

PLUT. GAI. GRACCH. AND DIONYS. HAL. AR. VIII:
A NEW LIGHT ON THE GRAIN DOLE AND THE PARTICIPATION OF
SOCII IN LEX AGRARIA SEMPRONIA, THE ISSUE REVISITED

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ABSTRACT. This article examines the parallels between the reforms of Gaius Gracchus and the actions of Spurius Cassius as described by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, shedding new light on the interpretation of grain dole, land allotments and the role of Italian allies in the *Lex Agraria Sempronia*. The narrative of Spurius Cassius appears heavily anachronistic, reflecting the conflicts of Gaius Gracchus's era rather than those of the early Republic. Through a detailed analysis of the biographical structure of Plutarch's parallel lives of Gaius Gracchus and Cleomenes, the article explores the moral and political frameworks imposed by these authors. These comparisons reveal indirect evidence suggesting that Gaius Gracchus may have included Italian allies in his land reforms, a hypothesis that contrasts with traditional interpretations of his legislation. By comparing literary and rhetorical strategies, the study highlights how Dionysius and Plutarch utilized historical figures to reflect broader political and moral debates. Upon examining these texts, the study contributes to a re-evaluation of Gracchus's agrarian reforms and their implications for Roman-Italian relations during the late Republic.

KEYWORDS: Spurius Cassius, Gaius Gracchus, Lex Agraria Sempronia, agrarian reforms, Roman-Italian relations, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Plutarch, Roman Republic, Italian allies.

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§1. The Spurius Cassius narrative by Dionysius of Halicarnassus

While investigating the reforms of Gaius Gracchus, one of the most enigmatic reformers of the late republican history, the main challenge is posed by the extreme scarcity and inconsistency of sources. Under these conditions, one has to look for an opportunity to extract information from comparing pieces of information delivered by the literary tradition. Let us turn to the consideration of the text, that can offer some interesting evidence for the topic in question. This is a fragment

from the 8th book of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, dedicated to Spurius Cassius. Let us pay attention to the reformatory plans of Spurius Cassius regarding the roman allies.

The story of Spurius Cassius recalls biography of Gaius Gracchus through many details and ideas, according to the ancient rhetorical tradition they are conveyed by means of exposition or direct oratory speeches of participating characters. According to Dionysius, Spurius Cassius, who became consul for the second time, waged a war, and after returning to Rome, with his speeches, acquired the fame of an arrogant person.

They were also displeased at the arrogance of the man, who, after being honoured by the senate, had not shown equal honour to that body, but had produced a treaty drawn up according to his own pleasure and not with the general approval of the senate¹.

This treaty drawn up without the general approval of the senate (international affairs traditionally fell within the jurisdiction of the Senate) is in a perfect symmetry with the Attalus' legacy about which Tiberius Gracchus deliberated without senatorial consent². Although Cassius received all honours from the senate, he did not pay back with the equal respect:

For, being the only man at that time who had been honoured by his country with three consulships and two triumphs, he now conducted himself in a more pompous manner and conceived a desire for monarchical power³.

The three consulships⁴ brings up a further analogy with the two tribunates of Gracchus. Also, special attention is drawn to the desire for monarchical power –

¹ Dionys. Hal. AR. 8, 69.

² “And as regarded the cities which were included in the kingdom of Attalus, he said it did not belong to the senate to deliberate about them, but he himself would submit a pertinent resolution to the people. By this proceeding he gave more offence than ever to the senate” (Plut. Ti. Gracch. 14). See also: Cic. Rep. 3, 41; Liv. Per. 58; Flor. 2, 3, 2; De vir. ill. 64, 5; Oros. 5, 8, 4.

³ Dionys. Hal. AR. 8, 69.

⁴ Despite the fact that the Cassius gens was plebeian, Spurius Cassius somehow managed to be elected to the consulship three times before the Licinius-Sextius law of 367 BC, which for the first time allowed plebeians to be elected consuls.

which was one of the classical reproaches addressed to the brothers Gracchi by the historians of the 1 century BC⁵.

