

# THUCYDIDES, XENOPHON, AND LICHAS: WERE THE SPARTANS EXCLUDED FROM THE OLYMPIC GAMES FROM 420 TO 400 B.C.?

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## I. INTRODUCTION

IN THIS PAPER, I should like to examine the consequences of one of the most tense and dramatic moments in the history of the ancient Greek Olympic Games. I refer to the exclusion of the Spartans from the sanctuary of Olympia and from the Olympic Games of 420 B.C. by the people of Elis who controlled the games and the festival; and the flogging, by the Elean umpires, of the distinguished Spartan athlete Lichas son of Arkesilas when he crowned his charioteer publicly. Lichas' gesture was intended, so Thucydides tells us (5.49–50), to show that the winning chariot was his and not that of the Boiotian state, in whose name the victory had been announced; Lichas thus provocatively exploded a fiction which had been made necessary by the exclusion of the Spartans. Thucydides (who was, it is attractive to suppose, present on the occasion and knew in detail what he was talking about)<sup>1</sup> says that everyone was afraid the Spartans would make an armed attack and force their way in. Recently discovered archaeological evidence for a pitched battle at around this period in the actual sanctuary of Nemea, on the other side of the Peloponnese, not to mention the fighting at Olympia itself during the Games of 364 B.C., shows that this kind of thing could indeed happen at a sacred and panhellenic site.<sup>2</sup> It has been well said (Rood 1998: 106) that Thucydides describes the Lichas episode in "splendid detail." Certainly the two rich and in many respects uncharacteristic chapters which Thucydides devotes to it repay close study, for their subject-matter, their architecture, and their vocabulary.

In this paper I confine myself to one aspect of the 420 episode: its bearing on a war fought some twenty years later, the war of about 400 B.C. between Sparta and Elis,<sup>3</sup> described by Xenophon in the *Hellenica* (3.2.21–23) in terms of revenge

I am very grateful for help from Jim Roy and Alan Griffiths.

<sup>1</sup> So Clark 1999: 125, who says that Thucydides' description of the Olympia festival of 420 is "so vivid and full of detail that I am tempted to conclude that the historian actually attended." He adds (126): "Perhaps few would be surprised to learn that Thucydides had attended the first Olympics after his banishment from Athens. Among other enticements, he may have perceived an opportunity to recite parts of his histories publicly or in private gatherings there."

<sup>2</sup> For the battle at Nemea, unattested by ancient literary sources, see Miller 1990: 61 and n. 38, 130; cf. Andrewes 1992: 488–489 and n. 48; for 364, see Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.28–32 with Roy 1994: 203–204.

<sup>3</sup> The exact date of this war has been much discussed but the gap between the various views is not wide. I shall for convenience speak of it as having happened "in" 400 although it lasted for two years and is uncertainly dated. For a good recent discussion, see Tuplin 1993: 201–205.

for Elean behaviour. The actions for which revenge was sought are specified by Xenophon: the exclusion of the Spartans from the Olympic games, the whipping of Lichas, and the Elean refusal to allow the Spartan king Agis to make a sacrifice and prayer for victory (?414 or 413, see below, 215, n. 10). A recent contributor to this journal (Falkner 1996) has studied the "revenge" aspect to the war of 400. She plausibly concludes that there was more to the war than revenge, but does not deny that revenge was important. She does not, however, discuss one important question: did the ban relate to an exclusion from the festival of 420 only (and perhaps from the sanctuary for a further couple of years after that), or were the Spartans excluded not only in 420, but for the entire two decades thereafter, in fact until the Sparta-Elis war? If the second possibility is right, as the current orthodoxy maintains, then the Spartan grievance of 400 was, clearly, much more serious.

## II. THE PROBLEM: A ONE-FESTIVAL BAN OR A TWENTY-YEAR BAN?

I say "the current orthodoxy," but the truth is that most scholars who write about either the 420 episode or the 400 war do not address the issue at all. The commentators on Thucydides (Classen and Steup 1900–1922; Gomme 1970; Andrewes 1970), Xenophon (Breitenbach 1884; Underhill 1900; Krentz 1995) and Pausanias (Hitzig and Blümner 1896–1910; Frazer 1898) are no help on this point; nor are the great German histories of Greece. Beloch in volume 2 (Beloch 1914) passes over the 420 episode altogether, and mentions it only retrospectively in volume 3.1 when treating the 400 war (Beloch 1922: 17). Busolt (1904: 1230–31), describing the events of 420, says nothing about the length of the ban, and since his history did not go down to the Spartan-Elean War, he had no occasion to return to the topic. Scholars too numerous to list speak of the Spartans having been banned from the Olympic Games "of 420 B.C." and strictly this might be thought to imply a ban in and only in 420;<sup>4</sup> but I suspect that most of these scholars have not consciously addressed the issue of the length of the ban at all. In one recent collection of essays on the fourth century, by contrast, we do find the categorical assertion that the Spartans were banned from the Olympic games until 400. No modern references are given by the author of this statement (Hamilton 1997: 50), who merely refers to Thucydides, Diodorus, and Pausanias. Similarly, Stephen Hodkinson states as fact that "after 420 no Spartiate was able to compete until Elis had been disciplined at the end of the Peloponnesian War" (Hodkinson 1989: 98, citing Thuc. 5.49–50 and Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.21–31); a similar assumption is made by Marta Sordi (Sordi 1984a: 23 and n. 13; 1984b: 153). Paul Cartledge, without arguing the matter, says more cautiously that the ban of 420 "possibly" lasted until 400 (Cartledge 1987: 249).

