

ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE CLASSICS: WAR, VIOLENCE, AND THE STATELESS *POLIS*¹

I. INTRODUCTION

It has become a commonplace in contemporary historiography to note the frequency of war in ancient Greece.² Yvon Garlan says that, during the century and a half from the Persian wars (490 and 480–479 B.C.) to the battle of Chaeronea (338 B.C.), Athens was at war, on average, more than two years out of every three, and never enjoyed a period of peace for as long as ten consecutive years.³ 'Given these conditions', says Garlan, 'one would expect them (i.e. the Greeks) to consider war as a problem. . . . But this was far from being the case.'⁴ The Greek acceptance of war as inevitable was contrasted by Momigliano and others with the attention given to constitutional changes and to the prevention of *stasis*: 'the Greeks came to accept war like birth and death about which nothing could be done. . . . On the other hand constitutions were men-made and could be modified by men.'⁵

Moralist overtones were not absent from this re-evaluation of Greek civilization. Havelock observed that the Greeks exalted, legitimized, and placed organized warfare at the heart of the European value system, and Momigliano suggested that:

The idea of controlling wars, like the idea of the emancipation of women and the idea of birth control, is a part of the intellectual revolution of the nineteenth century and meant a break with the classical tradition of historiography of wars.⁶

More recent studies have questioned the assumption that 'war was an ever present reality in Greek life', suggesting that it confuses importance with frequency: war was important, yet not necessarily an 'ever present reality', at least not all the time and not for all the *poleis*.⁷ Thus Connor maintains that 'the significance of war in early Greek civilization . . . is not to be measured by its frequency but by its symbolic power'.⁸ It has been argued further against the traditional view that the rules of the hoplite pitched battle clearly indicate that the Greeks knew and practised, at least in the archaic and early classical periods, a firm control of wars. Thus it seems that the

¹ This paper is based on my Cambridge Ph.D. thesis. I owe special thanks to two men in Cambridge: my supervisor, Dr Paul Cartledge, who has also helped me to bring this paper to its final form, and the late Professor Ernest Gellner, who commented on my thesis and on earlier versions of this paper. I wish also to thank Professor W. Z. Rubinsohn of Tel-Aviv University and Dr A. Avidov for their helpful remarks.

² W. R. Connor, 'Early Greek warfare as symbolic expression', *Past and Present* 119 (1988), 4–5.

³ Yvon Garlan, *War in the Ancient World: A Social History*, trans. Janet Lloyd (London, 1975), 15, and see also M. I. Finley 'War and empire', in *Ancient History: Evidence and Models* (London, 1985), 67.

⁴ Garlan (n. 3), 16.

⁵ A. Momigliano, 'On causes of war in ancient historiography', in *Studies in Historiography* (London, 1966), 120; Finley (n. 3), 68 says that 'it was universally accepted in antiquity that war is a natural condition of human society. Neither historians nor philosophers ever asked the question, Why war?'

⁶ Momigliano (n. 5), 124; E. Havelock, 'War as a way of life in classical culture', in E. Gareau (ed.), *Classical Values and the Modern World* (Ottawa, 1972), 37.

⁷ Peter T. Manicas, 'War, *stasis*, and Greek political thought', *SCSSH* (1982), 673–4. Connor (n. 2), 6–8.

⁸ Connor (n. 2), 8.

traditional view confused 'controlling wars' with avoiding them altogether. It has been pointed out furthermore that the assumption that the importance and prevalence of wars were rooted in Greek intellectual, psychological, or moral traits, or related to the Greek concept of human nature, tends to ignore the fact that war in ancient Greece was directly related to that unique Greek invention—the *polis*. As Manicas observes:

But the key to the meaning of war in ancient Greece is a firm understanding and grasp of the Greek city-state, the *polis*. A failure to keep even the most elementary facts about the *polis*-world in mind has been the source of much confusion and misunderstanding.⁹

One of these 'elementary facts', usually ignored, is the decentralized nature of the *polis* which bears directly upon its warlike character. As I will argue in this paper, contrary to what has been traditionally assumed, the *polis* was not a state, but rather what the anthropologists call a stateless community. In Max Weber's celebrated definition of the state, a stateless community is characterized by *the absence* of an agency or class which monopolizes the use of violence, and by the fact that the ability to use force is more or less evenly distributed among armed or potentially armed members of the community.

The role of war in acephalous communities has been an object of extensive study by anthropologists and received special attention in the various writings of Ernest Gellner. One of the important facts about stateless communities that one should bear in mind is that they are part of the agrarian world. Gellner points out that while in our time 'violence becomes . . . optional, counter productive and probably fatal', this was not the case for the agrarian world in which violence was 'pervasive, mandatory and normative' and military skills were central to the dominant ethos.¹⁰ One of the reasons for the primacy of violence is that, unlike the industrial world, in the agrarian world wealth can generally be acquired more easily and quickly through coercion and predation than through production. Consequently 'specialists in violence are generally endowed with a rank higher than that of specialists in production'.¹¹ According to Gellner, whether in a certain agrarian society violence would take the form of coercion or predation depends on how the means of coercion are distributed. Most agrarian communities are authoritarian, that is, stratified state-societies, where the means of coercion are centralized or monopolized by a ruling class. In such societies coercion takes the form of state domination and state appropriation of surplus production. Yet there is another kind of agrarian society—egalitarian stateless communities. These societies are characterized by a high military participation ratio,¹² that is, almost everybody carries arms in wartime. A most obvious example of such societies is pastoral nomadism, yet they can also be found among peasantries located in difficult terrain. What characterizes such communities is that they resist coercion. In such stateless communities violence would take the form of defence, predation, and war against the outside world.¹³

Yet, according to Gellner, war has another important function in acephalous communities: it is through war that these communities maintain their cohesion. The

⁹ Manicas (n. 7), 674.

¹⁰ E. Gellner, 'An anthropological view of war and violence', in R. Hinde (ed.), *The Institution of War* (Basingstoke, 1991), 62.

¹¹ Gellner (n. 10), 63.

¹² Gellner borrowed this phrase from S. Andreski, *Military Organization and Society* (London, 1968²).

¹³ Gellner (n. 10), 63. See also his *Muslim Society* (Cambridge, 1981), 20–1.

dominant role of war in fostering the unity of agrarian stateless communities is attributed to the absence of state or centralized authority.¹⁴

To what extent can Gellner's anthropological view of the role of war in stateless communities be helpful for the understanding of its role in the Greek *polis*? There is here a possible solution for the 'paradox' posed by Momigliano. The acceptance of war and the rejection of *stasis* is not paradoxical if agrarian stateless communities maintain their cohesion and sometimes their economy through war. Thus if one chose political life, one had also to accept war as inevitable.

II. *POLIS*, TRIBE, AND STATE.

Social anthropologists have traditionally identified the stateless community with the tribe.¹⁵ The classical *polis*, though stateless, was not tribal and it is strongly doubted today whether tribal forms ever existed in ancient Greece even in archaic times. Thus, though my next step would be to establish the statelessness of the Greek *polis*, it is necessary also to point out how it differed from tribal stateless societies studied by anthropologists.

Broadly speaking, the *traditional* definitions of state could be classified into those based on (i) stratification and (ii) authority or the structure of the government itself.¹⁶

Definitions based on stratification stress the correlation between states and the existence of permanent social classes. In those definitions the state is either identified with the ruling class or viewed as dominated by the ruling class, and is used as an instrument for the appropriation of surplus production. Although those definitions have usually been associated with Marxism, and especially with Engels's *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, stratification is considered today as a universal correlate of the early (and pre-modern agrarian) state.¹⁷ Thus Gellner observes that

In the characteristic agro-literate polity, the ruling class forms a small minority of the population, rigidly separate from the great majority of direct agricultural producers, or peasants. Generally speaking, its ideology exaggerates rather than underplays the inequality of classes and the degree of separation of the ruling stratum. This can in turn be sub-divided into a number of more specialized layers: warriors, priests, clerics, administrators, burghers. . . . The whole system favours horizontal lines of cultural cleavage, and it may invent and reinforce them when they are absent.¹⁸

¹⁴ Gellner (n. 13, 1981), 93–4. This is when compared to state-societies in general. When compared to the modern industrial nation-state, another factor is added here, that is, that 'by promising security and affluence for all those who acquire its culture in a literate manner, it can also secure popular loyalty'. Thus while in the agrarian state it is the centralized authority which commands loyalty, in the modern nation-state it is also 'the nation' and 'the culture' which secure loyalty through the affluence and security they promise.

¹⁵ See below n. 41.

¹⁶ R. Cohen, 'State origins: a reappraisal', in Henry Claessen and Peter Skalnik (edd.), *The Early State* (The Hague, 1978), 32–4; R. Cohen, 'Introduction', in R. Cohen and E. Service (edd.), *Origins of the State: The Anthropology of Political Evolution* (Philadelphia, 1978), 2–5. I have modified Cohen's position slightly, limiting myself to traditional definitions of the state. Thus under (b) Cohen includes also state definitions based upon 'information processing' ('Introduction', p. 2). This is a recent development (p. 3), and as such non-traditional. Cohen adds also (c) 'diagnostic traits' which 'lump together certain common traits found among early centralized states' (p. 3), which he rightly rejects because 'it is impossible to obtain a set of traits that applies to more than a few societies' (p. 3).

¹⁷ Henry Claessen and Peter Skalnik, 'The early state: theories and hypotheses', in Claessen and Skalnik (n. 16), 20–1.

¹⁸ E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983), 9–10. Gellner's position is different from that of classical Marxism. According to the latter, stratification, or the emergence of classes,

Gellner himself does not think that his model of the agrarian state applies to the classical Greek world, pointing out that the Greek world lacked horizontal cultural differentiation and a military-clerical domination. Indeed Gellner calls Greek society a 'domination-free society'.¹⁹ Yet, the existence of exploitation (notably slavery) or of privileged groups (notably the citizens) in the *polis* could not be denied. In the same manner one could not deny that in a certain sense the citizens did have a monopoly on the application of physical force. These have led to attempts to modify the model (Gellner's) of the agrarian state in order to make it applicable to the ancient Greek arena. I will return to these attempts later on.

A second set of definitions of the state focuses on the structure of the governmental system itself, looking for institutional hierarchy and centralization, territorial sovereignty, the monopoly of the application of physical coercion.²⁰ Here the best starting point would probably be Max Weber's celebrated definition of the state as that agency within society which possesses the monopoly of legitimate violence.²¹ Gellner follows Weber's definition of the state:

The state constitutes one highly distinctive and important elaboration of the social division of labour. Where there is no division of labour one cannot even begin to speak of the state. But not any or every specialism makes a state: the state is the specialization and concentration of order maintenance. The 'state' is that institution or set of institutions specifically concerned with the enforcement of order (whatever else they may also be concerned with). The state exists where specialized order-enforcing agencies, such as police forces and courts, have separated out from the rest of social life. They *are* the state.²²

This definition is far from being true for the *polis*. Osborne observes that in Athens 'there was no equivalent to the authority of the state, no attempt to monopolize the use of force. Such a monopoly of legitimate use of force has been seen as one defining feature of the state . . .'.²³ The rudimentary character of state-coercive apparatus in the *polis* has been noted by Sir Moses Finley among others. With the partial exceptions of Sparta, the Athenian navy, and tyrannies, the *polis* had no standing army. Only in the case of tyrannies were militias used for internal policing.²⁴ (Tyrannies were indeed attempts to centralize the means of coercion, that is, to create something which resembles a state.) As for police, it seems to be agreed that the ancient *polis* 'never

must precede that of the state. Thus, classical Marxism sees the state as a 'third power' and the prize of the class struggle between the ruling and the ruled. Gellner, on the other hand, identifies the ruling classes with the (agrarian) state and limits struggles for power to the ruling strata only (that is, in Marxist terms he identifies only 'one power': the ruling classes). See M. Mann, 'States ancient and modern', in *States, War and Capitalism* (Oxford, 1988), 48–9.

¹⁹ Gellner (n. 18), 14; E. Gellner, *Plough, Sword and Book: The Structure of Human History* (London, 1991), 22.

²⁰ Cohen (n. 16, 1978), 34.

²¹ M. Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 2 vols, ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich (Berkeley, 1978), 54.

²² Gellner (n. 18), 4.

²³ R. Osborne, *Demos: The Discovery of Classical Attika* (Cambridge, 1985), 7; C. Starr in his *Individual and Community: The Rise of the Polis 800–500 B.C.* (New York, 1986) says 'one cannot avoid the term "state" in a political analysis, but the *polis* differed fundamentally from the abstract entity implied in the word as used from Machiavelli onward' (p. 36). Starr doubts whether the Weberian definition of State is applicable to the *polis* (p. 44). However, he seems to see it as problematic in the case of the early *polis* only and not for the classical one (p. 45).

²⁴ M. I. Finley, *Politics in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1983), 18–20.