It should be noted here that the desire for tyranny attributed by ancient authors to the Gracchi, Spurius Cassius (as well as Spurius Melius and Marcus Manlius) is to a large extent a historiographic construct. The latter probably goes back to accusations that sounded in the speeches of the political opponents of Gracchi⁶). Next, the author reveals the motivation behind the legislative initiatives of Cassius:

bearing in mind that the easiest and safest way of all for those who aim at monarchy or tyranny is to draw the multitude to oneself by sundry gratifications and to accustom them to feed themselves out of the hands of the one who distributes the possessions of the public⁷.

Up to this point, this description fits almost perfectly with the history of Gaius Gracchus known to us from other sources⁸. Let us also pay attention to the coincidence of the strategy applied by Spurius Cassius and Gaius Gracchus: *largitio* (generosity in the form of electoral bribery)⁹.

⁵ Vell. Pat. 2, 6. Gaius might have been the first man in the state (*princeps esse posset*) had he held his spirit in repose; but, whether it was with the object of avenging his brother's death or of paving the way for kingly power (*vel praemuniendae regalis potentiae*), he followed the precedent which Tiberius had set and entered upon the career of a tribune.

⁶ Auctor ad Herennium. 4, 28, 38; Cic. Brut. 27, 103; de Har. Resp. 20, 43; Cic. De off. 2, 21, 72; Tusc. Disp. 3, 20, 48; Cic. de leg. 3, 9, 20. About the anti-gracchan annalistic tradition see: Mellor 2002, 20-21.

⁷ Dionys. Hal. AR. 8, 69.

⁸ "His aims, however, were far more ambitious and drastic. He was for giving the citizenship to all Italians, extending it almost to the Alps, distributing the public domain, limiting the holdings of each citizen p61 to five hundred acres as had once been provided by the Licinian law, establishing new customs duties, filling the provinces with new colonies, transferring the judicial powers from the senate to the equites, and began the practice of distributing grain to the people. He left nothing undisturbed, nothing untouched, nothing unmolested, nothing, in short, as it had been. Furthermore he continued the exercise of his office for a second term". (Vell. Pat. 2, 6)

⁹ Livius about the *largitio* of Cassius: "But the senators were also concerned on public grounds, namely, that the consul by his largesses should be building up an influence perilous to liberty". (Liv. 2, 41, 2). The following authors mention the concept of *largitio* when speaking about Gaius Gracchus: Oros. 5, 12: *Cum saepe populum Romanum largitionibus promissisque nimis in acerbissimas seditiones excitavisset*. Cic. de Off. 2, 21, 72: *C. Gracchi frumentaria magna largitio, exhauriebat igitur aerarium; modica M. Octavii*. Cic. Tusc. Disp. 3, 20, 48: *C. Gracchus, cum largitiones maximas fecisset et effedisset aerarium,*

An additional argument in favor of the anachronistic character of the legend about Cassius is supplied by the term *largitio* itself. According to Dionysius, it was the generosity of Spurius that brought him the strongest distrust. At the same time, *largitio* became a qualifying attribute of illegal *ambitus* only at the beginning of the 2nd century BC¹⁰. That is, the accusation of *largitio* is largely irrelevant for the early Roman republic¹¹. Further, Dionysius goes on to describe the details of Cassius' plan. According to him, Spurius Cassius put forward a motion to distribute to the people some vast public land, which had been previously abandoned, but since then occupied by the richest citizens. This is not the only peculiarity of such motion - he proposed to include both Latins and Hernicans in the list of recipients of allotments, who thus were to receive citizenship along with the allotment. With this action, Spurius planned to attract the Latins and allies to his side. The stubbornness in this matter was strongly condemned by the senate:

And bearing in mind that the easiest and safest way of all for those who aim at monarchy or tyranny is to draw the multitude to oneself by sundry gratifications and to accustom them to feed themselves out of the hands of the one who distributes the possessions of the public, he took that course; and at once, without communicating this intention to anyone, he determined to divide among the people a certain large tract of land belonging to the state which had been neglected and was then in the possession of the richest men. Now if he had been content to stop there, the business might perhaps have gone according to his wish; but as it was, by grasping for more, he raised a violent sedition, the outcome of which proved anything but fortunate for him. For he thought fit in assigning the land to include not only the Latins, but also the Hernicans, who had only recently been admitted to citizenship, and thus to attach these nations to himself¹².