What I have called the current orthodoxy (i.e., a ban for the whole period 420–400) appears to date from 1968 and the publication of Augusta Hönle's

<sup>4</sup>Roy 1998, an important treatment, speaks of "continuing Spartan resentment at being barred from Olympia"; this is non-committal on the length of the exclusion. See further below, 222–223.

Tübingen dissertation, *Olympia und die griechische Staatenwelt* (Hönle 1968 [1972]). According to Hönle, “it emerges clearly (‘unambiguously,’ ‘unequivocally,’ the German is *eindeutig*) from Xenophon” that the Spartans were excluded until the war of 400.<sup>5</sup> Anyone who did not consult the Xenophon passage might suppose from Hönle’s formulation that Xenophon said in so many words that the Spartans had been excluded from the Olympic festival during the entire period beginning with the games at which Lichas was whipped, right through until the Sparta-Elis war twenty years later. Actually Xenophon says no such thing. Hönle can only be making an inference from Xenophon’s language, and, as I shall argue in a moment, an incorrect inference.

Hönle’s “excellent” dissertation was rightly hailed as such by Luigi Moretti, the modern Hippias of Elis—that is, the author of *Olympionikai* (Moretti 1957)—who immediately accepted correction by Hönle on one vital point.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, if it could be shown that there was a single Spartan victor in the Olympic games of 416, 412, 408, or 404, the argument for a twenty-year exclusion would fail whatever Xenophon may or may not have said and thought. And in fact Moretti in 1957 had provisionally assigned a Spartan Olympic victor to the year 416: one Lakrates (Moretti 1957: no. 342), who fell fighting at Athens in the year 403 and who is explicitly said by Xenophon to have been an Olympic victor (*Hell.* 2.4.33). But this is not an Olympic victor like some of those recorded by Pausanias, conveniently provided with the year of his Olympic victory. The range of possible Olympiads for Lakrates is large, as Moretti acknowledged by putting a question-mark in front of the date 416. And in any case, in his first and second supplements to *Olympionikai* (Moretti 1970: 296; 1987: 69),<sup>7</sup> Moretti withdrew the 416 dating in deference to Hönle, and re-assigned Lakrates to 424 or some even earlier Olympiad. Was Moretti right to change his mind like this? I shall argue that he need not have changed it, although Lakrates’ dates remain uncertain and 424 may indeed be right for him.<sup>8</sup> I shall return in section v to the absence of other Spartan victors between 420 and 400.

### III. THE EVIDENCE OF XENOPHON

Since the Olympic victor lists do not solve our problem, it is time to look at the evidence of Xenophon for the war of 400. He says (*Hell.* 3.2.21–23):

τούτων δὲ πραττομένων ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ ὑπὸ Δερκυλίδᾳ, Λακεδαιμόνιοι κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν χρόνον, πάλαι ὀργιζόμενοι τοῖς Ἡλείοις καὶ ὅτι ἐποίησαντο συμμαχίαν πρὸς

<sup>5</sup> Hönle 1968 [1972]: 155, n. 3: “dass dies der Fall war, geht eindeutig aus Xen. *Hell.* 3,2,21 hervor.”

<sup>6</sup> For the correction of Moretti 1957, see Hönle 1968 [1972]: 130 (continuation of n. 3 from 128–129).

<sup>7</sup> In the 1987 list, which incorporates and amplifies that of 1970, Moretti rightly rejected an attempt to re-categorize Lakrates as an Athenian who fought for the Spartans.

<sup>8</sup> A later date than 424 might indeed have advantages, but without knowing what event he won, we cannot say whether it would be desirable to posit a shorter interval than twenty-one years between his Olympic success and his death in action. If so, the available candidates are 416, 412, 408, and 404.

