Sedes et rura:

landownership and the Roman peasantry in the late Republic.

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This thesis reconsiders the cultural and economic relevance of landownership for the Roman republican peasants. In the Introduction, I define direct agricultural producers (hereafter "peasants") as the object of my investigation. In Chapter 1, I argue that throughout the republic peasants owned little or no land, and private landholdings had a marginal role in peasants' production strategies. The frequent land schemes did not make the distribution of property more egalitarian, because they were not designed for that purpose, and due to their poverty peasants were unable to maintain control of the allotments.

In Chapter 2, I explain that in ancient literature peasants were idealized as symbols of complete independence and self-sufficiency, and in political reflection they were considered the most perfect citizens. In accordance with the widespread view that Roman power had peaked and was now declining, already by the time of Fabius Pictor early and middle republican Rome was idealized as a society of peasants, whose supposed decline was threatening the republic. I conclude that in the Gracchan period peasants' discontent may have been a consequence of growing inequality, rather than utter impoverishment.

In Chapter 3, I argue that in order to understand whether the free peasantry was actually declining we should consider variations in peasants' opportunities for dependent labour on the one hand, marketing on the other. Therefore, I reconsider the available data on the demography of Roman Italy and on commercial agriculture. I conclude that, while peasants could profit from increased access to markets, there is no conclusive evidence that competition for labour grew.

In Chapter 4 I explain that the late republican peasants were perfectly aware that land had an economic value, and were even able to carry out evaluations. I suggest that this was a consequence of *census* procedures.

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Introduction

1. What farmers?

The subject of the present thesis is all those agriculturalists who worked the land and produced little surplus. Although definitions such as “farmers living around subsistence levels” or “direct farmers” certainly have great precision, they suffer from a double disadvantage. The first is merely practical: the constant repetition of these periphrases can be seriously annoying for readers. The second, more important, is that by introducing new terminology I would unfruitfully sever the link with the previous scholarship, both in the narrower subject of the study of ancient agriculture, and more generally in the study of agriculturalist societies.

There is indeed a term that immediately comes to the mind when discussing direct farming: peasants. The term has been commonly used in ancient history until the 1980s. Especially in the study of ancient Greek agriculturalists, it has subsequently been replaced by “smallholder”, “farmer”, or by periphrases such as “small farmers”. The fading fortune of the “peasant” from the second half of the 1980s can partly be connected to the crisis of socialism and Marxist ideologies throughout the globe (Gallego 2007: 6). Unsurprisingly, the word is still alive and well in disciplines, such as that of peasant studies, still strongly influenced by Marxist theory (e.g. Van der Ploeg 2008). To the dissatisfaction with the word “peasant” the traditional derogatory nuance of common English usage (which in Italian, for some reason, is attached to husbandry: cf. *bifolco*, from Latin *bubulcus*) has also contributed to some extent. However, the main reason why the term peasant has been widely challenged is that this has been assumed to entail, by definition, the regular transfer of parts of the produced surplus to the ruling elite (Gallego 2007: 2). Thus, the preference for the term farmers involves precise assumptions about the success of the πόλις in reducing the exploitative nature of the relationship between wealthy landowners and small farmers (most notably Hanson 1995). This position, however, is completely unjustified, insofar as exploitation is not part of any scientific definition of peasants.

In fact, the term peasants has never been rejected by Roman historians and archaeologists (e.g. Evans 1980a; 1980b; De Ligt 1990; 1991; 2012; Launaro 2011; Kron 2008; Rathbone 2008; Ghisleni et al. 2011; Vaccaro et al. 2013), who have correctly applied it to both independent and dependent agriculturalists. However, Roman historians have reached such a refined understanding of the Roman peasantry that they have, without noticing, challenged the assumptions upon which current definitions of peasants are based. In peasant studies, in addition to the use of a notional and undetermined threshold in the size of properties, peasants are also distinguished from farmers on the basis of their supposedly different production strategies. Peasants – so the story goes – practice subsistence farming.

Thus, one of the four points whereby Shanin (1982) defines peasants is that they mostly produce what they consume: production, consumption and labour are for the most part internal to the household (note, however, that Shanin admits that contemporary peasants are more engaged with the market). According to Wolf (1966), instead, peasants are involved with the market, but only for survival, rather than to invest and expand the scale of their operations. According to Van Der Ploeg (2008), peasants "actively withdraw" from markets and their logics, including the use of money: they minimize monetary costs, resorting instead to cooperative relations, that could provide alternatives to markets and monetary exchange. Among the various attempts to define peasants in terms of access to markets, Grigg's (1982) stands out, in that, in his definition, peasants' loose relationship with markets does not depend on peasants' deliberate decisions, but rather on external constraints: peasants are forced to count on their own strengths because they only have imperfect access to markets, and this results in the pursuit of completely different strategies than those that they would otherwise pursue if they could market their produce (see examples in Grigg 1995: 82-3).

These definitions, though, can hardly apply to the ancient world. Modern peasants live in remote or underdeveloped regions, and are therefore barred from access to markets; otherwise, when living in developed countries, their attempt to have little to do with markets is part of a precise ideological and political choice (rejecting globalization and the consumer society, appreciating by contrast direct work and self-sufficiency, is a very distinctive characteristic of "re-peasantization" in Europe and Northern America as described by Van der Ploeg 2008).[1] Ancient peasants, instead, often lived close to towns and commonly had access to markets (Evans 1980; De Ligt 1990; 1991; 1993; Horden and Purcell 2000: 270-278 on Mediterranean peasants), especially, as I will explain in Chapter 3, to short and medium range commerce.[2]

The case of Attica is emblematic.[3] There, as the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Oeconomicus* explains (1.6.2 [1344b]), the typical custom of household administration was to sell all the produce and then purchase during the year: for this reason, in small households the produce did not even make it to the storage rooms (ἡ τοῦ ταμιείου θέσις οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ταῖς μικροτέραις οἰκονομίαις "the operation of depositing the produce in the storage room does not take place in the administration of smaller households"; my transl.).[4]

Equally questionable is the supposition that peasants only access market for survival, and not for growth. In fact, distinguishing survival and growth is impossible. If I invest in a iron plough, more effective than a wooden one, or if I purchase a pair of oxen, this is an investment; and yet, it aims at increasing production to prevent starvation in lean times: it aims at survival. The distinction between survival and growth has its roots in the Marxist idea of "simple reproduction", which underlies Chayanov's idea that peasant households undergo a life cycle in which any achieved growth will be eventually harnessed by their own reproduction, resulting in the partitioning of land and wealth to give birth to a new household (Chayanov 1966). It

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[1] This is not to say, of course, that all modern direct farmers have no access to markets, or reject it. Yet, under peasant studies' classification, they would be listed under a different category, that of "entrepreneurial farmers".

[2] Note that peasants' access to markets was, in some instances, limited and controlled by wealthy landowners. See e.g. n. 51 on landowners' control of *nundinae*.

[3] On marketing strategies see also the case of Pericles (Plut. *Pericles* 16.4-5), which I discuss in Chapter 3.

[4] Are we entitled to conclude from this that small Attic farmsteads did not even have storage rooms?

would be wrong, however, to assume that peasants can by no means escape their condition. The Maktar harvester (Shaw 2013: 281-298), for example, was a peasant who succeeded in growing and escaping his condition (he moved on from being a wage harvester to being a *ductor*, to purchasing his own farm).

In this thesis, I will use the term peasant in order to preserve the connection with the academic research on Roman agriculturalists. I will use the term with the loose sense that these studies have implicitly used, that is direct producers who could have, to various degrees, access to markets and coinage. The use of modern terminology has the advantage of capturing a sector of the population that the ancient terminology failed to distinguish. In Latin and Greek, we have a number of words that are commonly used to describe agriculturalists: however, they relate to different distinctions, such as that between urban and rural inhabitants, or rich and poor. For example, words such as *rusticus* and ἄγροικος are used for people who live in the country, regardless of their economic and social level.[5]

The same lack of distinction is visible in the word *plebs*. As Veyne (2000: 1170-1179) has pointed out, the social and economic levels described by the word *plebs* stretched all the way up to those people whose income fell just short of the the equestrian rank ("you are 6-7,000 HS short to the 400,000", Horace says [*Epist*. 1.1.57-59]). The frequent mentions of the *plebs rustica* supporting late republican land distributions may suggest that this expression describes the kind of people with whom the present thesis is concerned; and yet, it is clear that *plebs*

[5] The two words often convey a sense of remoteness and lack of refinement. The only explicit rejection of this view in ancient literature is Dio Chysostom's *Euboicus*, which argues that people who live removed from the city – such as the hunters whom he describes – are perfectly decent, and even better than those who live in the "corrupting" town. Besides, Dio Chrysostom (7.107-8) also argues that the original rural inhabitants of Attica, who stayed clear of Athens, were "better and wiser" than those who later took up the habit of gathering in town to serve as members of the assembly and jurors in the courts. At any rate, note that complete remoteness from the city is of course a produce of idealization, comic overturning of reality, or rhetorical exaggeration. See for example Claudian's *Senex Veronensis*, who had never left his suburban property to visit nearby Verona (Claud. *Carm*. 20); Plut. Merc. 66-8, where Demipho is said to have left the farm only once every 4 years to attend the Panathenea; Mago's prescription to sell your town house to achieve more effective oversight of your farm (Plin. HN 18.35; note that Pliny disagrees). Even Aristophanes' notoriously idealized farmers could go to town, as in the *Ecclesiazousae*, where they go to the assembly, to vote against the mobilization of the fleet (for which, it should be noticed, they were required to pay).

rustica is mainly constructed in opposition to *plebs urbana*, and, again, cuts through different levels of wealth (see e.g. Haeussler 2013: 255; 288 and Table 5.6 on Northern Italy).

Words such as *agricola* and *colonus* (the latter, of course, when not used with the technical sense of tenant) seem at first glance much more promising, since they derive from the verb *colo* and thus imply direct work. However, things are complicated by the fact that the sources commonly present wealthy people, who do not perform any direct work, as *agricolae* or *coloni*. According to Reay (2005; 2012), the ancients considered slaves as their own extensions and therefore they could believe that they were directly at work in the fields even if their slaves actually were. This idea, fancifully defined as "prosthetic masterly extensibility", has been accepted by Roth (2011: 88), who claims that, through the fiction of landowners working their fields, "slave labour employed under due masterly supervision […] could be seen as a continuation of […] due care for one's land and homestead, worked by one's own hands and fertilized by one's own sweat". Although ingenious, Reay's idea is simply a misunderstanding, due to the conflation of literary representation and lexical meaning. Kolendo (1993) is guilty of the same misunderstanding: according to him the definition of wealthy landowners as *agricolae* and *coloni* by the sources is a proper "usurpation". Both theories conflate the meaning of the words deriving from Latin *colere* with the appropriation of the *image* of peasants by the elites (motivated by political purposes: see Chapter 2).

Although it is true that, in some cases, the Roman elites misleadingly depict themselves as peasants, they do not usurp the words *colonus* and *agricola*, simply because these words mean "farmer" in the broadest sense, without necessarily entailing direct work. As Siculus Flaccus (102.29-33 Campbell) reports, when one of the two Gracchi brought forward his land reform, "that nobody in Italy should hold more than 200 *iugera* of land, he was aware that the contrary custom was in place, that people were holding a higher measure than what they were able to *farm* themselves" (*maiorem modum possidere quam qui ab ipso possidente coli possit*). *Colere* does not mean "to work the land", but "to farm". When in the *Heauton*

Timoroumenos Menedemus explains to Chremes that if he spent his time directing his workers rather than performing heavy duties himself he would be better-off (Ter. *Heaut*. 69), he is not suggesting giving up farming, but to farm in a more adequate way.

Direct supervision had an extraordinary importance. Pliny (*HN* 18.41-3), for example, recognised in Chresimus' constant direct supervision the key of his success. However, given the size of elite properties, it was all but natural that trustworthy bailiffs were appointed (on *vilici* see Aubert 1994; Carlsen 1995). Direct supervision was still considered superior: as the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Oeconomicus* (1344b) claims, the owner's footprints are the best manure, because one reserves much more attention to one's own property than to that of others (in the treatise, this is called the Persian custom). The importance attributed by landowners to hands-on control of farming was such that it could be parodied in comedy. In the *Truculentus*, for example, Strabax, the son of the owner of the farm, has to come all the way from town to feed the oxen (Plaut. *Truc*. 645-6), and in the *Mercator* Demipho is forced by his father to work the fields himself (Plaut. *Merc*. 65; note that Demipho sells the farm as soon as his father dies). Nevertheless, the appointment of bailiffs was often unavoidable. In this case, the dutiful master should carefully oversee the overseer: Columella suggests that the possibility for the owner to pay frequent visits (*praesentia domini*) is the first gain of owning a farm located close to a road (Colum. 1.3.3), and he also suggests making the farm a pleasant place, in order to attract the *dominus*, and especially the *domina*.

Overseeing other people's overseeing was still considered as *colere*. Significantly, Pliny (*HN* 14.50) says that Remmius Palaemon only pretended to be an *agricola* (*dum agricolam imitatur*), because he was giving an entirely free hand to his *vilicus* Sthenelus, without even bothering to oversee his work. Given the moral implications of farming (see Chapter 4), Remmius can only be blamed for “not having approached farming his property with moral virtue, but with vanity in the first place” (*praedia … adgressus excolere non virtute animi sed vanitate primo*).

2. Dulcia arva patriae.

In Virgil's first Eclogue, Meliboeus laments being forced out of his fields, as these are distributed to the veterans (Verg. *Ecl.*1.70-72: *impius haec tam culta novalia miles habebit*, / *barbarus has segetes. en quo discordia civis* / *produxit miseros; his nos consevimus agros*!). Confessedly, Meliboeus envies the fate of Tityrus – a former slave who purchased his freedom – who has been spared dispossession through Augustus' intercession (vv. 46-47: *Fortunate senex, ergo tua rura manebunt* / *et tibi magna satis*). The dispossessions of the 1st century BC appear to have spurred panic among Italian landowners (cf. Verg. Ecl. 1. 11-12: *undique totis turbatus agris*). The *Dirae*, another hexametric composition – of much lower quality – preserved in the *Appendix Vergiliana*, portrays landowners' reaction to dispossessions in a much more aggressive tone.[6] In the opening lines, the author exhorts his fictitious addressee Battarus to "sing once again our divided dwellings and fields, upon which we have cast our bad omen, our impious vows" (vv. 2-3: *divisas iterum sedes et rura canamus* / *rura quibus diras indiximus, impia vota*). A list of disturbing calamities follows, spanning from crop failure to floods and fires: whichever soldier is to obtain possession of this property, he must not enjoy it.

The anonymous poet of the *Dirae* has very strong feelings for his farm. He pathetically portrays his farewell to his fields: "hence, from a hill, I will look upon the extreme boundaries of my fields, hence I will enter the woods. The hills will block my view, the mountains will, and I will be able to … the fields" (vv. 86-88: *Hinc ego de tumulo mea rura novissima visam,* / *hinc ibo in silvas. Obstabunt iam mihi colles,* / *obstabunt montes, campos † audire † licebit*). In the final lines, despite having wished the total destruction of his farm, the poet admits that he will always love it, and will never forget the joy that it has procured him (vv. 102-3: *quamvis ignis eris, quamvis aqua, semper amabo*: / *gaudia semper enim tua me meminisse licebit*). His farm is everything for him: "there is nothing more that I can lose: … as an uncondemned exile

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[6] The composition is preserved in the manuscripts together with the *Lydia* as a longer text. The two poems were first separated by Jacobs in 1792. See Goodyear 1971: 32 and n. 1.

I fled my fields" (vv. 66-84: *nil est quod perdam ulterius: … exsul ego indemnatus egens mea rura reliqui*). The same feeling is shared by Meliboeus: "we left the boundaries of our homeland, and the sweet meadows. We are fleeing our homeland" (vv. 3-4: *nos patriae fines et dulcia linquimus arva. / nos patriam fugimus*); "oh, will I ever marvel at the sight, after a long time, of the boundaries of my homeland, and of the roof patched with turf of my poor hut, at the sight, after some harvests, of my kingdom?" (vv. 67-69: *en umquam patrios longo post tempore finis / pauperis et tuguri congestum caespite culmen*, / *post aliquot, mea regna, videns mirabor aristas*?).

Both poems are centred on the concept of *patria*. This is represented in terms that very much resemble the German concept of *Heimat.* The word, which literally means something like "small fatherland", is best described as the physical space that is necessary to the individual to feel complete and understand him/herself: as Blickle (2002: 4) explains, German speakers connect it to a physical space – such as a landscape or a dwelling – associated with feelings of identity, love, longing. In the two poems, the dispossessed farmers are described as exiles roaming to the four corners of the earth (Verg. Ecl. 1.64-66: *At nos hinc alii sitientis ibimus Afros*, / *pars Scythiam et rapidum cretae veniemus Oaxen* / *et penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos*), or entering an undefined – yet symbolic – *silva* (*Dirae* l. 87). Like the Heimat, *patria* is a physical space that has a meaning for the self, and that contributes to shape its very identity. It has boundaries *(fines patriae*), beyond which everything is unknown (cf. the *flumina nota* of Verg. Ecl. 1.51): once these are crossed, individual identities are questioned, challenged, and deconstructed. The Latin concept of *patria*, however, has a peculiar aspect that is absent from German *Heimat*. In both poetic lamentations, the element of ownership is central: Meliboeus talks of *mea regna*, as well as of Tityrus' *tua rura*; likewise, the *Dirae* make frequent mention of *mea rura*. *Patria* overlaps and identifies with *patria rura*, being not only the place where one feels to belong, but also which one owns.

These poems are the product of educated people. The *Eclogues* were written by a wealthy member of the Italian elite, and one of the most refined poets of all ages. Even the *Dirae*, whose poetic quality is certainly not excellent, testify at least a great familiarity with Virgilian themes. It should not be taken for granted, then, that the centrality of landownership for identity construction that is visible in these poems applies to the entire Roman population.[7] However, this is exactly what modern scholarship has been assuming so far. According to the established view, in Roman history the progressive opening of property rights was closely bound to progressive access to political power, and therefore landownership also sanctioned the individual's belonging to the community of citizens. In other words, from the end of the Struggle of the Orders onwards, republican citizens defined and understood themselves as landowners. By shifting the focus from the psychological to the political identity, modern interpreters take the two poems as the representation – through the lens of elite's appropriation – of the republican citizen, right before he disappears from the radar under the Empire.

According to the current view, emblematic of the close relationship between landownership and citizenship is the retrojection, operated by some traditions, of the extension of landownership to the very foundation of Rome. As Varro (*Rust*. 1.10.2), Pliny (*HN* 18.7), and Verrius Flaccus (Fest. 47.1-4 Lindsay) report, Romulus distributed 2 *iugera* of land (the *bina iugera*) to every citizen of the original settlement.[8] These units, called *heredia*, although of the size of a garden – hence Pliny's (*HN* 19.50) speculation that the word *heredium* was used in the XII Tables with the meaning of *hortus* – represented, according to this narrative, the original nucleus of citizens' private properties.[9] In the same fashion, historical narratives keenly remarked the effort to provide all the new citizens with some land: already Romulus had distributed land to the refugees of his asylum (Dio. Hal. 2.15.4); Numa followed his

[7] As I will explain in Chapter 4, even for the educated classes *patria* was a cultural façade with few practical implications.

[8] This tradition, however, was ignored by the annalists: Gabba 1979: 56.

[9] Mention of the *heredium* is preserved in the extant fragments of the text of the XII Tables: *Roman Statutes* 40, VII 2-5: <<<*finis inter*>>> *hortum heredium*<<<*ue quinque pedes esto.*>>> *si iurgant,* <*arbitros postulanto*>. The editors believe that the word is etimologically linked to *heres* and *hereditas*, and its original meaning was possibily "property".

predecessor's example, giving land to the new citizens (Dio. Hal. 2.62.3-4); when the Claudii moved to Rome, they received 2 *iugera* each (but their clan leader received 25 *iugera*: Plut. Publ. 21.10).

According to the current view, there is also another way in which the *patria rura* contributed to structuring citizens' identity. Roman men were soldiers just as much as they were citizens. Military service was the unifying experience in the lives of Roman men, and their sense of belonging to the community was also conveyed through the army. Again, landownership is considered central to this process. The generals who had built Roman power in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC (M. Furius Camillus, L. Quinctius Cincinnatus, M'. Curius Dentatus, C. Fabricius, M. Atilius Regulus) – considered to embody the average citizen of their times – were traditionally portrayed as farmers devoted to the care of their ancestral land (Hor. *Od*. 1.12.43-44: *avitus ... fundus*).[10] Through military service, Roman citizens defended their *patria* (there is hardly any need to mention Horace's *pro patria mori* here); to the *patria rura* they returned once the season of military campaigns was over, to attend to the works of the fields. Landownership gave soldiers the necessary motivation, the idea that their sacrifices were worth something.

Republican history is generally divided into two periods. The first period may be very crudely bracketed in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC. This would correspond to the period in which, after the *lex Licinia de modo agrorum* finally put an end to the control of the land by a small number of people, and thus released a certain quantity of land that could be appropriated by any citizen, almost all republican citizens owned land.[11] In a very similar way to what happened in

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[10] All the ancient texts on these characters are conveniently collected by Broughton, MRR. The most ideologically relevant are: Hor. Od. 1. 12. 41-44 (M'. Curius Dentatus and Furius Camillus); Cic. *Cato* 55-56 (Curius Dentatus and C. Fabricius); Val. Max 4.4.6-7 (Atilius Regulus and Cincinnatus); Colum. 1.4.42 and Plin. HN 18.27 (Regulus) Dio. Hal. 19.14 (Fabricius). See Chapter 2 for detailed discussion.
[11] According to a popular theory, the 4th century *lex Licinia* would be a later invention. According to this thesis, landholding was not regulated until the early 2nd century BC. The *terminus ante quem* is a mention of the 500 *iugera* limit made by Cato in his speech *pro Rhodiensibus,* delivered in 167 BC. Livy, however, mentions the existence of a limit to landholding as early as 298 BC (Roselaar 2010: 104). Supporters of the 2nd century thesis may of course dismiss Livy's account as a later invention. But the evidence in support of a 2nd century law is basically non-existent. According to Wiseman (2009: 47 ff.),

6th century Athens, at Rome popular demand for a fairer distribution of landownership had been triggered by the introduction of a new system of warfare.[12] Why should citizens be willing to risk their lives in battle, since they owned no land (Garnsey 2007: 193)? At the same time, the new warfare system had also been the reason why popular agendas had succeeded: the elites needed their soldiers to defend themselves from external threat.

Popular access to landownership has been traditionally used also as a powerful hermeneutic tool to understand Rome's success in conquering the Mediterranean: it created a large pool of recruits, and at the same time harnessed any possible unrest and social conflict. The compromise between the various social groups that is symbolized by the *leges Liciniae Sextiae*, and that is held responsible for the success and greatness of the Roman republic, extended far beyond the elite's agreement to give up partly their control over their land through a *lex de modo agrorum.* According to Wiseman (2004: Chapter 7; 2009: Chapter 2), the same ideology of compromise is visible in the land distributions of the late 4th and early 3rd century BC (the age of C. Fabricius Luscinus and M'. Curius Dentatus). The new consensus, based on the acknowledgment that the interests of the republic were more important than the private advantage of some individuals, also shaped the control of the territories that were progressively subdued by the Romans.

Columella believed that the *lex Licinia* had been passed after the Hannibalic War. In fact, Columella (1.3.11) explains that in ancient times it was considered a crime (*criminosum*) that senators should own more than 500 (*quingenta*) *iugera* (but MSS. have *quinquaginta*!), and even after the Hannibalic war, when more land was available, the law did not change. At this point, Columella explains that even Licinius was condemned under his own law. Columella's wording, however, does not necessarily imply that the Licinius episode took place after the Hannibalic War. Another problem with the *lex Licinia de modo agrorum* is that it is not clear whether the introduction of a limit was followed by the redistribution of whatever land was held in excess. Until recently, the *lex Licinia* was believed to have set a limit for the quantity of public land that could be controlled by any citizen: it was easy to imagine, then, that this land would be vacated, and once returned to the public authorities was rented by someone else. Now, though, it has been proved that – with the single exception of Appian – all the ancient sources consider the *lex Licinia* to have introduced a limit of 500 *iugera* for private landownership (Ridley 2000; Rich 2008; Balbo 2010 adds some details on Italian scholarship, but otherwise repeats Rich's argument): it would seem, then, that the *lex Licinia* must have been followed by large scale dispossessions. However, we know so little about the period that the matter cannot be settled.

[12] It is now agreed that at Rome the introduction of hoplitic weaponry and tactics took place in the 6th century, roughly a century later than their first appearance in Greece (Cornell 1995: 184).

On the one hand, throughout the republic Roman veterans commonly received land when they were discharged. This had the effect of creating consensus and unity, based on the attainment of a certain level of prosperity and welfare: the unity of the Romans was based on the assumption that they were entitled to a certain share of the Roman land. On the other hand, the connection between landownership and military service also worked in the opposite direction: in several occasions, land was distributed with the precise aim of creating new soldiers.[13] This is made very clear by Livy, in his narrative of the events of 209 BC. In that year, with Hannibal's army marauding Italy, 12 *coloniae civium Romanorum* refused to provide additional soldiers and money to Rome, claiming that they had no more of either. Livy explains that their complaints were met by the argument that their cities existed precisely to cater from Rome's manpower: "they were Romans, originally from Rome, sent out from the city to found colonies and populate the countryside conquered in war, in order to increase the Roman stock" (27.9.10-11: *eos ... Romanos, inde oriundos, inde in colonias atque in agrum bello captum stirpis augendae causa missos*).

Indeed, for the *res publica* popular access to landownership was ideal: providing its citizens with land, the republic was securing manpower. All this, however, was soon to end.In the second period, which we could roughly date to the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, the system of egalitarian landownership entered a crisis, as the quantity of landless citizens grew. Unrest and strife were instigated by members of Rome's political elite, who either aspired to durable social reform, or were driven by the individualistic desire for power and wealth. In most cases, different traditions portray the same individuals in contrasting tones, either as passionate reformers or ruthless ring-leaders. There is however a point on which all sources agree: their popularity and success were a consequence of the miserable conditions of a considerable part

[13] The two aspects were not mutually exclusive, but complementary to each other: as Hyginus explains, "to the Roman people, [the foundation of colonies] procured not only the growth in numbers of soldiers, to the benefit of the *res publica*; at the time, the land was also a reward, and was received according to one's merit" (Hyg. *Const. Lim*. 140.24-25 Campbell: *non enim tantum militum incremento r(ei) p(ublicae) p(opulus) R(omanus) habuit; erat tunc praemium terra e pro emerito habebatur*).

of the Roman population. This, in turn, was a consequence of landlessness. It is important to notice that, according to the "mainstream" view, in this second phase Roman citizens vocally protested against landlessness because they continued to assume that, since they were citizens, they had the right to own a plot of land.

Theoretically, the system of continuous expansion and land distributions should have catered for enough land for every citizen, successfully preventing destitution. In practice, though, something had gone wrong. For some reason, a large part of the Roman population owned no land at all. This is made clear by Ti. Gracchus' famous speech delivered to the popular assembly in 133 BC. Ti. Gracchus' words are reported in detail by Plutarch (*Ti. Gracchus* 9.4), and it is commonly assumed that he draws from a Gracchan source very close to the original – possibly Tiberius' brother C. Gracchus' *memorandum* mentioned at 8.7. Ti. Gracchus, serving as tribune of the plebs, was canvassing for his agrarian bill, that would have introduced a maximum of 500 *iugera* of *ager publicus* that could be held by single individuals (plus a further 250 *iugera* per each child); all the land that was being held above that limit would have been seized by the state, and distributed to the people.[14] To secure popular support, Ti. Gracchus pointed out to the people that (Plut. *Ti. Gracchus* 9.4-5; transl. LCL):

> "The wild beasts that roam over Italy […] have every one of them a cave or lair to lurk in; but the men who fight and die for Italy enjoy the common air and light, indeed, but nothing else; houseless and homeless they wander about with their wives and children. And it is with lying lips that their imperators exhort the soldiers in their battles to defend sepulchres and shrines from the enemy; for not a man of them has an hereditary altar, not one of all these many Romans an ancestral tomb, but they fight and die to support others in wealth and luxury, and though they are styled masters of the world, they have not a single clod of earth that is their own."

Ti. Gracchus' scheme was approved, and dispossessions and redistributions were carried out – as testified by the commissioners' names on *termini* – despite his eventual downfall and slaughter. However, his reform was hardly conclusive. Ten years later, his younger brother Gaius was elected to the tribunate on the promise of a land reform program that was even more

[14] The size of plots is not known, and perhaps varied. See Stockton (1979: 48-9). See also Chapter 1 for a discussion of the size of late republican land allotments.

ambitious than that of his predecessor, as it also included the deduction of colonies outside Italy (most notably, Carthage); the senate fielded against him M. Livius Drusus, who significantly attempted to defeat Gracchus by going even bigger, and proposing the foundation of an unrealistically high number of settlements. As Brunt (1988: 240-1) puts it, "agrarian reform remained a leitmotiv in the turbulent century that followed. I need only mention the laws or bills of Lucius Philippus, Saturninus, Sextus Titius, and the younger Drusus, the settlement of the Sullan veterans, the proposals of Plotius, Rullus, and Flavius, the agitation of Catiline, the legislation of 59 BC, and the later allotments of Caesar, the Triumvirs, and of Augustus himself".[15] The changes which occurred in landownership, then, are generally considered to be central to our understanding not only of Rome's success in conquering the Mediterranean, but also of the irreversible crisis of the republican system: the widespread welfare underlying the republican consensus had disappeared. Only the power of weapons could succeed in persuading the elites – and only the defeated faction – to give up once again part of their land, which was distributed to the hundreds of thousands of veterans.

The importance of Roman landownership, however, also extends far beyond the chronological boundaries of the Roman era. The uniqueness of the Roman republic as a consensus-based political system with a strong army made it the perfect object of comparison for any modern political reflection aiming to the re-enactment of such model. Since Machiavelli, then, Roman landownership has been at the core of reflections on republicanism. Observing that the weakness of Italian states in the face of the kingdoms of Spain and France was due to internal strife, and to the use of unreliable mercenary armies, Machiavelli believed that a limit should be imposed to private wealth, and that armies should be composed of citizens

[15] It is highly doubtful that the supposed Marian settlement of veterans in Africa should be added to the land schemes listed by Brunt. Whereas French-speaking scholars, most notably Lassère (1977), believe that Marius undertook a large-scale settlement programme in Africa, English-speaking scholars (e.g. Brunt 1971: 577-80) hold the contrary opinion. Whittaker (1980: 234) has pointed out that a "French panegyric tradition of North African studies" exists, which, perhaps with an unconscious influence of modern colonialism, attempts to demonstrate that there was a large presence of Romans in Africa during the republic: see most recently Ben Akacha (2010-2012).

fighting to defend their country. Unsurprisingly, it was to the Roman republic that Machiavelli looked for a case in which these reforms had been implemented succesfully. “Io non mi partirò mai, con lo esemplo di qualunque cosa, da' miei Romani”, Fabrizio Colonna says in Machiavelli's *Dell'arte della guerra*, and the *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* include precisely an analysis of Rome's success in implementing the two points exposed above.

Likewise, two centuries later French republicanism looked in awe to the Roman antecedent. Montesquieu, for example, devoted to it his *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence*. The beneficial effects of widespread landownership were given due importance. In Chapter 3, entitled *Comment les romains purent s’agrandir*, Montesquieu stated that originally the Romans divided all the land into equal parts and this was the source of their power (a power expressed, in Montesquieu's view, by a well-ordered society and an efficient army), since everyone had the same interest, and the most compelling, in defending their homeland. Montesquieu's comments on egalitarian division of the land are particularly meaningful. Although landownership was by no means entirely egalitarian in the Roman republic, the distribution of plots of land of the same size to citizens in any case came very close to it. The presence of this egalitarian principle in a system which fundamentally protected inequality made the Roman republic the perfect example for advocates both of radical and moderate social reform, according to which one of the two aspects one was more willing to highlight.

Among the moderate reformers was Niebuhr, whose Roman History, first published in 1812, marks the birth of modern Roman historiography.[16] Despite his disaffection with the French Revolution (the Terror had cooled down his juvenile democratic passion), Niebuhr maintained a strong interest in social issues, and actively championed the liberation of the

[16] As Momigliano (1982) has reconstructed, Niebuhr's interest for Roman agrarian history dates to the early stages of his life. Around 1804, Niebuhr undertook a dissertation on agrarian history "in the style of Montesquieu" (Momigliano 1982: 12). Although the project was never completed, the section on Roman landholding survives as a autonomous treatise.

Prussian serfs. The liberation of serfs had been implemented in Denmark not long before, but its outcome had been very disappointing for Niebuhr. Among the liberated serfs, only those in a stronger economic position had managed to "buy the freehold of their farms" (Jones 2012: 117). Poorer serfs, instead, were left landless, and were forced to work as wage labourers. Most likely, the presence of large numbers of landless peasants was not an unforeseen side-effect; it had been planned in order to reconcile the need to create a modern, productive class of small-to-medium landowners with the "labour requirements of a landlord manorial economy" (Jones 2012: 117). Niebuhr, being Danish, had witnessed the reforms; in order to protect Prussian serfs, he believed that their land should not be put on the free market, but they should be given hereditary rights over it. Once again, the model was to be Rome, where a mass of small farmers received from the state a plot of land which became their own private property and as such could be passed on as inheritance.[17]

The three examples above are just a tiny fraction of the number of instances in which Roman republican land tenure has been used as a model to advocate land reforms (a topic that would certainly deserve detailed analysis in the future). They have been hand picked here to show that, throughout the centuries, Rome could be cited as a precedent for a wide number of policies, that spanned from military and political reform aiming at the creation of strong republican states (and, from a certain point on, republican nation states) to social reform driven by selfless humanitarianism. There is, however, a point that is common to all these interpretations. They all assumed that all people should own land: as human beings, in order to produce enough to make a decent living; as citizens, because citizenship and access to property should go together. Landownership creates the feeling that citizens actually hold a stake in the

[17] Despite Niebuhr's warnings, when serfdom was abolished (1807-1816), only richer villagers managed to secure control of their land. As for the poorer serfs, Hagen (1998: 150) explains that, whereas previously they had had access to land, since "rents had been exacted in manual labour", now, once the traditional bonds between peasants and feudal landlords had been wiped away, landowners "were free to evict them and enclose their holdings into the state demesnes". If anything, Prussian former serfs were in an even weaker position than their Danish counterparts, since they suffered the competition of the cheaper manpower coming from the areas bordering Russia (Capogrossi Colognesi 2000: 104-107).

state, and thus participate in its government and defence; and on the other hand, landownership makes citizens capable of feeding themselves, and thus of performing their two duties, to vote and to fight. Popular landownership, in sum, conveyed a sense of social justice, and embodied – together with voting rights – the most perfect form of state. Having achieved both these targets, the Roman republic was considered a perfect example of morally just, formally perfect, and highly successful state.

3. Thesis outline.

In this thesis, I will reconsider the cultural and economic relevance of landownership for Roman peasants during the republic. In Chapter 1, I will argue that the distribution of property during the 4th and 3rd centuries BC was not as egalitarian as people have so far believed. As opposed to the traditional view, I will argue that republican peasants owned little or no land, and that landownership did not play a central role in their production strategies.

In Chapter 2, I will explain that when the ancient sources describe peasants as living on the produce of their land they are not describing actual peasants, but idealized people who are taken as symbols of complete independence and self-sufficiency (both targets being impossible to attain in real life). I will also argue that the 4th century BC was idealized as a society of peasant-soldiers already at the time of Fabius Pictor, and progressively this imaginary reconstruction also came to include the 3rd century. I will also explain how this imaginary reconstruction of the republican past is connected to the popular view that Roman power had already reached its peak and was now declining. To conclude, I will suggest that Ti. Gracchus' idea of a decline of the rural population should be understood as part of this stereotype, and therefore rural decline should not be taken for granted.

In Chapter 3 I will draw on the conclusions of Chapter 1 to reconsider on a new basis whether the rural population actually underwent a crisis during the late republic. Assuming that access to credit did not change, because indebtedness is structural among peasants, I will focus on demographic trends of the free and servile population, in order to consider whether peasants' access to tenancies and wage labour could have become more difficult. I will conclude that, despite the endless studies that have been devoted to the argument in the last 20 years, the available data are insufficient to allow anything but a vague conclusion. However, I will point out that economic growth opened up more opportunities for commercial agriculture, through which peasants could somewhat improve their condition.

Finally, in Chapter 4 I will challenge the idea that landownership was of great importance for peasants' self-definition as Roman citizens. I will suggest that even for the elites who produced the texts discussed in Section 2 landownership's cultural and ideological significance were only a literary façade. To the peasantry, the demand for a fairer distribution of land appears confused with broader requests concerning social justice. To conclude, I will suggest that, partly as a consequence of *census* declarations, Roman peasants came to share the elite's view of land as an economic asset, that is a form of wealth alternative to money.

Chapter 1: land distributions and the landscape of property.

1. The traditional view on republican and imperial societies: a great divide?

In the last 30 years, academic research on the composition of Roman society in the late republic and early empire has moved on from the old assumption that there was a binary division between a tiny, wealthy elite, and a mass of miserable people. Instead, scholarship has focused on the people in between, the middling groups of Roman society.

Since the pioneering works of Andreau, scholars have come to acknowledge the importance of business and finance even in the lower ranks of society, a world populated by middling and petty moneylenders and businessmen. Andreau's edition of the archives of "Monsieur" Iucundus is now supported by Camodeca's *Tabulae Sulpiciorum*, and the ongoing study of the *Tabulae Herculanenses*. These documents are a source of unrivalled information. It is only thanks to them that we happen to have an idea of the scale of smaller transactions: the average of loans in the Caecilius Iucundus archive is a mere 3,059 HS (Terpstra 2013: 18); the average size of transactions in the Sulpician tablets is HS 16,623 (Rathbone and Temin 2008: 405).[18] These sums are quite remote from the millions of *sesterces* involved in elite transactions: Cicero's purchase of his house on the Palatine; Messalla's purchase of Autronius' house for 13.4 million HS (Cic. *Att*. 1.13.5); Marius' villa at Baiae, first purchased by Cornelia at a bargain price of a mere 75,000 HS right after Sulla's victory, and later bought by Lucullus for 2.5 million HS (Plut. *Mar*. 34.2).[19] Business was carried out even at lower levels: Kay (2014: 257-9), for example, has suggested that around the time of Catiline's conspiracy a large part of the population of Rome was oppressed by the debts contracted with the countless petty

[18] The transactions in the Sulpician archive are sometimes hard to grasp. It appears clear, however, that they are not all loans. Besides, the sums involved are highly variable: from 1,000 HS to an exceptional 130,000 HS.
[19] Note, however, that Cicero also purchased a villa for his brother at Arpinum for a mere 101,000 HS (Cic. Quint. 3.1). The reference to *nundinae* suggests that the property was purchased at an auction.

moneylenders that existed in the city.

The same stratification seems to have been in place for trade: Horden and Purcell's (2000) “connectivity” model now provides a strong case in favour of the ubiquity of medium-to-small scale trade. Likewise, although the sources often give us the impression that only small holdings or enormous estates existed, the landscape of property was actually very complex, and, although evidence is scarce, middling landowners existed too.[20] As Veyne (2000: 1174) remarks, the “moyenne propriété rurale” is one of the least-known categories of ancient society. For example, it is only thanks to the survival of the relevant *Tabula Alimentaria* (that of *Ligures Baebiani*), that, as Evans (1980: 23) has pointed out, we are able to take Cicero's claim that Valgus owned the whole *ager Hirpinus* (in addition to estates at Casinum: Cic. *Leg. Agr*. 3.3.8) for what it is, i.e. a rhetorical exaggeration. Indeed, as Evans (1980: 31-33 and nn. 86-87) has showed, epigraphic evidence such as the *Tabulae Alimentariae* of Veleia and Ligures Baebiani testify to the existence of a number of landholdings of “middling” dimensions.[21]

We should be careful, however, not to overestimate the size and importance of such a “middling” section of the population. According to Scheidel and Friesen (2009), “at the time of its putative peak in the mid-second century CE” (2009: 62), Roman society was arranged into a steep “income pyramid”, in which the elite – that is, those people with at least decurional census – amounted to around 1.5% of the total population of the Empire (which they reckon at some 70 million), and whose income accounted for between 15% and 30% of the total (2009: 82). They divide the remaining population between another 1.5% representing the military, and the undistinguished mass (97%) of the population (2009: 83). In order to obtain a better understanding of the internal articulations of this mass, they divide it further in a number of

[20] Finley is too often cited as a supporter of this traditional Weberian vision of Roman agriculture as split in two, between few wealthy landowners and a mass of subsistence farmers. However, Finley was very well aware that a “spectrum” existed. As Purcell (1995: 162) points out, those who accuse Finley of denying variety to the ancient countryside are actually over-simplifying his thought.

[21] Evans concedes that there was a tendency for the *fundi*, small as they were, to be concentrated in the hands of the few people who made the *obligationes*; however, it is not certain that these people actually owned all the properties that they mortgaged. See section 2.

consumption levels, the highest being between 8.4 and 10 times subsistence levels. All people falling between this threshold and the level of 1.7 to 3.3 times subsistence are defined as having a "middling income". Those below are the poor. Scheidel and Friesen conclude (2009: 84) that people with a middling income amounted to between 5 and 10 % of the population. According to this reconstruction, then, people living around or below subsistence were still some 85% of the total population.[22]

Similar conclusions have been reached by Maiuro (2012: 124-127), who has tried to figure out the distribution of wealth using a higher GDP than that used by Scheidel and Friesen.[23] Using the alternative (higher) GDP calculated by Goldsmith, Maddison, and Lo

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[22] This quantification, however, relies on the arbitrary assumption that using an average price of wheat of 2.5 HS per *modius* (that is, 25% higher than the average price in Egypt, where grain was cheap) for calculations would not distort reality excessively. This, however, is far from certain. Maiuro (2012: 121; 123), for example, prefers to use an average price of 3 HS, which, as he notices, if applied to Scheidel and Friesen's model would return a completely different image of GDP and income distribution. The problem is that local variability of grain prices cannot be properly assessed without data. Those available are limited to some particular places: see Rathbone (2014: 300), who suggests that Delian prices provide a long-term average of 5 drachmae per *medimnos* in the Greek world (= 3.3 HS per *modius* ca.), and that at Rome prices increased from 6-8 *asses* per *modius* in the early 2nd century to 6-8 HS in the late second century BC. A further problem is that all available prices suggest high intra-annual and inter-annual volatility (see e.g. the fluctuations of prices between 2 and 5 HS reported by Cicero in the *Verrines*, collected by Rathbone 2014: 293; see also Andreau 1997: 108). At the end of the day, the only reliable criterion to assess the existence and extent of middling groups is historical likelihood. As Scheidel and Friesen admit (2009: 88), "it is not feasible to suppose a much larger (or smaller) GDP, or a much larger middling segment, or much larger elite income, without assuming that the Roman Empire *as a whole* [their italics] was highly anomalous in world historical terms".

[23] Maiuro believes that Scheidel and Friesen's total GDP is too low because, even using their average grain price of 2.5 HS per *modius* (which he considers too low), too many people would be left living on the verge of subsistence. According to Maiuro, in this scenario the population of the Roman Empire would have been vulnerable to demographic shocks: since Mediterranean yields are variable from year to year, bad years would have had apocalyptic effects. Maiuro, though, does not consider that, owing to Mediterranean environmental fragmentation, shortages tend to be localised: exchange and redistribution can solve the problem. Equally weak is Maiuro's point that, if there had been so many people around, a slave population of around 10% of the total would have been unjustified, because slaves would have been more expensive than free people's wages. Note though, that a slave population of 10% of the total is pure guesswork (see Chapter 3), and that, at any rate, as Maiuro (2012: 122, n. 312) admits, one could solve the contradiction by simply postulating (as Harris does: see Chapter 3), that child exposure was the main source of slaves. Besides, according to Maiuro, if the population had actually been so poor, then the potentially good redistributive effects of equal testamentary partitioning would have become nefarious. Well, this is precisely what we see from the scanty evidence: properties were often very small (e.g. Spurius Ligustinus), and in some cases equal partitioning could be withheld (e.g. the *ercto non cito*). Finally, according to Maiuro, Scheidel and Friesen's scenario postulates an incredibly poor population in the provinces, since living standards in Italy were higher than elsewhere. Note, though, that (a) since we do not know the distribution of wealth in Italy, that living standards were *overall* higher than in the provinces is only Maiuro's assumption, and (b) Italian living standards may have been only apparently higher, that is there may have been a lot of miserable people kept alive by state handouts.

Cascio and Malanima, Maiuro attempts to calculate how many people out of the total population could have had a yearly income at or above a legionary's level, which he reckons at between 1.25 and 1.5 times subsistence levels.[24] Using the same population figure as Scheidel and Friesen, Maiuro concludes that the people having at least a legionary-level income were some 25% of the total population, thus leaving the remaining 75% ca. below that level.

To a large extent, social stratification is already assumed in the earliest centuriate system (traditionally attributed to the late 6th century BC), which, in fact, entails a division of the population into timocratic classes. It is generally assumed, though, that social differentiation became more and more profound throughout the centuries. Thanks to the looting of the conquered territories and the reinvestment of booty, the rich became richer and richer. At the lower end of the scale, instead, the poor grew poorer and poorer. The striking quantity of people living below subsistence in Scheidel and Friesen's model combines very well with the grim picture outlined by Ti. Gracchus in 133 BC, which I have quoted in the Introduction: people without a roof above their heads, and no source of income. According to the traditional view, then, one could say that Roman Imperial social pyramid has its roots in social transformations that took place centuries before. At some point in the republic, the lower strata of Roman society ceased to be composed of the sort of citizen-farmers that I have sketched in the Introduction. As I reported there, this change was explained by Ti. Gracchus in terms of reduced access to landownership.

How could it have been possible for so many people to be left landless? In his introduction to Ti. Gracchus' tribunate, Appian formulates precise accusations. He explains that (App. *B.Civ*. 1.1.7; transl. LCL):

> “the rich, getting possession of the greater part of the undistributed lands, and being emboldened by the lapse of time to believe that they would never be dispossessed, absorbing any adjacent strips and their poor neighbours' allotments, partly by purchase

[24] Maiuro's calculation of legionaries' income is based on legionaries' *missiones* and wages after Augustus' military reform (see Chapter 4 for details). Yearly income after discharge is calculated at a 6% yearly extraction rate of the total estate, which is calculated accounting for *missiones*, possible small savings and possible *donativa*.

> under persuasion and partly by force, came to cultivate vast tracts instead of single estates, using slaves as labourers and herdsmen, lest free labourers should be drawn from agriculture into the army. At the same time the ownership of slaves brought them great gain from the multitude of their progeny, who increased because they were exempt from military service. Thus certain powerful men became extremely rich and the race of slaves multiplied throughout the country, while the Italian people dwindled in numbers and strength, being oppressed by penury, taxes, and military service. If they had any respite from these evils they passed their time in idleness, because the land was held by the rich, who employed slaves instead of freemen as cultivators".

This is certainly Ti. Gracchus' diagnosis. According to Appian, he "inveighed against the multitude of slaves", and, as we know, he suggested solving the problem by setting a limit to the land-grabbing of the rich (οἱ πλούσιοι) through a *lex de modo agrorum*. In fact, Plutarch (*Ti. Gracchus* 8.1-3) describes the situation in very similar terms, and explains that, according to C. Gracchus, his brother had conceived his reform when, travelling through Etruria on his way to Numantia, he had "observed the dearth of inhabitants in the country, and that those who tilled its soil or tended its flocks there were barbarian slaves" (*Ibid*. 8.7; transl. LCL).

Although the tradition going back to the Gracchi is the only one to provide a systematic explanation of the misery of the rural population, hints at the concentration of property and the diffusion of rural slavery are also present in other sources. In a famous passage that was also discussed by Montesquieu in the *Esprit des Lois* (Part 4, Book 23, Chpt. 19: *Depopulation of the Universe*), Livy (6.12.5) declares that he was shocked (*miraculo fuit*) to realise that, despite having suffered many a defeat, the Volsci and the Aequi were still able to field armies to fight against Rome. He conjectures that either their armies were always composed by different generations (*suboles*), or *populi* (that is, different sub-groups of the same *gens*), or "there was a countless multitude of children, in the same places where now the presence of slaves barely prevents complete depopulation, since only a small nursery of soldiers is left" (*aut innumerabilem multitudinem liberorum capitum in eis fuisse locis quae nunc vix seminario exiguo militum relicto servitia Romana ab solitudine vindicant*).

A century later, Pliny (*HN* 18.35) remarks that the presence of excessively large estates (*latifundia*) has doomed Italy: "In old times it was thought that to observe moderation in the size of a farm was of primary importance, inasmuch as the view was held that it was more satisfactory to sow less land and plough it better; and I observe that Virgil was of this opinion. And if the truth be confessed, large estates have been the ruin of Italy, and are now proving the ruin of the provinces too—half of Africa was owned by six landlords, when the Emperor Nero put them to death; though Gnaeus Pompeius must not be cheated out of this mark of his greatness also: he never bought land belonging to a neighbouring estate" (transl. LCL). Although Pliny's complaint seems to be driven exclusively by his belief that large estates are less efficient, and due to their existence Italy is now forced to rely on imports (on which see Varr. *Rust*. 2. *praef.* 4), the passage appears to reveal that, in imperial times, the concentration of landownership was still an ongoing phenomenon.[25] The crime, then, appears to have been solved. We know the felons, the wealthy Romans, who seized more and more land, and, having evicted the peasants, replaced them with slaves, since these were not liable to military service. We know the motivation: greed. We know the effects: poverty and depopulation.

During the 1970s-80s, Italian archaeologists started to investigate the production strategies of Roman elite farmsteads through their material remains. The central figure of the group, for his age as well as for his influence, was Carandini, who directed the excavation of the large villa of Settefinestre, in the immediate surroundings of the Roman colony of Cosa.[26] Confessedly, the ambition of the excavators was to use that unique opportunity to draw a model of the Roman villa as a distinct historical phenomenon (Carandini 1984: 116). All villas, they argued, not only had specific architectural features and a precise cultural origin (which they pinned down to the Romano-Italian cultural milieu): they also shared the same production systems. The main finds of the excavators were two: villas made an extensive use of servile

[25] The same connection between concentration of property (owing to frequent sales) and Italy's reliance on imports is in Colum. 1. pr. 20: *Itaque in hoc Latio et Saturnia terra, ubi dii cultus agrorum progeniem suam docuerant, ibi nunc ad hastam locamus, ut nobis ex transmarinis provinciis advehatur frumentum, ne fame laboremus: et vindemiam condimus ex insulis Cycladibus ac regionibus Baeticis Gallicisque*.

[26] Relying on the presence of the initials *LS* on tiles and *SES* on amphorae found at the villa, the excavators suggested that the owner could be L. Sestius, *cos.* 23 BC. The identification is admittedly hypothetical.

labour, and they produced for the market. At Settefinestre, the presence of large numbers of slaves was proved by the finding of slave quarters (*ergastula*) arranged around a central court. The villa's commercial focus was demonstrated by the presence of presses and storage vats for wine, which were certainly connected with the booming export of Cosan wine to Gaul. The villa, of course, also produced grain and oil, but these served to cater for the internal needs of the villa, reducing the villa's dependence on the market and thus maximising revenues.

The excavators of Settefinestre also believed that, combining material remains with the literary sources, it was possible to outline the evolutionary history of villas. They interpreted the growing dimensions and complexity of archaeologically known villas throughout the republic – starting with the smaller, simpler Hellenistic farmsteads prevailing until the 3rd century – in the light of the agricultural treatises of Cato, Varro, and Columella. The growing size and refinement of the ideal *fundus* between Cato's and Varro's descriptions led Italian archaeologists to distinguish three evolutionary phases, called after the three Latin agronomists. Of the three phases, Settefinestre corresponded to the Varronian one. This was the stage of maximum development and efficiency of the *villa*: the *villa perfecta*. Rooting their conclusions in a solid Marxist theoretical framework, Italian archaeologists argued that the growth of villas demonstrated the emergence and growth of Roman agricultural capitalism.[27] The new

[27] As Launaro (2015: 175, n.11) remarks, this conceptualization of the Roman *villa* is profoundly influenced by Marxism: the *villa* is considered an example of what Marx called the "servile mode of production (*Produktionsweise*)". However, as Rathbone (2009: 600) points out, it is also true that in order to believe to the model of the "slave-staffed *villa*" one does not need to be a Marxist. For example, Hopkins too (1978) talked of slave staffed villas in terms of agricultural capitalism (although, as Bowman 1980: 291 points out, his use of the term is very vague). In fact, it is only when it comes to the decline of the villa that ideology is more relevant. Some Marxist scholars believed that, already during the third phase of the villa, named after Columella, the system exhausted its vitality, owing to its "inelasticity": as properties grew in dimensions, it became harder and harder to squeeze out the most efficient performances from slave gangs. This idea may be connected to Marx's theory of the falling rate of profit. However, as Clarke (1994: 8) explains, although "at various times Marx appears to associate crises with the tendency for the rate of profit to fall", this is a quite underdeveloped point of Marx's theorization. Others have stressed the "internal contradiction" of the servile mode of production: after a certain size, controlling labour became more expensive than labour itself. This triggered the passage to the late-antique colonate, as properties too big to be farmed by slave gangs were rented out to *servi quasi coloni*. As Morley (2011: 276) points out, this is "an … ideological approach, allegedly Marxist but in fact largely based on Stalin's dubious interpretation of Marxist theories of historical development". However, inside the same Marxist framework, less ideological interpretations exist. Some, for example

production system was based on the use of slave labour to intensify production of cash crops.[28]

The excavation of Settefinestre was accompanied by an extensive survey of the *ager Cosanus*.[29] The results showed that rural settlement had experienced a phase of decline around the time when a number of large villas, such as Settefinestre or the villa delle Colonne (Dyson 2002) had appeared in the area.[30] The *ager Cosanus*, then, appeared to prove once and for all the connection between the growth of elite estates, the growth of slavery, and the decline of the rural population. Carandini was aware that the picture provided by the archaeological sources was not so clearcut. He believed, though, that a distinction should be made between the situation in what he called "key areas", more central places where the new agricultural capitalism had spread, supplanting other forms of production, and peripheral areas, where residual forms of production still existed (Carandini 1980).[31]

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have suggested that the decline was caused by the exhaustion of the sources of slaves. For detailed resumes and criticism of the various positions see Giardina 1997: 233-264.

[28] Whereas Weber believed that slavery was intrinsically inefficient (Weber 1981: 36-7), Marxists believed that slavery was more efficient than free manpower, because more labour could be extracted from slaves. Finley, on his part, believed that slave labour was "as good as any" (Finley 1965: 43), and that the diffusion of slavery in Italy depended on the scarce availability of free labour as a consequence of the Hannibalic War.

[29] The results of the original survey were unfortunately published only in 2002 (Carandini and Cambi 2002) – without the acknowledgment of some of the contributors (Wilson 2004: 569) – but were apparently used in the original publication of the villa twenty years earlier. At any rate, the contributors who had not been informed of the survey's publication have subsequently confirmed its overall conclusions (Fentress 2008; Fentress and Perkins 2016).

[30] Settefinestre and Le Colonne are very similar, and are usually considered the creation of the same architect. The excavators of Settefinestre dated the construction of the *villa* to the 40s BC, owing to the presence of wall paintings in the Pompeian IIA style. The paintings were considered to belong to the original decoration: "since, when replaced, wall-plaster is painted over rather than removed, its date must be that of the primary phase of the villa" (Fentress 2008: 421, n. 8). According to Dyson (2002: 222), by contrast, Roman wall-painting styles cannot be precisely dated. Relying on the presence of Graeco-Italic and early Dressel 1 amphorae as well as of coins from the period 140-90 BC at Le Colonne, Dyson dates the two villas to the late 2nd – early 1st century BC. Dyson's view that one could anticipate the Pompeian IIA style of roughly 50 years is incautious. Besides, the earlier coins and pottery may equally belong to an earlier phase of the villa, which has been detected (Dyson 2002: 222). On the other hand, though, Dyson's argument that Le Colonne cannot have been built around the 40s BC makes better sense of the patterns of pottery finds (much larger presence of late 2nd – early 1st century pottery than at Settefinestre, followed by a scarce presence of late republican pottery and a recovery in the Augustan period) and of coin finds (gap between the 90s BC and the Tiberian period). These trends suggest that the occupation of the villa was closely connected with the activities of Cosa and its port. Therefore, according to Dyson, Le Colonne is unlikely to have been built in the 40s BC, because Cosa was abandoned between the late 70s BC and the Augustan age.

[31] Carandini (1994) also argued that in more peripheral areas villas had different features, and were more focused on self-sufficiency. For criticism of the distinction between *ville centrali* and *ville periferiche*

The catastrophic picture outlined by the literary sources, whereby ruthless land-grabbing was rapidly bringing the Roman population to the verge of collapse, received further confirmation by the studies of ancient demography that were being carried out around the same years. Ever since Beloch's pioneering *Die Bevölkerung der griechisch-römischen Welt* (1886), such studies have been based on the analysis of the census figures, that is the reckoning of the Roman population that censors carried out every five years. According to Beloch, Italy experienced demographic decline, even after the Gracchan reforms, which, as I have explained above, were not conclusive, but were followed by a whole series of other reforms (either attempted or carried out). Beloch's work was pioneering, and was not taken up until almost a century later, when Brunt (1971) completely revised Beloch's figures. However, although on a completely new basis, Brunt came to the same conclusion as Beloch. According to his calculations, the dramatic picture presented by Livy and Appian was indeed correct. It was on the basis of this demographic analysis that Hopkins (1978) was able to construct his "complex causal chain" (Bowman 1980: 291) whereby the mass-enslavements resulting from Rome's conquests produced the immiseration of the rural population of Italy, and its consequent displacement, resulting in mass-migration to the cities and the extraordinary urban growth of late republican Italy.

In recent years, the traditional narrative of estate consolidation provided by ancient authors has been called into question.[32] To begin with, it is now clear that inequality cannot have exceeded a certain limit. According to Maiuro (2012: esp. 144-145), for example, around the death of Augustus senatorial estates cannot have represented more than 10% of properties in the Empire. Scholars have come to appreciate the extent to which the sources typically exaggerate the effects of land-grabbing, to the point that Pliny the Elder, complaining that

see Patterson 2006: 58-60 and Giardina 1997: 233, who defines *ville periferiche* a "ghost".

[32] The rethinking of concentration of property in republican Italy is part of a wider reaction to the traditional view whereby a linear trend of concentration of landownership took place throughout antiquity (Finley 1973). See for example Harper 2015 on concentration of landownership in Late Antiquity.

latifundia perdidere Italiam (*HN* 18. 35), could draw a comparison with Africa, where – according to him – all the land had been owned by just six men until Nero had had them executed. In fact, MacMullen (1974: 6) certainly had a point when he remarked that the sources' censuring the "ruthless drive toward consolidation" is so common "that one suspects a cliché".

We should also consider that several ancient discussions of land-grabbing seem to describe it as a thing which happened between wealthy landowners. In his tirade against greedy individuals who own huge estates, Seneca mentions the possibility that such people obtain their neighbours' land through *iniuria*, if they cannot purchase it (Sen. *Ep*. 89.38). In his 14th *Satire*, Juvenal provides a detailed description of such immoral strategy: "If their owner is not won round by any offer, you'll drive some scrawny oxen and famished pack animals with weary necks into his green corn at night and they won't go home until the entire new crop has disappeared into their raging bellies. You'd think it had been done with a scythe. You can scarcely describe how many people make complaints of this kind or how many estates are put up for sale because of damage" (Iuv. 14.139-151; transl. LCL).[33]

These accounts, as I have just argued, have a great degree of exaggeration. Still, it is important to notice that, rather than abuses against poorer people, they all seem to depict land-grabbing as competition between neighbours of equal social status. For example, in Juvenal's passage the criminal act is triggered by jealousy of the neighbour's crops, which are more abundant and of better quality than those of the felon. Given the particular fragmentation of Roman landholding (in turn a consequence of equal inheritance customs), it could frequently happen that attempts to consolidate estates involved clashes with neighbours: people did not always have the same opportunity as Pliny to purchase their neighbour's land on the market (note that Pliny says that his neighbour's land criss-crosses his property: *Ep.* 3.19.5).[34]

[33] Note that Juvenal mentions the effects of this strategy on people's reputation (Juv. 14.152-155). In this case, the felon is not worried of endangering his reputation; we should consider the possibility, though, that this was a constraint on the behaviour of some people.
[34] A special case of fragmentation was Rome and its immediate surroundings. Purcell (2007: 363) draws our attention to Suetonius' report that, when Terentius died, he left *hortulos* of 20 *iugera* each (Suet.

Further doubts have been cast by archaeological investigations. Newly available data reveal that in most areas of the Italian countryside there is no trace of the supposed depopulation that the sources claim to have accompanied the establishment of large estates. In principle, ongoing occupation is not by itself irreconcilable with growing concentration of property. It could be assumed, in fact, that tenancy was very common. It is not by chance that even those scholars who have remarked on the persistence of small farmsteads in some regions of the Italian peninsula, have often interpreted their presence in terms of diffusion of tenancy (Witcher 2006). However, unless we assume that all tenants were of servile status (that is, they were *servi quasi coloni*), it is beyond doubt that the scenario described by the literary sources, of slaves replacing free peasants is simply not acceptable anymore.