²⁵ E. Badian, 'Police', in N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard (edd.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford, 1970²), 851.

developed a proper police system';²⁵ the nearest thing to it was usually a 'small number of publicly owned slaves at the disposal of the different magistrates'.²⁶

The absence of public coercive apparatuses meant that the ability to apply physical threat was evenly distributed among armed or potentially armed members of the community, that is, the citizen-body. Thus, as Lintott has observed, policing was done by self-help and self-defence (that is, with the help of friends, neighbours, family). There was no public prosecution system, and cases were brought to the popular courts either by interested parties or by volunteers. In the same manner, court orders were not carried out by the officials but by the interested parties, sometimes by self-help.²⁷ Thus Virginia Hunter observes that 'private initiative and self-help were fundamental to policing Athens' and that the 'Athenian citizen participated to an unprecedented degree in the social control of their own society'.²⁸

In Athens, for instance, the Eleven, who had the charge of the prison and executions, could be seen as a state law-enforcement apparatus. Yet they, like most Athenian magistrates, were ordinary citizens, chosen by lot for one year. The Eleven did not normally make arrests on their own initiative. Those were carried out by self-help, by interested individuals, or by volunteers.²⁹ In other words the prisoners were brought to the Eleven. Further, imprisonment was not *normally* a form of punishment imposed by the courts in the classical *polis*³⁰ (which is not surprising, since prisons are typical of the bureaucratic machinery of the state); in Athens it was more usual to detain people in the public prison under the supervision of the Eleven until they were tried or while they were awaiting execution (by the Eleven).³¹ The Eleven were also responsible for the execution without trial of *kakourgoi*, that is, robbers, thieves, and other criminals who were caught red-handed and confessed. Again the *kakourgoi* were not arrested by the Eleven but brought to them by ordinary citizens.³² There was also in Athens a corps of Scythian archers, which were 'probably more decorative than useful, especially for keeping order in law-courts and assemblies'.³³

To the extent that this apparatus could be described as a police force, its rudimentary character becomes obvious when one is considering the size of the population in Attica (above 200,000 including non-citizens³⁴). Thus Finley emphasizes that:

Neither police action against individual miscreants nor crisis measures against large scale 'subversion' tells us how a Greek city-state or Rome was normally able to enforce governmental decisions through the whole gamut from foreign policy to taxation and civil law, when they

²⁶ Finley (n. 24), 18.

²⁷ Andrew Lintott, *Violence, Civil Strife and Revolution in the Classical City: 750–330 B.C.* (London and Canberra, 1982), 26; Virginia J. Hunter, *Policing Athens: Social Control in the Attic Lawsuits, 420–320 B.C.* (Princeton, 1994), ch. 5, 140–3.

²⁸ Hunter (n. 27), 149.

²⁹ Hunter (n. 27), 134–9. Lintott (n. 27).

³⁰ Stephen Todd, 'Penalty', in the Glossary-Index of *Nomos: Essays in Athenian Law, Politics and Society*, ed. Paul Cartledge, Paul Millett, and Stephen Todd (Cambridge, 1990), 234.

³¹ Also a man condemned to pay a fine could face imprisonment until he paid it. Douglas M. MacDowell, *The Law in Classical Athens* (London, 1978), 257.

³² M. H. Hansen, *Apagoge, Endeixis and Ephegesis against Kakourgoi, Atimoi and Pheugontes* (Odense, 1976), 9–25. However, *ephegesis* was a process (rarely mentioned by the sources) in which arrest was carried out by the Eleven probably because the prosecutor lacked the power to make the arrest (*ibid.*, 24–7). Hunter (n. 27), 134–9.

³³ Badian (n. 25). Some refer to the *kruptheia* as a 'secret police'. Here selected young Spartans were terrorizing the helots by murdering secretly any supposedly dangerous helot. This was probably a sort of initiation rite. The *kruptheia* was used against the Helots and not against the Spartiates. Badian, *ibid.*; P. Cartledge, *Agisilaos and the Crisis of Sparta* (London and Baltimore, 1987), 30–2. However, Sparta was not a typical *polis* since it was a community of professional warriors.

³⁴ A. W. Gomme and R. J. Hopper, 'Population', *OCD*², 862.

evidently lacked the means with which, in Laski's vigorous language, 'to coerce the opponents of the government, to break their wills, to compel them to submission'.³⁵

As for the differentiation or the separation of state institutions 'from the rest of social life', Finley has noted also that Athens, with all its impressive political institutions and empire, had virtually no bureaucracy at all.³⁶ Athens's political institutions, the Assembly (*ekklesia*), the Council (*boule*), and the Lawcourts (*dikasteria*), were popular, not differentiated from the *demos*.³⁷ The various offices in Athens (most of the magistrates, including the archons but not the generals [*stratēgoi*]) were designated by lot for one year.³⁸ Designation of political offices by lot for short periods is another way of preventing the differentiation of a state. It also bore directly on the 'constitutional' and actual power of those officials. Osborne observes that

Athens did have executive officials who were held responsible for their actions, but these men were little more than ciphers of a civil service. This leads to the elision of anything that could properly be termed an executive *power*, and reduces officers to individuals not distinct from the *demos*.³⁹

In Athens it is possible to distinguish also between 'government' in the sense of political institutions and officials, on the one hand, and 'government' in the sense of people who formulated policy. While the political institutions and offices were staffed by amateurs, thus exhibiting no division of labour, one can speak of a certain kind of division of labour considering the 'professional politicians' in Athens, that is, the demagogues and those who proposed and spoke in the assembly. Yet in the sense that these people could be called a government, this was certainly a non-state government. The Athenian leader did not have any formal position and state coercive apparatus at his disposal. He was simply a charismatic individual, a demagogue, who could persuade the people in the Assembly to accept his policies, but still risked losing his influence (and his life!), and having his policies rejected at any moment.⁴⁰

The statelessness of the Greek *polis* makes social anthropology a proper discipline for its analysis. However, such an analysis should not be carried out without qualifications. The main obstacle seems to be that anthropologists tend to identify the stateless community with the tribe (and Gellner seems to follow this tradition),⁴¹ while it is agreed that the classical *polis* was not tribal and it is today very much doubted whether tribal forms ever existed even in archaic Greece.

However, the traditional view, dominant until recently, was that the classical *polis* had evolved from the archaic *polis* which was tribal. This tradition seemed to be supported by the existence of the Athenian *phylai*, *gene*, and *phratries*, which looked like lineage systems. The idea of the tribal *polis* had received its traditional formulation in the nineteenth century by Grote and Fustel de Coulanges and was canonized in the late nineteenth century through the influence of social anthropology, especially the writings of Lewis Morgan.⁴² Yet it has in the last two decades come under a fierce

³⁵ Finley (n. 24), 24.

³⁶ M. I. Finley, *The Ancient Greeks* (Harmondsworth, 1977), 75.

³⁷ This is the traditional view. However, Hansen argues that the *dikasteria*, the lawcourts, were a differentiated body. See, for instance, M. H. Hansen, 'Demos, *ekklesia*, and *dikasterion*: a reply to Martin Ostwald and Josiah Ober', *Classica et Mediaevalia* 40 (1989), 102.

³⁸ Finley (n. 36), 75.

³⁹ Osborne (n. 23), 9.

⁴⁰ M. I. Finley, *Democracy Ancient and Modern* (London, 1985²), 24.

⁴¹ Gellner (n. 10), 64; Gellner (n. 13, 1981), 24-5; Gellner (n. 19, 1991), 152.

⁴² G. Grote, *History of Greece*, vol. 2 (London, 1862), 265-6. N. D. Fustel de Coulanges (1864), *The Ancient City: A Study on Religion, Laws and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Balti-

attack which was started by the works of two French scholars, Roussel and Bourriot.⁴³ According to these two scholars the tribal model of archaic Greece was mainly a product of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century rationalizing. Heavily influenced by the evolutionist anthropological theories of the day, historians postulated that primitive Greeks must (like Morgan's Iroquois) have had 'tribes', 'phratries', and 'clans'.⁴⁴ Roussel and Bourriot refuted the notion of the archaic Greek tribal community basically by pointing out there is no literary evidence in Homeric and Archaic literature of clan property, clan cults, and joint family, or that the obligation of assistance in blood-feuds (that is, self-help) rested within a joint family; rather they showed that the word *genos* is used in its normal meaning of birth or family origins.⁴⁵ Further, they showed that there is no archaeological evidence which supports the existence of continuous burial plots from the Dark Age to the classical times.⁴⁶

Finley, who enthusiastically adopted Roussel's findings, suggested that the notion of the tribal *polis* 'runs counter to the evidence' and that 'in so far as it is not merely the by-product of a linear theory of human social evolution, it reflects a fundamental confusion between family and clan or tribe'.⁴⁷

Comparing the archaic Greek social structure with contemporary theories of tribal structure gives reasons for further doubts over the alleged tribal nature of archaic Greece. Segmentary theory, which is associated with the works of Evans-Pritchard and Gellner, suggests that when a tribal community is divided in times of conflict, the division should be according to lineage. However, the divisions within the *polis* were usually *ad hoc* associations. Self-help was exerted on an *ad hoc* basis by family, friends, and neighbours in order to respond to particular situations or emergencies.⁴⁸ The Greek political divisions in the case of civil war, the *staseis*, were 'temporarily organized groups of citizens'⁴⁹ and were not identical with the so-called Greek kinship units. The absence of segmentation in the Greek *polis* should be added to the proof that these were not kinship groups (at least as those are envisaged by segmentary theory).⁵⁰

more, 1980), 92–112, esp. 109–12. Lewis Henry Morgan (1877), *Ancient Society* (Cambridge, MA, 1964).

⁴³ D. Roussel, *Tribu et cité: études sur les groupes sociaux dans les cités grecques aux époques archaïque et classique* (Paris, 1976). F. Bourriot, *Recherches sur la nature du genos: étude d'histoire sociale Athénienne—périodes archaïque et classique* (Lille and Paris, 1976).

⁴⁴ Walter Donlan, 'The social groups of dark age Greece', *Classical Philology* 80 (1985), 295–6. Roussel (n. 43), 99–103.

⁴⁵ Richard C. Smith, 'The clans of Athens and the historiography of the archaic period', *Classical Views* n.s. 4 (1985), 53. See also Bourriot (n. 43), 240–300; Roussel (n. 43), 30–1. These features formed the traditional nineteenth-century notion of the tribal community based on the definition of the *genos* originally formulated by George Grote and modified by Lewis Morgan.

⁴⁶ Bourriot (n. 43), 850–99; Smith (n. 45), 54–5.

⁴⁷ Finley (n. 24), 44–5. See also Finley, 'Max Weber and the Greek city-state', in *Ancient History: Evidence and Models* (London, 1985), p. 91; O. Murray, 'Cities of reason', in Oswyn Murray and Simon Price (edd.), *The Greek City: From Homer to Alexander* (Oxford, 1990), 13.

⁴⁸ See note 27 above.

⁴⁹ Marcus Wheeler, 'Aristotle's analysis of the nature of political struggle', in J. Barnes, M. Schofield, and R. Sorabji (edd.) *Articles on Aristotle*, vol. 2: *Ethics and Politics* (London, 1977), 168.

⁵⁰ For a more detailed discussion of the relation between *stasis* and the statelessness of the *polis*, see M. Berent, 'Stasis, or the Greek invention of politics', *History of Political Thought* 19 (1998), 331–62. For a more detailed comparison between the *polis* and the tribe, see *ibid.*, 344–8.

III. SLAVERY AND EXPLOITATION: THE *POLIS* AND THE AGRARIAN STATE

Generally speaking, within Gellner's anthropological view of the political systems of the agrarian world, the *polis*, being both stateless and non-tribal, seems to have no place. Nevertheless, so far as the distribution of the means of coercion is concerned, the *polis* should be classified along with the warlike egalitarian stateless communities of the agrarian world rather than with coercive authoritarian state-societies.

However, the existence of exploitation (notably slavery) or of privileged groups (notably the citizens) and the fact that in a certain sense the citizens did have a monopoly on the application of physical force could indicate that the *polis* was a 'coercive' community.⁵¹ Thus attempts have been made to modify (Gellner's) model of the agrarian state in order to make it suitable for the ancient Greek world. An analysis of these modifications could elaborate further on the differences between the *polis* and the agrarian state.

The most obvious way to modify the model of the agrarian state would be to follow Morris in drawing the main horizontal line (which separates rulers from ruled) between the citizens and the slave population.⁵² Again, seeing the citizens as a 'ruling class' conflicts with Gellner's model of the agrarian state because of the absence of a division of labour: the citizens were not professional soldiers or administrators. Thus a further modification seems to be suggested by Runciman, who says that two necessary conditions are paramount in a *polis*:

First, a *polis* must be juridically autonomous in the sense of holding a monopoly of the means of coercion within a territory to which its laws apply. Second, its form of social organization must be centred on a distinction between citizens, whose monopoly of the means of coercion it is, who share among themselves the incumbency of central government roles, and who subscribe to an ideology of mutual respect, and non-citizens, the product of whose labour is controlled by the citizens *even if the citizens do the same work (when not under arms)*.

Runciman still considers coercion in what he calls 'a citizen- state', as a means of appropriation of surplus production.⁵³ His model assumes that the citizen-body acts as a sort of a centralized body towards the slaves or the non-citizens in general. Is this view justified?

With the conspicuous exception of Sparta, the absence of any organized militias or otherwise professional bodies for internal policing is recognized today. How, then, were the slaves controlled?

Ancient Greece was characterized by chattel slavery; that is, slaves were usually owned by individual masters and not by the public.⁵⁴ Further, and this is important, the control of the slaves was also 'private', that is, by self-help. In an illuminating passage in the *Republic* Socrates equates the slave-owner with the tyrant. It is the business of the slave-owner to control the slaves. But why is it that 'Such slave-

⁵¹ A case against citizens' monopoly of violence could be made by the fact that non-citizens were sometimes employed as hoplites. Nevertheless, this employment created pressures for enfranchisement (see below).

⁵² See Ian Morris, 'The early *Polis* as a city and state', in John Rich and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (edd.) *City and Country in the Ancient World* (London, 1991), 46–9.

⁵³ W. G. Runciman, 'Doomed to extinction: the *polis* as an evolutionary dead end', in Murray and Price (n. 47), 348 (emphasis added).