If we attribute these plans to Spurius Cassius, then it will be almost impossible to fit them into the context of the 5th century BC known to us from other sources¹³.

verbis tamen defendebat aerarium. Quid verba audiam, cum facta videam? Cic. pro Sest. 48, 103: *Frumentariam legem C. Gracchus ferebat. Iucunda res plebei; victus enim suppeditabatur large sine labore.*

¹⁰ Aleksandrovsckaya 2006, 195.

¹¹ Cf. Kaplow 2013, 35.

¹² Dionys. Hal. AR. 8, 69.

¹³ The public land division paradox is found also in the description of Titus Livius: "To this gift he wished to add some part of that land which, he charged, was held by individuals, although it belonged to the state. Whereupon many of the Fathers, being themselves in possession of the land, took fright at the danger which threatened their interests" (Liv 2, 41, 2).

Firstly, in that period Rome was a small city-state that owned a relatively small territory. The population of Rome was also small and there were not yet extensive available conquered lands, which could be turned into ager publicus and distributed among the needy people¹⁴. Below Dionysius describes legal position of this land in more detail and thus it perfectly fits with the status of ager publicus immediately before Gracchan reforms:

they should show their concern for them by dividing among them the land conquered in war, which, though nominally the property of the state, was in reality possessed by the most shameless patricians, who had occupied it without any legal claim¹⁵.

Thus, the story of Dionysius of Halicarnassus about the semi-legendary consul Spurius Cassius contains numerous anachronisms. In our opinion, the author utilized the scenery of the early Republic¹⁶ in order to convey the essence of political conflicts of much later times. It might have been a deliberate decision¹⁷ of Dionysius dictated by political or literary motives. And, indeed, many details of the stated

¹⁴ Hölkeskamp emphasizes the insignificance of Roman *civitas* in those days (Hölkeskamp 2004, 20).

¹⁵ Dionys. Hal. AR. 8, 70

¹⁶ Mellor presumes that, the legislation and ideas, as well as the death of the Gracchi, became a model for the late Republican populations, and thus they were “retrojected onto earlier Republican history”. (Mellor 2002, 140). Mellor also notes that the biography of Tiberius Gracchus, compiled by his younger brother for propaganda purposes, could inspire the annalistic tradition of projecting “the violent confrontations of their day into their histories” (Mellor 2002, 20).

¹⁷ Cf. Kaplow 2013, 15, assuming, that the historicity of these histories is debatable, but it is for this reason that they are of particular interest in the study of the Late Roman Republic, during which these histories were “elaborated, recorded and believed”. Kaplow carried out an analysis of the historiographic tradition, which united early Roman reformers accused of striving for tyranny, with that of late Republic (Gracchi, Saturninus, Publius Clodius Pulcher), calling them with the general term of *popularis* (Kaplow 2013, 37). Mellor identifies the same reference, but within the works of Annalists (Mellor 2002, 21). *Contra* Oakley, speaking in favor of the historicity of the evidence about the early republican history. His thesis that the early social and economic development of Rome cannot be explained otherwise than by extensive patrician possessions requires additional confirmation, which the author does not provide (Oakley 1993, 21).

biography of Spurius Cassius resemble the history of the tribunates of Gaius Gracchus¹⁸. When, in 122 BC, Gaius Gracchus took office for the second time as tribune of the plebs, he proposed a bill that was absolutely unacceptable for the senatorial aristocracy - on granting citizenship rights to the Italian allies of Rome¹⁹.

Let us look at a further description of legendary early Roman history by Dionysius. Appius Claudius raised objections to the plans of Cassius:

Appius, upon being asked his opinion first, refused to grant the distribution of land to the people, pointing out that an idle multitude accustomed to devour the public stores would prove troublesome and unprofitable fellow citizens and would never allow any of the common possessions, whether property or money, to continue to be held in common²⁰.

