

an excellent resource.³⁴ In the absence of clear evidence to the contrary, we cannot rule out the possibility that the Babylonian sun-god tradition influenced the attributes of Helios (and hence eventually those of Apollo) well before Parmenides wrote his poem. If, on the other hand, it is one day proved that neither Helios nor Apollo is ever associated with gates and *Dike* herself, we must consider the possibility that Parmenides was influenced by Babylonian imagery more directly. While the thorny question of transmission is beyond the scope of this paper, the reader will find provocative discussions in recent works.³⁵ For the time being, I leave this question and its implications to others.

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³⁴ Even so, the available evidence suggests that Aeschylus' *Heliades* recounted the story of Phaethon, which is not necessarily relevant to the account in Parmenides (see n. 31). S. Radt (ed.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta 3, Aeschylus* (Göttingen, 1985), F68–73a.

³⁵ For transmission of Near Eastern material to Greece generally, see West (n. 11), ch. 12. For transmission of Babylonian beliefs to Parmenides specifically, see Kingsley (n. 5), 11–27, 46–8.

HELOTS CALLED MESSENIANS? A NOTE ON THUC. 1.101.2.

Θάσιοι δὲ νικηθέντες μάχῃ καὶ πολιορκούμενοι Λακεδαιμονίους ἐπεκαλοῦντο καὶ ἐπαμύνειν ἐκέλευον ἐσβαλόντας ἐς τὴν Ἀττικὴν. οἱ δὲ ὑπέσχοντο μὲν κρύφα τῶν Ἀθηναίων καὶ ἔμελλον, διεκωλύθησαν δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ γενομένου σεισμοῦ, ἐν ᾧ καὶ οἱ Ἐἰλωτες αὐτοῖς καὶ τῶν περιοίκων Θουριᾶται τε καὶ Αἰθαίης ἐς Ἴθώμην ἀπέστησαν. πλείστοι δὲ τῶν Εἰλώτων ἐγένοντο οἱ τῶν παλαιῶν Μεσσηνίων τότε δουλωθέντων ἀπόγονοι ἢ καὶ Μεσσηνιοὶ ἐκλήθησαν οἱ πάντες.

In this well-known passage, Thucydides mentions the earthquake and the revolt of Helots and *perioikoi* that prevented the Spartans from helping the Thasians against the Athenians. Virtually everything Thucydides says or implies here, particularly but not only the chronology of the events, has aroused fierce controversy. As far as Thucydides' description of the rebels is concerned, though, there seems to be very little disagreement in recent scholarship. Nevertheless, as I shall try to demonstrate, most scholars misinterpret the passage precisely on this point, with serious consequences for the interpretation of some fundamental aspects of Helotry. In the following, the interpretation of the last two sentences (underlined in the text above) in recent scholarship will be discussed, then the text itself will be analysed, to show how it should most probably be translated, and the consequences of this translation for the interpretation of Helotry will be briefly addressed.

The sentences under discussion have been understood in two very different ways: either as if they meant that, in general, in Thucydides' times, the Helots were called Messenians, because the majority of them were descendants of the 'old Messenians', or that the majority of the Helots who revolted against Sparta after the earthquake were descendants of the 'old Messenians', and for that reason all the rebels—or all the Helots who revolted—came to be called Messenians.¹ In many cases, translators, in particular, seem not to have reflected on such implications, and have rendered the

¹ The possibility of combining these two interpretations and taking the passage to mean that, in general, in Thucydides' times, the majority of the Helots was formed by descendants of the 'old Messenians', and therefore all those who revolted were called Messenians is excluded by the obvious link between *πλείστοι* and *οἱ πάντες*.