As a matter of fact, the idea of demographic decline has now been abandoned. On the contrary, scholars now tend to believe that the Italian population was growing. Demographic trends have now become central to the explanation of social change: either completely (Lo Cascio), or partly (De Ligt), population growth is considered the reason for the decline of the republican citizen-farmer. Although I believe that understanding demographic trends is indeed central to understanding the social transformations that took place in the Italian countryside, still, as I will explain in Chapter 3, I am quite sceptical about the possibility of obtaining any precise idea on the matter. Likewise, in Chapter 3 I will argue that we cannot even be sure that rural slavery grew with the dramatic proportions described by the sources.

In Chapter 2 I will argue that the so-called middle republic (that is, the 4th and 3rd centuries BC) was later idealized as a marvellous period of equality and prosperity. In this

Poet. 99-100). Purcell (2007: 364) also comments on the *tecta hortorum* of Liv. 26.10.5-6: "the individual lots are clearly not particularly large. This is an extremely densely settled, and well-established, productive landscape". Also consider that the small size of landholdings at Rome from an early stage is suggested by the regulations of the XII Tables (Watson 1983: 403-409). Elsewhere fragmentation had a completely different nature. At Ameria, for example, Roscius owned 13 *fundi*, but these must have been all of considerable size, since Cicero says that 10 of them were worth 6 million HS (*Rosc. Am.* 20-21; see Brunt 1988: 246). Note, however, that Cicero may be exaggerating their value to some extent, in order to make Chrysogonus' purchase for a mere 2,000 HS look even more criminal.

chapter, I will suggest that whatever transformation might have happened to the Roman landscape of property during the late republic should not be seen as a decline from an original equality, because the system was already unequal. That is, instead of trying to explain the reasons why the "great divide" between unequal late republican society and its egalitarian early counterpart came into existence, I will attempt to bridge it by arguing that already in the middle republic the distribution of property was remarkably unequal.

As I have explained in the Introduction, it is generally assumed that republican society was egalitarian because land distributions provided most citizens with land. In this chapter, I will reconsider the actual extent and effects of land distributions. I will argue that Rome did not use land distributions with the purpose of promoting an equal distribution of property, and therefore at no point such measures were intended to include the majority of the population; furthermore, I will argue that for structural reasons a large portion of the recipients of land allotments may have lost control of their land. I will conclude, then, that in the middle republic property distribution was already very unequal. In this way, the case of the Roman republic will cease to be a historical anomaly: just like at any other time and in any other place (unless some sort of communistic regime is in place), there was a large part of the population that owned no land at all (which is why the Roman republic has exerted such a fascination throughout history: see Introduction).

2. Local and global approaches to property distribution in Roman Italy.

Geographers and historians working on agrarian structures have long understood that environment, settlement, economy, power relationships and property distribution are very much entangled in a complex nexus, whose every thread influences the others. Agrarian structures depend to a large extent on local conditions. Let us look, for example, at the Apulian cities of Ascoli Satriano and Locorotondo in the Kingdom of Naples in the 17th century. As Curtis (2014: 223-263) explains, Ascoli Satriano was an agro-town, that is a large urban centre with sharp inequality in the distribution of land. Curtis shows that, in this case, settlement and distribution of land are the consequence of the intertwining of power relationships, environmental factors and economic exploitation. Pastoralism was strong in the area, partly for geographical factors (location on the Apennine transhumance route to the Apulian plains), partly owing to political reasons, since it was stimulated by the *Regia Dogana* of Naples, which was interested in maintaining a steady tax revenue.[35] The influence of the Customhouse goes a long way to explain the local structure of settlement and distribution of land: on the one hand, it restricted building in the countryside; on the other hand, it favoured large landowners when assigning tenancies of grazing land.[36]

Just a few kilometres away, Locorotondo was instead characterised by dispersed settlement and more equal distribution of land. As Curtis explains, these are the result of the reclamation and colonization of the woodlands surrounding the town in the 16th century, which,

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[35] As in any other push and pull system, other geographical factors were opposing pastoralism: the city of Naples needed wheat, and Ascoli Satriano was located on an overland route to the capital city. The environment also had a say against cereal growing, though: the repeated catastrophes (earthquakes, pestilences) produced cyclical contractions of manpower that prevented arable farming from developing further. When Ascoli Satriano grew as a commerce centre – a development in which wool production and trade (in turn a consequence of pastoralism) played a major role –, though, population growth provided new stimulus to grain cultivation.

[36] However, causal relationships between settlement and distribution of land on the one hand, power and economic exploitation on the other, could also work the opposite way: thus, the success of the Royal Customhouse in strengthening its control on Ascoli Satriano and developing pastoralism in turn depended on the already sharp inequality of power and property. Owing to the overwhelming presence of religious institutions and feudal nobility, very few people objected to the Customhouse's closer grip on the territory.

combined with the weakness of local nobility, put farmers in the position to acquire emphyteutic rights on the land. At the same time, the absence of institutional monopolies visible elsewhere in the kingdom of Naples stimulated Locorotondo's involvement in wine trade, which in turn allowed farmers to base their production strategies on viticulture.[37]

Unfortunately, the lack of data prevents us from attempting similar studies for Roman Italy. Attempts, it is true, have been made in this direction, comparing the two *Tabulae Alimentariae* of Veleia (*CIL* XI 1147 = Criniti 2014) and Ligures Baebiani (*CIL* IX 1455 = *ILS* 6509; see Veyne 1957; 1958). As opposed to Veleia, a peripheral centre tucked in the Apennines, at Ligures Baebiani, in the neighbourhood of Beneventum – an important city at the crossroads of all the main routes in the region (among which was the *via Appia*: Sirago 2004: 18) – the relevant *Tabula Alimentaria* reveals that at least 5 individuals of senatorial or equestrian rank and the emperor himself (whose property often included formerly senatorial estates) owned land in the area (Maiuro 2012: 139-142). According to Maiuro, this situation reflects an evolution of agrarian structures that took place between Augustus and Trajan. The opportunities provided by Ligures Baebiani's location stimulated elite's landholding in the area, and this translated into higher inequality in the distribution of property, as revealed by the low threshold of single *professiones* (14,000 HS, as opposed to Veleia's 50,000 HS) .

However, Durliat (1993) and Chouquer (2013) argue that the individuals who made the *professiones* did not own all the properties that they pledged. According to Durliat – who interprets the *Alimenta* as a proper tax – these people were in charge of collecting the money from the owners of the properties, and paying the tax. Chouquer, instead, prefers the traditional interpretation of *Alimenta* as loans made by the emperor to support agriculture, whose (perpetual!) interest of 5% was directed to funding the youth poverty relief scheme. He too,

[37] According to Galt (1991: 83), overseas exports were generally limited, and most of Locorotondo's wine production went to meet the demand of Martina Franca, which specialised in livestock and leather craftsmanship (more than 400 artisans lived in the town). According to Curtis (2014: 245), on the other hand, Locorotondo's wine was primarily exported on Sicilian and Venetian ships via the coastal harbours of Bari, Monopoli and Taranto.

however, believes that the single declarants did not own all the properties in their *professiones*. Therefore, the higher threshold does not reflect higher inequality, but simply different fiscal arrangements.[38] The precise consequences of elite's economic interests at Ligures Baebiani still remain beyond our reach.

Despite the importance of local developments, however, the possibility exists that after the Hannibalic war, the distribution of property followed similar trajectories all over Italy. In fact, it is now clear that, thanks to transmarine expansion, and the almost complete disappearance of endemic warfare in the peninsula, Italy entered a phase of steady economic growth that has been recently labelled as a proper "economic revolution" (Kay 2014).[39] There is the reasonable possibility that, all over Italy, upper classes' investment in landownership and agriculture was growing, thus increasing the concentration of landownership: although the apocalyptic tones of Appian and Plutarch are certainly exaggerated, nevertheless a similar phenomenon could have had serious consequences for the rural population. The possibility that agricultural investment was indeed growing is made plausible by two phenomena connected with economic growth: the growth of consumption, and the growth of urban centres.

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[38] Chouquer also suggests that – since *fundus* may also indicate a fiscal unit, including through *contributio* properties that may belong to different people – the *fundi* with many names may have belonged to different owners. However, this possibility appears less likely if one considers the *fundi* with many names that are pledged only in part. This happened when different owners owned a property *pro indiviso pro parte* (Maiuro 2012: 140-141). Now, in some cases (such as the *fundus Messianus Allelianus* at l. 25) the portion pledged has nothing to do with the number of names (¼ in this case), thus suggesting that, in general, the number of names is not related to the number of owners. There is no reason, then, to deny that *fundi* with many names could belong to a single individual (unless they were owned *pro parte pro indiviso*).

[39] After the end of the Hannibalic War, there were other episodes of fighting on Italian soil: the invasions of Cimbri and Teutones, that only involved Cisalpina; the slave armies of Spartacus in the southernmost corner of the peninsula; the dramatic Social War. These events, however, were episodic and mostly unexpected; on the contrary, "endemic warfare" always took place outside the peninsula. We could say that the possibility of a war in Italy was remote enough not to discourage agricultural investments. On the connection between the disappearance of warfare from Roman territories and agricultural investment see Dio 9.40.27: Pyrrhus explains to his Italian allies that they cannot defeat the Romans because, since the fighting is not taking place on their territory, they still have fully working farmsteads and will never run short of supplies. Pyrrhus also makes a reference to the expensiveness of farmsteads, and thus reminds us that investments greatly depend on considerations regarding safety from future wars. For an extraordinary instance of recovery after destructions see Hor. *Od*. 3.5.21-25: Regulus marvels at seeing the fields of the Carthaginians, that the Romans had devastated, already back in cultivation (*arva Marte coli populata nostro*). This is a sign of Carthage's threatening power: the city has managed to devote sufficient resources to agriculture, despite the looming danger of war.

Social status always entails possessing some items that are considered important: the status-symbols (which tend to change through time according to fashion rules). At the same time, status-symbols are part of the competition between people of the same status. In other words, competition and social obligation are at the same time vertical and horizontal: possessing the status symbol certifies your possession of a certain status (as opposed to all the other people of inferior rank), but possessing the best status symbol means being the best among your peers. It is a system in dynamic balance, in which control and challenge are found together. According to Wallace-Hadrill (2008), from the late 3rd century BC onwards traditional status-symbols were challenged by a new focus on luxury and expenditure. Wallace-Hadrill (2008: 323) explains that this phenomenon was part of the rise of new economic elites that wanted to impose themselves as legitimate members of the ruling classes, that is to transform their economic power into political power: “the motor behind purchase of luxury was seen as aspiration to social status in a hierarchically ordered society”. This created a competition with the established elite, the traditional Roman nobility.

Wallace-Hadrill explains that the elite attempted to discourage competitive spending by introducing legislative measures aiming at preventing it, the so-called sumptuary laws.[40] It seems clear, however, that the Roman elite most commonly fought back by the same weapon, and that competitive spending became very common. In fact, late republican and imperial literature have plenty of moralistic tirades against expenditure and luxury. Among the most famous is possibly Juvenal's typically bitter claim that “extravagant Rome has not established an end to expenditure” (Iuv. 7.138). Such moralistic grandstanding is itself part of the same game to which luxury and expenditure belong: moralism is an attempt to change the rules of the game, claiming that luxury is no more fashionable, and at the same time to state your superiority, claiming that you do not even need to take part to the game.

[40] Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 329-330 has a very good discussion of 2nd century BC laws in general. For discussions of specific laws see Gabba 1988: 37 (*lex Oppia*); Rossi 1975: 16 (*lex Fannia*); Nenci 1983: 1026 (*lex Metilia de fullonibus*, *lex Publicia de cereis* , *lex Cincia de donis et muneribus*).

As I said above, status-symbols tend to change through time. In this respect, though, late republican and early imperial society presents us with very long-lived status symbols. One of these is food. Most sumptuary laws of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC concerned banquets, to the point that Cato referred to them as *leges cibariae* (Gabba 1988: 38-42). Three-hundred years later, Columella was still complaining of *luxus mensae* in the foreword to his book on horticulture (Colum. 10.pr.1), stating that meals had come to be regarded "as occasions … for the display of wealth". This echoed Varro's claim that, because of *luxuria*, daily meals at Rome resembled *epula*, the lavish banquets celebrated in special occasions, such as triumphs (Varro *Rust.* 3.2.16). Thanks to these moralistic statements, we are reminded that, throughout three or four centuries, "Roman food" continued to be "one of the prime obsessions" (Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 335).

Luxus mensae offered great opportunities for profit. On the one hand, the Roman elite came to consume extraordinary quantities of food.[41] They hosted banquets for their friends and their clients.[42] They had large households, which required large amounts of food: thus, Seneca (*Ep.* 2.17.3) refers to the *turba servorum* fed on imported foodstuffs.[43] They distributed food to communities (e.g. Purcell 1985: 14 on distributions of *crustulum* and *mulsum*).[44] On the other

[41] As for lower social groups, it is hard to tell whether their food intake grew. It is hard to tell to what extent soldiers benefited from imperial expansion. As Shatzman (1972) has demonstrated, generals had complete liberty in dividing the booty between their own share (the *manubiae*), the share of soldiers, and that of public treasury. On various occasions, the sources report dissatisfaction with the distribution of booty and rewards; and yet, it is possible that, although much less than their generals and officers, soldiers did benefit from conquests, and that, to some extent, their food consumption did improve. Osteological evidence might potentially reveal any variation in the food consumption of the Italian population; unfortunately, at present, available data mostly come from Britain, and are therefore of no use for other regions; besides, different analyses of the same evidence have returned contrasting results (De Ligt 2012: 17-20).

[42] As Varro (*Rust*. 3.2.16) noticed, banquets had the effect of sending retail prices crazy (*excandefaciunt annonam macelli*).

[43] In principle, the passage may be interpreted according to Whittaker's (1985) idea that the elite residing in Italy imported the produce of their overseas estates. Equally ambiguous Colum. 1. pr. 20. However, Whittaker's attempt to downplay private trade has now been generally rejected (see Chapter 3).

[44] According to Rosenstein (2008), distributions to communities, together with households' internal consumption, absorbed by far the most part of the production of elite estates. However, these handouts were not necessarily made with the produce of elite estates. See e.g. the inscription of T. Helvius Basila (*CIL* X 5056 = *ILS* 977). As the inscription set up by his daughter informs us, this individual – who lived under Claudius and Nero – left 400,000 HS in his will to the people of Atina. This sum must have been invested somehow, since the inscription says that its revenue (*reditus*) should go to buy grain for local

hand, they came to demand the most exquisite and highly-priced delicacies, to the point that Pliny the Elder (*HN* 19. 52 ff.) could claim that even plain water was not desirable anymore, as people craved ice and snow to drink. In order to seize such opportunities, investment and entrepreneurship were often necessary. Discussing gardens around Rome, for example, Carandini (1985: 74) has pointed out that expensive food and farming innovations are closely connected. In fact, the search for refined foodstuffs is accompanied by the development of new varieties and new techniques: in the same passage, Pliny mentions the Ravenna asparagus, and improvements to cabbage cultivation; likewise, Columella mentions a variety of lettuce called after a Caecilius Metellus (Colum. 10.178).

The second consequence of Italian economic prosperity that is likely to have stimulated agricultural investment is urbanization. The growth of private expenditure and urbanization are closely related, since, to a large extent, private expenditure takes place in towns. This is very well-known to ancient historians and scholars of urbanism, since Max Weber first formulated the theory of the "consumer city". Over the years, attempts have been made to reject this model, in favour of alternatives ranging from the "processor city" (Hopkins 1980) to the "service city" (Engels 1990). Now, it is undeniable that a lot of (most?) cities also fulfilled other functions than just consuming the surplus produced by the countryside; nevertheless, this still appears to be the only unifying factor of all urban centres (Whittaker 1990; 1995).[45]

In particular, it is elite expenditure that is central to the consumer city model. Jongman (1988: 192-198), for example, considers elite consumption the main driver of urbanization. He suggests that elite expenditure created new opportunities for employment, thus attracting

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children; when these came to age, instead, they were to receive 1,000 HS each. If grain handouts had been normally derived from elite estates, one would expect Basila to have followed this system; instead, he leaves money to the people so that they can *buy* grain. The same could be said, of course, of Nerva's and Trajan's *Alimenta*. See also *CIL* XI 1602, from Florence, dated to the reign of Titus or Domitian: a veteran of the *XX legio* gave a free handout of imported grain (*triticum peregrinum*).

[45] When Weber formulated it, she consumer city theory was connected to a precise view of ancient economic behaviour, according to which the elites had a parasitic attitude and were mostly interested in extracting rents from the countryside. This view has now been rejected (see Chapter 4).

migrants, and stimulating urban growth. However, the stress on elite expenditure appears excessive. In fact, places of residence of the socio-political elites are only the iceberg tip of a much larger and varied phenomenon that goes under the name of urbanization. The reason why the consumer city model is often linked to elite expenditure is precisely definitional: analysis is carried out on those urban centres that had official urban status: πόλεις (Greek)*, coloniae* or *municipia* (Latin).[46] It is natural that the elites played an important part in these places. The urban phenomenon, however, is much more complex.

Economic historians define cities according to the existence of some forms of division of labour.[47] In principle, this definition has some sort of underlying relationship with the size of settlements: it is reasonable to imagine, for example, that in very small communities all inhabitants perform all sorts of activities. However, quantification is extremely problematic. Medieval historians, for example, often consider 3,000 inhabitants the minimum requirement to call a settlement "city". However, as pointed out by De Ligt (2012: 201), they are forced to do so, because no reliable list of smaller settlements exists. The arbitrariness of such a limit is all the more apparent when one considers that in medieval and modern Western European history the division of labour was in place in small settlements. A case in point is Italy, where, as De Ligt (2012: 200, n. 26) explains, around half of the population engaged in non-agricultural activities (42% of the total) lived in settlements with less than 5,000 inhabitants.

De Ligt (2012) correctly appreciates the importance of smaller centres in the

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[46] It should be noticed that possession of legal and political functions was only one of the ways in which urban status was conceptualized in the ancient world. Size was one way; the possession of certain infrastructures was another. But since they were using a classification that was primarily legal, the Romans had serious troubles in defining cities according to these two criteria. For example, using the quantity of inhabitants as a criterion for classification, Strabo (4.1.12) denies urban status to the 24 settlements attributed to Nemausus, and lists them as villages (κώμαι). Pliny (*HN* 3.37), however, does not use the word *vici,* apparently because he considers them larger than villages; still, he does not seem quite sure of what they are: he uses the expression *oppida ignobilia*, which shows how tentative his classification is. Likewise, Cassiodorus, describing his home-town Scylacium, explains that, although there are no city walls, Scylacium may still be considered a city. Nevertheless, he uses the periphrasis *civitas ruralis*, suggesting that Scylacium is actually somewhat inferior to a proper city (Cassiod. Var. 12.15.5: Scylacium "has no walls, so you might think it a mere country town"; transl. Purcell 1987: 202).

[47] Sociologists, instead, use Wirth's (1938) definition of the city as the space of secondary relationships.

urbanization patterns of ancient Italy. However, he focuses on the largest among them. Drawing a comparison with medieval and early modern Europe, De Ligt (2012: 202) points out that "settlements with populations of between 1,000 and 3,000 played a vital role in the lives of the great majority of the population". Here, by contrast, I also consider even smaller nucleated centres: smaller *for a* (such as *forum Felix*: see below), as well as those settlements generally referred to as *vici* (some of which could in fact be quite large: Bedriacum, a *vicus* according to Tac. *Hist*. 2.23, is a πολίχνη in Plut. *Otho* 8.1).[48] This category of settlements in particular reveals the shortcomings of a legalistic approach to nucleated settlements. As Festus (502-508 Lindsay) explains, in some instances *vici* lacked an administrative structure, relying instead on the *pagus* to which they belonged. This situation appears to be the result of urbanization, as *vici* appeared in areas that only had *pagi* when their administrative status had been arranged.[49]

Was some sort of division of labour in place in settlements averaging a few hundreds of inhabitants? If we are to rely on Varro (*Rust.* 1.16.4-5), who talks of specialised craftsmen living in *vici*, there was. The presence of traders is another possibility, as suggested by the *vici* of Cisalpine Gaul: Bedriacum (founded in the late 2nd – 1st century BC), Brixellum, Hostilia, Vicus Varianum, were trading centres located along riverways (Sena Chiesa 2014: 198). Further confirmation that specialisation existed in smaller centres comes from the presence of *nundinae*. Even though, as De Ligt (1990: 53) has remarked, out of twenty-five ca. markets recorded by the *indices nundinarii* of Latium and Campania, "only one was held *in vico*, whereas the others were held in towns", it would seem that elsewhere *nundinae* took place in smaller centres (*contra* Morley 1996: 166).[50] As Festus uncontroversially states, *nundinae* were also held in

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[48] In the recent years, scholars have come to consider *vici* (nucleated settlements) as the typical form of rural settlement among the Italian peoples, whereas *pagi* (sparse dwellings) were imported to the Italian territories by the Romans. See most recently Letta (2004 [2008]). This does not mean, of course, that *vici* were not present in the Roman territories.

[49] By contrast, the co-existence of *vicus* and *pagus*, both with administrative functions, has been convincingly explained by Letta (2004 [2008]: 239) as the consequence of Roman viritane settlements in Italian territories.

[50] Perhaps, the absence of *nundinae* at smaller centres in Latium and Campania depends on the short distances between towns in these regions.

vici (Fest. pp. 502; 508 L s.v. *vicus,* with the restorations proposed by Letta 2004 [2008]: *sed ex vic[t]is partim habent rempublicam et <ibi> ius dicitur, partim nihil eorum et tamen ibi nundinae aguntur negoti gerendi causa, et <ut> magistri vici, item magistri pagi quotannis fiunt*).[51]

Since my present concern is the aggregate demand that the Italian population could generate, regardless of whether they lived in cities or in smaller centres, here I will use the term "urbanization" in the sense of "de-ruralization", that is the increased division of labour, and the consequent growth in numbers of people who did not directly produce their own food (or produced it only partially, for example combining agriculture with other activities such as masonry).[52] This approach has a number of advantages. It still complies with the theoretical framework of the consumer city, simply reframing it into the "consumer settlement". In this way, it can adequately account for the role of small centres. At the same time, it provides a

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[51] According to Cracco Ruggini (2000: 162-163), the Senate always kept close control of authorizations to hold *nundinae.* In a documented instance, for example, a wealthy landowner, L. Bellicius Solers, planned to hold a market on his private property (Plin. *Ep*. 5.4; 5.13). It has been convincingly suggested (Kehoe 1997: 210) that this individual was aiming to exert closer control on his tenants' "commercial relationships with traders from outside the estate", barring them from access to nearby Vicetia's urban market (De Ligt 1993: 202-224). Vicetia's urban authorities opposed Bellicius' project: this is further evidence of the importance of retail activities for the economic life of towns. Although one may wonder whether the Senate's intervention was compelled by Bellicius' quarrelling with Vicetia's local government, some sort of central control certainly existed. Thus, to prove that the emperor Claudius was respectful of the state's powers, Suetonius reports that the emperor petitioned the consuls to hold *nundinae* on one of his estates (Suet. *Claud*. 12.2). Central control, though, does not imply that *nundinae* always remained confined to larger centres. The inscription of the *Magistri Mercuriales* from *forum Felix* now suggests that the Senate's involvement in the establishment of marketing events and facilities extended to peripheral places. In a similar fashion, the lists of market days from Antioch and Magnesia on the Maeander prove that even the small village of Attoukleis required formal authorization to hold market (De Ligt 1991: 48 ss.).

[52] My approach to urbanization is similar to Hopkins' (1978), who, as I do, focused on the number of people involved in non-agricultural activities. Still, Hopkins was actually trying to quantify the people residing in towns; for this reason, the criticism to which his method has been subjected (Jongman 2003: 102, n. 16; De Ligt 2012: 196) is undeniably correct, because, excluding urban-based peasants, and including rural craftsmen, Hopkins' figures do not provide the size of towns (whatever we mean by this word), but the number of non-agricultural workers. Unfortunately, urbanization rates cannot be quantified. Many believe that ca. 4 agricultural workers are necessary to make 1 urban resident, and therefore the urban population cannot exceed 20% of the total. Yet, it has been demonstrated (see De Ligt 2012: 200, n. 26) that the peasants of 18th century France were, for example, capable to sustain a urban population rate as high as 60%. Urbanization rates can be very high even in the absence of developed industries: as I have pointed out, 42% of the Italian population were not involved in agriculture in 1861, at a time when, especially in Southern Italy, industrialization was still very marginal.

feasible solution to the dearth of data on the population of ancient urban centres.[53]

Regardless of the size of the settlement where they lived, it is likely that in a phase of economic growth such as that experienced by post-Hannibalic Italy the number of people who did not (entirely) produce their food grew, as a consequence of demographic growth, migration, and reconversion from agriculture to other activities. In fact, the importance of nucleated settlements of all sorts in consuming agricultural surplus is confirmed by the diffusion of retail trade. Trips to the market to purchase foodstuffs appear to have been a regular presence in everyday life (see e.g. Hor. Serm. 1.1.73-75: *nescis, quo valeat nummus, quem praebeat usum? panis ematur, holus, vini sextarius; adde quis humana sibi doleat natura negatis*).[54] In the late republic, a large number of Italian towns had *macella*, whose establishment, as Frayn (1993: 4) remarks, "implies a change in the buying habits of the populace".[55] Other facilities, such as *tabernae*, could fulfil the same role in smaller settlements: in the 1st century BC, there were *tabernae* for retail trade, as well as a *vestibulum* for financial transaction, even at *forum Felix*,

[53] A popular strategy to determine the population of ancient towns is to use areal extension, and then transform it into population figures using standard densities (which are entirely arbitrary and have very high margins of error). This method, unfortunately, is riddled with all sorts of methodological flaws. There are two ways to calculate the areal extension of ancient cities: either determining the built-up area, or using the perimeter of city walls. Determining the built-up area is only possible in a very limited number of cases; besides, this system does not account for variations in size over time (Morley 2011b: 145). For these reasons, generally town walls are the best option. This, however, rules out those cities, such as Scylacium, which had no walls. Besides, it fails to consider that cities often expanded beyond their city walls, and that, at any rate, part of the population of ancient agro-towns actually lived in the countryside: Garnsey (1998: 107 ff.); still, Garnsey's skepticism on the extent to which farmers also lived in town seems excessive: see De Ligt (1990: 54); Pelgrom (2008: 343) suggests that Garnsey may be postulating too low an urban density. Together with others, Pelgrom is developing a new model of rural settlement around larger centres, according to which peasants lived in clustered villages (see e.g. Casarotto *et al.* 2016 on Venusia).

[54] It has been suggested that market places could also be informally arranged. Colin (2000: 151-152), for example, argues that the place where Encolpius and Ascyltus try to sell a cloak in the *Satyricon* is a case in point. However, given the attention of Roman authorities for such events (see Chapter 3), it is uncertain whether this could have been the case. It is also uncertain to what extent one could use Petronius as a historical source. For a careful attempt to extract social *Realien* from a fictional work see Millar (1981).

[55] The word *macellum* is already of common use in Plautus. Ferrary (2001) has demonstrated that, although the original construction of the *macellum* at Rome cannot be dated, it must be earlier than 209 BC, since it was rebuilt in that year (it was rebuilt again in 179 BC). Before the construction of the *macellum*, other places could serve for retail trade, such as the *forum cuppedinis*/*cupidinis* or the *forum piscarium*.

a small village in Hirpinia (*AE* 1999, 538).[56]

The presence of fertile grounds for agricultural investment and estate consolidation, then, is undeniable. However, the general scenario of growing pressure on landownership should be considered in its setting. That is, we should consider what the agrarian structures were like before the period of extraordinary growth beginning in the 2nd century BC. We should not make the mistake of believing that since opportunities for investment were fewer, then property distribution was more equal. During the phase of economic growth that characterized the late Middle Ages, for example, the appearance of wealthy "urban interest groups" generated competition with the feudal nobility and the Church (Curtis 2014: 27-28): that is, competition took off in an extremely unequal context.

Although, as we have seen, Appian and Plutarch describe the late republican transformation of agrarian structures in terms of dramatic growth of inequality, it is also possible to reconstruct a different scenario, in which competition mostly involved the upper echelons of Roman society. For example, elsewhere (Adamo 2016), I have suggested that during the first half of the 2nd century BC, the Roman elite's monopoly of *ager publicus* in Southern Italy, dating to the immediate aftermath of the Hannibalic War, was progressively challenged by local colonial elites. The same phenomenon could also take place in the opposite direction, as Roman elites swarmed in to challenge local landowners.[57] This is not to say, of course, that inequality did not grow. One may imagine, for example, that local wealthy landowners were being replaced by wealthier senators and *equites*. It is equally possible to suppose that middling landowners were affected, although there is no evidence for whether and how their access to property might have changed (the only thing that can be said with certainty

[56] The inscription reveals an interesting interplay of public and private actors: the *magistri* of the local *collegium Mercurialium* purchased the land and built the structures, but the *vectigal* should go to the public treasury. I wonder whether this was meant as partial payment for the land, which was perhaps public property.

[57] Unfortunately, collections of data on Roman elite's properties are mostly limited to senators (e.g. Shatzman 1975). For collections of data including *equites* and other wealthy Romans see Fraschetti 1981 (Sicily) and Giardina 1981 (Lucania and Bruttium).

is that, as we have seen above, they continued to exist). But it is not with these people that this thesis is concerned.

Here, I want to investigate what happened to the people whom Ti. Gracchus was addressing, the Roman peasants. Although, as I explained above, in many cases land-grabbing was a matter between wealthy landowners, this does not mean that peasants were never affected. Abundant evidence is provided by Early Imperial rhetorical exercises. For example, a controversy of Seneca the Elder revolves around the attempts of a wealthy man to purchase a single tree from his poor neighbour (Sen. *Contr*. 5.5). One of the Pseudo-Quintilianean *Declamationes Maiores* (13.2) describes the effects of the expansion of a large estate at the expenses of local small holdings: the poor man who is imagined to speak, explains that originally his neighbours were people of his same status, the neighbourhood was dotted with farms, and harmony reigned. But then, the whole area became the "garden" of a single individual: he even removed the boundary stones, and the farmers were forced to move out. Now, the poor man is completely surrounded by this individual's properties, to the point that he has just a small pathway to get in and out of his small-holding. As it is immediately clear, these exercises contain a good degree of exaggeration (the purchase of a single tree!); still, the popularity of the theme of the small-holding seized by a wealthy landowner suggests that this was indeed a common occurrence in early imperial Rome. I would argue, though, that peasants had always had limited access to landownership. That is, peasants' dispossessions were an ever-lasting phenomenon. Their access to landownership was not changing, because it had always been extremely limited.

3. Land distributions in the Roman republic: an overview.

Human mobility is a constant at all periods (especially in the Mediterranean: Horden and Purcell 2000). Centrally arranged relocations, by contrast, are not. Although some scholars have uncritically accepted the traditions regarding colonial foundations in the regal period (Chiabà 2011), these are more likely to have been *ex post* inventions, perhaps modelled on genuine traditions of movements of people, but interpreted according to the later procedures of state-driven foundations and settlements. It has long been recognized that centrally arranged distributions of land are strictly connected with land surveying and the appearance of grids in the countryside. The orderly division of the physical space makes its first appearance in the Greek world. In towns, it left its mark in the Hippodamian urban planning that was put into practice for example at Olynthus (Mayer 2012: 27 ss.).[58] In the countryside, it is embodied by "chequerboards", which were ubiquitous to the Greek world, ranging from Western Greek Metapontum to the Tauric Chersonesus (Carter 2006). Contact with the Western Greek communities seems to have decisively influenced the development of centuriations at Rome. Centuriations are closely connected to land reclamations for agricultural purposes (either draining marshes, as in the Pomptine plain [De Haas 2010], or channelling irregular rivers, as in the Reatine plain [Camerieri *et al.* 2009; Camerieri and Mattioli 2014] and along the Adriatic Coast [Dall'Aglio 2009]). These operations were also necessary for settlement, eradicating malaria and reducing the risk of floods.

The precise dating of the appearance of centuriations is still debated. A major point of uncertainty concerns their technical evolution: some believe that the quadration *per strigas et scamnas* is older than the 20x20 *actus* of 200 *iugera*, whose earliest known example is the

[58] Although I will not discuss the issue here, since it is irrelevant to the topic of this thesis, I should at least point out that the idea that Olynthus' private architecture reflects complete equality has been readdressed by Cahill (2000), who has remarked that differences between houses are visible, and that the co-existence of similarities and differences should be read as reflecting "both the philosophical ideals of democracy, *isonomia*, and the like, and also the realities of social and economic inequalities" (2000: 501).

centuriation of Ariminum, founded in 268 BC (Campbell 2000: lx). Others, instead, believe that the two systems existed together (see De Nardis 2009b: 207 for the *status quaestionis*). It is extremely hard to take sides in the debate, although the idea of a linear evolution appears at odds with the great flexibility of technical solutions that is visible at later stages: the centuriation of Vibo was 16x25 *actus*, that of Cosa was 16x32, and others of various sizes are reported by the *Agrimensores*, who also prescribe adapting the *modus* to the quantity of land (Moscatelli 1993: 110). All things considered, the most likely dating for the appearance of Roman centuriations seems to be the late 4th century (Gasparri 1994: 154). As Cancellieri (1990) has argued, the different orientation of the via Appia and of the centuriation of the Pomptine plain suggests that when the road was constructed, the centuriation was already in place: in this case, then, we would have a decisive *terminus ante quem*.[59]

As Chiabà (2011) has pointed out, land distributions and colonization are actually mutually alternative strategies, whose deployment entails maintaining (or not) settlers inside the civic body of their community of origin. Despite this macroscopic difference, though, in ancient reflection the boundary between the two is quite blurred, since colonial foundations always include land distributions, and on the other hand both encompass the physical relocation of people. Relocating people is considered important inasmuch as the physical presence of the rulers contributes to territorial control. Cicero notoriously called colonies *propugnacula imperii*, a definition shared by Tacitus, in his famous description of Cremona (*Hist.* 3.34.1). According to Siculus Flaccus (102.20-22 Campbell), for example, colonies secure to Rome the control of territories subject to local rebellions or external threats.[60] Appian calls Roman colonies φρούρια (*B.Civ.* 1.7), and the same term is used by Plutarch regarding Pericles'

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[59] According to Cancellieri, this centuriation might testify for a distribution of land carried out when the Oufentina tribe was founded. See de Haas 2010: 3-4 for the *status quaestionis*.

[60] The idea is restated at Sic. Flacc. 102.29-31 Campbell, discussing Gracchan colonies. Since the passage is preceded by a *lacuna*, the mention of Gracchus in the text could also be interpreted otherwise: Gabba (1992: 398), for example, argues that Siculus Flaccus is talking of an earlier law, and Gracchus is only mentioned as a term of comparison.

colonies (*Per.* 11.6: see Moreno 2007: 93 for the influence of Roman colonial experience on the passage). In his famous description of Camulodunum (Tac. Ann. 12.32), Tacitus also adds another reason why the presence of Romans helps to control a territory: not only does a colony provide support in case of rebellions, but it also educates the natives in the laws of the conquerors.[61]

Resettlement is also a valuable way to remove potentially dangerous groups from a city. Aristotle reports (*Pol*. 2.8=1273b 19-24) that this strategy was adopted at Carthage to get rid of part of the δῆμος, so that "they make the civic body steady" (ποιοῦσι μόνιμον τὴν πολιτείαν).[62] This could happen also when there was no immediate threat of civic unrest. As Whittaker (1993: 274-275) has showed, ancient sources generally take a moralistic, patronizing view of the poor. Destitute people are considered a threat to civic harmony, in that they are morally degenerate and corrupt.[63] Slaves and freedmen were another problematic presence. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (Dio. Hal. 4.24.8), for example, condemned Roman manumission policy, because slaves were freed indiscriminately, and so evil doers were allowed into the civic

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[61] The foundation of *Camulodunum* notoriously did not prevent the outbreak of the rebellion (Tac. Ann. 14.31-32). It is unclear, however, what role the colony was expected to play. The *lex Ursonensis* prescribes the creation of local militias in case of need (*Roman Statutes* 1.25[*lex Coloniae Genetivae*], chpt. 103; cf. chpt. 62 on *vacatio militiae*), but the prescription was "possibly anachronistic" (Mackie 1983: 356). There are scholars who believe that colonies did play an active military role (Brennan, P.M. 1990: 492). Otherwise colonies' military role could be conceived as indirect, mostly limited to logistic support.

[62] Aristotle disagrees with this measure, explaining that the effective prevention of *stasis* should be achieved through legislation.

[63] Of all the ancient writers, Dio Chrysostom is the only one to take an original stance on the issue. In the *Euboicus*, he explains that the removal of poor urban inhabitants from the city would actually weaken the community, inasmuch as the city would miss the chance to exploit the potential of as many good citizens as are present in that group. Dio believes that the urban population is not an undistinguished mob, but differences exist between various sub-groups, depending on their occupation. Some salaried jobs, he claims, do not weaken the body and the soul, and therefore those workers who are engaged in such activities are good citizens, although of poor means. Dio promises to list all the occupations that do not harm the body and the soul, but there is no trace of such list in the speech. At any rate, it should be noted that, although Dio believes that retaining the "good" urban poor in the city would be a better option, "transforming all these people into rustics by all ends, would not be either difficult or harmful" (Dio Chrys. 7.107-108). Although he believes that also urban inhabitants can be good citizens, Dio shares the view that rural life creates good citizens: for example, he claims that in the case of Athens, the relocation of the urban poor, distributed throughout Attica, produced better citizens than those who lived inside the city later on. Brunt (2013: 151-179) shows that the *Euboicus* is heavily influenced by the early Stoa (Cleanthes or Chrysippus), as opposed to Cicero's dependence on the middle Stoa (Panetius) in the *De Officiis*.

body, deteriorating civic ἔθος. Dionysius suggested reviewing the manumitted slaves yearly – along the lines of the yearly censorial review of *equites* – and sending away, under the pretence of founding a colony, those judged unworthy of the citizenship. Rome was a particularly problematic case, since its swollen population made the risk of unrests particularly dangerous.[64]

Finally, relocation combined with land distribution is also a way to effectively tackle destitution, without putting at risk civic harmony by challenging the property rights of the wealthy. As Livy suggests (Liv. 3.1.5), describing the first foundation of Antium in 467 BC, "thus the plebs would have moved to the fields without the complaints of the owners, and the city will have enjoyed harmony (*concordia*)". Of course, the removal of the poor from the city and the improvement of their conditions through land distributions are two sides of the same coin: Plutarch, for example, claims that Pericles' ἀποικίαι aimed to free Athens from the poor, and at the same time improve their conditions of life (Plut. Per. 11.5-6).[65]

By improving the conditions of life of settlers, colonization and land distributions were also a fundamental tool to secure demographic prosperity. This, in turn, was important not only because πολυανδρία was considered one of the signs of a prosperous state in its own right, but also because it signified abundance of manpower, and thus military power. The idea that the military power of a state depends on its population, that is on the bare number of potential recruits, is as old as Herodotus, who ascribed the idea to the Persians (Hdt. 1.136.1); Dionysius of Halicarnassus depicts the Roman king Tullus Hostilius defending the same principle: "the power of cities lies in their military strength", he claims, "and this comes from the abundance of people" (Dio. Hal. 3.11.6). Demographic growth was central to Roman land distributions. As Livy explains (Liv. 27.9.11), when the Romans conquered new territories, they settled their

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[64] The connection between overpopulation and unrest is made by Cassius Dio (Dio 38.1.2-3) regarding Caesar's land distribution of 59 BC.

[65] *Contra* Bearzot (1995), who believes that the two explanations are mutually exclusive, and should be assigned to two different chronological periods of Athenian transmarine imperialism. Plutarch's expression ἀργοῦ καὶ διὰ σχολὴν πολυπράγμονος ὄχλου suggests that he considered the presence of the poor problematic due to their savage nature, and unemployment was only worsening things. Compare πολυπράγμονος to the praise of ἀπράγμονες in Ar. *Rhet*. 2.4.10.

citizens, by means of new urban foundations or viritane allotments (*in colonias atque in agrum bello captum*), so that the number of citizens could grow (*stirpis augendae causa*). Likewise, when Veii was captured, Livy (Liv. 5.30) reports that the Senate decided to divide the new territory to the plebs, in allotments of 7 iugera, not only to *patres familias*, but also to all *liberorum capita.*[66] This custom was not limited to the Roman army, but was also applied to the allies: for example, Livy (Liv. 40.38.4-8.) reports that in 180 BC the Senate decreed to give land to the Ligures in order to increase their manpower. Similar instances must not have been exceptional: looking back at republican land distributions, Hyginus (Hyg. Const. Lim. 140. 17-25 Campbell) considered the distribution of land to the allies as customary.[67]

Colonization, of course, was not the only acknowledged way to cater for manpower. In Philip V's letter to Larisa, for example, the Romans are said to have increased their manpower through a policy of openness. Rather than the cause of Rome's demographic prosperity, Philip considers colonies as an effect (*IG* IX.2, 517, ll. 29-34; transl. Bagnall and Derow):

> "For that it is the fairest thing of all for a city to grow strong, with as many as possible having a part in the state, and for the land to be worked not badly, as is now the case, I believe that none of you would disagree, and it is also possible to look at the others who make use of similar enrolments of citizens, among whom are the Romans, who receive into the state even slaves, when they have freed them, giving them a share in the magistracies, and in such a way not only have they augmented their fatherland [τὴν ἰδίαν πατρίδα ἐπηυξήκασιν, to be compared with Livy's *stirpis augendae causa*, and Hyginus' *augendae rei publicae causa*], but they have also sent out colonies to almost seventy places".

Dionysius of Halicarnassus was another passionate supporter of Rome's openness. When Tullus Hostilius, as we have seen above, states, in Dionysius' narrative, that the strength of states depends on their manpower, he is speaking in favour of the "open" character of Rome, where

[66] Livy explains that the inclusion of all children in the measure aimed to persuade people to raise them (*ut omnium in domo liberorum capitum ratio haberetur, vellentque in eam spem liberos tollere*). Does this mean that, in the hope of future identical measures, people will have given birth to more children, or does it mean that, since now children had property, their parents had a reason to acknowledge them and raise them? In other word, was the measure aimed to increase births, or to eradicate child exposure?

[67] Appian too, in his account of how Rome dealt with conquered territories, explains that the arrangements made aimed at maintaining the manpower of her allied states. However, elsewhere Appian makes clear that only the Romans benefited from the new settlements: the connection between Rome's arrangements and the interests of the allies is not straightforward. See Chapter 3 for discussion.

all newcomers are accepted and included in the civic body.

Obviously, colonization and openness can also be deployed together. Describing Romulus' reign, Dionysius explains that (Dio. Hal. 2.16.1-3) Romulus did not slay or enslave all the enemy populations after their defeat (which would have caused the abandonment of their land). Rather, he sent "settlers thither to possess some part of the country by lot and to make the conquered cities Roman colonies, and even grant[ed] citizenship to some of them". The following kings and magistrates having followed Romulus' example, the Roman people, despite having started out with no more than 3,000 foot soldiers and 300 knights, "became inferior in numbers to none of the nations that were accounted the most populous (transl. LCL)". Likewise, the Sallustean(?) second letter to Caesar (Sall. *Rep*. 2.5.7-8) advises combining a colonial program with the grant of citizenship: the new citizens will be settled in colonies alongside those who are already citizens. In this way, the letter concludes, *res militaris opulentior erit.*[68]

We should refrain from applying uncritically any of the motivations analysed above to colonial projects whose explicit aim is not stated by the sources. Equally, we should not accept uncritically the motivations provided by sources that are distant in time and sensibility from the historical episode that they are describing. As Moreno (2009) has showed, for example, Plutarch has completely distorted the meaning of Athenian cleruchies of the Periclean age, which he describes as distributions of land to the poor, whereas they were actually meant to benefit absentee Athenian landowners who received a rent from their *kleroi*, the cleruchs at the same time being liable for taxation and military service. It is possible, of course, to make educated guesses on the possible aims of the various colonial foundations and land distributions, by

[68] The authenticity of the two *Epistulae*, preserved only by the codex V, which contains miscellaneous material, is much debated and, as Duplá *et al.* (1994: 8) earnestly admit, no certainty can be achieved. In fact, there is no decisive argument either in favour or against their authenticity except personal taste: all the arguments against authenticity are challenged and forcefully rejected by Cugusi 1968 in the Introduction. It is meaningful that, as pointed out by Reynolds, many more scholars are keen to accept the authenticity of the first epistle alone, because it *looks* more genuine (Reynolds 1991: XX: *sunt etiam nunc qui has lucubrationes uel certe priorem – nam haec minus habet quod suspicionem moueat – Sallustio adscribant*). At any rate, the important thing is that, whoever wrote these letters was very well acquainted with Sallust's thought and succeeded in imitating it.

looking at their precise features and historical context. However, univocal conclusions are often beyond reach. For example, it has long been taken for granted that in the 4th and 3rd centuries, until the Hannibalic war, colonies had primarily a strategic military function (Laffi 2007: 20-21; Erdkamp 2011: 111). In the recent years, however, other possibilities are being (re-)explored, such as outright attempts to "Romanize" new territories, or to release pressure on landownership (Pelgrom and Stek 2014).[69]

At least, a distinction can be made between Latin and Roman colonies. Latin colonies usually received a large population: it has been suggested (Erdkamp 2011: 111) that their colonists were generally veterans, whose resettlement prevented their families of origin from partitioning their property – when the time came – into dowries and inheritances. Thus, the creation of Latin colonies actively protected the number of *adsidui* at Rome, and at the same time created a new loyal community obliged to provide soldiers. Roman colonies, instead, were small settlements along the coast (the *coloniae maritimae*: Laffi 2007: 21). Several of them were located to protect river-mouths.[70] It is uncertain what kind of people were chosen to populate these garrisons. According to Livy, in the darkest hours of the Hannibalic War, "even the maritime colonies, which were declared to have been solemnly and formally exempted from military service were called upon to furnish soldiers"; when summoned to Rome, "each community produced its title to exemption" (Liv. 27.38.3-4; transl. Roselaar 2009: 610). The existence of such formal *vacationes militiae* would suggest that the inhabitants of these colonies were formally *adsidui*, that is, liable to military service.

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[69] According to Wiseman (2009: 42 ss.), in particular, during the 4th and early 3rd centuries the distribution of land was stimulated by an egalitarian "ethos" whereby popular leaders such as M'. Curius Dentatus aimed at enlarging the *plebs*' access to landownership. As I will argue in Chapter 2, however, the stories on popular leaders being concerned with equal access to landownership belong to the later reflection on how inequality weakens states. In Chapter 4, I argue that it is extremely unlikely that the people ever requested the distribution of land *as* such, but we should rather think of vaguer protests caused by their hardships.

[70] That *coloniae maritimae* should protect river mouths is explicitly stated by Livy regarding the three colonies founded in Campania in 194 BC (the decision to found them was taken three years earlier): Liternum, Volturnum, Puteoli. Note, though, that Puteoli is not on a river mouth. According to Frederiksen (1984: 270), these settlements created "a barrier between the *ager Campanus* and the sea".

Recent scholarship has attempted to overturn this view, claiming that the small dimensions of plots distributed to settlers strongly suggests that these people were *proletarii* (Roselaar 2009; Erdkamp 2011: 115).[71] This view conceals a profound misunderstanding of the conditions of life in the 4th and 3rd century, especially in coastal towns. Although it is most probably true that two *iugera* of land were not sufficient to qualify as *adsidui*, one should not make the mistake of assuming that all those people who had this qualification were landowners.[72] These scholars tend to forget that other forms of wealth existed, a fact that is universally accepted by archaeologists working on archaic Rome, who have long rejected any unlikely primitivistic stance on the development of trade and urban activities in Rome in the 4th century BC (Cornell 1995: 385-390).

As I mentioned above, such forgetfulness is especially unfortunate in the case of coastal towns such as the maritime colonies. Although it is true that these settlements could be located in fertile territories (Mason 1992; Roselaar 2009: 614-615), the inhabitants of coastal towns – as the case of Antium reminds us (Bispham 2012) – could also base their fortunes on fishing, trade and piracy (the difference between the two being very subtle).[73] Before the colony was founded the local population (a mix of Romans and Volscians) had practiced piracy. The colonists must have continued this tradition. In fact, when the *vacatio militiae* of maritime colonies was waived in 209 BC (episode reported above), the colonists of Ostia and Antium were also requested to swear that they would not stay away from their cities for periods longer than 30 days. This particular forcefully suggests that these people were seafarers, who commonly spent months away from home. Needless to say, mariners' principal possession is

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[71] It is generally assumed that settlers at maritime colonies received only 2 *iugera.* To be honest, the size of allotments is only known in the case of Tarracina (Liv. 8.21.11; see Roselaar 2009: 614, n. 17).

[72] De Ligt (2014) has argued that maritime colonies were founded before the introduction of the five *census* classes. This is generally dated to the creation of *stipendium* and *tributum* in 406 BC (Cornell 1995: 187); De Ligt uses instead Rathbone's (1993) alternative dating to the first half of the 3rd century. It is extremely unlikely, though, that a reform that took place around the time of Fabius Pictor could later be ascribed to Servius Tullius. Cornell's earlier dating must be preferred. The recorded minimum threshold is 11,000 *asses*, but since no Roman currency existed at the time, it is not entirely clear how *census* was calculated (*aes rude*?).

[73] Roselaar (2009) and De Ligt (2014) instead lay all the stress on access to public land.

their boat (for those who own one). Livy records that the pirates who lived in Antium before the colonial foundation had *naves longae* (Liv. 8.14.8). Their Roman successors too will have owned ships, and these will have been regularly entered in the *census*.

The Hannibalic War represents a watershed in Roman colonial practices. On the one hand, the massacres made a large quantity of land available, especially in Southern Italy, while Rome also accelerated the subjugation of Cisalpina. On the other hand, Scipio's veterans had to be rewarded, and new births were necessary to recover from the casualties. Rome responded by creating Latin colonies throughout the peninsula, whose settlers were generously treated: the size of allotments varied from 15 to 50 *iugera* (Cassola 1988; Gabba 1988b).[74] Around the same years, Roman colonies were founded too, and one viritan allotments was also carried out. In these cases, allotments were much less generous, ranging between 5 and 10 *iugera*.[75] As Erdkamp (2011: 117) has suggested, recipients of these smaller settlements were possibly *proletarii*. In fact, Rathbone (2008) has suggested that this smaller kind of allotments may correspond to the minimum census requirement of the 5th class. This appears to have been created at some point in the mid-3rd century (Rathbone 1993: 141), not much later than the introduction of *aes grave* (between 320 and 300 BC) and *aes signatum* (perhaps contemporary with the creation of *triumviri monetales* in 289 BC).[76]

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[74] The size of plots in earlier Latin colonies is completely unknown (Roselaar 2009: 614, n. 16), so comparisons with the earlier situation cannot be made. On the reasons of the extreme fluctuation of the size of allotments in post-Hannibalic Latin colonies several theories have been formulated. One of the most popular is that those colonies with more generous allotments were those where settlers had to be lured to go, because they were more dangerous or isolated. Others have suggested that larger allotments reflect Rome's new interest for commercial agriculture (Bandelli 1988: 42-55). Other attempted explanations include the different availability of *ager publicus* in the various colonies, compensations in kind, different political contexts (Bollini 2006: 335-336). Physical constraints such as the quantity of land available, and the number of recipients to accommodate, should not be overlooked.

[75] The allies included in the viritane settlement of 173 in the *agri Ligustini et Gallici* received a mere 3 *iugera* each (Liv. 42.4). The sources report that allotments in the Roman colony of Luna were 51.5 *iugera* (Liv. 41.13), but this figure should be amended to 6.5 (Rathbone 2008: 307, n. 10).

[76] Carlà (Carlà and Marcone 2011: 60-63) connects the introduction of *aes grave* with the inclusion of cash in the recording of *census*, which he dates to 312 BC. This dating, however, depends on Mommsen's view that cash (like other *res nec mancipi*) started to be included in *census* declarations only after the creation of *tributum* in 312 BC. As I will explain in detail in Chapter 4, this view has been authoritatively criticised by Fraccaro (1931).

The reduction of the property qualification of the 5th class after Cannae had the effect of increasing the number of members of the 5th class, possibly "in order to increase the pool of possible recruits for the Roman army in an emergency" (Lo Cascio 2008: 248). As proved by Polybius (Pol. 6.19.2), the minimum *census* requirement of the 5th class was now 400 drachmae, that is 4,000 sextantal asses (Rathbone 1993: 126). Rathbone suggests that, due to the profound variations in the value of land, the quantity of land needed to qualify in the various *census* classes was established using an entirely notional value: he suggests that the minimum figures were 100, 75, 50, 25 and 4 *iugera* for each of the five *census* classes. Although, as I will explain in Chapter 4, I believe that the value of land as entered in *census* records was not notional, but corresponded to market values, Rathbone's idea that the size of allotments distributed to Roman citizens in the early 2nd century corresponded to the minimum *census* requirements for inclusion among the *adsidui* appears extremely likely, considering that, as I have suggested above, after the Hannibalic War Rome was concerned with restoring her base of recruitment.

Earlier on and later on, instead, the size of plots does not appear to have been linked to minimum census requirements. As we have seen, in maritime colonies settlers received very little land. Likewise, the allotments of 7 *iugera* in use in the 4th century (the land distributed in the *ager Veientanus* in 393 and by M'. Curius Dentatus in the *ager Sabinus* in 290 BC: Liv. 5.30.8; Val. Max. 4.3.5b.), which Rathbone defines "archetypal", were possibly insufficient to meet the minimum requirement of 11,000 *asses*.[77] In the second half of the 2nd century BC, instead, allotments became much bigger than what was necessary to qualify for military service. Rathbone has proposed that the minimum census requirement to be listed among the *adsidui*

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[77] It should be noticed that a different tradition is preserved by Diodorus, who (Diod. Sic. 14.102) reports that the size of plots was 4 *plethra*, adding that the size reported by other sources was 8 *plethra*. This should remind us that the possibility that information on the size of allotments was altered through time cannot be ruled out. Juvenal, for example, claims that the Romans who fought Pyrrhus and the Carthaginians had received only two *iugera* (Iuv. 14.161-171)!

was changed to 375 HS after the retariffing of the denarius in 140 BC.[78] This figure implies that the *census* of the 5th class underwent a reduction, in terms of silver *denarii*, from 400 to 94 (Rathbone 1993: 144).[79] The scope of this measure was to avoid that, as a consequence of inflation, members of lower classes were "promoted" to higher ranks.

Rathbone reckons that the new threshold "cannot have represented more than a hut and garden-plot". This remark helps him make sense of Livy's story of Sp. Ligustinus owning a single *iugerum* of land. This man – who, in the speech that Livy moulds for him, claims to have joined the army in 200 BC – corresponds, in Livian depiction, to the typical legionary (Liv. 42.34.2).[80] If the rationale underlying the size of plots had still been the same (that is, complying with the minimum census requirements), we would expect allotments to have become smaller after 140 BC. This did not happen: on the contrary, their size grew.

Unfortunately, the analysis of late republican land distributions is vitiated by the misunderstanding of the procedure used to divide *centuriae* (the larger quadrants formed by the intersections of *kardines* and *decumani*) into smaller plots. It is unwarrantedly assumed that *centuriae* were divided only once and then allotted (e.g. Bosio 1965-1966 on *Iulia Concordia*). Following this principle, scholars have come up with unreliably large sizes. Rathbone (2008: 308), for example, believes that Gracchan colonists at Luceria received 80-90 *iugera* each. On the same grounds, Piganiol (1962: 138-139) has argued that at Arausio the plots of Cadastre B were 33 1/3 *iugera* wide.[81] Maiuro (2012: 124, n. 314) has even ventured to explain this generous size, claiming that it was due to the higher bargaining power of soldiers, combined

[78] *Contra* Lo Cascio (1988; 2008), who believes that the last lowering of the minimum threshold is the one from 11,000 to 4,000 *asses*.
[79] This is precisely the opposite of what happened to the other classes, whose property requirements were raised in order to "restore the traditional *census* … in terms of actual property" (Rathbone 1993: 132).
[80] The idea that, with the new *census* threshold, only a garden-plot could suffice may be confirmed by Varro's account of the *fratres Veiani*, who owned a single *iugerum* with beehives (Varro 3.16). In this case, though, we have no certainty that the two brothers did not own other land.
[81] Piganiol's figure derives from a free-handed use of rounded numbers and approximations. Also note that, whereas Piganiol believed that Cadastre B corresponded to the settlement of the veterans of Actium, this phase is now ascribed to a newly discovered cadastre, named "Cadastre E" (Assénat 1994).

with the availability of land after the *lex Pedia* of 43 BC. Owing to such wrong assumptions on the size of plots, scholars have wrongly interpreted the actual social consequences of land distributions. For example, reasonably wealthy farmsteads such as villa Regina, Boscoreale stazione and Boscoreale Giuliana have been associated with distributions of 30 to 50 *iugera* to average Triumviral veteran (so Maiuro 2012: 124, n. 314), which is certainly way too optimistic.

This misconception is partly due to a mistaken interpretation of Hyginus' description of the *sors* (Hyg. 156.25-158.10 Campbell), i.e. the ballot used to to assign plots to colonists. According to this procedure, a first ballot is carried out to assign centuries, then a further ballot assigns the various plots of each century. Now, to explain this procedure, Hyginus uses an example in which every *centuria* is divided only once (in three plots, using a technique named *conternatio*). Keppie thought this passage is related to the foundation of *Augusta Emerita*, since Hyginus mentions the *legio V Alaudae.* This, though, cannot be correct, because the centuries of *Emerita* were 400 *iugera* in extent, whereas Hyginus is referring to centuries of 200 *iugera* (Mayer and Olesti Vila 2001: 110). In fact, the example is meant to be a hypothetical simplification, as it is made clear by Hyginus' own words: *sit forte centuria* ... ! If this were not enough, Hyginus even uses the typical fictional names of Roman law (156.33-34).

According to Keppie (1983: 93), further evidence proving that *centuriae* were divided only once is found in the *Corpus Agrimensorum*, which would contain traces of allotments of either 25 or 50 *iugera*, obtained from a single "four-fold division of the normal centuria of 200 *iugera*". The passages quoted by Keppie, however, do not support his claim. The first reference to plots of 50 *iugera* – which Keppie, following Lachmann, ascribed to Hyginus (110.10 Lachmann = 50.15-17 Campbell) – is now considered to belong to "a pastiche of the works of the *Gromatici*" (Campbell 2000: 353). The passage states that "the *ager* that included more than 200 *iugera* was distributed in lots of 50 *iugera* or more by order of the *principes*, using internal boundary lines, according to what *qualitas* the land was found to have". Almost every word of this sentence is puzzling: what land? What *principes*? It appears clear, however, that Keppie's interpretation, which takes the passage's mysterious *ager* as if indicating a *centuria*, is unwarranted. The passage explains that, before partitioning the land, its *qualitas* was investigated. Now, as Frontinus explains (Front. 3.3-4 Campbell) *qualitas* is a technical term that indicates the technical typology of the land: "there are three typologies of land: the first is the land divided and allotted, the second is the land whose dimensions are calculated by measuring its external boundaries, and the third is the *ager arcifinius*, whose measures cannot be calculated [due to the absence of boundary lines]". Of course, if the mysterious *ager* of 200 *iugera* or more had all been included in a single *centuria*, there would have been no need to ascertain its *qualitas*, since all *centuriae* are *ager divisus et adsignatus*. Therefore, the passage cannot be saying that *centuriae* of 200 *iugera* were divided in plots of 50 *iugera*. Nor can the second passage provided by Keppie. In fact, this passage from the *Liber Coloniarum* (Liber Coloniarum 242.29 Campbell), which according to Keppie would prove that veteran settlements were 50 *iugera* large, actually refers to a specific category of land, the "*ager iugarius*".[82]

The publication of the so-called *sors Ilicitana* (Mayer and Olesti Vila 2001) now proves beyond any doubt that the internal divisions of *centuriae* were very complex. This bronze inscription contains a *sors*, in this case of ten names, whereas the example provided by Hyginus only has three names (adding even more weight to the idea that Hyginus is simplifying).[83] In this case, two adjoining centuries were divided by *conternatio* in 3 parts of 66.66 *iugera* each; two of the resulting plots, adjoining but belonging to different *centuriae*, were grouped together and further divided among the group of 10 colonists, who then received 13 *iugera* each, 6.5 *iugera* in each *centuria.*[84]

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[82] For the same reason, the reference to an "*ager meridianus*" of 25 *iugera* in the following entry (242.30 Campbell) cannot be used to prove that allotments were 25 *iugera* large.
[83] The so-called Hyginus 2 (78.5 Campbell) confirms that in practice the *sors* was customarily based on groups of 10 names (*decuriae*).
[84] The remaining (*superest*) 11 *iugera* will have been *subseciva* used as *traiectus*, the pathways across

At the end of this somewhat pedantic discussion, it can be argued with confidence that Rathbone's (2008: 307) view that late republican settlements were in the range of 10-15 *iugera* is correct. Larger figures are recorded, but these are, with all likelihood, later inventions or unfulfilled promises. In the former category I would include the *De Viris Illustribus*' report that Saturninus proposed to distribute 100 *iugera* each to Marius' veterans (*Vir. Ill.* 73.1): the information appears to be part of the characterization of Saturninus as an evil man, among whose faults a general lack of sense of measure was included. Among the unfulfilled promises, I would list the 40 *iugera* promised by Domitius Ahenobarbus to his troops in 49 BC: Domitius was being abandoned by his army, and the promise sounds like a desperate attempt to preserve his troops' loyalty (Rosenstein 2008: 23; *contra* Keppie 1983: 92 n. 40). Actual land bills, by contrast, are consistent with Rathbone's idea. In 63 BC, Rullus wanted to distribute 10 *iugera* each to settlers in the *ager Campanus* and 12 to settlers in the *ager Stellas* (Cic. *Leg. Agr*. 2.78; 2.85); Caesar gave 10 *iugera* each to the beneficiaries of his agrarian law in 59 BC (Cic. *Att*. 2.16.1). If the account of the *Liber Coloniarum* is reliable – and nothing proves that it is – the most generous late republican land distribution was carried out at Volaterrae, where settlers received 25 *iugera* each.[85]

The late republican phase of Roman colonization does not stand out only for the increased size of its allotments, but also because, in most cases, these schemes involved dispossessions and redistributions. Recipients, as we have seen, were often veterans, but they could also be urban *proletarii*.[86] The theme of sending away the problematic elements of the population of Rome was very popular in late republican political debate. As we know from Cicero's indignant denunciation to the people (Cic. *Leg. Agr.* 2.70), Rullus claimed that his law

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the single allotments (Mayer and Olesti Vila 2001: 120-121).