⁵⁴ Though there were public slaves in Athens, the *demosioi*, who helped the magistrates to perform their public duties and did other public works. M. H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: Structure Principles and Ideology* (Oxford, 1991), 123–4.

owners . . . don't live in fear of their slaves.' The answer is that 'the entire *polis* (*pasa e polis*) would run to help (*boethei*) him'.⁵⁵ That Socrates refers here to self-help rather than any organized or professional help becomes more obvious from what follows:

But imagine now that some god were to take a single man who owned fifty or more slaves and were to transport him and his wife and children, his goods and chattels and his slaves, to some desert place *where there would be no other free man to help him*; wouldn't he be in great fear that he and his wife and children would be done away with by the slaves?⁵⁶

The emphasis here is not on the absence of a state in some desert place, and *not even on the absence of citizens*, but rather on the absence of other free men who constitute the natural group from which help could come. In Xenophon's phrase in a similar passage, all the slave-owners in the community act together as 'unpaid bodyguard'.⁵⁷

The absence of any ready militia to crush slave revolts is complementary to the fact that 'slaves never represented a cohesive group either in their masters' or their own mind so for all their exploited situation they did not engage (for the most part) in social conflict',⁵⁸ and that we do not know of any slave revolts in ancient Greece, again with the conspicuous exception of Sparta. As for the latter, the Helots were not at all chattel slaves but were an identifiable and cohesive population who had been enslaved *en bloc* by conquest by Sparta. They were only *able* to revolt outright because of their ethnic and political solidarity, while 'these conditions did not obtain for chattel slaves of classical Greece'.⁵⁹ And indeed the Greeks had already discovered that slaves were easy to handle when they were disorientated. Thus Aristotle says that:

This is the way in which we suggest that the territory of our *polis* should be distributed, and these are the reasons for our suggestions. The class which farms it should ideally, and if we can choose at will, be slaves—but slaves not drawn from a single stock, or from stocks of a spirited temper. This will at once secure the advantage of a good supply of labour and eliminate any danger of revolutionary designs.⁶⁰

Disorientation and deracination were important tools for the control of the slaves.

⁵⁵ The traditional translations are imbued with statism, so that P. Shorey translates 'because the entire state is ready to defend each citizen' (Loeb edn, London, 1935) and Desmond Lee translates 'because the individual has the support of society as a whole'. What is missing is the notion of self-help which is projected by the verb *boethein*. *Boe* means a shout and also a cry for help. The *boe* was a main way of calling the neighbours for help and people were supposed to run in response to a cry for help. The verb *boethein* became one of the standard Greek words for giving assistance. See Lintott (n. 27), 18–20.

⁵⁶ Plato, *Republic* 578d–e (emphasis added), trans. Desmond Lee (Harmondsworth, 1974).

⁵⁷ Xen. *Hiero* 4.3. And see N. R. E. Fisher, *Slavery in Classical Greece* (London, 1993), 71–2.

⁵⁸ Thomas J. Figueira, 'A typology of social conflict in Greek *poleis*', in A. Molho, K. Raafaub, and J. Emlen (edd.), *City-States in Classical Antiquity and Medieval Italy* (Stuttgart, 1991), 302. See also P. Vidal-Naquet, 'Were Greek slaves a class?', in *The Black Hunter* [1981], trans. Andrew Szegedy-Maszak (Baltimore and London, 1986), 159–67.

⁵⁹ Paul Cartledge, 'Rebels and sambos in classical Greece', in P. Cartledge and F. D. Harvey (edd.), *Crux: Essays in Greek History Presented to G. E. M. de Ste Croix on His 75th Birthday* (Exeter and London, 1985), 46. Garland in his *Slavery in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca, NY and London, 1988), ch. 2, classifies them as 'community slaves'. Since these were actually communities many scholars (e.g. de Ste Croix in his *Class Struggle*) find it helpful to classify them as 'state-serfs' rather than as slaves: Fisher (n. 57), 23–4.

⁶⁰ Aristotle, *Politics* 7.10, 1330a24–9 (trans. Ernest Barker, *The Politics of Aristotle* [Oxford, 1946]); Plato (*Laws* 777) says that 'The frequent and repeated revolts in Messenia, and in states where people possess a lot of slaves who all speak the same language, have shown the evils of the system often enough . . . if the slaves are to submit to their condition without giving trouble, they should not all come from the same country or speak the same tongue, as far as it can be arranged' (trans. Trevor J. Saunders [Harmondsworth, 1970]), and see Garland (n. 59), 177–83.

Another was manumission and a certain incorporation into the Greek society. In their analysis of slavery in Africa, Miers and Kopytoff suggest that while emphasis has usually been laid on 'how slaves are *excluded* from the host society . . . the problem for the host society is really that of *including* the stranger while continuing to treat him as a stranger'.⁶¹ Consequently African slave societies offer social mobility to the slaves from the status of the total stranger towards the incorporation into the kinship group in what Miers and Kopytoff call 'the 'slavery to kinship continuum'.⁶² In classical Greece manumission and a certain mobility existed along with what might be called a 'slavery to citizenship continuum'. One potential source of large-scale manumission in the *polis* were shortages in warriors and rowers for the army and the navy.⁶³ The fact that usually the process of incorporation was arrested at a very early stage and full incorporation of slaves into the citizen body was rare and could have taken more than one generation does not undermine its existence and importance.⁶⁴ It is important to note that Greek slaves were also incorporated culturally into the Greek society. Plato's and the Old Oligarch's complaints that in Athens slaves could not be identified by their physical appearance were perhaps an overstatement of this phenomenon. In other words, the cultural horizontal cleavages which Gellner sees as characteristic of stratified authoritarian agrarian communities were absent in the Greek case.

The absence of coercive apparatuses made the *polis* less equipped for domination through conquest. The price of such domination would have been the creation of a Spartan-type community, that is, turning the community into a military camp.⁶⁵ Consequently, in many cases, though colonization started indeed with a conquest, the new *poleis* preferred either to annihilate the local inhabitants, or expel them, or to sell them as slaves, rather than to enslave them and create a Spartan-type community.⁶⁶ The absence of coercive apparatuses also prevented the increase of the number of slaves beyond a certain point. Thus the relative number of slaves within the total population seems also to conflict with Gellner's model of the agrarian state. While in the latter the rulers form only a tiny fraction of the total population, in the Greek *polis* the slaves ('the ruled' in this case) were at most 35–40 per cent of the total population.⁶⁷

This feature of the *polis*, according to which internal coercion was not organized or professional but rather exerted by self-help, that is, by volunteers, means that the *polis* was not a state, but rather, as Aristotle says, an association or partnership (*koinonia*). This does not mean, of course, that the *polis*' economy was not based also upon the appropriation of surplus production of the slaves (or the 'poor' in general), but that exploitation and slavery could exist in stateless conditions. This point is made clearer when we examine to what extent modes of exploitation associated with the agrarian state existed in the *polis*. Khazanov observes that:

⁶¹ S. Miers and I. Kopytoff, 'African "slavery" as an institution of marginality', in S. Miers and I. Kopytoff (edd.), *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison, WI, 1977), 15–16.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 19–26.

⁶³ Fisher (n. 57), 67–70.

⁶⁴ I. Morris, *Burial and Ancient Society: The Rise of the Polis* (Cambridge, 1987), 174.

⁶⁵ There seem to have been such communities on the island of Crete, in Thessaly, Heraclea on the Black Sea, Syracuse, and a few others. See Fisher (n. 57), 32–3.

⁶⁶ Tracy Rihll, 'War, slavery, and settlement in early Greece', in J. Rich and G. Shipley (edd.), *War and Society in the Greek World* (London, 1993), 92–105.

⁶⁷ Fisher (n. 57), 34–6; P. Cartledge, *The Greeks* (Oxford, 1993), 135.

One characteristic of most, if not all, early states deserves special attention because it may well turn out to be one of their distinctive features. I am referring here to the significant role played by the early state in the direct exploitation of the producers through taxation, compulsory labour and other obligations.⁶⁸

In their book, *Pre-capitalist Modes of Production*, Hindess and Hirst include direct state taxation, appropriation, and compulsory labour in the ancient mode of production.⁶⁹ Among modern historians de Ste Croix applies the same modes of exploitation to the Greek *polis*. In his Marxist analysis, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*, de Ste Croix sees the Greek *polis* as a state, or, in the language of the *Communist Manifesto*, as 'the organized power of one class for oppressing another'.⁷⁰ He distinguishes between what he calls direct and individual exploitation on the one hand (wage-labourers, slaves, serfs, debtors, etc.) and indirect or collective, that is, state coercion, on the other. The latter is defined by de Ste Croix as 'when taxation, military conscription, forced labour or other services are exacted solely or disproportionately from a particular class or classes . . . by a State dominated by a superior class'.⁷¹

Let us examine to what extent these modes of state-exploitation (taxes, forced conscription and forced labour) existed in the *polis*.

As for taxation, de Ste Croix himself admits that 'in the cities before the Hellenistic periods it may often have been quite light'.⁷² In fact the absence of direct taxation of citizens has been a recognized feature of the *polis*.⁷³ Taxation usually characterized tyrannies, yet the latter were indeed attempts to create centralized power, that is, to create a state. Further, not only was direct taxation not imposed on the poor of Athens, it was also the legal duty of the rich to undertake *liturgies*. The liturgy system was a system whereby the rich carried a large financial burden and were recompensed by corresponding honours. It points to the fact that, generally speaking, *the economic burden of the polis fell directly upon the rich rather than the poor citizens* and points further to the Greek *polis* being an association rather than a state. Of course, it could still be claimed that the economic burden fell indirectly on the poor—the rich exploited the poor. Yet this was 'individual exploitation' rather than 'state exploitation'.

If we move to de Ste Croix's second mode of state exploitation, that is, forced conscription of the poor, he himself admits that 'in the Greek cities military service . . . (the hoplite army) was a "liturgy" expected mainly of those I am calling "the propertied classes"'. However, invoking Marx, who had already noted that 'military service hastened to so great an extent the ruin of Roman plebeians', he maintains that

⁶⁸ A. M. Khazanov 'Some theoretical problems of the study of the early state', in Claessen and Skalnik (n. 16), 87. Khazanov does not consider the Greek 'state' to be an early state but 'the next, higher state of development' (p. 77).

⁶⁹ B. Hindess and P. Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production* (London, 1985), 86–7.

⁷⁰ G. E. M. de Ste Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (London, 1981), 287.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 206.

⁷³ M. Austin and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Economic and Social History of Ancient Greece: An Introduction* (London, 1977), 121. By contrast there was no hesitation in taxing non-citizens. Thus metics in Athens had to pay regularly a special tax, the *metoikion*, which was admittedly moderate, but which symbolized their inferior status as compared with citizens (*ibid.*). Although the *metoikion* might have been economically important for the *polis*, the fact that it was moderate and symbolic meant probably that it did not bear heavily upon the metics (who could freely migrate if they felt attacked). Indirect taxes (usually on trade) were frequently resorted to and were one of the main sources of revenue. Those usually did not distinguish between citizens and non-citizens and even between Greeks and non-Greeks (*ibid.*, 122–3).

while conscription bore heavily on the poor it 'presented no really serious burden on the well-to-do, who did not have to work for their living'.⁷⁴

However, as Paul Millett says, while this was true for the Roman plebeians, 'in Athens, if anything, the reverse seems to have been the case, with wealthier citizens bearing the costs of campaigns while the mass of the people enjoyed any benefits'.⁷⁵ De Ste Croix's claim that military service impoverished the poor ignores the centrality of war in the economy of agrarian society in general and in the Greek world and the *polis* in particular. War also promised the participants a direct share of the booty⁷⁶ and through soldiering people could escape poverty, that is, could be fed and paid.⁷⁷ This was especially true in the case of Athens where the empire benefited both the poor and the rich: the former earned their pay for rowing in the fleet, while the latter needed to pay less for the public treasury because of the tribute paid by the subjugated cities.⁷⁸

Further, the history of Athens becoming a democracy shows that, from the class point of view (though perhaps not from the individual point of view), conscription was a privilege, not a duty. It was the emergence of the infantry hoplite army which hastened the downfall of the aristocracy-cum-oligarchy, and the centrality of the Athenian navy in maintaining the empire hastened the development of democracy. From a purely class point of view it was not in the interest of the oligarchy to arm the masses (that is, to 'conscript' them). Aristotle has pointed out their dilemma:

Changes may happen in oligarchies owing to internal reasons and without any attack from outside alike in war and in peace. They happen in war when members of the oligarchy are compelled by distrust of the people to employ an army of mercenaries. If a single man is entrusted with the command of these mercenaries, he frequently becomes a tyrant, as Timophanes did at Corinth; and if the command is vested in a number of persons, they make themselves a governing clique. Fear of such consequences sometimes forces an oligarchy to employ a popular force, and thus to give the masses some share in constitutional rights.⁷⁹

Thus forced conscription in the case of the Greek *polis* was the enemy of class domination, and as a class the masses should have been and were interested in 'conscription'. The latter was not forced upon the disenfranchised but rather was forced by external conditions, like wars, upon the franchised.

It seems, then, that when one examines closely de Ste Croix's argument about class exploitation, this argument is very weak concerning what he calls 'indirect and collective' exploitation by a 'State dominated by a superior class'.

⁷⁴ De Ste Croix (n. 70), 207–8.

⁷⁵ Paul Millett, 'Warfare, economy and democracy in classical Athens', in Rich and Shipley (n. 66), 184; W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, part 5 (Berkeley, 1991), 473–485.

⁷⁶ W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, part 1 (Berkeley, 1971), 82–4; id. (n. 75), 363–401, 438–504.

⁷⁷ Pritchett (n. 75), 458–9. Another matter is the fact that one of the prime targets of war in ancient Greece had been the destruction of crops and other agricultural resources. See L. Foxhall 'Farming and fighting in ancient Greece', in Rich and Shipley (n. 66), 134–6. Thus long invasions did not affect all alike—farmers were hit harder than those without land and some farmers were hit harder than others (pp. 142–3.) See also R. Osborne, *Classical Landscape with Figures: The Ancient Greek City and its Countryside* (London, 1987), 154.