Ἀθηναίους καὶ Ἀργεῖους καὶ Μαντινέας, καὶ ὅτι δίκην φάσκοντες καταδικασθαι αὐτῶν ἐκώλυον καὶ τοῦ ἵππικου καὶ τοῦ γυμνικοῦ ἀγῶνος, καὶ οὐ μόνον ταῦτ' ἦρκει, ἀλλὰ καὶ Λίχα παραδόντος Θηβαίοις τὸ ἄρμα, ἐπεὶ ἐκηρύττοντο νικῶντες, ὅτε εἰσῆλθε Λίχας στεφανώσων τὸν ἡνίοχον, μαστιγούντες αὐτόν, ἄνδρα γέροντα, ἐξήλασαν· (22) τούτων δ' ὕστερον καὶ Ἄγιδος πεμφθέντος θῦσαι τῷ Διὶ κατὰ μαντεῖαν τινὰ ἐκώλυον οἱ Ἥλείοι μὴ προσεύχεσθαι νίκην πολέμου, λέγοντες ὥς καὶ τὸ ἀρχαῖον εἶη οὕτω νόμιμον, μὴ χρηστηριάζεσθαι τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἐφ' Ἑλλήνων πολέμῳ. ὥστε ἄθυτος ἀπῆλθεν. (23) ἐκ τούτων οὖν πάντων ὀργιζομένοις ἔδοξε τοῖς ἐφόροις καὶ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ σωφρονίσαι αὐτούς.

At the same time as Derkyllidas was active in this way in Asia, the Spartans decided to bring the Eleans to their senses.<sup>9</sup> The Spartans had long been angry with the Eleans for the following reasons. First, they made an alliance with the Athenians, Argives, and Mantineans, then they prevented the Spartans from competing in the horse races and athletic contests at the Olympic Games, claiming that a judgment had been awarded against Sparta. And they went further than this. Lichas had handed over his chariot to the Thebans and the Thebans were announced as the winners; but when Lichas came on to the course and put the garland on the head of the charioteer, the Eleans whipped him, though he was an old man, and drove him out. (22) At a later time than this, when Agis had been sent, in accordance with an oracle, to sacrifice to Zeus, the Eleans prevented him from praying for victory in war, saying that it was an ancient convention that Greeks should not consult the oracle about wars against Greeks; so Agis went away without having sacrificed. (23) With all these reasons for being angry, the ephors and the Assembly decided to bring the Eleans to their senses.

As remarked above, there is nothing here which says explicitly that the ban lasted beyond or much beyond the Olympic festival of 420 B.C. Why then does Hönle take Xenophon to be saying “unequivocally” that it did so last? I assume she relies on the imperfect tense of the vital verb ἐκώλυον, that is, she takes it to mean they *went on preventing* the Spartans, over a long period of time. Is this assumption right? Four considerations suggest that it is not.

(a) The words τούτων δ' ὕστερον, “at a later time than this” (3.2.22), suggest that we have now left the 420 episode of 3.2.21 behind.<sup>10</sup> The only way of escaping this conclusion is to suppose that Xenophon means to say “the Spartans were excluded in 420 and remained excluded thereafter. *At a date later* than the original act of exclusion, but while it was still in force, Agis attempted to sacrifice to Zeus.” This seems to me a roundabout and implausible way of taking the passage. It is much better to suppose that Xenophon intends the following simple sequence of separate events: (i) alliance between Elis and Athens, Argos, and Mantinea (for which see Thuc. 5.47 and *IG* I<sup>3</sup> 83); (ii) brief exclusion at

<sup>9</sup> Strictly, the whole long sentence has no main verb to go with the nominative Λακεδαιμόνιοι. When Xenophon starts again at the beginning of 3.2.23, it is with a different construction involving ἔδοξε ... σωφρονίσαι, with the Spartan authorities (ephors and assembly) in the dative. For clarity I have given the idea represented by σωφρονίσαι, “bring them to their senses,” twice.

<sup>10</sup> Agis' attempted sacrifice is usually (see Cartledge 1987: 249) dated to about 414 or 413 B.C., when the Spartans were contemplating re-entering the war. Diodorus says (14.17.4) that it was the other king, Pausanias, but this is usually corrected.

Olympic festival in late summer of 420 and whipping of Lichas (Thuc. 5.49–50); (iii) subsequent episode involving king Agis in about 414.

(b) If the imperfect ἐκώλυον in 3.2.21 (grievance no. 2, the “Lichas” grievance) is pressed, we must logically be prepared to treat the imperfect ἐκώλυον at 3.3.22 (grievance no. 3, the prevention of Agis’ attempted victory-sacrifice) in the same way. And yet nobody has ever suggested that *this* act of prevention went on for years. What the Greek there perhaps means is that the prevention of Agis arose from a fixed state of mind on the part of the Eleans.<sup>11</sup> Or we can, even more simply, refer Xenophon’s imperfect at 3.3.22 to a period of time, perhaps days or even weeks (but not years, still less multiples of four years): no doubt Agis on his (single) visit made more than one attempt to get his way, but was baffled by Elean intransigence for which the imperfect was the appropriate tense. Linguistically, the two sentences, though sprawling, are in one crucial respect comparable: both occurrences of the imperfect ἐκώλυον are “resolved” by aorists emphatically placed at the end of the respective sentences (ἐξήλασαν, “they drove him out,” and ἀπῆλθεν), matching the initial aorist of ἐποίησαντο, “they made an alliance” (grievance no. 1). Three grievances, three aorists.<sup>12</sup> This argument seems to me the really decisive one.

