Large Scale Slave Revolts in Ancient Greece: An Issue of Absence or an Absence of Issue?

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In the modern perception of the Ancient World the massive slave revolts loom largely. To the modern mind, infused, through education and mass media, with notions of sanctity of personal freedom and shamefulness of servitude, there is natural and immediate connection between the institution of slavery and armed, violent resistance to it. Ancient slaves were kept in obviously shameful and degrading state of bondage, therefore they revolted – they must have. In fact, however, large scale slave revolts are actually quite rare in world history and, in the case of Ancient Greece, all examples that one could point to are late and (at least superficially) marginal. If we limit our scope to Classical Greece (5th and 4th centuries BC), the slave revolt is virtually non-existent, unless we choose to widen the definition of slaves to include the helots of Sparta and the penests of Thessaly. This paper assumes that Messenian (helot) revolts are a separate (though perhaps related) phenomenon to slave revolts, and focus only on the latter. There are only three known cases of anything resembling a slave revolt (four, if we add the problematic case of the slave uprising of Drimacus, in the 3nd century BC Chios), and they seem rather minute in their scope and achievement, especially when compared to the contemporary massive slave wars of Roman Sicily and Italy. The paper argues that this absence is not an illusion, created, as one might argue, through a lack of interest or organized silence on the part of ancient authors, but the actual reflection of historical reality. Prospects of success for such endeavor were minimal, while the dangers involved were overwhelming. Specific conditions required for large scale slave uprisings were rarely met in Ancient Greece and consequently the phenomenon itself was rare.

Introduction

Anyone who teaches the history of slavery in ancient Greece is probably familiar with questions such as "Were there any slave revolts in ancient Greece?", and the usual follow-up: "Why there were no slave revolts?", or, depending on the initial answer: "Why slaves did not revolt more often?" To a modern mind slavery is both morally abhorrent and socially unacceptable. Slaves are (rightly) seen as exploited by their masters, humiliated and dehumanized. Thus, the connection between the objectionable state of slavery and violent resistance to it seems direct and obvious to modern audience.[1] Enslaved persons (must have)

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1. Cf. Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), xiii: "Enslavement in any form has figured as the antithesis of that individual autonomy

desired freedom more than anything, so they initiated one armed revolt after another. It is that simple.

However, the issue might not be as simple and obvious to ancient peoples. The plain fact is that there are barely any examples of large scale slave revolts in Ancient Greece, and all of them are of a comparatively late date. This work will examine what we know about these revolts in order to understand why they came about and, by implication, why there were not more of them. To attain better understanding, some comparisons with slave insurrections in other times and places will be made. Such comparisons instantly reveal that in this respect the ancient Greeks were actually not unique. Slavery was very common throughout world history, but large slave revolts were not.[2]

Before we continue, three obstacles need to be moved out of the way. The first one is possibility that there actually were massive slave uprisings in Greece, during the half a millennium between ca. 800 and 300 BC, but that we are simply unaware of them, due to loss or silence of Greek authors. This silence is usually explained either as lack of interest on the part of said authors, or as deliberate concealment, perhaps due to the embarrassing nature of the subject.[3] Neither explanation is very convincing. In spite of numerous caveats that could be made about limitations of our knowledge, it is highly unlikely that we overlooked a large-scale slave insurrection during the Classical age, especially considering that such an event could only take place where slaves were particularly numerous: in rich and developed societies such as Athens, Corinth, Megara, Syracuse or Chios – exactly the places we are best informed about.[4] A conspiracy of silence is even less likely, most of the Classical authors report freely on the flight of slaves and slave participation in wars. Thucydides, for example, shows no hesitation in speaking about the brutal civil war on Corcyra and the slave involvement in it,[5] about a massive flight of Athenian slaves during the Decelean war,[6] nor about

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considered the essence of freedom in modern societies. The revolt against slavery thus emerged as the basic assertion of human dignity and of humanity itself."

2. E. D. Genovese, *op. cit.*, xxii; Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge MA/London: Harvard University Press: 1982), vii. Though massive slave revolts are not quite as rare in the world history as claimed by Moses I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (New York: Viking Press, 1980), 114-115.

3. Barry Strauss, "Slave Wars of Greece and Rome," in V. D. Hanson (ed.) *Makers of Ancient Strategy. From the Persian Wars to the Fall of Rome* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 187; Niall McKeown, "Resistance Among Chattel Slaves in the Classical Greek World," in Keith Bradley, Paul Cartledge (eds.) *The Cambridge World History of Slavery I: The Ancient Mediterranean World* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 154.

4. This, of course, leaves plenty of room for some (perhaps many) instances of smaller-scale violent resistance that are lost to us or were never recorded at all.

5. Thuc. 3.70-85; slave participation is mentioned in 3.73.

6. Thuc. 7.27.

Chian slaves joining with the Athenians and pillaging the countryside.[7] As we shall presently see, Theopompus, Posidonius, Diodorus, Strabo, Athenaeus and others show no hesitation in this regard as well.

The second potential obstacle rises from the problem of categorization of subjugated groups such as the *helots* of Laconia and Messenia, or the *penests* of Thessaly. If these should be (re)classified as slaves, as it was recently suggested,[8] the issue would seemingly dissolve: there were many historically attested massive revolts by these groups, some expanding into full-scale wars that went on for years. However, this solution is more apparent than real, as it still would not explain the absence of slave revolts in, for example, Classical Attica. Furthermore, the prevailing consensus among classicists and historians remains that helots and similar groups are clearly distinct from slaves, and that they should be understood as a kind of "serfs" i.e. semi-free servile agricultural population.[9] As things stand at the moment, the helots and helot uprisings should be seen as a separate historical and social phenomenon from slaves and their revolts.[10]

Finally, we should be wary not to interpret other forms of slave resistance or their military participation as armed revolts. Slaves equipped and mobilized to fight in war or civil strafe, or to otherwise aid the war effort, are a familiar

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7. Thuc. 8.40.

8. David M. Lewis, *Greek Slave Systems in their Eastern Mediterranean Context, c. 800-146 BC* (Oxford: OUP, 2018), 125-146. Lewis drew much inspiration from earlier works on helots by Jean Ducat, *Les Hilotes* (Athènes/Paris: École française d'Athènes, 1990) and Nino Luraghi, "Helotic Slavery Reconsidered," in Anton Powell, Stephen Hodkinson (eds.) *Sparta: Beyond the Mirage* (London: Duckworth / Classic Press of Wales, 2002), 227-248. See also Kostas Vlassopulos, *Historicising Ancient Slavery* (Edinburgh: University Press, 2021), 169-170.

9. Cf. Peter Hunt, "Slaves of Serfs?: Patterson on the Thetes and Helots of Ancient Greece," in John Bodel and Walter Scheidel (eds.) *On Human Bondage. After Slavery and Social Death* (Malden / Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 61-80 (also: id., "Ancient Greece as a 'Slave Society'," in Noel Lenski and Catherine M. Cameron (eds.) *What is a Slave Society? The Practice of Slavery in Global Perspective* (Cambridge: CUP, 2018), 75-84).