⁷⁸ A. Gouldner, *Enter Plato: Classical Greece and the Origins of Social Theory* (London, 1965), 142–3; M. I. Finley 'The Athenian empire: a balance sheet' [1978], repr. in M. I. Finley, *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, ed. Brent D. Shaw and Richard P. Saller (London, 1981), 58–9.

⁷⁹ Aristotle, *Politics* 5.6, 1306a20–26 [trans. Barker (n. 60)], and see also Plato, *Republic* 551e.

IV. WAR AND ECONOMY

As far as collective action was concerned, the *polis* was not an instrument for the appropriation of surplus production through domination. As a stateless (egalitarian) political community, one would have expected the *polis* to be engaged either in defence or predation against the outside world, rather than coercion. Here Sparta's relative reluctance to go to war after establishing the *polis* as a 'conquest state' has been noticed. This could be explained also by its being rather an untypical *polis*, that is, a coercive rather than predatory community. The limited resources of the *polis* meant that the control of the Helots (that is, a form of coercion) had to come at the expense of the ability to conduct external war.⁸⁰ Also the control of the Helots perhaps contributed to Sparta's having less economic motivation than the typical *polis* to go to war.

The relationship between the economy of the *polis* and war could be seen from Plato's construction of the first city in the *Republic*. As Gellner points out, as long as Plato's city is ascetic, there is no need for the warriors (that is, the Guardians). However, once civilization is preferred, war becomes inevitable:

We are to study not only the origins of society, but also society when it enjoys the luxuries of civilization. . . . We shall have to enlarge our state again. . . . If we are to have enough for pasture and plough, we shall have to cut a slice of our neighbours' territory. And if they too are no longer confining themselves to necessities and have embarked on the pursuit of unlimited material possession, they will want a slice of ours too. . . . it means a considerable addition to our state, the addition of an army, which will go out and defend the property and possession we have just described against all comers.⁸¹

In fact Plato identifies civilization with war and seems to suggest asceticism as a solution to the problem of war.⁸² Yet, could the ascetic community avoid war altogether? Although it does not need to go to war for economic reasons and, being poor, it is not a temptation of prey for other communities, it still would need to escape subjugation, enslavement, annihilation, or expulsion.⁸³ Thus it seems that a stateless community would attain its predatory character also because of the need to defend its own possessions (as in the case of nomadic tribes where raiding for cattle and the defence against raiding by others reinforce each other).⁸⁴ In fact, the predatory character of the *polis* was complementary to its decentralized nature. As Rihll points out, the fact that in the early *polis* arms were hanging at every citizen's house 'provided a fertile physical, social and psychological environment for military entrepreneurs: armed insurrectionists, mercenaries, pirates and adventurers'.⁸⁵

In any case, the Greeks rejected the Platonic 'City of the Pigs' and wanted instead the 'good life', that is, civilized life. For Plato this meant an abandonment of the 'First City' by the addition of a multitude of occupations needed for the creation of luxurious life and the introduction of a class of professional warriors, the *phylakes*. Here

⁸⁰ A. Andrewes, 'Spartan imperialism?', in P. Garnsey and C. R. Whittaker (edd.), *Imperialism in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1978), 91–102. Cartledge (n. 33), 15.

⁸¹ Plato, *Republic* 372e–374a (emphasis added) [trans. Lee (n. 56)]. See also discussion in Gellner (n. 13, 1981), 16–18.

⁸² There is a similar argument in the *Phaedo* 66c: wars are fought for wealth, which we need only for our slavish attention to the body. See W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 4 (Cambridge, 1975), 338 n.1 and 448.

⁸³ It could be that Plato relies here on what he sees as the rules of war among Greeks (as distinguished from wars between Greeks and non-Greeks) which prohibited these actions. See *Republic* 469c–471c.

⁸⁴ Gellner (n. 13, 1981), 16–21.

⁸⁵ Rihll (n. 66), 87.

Plato departs from the traditional model of the stateless Greek *polis* and seems to approach the model of the agrarian state, which consists of separated professional warrior/administrator classes ruling over a class of producers. As it has an economic class, the Platonic ideal city is not dependent upon war, and the function of the warriors (besides ruling) is to defend the wealth of the *polis* from outside aggression.

The case of the real *polis* was different. Slavery was one way to achieve the 'good life', but it could not be enough, probably because there were not enough slaves. We must remember that in agrarian states, the small civilized minority who appropriated the surplus production of the vast majority, consisted of a tiny fraction of the entire population, while in Athens the slaves were at most 35–40 per cent of the total population. The absence of coercive apparatuses made the increase in the number of slaves beyond a certain point impossible and dangerous. Thus war became a means for the good life.

The centrality of war and booty in the economy of the *polis* has long been recognized. In the *Phaedo* Plato says that 'all wars are undertaken for the acquisition of wealth',⁸⁶ and Aristotle points out five modes of acquisition, 'the pastoral, the farming, the freebooting, the fishing, and the life of the chase', and he sees war as a 'natural mode of acquisition'.⁸⁷ Indeed 'warfare in the ancient Greek world was a mode of production'.⁸⁸

One important thing that could have been acquired by war was territory. In mountainous Greece, where arable land was scarce, boundaries, as Plato indeed tells us, were a source of disputes for the emerging *poleis*.⁸⁹ However, generally speaking, 'it is only rarely that wars between Greeks were aimed at the acquisition of territory'.⁹⁰ Wars against non-Greeks were a different case and in many cases colonization started with a conquest followed by the annihilation, expulsion or sale (as slaves) of the local population.⁹¹ Yet, generally speaking, the absence of a standing army imposed a severe limitation upon the ability of the *polis* to increase its territory or to control other peoples. Also war was the major slave-supplying instrument in the Greek world.⁹² Bolkestein observes that the Greek 'state' interfered very little with economic life, yet:

There is one trade, the most extensive which Greek society ever knew, which was naturally carried on by the State, viz. the waging of war. At first sight we may wonder that war is ranged among the enterprises deserving a place in a description of economic life, but we are entitled so to do by the circumstance that their principal object often was the booty, to be distributed among the lucky participants. War was a means of securing a fortune or simply a livelihood instead of or next to the other means of subsistence, consisting of labour.⁹³

and Finley comments on this as follows:

Why did the Greek *poleis* war with each other incessantly? No simple answer is available. In the present context, the suggestion may suffice that Greek *poleis* lacked the resources in men, land and materials with which to provide for their citizens the 'good life' that was the avowed purpose

⁸⁶ Plato, *Phaedo* 66c.

⁸⁷ *Politics* 1.8, 1256b1, 1256b23.

⁸⁸ Rihll (n. 66), 105. Millett (n. 75), 183–4 says 'As far as the Greek themselves were concerned warfare was conceived as potentially profitable.'

⁸⁹ Hugh Bowden, 'Hoplites and Homer: warfare, hero cult, and ideology of the *polis*', in Rich and Shipley (n. 66), 48.

⁹⁰ Austin and Vidal-Naquet (n. 73), p. 13.

⁹¹ Pritchett (n. 75), 445–53; Rihll (n. 66), 92–100.

⁹² Pritchett (n. 76, 1971), 82; Rihll (n. 66), 79.

⁹³ H. Bolkestein, *Economic Life in Greece's Golden Age* (Leiden, 1958), 140–1. And see also Pritchett (n. 76, 1971), 53–84.

of the state. They could overcome chronic scarcities only at the expense either of a sector of their own citizenry or of other states.⁹⁴

V. WAR AND SOCIAL COHESION

As Gellner points out, war has another important function in stateless communities, which is that of securing social cohesion. Marshall Sahlins says that 'The tribe overcomes its local cleavages only so much as it must to prevail militarily, and in the absence of sustained opposition the normal separatist tendencies are periodically free to reassert themselves.'⁹⁵

It is important not to confuse the fact that communities can secure social cohesion through war with the fact that the economic objects of war could enhance social cohesion. The establishment of the Athenian empire probably tended to ease social tensions because it benefited both the poor and the rich: the former earned their pay for rowing in the fleet, while the latter needed to pay less for the public treasury because of the tribute paid by the subjugated cities.⁹⁶ Here war *indirectly* enhances social cohesion. However, war *directly* enhances social cohesion through the threat of the other and the actual participation in fighting.

The idea that political communities attain cohesion through war has become rather traditional. According to Gallie, 'the state and war come into existence in a kind of symbiosis'. The historical dependence of the state upon war means that 'in becoming political, human beings identify themselves not simply *with* a particular political unit but potentially *against* other competing units: political cohesion turns the subject into a soldier, and the foreigner into a foe'.⁹⁷ However while war could enhance social cohesion in any society, its role in stateless societies, according to Gellner, is a dominant one:

Segmentary theory explains the cohesion and co-operation of groups, notwithstanding the fact that they are devoid of strong leadership or effective central institutions; it explains this cohesion by invoking the threat of other, similar and rival groups. The unifying effect of external threat is something which of course operates in all societies; what distinguishes 'segmentary' ones is not just that it is present, but that it is proportionately far stronger and becomes, if not the only principle in operation, at least the main and dominant one—or very nearly the only one.⁹⁸

Indeed one reason for the dominant role of war in securing social cohesion in stateless communities when compared to state communities is, of course, that the latter have also state apparatuses to secure social cohesion.⁹⁹ Christian Meier argues that the consolidation of the Greek city out of the divisions of civil war presupposes the existence of a common enemy. Meier observes that the 'power of the *polis* had to be rooted in strong civic solidarity. *For there was no strong state power of the kind that exists in modern times . . .*' and that 'such friendship was possible only if there was

⁹⁴ M. I. Finley, 'Politics', in M. I. Finley (ed.), *The Legacy of Greece: A New Appraisal* (Oxford, 1981), 33. However, it must be emphasized that war which was directed or caused by competition for markets or for trading advantage or motivated by other forms of mercantile or capitalistic imperialism was simply not possible and such explanations should be dismissed as 'anachronisms'. Manicas (n. 7), 679–80. See also M. I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (London, 1985²), ch. 6, esp. 158–9.

⁹⁵ M. Sahlins, *Tribesmen* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1968), 45.

⁹⁶ Gouldner (n. 78), 142–3; Finley (n. 78), 58–9.

⁹⁷ W. B. Gallie, *Understanding War* (London, 1991), 31.

⁹⁸ Gellner (n. 13, 1981), 39. ⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 93–4.

sufficient solidarity to keep the existing factions in check, and, however strange it may seem to us, this ultimately presupposed common hostility to the world outside'.¹⁰⁰

However, war is also more effective in securing social cohesion in stateless societies because in those societies there are no standing armies, that is, there is no gap between the army and the community. Being communities of (non-professional) warriors, in those societies it is not only the threat of war but also and mainly the actual participation of the community in war that creates 'effective group cohesion, engendered by self-reliance in rude and lawless circumstances'.¹⁰¹ Walter Burkert in his book on the anthropology of ancient Greek sacrificial ritual says that 'war is ritual, a self-portrayal and self-affirmation of male society. Male society finds stability in confronting death, in defying it through a display of readiness to die, and in the ecstasy of survival'.¹⁰²

The connection between war and cohesion had been noted by the Greeks. Here, perhaps, lies the explanation for the different emphasis concerning the role of war in Plato's 'Ideal City' in the *Republic*, on the one hand, and his city in the *Laws*, on the other. 'In the *Republic* war seems to be the activity of a limited and specialized soldiery', while in the *Laws* 'the fear of war and the preparation for it permeate the entire community'.¹⁰³ The *Republic* is to some extent a utopia, a no-place; the city of the *Laws* is more, though not completely, 'realistic'. The warlike character of the latter when compared to the former is due to the fact that in the former social cohesion is supposed to be maintained by the state structure of the community, while in the latter the state structure disappears and Plato returns to the traditional Greek form of the *polis* as a stateless egalitarian community of (non-professional) warriors which attains its social cohesion through war. Indeed a similar point is made by Alcibiades at the meeting of the Athenian Assembly where the fatal decision for the launching of the Sicilian expedition had been voted. Alcibiades, who advocated the launching, says:

Remember, too, that the city, like everything else, will wear out of its own accord if it remains at rest, and its skill in everything will grow out of date; but in conflict it will constantly be gaining new experience and growing more used to defend itself not by speeches, but in action. In general, my view is that a city which is active by nature will soon ruin itself if it changes its nature and becomes idle . . .¹⁰⁴

Aristotle, who objects to the idea that the *polis* should make war its prime aim, has a note of warning to warlike *poleis*, which, indirectly, points to the connection between war and social cohesion:

Most of the *poleis* which make war their aim are safe only while they are fighting. They collapse as soon as they have established an empire, and lose the edge of their temper, like an unused sword, in time of peace. The legislator is to blame for having provided no training for the proper use of leisure.¹⁰⁵

Since Aristotle admits that for the Greek *poleis* of his day 'the legislators . . . have fallen short of this ideal',¹⁰⁶ his statement is confirmation that there is a contradiction between the real *polis* and peace.

¹⁰⁰ Christian Meier, *The Greek Discovery of Politics*, trans David McLintock (Cambridge, MA, 1990), 117. See also Gouldner (n. 78), 143–4; Philip Brook Manville, *The Origins of Citizenship in Ancient Athens* (Princeton, NJ, 1990), 87.

¹⁰¹ Gellner (n. 13, 1981), 27.

¹⁰² Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, trans. Peter Bing (Berkeley, 1983), 47.

¹⁰³ Gouldner (n. 78), 237.

¹⁰⁴ Thuc. 6.18. See also Havelock (n. 6), 75.