Here senator Appius makes proposals for correcting the bill of Cassius. If our hypothesis about the presentation of Gracchan ideas through the setting of early Republic is true, then the senator's speech reflected a conservative assessment of Gracchus's policy, whose adherents believed that only a reform of the census system or the recruitment system could be allowed, but in no case should the foundations of the polis system be destroyed in the form of unequal treaties with allies. Dionysius, apparently, expressed his own views on the politics of Gaius Gracchus through the speech of Appius. He goes on to explain further details of proposed correction:

After saying this and other things to the same purport, he ended by giving them this advice — to choose ten of the most distinguished senators to go over the public land and fix its bounds, and if they found that any private persons were by fraud or force grazing or tilling any part of it, to take cognizance of this abuse and restore the land to the state. And he further advised that when the land thus delimited by them had been divided into allotments, of whatever number, and marked off by pillars duly inscribed,

¹⁸ Scholars have paid attention to this, but did not go into details. Cf. Kaplow, stating that the agrarian laws of Spurius Cassius «evokes Mid and Late Republican parallels», especially with the Gracchi (Kaplow 2013, 34). On a broader level, scholars noted peculiar attitude of Dionysius with the 4-5th centuries BC: «the peculiar perception of the relationship between past and present that underlies Dionysius', and, indeed, any form of classicism (...): classicism operates on the premise that the remote past is somehow closer to the present than the period immediately preceding it» (Wiater 2018, 65).

¹⁹ Most ancient authors link this bill about granting civil rights to Italian allies with the program of Gaius Gracchus and Fulvius Flaccus. However, Velleius attributes it to Tiberius Gracchus (a certain confirmation of this view is supplied by Appian's exposition of the electoral speech of Tiberius Gracchus about the miserable condition of allies (App. BC. 1, 9).

²⁰ Dionys. Hal. AR. 8, 73.

one part of it should be sold, particularly the part about which there was any dispute with private persons, so that the purchasers might be involved in litigation over it with any who should lay claim to it, and the other part should be let for five years; and that the money coming in from these rents should be used for the payment of the troops and the purchase of the supplies needed for the wars. "For, as things now stand," he said, "the envy of the poor against the rich who have appropriated and continue to occupy the public possessions is justified, and it is not at all to be wondered at if they demand that the public property should be divided among all the citizens rather than held by a few, and those the most shameless²¹.

Further, Appius Claudius proposes to introduce full and free provision for soldiers.

and that it is better for them, when they set out for the wars, to receive both their provisions and their pay from the public treasury than to pay in their individual contributions each time to the treasury out of their private estates, when, as sometimes happens, their means of livelihood are scanty and will be still further cramped by providing this money²².

How could such radical proposals come from a senator? It is possible to assume that Dionysius was putting political proposals of Gaius Gracchus into the mouth of senator Appius²³.

Apparently, Dionysius saw the inevitability and relevance of such a decision in the conditions of the 2nd century BC crisis. Moreover, knowing the results of this crisis during the period of civil wars, he supported such decision. But due to the conservative views that Dionysius of Halicarnassus (expressing the views of Augustan regime) represented, he did not want an anti-senatorial politicians to play the role of a wise savior of the civitas²⁴. Putting ideas into the mouth of Appius was a

²¹ Dionys. Hal. AR. 8, 73.

²² Dionys. Hal. AR. 8, 73.

²³ Sisani shares a similar view on the narrative of Dionysius: «Proprio a tali soggetti allude esplicitamente Dionigi di Alicarnasso nel descrivere la proposta di riforma agraria nuovamente avanzata dai tribuni nel 470 a.C., i cui dettagli sono ricostruiti senza dubbio sulla falsariga delle vicende graccane» (Sisani 2015, 69). He points to a curious parallel between the way Plutarch comments on the difference in the recipients of land plots under the Gracchan agrarian law and the demagogic project of Livius Drusus (respectively *χαριστάτους τῶν πολιτῶν* (best of citizens) in case of Gracchus' bill, and *τῶν ἀπόρων* (poor) in case of Livius Drusus' bill, and a similar juxtaposition between the proposals of Sempronius Atrantinus and Spurius Cassius in Dionysius' book (Sisani 2015, 68–69).