passage in a way that does not allow one to decide with certainty how they have understood it.² Historians have usually been more explicit, and, at least in recent times, have normally chosen the first interpretation. Such was apparently the case with Forrest, who wrote ‘... their [sc. of the Helots] numbers, the permanence of the breed, and their national identity (most were of Messenian origin) made them an ever present menace to Sparta’s security’.³ Thucydides is not mentioned here, but Forrest was surely thinking of our passage. More explicitly, Lotze refers to Thucydides as a source for the statement that the majority of the Helots were Messenians.⁴ In a similar vein, de Ste. Croix wrote: ‘Most of the Helots, according to Thucydides (1.101.2), were descendants of the Messenians of old, conquered by Sparta, and so all the Helots came to be called Messenians.’⁵ Here de Ste. Croix is talking of the Helots in general, not referring in particular to those who revolted against Sparta; hence he is interpreting Thucydides as Forrest also did. Cartledge translated our passage as follows: ‘The majority of the Helots were descended from the Messenians who were enslaved (doulouthenton) of old. Hence all were called Messenians.’⁶ In a later book, he has been even more explicit: ‘In the mid-fifth century, Thucydides reveals, most Helots were the descendants of the ancient Messenians who had been enslaved long ago (in fact in the wars of the eighth and seventh centuries), and as a result all Helots were known generally as “Messenians”.’⁷ More recently, Talbert writes: ‘No figures survive for total numbers of helots. Thucydides (1.101.2) says that there were more in Messenia than Laconia.’⁸ Similarly, Fisher refers to our passage as evidence that ‘[t]he Messenians thus reduced to helot-status were considerably more numerous than the Laconian helots’,⁹ and Hodkinson observes that his estimate of the extension of Spartiate land in Messenia and Laconia, whereby the former was almost twice as large as the latter, ‘accord[s] with Thucydides’ comment (1.101) that most of the helot population was Messenian’.¹⁰

² Such is the case with, among others, R. Crawley (*Thucydides. History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. R. Crawley, new edn W. R. Connor [London, 1993]: ‘Most of the Helots were the descendants of the old Messenians that were enslaved in the famous war; and so all of them came to be called Messenians’), J. de Romilly (*Thucydide. La guerre du Péloponnèse*, texte établi et traduit par J. de Romilly [Paris, 1953]: ‘Un très grand nombre des Hilotes étaient les descendants des anciens Messéniens, asservis à l’époque: d’où le nom de Messéniens, qui fut appliqué à tous’), and S. Lattimore (*Thucydides. The Peloponnesian War*, trans., with introduction, notes, and glossary, by S. Lattimore [Indianapolis, 1998]: ‘Most of the helots were descendants of the Messenians of old, who had been enslaved in the Messenian wars, and accordingly they all came to be called Messenians’). C. F. Smith seems to incline for the first interpretation (*Thucydides. History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. C. F. Smith [Cambridge, MA, 1928]: ‘Most of the Helots were the descendants of the early Messenians who had been enslaved of old, and hence were all called Messenians’), and recently W. Blanco for the second (*Thucydides. The Peloponnesian War*, a new translation, backgrounds, interpretations; trans. W. Blanco, ed. W. Blanco and J. Tolbert Roberts [New York, 1998]: ‘Most of the helots were the descendants of the Messenians, who had been enslaved in antiquity. For this reason, all the rebels were called Messenians’).

³ W. G. Forrest, *A History of Sparta, 950–192 B.C.* (London, 1980²), 31.

⁴ D. Lotze, ‘Zu einigen Aspekten des spartanischen Agrarsystems’, *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, (1971) II, 65, n. 10.

⁵ G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (London, 1972), 89.

⁶ P. Cartledge, *Sparta and Lakonia: A Regional History 1300–362 B.C.* (London, 1979), 348, and cf. 218.

⁷ P. Cartledge, *Agesilaos and the Crisis of Sparta* (London, 1987), 14–15.

⁸ R. J. A. Talbert, ‘The role of the helots in the class struggle at Sparta’, *Historia* 38 (1989), 23.

⁹ N. R. E. Fisher, *Slavery in Classical Greece* (Bristol, 1993), 24.