¹⁰⁵ *Politics* 7.14, 1334a5–10.

¹⁰⁶ *Politics* 7.14, 1333b5.

The equation which identifies social cohesion or civic spirit with war, and peace with the destruction of the political community, has received a very famous formulation from the fourteenth-century Arab sociologist Ibn Khaldun. His importance to the present study lies in the fact that his observations are also directed to stateless communities, although, unlike the Greek *polis*, those communities were tribal. According to Ibn Khaldun, the first stage of human civilization, or human social organization, is desert tribal community based on kinship. This community is characterized by him as 'primitive culture' which attains its unity, its civic spirit, through solidarity, which is created through kinship on the one hand, and through being constantly engaged in war with other groups on the other. This 'primitive culture' aims at becoming a 'civilized culture' and a peaceful one. It then moves into a stage where it establishes cities, or takes over existing ones, and the once tribal men begin to enjoy the fruits of peace and civilized life. As a result they lose their cohesion and their political communities disintegrate, conquered by new tribes from a 'primitive culture'.¹⁰⁷ The equation that Ibn Khaldun draws identifies war with political cohesion and civic spirit, on the one hand, and peace, civilization, and cities with political disintegration, on the other. While the Greeks would have probably agreed that war was essential to civic spirit, they would have objected to the idea that civilized life and cities contradicted it. Indeed, the Greek *polis* seems to defy Ibn Khaldun in this respect, for it generated civic spirit within cities. Yet, following Ibn Khaldun's lead, the question which we must now address is: how did the Greek *polis* manage to generate this spirit? How could civic spirit arise within an egalitarian, non-kin, relatively individualistic, civilized community?¹⁰⁸

VI. HOPLITE FIGHTING AND SOCIAL COHESION

War plays an important role in fostering the cohesion of acephalous tribal communities mainly because these are also communities of (non-professional) warriors. However, though in the classical *polis* the notion of the *polis* as an egalitarian community of warriors, a community of *homoioi*, existed and had a valuable symbolic power, only a third or so of the citizens of the *polis*, with the exception of Sparta, were warriors in the strict sense, that is, hoplites. In other words, the classical *polis* was not a community of warriors.

Yet, was this true also for the early *polis*? Max Weber had already said that 'The ancient *polis* . . . from the time of the creation of the disciplined hoplite formations, was a *guild of warriors*.' Weber used the phrases 'a guild of warriors', 'a military camp', and 'militaristic association' mainly to describe the early *polis* 'after the downfall of the patriciate'. He added that 'this institution, however, decayed very early in most cities and then became altogether superfluous as paid mercenaries or, in the maritime cities, naval service gained in importance'.¹⁰⁹ Here I intend to follow Weber's lead and to argue that the nature of the stateless community as a community of warriors was more visible in the early *polis*.

An important difference between the stateless *polis* and stateless tribal communities

¹⁰⁷ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, abridged and ed. N. J. Dawood (London, 1967), 97–100; Gellner (n. 13, 1981), 16–28.

¹⁰⁸ See Gellner (n. 13, 1981), 17–19; H. R. Trevor-Roper, *Historical Essays* (London, 1957), 29.

¹⁰⁹ Weber (n. 21), 1359–63. See also J. M. Bryant, 'Military technology and socio-cultural change in the ancient Greek city', *Sociological Review* 38 (1990), 484–6. Bryant notes that Marx had fully anticipated Weber on this connection between militarism and social organization.

is the non-tribal nature of the latter. As Gellner observes the mechanism for attaining social cohesion through war in a tribal community lies in its kinship structure. The relative order in segmentary societies is attributed to balanced opposition between warring factions:

... the order which *was* there to be found in an anarchic, ungoverned social environment was produced by balanced opposition, by a balance of power. ... in this kind of society units of different size are, as it were, nested in each other; the tribe divides into clans, clans into sub-clans and so on. ... No particular level of size is in fact very much more important than any other. At each and every level, there is opposition between groups of that particular scale, and the rivalry and opposition of two sub-clans, which keeps each of them internally cohesive, does not preclude co-operation as fellow-units of the full clan, and so forth. Balanced opposition can only be sometimes like an adequate explanation of the maintenance of order, if units do indeed exist at every level of size at which conflict is liable to arise.¹¹⁰

Yet, the *polis* was not a tribal or segmentary community. Indeed we are faced here with a problem raised by Ibn Khaldun. How could civic spirit arise within a non-kin, relatively individualistic, civilized community? It is here that social anthropology proves to be inadequate for the analysis of the Greek *polis* and the mechanism for attaining social cohesion through war has to be looked for elsewhere. In what follows I will argue that this mechanism lies in the mass tactics employed by the *polis* in which there were three important ingredients: the hoplite citizen army, the pitched battle, and the phalanx formation. In other words I will argue that as the tribe is isomorphic with its kinship structure, the early *polis* was isomorphic with the phalanx. Further, as we shall see, it is possible to see Greek society as segmentary when the various *poleis*, through the observation of the rules of the pitched battle, constitute a system of balanced opposition.

I would like to start with the less problematic issue, that is, the relation between hoplite fighting and social cohesion. The relation between the phalanx formation and comradeship has long been recognized. Hanson points to two factors, unique to classical Greek battle, that tended to create exceptional ties among soldiers. First:

... the armament and tactics of the ancient phalanx were ideally suited to ideas of loyalty and friendship; fighting together in column, rather than spread along a line, drew all in close physical proximity with each other: a man's moment of bravery or lapse into cowardice was manifest to all who fought in rows and files to his rear, front and side. ... Similarly ... the nature of hoplite equipment—especially the shield—dictated that each became dependent on the man to his right for the protection of his own right side.¹¹¹

However, the second and 'more important' consideration is

... the peculiar nature of the ties among the men of the phalanx: unlike most modern armies, the bonds between hoplites on the line did not originate within military service or in weeks of shared drill in boot camp; they were natural extensions of already long-standing peacetime friendships and kinships. So far as we know, hoplites in nearly all city-states were deployed in their phalanxes by tribe, and most likely were of course well acquainted with those of their own town or deme. Men who knew each other through political, religious, and ceremonial associations and who may have been related strengthened these existing bonds as they fought side by side in the phalanx.¹¹²

Hanson stresses here what has been traditionally stressed: the bonds among the men of the phalanx were natural extensions of peacetime relations between citizens,

¹¹⁰ Gellner (n. 13, 1981), 189–90.

¹¹¹ V. D. Hanson, *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (London, 1989), 119.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 121.

and the unique comradeship fostered by the mixture of personal relations and war turned the phalanx into a mighty weapon.¹¹³ However, what seems to be relatively neglected is the role of fighting in phalanx formation in fostering the social cohesion of the community.¹¹⁴ As Andreski says, the cohesion of the armed forces tends to produce the cohesion of the body politic.¹¹⁵ More so in our case: since the deployments in the phalanx were according to *phylai* (that is, 'tribes'), the phalanx reflected the body politic and political associations within the community. Consequently, solidarity on the battlefield reinforced the stability of the community.

Indeed Connor, who approaches the Greek war from an anthropological angle, emphasizes the importance of the hoplite ritual in fostering the unity of the city. He speaks of hoplite warfare as a very powerful symbolic system pointing at its 'ritual elements', which make the Greek war 'appear like one great sacrificial action'.¹¹⁶ Yet what Connor seems to omit is the role of this special way of fighting within phalanx formation as a means for community-building. Here I believe that Hanson rightly complains that the anthropological approach towards the Greek battle tends to universalize it and ignore what is particularly Greek about it.¹¹⁷ Ritualized warfare tends to foster the unity of any (primitive) community. Yet, as the kinship structure provides the framework within which war is conducted and cohesion is attained in tribal communities, the phalanx, being isomorphic with the early *polis*, provided the framework within which war was conducted and the cohesion of the Greek *polis* was attained.

Here, perhaps, lies a major key to the understanding of Cleisthenes' reforms. These reforms included the reorganization of the so called 'Athenian tribes' and the creation of ten tribes instead of the old four. Attica was divided into three regions: the city, the inland region, and the coast. Each region was divided into ten *trittyes*, and a new tribe was composed of a *trittys* from each region. The purpose of these reforms was 'to have "mixed up" the people, and have encouraged the unification of the state by combining in one tribe men from different parts of Attica'.¹¹⁸ As Christian Meier observes, 'one wonders how it was possible, in the absence of any police authority and without provoking open disturbances, to destroy traditional religious links and affiliations—supposing that these were still strong—simply by an administrative reorganization'.¹¹⁹ While it might be arguable whether Cleisthenes did indeed destroy traditional religious links and affiliations,¹²⁰ there is another crucial question here, that

¹¹³ Ibid., 25–6, 30–1. See also F. E. Adcock, *The Greek and Macedonian Art of War* (Berkeley, 1957), 4.

¹¹⁴ Yet not entirely neglected. Thus Cartledge points at the 'levelling effect' of fighting in phalanxes. See Cartledge (n. 33), 44.

¹¹⁵ Andreski (n. 12), 139.

¹¹⁶ Connor (n. 2), 21–4.

¹¹⁷ Hanson, 'The ideology of hoplite battle, ancient and modern', in V. D. Hanson (ed.) *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience* (London, 1991), 8–9.

¹¹⁸ P. J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford, 1981), 253–4.

¹¹⁹ Meier (n. 100), 61.

¹²⁰ Thus Ehrenberg, using traditional 'statist' language says that 'regional connections of kinsfolk and clans were decisively destroyed' by Cleisthenes' reforms (emphasis added) (*The Greek State* [London, 1969²], 29). However, others thought they had to account for this peaceful transition. A. Andrewes claims that 'the general impression remains that clans and phratries had already ceased to play a part, as such, in Athenian politics, well before the reform of Cleisthenes in 507' (*The Greeks* [London, 1967], 82). Another possibility is that the new cults supplemented rather than replaced the old one, as the *genos* and *phratry* seemed to have been little affected by the reforms. See E. Kearns, 'Religious structures after Cleisthenes', in Cartledge and Harvey (n. 59), 204–7.

is, how it was possible to forge new ties between people from different regions (in some cases there was no territorial continuity between the *trittyes* that formed a tribe) simply by an administrative reorganization. The answer could be that if deployments in the phalanx were according to tribes, then redeployment in the phalanx would have been one way to foster these new ties.¹²¹

VII. THE *POLIS* AS A COMMUNITY OF WARRIORS

We must now approach the more problematic issue. The connection between fighting in phalanx formations, on the one hand, and the cohesion of the early *polis*, on the other, could be established only if the early *polis* had indeed emerged as a community of hoplites. Here it seems that Weber's notion of the early *polis* as a community of hoplite warriors has been rejected by most contemporary historians. According to the dominant view today the hoplites were not identified with the (early) *polis* but rather with a class within the *polis*. This view assumes the pre-existence of a (political) community from which the warriors were drawn.¹²² Yet others have followed Weber's lead and maintained that the *polis* had emerged as and was identified with the hoplite warrior group. As Vernant noted in his introduction to *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne*, many of the contributors to that volume insisted that 'the army was the popular assembly under arms, or the city on campaign', on the one hand and that 'the city was a community of warriors', on the other.¹²³ In her review of this volume Humphreys argues that:

Contributors to this volume have successfully shown that the idea of the Greek *polis* as a community of citizen-soldiers who were all alike—*homoioi*—existed as one model (among others) of the social structure of the city which influenced Greek thought, not least that of Plato. But there is no city in which reality corresponded perfectly to this model.¹²⁴

Yet the case for the archaic *polis*, I will argue, was different. Here, it is plausible to assume that the archaic *polis* was a group of egalitarian hoplite-warriors very close to this ideal type.¹²⁵

The main objection to the identification of the *polis* with its hoplites is usually that 'the entire concept of a hoplite army must always be based on a qualification of wealth: the wealth necessary for the individual soldier to pay for his own panoply'.¹²⁶ Thus Snodgrass concludes that the hoplites were recruited from the farmers, not from

¹²¹ Actually Cleisthenes created a new army rather than rearranged an old one. H. van Effenterre has pointed out that while the political aspect of the Cleisthenes reforms has been thoroughly emphasized the military aspect has been neglected ('Clisthène et les mesures de mobilisation', *REG* 89 [1976], 1–3). Effenterre points to the need to create a new army after the reign of the Peisistratids who disarmed the population and relied upon mercenaries (pp. 3–4). He concludes that Cleisthenes' reform was simultaneously a political measure and a military measure (p. 16), and a successful one considering the victories both against Greek neighbours and in the Persian wars. However, he still remains within the mainstream which sees the army as a reflection of the reform and not also as an instrument for bringing it about. Siewert, on the other hand, seems to belittle the political motives of the reform and see the latter as a largely military reorganization (*Die Trityyen Attikas und die Heeresreform des Kleisthenes* [Munich, 1982]). However, in stateless communities with a high military participation ratio, that is, where almost everybody carries arms in wartime, it is impossible to separate the military from the political.

¹²² Bowden (n. 89), 47.

¹²³ J.-P. Vernant (ed.), *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne* (Paris and La Haye, 1968), 18. For the same position, see M. Detienne, 'La phalange: problèmes et controverses', *ibid.*, 140–2.

¹²⁴ S. C. Humphreys, *JHS* 91 (1971), 192.

¹²⁵ See, for instance, J.-P. Vernant (n. 123), 19–20.