[85] The *Liber Coloniarum* refers to allotments carried out *e lege triumvirali*, but the only settlement known at Volaterrae is Caesarian (Keppie 1983: 92).

[86] The boundary between *proletarii* and poor *adsidui*, though, could be very narrow. See e.g. Cicero's reference to Rullus' intention to include the inhabitants of rural tribes, who may well own a little land (*qui habent*), in his land scheme (Cic. *Leg. Agr*. 2.79).

was directed to emptying the drains of Rome (*sentina urbis*), a function with which Cicero himself had no problem to agree in his private conversation with Atticus two years later, describing the advantages of the *lex Flavia* (Cic. *Att.* 1.19.4). It is possible that also the other bills of the same kind were presented in a similar fashion. According to Brunt (1988: 241, n. 4; 251), the theme of "draining off the urban proletariate" was a constant presence in the debate on land distributions during the last century of the republic.[87]

This overview of land distributions throughout the republic – although short – has demonstrated one important thing. At no point did Rome use land distributions to promote an egalitarian principle. Land distributions were always meant to resolve contingent concerns: recovering manpower after a war; rewarding soldiers; controlling and protecting the territory; improving security and quality of life at Rome (and perhaps saving on public grain provisions). Therefore, Rome was never interested in expanding land distributions to all the people. It is undeniable, however, that a large quantity of people was involved (especially after the Hannibalic war). But, as I will argue in the next sections, a lot of them may have lost their land.[88]

Before moving on to discuss this issue, though, there is still one aspect of republican land distributions that requires treatment: their frequency. After the *supplementum* of 1,500 families sent to Aquileia in 169 B.C. (Liv. 43.17.1), no more land was distributed until Ti. Gracchus' reform (Laffi 2007: 45). This period of 40 years without land distributions is often considered to have delivered the final blow to the Roman peasantry. It is possible that the Senate consciously decided to reduce the frequency of land distributions in order to preserve the *status quo*. In fact, the *deductores* entrusted with land distributions acquired extraordinary influence

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[87] Brunt suggested that also the 80,000 citizens that Caesar relocated – or planned to – to transmarine colonies (Suet. *Iul*. 42.1) were proletarians, whose removal from Rome aimed to relieve the *annona*.

[88] Since I am making a general point on the outcomes of *any* land distribution carried out at the same conditions, here I will not distinguish between Latin and Roman colonies. If anything, what I will say below is even more relevant to Latin colonies, because allotments there tended to be larger, and the timocratic division sharper (see e.g. houses at Cosa: Fentress *et al.* 2003: 23).

and power, and the Senate may have been worried that it could lose control over the appointment of *deductores*.

The problem appears to have emerged already in 232 BC, when C. Flaminius, then tribune of the *plebs*, promoted the distribution of the *ager Picenus* to the people. Commenting on the episode, Polybius (2.21.7-8) claims that, for the Romans, this popular policy (ταύτην τὴν δημαγωγίαν καὶ πολιτείαν) “can be labelled the so to say originator of the people's change for the worse” (ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν φατέον ἀρχηγὸν μὲν γενέσθαι τῆς ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον τοῦ δήμου διαστροφῆς).[89] As Walbank (1957: *ad locum*) explains, Polybius' obscure comment on the people's corruption should be explained in the light of his description of the balance of powers between the Senate and the *comitia* at 6.16.3-5. Traditionally, colonial foundations had been a perfect occasion to create relationships of patronage, and increase one's influence and power. The bounds between the settlers and the magistrate responsible for their *deductio* were very strong and durable. Indeed, as Laffi (2007: 39) has pointed out, after the Hannibalic War the foundation of colonies under tribunician initiative became quite popular. Carrying out land distributions on the exclusive authority of the people was problematic, because it disrupted the traditional balance of powers. Therefore, it is possible that the failure to distribute land to the people over a period of roughly 40 years was a consequence of the Senate's open opposition to any such measure.

However, in comparison to land distributions and colonial settlements over the course of the previous centuries, an interval of 40 years does not seem anomalous. If anything, the anomaly is represented by the high number of colonial deductions in the early 2nd century, a consequence of the depopulation caused by the Hannibalic War. Furthermore, there are reasons to argue that the central decades of the 2nd century actually witnessed land distributions and resettlement. Excluding Carteia, founded in 171 B.C. to settle the sons of Roman soldiers and

[89] Polybius' choice of the word ἀρχηγὸν echoes the ἀρχηγέτης, the leader of archaic Greek colonial expeditions.

native women (Liv. 43.3), with the addition of freed slaves, and also excluding those settlements that were little more than military *praesidia* (such as Iluro, Baetulo, Iesso and Aeso, modern Mataró, Badalona, Guissona and Isona respectively) there are a number of documented instances of colonial settlements in Spain throughout the 2nd century.[90] After the victory of Ilipa in 206 B.C. , P. Cornelius Scipio settled his wounded soldiers in a town, which he called Italica (App. *Iber.* 38; on the debate surrounding the town's legal status see Caballos Rufino 2012). In 179 BC, Ti. Sempronius Gracchus founded Gracchurris (Liv. *Per*. 41.2 ; Fest. 86 L) and Iliturgi (*CIL* II^2.7.32), settling Italians together with natives, in towns that lacked a clear juridical condition and were almost “informal” (Laffi 2007: 44-45).[91] Either in 169-8 or in 152-1 BC, M. Claudius Marcellus founded Corduba (Strab. 3.2.1; Ventura, León and Márquez 1998: 88 and n. 7 rightly reject the alternative identification of Marcellus as Augustus' son-in-law).[92] In 138 BC D. Iunius Brutus founded Valentia (Liv. 31.4.1-3; 31.49.5; 32.1.6; see Ribera i Lacomba 2006: 77), and also Brutobriga (note, though, that the presence of Italians in this settlement is not confirmed). Now, scholars tend to assume that only Italian allies were settled there, whereas Roman citizens were not. This interpretation, however, is too strictly legalistic, and does not consider the informal nature of these settlements and soldiers' voluntary choices. Why should Scipio have left behind the wounded *socii*, and bring back the wounded Romans? What if some Roman soldiers were willing to stay? It seems more likely that the Iberian

[90] The four settlements were founded on the route through the Pyrenean passes to discourage invasions (Guitart i Duran 2006: 60), and were, with all likelihood, inhabited by Italians (*contra* Chasseigne *et al*. 2006: 148; note however that Guitart i Duran's identification of the settlers as Marius' veterans is a mere hypothesis). Aeso was only a stipendiary town in the Augustan period (Plin. *HN* 3.2.34), but the same is true of Cercina in Africa, where a colony was actually founded (see below) but soon took indigenous features.

[91] Later, Gracchurris remained a peregrine city (Galsterer 1971: 13; Fear 1996: 39), whereas Iliturgi became a *forum* (Poveda Navarro and Benedetti 2007: 81-85).

[92] Strabo controversially states that Corduba was the first ἀποικία sent by the Romans εἰς τούσδε τοὺς τόπους. As Carteia was certainly older, Strabo's statement has been explained as either referring to Turdetania alone, or to *coloniae civium Romanorum* alone. In the latter case, since Corduba did not become a Roman colony until Caesar, Strabo would be saying that it was the first of Caesar's colonies in Spain (Jiménez and Carrillo 2011: 56). In this respect, it is interesting to note that in the same passage Strabo refers to Hispalis as an ἄποικος Ῥωμαίων, that is a *colonia civium Romanorum*, a status that the town only acquired when Caesar re-founded it as *colonia Iulia Romula* in 45 BC (Isid. *Etym*. 15,1,71).

peninsula was a cradle of Roman and Italian mixture throughout the 2nd century BC.

Finally, there is also the possibility that colonies were founded also in other regions. Whereas the Iberian peninsula is extraordinarily well served by archaeology, other areas are less well known. In fact, the lists of colonies reported by ancient authors (especially Pliny) are strongly influenced by the Augustan phase of speculation on their legal nature (on which see Bispham 2006): thus, according to Velleius (1.15), the first colony outside Italy was the (attempted) Gracchan refoundation of Carthage in 123 BC. Although one should avoid to rely too heavily on the postulated existence of something that has left no trace whatsoever, it is very likely that several settlements of the kinds that I have just described (that is, informal settlements, with mixed populations, and outside Italy) were simply forgotten. As it happens, it is only by a fortuitous case that we know that even formally sanctioned settlements could go unrecorded in the extant literary sources. Thus, it is only thanks to a fragmentary inscription from Rome that we happen to know that C. Iulius Caesar, father of the future dictator, settled colonists in a place unfortunately not entirely preserved on the stone: according to some on the Kerkenna islands, off Tunisia; in Corsica according to others; at Cerceii according to yet another restoration (*CIL* VI 40954 = *Inscr*. *It*. 13. 3 n. 7: [*C*(*aius*) *Iu*]*lius* [*C*(*ai*) *f*(*ilius*) *Caesar*] / *pater Di*[*vi Iuli*] / [*p*]*r*(*aetor*) *q*(*uaestor*) *tr*(*ibunus*) [*mil*(*itum*) ---] / [*c*]*olonos Cerce*[*inam*? *deduxit*]).[93]

[93] Diod. Sic. 5. 12. 4 praises the quality of the harbours on the Kerkenna islands. They were positioned along the grain route from Africa to Italy, and during the Civil Wars the Pompeians stored their grain there (*Bell. Afr.* 8). Plut. *Mar*. 40 ff. reports that Marius, during his eventful exile following Sulla's march on Rome, took refuge on the islands, which are unlikely to have been controlled by Numidia at the time, since the Numidian king Hiempsal had explicitly refused Marius hospitality (Brunt 1971: 577). Since Pliny (*HN* 5. 41) mentions Cercina as an *urbs libera*, if a colony was ever founded there it must have been a failure.

4. The aftermath of land distributions.

It is universally assumed that the land distributions that were carried out during Rome's expansion in Italy (that is, from the 4^{th} to the 2^{nd} century BC) were matched by the proliferation of a class of small landowners. This is one of the most deeply rooted and uncontroversially accepted views among Roman historians (just to provide a sample of recent restatements, see Garnsey 2007; Rathbone 2008; Capogrossi Colognesi 2012; Green 2012; Vivenza 2012; Nelsestuen 2014). Talking of an indistinct class of smallholders, though, risks mystifying reality. As we have seen in the previous section, recipients of land allotments were a variegated group: sometimes they were *proletarii*, sometimes they were *adsidui sui iuris*, sometimes they were *filii familias*. Likewise, the size of allotments was extremely variable, ranging from 2 to 50 *iugera* for rank soldiers (even more for *equites*). A first consequence of this variety is that, quite obviously, the kind of exploitation that was implemented varied from place to place, and from person to person, because all these people had different availabilities of land, as well as different means. Besides, one should also have clearly in mind that the physical and geographical features of the various settlements were different, thus presenting settlers with different options and opportunities.

Despite this variability, it is generally taken for granted that all recipients of land allotments maintained control of their properties. It should be noticed, however, that in order for settlements to succeed, settlers did not strictly need to maintain control of their properties. Obviously, they were required not to desert, although this actually happened in a number of occasions.[94] However, this does not imply that settlers had to maintain control of their land. This remark also holds true for all those settlements that aimed to increase the pool of people available for military service. We should not postulate a direct connection between land

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[94] Abandonment could be due to the presence of hostile populations. For example, the *taedium accolarum Gallorum* was one of the reasons why most colonists had deserted Placentia and Cremona (Liv. 37.46); Lugdunum was founded with the Romans driven out of Vienna by the Allobroges (Dio 46.50.4). The return to pre-existing forms of settlement could be another reason for abandonment, as it was the case for Buxentum (Fracchia and Gualtieri 2015: 40).

allotments and Rome's target to increase the pool of recruits. Even if some settlers failed to maintain control of their land, settlements would have nevertheless met their target. On the one hand, there were people who did succeed in maintaining control of their land. On the other hand, we should not forget that in ancient towns there were people who were not involved in agriculture. Thus, when Capua was going to be repopulated with Roman *aratores* after the city's fall in 211 BC, Livy (26.16.8) explains that in order to maintain the city populated (*urbi frequentandae*) a multitude of traders and craftsmen was allowed to remain. Capua was obviously an exceptional case, in that (at least according to the plans) only *aratores* would have been citizens.[95] Most commonly, part of the people involved in non agricultural activities were citizens of the settlement.[96] In sum, if we replaced the traditional model of new Roman settlements as completely focused on agriculture with another, characterized by a diverse economy, the final outcome would not be different: in both cases, Rome would have had her soldiers.

The comparison with later practices may at first provide support to the view that recipients maintained control of their land. In fact, from C. Gracchus' *lex agraria* onwards we see various land distributions also entailing the prohibition on selling allotments: a law of Sulla (Cic. *Leg. Agr.* 2.78) and Caesar's law of 59 BC (App. *B.Civ.* 3.2.5; see Bauman 1983: 261-262). These measures aimed at protecting recipients' rights over their allotments, as Appian explicitly states in the case of the Gracchan settlements (*B. Civ.* 1.27). Yet, they should not be

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[95] Livy's construction of the sentence (*incolarum libertinorumque et institorum opificumque*) may either be interpreted as a coordination of three clausulae (*incolae* + *libertini* + *institores opificesque* , who in this case would be Roman citizens, treated by Livy as an exception because they are not *aratores*) or – as I believe more likely – as two couples (that is, traders and craftsmen who were either *incolae* or *libertini*).

[96] In addition to the traders and craftsmen who belonged to the original group of settlers, others may have come from abroad. Unfortunately, in the republic only Romans in a non-Roman context, or vice versa, have left traces. As for the latter group, see the non-Roman *incolae* in Roman colonies (e.g. the Samnites and Paelignians at Fregellae [Liv. 41.8.6-12; see Coarelli 1998], the Samnites at Aesernia [*CIL* I^2, 3201] or the Salassi at Aosta [*Inscr. It.* 11.1.6]). As for the former, see Roman traders in non Roman contexts. A Latin inscription found at Luna, and predating the foundation of the colony, has been interpreted as evidence of the presence of a Roman trading community; in the same fashion, Crawford (1995: 191) has persuasively interpreted Polybius' report (Pol.3.40.8) of a ἀποικία at Mutina already in 218 BC as a merchant outpost (see also Grelle 2011).

interpreted as providing settlers with the legal weapons to enforce their will to maintain control of the land. Rather, these measures aimed at maintaining settlers on the land *regardless* of their will.[97] In fact, there is sufficient evidence to claim that sales were common even when such prohibitions were in place (otherwise, the very prohibitions on selling allotments would remain unexplained).

To a large extent, sales must have taken place in the very first stages of existence of new settlements. C. Gracchus' prohibition on selling allotments was soon repealed by the *lex Thoria*.[98] Likewise, Appian reports that right after Caesar's assassination, veterans pledged with Brutus (then formally praetor) to remove the prohibition on selling their allotments. In his second speech against Rullus, Cicero reports (*Leg. Agr*. 2.78) that those who received allotments in the *ager Praenestinus* from Sulla soon sold them to wealthy landowners, notwithstanding Sulla's prohibition. Cicero's words (“not to mention what happened in more distant places”) reveal that the same phenomenon had taken place elsewhere. Likewise, in the third speech against Rullus Cicero mentions that some individuals have made extensive purchases of Sullan allotments (Cic. *Leg. Agr*. 3.3), and in a letter to Atticus he makes clear that those settlers (*agrarii*) who have retained their *possessiones* are the rich ones, the *locupletes* (*Att*. 1.19.4).

Things did not change with the grand colonial plans of Caesar and Augustus. By the Flavian period, for example, most of the original land allotments at Corinth had fallen in the hands of few rich landowners (Walbank, M.E.H. 2002: 258). Similarly, the three equestrian families and the senatorial one known at Pisidian Antioch by the reign of Domitian (Baroni 2004: 15, n. 22) certainly had extensive land possessions in the city's territory, originally

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[97] I would not say *in spite* of settlers' will, because it is undeniable that in many instances sales must have been forced.

[98] The epigraphical *lex agraria* of 111 BC makes references to sales: *Roman Statutes* 1.2 (*lex agraria*), ll. 54-55, explains what private contracts of sale should be considered invalid; l. 62 states that the rights of the *coloni* on the land must be confirmed unless they have sold it. According to De Ligt (2001: 213-214), ll. 51-52 instructed the *IIvir* to confirm property rights on various categories of land, including that purchased from the original recipients.

distributed to the veterans of Actium.[99] The frequency of sales was such that land surveyors were required to take them into account when advising on controversies concerning ownership. Thus, Siculus Flaccus (128. 11-15 Campbell) explains that the land distributed to several colonists may end up in the hands of a single individual; in this case, he explains, “although the cultivations are different, to the extent that even the boundaries are visible which used to mark the delimitations of the properties of those who had been given the allotments, the land of several plots is attributed to a single household”.

Nevertheless, it is generally assumed that, earlier on, things were different, in that settlers maintained control of their land. There are several reasons underlying this assumption. First of all, it is too often assumed that the demand for land – and thus the pressure on settlers to alienate theirs – was scarce before the 2nd century BC. This view depends partly on an excessive trust in the ancient descriptions of middle Republican society (see Chapter 2 for the disentanglement of their idealized nature). However, it also derives from an unlikely primitivistic stance regarding the economic development of the middle republic. It is true that the earliest explicit records of investment in landholding date to the Hannibalic war.[100]

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[99] Baroni (2004: 15) believes that no large landowners existed at Pisidian Antioch in the 1st century AD, because during the famine of AD 92-93 the governor L. Antistius Rusticus had to intervene, which suggests that nobody among the local notables had stepped in to provide grain to the population. Yet, as Baroni himself notices, grain could also be purchased from external markets (Egypt or Pontus, then shipped to Attaleia or Sinope), and therefore his assumption that nobody provided the people with grain because nobody had grain to spare would require us to believe that no wealthy households existed in the city at all. For this reason, the alternative explanation suggested by Baroni (2004: 16) seems more likely: grain handouts were not given because the colonists were accustomed to the magisterial arrangement of grain purchases typical of Rome.

[100] In 210 BC, the state borrowed from the citizens in order to fund the war: Livy (26.36.11-12) describes the senators bringing their precious metals to the treasury, and adds that both the *equites* and the *plebs* followed the example. The loans were to be returned in three instalments, but ten years later, once the war was over and it was time for the second instalment, there was apparently no money for the payment. Therefore, Livy (31.13.4-9) explains, the Senate passed a decree that was “a middle way between justice and advantage (*quod medium inter aequum et utile erat*): “to provide the creditors, since many of them claimed that there was land available for sale which they needed to buy, with a supply of that public land lying inside 50 miles from Rome”. The consuls were entrusted with evaluating the land and fixing a congruous *vectigal*; at any time, if the state could pay them back, the creditors were free to accept the money and return the land. Livy explains that the creditors were happy to accept the offer (and one is left wondering whose *utile* Livy had in mind). This land was called *ager in trientabulis* (see discussion by Roselaar 2010: 127-128). Beyond doubt, even during the crucial phases of the conflict, business was being carried out at Rome, and this, unsurprisingly, involved land sales and purchases. Livy (26.11.6-7) tells a story on Hannibal's outraged reaction when he found out that the very land on which he had built

However, it is also true that the archaeological evidence of large farmsteads dating back to the 5th century BC (Terrenato 2001) suggests that agricultural investment was already considerable earlier on. I do not want to deny that Rome's "economic revolution" (Kay 2014) also brought about an increased appetite for agricultural investment, and thus higher demand for land. Yet, as I have explained in Section 2, such increased demand for land may have taken place in contexts that are already unequal. Here, I assume that well before the Hannibalic war agricultural investment also involved land changing hands. We should consider, in fact, the concrete possibility that after land was distributed to settlers, it ended up in the hands of wealthy people (either residing in the settlement or not).

Let us go back for a moment to the creation of the *ager in trientabulis*. The State's creditors complained that, in that particular moment, there was plenty of land available on the market which they could not purchase due to their debtor's insolvency. Undeniably, the historical circumstances were exceptional: war casualties had certainly made available a large quantity of land. Besides such exceptional instances, it is generally assumed that, before the 2nd century BC, the supply of land on the market was little or non-existent. This assumption is based on two beliefs: that a profound bond existed between landowners and their land (as we have seen in the Introduction; I will challenge this idea in Chapter 4), and that to recipients of land allotments it made no sense at all to alienate their land, because it was the basis of their production strategies.

Indeed, scholars can be divided in two groups: those who believe that land allotments were measured out so that recipients could make a living just farming them (e.g. Roselaar 2010), and those who believe that some allotments were definitely too small to be the only source of income of recipients' households. The latter group can be further divided in two sub-groups: those who believe that, when plots proved insufficient, settlers could access a reservoir of public land (e.g. Tibiletti 1950), and those who believe that settlers commonly integrated the produce

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his camp had been put up for sale at Rome, and the price had not suffered reduction (Purcell 2007: 364).

of their land by finding employment as wage labourers (e.g. Rosenstein 2004; De Ligt 2012).

The scholars who believe that land allotments could be integrated by access to public land argue that the ownership of a plot of land came with entitlement to the use of surrounding communal land; therefore, the centrality of allotments should not be seen as much in mere productive terms as in legal terms. This theory is as old as the scientific study of Roman history. It was first imagined by Niebuhr, and fully developed by Mommsen (Capogrossi Colognesi 2008: 27). In order to demonstrate that *ager publicus* was fundamental for the subsistence of peasants, Mommsen proceeded backwards from the analysis of colonial foundations. First of all, he remarked that in the earliest colonies the size of allotments was so small that nobody could be expected to make a living out of it. Influenced by the Germanic regimes of communal land exploitation, he concluded that in Roman colonies too communal land must have been a reservoir which any owner of a plot of land could use according to their needs.[101] Finally, relying on the idea that colonies were *parvae Romae*, that is faithful copies of Rome, Mommsen argued that the situation in the early colonial foundations was typical of any other place in the republic.[102] Tibiletti was more optimistic on the possibility for Roman rural households to base their subsistence on their private allotments; nevertheless, he too considered communal land as fundamental, since it could be used for husbandry, or for cultivation whenever private allotments proved insufficient (Tibiletti 1950: 229).

As opposed to this interpretation, other scholars have argued that the contribution of public land to farmers' livelihood was minimal, only accounting for things such as collecting

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[101] The idea that recipients of land allotments could also use public land was as old as Machiavelli, who – certainly influenced by Appian, whom he could read in the Latin translation of Petrus Candidus Decembrius (1452) – imagined that Roman colonists could have access to communal woodland for timber and meadows for pasture (*Discorsi* 2.7). However, Mommsen was the first to formulate the theory that without access to communal land colonists could not survive.

[102] In Mommsen's reconstruction, the *ager publicus* acted as a constraint to private landownership, and at the same time reduced its importance, since what really mattered was access to communal land. Taking up this idea, Weber argued that private landownership was not as much an economic matter as an ideological and political one. Having a share in the ownership of the community's land equalled being a member of the community: just like the Greek κλῆρος, Latin *fundus* originally did not refer to a physical plot of land, but to the abstract right to a share in the community's territory.

wood for fuel, construction and similar, and to graze the few animals that farmers could own (they seem to attribute husbandry only a marginal role in farmers' production strategies). Instead, they place all the stress on private allotments, arguing that they were indeed sufficient to cater for the subsistence of farmers' household. For example, Roselaar (2010: 204-5) calculates that seven *iugera* of land were sufficient to cater for the needs of an "average family" (seemingly 4 people).

A serious reason for dissatisfaction with the idea that public and private land were used in combination is that, at a closer look, it is very hard to see how every recipient of land allotments could have access to public land. Roselaar (2010: 203), for example, has pointed out that "for public land to be useful to small farmers, it had to be located close to his private lands, which means that many kinds of *ager publicus* would have been inaccessible to small farmers according to the traditional interpretation".[103] In fact, as Rathbone (2003) has demonstrated, by the time of the Gracchi, if not earlier, all the *ager publicus* available was located in remote areas of the peninsula.

The "combination" theory has to assume that there were extensive tracts of land available in the environs of settlements, but this does not seem to have been the case. A first category of communal land that was available to settlers was *compascuus*, that is land left free for common use as grazing land. As Laffi (1998: 534-538) explains, this land could either be public (that is, property of the *res publica p. R.*), or municipal land (in which case it went by the name of *compascuum publicum colonorum*).[104] In neither case, however, was this land available to each and every settler. As for public *compascuus*, this was attached only to particular plots. Colonial *compascuus*, for its part, was managed by the *ordo*, which could

[103] Note, however, that Roselaar's (2010: 206) statement that "in viritane distributions there was no communal land" clashes with the fact that we do not know a single thing about their physical layout.
[104] Two other categories of *compascuus* existed, that are not relevant to the present discussion. One is the *pascuum coloniae*: this land, owned by the colony as a juridical person, provided pasture for the horses of public guests, and timber for temples and public buildings. The other category is the *compascuus* that could be created on private land by mutual agreement among private individuals.

assign it to common exploitation, but could also assign it to particular individuals, or yet lease it or make it subject to emphyteusis.

Another category of land that is often believed to have been available to settlers is *subseciva* – and the germane category of *ager extra clusus*. However, the extent to which this land was actually available to colonists is very doubtful. As Frontinus (Frontin. 2. 31-4.2 Campbell) explains, according to the *ius* regulating *subseciva*, this land would remain in the availability (*potestas*) of the *auctor divisionis*, that is the magistrate in charge of the distribution. The information is confirmed by Siculus Flaccus (124. 3-4 Campbell), who explains that, on the cadastral map (the *forma*), this land was labelled *excepta*, that is "withdrawn (from the distribution)". Having complete authority over its use, the *auctor divisionis* could either keep the land for himself, or bestow it on private individuals or entire communities (Hygin. 98.17-20 Campbell). As we can see, then, the possibility that the community could obtain access to *subseciva* was completely subordinated to the will of a single man, and it is very hard to believe that the entire rationale of land distributions could be based on this single decision. In fact, it is likely that in most cases the magistrates in charge of distributions maintained control of *subseciva* (Gabba 1988b: 29; see Chapter 3 here for Q. Fulvius Flaccus and the *ager Campanus*). Perhaps, the story of Postumius Megellus using his army to clear woodlands in one of his properties (Dio. Hal. 17 [18].4) is connected to the creation of large estates on unallocated marginal land.

In fact, the idea that *subseciva* were easily available to Roman peasants is based on a worrying misunderstanding of the meaning of Appian's description of public land. At the beginning of his narrative of Ti. Gracchus' land reform, Appian explains that "as the Romans progressively conquered Italy in war, they reserved part of the land to founding cities; alternatively, they sent colonists – chosen among themselves – to the cities that were already existing. They intended these settlements as strongholds." (*B. Civ.* 1.1.7). At this point, he moves on to explain what happened to the land that was not used for the foundation of cities (transl. LCL with modifications):

> "By contrast, of the land acquired by war which every time [scil. after every conquest] was in their availability, they [scil. The Romans] assigned the cultivated part forthwith to the colonists, or sold or leased it. But since they had no leisure as yet to allot the part which then lay desolated by war (this was particularly abundant), they made proclamation that in the meantime those who were willing to work it might do so for a toll of the yearly crops, a tenth of the grain and a fifth of the fruit. From those who kept flocks was required a toll of the animals, both oxen and small cattle".

This system is described in similar terms by Plutarch and Siculus Flaccus. As for Plutarch (*Ti. Gracchus* 8.1), he claims that the Romans partly sold the land, and partly gave it to the poor, who were allowed to live on it – νέμεσθαι – in return for a small rent. With all likelihood, Plutarch and Appian are drawing from the same (Gracchan) source, which Plutarch simply presents in a more abridged form, conflating distributions and leases, whereas in Appian the two categories are kept separate. Siculus Flaccus' account (102. 34 – 104.7 Campbell) is also similar to Appian's in its main parts, although, given its author's interests as a land surveyor, it provides more technical details (Gabba 1985: 269).[105] According to Appian, originally there was no maximum amount of unallocated land that citizens could use.[106] Yet, after this system was disrupted by the greed of the wealthy, the *lex Licinia* was passed, which prescribed that "nobody should hold more than 500 *iugera* of this land, or pasture on it more than 100 cattle or 500 sheep" (App. *B. Civ.* 1.1.8).[107] In Appian's narrative, although subject to extensive abuse, this system was still in place in 133 BC.[108]

Appian's passage is usually interpreted as if he were describing a single colonial

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105 The main difference between the two accounts is that, according to Siculus Flaccus, rents were introduced only at a later stage. The disagreement between the sources should suffice to prove (*contra* Vivenza 1994: 30-1 and n. 13; see also Roselaar 2008: 577, n. 21), that during the empire nothing could be possibly known of the regimes of exploitation of public land before 376 BC: the entire debate on whether rents were in place before the *lex Licinia* is pure nonsense.

106 As Mantovani (1997) has demonstrated, Siculus Flaccus also holds this exact opinion.

107 According to Tibiletti (1949: 11-12), Appian's description of the law should be understood in the sense that individuals were allowed to farm up to 500 *iugera* of public land, and they could use as much land as they needed for pasture, the only limit being the size of herds.

108 Against the idea that a law was passed in the second century BC to update the terms of the *lex Licinia* see Roselaar 2010: 100-104.

landscape. That is, scholars imagine that Appian were saying that in every colony founded by the Romans some land (the greater part, Appian specifies) was not distributed, and was left to the exploitation of whoever was willing to use it. Scholars also take Appian's passage as evidence that the people who used public land were the same who had received land allotments. That is, Appian's passage is taken as referred to *subseciva*. A side-effect of this interpretation is that the occupation of the public land described by Appian is considered to have been – in principle – only temporary, and the presence of houses and graves on public land, which was ascertained by the Gracchan commissioners, is generally taken as the effect of abuses.

At a closer look, however, Appian is not saying anything like that. He is describing two different contexts: one is the colonial foundation, accompanied by the creation of *ager divisus et adsignatus*; the other is the land that laid waste, whose conquest was not accompanied by any distribution, sale, or lease (the *ager occupatorius*). In Appian's description, the people who make use of this land are completely different from those who have have been settled in colonies, and they live in completely different places. There is no reason to assume that the people who used *ager occupatorius* were expected to occupy this land only temporarily: provided that they complied with the limits set by the *lex Licinia*, and regularly paid their rents, they could expect to live on public land as long as they wished. In fact, the Gracchan commissioners did not treat the presence of houses or graves on *ager publicus* as illegal *tout court*, but only when the limit of 500 *iugera* was disregarded. The difference between settlers on *ager occupatorius* and the recipients of land allotments is exclusively legal, inasmuch as their entitlement to the land was not secure.[109]

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[109] In this respect, it should be noticed that also security of tenure over private property, which is a pillar of Roman law, could be subject to challenges at various times. The dispossessions of the 1st century BC did not only challenge security of holding in practice, but also in theory. Cicero, for example, stating in the *De Officiis* (2.73) that the magistrates should confirm private rights to property, implicitly concedes that they could in principle choose not to do so, and in the *Pro Flacco* (79) he seems to be assuming that only land outside Roman territory was safe from dispossessions. In the same fashion Livy, in his account of the episode of Sp. Maecilius (4.48), explains that the patricians were frightened of an attempt to distribute land because all Roman land was technically “conquered in war”, and therefore liable to distribution. Livy's text as preserved by the MSS. would imply that the *plebs* owned most of the land, which is of course the contrary of what Livy is saying. See Ogilvie (1965) *ad loc.* for two possible

Having ruled out that *ager publicus* could be the secret weapon in the hands of the recipients of land allotments, in the next sections I will discuss the other two options. In the first place, I will address the idea that land allotments were measured out so as to suffice to sustain recipients' households. I will object that, as far as we can tell from later practice, productivity was not assessed, and with all likelihood in the earlier periods the situation was the same, since – especially in the case of new foundations – productivity could not be assessed, as simply as that. Then I will discuss the various attempts made by scholars to quantify average production to demonstrate that allotments sufficed. I will argue that there are so many variables that no such attempt makes any sense at all. I will conclude that the only possible way to get round the problem is by shifting the focus from the allotments to the settlers. I have pointed out at the beginning of this section that they were the most diverse. I will argue that the majority of them was poor and therefore very vulnerable to downturns, especially considering that the allotments were, during the middle republic, in wild (or abandoned) areas, and therefore they were not immediately productive. I will thus conclude that peasants had to use dependent labour to integrate the produce of their own plots of land. However, I will expand on this conclusion, claiming that dependent labour was part of dependence in a wider sense.

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restorations. It is also possible that the theoretical reflection underlying the Gracchan reforms imagined private property in a more "communistic" way, that is it assumed that public claims always had priority. As De Ligt (2007b) has forcefully argued, the *agri privati vectigalesque* in the African section of the epigraphic *lex agraria* should be understood as what they look like, private land subject to taxation. Since only public land could be *vectigalis* (see e.g. Hyg. 82.31-2 Campbell), the existence of a *vectigal* on private land may suggest that theoretically the ultimate owner of that land was considered the *res publica*. This *vectigal* cannot be explained as the early appearance of the *dominium in solo provinciali populi vel Caesaris* concept (on which see Grelle 2005: 293-312), because, as suggested by De Ligt (2007b: 93-4), the *vectigal* was in place also in Italy (C. Gracchus may have founded colonies at Tarentum and Capua: Plut. *C. Gracchus* 8.3). The idea that private property was not entirely private would also explain why the Gracchan laws could take the liberty of setting a limit to its extension, as was the case for *equites* at Carthage (a maximum of 200 *iugera* is mentioned by the epigraphical *lex agraria*: *Roman Statutes* 1.2, l. 60; cf. the Gracchan law mentioned by Sic. Flacc. 102.31-32 Campbell and see Campbell's commentary *ad loc.*; *contra* Gabba 1992: 398 [see n. 60 above]). This particular view of public land seems to have been marginal in Roman reflection on property: no other land scheme expected recipients of land allotments to pay a *vectigal*. Still, I wonder whether the prohibition on selling allotments that is found again under Caesar may hint at a conception whereby private owners do not completely own their land, since the public still has a say on what they can and cannot do with it.

5. The productivity of allotments: a futile debate.

One of the duties of land surveyors was ascertaining what territories were unsuitable for cultivation, and excluding them from the distributions. As Siculus Flaccus explains, (122.16-17 Campbell) “if the soil is sour (*amarus*) and untrustworthy (*incertus*), then it is not assigned”. In the latter category, one could include land subject to floods or erosion: we know that land located close to rivers was usually left unassigned, as it happened at *Augusta Emerita* (Agennius Urbicus 40 Campbell; see Edmonson 2011: 35).[110] In the former category we could include land that was clearly unproductive, such as rocks, shores, and deserts. This kind of distinction was already present in Rullus' attempted land bill of 63 BC (Cic. *Leg. Agr.* 2.67: Rullus wanted to distribute all the land *qui arari aut coli possit*), and was later revived by a law of Augustus, which instructed land surveyors – unless the colonial founder decided otherwise – to distribute the land only “as far as the scythe and plough have gone” (Hyg. 158.11-12; 160.1-7 Campbell).[111] Campbell (1996: 96) considers this law as illustrative of “Augustus' intention to distribute arable land to form a self-sufficient plot”. Actually, though, nothing proves that this was the case: the law only enforces a very rough division between land that is suitable or not for cultivation. Although suitable for cultivation, land could be of poor quality, which would have put settlers' self-sufficiency in danger. In order for Campbell's assumption to be correct, land surveyors would have needed to carry out an evaluation of the fertility of land, which is absolutely not the same thing as establishing whether the land can be cultivated. Now, a widespread belief among specialists of Roman land distributions is that an assessment of the productivity of land was carried out before establishing the size of plots, in order to make sure that allotments sufficed for the livelihood of recipients' households (Moatti 1993: 26; Campbell

[110] In some cases, though, allotments could include riverine areas; see e.g. Agenn. Urb. 40.16 Campbell, referring to plots including rivers: *si sors ita tulerat, aequo animo ferendum habebat*.

[111] Hyginus rejects the interpretation of the law given by some, who believe that the law prescribes the distribution of only land that is already cultivated. According to him, the law prescribes the allocation of all the land that *can* be cultivated (*ager utilis*), including both land already cultivated, and unused land (*ager rudis*).

1996: 90).[112] In this section, I will argue that this was not the case.

I will begin by reconsidering the evidence that is generally used to support the view that the fertility of the land was assessed and that the size of plots was decided accordingly. This consists of two passages from the *Corpus Agrimensorum*, one of Hyginus (136.6-12 Campbell), the other of Siculus Flaccus (122.20-26 Campbell). The two passages appear quite straightforward. In the first passage, Hyginus states that some allotments are smaller, their size being established through an estimate of their fertility (*nam et possessiones pro aestimio ubertatis angustiores sunt adsignatae*). In the second passage, Siculus Flaccus says that the plots located in different areas may have different sizes (*nec singulis acceptis modi[s] per omnes regiones aequalitas est*): those of higher qualities are smaller because they were more fertile. When the two passages are taken in their context, though, it appears immediately clear that they are far from straightforward. It will be necessary, then, to quote both passages at full length. Let us begin with Hyginus:

> *linearii limites a quibusdam mensurae tantum disterminandae causa sunt constituti, et si finitimi interveniunt, latitudinem secundum legem Mamiliam accipiunt. in Italia itineri publico serviunt sub appellatione subruncivorum, habent latitudinem ped. VIII: hos conditores coloniarum fructus asportandi causa publicaverunt. nam et possessiones pro aestimio ubertatis angustiores sunt adsignatae: ideoque limites omnes non solum mensurae sed et publici itineris causa latitudines acceperunt.*
>
> "*Limites linearii* have been drawn by some surveyors merely for the purpose of fixing a boundary, and if there are neighbouring landholders on each side, they have a width according to the provisions of the *Lex Mamilia*. In Italy they also serve as public rights of way, under the name *subruncivi*, and have a width of eight feet. The founders of the colonies made these into public roads for the transport of the farm produce. In fact, also smaller plots were allocated, on the basis of an assessment of their fertility: for this reason, all *limites* were given a width not only for the purpose of conducting survey, but also to serve as public right of way" [transl. Campbell with modifications].

Hyginus' statement belongs to a detailed explanation of why in Italy the *limites linearii* are used as public roads, being 8 feet wide. First, Hyginus explains that their original purpose was to allow transport of agricultural produce. Having said this, Hyginus adds that this use of *limites linearii* depended on the fact (*ideoque* introduces a relationship of cause/effect) that in the past

[112] To be precise, Moatti believes that such assessment was carried out only for viritane distributions.

plots were measured out according to their fertility. The causal relationship between measuring out plots according to their fertility and making *linearii limites* large enough to serve as roads is not immediately clear. It can only be understood by postulating an intermediate logical step: usually *kardines*, *decumani*, and the *limites actuarii* (12 feet wide) suffice to cater for settlers' mobility; in Italian colonies this was not the case, because there plots were smaller than usual, and therefore some of them could not be reached by the usual roads. Therefore, in order for the owners of Italian plots to transport the produce of their land, surveyors had to create other pathways, which was made by enlarging the *limites linearii.* Hyginus, here, is not saying that inside the same colony there could be larger and smaller plots. Rather, he is saying that in Italy *all* plots are smaller than elsewhere.[113]

Let us move on now to the second passage:

> *Non enim omnibus aequaliter datus, sed et secundum <gradum> militiae et modus est datus. Manipulus ergo singulas acceptas accipient, aliqui gradus singulas et dimidias, aliqui binas. Pluribus ergo, ut supra diximus, personis <in>aequaliter assignatus modus. sed nec singulis acceptis modi[s] per omnes regiones aequalitas est; nam secundum bonitatem agrorum computatione facta acceptas partiti sunt: melioris itaque agri minorem modum acceperunt.*
>
> "For land was not distributed equally to everyone, but an area (of land) was granted according to military <rank>. Rank and file soldiers therefore received a single allocation, some ranks one and a half allocations, some rank double allocations. So, as I said above, for many people an <un>equal area of land is allocated. Furthermore, not even the size of single allocations is the same in all regions; for they divided the allocations by making a calculation on the quality of the land; so people received a smaller quantity of the better land" [transl. Campbell with modifications].

In order to understand the passage, we need to have clear in mind the visual aspect of a cadastral map. As the Orange Cadaster (Piganiol 1962) shows, in cadastral maps every *centuria* included an indication of the legal status of the land, the names of all the people who owned (or rented) land in that *centuria*, and the quantity of land that each of them owned (or rented). In the passage, Siculus Flaccus is discussing the case in which, from the cadastral map, a *centuria* of *ager datus adsignatus* includes the property of more than one person. He explains that land

[113] It would be interesting to know where Hyginus takes this idea from, since it clearly does not correspond to the real state of things. Perhaps the old theme of Italy's extraordinary *ubertas*?

surveyors should not make the mistake of thinking that each person owns the same quantity of land in that *centuria*. In fact, not all soldiers receive single allotments (*acceptae*), but the quantity of land that they receive varies according to their rank.

At this point, Siculus Flaccus warns that single *acceptae* do not have the same size (*aequalitas modi*) everywhere, but their size varies among the various *regiones*, the plots located in the more fertile ones being smaller than those located in the less fertile ones. In order to understand the correct meaning of this statement, it is necessary to focus (a) on the relationship between the sentence *sed nec singulis acceptis modi*[*s*] *per omnes regiones aequalitas est* and the preceding section; and (b) on the meaning of *regiones*. According to the current interpretation, the sentence beginning with *sed* would simply be the follow-up of what Siculus Flaccus has been saying. That is, having explained that inside the same *centuria* there could be plots of different size according to the rank of recipients, Siculus Flaccus here would be introducing an additional reason for inequality: fertility. This interpretation, though, does not take into account the presence of the word *regio*. Even if this word had the non-technical meaning of "region", clearly here it could not be indicating different areas of the same *centuria*, because *regio* – just like English region – indicates a very wide area, much larger than a single century.[114] Therefore, we must conclude that the sentence *sed nec singulis acceptis modi[s] per omnes regiones aequalitas est* does not pertain anymore to the discussion of plots of different size inside the same *centuria*. Rather, the sentence appears to be a further clarification. Having claimed that, according to rank, soldiers could receive one, one and a half, or two *acceptae*, Siculus Flaccus clarifies that, even the size of single *acceptae* could be different.

As Siculus Flaccus explains, plots of the same rank could have different sizes if located in different *regiones*. As Siculus Flaccus explains in another passage, (102.8-9 Campbell), "we

[114] In fact, owing to their proximity, different allotments inside the same *centuria* will have been (in most cases) quite similar in quality. Thus, Hyginus claims that among the people who have been settled in the same *centuria* complaints cannot arise, because all allotments are equal (Hygin. 78.17 Campbell). Note that Keppie (1983: 92-94) and Campbell (1996: 88 and n. 53) misunderstand Hyginus' passage, taking is as a claim that *all* plots of the same colony are equal.

call *regiones* the areas inside whose boundaries the magistrates of colonies or *municipia* have jurisdictional and coercive power”. Likewise, also In the passage examined here the word *regio* has the technical meaning of “area delimited by the municipal boundaries”.[115] We can conclude, then, that in the passage Siculus Flaccus is simply explaining that, in different colonies, people of the same rank received different quantities of land.

To sum up, then, neither passage proves that, inside the same colony, allotments could have different sizes according to their fertility. What these texts actually say is that in different colonies allotments had different sizes. It is true, though, that both Hyginus and Siculus Flaccus mention fertility as the reason for this variability, which apparently suggests that the assessment of fertility was actually carried out. I believe, though, that the assessment of fertility is an invention of these two authors. In fact, both describe this practice as something that used to take place in the past (both authors use the perfect tense; as for Siculus Flaccus, cf. Hygin. 140.25-28 Campbell on distributions carried out in the past according to the military rank [*pro portione officii*] or personal merit [*pro emerito*]). They lived at a time when all soldiers received the same amount of land upon discharge, and the idea that, in the past, soldiers could receive different quantities of land looked to them in contrast with the principle of uniformity underlying soldiers' *missiones*. Therefore, they resort to fertility to make sense of the difference: soldiers who received less land were not being treated unfairly, because their land was actually more fertile.

In conclusion, there is no evidence in the technical literature suggesting that an assessment of the fertility of the land was carried out in order to establish the size of allotments.

[115] With a technical meaning, *regio* is found as early as in Plautus' *Poenulus*, in a passage which clearly imitates the technical terminology of surveying (vv. 46-49). In the comedy's prologue, the *Prologus* compares the subject of the comedy to a colony, and says that he will demarcate (*determinabo*) its *regiones*, *limites* and *confinia*. That is, he is going to explain what is contained in the comedy: *regiones* corresponds to the content, *limites* to the internal divisions, and *confinia* to the external boundaries. Sometimes it is not clear whether *regio* is being used with a technical meaning or not (see e.g. Hyg. 36.11-12 Campbell: *haec variis appellationibus per regiones nominantur: in Etruria communalia vocantur, quibusdam provinciis pro indiviso*).

In fact, colonial cadasters bear no trace of the supposed assessment of fertility (again, the Orange Cadaster is exemplary). When the *De Controversiis Agrorum* (32.35 Campbell) says that the bronze table containing the *forma coloniae* always reported indications of the *species*, it is not referring to the "quality" of land, as some scholars have thought (e.g. Moatti 1993: 34): *species* in this case must have the same meaning of *condicio*, indicating the "legal conditions" of the land.[116]

The popularity enjoyed by the idea that Roman land distributions were preceded by the assessment of productivity appears all the more surprising if one considers the technical complexity that such an operation would have required. As Varro explains, productivity depends on the quality of soil (*Rust*. 1.7.5). The Romans were well aware that different kinds of soil existed: Columella, for example, states that the typologies of soil (*species terrarum*) are various, and the most diverse (1. *praef.* 24-25: *varias dissimillimasque*). Indeed, some empirical methods to distinguish different soils existed: Cato (in Plin. *HN* 18.34), for example, suggested that the best soil to grow grains could be recognized by the presence of some wild plants, and by its colour. Likewise, agronomical treatises contain traces of attempts to create taxonomies of soils: Columella distinguished 4 different categories (2.2.4-7), whereas Cato identified as many as nine (*De Agr*. 1.7; cf. Varro *Rust*. 1.7.9.)! However, such empirical distinctions were extremely tentative. In the passage just mentioned, Columella discusses the possibility to recognize the quality of land from its colour and consistency, but also explains that the colour and consistency of good soils varies from place to place.[117]

Nowadays, assessing the quality of the soil is possible thanks to chemical analysis. How could we expect the Romans, then, to have assessed the quality of the land that they were going to distribute? It appears clear, in fact, that only through long frequentation of a certain region, could they be able to make forecasts on the expected produce. As Cato prescribed (*De*

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[116] For this technical meaning of *condicio* see Siculus Flaccus' treatise on the "Legal conditions of land", esp. its preface: Sic. Flacc. 102.1-8 Campbell; see also Hyg. 160.3-6 Campbell.
[117] See Chapter 4 for the fiscal aspects of distinguishing different typologies of soil.

Agr. 1.1), purchasers should pay frequent visits to the farm on sale. Thus, when the younger Pliny wanted to buy an estate at Tifernum, he was able to evaluate carefully the fertility of soil (which he judged with extreme favour) because he had frequent contact with the estate on sale, since it adjoined – and even criss-crossed – his own property (Plin. 3.19.5). Besides, such evaluation was only possible when the region was already cultivated. Cato, for example, suggested paying attention to the neighbourhood: in fertile areas, it will look prosperous, and farms will not be easily put on sale (*De Agr.* 1). Likewise, in Varro's *De Re rustica*, Scrofa suggests looking at the external appearance of fields, arguing that the most beautiful ones are also the most productive (1.7.1).[118]

In existing settlements, we may concede that perhaps the choice of the size of allotments was driven by considerations on their expected productivity. On a local level, in fact, it is quite possible that, thanks to the experience acquired over time, certain shared ideas on how much land was necessary to obtain a certain amount of produce existed. Thus, in P. Tebt. 1.56, the γεωργὸς Ptesouchos writes to his brother Marres to report that, due to the flood, his herds (κτήνεα) have not enough to eat, and asks him to procure 5 *arourai* of land in the neighbourhood of his village, so that he can cater for his family's livelihood (εἰς τὴν τροφὴν ἡμῶν). We have here an example of a local inhabitant who has a precise idea of how much land he needs to feed his family. Now, it is true that Egypt was an exceptional case: since cultivation was based on the yearly floods and the watering system, it was possible to make educated guesses on the expected yield by looking at the level of the flood (which in Ptesouchos' case has already taken place, since he explicitly mentions it). However, anywhere in the world, local farmers usually have a solid knowledge of the quality of the fields in their villages, and information on yields are widely available.

At any rate, these considerations cannot apply to the settlements that we are examining here (that is, those carried out during Rome's expansion in Italy). In fact, despite Appian's claim

[118] The presence of well-laid cultivations also made an estate *vendibilior* (Varro *Rust* 1.4.2)

that, when Rome conquered a territory, only the land already farmed was distributed to settlers (*B. Civ.* 1.1.7), actually the settlements created during this phase were carried out in an "empty landscape". Various factors added up to this: some areas were actually underpopulated, for example the North-Eastern corner of the peninsula where Aquileia was founded; some other areas had been "emptied out" by Roman conquest, as it was allegedly the case in the *ager Gallicus*; finally, in some areas agriculture only had limited diffusion and development, and forests still covered the great part of the territory. Production-wise, these new foundations were a complete jump in the dark. That in new foundations Rome did not succeed (or did not even try) to distribute to colonists the most fertile land is proved by the Caesarian (then Augustan) settlement of *Arausio* in Narbonese Gaul. There, as the colony's cadastral map (the Orange cadaster) reveals, colonists received a random mix of excellent and mediocre plots, whilst parts of the best land were left unallotted and were subsequently leased out (Favory 2004: 116).

At this point, it is necessary to consider whether – despite the absence of a deliberate planning – allotments could have nevertheless sufficed to provide enough food to settlers' households. The entire debate revolves around numbers: households' food intake on the one hand, average yields on the other. Roselaar (2010: 205), for example, uses for her calculations "Jongman's consumption estimate of 200 kilos (22.8 *modii*) of grain per person", and Brunt's estimate of the "net yield of seven *iugera* (after deduction of seed and assuming one-half of the land was fallowed) at 52.5–105 *modii*". Assuming that the average household was composed of 3.5 people, Roselaar concludes that "this amount of land would [...] in many cases have been sufficient", and, "under favourable circumstances", households would have also been able to produce a little surplus, especially considering that, in her opinion, Brunt's estimated yields are too low.

Unfortunately, whereas consumption estimates can be easily obtained comparing World Health Organization's figures for minimum calories intake with the ancient figures for military rations (Foxhall and Forbes 1982), the figure of average yields used by Roselaar is by no means secure.[119] Let us take fallowing, for example. As Roselaar (2010: 205, n. 209) admits, it is uncertain whether Roman practice was based on "a traditional two-year fallowing cycle, with an alternation of cereals and fallow", or on a three-year system.[120] The assumption that the Romans used a two-years fallowing system relies exclusively on Columella's calculations for the number of labourers (2.12.7–9), about the reliability of which – as I will explain in Chapter 3 – there are serious reasons to doubt. But if a three-year system was used, then the area under grain cultivation would have been smaller than Roselaar believes.

The same uncertainties concern yields. The sources commonly report a sowing rate between 3 and 5 *modii* per *iugerum*, which may be considered reliable.[121] Instead, all the ancient figures on seed/yield ratios are unreliable. Columella claims that "we can hardly recall a time when, at least in the greater part of Italy, grain crops responded with a fourfold yield" (3.3.4), but the passage is an attempt to prove that viticulture is more profitable than grain cultivation, and Columella may be voluntarily distorting reality by providing an artificially low figure of grain yields (see Chapter 3 for further discussion). On the contrary, Varro's fabulous yields of 1:10-15 in some places in Etruria are legendary, just like the incredible 1:100 of Sybaris (*Rust.* 1.44.1). Cicero, in the Verrines, claims that the yield of the *Leontinus ager* is 1:8 only in very good years, and 1:10 when "all the gods help", but the figures are merely indicative of *quantum lucri factum sit* by Verres and his claque. In fact, Cicero explains, logically only when the yield is 1:10 does the amount of the tithe correspond to the number of *iugera* under cultivation:

[119] Foxhall and Forbes (1982) also use Cato's figures of slave rations. These, however, are less secure, because they may be affected by Cato's rhetorical bias (see Chapter 3). In fact, Cato seems to overlook the presence of female slaves (Roth 2007: Chapter 2). This may be the case because he assumes that rations could be integrated with pulses, fruits and other foodstuffs, but it may equally be the case that Cato is deliberately claiming that he is able to spend on slaves way less than his readers (see Chapter 3 for other similar instances).

[120] Less land could be fallowed, of course. In this case, however, without the use of abundant manure the productivity of land would have been compromised in the medium-long term. See Kron (2008) for the view that Roman farmers commonly had access to large quantities of manure.

[121] Varro *Rust.* 1.44.1; Plin. HN 18.198-200; Colum. 11.2.75. Elsewhere, at 2.9.1-2, 5, Columella makes a distinction according to the different quality of land: 4 *modii* per *iugerum* on *ager pinguis*, 5 on *mediocris*, and 3 on a *uber campus*, following Lucarini's (2014) restoration *singula iugera tritici tribus et adorei octo modis obserere* [*tritici quibus* MSS : *tritici quinque* edd. vett.]

despite this obvious fact, he goes on, the amount requested by Verres was much higher than the number of *iugera* (2.3.112-113).[122]

Given the complete absence of evidence, it is not surprising that modern estimates are extremely variable. Evans (1980: 136), building on a remark by Georges Duby, believes that in the Western Mediterranean farmers could not hope for more than a 1:3-4 ratio. On the contrary, Erdkamp (2005: 44) believes that only in the worst conditions could productivity be as low as 1:4 or even 1:3 throughout the Mediterranean, and Rosenstein (2004: 67-68) accepts a ratio as low as 1:3 only for a worst-case scenario. Engels (1990: 203, n. 27), on his part, uses a figure of 1:3 for the territory of Corinth, but only because he believes that "yield rates in Greece were lower than in other parts of the Empire".[123] Viglietti (2011: 151) believes that a ratio of 1:8 was absolutely likely. The same figure is used by Goodchild and Witcher (2009: 204) for their model of agriculture in the *ager Veientanus*; they, however, consider Etruria an extraordinarily fertile area.

Personally, I prefer estimates at the lower end of the scale. This is not because of poor fertility (as I said, the quality of land is extremely variable), but because – before the advent of fertilizers and pesticides – the risk of bad years and complete failure was extremely high. It is true that the sources provide a sort of idyllic view of agriculture as a safe occupation: Cato, for example, claims that *mercatura* (trade) is dangerous, assuming that farming is not (*De Agr.* Praef.). So in the Cato Maior (51) Cicero says that the land always returns a yield (*nec umquam*

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[122] Some scholars have attempted to quantify ancient yields using comparative data from pre-mechanised agriculture. However, since they mostly come from the 19th century onwards, they may have been lower than in antiquity, due to centuries-long exploitation (unless 3 year fallow was in place). Viglietti (2011; 2014a; 2014b) has attempted to use evidence from present-day bio-agriculture, but his calculations are methodologically unsound. Although in his earliest discussion Viglietti (2011: 149) considered the possibility that the selection of more productive varieties could affect the comparison, in his more recent work he neglects this important *caveat*. Besides, he believes that ancient light ploughing with oxen can be compared with its modern mechanized counterpart, because cereal cultivation does not require deep ploughing (Viglietti 2011: 149). This is by no means correct: oxen and metal ploughs were far from typical, and therefore ancient ploughing is unlikely to have been as effective as modern mechanised practices.

[123] Other scholars have a more optimistic view of Greek productivity: Garnsey has proposed that in Attica the ratio was 1:4.8, whereas Osborne sees 1:10 as not implausible in some cases. See Moreno 2007: 3-11 and Table 1.

sine usura reddit quod accepit, sed alias minore, plerumque maiore cum faenore). Behind this apparent safety, though, catastrophe is always looming: as Manilius explains, the outcome of everything in human life depends on the stars (Manil. 3.96-101), and agriculture is not an exception (3.149-155). Even the optimistic Cato (Plut. *Cato Maior* 21. 5) conceded that agriculture was subject to Jupiter's will. Thus, Martial (12.72) contrasts agriculture with the small but safe rewards (*certa praemia*) of being an attorney. As Critobulus protests to Socrates in Xenophon's Oeconomicus (5.18), “it is impossible for a man to foresee most of what happens in farming. Sometimes hail and frosts, droughts, and excessively heavy rain, blight, and other catastrophes repeatedly destroy what has been well planned and well accomplished. And sometimes disease attacks the best-raised cattle and destroys them in a most dreadful manner” (transl. Pomeroy 1994). The risk of failure is all the more concrete in the Mediterranean, where, as Horden and Purcell (2000) remark, the unpredictability of weather, inter-annual variability, and the possibility of sudden catastrophes are constant concerns for farmers.

However, here I will not attempt to redo the maths in order to argue that allotments were not sufficient. In fact, I would argue that any such attempt clashes with three interrelated problems. The first is that the dietary options available to people were (and still are) numerous. We are regrettably poorly informed on the place of grain in farmers' diet. Grain was the cereal preferred by those who could afford it: these people could lightheartedly dismiss emmer as belonging to the old-fashioned diet (Purcell 2003: 332-336), and consider barley only good for the punishment of soldiers and for gladiators (whence *hordearii*, according to Plin. *HN* 18.72).[124] Still, other cereals with higher yields could be preferred by people striving to survive. We do know that, when necessary, even cereals commonly considered unsuitable for mankind could be consumed (see e.g. Plin. HN 18.141 on rye, deemed good only to avoid starvation; Strab. 5.1.12 reports that millet was the best remedy against scarcity, as it is resistant to any

[124] As Foxhall and Forbes (1982: 45-46) point out, the nutritive value of the edible parts of wheat and barley are very close, but barley has more inedible parts. Nevertheless, due to the ancient milling systems, parts of barley's inedible hulls ended up in the flour.

kind of weather). In some cases, peasants produced grain only as a cash-crop, and relied on lower-rank cereals for subsistence: Galen, for example, describes peasants in Asia Minor sending their grain to town and eating other cereals, that they have apparently produced themselves (Gal. *De aliment. facult.* 598; see Garnsey 2005: 217). Equally, there were all sorts of other things that farmers could eat, from legumes to herbs, fruits and vegetables, fish and so on. The different dietary options available to farmers cannot be easily dismissed, as Roselaar does (2010: 205), simply as welcome additions to a cereal-based grain, because they all actually entail different production strategies and different allocations of land and labour, and therefore change our understanding of the success of farmers' private land to cater for their livelihood.[125]

A closely related problem is that production strategies were subject to extreme local variability. Fish, for example, will have been important for the diet of the inhabitants of coastal areas. In Cisalpina, a combination of cereal production and husbandry (swine-herding in particular) is visible from the literary and archaeological evidence (Bandelli 2008). Yet, for many other places things are much less clear. What were production strategies like in riverine valley settlements, such as the colonies founded along the Adriatic coast (Potentia, Pisaurum, Auximum – though in the latter case the centuriation also included the hills: Moscatelli 1993)? Did the Roman Apennines ever witness a "*civiltà del castagno*" as they did during the Middle Ages? Answering these questions (and several others alike) would require lengthy and detailed comparative studies, which so far have not been attempted.

The third problem is that farmers did not necessarily eat what they produced. Although it is uncertain how common it was for Roman farmers to produce cash-crops, that is produce exclusively devoted to commercialisation, it is beyond doubt that they could market (at least partly) their produce (see Chapter 3). This, of course, would entail completely different land uses, since it would be possible to argue that the production of high-rank foodstuffs, that could

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[125] Foxhall and Forbes' (1982: 74) finding that "grain contributed about 70-75% of the calories in the average classical diet" should be considered valid only for the people concerned by the evidence used in their study: soldiers and urban inhabitants who benefited from grain distributions.

fetch high prices, required less land and therefore it could enable farmers to rely exclusively on their own land to make a living. Thus, with a certain degree of exaggeration, Varro reports that the two *fratres Veianii* in the *ager Faliscus* made as much as 10,000 HS per year on a single *iugerum* of land: it was simply a matter of choosing the right produce (honey, in this case).

6. Subordination and vulnerability.

We have thus returned to the starting point. We set out to ascertain whether allotments sufficed or not, but we have only concluded that we cannot obtain an answer. I believe, however, that there is a way to overcome this problem. We should, I believe, shift the focus from the land to the farmers. Let us consider the physical reality of land distributions. An inscription from Pergamum (*Royal Correspondence* 51; Virgilio 2003, number 29) preserves for us (although in fragmentary form) the text of a king's (perhaps Eumenes II) reply to a petition from his soldiers. The soldiers have been settled in a κατοικία connected to a unnamed πόλις, possibly Pergamum (on the episode see Virgilio 2003: 159-61), and the king is now mandating that those settled in the country should receive 125 plethra of ψιλὴ (arable land) and 12.5 of vines; those settled in the city are to receive 100 and 10 plethra respectively; those not yet settled, 50 and 5 plethra.[126] All three groups, in sum, are receiving land that is already set up for cultivation.