10. It should be noted that distinction between helots and slaves was recognized within the Spartan society as well. Free population of Laconia owned imported slaves who were not helots and could be manumitted by their masters (Pl. *Alc.* 122d; Ath. 6.271f; cf. Rachel Zelnick-Abramovitz, *Not Wholly Free. The Concept of Manumission and the Status of Manumitted Slaves in the Ancient Greek World* (Leiden/Boston: Brill 2005), 63). There is epigraphic evidence (late 5th / early 4th century BC) for Laconian owners manumitting slaves: *IG* V 1, 1228-1232; a 5th century BC inscription from Gythium (a town of perioeci) prohibits quarrying of stone to both free and enslaved (*IG* V 1, 1155). Unlike the Athenian slaves, helots had property rights (cf. Thuc. 4.26.7) etc. I do not find very helpful the suggestion of Sara Forsdyke, *Slaves and Slavery in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: CUP, 2021), 42-43, that distinctions between slaves and helots were simply unclear in ancient Greece.

occurrence in ancient Greek history.[11] But this activity is not directed against masters, but rather agreed upon and sanctioned by them, or their state. Although flight of slaves is sometimes marked by violence, this is either of accidental nature, or with the purpose of facilitating the escape. For a movement to be considered a proper slave uprising three things are necessary: to be massive (participation should at least be in the hundreds), to be composed exclusively or mainly of enslaved people, to be focused on fighting the established order and government, rather than mere flight. The last point should not suggest that rebels aimed at abolition of the slavery as such – in fact, this would be untrue for any of the ancient slave revolts. They were fighting to render *themselves* free, though others would remain in bondage.

Slave Revolts in Attica and Delos

There are only three reasonably certain examples of slave revolts in the ancient Greek world. There is also a fourth case to consider, actually the most interesting one, but its historicity is disputed, and it will be examined separately.

Two earliest incidents that can be reliably dated are mentioned by Diodorus of Sicily, his source probably being Posidonius of Apamea.[12] Diodorus tells us

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11. Karl-Wilhelm Welwei, *Unfreie im antiken Kriegsdienst* I: *Athen und Sparta*; II: *die kleiner und mittleren griechische Staaten und die hellenistischen Reiche* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974-1977); Yvon Garlan, *Slavery in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca / London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 163-176; Peter Hunt, "Arming Slaves and Helots in Classical Greece," in Christopher Leslie Brown, Philip D. Morgan (eds.) *Arming Slaves: from Classical Times to Modern Age* (New Haven / London: Yale University Press, 2006), 14-21, 25-34; Jean Andreau, Raymond Descat, *The Slave in Greece and Rome* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 120-124, 126-128. Peter Hunt, *Slaves, Warfare, and Ideology in the Greek Historians* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998) made a case for Classical Greek historians deliberately concealing the role of slaves in warfare and civil strife. This he achieved, however, by throwing off the shackles of methodology: numerous examples of actual slave participation he speaks of, are found in the works of the very same historians. When Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon and others write of slaves under arms, no omission is assumed and they are treated as reliable witnesses. When they do not mention slave participation, this is taken as a proof of concealment. Credibility of the sources is decided according to whether they support the desired conclusion or not.

12. These events are often seen as a single revolt; however Diodorus and Orosius (or their sources) must have had a reason to single out the uprising in Delos from smaller unrests in "many other places". I suggest that this is due to the comparatively high number of persons involved. Diodorus mentions two other revolts in the same breath (D.S. 34.2.19): the Attican (more than thousand slaves) and the one in Rome (150 slaves); Orosius speaks of two contemporary uprisings in Latium with even greater numbers of participants (450 and four thousand). The Delian revolt must have been within the same orders of magnitude. Late Hellenistic Delos was a major center of Mediterranean slave

that, in 135 or 134 BC, reacting to news of the initially successful slave revolt in Sicily,[13] slaves in Attica and those in Delos, and also "in many other places" (κατ᾽ ἄλλους πολλοὺς τόπους), rose against their masters. Apart from that, we are given only two bits of information: the numbers of slaves involved were large, "more than a thousand" (ὑπὲρ χιλίων) in Attica alone, but, in spite of that, the revolts were short lived. Authorities reacted with the greatest speed and crushed the insurrections before they could develop into something more substantial.[14] This information is corroborated by a much later source, Orosius, who adds that rebel slaves in Attica were miners, defeated by a magistrate called Heraclitus. Similarly, the rebels in Delos were eliminated by citizen-soldiers, who anticipated the unrest. Orosius, too, emphasizes the connection between uprising in the West and those in the Aegean.[15]

This was not the end, however. A generation later, about the time of the Second Sicilian slave war (104-100 BC),[16] the Athenian slaves took arms again. We are slightly better informed about this episode. According to Posidonius (this time *via* Athenaeus), slaves employed in the Laurium mines of Attica managed to break free, kill their guards and take the Acropolis of Sunium. From this stronghold they made destructive forays into the Attican countryside. These slaves resisted "for a long time", ἐπὶ πολὺν χρόνον (months? years?), before they were overpowered.[17]

Once again, it is important to emphasize the fact that the Athenian slave revolt occurred concurrently with the much larger uprising in Sicily. The mention

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trade and there were centrally many recently enslaved individuals, who would riot given the right circumstances.

13. D.S. 34.2.2-48. On Sicilian slave wars see Keith R. Bradley, *Slavery and Rebellion in the Roman World, 140 B.C. - 70 B.C.* (Bloomington / London: Indiana University Press / B. T. Batsford, 1989), 46-82. A more thematic approach to these (and other) slave uprisings is given by Theresa Urbainczyk, *Slave Revolts in Antiquity* (London / New York: Routledge, 2008).

14. D.S. 34.2.19: Οὗ διαβοηθέντος κατά τε Ῥώμην δούλων ἀπόστασις ἑκατὸν πεντήκοντα συνομοσάντων ἀνήπτετο, καὶ κατὰ τὴν Ἀττικὴν ὑπὲρ χιλίων, ἔν τε Δήλῳ καὶ κατ᾽ ἄλλους πολλοὺς τόπους. Οὓς τάχει τε τῆς βοηθείας καὶ τῇ σφοδρᾷ κολάσει τῆς τιμωρίας οἱ καθ᾽ ἕκαστον ἐπιμεληταὶ τῶν κοινῶν θᾶττον ἠφάνισαν, σωφρονίσαντες καὶ τὸ ἄλλο ὅσον ἦν ἐπὶ ἀποστάσει μετέωρον.

15. Oros. 5.9.5: "...in metallis quoque Atheniensium idem tumultus seruilis ab Heraclito praetore discussus est; apud Delon etiam serui nouo motu intumescentes oppidanis praeuenientibus pressi sunt, absque illo primo Siciliensis mali fomite, a quo istae uelut scintillae emicantes, diuersa haec incendia seminarunt."

16. D.S. 36.3-11.

17. Ath. VI 272e-f: Ποσειδώνιος γοῦν, οὗ συνεχῶς μέμνησαι, ὁ φιλόσοφος καὶ ἀποστάντας φησὶν αὐτοὺς καταφονεῦσαι μὲν τοὺς ἐπὶ τῶν μετάλλων φύλακας, καταλαβέσθαι δὲ τὴν ἐπὶ Σουνίῳ ἀκρόπολιν καὶ ἐπὶ πολὺν χρόνον πορθῆσαι τὴν Ἀττικήν. Οὗτος δ᾽ ἦν ὁ καιρὸς ὅτε καὶ ἐν Σικελίᾳ ἡ δευτέρα τῶν δούλων ἐπανάστασις ἐγένετο.

of Laurium is equally significant. It is one spot in mainland Greece where we would expect armed slave resistance to happen: slaves were numerous and concentrated within a limited locality, they were mainly adult males, most of whom would be recently captured and purchased, and they were employed in one of the hardest and most dangerous forms of labor. While Diodorus omits this information, Orosius confirms that the revolt of ca. 135 BC also began in the Laurium mines. The importance of this will be expanded upon in the discussion of the circumstances that lead to slave revolts.