¹²⁶ A. Snodgrass, 'The hoplite reform and history', *JHS* 85 (1965), 114.

the smallholders. Cartledge points out that 'the other side of the hoplite coin is the exclusion, militarily, of the poor peasantry and "wearers of skins" in the country, of the shopkeepers, petty traders, handicraftsmen, and casual labourers in the town'¹²⁷ (to these one could add also slaves, serfs, debtors, foreigners, etc.). This exclusion of the non-hoplites seems to support the traditional view which saw the hoplites as a class within the *polis*. However, it seems that to a certain extent the traditional view is imbued with statism, or, to be more precise, with the idea of a community which is defined by territory. Thus it does not distinguish between the emergence of the hoplites as a rich class *within a certain territory*, on the one hand, and the emergence of rich class of citizens *within the polis*, on the other, because it assumes that the *polis* was a territorial entity, some its members being hoplites. However, the *polis* was an association (*koinonia*), rather than a political system defined by territory. The non-territorial definition of the *polis* has been noted by Finley and others (and indeed is considered as a characteristic of stateless communities in general). Thus Finley says that 'the *polis* was not a place, though it occupied a defined territory; it was people acting in concert . . .'¹²⁸ This means that membership in the *polis* was not established by the principle of territoriality, but as a membership of the association (which in some cases, like colonization, preceded chronologically the actual settlement). As Hansen has pointed out, one of the corollaries of the non-territorial definition of the *polis* was that 'a high proportion of the population of a *polis* were liable not to be citizens . . .'¹²⁹ Thus the hoplites could be identified with the *polis* on the one hand, and they could still form the rich layer of the society within a certain territory, on the other. In classical times, when citizenship was mainly a political and a legal category, the non-citizen male population consisted mainly of slaves and metics. In the early *polis*, when the political community and the concept of citizenship were only beginning to be formed, the *polis* was defined probably more according to social position and wealth, and consequently excluded the poor. The same is true in oligarchies of the classical period. Thus it is possible to argue that in archaic times the hoplites were identified with the *polis*, while the rest of the population were not members of the political community in the strict sense or were not full members of the political community.

Having said all this, it is important to note that while membership in the *polis* was not defined according to the principle of territoriality, only citizens were allowed to own land. Thus one should distinguish between the exclusion of smallholders from the hoplite class on the one hand, and that of the other lower classes on the other. If citizens alone could own land and if, as Snodgrass suggests, smallholders could not have afforded the panoply, then the identification of the hoplites with the citizen body must be rejected. Yet Hugh Bowden, who follows Vernant in maintaining that the hoplites were 'isomorphic with the *polis*',¹³⁰ tries to overcome this objection by suggesting that even the poor farmers were also hoplites and that initially the hoplite

¹²⁷ P. Cartledge, 'Hoplites and heroes: Sparta's contribution to the technique of ancient warfare', *JHS* 97 (1977), 23.

¹²⁸ Finley (n. 36), 56; cf. his *Authority and Legitimacy in the Classical City State* (Copenhagen, 1982), 3-4; M. H. Hansen, 'The *polis* as an urban centre. The literary and epigraphical evidence', *CPC Papers* 4 (Copenhagen, 1997), 9-86. For the non-territorial definition of stateless tribal communities, see M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Introduction to *African Political Systems*, ed. M. Fortes and E. E. Evans Pritchard (Oxford, 1940), 10-11; A. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World* (Cambridge, 1984), 138, 149-51. Gellner (n. 13, 1981), 34.

¹²⁹ M. H. Hansen (n. 54), 58-9 and 61-4.

¹³⁰ Bowden (n. 89), 48.

armour was not as expensive as it has been traditionally assumed. John Salmon suggests that 'uniformity of weapons and of methods of warfare may therefore not yet have been thought vital for the (early) phalanx: what mattered was its cohesion and the unflinching maintenance by its members of their ground', and that it will be hardly surprising if in the earliest phalanxes some members fought without the full panoply.¹³¹ As we are going to see, this position seems to be supported also by evidence which suggests that phalanx fighting preceded the appearance of mature hoplites in the middle of seventh century (see below).

One corollary of the suggested model of the archaic *polis* concerns the relative size of the non-hoplite segment of archaic society. Traditionally it has been assumed that in the so-called 'hoplite regime', the hoplite 'rulers' formed only a small minority when compared with non-hoplite 'ruled'. While this view is in accordance with the model of the agrarian state, it is untenable in the stateless conditions of archaic Greece. The *polis* could have been a community of hoplites and thus excluded the non-hoplite lower classes as long as the number of the latter was relatively small. As they were indigenous, and thus maybe less controllable than the slaves, the non-hoplites probably constituted an even smaller portion of the total population in the hoplite *polis* than did the slaves in the classical *polis*.¹³²

Traditionally it was assumed that the hoplite class were distinguished not only from the poorer members of the society, but also from the so called 'aristocrats' who preceded them as a dominant class. The relation between the hoplites and the former 'aristocratic' regime could throw more light on the nature of the emerging *polis* as an association of warriors.

The notion of the aristocratic regime seems different from that of the *polis* as a community of warriors in two important ways: first, it had been suggested that it was an aristocratic state, that is, a stratified community in which the aristocrats had formed the ruling class. This means that the aristocratic regime deviated from the model of the stateless egalitarian *polis*. Second, and related to the first, the absence of mass tactics in the aristocratic regime had been traditionally assumed. This image of the aristocratic regime seems problematic from the point of view presented in this paper because it means that the change from the aristocratic regime to the hoplite *polis* was a very significant one and in fact involved the transition from a stratified state-society into a relatively egalitarian and stateless one. Thus it is important to examine the nature of the aristocratic regime and its transition to the hoplite *polis*.

About the issue of stratification there is long-standing division of opinion between those who believe that Greek society of the early Iron Age was in general rather egalitarian, and those who, on the contrary, hold that it was markedly stratified.¹³³ The latter view corresponds, more or less, to the model of the agrarian state, thus seeing the aristocratic community as a state. Gabriel Herman claims that Gellner's model of the agrarian state applies to archaic Greece, while admitting that the appear-

¹³¹ Some without greaves and others without corselets, or using leather helmets instead of bronze, or shields of different shape and materials. J. Salmon, 'Political hoplites?' *JHS* 97 (1977), 90–2. Bowden (n. 89), 48–9.

¹³² Kurt A. Raaflaub, 'Soldiers, citizens and the evolution of the early greek *polis*', in Lynette G. Mytchell and P. J. Rhodes (edd.), *The Development of the Polis in Archaic Greece* (London, 1997), 54. Walter Donlan, 'The relation of power in the pre-state and early-state polities', *ibid.*, 45–6. Lin Foxhall, 'A view from the top: evaluating the Solonian property classes', *ibid.*, 131.

¹³³ A. Snodgrass, 'The rise of the *polis*: the archaeological evidence', in M. H. Hansen (ed.), *The Ancient Greek City-State* (Copenhagen, 1993), 35.

ance of the *polis*, which, according to him, was superimposed upon this archaic order, made this model inapplicable because of the *polis* levelling effect.¹³⁴ Herman's position is based upon the existence of a small inter-*polis* aristocratic layer which 'tried to differentiate themselves from those below them' and were interconnected through guest-friendship and marriage. However, Herman seems to ignore Gellner's prerequisite for a cultural gap between the rulers and the ruled. The Greeks emerged from the Dark Age as the 'nation' of Homer, that is, no class had a monopoly of literacy and culture.¹³⁵ Further, if, as Herman says, the 'prerequisites for entering this (aristocratic) sphere were wealth, power and status', then one should bear in mind that archaic Greece was much poorer than classical Greece. Although the *polis* indeed had a levelling effect, it has also created wealth, honour, and status. In other words, we are more likely to encounter class differentiation based on wealth and status in the classical age than in the archaic age. Herman is right to point out that class conflict in the classical period is a result of the political emancipation of the *demos*,¹³⁶ but is certainly also a result of the existence of more wealth and differentiation in the community.¹³⁷

Indeed, Snodgrass has pointed out that the archaeological evidence indicates that Greek society before the eighth century could not have reached a high level of social differentiation mainly because the individual communities were isolated and small: 'an isolated community of less than 500 people cannot generate a sharply-differentiated élite'.¹³⁸ This means that the so-called 'aristocratic community' was stateless as well as the archaic and the classical *poleis*. Though we should not rely too much upon his knowledge of the eighth and seventh centuries, Aristotle also emphasizes the small number of the population in general and of what was to become the infantry in particular, and sees the latter as a main reason why the 'middle class' tolerated 'aristocratic' domination:

It is not surprising that the old constitutions should have been oligarchical and, earlier still, monarchical. With their population still small, states had no large middle class; and the body of the people, still few in number, and insignificant in organization, were more ready to tolerate government from above.¹³⁹

As I have already pointed out, in stratified societies the size of the ruling classes is usually a tiny fraction of the size of the ruled, while what Aristotle portrays here are groups (the aristocrats and the middle class) which seem to be, if not of the same size, at least of a similar magnitude.

The conclusion that could be reached here is that the aristocratic community was stateless and in principle the aristocrats dominated the middle class in the same manner as the 'hoplite regime' which followed dominated the non-propertied classes, and in the same manner as the classical democratic *polis* which followed the 'hoplite regime' dominated the slaves and the metics. This was a domination by exclusion from political and economic rights, backed by the ideology of the existing order and self-help. The absence of stratification points to a structural continuity between the late Dark Age communities and the archaic and classical *poleis*. Consequently it might be arguable whether the Dark Age was 'aristocratic' at all.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ G. Herman, *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge, 1987), 162–5.

¹³⁵ A. Snodgrass, *Archaic Greece: The Age of Experiment* (London, 1980), 160–1; Snodgrass (n. 133), 32–3.

¹³⁶ Herman (n. 134), 164.

¹³⁷ Starr (n. 23), 43–5.

¹³⁸ Snodgrass (n. 133), 39.

¹³⁹ Aristotle, *Politics* 4.10, 1297b25–30 (trans. Barker [n. 60]).

¹⁴⁰ Bowden (n. 89), 61.

Traditionally it has also been assumed that the break between the so called 'aristocratic community' and the hoplite *polis* was accompanied also by a change of war tactics. It has been suggested that the pre-hoplite *polis* was ruled by aristocrats, that pre-hoplite warfare was 'loosely (if at all) organised' and 'conducted pre-eminently by individual champions, opulent aristocrats'.¹⁴¹ This is held to have changed somewhere between 700 and 650 B.C. with the appearance of the phalanx. The appearance of the new hoplite fighting was considered as an 'hoplite reform' or 'hoplite revolution' and was marked by a transfer of power from the aristocracy to the new emerging hoplite class. Consequently there has been an ongoing debate concerning the emergence of hoplite fighting: 'gradual change' and 'sudden change' theories have been offered to explain the appearance of the hoplite and collective fighting in phalanx formation.¹⁴² Snodgrass, who offers a 'gradual change theory', suggests that since the hoplite armour was expensive, only rich individuals could have afforded it. Consequently the change from the individualistic 'aristocratic' fighting to fighting in phalanx was gradual: rich individuals, heroes of the preceding individualistic fighting, first acquired hoplite weapons as improvement on their old weapons.¹⁴³ Snodgrass treats the question of the adoption of the various individual items which made up the hoplite panoply, on the one hand, and that of the introduction of the new phalanx form of tactics, on the other, as separate issues.¹⁴⁴ This approach would not incline one to see the phalanx as isomorphic with the *polis* because it considers the phalanx as accidental to the *polis*. The adoption of mass fighting seems to have been dictated, according to this view, by the discovery of the military effectiveness of the phalanx and by the fact that the hoplite armour *happened* to be suitable for phalanx fighting.

An important criticism of the 'gradual change theory' points out that 'as an invention for use in pre-hoplite warfare the hoplite shield would not merely have been barely (if at all) superior to its single handled predecessors but in certain circumstances positively and dangerously inferior'.¹⁴⁵ The conclusion is that the hoplite shield and perhaps other parts of the panoply were developed from the beginning for fighting in phalanxes. Thus Cartledge subscribes to a 'sudden change theory' which suggests that the change from individualistic 'aristocratic' fighting into fighting in phalanxes was sudden and preceded the appearance of mature hoplites. The 'sudden change' approach is not at odds with the notion of the isomorphism of the *polis* and the phalanx, since it assumes some sort of collective adoption of war tactics (yet it does not necessarily identify the collective with the *polis*). The major problem for the 'sudden change' theory seems to be that it does not really explain why this 'sudden change' happened in the first place. Why was individual fighting suddenly replaced by mass tactics? The military effectiveness of the phalanx is, of course, a possible answer. However, Cartledge rightly rejects any technological or military determinism:

This first impression that the Greeks' invention of hoplite warfare was not dictated by purely or even primarily military (in a narrow sense) considerations is apparently confirmed by the fact that there was no narrowly military reason why, once one state had 'gone hoplite', its competitors should automatically and necessarily have followed suit.¹⁴⁶

'Going hoplite' would mean forming a phalanx, accepting the notion of the pitched battle as a direct collision between two phalanxes which involves face-to-face killing at close range, having a general reluctance and contempt for the conduct of

¹⁴¹ Cartledge (n. 127), 18.

¹⁴³ Snodgrass (n. 126), 110.

¹⁴⁵ Cartledge (n. 127), 19–20.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Snodgrass (n. 126), 84–5.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 18.

hit-and-run tactics, skirmishing and ambush, and disdain for those who fight from afar.¹⁴⁷ Cartledge concludes that the motives for 'going hoplite' were 'importantly moral and social as well as narrowly technological and military'.¹⁴⁸ Yet what were these moral and social reasons for the adoption of mass fighting? Thus while the 'gradual change' theory offers a continuity between the 'aristocratic regime' and the hoplite era, the 'sudden change theory' offers a break from the aristocratic regime without really explaining it.

Here, I believe, a third kind of theory is possible, one which would assume that the emergence of the *polis* and the emergence of mass tactics were the same. The *polis* emerged as a group of (non-professional) warriors who from the very beginning used mass tactics. The ritualistic character of hoplite fighting (see discussion below) clearly suggests that this form of fighting was from the outset adapted by and for political systems. The *poleis* developed the mass tactics until it had reached its mature form in mature hoplite fighting.