Similarly, in Roman practice, when the land to be distributed was obtained through dispossessions, cultivation was generally already in place. Discussing the contribution that the observation of cultivation can make to the settlement of disputes concerning property, Siculus Flaccus explains that one should not automatically assume that all the adjoining pieces of land cultivated in the same way belong to the same owner.[127] In fact, "it can be the case that similar cultivations, and ones which fit well together (*similes convenientesque culturae*), are owned by several individuals, although their external aspect is indistinct" (Sic. Flacc. 128.6-8 Campbell; my translation). This is the case, Siculus Flaccus explains (128.8-11 Campbell), when the land

[126] *Royal Correspondence* rejects on no sound basis Segre's restoration of l. 10 [τοῖς ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ ἐστεγνοποιημ]ένοις. Perhaps, soldiers have been settled according to rank, and therefore those who are still waiting to be settled are also going to receive less land, because they are lower in rank. The *plethron* corresponded to a piece of land 100 feet square: the Greek foot (*pous*) varied between 27 and 35 cm, and therefore the *plethron* varied too (averaging 900 m^2). The Roman *pes* averaged 30 cm, but the *iugerum* corresponded to a rectangle of 120x240 feet, that is roughly 2,500 m^2 = 0.25 ha.

[127] Similarities are not limited to growing the same crop, but involve, more generally, anything that is distinctive to the eye, such as e.g. the distance between trees, or the combinations of different crops (e.g. grain grown in olive orchards). In fact, Siculus Flaccus uses the very generic terms *facies* (translated by Campbell as "appearance") and *cultura* (cf. Sic. Flacc. 128. 13 Campbell: *quam<vis> dissimiles sint culturae*; ibid. 128. 15-16: *nihil ergo nocere debebunt varietates et dissimilitudines culturarum*). To indicate the crop grown, Latin writers use *species*: see *e.g.* Varro *Rust*. 1.7.2.

for distribution has been obtained by dispossessing its former owners: in this case, extensive cultivations, formerly owned by single individuals, may end up being divided into several allotments. In this instance too, settlers receive land which was already cultivated.

Otherwise, settlers would have needed time to start to cultivate. This was taken into account by Antiochus III, when he established 2000 Jewish families in Lydia and Phrygia, an episode known from his letter with the relevant instructions, reported by Flavius Josephus (*Ant.* 12.147-153; see Virgilio 2003: 157-158). The settlers appear to have received land previously uninhabited, since the letter gives them instructions to build houses, to cultivate and to set up vineyards. In his instructions, the king includes some measures that clearly prove that he is taking into account the time needed for the constructions and cultivations to be completed: settlers are to be tax-free for 10 years, and, until their first harvest, they will receive grain handouts for their servants, and for those people engaged in public service (Jos. *Ant.* 12.152). In the same fashion, middle Republican land distributions mostly took place in areas that were previously not cultivated: when considering the possibility that settlers could be independent, this problem should be properly accounted for.[128]

Furthermore, time is not the only thing that is needed to turn land into cultivation. In the case of Antiochus' Jewish settlers, the fact that they are not going to receive food for themselves, and the fact that they have servants, suggests that they are people of some means, certainly not rich, since they need support to feed their servants, but possessing at least the means to build structures and cultivate the land. Now, not all Roman settlers had the means to do so. A passage of Cicero (*Phil*. 6.14), for example, describes settlers who have not been able to build any structure yet, because (among other reasons) they cannot afford the expense. This example reminds us that land alone is of little help. Farming requires balancing land, capital,

[128] For the acknowledgement of the same problem in a context of investment farming see Columella's accounting for the time taken by vines before being productive, in his famous calculation of the profitability of vineyards (Colum.3.3.9, on which see Chapter 3). See also Cato's suggestion to plant trees when the owner of the farmstead is still young (*De Agr.* 3.1).

and labour: in particular, capital is the most important of the three production factors, since it can purchase access to the other two (Erdkamp 2005: 14-15). Therefore, rather than discussing the yields of land allotments, we should instead consider whether settlers were in a position to use their land allotments to make a living.

Lack of means, in fact, seriously undermines productivity. If you want to make independent farmers, you have to give them money, gear, seeds, and labour (animals, slaves or free workers). This is what happened under Constantine, when veterans received not only sufficient money to purchase a plot of land, but also a yoke of oxen and seeds (*CTh* 7.20.3; the law is dated to October 320). Now, during the republic, almost no land distribution entailed the provision of capital: it is possible that only Ti. Gracchus ever conceived a measure of that kind, proposing to distribute Attalus' treasury to the recipients of his land distributions (unless the connection is Plutarch's deliberate inference: *Ti. Gracchus* 14.1). Even this measure, at any rate, was dropped after the tribune's death.[129] Republican settlers, then, had to count on their own resources. These, however, will have varied: some will have been able to set up farmsteads, some others will have been limited in their action by the lack of capital.

As I have explained in section 3, the land distributions carried out from the 4th to the 2nd century BC are likely to have included *proletarii* and *filii familias* of people who qualified for military sevice. These two categories are likely to have had very limited access to capital. This means that, even though they had received some land, they still needed to find a way to build their houses, find seeds, gear, and all the necessary to farm their land, all the while sourcing enough food to survive until their first harvest. Of course, we should not make the

[129] Later, Caesar and Augustus distributed triumphal *congiaria* – i.e. cash distributions – to their soldiers, in addition to land allotments. It is uncertain, though, whether these sums had been planned as a contribution to agriculture. Augustus, for example, also handed out money that had nothing to do with farming, such as the bequest to the people included in his will (Tac. *Ann*. I, 8, 3; Suet. *Aug*. 101 ; Dio 57, 14, 2). At any rate, at least in some cases the money was reinvested in farming, like in Campania, where Caesarian veterans were building their farmsteads in 44 BC (Suet. *Div. Iul.* 81; Yavetz [1983: 138] argues that the colonists to whom Suetonius refers are those settled by the lex Iulia of 59 BC, but this is unlikely, since Suetonius is talking of an episode that happened immediately before Caesar's death).

mistake of believing that these people were an undetermined mass. People gravitating around subsistence levels present profound differences. Hilton (1985: 141-142), for example, suggests that the availability of ploughs and draught animals was the "basic form of stratification inherent in any peasant society in the temperate zone". Even among farmers who owned ploughs and draught animals there were profound differences. Halstead (2014), for example, has extensively discussed the different availability of different draught animals (oxen, mules, horses) and different ploughs (iron vs. wooden) to farmers with different means. Nevertheless, we should at least admit that for people who were struggling to put enough food on the table day after day, even the essential tasks such as clearing their land for cultivation, building farms and other structures, purchasing draught animals, building or purchase their gear, and surviving until their first harvest, were serious challenges, and so was recovering after unexpected losses.

Furthermore, the initial stages of settlement were by no means the only critical moment in the life of republican peasants. As a matter of fact, free peasants were by far the most vulnerable category of ancient society, possibly – in terms of sheer opportunities for survival – even weaker than slaves (so Finley 1973: 108: "the freer the ancient peasant, in the political sense, the more precarious his position"). The first problem that they had to overcome is that they needed to attain minimum subsistence levels year in year out, in the face of the frequency of crop failures and the fluctuations (dramatic at times) of surpluses (Halstead 1989: 68-70). The second problem is that until 167 BC peasants who had received land allotments of sufficient size to qualify as *assidui* were still expected to put together enough money to pay the *tributum* year in year out.

It is necessary at this point to consider how peasants could hope to overcome their general lack of means. A possible strategy was to expand to the area under cultivation. This, however, must be seen as a rather exceptional case. A passage of Agennius Urbicus (36.13-15 Campbell) is usually taken to prove that *compascuus* was easily available to peasants. This idea, however, rests on a wrong translation. Agennius Urbicus explains that in several occasions *compascuus* has been turned into ploughland, due to people's <*in*>*potentia*. In this case, this word does not mean "lack of means" (as translators usually take it), but "lack of self-restraint". Agennius Urbicus, in sum, is not describing poor people who need to increase their production, but greedy landowners who are ready to seize communal land.

Otherwise, peasants could put in extra labour, if this was available: thus, Varro explains that "after harrowing, some people, who have not so large cornfields – like in Apulia and in properties such as those that are found there – , usually harrow again with hoes, in case some large clods are left in the ridges between the furrows" (Varro *Rust*. 1. 29; my translation). Most likely, however, peasants will have resorted to other people's help. In principle, their options were in a range from cooperation to subordination. In practice, though, in many (most) cases the only people capable to provide help were those of higher social status. Asking for their help meant getting involved in uneven social relationships. In some cases, this entailed entering forms of subordinations such as patronage and *clientela.*[130] These relationships, in fact, involved the provision of food and/or money to subordinates in return for their adulation (see e.g. the *salutatio*) and political support. Credit was another possibility. As Foxhall (1990: 103) points out, the normality of loans handed out by wealthy landowners to peasants is already taken for granted in Cato's *De Agri Cultura*, which includes prescriptions for the bailiff to collect loans (and, in this particular case, also the prohibition to extend terms of repayment: Cat. *De Agr.* 5.3). Finally, peasants could offer their services to wealthy individuals as wage labourers or tenants.[131]

At the end of this long survey of the role of private allotments in peasants' production strategies, it is possible to say that peasants were definitely not able to base their production

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[130] I accept the distinction between *clientela* as a precise institution and patronage as a more general behaviour suggested by Tatum (2003-2004: 212).

[131] It should be noticed that in some cases it is hard to separate credit, wage labour and tenancy from personal patronage. These three things, in fact, are often cast as a favour made by some generous patron to their subordinates. Benefits, loans, and wages all belong to the sphere of personal patronage. As for credit, see for example Horace's story of Volteius Mena: Philippus gives Mena 7,000 HS as a gift, and lends him an additional 7,000, to buy a farm (Hor. *Epist*. 1.7.80-81).

strategies exclusively on farming their own land. Their land's produce had to be at least integrated with other sources. Furthermore, the remarks made above on peasants' vulnerability can be expanded by arguing that those peasants who received land allotments were – in many cases – also unable to maintain control of them. Above, I have argued that throughout the republic there were people who invested in agriculture and were interested in obtaining more and more land. Then, I have suggested that peasants are by their own nature vulnerable to crises and need external assistance. What I suggest here is that, due to their vulnerability, in many cases peasants were forced to alienate their land.

In fact, the only reason why the sort of ruthless land-grabbing of which late republican and imperial sources complain is believed not to have existed in earlier times is that these have been idealized by the sources, as I will explain in Chapter 2. A possible clue of the scale of land-grabbing at earlier times comes from indebtedness. We hear of the escalation of private indebtedness as early as in 342 BC , as testified by the revolt of the Roman army stationed in Campania.[132] Now, debts and land-grabbing are closely connected.[133] Indebtedness always entails the risk of losing one's land, if this has been used as a security, which appears to have been a common habit at all levels of the population.[134] If debts were a common problem, we can expect land-grabbing to have been present too.[135]

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[132] The connection of this episode with private indebtedness is made clear by App. Samn. 1.1-9; Dio. Hal. 15.3. On the episode see Storchi Marino 1993; Gabrielli 2003.

[133] For a comparative view on the long-term exploitative effects of credit see Briggs (2009), who explains that only when debtors are relatively wealthy they do not suffer negative consequences.

[134] For example, one of the Pseudo-Quintilianic *Declamationes Minores* (*Declam. Min*. 336) deals with the case of two brothers agreeing that one of them would retain total control of their father's land, but at the same time he would also take up the entire debt for which their father had used his land as a security. Subsequently, the passing of a law cancelling all debts (a *lex tabularum novarum*), embittered the relationship between the two brothers, as one of them was left with all the land and no debts to pay, and the other with no land at all. Another famous instance of indebted agriculturalists is provided by Cicero, who describes Sulla's veterans-turned-farmers burdened by debts (*Cat.* 2.18.20).

[135] In fact, in some instances indebtedness may have not resulted in the seizure of peasants' property, but in the tightening of the bounds of social subordination in which peasants were involved. For patrons, in fact, loans are an instrument to tighten their control over subordinates. Extensions of the terms of repayment, and cancellations, bind debtors and creditors in long lasting ties of gratitude. Economic and social subordination are generally interconnected. For this reason, when we consider peasants' relationships with landowners, we should have clear in mind that their subordination was not only economic, but also social and political (Kehoe 2007: 16).

Of course, one should avoid simplistic generalizations. As I have explained in Section 2, agrarian structures have a remarkable local variability. For example, the few scanty data available for the ancient world seem to suggest that around larger settlements the concentration of property was higher. As Bowman's (1985) study of landholding in the Hermoupolite nome reveals, the Gini coefficient of the urban population was extremely high (.815), suggesting that a large part of these people owned little or no land. In the Oxyrhynchite nome, instead, the distribution of property was more equal (Rowlandson 1996: 123). Rowlandson suggests that the difference reflects the possibility for the inhabitants of a *metropolis* (in the Greek Egyptian administrative sense of the word) such as Hermoupolis to make a living through non-agricultural work, whereas in the rural district of Oxyrhynchus, where "most villagers would be completely dependent on agriculture or related activities (such as shepherding) for a living". This, however, does not explain why Oxyrynchite villagers had access to land. Instead, it seems possible to conclude that in Hermoupolis the concentration of property was higher because tighter control was exerted by the elites residing in town.

As this single example reminds us, in order to understand how high the rate of peasants who lost their allotments was in comparison to the total population of each settlements, I would need far more data. However, I believe that I would be still on safe ground if I claimed that in each and every Roman settlement the quantity of people who owned enough land to feed their households was actually very small. In fact, historically in places where some sort of social hierarchy was in force (as in Roman settlements), even when the distribution of land was relatively egalitarian the quantity of people who owned no or very little land were by far the majority of the population. Thus, even at Athens, where the Gini coefficient was remarkably low (.38-39), 20 to 30% of the population owned no land at all (Scheidel 2006: 46). This fact, that is already remarkable, would certainly be even more impressive if we were able to calculate the standard deviation coefficient of the "middling" citizens (the hoplitic group) who controlled about half of the land of Attica (Scheidel 2006: 46). Without any doubt, we would find that the distribution of property among this group was extremely unequal.

A very good example of this situation comes from Locorotondo, a place that, as I have explained in section 2, is generally considered an example of egalitarian distribution of property. According to the *catasto onciario* of 1748, the community had a total population of 2,182, divided into 613 households (hearths). The occupations of their heads are conveniently resumed in a chart by Galt (1991: 94). The list provides a striking example of how, even in a town such as Locorotondo, where, thanks to the weakness of the local nobility, as much as 55% of the land was controlled by peasants and artisans (Curtis 2014: 247-8), a considerable number of households owned little or no land. As much as one fifth of the population did not have access to any land at all.[136] Some others owned some land, but it was little more than a garden: the butcher, for example, owned little more than 0.3 ha, and the trullo builder 0.2; each of the 6 smiths owned, on average, little more than 0.6 ha.[137] Other "urban" workers seem to have fared better: the 19 shoemakers owned on average 1.9 ha each, and the 22 pack animal drivers, the priests, doctors and notaries owned much more; still, the standard deviation coefficient is very high, which means that the average of holdings is very distant from the real situation, and we should conclude that many of these people actually owned little or no land. But the most striking finding is that also among rural workers the standard deviation coefficient is extremely high: this means that many *bracciali* (rural workers) owned little or no land of their own, and even among *massari* (owners of farms) many were actually *massari da campo*, that is salaried overseers of large estates (Galt 1991: 99). It is true that the Gini coefficient for vineyards is quite low (.56), which means that most of the inhabitants produced some wine, but clearly they could not make a living by selling it, as revealed by the popularity of non-agricultural activities.

If we transposed this finding into the landscape of property of republican Italy, it would

[136] The heads of families who did not own any land at all were involved in "urban" activities: 5 tailors, 1 tanner, 1 pharmacist, 1 lawyer, 1 student, 1 servant, 1 *zavattino* (this word means shoemaker in the local dialect. Since Galt lists shoemakers as a different category, they must have been difficultly dented in the *catasto*).
[137] Measures on the *catasto* are in *stoppelli* (1 *stoppello* = 1, 074 square meters).

appear that, despite the several distributions of land, most peasants owned little or no land. *Contra* Lo Cascio, the presence of large numbers of landless peasants was not the result of property partitioning, but of structural conditions. If Italy actually experienced steady demographic growth, this only increased the number of landless people, but was not the primary cause of landlessness.

7. Conclusions.

In this chapter, I have argued that however the pressure on landowners may have increased in the late republic, this was happening in a context that was already one of great inequality. The land distributions that followed each other during the republic had not succeeded in creating a class of small landowners, partly because they had not been implemented with that purpose, partly because without other means (capital in the first place) the recipients of land allotments tended to lose their land. This chapter concludes that landlessness was structural and that Roman society was always remarkably unequal. This finding prompts us to reconsider Gabba's (1988a) popular view that Roman society underwent a profound change around the 3rd century BC, as the egalitarian system that had come out of the Struggle of the Orders was being disrupted by the growth of private wealth and competition. According to Gabba, we only get to hear of *proletarii* in 281 BC because there were none before.[138] As I will argue in the next chapter, instead, the problem lies in the bias of the sources. In Chapter 2, I will explain that they completely idealize the middle Republic portraying it as the triumph of a class of independent peasants. It is against this idyllic scenario that we should read the sources' belief that the distribution of property was becoming more unequal and the rural population was declining.

[138] In that year, *proletarii* were enrolled for the first time in an emergency levy (Enn. *Ann*. 170-2 Skutsch; FRHist 6 [L. Cassius Hemina] F24; see FRHist commentary *ad loc.* for discussion of the date).

Chapter 2: the myth of the hoplitic republic.

1. A peasants' idyll.

Ancient literature has plenty of idyllic representations of peasants' life, from the poor but decent peasants of Virgil and the pseudo-Vergilian *Moretum*, to the relegated hunters of Dio Chrysostom's *Euboicus*. One cannot fail to notice that these characters are constructed in ways that mirror writers' own society. The sense of remoteness and ancestral simplicity pervading these images is openly in contrast with the frantic, stressful urban life. Literary peasants live a laid-back life: their time moves at a slower pace, its rhythm dictated by the cycle of seasons and agricultural work. In ancient literature, rural life is also a life of plenty. From Aristophanes' *Acharnians* and *Peace*, to Vergil's *Georgics*, images of abundance are common. Tones, of course, vary. In Aristophanes in particular peasants are blessed with such an abundance of food that they can easily host banquets on certain occasions. This exaggeration has certainly to do with the centrality of food, voracity and abundance in the Old Comedy. With the exception of comedic excess, however, the blessed conditions of literary peasants usually take a different shape.

Greeks and Romans had two different words to address what, in the modern world, goes under the heading of "poverty". The Greeks distinguished the πτωχοί from the πένητες (Coin-Longeray 2001; 2014: 145-201), the difference between the two adjectives being best exemplified by Aristophanes' statement that “it is the beggar's life to live possessed of nothing, but the poor man's life to live frugally and by applying himself to work, with nothing to spare perhaps but not really in want” (*Pl.* 551-554; transl. Whittaker 1993: 279). Similarly, the Romans distinguished *paupertas* from *egestas*. As Viglietti (2011: 155-163; 172-187) has demonstrated, *paupertas* was different from *egestas*, being instead related to *modestia*, the possession of just enough means to live a decent life. It is this kind of condition that is most typically found in literary descriptions of peasants: the Golden Age has long gone, and mankind has to cope with the ineluctability of labour; peasants have nothing to spare, but through hard work they suffer no deprivation.[139]

The perfect example of such blessed existence is the famous Corycian elderly man (the *Corycius senex*) portrayed by Virgil to the end of the *Georgics* (4.125-148). This man only owns a few *iugera* of land of very poor quality, where no vines could grow, nor cows or sheep find meadow grass (4.127-129).[140] Nevertheless, as Virgil says elsewhere (*Georg*. 1.145-146), "hard work overcomes everything" (*labor omnia uicit improbus*). The *Corycius senex* is the embodiment of this belief: he works in the fields until it is dark, and his toils are rewarded, to the point that he has more food on the table than what he can eat (Verg. *Georg*. 4. 132-133). Along the same lines, the *Moretum* describes a happy and contented peasant life, whose protagonists do not lack anything thanks to the sweat of their brow.

The *leitmotiv* of all the idyllic representation of the peasantry is the celebration of their supposed, complete independence. Peasants' independence entails complete self-sufficiency, which has both an economic and a social side. As for production, self-sufficiency means complete reliance on what you produce. Self-sufficient people do not need to perform dependent labour, nor do they obtain their food on markets (which is a form of dependence too). Thus, Aristophanes' Acharnian peasant claims that where he lives, the word to buy is unknown (Ar. *Acharn*. 33-36).[141] In the same fashion, self-sufficient people are socially and politically

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[139] There were different ways to understand the precise effects of the disappearance of the Age of Gold. According to some, the fertility of the Earth was continuing to decline: this belief was notoriously held by Lucretius (2. 1164-1174), but also agricultural writers such as Tremellius Scrofa agreed. La Penna (2004: 200-203) persuasively suggests that Tremellius Scrofa used the cliché of the Earth's declining fertility to advocate for the necessity to acquire a scientific knowledge of agriculture. Others, such as Columella, strongly denied that fertility was declining, and Virgil goes as far as to claim that the Earth provides a "easy" livelihood (Verg. Georg. 260: *fundit humo facilem victum iustissima tellus*). At any rate, everyone agreed that labour was necessary.

[140] Virgil calls the old man's property a *relictus ager*. This expression is used in a technical sense by Frontin. 6.31-33 Campbell as those places *quae siue locorum iniquitate siue arbitrio conditoris [relicta] limites non acceperunt.* In this passage, however, the term simply means "waste, unsuitable for cultivation" (cf. Colum. 2.2.7: *solum relictum*). See Mynors 1990 *ad loc*.

[141] As De Ligt (1990: 33-34) remarks, the τόπος of the farmer living completely relegated from markets is customary of ancient literature. Centuries later, Philostratus still depicted an *ampelourgos* who had never seen a drachm (Philostr. *Her*. 1.4.6).

free, since they are not involved in any uneven relationship of dependence, such as *clientela* or patronage. Of course, social and economic dependence are very close-knit. Social subordination, in fact, is based on the unspoken assumption that, in return for clients' adulation and loyalty, patrons provide economic support.[142]

Literary representations of peasants assume that these people are able, through their hard work, to attain complete self-sufficiency. Furthermore, to achieve this goal, peasants are not only imagined to work hard, but also to implement a rigorous "moral consumption" policy. Peasants only possess the bare necessary to survive: food, shelter, the necessary clothing. In their idyllic transfiguration, they are imagined to have voluntarily relinquished the strife for superfluousness, and to be content with the bare necessary. In fact, as long as you are slave of superfluousness, independence will be unattainable. It is only by being content with the little that you have that you will be free. What is required to achieve this target, then, is a moral approach to consumption.[143]

Idealised peasants adopted such approach. As one of the idealised poor agriculturalists, the Roman general C. Fabricius, explains to Pyrrhus in Dionysius' narrative, "My nature is not forced to seek things exceeding the bare necessary" (Dio. Hal. 19.15.5: τὰ δ' ἔξω τῶν

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[142] This may well be disguised as a gift, but generosity is never actually for free, and gifts introduce inequality in the relationship between two individuals. This is what Dionysius of Halicarnassus explains through Fabricius' mouth (Dion. Hal. 19.16.4). Faced with Pyrrhus' proposal to receive a gift from him, Fabricius replies that, gifts of this kind, regardless of the fancy names which they are given, oppress human beings until they are repaid.

[143] Ironically, the role of a moral approach to consumption to attain independence is best exemplified in a letter by the wealthy senator Pliny the Younger. In the letter, Pliny excuses a deceased debtor, so that his daughter can inherit. Pliny explains that his means are modest, *modicae facultates* (the adjective *modicus* is related to *modestia*). Besides, Pliny explains, his *dignitas* requires expenditure, and the revenues from his farms are small and uncertain due to their *condicio*. Despite all this, he claims that he can afford to excuse his debtor, because "what is lacking from my income, is provided by my frugality, whence, just like a spring, my generosity derives" (2.4.3: *sunt quidem omnino nobis modicae facultates, dignitas sumptuosa, reditus propter condicionem agellorum nescio minor an incertior; sed quod cessat ex reditu, frugalitate suppletur, ex qua velut fonte liberalitas nostra decurrit*). The passage clearly explains how, regardless of how limited your means are, you can always make ends meet, simply getting rid of the superfluous. Kehoe (1997: 27) takes the passage seriously, and scrutinizes Pliny's claim as if it were a good example of his economic behaviour. Yet, it seems to me that the text is highly influenced by a stereotypical self-representation. Here, Pliny is interested to celebrate his own generosity (*liberalitas*). Thus, he claims that he could not really afford to excuse his debtor, and nevertheless he will, because he is a generous man. We can legitimately doubt that he really had to mitigate his expenditure; at any rate, the important thing is that he claims that he will.

ἀναγκαίων οὐ βιάζεται ζητεῖν ἡ φύσις).[144] In Dionysius' fictitious speech, Fabricius explains that he does not consider himself unlucky, but, on the contrary, he prides himself on being one of the luckiest. His wretched farm suffices to provide him with everything, granted that he works hard and manages well his limited resources. His nature has not given him an appetite for the superfluous, and he is content with what he has (19.15.5-7).

This approach to consumption brings peasant lifestyle very close to perfect morality. Cicero, for example, considers it a perfect remedy to the temptation of *voluptas*, as proved by his treatment of peasant life in the *Cato Maior* (Russo 2009: 77). The attainment of complete self-sufficiency through a strict control of needs and desires is a condition which in philosophical speculation is indicated by the name αὐτάρκεια. In fact, peasants also become symbols of philosophical reflection: it is not by chance that Dionysius says of Poplicola – one of the heroes who liberated Rome from the tyranny of the Tarquinii, and, in the later re-elaboration, an example of poor agriculturalist – that the man "had a sort of self-taught philosophy" (Dio. Hal. 5.12.3: φιλοσοφία γάρ τις αὐτοδίδακτος ἐγένετο περὶ αὐτόν).

Given the strong ideological superstructure of literary representations of peasants, it is all the more striking that these have usually been taken as more or less realistic descriptions of the life of small landowners (e.g. Roselaar 2010: 205), and have therefore been used to argue that peasants had concrete opportunities to make a decent living as long as they had secure access to landholding. This use of the literary representations of peasants is totally incorrect. Ancient literature describes ideal peasants as completely independent precisely because actual peasants are not. Such idealized descriptions completely overlook peasants' fragility, and depict them as perfectly capable of taking care of themselves relying only on their own strengths.

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[144] Here I have used the periphrasis "poor agriculturalist" to define Fabricius because, as I will explain in the next section, the characters of the "magistrates-farmers" of the early and middle Republic (among whom Fabricius can be listed) reflect the elites' cultural appropriation of the image of the peasant. Thus, these characters show features of peasants, such as poverty and direct work, but are used to denote an undefined level of wealth that entails at the same time simplicity and complete security, that is the way in which the elites aim to represent themselves.

Even the insistence on the theme of peasants' happiness could be subject to critical scrutiny: peasant life is toilsome, as is visible, for example, in Lucretius' description of the unbearable burden of work to which peasants are subject (2. 1164-74). Whereas the idealized independent peasants are able to survive having only what is strictly necessary, such a condition is actually one of extreme vulnerability. It is not by chance that, in two separate instances, Horace calls *paupertas* (or its equivalent *pauperies*) cruel (*saeva*: *Od.* 1.12.43) and distressing (*importuna*: *Od*. 3.16.37; on the two passages see Nisbet and Hubbard 1970: 160). Lucretius' description of the plague at Athens exposes the problematic nature of *paupertas* in all its dramatic aspects. First (6. 1252-1255), describing the infection and subsequent death of poor people – shepherds, herdsmen and ploughmen – he claims that poverty, together with the disease, was the cause of their death (*paupertate et morbo*). In fact, since the poor's lack of means forced them to live in overcrowded houses (*casa contrusa*), they were more subject to the *contagia avidi morbi*. The poor's *paupertas* was responsible for their death because it left them more vulnerable to the disease. Furthermore, in another passage (6.1282-1286), Lucretius calls *paupertas horrida*: the context is the pathetic description of people lacking the means to build a funeral pyre to their dead, and burning them by stealth on those of others. Together, the two passages of Lucretius exemplify masterfully the problematic nature of *paupertas*: it is dangerously close to destitution (*egestas*). Even accepting the idea, embodied by the *Corycius senex*, that the exhausting efforts made by peasants are actually rewarded with enough food, this can only be the case under normal conditions (whatever "normal conditions" might mean). In other words, literary descriptions describe peasant life as still and immemorial, whereas it is dramatically subject to change and unexpected events. Living at subsistence levels, peasants are vulnerable to any kind of change: diseases, droughts, shortages and so on. Having only the bare minimum means living on the edge of survival: things can go wrong at any moment.

In a famous article, Veyne (1979) argues that the ancient concept of αὐτάρκεια should not be seen as aspiration to complete self-sufficiency. Instead, Veyne takes it as aspiration to security in the typically uncertain sphere of economic activities. As I will explain in Chapter 4, Veyne's intuition on the importance of economic security for certain social groups in the ancient world is doubtlessly correct. However, this has very little to do with αὐτάρκεια itself. This concept, as we have just seen, entails precisely complete self-sufficiency. Veyne's discomfort with this interpretation of αὐτάρκεια is symptomatic: as he points out, there is no trace whatsoever that the ancients ever attempted any actual economic behaviour aiming at self-sufficiency.[145] But this should not surprise us. Complete self-sufficiency cannot actually be attained. Therefore (as I will explain in Chapter 3), among the Romans it was not even pursued by large and wealthy households. This is all the more true for peasants, who have limited means. Whenever possible, peasants sell their produce on the market (another theme which I will explore in Chapter 3), and they also seek access to markets in order to source what they are lacking. The need to access markets in both directions, however, is not the only thing that prevents peasants from being completely self-sufficient. In Chapter 1, I have explained that peasants' life is first of all a life of dependence.

Unsurprisingly, under the thin layer of the idyllic dream, even the ancient descriptions of self-sufficient peasants do not take them as being self-sufficient. Markets are present even in the most idealized descriptions. The *Corycius senex*, for example, bases his productive strategies on the sale of honey, taking care of his beehives whilst he makes do with cabbages and poppy seeds. He is a skilled, specialized worker, who obtains his revenues from trading a high level product, which cannot suffer from shortages. One cannot help but think of the two veterans of Varro who made 10,000 HS a year out of a single *iugerum* (Varro *Rust.* 3.16.10): certainly an extreme case, but representative of the high level trade in which honey should be included. In addition, the *Corycius senex* is said to pick fruits and flowers that he certainly sells (Verg. *Geo.* 4.142-3).[146] In the same fashion, literary peasants are commonly described

[145] Veyne (1979: 270) points out that if the ancients had devoted their efforts to self-sufficiency, the complexity of classical societies would remain unexplained.
[146] Note that the availability of fruits and flowers seems in contrast with the alleged sterility of the fields.

accessing markets to purchase what they need. Thus, in the *Satyricon* (12-15), we see Encolpius and Ascyltus try to recover their treasure from a peasant who has gone to the market – an *emptor rusticus*! Purchases at the market crop up even in the *Moretum*, whose protagonist is said to make purchases sometimes – although admittedly very rarely – when he goes to town to sell his herbs and vegetables (77-84).

The same inconsistency between proclaimed self-sufficiency and actual behaviour applies to personal ties. Even Dio Chrysostom's idyllic representation of the hunters assumes that personal ties of dependence, such as gifts and loans, are both unavoidable and useful; as the hunters admit (7.68-69), in times of shortage they have been forced to borrow seeds from their son-in-law (even though they proudly remark that their debt was repaid as soon as the new harvest was ripe). All efforts to search for examples of complete self-sufficiency in antiquity would be frustrated.[147] Self-sufficiency was not a feasible economic strategy; on the contrary, it was an ideal aspiration: the dream of complete liberty.[148]

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[147] Although, as I have just pointed out, the hunters of Dio Chrysostom's *Euboicus* are not completely self-sufficient, they still are the closest to a depiction of real self-sufficiency that survives from the classical world. Starting from nothing (actually, the hounds were their initial asset) they managed through hard work to have everything they needed to live a happy and contented life, sticking to the bare necessary except for rare occasions like the marriage concluding the episode. However, the particular chronological setting of the *Euboicus* should not be ignored. The speech depicts the countryside as suffering from depopulation. Besides, political authorities have only had a very loose grip on the land for a long time. Still, when they appear on the scene, things become suddenly harder for peasants. Owing to the particular political and demographic circumstances in which the story is set, even if we ignored, as Erdkamp (2005: 55-56) does, its idealized nature, still we could not take its characters as representative of the typical ancient peasants.

[148] In the ancient world, the only people who claim that they are actually able to attain self-sufficiency, and thus complete freedom (Sen. *Ep*. 2.17.4-5; Mart. 2.53) are the philosophers. However, there is a high degree of ambiguity in the philosophical aspiration for self-sufficiency, inasmuch as it claims that also essential needs should be given up. Thus, Seneca, arguing that only philosophy can make human beings really independent and free (*Ep.* 2.17.1-2), uses a very distinctive verb: *opitulor* (which he claims to belong to Cicero's distinctive lexicon). This verb indicates the provision of external assistance to take remedy to the lack of means. It is used, for example, by Sallust (*Cat.* 33.2) in the context of the magisterial intervention in favour of the people burdened by debts (a condition qualified as *inopia*). What Seneca is implying here is that philosophy can even cater for the needs of the body, and that complete detachment from material things can be obtained. He even objects to the possibility that Lucilius should at least make the necessary arrangements with his estate "so that poverty would not be a burden to me [i.e. Lucilius], nor I to anyone else". It is clear, though, that as soon as the pursuit of philosophical self-sufficiency claims to have reached the bodily dimension it becomes pure rhetoric: neither Seneca or Lucilius ever gave up their personal wealth. Nor did philosophers who did give up all their wealth (like the cynics) attain actual αὐτάρκεια: they simply created other ties of material dependence, inasmuch as their existence depended on the generosity of other people (alms, gifts, etc.).

2. Peasants as aristocratic role models.

Once ascertained that, despite what some modern commentators believe, ancient descriptions of peasants are extremely idealized, in this section I will discuss the use of these figures as role models for the ruling elites. The assumption that involvement in direct farming was desirable is visible ever since Hesiod's *Works and Days*. In a nutshell, the reason why direct farming is considered a superior activity is that peasants possess the superior moral qualities that we have seen in the previous section. Quite obviously, however, the symbolic importance of direct farming varies throughout classical literature. Since the earliest stages of Greek literature, farming is found associated with aristocratic ideals. In fact, the model of the aristocratic man performing direct work in agriculture is already present in the Odyssey, where none other than the protagonist's father, Laertes, is said to have spent much labour on his farm (Hom. *Od*. 24.205-212).[149]

The *Odyssey* does not explain why farming is important to aristocrats. To obtain an explanation, we will have to wait until Xenophon's *Oeconomicus,* which, as Kronenberg (2009) has showed, is a subtly ironical criticism of the culture and beliefs of the Athenian elite of Xenophon's time. The *Oeconomicus* is shaped as a dialogue between Socrates and the young noble Critobulus, which in turn frames Socrates' account of Ischomachus' teachings on household management. Having been asked by his discussant what economic activities appear to him to be the most noble, the literary Socrates does not disclose the actual thought of the historical Socrates, that philosophy is the only noble activity.[150] On the contrary, "instead of

[149] Hanson (1995: 56; 92) claims that Odysseus' remark that Laertes is "ill-cared for" and wears squalid clothes (Hom. *Od.* 24.244-250) reveals a "distaste for hard labor", which is at odds with Odysseus' appreciation for it in his contest with Eurymachos (18.357-76), where they challenge each other to build walls and plant trees, to harvest grain and plough the fields. This, together with the absence of references to aristocrats' involvement in farming in the *Iliad*, leads Hanson to conclude that two different chronological stages exist: the older is that of the *Iliad* and of Odysseus' distaste for farming, and corresponds to the Homeric aristocracies; the more recent is that of Odysseus' contest with Eurymachos, and reflects the same society as Hesiod. These conclusions appear too schematic. It seems to me, in fact, that Odysseus' comments on Laertes' conditions are not related to his involvement in direct farming, but to his old age and the loss of privileges. As far as the ideology of direct farming is concerned, "the world of Odysseus" does not seem to me to be different than that of Hesiod.

[150] To be fair, the "historical" Socrates is only known from Platonic dialogues. It is therefore uncertain

berating [Critobulus, Socrates] responds on his level" (Kronenberg 2009: 41-42), and elaborates a long praise of farming.[151]

The values of 4th century Athenian aristocrats belong to the system of values of the *kalokagathia*: as Socrates explains to Critobulus, he approached Ischomachus in the first place because he wanted to learn how to be καλὸς κἀγαθὸς, and Ischomachus was considered to be such by the entire city (Xen. *Oec.* 6.17; 7.3). Farming is considered important inasmuch as it provides the physical fitness that is central to aristocratic ideology; in addition, the work of the fields is connected to a set of moral qualities that equally belong to the aristocratic system of values. Thus, Socrates explains that farming is desirable because it is an "exercise for the body so that it may be capable of all those things that are suitable for a free man" (5.1: σωμάτων ἄσκησις εἰς τὸ δύνασθαι ὅσα ἀνδρὶ ἐλευθέρῳ προσήκει. Transl. Pomeroy 1994), a category including hunting and military service (5.5-6).

The second reason provided by Socrates to support his claim that farming is the best activity is that it "teaches justice" (δικαιοσύνην διδάσκει: 5.12). Physical fitness and sense of justice: these two points are still the same values of the archaic aristocracy (even though nothing ensures that the archaic δίκη is the same as in the *Oeconomicus*, where δικαιοσύνη is the faculty to understand when it is just to harm other human beings – in this case, if they invade your land: 5.13). The *kalokagathia* of 4th century Athens, however, is fit into the civic values of a city that is formally democratic (although its political system has become more strictly timocratic after the Peloponnesian War). Xenophon's Athens has already experienced the great season of

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to what extent Socrates' character is the result of Plato's literary manipulation. However, Socrates' belief that philosophy was the only noble activity is so ubiquitous in the sources that we can take for granted that it belonged to the teachings of the historical figure.

[151] As Kronenberg explains, Socrates' praise of farming actually aims to denounce elite's values as "based on material self-interest and in conflict with the teaching of Socrates in chapters 1 and 2 of the *Oeconomicus*" (Kronenberg 2009: 46). The utilitarianism denounced by Socrates is, to an extent, individualistic: agriculture is "a pleasant experience, a means of increasing one's estate" (Xen. *Oec*. 5.1: ἡδυπάθειά τις καὶ οἴκου αὔξησις), and "the earth bears, for those working it, the things for which men live, and she provides in addition the things from which they live pleasantly" (5.2). There is, however, also a sort of "civic utilitarianism": farming is important for the city, because it makes good citizens and good soldiers.

democratic government, and the democratic ideal is deeply rooted in public ideology. Thus, Socrates' list of the benefits of direct farming also includes a third point that reflects the ideals of the democratic πόλις: mutual assistance. As Socrates explains, “farming also teaches to assist each other” (Συμπαιδεύει δὲ καὶ εἰς τὸ ἐπαρκεῖν ἀλλήλοις ἡ γεωργία: 5.14).

The presence of direct farming among the values of the Greek urban aristocracies, at any rate, is based on the cultural appropriation of the image of the peasant. In fact, it is hard to believe that the elites actually performed any direct work in their fields. Instead, by portraying themselves as peasants, they claimed to possess those values that they believed to be characteristic of peasants. This phenomenon begins precisely with the representations of “elite peasants” in Hesiod and Homer. In the *Oeconomicus*, the hypocrisy of the appropriation emerges in all its ridiculous aspects, thanks to Xenophon's wit. Thus, since wealthy landowners do not actually perform any work, it is hard to see how farming could keep them in shape and make them fit for military service. Xenophon's solution, proclaimed through Socrates' mouth, is highly ironical: landowners who “farm by supervision” (5.4: τοὺς δὲ τῇ ἐπιμελείᾳ γεωργοῦντας) also remain fit, since they wake up early and go around eagerly (σφοδρῶς). The same appropriation, as I will explain now, is visible at Rome. This is not the place, of course, to discuss the precise features of the identification of landowners and peasants in the Greek world, a theme that would first require a detailed discussion of the presence and importance of small landowners in the Greek world throughout the centuries. Instead, the theme of the present thesis requires a detailed treatment of the phenomenon as it took place at Rome during the republic. The reason why such discussion appears necessary is that the identification of landowners and peasants is one of the major reasons why it has been so far assumed that landownership was widespread during the republic, and it was central to citizens' self-understanding.

Wealthy Romans did not generally like direct labour (Rosafio 2002: 17), which was believed to be only good for animals and less-than-humans. In the story of Manlius Capitolinus as narrated by Livy (7.4.7), Capitolinus' father L. Manlius Imperiosus, resenting his son's stupidity, forced him to work the fields like a slave, even letting him sleep in the *ergastulum*. According to one of his political enemies, however, this strategy could only make things worse, because, “if there was any natural vigour left in the boy, he was driving it out by carrying on a rural life and growing as a countryman among the beasts”. Thus, commenting on Chremes' behaviour in Terentius' *Heautontimoroumenos*, Cicero (*Fin.* 1.1.3) argues that, forbidding his new neighbour to perform direct labour in the fields the character is not being inhuman (*inhumanus*): “as a matter of fact, he is not discouraging him from being diligent, but from performing an endeavour unworthy of a free man (*ab inliberali labore deterret*)” (my transl.). The idea that direct farming is not suited to a free man appears also in Seneca (*Ep.* 88.21), whilst Sallust states that it is good for slaves (*servile officium*: Cat. 4.1). In the *De re rustica* (1.17), discussing the distinction between farmers who use slaves, free workers, or both, Varro explains that it is for *pauperculi* to work the land with their own labour and that of their children.[152] Precisely because the work of the fields was completely removed from the life of wealthy Romans, engaging in it, as Fronto and Marcus Aurelius did taking a part in the vintage, could be an exotic experience (Front. *ad M. Caes.* 4.4; see Purcell 1995: 157).

Nevertheless, despite the actual distaste for direct farming, this was at the core of elite's self-representation. The traditions on the great Republican generals, such as Cincinnatus and Atilius Regulus, describe them as direct farmers. According to Pliny, even the kings tilled their fields (*HN* 19.19: *Romani quidem reges ipsi coluere*), and Cicero states that originally senators were direct farmers (*Sen.* 56: *in agris erant tum senatores*). Perhaps the most famous example

[152] Sirago (1986) suggests that Sicinius Aemilianus, a character of Apuleius' *Apologia*, was a direct worker, despite being a man of some means. Apuleius' description of this individual, however, is clearly distorted by his rhetorical strategy and aims. In the Apology, Apuleius objects to the accusation of poverty made by Sicinius: not only does he defend himself (*Apol.* 17-22), but he also counter-attacks, presenting his rival as a poor man, who only owns an *agellus* that could be ploughed by a single donkey in three days (23). The suggestion that Sicinius Aemilianus performs direct work (17) is clearly meant to be derogatory. We should assume, on the contrary, that, although smaller than Pudentilla's properties, Sicinius' arable land, vineyard and flocks (56) were of sufficient size to make Sicinius' wealth look similar to Apuleius', who had inherited some 2 million HS to share with his brother (23). Certainly, Sicinius Aemilianus did not come close to a hoe in his entire life.

is Cato, who proudly stated in his speech *De suis virtutibus contra Thermum* to have worked the rocky land of *Sabinum* (Plut. *Cato Maior* 2.2; Fest. 350.26 Lindsay).[153] Some Roman writers were also willing to expose the paradoxical effects of the identification. Thus, in his *De re rustica*, Varro uses the same subtle irony that we have seen at work in Xenophon to stress the insurmountable distance separating the elites from the direct farmers and ordinary soldiers with whom they pretend to be one and the same. Varro believes that agriculture has positive bearings on physical fitness (*Rust*. 2. pr. 1-2), and this in turn affects positively military service (*Rust.* 3.1.4); still, just like Xenophon, Varro is aware that farming's positive effects cannot be enjoyed by the elite, because they do not actually perform direct work. However, Varro is even more cynical, remarking that wealthy landowners, who do not perform any direct work, actually exploit those who do, in order to appropriate all the beneficial effects of agriculture: "not without reason our ancestors sent their fellow-citizens from town to country, because in times of peace they were fed by rustics, and in times of war they were helped(?) by them".[154]

As I have explained in the Introduction, at Rome the conflation of peasants and wealthy landowners was made easier by the "loose" meaning of the semantic group connected to the verb *colere* (see Introduction). Claiming that they were *agricolae*, the Roman elites were, strictly speaking, telling the truth. Let us take for example Cato's *De Agri cultura*: scholars have noticed that the preface does not fit well with the rest of the work, because it deals with direct work and small scale farming, whereas in the rest of the treatise Cato describes a large scale farmstead, "dependent on slave labor and considerable capital investment by an absentee landowner" (Bodel 2012: 48-49; see also Reay 2012: 63). In a sense, it is normal that a treatise

[153] In the same fashion, in the 1st letter to the Corinthians Paul claims that he gains his livelihood with his hands, although he actually was a textile industrialist. Veyne (2000: 1174) remarks that if Paul had actually been a worker, stating that he worked with his hands would have been unnecessary. Astin (1978: 105-106, n. 5) rejects the identification of Cato's speech *contra Thermum* with the *In Thermum post censuram*, which is probably identical with the *De lustri sui felicitate*. The circumstances of this particular political clash (one of a number that opposed Cato to Thermus) are not known.

[154] Varro, *Rust.* 3.1.4: *quod et in pace a rusticis Romanis alebantur et in bello ab his allevabantur*. Note that *allevabantur* is a restoration: the Mss. have the plainly corrupt repetition *alebantur*. Any new reading by Rodgers' forthcoming edition will be greatly welcome.

De Agri cultura includes both aspects, since no distinction between them was implied by the term *agri cultura*. Similarly, a long tradition of studies has struggled to understand who the expected audience (either real or fictitious) of Virgil's *Georgics* could be. Of all the suggestions included in the poem, in fact, some are best suited to big farms, despite their "nesting […] in scenes that look very much like" small-plot farming (Reay 2003: 22). Some others, instead, are precisely directed to peasants. For example, Virgil notoriously suggests that it is best to only "praise large fields, but farm a small one" (*Geo.* 2. 412-413: *laudato ingentia rura* | *exiguum colito*). Here, Virgil is claiming that, since you have to work your land by yourself, then you need to own little land.[155]

However, the overlapping of the two categories of peasant and landowner does not depend exclusively on semantic reasons. We do see the attempt, by the Roman elites, to appropriate the image of direct farmers, representing themself as directly at work in the fields. This attempt is politically charged. That is, the elite's decision to portray themselves as peasants reveals something of the functioning of Rome's republican political system. But what exactly? According to Green (2012: 40-41), the elite's self-depiction as peasants testifies to their need to portray themselves as average Roman citizens on the political stage, in order to secure consent and support through the well-known process of popular identification with their leaders. In her words, the "elite soon used the patrician Cincinnatus to co-opt the identity of the small farmer". If this were the case, of course, we would have to admit that at Rome not only did small landowners exist, but they also had enough political influence that the elites should bother to obtain their support.

I believe, though, that the mechanism of identification is not as straightforward as this. Rather than simply identifying the elites with their audience, the elite's appropriation of the image of peasants acted on their audience as a reference to a third party, that of the independent

[155] Interestingly, Columella (1.pr.9) uses the Virgilian sentence without the ambiguous overlapping of peasants and entrepreneurial farmers. According to Columella, the verses suggest that small farms should be preferred, because they can be farmed more intensively, and thus be more profitable.

peasants, who, as I have been arguing, are an entirely imaginary group. Given the superior moral qualities possessed by this group, the elite attempted to identify with them in order to shine of the reflected light of their virtues. Claiming to be *the* peasants, the elite were claiming to possess all the moral qualities to lead the *res publica*: they had the martial qualities necessary to lead successfully the Roman armies in battle; they had the moral qualities that could ensure voters that they would not have used magistracies as a shortcut to personal enrichment, serving instead the *res publica*'s interests.[156] In assemblies, rural lifestyle could be used in the same way as it was used in courts to portray favourably a character's *ethos*. Cicero's defence of Roscius of America – who "always lived in the country, farming his land" – revolves around the theme of his client's rural lifestyle, "the most remote from greed, and the closest to duty" (Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 39). Both in assemblies and in courts, this strategy aims at remarking the extraordinary nature of the individuals described.

There may well have been peasants in the audience of political assemblies; but it was not with them that the elite were identifying. How could they? What would have been the point of identifying with poor wretched creatures? Instead, the Roman elite identified with the glorious independent farmers of their past. The Romans recalled a time when even their senators and their magistrates had worked the fields with their own hands, and had possessed only little land. These times are symbolized by the stories of virtuous magistrates, such as Cincinnatus, M'. Curius Dentatus, C. Fabricius Luscinus, and M. Atilius Regulus, who, as Green (2012)

[156] Although all the traditions on independent peasants agree that these people had a moral approach to wealth, they show different nuances concerning their attitude to money-making. Some reveal a complete, extreme rejection of it. For example, in his eulogy of Valerius Poplicola (Dio. Hal. 5.48.2), Dionysius explains that, despite all the opportunities that Poplicola had to amass a fortune – opportunities which, if seized, would have not brought discredit on him – "he did not let the appetite for wealth win him, which enslaves all men and forces them to pursue wrong actions; rather, he continued to rely on the small substance inherited from his father, leading a wise life, self-sufficient, and superior to any desire". Others, instead, seem to justofy money-making as long as its ultimate aim is moral. See e.g. Fabricius' reply to Pyrrhus (Dio. Hal. 19.16.1): Fabricius claims that he does not believe to have any fault (αἴτιος) because he shares everything he has with the needy; yet, he concedes that wealth is useful to help one's neighbours. Generosity is considered a justification for private wealth both by Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 8.1.1 [1155a8]; see Verboven 2007: 866) and Cicero (*Off.* 1.2.5; on the passage see Di Gennaro 2004: 43).

resumes, embody the republican small farmers, "the heavy-armed soldier of the infantry of the Roman army, the army that defeated Latin, Etruscan, and Greek hoplite forces from the fifth century on". As Nelsestuen (2014: 152) correctly remarks, these figures are important inasmuch as they show how the Romans of the late Republic envisioned their ancestors. The magistrates of the early and middle republic are described as the best examples of military prowess, and of honesty: as such, they embody the perfect Roman generals and magistrates.

However, the elite display two different attitudes towards these models, according to the different context. When the mention of the ancestors belongs to the internal discourse of elite's behaviour, then these people are used to establish the "ethical baselines" (Nelsestuen 2014: 152) by which the members of the elite should ideally abide. That is, the ancestors are taken as paradigms and models of behaviour (Rosafio 1999: 77; Nelsestuen 2014), thus implicitly stating their alterity. For example, in a passage of the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* (6.48-50), Cicero takes himself as the most similar man to the great Romans of the past: nevertheless, one gets the impression that the distance between the past and the present cannot be bridged, amidst the *error huius saeculi*. In public contexts, by contrast, the identification is complete. This mechanism is visible in the use made by Cato of the figure of M'. Curius Dentatus. In Cicero's *De Senectute*, Cato remebers his frequent visits to Curius Dentatus' farm (56); the story is also reported Plutarch (*Cato Maior* 2.1-2), and is mentioned again by Cicero in the *De Republica* (3.40). On these occasions, the two authors claim, Cato was reminded of the importance of hard work and frugality. As Cicero says in the *De Republica*, the story derives from Cato himself. Clearly, here Cato is establishing a direct link between the great character of the republican past and himself, the heir of those principles upon which Rome built her glory (Pasco-Pranger 2015). Cato was a *homo novus*, and so Curius Dentatus had been.[157]

[157] Since Curius Dentatus had been a plebeian leader and tribune of the plebs, Cato's reference to him would suggest that the story comes from a speech delivered in front of the people, rather than in the Senate. However, the question must remain open. In fact, Cato's claim to possess the same virtues as Curius Dentatus would also make sense in a senatorial context: trying to stress his connection with a illustrious ancestor could also serve to showcase his command of the values and customs of the Roman

Far from being stressing their identity with their audience, the Roman elite were actually drawing a line between rulers and ruled. It is true that – especially in their imperial afterthought – these images of poor peasants are often associated with the idea that one could somehow escape the strict rules of the *census* and achieve the highest honours despite having poor means. However, this escape is never complete. Let us take for example the Aelii Tuberones during the first half of the 2nd century BC, as described by Plutarch and Valerius Maximus (Plut. *Aemilius Paulus* 5.7; 28.12; Val. Max. 4.4.8). Plutarch takes this family as an example of the reciprocal trust of co-heirs, as opposed to the behaviour of his contemporaries, who do not trust each other and are eager to divide inheritances to avoid being cheated. All the sixteen members of the family are said to have only owned a small house at Rome, the seats for spectacles at the circuses Maximus and Flaminius (donated by the community as a reward for their virtues), and a small farm in the territory of Veii, where they all lived together.[158] For Plutarch, the Aelii Tuberones represent a model of poverty and virtue. In particular, he says of the Aelius to whom Aemilius Paullus married his daughter that he "was an excellent man, and, of all Romans, lived in poverty in the manner most befitting a great man" (Plut. *Aemilius Paulus* 5.6: Αἴλιος Τουβέρων, ἀνὴρ ἄριστος καὶ μεγαλοπρεπέστατα Ῥωμαίων πενίᾳ χρησάμενος). The same assumption that poverty and virtue are dove-tailed is visible in Valerius Maximus.[159] Commenting on the family's story, Valerius Maximus does not fail to comment also on Aemilius Paullus' poverty and morality (even more exemplary considering that this man had at once handled the entire booty of Greece!). He concludes that in the old days the *aestimatio* of republican Romans was not carried out only on their physical wealth, but also on their *bona dignitatis*: "The characters of men and women were respected in the community, and it was by

nobilitas. Pasco-Pranger (2015: 309) suggests that the story comes from the *de suis virtutibus contra Thermum*, whose context (Senate or assembly) is equally unknown.

[158] Scarano Ussani and Torelli (2002: 29) suggest that the Aelii Tuberones were *fratres consortes*, i.e. they had inherited their property as co-heirs under the *ercto non cito* law.

[159] In his exaggerated portrait, the Aelii Tuberones' farm is said to have employed fewer workers than the number of owners.

the high quality of these that assessment of dignity was calculated in all matters" (transl. LCL).

Similar reinterpretations of the republican past are quite common. In Dionysius' account of the attempted bribing of Fabricius Luscinus by Pyrrhus, Fabricius states that at Rome individuals are evaluated exclusively according to their personal merit. Poverty is not an obstacle to political participation, since the state provides its magistrates with everything they need to cover their expenses.[160] One could easily dismiss these statements as symptomatic of the symbolic stance acquired by the republican magistrates and generals under the Empire (note however that, as I will explain in the next section, the idealization of the ancestors is actually present at any stage of Latin literature). However, it is important to notice here that even in these idealized reinterpretations poverty is never taken in absolute terms, but only in comparison to other elite families. Whenever the Roman elite portray themselves as poor, this is actually a relative poverty.[161] The term of comparison is senatorial wealth, as showed by a passing comment of Pyrrhus in Dionysius. There, Pyrrhus explains that he wants to make a gift of gold and silver to Fabricius, because he sees him "without means, and in this only respect badly served by Fate, so that, as far as the things necessary for life are regarded, you live no better than the poorest senators" (Dio. Hal. 19.14.1: μηδὲν ἄμεινον τῶν πενεστάτων βουλευτῶν ἐν τοῖς κατὰ τὸν βίον. Transl. LCL).

The statements explored above, such as Fabricius' claim that in Rome prestigious magistracies are independent from one's wealth, are absolutely not in contrast with Rome's fundamentally timocratic society. To the Romans, the ideology of *census* was central: as Livy explains (1.42.4-5), commenting on the introduction of *census* by king Servius Tullius, the distinction between the *ordines* corresponded to a different level of wealth (*gradus fortunae*),

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[160] Awkwardly, this is achieved through a system of allowances (Dio. Hal. 19.15.4). Allowances, which are the perfect example of how wealth has a say in attaining popularity – to spend in political life – are used to prove that wealth does not play a part in politics!

[161] Thus, according to Valerius Maximus, L. Aemilius Paullus "died so poor that if the only landed property he left had not been sold there would have been no money for his wife to recover her dowry" (transl. LCL). In this case, poverty just means that Paullus had no other wealth than that invested in land.

as well as of dignity (*dignitas*). It helped to distinguish good and bad citizens, and to entrust the lead of the state to the former: it was a *res saluberrima.*

The only apparent contrasting voice might seem Sallust's, who seems to attribute all the importance to personal skills, regardless of individuals' *census*. In the Sallustian(?) *Oratio de re publica ad Caesarem senem*, in fact, it is stated that human fate depends on virtue, and must be catered for with *industria* (Sall. *Rep*. 1.1.1-4); this is what happened originally at Rome, where individuals played a part more or less important in political life only according to their *bona fama factisque fortibus* (*Rep*. 2.5.1). The same view is also found in the *Catilinae coniuratio*, where it is stated that *imperium* always ends up in the hands of the best individuals (*Cat*. 2.5-6). However, Sallust's position is not revolutionary: his claim that personal skills make the difference is internal to the elite; in particular, as he (or a very insightful imitator) makes clear in the second *Letter to Caesar*, he is simply making a point in favour of *homines novi* against the very self-referential circles of the *nobilitas*. Against these people's willingness to monopolize public offices, Sallust claims that it is perfectly legitimate that a *nobilis* individual – that is, a man of extraordinary personal qualities – could have more power than the *nobilitas* (*Rep*. 2.5.1). As far as the timocratic system is concerned, *homines novi* are not revolutionary: they lack noble ancestry, not wealth. Like any other wealthy Roman, Sallust cannot even conceive that someone from the lower *census* classes may possess the skills to lead the *res publica*. Personal qualities could never be totally removed from wealth: in Valerius Maximus' passage on *aestimatio* discussed above, wealth and merit appear complementary, not mutually alternative.[162]

There is in fact a blatant contradiction between the superficial description of the elite

[162] In the *De Officiis*, Cicero provides an answer to the sort of chicken and egg question that could arise from reflection on the relationship between wealth and personal merit. Cicero violently attacks the *aequatio bonorum* preached by the Gracchans, because this would be a violation of the *ius humanae societatis* (1.21). Cicero, in sum, takes personal merit as the measure of wealth inequality, assuming that, after the original communistic phase, individuals seized as much wealth as their skills allowed them.

peasants such Cincinnatus and Regulus as owning merely 4 and 7 *iugera* respectively, and the kind of elite poverty that I have just discussed.[163] Elite poverty always goes with an “abundance and plenty of everything” (*saturitas copiaque rerum omnium*: Cic. *Sen.* 56). This, however, should not surprise us. We return here to what I have stated in Section 1: that the image of independent peasants is only imaginary. The elite, although superficially claiming that they are peasants, imagine themselves as the sort of independent peasants that did not actually exist. Thus, Cincinnatus and Regulus are portrayed in a way that is openly in contrast with the mere 4 and 7 *iugera* that they are said to have owned. They have *vilici* and *mercennarii* at their service, i.e. hired workers who must be paid, as well as oxen to plough the fields, which will have been purchased and must be fed.[164] Even more remarkably, they have attitudes to investment. Atilius Regulus, for example, was believed to have given suggestions on what land is most suitable to purchase (Colum. 1.4; Plin. HN 18.27). As a matter of fact, in Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, the various peasant-generals are considered to be on the same level of wealth as M'. Manilius, who owned “*aediculas in Carinis et fundum in Labicano*” (6.48-50). Buildings at Rome and land in the *suburbium*: such assets are definitely not what we would expect from poor peasants.[165] The supposedly poor peasants can actually stand the comparison with the characters of Plautus and Terentius, who have farms in the proximities of the town, and the capital to manage them. This is the case, for example, of Charmides' farm in the *Trinummus*, an example of mixed farming, with its trees, pigs and sheep (Plaut. *Trin*. 538-540). The Roman elite may have posed as peasants on the political scene, but this self-representation was completely unrealistic.

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[163] Cincinnatus owned 4 iugera and a *tugurium* according to Liv. 3.26.7; 7 iugera according to Val. Max. 4.4.6-7, but he had sold 3 to help a friend pay his fine. Regulus owned 7 iugera according to Val. Max. 4.4.6; cf. Sen. *Helv*. 12.5.

[164] According to Varro *Rust*. 1.17, on the contrary, poor people (*pauperculi*) had no hired workers, but worked the land *cum sua progenie*; the same information in Hor. *Epist*. 2.139-144, referring to the farmers of the good old times.

[165] Commenting on Plautus, De Nardis (2009a: 144-145; 149) explains that the expression *aedes et ager* symbolizes a seigneurial estate.