The other (roughly) contemporary examples of slave involvement in armed conflicts in the Hellenistic East fall into the categories of unfree summoned to fight for their masters, or joining a side in a civil war. This was the case with slaves mobilized by Andriscus (Pseudo-Philip) in 149-148 BC,[18] with those who fought for Aristonicus in 133-129 BC,[19] as well as with those who took part in the wars of Mithridates VI, from 89 BC onward.[20]

The Slave State of Drimacus

Nymphodorus of Syracuse, a Hellenistic writer of (probably) late 3rd century BC, whose account is preserved (again) only through Athenaeus of Naucratis, speaks of a slave revolt on the island of Chios, led by a man named Drimacus (Δρίμακος). In his account, the Chian society is described as in possession of multitude of foreign, imported slaves.[21] As time went by, increasing numbers of

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18. Eutr. 4.15: "Iterum in Macedonia Pseudoperses, qui se Persei filium esse dicebat, *collectis servitiis rebellavit* et, cum sedecim milia armatorum haberet, a Tremellio quaestore superatus est." (my italics). Cf. K-W. Welwei, *Unfreie im antiken Kriegsdienst* II, 64-65.

19. D.S. 34.2.26; Strab. 14.1.38; cf. K-W. Welwei, *op. cit.*, 68-78. Romans themselves sought to attract slaves to join them in this war. It seems that a group of slaves, who fought for Aristonicus in the territory of Colophon, switched sides and was even recognized by the Senate, however briefly, as an allied community: Louis & Jeanne Robert, *Claros* I, 1, col. II, ll. 36-47 (= *SEG* 39.1243); see Kent J. Rigsby, "Agathopolis and Doulopolis," *Epigraphica Anatolica* 38 (2005): 112-115. Diodorus (*loc. cit.*) sees a direct link between the revolts in the West and slave participation in war of Aristonicus.

20. Mithridates enticed the slaves of Romans and Italians settled in Asia to kill their masters by promising them freedom and material rewards (App. *Mith.* 22). Among other late-war measures, Mithridates freed all slaves who would join him in the fight (App. *Mith.* 48; cf. 61-62). However, his enemies used slaves as well. Two Athenian slaves kept Sulla's forces informed on the events in the besieged city (App. *Mith.* 31, 34). After they turned on the Pontic king, the Ephesians manumitted their public slaves to boost the numbers of recruits (*Syll.*3 742, ll. 47-48), but also to preempt a similar measure by the king. K-W. Welwei, *op. cit.*, 80-86; Brian McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates VI Eupator King of Pontus* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 114-116, 128-129, 131.

21. The claim is corroborated by Thucydides (8.40) and Theopompus (Ath. VI 265b). Athenaeus emphasizes greed of the Chians, who sought to acquire ever more slaves, and

these slaves fled their masters' estates and households, to congregate in an isolated, mountainous part of the island. Initially this was a rather chaotic affair, slaves were leaving their mountain refuge to plunder the countryside, until Drimacus, also a runaway slave, assumed leadership of the movement, "as king would take command of the army" (ὡς ἂν βασιλέα στρατεύματος). Under his leadership, they became more organized and more threatening to the slaveholders of Chios. The Chians made several attempts to crush the revolt by force, each one ending in defeat.[22]

At this point, Drimacus offered a compromise to the citizens of Chios, which was accepted. The slave community in the mountains would refrain from further violence against the citizens, in return they were to be allowed to take agreed upon amounts of food and goods, essentially being paid to keep the peace. Drimacus would cease to shelter runaway slaves indiscriminately. In the future he would accept only those who had genuine grievances; others would be returned to their masters. For many years this compromise held, with Drimacus ruling his mountain kingdom with the utmost discipline, punishing severely those who were out of the line. Then we have a gap in narration: Drimacus is now an old man and the Chians are offering a high bounty on his head. Seeing the end approaching, he urged his young lover to kill him and claim the bounty for himself, which the young man did, following some hesitation. After taking the prize and burying Drimacus, the unnamed youth left the island forever.[23]

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the element of divine justice in misfortunes that befell on them (Ath. VI 265c: ἐγὼ δὲ τοῖς Χίοις ἡγοῦμαι διὰ τοῦτο νεμεσῆσαι τὸ δαιμόνιον· χρόνοις γὰρ ὕστερον ἐξεπολεμήθησαν διὰ δούλους).

22. Ath. VI 265d: μικρὸν δὲ πρὸ ἡμῶν οἰκέτην τινὰ μυθολογοῦσιν αὐτοὶ οἱ Χῖοι ἀποδράντα ἐν τοῖς ὄρεσι τὰς διατριβὰς ποιεῖσθαι, ἀνδρεῖον δέ τινα ὄντα καὶ τὰ πολέμια ἐπιτυχῆ τῶν δραπετῶν ἀφηγεῖσθαι ὡς ἂν βασιλέα στρατεύματος. Καὶ πολλάκις τῶν Χίων ἐπιστρατευσάντων ἐπ᾽ αὐτὸν καὶ οὐδὲν ἀνύσαι δυναμένων...

23. Ath. VI 265d-266d: ἐπεὶ αὐτοὺς ἑώρα μάτην ἀπολλυμένους ὁ Δρίμακος (τοῦτο γὰρ ἦν ὄνομα τῷ δραπέτῃ) λέγει πρὸς αὐτοὺς τάδε· "ὑμῖν, ὦ Χῖοί τε καὶ κύριοι, τὸ μὲν γινόμενον πρᾶγμα παρὰ τῶν οἰκετῶν οὐδέποτε μὴ παύσεται· πῶς γάρ, ὁπότε κατὰ χρησμὸν γίνεται θεοῦ δόντος; ἀλλ᾽ ἐὰν ἐμοὶ σπείσησθε καὶ ἐᾶτε ἡμᾶς ἡσυχίαν ἄγειν, ἐγὼ ὑμῖν ἔσομαι πολλῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀρχηγός." σπεισαμένων οὖν τῶν Χίων πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ ἀνοχὰς ποιησαμένων χρόνον τινὰ κατασκευάζεται μέτρα καὶ σταθμὰ καὶ σφραγῖδα ἰδίαν· καὶ δείξας τοῖς Χίοις εἶπε διότι· "λήψομαι ὅ τι ἂν παρά τινος ὑμῶν λαμβάνω τούτοις τοῖς μέτροις καὶ σταθμοῖς, καὶ λαβὼν τὰ ἱκανὰ ταύτῃ τῇ σφραγῖδι τὰ ταμιεῖα σφραγισάμενος καταλείψω. τοὺς δ᾽ ἀποδιδράσκοντας ὑμῶν δούλους ἀνακρίνας τὴν αἰτίαν, ἐὰν μέν μοι δοκῶσιν ἀνήκεστόν τι παθόντες ἀποδεδρακέναι, ἕξω μετ᾽ ἐμαυτοῦ, ἐὰν δὲ μηδὲν λέγωσι ‖ δίκαιον, ἀποπέμψω πρὸς τοὺς δεσπότας." ὁρῶντες οὖν οἱ λοιποὶ οἰκέται τοὺς Χίους ἡδέως τὸ πρᾶγμα προσδεξαμένους πολλῷ ἔλαττον ἀπεδίδρασκον φοβούμενοι τὴν ἐκείνου κρίσιν· καὶ οἱ ὄντες δὲ μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ δραπέται πολὺ μᾶλλον ἐφοβοῦντο ἐκεῖνον ἢ τοὺς ἰδίους αὐτῶν δεσπότας καὶ πάντ᾽ αὐτῷ τὰ δέοντ᾽ ἐποίουν, πειθαρχοῦντες ὡς ἂν στρατηγῷ· ἐτιμωρεῖτό τε γὰρ τοὺς ἀτακτοῦντας καὶ οὐθενὶ ἐπέτρεπε συλᾶν ἀγρὸν οὐδ᾽ ἄλλο ἀδικεῖν οὐδὲ ἓν ἄνευ τῆς