²⁴ Indeed, in other place of his work Dionysius criticizes Gaius Gracchus for creating discord: "No, they dealt with these by a process of persuasion and instruction, sometimes

way of ennobling the idea, and presenting senators ready for hard, but necessary decisions in order to save the state (the public property that Appius protects is regarded as its most solid foundation).

Let us take a closer look on the reform proposed by Appius Claudius. He suggests that illegally occupied land be confiscated to the state treasury in order to be partially leased for a five-year period. The money that will come from renting should be used to supply the soldiers and to pay for those expenses that are necessary for waging wars:

to choose ten of the most distinguished senators to go over the public land and fix its bounds, and if they found that any private persons were by fraud or force grazing or tilling any part of it, to take cognizance of this abuse and restore the land to the state. And he further advised that when the land thus delimited by them had been divided into allotments, of whatever number, and marked off by pillars duly inscribed, one part of it should be sold, particularly the part about which there was any dispute with private persons, so that the purchasers might be involved in litigation over it with any who should lay claim to it, and the other part should be let for five years; and that the money coming in from these rents should be used for the payment of the troops and the purchase of the supplies needed for the wars²⁵.

Then he continues that it is better for the poor when they go to war to receive food and salaries from the public treasury than to pay every time to the treasury from their own property:

and that it is better for them, when they set out for the wars, to receive both their provisions and their pay from the public treasury than to pay in their individual contributions each time to the treasury out of their private estates, when, as sometimes happens, their means of livelihood are scanty and will be still further cramped by providing this money²⁶.

making concessions and sometimes receiving them, and thus they resolved their complaints in a civic and civil way. That lasted until Gaius Gracchus gained power as a tribune and destroyed the concord of the state; and since then they have ceaselessly been killing and driving each other into exile and showing no restraint in extreme measures when in quest of victory. (Dionys. Hal. AR. 2, 11).

²⁵ D. Hal. AR. 8, 73: τὸ δὲ προσιὸν ἐκ τῶν μισθώσεων ἀργύριον εἰς τοὺς ὀψωνιασμοὺς τῶν στρατευομένων ἀναλοῦσθαι καὶ εἰς τὰς μισθώσεις ὧν οἱ πόλεμοι χορηγιῶν δέονται.

²⁶ D. Hal. AR. 8, 73: καὶ ὅτι κρεῖττον αὐτοῖς ἐστίν, ὅταν ἐξίωσιν ἐπὶ τοὺς πολέμους ἐκ τοῦ δημοσίου ταμείου τὸν ἐπισιτισμὸν τε καὶ ὀψωνιασμὸν λαμβάνειν, ἢ ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων οἴκων εἰς τὸ ταμεῖον ἕκαστον εἰσφέρειν τεθλιμμένων ἔστιν ὅτε τῶν βίων καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον ἐν τῷ συμπορίζειν τὸ ἀργύριον ἐπιβαρησομένων.

It can be assumed that Gaius Gracchus originally wanted to introduce free provision of soldiers with grain, but when pressed by his political opponents he abandoned this idea, limiting himself to a discounted grain distribution²⁷. This provision was supplemented by his *Lex Frumentaria* (Corn Law), which also introduced a fixed reduced price for grain distributed in Rome²⁸. The draft law of Appius is surprisingly consistent with the content of the military law of Gaius Gracchus.

To conclude, Dionysius is carrying out an obvious modernization of ancient history – perhaps consciously. For some reasons unknown to us (literary or political), Dionysius chose to present the history of the reforms of Gaius Gracchus in the setting of the Early Republic. This is indicated by the coincidence of the details of the narrative and the main ideas.