¹⁰ S. Hodkinson, *Property and Wealth in Classical Sparta* (London, 2000), 145. I have argued against Hodkinson’s estimate of the extension of Spartiate land in Messenia in ‘Becoming Messenian’, *JHS* 122 (2002), forthcoming.

In recent years, only Ducat has explicitly interpreted our passage in a different way. In a careful discussion, Ducat observes that the use of the aorist ἐγένοντο shows that Thucydides is referring to the majority of the Helots who revolted after the earthquake, not to the majority of the Helots *tout court*.¹¹ However, also Oliva, who says that ‘Messenians’ was the name given to the rebels, implies the same interpretation.¹² Before going on to explain why Ducat must be right, it is important to note that nineteenth-century commentators of Thucydides understood the text just as he does. Poppo explained οἱ πάντες as ‘omnes ii qui defecerunt, non omnes omnino’.¹³ Similar explanations are to be found in Forbes¹⁴—whom Gomme quotes approvingly—and Böhme and Widmann,¹⁵ while Jowett¹⁶ offers an extremely precise and unambiguous translation of the passage: ‘These Helots were mostly the descendants of the Messenians who had been enslaved in ancient times, and hence all the insurgents were called Messenians.’ Similarly, Bétant¹⁷ had translated our sentences as follows: ‘La plupart de ces Hilotes descendaient des anciens Messéniens asservis dans le temps; c’est ce qui fut donné à tous les révoltés le nom de Messéniens.’

A careful scrutiny of the sentence shows that this interpretation is right. Ducat has correctly emphasized that Thucydides uses an aorist when he says that the descendants of the ‘old Messenians’ formed the majority of the Helots. The same happens with the following sentence, where we have the passive aorist ἐκλήθησαν. In both cases, actions that took place at a specific point in time must be meant, not states of fact or actions whose results continue into the writer’s time.¹⁸ Particularly in the case of ἐκλήθησαν, Greek grammar and Thucydidean *usus scribendi* firmly speak against the possibility that Thucydides is saying that in general, normally, all Helots were called Messenians: for this, he would use a present or, in reference to the past, an imperfect.¹⁹ In theory, we could think that both aorists indicate actions that took place in a distant past, not at the time of the revolt; the τότε could then be seen as a signal in this sense, and Thucydides would be saying something like ‘the offspring of the old Messenians, who got enslaved then, came to form the majority of the Helots, and hence all the Helots

¹¹ J. Ducat, *Les Hilotes* (Paris, 1990), 132. He translates as follows: ‘la plupart des Hilotes se trouveront être les descendants des anciens Messéniens, jadis réduits en esclavage; d’où le nom de Messéniens qui leur fut donné à tous’.

¹² P. Oliva, *Sparta and her Social Problems* (Prague, 1971), 153, and cf. n. 1 above.

¹³ *Thucydidis de bello Peloponnesiaco libri octo*. Ad optimorum librorum fidem editos explanavit Ernestus Fridericus Poppo. Editio tertia quam auxit et emendavit Ioannes Matthias Stahl (Lipsiae, 1886), ad loc.

¹⁴ *Thucydides. Book I*, ed. with introduction and notes by W. H. Forbes (Oxford, 1895), ad loc.

¹⁵ *Thucydides für den Schulgebrauch erklärt* von Gottfried Boehme. Von der fünften Auflage an besorgt von Simon Widmann (Leipzig, 1894⁶), ad loc.

¹⁶ *Thucydides Translated into English with Introduction, Marginal Analysis, Notes and Indices* by B. Jowett (Oxford, 1881), not to be confused with the 1900 edition of Jowett’s translation without notes.

¹⁷ *Histoire de la guerre du Péloponnèse de Thucydide*, traduction nouvelle avec une introduction et des notes par E.-A. Bétant (Paris, 1869²).

¹⁸ On the use of the aorist in Thucydides, see now E. J. Bakker, ‘Verbal aspect and mimetic description in Thucydides’, in id. (ed.), *Grammar as Interpretation: Greek Literature in its Linguistic Contexts* (Leiden, 1997), 8–54. In Bakker’s terms (28–9), our passage is in the diegetic mode, with aorists used to denote sequential events that form the main time-line (31). The imperfect ἐμελλον is explained by the fact that the Spartans were not able to help the Thasians because of the revolt (cf. Bakker, 33).