(c) It has sometimes been urged that, in the entire section quoted above, Xenophon is generally indebted to Thucydides (so the older commentators, and more recently Soulis 1972: 115). The suggestion is not necessary, given that Xenophon’s estate was not far from Olympia and he was well placed to find out for himself what happened. But of course the two passages invite comparison. The alliance alluded to by Xenophon is fully reported by Thucydides (5.47, giving a text of the treaty); and the handling of the 420 Olympia incident is roughly similar in the two authors. But there are differences. Thucydides mentions both a ban on Spartans sacrificing and on their participation in the games, whereas Xenophon concentrates on the exclusion from the games and ignores the perhaps (in practice) slightly longer-lasting, but not separate, ban on sacrificing (see below, 217; and see [d] for the point that the two bans were not separate). Xenophon’s μαστιγοῦντες, “whipping,” may, as Andrewes notes (1970: 67) in his contribution to Gomme’s commentary on Thucydides, be slightly stronger than Thucydides’ πληγὰς ἔλαβεν, “received blows,” and Xenophon adds—perhaps from his own good knowledge of Spartan affairs—the interesting detail, not in Thucydides, that Lichas was a γέρων, a man of over sixty and perhaps a member of the *gerousia*,

<sup>11</sup> We may compare the present participle κωλύοντων at Thuc. 5.13.1 with Gomme’s good note (1970: *ad loc.*: not “the Thessalians prevented them” but “the Thessalians were for preventing them”).

<sup>12</sup> I am very grateful to Alan Griffiths for help on the linguistic point. We may compare, but also contrast, Hdt. 5.22.2, another passage about attempted exclusion at the Olympics, which has a verb of exclusion in the same imperfect tense: “they *tried* to have Alexander of Macedon excluded (ἔξεργον) . . . but he was vindicated (ἐκρίθη εἶναι “Ἕλληνα). Here the imperfect is conative and is resolved by a word indicating that the attempt at exclusion failed (i.e., “they tried to exclude him but they failed”). The two Xenophonic exclusions are resolved rather differently: the Elean exclusion of the Spartans culminated in their driving Lichas out altogether; their exclusion of Agis culminated in his departure without having sacrificed.

in 420. He also specifies that the chariot was announced as Theban (Thucydides has the more general “Boiotian”).<sup>13</sup> Thucydides’ word for Lichas’ crowning of the charioteer is ἀνάδησε by contrast with Xenophon’s στεφανώσων; finally, the verb for the exclusion is εἶργω in Thucydides, but κωλύω in Xenophon, and Xenophon’s emphatic closing aorist ἐξήλασαν, “they drove him out,” does not correspond to anything in Thucydides. On the other hand, both<sup>14</sup> have the semi-technical word καταδικάζω in the middle voice (Thucydides also has the noun καταδίκη) closely combined with the participle φάσκοντες.<sup>15</sup> Now Thucydides, who began his narrative with the aorist passive εἰρχθησαν (5.49.1), “they were excluded,” switches to the imperfect of the same verb by 5.50.2: Λακεδαιμόνιοι μὲν εἶργοντο τοῦ ἱεροῦ, θυσίας καὶ ἀγώνων, καὶ οἴκοι ἔθουον, οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι “Ἕλληνες ἐθεώρουον πλὴν Λεπρεατῶν, “the Spartans were being excluded from the sanctuary, that is from sacrificing and competing, and sacrificed at home. But the other Greeks participated in the festival, except for the people of Lepreon” (for the Lepreates, see below, n. 25). Again (cf. [b] above), nobody has ever suggested that Thucydides is talking about more than one Olympic festival. The Olympic festival, and the advance preparations for it, went on for many days. Thucydides means that for the duration of the festival, and for as long thereafter as the ban from the sanctuary lasted, the Spartans were excluded, and so they “did their sacrificing at home,” as we might translate the interesting expression οἴκοι ἔθουον. It is just possible that Xenophon recalled and reproduced Thucydides’ imperfect tenses. But even if the dependence on Thucydides is denied (and the differences are at least as striking as the similarities), it remains true and important that Thucydides’ repeated imperfect tenses show that Xenophon’s imperfect tenses need not, and I would say should not, be taken to extend to any festival later than that of 420.

One aspect of Thucydides’ imperfects must be discussed. It will be seen (below, 222–223) that there are reasons for thinking that the exclusion of the Spartans from the sanctuary was lifted a couple of years later, at some point between 418 and 416. It might be argued that this interval—less than an Olympiad but more than ephemeral—explains the imperfect tenses of Thucydides, who does after all talk of the Spartans “being prevented *from sacrificing* or competing in the games,” εἶργοντο τοῦ ἱεροῦ θυσίας καὶ ἀγώνων (5.50.2):<sup>16</sup> this was both a general sanctuary-ban which would last beyond the end of the festival, and a festival-specific ban.<sup>17</sup> But though this interpretation is possible, I do not think that it is necessary. First, Thucydides’ language at 5.50.2 picks up 5.49.1, εἰρχθησαν ὥστε μὴ θύειν μηδ’ ἀγωνίζεσθαι—but there Thucydides, as we have

<sup>13</sup> I return elsewhere to the question of which author is correct. Both have their supporters.