After his death, Drimacus left an interesting legacy of respect by slaves and masters. Around his grave a ἡρῷον was built (of Ἥρωος Εὐμενοῦς, The Kind Hero), where both runaway slaves and their masters left offerings. Drimacus is even credited with appearing in dreams of some free Chians, to warn them about plots of their slaves. Athenaeus finishes by remarking that slave leader is nameless in some copies of Nymphodorus' text.[24]

What should we make of this story? The only chronological bit of data is phrase that revolt of Drimacus took place "little before our time" (μικρὸν δὲ πρὸ ἡμῶν),[25] which, if the accepted dating of Nymphodorus is correct, ought to mean sometime during the 3rd century BC.[26] On the face of it, there is nothing impossible in the story and little that seems improbable. That fleeing slaves would congregate in remote and inaccessible locations is well known practice, attested in many times and places. With an area of almost 850 km[2] Chios is large enough for such activity to be plausible. The refuge of these slaves must have been located somewhere within the mountainous region in the island's northeast. An inaccessible highland stronghold, combined with a large number of armed slaves, would account for inability of the Chians to end the revolt by force.[27]

αὐτοῦ γνώμης. ἐλάμβανε δὲ ταῖς ἑορταῖς 266b ἐπιπορευόμενος ἐκ τῶν ἀγρῶν οἶνον καὶ ἱερεῖα τὰ καλῶς ἔχοντα, ὅσα δ᾽ ἂν αὐτοῖς δοίησαν οἱ κύριοι καὶ εἴ τινα αἴσθοιτο ἐπιβουλεύοντα αὐτῷ ἢ ἐνέδρας κατασκευάζοντα, ἐτιμωρεῖτο. εἶτ᾽ (ἐκήρυξε γὰρ ἡ πόλις χρήματα δώσειν πολλὰ τῷ αὐτὸν λαβόντι ἢ τὴν κεφαλὴν κομίσαντι) οὗτος ὁ Δρίμακος πρεσβύτερος γενόμενος, καλέσας τὸν ἐρώμενον τὸν ἑαυτοῦ εἴς τινα τόπον λέγει αὐτῷ ὅτι· "ἐγώ σε πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἠγάπησα μάλιστα καὶ σύ μοι εἶ καὶ παῖς καὶ υἱὸς καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα. ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν χρόνος ἱκανὸς βεβίωται, σὺ δὲ νέος εἶ καὶ ἀκμὴν ἔχεις τοῦ ζῆν. τί οὖν ἐστιν; ἄνδρα σε δεῖ γενέσθαι καλὸν κἀγαθόν· ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἡ πόλις τῶν Χίων δίδωσι τῷ ἐμὲ ἀποκτείναντι χρήματα πολλὰ καὶ ἐλευθερίαν ὑπισχνεῖται, δεῖ σε ἀφελόντα μου τὴν κεφαλὴν εἰς Χίον ἀπενεγκεῖν καὶ λαβόντα παρὰ τῆς πόλεως τὰ χρήματα εὐδαιμονεῖν." ἀντιλέγοντος δὲ τοῦ νεανίσκου πείθει αὐτὸν τοῦτο ποιῆσαι· καὶ ὃς ἀφελόμενος αὐτοῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν λαμβάνει παρὰ τῶν Χίων τὰ ἐπικηρυχθέντα χρήματα καὶ θάψας τὸ σῶμα τοῦ δραπέτου εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν ἐχώρησε.

24. Ath. VI 266d-e: καὶ οἱ Χῖοι πάλιν ὑπὸ τῶν οἰκετῶν ἀδικούμενοι καὶ διαρπαζόμενοι μνησθέντες τῆς τοῦ τετελευτηκότος ἐπιεικείας ἡρῷον ἱδρύσαντο κατὰ τὴν χώραν καὶ ἐπωνόμασαν Ἥρωος Εὐμενοῦς· καὶ αὐτῷ ἔτι καὶ νῦν οἱ δραπέται ἀποφέρουσιν ἀπαρχὰς πάντων ὧν ⟨ἂν⟩ ὑφέλωνται. φασὶ δὲ καὶ καθ᾽ ὕπνους ἐπιφαινόμενον πολλοῖς τῶν Χίων προσημαίνειν οἰκετῶν ἐπιβουλάς· καὶ οἷς ἂν ἐπιφανῇ, οὗτοι θύουσιν αὐτῷ ἐλθόντες ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον οὗ τὸ ἡρῷόν ἐστιν αὐτοῦ. ὁ μὲν οὖν Νυμφόδωρος ταῦτα ἱστόρησεν· ἐν πολλοῖς δὲ ἀντιγράφοις ἐξ ὀνόματος αὐτὸν καλούμενον οὐχ εὗρον.

25. Ath. VI 265d.

26. Though Felix Jacoby, *FGrH* III B, F4 n. 10 saw this as a mistake and corrected it as οὐ μικρὸν δὲ πρὸ ἡμῶν (my italics).

27. I disagree with the interpretation of J. Adreau, R. Descat, *op. cit.*, 143 that we are not dealing so much with a slave revolt here as with an interesting case of cooperation between runaway slaves and their former masters. This seems to run contrary to the facts

But there are some problems as well. A story is not historical merely because it sounds, in a very broad sense, "realistic". We know next to nothing about Nymphodorus of Syracuse, merely that he lived during the Hellenistic Age, perhaps in the late 3rd century BC (but even this is inferred),[28] and wrote a volume on paradoxography (*On Strange Things in Sicily*, Περὶ τῶν ἐν Σικελίᾳ θαυμαζομένων).[29] The tale of Drimacus is taken from his other work, titled *Voyage along the coasts of Asia* (Τῆς Ἀσίας περίπλους).[30] It is puzzling that such a long story (Athenaeus gives us only a condensed version) should find its place in a work like this. But it is likely that Nymphodorus' composition was less a travelogue and more a collection of entertaining tales, less geographical and more paradoxographical in nature.[31] Not only that we have no corroborating account but, to judge from his comment on various versions of Nymphodorus' text, Athenaeus had none himself. Furthermore, the story as we have it is broken in three uneven parts that do not connect well. How did we got from peace between young Drimacus and the Chians, to old Drimacus with Chian bounty on his head? Once dead, why did the Chians choose to worship as a hero the one whose death they solicited? This, together with Athenaeus' comment that Drimacus' name does not appear in all versions of the text, has led Laquer and Jacoby to assume that we are in fact dealing with two or more distinct stories, perhaps taken from different sources, that were artificially cobbled together. In which of these stories was the protagonist actually called Drimacus?[32]

Even if we choose to separate conflicting tales, some difficulties remain. The conclusion of the story is obviously written from the perspective of slaveholders. It asks of the reader to accept that there are "good masters" (who treat the slaves justly, and deserve their obedience) and "bad slaves" (who disobey without proper cause, and deserve punishment), and it frames Drimacus as a divine protector of some idealized master-slave relation.[33] This begins to look like an etiological tale, invented to explain the existence of the shrine of the Kind Hero, and its connection with slaves on the run.