Indeed recently a growing number of scholars have challenged the notion of pre-hoplite individualistic fighting in the epics, on the one hand, and in the early or pre-*polis* community, on the other. Pritchett suggests that in Homer 'the pitched battle was the decisive element' and that 'the general impression created by the poem is one of hoplites fighting in mass formation . . .'.¹⁴⁹ Pritchett maintains also that 'There is no literary evidence for a view which has gained wide currency that there was a change in tactics in the early seventh century from pre-hoplite warfare to hoplite warfare'.¹⁵⁰ Kurt Raaflaub reaffirms the dominance of phalanx fighting in Homer and in the early archaic period, and he further argues that the pitched battles were between (loosely organized) *poleis*, and that the *polis* and the phalanx evolved in an interactive process over a long period of time.¹⁵¹ Hanson maintains that 'Dark-Age soldiers had fought loosely in mass formations for many years in ancient Greece, in most cases under the direction of aristocratic leaders and clansmen' and that 'the constituted "hoplite phalanx" was thus the old Dark Age wine in new agrarian flasks'.¹⁵²

Indeed it is possible to push the idea of the *polis* and the phalanx further back to a pre-agrarian or a nomadic stage.¹⁵³ It has been suggested by Hanson and others that, as phalanx fighting seems especially suited for establishing territorial borders between farmers, the emergence of the phalanx was directly related to the process of sedentarization and the emergence of agrarianism.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, it is important to note that while mobile, the nomad tribe 'does occupy . . . a specific territory and in this sense can be regarded as a territorial unit',¹⁵⁵ and that consequently it is not unreasonable to attribute phalanx fighting to nomads fighting over disputed pastures. Further, the so-called 'aristocratic regime' was identified with the *hippeis*, or the 'cavalry'.¹⁵⁶ This has been a traditional source of confusion as to the existence of the phalanx in the early *polis*, for this 'cavalry' was credited with aristocratic individualistic fighting. Yet it is generally accepted today that during archaic times the *hippeis* were mounted

¹⁴⁷ Hanson (n. 111), 9–18.

¹⁴⁸ Cartledge (n. 33), 43.

¹⁴⁹ W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, part 4 (Berkeley, 1985), 33. See also Morris (n. 64), 196–204.

¹⁵⁰ Pritchett (n. 149), 44.

¹⁵¹ Raaflaub (n. 132), 49–57.

¹⁵² V. D. Hanson, *The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization* (New York, 1995), 238.

¹⁵³ On Early Iron Age pastoralism, see Snodgrass (n. 135), 190–209.

¹⁵⁴ Hanson (n. 152), 223.

¹⁵⁵ Khazanov (n. 128), 149–50.

¹⁵⁶ Aristotle, *Politics* 4.10, 1297b15–24.

hoplites, and that 'the horse was used only for transport, and on the battlefield the aristocrat, already accoutred as a hoplite, dismounted and took his position in the line, leaving his horse to a squire'.¹⁵⁷ Those who subscribe to the notion of the 'aristocratic regime' characterized by individual fighting suggested that the first phalanxes were composed of both aristocrats, or *hippeis*, on the one hand, and the newly emerged hoplites, on the other. They considered mass tactics as 'a deft compromise' for the *hippeis* and the so-called 'aristocrats' as 'reluctant hoplites'.¹⁵⁸ Others seem to push the idea of the 'mounted hoplite' one step further, suggesting that the first phalanxes were composed entirely of *hippeis* or mounted hoplites and that the archaic *hippeis* were never actually cavalymen but always mounted infantrymen or mounted hoplites.¹⁵⁹ The notion of the 'mounted hoplite', or notion of the *polis* as an association of 'mobile hoplites', could indeed supply us with the connection between the early *polis* and nomadism.

Another interesting feature of the Greek *polis* which resembles that of the nomadic tribe is its non-territorial definition. The non-territorial identity of the nomadic tribe has been traditionally attributed to its mobility. Gellner observes that 'nomads, people of no fixed abode, cannot be defined, or have their nested social units defined, in terms of their locality'.¹⁶⁰ It is interesting to note that also in the case of the Greek *polis*, its non-territorial definition meant, as Raaflaub puts it, that 'the *polis* was movable'.¹⁶¹ It was movable in the sense that it could have been moved from one location to another. Thus Herodotus (1.163–8) tells us that the Ionian Greeks of Phokaia and Teos had moved their *poleis* (to Italian Elea and Thracian Abdera). The Athenians themselves provide a famous case when, during the war with the Persians (480), they gave an ultimatum to the Spartan commander of the Greek army, that unless their policy of war was accepted, they were going to remove their *polis*, or put their families aboard their ships and sail for Siris in Italy where the oracles tell they must establish a colony.¹⁶² The *polis* was movable also in the sense that in the case of colonization the *polis* was formed before the actual sedentarization took place and also, as the example of

¹⁵⁷ Snodgrass (n. 126), 114.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 113; Cartledge (n. 127), 23. Yet Snodgrass (n. 135), 98 seems to reject the existence of 'a phase of true cavalry warfare, in which the warrior actually fought from horseback'. See also P. A. L. Greenhalgh, *Early Greek Warfare: Horsemen and Chariots in the Homeric and Archaic Age* (Cambridge, 1973), 75–8, 146, who maintains that the *hippeis* of the Geometric Age communities to whom Aristotle referred as having a military and political dominance were not cavalymen, but heavy-armed foot-soldiers who used their horses for transport. Greenhalgh suggests that before the so-called 'hoplite reform', battles were less organized affairs and success depended far more on individual skill and that the creation of the phalanx was prompted by technological inventions (such as the double-grip shield). The (mounted) pre-hoplite (still a mounted infantryman) used his horse for transportation to the battlefield and also to move around in the battle, while after the invention of the phalanx the hoplite could ride to battle but not use his horse to move about during the engagements between the phalanxes (pp. 70–4, 146). Van Wees suggests that the war-chariots in Homer were used to transfer the warrior to the battlefield and to move within the battle, yet normally, 'he at some point "jumps off" and "mingles with the *promakhos*", on foot' ('The Homeric way of war: the *Iliad* and the hoplite phalanx (I)', *Greece and Rome* 41 [1994], 9–10).

¹⁵⁹ Detienne (n. 123), 134–8.

¹⁶⁰ Gellner (n. 13, 1981), 34. For the non-territorial definition of the Greek *polis*, see notes 128 and 129 above.

¹⁶¹ Kurt Raaflaub, 'City-state, territory, and empire in classical antiquity', in A. Molho, K. Raaflaub, and J. Emlen (edd.), *City-States in Classical Antiquity and Medieval Italy* (Stuttgart, 1991), 566.

¹⁶² Hdt. 8.61–3. See discussion in Manville (n. 100), 38–40.

Xenophon's *Anabasis* shows, in the sense that a group of warriors could have formed itself and behave, using the words of Vidal-Naquet, as a 'travelling republic'.¹⁶³

While it could be illegitimate, as Cartledge insists, to extrapolate from Homer to the existence of *developed* hoplite phalanx warfare,¹⁶⁴ the debate seems to point further at a continuity between the late Dark Age communities and the archaic *poleis*. It seems that before mass tactics had reached the mature form it had from the middle of the seventh century onwards, it had to be shaped also by all the factors that have been traditionally assumed to enhance the appearance of the phalanx: agrarianism, demographic growth, economic expansion, and technological inventions.¹⁶⁵ Yet those factors were operating within and upon a community of warriors, the *polis*, which from its very beginning employed mass tactics.

If mass tactics were employed by the early *polis* as well, then the distinction between 'aristocrats' and 'commoners' becomes problematic. Thus Van Wees rejects the traditional distinction between the *promachoi* (the Homeric heroes who fought in the front) and the commoners, at least as far as participation in the battle was concerned. Van Wees maintains that anyone in the mass was eligible to fight in the front, and constantly the distinction between the *promachoi* and the 'multitude' was a topographical one. Among the *promachoi* would be reckoned anyone currently fighting at the front, from famous hero to anonymous commoner; among the 'multitude' at any particular time are all those who are currently out of action, including leading heroes temporarily retired from the fray.¹⁶⁶

The political implications of the dominance of phalanx fighting in Homer and in the early *polis* are obvious: an agrarian society which is characterized by a high military participation ratio and in which everybody is engaged in the same type of fighting would be stateless and relatively egalitarian. In such a community there will be no place for a differentiated élite. Indeed Osborne points out that

... what is striking about the rulers of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is their lack of supreme power, indeed their comparative powerlessness. . . . Agamemnon not only cannot enforce his will over Akhilleus, he cannot enforce it over the army at large. . . . Individuals exert political influence according to their social standing, their rhetorical abilities, and their personal charisma, but not according to the holding of the office of ruler.¹⁶⁷

All this becomes obvious once we understand that the Homeric community is stateless. In a similar way Raaflaub disagrees with Finley and others who interpret Homeric society as a pre-*polis* society that gives priority almost exclusively to the individual's claims and the private sphere. Raaflaub suggests that the 'epics presuppose an early form of the *polis*', and that 'in the community, institutions are informal and dominated by the élite. Yet a closer look reveals that the *demos*' role is

¹⁶³ P. Vidal-Naquet quoting Hippolyte Taine in 'The tradition of the Athenian Hoplite' (n. 58), 86 (an earlier version, 'La tradition de l'hoplite Athénien' was published in Vernant [n. 123], 161–81). Another example is Thuc. 7.77.7 where Nicias, at the moment of retreat in Sicily, says to the Athenian army 'Reflect that you yourselves, wherever you settle down, are a city already'. See C. Mossé, 'Le rôle politique des armées dans le monde Grec à l'époque classique', in Vernant (n. 123), 222.

¹⁶⁴ P. Cartledge, 'La nascita degli opliti e l'organizzazione militare', in S. Settis (ed.), *I Greci*, vol. 2. And see also W. K. Pritchett, *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography*, vol. 4 (Amsterdam, 1991), 181–90.

¹⁶⁵ Agrarianism: Hanson (n. 152). Demography: Snodgrass, *Archaeology and the Rise of the Greek State* (Cambridge, inaugural lecture, 1977); modified by I. Morris (n. 64), 156–9.

¹⁶⁶ Hans Van Wees, *Homeric Warfare*, in Morris and Powell (n. 166), 687–9.

¹⁶⁷ R. Osborne, *Greece in the Making, 1200–479 B.C.* (London, 1996), 150.

significant.¹⁶⁸ It should be emphasized that the dominant role of the 'élite' in political life, both in the Homeric and the early *polis*, does not contradict the notion of the stateless *polis*; it does not make its members rulers any more than the dominant role of the elite in classical times made its members rulers of the *polis*. Further, as Bowden suggests, if we assume that the *Iliad* is a poem about the society of the early Greek *polis*, then we cannot use it as evidence for earlier 'pre-*polis*' society, or for 'pre-hoplite' fighting, and we ought to question whether the Dark Age was 'aristocratic' at all.¹⁶⁹

It is important to emphasize that the isomorphism of the (early) *polis* with the phalanx existed in both directions: the early *polis* was both a military and a political unit. It was a political community which used mass tactics as well as being a military unit with a political organization. Thus it could be misleading to suggest that the *polis* adopted mass tactics, but rather that it was a form of mass tactics. Thus the Greek camp at Troy is itself transformed into a community structured politically like any other,¹⁷⁰ and, again, Xenophon's *Anabasis* is an example suggesting that even in classical times military groups devoid of strong leadership (that is, in stateless conditions) tended to organize themselves as *poleis*.¹⁷¹ In other words, if we return to the question raised by Cartledge, asking why the *polis* 'goes hoplite' is like asking why the tribe 'goes kinship'.

The nature of the pitched battle seems to point further to the conclusion that this form of fighting was developed from the beginning by and for political communities.¹⁷² 'Going hoplite', or the adoption of hoplite protocol by all *poleis*, could be attributed, as Hanson suggests, to agrarianism—that is, to the fact that the phalanx was composed of farmers. The battle was short, an hour or two of 'a brief nightmare that a hoplite could face only once a summer',¹⁷³ and generally speaking phalanx fighting demanded little specialized training.¹⁷⁴ This, of course, suits a non-professional army of farmers who had to attend to their fields.¹⁷⁵ Ideally, fighting was limited to the battlefield and it ruled out annihilation, enslavement, or expulsion of the defeated.¹⁷⁶ Booty in these battles was limited to the battlefield and the countryside. Invading armies usually pillaged the countryside for a while before the pitched battle. After the battle the main source of booty were the hoplite arms and armour which were stripped from the dead by the victorious party and the ransom which could be obtained from the relatives of the prisoners. After a dedication of a tenth to the gods, the booty went to the city. The hoplite battle, then, meant a redistribution of wealth within the Greek world. As Connor observes, this was not solely an exchange of wealth between *poleis*. If an invading army which pillaged the countryside before the battle was then defeated, much of this wealth could then be recycled by the vic-

¹⁶⁸ K. Raafaub, 'Homeric society', in Ian Morris and Barry Powell (edd.), *A New Companion to Homer* (Leiden, 1997), 645–8.

¹⁶⁹ Bowden (n. 89), 61.

¹⁷⁰ Osborne (n. 167), 150.

¹⁷¹ As Vidal-Naquet (n. 163), 86 points out, also in the classical period 'the army and the city were modeled on the *polis*. This was obvious at Salamis, where it was not the fleet that saved the city but the city that took up residence on the ships.'

¹⁷² For details of the hoplite protocol, see Hanson (n. 111), 9–18.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁷⁵ Adcock (n. 113), 4.