¹⁹ Thucydides uses the passive aorist of καλέω to indicate the moment in time when someone started being called with a name; compare 6.2.3 (aorist) with 4.102.3 (imperfect).

from that moment on were called Messenians'. Understanding the text in this way, the interpretation according to which in Thucydides' times all Helots were called Messenians would still be possible. But this extreme attempt at saving such an interpretation does not stand serious scrutiny. First of all, it would be strange to say that the descendants of the old Messenians formed the majority of the Helots, instead of simply saying that the old Messenians, at the moment of their enslaving, came to form the majority of the Helots. More importantly, the two aorists ἐγένοντο and ἐκλήθησαν come after a series formed by διεκωλύθησαν and ἀπέστησαν, both obviously referring to the time of the revolt, and there is no sign after them that Thucydides is changing his time-frame. On the contrary, the position of πλείστοι δὲ τῶν Εἰλωτῶν at the beginning of the sentence reinforces the impression that this sentence is supplying further detail to the general statement 'the Helots and some of the *perioikoi* revolted' in the preceding sentence. As for the τότε, it is to be understood in connection with παλαιῶν Μεσσηνίων, which makes an implicit but clear reference to the time of the Messenian War (probably only one for Thucydides),²⁰ when the 'old Messenians' had been conquered by the Spartans;²¹ in terms of grammar, it has the function to distinguish the chronological level of the aorist participle δουλωθέντων from that of the indicatives ἐγένοντο and ἐκλήθησαν.

Not only grammar speaks in favour of the interpretation proposed here. In the rest of his work, Thucydides consistently calls 'Messenians' the rebels after they left the Peloponnese and settled in Naupactus and their descendants, and 'Helots' the Helots.²² If he were saying in this passage that 'Messenians' was normally used to indicate the Helots, he would be explaining a meaning that the word never has in his work. Nor does any other Greek author use 'Messenians' to refer to the Helots. Authors of the late fifth and early fourth century, such as Herodotus (9.64.2), the Old Oligarch (3.11), and Xenophon (6.5.33), follow Thucydides in calling 'Messenians' only the rebels, and 'Helots' the Helots, in so far as they mention them at all.²³ Later sources, such as Plutarch (*Cim.* 16.7) and Diodorus (11.63.4; cf. 64.4 and 84.8), seem to distinguish Messenians from Helots even when speaking about the time of the Spartan domination of Messenia, but then, by saying that Messenians and Helots revolted against Sparta after the earthquake, they show that even in their terms 'Messenians' is not a general name for the Helots.²⁴ On the contrary, some authors, such as Theopompus (*FGrH* 155F13), explicitly say that even Helots of Messenian origin were called 'Helots'. Pausanias, who was very sensitive to the issue, explains carefully how it came to be that the Messenians themselves, once enslaved, came to be called 'Helots' like the

²⁰ Other fifth-century authors refer to 'the Messenian War' in a way that suggests that for them there had been only one Messenian War: see Hdt. 3.47.1 and, unambiguously, Antiochus of Syracuse, *FGrH* 555F13.

²¹ See Jowett's note (above, n. 16), II, 66, ad loc.

²² For Thucydides' use of the terms 'Helots' and 'Messenians', see T. J. Figueira, 'The evolution of the Messenian identity', in S. Hodkinson and A. Powell (edd.), *Sparta: New Perspectives* (London, 1999), 212–17.

²³ Pl. *Leg.* 777c is only apparently an exception. Plato here mentions the frequent revolts of the Messenians as an example of the danger of having many slaves who speak the same language: again, 'Messenians' is a name for revolting Helots. Elsewhere in the *Laws* (e.g. 776c), the Helots are called 'Helots'.