Consequently, the opinions of scholars as to the veracity of this story vary significantly. Already in the 19th century one could read diverse judgments: Fustel de Coulanges saw the account as an imaginary tale, one that resembles "un roman moral", while John P. Mahaffy believed it to be essentially true and

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as we have them: some cooperation was eventually achieved, but only after compelling display of strength on the part of the former slaves.

28. F. Jacoby, *FGrH* III b 572, 602-605 provides solid arguments for Nymphodorus as a Hellenistic writer, and more specifically writer of the late 3rd century BC, though the latter is less certain.

29. F. Jacoby, *op. cit.*, 602-603.

30. Ath. VI 265c.

31. F. Jacoby, *op. cit.*, 603.

32. Richard Laquer, *RE* XVII, *Nymphodoros* (6): 1625-1627.

33. Ath. VI 266e.

representative of a widespread phenomenon in antiquity.[34] Laquer (*op. cit.*) questioned its historicity, as did Westermann, while Jacoby dismissed it as a pure romance.[35] Soviet scholar Irina A. Šišova (Ирина А. Шишова) believed it to be fictional: Nymphodorus of Syracuse was actually a contemporary – perhaps even an eyewitness – of the Sicilian slave wars, which he used as a model for his imaginary Chian revolt.[36] Sara Forsdyke's dictum that "This wonderful tale cannot be accepted as an accurate account of historical events on Chios" is symptomatic of much of the recent scholarship.[37] On the other hand, there were and are many scholars that are less skeptical. Gustave Glotz took Nymphodorus' account at face value.[38] Moses I. Finley believed that numerous historical parallels are enough to give sound credibility to the story.[39] Alexander Fuks assumed the general outline of the story to be essentially historical, even if some details are not.[40] Joseph Vogt was of similar opinion.[41] Yvon Garlan said of the story that "it contains many details that are perfectly convincing historically."[42] Keith Bradley noted that it "has many features characteristic of maroon life", and that "there is every reason to accept the account as evidence..."[43]

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34. Fustel de Coulanges, "Mémoire sur l'île de Chio," *Archives des missions scientifiques et littéraires* 5 (1856): 526; John P. Mahaffy, "The Slave Wars Against Rome," *Hermathena* 7, no. 16 (1890): 178-180.

35. William L. Westermann, *The Slave Systems of Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1955), 41-42; F. Jacoby, *op. cit.*, 604.

36. Irina A. Sisova, "Anticnaya tradiciya o Drimake," in *Anticnoe obsestvo. Trudi konferencii po izucaniyu anitcnosti* (Moskva: Nauka, 1967), 85-91. Similar arguments are given in ead., "Rabstvo na Hiose," in Dimitriy P. Kalistov et al. (eds.) *Rabstvo na periferii anticnogo mira* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1968), 182-192.

37. Sara Forsdyke, *Slaves Tell Tales and Other Episodes in the Politics of Popular Culture in Ancient Greece* (Princeton / Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012). Lydia Langerwerf, "Drimakos and Aristomenes. Two stories of slave rebels in the Second Sophistic," in Stephen Hodkinson (ed.) *Sparta: Comparative Approaches* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2009), 331-359 treats the story of Drimacus as an example of the Greek literary fiction of the 2nd century AD. Cf. Peter Hunt, *Ancient Greek and Roman Slavery* (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 157, who describes the account as "more like a good story than the truth."

38. Gustave Glotz, "Têtes mises à prix dans les cités grecques," *Revue des Études Anciennes* 9 (1907): 4.

39. M. I. Finley, *op. cit.*, 113-114.

40. Alexander Fuks, "Slave war and slave troubles in Chios in the third century BC," *Athenaeum* 46 (1968): 102-111 (reprinted in: Alexander Fuks, *Social Conflict in Ancient Greece*, (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1984), 260-269).

41. Joseph Vogt, "Zum Experiment des Drimakos: Sklavenhaltung und Räuberstand," *Saeculum* 24, no. 3 (1973): 213-219.

42. Y. Garlan, *op. cit.*, 182.

43. K. Bradley, *op. cit.*, 38-40. Cf. id., "Resisting Slavery at Rome," in id., Paul Cartledge (eds.) *The Cambridge World History of Slavery I: The Ancient Mediterranean World* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 372. The Drimacus' story is accepted as historical by N.

Fortunately, the choice is not merely one between "an accurate account of historical events" and pure fiction. Real events can be (and often are) reflected in otherwise literary compositions. One should ask why was the slave-owning island of Chios chosen as the setting for the story? Why do slaves and, especially, a slave mountain refuge loom so largely in it? A romantic tale of a noble bandit-king would work well enough without these elements. When all the suspicious segments are removed, what remains may well be a reflection of actual events that took place on the Hellenistic Chios. The Attican revolt of 104 BC offers something of a parallel. Here too, the slaves escaped to the most inaccessible stronghold they could find, where they were able to hold out for a long time, and from where they made inroads into the countryside. More recent history of slavery provides many similar examples. Continuing forward, the romantic tale(s) of life and afterlife of Drimacus will be discarded, but I will also assume that three core elements of the account – Chian slaves fleeing in large numbers, the existence of slave stronghold in the mountains, and armed slave resistance than went on for some years – are true.

Conditions that Could Lead to Slave Revolts

So far, there is not much to go on, but comparisons with other slave uprisings in antiquity and beyond offer same useful parallels and opportunity for more solid conclusions. Some of historians of ancient slavery, of course, tackled the issue and offered explanations. Many scholars of older generation simply took opinions of certain ancient Athenian writers at face value and assumed that slaves did not revolt because they were, all things considered, well treated and satisfied with their position.[44] In doing so, they ignored statements to the contrary by other sources,[45] as well as the simple observation that many slaves fled whenever the opportunity presented itself.

Attempts to explain the lack of slave revolts prior to later Hellenistic period had been made, many of them focused on discovering a single determining factor. Michael Rostovtzeff believed that there was general impoverishment and marginalization of "lower classes" in the 2nd century BC; the slaves took arms

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McKeown, *op. cit.*, pp. 153. From vague language used by T. Urbainczyk, *op. cit.*, 29-31, I could not decide whether she considers the story fictional or not.

44. W. L. Westermann, *op. cit.*, 18, 22 (cf. 41-42); Alfred Zimmern, *The Greek Commonwealth: Politics and Economics in Fifth-Century Athens* (New York: Oxford University Press 1961), 381-382, 384-396 (cf. 179, 264, 266, 275, 348); Joseph Vogt, *Sklaverei und Humanität: Studien zur antiken Sklaverei und ihrer Erforschung* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1965), 3-4. Cf. Siegfried Lauffer, *Die Bergwerkssklaven von Laureion II: Gesellschaftliche Verhältnisse, Aufstände* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1957), 1012-1015.