3. A peasants' res publica.

In the passages of the *Dirae* and the first Eclogue discussed in the Introduction, both protagonists are described as humble people: Meliboeus, as we have seen, lives in a *tugurium*; the poet of the *Dirae* owns only an *agellus* (v. 82). They embody an entire category: the rural citizen, who owns a small farm, inherited from his ancestors, and works his land with his own hands. Horace's poems give many a depiction of these people (Heitland 1921: 214). In his first *Ode*, Horace includes in his review of the various human types the typical farmer, who "rejoices at scratching with a rake his ancestral fields" (Hor. *Od*. 1.1.11-12). Elsewhere, he mentions the farmer who works his ancestral land with his own oxen, declaring admiration for this lifestyle (*Epod*. 2.1: *beatus ille*).[166]

Livy portrays one of these people in his narrative of the events of 168 BC (42.32.6-35.2). In that year, during the enrolment procedures, a number of veterans who had been recalled into service were enlisted as ordinary centurions despite having previously raised themselves to the position of *centuriones primipili*, that is the centurions leading the first lines. In the discussion that followed, one of them, Sp. Ligustinus, is imagined to give a long speech in which he describes his life: having been born *ex Sabinis*, in a poor hut with a single *iugerum* of land, he volunteered in the army, and devoted his entire life to service (42.34). The character is with all likelihood fictitious, and the detail of owning a single *iugerum* reflects the reduction of the census threshold that possibly took place in the 140s (see Chapter 1). However, the way in which Livy decides to portray him reveals the "ideal type" of the Roman citizen. By no means does Ligustinus attempt to improve his material condition: at the time of the speech, after an entire career in the army, he still lives in the same *tugurium* where he was raised. True Roman citizens are not attracted by wealth, by frivolities; they are content with what they have, and all their efforts go towards serving the *res publica*.

[166] There is a strong ideological link between Horace's idealization of peasants and Augustus' veteran settlements. As I will explain below, Augustus presented his distributions as the regeneration of Italian agriculture (Vell. 2.89.4: *rediit cultus agris*; Hor. *Od*. 4.15.5: *fruges et agris rettulit uberes*).

As I have been arguing, Horace's peasants are the imaginary produce of elite literature. They fully comply with the image of blissful plenty that we have encountered in the previous sections (according to Horace, for example, these people have no need to borrow: *Epod*. 2.4: *solutus omni fenore*). Even though Ligustinus makes no mystery of the difficult conditions of his existence his character is equally idealized, becoming a model of perfect Roman virtue. Just like Livy's Sp. Ligustinus, when Horace speaks of the peasants of his day, their idealized virtues become a model that contrasts the general moral corruption of Roman citizens. Still, when Horace talks of the republican past, virtuous peasants cease to be the exception: rather, they are the *average* citizens. Horace imagines the society of the republican past as composed entirely of peasants. They were the men who had conquered the Mediterranean, well-disciplined and physically fit, trained by the hard work of the fields. They were decent men, content with the little they had, and not attracted by wealth (*Epist.* 2.1.139: "the farmers of old, strong and content with little"). Their stock, though, was long gone (*Od.* 3.6. 33-41):

> "Not from parents like these came the young men who stained the sea with Punic blood, and cut down Pyrrhus and the mighty Antiochus and Hannibal the terrible. No, the manly children of peasant soldiers (*rusticorum mascula militum proles*), who had been taught to turn the sod with a Sabellian mattock, and on the instructions of their stern mother to cut and carry firewood, when the sun was lengthening the shadows on the hillside, lifting the yoke from weary oxen and bringing on the cheerful hour with his departing cart (transl. LCL with modifications).[167]

Now, it should be noticed that Horace's belief that the republican past was populated by the sort of independent peasants that I have outlined in section 1 is essentially ubiquitous in Latin literature. The Roman republic was exactly imagined as the idyllic society where everyone worked hard and was independent. Lucretius (2.1170-2) talks of an "ancient breed full of piety" that "easily tolerated life among narrow boundaries" [that is, on a small plot of land]. Pliny, who imagined the early republic as a society of peasants (Citroni Marchetti 1991: 78-81; Cotta

[167] Horace's second *Epode* takes a further step combining past and present through a comparison of the blessed peasants of his day with the "ancient stock of men" (*Epod.* 2.2: *ut prisca gens mortalium*) who tilled their land.

Ramosino 2004: 167-172), explains that originally there were no bakeries at Rome, because everyone – or rather, every woman – made her own bread at home (*HN* 18. 107). The model is that of complete independence; only later, when wealth became common, people turned to purchase bread, and to have, among their *servitia*, people who cooked for them: as soon as they became better off, they started to depend on someone else for their own living. Not only were the elders peasants; they also held farming in the highest esteem. Cato explains that the elders (*maiores nostri*) judged *agricolae* to be the best of men and of soldiers (Cato, *Agr.* Praef.). Varro claims that the elders "attributed way more importance to the rural population than the urban one", and for this reason they arranged the political calendar so that the farmers could take part in government matters, coming to town once every nine days (Varro *Rust*. 2.pr.1. On the passage see Green 2012: 39-40). Gellius and Pliny report that, in the past (but when exactly we are not told), those who did not cultivate their land adequately were subject to blame and punished by the censors (Gell. *NA* 4.12.1; Plin. *HN* 18.3.11).

In comparison to the extremely scanty evidence available for later periods, one could say that we are literally flooded with descriptions of republican peasants. As Heitland (1921: 131) noticed, "we know more of the farm-management and labour-conditions in this period [scil. the early and middle Republic] than we do of most matters in antiquity". In this section, I will argue that it is not fortuitous. In fact, the past was also believed to have been the peak of Roman power: the Etruscans, the Gauls, the Samnites, Pyrrhus, Carthage, all sorts of enemies had been subdued by Rome's valorous armies. As I will explain, the descriptions of republican peasants are so frequent because they belong to the Romans' political and historical reflection. The Romans reflected on their own past in order to understand what had changed and why Rome's power was (supposedly) declining.

A natural consequence of the accumulation of physical and moral virtues upon the image of peasants is that these people are considered to be the most perfect citizens, and therefore it is desirable that a state should have as many peasants as possible. Above, I have discussed Varro's irony on the view that farmers lead a *piam et utilem vitam*, “for in time of peace [our ancestors] were fed by the country Romans, and in time of war aided by them” (*Rust.* 2.1.1-2). This is the view enshrined in Cato's statement that “*ex agricolis et viri fortissimi et milites strenuissimi gignuntur*” (*Agr.* Praef.). Military prowess is central to the preference for peasants. A state whose inhabitants cultivate the land is a powerful state, because farmers are physically fit, and therefore are good soldiers. Thus, in the *De Re Publica*, Cicero explains that the decline of Corinth and Carthage is a consequence of people's disregard of agriculture (*Rep.* 2.7; for Cicero's negative judgement of Carthage see also Cic. *Leg. agr.* 2.95). As a consequence of the *mercandi cupiditas*, farming and military service (*agrorum et armorum cultus*) were neglected, and the two cities were easy prey of external enemies (Rome!).

There is, however, also another way in which peasants contribute to create powerful states. Besides military power, the other thing that, in the ancient political reflection, makes states great is their internal cohesion. As Dionysius explains through Romulus' mouth (Dio. Hal. 2.3.6), even scarcely populated settlements, and located in territories “which were not quite excellent” (εἰς χωρία οὐ πάνυ σπουδαῖα), managed to maintain their independence and even to subjugate other cities, thanks to their internal harmony. In order to maintain harmony, though, it was necessary that everyone had enough to live. Destitution is a threat to harmony, as it can degenerate into internal dissensions. Thus, the existence of destitute people harms the community. Besides, as I have explained (see Introduction, Section 2; Chapter 1, Section 3), access to land was also believed to stimulate demographic growth. For these reasons, ancient politico-philosophical reflection extensively discussed the distribution of property. In the Republic, Plato envisaged that the perfect state should rigidly control property: the plots of land assigned to the families of farmers were to be inalienable and indivisible, and only the eldest son would inherit. Furthermore, to avoid all the other children remaining propertyless, Plato also envisaged adoption into a childless family for all “supernumerary” children. This system was modelled after Sparta's own, and could work only in a situation of demographic stagnation.

Plato prescribed that reproduction should be limited, in an effort to maintain population at its optimum level (Moreau 1949: 605-609).

In their search for the perfect arrangement of property, Greeks and Romans also looked at other societies. Thus, considerations on property are also present in ethnographic literature. Strabo, for example, reports that the Dalmatians redistributed land every seven years (7.5.5). That the reflection on property and inequality is part of the wider reflection on the power of states is proved by Diodorus Siculus' discussion of Lipari (5.9.4-5). The inhabitants of Lipari were believed to have introduced common ownership of land, as well as of the revenues of piracy. This, in Diodorus' account, seems to have corresponded to the ἀκμὴ of their power; the temporal indication μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα has a consequential nuance, and it would appear that a direct relationship is implied between the regime of property and the defeat of the Tyrrhenians and the magnificent gifts sent to Delphi. Now, as I have explained above, imaginary peasants are characterized by a rigid moral approach to consumption, whereby they are content with what they produce through their hard work. For this reason, they are the perfect citizens, because, by leaving the distribution of property unaltered, they contribute to preserve harmony. This is the second reason why peasants make the state great.

As I have mentioned above, the Romans reflected on their republican past, the time of the great imperial expansion in Italy and the Mediterranean. Their successful expansion was believed to have happened because, back then, Rome was more egalitarian, and this had stimulated demographic growth and had preserved harmony. There is no need to repeat what I have already said in Chapter 1 on Appian's account of Rome's attention to demographic growth and its consequences for her dealing with conquered territories. As for harmony, it is present in Appian's narrative too. Right at the beginning of his narrative, he points out that, at Rome, internal strife had never degenerated in violence, but had remained inside the boundaries fixed by laws, and that the contestants had been willing to make reciprocal concessions (*B.Civ.* 1.1). Rome, as depicted by Appian, had been able to subjugate the entire Mediterranean because the city lived in harmony and had abundant manpower; this blessed condition was not a stroke of luck, but had been cultivated by the Romans over the centuries, through their efforts to maintain the civic body at peace and to care for their manpower through a forward-looking colonial policy.[168] Livy too recalls the many occasions in which, faced by dangerous enemies, the two factions readily made reciprocal concessions, putting an end to internal strife, and eagerly describes internal dissensions mitigated by the appeal to noble values and morality. Likewise, the author of the second *Epistula ad Caesarem* – whoever he might be – claims that competition and rivalry existed, but the two sides tried to show their supremacy in the fields of fame and deeds (*bona fama factisque fortibus*), thus adding to the greatness of Rome (Sall. *Rep.* 2.5.1).

The only discordant voice is Sallust's. He, however, came to call into question the blessed image of early Rome only at a later stage. Initially, in the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, the two factions – embodied in the expression *populus et senatus* – are said to have dealt with one another *placide modesteque* (41.2), an image that is not dissimilar from Appian's. It is only later, in the Histories, that Sallust's pessimistic opinion on mankind is retrojected to the Roman past. Now the elders are not seen anymore as examples of perfect morality, but common people, who indulge in *discordia*, *auaritia* and *ambitio*; whereas in the monograph on Jugurtha the fear of external threats (*metus hostilis*) was believed to have stimulated the Romans to behave according to morality and decency, now this check on human immorality is absent, and the Romans appear to be kept together by mere necessity (*Hist.* fr. 11-12 Maurenbrecher = 11-12 Reynolds. See McGushin 1992: 78-79). This view of early Rome is extremely original, and represents (at least to my knowledge) the only attempt to add a critical dimension to the glorious Republican past. The idea that the elders were common people, and they were bound together by the fear of external threats, locates Sallust very far from every other author, as well as from his own earlier writings.

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[168] Gabba 2003 explains that Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Appian conceive Rome's empire as the conclusion of the historical process of succession of empires, and that the empire is the result not only of favourable chance, but also of Roman civic virtues.

In order to achieve harmony and military power, the Romans had to make sure that all their citizens had enough. This is what is stated in a passage of the first Pseudo(?)-Sallustean *Epistula de re publica* (1.5), where the author explains that, in the early Republic, even the people of most modest means (*humillimus quisque*) "did not lack anything legitimate" (*nullius honestae rei egens*). This was catered for by military service in times of war, and by landholding (*in arvis*) in times of peace. It is at this point that the various traditions on the distribution of land to all citizens, and the archetypal allotments come into play. These are not only the two *iugera* of the Romulean *heredium* (see Introduction), but also the seven *iugera* of the legendary distribution of Licinius *post reges exactos* (Colum. 1.3.10; Plin. HN 18.18; see Wiseman 2009: 45-47), of the allotments of the *ager Veientanus* and of M'. Curius Dentatus in *Sabinum*. Far from being the symbol of plebeian requests, the two and seven *iugera* hint to a lost word of most perfect harmony springing from the compromise between the *ordines* and the assumption that the common good is superior to any particular interest.[169]

In this context, the two *iugera* – a measure that most likely derives from the size of allotments in maritime colonies (Gabba 1979: 62) – and the seven *iugera* – which happened to be the size of allotments in the territories of Veii and the Sabines, for who knows what reason – were reinterpreted as the precise quantity of land that allowed all citizens to make a living. That is, they acquired an extraordinary symbolic value, as if they were a magic recipe for successful states. According to Valerius Maximus, M'. Curius Dentatus "deemed any citizen who was not satisfied with what he had been given to be of little use to the *res publica*" (4.3.5; cf. *Vir. Ill.* 33; Plin. HN 18.2.7; 18.4.18). Plutarch reports Dentatus' *apophthegma* in slightly different words: "let there not be a Roman who deems insufficient as much land as he needs to live". Once again, the secret is the ancestors' superior morality, that allowed them not only to

[169] This does not affect Wiseman's (2009: 48-49) evocative suggestion that in 145 BC the tribune of the plebs C. Licinius Crassus, in his speech in favour of his measure relocating the location of the tribal assembly from the *comitium* to the *forum*, mentioned the 7 *iugera* (Varro *Rust.* 1.2.9). Tribunician oratory must not necessarily inflame the *plebs*' partisan feelings; it could equally be inspired by accommodating references to the *concordia ordinum*.

reach a compromise, but most importantly to survive on so little land, thanks to their "moral consumption policy". In fact, since the sources assume that by simply getting rid of the superfluous one can always make a living, they do not question whether land allotments could ever provide enough food for recipients' households. If anything, the small size of the Romulean *heredium* is explained by claiming that the Romans of the time of the foundation had the most perfect frugality.[170] Thus, whereas according to Pliny the elders considered a mere two *iugera*, the size of the *heredium*, as sufficient to live on it (HN. 18.2.7; cf. 19.19.52, which concerns the *hortus*, but immediately follows the claim that in the XII tables *hortus* means *heredium*), according to Columella and Plutarch (*Crass*. 2.7-8, with Ziegler's restoration Μα<νιου Κου>ρίου: Wiseman 2009: 42, n. 50) M'. Curius Dentatus' was content to receive 7 *iugera* (a *popularis ac plebeia mensura*: Colum. 1.pr.10-11; see Rathbone 2003: 138, n.8).[171]

Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to date these traditions. In this particular case, this difficulty may lend support to interpretations attempting to rescue the historicity of the compromise on land and the republic's egalitarian landownership. This could be the case, for example, with Wiseman's (2004: Chapter 7) excellent reconstruction of the cultural and religious centrality of common good and public trust in the first half of the 3rd century BC. Wiseman's study offers strong arguments in favour of the historicity of the theme of equality in public debate around the time of C. Fabricius and M'. Curius Dentatus. And yet, whereas there are precise cultic references that permit to ascertain the historicity of other related themes, such as *fides publica*, the only evidence for an attention to the equal distribution of property is, once again, in the stories that I have analysed above. It may seem unlikely that, in less than one century – that is, the time separating M'. Curius from Cato – the period of Curius and Fabricius

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[170] Lucr. 2.1170-2, instead, connects the smaller size of earlier allotments (*cum minor esset agri multo modus ante viritim*) with the earth's higher fertility. Still, as I have explained above, he also mentions the elders' *pietas* (*antiquum genus ut pietate repletum*).

[171] Interestingly, the *De Viris Illustribus* (33.6) reports a size of 14 *iugera*. Do the higher dimensions reflect an "update" based on the size of plots in late republican distributions?

could have been subjected to such strong rethinking and idealization.[172] And yet, I believe that the idealization of these figures took place in a very short time-span. In the next section, I will discuss the other side of the coin of the histories of republican glory: the reflection on its downfall. As I will argue there, the surviving evidence on the republic's corruption and decline suggests with some clarity that already by the time of Fabius Pictor the social and political context of the time of Curius and Fabricius had been transformed and idealized.

[172] Dating the idealization of Atilius Regulus, instead, may at first sight seem less controversial. The story on his selfless loyalty to Rome, and his advice to reject the exchange of prisoners that would have saved his life, is absent from Polybius, and is first found in Sempronius Tuditanus (FRHist 10 F8). However, the story's absence from Polybius does not necessarily mean that it was unknown to him.

4. The decline (without fall) of the Roman republic.

According to the Latin historians, the present time was characterised by military decline (decline of manpower, replaced by slaves) and political strife (subversion of harmony). Underlying military and political decline was the subversion of the morality of old. As Livy explains, the traditional *mores* were progressively abandoned, and *disciplina* declined (*Praef.* 9; see Harrison 2005: 292-293). According to Sallust, the Romans, who initially had coped with their limited means thanks to their virtue, were now being corrupted by luxury and idleness (*Cat.* 53.3-5; see La Penna 2004: 204-205 for the restoration *effeta parente* in the place of *effeta parentum* of the MSS.). In similar tones, Varro complains about *auaritia* (*LL* 5.49-50).[173] In the *Coniuratio Catilinae*, Sallust has Cato claim that the virtues thanks to which the elders made great the Roman state have now been lost (52.22-23).[174] The key moment in which customs had started to degenerate was the appearance of *luxus*.

Luxury had traditionally been seen as problematic by classical moralistic authors (e.g. Solon). At some point, it became an organic part of the theory of empires: now it was considered as a degeneration affecting all states as soon as they became too powerful and wealthy. The history of the cities of Magna Graecia, as reported by Athenaeus in his XII[th] book, is ripe with cycles of power and decline under the influence of luxury (Athen. 12. 518c-522a; see Wallace-

[173] The text of Varro is printed by LCL as follows: *iam diu enim late avaritia una <domina> est*. The editors ascribe the restoration to Goetz and Schoell, but they should have made clear that the two German philologists only suggested this restoration in their apparatus, whereas their text has a *crux desperationis*. In fact, this suggested restoration is certainly wrong: we expect here something longer that could explain why, because of *auaritia* (which I take as an ablative in the passage), sacred groves have been usurped (cf. Agenn. Urb. 44.21-22 Campbell: *in Italia autem densitas possessorum multum inprobe facit, et lucos sacros occupant*). At any rate, Goetz and Schoell's suggestion is curious in its own right: the same expression is found in St. Bernard of Clairvaux!

[174] I disagree with the analysis of the passage by Storchi Marino (2004: 26-28), according to whom the cola *laudamus diuitias, sequimur inertiam* are opposed to each other (“we praise wealth but we pursue an anti-economic behaviour”). On the contrary, I believe that here *inertia/industria* do not have the technical economic meaning that she correctly recognizes in other authors (throughout his work, Sallust holds economic activities in complete disregard), but are more generally referred to physical activity. In Sallust, in fact, laziness and avidity are two aspects of the same phenomenon, namely the present moral decline caused by luxury, as opposed to the past, the time of physical strength and disregard for wealth (for the importance of physical strength see Sall. *Cat*. 1.2; for its decline see in particular Sall. *Cat*. 7.6, on which see below for discussion). I take from *pro his* onwards as a sequence of negative remarks on the present, and translate as follows: “we praise wealth and pursue indolence”.

Hadrill 2008: 338). According to the established view, the idea that success and wealth will – sooner or later – degenerate in luxury and decadence was already present in Herodotus, and was widely established in Hellenistic historiography. Recently, however, Gorman and Gorman (2014) have argued that the connection between luxury and the cycles of power and decline was not made before the late Roman republic. Gorman and Gorman's idea that the connection between luxury and decline reflects the late republican political crisis should be rejected because, as I will explain below, the Roman authors were connecting luxury and decline well before the crisis. Nevertheless, their argument that the theme was absent from Hellenistic historiography should be taken seriously: according to their alternative reconstruction, the Greek historiographers from the 4th century BC onwards quoted by Athenaeus (e.g. Alcimus [FGrHist 560 F3] and Timaeus [FGrHist 566 F1b] on the Etruscans) did not connect luxury to decline; the connection, by contrast, was made by Athenaeus.

However this complicated matter might be, the idea that luxury caused the decline of states was certainly widely popular in Roman historiography. The Etruscans, the Campani, the Greeks, were all considered extravagant. It was thanks to their superior morality that the Romans had outpowered them. A lemma of Festus (162 L), unfortunately badly damaged, seems to suggest the same scenario of Etruscan decadence that is visible in Athenaeus, since it apparently says that the word *nepos* (lit. "grandchild", whence "squanderer" of familiar fortune) comes from the Etruscan. Capua too was a typical example of extravagance. In Livy's narrative (7.32.7), the consul Valerius cheers up his troops pitched against the Samnites, saying that they must not judge their enemies' value from their victory over the Campanians, because "without doubt, the Campanians had been defeated by their condition, overflowing with excessive luxury, and by their own voluptuousness, more than by the strength of their enemies" (transl. LCL). *Luxus* also spread like a disease. According to a popular view, which we shall see in a moment, *luxus* had been imported to Rome from the Greek East. Similarly, Livy reports that the Roman army stationed at Capua revolted after being corrupted by local decadence (7.38.5;

cf. Dio. Hal. 15.3.4-9; App. Samn. 1).

So, finally, it was Rome's turn to fall under the spell of *luxus*. In his Pharsalia, Lucan, explaining the personal reasons that led the two generals to wage war (1.158-170), also adds that "among the people there were hidden causes of war – the causes which have ever brought down ruin upon imperial races" (transl. LCL): having become exceedingly wealthy, at Rome "customs have disappeared amidst the present prosperity" (*rebus mores cessere secundis*).[175] In the passage of the *De Republica* on Corinth and Carthage, which I have introduced above, Cicero describes how maritime cities are corrupted by the import of new customs that persuade their inhabitants to wander in search of fortune, or, even when they do not leave, to daydream. In Cicero's view, maritime cities are prone to corruption because the lust of trade and navigation makes people neglect farming and military service (Cic. *Rep.* 2.8). The disaffection for the traditional lifestyle and the seduction of seafaring have a precise reason: the quest for wealth: many incitements to luxury (*ad luxuriam invitamenta*) come by sea, either being captured or purchased.

In a sense, Rome had undergone the fate of her former rivals, Corinth and Carthage. In contrast with the positive model represented by the early republic, in which everyone farmed their land, in present-day Rome people disregarded agriculture. As Lucan claims in his first book, *luxuria* has sown *semina publica*: corruption affects the whole population (1.158-159). The "disease" of extravagance does not infect only the wealthy, who have fallen into a black hole of decadent expenditure (Sall. *Rep*. 2.8). The entire population is affected, as it is visible by the rejection of hard work. Sallust explains that many young rural wage workers have moved to Rome in order to live more comfortably on private and public largesses than through heavy work (*Cat*. 37). Similarly, in the first letter to Caesar, it is said that the *plebs* has been corrupted by handouts and subsidized grain distributions (*Rep.* 1.7.2-3). Theatre and games too, as Varro

[175] Berti (2004) fails to notice the passage's connections with ancient historiographical theory. According to him, on the contrary, these verses would reveal the complete disappearance of any critical approach to the past.

complains, have played their part in attracting many *patres familiae* to the city, making them quit farming (*Rust*. 2.pr.4). Thus, *luxus* and *avaritia* disrupt the traditional set of values connected to the agricultural life.

The consequences for the state are dramatic. As Sallust explains (*Cat.* 11.3-12.2), due to *avaritia* human beings become effeminate and lose their physical and mental strengths (*avaritia ... corpus animumque virilem effeminat*). Besides, *avaritia* is insatiable: people always want more and more. The traditional moral approach to consumption is disrupted, and now *paupertas* is held in discontempt (*paupertas probro haberi*). It is unavoidable that citizens should turn on each other to satisfy their endless greed. One of the effects of *auaritia* is the accumulation of landholding; as Livy reminds us, ownership of large amounts of land was precisely a sign of *immodica cupiditas* (10.13.14; for the restoration *immodicae cupiditati*[*s*] see Oakley *ad loc.*). Due to the greed of the wealthy, peasants are left landless. Thus, in the second letter to Caesar, it is explained that the wealthy were responsible for the *inertia* and *inopia* of the *plebs*, because they expelled them from their land (Sall. *Rep*. 2.5.1). Even though the word *inopia* does not appear in the genuine Sallustean works, there the picture is identical: in the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, Sallust says that those who lived close to rich landowners were expelled from their residence (*Iug.* 41.8), and in the Histories – where, as we have seen, the moral corruption is retrojected to the earliest phases of the Roman history – Sallust claims that the *patres* had started driving out the *plebs* from the land ever since the end of the monarchy (*Hist.* fr. 11). Appian provides the same explanation of the decline as Sallust: the wealthy are responsible for the decline of the state, because they cannot be content with what they already have. As Appian says: “the powerful grew richer” (*B.Civ*. 1.8: οἱ μὲν δυνατοὶ πάμπαν ἐπλούτουν). Harmony is disrupted, as the poor are given no rest. Military manpower is endangered, because the poor give birth to fewer children, and because, as Plutarch explains, after being deprived of the land, the poor become discontented with the idea of serving in the army (*Ti. Gracchus* 8.3). Thus, *avaritia* disrupts the two pillars of the state: military power and internal harmony.

A character in Ennius' Annals, in a passage set in the 4th century (the fragment comes from book 5), claimed that "the Roman state is based on ancient customs and strengths" (5.156 Skutsch: *moribus antiquis res stat Romana virisque*). When did the decline start? According to Sallust, the *corrupti civitatis mores* had to do with the arrival of immense wealth after the defeat of Carthage (Sall. *Cat.* 5.8; *Hist.* fr. 11; cf. Plin. *HN* 33.150; Vell. 2.1.1; Flor. 1.33.1; Aug. *Civ. Dei* 1.30; Oros. 5.8.2). Before that event, wealth was not ignored, but was held in contempt (Sall. *Cat*. 7.6). In the *coniuratio Catilinae*, Sallust describes step by step the corruption of *mores* (11.3-12.2). Initially, the wholesome competition for glory degenerated into ambition: as opposed to *auaritia*, ambition is a "vice closer to virtue" (*uitium propius uirtutis*), but is still problematic: whereas, in ideal conditions, the people without spirit (the *ignaui*) should peacefully accept to be ruled by the *boni*, due to ambition they find being prevailed upon unbearable, and fight back with any mean. Eventually, *auaritia* appears. This is the central moment. Rather than subverting public morality, the disappearance of *metus hostilis* only delivers the final blow to it. Sallust's ideas on the decline of states have several aspects in common with Polybius. Like Sallust, Polybius too considers the appearance of extravagance as a joint factor in the process of moral corruption, together with the disappearance of external threats (31.25.6-7; cf. Diod. Sic. 31.26). Polybius, though, considers them to have appeared at the very same time: the defeat of Perseus, when Rome's supremacy on the Mediterranean became unchallenged, and massive wealth was shipped over to Italy as war booty.

In fact, the diffusion of wealth and luxury at Rome is variously dated by the sources (McGushin 1992: 78 ff.; Edwards 1993: 177). Livy, for example, dates the decay of customs to the Asian Greek influence on Manlius Vulso's army, which then spread the corruption at Rome after coming back from the East in 187 BC (Liv. 39.6-7). The annalist Calpurnius Piso, for his part (FRHist 9 F40 = Plin. *HN* 17.38.244), dates the arrival of luxury to 154 BC. As far as we can tell from Pliny's discussion, though, in Piso's account too the wars with Perseus seem to have played a part.[176] Even Sallust, who ascribes the decline to the final defeat of Carthage, believes that things degenerated fast after the return of Sulla's army from the East, where they were weakened by local pleasures (*Cat.* 11.4-6).

Polybius in particular provides us with an invaluable insight into the use of the theme of extravagance in the public debate of the first half of the 2nd century BC. He reports Cato's comment that “it was the surest sign of deterioration in the republic when pretty boys fetched more than fields, and jars of caviar more than plowmen” (31.25.5). Furthermore, his comparison between the young Scipio Aemilianus and the rest of the Roman youth echoes Scipio Aemilianus' own words as preserved in Macrobius' Saturnalia (ORF 21, fr. 30=Macr. 3.14.6). Describing Scipio Aemilianus' attempt to gain visibility and popularity through the achievement – and display – of his personal virtue, Polybius contrasts his behaviour with the general dissolution of the Roman youth of that time: “for some of them had abandoned themselves to amours with boys and others to the society of courtesans, and many to musical entertainments and banquets, and the extravagance they involve” (31.25.2-4; transl. LCL). Likewise, in his own speech Scipio Aemilianus reproached the moral customs of the Romans of his days, who indulged in activities, such as dancing and singing, “that our elders wanted to be deemed shameful among the freeborn”.

In the 2nd century BC, then, the accusation of immorality was part of the political context: thus, Scipio focuses his attack on a *puer bullatus* (the *bulla*, Macrobius explains elsewhere [1.6.8 ss.], was a status-symbol of the nobility), the son of a man running for a magistracy (*petitor*). However, the theme of *luxus* and decline was not invented in the 2nd century BC. In fact, it is already present in the earliest Roman historian, Fabius Pictor, who claimed, according to Strabo, that the Romans first “experienced wealth” when they conquered *Sabinum* (Strab. 5.3.1=FGrHist 809 F 27=FRHist 1 F24).[177] It would seem, then, that Roman

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[176] Pliny explains that in 154 a fig tree grew on the altar of Jove on the Capitol, where a palm had grown during the war with Perseus; the palm had been subsequently brought down by storms.
[177] The meaning of αἰσθέσθαι τοῦ πλούτου is not straightforward: see discussion in FRHist *ad loc.*

historiography came to light complaining about moral decline (Gabba 1988: 20). It is true, as the editors of the Fragments of the Roman Historians note, that Strabo's reference is too short. However, their caution seems excessive here. That Fabius was “making a moral point, and lamenting the growth of luxury” appears basically certain, considering that the other fragments of uncertain location provide the same kind of moral degeneration that I have been exploring in this section: drunken women (FRHist 1 F25), and corrupt magistrates putting their hands on public funds (FRHist 1 F26).

Fabius' reference to the conquest of *Sabinum* as the moment in which the Romans first experienced wealth is of paramount importance for my argument on the idealization of the republican past. Gabba (1988) takes Fabius' statement literally, and uses it to argue that a large economic and cultural transformation that was taking place at Rome since the early 3rd century BC: in his opinion, it was only about this time that the flood of wealth to Rome produced a profound transformation in the Roman elite's culture, one that abandoned the previous set of values based on poverty and agriculture, to take up a new system of values, based on the accumulation of wealth and on success in one's economic enterprises.[178] It seems to me, instead, that Fabius' statement proves, on the contrary, that already after a couple of generations the time of Curius Dentatus and Fabricius had been completely idealized. Fabius' description of the poverty of 4th century BC Romans is no less realistic than Seneca's description of Scipio's poverty (*Ep.* 86), or Juvenal's idealization of the veterans of the Punic Wars living on a mere two *iugera* (Juv. 14.161).

[178] Gabba (1988: 25) actually uses the word mentality (Italian mentalità), which has a precise history and a problematic use, as showed by Lloyd (1990). Although Andreau, France and Pittia (2004) claim that the concept of mentality can still be used in historical research, they fail to challenge Lloyd's remarks.

5. Conclusions.

By reflecting on their past, the Romans did not limit themselves to understanding the problems of their times, but at various times they also concerned themselves with finding remedies that could bring them back to the harmony of the old days. The most spectacular case is doubtlessly the Augustan restoration of the traditional *mores*. In fact, as Wallace-Hadrill (2005: 66) points out, Augustus' "reinvention of tradition" would not make sense without the "invention of the loss of tradition".[179] Unsurprisingly, to accomplish his mission of bringing back to life the republican *mores*, Augustus resorts to the ideal figure of the citizen-peasant-soldier. It is in this context that the frequent claims of a restoration of Italian agriculture found in Augustan literature should be understood. The ideological nature of Augustus' restoration of Italian agriculture is sometimes overlooked. Spurr (2008), for example, has questioned whether the Italian agriculture really needed any restoration, since, in his opinion, Rome's supply system was strong enough to cope with Sex. Pompeius' naval blockade.[180] This approach is not productive: the point about the Augustan restoration of Italian agriculture is not that production was not sufficient, but that, as part of his restoration of traditional *mores*, Augustus wanted to reintroduce the republican model – imaginary as it was – of small landowners.[181]

It is true that statements such as Velleius' (2.89.4: *rediit cultus agris*) or Horace's (*Od.* 4.15.5: *fruges et agris rettulit uberes*) – to say nothing of Virgil's fourth Eclogue – proclaim Augustus' new *saeculum* as the return of the age of gold. Virgil talks of the *ordo saeculorum* starting back from the beginning (*Ecl.* 4.5), and the Sybil forecasted times of peace and prosperity (Evans, R. 2008: 20-21). This Roman age of Gold, however, is peculiar for not being

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[179] Wallace-Hadrill is specifically concerned with ritual and religion. In this matter, Varro's *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum* were a key passage in the invention of the loss of tradition. As for *mores*, though, as I have explained in the previous section the invention of their loss was much earlier than Varro.

[180] This is wrong: Dio 48.18.1 makes clear that starvation was a risk for the city. See Whittaker 1993: 285.

[181] See also Suetonius' report that at some stage Augustus entertained the idea to abolish *annona* as it damaged agriculture (*Aug.* 42).

free from work (Evans, R. 2008: 87): the return to the time of king Saturn is the return to a flourishing agriculture, practised on a fertile land. Thus, the description of the age of gold in the Aeneid also included scenery set *per arva* (6.791-5). Already Varro had claimed that peasants were the only relics of the breed of Saturn (*Rust*. 3.1.5); the return to the age of gold is, for Augustus too, the return to a society of happy peasants. However, considered the strong republican implications of Augustus' restoration of *mores*, it is possible to see that Augustus' restoration of the Italian peasantry points to the legendary republican past just as much as it points to the mythical age of gold.

Nobody would argue that Augustus' immediate concern was with the decline of agricultural production. Rather, he was primarily concerned with resuscitating the *rusticorum mascula militum proles*, the rural population that had for centuries provided soldiers to Rome. In this respect, one cannot fail to notice the similarities with the Gracchan agrarian reforms. Through his reform, Ti. Gracchus was aiming to restore Rome's manpower (see Chapter 3). In the light of this similarity, then, we should consider the possibility that the Gracchan reform sprang out of the same ideology of decline and attempted restoration. In other words, one cannot help but suspect that when Ti. Gracchus claimed that the rural population was declining his benchmark were the legendary peasants of the republic.

By accepting uncritically the idea that the Gracchi were attempting a remedy to the decline of the rural population, scholars condemn themselves to a schizophrenic use of the literary evidence. Although, in the ancient sources, rural decline is described in terms of depopulation and estate consolidation, modern scholars reject these two phenomena, but still believe that decline was real. In fact, gloomy pictures such as Livy's bemoaning of the depopulation of the Italian countryside (6.12.5) owe too much to the politico-philosophical idea of ἀκμὴ and decline to be simply taken at their face value. Similarly, when we read Gracchus' claim that the Italian peasantry did not even have a roof above their head (see Introduction), we should be very careful. In the recent years, a particularly disputed theme of the debate has been the use, and understanding, by Ti. Gracchus and his younger brother of the census figures. De Ligt, in particular, has suggested, and then rejected (2012: 167-171), that they might have misunderstood the census returns, assuming that population was declining whereas it was actually growing. And yet, the only source that Ti. Gracchus, for his own admission, was using, was autopsy: passing through Etruria, he witnessed the gangs of slaves working the estates of wealthy landowners, and the depopulation of the countryside. This picture has been confirmed by field-surveys; these, though, have also showed that the situation of coastal Etruria was quite exceptional in the Italian rural landscape. We should at least consider the possibility, then, that Ti. Gracchus interpreted this exceptional case as customary because he had learned to believe that Roman power was declining, and that one of the symptoms of such decline was the disappearance of the republican happy peasants.

As we have seen in Chapter 1, Ti. Gracchus blamed the decline on the wealthy, who had seized too much land. According to Gabba (1979: 17), this diagnosis stands in stark contrast with Scipio Aemilianus' blaming the moral corruption of the youth that we have seen in the previous section. In the previous section, though, I have explained that the creation of large landholdings belongs to the same kind of moralistic approach to history and politics. This remark is of paramount importance to explain why, despite my argument that throughout the republic Roman peasants owned little or no land, Ti. Gracchus nevertheless placed all the stress on reduced access to landholding: once again, the term of comparison was the imaginary republican small landowner.

As Giardina (1997: 235) has pointed out commenting on the supposed “crisis” of the villa-model, the very concept of crisis is open to different interpretations. According to some, crisis is halted development, according to others it is proper decline. Now, the sources unanimously interpret the crisis in terms of proper decline of egalitarian landownership. If, on the contrary, we accept the idea that the sources imagined the republic in an unrealistic way, then the late Republican social crisis could perfectly be explained with the other meaning singled out by Giardina. As Kay (2014) explains, Rome's imperialistic expansion was generating a fabulous flood of wealth directed to Italy. It is clear, though, that not everyone was benefiting to the same extent, and possibly a large section of the population was not enjoying any benefit at all. Resentment and social tensions may have been generated by growing inequality, rather than people's impoverishment. The enrichment of a small group must have looked all the more hateful, considering that it was the result of collective military enterprises, and of the sacrifice of thousands of soldiers. Unsurprisingly, in his speech Ti. Gracchus reminded the people that they were not receiving benefits from their sacrifices in war, whereas their generals were.

Chapter 3: peasants and landowners.

1. Nothing to do with landownership?

In the previous chapter, I have argued that the idyllic stories of happy republican peasants overshadow the complexity of landholding and land exploitation, in favour of a timeless picture, in which all peasants hold on to their land allotments, and keep cultivating them. As I have explained, these descriptions should be rejected as pure fantasy. Furthermore, from the argument that I have developed in Chapter 1, it emerges that the Roman republic is not unlike any other time and place in European history: at any time, there was a mass of peasants who owned little or no land. We should believe that already the process of large scale land distributions that accompanied Rome's expansion in Italy in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC resulted in land changing hands quite frequently, leading to the formation of large estates, and leaving many settlers with no land at all. This, in turn, sheds a different light on the changes that were taking place in the Roman countryside by the late 2nd century BC. Even though dispossessions may have become more frequent in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, this should not be taken as meaning that more peasants had been left landless, but that competition for land was now starting to affect wealthier landowners. To what extent, there is simply no way to tell. However, it is irrelevant to the present thesis: it is not these people that the Roman popular leaders were addressing, but the rural proletariat that was traditionally landless. On the reasons why peasants were imagined to have owned land in the early days, I have extensively commented in Chapter 2.

Ancient historians have been misled hitherto by the importance attributed to widespread landownership by the ancient sources. Actual peasants do not seem to rely very much on landownership. Partly, this is a consequence of their social and economic weakness. Peasants do not rely on landownership because they hardly own much land, or the capital to exploit and maintain control of it. Still, this is only part of the explanation. In Chapter 1 I have remarked that peasants' main challenge is to attain minimum subsistence levels in the face of the fundamentally unpredictable nature of yields. This problem was completely overlooked in the ideal representations of peasants, that transformed their living on the edge into stability. External factors such as varying yields, though, are not the only factors affecting peasants' stability. Internal factors have great relevance too. Indeed, peasants' households are in constant flux: the cycle of births, marriages, and deaths keeps households' size continuously floating. To this, we should add that also the quantity of land available to peasant households varies: not only can it decrease through inheritances and partitions, but it can also grow through dowries. Therefore, we could say that peasants did not base their production strategies on whatever land they owned as private property for the following reasons: (1) they usually owned very little or no land; (2) they usually owned very little money to make their property productive and protect their property rights from crises; (3) by relying on private property alone, peasants would have been extremely vulnerable to any alteration of the balance between available land and household size.

In order to rebalance the ratio land-household, peasants have a choice between getting rid of the surplus manpower, or expanding the land in their availability. These two options translate into two strategies: wage labour (that can also be performed outside agriculture) and tenancy (in Chapter 1, I have denied the existence of common land freely available to peasants in Roman Italy).[182] Tenancy and wage-labour are also valuable ways to obtain access to capital. It should be noticed here that peasants did not necessarily need coined money. In many instances, payments for goods and services were made in kind: therefore, by simply producing on rented land, or receiving wages in kind, peasants could barter their surpluses to invest in production improvement.[183] Besides, tenancy also offered peasants indirect access to capital, as

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[182] Formally, tenancy and wage labour are two categories apart. And yet, the boundary between tenancy and wage labour might be subtle. For example, in the Oxyrhynchite nome, vineyard leases (*misthoseis*) actually concerned work (*erga*), and entailed the payment of wages by landlords to tenants (Rowlandson 1996: 229-230).

[183] Although we have no direct evidence of peasants bartering their produce to obtain gear seeds etc. ,

in some cases landlords provided all the necessary to run the farm, in return for peasants' labour and management.

Third, wage-labour and tenancy can be used to reduce the risk of bad years, and to cope with crisis. When rewarded in kind, wage-labour shifts the balance of sourcing enough food for survival from peasants to landowners. Tenancy, for its part, helps to reduce the risk of crop failure by diversifying. It has been observed (Forbes 1989: 89) that peasants tend to diversify not only by producing different crops, but also by renting plots of land at a distance (even considerable) from their own land, and with different physical features. Nevertheless, it is storage that has the lion's share in peasants' “bad year economics”. Now, not only do farmers store the surplus produced in good years; they also resort, when possible, to surplus storage in durable forms. This is achieved by cashing in wages, and transforming the perishable food surplus available at times of glut into a durable form of wealth through sales.[184] Marketing, in fact, can be a form of storage, protecting peasants against the risk of crop-failure (De Ligt 1990: 45). In the 2nd century AD *Vita Aesopi* (chpts. 57-60), for example, we see a peasant cashing in his produce, and storing the money for bad times to come.[185] Landownership has very limited

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we do have evidence suggesting that barter was common. For example, Martial (Mart. 12.72) says that when Pannychus was a lawyer, he used to sell *frumentum, milium tisanamque fabamque*. The idea that a lawyer could sell agricultural produce is at first surprising, but it can be explained considering that lawyers could be paid in produce (see e.g. Iuv. 7.121-ss), and Pannychus must have resold the foodstuffs that he had received in payment. This case proves that, thanks to payments in kind, peasants could have access to legal services – peasants' access to law has been re-evaluated more optimistically in the recent years (Kehoe 2007: 19-25) – for example to obtain protection from creditors or to enforce their tenancy contracts against landowners.

[184] This is what Keynes would call the “precautionary” motive of the demand for money (Hollander 2008: 123-124).

[185] According to Hollander (2008: 130), the growth of commercial agriculture in late Republican Italy stimulated the use of coined money in rural areas: “increased urban demand for foodstuffs must have contributed to the monetization of Italy as local markets became integrated into Rome's supply network”. It is extremely important to appreciate all the nuances of this statement, in order to avoid the trap of uncritical modernising. De Ligt (1990) has demonstrated that peasants could have access to and use money. On the other hand, as we have just seen, payments in kind were popular among peasants, which would suggest that peasants had irregular access to coinage. It is true that the complete absence of isolated finds of coins is not a sufficient reason to justify a minimalistic view, since Italy lacks any systematic reporting of such finds. However, those rare instances in which peasant contexts have been duly excavated and documented have returned no significant quantity of republican coinage. At Pievina, for example, the only coinage found dates from late Antiquity (Ghisleni *et al.* 2011). Here I suggest that, regardless of the quantity of money that circulated in the countryside, the important novelty of the late Republic is the growing number of peasants who became acquainted with money. Even though these

relevance to the opportunities for commercial agriculture. Peasants can take up tenancies to pursue profit, as Goethe (quoted by Carandini 1985: 72) witnessed in Naples in 1787, where tenant-peasants commonly marketed their produce in town.

In this chapter, I suggest that the analysis of the economic changes undergone by the Roman peasantry in the late republic should focus on how their opportunities for tenancy and wage-labour, and their access to markets, changed throughout that period. Section 2 will be devoted to analysing the formal aspects of tenancy in Italy, in order to demonstrate that peasants actually had access to tenancy. Since, in this section, I have argued that tenancy was not only a way to access extra land, but it was also used to diversify, and to have indirect access to capital, in section two I will also reserve some space to argue that, in Italy, tenancies did not necessarily involve entire *fundi*, but could also involve simple plots of land; besides, I will also argue that the provision of *instrumentum* by landlords was far from exceptional.

In sections 3, 4 and 5, I will finally take on demography. Since I have rejected the view that the crisis of the late republican peasantry – if there ever was any – was triggered by growing concentration of property, it is worth exploring the possibility that demographic growth and growing competition with slave labour increased unemployment rates and reduced salaries, thus triggering a crisis. Therefore, sections three to five should be ideally the *pièce de résistance* of this chapter: demographic analysis could finally demonstrate either that the late republic witnessed the general impoverishment of the Italian peasantry, or that, on the contrary, the effects of demographic change on salaries and employment rates were only mild. In this case, we should conclude that the sources' generalization of local phenomena of crisis and decline is unwarranted (see Chapter 2, section 5). Instead, my conclusions will be hopelessly aporetic. As I will explain, given the uncertainties regarding Italy's demographic growth and the relevance of slave labour in Italian agriculture, it seems sound to withhold judgement.

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could be one-off occasions, peasants were now aware that they could store their surplus in a durable form, and adapt their strategies as a consequence.

Finally, in section 6 I will discuss peasants' access to markets. I will argue that the opportunities for marketing even in smaller centres allowed a large quantity of peasants to become involved in commercial agriculture (regardless of whether they owned the land that they farmed), and this represented a concrete opportunity for them to improve their conditions, thanks to the importance of marketing in obtaining capital and coping with risk through durable storage.

It is fundamental to stress that peasants' access to tenancy and wage-labour derives from their interaction with landowners. Due to their political agenda, peasant studies typically focus on competition and contrasts between entrepreneurial farmers and peasants. Indeed, much of my argument in this thesis is based on peasants' subordination. Nevertheless, granted that the great social injustice is not underplayed, we should move on to explore how, despite their subordination and weakness, peasants managed to hang on. I believe that the answer to this question is provided by the very nature of the interaction between entrepreneurial landowners and peasants. Each party is necessary to the other. Landowners need peasants' labour and expertise to run their estates; they need the rents and services provided by their tenants; and, as I will argue in this chapter, also need peasants' produce to cater for their households' consumption. Therefore, even though it was in their interest that peasants remain socially and economically subject to their power, landowners also needed to maintain exploitation at an "acceptable" level, so that subordination can perpetuate itself. Slavery, of course, provided landowners with more opportunities to oppress peasants without endangering production at their own estates. And yet, it would appear that – possibly for economic reasons – in many cases slaves never entirely replaced peasants.

2. Tenancy.

Three aspects stand out in the most popular discussions of tenancy in Italy.[186] One is the tenants' duty to provide all the gear (the *instrumentum fundi*), and more generally the *invecta et illata* (a broader category including also slaves and draught animals) (Frier 1979).[187] This was certainly a common occurrence: according to Kehoe (1997: 149), it was indeed the norm, as the *invecta et illata* must be pledged as security for the rent.[188] The second aspect of Italian tenancies is that, apparently, only productive units of the kind land + building, which in the legal terminology are called *fundi* (as we will see, though, the term *fundus* covered all sorts of different productive units), were leased out. As Frier (1979: 214, n. 51) explains, "I know no evidence (none!) that early imperial tenancies were smaller than the normal *fundus*"; Kehoe (1997: 141) shares the same opinion.

The third aspect concerns the payment of rents. Tenancy agreements can be of three different kinds, depending on whether rents are paid through fixed sums in cash, or through a fixed amount of produce, or yet by a share of the produce, that varies according to the total yield. This latter system, called sharecropping, is quite similar to a partnership (Dig. 19.2.25.6: *quasi societatis iure*; see Rowlandson 1996: 214). It is often assumed that in Italy rents were mostly fixed, and payments mostly carried out in cash. Thus, according to Kehoe (1997: 142),

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186 Here I adopt De Ligt's (2000) view that tenancy was already very common in the middle republic. De Ligt rightly notices that tenancy is very common in every agricultural society, and he argues that the provisions on *pignoris capio* and *filii venditio* contained in the Twelve Tables may have provided the legal framework for tenancy at early stages. Rosenstein's (2004: 181-2) contrary argument is based on his view that in the middle republic the *plebs* actually succeeded in obtaining fair access to landownership. Against this view, I have argued in Chapter 2 that the descriptions of the middle republic are highly idealized. For Rosenstein's remark that landowners preferred slaves to tenants because these were liable to military service see below, section 5.

187 Opinions on the precise boundaries of the *instrumentum fundi* varied: Dig. 33.7.12.2, for example, provides Alfenus Varus' opinion that slaves were not part of it, as opposed to Ulpianus' opinion that everything and every living being that was on the *fundus* for the sake of farming did belong to the *instrumentum*. Aubert (2009: 170) suggests that Alfenus' opinion "may have been dominant in the late Republican period, but was no longer acceptable in the classical period". Note that slave tenants (*servi quasi coloni*) were not included in the *instrumentum* (Dig. 33.7.20.1; see Aubert 2009: 172).

188 Frier (1979: 227) has even suggested that the late Antique transformation of *coloni* into bound serfs may have been determined by their general impoverishment, as by the 2nd century AD "fewer and fewer tenants were able to supply other than their own labor".

sharecropping is a thing of the provinces, whereas fixed rents were the common way to run tenancies in Italy. Kehoe (1997: 147-148) appears to believe that Pliny was one of the first people to introduce this kind of tenancy into Italy: “Pliny describes his plan to institute sharecropping on his Tuscan estates in terms suggesting that his correspondent would only be generally familiar with this form of land tenure, rather than having first-hand knowledge of it”. Also Lo Cascio (2009: 99) believes that sharecropping was introduced in Italy only at a later time. As for the payment of a fixed quantity of produce, it has been argued that this was only popular in Egypt (Lo Cascio 2009: 99-100).

Together, the three aspects just described strongly suggest a precise social background for lessees. Whenever, such as in the Fayum villages, tenancy agreements also involved small plots of land, it is hard to deny that leases were being used by peasants “at least as a temporary expedient” (Rowlandson 1996: 204) to make ends meet, rebalancing labour and land. Here, instead, we would be in the presence of a small group of managerial farmers, who owned all the necessary gear and livestock and were thus able to take up commercial tenancies and offer securities in case of defaulted payments (tenants' mobile property was generally pledged as *pignus*: Frier 1979; Kehoe 1997: 149). Landlords, on their part, entered these tenancy contracts in order to secure competent management on their estates that they could not/did not want to run directly, and at the same time share with tenants the burden to invest (since tenants provide movable items), and, thanks to fixed rents, partly pass on to tenants the risk of losses.

If the three assumptions outlined above were correct, it would be impossible to avoid the conclusion that a large proportion of peasants could not have access to tenancy, since they could not run entire *fundi* with their limited resources. Besides, the requirement to pay fixed rents put tenants in a very weak position, as the burden of risk was entirely shifted on the lessee. Even if peasants took up tenancies, then, these could prove unbearable in the long run. However, I would contend that: (a) there are clear traces showing that landlords could also provide the *instrumentum* to tenants; (b) even though extant literature only concerns the leases of entire productive *fundi*, these are likely to be just the tip of the iceberg of a wider phenomenon; and (c) other forms of payment, more favourable to peasants, were also popular.

As for the provision of gear, the idea that this was provided by landlords only in rare, exceptional cases does not seem correct. Indeed, a number of passages from the juridical literature precisely discuss tenants receiving all the necessary gear from their landlords (De Neeve 1984: 170, n. 248). Finley (1976: 108) suggested that "it was common for the landlord also to supply *instrumentum*". Aubert (2009: 174) has provided decisive support to this view, pointing out that Roman inheritance law commonly assumes that the *instrumentum* of leased *fundi* passed on to the heirs together with the *fundus*. We should avoid any rigidity: precisely because tenancy could respond to different needs, it could have different features. It could be the case, for example, that parts of the *instrumentum* were provided by the landlord, and parts by the tenant.

In fact, the different rulings provided by different legal authorities testify to their unease in establishing universally valid rules, in the face of a matter that was extremely fluid, and whose every single instance was different from the others. Thus, for example, legal texts' ruling that living beings should be included in the inherited *fundus cum instrumento* (Aubert 2009: 177) responds to the instances in which slaves and livestock were provided by landlords, but is of little help in those cases when they were provided by the tenants. This must have been a very common instance, since it has left such an abundant legal record that Frier (1979) has been (wrongly) led to believe that livestock was always provided by tenants.

We can easily assume that landowners could be willing to step in and provide support to those tenants who lacked the means to run their farms. In the famous letter of Pliny the Younger to Calvisius Rufus, for example, describing the property that he was interested in purchasing at Tifernum Tiberinum, Pliny (3.19.6) mentions that the former owner had seized the gear of indebted *coloni* on more than one occasion (*saepius*). Tenants had fallen behind with payments, and the former owner had seized and sold the *pignora* to recover part of the rent.

However, according to Pliny, this strategy had backfired: although the sale of *pignora* has repaid part of the accrued debt for the moment, it has reduced the productive capacity of *coloni*, whose debts have eventually grown. We can speculate that Pliny was planning to solve the problem by stepping in and providing all the necessary gear.

The reason why, despite tenants' failure to pay rents, the former owner had not evicted them appears to be the difficulty of finding others. This is not because the area was depopulated: as Lo Cascio (2009: 120-121) has convincingly argued, Pliny's expression *haec penuria colonorum* (in the ablative in the text) should not be taken as proving the depopulation of the countryside. Here, the word *penuria* has the meaning (which is commonly found in later Latin) of “poverty of means”, rather than “scarcity”. Rather, most likely the former landowner had not evicted his tenants – nor Pliny was planning to – because finding suitable tenants was not an easy matter (as Columella's discussion reveals): landowners must make sure that tenants have the necessary skills, and the right attitude to work.[189] When competent tenants were available, but lacked sufficient means, judicious landowners such as Pliny would provide additional resources to secure their services.

The quantity of money involved must have been considerable: Pliny mentions that the *praedia* used to be worth 5 million HS, and now their value has dropped to 3. Yet, Pliny is silent on the number of *fundi* into which the *praedia* that he wants to buy are divided: therefore it is not entirely clear to what social class these *coloni* should be ascribed.[190] In general terms, the size, productivity, and value of single *fundi* were so variegated that all kinds of peasants could potentially be required. Frier (1979: 214, n. 51) points out that “variance was no doubt great; contrast *CIL* VI 33840 (a *colonus* paying 25,000 HS per year) with *CIL* IX 5659 (a *colonus pauper*)”.[191] As Kehoe (1997: 141) has remarked, in strict technical legal terms, a *fundus* as a

[189] This is why, although in Italy tenancy contracts usually lasted 5 years (Kehoe 1997: 147-148), tenants were expected to hold tenancies for much longer periods (Foxhall 1990: 101).

[190] That the property is divided in a number of *fundi* is proved by the use of the plural *coloni*, and by Pliny's explanation that the estate is fragmented, as parts of these *praedia* are *inserta* to his property.

[191] Frier is slightly imprecise here: the correct figure paid by the *colonus olitor* of *CIL* VI 33840 is 26,000

productive unit could equally be an estate with a villa as much as "a small parcel with a humble cottage".

Furthermore, I would argue that, just as in Egypt, so too in Italy, tenancy agreements could be struck on plots of land which did not make up a productive unit. Firstly, it should be noticed that tenants could also have their own land (De Neeve 1984: 169). Indeed, not all peasants lived on the land that they rented. According to De Neeve, though, there is no evidence of this form of tenancy from Italy.[192] Against this opinion, I contend that Cicero's famous letter to his favourite slave Tiro proves the opposite. In the letter, Cicero discusses the possibility to strike a tenancy agreement with a certain Parhedrus, for a garden that is currently being attended by a salaried gardener (*olitor*) (*Fam*. 16.18).[193] In the letter, Cicero mentions another tenancy deal he had struck with a certain Helico, who used to pay 1,000 HS for a property where there was not even a shed (*casa*).[194] Logically, Helico lived elsewhere!

The importance of Cicero's letter, however, is not limited to proving that absentee tenants existed in Italy. Indeed, the document proves that in Italy too single plots of land with no farmstead attached could be leased. The possibility to rent small patches of land seems to confirm that, in addition to those wealthy tenants who had capital, and took up cultivation of estates of considerable size, hoping to make a profit, there were also other people involved: their social level will have varied, from those living on the brink of starvation to those who simply found their households having an extra couple of hands and wanting to put them into

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HS.

[192] According to De Neeve, the only traces of this form of tenancy come from Africa. The *lex Manciana*, an imperial rescript regulating the tenancies of the *villa Magna Variana*, an imperial estate in the Bagradas Valley in Africa, includes prescriptions of the compulsory labour to be performed by those tenants *qui eorum* (scil. *Colonorum*) *intra fundo habitabunt* (*CIL* VIII, 25902). De Neeve concludes that the expression "means that there were also *coloni* who did not live on the *fundus*". The epigraphical text (Henchir Mettich inscription) is of Trajanic date, but the date of the regulation – which is also reported by other inscriptions – is uncertain.

[193] Cicero was dissatisfied with the present arrangements, either for the *olitor*'s lack of effort, or, as Shackleton-Bailey (1977: 386) suggests, because the *olitor* was keeping part of the produce for himself.

[194] There is no way to tell whether the 1,000 HS are an annual rent or refer to the whole duration of the lease (usually 5 years; see n. 189). For an example of annual payment see *CIL* VI, 33840, ll. 2-3: *colens in asse annuis ((sestertiis)) XXVI.*

good use. With some generalization, we could say that these tenancies were a good option for peasants who owned some land, although very little.[195] The lack of information on this typology of leases may be simply due to the nature of the evidence. Most of our knowledge of Roman tenancy derives from juridical texts: whereas controversies regarding fully equipped *fundi* were important enough to make their way into juridical literature, it is unlikely that those concerning single patches of land did. Although, as Kehoe (2007: 19-25) has argued, peasants could have access to judicial protection, we should consider that controversies concerning very small plots of land hardly ever made it to court.

Of course, renting an extra plot of land was not a magical solution to the misery of most peasants. Although, in many cases, landlords were genuinely willing to commit themselves to investment, a large part of the land available through these leases will have been marginal land, intensive cultivation of which neither appealed to nor benefited landlords.[196] In such cases, of course, they will also have been unwilling to assist tenants with gear, animals and slaves, as the quality of the land discouraged investments.[197] As we have seen, Cicero had admittedly refrained from any improvement on the land that he had leased out to Helico; from the tone of the letter, he appears pleasantly surprised by Helico's ability to get a high yield out of that land.

We come now to the modality of payment. It can be argued that in this matter too there

[195] For example, the *Codex Theodosianus* (11.1.14) singles out *coloni* "*quibus terrarum erit quantulacumque possessio*".

[196] We know that in many cases landlords were actively concerned with long term ameliorations. In Egypt, tenants could receive extra wages for improvements carried out on the land, and agreed upon in advance (e.g. *POxy* XIV 1628, including the payment of 1,500 drachmas for cutting rushes: see Rowlandson 1996: 204). On Imperial estates in North Africa, tenants were free to take up cultivation of parcels of *subseciva*, over which they had security of tenure as long as they cultivated them. In this case, they paid a fixed share of produce (whereas in Egypt rents were fixed amounts of produce, regardless of total yield: Rowlandson 1996: 220), but security of tenure stimulated long-term investment (Lo Cascio 2009: 101). In Italy, tenancy agreements (*leges colonicae*) could include precise stipulations on the maintenance of the property: see e.g. Varro *Rust*. 1.2.17, on the prohibition against grazing goats in the *ager surcularius*, i.e. the land where small trees were planted to grow.

[197] It has been suggested, for example, that Varro's mention of *pauperculi* who work the fields *cum sua progenie* (*Rust*. 1.17) also refers to tenants (Lo Cascio 2009: 97). From Varro's statement, however, it does not follow that these people were in desperate conditions, although this is what most commentators assume.

was greater variability than some scholars are willing to admit. For example, *contra* Lo Cascio's (2009: 96; 99-100; 117) belief that the payment of a fixed quantity of produce did not exist in Italy, there is in fact no reason why it should have not. Lo Cascio points out that Pliny only mentions payments in cash (*nummo*) and sharecropping (*partibus*) (10.8.5; 9.37.2). The context of Pliny's statement, however, proves that this *argumentum e silentio* is extremely weak. Pliny is reporting to Paulinus the worrying situation of his tenants, whose arrears have grown to the point that they have given up any hope of repayment, and are now eating what they produce. Pliny explains his resolution to switch from payments in cash to sharecropping. Obviously, Pliny does not mention other systems of payment, which have no relevance to his case. This, though, does not mean that other systems did not exist.

Similarly, Kehoe's belief that sharecropping was not popular appears too rigid. Sharecropping, in fact, appears to have been quite popular, and from an early stage (*contra* Lo Cascio). Cato already gives recommendations on the agreements to make with the *partiarius* letting a *fundus* with arable and a vineyard (*De Agr.* 136), and he also makes references to sharecropping at Casinum and Venafrum (*ibid.*).[198] Cicero's tongue-in-cheek complaint about receiving too many flowers from his tenant Motho (*Fam.* 16.18.2: *calface hominem, ut ego Mothonem; itaque abutor coronis*) also seems to refer to sharecropping arrangements. At the end of the day, Finley's (1976: 106) conclusion seems the most reasonable: “it was also probably the most common practice to let for a fixed annual rent in money, but recognized alternatives were available … straightforward share-cropping … and there was the possibility of an agreement to pay the rent in a fixed amount of produce at fixed prices”.