<sup>14</sup> As noted by Roy (1998: 362).

<sup>15</sup> For the verb καταδικάζω, compare, e.g., *JG* II<sup>2</sup> 1126, line 5, about the Delphic amphiktion.

<sup>16</sup> I agree with Classen and Steup (1900–22: 5.131) that there is no call to delete the last three words, as do some editors.

<sup>17</sup> See further (d) below for these two aspects of the ban, which should not, however, be regarded as two separate exclusions.

noted already, uses the aorist passive. Second, Thucydides uses the imperfect tense elsewhere in his account: he uses it both for the Greeks other than the Lepreans who sent sacred envoys (ἐθεώρουν) and for the Eleans who kept guard (φυλακὴν εἶχον); both of these verbs surely apply to the period of the festival of 420 only. In any case this particular argument, i.e., in terms of a general ban on sacrificing, is much less relevant to Xenophon, because, as we have seen, he ignores the ban on sacrificing and focusses exclusively on the ban from the games.

(d) It has been pointed out to me by Jeremy Trevett that Xenophon's account of the foiling of Agis' attempt to sacrifice at Olympia in 414 or 413 has a bearing on the main problem; indeed it has, and it powerfully supports my conclusion. The reason given for the Elean refusal to let him sacrifice is in terms of ancient Greek convention. If the ban was in force at that date, why did the Eleans not simply bar him on the grounds that the Spartans had not yet paid the fine? And why did Agis bother to try to sacrifice? The implication must be that the general ban on Spartans was no longer in force. This conclusion can be avoided only if we do one of two things. (i) We should have to separate the ban on competing from the ban on sacrificing, and suppose that the ban on sacrificing was lifted whereas the ban on competing was not. But there is no reason to do this: for one thing, Thucydides joins the two bans very closely together. (It is true that, as we have seen, Xenophon in his account of 420 omits the ban on sacrificing, but that has no weight in this regard.) (ii) Alternatively, we should have to suppose that although the 420 ban was still in force in 414 or 413, the Eleans for some reason chose to invoke a different principle altogether, perhaps one they felt more confident about invoking.<sup>18</sup> Or we might want to say that the Eleans really did use both arguments (non-payment of fine; ancient convention), but Xenophon, who after all ignores the sacrificial aspect of the 420 ban, chose to focus only on the ancient convention. Neither of these possibilities, (i) or (ii), are as plausible as the simple explanation that here we have further evidence that the ban was no longer in force, at any rate by 414 or 413.

(e) For what it is worth, Diodorus (14.17.4), in his account of the war of 400, uses not the imperfect but the aorist tense for the critical exclusion of the Spartans from the Olympic games: "they did not allow ..." (καὶ διότι τοῖς Ὀλυμπίοις Λακεδαιμονίους οὐκ εἴασαν ἀγωνίσασθαι). (The plural τὰ Ὀλύμπια does not, incidentally, mean more than one Olympic festival; it is standard Greek for a single occurrence of the festival: cf. Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.28.) Diodorus *precedes* this with the statement that the Eleans prevented (διεκώλυσαν, aorist again) king Agis (whom he calls Pausanias) from sacrificing (Diod. 14.17.1). This must be from Ephorus, who may well have got it from Xenophon. (The Elean alliance with Athens has disappeared in the opening phrase ἀλλὰ μὲν πλείονα τοῖς Ἡλείοις

<sup>18</sup>The principle of not consulting the oracle about wars against the Greeks was not a very sound one, "more honoured in the breach than in the observance," as Underhill (1900: 95) puts it, citing Thuc. 1.118.

ἐνεκάλουν.) It would be possible to take Diodorus' order of grievances to imply that the ban was still in force after Agis' visit, but I suggest that Diodorus' order is not significant and that his aorists show that he was thinking of two episodes, not of one episode and a long-drawn-out process. Diodorus, like Beloch, found room for the 420 exclusion only as a retrospective ingredient of his account of the Sparta-Elis war, not as part of his 420 narrative. Under 420 he merely records that Hyperbios of Syracuse (Moretti 1957: no. 334) won the *stadion* in the ninetyeth Olympics, and follows this with a narrative of the year which obviously goes back ultimately to Thucydides (Diod. 12.77). He or Ephorus evidently thought the Lichas episode not worth bothering with at all.