²⁴ For a discussion of the distinction between Messenians and Helots in sources later than Epameinondas' 'liberation of Messenia', see N. Luraghi, 'Der Erdbebenaufstand und die Entstehung der messenischen Identität', in D. Papenfuß and V.-M. Strocka (edd.) *Gab es das griechische Wunder? Griechenland zwischen dem Ende des 6. und der Mitte des 5. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Mainz, 2001), 290–2.

‘original’ Helots, once inhabitants of Helos in Laconia (3.20.6). In other words, if Thucydides’ passage meant that the Helots were normally called ‘Messenians’, it would paradoxically be the only piece of evidence for such a usage.

In the general dearth of sources on Helotry, the interpretation of any single one of them is important, and it becomes crucial in the case of a highly respected and relatively early author like Thucydides. In the absence of numerical data on the Helot population, Thucydides’ statement easily becomes a cornerstone for interpretations of central structural aspects of Helotry, from the respective extension of Spartiate land west and east of the Taygetus to the very nature of Helotry itself. The idea that the majority of the Helots was of Messenian descent easily leads to the conclusion that most of Messenia was divided among the Spartiates, a conclusion for which no other solid evidence exists. Interpreting Thucydides’ statement in the wrong way—if the arguments presented in this note are correct—scholars have been induced to overlook the evidence for perioikic settlements and sanctuaries in Messenia in the late archaic and classical periods.²⁵ On the other hand, the implications of our passage for the identity of the rebels went mostly unnoticed, and with them the basic nature of Messenian identity in fifth-century Peloponnese.²⁶ In Figueira’s words, ‘instead of reflecting genealogy, feeling “Messenian” or identifying oneself as “Messenian” appears to be inversely correlated with the degree of compliance with the Spartan government and with the Spartiates as a social class’.²⁷ During the Peloponnesian war, every Helot who successfully escaped the control of the Spartans and joined the ‘maroons’ of Naupactus became a Messenian, regardless of whether he came from Messenia or Laconia. Revolting against Sparta was the touchstone of Messenian identity. Thucydides’ passage, if interpreted in the way here proposed, shows precisely the emergence of such an identity in the Peloponnese, and shows its connection with the revolt against Sparta in the clearest possible way.²⁸

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²⁵ As I try to make clear in ‘Becoming Messenian’, *JHS* 122 (2002), forthcoming.

²⁶ It is necessary to specify ‘in the Peloponnese’, since the first Greek polity to identify itself as Messenian, after the Spartan conquest of Messene in the age of king Theopompus, was Sicilian Messene, founded by the tyrant of Rhegion Anaxilas c. 489 B.C. in place of Zancle. See N. Luraghi, *Tirannidi arcaiche in Sicilia e Magna Grecia da Panezio di Leontini alla caduta dei Dinomenidi* (Florence, 1994), 206–11; on Anaxilas’ promotion of a Messenian identity in Rhegion and in the newly founded Messene, see *ibid.*, 193–206, and *id.*, in *Mito e storia in Magna Grecia. Atti del XXXVI convegno di studi sulla Magna Grecia* (Napoli, 1998), 333–46, and now J. Hall, ‘The Dorianization of the Messenians’, in S. Alcock and N. Luraghi (edd.), *Helots and their Masters in Laconia and Messenia: The History and Sociology of a System of Exploitation*, proceedings of a workshop held at Harvard University, 17 March 2001, forthcoming.

²⁷ Figueira (n. 22), 224.

²⁸ On the Messenian identity of the rebels and its meaning, see Luraghi (n. 24), 293–4.

TWO AWKWARD WOMEN IN ISAEUS (IS. 5.9, 26)

This paper revisits two notorious textual cruces in Isaeus 5, *On the Estate of Dicaeogenes*, each of which involves a female member of a prominent Athenian family. Forster in the Loeb edition¹ gives this stemma:

¹ E. S. Forster, *Isaeus* (Cambridge, MA, 1927). I have omitted some biographical details included in the stemma by Forster and used ‘F’ for ‘daughter’.