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**Greek Tyrants and Roman Anxieties in Dionysius of Halicarnassus**

In a famous digression in his *Roman Antiquities* (7.2-11), Dionysius of Halicarnassus tells the story of Aristodemus Malacus, tyrant of Cumae in the late Sixth and early Fifth Centuries BC. Scholars have tended to focus on the possible sources of this passage, in hopes of establishing its value as evidence for the history of pre-Roman Italy. This paper seeks to provide a new perspective to this typically sterile discussion of Dionysian *Quellenforschung*. It begins by considering two questions that previous scholarship has failed to take seriously: the role of the Cumaean digression within the broader context of the early Roman history that Dionysius is relating, and the ways in which he (or his source) may have adapted the Aristodemus anecdote to suit that purpose.

I argue that Dionysius's portrait of Cumaean politics stands in deliberate contrast to the unique *stasis* between patricians and plebeians that is playing out at Rome. Dionysius explicitly states that the Romans' ability to resolve this conflict peacefully through political compromise was what made their city great, and that their success in this regard sets them apart from the experience of other Greek *poleis*, such as Corcyra (7.66). As Dionysius presents events, this Roman exceptionalism depended upon the moral character of the individual actors involved. The moderation of senators like Menenius Agrippa and M'. Valerius kept the state together in the face of the divisive arrogance of Appius Claudius and Coriolanus. Meanwhile, the tyranny at Cumae was brought about by the unchecked hostility of the local aristocracy, coupled with Aristodemus's own ambitious nature. In its context within the *Roman Antiquities*, this digression on Cumaean political developments serves to underscore what is at stake in the elaborate debates about *concordia* presented in the main narrative.

Once this connection has been established, we can return to the question of sources. The history of Aristodemus's tyranny was not entirely unfamiliar to other writers on Rome's early history. It is possible that the lessons of what happened at Cumae were already part of the wider historical tradition about the conflict of the orders before Dionysius. That this was the case is suggested by the presence of what seem to be uniquely Roman ideas about tyranny in Dionysius's description of Aristodemus's rise to power. While it was not uncommon for Greek tyrants to be associated with the interests of the dispossessed, Aristodemus's demagoguery has a distinctively Gracchan flavor. Similarly, the manner in which he seizes sole power is reminiscent of late Republican anxieties about those who desired *regnum*

If this analysis holds, then Dionysius's account of the life of Aristodemus Malacus should not be regarded as a straightforward retelling of local ( i.e., non-Roman) tradition, mediated by a Third-century Greek historian, as argued by Alföldi, *et al.* As with the rest of his presentation of the first conflict of the orders, the author's portrait of Aristodemus overlays his own Greek aristocratic viewpoint onto distinctively Roman political concerns already inherent to the tradition.