It is time now to comment on tenancy's role in creating economic and social subordination. Rents extracted from tenants could be particularly exploitative, leaving them with the bare necessary to survive year-round. As we have seen in Chapter 1, peasants are vulnerable to indebtedness: accruing rents, as in the case of Pliny's tenants, perpetuate the

[198] According to Foxhall (1990: 105) Cato had a farm at Venafrum.

system. It has also been suggested (De Neeve 1984: 177) that indebtedness was one of the factors that generated tenants' social and political subordination to landlords. Thus, during the late republican Civil Wars in a number of documented instances *coloni* were enrolled in private armies (Foxhall 1990: 99).

On the level of exploitation of Roman tenancy we have two opposing perspectives. Both agree that landlords and tenants are interdependent. Thus, Kehoe (1997: 194) suggests that "both landowners and tenants benefited from the institution of farm tenancy, and they depended on one another for their respective economic security"; in similar terms, Foxhall (1990: 101) explains that "large and small cultivators were bound into a single system". However, they have radically different views of the burden placed on the shoulders of peasants. Whereas, according to Kehoe, landlords' primary interest was to secure reliable and expert management for their land, and therefore they were willing to go a long way towards meeting tenants' needs and requirements, Foxhall (1990: 102) – following Finley – believes that tenants were constantly subject to the "whip of hunger", under the constant threat of "draconian" tenancy terms. Now, Foxhall's claim (1990: 111) that "the primary reason that tenants enter into such agreements must be that they have little alternative for survival – it is a least-worst option" is absolutely right. From this, however, it does not necessarily follow that tenancy agreements were shaped so to keep tenants on the brink of starvation. Foxhall discusses abundant comparative evidence that would prove her point; these, though, cannot simply be held true for Roman history, unless the structural conditions were the same. The point here is understanding whether the position of tenants was as vulnerable and helpless as it was in many (most) other times in human history.

It has been widely noticed that tenants had more bargaining power in less densely populated areas, for the obvious reason that landlords had less chance of finding tenants. In some instances, landlords could go as far as to grant emphyteutic rights to tenants, in order to attract them to less densely populated areas (Curtis 2014: 251-2). Demographic trends, therefore, play a fundamental role in determining the quantity and quality of tenancy opportunities. An identical case can be made for wage labour, of course: demographic growth corresponds to higher competition and lower wages. It is therefore necessary to face the complex historiographical question concerning demographic trends in Roman Italy. As I have explained in Chapter 1, Section 1, the idea of a dramatic demographic decline is now universally rejected: but what happened instead? And what was the ratio of the population of slaves to the total population? In the next three sections, I will review the evidence and scholarly positions, in order to defend my argument that any reliable conclusion is beyond our reach. At the end of the day, we are left with the suspicion that the supposed crisis of the Italian peasantry may well have been limited to very few areas of the Italian peninsula, and the overall conditions of the rural population may well have not changed much throughout the centuries, until war broke out again on Italian soil.

3. The demography of republican Italy: ingredients and recipes.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, the Gracchan tradition reports that, due to the egoism of few individuals, the very fabric of the *res publica* was at risk of falling to pieces, as the *res publica populi Romani* was becoming weaker against external enemies, since the Italian stock, upon which it had based its power, was thinning out (App. *B.Civ.* 1.1.10: "On the other side were heard the lamentations of the poor—that they were being reduced from competence to extreme penury, and from that to childlessness, because they were unable to rear their offspring"; transl. LCL).[199] Besides, as Plutarch explains (*Ti. Gracchus* 8.3), dispossessed people were now unwilling to serve in the army. Appian explains that Ti. Gracchus was aware of the problem, and that his reform was directed at improving manpower: "What Gracchus had in his mind in proposing the measure was not making people wealthy, but making them fit" (*B.Civ.* 1.1.11: Γράκχῳ δ᾽ ὁ μὲν νοῦς τοῦ βουλεύματος ἦν οὐκ ἐς εὐπορίαν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐς εὐανδρίαν).[200]

Traditionally, scholars have accepted this view, and have even argued that the repeated reductions of the minimum census requirements to serve in the army demonstrate that the problem of demographic decline was taken seriously at Rome (Gabba 1976: 1-19; 20-6). It was

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[199] Appian actually talks of the manpower of Italian allies: "Ti. Sempronius Gracchus … delivered an eloquent discourse, while serving as tribune, concerning the Italian race, lamenting that a people so valiant in war, and related in blood to the Romans, were declining little by little into pauperism and paucity of numbers without any hope of remedy" (*B.Civ.* 1.1.9; transl. LCL). The passage has often been used to argue that Ti. Gracchus' land distributions also included the Italians (Stockton 1979: 42-6; Richardson 1980). However, this interpretation fails to consider Appian's apparent belief that only Roman citizens were included in colonial settlements and land distributions (Ibid. 1.1.7: κληρούκους ἀπὸ σφῶν κατέλεγον). Also consider that the epigraphical *lex agraria* never mentions *socii* as recipients of land allotments, but only Roman citizens or Latins (*Roman Statutes* 1.2, ll. 3; 21; 31). Gargola (2008: 495) has now convincingly argued that Appian "wished to bring forward all the issues of C. Gracchus' tribunate or the Social War, when the status of the Italians was a source of controversy, as soon as possible". The mention of the Italians is a deliberate invention, aiming at harmonising into a single historical development – and thus into his own single historical narrative – the different narratives of the land crisis and of the Social War.

[200] As Gallo (1980) has showed, εὐανδρία in Greek is never used to indicate the abundance of population. Silvestrini 2004 remarks that with this meaning Appian uses the word πολυανδρία (e.g. *B. Civ.* 1.7.28). That in Appian εὐανδρία and πολυανδρία are not synonymous is further substantiated by Appian's use of the words indicating the opposed conditions: δυσανδρία and ὀλιγότης (or ὀλιγανδρία) respectively (found together at *B.Civ.* 1.7.29). On the theme of ὀλιγανδρία in Appian see De Ligt 2012: 178.

also believed that Rome's failure to further reduce the minimum threshold rapidly led to a manpower shortage that forced Marius to enrol *proletarii* in 107 BC (Ibid.). However, Rich (1983) has subsequently pointed out that, in Appian's and Plutarch's accounts, people are still liable to service despite having being deprived of their land. He concludes that, despite (possibly widespread) impoverishment, manpower was not in danger: Rome continued to wage wars, even in areas where no armies were previously stationed; as for Marius' actions, they could be best explained as a political gesture, attempting to secure the support of the lower social strata. Rich also reconsidered the evidence for threshold reductions, showing that the only threshold reduction that was certainly motivated by the need to expand the pool of recruits took place in the years after Cannae. Otherwise, the apparent reductions could be explained in a number of different ways, and it has since been accepted that the various adjustments are mostly a consequence of monetary reforms (Lo Cascio 1988; Rathbone 1993; Lo Cascio 2001).

As I have anticipated in Chapter 1, Appian's and Plutarch's descriptions of Italy's demographic decline should be rejected. Newly available archaeological data from field surveys show that, in most cases, the number of rural sites did not decline throughout the republic. The suggestion that field surveys could actually challenge the traditional idea of demographic decline was first suggested – although for the wrong reasons – by Frederiksen (1970-1971), on the basis of Ward-Perkins' pioneering South Etruria Project.[201] His warning, however, was ignored at first. Partly, this depended on the doubts regarding the reliability of field surveys, which were still in their early days, and were still developing their methodology (see Witcher 2006: 274-5). However, there was also a certain preconceived skepticism for all things material (as opposed to written texts). Finley (1973: 33), in particular, had spearheaded a virulent skepticism for the reliability of archaeology, notoriously pointing out that, in one instance, thousands of pottery fragments had turned out to belong to a single vase.

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[201] As De Ligt (2007: 176) explains, most of the black-glaze pottery that Frederiksen dated to the 2nd century B.C. has been subsequently assigned to the period before the Hannibalic war.

Fortunately, methodology has become extremely refined over the course of the last 30 years, and archaeologists have overcome all sorts of interpretative problems, such as the classification of surface remains into meaningful site categories, and the comparability of site categories used in different surveys. However, other serious problems have not been overcome as yet. One of the most important is a practical one. The concrete risk exists that the visibility of surface remains during field surveys is modified (in both directions) by human activities such as ploughing. This problem can be solved by repeating surveys over more than one year. However, in the past this has not always been done. In these cases, then, results should be handled with great care. However, the most serious objections to the use of field surveys to reconstruct demographic trends are methodological. In order to formulate meaningful conclusions archaeologists have to rule out *a priori* any randomness, postulating that all sites of all types and periods have the same chances of being recovered. These assumptions have been seriously challenged (Hin 2013: 298-341; Scheidel 2013).[202] For example, critics have pointed out that different diagnostic materials may have different visibility, or may have been supplied in different quantities in antiquity. Another extremely concerning finding is that, for unclear reasons, sample size affects the analysis of field survey data (the smaller the sample, the more dramatic demographic change will appear).

Despite the problems just outlined, it is at least possible to claim that, overall, the number of rural sites in Italy did not decline. Archaeologists now tend to believe that depopulation was a regional phenomenon (e.g. coastal Etruria: Witcher 2006).[203] Another serious challenge posed by field surveys to the traditional picture is that, in most cases, the appearance of larger sites (conventionally referred to as villas) does not correspond to the disappearance of small sites. On the contrary, these two categories appear to have existed

[202] A further criticism is directed to those archaeologists who try to reconstruct not only trends, but also figures: critics point out that the necessarily arbitrary distinction of site types, and the related assumption that a similar number of people lived in any site of the same type, have a very high margin of error.
[203] The possibility exists that an upsurge of malaria contributed to empty out the coastal Etruscan landscape (Sallares 2002: Chapter 7).

together (Witcher 2006 on Rome's *suburbium*; Launaro 2011). The ongoing existence of smaller sites has forced scholars to reconsider the sources' account of the almost complete replacement of free farmers with slaves. Unless we assumed that all these sites were farmed by *servi quasi coloni*, we must find space for free peasants in the Italian countryside. Even in coastal Etruria, where the impact of villas was the most dramatic, free peasants continued to exist: as it has been suggested, the villas of the *ager Cosanus* employed wage labourers from the nearby colonies and the interior, where, as opposed to the coastal plain, small rural sites do not show signs of decline: Rathbone 1981; Foxhall 1990).

The prevailing idea among scholars is that later sources such as Appian and Plutarch are not deliberately misrepresenting reality, but the Romans of the central decades of the second century actually (wrongly) believed that population was declining. Rich (1983: 303-5), for example, suggests that the Gracchan land scheme was the typical Roman over-reaction to a problem that was more apparent than real (in this case, a slight decrease of *census* figures). In Chapter 2, Section 5, I have suggested that Ti. Gracchus was misled by his own cultural background to believe that a regional phenomenon, limited to South Etruria, was actually happening all over Italy.

The only claim that the Romans were interpreting reality correctly has come from Lo Cascio (1999; 2008), according to whom it is the modern interpretation of Ti. Gracchus' words that is wrong. As he explains, Ti. Gracchus was not attempting to halt demographic decline; rather, he was proposing a solution to a public health crisis, caused by demographic growth and misery. According to Lo Cascio, impoverishment had escalated to the point that a large section of the population was not eating enough food to survive. However, although it is true that Ti. Gracchus also mentioned the fitness of people (App. *B. Civ.* 1.1.11; see above, n. 200), he only did so when replying to his opponents' accusations that he was trying to enrich people. In that context, he pointed out that he was only giving them enough to be fit. But as for the aim of his reform, it is clear that this was tackling demographic decline, as proved by Appian's mention of people's "failure to rear children" (Rich 2007: 162). On my part, as I argued in Chapter 2, Section 5, I believe that the correct explanation of the Roman concern for manpower – visible not only in Ti. Gracchus' reform, but also in Metellus Macedonicus' speech *De Prole Augenda* (delivered in 131-0 BC) – is another. It was not based on actual data (such as the *census* returns), but on the assumption that Roman power was declining, and that this decline took the shape of demographic decline (among other things).[204]

Although, as I have explained above, the idea that archaeology could prove demographic growth should be treated with some care, it is also true that some sort of growth appears to have been the most likely scenario, due to the concurrent phase of economic prosperity. But in what terms? We have in this respect two radically different views. According to some scholars, led by Lo Cascio, population growth was dramatic and steadfast. Initially, Lo Cascio (1994) deconstructed Beloch's argument that Roman Italy was more or less as densely populated as in the Renaissance. As Lo Cascio explains, Beloch assumed *a priori* that population is denser in areas with higher industrial production. Therefore, since Italy was not more industrialised in antiquity than in the Renaissance, its population could not have been higher. In Beloch's reckoning, the population of Renaissance Italy was as low as 4 million (in 1881 it was 25 million), and Roman Italy must have had more or less the same number of inhabitants.[205] However, it is by no means certain that industrialization and demography are so closely interdependent. Lo Cascio believes that, after Rome's conquest of the Mediterranean, the import of huge quantities of public grain (partly purchased, and partly as a form of taxation in kind imposed on provincials), combined with the foodstuffs imported through private trade, could support a far higher population than what Italy's agricultural production was able to feed

[204] In this respect, it is far from surprising that the Augustan restoration had the same concern for manpower, to the point that to support his legislation *de maritandis ordinibus* Augustus had Metellus' speech published (Suet. *Aug*. 89.2).
[205] Beloch's assessment of the population of Renaissance Italy (max. 9 million people including the islands) is implicitly accepted by Lo Cascio and Malanima (2005: 14), who calculate some 7.5 million people around 1450, including the islands.

with its own resources.[206] According to Lo Cascio, Rome and a large number of coastal cities were almost entirely fed on provincial grain.[207] Relying on his interpretation of the Augustan census figures (see section 4), Lo Cascio claims that Italy had as many as 14 million inhabitants by the Augustan age. Besides, comparing this figure with his own interpretation of the republican census figures (see section 4), Lo Cascio (Lo Cascio and Malanima 2005) argues that the population of Italy was growing at a rate of 0.45% per year, from around 8 million in 225 BC to 14.5 million under Augustus.

Such an extreme theory has been met with widespread criticism. Scheidel (2008), in particular, has pointed out that a population of 14 million inhabitants would place Italy in an anomalous position among the Mediterranean regions, which would be extremely difficult to explain. If, on the contrary, one argued that Italy was not anomalous, but the population of the entire Mediterranean should be reassessed upwards, this would force us to believe that as many as 150 million people lived in the Roman Mediterranean, a number which was not reached until the 20th century. On a regional level, we should believe that Egypt, for example, had four times the population that it is currently assumed to have had (Scheidel 2004: 7), and as many inhabitants during the Roman empire as in the 1920s (13 million). Besides, the presence of so many people in antiquity would force us to reconsider the subsequent transformations, postulating a real apocalypse somewhere between the 2nd century AD and the Middle Ages (Scheidel 2004: 8).

Scheidel remarks that the possibility that 14 million people lived in Augustan Italy appears all the more unlikely if one puts it in a comparative perspective: under the Han dynasty, China had merely 3 times that population, but its territory was 15 times bigger than Italy; France had that many inhabitants only in 1600, and Italy as late as 1840. Another problem with Lo

[206] De Ligt (2012: 30) suspects that the role of private trade was minimal: as he points out, the wine traded in Gaul was exchanged with gold and slaves, but not with grain.
[207] Other adherents of Lo Cascio's thesis, usually referred to as “high-counters”, believe that, although relevant, imports were not decisive, as Italy could feed a considerable part of these supposed 14 million people (Kron 2008).

Cascio's thesis is that one would logically expect a rapid population growth to have been matched by mass migrations to the provinces. But if this was the case (for discussion of this possibility see section 4), then we should consider the possibility that demographic growth never reached the point of a real Malthusian crisis.[208] Indeed, it is the very assumption that overpopulation crises exist that is subject to debate. Boserup, for example, has developed an anti-Malthusian argument, according to which demographic growth stimulates innovation, thus improving food production to the point that it can sustain population growth (De Ligt 2012: 22-23). As I have explained (see n. 207) Kron (2008) has suggested that, driven by population growth, Italian agriculture was experiencing a rapid transformation, with the introduction of sophisticated techniques such as triennial rotation and fertilization, which was connected to the exceptional development of husbandry.

However, even though the population of Italy is unlikely to have been as high as Lo Cascio suggests, and it is equally unlikely that a Malthusian crisis took place, the idea that demographic growth was putting pressure on the rural population is very suggestive. Recently, De Ligt (2012) has proposed a new demographic scenario, according to which the population of the peninsula did grow, but on a much lower level than Lo Cascio believes: from some 4.2 million people in 225 BC to 5.7 in 28 BC. However, according to De Ligt the population growth in the countryside was mostly due to the explosion of rural slavery, from some 150,000 in 225 BC to some 800,000 in 28 BC (De Ligt 2012: 190, Table 4.3). At the same time, the free rural population decreased from 3.5 to 3.1 millions (-11.4 %), due to migration to cities (the urban population doubled according to De Ligt, from 400,000 to 1.1 million people, 600,000 of which in the city of Rome). De Ligt interprets the crisis as partly Malthusian: on the one hand,

[208] It has also been objected that the high rate of migration to Rome, combined with the extremely high mortality rate in the city (a proper "demographic sink"), prevented Italy's population from growing to the dramatic point imagined by Lo Cascio (Morley 1996). The argument, however, is far from uncontroversial. Most recently, Tacoma (2016: 157-63) has pointed out that mortality rates at Rome were certainly higher than in any other urban centre, and it was "not compensated by equally high levels of fertility" (*Ibid.* : 164). However, there is no way to quantify the population decrease. Lo Cascio (1999: 222-9) has extensively rejected Morley's calculations.

demographic growth resulted in the partitioning of properties, and left some with no land at all; on the other hand, the explosion of rural slavery significantly reduced free farmers' chances of engaging in wage labour. Migration to cities, then, appeared the best outlook to rural inhabitants.

De Ligt is not the only one to have explored the possibility that reduced access to dependent labour was one of the factors determining the crisis of the rural population. Taking on Finley's (1980) remark that the expansion of slavery is generally a consequence of the scarcity of labour, ancient demographers have suggested that the casualties of the Hannibalic war stimulated the diffusion of rural slavery, which in turn reduced free peasants' labour opportunities. In Lo Cascio's interpretation, however, the growth of the free population plays a central role in increasing competition for labour and depressing salaries. Lo Cascio and the other “high-counters” pay less attention to the relationship between free population and slaves. We could assume that, for them, more free people correspond to more slaves (since there will be more slave-owners), and, due to manumissions, the growth in numbers of slaves further increased the free population.

It should be noticed that there is a clear contradiction between the description of the crisis as provided by Appian, and the modern explanations of De Ligt and Lo Cascio. Appian is completely silent on the effects of reduced access to dependent labour.[209] To be fair, Appian does not even consider the possibility that free landowners could engage in dependent labour for wealthier neighbours. Whereas De Ligt and Lo Cascio have in mind farmers who own a

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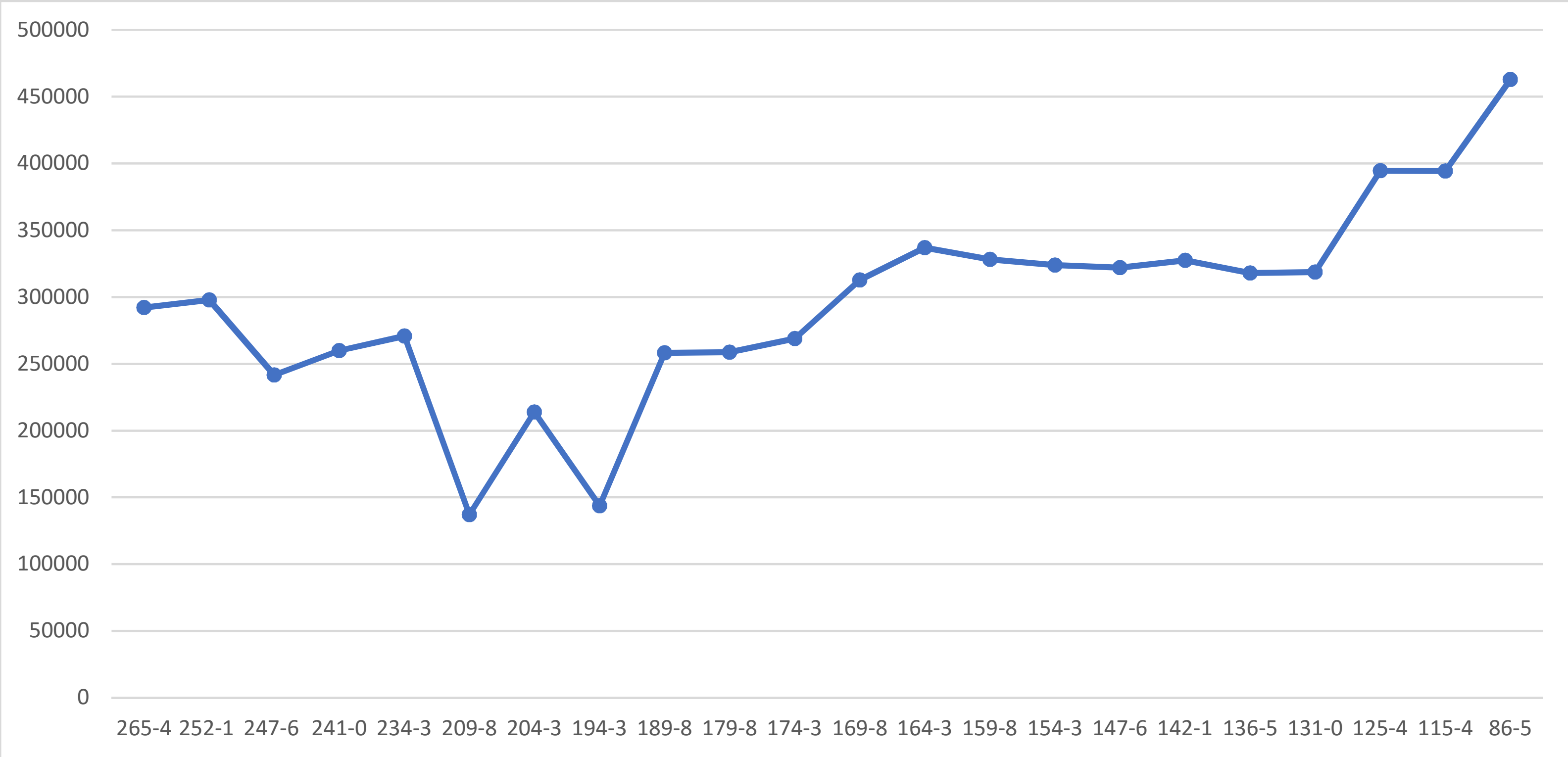
[209] Appian's mention of military service in relationship to slavery should not be taken as an indication that free farmers used to work as dependent labourers, but were now becoming less competitive than slaves, who were preferred by wealthy landowners because they were not liable to military service. In fact, Appian's mention of military service has a completely different tone: he simply says that, not being liable to service, slaves were growing in numbers, that is they grew in numbers because they did not die in war. Appian's failure to notice it does not imply, of course, that military service had no effect on farmers' access to wage labour. Rosenstein's demonstration that at any time in the republic “the demands of war and agriculture lay at cross purposes” (2004: 52) has reinforced the traditional view whereby military service made free farmers less suitable for wage labour than slaves. Besides, it has been convincingly argued (Harper 2010: 212-213) that, draining out rural labour, military conscription had the effect of driving wages upwards, and therefore made free labour less competitive.

little land, whose produce they integrate with wage labour and tenancy, Appian is describing completely independent farmers who only live on the produce of their land in a regime of self-sufficiency, just like the average republican farmer that I have introduced in Chapter 2. This is why he explains the crisis exclusively in terms of reduced access to landownership. Once farmers are dispossessed, they are deprived of their only chance of surviving.

In the analysis of data, slaves and free people are usually kept separate, because estimations of their numbers are based on completely different sets of evidence. For the free population, we do have some figures, and the entire discussion is focused on trying to reconcile them into a meaningful demographic scenario. In order to cope with the absence of data, by contrast, the demographic analysis of the slave population of Roman Italy is carried out by analysing trends in supply and demand of slaves. Owing to the different sets of evidence used, I will divide my treatment of demography into two sections, each devoted to the free population and the servile population of Italy respectively. We should not forget, though, that actually the demographic trends of the free and servile population are interdependent.



The graph above provides a visual representation of the republican census figures reported by the annalistic sources (Livy and his tradition: a list of the sources, and the exact figures, are provided by Lo Cascio 2008: 244 and Hin 2013: 351-353) for the period between 265 BC and 85 BC. Another figure is known, pertaining to the census of 70-69 BC: this peaks at 910,000, reflecting the citizenship grant to all the Italians after the Social War.[210] Although, *ça va sans dire*, the genuineness of these figures is by no means certain, it would not be methodologically sound to reject their reliability *in toto*.

In the sources, the figures are consistently introduced by the explanation that they represent the numbers of *civium capita.* Therefore, as it is now generally agreed upon, these figures *are meant* to provide the numbers of all the adult male citizens (De Ligt 2012: 82-95). However, the same expression is used by Augustus in his *Res Gestae* to introduce his censuses

[210] The census figure of 86-85 BC (463,000), which was often emended to 963,000 in the past, is now defended by De Ligt (2012: 112-116), who argues that a "whole range of practical problems", worsened by the anti-Italian feelings of one of the two censors (L. Marcius Philippus), prevented the new citizens from being recorded in 86-5 BC.

of 28 BC, 8 BC, and AD 14, which are all above 4 millions. Since the increase cannot of course be explained in terms of actual demographic growth between 69 and 28 BC, some kind of change must have taken place in the target population. I will return to this matter later. Before, there is a basic problem that must be discussed: the representativeness of census figures. What percentage of the total number of adult male citizens do these numbers represent?

Lo Cascio believes that the census figures only represent a tiny part of the total population. According to him, the efficiency of census registrations was seriously compromised by the fact that this could take place only at Rome. Lo Cascio argues that this custom was retained until the very last decades of the republic, and only around the date of the *Tabula Heracleensis* (45-44BC?) did the practice change to local *census* recording. Besides, Lo Cascio believes that usually men under arms were not registered: the main exception being the census of 204-3 BC, when, as we know from Livy (29.37.5), the censors went to great lengths to register soldiers in service abroad, an anomaly which would explain the sudden peak recorded by the census figure of that years.

De Ligt (2012: 95-98), on his part, has a more optimistic view of the efficiency of census procedures. As for the place of registration, De Ligt (2012: 106-112; 119) suggests that the procedure was already being carried out on a local basis, and that the relevant passage of the *Tabula Heracleensis* simply reports an earlier law. De Ligt also suggests that failure to record soldiers in active service was quite exceptional (in 209-8 BC, for example, Rome had more urgent priorities) (see also Hin 2013: 144-5), and argues that under normal conditions the names of soldiers could be copied from their (or their fathers') old census records into the new census. As a consequence of their disagreement on the efficiency of census procedures, De Ligt and Lo Cascio have very different ideas on the representativeness of census figures. De Ligt estimates that underregistration was around 20%, whereas Lo Cascio sets it at 45%.

Above, I have mentioned that Augustus' *Res Gestae* contain *civium capita* figures that are above 4 millions. They are as follows:

- 28 BC: 4,063,000 (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 8.2).
- 8 BC: 4,233,000 (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 8.3).
- AD 14: 4,937,000 (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 8.4).

According to Beloch, Brunt, and De Ligt, Augustus changed the registration practices, now recording the entire population of Italy. Against this interpretation, Lo Cascio insists that the expression *civium capita* cannot be overlooked (as De Ligt 2012: 121-128 admits). Lo Cascio argues that there was no change in practice, and that Augustan figures continue to represent the adult male population. Simply, unlike the republican censors, Augustus succeeded to record the greater part of it. Lo Cascio's explanation does not only do justice to the expression *civium capita*, but also fits well with the context in which the Augustan figures are inserted. In the relevant passage of the *Res Gestae*, Augustus also mentions his carrying out the *lustrum*, a military ceremony closely tied with the *census*. Lo Cascio concludes that Augustus' traditionalism would hardly justify a change in practice.

At this point, the reason why Lo Cascio sets underregistration at 45% is clear: even accounting for a very steady population growth, the republican and the Augustan census figures can only be reconciled by setting a very high underregistration rate in the republic. Now, I am ready to concede that, to some extent, the huge leap between the census of 70-69 and 28 BC should be explained by increased registration of adult male citizens in Italy. It is perfectly possible that the Augustan census was more efficient, as Lo Cascio argues. Besides, the census tally was certainly boosted by the citizenship grant to Cisalpine Gaul. Finally, there is the serious possibility that a large number of Italians who had received the citizenship after the Social War were not recorded before Augustus. As Lo Cascio (2008: 245) has noticed, in comparison to the territorial expansion of the *ager Romanus*, the quantity of new citizens recorded in 70-69 BC was pretty low. Lo Cascio concludes that "the low counters must either assume that the demographic effects of the Social and Civil Wars were utterly disastrous, or take on board the view that population densities within the territories of the new *ciues* were very low in comparison with the old *ager Romanus*": according to Lo Cascio, both options are less likely than assuming that a certain amount of Italians were not recorded before 28 BC.

At any rate, as I have explained in Section 3, there are serious reasons to doubt that 14 million people actually lived in Italy around the turn of the millennium (although it should be restated once again that though extremely unlikely, this is not impossible). Lo Cascio's superior interpretation of the meaning of the Augustan figures could be retained only if one assumed that a large part of the 14 million citizens ca. were actually living in the provinces.[211] Indeed, it has been suggested (e.g. Crawford 2008) that the number of citizens in the provinces was much higher than we currently assume. It should also be noticed that a large number of provincials were granted the citizenship between 70 BC and 28 BC: citizenship grants became quantitatively relevant after Actium, when Antony's veterans were settled in *coloniae civium Romanorum*.[212]

However, scholars are split on the possibility that Roman citizens living in the provinces amounted to a few millions. Others, such as De Ligt (2012: 121 ff.) prefer to believe that, despite any philological argument to the contrary, Augustus actually changed the target of the census, and thus his figures also include women and children. I will avoid taking sides on the issue here. My point is different: Lo Cascio's underregistration rate derives exclusively from his need to reconcile republican census figures with a supposed Italian population of 14 million people under Augustus. Once we deny that there were so many people in Italy at that time, the reasons to postulate this particular underregistration rate suddenly disappear.

Let us move now to De Ligt's ca. 20%. As I will demonstrate now, this figure is based

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[211] This, of course, would mean that, before Augustus, the registration rate of Roman citizens in the provinces was extremely low.

[212] Raggi's (2006: 223-229; see also Purpura 2012) new edition of Octavian's edict *de privilegiis veteranorum* proves that veterans were not necessarily given the citizenship. However, as I will explain in Chapter 4, there are good reasons to believe that the thousands of Antony's veterans who were settled in *coloniae civium Romanorum* were not citizens. Octavian's edict must pertain only to the auxiliary troops who fought with the triumvirs. Indeed, among the possible datings, 37 BC (well before Actium) is by far the most likely.

on Polybius' description of the Roman and allied forces that confronted the Gallic invasion of Italy in 225 BC. At 2.23-4, Polybius describes the descent of the Celtic chieftains to the south with their army "of about 50,000 foot and 20,000 horse and chariots". These numbers do not correspond to the Gauls' total strength, as some soldiers were left behind to guard their rear against the Veneti and Cenomani. Polybius goes on to describe Rome's response to the Gallic invasion. He explains that Rome had armies in active service in various parts of Italy, which also included (as usual) allied troops; besides, Etruscans, Sabines, Umbrians and Sarsinates had troops in active service. Furthermore, Polybius explains that Rome also asked her allies for detailed figures on their manpower. It is universally agreed that Polybius' figures come from Fabius Pictor (De Ligt 2012: 41-42). The figures can be summarised as follows:

- Men under arms:

  −22,000 (4 consular armies).

  −8,800 (reserve armies stationed in Sicily and Tarentum).

  −21,500 (reserves stationed at Rome).

  −32,000 (allies attached to consular armies).

  −32,000 (reserve allies stationed in Rome).

  −> 54,000 (Etruscans and Sabines).

  −20,000 (Umbrians and Sarsinates).

- Men on the registers:

  −273,000 (Romans and Campanians).

  −85,000 (Latins).

  −77,000 (Samnites).

  −66,000 (Iapygians and Messapians).

  −33,000 (Lucanians).

  −24,000 (Marsi, Marrucini, Frentani, Vestini).

- Total: > 696,000.[213]

It is not immediately clear what these figures represent. In Beloch's and Brunt's view, they represented all adult Roman males, but only the allied *iuniores* (Brunt 1971: 56-57).[214] Lo Cascio and Malanima (2005), on their part, suggest that these figures only include males of military age up to 45 years, thus representing around 75% of the total adult male population (see De Ligt 2012: 55-63 for refutation of this interpretation). De Ligt (2012) has formulated a very seductive interpretation of Polybius' figures. According to him, the figures include all the adult males, both Romans and allies, and (De Ligt 2012: 54-55) are representative of almost the entire population of the peninsula, with only about 5% of them going unregistered. This was the case, according to De Ligt, because a *tumultus Gallicus* had been declared – or, to be precise, the "general atmosphere strongly resembl[ed] that created by the declaration of a pan-Italian *tumultus*" (De Ligt 2012: 53, n. 46).

In fact, as Polybius' (2.23.9-10) explicitly states, the Romans wanted to know "what their total forces amounted to". For this reason, Polybius explains, Rome decided to request lists (ἀπογραφαί) of all the men of military age (ἐν ταῖς ἡλικίαις: see De Ligt 2012: 55-63 for discussion of the expression) from her Southern allies.[215] The figures returned by the allies in

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[213] The 20,000 Veneti and Cenomani mentioned by Polybius should be added to the total of Rome's allies. A serious problem affecting the use of Polybius' figures to reconstruct Italy's demography is that these data do not cover Cisalpine Gaul, Bruttium, and the Greek cities of Southern Italy. Estimates for these territories vary: whereas the low-counters suggest around 200,000 people for Bruttium and Greek cities, and 1 million for Cisalpine Gaul, the high counters suggest that the population of these areas amounted to some 4 million (Lo Cascio and Malanima 2005). In absence of precise data, the reliability of all these figures is questionable. In particular, the estimate depends on: (1) our assumptions on the military efforts and enrolment rates among the peoples of Cisalpine Gaul. For example, Brunt assumed that the 50,000 Insubrians reported by Polybius amounted to "every available" man; (2) our preconceptions on the importance of agriculture in Celtic societies. The low-counters imply a density of population of around 10 inhabitants per square km, as opposed to high counters' 32.5. These figures correspond to different images of Cisalpine Gaul: scarcely cultivated, with extensive swamps and forests, according to the low-counters (e.g. De Ligt 2012: 72); more intensively cultivated, according to the high-counters.

[214] De Ligt (2012: 43) seems to believe that according to Brunt the figures represent all adult males, and only in the case of Latins they represents only *iuniores*. This impression may be simply due to De Ligt's brevity, or perhaps to Brunt's obscurity.

[215] Apparently, the northern allies (Etruscans, Sabines, Umbrians, Sarsinates) are only included among the men in active service because they had already deployed their full strength.

the καταγραφαί are given by Polybius a few sentences below (Pol. 2.24.10), and at this point he also provides the numbers of the citizens (Romans and Campanians) who were recorded (κατελέχθησαν). From Polybius' terminology, it seems uncontroversial that the lists of Romans and Campanians, as well as of the allies, were compiled *ex novo*, and attempted to be as inclusive as possible.

At this point, once he has argued that the number of Romans and Campanians provided by Polybius comes from a list that is more inclusive than census records, and almost manages to include the exact number of the adult male population, De Ligt can compare Polybius' figures with the census figure of 234 BC. Once the maths are done, the result is as follows: 325,300 – 270,713 = 54,687 (– 16.81%). It should be noticed that De Ligt nowhere explains what he is doing, but there is no other possible explanation for his suggestion that during the late 3rd century BC about 17% of the population went unrecorded, which otherwise would be totally invented.

However, there are two reasons to suspect that Polybius (or his source Fabius) was – inadvertently or not – passing off as a new and detailed reckoning of Roman and Italian manpower figures that actually had another significance. Carelessness or outright manipulation would not be inconceivable: Polybius' struggle for reliability drives him to report figures of doubtful provenance, such as those on Gallic manpower (how could the Gallic troops be counted at all?).[216]

Let us begin with the lists requested from the allies who had not already deployed their full strength (see n. 215). These are usually taken to be the *formula togatorum*, i.e. the lists of allied manpower that formed the basis of Rome's conscription of allied troops.[217] Since both

[216] The best case scenario of which I can think is that the number of Gallic troops may have been vaguely reconstructed *ex post*, using the numbers of casualties and prisoners. This, however, is extremely unlikely.
[217] In the epigraphical *lex agraria* (*Roman Statutes* 1.2, ll. 21; 50), mention is made twice of "whichever Roman citizen or ally or member of the Latin name, from whom they [the Romans] are accustomed to demand troops in the land of Italy, according to the *formula togatorum*" (Bispham 2007: 61). It is unclear when these lists were introduced. Although a mention of mutual military help is made in Dionysius'

Fabius Pictor and Polybius were well acquainted with the recruitment systems of Rome, I have no doubt that Polybius' reference to lists of all allies of military age is meant to refer to the *formula*. However, we should not take for granted that this was actually the case. As Scheidel (2004) has noticed, the ratios between allies and Romans on the registers are very neat: their infantries are of identical size, and the allied cavalry is 1.5 times the Roman one. De Ligt (2012: 48) objects that the ratio is not neat at all, once the Northern allies are taken into account, but this argument actually begs the question: Scheidel is not arguing that the ratio between allies and Romans is suspicious, but that the ratio between Romans and allies *on the registers* is suspicious (the Northern allies were not on the registers).

Scheidel concludes that Polybius' figures are a forgery, constructed "on the basis of known active and passive Roman troop strength" (De Ligt 2012: 47). However, I agree with De Ligt that this is not the case. I believe that an alternative explanation can be conceived. There are indications in Polybius that not all the peoples of Italy felt the Gallic threat equally. At 2.31.7, for example, he explains that, although the Gauls were considered as a threat by everyone in Italy, this was especially the case for the Romans. It is true that elsewhere he states that everyone in Italy feared the Gauls, and all the peoples joined their forces against the invaders:

> "On every side there was a ready disposition to help in every possible way; for the inhabitants of Italy, terror-struck by the invasion of the Gauls, no longer thought of themselves as the allies of Rome or regarded this war as undertaken to establish Roman supremacy, but every man considered that the peril was descending on himself and his own city and country. So there was great alacrity in obeying orders" (transl. LCL).

However, this depiction is to some extent influenced by the Roman concern to present their domination of Italy as the achievement of unity of different peoples who shared the same aims, and who were even bound by kinship: a confederacy under Rome's leadership, from which all

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description of the *foedus Cassianum* of 493 BC (Dio. Hal. 6.95), it is generally thought that Polybius may be describing the creation of proper lists, or at least a subsequent reform of the system (Brunt 1971: 547; Russo 2012: 159). According to Beloch, the *formula* fixed the maximum number of soldiers that Rome could demand. So also Toynbee. See Brunt (1971: 545-548) for discussion.

members profited, and in which they all prospered (on Roman reflections on their relationship with Italy see now Russo 2012). Thus, if we admit that Polybius is exaggerating the perception of the common threat in order to give the impression of a greater unity between Rome and the Italians, it can be easily conceived that, whereas the northern allies – under the direct threat of the Gallic invasion – fearing for their survival turned up at their full strength from the very first moment, Southern allies did not take the initiative, but (after providing the usual number of troops) just waited for Rome's orders. In the mounting climate of fear, Rome sent instructions to mobilize a certain number of troops. This number, however, was not established by Rome according to the actual manpower of the allies, but so that it should be equal to Rome's total manpower.

Let us move now to the number of Romans and Campanians. De Ligt's idea that Polybius' figures are representative of almost the total adult male population is based on the assumption that, on the occasion of the *tumultus Gallicus*, Rome carried out a lengthy and complex procedure almost identical to a *census*, and in certain aspects even more accurate.[218] This is extremely unlikely. Being emergency measures, tumultuary levies did not entail any recording procedure: simply, every adult male showed up to fight.[219] It is very hard to believe that, faced by the Gallic threat, Rome decided to spend energies and time carrying out a more refined version of the *census*, when one was already available.[220]

In fact, as Beloch noticed, the figure of 273,000 men in the registers is suspiciously similar to the *census* of 234 BC (270,713: Liv. *Per.* 20): his explanation that the figure of citizens in the registers provided by Polybius actually comes from the *census* of 234 BC is still the most likely. This, as De Ligt (2012: 42) points out, would mean that either Fabius or

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218 The only difference would be that no assessment of property was required.

219 One could even doubt of the voluntary nature of tumultuary levies. Thackeray's *Barry Lyndon* provides an extraordinary depiction of the "informal" ways in which extraordinary military demands could be catered for by officers in charge of enrolment.

220 This is all the more true considering that De Ligt believes the census to have been carried out on a local basis, i.e. through a lengthier and more complex procedure.

Polybius counted the men in active service twice, as men in service and as men on the registries. I would not be so horrified as De Ligt is by this possibility. My interpretation is, of course, very bold, since it requires us to imagine that either Fabius Pictor or Polybius misrepresented the available documents, *i.e.* the *census* lists of 234 BC, and a list of troops requested from the allies, as the total manpower of Rome and her Italian allies. However, since this is far from impossible, my interpretation is preferable to De Ligt's, as it explains the very neat ratios between Roman and allied troops, and also does more justice to the historical context of a tumultuary levy.

So far, I have argued that neither current theory on the percentage of registration is justified by the evidence. The impression that the census failed to record a large number of people is hard to avoid. Whereas, according to De Ligt, under-registration only concerned proletarians, it would appear that also *adsidui* could have cold feelings about registration: this would explain why, after the retariffing of the *denarius* in the 140s and the reduction of the minimum threshold for registration among the *adsidui* (Rathbone 1993: 139-146; *contra* Lo Cascio 2008: 247-248) – measures affecting a high number of people – , the census of 142-1 BC showed a population increase of a mere 5,000 people.

Under-registration could also be worsened by a certain ineffectiveness of local censuses, which, though certainly more inclusive than centralized procedures, were also more difficult for censors to supervise. Let us take for example Archias, the poet from the southern Italian Greek city of Heraclea defended by Cicero from the accusation of having usurped the Roman citizenship. According to Cicero's defence (Cic. *Arch. 2*), Archias was a Roman citizen, but there was no evidence of it, since he had missed both the census of 86-5 BC and that of 70-69 BC, being away with the army in the East on both occasions. According to De Ligt (2012: 98), it was only the destruction of the local records of Heraclea in the Social war (Cic. *Arch.* 8) that prevented Archias' name from being copied into the census. One cannot help but be surprised that it was only when Archias' citizenship was called into question that the destruction of the local census of Heraclea was brought up: when the censuses were being compiled, nobody in Heraclea bothered to inform the Roman censors that a certain number of names would have been missed, since they were not in town, and any previous record had disappeared. Although De Ligt's case that men under arms were commonly recorded is certainly strong, geographical distance will have made inefficiencies particularly severe.[221] However, owing to the absence of data, we could set under-registration rates as high or as low as we like. Therefore, although reasonable hypotheses on possible scenarios can be formulated, it is absolutely impossible to come up with precise figures for the Italian population.

For our present purposes, however, the absolute quantity of the population is relatively useless. In order to determine whether employment and wages were under pressure, we need to assess growth rates. I believe, however, that neither this can be done, since registration rates appear to have suffered from dramatic and unpredictable swings.

Since De Ligt believes that the efficiency of census procedures remained more or less stable throughout the republic, he can assume that, in percentage, underregistration remained more or less stable. In De Ligt's (2012: 97 and n. 78) opinion, the consistency of the registration rates is proved by the absence of sudden increases and decreases, that is the absence of fluctuations. The only fluctuation that he notices is that of 125-4 BC, when the registration rate grew somewhat. In this case, De Ligt explains, growth was a consequence of the Gracchan land reforms: whereas by the *census* of 131 BC the benefits of the land scheme were not clear to the *proletarii* yet, by 125 BC they were; therefore, a large number of proletarians previously unregistered presented themselves to the *census*, attracted by the prospect of being included in the land distribution schemes.

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[221] It should be noticed that De Ligt's argument that soldiers in service were recorded using previous census lists would require their names to have been recorded in some sort of list. Only in this way it would have been possible to know what citizens had not showed up at the *census* because they were on active duty with the army. Now, the existence of such lists is possible, but there is no evidence at all. Besides, on a minor note, it is not clear to me how public officers were expected to know whether soldiers on duty were still alive, considering that as far as we can tell no certification of birth and death existed.

Unfortunately, despite De Ligt's opinion, the figures reveal fluctuations in two other cases. The first is the *census* of 194-3 BC, that is considerably lower than the previous *census* (204-3 BC), almost dropping to the levels of 209-8 BC. De Ligt argues that the figure is corrupt, but there is no reason why it should be so. In the second instance, instead, the opposite case is visible: a sudden drop followed by a sudden increase in the space of barely 10 years. For the year 179-8 BC, the Livian tradition (*Per*. 41) provides a census figure of 258,794. For the year 174-3 BC, for which we have Livy's text, the figure reported is 269,015 (42.10), but Livy also claims that the number of citizens recorded in that occasion was much lower than at the former *census*. It is beyond doubt, then, that the census of 174-3 BC was actually lower than the previous one, and the figure was corrupted at some point in the transmission (is this a textual corruption, or a mistake of the epitomator?).[222] It is therefore striking that the following census, that of 169-8 BC, peaks at 312,805 *civium capita.*

For all these reasons, Lo Cascio's approach to fluctuations seems much more promising. He argues that, although some fluctuations depended on structural reasons, such as groups losing or acquiring the citizenship (Lo Cascio 2008: 248-250 mentions the expulsion of 12,000 Latins after 187 BC, and the inclusion of Campanians and other communities after 189 BC), fluctuations primarily depended on the unpredictable efficiency of census procedures.[223] Partly, efficiency depended on census procedures, on which we are extremely poorly informed: we only happen to know that the censors of 179 BC introduced some change to census

[222] In addition, it should be noticed that even if we accepted the census figure preserved by the tradition for the year 174-3 BC, the yearly growth rate between 174 and 169 would be extremely high.

[223] The Campanians had become *cives sine suffragio* after the Samnite Wars (Frederiksen 1984: 207-216). They acquired full citizen rights in 189 BC: Liv. 38.28.4; 38.36.5-9; De Ligt 2012: 142, n.25 cautiously remarks that Livy only speaks of *connubium*, but registration in Rome suggests that they also became *ciues optimo iure*. Lo Cascio (2001:582-583) has argued that *ciues sine suffragio* were not included in the Roman census, but his arguments, although solid, can be rejected: (1) *contra* Lo Cascio, Livy does not consider the *ciues sine suffragio* as *socii*: Sisani 2009: 60-61, and see also De Ligt 2012: 94 for the suggestion that they were initially recruited separately, and then added to the legions. (2) The existence of *Tabulae Caeritum* is compatible with the inclusion of *ciues sine suffragio* in the *census*. These lists, kept in Rome, could be used to make sure that *ciues sine suffragio* did not vote; the *census*, instead, also had fiscal and military purposes. It seems to me that De Ligt's (2012: 89-91) argument in favour of the inclusion of the *ciues sine suffragio* in the *census* is definitive: if the census figures of the 4th and 3rd century did not include them, population densities would be unrealistically high.

registration (Liv. 45.51.9); even in this case, though, the real nature and impact of the innovations elude us completely. One cannot overlook, however, how the different ability and interests of the various censors influenced the representativeness of census records (Lo Cascio 2008: 252). For example, Lo Cascio convincingly uses Livy's report of the census of 169-8 BC (43.14.2-10) to argue that the sudden increase of the census figure of that year is a consequence of the higher efficiency of registration procedures.

A perfect example of the variables that could affect the *census* inclusivity is provided by the *census* of 70 BC. In that year, as Cicero explains (*Verr.* 1.15.54), the census was held at the same time as games and elections, and a large crowd assembled in Rome. The passage has been taken by Lo Cascio as proving that the census was carried out only in Rome; De Ligt (2012: 117), by contrast, suggests that the crowd was mostly composed by people who had come to Rome to vote and/or assist to the games, and the only people who had come for the *census* were the delegates of the *municipia*, sent to deliver their local census lists. For some reason, the high individual mobility of the ancient Italian population is consistently ignored in discussions of registration elusion. A partial exception is Scheidel (2004), who discusses individual mobility, but only deals with definitive relocation, and is primarily interested in migration to Rome. Instead, we should remember that people also migrated away from Rome, and that a lot of people relocated only temporarily: traders, sailors, etc. In fact, there is no reason to separate the census of 70 BC from the games and elections. It can be argued that, in that occasion, a large number of people returned to Rome for the games and the elections, and, since they were in town, they were also registered in the census. Otherwise, one can only guess how many people will have missed registration because they were away from their hometown, and did not bother to return only to be registered.

To conclude, I believe that the population growth rate cannot be assessed because the percentage of total population targeted by single census figures is extremely variable. In Lo Cascio's reconstruction of the Italian demography, the fluctuations of registration rates are essentially irrelevant, since he posits an extremely high population. But if we posit a much lower population figure, as I believe we should, the variations suffered by registration rates through time have devastating effects on our hopes to obtain reliable figures of population growth. This is an unsurmountable problem for any attempt to understand whether competition for labour and access to tenancy grew in the late republic. In fact, even admitting that the population of Italy grew, we should keep in mind that so did the quantity of land under cultivation: land reclamation, terracing, clearance of woodland, and the reconversion of grazing land, all contributed to increasing the cultivated area of Italy. We cannot be sure, then, that there was an actual shortage of employment opportunities.

5. The impact of slaves on Italian agriculture.

As I have explained in Chapter 1, Section 1, according to a scholarly position that has been in fashion until the early 2000's, the appearance, growth, and decline of Italian entrepreneurial agriculture – as well as its features – could be established by combining the archaeological evidence of agricultural production with the descriptions provided by ancient literature, in particular by the so-called Latin agronomists (Cato, Varro, Columella, and the later Palladius, whose work is not considered here). However, new studies have now questioned this methodology. In fact, as Marzano (2007: 125 ff.) has demonstrated, too often literary descriptions have been used to support interpretations of material remains that were far from self-evident. At Settefinestre, for example, the excavators interpreted the rooms arranged around a courtyard as slave quarters (wrongly defined *ergastula*: see n. 232) because from ancient literature they expected every villa to have them. According to Marzano, the rooms in question are more likely to have been depots or stables.

The implications of Marzano's alternative interpretations of supposed slave quarters in Italian villas are profound. Although Rathbone (2009) has warned us from throwing the baby out with the bathwater, and has pointed out that the absence of slave quarters from Settefinestre does not prevent us from believing in the popularity of rural slavery (Marzano herself, in fact, has no problem in conceding that slaves were present at the villa), we should at least admit that no material remains can give us a hint of the actual extent of rural slavery (for slave quarters in urban contexts see below).[224]

In fact, the only evidence of the role of slaves in Italian agriculture comes from the literary sources. However, literary evidence should not be taken at face value. In recent years, it has become more and more apparent that the Latin agricultural treatises do not provide hard data that can be taken at face value. In fact, they are complex literary artefacts, that require

[224] Marzano suggested that at Settefinestre slaves could be kept in barracks made of timber; *contra* Fentress (2008: 241), who deems Marzano's suggestion as “pure fantasy”, considering that in the area the typical building technique is “*pisé de terre* on a masonry foundation”, which is cheaper than timber.

sophisticated analysis. Varro's *De re rustica* has been the first of the triad to be approached with the use of a refined literary toolkit (Kronenberg 2009; Nelsestuen 2015). This is not surprising: being a dialogue, its literary nature is perhaps more evident. The other two, seemingly being crude handbooks, are still assumed to have some sort of scientific reliability. Actually, though, they are first and foremost rhetorical pieces: they have their own agenda, and they want to *persuade* their readers. Therefore, the information that they provide should be analysed case by case, always paying attention to the authors' aims and rhetorical strategies.

For example, Cato's description of a "medium-sized farmstead with a workforce of over a dozen slaves" (Terrenato 2001: 24) cannot be understood outside the ideological framework of the *De Agri Cultura* (*Ibidem*). Cato's *De Agri cultura* is part of his self-representation as a "man of the people", a *homo novus* who has risen through the ranks of Roman society thanks to his hard work and exceptional qualities. He notoriously claimed to have spent his youth working the *Sabina saxa* with his own hands (see Chapter 2). Therefore, as is visible in the preface, where he talks of direct farming, Cato consistently tries to portray himself as poorer than he actually is, and for this reason he describes an estate that is certainly not the biggest among the many that he must have owned.[225] As a consequence of this aspect of Cato's self-representation, his description of farmsteads and farming should be handled with great care: we cannot use the relatively small size of Cato's estate to postulate a Catonian phase of the villa, as the excavators of Settefinestre did.[226]

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[225] The most striking example of the ideological relevance of poverty in Cato's description of the farm is the prescription to plaster walls with soil, straw, and oil sludge (*De Agr.* 128), which Terrenato (2012: 81) rightly defines a "rhetorical hyperbole".

[226] The rejection of the reliability of the figures provided by the ancient agronomists has also delivered the final blow to the "genetic" model of the Roman villa. As I have explained in Chapter 1, Section 1, the figures provided by Cato, Varro and Columella were used to argue that the Roman villa had been progressively adapted and optimised from Hellenistic farmsteads around the time of Cato. Although the Greek origin of Roman villas still has its supporters (Carandini and Cambi 2002: 10-12), this model is now called into question by the discovery of the Auditorium villa (see Torelli 2012 for an attempt to analyse the relationship between Greek and Italian models in the light of the new discoveries). Terrenato (2001) has suggested that villas already existed in Archaic Rome, although the only extant examples are the Auditorium Villa and Grottarossa. These villas, according to Terrenato, have their model in the Etruscan palaces such as that of Murlo. Terrenato also argues that until the 1st century BC villas remained few in numbers, and only the most powerful families owned one. In fact, it is now clear that the boom

At the same time, though, Cato also attempts to present himself as the best authority on agriculture and an extraordinary farmer (on the importance of profits in Cato's *De Agri cultura* see Chapter 4).[227] Therefore, we should be careful when using Cato's numbers of slaves, and the balance of servile and free manpower that is visible in his work. As Roth (2007: 121) rightly sums it up, Cato's description of the slave-staffed villa is an ideal model that never found its full application. Nor is the subsequent criticism of Cato's figures – such as Varro's (*Rust*. 1.18), who also takes issue with Saserna's figures – more reliable. Similar debates over figures, such as Columella's (3.3) criticism of Cato and Varro on the productivity of vineyards, should be seen as a competition among rhetors who want to prevail over each other in making their readers believe that they are the best authority in the field.

Nowhere is the Latin agronomists' rhetorical bias – and the paradoxical outcomes of taking them seriously – better visible than in Columella's discussion of the profitability of vineyards. In a passage of his third book, Columella (3.3.8-11) attempts to demonstrate through a basic calculation that viticulture is extremely profitable. He explains that even accounting for the cost of purchasing the land, the cost of setting up cultivations, and the cost of purchasing an experienced *vinitor*, the entreprise would still be extremely profitable, even accepting the average yield suggested by Iulius Graecinus in his calculations, which Columella believes to be on the lower end of the scale.[228]

Before Rathbone's (1991) study of the Heroninos archive, the entire debate on ancient

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of villa building is a 1st century BC phenomenon (Terrenato 2001; Marzano 2007). Very few villas existed until then, and far fewer were built later. Marzano (2007: 210-212) tentatively suggests that the decline of villa buildings may be due to the ongoing concentration of landownership, and she also points out that the advent of the Principate may have been a factor. I would also suggest that the changing composition of the senate, with the inclusion of provincial senators, may have had a role in the decline of villa building in Italy. As we know from Plin. *Ep*. 6.19, provincial senators owned land in the provinces, perhaps more commonly than in Italy. We should also consider that, since villa ownership was part of the self-representation of Roman politicians, the decline of assemblies and elections may have reduced its attractiveness.

227 Notoriously, elsewhere Cato advised to give priority to other, more profitable activities such as husbandry (Cic. *Off.* 89).

228 Iulius Graecinus was a senator, executed under Gaius. He was the father of Iulius Agricola, Tacitus' father-in-law.

accounting rationality had focused on this passage.[229] Dissent was centred on why Columella had left out some costs of which one should keep record to assess the profitability of the endeavour: things such as villa maintenance, gear, and the grain to feed workers. According to Finley, their absence proved that the ancients were unable to take rational economic decisions, and Columella's attempt was, at most, a “merely perfunctory desk exercise” (Finley 1973: 117). Carandini (1983; now 1988: 235-265; so also Lo Cascio 2009: 59), on the other hand, explained the entries missing from Columella's calculation according to Kula's theory (originally pertaining to Polish feudalism) of a bisectorial economy. According to this theory, some goods were not exchanged on the market, but were produced inside the estate; therefore, not having a monetary value, they could not be entered into accounts.[230]

It should be immediately clear that Columella's calculation simply does not allow any conclusion on ancient economic rationality, let alone on the existence of a bisectorial economy. Columella did not invest his money relying on such calculations. Nor did Columella's readers.

[229] Finley's argument that the absence of double-entry book-keeping is a symptom of backwardness should be rejected, as other systems have been shown to be capable of similar levels of refinement (Macve 1985). Rathbone's (1991) study of around 450 papyri of the so-called Heroninos archive has shown that Aurelius Appianus' estates adopted an accounting system based on internal cash credits, even for transactions in kind. The modernity of this system is striking: it is similar, for example, to that adopted by James Mason at Eynsham Hall (Oxfordshire) as late as the early 20th century, and considered by historians as modern and efficient (see Dewey 2013). Andreau and Maucourant (1999: 69) argue that this was an “old custom”, to be traced back to pharaonic Egypt. *Contra* Rathbone (2005: 266): “no Pharaonic-period account can be said, in any meaningful sense, to have costed most inputs and outputs by their market price in cash”. At the time of Rathbone's original study, he estimated that another 600 papyri belonging to Appianus' archive awaited publication. Those made available since then are discussed by Rathbone (2005) and Pintaudi and Rathbone (2011-2012). As opposed to Eynsham Hall's accounts, however, those of Appianus' estate do not consider certain expenses, such as “the cost and depreciation of draft animals, and fixed capital, including buildings and facilities for pressing grapes and olives” (Kehoe 1993: 483). I believe that their absence can be explained by considering that keeping record of them would only make sense if the profitability of agriculture were to be assessed against that of other investments. This was the case at Eynsham Hall, whose accounting was based on the assumption that, if the estate turned out to be unprofitable, it could be sold and the money invested in a different activity: “farming was a business, and needed to pay attention to its rate of return on capital, as compared with the return on other occupations in which it might have been employed” (Dewey 2013: 227). The accounts of Appian's estate, instead, do not account for expenses that would only make sense if one had to choose between agriculture and other forms of investment. For discussion of why the Roman elites always tended to invest part of their capital in agriculture see Chapter 4.

[230] Whittaker (1985: 69) remarks that the comparison is misplaced, because (a) Kula actually considered the Polish nobility unable to calculate profits, and (b) some entries missing from Columella's calculation cannot be explained by their not entering the market, because they did.

It was all about rhetorical showing-off: Columella is proving that he is able to defend even the most controversial argument, and that all depends on choosing the right weapon (numbers, in this case); which is exactly what his readers want to read. He does not want to be accurate, but to make a superficially persuasive case. In order to achieve this result, Columella is willing to pass over some expenses in silence. At the same time, he exaggerates the profitability of viticulture, for example overlooking the problem of crop failure.[231]

In conclusion, given the literary nature of the agronomical treatises, we definitely cannot attempt to calculate the number of slaves (as has often been done: *e.g.* Carandini 1984) using the figures on labour that these texts provide. In fact, it is now apparent that preconceptions about rural slavery have largely influenced the interpretation of Roman agriculture. Particularly influential has been the comparison with the American plantations, where slaves were extensively used as labour force. In recent years, the view of the villa as a plantation has been rejected (Roth 2007), although it is far from clear how we should actually imagine its production systems (see Fentress' [2008] criticism of Roth 2007).[232]

In sum, we have to admit that the only basis on which we can assume that rural slavery actually had a large impact on free farmers is the very sources that idealize the republican past and complain about the current decline (e.g. Appian, Livy, and Pliny: see Chapter 2, Section 5).[233] Now, as I have explained above, archaeology reveals that the Italian countryside was not

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[231] In one instance known from his correspondence, for example, Pliny had to reimburse the merchants who had purchased his vintage in advance, when the yield turned out to be extremely unsatisfactory (8.2).

[232] The rejection of the plantation model, though, does not imply that American plantations cannot be used as a term of comparison for the miserable life and cruel treatment of ancient slaves. Note, however, that although, as human beings, we have the moral obligation to condemn slavery, as historians we must try to look at the evidence with an unbiased eye. This, for example, has been correctly done by Roth (2011), who has showed that the use of fetters was less widespread than previously assumed, as this was actually a punishment for unruly slaves. Roth has also demonstrated that slaves were not usually kept in *ergastula*, but these too were used for punishment.

[233] This limit holds true also for those studies such as Hopkins', claiming to be completely independent from the traditional historiographical method of "making assertions and using selected quotations from the sources to support them" (Bowman 1980: 291). Indeed, as Bowman points out, actually for the most part of his work Hopkins "*does* [Bowman's italics] account for the [literary] evidence". As De Ligt (2012: 164) has noticed, given Hopkins' skepticism on the reliability of the written sources, his narrative's close resemblance to Appian's is very suspicious.

depopulated. On the contrary, in most areas smaller sites continue to be visible.[234] This, combined with the frequent mention of free labour in the agronomical treatises (Marcone 2009), should lead us to at least not take for granted that during the 2nd and 1st centuries BC slaves progressively replaced free labourers.