45. For example Lys. 7.35; Pl. *Resp.* 578d-9a. Cf. Xen. *Hier*. 10.4: ἤδη δὲ πολλοὶ καὶ δεσπόται βίᾳ ὑπὸ τῶν δούλων ἀπέθανον!

because their position was worst of all and kept deteriorating.[46] In his extensive study on the slave workers of the Laurium, Siegfried Lauffer sought to explain the Attican uprisings as mirroring of the larger movements in Sicily.[47] Geoffrey E. M. de Ste. Croix decided that there was a "simple and obvious" solution. Different slave backgrounds (divergent cultures, languages, ethnicities etc.) meant that it was nearly impossible to organize and coordinate a revolt. Instead, they were forced to choose between fleeing or coming to terms with their fate.[48]

Others opted for a more complex explanation. In his much quoted work on armed resistance of African slaves in the 18th and 19th centuries, Eugene Genovese brings up a list of general conditions needed for the initiation of a large scale slave revolt. According to him, there is "a higher probability of slave revolt where: (1) the master-slave relationship had developed in the context of absenteeism and depersonalization as well as greater cultural estrangement of whites and blacks; (2) economic distress and famine occurred; (3) slaveholding units approached the average size of one hundred to two hundred slaves, as in the sugar colonies, rather than twenty or so, as in the Old South; (4) the ruling class frequently split either in warfare between slave holding countries or in bitter struggles within a particular slaveholding country; (5) blacks heavily outnumbered whites; (6) African-born slaves outnumbered those born into American slavery (creoles); (7) the social structure of the slaveholding regime permitted the emergence of an autonomous black leadership; and (8) the geographical, social, and political environment provided terrain and opportunity for the formation of colonies of runaway slaves strong enough to threaten the plantation regime."[49] Not all conditions are absolutely necessary, rather some combination of majority of them will suffice in most cases.

Several historians of antiquity suggested that this list, perhaps with some modifications, could be applied to the ancient world, maybe even offering explanations as to comparative scarcity of massive slave revolts. Paul Cartledge went further than most and made a valiant attempt to use this theoretical framework to explain the absence of slave revolts and recurrence of helot uprisings.[50] In spite of the obvious effort and great knowledge and diligence on display, there are problems with the solution proposed. Above all, modern concepts of race, racism and nationalism are applied to the ancient world with surprising ease. White masters / black slaves divide of the Atlantic colonial

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46. Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), 756-757.

47. S. Lauffer, *op. cit.*, 991-1015.

48. Geoffrey E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: From Archaic Age to the Arab Conquest* (Ithaca / New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), 146.

49. E. D. Genovese, *op. cit.*, 11-12.

50. Paul Cartledge, "Rebels and *Sambos* in Classical Greece: A Comparative View," in id., *Spartan Reflections* (London: Duckworth, 2001), 127-152.

societies, is equated with the ancient distinction between Greeks and barbarians with a very little caveat or qualification.[51]

If we accept these conditions or some modification of them as the explanation for the absence of the slave revolts prior to the Hellenistic age, we then must ask how they address the revolts that did happen in 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. That there was a significant social gap between masters and slaves can be taken for granted, but absenteeism, depersonalization and "greater cultural estrangement" (1) are harder to establish. Even if Sicily, where sources give a bleak picture of masters abusing and exploiting their slaves, we predominantly see native Greek masters in possession of Greek-speaking slaves from the Hellenistic east.[52] What sort of total cultural estrangement are we looking for here? There is very little that can be said concerning this aspect in Attica, Delos or Chios. Diodorus provides solid evidence for "absenteeism" in Sicily, but nothing of the kind for other places. Economic distress and famine (2) did not occur prior or during any of these revolts. The size of slaveholding units (3) seems to be very large in Sicily, though no statistics exist, but much smaller in Attica. This is of less importance, however, considering that uprisings began in Laurium. There is hardly any information on this aspect for Delos or Chios. The split in the ruling class (4) played no part in these events, nor were Athens or Chios in a state of war with any foreign enemy. Rome was, of course, always engaged in some or other foreign conflict but all of these were fought far away from Sicily. Roman difficulties in the north of Italy played some role in the Second slave war but not in the First.[53] Slaves did not outnumber the free population (5) in Attica or Delos, nor in Sicily for that matter.[54] Cartledge suggested that slaves were a majority of the population in Chios but the claim is dubious.[55] That newly purchased slaves outnumbered those born in slavery (6) is surely true of Sicily and Chios, probably of Delos as well, while for the 2nd century BC Attica there is just not enough evidence. However, if we consider only the slaves in the Laurium, then this condition is almost certainly fulfilled. The Chian slave refuge and the Sicilian slave revolts certainly had strong leadership, and we can at least infer the same for Attican and Delian revolts, but

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51. Ibid, 142-143.

52. Cf. Gerald P. Verbrugghe, "Sicily 210-70 B.C.: Livy, Cicero and Diodorus," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 103 (1972): 542-543.

53. Numerous examples from Classical and Hellenistic age show that Greek slaves did use civil strife and war as opportunity to free themselves. However, this never took the form of an autonomous revolt. Rather, slaves would join one of the sides (as in Corcyran civil war or the Athenian campaign against Chios) or simply took advantage of irregular circumstances to flee (as did more than 20,000 Athenian slaves from 413 BC onward). See n. 5-7 and 18-20.

54. Ibid, 557-558.

55. Thuc. 8.40.2 (οἱ γὰρ οἰκέται τοῖς Χίοις πολλοὶ ὄντες καὶ μιᾷ γε πόλει πλὴν Λακεδαιμονίων) is no proof; Thucydides could not have known how many slaves there were in Athens, let alone in Chios.

was this in any way connected with the social structure of "slaveholding regime" in those places (7)? And if so, how to confirm this, given the state of our evidence? This criterion is both broad and vague. The final condition, one concerning "the geographical, social and political environment" (8) that would allow the formation of runaway slave colonies is again very broad and general. If there was a slave refuge in Chios in the 3rd century BC (again, the date is anything but certain) but not before or later, we should ask what changed regarding these conditions. But there is simply no basis to pursue this line of inquiry.

In short, Genovese's theoretical framework is less useful for explaining the slave revolts of ancient Greece than it would seem at first glance. Some conditions are specifically tailored for the 16th to 19th century Atlantic slavery, and not really applicable to antiquity, or just hopelessly difficult to confirm and examine, given the state of ancient evidence (1, 3, 7, 8). Others are simply not present (2, 4, 5). What remains is 6, the great numbers of individuals recently enslaved and sold, but this surely cannot be enough on its own. However, the slave uprisings in Attica and Delos did happen, probably the one in Chios as well, while slave revolts in the West went on for several years. A solution for this ought to be offered, and preferably one that would explain the absence of similar events prior to the 3rd/2nd centuries BC.

Conditions that Did Cause Slave Revolts

The four conditions that follow are based on observation of commonalities between four Greek cases, and the slave uprisings in Sicily and Italy. The examples from later history are called upon when needed. These factors were clearly present in all the cases and played significant (if not always pivotal) role. I do not suggest that there are no other important factors at play in these events, factors that we are simply unable to see with the sources we have, nor that the mere presence of four main factors would automatically lead to slave unrest.

Numbers. An absolute majority of slaves in any given population is evidently not a requirement for slave revolts to start, least of all overwhelming majority; the cases we have at hand prove as much. However, they also show that significant numbers are essential even for an uprising to begin, and especially to have some success and expand. Revolts in Sicily and Italy began with thousands of slaves that grew into the tens of thousands (hundreds of thousands, if Diodorus is to be believed).[56] The numbers for the Aegean uprisings are not as high, which is to be expected (the total numbers of slaves were lower) but they are still significant. Over a thousand participated in failed uprising in the Laurium mines in ca. 135 BC, and probably even more in the more successful one of 104 BC. Something

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56. D.S. 34.2.18 (cf. 34.2.27).

about the numbers of slaves involved in the Chian revolt can be gleaned from the fact that they repeatedly beaten off subjugation attempts.