In search of additional evidence that speaks in favor of the hypothesis of the participation of Italian allies in the Gracchan settlements and land allotments, let us take a look at Plutarch's "Biographies". By doing so, we will bear in mind that Plutarch's paired biographies should not be considered in isolation from each other, but together, because they are presented by the author precisely as parallel ones²⁹.

Comparing his biographies and evidence from other sources about the same events and people shows that Plutarch was not committed to give an accurate historical account of the actual historical events. Instead, he sought to present a moral portrait of a number of selected heroes of the past in order to be able to compare and identify certain moral patterns³⁰. Thus, Plutarch's main objective consisted in the ethical, and not in the historical perspective³¹.

²⁷ Telminov 2019.

²⁸ The story about corn that ought to have been divided among all the citizens as a free gift also strikingly resembles the realities of the 2nd century BC more than anything else (D. Hal. AR. 8, 70).

²⁹ It should be noted that even if a comparison of biographies paired with each other does not always provide new material, one should not miss the opportunity to reveal the hidden allusions embedded in paired biographies by Plutarch himself.

³⁰ Cf. Davies, Swain 2010, 6.

³¹ Plut. Paul. 1: "using history as a mirror and endeavouring in a manner to fashion and adorn my life in conformity with the virtues therein depicted. For the result is like nothing else than daily living and associating together, when I receive and welcome each subject of my history in turn as my guest, so to speak, and observe carefully "how large he was" (...) and select from his career what is most important and most beautiful to know. Plut. Alex. 1: "For it is not Histories that I am writing, but Lives; and in the most illustrious deeds there is not always a manifestation of virtue or vice, nay, a slight thing like a phrase or a jest often

Historical events were mentioned by Plutarch only to the extent that their description contributed to the revelation of certain character traits of his heroes on the example of their judgments or behavior³².

In the light of our task, it is especially important to highlight the tendency of Plutarch to ignore well-known facts of biographies that did not fit into the harmonious moral portrait created by him³³, as well as inaccuracies caused by the author's inattention to minor details against the backdrop of the all-consuming task of creating a consistent moral image³⁴.

For the purposes of our study, we compared the parallel biographies of Agis and Cleomenes with that of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchi. To begin with, let's take a look at the sequence of events in these two "parallel biographies" and try to identify a common structure that may underlie them.

§2. The structure of parallel biographies (Cleomenes and Gaius Gracchus).

Comparing the biographies of Gaius Gracchus and Cleomenes, we see their consistent parallelism. With such a degree of "fitting" of the two plots (and characters) together, it is not surprising that Plutarch's account is full of inaccuracies. Within the two biographies, the structural elements of the plot can be easily distinguished. The whole narrative and the central moral insight of the biographies are built around these plot elements.

makes a greater revelation of character than battles when thousands fall, or the greatest armaments, or sieges of cities".

³² See Plutarch's stance on that matter in Plut. Nic. 1, 5. The author's attitude regarding historical details is conveyed even more accurately by the following lines from the biography of Galba (Plut. Galba. 2, 5): "Now, the accurate and circumstantial narration of these events belongs to formal history; but it is my duty also not to omit such incidents as are worthy of mention in the deeds and fates of the Caesars".

³³ In more detail about Plutarch's techniques, which he used to "compress" his narrative, transfer actions of secondary characters to the protagonists and combin similar events into one, also changing their sequence, see in: Pelling 1979, 74-96.

³⁴ For example, we noted the following inaccuracy in Plutarch's account of the last day of Gaius Gracchus. When he leaves the house, he is armed only with a short dagger (τό ἐγχειρίδιον) (Plut. Gai. Gracch. 15, 1: ἀλλ' ὥσπερ εἰς ἀγοράν ἐν τηβένῳ προΐει, μικρὸν ὑπεζωσμένος ἐγχειρίδιον), but when a little later, in the temple of Diana, Gaius Gracchus was about to commit suicide, his friends stopped him by snatching from his friends not a dagger, but a sword (τό ξίφος): ἐκεῖ δὲ βουλόμενος ἑαυτὸν ἀνελεῖν ὑπὸ τῶν πιστοτάτων ἐταίρων ἐκωλύθη, Πομπωνίου καὶ Λικινίου: παρόντες γὰρ οὗτοι τό τε ξίφος ἀφείλοντο καὶ πάλιν φεύγειν ἐπήραν αὐτόν.