Another direction followed by scholars to understand the impact of slavery on Italian agriculture consists in a “bottom-up” approach. There is, it should be noticed, no consensus on the number of slaves. According to Brunt, there were some 3 million slaves in Augustan Italy. Hopkins had a very similar view, just setting the number of slaves under Augustus at the slightly inferior level of 2 millions, which had already been suggested by Beloch. More recently, Scheidel (2005) has argued that the number of rural slaves did not exceed 700,000.

Equally debated is the scale of slave population growth. According to Scheidel's model, slavery expanded at a much lower pace than Brunt imagined: whereas Brunt assumed that 500,000 slaves were present in Italy in 225 BC, and therefore their number had increased sixfold by Augustus' times, Scheidel sets the number of rural slaves in 225 BC at 300,000, and therefore imagines that their number just doubled in around two centuries. De Ligt (2012: 164; 341-2) posits a slightly higher growth, arguing that there must have been about 800,000 slaves in Italy in 28 BC. However, despite deep disagreement on its actual dimensions and pace, there is a universal consensus among scholars, that slavery (including rural slavery) did actually grow very fast, and had a considerable impact on Italian agriculture.

All these figures are hardly supported by the evidence. As Scheidel (2005: 65) has noticed, Brunt's and Hopkins' estimates are entirely notional, deriving from the assumption that, “in those cases in which the actual share of slaves is thought to be significant” , their number must amount to roughly one-third of the total population (which Brunt estimated at 7 million

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[234] Carandini explained the ongoing presence of smaller sites in terms of “residual” modes of production that survived only in peripheral areas, whereas the villa-system had become “dominant” only in “key-areas” (see Chapter 1, section 1). The *suburbium*, however, would remain unexplained, since it was a key area, and had villas, but it also had smaller sites. Carandini 1985 is an excellent treatment of agricultural production in the *suburbium*, but does not discuss the inconsistency.

people under Augustus). However, his attempt to provide more refined figures is not more secure. Scheidel's figure of rural slaves (which I report here in De Ligt's slightly adjusted form) is based on the assumption that slaves were only used in commercial agriculture; this leads him to estimate some 100,000 slaves engaged in oil and wine production, to which another 100,000 slaves are added, that is the "assistants, staff and the additional labour force needed to cultivate the grain" eaten by the slaves, plus a "*hypothetical* [my italics] 250,000 slaves engaged in grain-growing, in pasturage, in *pastio villatica* and in rural manufacturing" (De Ligt 2012: 341-2). To this number, De Ligt adds women and children to reach the total of 800,000.

It should be noticed that these figures assume that all agricultural labour was provided by slaves: since it was not so, they can at most represent the *maximum* number of rural slaves.[235] At any rate, Scheidel/De Ligt's estimate is not more reliable than Brunt's and Hopkins', since it relies on a number of undemonstrated assumptions. First, productivity: as Scheidel (2005: 67-71) himself admits, the ancient sources assume lower labour-to-land ratios. Although I believe that the productivity suggested by the sources is extremely doubtful, due to the rhetorical nature of the passages, which are mainly *perorationes* of agriculture, there is no particular reason why it should be set at the level (1 slave every 2 *iugera*) suggested by Scheidel. Second and third: demand and yields. Scheidel's numbers are based on Jongman's assumption that the volume of Italian commercial agriculture amounted to the produce of 200,000 *iugera* of Italian land, because the produce of so much land sufficed to meet the total demand. Jongman's estimate of Italian food demand, though, relies on Hopkins' estimate that in the late Republic Italy had a urban population of about 1.8 million people, half of whom were in Rome alone. This figure has been rightly criticised – even by Jongman, in a more recent paper – as "pure guesswork" (Jongman 2003: 102, n. 16; De Ligt 2012: 196). Besides, as we will see (section 6) Jongman's assumption that only towns generated demand ignores the demand generated by the

[235] On the mixed use of slave and non-slave labour see Rathbone 1981 and Foxhall 1990: 103-105.

countryside, as well as army supplies and exports.[236] Finally, Jongman's figure of how much land was necessary to cater for Italian demand is obtained using average yields that are certainly way too optimistic.[237]

However, it is the very attempt to quantify the number of slaves by calculating the dimensions of commercial agriculture – and to quantify this by calculating the size of towns – that is questionable, because we cannot be sure (and in fact, it is quite unlikely) that the contribution of slave manpower was limited to commercial agriculture. This problem has been noticed by De Ligt (2012: 341), who has adjusted his figures assuming that actually some slaves were involved in production for household consumption. However, it is completely unclear how he comes up with that particular number of slaves producing for household consumption. In conclusion, we should simply give up any hope to quantify the number of slaves in Italy.

The same uncertainty applies to growth rates. According to most scholars, the number of rural slaves in Italy grew, as we have seen, more or less steadily. Two reasons are usually produced to justify this view.[238] The first reason is that, thanks to the growth of Mediterranean

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[236] In fact, Rome appears to have adopted a deliberate mercantilistic policy in the late Republic. In a famous passage of the *De Republica*, Cicero mentions the prohibition enforced in Narbonese Gaul to grow also olive-trees (3.16: *nos vero iustissimi homines, qui transalpinas gentis oleam et vitem serere non sinimus, quo pluris sint nostra oliveta nostraeque vineae*). Rome's first concern seems to have been avoiding provincial competition in provincial markets; incidentally, though, the measure also prevented provincials from competing in the Italian market. It is hard to deny that such policy was driven by the interests of large scale commercial producers. For a recent discussion of the passage see Silver 2011. As for army supplies, the evidence for grain – which in some cases was catered for on the theatre of military operations, but was more commonly sourced beforehand – is collected by Erdkamp (1998: 180-189). It is even possible that army supplies were provided by generals' estates: for example, Manacorda (2005) connects the amphorae stamps with Pompeius' name to his campaigns in the East.

[237] Jongman (1988: 131-137) derives his yield figures from a combination of the figures provided by ancient agronomical writers and early modern and modern comparative evidence. As I have explained above, Latin agronomists are unreliable. Besides, the supposed early modern figures actually derive by no less speculative modern attempts to quantify production (see e.g. Jongman 1988: 135, n. 3, deriving from Braudel). Finally, modern yields hardly prove anything, not only because farming has improved enormously (cf. Chapter 1), but also because modern varieties are different. Jongman's figures are certainly too high, as they do not account for the frequency of crop failure and bad years.

[238] Other possible reasons in favour of an increased presence of slaves will be dealt with only briefly here. The first is the ongoing phenomenon of slave revolts. These, however, are connected by the sources with the growing number of slaves in the province of Sicily. It was only when Spartacus crossed to Italy that his army was joined by Italian slaves. Equally, slave unrest in Apulia was endemic, and mainly involved shepherds. None of these episodes proves that the number of slaves in Italy grew. A further reason that is often mentioned as proving an increased presence of slaves, is the fact that, by the early Empire, slaves and *liberti* are widely visible in material, literary and epigraphic culture. It should be

trade, slaves became more easily available. By the Augustan period, the number of slave sales carried out every year in the empire must have been in the scale of some hundreds of thousands. We know that in 7 AD Augustus introduced a tax on slave sales (the *quinta et vicesima venalium mancipiorum*) to pay the salaries of Rome's *vigiles.* Harris (1980: 121) has suggested that the yearly cost of *vigiles*' salaries must have been at least 5 million HS; using the notional slave price of 1,000 HS provided by Columella, Harris concludes that some 250,000 slave sales must have taken place every year in the open market alone, that is a fraction of the actual quantity of sales.[239] However, we should consider that the total number of slaves involved in these transactions must have been much lower. First of all, the number of transactions is necessarily higher than the number of slaves, since these changed hands several times along the "supply chain". More importantly, though, many of these transactions involved people who were already slaves, and were being resold.

That the number of transactions under Augustus (which cover the entire empire, not only Italy) is the result of the growth of slave trade is a possibility. In fact, by the late republic, two new commercial sources of slaves were available: the exchange of slaves with wine that was taking place in Gaul (Tchernia 1983 and 2009: 104-5; Kolendo 2001), and the slave trade of the eastern Mediterranean.[240] However, in earlier times slaves were already widely available (see e.g. Rosenstein 2008: 24-26 on the second Punic War). Are we able to tell how fast commercial slavery grew? Unfortunately not. Hopkins (1978: 133-171) suggested that the rising manumission prices paid by slaves at Delphi in the 2nd century BC prove that the Eastern and Western markets were integrating, and the growth of prices in Greece was precisely a

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noticed, however, that such higher visibility mostly concerns the funerary sphere (monumental tombs, *columbaria*, and tombstones), and as such it could well be explained in terms of a higher visibility of death throughout all the lower strata of the Roman population.

[239] Note that Columella's price of 1,000 HS is the price of a skilled *vinitor.* On the other hand, though, as I have argued above, the passage has a high rhetorical bias, and therefore we should not take for granted that the price is realistic.

[240] Strab. 14.5.2 links Cilician pirates with the slave trade. De Souza (1999: 99) denies that they fulfilled a structural function in it. Until 87 BC, Delos was the main market place of eastern slaves (Strab. 14.5.2; Rauh 1993: 41-52). For other trading centres see Harris 1980: 126-8.

consequence of Italy's steadily growing demand. Others, however, have suggested different explanations. Jongman (2007), in particular, has connected growing manumission prices to inflation.[241]

In fact, the relevance of the slave trade must have been minimal in comparison to the impressive number of mass enslavements carried out during Rome's military expansion.[242] Mass enslavements, though, were extremely irregular events, which did not necessarily translate into a constantly increased presence of slaves.[243] What were the average age and gender balance of war prisoners? How many of them succeeded in surviving long enough to give birth to children? These questions must remain unanswered.[244] Besides, it is not entirely sure that mass enslavements actually became more common in the late republic. The figures on mass enslavement, conveniently collected by Scheidel (2011: 294-6), reveal an impressive number of slaves captured in war already during the Third Samnite War.[245] As Bradley (2011:

[241] Note that Jongman's final aim is to use the growing price of manumissions at Delphi as an indicator of economic growth, on which see Scheidel's (2005b) criticism (manumission figures also included a skills premium, and therefore do not reflect real prices). Other attempts to reconstruct slave prices, assembling isolated figures coming from different places and times, are flawed by the incommensurability of currencies. Thus, Scheidel's (2005b) attempt to compare slave prices by converting nominal prices into real prices expressed in wheat equivalent is flawed by his use of an arbitrary wheat price.

[242] However, some degree of exaggeration should be accounted for. For example, even though Strab. 4.6.7 reports that all the 44,000 Salassi who were captured by Terentius Varro were sold as slaves, the presence of *Salassi incolae* living at Aosta since its foundation (*Inscr. It*. 11.1.6, ll.6-7: *qui initio se in colon*(*iam*) *con*[*t*(*ulerunt*)] suggests that this was not actually the case. More strikingly, the one million slaves that, according to Lo Cascio (2002: 54) were brought to Italy from Caesar's campaigns in Gaul, actually reflect the sources (Plut. *Caes*. 15; App. *Celt*. 2) giving up on counting them and giving an implausibly high figure (“a hundred myriads”; Harris 1980: 122).

[243] Other sources of slaves, such as “foundlings, children sold by their parents, adults sold into slavery by themselves, those enslaved for debt, certain criminals, victims of kidnapping” (Harris 1980: 123) are unlikely to have varied sensibly through time. Only with the progressive extension of Roman citizenship during the Empire must the number of those enslaved for debt have dropped, since the *lex Poetelia de nexis* of 326 BC forbad enslaving Roman citizens for debts.

[244] Here I will not discuss slaves' reproductivity rates, since they are unlikely to have varied through time. It has been suggested by Scheidel (1997) that as much as 80% of the slave supply was provided by slave reproduction. However, his conclusions, although accepted by Harper (2010: 219, n.56), are rejected by Harris (1999: 65-72) and Lo Cascio (2002: 158-9). As for Roth's (2007) more recent attempt, her calculations are rightly dismissed as “suspicious” by Harper (2011: 164).

[245] According to the tradition reported by Livy (5.22.1), already the conquest of Veii had resulted in the complete enslavement of its population. However, there are also mentions of the inhabitants of the *ager Veientanus* being given the citizenship (Liv. 6.4.4). Cornell (1995: 320) concludes that “only a minority of the defeated Veientines were sold” (although his argument that at this stage there was no market for a large number of slaves is not necessarily true).

246) carefully explains, even if the figures on the mass enslavements of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC are of dubious reliability, they "suggest at a minimum that huge migrations of peoples took place".[246]

Another problem affecting our understanding of the impact of slavery on Italian agriculture is that, even accepting the uncertain conclusion that the presence of slaves grew, we do not know the share of the agricultural sector in the demand for slaves. Whereas it is quite certain that skilled slaves – especially Syrians (Silver 2006) – were particularly sought after, also for managerial roles (*vilici*), things are less certain for farm hands. As a matter of fact, although we know that slaves were used for almost every rural task (see the lists assembled by Bradley 1994: 59-60, using the evidence of Dig. 33.7 and Columella), there is no reason to assume that this was always the case, as these tasks could equally be performed by free labourers.[247] Only in one case do we know that slaves and free labourers were not interchangeable. Tellingly, though, this instance reveals a preference for free labour: in malarial areas, we are told, slaves should not be used (Varro *Rust.* 1.17.3), most likely to avoid losing their entire price in case of premature death.

Equally problematic is the argument whereby rural slave labour prevailed over wage-labour because it was becoming cheaper. Expanding on Appian's remark that Ti. Gracchus' supporters reproached landowners for using slaves, who were not serviceable for military service (*B.Civ.* 1.1.10), it has been suggested that "conscription drove up wages, encouraging employers to turn to slave labor" (Harper 2010: 212-3). Against this idea, though, it should be remarked that, as Rich (1983: 292-3) points out, Rome's military commitments actually decreased after 163 BC. If anything, then, agricultural labour was being released from military

[246] In early Rome, the supply of slaves must have been maintained also by failure to repay debts. Debt slavery had a huge impact, as proved by the inclusion of debt slavery among the themes about which patricians and plebeians clashed. However, as we know from the Ten Tables, the sale of insolvent debtors was carried out *trans Tiberim*. For the argument that also the sale of *infrequentes* and *incensi*, of thieves (*fures*), and of *filii a patre venditi* took place *trans Tiberim* see Robleda 1976: 31-36.

[247] De Neeve's (1984) suggestion that the diffusion of grain cultivation stimulated rural slavery is unwarranted.

service in the years preceding the Gracchan crisis.[248]

In fact, given the complete dearth of quantitative data, one could easily argue that non-agricultural activities absorbed whatever increase in the supply of slaves there might have been. On the one hand, slave labour was commonly employed in non-agricultural productive activities, spanning from trade and financial business to craftsmanship and industrial production. Finally, there were temple slaves, and also public slaves, who were widely used in public administration, the mint, and Rome' public grain supply-chain.

On the other hand, given the importance of slavery as a status-symbol, a large number of slaves were used for non-productive activities, such as servitude at villas and at urban residences (*familiae urbanae*).[249] The *columbarium* of Livia's slaves and freedmen records more than 50 tasks that could be performed by slave servants (Treggiari 1975). There is no doubt that slaves were present to the hundreds in wealthy Roman *domus*. Tacitus, for example, reports that the *praefectus urbi* killed in AD 61 had 400 slaves in his town house (*Ann.* 14.42-ss. ; on the episode see Hopkins 1993: 4-5). Archaeology provides additional support to this view: in the urban house of M. Aemilius Scaurus a large number of *cubicula* for servants have been excavated (Marzano 2007: 148, n. 85). Besides, we should also consider that household servants were common at all social levels, from Horace's three slaves who served his meals (Hor. *Sat*. 1.6.116), to the grammarian who had two slaves, one who escorted him around, and the other who stayed home for surveillance and to make meals (Galen. *De locis affectis* 2.5; see Veyne 2000: 1173).

To conclude, are we in the position to argue that the presence of slaves in Italian

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[248] It is uncertain, however, whether this phenomenon alone could create more competition on the job market, therefore driving down wages to the point of triggering a crisis.

[249] The precise relevance of non-productive purposes in slave-ownership is not clear, but it should not be underplayed. Thus, although he admits that the Romans may have purchased slaves as a status-symbol, mostly employing them as household domestics, Harper (2010: 211) concludes "*hypothesiz*[*ing*; his italics]" that slaves were mostly used for production, and that indeed "the value of Roman slaves strongly reflected the value of their labor, in turn a function of the price of the commodities they produced". Although the first part of the statement may well be true, we should remember that the value of Roman slaves was also hugely affected by their physical appearance.

agriculture actually grew? Certainly we are not.

6. Peasants and Commercial Agriculture.

The importance of marketing in peasants' production strategies is exemplified by a very interesting passage by Pliny the Elder (HN 19.54-56), which does not only connect peasants to commercial agriculture, but also shows that this strategy allowed a higher level of security.[250] Unfortunately, the passage is convoluted to the point of plain obscurity (the LCL translation is particularly unfortunate, but others, such as the CUF, and Noè's (2007), are equally unsatisfactory). Therefore, I provide here a long excerpt of Pliny's text, in order to set the passage in its context and attain a better understanding (transl. LCL with modifications):

> *etiamne in herbis discrimen inventum est, opesque differentiam fecere in cibo etiam uno asse venali? in his quoque aliqua sibi nasci tribus negant, caule in tantum saginato ut pauperis mensa non capiat. Silvestres fecerat natura corrudas, ut passim quisque demeteret. Ecce altiles spectantur asparagi, et Ravenna ternos libris rependit. Heu prodigia ventris! mirum esset non licere pecori carduis vesci: non licet plebei! ... Etiamne herba aliqua diviti tantum pascitur? Nemo Sacros Aventinosque montes et iratae plebis secessus circumspexerit? † Mox enim † certe aequabit quos pecunia separaverit. Itaque, Hercules, nullum macelli vectigal maius fuit clamore plebis incusantis apud omnes principes, donec remissum est portorium mercis huius, conpertumque non aliter quaestuosius censum haberi aut tutius ac minore fortunae iure, cum credatur pensio ea pauperum. His in solo sponsor est et sub die reditus superficiesque caelo quocumque gaudens.*
>
> "but have distinctions been discovered even in herbs, and has wealth established grades even in articles of food that sell for a single copper? The ordinary public declares that even among vegetables some kinds are grown that are not for them, even a kale being fattened up to such a size that there is not room for it on a poor man's table. Nature had made asparagus to grow wild, for anybody to gather at random; but lo and behold! now we see a cultivated variety, and Ravenna produces heads weighing three to a pound. Alas for the monstrosities of gluttony! It would surprise us if cattle were not allowed to feed on thistles, but thistles are forbidden to the lower orders! … Likewise, is there any kind of plant that is reared to serve only the rich man's table? Can nobody have paid attention to the Sacred Mount or the Aventine Hill, and the secessions of the angry *plebs*? … will level up persons whom money divides into classes. And so, I vow, no impost at Rome bulked larger than the market dues in the outcry of the common people, who denounced them before all the emperors until the import tax on this commodity was remitted, and it was discovered that no estate was more lucrative or safer and less governed by chance, to the point that this form of payment used by the poor is trusted: their guarantor is in the soil, and their revenues lie in open daylight, just as does the surface of their land, rejoicing in the sky whatever be its aspect".

In order to understand the passage, the mention of the Secessions of the *plebs* is central.[251] Pliny

[250] Although Pliny describes a later state of things, his connection of peasants and Rome's urban market must be considered valid also for the earlier period.

[251] The term *plebs* includes people of different means (see Introduction); in this case, however, Pliny clearly has in mind direct producers.

has just explained that herbs are not available to the poor because of their cost. They are grown with elaborate techniques, that respond to the elite's demand for more and more refined foodstuffs. In this context, Pliny's mention of “the *Mons Sacer*, the Aventine Hill, and the secessions of the angry *plebs*” may at first be taken as an expression of concern for the social effects of inequality. That is, Pliny may be saying that if the inequality between wealthy and poor – even in access to the most basic commodities – continues, the social fabric of the Roman state will collapse due to the *plebs*' growing discontent.

I think, however, that another explanation should be preferred, that makes more sense of what Pliny says immediately below. In fact, in the following lines, Pliny describes the *plebs*' anger at the *vectigal macelli*, that is a tax on food on sale at the market. However, Pliny is not implying that the *plebs* were angry at not being able to purchase food: in fact, as he makes clear, the tax that more than any other aroused the *plebs*' discontent was a *portorium*, that is a tax on the commodities brought into the city to be marketed. The *plebs*, then, resented the tax because it reduced their profits on selling foodstuffs at Rome. We can now go back to the *secessiones* and understand the why they are mentioned here. Their mention is immediately preceded by a question: “is there any kind of plant that is reared to serve only the rich man’s table?”. The answer is no: it is true that, as Pliny has already explained, the *plebs* do not eat herbs; as we have seen, though, they sell them. Therefore, the *plebs* too have an interest in growing herbs. Finally, here comes Pliny's second question: “Can nobody have paid attention to the Sacred Mount or the Aventine Hill, and the secessions of the angry *plebs*?”. Its meaning is now clear. This second question is meant to be an answer to the first question: what Pliny is implying here is that, had herbs been grown for the exclusive interest of the wealthy, the strife of the *plebs* for an equal distribution of land would remain unexplained. Instead, the *plebs*' strife for landownership proves that they too are interested in growing herbs.

Pliny's passage provides further evidence of the importance of urban markets for peasants. The role of towns in stimulating peasants to produce for the market was already clear to Adam Smith (Jongman 2003: 102). In the vicinity of towns, peasants could profit from the demand for foodstuffs. As Goethe (quoted by Carandini 1985: 72) was told during his stay in Naples in 1787, growing cabbage at the outskirts of the city, even on rented land, was extremely profitable, and could allow peasants to expand their activities. In fact, ancient peasants living at the outskirts of cities regularly attended urban markets. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the protagonist of the *Moretum* regularly walked to town to sell his vegetables. Even Aristophanes' fiction that the *demos* of Acharnae was completely secluded from the urban market is, *contra* Finley (1973: 107), absolutely untrue. Indeed, elsewhere (*Eccl.* 817-20) Aristophanes describes the peasant Khremes selling his grapes (Silver 2008: 16). The only exception is Dio Chrysostom's *Euboicus*, which revolves around the idea of remoteness. Even these highly idealised people, though, could occasionally walk to town, and had contacts with nearby villages (see Chapter 2).

Furthermore, the passage provides additional confirmation of the importance of gardening in peasants' production strategies. Gardening was perhaps the best option for peasants who wanted to market their produce: vegetables, fruits, and also flowers, grown, for example, by the tenants of Cicero's *horti* (located at Tusculum and possibly in Rome; in one instance Cicero jokes that he receives too many flowers: *itaque abutor coronis* [*Fam*. 16.18.2]).[252] Viticulture too must have been important for small producers. Vineyards could be so small as to fit inside the town walls of a densely populated city such as Pompeii (the so-called *Foro Boario*, connected to a shop on *via dell'Abbondanza*: Jashemski 1979: 201-218).[253] Indeed,

[252] Inclusion of Tusculum in Rome's *suburbium* varies according to modern usage of the word. See Witcher (2006: 121) for discussion. See also Champlin 1982 for *suburbium* as less of a geographical than of a cultural concept.

[253] Purcell (1985) has suggested that, by the early Empire, wealthy landowners directed their productive efforts towards mass-produced low-quality wine. However, this does not seem to have been produced on such a scale that small producers could not find niches in the market for their wine anymore. In fact, as Tchernia (Salviat and Tchernia 2013: 153-166) has pointed out, the size of production and storage facilities at large villas suggests that even there the quantity of land devoted to vineyards was quite small. For example, the presses and storage pits at Settefinestre sufficed for the production of just a few tens of hectares (between 14 and 30), in the face of a total area that, according to its excavators, measured some 500 *iugera* of land (Carandini 1984: 52-53). Note, however, that this figure is obtained by roughly dividing the Valle dell'Oro by the number of known villas. The undemonstrated assumption is that every

throughout history the cultivation of vines as a cash-crop seems to have been a strategy adopted by most peasants. Again, Locorotondo provides a good point of comparison (Galt 1991: 79-80). There, as we have seen (Chapter 1, Section 2), almost three quarters of the households cultivated vineyards, which, although of varying size, tended to be quite small. According to Galt, small landholders (*bracciali*) produced on average much more than household consumption required; he concludes that they participated in commercial viticulture.

However, Pliny also adds important details to the picture. Pliny explains that, after the *portorium* was waived, it was realized that "no estate was more lucrative or safer and less governed by chance, to the point that this form of payment used by the poor is trusted". Pliny here is saying that the individuals who belong to the *plebs* have an estate (*census*) that is at the same time very profitable and safe. Besides, this estate can also be used as a form of payment (*pensio*). What is it?

The answer to this question is hidden in Pliny's explanation of why the poor can be trusted when they use this form of payment. The entire sentence is a parody of payments made through paper-money (*nomina*). When using paper-money, payees require payers to provide trustworthy guarantors and evidence that they have sufficient properties as a security of the payment. Both elements are visible in Pliny's passage: the guarantor (*sponsor*), as well as the "background check", which is carried out by considering the payer's income (*reditus*) and landed properties (*superficies*). Now, *reditus* and *superficies* are precisely the two parts of which *census* declarations were composed (Brunt 1971: 15): we can conclude that the *census* of which Pliny is talking here is something connected to gardening, since it comprises an income in full daylight (herbs, once they are sold: note here the tongue-in-cheeck irony towards those people who use *nomina* having uncertain credentials), and land (note Pliny's optimistic view of agriculture condensed in his statement that land rejoices at every weather).

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villa controlled a territory of comparable size, and that the *limites* of centuriation can be used to reconstruct the boundaries of *fundi*. For a much more complicated picture of centuriations' internal divisions, see my discussion of the *sortitio Ilicitana* in Chapter 1.

Higher precision can be obtained considering that the same thing that Pliny defines as a *census* and a *pensio* is also defined as a good (*merx*). We can conclude that the mysterious item are precisely herbs. It is even possible that the word *holus* or an equivalent was included in the portion of text that has been corrupted into the words *mox enim*. In fact, both the CUF translation, and Noè 2007, wrongly take the genitive *plebis* as the subject *ad sensum* of *aequabit*.[254] It is clear from the text structure, though, that the subject of "will reunite what money has separated" is the same to which Pliny refers as a *merx*, as a *quaestuosus census*, and as a *pensio pauperum*. This interpretation also does justice to the subtlety of Pliny's irony: so far, Pliny has complained of the greed of the wealthy, who turn every foodstuff into a luxury object, thus denying the *plebs* access to them. Here, though, Pliny reveals that the *plebs* are no less greedy: they grow herbs for a profit, selling them at a high price. Herbs have indeed reunited those whom money had separated.

Thus, having clarified the tricky interpretive aspects of Pliny's passage, three conclusions follow: (1) profitability: peasants can grow fruits and vegetables and trade them to purchase more staples than they could possibly grow by themselves; (2) security: Pliny's statement that gardening provides a safe *census* seems to depend on the fact that fruits and vegetables always have a market; (3) popularity: Pliny discusses marketing assuming that the entire *plebs* was involved in it. However, we should also have in mind that gardening was not the only way in which peasants could be involved in commercial agriculture: in Chapter 2, for example, I have quoted a passage of Galen describing peasants marketing staples. Gardening was peasants' "silver bullet" in a diversified armoury of production strategies. Although less profitable, marketing staples must have been no less popular nor less secure.

Some scholars would deny that, with the exception of Rome and a few relatively large

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[254] CUF: "Personne n'aura songé au Mont Sacré, à l'Aventin et aux sécessions de la plèbe irritée? Car bientôt sans doute celle-ci rendra égaux ceux que l'argent a séparés". Noè 2007: "nessuno ha riflettuto ricordando il Monte Sacro, l'Aventino e le secessioni della plebe piena d'ira? Perché ben presto, questo è sicuro, essa riporterà l'uguaglianza fra coloro che il denaro ha discriminato".

centres, peasants commonly marketed their produce, since this would imply that the demand for foodstuffs was high. Against this possibility, Rosenstein (2008; 2009) has argued that Italy's demand was so low that even just a few landowners could produce enough to satisfy it. Using a *fourchette* of individual consumption that could encompass all possible scenarios, and then comparing the various hypothetical demands with average yields, Rosenstein argues that even if the demand had been the highest possible, nevertheless it could have been satisfied by a mere portion of the produce of senators' and *equites*' estates. Therefore, Rosenstein concludes that commercial agriculture in Roman Italy was a marginal phenomenon.

At first sight, Rosenstein's argument could help to explain why the evidence suggests that marketing and subsistence were mostly practiced in combination. Roman houses, for example, typically had two separate stores: one for the produce to sell; the other – the *penus* – for household consumption (Saller 1994: 82).[255] In the same fashion, already Plautus describing the preparation of a banquet included a list of food stored in the house together with the food that should be purchased at the market (Plaut. *Capt*. 845-851; 912-920). However, it seems to me that the most striking aspect of this evidence is precisely the opposite, that is that everyone took for granted that part of their produce should be marketed, and part of their food should be purchased on the market (on this, see also Chapter 1, section 2).

In fact, Rosenstein's rhetoric of numbers is far from flawless. The same criticism that I have made to Scheidel's attempt to calculate the volume of commercial agriculture (see Section 5) also applies to Rosenstein. He uses, for his calculations, Jongman's figures for average yields, that I have already rejected as unreliably optimistic (see Section 5 on Scheidel).[256] Besides, just like Scheidel, Rosenstein too completely overlooks the demand

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[255] In the late 2nd century BC, Q. Mucius Scaevola defined the *penus* in the following terms: "what is for eating or for drinking, which has been secured for the sake of the *paterfamilias* himself or the *materfamilias* or the children of the *paterfamilias* or his slaves (*familia*), who are around him or his children and do not work" (Gell. *NA* 4.1.17; transl. Saller 1994).

[256] To be precise, Jongman does not discuss olive yields. Rosenstein's figure of 440 litres of olive oil per hectare (suspiciously similar to modern yields on a good year) is certainly too high, because it does not account for the biannual cycle of olives, and the fact that, after years of glut, the following harvest will

generated by the countryside, focusing only on the role of towns (for which, incidentally, he uses Hopkins' figure of about 1.8 million people, which, as I have explained in Section 5, is totally invented). This view is doubly unwarranted. First of all, because the countryside did generate demand. In Chapter 2 I have rejected the old-fashioned view of the peasantry as mostly self-sufficient. Ancient peasants' production strategies were far more complicated than this. Peasants producing *mainly* for subsistence were only one kind of peasants among others.[257] They could easily give up self-sufficiency to produce for marketing, and there were even people who specialised in producing cash-crops (see e.g. Introduction, section 1 on Attic farmers). For this reason, Hopkins's (1978: 15) famous assumption that "*on average* [his italics], Roman peasants consumed four fifths of their own produce and supported non-peasants with the remaining fifth" is completely unwarranted.[258]

In the second place, Rosenstein's idea that only towns generated demand does not take into account the capillary presence of smaller settlements that I have outlined in Chapter 1, Section 2. This, incidentally, also rules out an objection that is commonly made to the idea that peasants could be extensively involved in marketing. Some scholars have attempted to distinguish peasants with access to markets using Von Thünen's model of the location of land uses (described in detail by Jones 2014: 442-447). According to this model, owing to the cost of transport commercial agriculture only makes sense inside a certain distance from market centres.[259] However, the capillary distribution of marketing centres in small settlements

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be plagued by olive fruit flies (*bactrocera oleae*), that reproduce in the olives that have fallen to the ground the previous year.

[257] Speaking of subsistence agriculture, a warning is necessary: we should not make the mistake of believing that subsistence agriculture does not involve exchange and redistribution. The image of self-sufficient peasants that I have analysed in Chapter 2 is pure fantasy. Rather, exchange is carried out through a system of mutual help and obligations, among families, neighbours, and communities. See Chapter 2 for discussion.

[258] Note, however, that the demand generated from peasants cannot be quantified, nor can we tell to what extent this demand was satisfied by purchases (other options were available, such as mutual assistance).

[259] Silver (2008: 16) claims that "farmers in Roman times sold grain and other products to itinerant merchants, who, for the usual kind of economic reasons, specialized in marketing". However, he only provides references to this phenomenon going on in Galilee. As for Italy, the only instance of a travelling trader of which I am aware is the *pharmacopola circumforaneus* of Cicero's *Pro Cluentio* (Cic. *Clu.* 14.40).

suggests that there were very few people in Italy whose access to markets was affected by excessive distance from market places.[260]

Unfortunately, the available evidence is simply too sketchy to attempt any quantitative assessment of peasants' involvement in commercial agriculture. For example, Pliny's passage discussed above is concerned with Rome, which was quite an exceptional case. It was the largest urban market in the ancient world. It appears obvious that, in its environs, marketing would represent the primary option for all producers, as testified by the large number of oil and wine presses found in archaeological excavations around Rome (Wilson 2009: 216).[261] It is true that also in smaller centres urban demand appears to have stimulated production in the surrounding countryside. Whether peasants played a role in it, though, is quite a different matter.

Let us take Luna, for example. There, although there is evidence of food production for export (wine: Plin. *HN* 14.68; cheese: Mart. 13.30; Plin. *HN* 11.241) local demand had the lion's share: the prosperity of Luna's countryside, peaking in the Early imperial period, and its subsequent decline correspond precisely to the growth and decline of the urban centre (Launaro 2011: 110). This prompts us to conclude that the countryside was thriving thanks to the town's demand. But how can we be ensured that Luna's demand was sufficient for peasants to avoid being outplayed by landowners? And how was the situation in smaller centres, the villages that were so typical of the Italian landscape (see Chapter 1, Section 2)?

The answer, I believe, lies in landowners' intrinsic dependence on peasants. As I pointed out in Chapter 1, section 1, field survey data suggest that in most areas, smaller

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[260] In case further clarification were needed, peasants living in peripheral areas were never totally isolated. Visits to town could be paid from time to time for marketing purposes, as even the hunters in Dio Chrysostom's *Euboicus* did on rare occasions (Dio Chrys. 7.21: “the other one of us has never yet been to town, though he is fifty years old, and I only twice” transl. LCL). Even the peripheral site of Case Nuove in inner Etruria (Vaccaro *et al.* 2013) had access to imported pottery (though perhaps in this case access to markets was mediated by the nearby *villa*, where the same kind of pottery found at the site has been found).

[261] Wilson remarks that the absence of traces of transport of oil and wine can be explained by the use of perishable containers such as skins. Note that usually landowners were not directly involved in transport and commerce, but sold “at the door” (Tchernia 2011: 23 ss.).

farmsteads and villas existed side by side. This, of course, should be in part be explained in terms of tenancy: it could be that villas and smaller farmsteads were owned by the same people (so Witcher 2006 on Rome's *suburbium*). Other small sites must have been the homes of those peasants who provided the necessary labour to landowners' estates. However, labour was not the only thing that made peasants an integral part of landowners' production strategies. Trade was another.

Far from monopolizing the commercial sector, villas generated additional demand. First of all, this was because, as I have argued in Chapter 2, self-sufficiency is essentially unattainable. There will always be reasons to bring in stuff from outside, be it simply the dry wood that Martial suggests the Nomentan farmer to bring in from elsewhere, due to the moistness of the region (Mart. 13.15). Another reason why villas generated demand is that they were not necessarily focused on production, but could equally be leisure-oriented. In fact, the balance between pleasantness and profitability is problematic, and a number of different opinions can be detected in ancient literature.[262] It is beyond doubt, however, that in a

[262] Ps. Ar. *Oec*. 1344B, 27-30 advises that the productive parts (*karpima*) of one's property should be greater than the non-productive ones (*akarpa*). This view was criticised by Philodemus (who considers the treatise to be Theophrastus' work) as a sympthom of greed (*philochrematos*) (Swain 2013: 214). Although Xenophon does not explicitly discuss how beauty and profitability are related to each other, his description of Cyrus' *paradeisos*, with the trees well ordered in line, seems to imply that there is an implicit beauty of sort in the arrangements that are most suited to production. Not everyone, however, was persuaded that beauty and profit were so easy to reconcile. In this respect, the polyphony of Varro's *De Re Rustica* proves very useful to get a glimpse of the various possible opinions on the matter. In the discussion of aviaries (*Rust.* 3.4.1-3), Merula explains that these can be of three types: one privileges *delectatio*, another *fructus*, and the third combines the two (*coniunctum*). Merula, though, defines the latter as “useless”, because it actually lacks any beauty: the birds *non delectant oculos*, and their stink offends the senses. In the first book of the dialogue, instead, Scrofa explains that farmers should aim at two targets, *utilitas*, that pursues profit, and *voluptas*, that pursues pleasure (1.4.1-2; cf. 1.7.2; 1.7.4). According to Scrofa, the two can be reconciled: the same features that make fields more beautiful also make them more productive; besides, beauty makes estates *vendibilior*, thus increasing their price. However, as Kronenberg (2009: 77-79) has showed, in the *De re rustica* Scrofa is a parodical “hyper-intellectual” character, whose views constantly turn out to be wrong (note, though, that even if Kronenberg's claim [2009: 79] that the Scrofa whom Varro is parodying is not the agronomical writer but his son could well be correct, that this man had “no particular expertise in agriculture” is very unlikely). Despite Varro's irony, though, the idea that beauty and profit could be reconciled was quite popular. Columella explains that the pleasantness of the *villa* could attract the *dominus* (and even more of the *domina*, who, being a lady(!), must have a *delicatior animus*…) and thus secure higher control and better management (Colum. 1.pr.4.8). Pliny the Younger (Plin. Ep. 3.19) justifies his willingness to buy an estate adjoining his own in terms of *pulchritudo iungendi*, but also because there is a factor “no less practical than pleasurable: being able to visit both estates together in one journey, to run them with

considerable number of cases refinement was privileged, at the expenses of productivity. For example, in a number of instances Martial (3.47; 3.58) makes fun of Bassus' unproductive *villa* near Rome, labelled a *fames munda sub urbem*, as well as of Pannychus' farm (Mart. 12.72). In the same fashion, in Varro's dialogue on agriculture (*Rust*. 3.2.1-18), Axius reprimands Ap. Claudius Pulcher's villa on the outskirts of the Campus Martius, defined *deliciis sumptuosa*, as opposed to Axius' own productive estate, admittedly less refined, but attached to a *fundus magnus et politus cultura* (see Purcell 1995: 151 ss. for discussion). Likewise, in the *Pro Roscio Amerino*, Cicero blasts on Chrysogonus' extravagance pointing out that he does not own any property that is not "pleasant" (*rus amoenus*: Cic. *Rosc. Amer*. 133).

A third reason why villas were not self-sufficient has to do with the growth of private expenditure discussed in Chapter 1, Section 2: the game of competitive refinement required villa owners to source delicacies from any available source. It is true that the possibility of claiming that refined and precious foodstuffs had been produced inside the household could add to landowners' prestige (see for example Petr. *Sat*. 38 on Trimalchio: "you must not suppose either that he buys anything. Everything is home-grown". Transl. LCL; the same concept is proudly restated by Trimalchio's own words: *Sat*. 48). However, *luxus mensae* required villa owners to go at great lengths to source the most refined foodstuffs also on the market.

At times, purchased goods could come from the remotest corners of the *oecumene*. Varro (*Rust*. 2.4.11) records that L. Volumnius received salt pork from Lusitania; an *amphora picta* found on the Rhône river-bed at Arles shows that C. Saturius Secundus, while he was governor of Raetia in 77-78, had the finest mackerel *garum* of two years transported all the way from *Baetica* to his residence (Ehmig, Liou and Long 2004; see also Tchernia 2011: 113). In the same fashion, the same guest who praises Trimalchio in the Satyricon for producing everything he needs, equally praises his host's willingness to purchase exotic stuff (*arietes;*

the same steward and practically the same foremen, to maintain and furnish one villa and only keep an eye on the other one" [transl. Swain 2013: 157].

apes; semen boletorum: Petr. *Sat*. 38). Even cereals could be sourced at great distances: thus, in his discussion of *siligo* – a word that seems to include both bread wheat (*triticum aestivum*) and club wheat (*triticum compactum*: see Spurr 1986: 15) – Pliny (*HN* 18. 85-86) claims that the best quality of *siligo* bread is obtained mixing the variety grown in Campania with that grown in Pisae.

More commonly, though, refined foodstuffs were sourced locally. Thus, in Pliny's passage discussed above, the author describes vegetables produced by the *plebs* for the exclusive interest of the elite who consume them. Likewise, as Columella (10. *pr*. 1.1-3) explains in his condemnation of *luxuria*, since *frugalitas* has given way to gluttony, *pauperes* do not eat anymore what they produce: they prefer to eat the *vulgares cibi* and sell the *pretiosiores* that fetch high prices. Peasants' involvement in luxury production is not at odds with my statement (Chapter 1, Section 2) that the increase of luxury consumption stimulated agricultural investment. In fact, the success of luxury objects does not only depend on deliberate planning and marketing. Sometimes, foodstuffs acquire a totally new status as luxury objects, and become expensive and sought after, for reasons that are completely beyond the will of the producers. For this reason, peasants were not excluded from luxury production. To put it simply, it might happen that peasants ended up producing luxury foodstuffs without having made any deliberate move towards it.

A striking example of how direct producers (fishermen, in this case) could become involved in luxury production without even making a move to it comes from a letter of Seneca (*Ep.* 55.6; see D'Arms 2003: 341), which describes Servilius Vatia' habit, when he was in his Cumaean *villa*, of eating the fish caught by local fishermen – even though his villa had *piscinae* for aquaculture – unless they were forbidden to go out by stormy weather. To explain the apparent paradox, we should consider (yet again) the complex social stratification of foodstuffs. As Purcell (1995b) has showed, even though fish can be a “tremendous … symbol of wealth” (136-137), this is only one aspect of its complex symbolism that can equally reflect destitution.

Different typologies of seafood could have different social markers. *Piscinae* seem to have positioned themselves in an intermediate layer, as they specialised in the production of upmarket foodstuffs, but still mass-produced. This is often overlooked by commentators: for example, Bannon (2014: 66) argues that Sergius Orata's mass-produced oysters created "a new standard in taste". I would rather contend that he made oysters available to the wider public, thus diminishing their value as status symbols (for the same loss of status-symbol value, cf. Plin. *HN* 9.114: pearls have lost their extravagance – *perdito nepotatu* – and even the poor covet them).[263] With all likelihood, this was the reason why Servilius Vatia, a top member of the elite (*praetorius dives* according to Seneca) preferred not to eat farm-bred fish when more refined options were available. In this case, fishermen had done nothing particular to attract Vatia's interest: perhaps, they even caught the same species that were bred in Vatia's ponds. Likewise, peasants could end up producing particular varieties that the elite considered more exquisite and delicate than their more common equivalents.

However, by far the main reason why landowners depended on the market is that their own production strategies were based on economic profitability, and therefore in many cases they preferred purchasing foodstuffs, if this was cheaper than producing them at their own villas. In Chapter 4, I will discuss Finley's idea that the ancient elites held any form of involvement with economic activities in disdain. According to Finley, the ancient landowners behaved as parasites, draining safe rents out of their estates without any willingness to invest. This view is now commonly rejected.[264] It is commonly agreed that landowners' attitudes to

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[263] See Chapter 2 for comments on grandchildren (*nepotes*) and extravagance.

[264] Among Finley's epigons, the most vocal supporter of the idea that ancient landowners were risk-averse is Kehoe, who, as Carrié (2005) has pointed out, has the undeniable merit of having been able to write thousands of pages to argue for a single idea. Kehoe sees traces of risk-avert economic strategies in Pliny's management of his estates (Kehoe 1988; 1989; 1993b), in the administration of the Egyptian estates (Kehoe 1992), and in Roman law (1997; 2007). The evidence provided by Roman law, however, only concerns special cases, such as tutorship, where it is clear that the aim of tutors is to avoid any losses to their pupil's endowment. It would be hard to claim that the behaviour of tutors was typical of other Romans. Equally controversial is Kehoe's interpretation of the behaviour of landholders in Egypt. There, Kehoe explains, landowners tried to keep investments to a minimum, and pass it on to tenants. His interpretation, however, does not explain why some landowners were also willing to rent additional land (Bagnall 1993: 131-132), nor why the best known Egyptian landowner, Aurelius Appianus, was

investments were more diversified than Finley was willing to admit.[265] As Andreau (Andreau *et al.* 2004) has pointed out, economic decisions are not binary choice, between risk and security, higher and lower profits, but there is a complex array of possibilities. People, for example, may be willing to take higher or lower risks at different times; or they could combine safer and riskier strategies. Accounting for personal preferences, though, investment was considered the norm. The miserly Euclio of Plautus' *Aulularia*, who is so poor that he has to collect the *argenti nummum* (in spite of the gold buried in his house), represents the comic overturning of the correct behaviour: Euclio does own a plot of land, and, as De Nardis (2009: 148) has argued, his poverty is strictly connected to his stinginess, and the consequent refusal to invest.

In Finley's view, however, landowners' unwillingness to take money out of their purse was not limited to investment. As he claimed, landowners "had a peasant-like passion for self-sufficiency on their estates" (Finley 1973: 108). Of course, Finley was aware that peasants and landowners behaved in different ways and had different targets. As he explained, peasants' self-sufficiency was subsistence-oriented; instead, whenever, as with Roman landowners, "we are […] considering estates that were farmed for their cash incomes, not for subsistence" (1973:

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actually using a system of direct management on his estate. Bagnall (1993: 133) suggests that, in many instances, landowners did not use tenants to avoid risky investments: on the contrary, they were investing, loaning them the money necessary to take up the tenancy. As for Pliny, some, like Morley (2000: 234), have wondered wonder to what extent his behaviour was typical of the landed Roman elite, pointing out that Columella appears to have behaved in a completely different way. The contradiction, however, is more apparent than real: re-examining the same letter on which Kehoe based his argument, Swain (2013: 166-168) has showed that Pliny is actually taking risks: more precisely, he is giving up part of his immediate profits in return for the possibility of future profits. It is the same conduct praised by Columella, who criticized those producers who compromise future vintages overburdening vines for immediate profits (3.3.7: *queruntur que non respondere sibi vineta, quae vel per avaritiam vel inscitiam vel per negligentiam perdiderunt*).

[265] See for example the debate between Kehoe and Rathbone on Egyptian landowners' attitude to investment; as Rowlandson (1996: 206) wisely points out, whereas the Heroninus archive reveals a preference for hands-on management, and although the case of Claudia Isidora's estate is uncertain, considering that the only land subject to lease "was in the remote Small Oasis, and we have no idea what proportion of her total property this comprised", Kehoe is at least right to argue that "some sizeable estates gave tenancy a significant place alongside direct cultivation; the clearest case is the archive of the descendants of Laches from Tebtunis, from which survive not only many individual leases, but also a list of rents in kind, as well as wage accounts".

109), self-sufficiency was embodied in the attempt to "avoid cash outlays". Finley famously compared the ancient elite to Oblomov's parents, who had a natural disgust for taking money out of their pocket (Finley 1973: 109-110; Rathbone 2005: 269 notes the oddity of using a highly "fictionalised" term of comparison).

Oddly, even though, in Finley's theorization, self-sufficiency and unwillingness to invest were two sides of the same coin, modern scholarship has rejected the latter, but has widely accepted the former. Thus, although extreme positions such as Whittaker's (1985) – according to whom the elite were willing to transport the produce of their own estates across the Mediterranean, in spite of any principle of economic profitability, due to what he labelled the "prevailing ideology of self-sufficiency" (1985: 58) – are commonly rejected, still the *communis opinio* on landowners' production strategies is that they generated very little demand.[266] This holds true not only for those scholars who, like Rosenstein (2008), believe that commercial agriculture was almost insignificant, but also for those who attribute the right importance to the phenomenon. As Hin (2013: 46) has recently held, "it must be noted that even on slave-staffed villas owned by the Roman elite, the food needed for workers was produced on the estate itself, so that full specialization was never achieved". The exemplary model of how productive specialization and self-sufficiency could co-exist is Settefinestre's phase 1. In this period, production is usually understood as focused on commercial viticulture, in connection to the exports of wine to Gaul. At the same time, however, the villa catered for its manpower's consumption (Carandini 1984: 116) (though perhaps not entirely).[267]

However, the idea that landowners' estates were mostly self-sufficient does not

[266] In order to prove Whittaker's model wrong, Wilson (2009: 214, n.1) points out that evidence of transport is not limited to elites' places of residence, and therefore there is no sound basis to reject the existence of trade. To be precise, though, Whittaker was aware that trade existed, although he seems to assume (just like Finley did) that it was only directed towards major centres such as Rome or Lugdunum.
[267] In this respect, note that the excavators' idea that what was lacking at the villa was brought in from other villas of the same owners is dangerously close to Whittaker's model of "transport without trade". According to the excavators of Settefinestre, the villa only came to depend on overseas imports in its second phase (Carandini 1984: 178), which, according to their general theory of the villa-system, was a phase of decline. Imports, then, were seen as a sign of decline of the villa-system, which, at the low ebb of its existence, was not able anymore to support itself.

actually stand a detailed examination. As for Finley, his view that landowners aimed to self-sufficiency was perhaps influenced by the Roman elite's habit of portraying themselves as peasants (see Chapter 2), as well as by the myth of peasants' self-sufficiency (Ibid.). However, it is also clear that Finley was too ready to jump to conclusions regarding landowners' strategies. As is typical of Finley, his argument proceeds by accumulation of examples (Finley 1973: 109-111). In particular, great emphasis is attributed to Cato's statement, that a *pater familias* should be a seller, not a buyer (*De Agr.* 2.7). However, as I will explain in Chapter 4, Finley has plainly misinterpreted the passage, which is actually a cavalier praise of economic profit.

In fact, agronomical literature takes for granted that landholders should give up self-sufficiency whenever it is not profitable. Take Columella's example on carts: he explains that "it means a great deal, too, to get transportation at low cost if you make the trip with hired draught-animals, which is more expedient than looking after your own" (1.3.4; transl. LCL). But the most adamant statement of the rule is doubtless Pliny's statement that "good farming is essential, but superlatively good farming spells ruin, except when the farmer runs the farm with his own family or with persons whom he is in any case bound to maintain. There are some crops which it does not pay the landlord to harvest if the cost of the labour is reckoned (*si conputetur impendium operae*), and olives are not easily made to pay; and some lands do not repay very careful farming – this is said to be the case in Sicily, and consequently newcomers there find themselves deceived" (HN 18.38; transl. LCL). Tarius Rufus, the object of Pliny's reprobation in the passage, had squandered about 100 million sesterces by not considering the principle of profitability: as Pliny says, Rufus had cultivated *in gloriam*.

One of the advantages of appreciating the importance of economic profitability for entrepreneurial farmers' production strategies is that it helps to make better sense of the archaeological evidence concerning villas. Too often, in fact, archaeologists simply postulate that villas produced the full panoply of Mediterranean agriculture. A good example of this comes from inner Lucania: at local villas, no traces of viticulture have been found. And yet, scholars find it difficult to believe that there were no vineyards in the area, because some wine for household's consumption *must* have been produced: thus, the little traces of *opus doliare* have been used to suggest that some wine was indeed produced (Gualtieri 2009: 362). This stubbornness is at odds with the perfectly logical fact that viticulture could well be absent from the mountainous hinterland, since wine could more easily come from coastal estates.[268]

As a matter of fact, many villas specialized on certain productions, relying on imports for their internal consumption.[269] In Campania, for example, some villas only had wine-making facilities, not only smaller farms (such as *villa Regina*: Carandini 1989: 163), but also villas of comparable size to Settefinestre, such as the *contrada Carità* villa at Gragnano (Carandini 1989: 172; note, however, that the villa's remains were covered soon after its first publication in the early 1900's, so neither Carandini nor Rostovtzev – who discusses it too – have actually seen it). Likewise, Lucanian villas specialized in grain production and activities connected with pastoralism (Adamo 2016). One of the most interesting cases of specialization is the San Rocco villa at Francolise (Cotton and Métraux 1985) in the *ager Falernus.* Despite the region's focus on viticulture, the villa, conveniently located close to a major transport infrastructure as the *via Appia*, shows no sign of viticulture. Even in its phase II (built in the years before Augustus), the villa only had threshing floors; an *oletum* with vats was added in phase IIA (after AD 50). It is tempting to connect the villa's focus on grain and oil to the region's focus on viticulture: the villa perhaps produced for the neighbouring wine-producing establishments.[270]

In fact, the variety of productions visible at Settefinestre seems to have been

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[268] For example, Rabirius Postumus owned vineyards at Blanda Iulia, on the Tyrrenian coast of southern Lucania, as testified by amphorae-stamps (Gualtieri 2009: 362).
[269] Foxhall (1990: 105; 114) has used the figures provided by Cato in his description of the ideal olive farm to argue that "some kinds of large slave-staffed enterprises did not grow much grain for human consumption" and this was supplied by tenants. Even though I would agree with Foxhall's point, I am not sure that Cato's figures are of any use at all.
[270] That certain territories specialized on certain productions further strengthens my argument. For regional specialization in Apulia see Manacorda 1994, who convincingly uses Varro's description of the mule trains transporting oil, wine, grain, and (*ali*)*quid aliud* from the *ager Brundisinus* and the Apulian hinterland to the harbours (Varr. *Rust*. 2.6.5) to argue that oil and wine were exported from the *ager Brundisinus*, whereas grain and the unspecified other things came from inner Apulia.

exceptional.[271] However, it is not necessarily true that Settefinestre catered for its internal consumption. For example, it could be the case that all the produce was sold, and the personnel was fed on foodstuffs of lower quality, purchased on the market. A similar strategy was pursued by Pericles (Plut. *Pericles* 16.4-5), who is said to have sold up the produce of his estates in bulk, and relied on daily purchases for his household's consumption. Plutarch explains that Pericles adopted this solution to save time for his public duties (ὡς … μήτε πολλὰ πράγματα καὶ διατριβὰς ἀσχολουμένῳ παρέχοι). Yet, he also suggests that Pericles was not indifferent to money making (οὐ παντάπασιν ἀργῶς ἔχων πρὸς χρηματισμόν), and aimed at preserving his wealth (τὸν πατρῷον καὶ δίκαιον πλοῦτον, ὡς μήτ᾽ ἀμελούμενος ἐκφύγοι … συνέταξεν εἰς οἰκονομίαν ἣν ᾤετο ῥᾴστην καὶ ἀκριβεστάτην εἶναι), to the point that his wife found him stingy (“not a liberal purveyor”: οὐδὲ ... δαψιλὴς χορηγός).

In comparison to leisure and *luxus mensae*, productive specialization has more relevance, because it equally applies to the entire range of landowners' estates, from farmsteads to huge villas: all landowners had to resort to the market to source what they needed. In principle, it is true, one could argue that peasants had no role in this game, and that only landowners were involved in reciprocal exchange. However, ancient literature suggests that this was not the case: landowners' production was not sufficient to reciprocally meet their demand. As scholars have long noticed, villas are to be found in direct proportion with the degree of urbanization of a given area (Wilson 2008: 199, commenting on the results of the South Etruria survey project). The presence of villas close to towns is usually explained either in terms of opportunities for marketing their produce, or as a sign of the *urbanitas* of elite countryside housing. Too often, instead, the role of towns in supplying nearby villas is overlooked. This is particularly puzzling, considering that in the *De re rustica* (1.16.3) Varro precisely describes a

[271] A comparable case is the *villa della Pisanella* (Carandini 1989: 166-170), fully equipped with granaries, and presses and storage pits for wine and oil. Note, however, that it is uncertain whether the villa relied on its own production for cereal consumption: only a small manual grinding mill for cereals or salt has been found, (room 22a).

system in which villas exchange goods among themselves and with nucleated centres, in both directions: it is recommended that landowners source what their villas do not produce either from “towns or villages” (*oppida aut vici*) or from other villas (*divitum copiosi agri ac villae*).

There were of course differences between central and peripheral market places. Towns also attracted interregional trade. It would seem that during the late republic towns supplanted extra-urban markets such as the yearly fair at the *campi Macri*, that specialized in the trade of livestock (Varr. 2 *praef.*6) and wool (Ortalli 2012), attracting traders from distant places. The fair was thriving in the 2nd and early 1st centuries BC, but it is defined as deserted and ruined in the S.C. Volusianum of AD 56 (Gabba and Coarelli 1975: 157-159).[272] For this reason, high-rank products were only found in towns. In this respect, Pliny's description of his villa at Laurentum is exemplary. In the letter, Pliny explains to Gallus that, of all the goods that are not available at his villa, only the most common items can be procured from the nearby *vicus*, whereas the rest must be brought in from Ostia (Plin. 2.17.26).[273]

As we have seen, market places attracted peasants' production: therefore, they could serve as points of contact between landowners' demand and peasants' supply.A very good example of landowners' dependence on market centres, and of the role of small producers in supplying them, comes from the *villae maritimae* of the central Tyrrhenian coast, from Latium down to Lucania. Due to the importance of refinement at *villae maritimae*, these have long been considered a separate typology, responding to different needs and deploying different characteristics. More recently, however, as the relationship between productivity and leisure has been reconsidered (Purcell 1995), the separation between coastal and rural villas has been

[272] Morley's (2000: 217) claim that at *nundinae* there was no room whatsoever for “large-scale, long-distance wholesale trade” certainly goes too far. The holding of auctions at *nundinae* certainly stimulated businessmen's attendance. Andreau (2000) has demonstrated that the money transfers recorded on Caecilius Jucundus' tablets cluster around market days, and has concluded that auctions were commonly held at *nundinae* at Pompeii. This was not a unique case: at Arpinum, Cicero purchased a farm at an auction held at *nundinae* (Cic. *Quint*. 3.1).

[273] Loyal to his self-representation as a *homo frugi*, Pliny claims that the nearby *vicus* suffices to most of his needs.

nuanced, and even the term itself has come to be understood in a loose sense, as including all those villas "with a view on the sea" (*vue sur la mer*: Lafon 2001: 2). This "normalization" of maritime villas is further substantiated by my re-evaluation of productive specialization at rural villas. Maritime villas' focus on fish-breeding and aquaculture – since L. Sergius Orata's undertaking of the oyster business on the Lucrine lake around 100 BC (Bannon 2014: 166) – should not be seen anymore as an exceptional feature.[274] Once *villae maritimae* cease to be seen as a separate category, they can be used to comment on villas more generally.

Discussing coastal estates, D'Arms (1970: 9-10) explains that, in the early stages (roughly the generation of Scipio Africanus and the following one), it is possible that these estates also maintained a focus on agriculture, equal to that of rural villas.[275] As we move on to later periods, the presence of agriculture at coastal villas is better documented. As D'Arms (1981: 83) points out, "there were *vilici* and *procuratores* on one of Cicero's seaside estates, *iugera* at another (Cic. Att. 14.15.4; 14.16.1); Pollius Felix had vineyards and arable fields at his villa on the Sorrentine peninsula (Stat. *Silv*. 2.2. 98-99), and one *villa Baiana* is explicitly contrasted, in terms of productivity and the efficiency of *vilicus*, *vilica*, and *vernae*, with an estate near Rome where the staff was fed entirely by produce brought from the capital (Mart. 3.58)" (on Cicero's villas see now Pollard 2016). However, the possibility that *villae maritimae* sufficed to cater for their food consumption should be ruled out. In fact, as Cicero claims in his second speech against Rullus (delivered to the people) (2.78), the owners of seaside villas at *Cumae* or *Puteoli* were not in the conditions to feed their slaves unless they managed to put

[274] Aquaculture combined productivity and beauty (Marzano 2013: 215) Furthermore, it was an intelligent adaptation to natural resources. Marshes were particularly extensive along the coast, where, north to south, we find the marshes of Minturnae, the "pantano di Sessa", the *Literna palus*, and the *Acherusia palus*. Even the *fossa Graeca* was a drainage channel (Pagano 1995: 214). Further south, there were the coastal lagoons of Misenum, the *lacus Baianus*, *Lucrinus*, *Avernus*, and other coastal lakes (Agnano) and marshes (the "le Paludi" area) down to the salt-pans at Pompeii, close to the mouth of river Sarno (Pagano 1995: 211-214).

[275] Note, though, that Seneca's description of Scipio at his Liternum villa (*Ep*. 86.5), wearing "out his body by working the soil himself in the good old Roman way" (D'Arms 1970: 9), is highly idealized. Also consider that, as Terrenato (2001: 24) suggests, the *villa* described by Seneca is unlikely to have maintained the original features of Scipio's times.

their hands on the *ager Campanus* that Rullus was proposing to distribute. This passage strongly suggests that, in the late Republic, most seaside villas in Campania had no connection with inland productive units (*contra* Frederiksen 1984: 307; D'Arms 2003: 340). If this is correct, it follows that coastal villas depended on purchases of the surplus produced by the landholders of the *ager Campanus*.

Of course, the elite owned land in inland Campania. L. Papirius Paetus lived at Neapolis, but also owned properties in the *ager Campanus*, since Cicero's epistolary reveals his worries about the confiscations of 46 BC (*Fam.* 9.16.7; 17.1.20). The Fulvii Flacci appear to have acquired properties in the *ager Campanus* as early as 210 BC, when, right after the fall of Capua, the Roman proconsul Q. Fulvius Flaccus leased parts of the confiscated land (Liv. 27.3.1-2; see Frederiksen 1984: 248).[276] Evidently, the magistrate took advantage of his role to get his hands on some property (see Chapter 1, section 4 on *subseciva*). His family continued to maintain local connections, and take care of their local interests, as testified by the record of one of their *liberti* in the lists of Capuan *magistri* (Frederiksen 1984: 308).[277] However, the Campanian countryside was remarkable for its small holdings: it was a veritable garden farmed intensively in small allotments (Horden and Purcell 2000: 222) This is likely to have been the case already before the Campanian land was distributed to the people by the *lex Iulia agraria* of 56 BC: Cicero's accusation (*Leg. Agr.* 2.84) that the promoters of the land bill of 63 BC wanted to take the land from the *plebs optima et modestissima* who farmed the *ager Campanus* seems to encompass also direct producers. With its *nundinae* and its frequent villas, the *ager Campanus* provided all the optimal conditions for peasants to put their efforts into good use.[278]

[276] According to Gargola (1995: 122), Flaccus' decision to match every estate that was rented out with a townhouse suggests that “only lands near the city were treated”. There is no reason to believe that this was the case, especially if, as Gargola also suggests, the leased estates were those belonging to the disloyal local elite.