When slaves resort to violence, the high numbers give them greater strength and confidence, but also limit their options. Five or fifteen dissatisfied slaves can chose to flee and/or hide instead of revolting openly, but this is more difficult if they are fifty or five hundred. Where would hundreds or thousands slaves go, how would they survive, unless they take what they need, weapons in hand? Slave revolt in Chios began as a mass of unconnected flights of individual slaves. But, once their number grow beyond a certain point, both sides were pushed in the direction of massive confrontation. It is hard to imagine that the Chians would suffer the continuous existence of a stronghold of armed former slaves, and indeed they did their best to subdue them. On the slave side, a multitude of fugitives hiding in the mountains had little prospect of obtaining food and other necessities except through plunder. Thus, the armed conflict was fought until slaves were successful enough to impose terms on their enemies.

Concentration. High total numbers are not enough on their own, there has to be enough willing and/or desperate slaves at hand, in a limited geographic area, for a revolt to start. This is a more extensive and applicable version of the "size of the slaveholding units" criteria on the Genovese's list. It is potentially one of the stronger points in explaining the absence of slave revolts. Slaves were found everywhere but were rarely concentrated in a single locality in large numbers. Where this existed, the "locality" was usually a large urban area such as Athens, Corinth or Syracuse. But here the slaves were divided between many households and workshops, and also between very different regimes of life and work. They were intermingled with more numerous free population who, if emergency should rise, could quickly arm themselves, unlike slaves. Furthermore, the worst conditions for the enslaved were usually not found inside city walls but in agriculture and undertakings such as mining and stone quarrying.

What, then, of slaves outside cities? The single largest concentration of slaves in the Aegean were the Laurium mines of Attica. In the Classical age there were at the very least around ten thousand slaves (low estimate, perhaps three times as much) working in the silver mines.[57] They were also predominantly adult males and foreigners, purchased specifically for the purpose of hard physical labor. The production of the mines declined during the Hellenistic age, but slave workforce was still in the thousands in the second half of the 2nd century BC.[58] Here we have both numbers and concentration and it is a small wonder that of four known Greek slave revolts, two took place here. The more important question is: why

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57. S. Lauffer, *op. cit.*, 140-148.

58. Strab. 9.1.23 testifies that silver mines were all but exhausted, a century after the slave uprisings. In the second half of the 2nd century AD Paus. 1.1.1 described the mines as long abandoned.

there were no such revolts in the centuries prior, when the numbers were even larger and conditions hardly any better?

Nothing comparable in size to the Laurium existed elsewhere in the Aegean. Slaves were used in agriculture in significant numbers by the Athenians and others, but they were usually not concentrated in large groups. The largest estates of Attica were of moderate size,[59] not in any way comparable to the vast landholdings of the Hellenistic rulers and grandees, or to the Roman *latifundia*. More typical were small farms with at best several slaves. Outside Attica, it is difficult to speak with great certainty on this topic, but it does not seem that there were many large, compact landholdings, at least not before the Roman times.[60] Where larger estates are found, they are usually not worked by slaves, but by the helots, the penests and similar groups. The island of Chios seems like a good candidate for a place where larger agricultural domains existed and were tiled primarily by slaves. But if this was the case, it did not lead to an uprising of agricultural slaves but to their frequent flights – to the mountains.

Between themselves, Greek communities varied considerably in numbers of slaves in their possession. There were those where enslaved population was moderate and some where it was minimal. Unlike early modern examples, the richer and more developed the ancient state was, the higher the chances that it would possess an abundance of slaves. Thus, numbers and overall conditions that slaves lived in, could be significantly different between two neighboring states. Any coordinated action that would join slaves from different city-states would be exceedingly difficult to organize, and indeed we have no such example. When Greek slaves did rebel, this happened within the confines of a single community. This was a problem in another sense, revolts in Attica and Chios began in close proximity to a large urban center, one that slaves could not hope to take possession of. Their only chance was to take a well-fortified position and fight until they could reach some terms, which they managed to do in Chios. It was fortunate for the slaves in the First Sicilian revolt that they were able to take the

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59. Alison Burford, *Land and Labor in the Greek World* (Baltimore / London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 70-71. The largest known Attican landholding is supposedly one belonging to a certain Phaenippus, [Dem.] 42.5. Attempts were made to judge the size on the basis of its productivity ([Dem.] 42.20) but the conclusions vary between 40 and 120ha. See Geoffrey E. M. de Ste Croix, "The Estate of Phaenippus (Ps.-Dem. xlii)," in Ernst Badian (ed.) *Ancient Society and Institutions: Studies Presented to Victor Ehrenberg* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), 109-114 for the minimal assessment; Alain Bresson, *The Making of the Ancient Greek Economy: Institutions, Markets and Growth in the City-States* (Princeton / Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2016), 146-148 for the maximal. Smaller, but still "large" by Athenian standards, were the estate of Alcibiades (Pl. *Alc.* I 123c; 28.3 ha), and the one of Aristophanes, mentioned by Lys. 19.29.

60. A. Bresson, *op. cit.*, 149-152.

town of Enna at the very beginning of the conflict, and use it as their base.[61] But Enna was a small and isolated settlement in the hills. Capturing Athens or even Chios by storm was never a realistic option. The problem is most clearly visible at Delos, where the miniature size of the island forced rebels into a hopeless fight; there was practically nowhere to go, no inaccessible hill or stronghold to take and hold. The fragmentation of the Greek world, still very much a fact in the late 2nd century BC, worked against large scale slave revolts.

Desperation. While we can safely assume that all slaves longed for freedom, they above all else desired to survive. But some slaves were objectively in a much better position than others. Those who are reasonably content with their lot or convinced that non-violent options for improving it exist (whether this is actually true or not), will likely not revolt. Among the means of control utilized by slave owners, there are prizes as well as punishments. By encouraging some slaves to work harder and be loyal through privileges and material rewards, masters were also splitting and diminishing groups of potential rebels. For this and other reasons, household servants and slaves trained and employed in specialized crafts rarely riot. Especially difficult, indeed desperate, conditions are required to force someone to consider joining an incredibly dangerous and, in most cases, hopeless venture such as slave insurrection.

In the two Attican cases the rebels were overworked miners. We are reasonably well informed about the dire conditions prevailing in the mines of Laurium. It is true that most of the information comes from the 5th and 4th centuries, but there is little reason to think that there was any improvement by the 2nd century BC.[62] The fleeing Chian slaves were probably employed in agriculture. The situation in Sicily, where slaves lived and worked in detestable conditions, offers interesting parallels: the first revolt began on the estate where Damophilus and his wife habitually abused their slaves. There is no information on the Delian revolt, but since there were no mines or much opportunity for agriculture on the little island, the majority of rebels were most likely the people brought for sale on the infamous Delian slave market.

The criterion of desperation is in part subjective. It is well established that people who spent years in servitude or were born in it are less likely to flee or revolt. Here the importance of recently enslaved persons comes into play. They are much less tolerant of their new position and much more inclined to flee or fight, even when there is not much hope. There is enough evidence to assume that in each of the four Greek cases under consideration, the newly enslaved made up the majority of the rebels.