#### IV. THE EVIDENCE OF PAUSANIAS

Pausanias, who visited Olympia and did an excellent job of reporting what he saw there (Habicht 1985 [1998]: 149), is (we may think) in a different category from Diodorus. Here is an intelligent observer, who made inquiries of his own. For instance the Spartan-Elean war leads him to mention an extraordinary and fascinating archaeological find of his own time: the skeleton of a soldier in hoplite armour was found in the roof of the temple of Hera, a casualty (Pausanias claims, with implausible precision) of the fighting between Sparta and Elis. The man had crawled up there to die and his remains were not found for five hundred years (5.27.11). But did Pausanias have anything independent to offer on the causes of the war, in particular on the length of the Spartan exclusion? At first sight, yes. In his book on Sparta (3.8), he says that in the kingship of Agis, there were other Spartan grievances against the Eleans (ἄλλα τε ἐγένετο ἐς Ἡλείους ἐγκλήματα), and in particular they were annoyed with the Eleans because *they were being excluded* by the Eleans from the Olympic games and the sanctuary at Olympia (ὕπ' αὐτῶν εἰργόμενοι μάλιστα ἤχθοντο). There then follows a narrative essentially similar to Xenophon's. Here, it might seem, is (in the present or continuous participle εἰργόμενοι) proof that Hönle was right and that the ban was in force in 400. Indeed it could be thought a little surprising that she cites Xenophon rather than Pausanias in support of her view: does he not here commit himself to a twenty-year ban as the cause of the Spartan-Elean war? And if so, did he not perhaps have good independent evidence for so doing? However, the sentence just quoted is not Pausanias' only treatment of the war. He returns to it in book 6 when he deals with Olympia itself. There (6.2.2) he mentions statues of both Arkesilas and his son Lichas, the Lichas who, "the Spartans being excluded from the games at that time" (εἰργομένων τηνικαῦτα τοῦ ἀγῶνος Λακεδαιμονίων),—and then there follows the story of Lichas' victory, the proclamation in the name of the Theban *demos*, the crowning of the charioteer, and the whipping. The vocabulary is a blend of Thucydides (notably the use of εἶργω rather than κωλύω for the exclusion) and Xenophon (notably μαστιγοῦσιν for the corporal punishment), with some words not in either author (in Pausanias the charioteer is crowned with a ταινία or fillet).



Pausanias then continues: “it was because of this Lichas that the campaign of the Spartans against the Eleans in the time of king Agis occurred, and a battle inside the Altis.” Even allowing for the natural focus, in the context of Olympia and its statues, on Lichas personally, this is rather a startling simplification, and particularly startling because of the markedly different emphasis from Pausanias’ own book 3. In book 6, the “other grievances” of book 3 have disappeared entirely, and even the 420 exclusion is not given as a grievance but as hardly more than a temporal indicator expressed by a genitive absolute construction (“the Spartans being excluded at that time”). Pausanias does not here write like somebody with special knowledge of the war’s causes; he is surely writing from a memory of what he knew from Xenophon (and Thucydides). In light of this, I suggest that in book 3 he is similarly indebted to the two great written authorities.<sup>19</sup> The most, I suggest, that interpreters of the Höhle persuasion can plausibly extract from Pausanias 3.8 is the possibility that Pausanias read Xenophon’s imperfect tenses in the way that Höhle seems to have read them. But even if that is right (and see below for a different and preferable way of taking the Pausanias passage), it would not settle the meaning of the Xenophon passage as a whole. In particular, the problem of Xenophon’s repeated ἐκώλυον remains: Xenophon, it will be recalled, uses it of two distinct episodes, one of which (Agis’ attempted sacrifice) certainly did not extend over a period of years. There is also the problem that in Xenophon, that attempted sacrifice occurred “at a date later than” (τούτων δ’ ὕστερον) the Lichas affair.

How else might Pausanias be taken? Pausanias’ evidence is curious on any view, though his two treatments of the causes of the Sparta-Elis war are not actually inconsistent. In book 3 he mentions “other grievances” but not (specifically) Lichas. In book 6 he mentions Lichas and absolutely no other grievance, but as we have seen this emphasis is pardonable in the context of a description of statues at Olympia. In my view, the clue to the correct interpretation of the passage in book 3 lies in the word ἐγένετο, “arose.” The verb is applied to the entire reign of king Agis, viz. 427–400 B.C. Pausanias can be paraphrased as follows: “various causes of complaint arose during Agis’ reign [of 427–400]: what had irked them in particular in this period was being excluded—εἰργόμενοι, as in book 6—both from the games [420 B.C.] and from the sanctuary [420 again, and perhaps a couple of years thereafter (below, 222–223); but perhaps there is also a reference to the subsequent refusal of Agis’ attempt to sacrifice for victory].” Pausanias does *not* say: “in the time of king Agis they brought up/levelled various grievances against the Eleans, and in particular that they were [sc. at that time, 400 B.C.] being excluded . . .”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> For Pausanias’ familiarity with Thucydides and Xenophon, see Habicht 1985: 103, 133; cf. 1998: xvi [preface to paperback edition]. Eide (1992), who in any case does not discuss Thuc. 5.49–50, merely succeeds in showing that Pausanias did not go to Thucydides for every detail.

<sup>20</sup> Alan Griffiths objects that “in all these ἀλλά τε καί structures the vague preamble only really exists as a foil to highlight the emphasized item,” i.e., ἐγένετο is just part of the vague preamble. But we cannot be sure that there were no other grievances: it is only too likely.