1. Introduction. The influence of the fate of the ideological predecessor on the behavior of the protagonist in the field of reform activities, as well as his character traits, which will subsequently be revealed in full force and will influence his thoughts and actions.

2. First successes of the protagonist while he is still loyal to the established social and state order.

3. Ambition and pride force him to start confrontation with the state by appealing to the people.

4. The first program speeches addressed to the people serve as a means to justify future actions.

5. The first legislative steps in order to implement the plan.

6. Praise of personal qualities of the protagonist by the author.

7. The second significant success of the protagonist, immediately preceding the ill turn of fortune.

8. Opponents begin to press the protagonist. Success and failure alternate for a while.

9. Major defeat and failure of all plans.

10. Temptation of a suicide and withdrawal from the struggle.

11. "Message" addressed to the fatherland.

12. Honoring the protagonist after his death.

This parallelism is especially clear upon closer examination of the reformatory plans of both protagonists. Thus, the close interdependence of the two texts from each other is revealed. According to Plutarch, the fate of Cleomenes and Gaius Gracchus and their main political actions were to a certain extent similar. This allowed the author to draw up a complex construction of a "parallel biography" based on their life stories.

Now let's look at how the identified parallelism and interdependence of the biographies of Gaius Gracchus and Cleomenes serve as additional evidence of the participation of Italian allies in the Gracchan colonies and individual *virum* land allotments.

In the biography of Agis, we find one curious detail: according to the law proposed to the elders by Agis, it was planned to offer land allotments to *perioikoi*, that is, non-citizens³⁵. Agis did not succeed in implementing his plan, so it became

³⁵ Plut. Agis. 8: Οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ διαπραξάμενος ὁ Ἄγις ἔφορον γενέσθαι τὸν Λύσανδρον, εὐθύς εισέφερε δι' αὐτοῦ ῥήτρην εἰς τοὺς γέροντας, ἧς ἦν κεφάλαια χρῶν μὲν ἀφεθῆναι τοὺς ὀφείλοντας, τῆς δὲ γῆς ἀναδασθείσης τὴν μὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ κατὰ Πελλήνην χαράδρου πρὸς τὸ Ταῦγετον καὶ Μαλέαν καὶ Σελλασίαν κλήρους γενέσθαι τετρακισχιλίους πεντακοσίου, τὴν δ'

Cleomenes's turn to carry it out. The land was distributed. Cleomenes also gave allotments to each exile, promising to return them as soon as order would be restored. Having thus increased the number of citizens by adding the most worthy of the perioikoi, he created a new detachment of four thousand heavy infantry (Plut. Cleom. 11). This seems to be a neatly drawn parallel with the activities of Gaius Gracchus, who welcomed the allocation of land not only to Roman citizens, but also to Italian allies. It is curious that Plutarch does not mention Italian allies receiving land allotments in the biography of Gaius Gracchus. But what can this "eloquent silence" possibly mean?

If Plutarch saw clear differences in the fates of his heroes, he sought to comment on them in order to use the moral potential of such difference for an instructive "comparison" of heroes in the corresponding section of his parallel biographies. He tended to dwell more heavily on the revealed differences in the biographies of protagonists, rather than on the similarities. But Plutarch leaves the land reform of Cleomenes about the perioikoi without comment. Can it mean that there were no differences in this respect between Gaius Gracchus and Cleomenes? In other words, could he recognized a certain similarity between them by omitting any comments?

Plutarch sympathized with Cleomenes more. That is why, perhaps, he left without comment the Italian participation in the land reform by Gaius Gracchus, in order to silence this positive element in the latter's biography. And, indeed, upon careful examination of the biographies of all four heroes of these parallel biographies (Tiberius and Gaius Gracchi, Agis and Cleomenes), it becomes clear that Gaius Gracchus in the presentation of the author was the least worthy of all four.