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61. D. S. 34.24b. Similarly the Sicilian uprising of 104 BC began with 120 slaves seizing a defensible position: D.S. 36.3.4-5.

62. For the possibility that conditions in the mines were actually worse, that more inhumane and cruel Roman mining practices were introduced in Attica in the 2nd century BC, see S. Lauffer, *op. cit.*, 1005-1006.

Impulse. Finally, it takes something well out of the ordinary to set the violence in motion. Once the slaves shed the blood of the free, they are committed and have no other option but to fight until the (usually bitter) end, but this point of no return is difficult to reach. The impulse can come from the outside of the community in question, or it can be internal, originating from the interactions between masters and slaves. The latter can be unusual demands or brutality on the part of masters or slave handlers, or endless, everyday accumulation of small acts of humiliation and cruelty that are tolerated until a breaking point is reached. The former is any encouragement, inspiration or incentive that comes from the outside. The First Sicilian slave war is an example of the latter: slaves of Damophilus choose to fight to end unusual cruelties they were subjected to; the lack of oversight was a strong contributing factor.[63] The Second war was brought on by an outside impulse: the slaves were incited by the possibility of freedom that was supposedly offered but then immediately denied to them.[64]

Once there is at least a partially successful slave uprising, it becomes an impulse on its own; it can act as a model and a constant encouragement for other similar attempts. We have seen that in the case of the Attican and the Delian revolts the impulse clearly came from outside. Sources we have explain these as reactions to the news of the great uprisings in Sicily.[65] The eagerness with which the slaves initiated a forlorn struggle, once they received the smallest stimulation from the outside, shows that other conditions, and especially that of desperation, must have been well and truly present beforehand.

There is a clear historical parallel between these events and the Haitian (Saint-Domingue) slave revolution of 1791. This uprising, by far the largest in the history of Atlantic slavery, was itself brought on by an outside cause – the grant of freedom and citizenship for the enslaved of Saint-Domingue by the French parliament, and the stark refusal of the white planter class to accept this outcome. But, once successful, the Haitian example began to exert influence of its own on other enslaved groups in the Western hemisphere. Several Brazilian slave revolts were directly inspired by it, as well as the German Coast Uprising in Louisiana in 1811, the largest slave rebellion in the history of the United States, the Great African revolt in Cuba in 1825, and the Jamaica Rebellion of 1831-32 ("the Christmas Rebellion"). Though none of these movements had much success, the abolition of slavery and the complete freedom were now seen as realistic goals. In the earlier, 17th and 18th century revolts, the rebels mostly aimed at creating "maroons", "quilombos" and similar refugee communities.[66]

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63. D. S. 34.2.10, 26, 34-37.

64. D. S. 36.3.1-3.

65. D.S. 34.2.19; Oros. 5.9.5.

66. E. D. Genovese, *op. cit.*, 82-120; Herbert S. Klein and Francisco V. Lunda, *Slavery in Brazil* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), 208-211; Manuel Barcia, *African Slave Revolt of 1825: Cuba and the Fight for Freedom in Matanzas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012), 51, 97-119.

As a side note, free individuals sometimes incite slaves to revolt, out of their own personal interests. Polyaenus speaks of such an attempt by a free man named Sosistratus, during the Athenian siege of 414-413 BC. The attempt was thwarted before it took off.[67] According to Diodorus, a Roman knight named Titus Minucius Vettius actually lead an unsuccessful slave revolt in Campania ca. 105 BC. His motives were distinctly personal and selfish, but thousands of slaves that followed him willingly had reasons of their own.[68]

The Chian example is somewhat different; the impulse was internal, and not a direct product of master/slave interaction. Here the situation itself and worsening conditions provided enough incentive for armed action. The inability to leave the island, to obtain supplies, as well as the increasing numbers of slaves within the refuge directly led to pillaging and other violent actions.

Conclusion

After taking everything into account the initial questions began to seem pointless. Given the prevailing conditions there was never much opportunity for the enslaved in ancient Greece to rise in rebellion, let alone be successful in such an attempt. The first Attican and the Delian revolt were brief though bloody affairs. The Chian and Second Attican uprisings went on for longer time, but only because the slaves utilized the local geography to their advantage. The ultimate failure of these movements must have had a discouraging effect on any similar endeavors. Nothing comparable to revolutions in Sicily and Haiti was ever likely to happen in ancient Greece. It is indeed remarkable that any slave revolts took place at all.

Faced with a situation as hopeless as this, some slaves took advantage of other options, including individual or group flight, cooperation with participants in civil conflicts or foreign enemies appearing on the borders of their particular slave state. Such actions were highly dangerous and precarious on their own, of course, but much less so than an autonomous slave revolt. Athenian slaves fled in great numbers to the Spartans and Boeotians during the Decelean war,[69] while at the same time the Chian slaves threw in their lot with the Athenians and ravaged their masters' estates.[70] A similar choice was made by many Greek and Anatolian slaves during the wars of Aristonicus and Mithridates, in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC.

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67. Polyaen. *Strat.* 1.43.2. Thucydides makes no mention of this episode.

68. D. S. 36.2.

69. Thuc. 7.27.5. They did not flee to freedom, though, as testified by *Hell. Oxy.* XVII (XII) 4.

70. Thuc. 8.40.2.

However, even those slaves that fled rarely seem to congregate in large and permanent groups. The kingdom of Drimacus on Chios is often compared with "maroons", the settlements of runaway slaves in the Western Hemisphere. And, indeed, there are many similarities, which came about through broadly similar goals. However, while the Chian slave state, if historical, is the only clear ancient Greek example,[71] "maroons" are among the widespread and ubiquitous phenomena in the history of Western colonialism. There were hundreds of these in Brazil, Suriname, Guyana, Colombia, Jamaica, Cuba and elsewhere, even some in the southern parts of USA. Some of the more long lasting "maroons" survived for several generations, fighting, trading and sometimes even cooperating with the colonies they fled from, as well as with the other "maroons".[72] However, this was made possible by the existence of vast areas of swamps, hills and forests, with little or no human settlement, for slaves to escape to. Similar communities would be much harder to establish in the Classical and Hellenistic Aegean which had a greater population than 18th century colonies of Brazil, Suriname and Guyana combined, but with the territory that was several orders of magnitude smaller.

Why, then, were there some slave revolts in the 3rd and 2nd century BC, but none before? In short, the absence of an initial catalyst. Where the slaves were concentrated in greater numbers, as in the Laurium, they were subjected to tight control that made organizing and resisting extremely unlikely, at least without the strong incentive from the outside. Since in antiquity there was no antislavery and abolitionist movement or ideology to provide that role, the only alternative was a successful uprising elsewhere. And then, for a brief moment in the 2nd century BC, there actually was a glimmer of hope, brought on by the massive revolts in the West, and some of the Aegean slaves made valiant if futile attempts to regain their freedom. In Classical Greece the slaves were numerous and there certainly was desperation and suffering aplenty. But the proper impulse was nowhere to be found.

Note

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71. The "slave city" (Δούλων πόλις) near Claros in the late 2nd century BC, mentioned in L. & J. Robert, *Claros* I, 1, col. II, ll. 36-47, may be another example, if K. Rigsby's interpretation (*op. cit.*) is correct.

72. E. D. Genovese, *op. cit.*, 51-81; H. S. Klein, F. V. Lunda, *op. cit.*, 193-199.

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