## V. THE OLYMPIC VICTOR LISTS

One argument for a Spartan exclusion during the whole period 420–400 is the absence of Spartan victors in this period, whereas in the four-horse chariot event there are attested Spartan victors in 448, 444, 440, 432, 428, 424, and 420, and again in 396, 392, and 388.<sup>21</sup> This argument has, however, very limited force for the following reasons: (i) The lists for this period are far from complete. Under 412, for instance, Moretti lists just one victor from anywhere in any event, Exainetos of Agrigentum (Moretti no. 346). His victory is dated and certain (Diod. 13.34.1). So the games of 412 happened. (ii) It might be that Spartans competed in 416 to 404, but none of them won. (iii) What about Lakrates (above, 214)? If we want, we can always, with the Xenophontic obstacle removed, revert to 416 for him (or 412, or 408, or 404). Note also that the only reason for assigning Kyniska's first victory to 396 (Moretti 1957: no. 373) is the belief, challenged in the present paper, that for political reasons she could not have won before 400.

## VI. SOME ARGUMENTS FROM GENERAL PROBABILITY

Let us move away from the detail of Xenophon's account and from the specific evidence, positive and negative. There are some general arguments as well.

(a) If the Spartans had been excluded from the Olympic festival throughout the period 420–400, I should have expected the fact to have made more of an impression on our sources. If Xenophon, Diodorus/Ephorus, and Pausanias are really trying to tell us that the strongest power in the Greek world (and the most feared, at least after the Spartans had retrieved their prestige at Mantinea in 418: Thuc. 5.75) suffered a twenty-year exclusion from the most prestigious athletic event in the Greek world, their manner of presenting the fact is remarkably subdued. Then there is Thucydides: the Hönle view has interesting implications for his narrative technique. From his mention (5.49.1) of the "first" victory of Androstenes the Arkadian at the Olympic games of 420, it follows that he wrote or at least revised his account of the 420 Olympics after 416 at the earliest. His account betrays, however, not the slightest awareness that the ban against the Spartans was still in force at the time of writing, as on Hönle's view it must have been. This is not impossible, particularly if one takes the view that book 5 is unrevised, but it is mildly uncomfortable.

(b) The Spartans, as we know from Herodotus, "valued the things of the gods more than the things of men" (5.63). However irritating (and unfair?)<sup>22</sup> the behaviour of the Eleans was, there must surely have been plenty of members of the Spartan elite who would rather have paid the sacred fine than risk divine (and

<sup>21</sup> The full facts and references are in Moretti 1957, but the position can be taken in at a glance from the table at Hodkinson 1989: 97.

<sup>22</sup> Roy 1998: esp. 365.

general Greek) disapproval. It is noticeable that no armed Spartan intervention was made after the Lichas episode (although Thucydides says that there was a general fear of this). Why not? A feeling that Lichas had gone too far and was getting too big for his boots?<sup>23</sup> Or simply the calculation that with Argive, Athenian, and Mantinean troops ready to intervene, it would be prudent to show restraint (Roy 1998: 366)? Or scruples about acting like Kleomenes I (Hdt. 5.72; 6.80–81) and disregarding, or countenancing the disregard of, the ordinary pieties?<sup>24</sup> The term “Sparta” is an abstraction, and even “the Spartans” is a simplification: no doubt these various motives, and others, were present in different mixtures in the minds of different individual Spartans. My guess is that at some time before the festival of 416, and therefore well before those of 412, 408, or 404, the Spartans did in fact pay up, agreeing to some face-saving formula of the kind suggested by the Eleans in Thucydides. It is even possible that we can identify the *quid pro quo* for their re-admission: maybe the Spartans did after all, as James Roy suggests to me, restore the disputed city of Lepreon to the Eleans as the latter had demanded in 420 as the price for lifting the Olympic ban (Thuc. 5.49.5).<sup>25</sup> Lepreon was still not Elean in 418, but is called “Elean” by Aristophanes in 414 (*Birds* 149), and Dr Roy suggests to me that it became Elean in negotiations “not too long before”

<sup>23</sup> For Spartan envy of their own leading men, cf. Thuc. 4.108. Höhle (1968 [1972]: 156) suggests “a certain opposition” to Lichas on the part of other Spartans.