It is especially striking that even the positive features of Gaius Gracchus in the description of Plutarch look like shortcomings against the background of the actions of Agis and Cleomenes. Consistently insisting on the negative side of Gaius Gracchus, Plutarch could become forced by his own paradigm to omit important details that did not fit into his scheme, and to exaggerate minor details that helped to create the desired image of the reformer within the author's attitude³⁶.

The following detail is also noteworthy: in the "comparison" section, Plutarch does not say anything about offering land to perioikoi and conscripting them in the army, although this was probably the most daring and disruptive of all Cleomenes's actions, not counting the ephorate abolition. We believe this silence is quite

ἔξω μυρίους πεντακισχίλιους· καὶ ταύτην μὲν τοῖς ὅπλα φέρειν δυναμένοις τῶν περιόικων μερισθῆναι, τὴν δ' ἐντὸς αὐτοῖς Σπαρτιάταις.

³⁶ Albrecht, speaking about Plutarch's style, calls it "an intellectual construction, as is often the case with <...> Plutarch's 'comparative' sections" (Albrecht 2014, 70).

logical in the light of one of the “moral laws” that Plutarch formulates on the example of Cleomenes and Agis: in reforms, it is important to rely on authoritative examples of antiquity. The allocation of land to perioikoi, obviously, could not have any legitimate precedents in the history of Sparta.

The question of whether Gaius Gracchus agrarian commission distributed land to the allies, as Cleomenes did, of course, still remains open. But it can be concluded, that one of the following two statements might be probable: Plutarch might have known from his sources that Gaius Gracchus had acted in the same way as Cleomenes, i.e., offered land to non-citizens. He included this legislative decision into the biography of Cleomenes because there was a clear parallelism with Gaius Gracchus. But he omitted it in the biography of Gaius Gracchus because he did not approve of his actions. A sharp witted reader of parallel biographies would get a hint to think so, and Plutarch might have deliberately counted on this effect.

Second possibility is that, according to Plutarch, reformatory plans of Gaius Gracchus should have included such measure, although he did not have exact information on this matter. He still put this reform in the biography of Cleomenes. While mentioning land plots in the colonies of Gaius Gracchus, he did not specify whether they were given to citizens only or also to non-citizens³⁷. In such case, the absence of a specification speaks volumes. Plutarch did not want to focus on this measure, because he tended to emphasize the limited scope of Gaius Gracchus’ actions and a particular narrowness of his political thinking, in contrast to Cleomenes.

Thus, we have acquired an indirect evidence, based on an analysis of the literary tradition, that Gaius Gracchus (according to Plutarch) might have designated land allotments in his colonies not only for citizens, but also for non-citizens. Although this evidence cannot serve as a direct proof of the hypothesis under discussion, indirectly it indicates that Gaius Gracchus allowed and perhaps even encouraged the participation of Italics in his land reform.

We have demonstrated, by comparing the structure of both biographies, how carefully they are built according to the same scheme. Was it an artificial fitting of two dissimilar stories? We believe not. Plutarch had a variety of sources and was well acquainted with different versions of events. His biographies show that he

³⁷ Claiborne assumes that Plutarch was only interested in the character traits of his protagonists and he was not interested in non-citizens, who would be unnecessary and superfluous to his main narrative (Claiborne 2011: 105). We cannot agree with this point of view, because in the biographies of Agis and Cleomenes, however, legislation on the perioikoi comes into discussion.

carefully studied all available sources, including speeches and historical accounts about his protagonists and carefully chose correct pairs.

After a thorough analysis of biographies of many distinguished personalities, he accumulated rich material. From the list of these historical characters, he could combine almost perfect pairs, discarding unnecessary or inconsistent details in order to leave perfect symmetry in biographies and eloquent difference in moral values.

Based on the analysis of a number of accounts by Dionysius and Plutarch, we described an indirect evidence, hinting on the participation of Italian allies in the land reform of Gaius Gracchus. This conclusion argues against the prevailing thesis in historiography about the anti-Italic orientation of the agrarian law of Gaius Gracchus.

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