¹⁷⁶ The evidence in these matters seems at first glance to conflict. Connor (n. 2), 15, n. 59 suggests that much of the evidence used to suggest that Greeks enslaved other Greeks after battles in fact applies to sieges and that siege warfare was governed by a radically different code from that which applied to hoplite battles. A victorious besieger of a city was allowed to treat the captives as he saw fit. This could result in the death of military-age men and the enslavement of women and children. And see also Rihll (n. 66), 85.

torious army into other sections of the society. Connor concludes that an important result of the hoplite battle was that wealth moved from the private to the public realm.¹⁷⁷

The observance of the rules of the pitched battle reveals the understanding that the Greek or the Hellenic *poleis* constitute a 'system' of political communities, and that they maintain stability, social cohesion, and redistribution of wealth by observing the rules of the pitched battle.¹⁷⁸

VIII. CONCLUSION: 'DOOMED TO EXTINCTION'?

The idea of Greece as a 'states-system' and the importance of the hoplite pitched battle in maintaining that system are more true for archaic than for classical Greece. The classical *polis* could no longer be identified with its hoplites and the rules of battles had changed after the two long Persian invasions also because the Greeks confronted huge armies which had not 'gone hoplite'.¹⁷⁹ Hanson observes that

The Persian Wars became the training ground for the murderous years of the Peloponnesian War, as—reversing the contexts—the Spanish Civil War was for the Second World War. The Greeks were to learn that battle could be more than a simple pushing contest between armoured men, and that war was more than a onetime collision of phalanxes.¹⁸⁰

However, though hoplite protocol limited plunder and destruction in archaic times, it should be emphasized that war was also 'a mode of production' in the early and archaic *polis*. Raids for booty in Homer appear to be entirely accepted.¹⁸¹ Archaic Greece was also the age of colonization, and it is in this process where the nature of Greek warfare as a 'mode of production' was more visible as the Greeks were free from the restraints imposed by hoplite protocol which did not apply to wars with non-Greeks. In many cases colonization started with a conquest followed by annihilation, expulsion, or sale (as slaves) of the local population. Further, hoplite protocol was not always maintained, even in wars among the Greeks themselves.¹⁸²

The break-up of the hoplite protocol after the Persian wars meant that war among the Greeks become less controllable and more frequent and vicious than it was in archaic times, and that plunder and theft had become more dominant aims of war. In the Greek world the Athenian empire demonstrated the agrarian rule that wealth could much more easily be acquired by predation rather than by farming. Further, the break-up of the Persian hold over the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean in the fifth century, and the disintegration of imperial control in Asia itself during the fourth, gave the Greeks access to the east. This did not mean an increase only of trade, but also of plunder. Here, Greek military skills, acquired during hundreds years of living in warlike communities, proved to be a good source of supply for the agrarian demand for specialists in violence. Whether as raiding *poleis*, raiding bands, or mercenaries, it was the cohesive Greek group rather than the individual that was engaged in the fighting.¹⁸³

This was accompanied also by a significant change in the composition of the army,

¹⁷⁷ Connor (n. 2), 16.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 21. Indeed M. Wight considers ancient Greece to constitute the first 'states-system' which he roughly defined as 'a federation of a number of states with the object of preserving the actual balance of power' (*Systems of States* [Leicester, 1977], 21–2).

¹⁷⁹ Adcock (n. 113), 11–12; Hanson (n. 111), 37.

¹⁸⁰ Hanson (n. 111), 37.

¹⁸¹ Alastair Jackson, 'War and raids in the world of Odysseus', in Rich and Shipley (n. 66), 64–76. Rihl (n. 66), 79–80.

¹⁸² See notes 91 and 176 above.

¹⁸³ Hanson (n. 152), 357–65.

most of all, in maritime *poleis*. The navy had a dominant role in the victory over the Persians, it was dominant in maintaining the Athenian empire, and it was needed to secure the trading routes and to carry military expeditions and raiding bands. This meant, of course, that the *polis*, initially a community of hoplites, had to employ relatively large numbers of rowers upon whom its economy was dependent and who risked their lives for its sake. As I have pointed out earlier, in stateless societies military participation has a levelling effect. As a stateless community the *polis* could not enforce conscription, and consequently conscription had to be accompanied by an increase in the degree of political participation and enfranchisement. The classical *polis* was still a community of soldiers (though not of hoplites) and war against the outside world was still a dominant factor in enhancing the cohesion of the classical *polis*. Thus, for instance, the use of Athenian hoplites as amphibious troops meant that landowners fought alongside their social inferiors, which, no doubt, helped to bring about the political integration of those classes. Nevertheless, the simple mechanism of the phalanx in maintaining the cohesion of the *polis* had lost its dominance.¹⁸⁴

The new army was in a way a reflection of the new *polis*; it was more complex and less homogeneous because the *polis* was no longer a simple community of small landed farmers. The influx of wealth brought by empire, plunder, and trade increased urbanization. The numbers of slaves and metics had increased, new professions had been introduced, and the division of labour within the Greek *polis* had become much more complex than in archaic times. Here the Greek *polis* poses a problem for modern social anthropology. Social anthropologists usually consider the state as a necessary condition for civilization and the stateless community as 'primitive'. Thus Marshall Sahlins observes that

A civilization is a society both massive and divided within itself. The population is large, perhaps ethnically diversified, divided by its labors into specialized occupations and, by unequal interests in the means of power, divided into unequally privileged classes. All the cultural achievements of civilization depend on this magnitude and complexity of organization. Yet a society so large, heterogeneous, and internally divided cannot stand without special means of control and integration. . . . The cultural richness that we call civilization has to be instituted in state form.¹⁸⁵

Stateless tribal community is 'primitive' in the sense that it is egalitarian and simple. It is composed of identical and interchangeable units: everybody is engaged in the same type of food production, and all enjoy much the same level of material income and political influence.¹⁸⁶ While the traditional definition of civilization proposed by Childe—the existence of written language and cities—may be too narrow in the sense that it excludes the sophisticated yet illiterate native civilizations of Peru or West Africa, it is obvious that a society which possesses written language and cities is indeed civilized. Thus the ancient Greek world defies social anthropology by being both stateless and civilized even in archaic times; Greek civilization evolved in stateless conditions and was sustained by non-state mechanisms. Nevertheless, if Sahlins's point is not to be entirely rejected, then one must assume that the abilities of stateless communities to sustain a heterogeneous society are very limited. Thus, it could be claimed that the archaic *polis*, though civilized, could still have been sustained by non-state mechanisms because it was relatively 'simple' or homogeneous in the sense

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 369–375.

¹⁸⁵ Sahlins (n. 95), 6–7; Khazanov (n. 68), 89–90; Patricia Crone, 'The tribe and the state', in John A. Hall (ed.), *States in History* (Oxford, 1986), 49–50.

¹⁸⁶ Crone (n. 185).

that it was composed of (small) farmers and thus was relatively egalitarian from a social and economic point of view.

Was the classical *polis*, then, to use Runciman's phrases, 'doomed to extinction', or an 'evolutionary dead-end',¹⁸⁷ because as a stateless community, it could not have sustained the strains of civilization of classical times? This would lead us to another question: was *stasis* more endemic in classical times? Hanson seems to suggest that it was; Cartledge, on the other hand, argues that archaic Solon's *stasis*-ridden Athens was probably more representative than Hanson would allow.¹⁸⁸ When *stasis* is viewed as open hostilities, the answer cannot easily be established. However, when it is viewed as the negation of civic spirit of which the most important characteristic is the ability of the community to produce warriors, a case could be made here for its weakening in the classical *polis*. Civilized life, or cities, Ibn Khaldun reminds us, corrupts the civic spirit of (stateless) communities: the 'good life' fails to produce good soldiers. A similar point is made by Hanson: stressing agrarianism, he suggests that only the countryside could have produced hoplites (and their civic spirit) and, while the hoplites who fought Philip at Chaironeia were just as brave as their ancestors who slaughtered the Persians at Plataea, they were now only a segment within the city.¹⁸⁹ Further, city dwellers, though relatively reluctant to fight, could use their wealth to acquire more of it; in other words they could employ mercenaries in the pursuit of the 'good life'. As the numbers and size of mercenary armies increased in classical Greece, so the citizens with assured livelihoods from sources other than soldiering became progressively demilitarized. The result was that the *poleis* became less capable, not more, of defending themselves against an invader of a more formidable kind.¹⁹⁰

It is important to note that stateless communities could prevail when they encounter states or formidable empires. Here nomads provide a good example. Nomads resist coercion and remain free also because of their mobility, that is, in certain circumstances they simply run away. Nomads are mobile also because they are 'primitive' or relatively uncivilized and consequently there is not much to be carried away. Yet, if mobility was ever an option for the Greek *polis*, it no longer existed in classical times. The *polis* was too civilized and too 'heavy', and fourth-century Athenians could have never contemplated the kind of threat which was made by their ancestors during the war with the Persians (480), when they gave an ultimatum to the Spartan commander of the Greek army that unless their policy of war was accepted they intended to remove their *polis* to Siris in Italy.¹⁹¹

Yet there is another way by which stateless communities could prevail over formidable empires, namely by joint effort. Nomadic tribes can unite and take over existing empires or establish their own empires. And the Greeks themselves provide a good example when, by joint effort, they prevailed over the Persians. Thus Hanson sees a union of *poleis* as the only option for the survival of the *polis*:

[Athens] might have played a prominent role in Greek unification around agrarian principles, creating some federated fortress Greece, a defensive alliance of autonomous agricultural city-states, a democratic and Ionian mirror image of the Peloponnesian League under Sparta. Alternatively, after taking up an activist and internationalist stance, Athens, like Rome later, could have moved beyond all resemblance to her agrarian genesis . . .¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ See note 53.

¹⁸⁸ P. Cartledge, 'Classical Greek agriculture II: two more alternative views', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 23 (1995), 137.

¹⁸⁹ Hanson (n. 152), 353.

¹⁹⁰ Runciman (n. 53), 353–356.

¹⁹¹ See note 162.

¹⁹² Hanson (n. 152), 389.

Yet was a 'federated Greece' an option at all? Of course, 'a defensive alliance of autonomous agricultural city-states' could have been created on an *ad hoc* basis, as it was created in the Persian wars. But it would not have been anything like 'federated fortress Greece'. As a *polis*, or a union of *poleis*, it would have been stateless, that is, without any means to coerce its individual members into action or to preserve the unity among its members. The alternative, as Hanson rightly observes, would be a creation of an entity which would be 'beyond all resemblance' to the original *polis*—that is, a state. Nomads seem to face the same alternatives. When nomadic tribes retained their egalitarian nature, their empires 'were little more than short-lived historical episodes'. Nomadic societies of this kind are not stable and tend to oscillate between astonishing empires on the one hand and egalitarian, stateless communities on the other. 'To exist and maintain stability over a prolonged period a nomadic state must incorporate within itself a part of the outside world in the form of its sedentary population. However, for this very reason all such states are not nomadic states in the strict sense.'¹⁹³ In a similar way the alternative for the *polis* would be the establishment of an (Athenian, or Greek) state, which means that Athens would 'move beyond all resemblance to her . . . genesis', or in other words, the ruin of the *polis*.

Further, the notion of 'fortress Greece' is prejudiced by that of modern nationalism, or by the idea that shared culture could have provided the basis for common political will. However, as Gellner observes, nationalism, or the desire that the cultural and political boundaries overlap, is a product of the industrial age and did not exist in the agrarian world. In the latter, political systems could be roughly divided into local, self-governing, stateless communities, on the one hand, and large empires, on the other. While the former seldom exhaust the culture of which they are part, the latter are multiethnic or multicultural. Thus when a pan-Hellenic polity was established under Macedonian leadership, it very rapidly grew into an empire transcending by far the bounds of Hellenism.¹⁹⁴

Of all Greeks, probably no one saw the problem more clearly than Plato. Anticipating Ibn Khaldun, he saw a contradiction between wealth or civilized life, on the one hand, and civic spirit, on the other. Nevertheless, when he reluctantly abandons his 'First City', or the 'City of Pigs', and chooses civilized life, the latter has to be instituted in a form of a state. Government by amateurs was no longer an option, nor was a non-professional citizens' army. Plato abandons Greek traditionalism and the notion of the *polis* as a community of (non-professional) warriors in favour of a differentiated class of professional warriors who have the monopoly of violence. Furthermore, the Greek idea of the 'nation of Homer', in which culture and literacy are shared by each and every one in the community, is abandoned as well. The ruling classes monopolize culture, as they monopolize violence. According to Gellner, the structure portrayed in the *Republic* makes it the first theoretical account of the agrarian state. While Plato failed perhaps to anticipate Macedon, nevertheless, in the rigid and stagnant rule of clerics and warriors over producers, and in the demand that his Guardians be deprived of kin and private wealth, Plato 'anticipated some of the most effective bureaucracies of the agrarian world, notably the Church and the monasteries and the Mamelukes'.¹⁹⁵ Yet what even Plato, who saw the problem more

¹⁹³ Khazanov (n. 128), 296. cf. 228–9. Gellner, 'Foreword' *ibid.*, xiii–xv, xxv.

¹⁹⁴ Gellner (n. 18), 13–14; M. I. Finley, 'The ancient Greeks and their nation', in *The Use and Abuse of History* (Harmondsworth, 1990), 120–33.

¹⁹⁵ Gellner (n. 19, 1991), 87. cf. 84–90.

clearly than any other Greek, failed to see was that once his state was established and successful it would turn immediately into an empire. Like all Greeks, Plato saw the *polis*, at least as far as its size was concerned, as the natural socio-political unit, and consequently moulded his state after the *polis* and as a *polis*-state.

The Open University of Israel

MOSHE BERENT
mosheb@oumail.openu.ac.il