<sup>24</sup> We may compare the end of the entire episode. Twenty years later, after the Spartans’ successful war against Elis, they “did not take the management of the sanctuary away from the Eleans—although this prerogative had not been the Eleans’ in ancient times—because the Spartans thought the rival claimants [the Pisatans] were peasants who were not competent to do the job” (Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.31: τοῦ μέντοι προεστάναι τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ Ὀλυμπίου ἱεροῦ, καίπερ οὐκ ἀρχαίου Ἡλείοις ὄντος, οὐκ ἀπήλασαν αὐτούς [lit. “they did not do exclude them from the management”], νομίζοντες τοὺς ἀντιποιουμένους χωρίτας εἶναι καὶ οὐχ ἱκανοὺς προεστάναι). The negative presentation here—“the Spartans did *not* take away the management”—is interesting; it surely implies “as they might have done” or “as you might have expected”; perhaps there is also the implication that the possibility was discussed, and that one Spartan faction wanted the Eleans deprived of their role. But the fact is that they did not depose them, and here too we should allow for more than one shade of opinion. The single motive given by Xenophon is purely practical (the incompetence or unworthiness of the Pisatan “peasants”), but some Spartans would surely have felt religious unease at treating the Eleans in this way, despite the argument that the Eleans had not enjoyed their rights for all previous time. The pious Xenophon for once treats a religious episode in thoroughly Thucydidean manner, by suppressing the religious motive in favour of the more worldly one.

<sup>25</sup> Lepreon features in Thucydides’ narrative of the 420 games as more than just an object of dispute; he tells us that “the other Greeks, except the Lepreatai, sent *theoroi*, sacred envoys, to the festival” (οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι “Ἕλληνες ἐθεώρουν πλὴν Λεπρεατῶν). Gomme (1970: 66) comments on this “presumably because they had invited, or at least accepted, Lacedaemonian armed assistance.” In light of this it is mildly surprising to find that there was a victor from Lepreon in 420 (Moretti 1957: no. 338, derived from Paus. 6.7.8: Theantos, victor in the boys’ boxing event). This is not, however, formally inconsistent with Thucydides: *theoroi* are not the same as athletes. In any case we must reckon with Paus. 5.5.3: victors from Lepreon were proclaimed as Eleans. For a good discussion and explanation of Theantos’ participation, see Nielsen forthcoming (I am grateful to Dr Nielsen for an advance sight of this paper).

the date of that play.<sup>26</sup> I am very happy with this suggestion, and with the formulation “not long before,” which would be consistent with a date for the negotiations and the re-admission of the Spartans after 418 but shortly before 416 and the Olympic games of that year; the Spartans surely had a strong motive for clearing the issue up before then. However, that agreement, if agreement there was, did not stop the Spartans from nursing their grievance against the Eleans for many years to come—as they did on any view of the length of the ban.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Dr Roy, who thinks my overall conclusions are right, kindly allows me to quote in full his interesting and plausible suggestion, which strengthens my conclusions:

“To be honest I had not thought a great deal about the question. I had however given some thought to another question—how Elis recovered Lepreon—without then finding much enlightenment, and it may now make more sense in the light of your arguments. At Thuc. 5.62.1–2 Elis had still not recovered Lepreon, but by the outbreak of the Spartan-Elean war ca 400 Lepreon was again Elean (though it broke away in the conflict): cf. Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.25. It was presumably already Elean by 414 because Aristophanes *Birds* 149 calls it Elean. Elis presumably recovered Lepreon either by force or by negotiation, and force seems very unlikely in these years. Negotiation on the other hand, with some resolution of the Elean-Spartan dispute (even if patently not a complete or lasting resolution), would be a suitable occasion for resolving also the question of Sparta’s admission to the Olympics, and Sparta may have been willing to make such a concession as restoring Lepreon to Elis in order to resolve the Olympic problem. The situation would then somehow have deteriorated again before Agis was refused permission to sacrifice and pray (as you say, possibly in 414 or 413). Aristophanes’ reference to Elean Lepreon also makes more sense if, not too long before the *Birds* in 414, Lepreon had been the subject of Spartan-Elean negotiation. All this is rather speculative, I admit, but it seems to me to fit your line of argument well.”

So too Sommerstein (1987: 208), in his note on the Aristophanes passage, comments that “by 414 the Eleans may have recovered control of Lepreon”; Dunbar (1995: 182) does not consider the point. “Lepreon” is chosen, as both Sommerstein and Dunbar note, for its similarity to an adjective suggesting scaly skin (see line 151), but that does not affect the Elean point.

One advantage of the suggestion above about Lepreon is that it may help to dispose of the difficulty that a fine of more than 33 talents (2,000 minai = 200,000 drachmai) is, as Mr J. W. Roberts points out to me, an enormous sum which the Spartans might have found hard to afford (though at Thuc. 6.95 the Argives take Spartan booty worth at least 25 talents). We do not know if the fine was (i) paid at all, or (ii) paid in full, or (iii) paid on the partial basis suggested by the Eleans at Thuc. 5.49.5. If (iii), then perhaps the Eleans waived their share (nine-tenths?) in consideration for the return of Lepreon.

<sup>27</sup> It is entirely plausible that the Spartans should have long resented even a short-term ban which had been lifted many years previously; that is, it cannot be objected against me that anything short of a twenty-year ban makes the Spartan declaration of war against the Eleans look like unbelievably petty remembering of remote events. After all, Xenophon mentions the quadruple alliance of 420 as another of Sparta’s grievances against the Eleans, and this alliance lasted only until the winter of 418/7 (Thuc. 5.78).

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