[277] Another instance of a member of the Roman elite owning properties at Capua is the fabulous story reported by Diodorus Siculus (36.2-2a) on the slave uprising stirred by a Roman *eques*: this man armed his rural slaves (numbering 400), and proceeded to enrol those of neighbouring farms. Still, the reliability of the story is hard to assess, and there are plenty of uncertainties, including the name of the individual, reported as either T. Minucius or Vettius.

[278] The sources (Fest. 176 L; Cic. *Leg. Agr.* 2.89) explain that *nundinae* were attended by *rustici*, a term

7. Conclusions.

Generations of students have grown up with Brunt's (1988: 240) teaching that the Roman revolution "had its origins … partly in the misery of the poor, in a social crisis". I would contend that, although the first colon is certainly true, the second may be not. We do not need a social and economic crisis to explain the large support showed by Italian peasants for change, either through ambitious reform or through the force of weapons. Destitution was an ever-present feature of the Roman countryside. In this chapter, I have attempted to see whether the conditions of the Italian peasantry can be assessed with some precision. Analysing peasants' opportunities to market their produce, I have concluded that a part of the Italian peasantry was enjoying better conditions. However, I have also concluded that the main factor affecting peasants was the opportunity to access tenancies and wage labour. In this respect, the chapter's most important finding has been a negative one: we cannot tell whether wages were dropping, and competition growing, because of the uncertainties surrounding the demography of Roman Italy, and the precise use of slave labour. As Harris (1999: 63) explains, "in the eyes of some, what we have learned [about the demography of the Roman Empire] … has been mainly the depth of our ignorance". Please count me in.

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which, as we have seen in the Introduction, also includes wealthier farmers. However, the term also includes peasants: *contra* Ziccardi 2000: 135, then, there is no reason to deny that peasants attended *nundinae*.

Chapter 4: landownership in Roman culture.

1. Challenging the traditional view.

In the Introduction, Section 2, I have described the common idea according to which landownership was central to the cultural landscape of Roman citizens. Landownership defined the Romans' sense of belonging to the community, as citizens – owing to its connection with voting rights – and as soldiers, providing the motivation for which they were to fight (and die). It has been argued that it was in the context of the progressive allotment of land to citizens that "the original bond between the farmer-soldier and his plot of land developed" (Vivenza 2012: 27). The right to a share of the land is believed to have been inextricably intertwined with military service, and thus with citizen status, along the same lines as the Greek κλῆρος system.[279] In the case of Latin colonies, of course, landownership rights depended on participation in the colony's citizenship, not Rome's.

However, the connection between citizenship, landownership and military service should be seen with a critical eye. In Rome, until the 2nd Punic war the *census* threshold to be counted among the *adsidui* was quite high (11,000 *asses*). For this reason, the republican citizens who voted in the *centuriae* of the 5 classes and served in the legions were far from being the small landowners described by Horace (see Chapter 2). Rather, in comparison to the rest of the population, they were affluent and privileged people.[280] Likewise, recent research on

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[279] In fact, according to Weber, originally Greek κλῆρος and Roman *fundus* indicated the eligibility to a share of the land. (Capogrossi Colognesi 2000: 29; 32, n. 57; 273; 279-280). It may well be possible that, originally, Roman property customs were not yet based on the dichotomy *dominium* / *possessio* (and the corresponding distinction between *ager publicus* and *ager privatus*). By contrast, centuriations correspond to a later stage, in which the concept of private property has fully developed, and settlers receive full property rights on the land that they receive.

[280] According to Mommsen, originally only landowners were eligible for military service. In his *Römische Geschichte* (Eng. transl. vol.1 p. 240), Mommsen claimed that the Servian constitution presupposes the identity between landowner and citizen: only landowners could cast their vote in the centuriate assembly and serve in the army. Mommsen's view depends on his idea that originally only *res mancipi* – that is, land and other things more or less connected to farming, such as slaves and cattle – were included in *census* declarations (that is, they were *censui censendo*: *Römische Staatsrecht*, vol. 2.1, p. 377). Mommsen believed that only after the introduction of *tributum*, traditionally dated to 312

Greek landownership has remarked that the citizens who owned a κλῆρος and belonged to the hoplitic class were a relatively small and privileged group (Moreno 2009). *Adsidui*'s privileged status, incidentally, helps us to better appreciate the revolutionary nature of the tribal assembly, in which the majority of the population – who, being *proletarii*, never got to vote in the centuriate assembly – could finally express their preference.

It is only from the second Punic war onwards that poorer people are progressively included among the *adsidui*, serving in the army and participating in assemblies in the ranks of the *centuriae* of the fifth class. Tellingly, then, the only time in which the Roman citizens who directly worked the land – that is, the peasants – could have developed a group identity based on their bond with their land is precisely the period in which, according to the current view, they were progressively deprived of it. In this thesis, though, I have argued that among poorer people landownership was very rare, and only had a marginal role in peasants' productive strategies. If this idea is correct, then, the idea that the Roman peasants could be willing to serve in the army to defend their land becomes untenable. In the same fashion, the role of landownership in shaping the individual's sense of belonging to the political community disappears from the picture.

In fact, military and political participation can be explained otherwise. For example,

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BC, was *census* assessment reformed, coming to include also mobile goods (*instrumentum fundi* etc.) (for criticism of the dating see Fraccaro 1931 and now Savino 2004: 164). Mommsen's view, though, is plainly wrong. It is based on a single passage of Cicero's *Pro Flacco* (79), in which Cicero attacks his opponent for having entered a property located outside Roman territory in his *census* declaration. From this passage, Mommsen concluded that land outside Italy was *nec censendo*; combining this with Gaius' statement (2.27) that *ager provincialis* was *res nec mancipi*, Mommsen concluded that all *res nec mancipi* was *nec censendo*, and that therefore only *res mancipi* was *censui censendo*. This interpretation, however, is completely inconsistent. In Cicero's times *census* certainly included *res nec mancipi*: therefore, Cicero's accusation cannot have been based on the inclusion in the *census* of *res nec mancipi*, which was indeed perfectly legal. In fact, Mommsen here makes confusion between provincial land, that is *ager Romanus extra Italiam*, and land located in a foreign, formally independent country, that is *ager peregrinus*. It is with the latter category that Cicero is dealing. Cicero is not pointing out that the property is *res nec mancipi*, but that, being located in *ager peregrinus*, it is not subject to the *ius Romanorum*, and therefore the categories of *res mancipi* and *nec mancipi* simply do not apply to it: it is, in sum, outside Roman jurisdiction, and therefore should not be entered in the *census*. In fact, as Festus explains, only the land that can be purchased and sold according to the Roman private law (*ius civile*) is to be considered *censui censendo* (Fest. 50 Lindsay). Surprisingly, Grelle (2005: 310, n. 51) takes Festus' lemma as supporting Mommsen's interpretation of the *Pro Flacco*.

peasants could be lured to serve in the army by the promise of booty. Even the simple *stipendium* could do, as peasants' households were generally under pressure to make ends meet. Finally, we must consider the possibility that people unwilling to fight were forcefully enlisted. As for political participation, although it is undeniable that it is always accompanied by a feeling of belonging to the community, we should conclude that Roman peasants felt that they belonged to the community *even though* they did not own land.[281]

In the Introduction I have also showed that – as far as Virgil and his imitators are concerned – landownership is also central to shaping the Romans' sense of belonging to the territory. There, though, I also pointed out that all the sources available come from elite circles. We never get to hear peasants' own voices. Besides, literary self-representation is not necessarily reliable: in Chapter 2, for example, I have investigated the political overtones of the elite's self-representation as peasants. In fact, as Rawson (1976) has showed, the actual behaviour of the late republican Roman elites uncontroversially shows that these people had no problem about alienating their own *patria rura*. To what extent, then, does the cultural value of landownership in shaping the individual's bond with the territory, as is visible in Virgil's *Eclogues* (as well as in the *Dirae*), correspond to the elite's actual practice, and to what extent, by contrast, is it just literary posing, in the style of the "exile lamentation", combined with the Augustan propaganda on *patria* (Eder 2005)? This chapter formulates an answer to this question. Connecting Rawson's findings on aristocrats selling their land to the analysis of the elite's economic behaviour, I will show that *patria rura* actually had very little space in elite culture. This, instead, was based precisely on those principles of economic profitability that are at odds with non-economic considerations such as the sense of belonging.

In principle, though, rejecting the elite's cultural bond with the territory would prove

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[281] The lower classes' political participation rates during the republic are notoriously a fiercely contested battleground; however, nobody (not even Mouritsen) would deny that at least a small portion of the urban proletariate took part in assemblies and elections. Besides, on some occasions the turnout at assemblies was doubtless larger, as rural proletarians swept in from around Rome (see e.g. Appian's narrative of Ti. Gracchus' tribunate).

nothing about peasants. In fact, a peculiar aspect of modern peasantries is their alterity to the "hegemonic" culture. In particular, to an hegemonic culture based on the commercial logics of profitability and development – whereby only what is economically profitable for the individual is worth pursuing – they oppose the welfare of the community, and its rootedness in the physical territory. From the Mapuche of Patagonia (deprived of their land by the Italian wool company Benetton) to the direct farmers of the Val Susa (threatened by the construction of a purposeless railway tunnel that will devastate the valley's hydrography), today we see peasant cultures opposing not only corporations' land-grabbing and ruthless exploitation of the territory – that is, plans that any human being able to distinguish good and bad would immediately condemn – but also plans that would in fact advantage the population. The most striking example of the latter type perhaps comes from Ethiopia. There, the government is promoting the construction of the biggest dam in Africa, which will cater for the country's ever-growing energy demand and will effectively improve the lives of millions of people. And yet, the inhabitants of the region that is planned to be flooded to create the artificial lake refuse to move. In fact, peasants argue that their communities are held together by traditions that have taken shape through their endless relationship with the territory: relocation would sever these ties, thus endangering the community's very existence, ultimately making their lives meaningless.

Yet, using modern peasants as a term of comparison for the ancient ones would be misleading. As I have been arguing in this thesis, in Roman Italy most peasants did not live in isolated communities (see Chapter 3, section 6). Of course, the scale of their contacts with cities was variable: some lived in towns, some lived at walking distance, and some only had sporadic contacts with them. Nevertheless, as I have explained in Chapter 2, complete isolation was never an option. A key moment of Roman peasants' contacts with urban communities was *census* registration. In this chapter, I will suggest that the evaluation of properties that took place during *census* recordings played a decisive role in spreading among peasants the same view visible among the elites, that land was a form of wealth and as such it could be freely sold to raise money.[282] As a test-case of this idea I will analyse the behaviour of the veterans who received land under Caesar and Augustus, showing that they sold it as it pleased them. Finally, I will reflect on how *census* recording procedures provided peasants with access to abstract sets of principles to evaluate land.

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[282] Land, however, was not a commodity, since its value varied according to position (De Neeve 1985). In economics, a commodity is a good or service that has substantial fungibility (that is, its individual units are capable of mutual substitution). The demand for commodities has no qualitative differentiation across the market. Translated in simple language, this means that in order for land to be a commodity, a plot of land in a certain region must be absolutely interchangeable with another plot of land located elsewhere, which is not what we see among the Romans.

2. Elite attitudes to landownership.

In the praise of agriculture in his *Cato Maior* (*Sen.* 7.25), Cicero describes an old farmer thanking the gods for letting him obtain (*accipere*) his fortune, and pass it on to his descendants (*posteris prodere*). The ancients were acutely aware that any sort of economic activity was subject to the unforeseeable swings of fortune (so Manil. 3.96-101), and therefore potentially risky. The uncertainties of the economy are best exemplified by Seneca the Elder's First *controversia* (see Woolf 2006: 91): in this fictitious court case, we see a man fall into poverty, but then recover thanks to an inheritance; meanwhile, though, his brother experiences the same reversal of fortune and becomes poor. However, the ancients knew that some activities carried more risks than others. In this respect, trade is exemplary: the introduction to Cato's *De Agri cultura* earmarks trade as too dangerous.

As I have explained in Chapter 3, we should avoid the mistake of believing that everyone in the ancient world had the same attitude to risk. Trade was considered dangerous, but there were plenty of traders. Likewise, among landowners there were those willing to take risks in order to obtain higher profits.[283] Thus, Columella (1.pr.4.4-5) pleads for taking risks in

[283] Despite overtly optimistic claims such as Cicero's, who in the *De Officiis* states that "there is no kind of gainful employment that is … more fruitful … than agriculture" (*nihil est agri cultura... uberius*), agriculture was less profitable than other activities (especially credit). For this reason, agriculture may have seemed intrinsically more "moral" than other activities, since it was connected to *parsimonia*, which, with its contrary *avaritia*, was a key concept in Republican political discourse (Storchi Marino 2004; see Gozzoli 2007 for the accusation of *avaritia* as a political weapon). Such "moral value" of agriculture is championed by Tremellius Scrofa in Varro's *De Re Rustica*, who uses the adjective *honestus* to define farming (Kronenberg 2009: 98). Likewise, among agricultural activities the most profitable ones were at risk of being deemed immoral. In the Preface of Book 2 of his *De Re Rustica*, Varro criticises those who devote much land to herding, which he claims to be a symptom of greed (2.pr. 4: *Propter avaritiam contra leges ex segetibus fecit prata*). Viticulture was subject to the same risk (Purcell 1985: 4). However, different opinions can be seen. In his account of Remmius Palaemon's vineyard, later purchased by Seneca, Pliny (*HN* 14. 50) explains that, at first, Remmius undertook viticulture for vanity (meaning that Remmius, who had no expertise to invest in agriculture, nevertheless did so, in order to pose as a farmer); then Sthenelus took charge of the vineyard and achieved extraordinary profits. The construction of the sentence, that posits the two moments in opposition to each other (*haec adgressus excolere non virtute animi sed vanitate primo ... pastinatis de integro vineis cura Stheneli*: "He undertook the cultivation of this property not from any high motive but at first out of vanity … but he had the vineyards dug and trenched afresh under the superintendence of Sthenelus" [transl. LCL]), makes clear that the *virtus animi*, at first absent, appeared when Remmius took the profitable decision to task Sthenelus with the management. Pliny, in sum, appears to have a favourable view of increasing profits. When he reports that Seneca later purchased the vineyard, however, he admits that the purchase looked strange on the part of a man such as Seneca, who was "at all events no admirer

experimenting with new things, claiming that, "though sometimes detrimental in part (*etsi per partes non numquam damnosum*), nevertheless [experimenting] proves advantageous on the whole (*in summa tamen fit compendiosum*), because no field is tilled without profit (*sine profectu*) if the owner, through much experimentation, causes it to be fitted for the use which it can best serve" (transl. LCL). However, it could also be the case that investments did not pay. For example, in Varro's dialogue on farming *pastio villatica* (farm-based animal husbandry) is defined as a *bolum* (a lucky throw of the dice: Purcell 1995: 154), as it requires huge investments that may result in huge losses. And yet, *pastio villatica* had its supporters. And so had viticulture, which also required considerable investment. To put it briefly, all sorts of different opinions and preferences existed. According to Cato and Columella, viticulture was the best strategy. Yet, in Varro's *De re rustica* (1.7.10) Stolo explains that people disagree on this point; in his opinion meadows (*prata*) have far more advantages.[284]

However, as Veyne has explained (1979), there was a bottom-line, security-oriented approach that most landowners followed (with the exception of those who, like Tarius Rufus, were considered as squanderers). That is, regardless of individual preferences for risk and investment, every landowner tended to have a sort of "money in the bank", some land managed by privileging security as opposed to profitability, and upon which they could fall back in case of economic setbacks.[285] For this same reason, all wealthy Romans invested at least part of their money in landownership. In comparison to any other investment, landownership was considered safer, especially in troubled times, when the currency floated, and *leges tabularum novarum* were looming. As Cicero reports of Fulcinius, he invested his wife's dowry in land to

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of frivolities" (*minime utique miratore inanium*). He admits, then, that to people like Seneca the returns of viticulture could look *inania*. The same polyphony of opinions is visible in the judgements of *pastio* in Varro's *De re rustica*. As Merula claims (3.2.10), "what does it matter if you obtain the profit from sheep or from birds?" [transl. Kronenberg (2009: 96)].

284 Note that *prata* are not wildland; they are created through irrigation, and as such they require investments. See e.g. *CIL* XI.7505: *C. Egnatius Sex. f. prata faciunda coiravit*, with comments by Marzano (2007: 93); Cic. *Quint*. 3.1.3: *ego locum aestate umbrosiorem vidi numquam* [i.e. than the *Fufidianum fundum*], *permultis locis aquam profluentem et eam uberem. quid quaeris? iugera L prati Caesius irrigaturum facile te arbitrabatur …*

285 Some, like Gabba (1988), have connected security to the need to protect personal *census*.

keep it safe (*Caecin*. 10-11).

I believe that we can talk of agriculture as a "core activity" of the Roman elite: quantities of money invested in land varied, but everyone owned land. Cicero seems to suggest that traders only purchased land when they were satisfied with the profits made by trading (*Off.* 151), but these two activities should be rather seen as complementary. When the Plautine Gripus describes what he would do with all the money on which he hopes to get his hands (*Rud.* 927-931), his "statement of purpose" involves both setting up farms and undertaking sea-trade. Thus, in the *Pro Fonteio* (46), Cicero mentions *omnes illius provinciae publicani, agricolae, pecuarii, ceteri negotiatores*. As D'Arms (1981: 26) explains, "the force of *ceteri* in this passage has been correctly interpreted as showing that the first three activities in the series fell within the range of activities of the *negotiator*".[286] If the fiction of *Satyricon* may be taken to reflect contemporary practice to any significant extent, Lichas of Tarentum is said to have "captained and owned the merchant vessel… but he also possessed landed estates and a *familia negotians*" (D'Arms 1981: 102). In the same work, the wool worker (*centonarius*) Echion also has a *villa* (though confessedly small), to which he invites the rhetor Agamemnon.

Epigraphical findings are consistent with this picture. On Christol and Fédière's (1999) reconstruction, for example, that the Usuleni of Narbo were involved in trading and also owned *figlinae* (an activity always connected with landownership). Likewise, at Tarraco some names appearing on the metal ingots are found also on tiles (Revilla Calvo 1995), proving that these people were both involved in metal production and/or trade and owned *figlinae* (and therefore land).

The same complementarity is visible in financial investment taking place alongside landownership. In Cicero's passage just discussed, the identification of *agricolae* and *negotiatores* also involves *publicani*. In fact, Frederiksen (1981: 273) has reminded us of a very

[286] Cic. *Font*. 12, instead, appears to make a distinction between the two categories: *unum ex toto negotiatorum, colonorum, publicanorum, aratorum, pecuariorum numero*.

obvious, yet completely overlooked, fact: the *locationes* farmed out to *publicani* and *mancipes* required the pledge of *praedes* and *praedia*. Tax-gatherers needed to be able to pledge land, which quite obviously was, in many cases, their own. Credit too could take place alongside agriculture. Pliny the Younger comes to mind, who, in a letter to Calvisius Rufus, claimed that his wealth was mostly invested in land, but he also had money out on loans.

Another reason why the elites considered necessary to own land is that landownership has a public aspect, in that it advertises your success and arouses admiration. This is already visible in Xenophon's episode of Lysander and Cyrus (*Oec.* 4.15.23). Six centuries later, in Dio Chrysostom's *Euboicus*, one of the landowners who attend the trial of the hunter explains that cultivated land becomes more valuable to the owner, "and at the same time the sight of land occupied and under cultivation is a pleasing one, while wastelands are not only a useless possession to those who hold them, but very distressing evidence of some misfortune of their owners" (7.34; transl. LCL). Just like urban houses (e.g. Cic. *Off.* 1.138 on Cn. Octavius' house that "canvassed for him" [transl. LCL]), rural estates are a sort of business card: Catullus, for example, (114) says that Mentula is believed to be wealthy because this is the impression given by his estates; in the same fashion, Juvenal (7. 132-133) describes the lawyer Tongilius' attempts to impress potential clients displaying more wealth than he actually has (*maioris vivere census*): among the objects through which Tongilius' pretended wealth is showed-off, villas are present.

Thanks to its public aspect, landownership advertised not only owners' fortunes, but also their morality. In Roman culture, not all occupations were morally equivalent. Cicero's *De Officiis* contains the most comprehensive philosophical discussion of economic behaviour to survive from the Roman republic. In a passage of this work (1.150-151), Cicero discusses what economic occupations are legitimate for an honest man, claiming that agriculture is the most perfect activity (so also Colum. 1.pr.10: *unum genus liberale et ingenuum rei familiaris augendae*). Cicero's reflection on the legitimate ways to make money is based on Posidonius' reflection on *artes sordidae* and *artes liberales* (reported by Sen. Ep. 88.21-23). Though not a strict follower, Cicero was nevertheless imbued with Stoic doctrine. However, I would say that this view of the intrinsic morality of agriculture was not an exclusive feature of philosophical reflection. On the contrary, philosophical reflection derived the distinction between moral and immoral activities from assumptions commonly held among the Greek and the Roman elites alike.

Limiting our investigation to the Roman world, attention to the correct ways of making money can be seen in Q. Caecilius Metellus' funerary eulogy for his father Lucius, pronounced in 221 BC. In the speech, the son listed his father's highest achievements, remarking that even wise men generally struggle to obtain them. Among his father's achievements, Metellus included making “big money in a good way” (*pecuniam magnam bono modo invenire*) (Plin. HN 7.139-140 = ORF 6.2). We could conclude that it was not only Cicero who attributed importance to the correct ways of making money, but that this was a shared value at least from the late 3rd century. In fact, the idea that agriculture was the most moral activity is already present in Cato's reflection. Cato famously defines the *agricola* as *vir bonus colendi peritus* (Serv. *Ad Verg. Geor.* 1.46), and in his treatise on farming he defines *agri cultura* (1) as “*maximeque pius quaestus [...] minimeque invidiosus*” (he also adds that “*minimeque male cogitantes sunt qui in eo studio occupati sunt*”).

Understanding the preference for agriculture requires some explanation. In fact, it is immediately clear why the Roman elite might consider some activities disdainfully, owing to their being more menial than others (cf. the Greek distaste for banausic activities). The consul Terentius Varro, defeated by Hannibal at Cannae, was said to be son of a butcher (*lanius*); in Cicero's times, Plancus could call Ventidius Bassus a muleteer (*mulio*), just as Vespasian was called, for having been involved, in times of need, in what Suetonius calls a *mangonicus quaestus* (Tchernia 2011: 219-220).[287] The stigma connected to money-lending, instead, could

[287] Nevertheless, though subject to stigma, all these activities were practised. In fact, the Romans were

be explained considering that this activity usually involved stripping people of everything they had: thus, Cato compared money-lending to theft (*De Agr.* praef.) and to homicide (Cic. *Off.* 2.88-89). As for trade, things are less clearcut, as Cato does not comment on its immorality (only on its risks), and Cicero justifies it, provided that it is carried out on a large scale (*Off.* 1.151: *mercatura magna et copiosa … non est admodum vituperanda*).[288]

Some scholars (Veyne 1979; Tchernia 2011: 220) have argued that agriculture was not considered a proper economic activity, but only a sort of accidental, irregular one. This, though, does not seem correct. As Cato makes clear in the Preface to his agricultural treatise, he considers farming a *quaestus*. This Latin word usually indicates all the range of economic activities ranging from one-off sales to proper jobs (what Andreau [2007] and Tchernia [2011] call "gagne-pain"). Here, however, Cato neatly separates *quaestus* and the actions necessary to

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not excessively picky when it came to involvement in "shameful" but profitable activities. Thus, Cato himself, according to Plutarch, in his old age became involved in money-lending (*Cato Maior* 21.6-7). The story of M. Aemilius Scaurus provides a very good example of this "double standard". According to the story (Val. Max. 4.4.11; *Vir. Ill.* 72.1-5; see Gabba 1988: 41-42), Scaurus had been left relatively little money by his father, but managed to grow rich. The *De Viris Illustribus* explains that Scaurus' enrichment went hand in hand with the stigma of having been a charcoal-dealer (*carbonarius*). And still, according to Valerius Maximus, Scaurus recorded his financial achievements in his own autobiography (*de vita sua libri*). It would seem, then, that for Scaurus his enrichment was not only unproblematic, but even something to be proud of, to the point of recording it in his autobiography. The apparent contradiction and ambiguity between belief and practice is equally visible in expenditure. According to a very popular belief, one should not spend more that he owned. This is visible, for example, in the moral reproach for those who practice *luxus* borrowing money (Storchi Marino 2004: 24). Interestingly, the *Epistulae ad Caesarem senem* (Sall. *Rep.* 1.5.3 ff.) suggest that credit should be forbidden, so that individual members of the nobility (*homines adulescentuli* in particular) can only squander their *res familiaris*. To explain why, Bryson, who possibly lived in the 1st century BC, used metaphors of bodily growth and nutrition: "spending at the level of income is like a body whose growth has stopped. Spending beyond income is like an ancient body which is in decay" (Swain 2013: 242). This is why Catullus (Cat. 114) reproaches Mentula, who *fructus sumptibus exsuperat*. However, people could find ways to adapt credit and expenditure into their own systems of moral values. For example, when Cicero – who in another occasion claimed that *odit populus Romanus privatam luxuriam* (*Mur.* 76)! – purchased his house on the Palatine, he claimed in a letter to Atticus (1.13.5) that it is legitimate (*licere*) to borrow from a friend (Atticus himself) when the target is stockpiling your *dignitas* (*ad dignitatem aliquam pervenire*). Equally ambiguous was Cicero's attitude to fancy villas: he blamed them in public (*Leg.* 2.2; 3.30-31), though he owned a few (see discussion by Kronenberg 2009: 102, n. 24).

[288] The evidence for elite's involvement in seaborne transport is limited to one single piece of evidence from the 2nd century AD. This is a poem in the volume of the Greek Anthology dedicated to oracles (14.72), and reports the oracle received at Didyma by a certain Rufinus – identified by a lemma with L. Cuspius Pactumeius Rufinus, cos. AD 142 – on how he should have his *naukleros* take his vow. It is uncertain, however, whether Rufinus had a shipping enterprise (Whittaker 1985: 58 thinks that he used his ship to transport the produce of his estates; *contra* Tchernia 2011: 32-33).

obtain it (*studium*, a proper "endeavour"). As opposed to *lucrum*, which is in some way unexpected (Crampon 1985: 201), *quaestus* (as the name implies) is deliberately planned. However, it is not immediately clear what Cato is saying here, since his use of *quaestus* and *rem quaerere* in the passage could either be referring to returns/revenues or profit/gain. Returns or revenues are the money made out of a single or more transaction, whereas profits/gains are the final capital increase accounting for expenses.[289]

In Latin, the two concepts are not distinguished (Crampon 1985: 201), and all words meaning profit can also mean returns. For example, *reditus* usually means profit, but in a passage of Pliny (HN 10.45: *pavonem ... saginare primus instituit ... M. Aufidius Lurco, eoque ex quaestu reditus HS sexagena milia habuit*; "from this enterprise, he made 60,000 sesterces") the word means returns: it is the money made out of a transaction that can be easily showed-off, not the actual profit calculated going back to your account-books. So also *quaestus*: even though is commonly found with the meaning of profit ever since Plautus (Crampon 1985: 201), it can also mean returns (e.g. Colum. 8.4.6: *nullus ornithonis quaestus vincet impensas*: "no returns coming from breeding birds for sale can be higher than the expenses incurred"). Thus, to avoid confusion, Cicero (*Off.* 2.87) distinguishes between obtaining a revenue (*rem quaerere*), and a profit (*rem augere*).

Alone, lexical analysis does not allow an uncontroversial choice between the two meanings. It is necessary, then, to consider the broader context of Cato's usage of the word. It makes more sense for a handbook *de agri cultura* to give advice to readers on capital increase in the long run. Once seen in this context, it becomes clear that Cato is talking about profit. In fact, Cato's attention to profit shone in his posthumous fame. Thus, Plutarch (*Cato Maior* 21.8) reports Cato's advice to his son on the matter: "diminishing one's patrimony was the sign of a

[289] In accounting, gain is defined as the difference between initial and ending capital, whereas profit is returns (or revenues) less expenses. In practical terms, the two concepts overlap. Let us make the following example: with an initial capital of 60, and an expenditure of 50, we get a return of 300, which brings the final capital to 310; the gain, then, will be 250 (310-60), as will be the profit (300-50).

widow woman, not a man".

Cato's attention to profits resounds in his suggestion that a *pater familias* should be a seller, not a buyer (*De Agr.* 2.7). As I have explained in Chapter 3, Finley used this passage to defend his idea that Roman landowners were primarily interested in self-sufficiency. On a close look, though, this piece of advice has little to do with self-sufficiency. The prescription to sell more than one buys is part of the idea that the head of the household has the duty to increase the family's patrimony, in order to pass on to the sons a larger fortune than he has inherited. Cato does not say that people should not buy at all, but that *overall* one should sell more than he buys. We should not believe that Cato's view was isolated. Columella too connected agriculture to the expansion of *res familiaris* (1.Pr.7).

In Roman elite culture, profit was important not only at the family level, but also at the individual level. Not only did it increase the estate, thus adding up to the greatness and glory of the family; it also made the Roman *vir* able to meet the expenses connected to (and expected from) higher social statuses (Cic. *Off.* 1.8.25 talks of *usus vitae necessarii*; see Di Gennaro 2004: 47-48). *Quaestus* was necessary in order to pay for *sumptus*. On the one hand, the noble man needed to be able to pay for the gifts, handouts, and gratuities with which he maintained the ranks of his *amici* and *clientes*. On the other hand, the kind of high-rank expenditure that I have introduced in Chapter 1, section 2 (see also Chapter 3, section 6) was inescapable. As Verboven (2007: 863) has explained, "status claims have to be communicated", and this communication took place through expenditure. As Cicero wrote to Atticus regarding his intention to buy a luxury house, the purchase was necessary *ad aliquam dignitatem pervenire* (1.13.5). Those who rejected *sumptus* were at risk of social stigma: it is the case, for example, of the miser portrayed by Juvenal in his 14th Satire, who lives poor in order to leave a wealthy inheritance.[290] However, profit appears to have been central at all levels of Roman society.

[290] The importance of expenditure for social prestige was already part of Greek culture. For example, at the beginning of Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, we are informed of "Critobulus's need for money to pay for his various public obligations, and the source of that money is said to be the surplus (*periousia*) that

Evidence in support of this view comes from a tomb located on the Via Portuense, and dated to the 1st century BC - 1st AD. The tomb belongs to the family of the beef trader (*bublarius*) M. Valerius Celer, who, in his funerary inscription, is praised for preferring "earning than spending" (AE 1991, 122a, ll. 3-4: *plura maluit emereri quam consumere*; on the inscription see Giardina 1993: 265).

According to Andreau (2007: 239), Cato's preface is the only instance in republican Latin where *quaestus* only indicates the result of an economic activity (that is, obtaining money) without the action. I would rather contend that this use is not unique. In Cic. *Off.* 1.150-151, *quaestus* is used with the same meaning, whereas the activities that cater for it are defined *artificii* or *artes* (*contra* Andreau 2007: 237, who takes *artificiis et quaestibus* as meaning economic activities of different nature and quality). The passage is of great importance to understand the role of agriculture in the elite's attitude for economic activities. Andreau (2007: 239) believes that Cato's preface is the only instance in republican Latin in which making money through agriculture is considered an economic activity. However, the same idea is visible in Cicero's passage. Although Cicero does explicitly call agriculture an *ars*, but uses the general *res* (*omnium rerum*), he is clearly treating *agri cultura* as an *ars*.[291] Ancient authors, in fact, all agree to define agriculture as a *techne* (Xen. Oec. 5.8.10-11) or *ars* and even *scientia.* Varro (*Rust.* 1.3.1) is very specific: agriculture is the science of making the earth give the highest yields (*fructus* again). Therefore, when his wife Fundania buys an estate, she asks Varro, the keeper of agricultural knowledge, to take care of it (1.1.2). The theme is as old as

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comes from his estate" (Swain 2013: 194). To what extent did the Roman elite take up models of behaviour that already belonged to the Hellenistic world? Here I can only express my hope that this complex problem will be adequately investigated in the future.

[291] It is uncertain whether Cato's and Cicero's idea that landownership (and farming) were economic activities is a novelty occurred around Cato's time. Livy, in fact, in his account of the *plebiscitum Claudianum* of 218 (Liv. 21.63.3-4: see Tchernia 2011: 201-210 for an analysis of the law and its afterlife), glosses that "all economic activities were considered shameful for senators" (*quaestus omnis patribus indecorus uisus*). According to Tchernia (2011: 217), Livy's text is broadly faithful of what was said by Q. Claudius or C. Flaminius (who had promoted and supported the law respectively) in 218 BC. However, it is equally possible that the sentence is Livy's personal re-elaboration. According to Paulus, *Sententiae* 5.28.3, in the law the word *quaestus* was connected only to trade (*navem in quaestum habere*). See now Prag 2016: 3.

Xenophon's Oeconomicus, where Socrates also defines agriculture as the best way to increase one's estate.[292] The theme of profits returns in the *Cato Maior* (Cic. *Sen.* 51; on Xenophon as a source of this work see Russo 2009). There, Cicero's fictional Cato explains that *fructus* – which has the double meaning of "yield" and "revenue" (De Neeve 1985: 82-83) – is one of the reasons of his preference for agriculture. The idea that agriculture must be profitable is a typical theme of Roman thought: thus, Quintilian defined the good farmer as "he who had high yields/profits" (5.10.48: *bonus agricola magnos sustulit fructus*).[293]

It seems to me, in fact, that the preference for agriculture should precisely be explained in terms of its public visibility, as I have outlined above.[294] Providing evidence of landowners' fortune and moral values, agriculture contributed to building up a form of social respectability. This is visible, for example, in the story of L. Marcius Philippus and Volteius Mena, told by Horace in the *Epistles* (1.7.46-95). So the story goes: Philippus, having taken an interest in Mena, the typical average honest man, and having made him a loyal *cliens*, decides to give him part of the necessary money to buy a farm (and lend him the remaining part). Doubtlessly, Philippus' decision is motivated by his willingness to reward Mena's honesty by helping him to improve his social status. Volteius will eventually prove unable to succeed as a farmer, and will ask Philippus to restore him to his former life as an auctioneer. Horace comments on people realising the real value of things (note the irony here: Mena is a *praeco*!), and that what they have left was actually superior to what they have acquired. This comment implies that Philippus and – initially – Maena (and Horace's readers) assumed that farming was preferable to being an auctioneer.

The connection between landownership and respectability is perfectly visible in the

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[292] For the definition of estate see Xen. Oec. 6.4: "an estate (οἶκος) seemed to be identical with the total of a person's property (κτήσις ἡ σύμπασα)". In Chapter 2, I have commented on the complicated ironical interplay between the statements of the literary Socrates and the teaching of the historical Socrates.
[293] Remarkably, the next example made by Quintilian in the passage refers to expenditure damaging the family's estate: *sumptuosus fuit, patrimonium exhausit*.
[294] For the possibility that agriculture was preferred because it was more "moral" (see n. 283), consider that a profound misalignment existed between moral assumptions and actual practice (see n. 287).

expectation that the members of the decuronial class owned land, as we can see in the story of Vespasian's grandfather, T. Flavius Petro. Suetonius (*Div. Vesp*. 1) explains that Petro was a *centurio* (or perhaps an *evocatus*) in Pompey's army. Possibly, in his previous period of service he had already amassed some wealth, and he must have obtained some more then, since Suetonius mentions the possibility for him to become a *decurio* on his return home from Pharsalus. This possibility, however, could not be turned into reality, since the man owned no land.[295] We do not know why Flavius Petro failed to purchase land right after Pharsalus. Perhaps he was denied the possibility, as local landowners were not pleased with having an outsider in the municipal senate; perhaps there was no land available for purchase, or perhaps (less likely, in the light of what I said above) he had insufficient funds. At any rate, it is clear that purchasing land was a key passage in social promotion.[296] According to Mayer (2012: 42-45), Cicero is perhaps the most striking example of a landless but wealthy individual managing to achieve both results (purchasing land and climbing the social ladder): however, in this case it seems more likely that the Tullii owned land, since they belonged to the local elite.

Owing to the importance of landownership for their economic and social strategies, the Roman elites could be at times reluctant to sell their land. The reluctance to sell also depended on the sentimental values attached to land, in particular the ancestral fields, where, as Cicero puts it, "*hic sacra, hic genus, hic maiorum multa vestigia*" (*Leg*. 2.3). Nevertheless, as Rawson (1976) has uncontroversially showed, Cicero did not even rule out that one day he could alienate his ancestral land. As he explains to Atticus (12.36.1), before deciding the location of his beloved daughter Tullia's *fanum* he wants to make sure that future owners will respect its sanctity: this clearly shows that not even Cicero's land at Arpinum would have

[295] Hence Petro decided to invest his money, and became a *coactor argentarius*. Eventually he must have obtained land through his wife's dowry or inheritance, since Suetonius says that she owned land at Cosa (Andreau 1987: 380).

[296] Adding land to your other sources of wealth is not the same as giving up all activities that are not connected with landownership. This was the typical behaviour of the modern European social climbers: for example, in Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir*, we are told that Monsieur de Renard has given up his factory and has become a landowner.

certainly remained at his disposal for ever.

In general, despite security, publicity, and whatever affective involvement people might have with their land, elite Romans had no problems with selling it. The decision to sell could be motivated by the need for capital to pay for expenses and to invest. In Livy's narrative of the events that led to the first secession of the *plebs* in 494 BC, a central position is occupied by his pathetic description of a military officer oppressed by debts: he has sold his ancestral land to repay his debts, and has eventually been enslaved (Liv. 2.23). The story reveals that the Romans were fully aware that land could be converted into cash when needed: just like Livy's enslaved officer, in the traditional account of Cincinnatus' story the man has sold almost half of his land to pay a fine on a friend's behalf (Val. Max. 4.4.7). Similarly, land could be sold when capital was needed to start an enterprise: in Plautus' Mercator, Demipho has sold his father's farm in order to undertake trading. The very same course of action was followed by Trimalchio, who – having inherited land from his master (Petr. *Sat*. 76.2) – must have either sold or mortgaged it to undertake his shipping enterprise.[297]

Furthermore, in the light of what I have said above on the importance of profitability, we should not overlook its implications for the decision to sell land. As Columella (1.2.2) explains, whoever inherits land of poor quality should get rid of it. This strategy must have been very common: Cato suggests not to buy land in areas where farms are frequently on sale, as it implies that owners are not happy with them. The assumption that unprofitable land should be sold allows us to conclude this section claiming that for landowners sales were not the exception: landowners did not sell land only when unexpected expenses came up; rather, the daily management of their estates involved taking decisions on “cutting the unproductive branches”.

[297] Trimalchio says that he subsequently redeemed his master's land (Petr. *Sat*. 76: *Statim redemi fundos omnes, qui patroni mei fuerant*), which is the terminology used both for purchases and mortgages.

3. Peasants' views of land.

In the previous section, I have showed that the Roman elites were perfectly aware that land could be converted into cash when needed. This, of course, requires people to be generally aware that land has an economic value. As Frederiksen (1975: 168) has pointed out, at least by the late republic market values of land were easily available, and there were also expert valuers and advisers.

Indeed, it appears uncontroversial that this knowledge was common among landowners. It is true that we only possess few instances of landowners commenting on the price of their land. Pliny is the first who comes to mind, but also Quinctius, who knew that his estate in Gaul had not been sold at its full value (Cic. *Quinct*. 20). However, the extent to which landowners were aware of the economic value of their land is also visible in state land purchases and distributions. When the state purchased land from private citizens the sellers could sometimes be requested to evaluate their land (e.g. Sic. Flacc. 128.3-5 Campbell: former owners make a *professio* of the *aestimatio* of their land and are paid accordingly). More often, the *aestimatio* was carried out by the public magistrates (Liv. 31.13: "the consuls should evaluate the land"; cf. Cic. *Off*. 2.23.81-82: Aratus and 15 *principes civitatis* carry out the *aestimatio* of the exiles' estates), although landowners could be asked to give their consent on the procedure (e.g. Gran. Licin. 28.31-36: "the owners of the land agreed to let Lentulus set the price").

Magistrates' and landowners' competence on evaluating land were drawn together at the moment of the *aestimatio*. On the one hand, the magistrates in charge of the transactions – who were landowners themselves – reveal an acute knowledge of land values. Thus, when after Caesar's death a septemviral board was entrusted with the distribution of land to soldiers, the commissioners, led by L. Antonius, reserved the *ager Semurius* to *tribuni militum*. This land was very close to Rome (Cic. *Phil*. 6.13-14; cf. Cato in Macr. *Sat*. 1.10.16): the fact that it was reserved to *tribuni militum* – whose rewards had to be higher – shows that the commissioners were taking into account the economic value of the land.[298] Likewise, Cicero foresees the distribution of land to veterans *aequaliter* as an alternative to the *sors* (Cic. Fam. 11.20): considering that all *sortes* were of the same size, in this case too Cicero must be referring to their different economic value (cf. Chapter 1, section 5).[299] On the other hand, landowners were able to judge whether they were receiving a sum congruous to the value of their land.[300] If politicians like Cicero – who, by his own admission, was supported by the *locupletes* (*Att.* 1.19.4: *is enim est noster exercitus hominum ... locupletium*) – were worried that landowners forced to sell below market values could turn their back on them (see e.g. Cic. *Phil.* 5.53 for the desideratum that purchases take place *sine iniuria privatorum*; cf. Cic. *Att.* 1.19.4: *omnia illa tollebam, quae ad privatorum incommodum pertinebant*), then landowners must have been fully capable to understand whether they were being deceived by public authorities.

When magistrates' and landowners' estimates coincided, that is when landowners judged themselves to have been treated fairly, the magistrate who had carried out the purchases could be assured that they would acquire popularity and prestige: for example, Lentulus' purchase of 50,000 *iugera* in the *ager Campanus* in 163 BC secured him the reputation of "just man" (Gran. Licin. 28.31-36). It is with this aim that, in the *Res Gestae* (16), Augustus records carefully the expenditure incurred to reimburse the dispossessed, falsely claiming to have been

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[298] Usually *tribuni militum* received four times the normal reward: see e.g. App. *B.Civ.* 102; Dio 43.21 on Caesar's triumphal *congiarium*. See Keppie 1983: 42-43 for a record of payments to troops.

[299] It would be suggestive to explain the striking differences in size of land allotments in settlements close to each other and geographically similar in terms of different economic value of land. For example, colonists settled at Bononia in 189 BC received between 5 and 10 times more land (50 *iugera*) than those settled at Parma and Mutina six years later (9 and 5 *iugera* respectively). One cannot help imagine that the former received so much land because land in a still remote and foreign area was almost worthless: after Bononia was founded and the via Flaminia constructed, the price of land will have grown, and for this reason the colonists of Parma and Mutina will have received smaller allotments.

[300] Landowners could also be reimbursed with land located elsewhere. This possibility was already included in the Gracchan *lex agraria* (*Roman Statutes* 1.2, ll. 20-23; cf. ll. 23-25), and was also resorted to by Rullus in 63 BC (a measure opposed by Cicero: *Leg. Agr.* 1.5-6; 2.51). Augustus too used this solution when gathering all the money to reimburse landowners proved problematic (Dio 51.4.7-8). In 36, for example, he repaid the colony of Capua with public land at Cnossos (Dio 49.14.5; see Baldwin Bowsky 2004: 115), and in 31 BC reimbursements included land in Dyrrachium and Philippi (Dio 51.4.6-7; Dio's expression ἀντὶ τῆς χώρας, is ambiguous, as it can both mean "in return for the [seized] land" or "instead of the land", but its only other occurrence in Dio [54.25.5] suggests that the latter meaning should be preferred).

the only one to do so (as far as his contemporaries could recall: *ad memoriam aetatis meae*). In fact, meeting landowners' requests was a convenient way to secure political support. In his attack on Rullus, Cicero complains that he is agreeing to pay for the Campanian land at the price set by the owners (*Leg. Agr*. 2.72: *ergo ea lex est qua nostra vendamus quanti possimus, aliena emamus quanti possessores velint*). According to Dio (68.2.1-3), Nerva's generosity was such that, when he purchased 65 million HS worth of land to distribute to the poor of Rome, the emperor decided not to "bargain on the value of the land" (οὐ μέντοι καὶ περὶ τὰς τιμὰς αὐτῶν ἐμικρολογήσατο). Rather, Nerva agreed to pay a generous price, selling part of his private possessions and of the imperial estates to put the sum together: in this way, "through this [purchase] he benefited many people" (ἐν αὐτῷ τούτῳ πολλοὺς εὐηργέτησε).

What about peasants, though? So, far, nobody has actually tackled the matter, certainly as a consequence of the assumption that this mass of people was essentially uninvolved in land transactions. For this reason, so far scholars have been content with the view that Roman peasants had no idea of the value of land: their view of landownership was non-economic. Typical of this view is Gabba's (1985; uncritically repeated by Savino 2004: 94) belief that during the Civil Wars Roman veterans requested land from their generals that was ready for cultivation, assuming that for them land only mattered as long as it was their source of livelihood (as Brunt 1988: 253-256 explains, armies were predominantly composed of peasants). In Chapter 1, though, I have argued that land sales were common and also involved peasants. In accordance with this alternative picture, then, it is time now to reconsider whether peasants actually lacked any abstract view of land as an economic asset. I will reconsider the same case study used by Gabba, that is the veterans of the Civil Wars, to argue that Roman peasants did actually have a precise view of land as a form of wealth that – being interchangeable with money – could be traded at will.

In Chapter 1, section 6, I have mentioned a law from the *Codex Theodosianus* concerning the economic treatment of discharged veterans. As I have explained, the law establishes that veterans receive seeds and oxen to undertake farming. However, this is not the only option. In fact, the text also accounts for the possibility that veterans decide to undertake trades. The law successfully reminds us that, although estimates suggest that in the pre-industrial world between 60 and 80% of the total population were employed in agriculture, people could well conceive alternative options. If people were given a choice, they could decide to give up farming: as Appian explains, when the young Octavian took sides with the Senate against Antony, many among Caesar's veterans abandoned him; then, however, they "remembered the toils of agriculture and the gains of military service" and changed their minds (*B.Civ*. 3.42; transl. LCL). With its leisures and refinements (Brunt 1988: 251), urban lifestyle could exert a powerful attraction on soldiers.

As Brunt (1988: 270) points out, Roman magistrates went at great lengths to reward their soldiers with land: the *lex Flavia agraria* of 61 BC and Caesar's agrarian law two years later (Cic. *Att*. 1.19.4; Dio 38.1.4-5) proposed to use the fiscal revenues of the new provinces conquered by Pompey to buy land for distribution, and perhaps Rullus' projected law of 63 BC included the same measure (Cic. *Leg. Agr*. 2.72). However, we should keep soldiers' desires separate from the decisions of Roman magistrates: in all these instances, soldiers were not asked to choose between land and cash; the decision to give them land was taken unilaterally by the magistrates in charge.

In fact, even though the veterans of the Civil Wars were mostly rewarded with land, they actually did not mind receiving cash. When, in 36 BC, Octavian had to face the revolt of his troops, unhappy with the delayed payments of their long promised rewards, the seditious tribune Ofillius said that both cash *and* land were appropriate rewards for soldiers (App. *B.Civ.* 5.128). Similarly, Cicero reports that Antony requested *praemia agrumque* for his soldiers during the negotiation with the Senate (*Phil.* 8.25). Soldiers did not desire farms and land: rather – more vaguely – they aspired at an improving their economic conditions, as we can see in their misunderstanding of Caesar's gesture of touching his ring while addressing them as a promise of equestrian status (Suet. *Iul.* 33).[301] Therefore, whenever they were given a choice, soldiers always went for what they considered the most advantageous option, regardless of receiving land. For example, in AD 69, the former Vitellian soldiers just included in Vespasian's army and Vespasian's very own legionaries refused land, requesting instead to be retained in active service at the salary rate of the praetorian guard (Tac. *Hist*. 4.46). This episode, of course, is slightly later: still, the evidence for our period is consistent with the view that, between land and money, soldiers always went for the most profitable option. Thus, when, after Augustus' death, the legionaries of Illyricum revolted because they were dissatisfied with their *praemia militiae* – which were being paid to them in provincial land – , their dissatisfaction did not derive from the impossibility to farm land of such poor quality (Tac. *Ann*. 1.17: *trahi adhuc diversas in terras ubi per nomen agrorum uligines paludum vel inculta montium accipiant*) and surrounded by "rough people" (*horridas gentis*: Tac. *Ann*. 1.17.6), but from the worthlessness of the allotments.

The principle of higher profitability equally applies to those instances in which soldiers have to choose between land in different locations. Provincial land was less sought after than Italian land, and therefore less valuable. Most of the soldiers were of Italian descent, and the lack of direct knowledge of the provinces made them less willing to accept land of whose quality (and economic value) they could hardly be aware.[302] Accordingly, although some of Caesar's soldiers refused to extend their *militia* to the end of the war and preferred the *certa praemia* of land allotments in the provinces, many more stayed on with their generals, hoping

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[301] The only evidence to the contrary is Dio's statement (Dio 54.25.5) that until 13 BC soldiers had always requested land. This, however, contrasts with the rest of the evidence: perhaps, Dio's sentence should be taken as meaning that until then generals had always distributed land, to the point that soldiers had never considered cash as an alternative.

[302] For example, Caesar's legions IV and Martia were rewarded with land in Macedonia, a decision that seems to have been taken by Antony (Cic. *Phil*. 13.5.3-4). Later the two legions deserted to Octavian, and it is conceivable that a general dissatisfaction with the treatment received by Antony played a part in their desertion. Unsurprisingly, the first soldiers settled in the provinces were those who had served their *militia* in the area of settlement. We also hear of soldiers who, having served in a province, resettled there independently after their discharge (Caes. *B.Civ.* 3.4 mentions a legion put together by Pompey with veterans who had been stationed in Crete and Macedonia and *dimissi a superioribus imperatoribus in his provinciis consederant*).

to receive land in Italy at the end of the war.[303] Already Pompey had settled in the provinces those soldiers who preferred a secure and immediate reward, founding the new colony of Nikopolis. In this case too, though, the vast majority of soldiers had preferred to wait, hoping to be eventually settled in Italy.

Given soldiers' attitude to land and money, it is not surprising that Roman authorities could consider money a feasible alternative to land when it came to rewarding soldiers. Thus, struggling to find land to settle "loyal" soldiers, Decimus Brutus examined the possibility of recovering the land that had been distributed to Antony's soldiers; considering that, in his letter to Cicero, he mentions that the Senate should make all the relevant financial arrangements (Cic. *Fam*. 11.20), it is easy to conclude that Antony's soldiers would have received a compensation: in other words, their reward would have been changed from land to money.

The most remarkable instance of the interchangeable nature of land and money, though, comes from Augustus' treatment of his veterans. In the *Res Gestae*, Augustus claims that in 29 BC he distributed a *triumphale congiarium* of 1,000 *denarii* to all the 120,000 soldiers settled in the colonies (*RGDA* 15.3).[304] Augustus also claims to have further settled colonists when Crassus and Lentulus were consuls, that is in 14 BC (*RGDA* 16.1). These were the soldiers

[303] For Caesar's settlement of soldiers in the provinces during his campaigns see Dio 43. 14. 1 (soldiers settled in Africa after Thapsus; these men must not be confused with the three legions left behind when Caesar returned to Italy [App. *B.Civ.* 3. 85], who were certainly still in service, as two of them were later recalled to Rome by the Senate, ultimately deserting to Octavian [App. *B.Civ.* 3. 91-92]) and Liv. 34.9 (settlement at *Emporiae* in connection with the battle of Munda). Appian (*B.Civ.* 2. 92-94) has Caesar say that land will be distributed only at the end of the war, but the sentence belongs to a speech delivered in a dramatic moment, when soldiers were turning their backs on their general. As in other occasions (*B.Afr.* 19.3; 44.1; Dio 43.14.1) Caesar only managed to keep his army together thanks to his theatrical coups and rhetorical ability. Pretending to postpone land distribution to the end of the war gave soldiers a reason to stay.

[304] Although Augustus uncontroversially defines the beneficiaries of his munificence as "his soldiers", after Actium his soldiers eligible for retirement could not amount to more than 40,000-50,000 (Cooley 2009: 173). Therefore, this figure is likely to include also the veterans of Philippi and Naulochus. Their number, though, has been calculated at around 70,000 (at least 50,000 of them were veterans of Philippi), of which no more than 50,000 could survive by 29 BC (Brunt 1971: 488-500; Keppie 1983: 75). To account for the 120,000 recipients of the *congiarium*, then, we need to add 20,000 veterans who can only have been the soldiers who had served at Actium under Antony (Keppie 1983: 74-75; 86).That Augustus could define Antony's soldiers as "his" is hardly surprising, considering his attempt to remove the defeated triumvirs from historical memory. Besides, since distributing rewards to the troops typically established a strong connection with their general, rewarding Antony's troops, Octavian was replacing Antony as their leader for all practical and symbolic purposes.

who had served their full *militia* and had become eligible for discharge between 29 and 14 BC: accounting for 4,000-5,000 soldiers reaching entitlement to *missio* every year, the number of colonists settled in 14 BC can be tentatively set at around 70,000. The total number of veterans who received land allotments by Augustus, then, is of 190,000 ca. Between 7 and 2 BC, instead, Augustus rewarded with cash all discharged soldiers (*RGDA* 16.2): in fact, *missio nummaria* (i.e. the possibility of rewarding discharged soldiers with cash) had been introduced in 13 BC, and assuming that all those eligible for *missio* had already been discharged in 14 BC, we may tentatively include in the payments of 7-2 BC also the veterans discharged between 13 and 7 BC, whose *praemia* may perhaps have been delayed. If we start counting from 13 BC, we can conclude that around 50,000 veterans were rewarded with cash between 7 and 2 BC. Therefore, a ratio of almost 1:4 is visible between soldiers who received cash and soldiers who received land by Augustus in the period prior to 2 BC.

When discharging veterans, the Roman state had always distinguished the value of rewards according to variables such as rank (see Chapter 1, section 5) or the years of service: for example, after the Hannibalic War, the veterans of Scipio's campaigns in Spain and Africa received two *iugera* of land (in Apulia and Samnium) per year of service (Liv. 31.4.1-3; 49.5). During the Civil Wars, the different value of rewards became a way to privilege particular social groups: for example, it would seem that in order to leave Italian land – which was more valuable – to the veterans, Caesar's transmarine colonies were reserved to urban proletarians and *liberti* (Suet. *Div. Iul.* 42.1). Augustus' treatment of the veterans of Actium allows us to expand our considerations, adding cash to the ranking between Italian and provincial land.

Dio (51.3.1) reports that, at first, Augustus sent to Italy all the soldiers who were Roman citizens and were entitled to discharge, regardless of their belonging to his or Antony's army. However, at this stage soldiers did not receive any reward. Only at a later stage, after disturbances broke out among the soldiers, did Octavian distribute rewards (Dio 51.4). Dio explains that those soldiers who had served under Octavian "throughout" the war (διὰ παντὸς) received land in Italy, whilst Antony's veterans received cash. Hyginus Gromaticus confirms Dio's statement that Octavian's veterans received land in Italy, but he says that the soldiers of the defeated Triumvir were settled in the provinces (Hyg. 140.34-142.4 Campbell*: colonos fecit, alios in Italia, alios in provinciis*).

In at least one case, Hyginus' statement on the destiny of Antony's veterans appears trustworthy. As Keppie has argued (2000: 90-91), when Octavian decided to send the ships captured at Actium to Forum Iulii with a suitable number of rowers (*valido cum remige*: Tac. *Ann*. 4.5), most likely the crews were still the same who had served under Antony.[305] These men were settled at Forum Iulii, whose full name was *Colonia Iulia Pacensis Classica Octavanorum*. Since we know that at Actium both armies had embarked legionaries on the ships, Keppie concludes that the crews settled at Forum Iulii had formerly been Antony's eighth legion.

As I have explained above (n. 304), it is possible that around 20,000 soldiers of Antony were settled by Octavian in his colonies. This, however, does not imply that Dio's account is wrong. Ultimately, the information provided by Dio and Hyginus is compatible. We may hypothesize that among Antony's soldiers, those with Roman citizenship were given money, whereas *peregrini* were settled in the provinces. This hypothesis is compatible with the estimated strength of Antony's army. At Actium, Antony had some 120,000 men, among which at least 60,000 were *peregrini* (Keppie 2000: 76). Assuming, with Keppie (2000: 82), that some 30-35,000 of them were immediately discharged, then it is possible to imagine that the 20,000 ca. Antonian veterans who were settled in colonies were the remaining part of Antony's peregrine soldiers. To conclude, it is possible to suggest that Antony's citizen soldiers occupied an intermediate position between Octavian's own veterans and their comrades of peregrine status: as such, they received an intermediate discharge, less valuable than land allotments in

[305] The adjective *validus*, when referred to military forces, usually concerns their number. The alleged total of ships captured at Actium is provided by *RGDA* 3.4: *naves cepi sescentas praeter eas, si quae minores quam triremes fuerunt*.

Italy, but more valuable than land in the provinces.

I would suggest that, since after the 140s BC military service became common also among the lower social classes, the discharge of soldiers contributed to spread the view of land as a form of wealth. Soldiers were aware that they were receiving allotments of different values. Therefore, they learned to consider land as a proper form of wealth with an economic value. However, I would suggest that the discharge of veterans only restated and reinforced an assumption that soldiers had already been making.

This assumption, that land is a form of wealth, was passed on to them at *census* taking procedures. In fact, the *census* was the the fundamental moment at which peasants learned to consider land as alternative to money. When they appeared in front of the censors (or their agents: in Chapter 3, I have defended De Ligt's view that census was taken on a local basis), Roman citizens also had to provide a list of all their properties, together with their value (Gell. *NA* 6.11.9=*ORF* 21.5.19: *P. Africanus pro se contra Tiberium Asellum de multa ad populum: ... si tu in uno scorto maiorem pecuniam absumpsisti, quam quanti omne instrumentum fundi Sabini in censum dedicavisti ...*; *Dig*. 50.15.4pr.: *omnia ipse qui defert aestimet*). Obviously, this also applied to land. By entering their land into the *census* – and/or seeing/knowing other people who did the same – peasants developed the distinct knowledge that land and money were interchangeable: in other words, they learned that land had a value that could be expressed in currency. Regardless of whether or not the *census* was actually introduced during the monarchy, it is certainly true that this fiscal and political machinery was the creation of the educated elites. By prescribing that all citizens should enter themselves in the *census*, the republican elites also contributed to spread their own view of land as a form of wealth among the lower classes. In this respect, *census* drew together the Roman people also in cultural terms.

4. Peasants as surveyors.

In the previous section, I have argued that peasants were aware that land could be purchased and sold, and that it had an economic value; I have even argued that they were able to compare different plots of land – or land and a sum of money – and establish which one was worth more. In one word, they were able to *evaluate*. In a sense, this is precisely what we should expect, considering that, as I have argued, their view of land as a form of wealth derived to them from census recording. Roman landowners – who, as I have explained in the previous section, were perfectly able to evaluate real estates – entered their properties' values when they appeared in front of the censors. We may imagine that, regardless of whether peasants owned land or not (in Chapter 1, I have not ruled out that peasants could own a little land), by attending *census* (or being in contact with people who did) peasants could consider and confront other people's declarations.

However, having access on information on the value of *fundi* and being able to evaluate land allotments according to abstract rules are two very different things. This is for two reasons. First, quite obviously, the value of an estate is not the same as the value of its bare land. The added values of buildings and cultivations made a considerable difference. As Varro (*Rust*. 1.4.2) explains, cultivations add to the value of properties. It is uncontroversial that this fact was taken into account when real estate evaluations were carried out. For example, the added value of cultivations is taken into account on the Orange cadaster, in which the land returned to the Tricastini (*reddita Tricastinis*) is divided into *culta* and *inculta*, so that a higher taxation could be applied to the former – more valuable – category. Likewise, in the Digest the procurators in charge of *fiscus* sales are instructed to take into account the presence of cultivations and their state to fix the price (*Dig*. 49.14.3.5). Second, as De Neeve (1985) explains, Roman landowners anticipated current practice in evaluating their land also according to the "prices agricultural produce could fetch and the incomes the land could yield" (De Neeve 1985: 79). In other words, there was a connection between revenues and land prices. Leaving aside all the circumstantial factors which affected revenues (such as variations in supply and demand), the fundamental factors that affect revenues are (1) location and (2) the quality of the soil. According to the classical theory of Von Thünen, due to the costs of transport, agriculture becomes less and less profitable as distance from the centre grows. For this reason, the price of land is higher the closer to the market land is located. Von Thünen's model appears to be confirmed by the evidence concerning Roman land prices. Around Rome, the price of land was high, whereas in peripheral areas it was much inferior.[306]

In order to formulate abstract evaluations of land values, peasants had to be able to: (1) break down total values into the values of single items (buildings, cultivations etc.); (2) be able to distinguish different types of soil and to take location into account. I believe that *census* recordings equipped peasants with all the necessary tools to take these fundamental steps towards the formulation of abstract principles to evaluate the land: therefore, simply by being acquainted with *census* procedures, peasants could learn to formulate abstract evaluations of the value of land.

Census returns contained a breakdown of estates in single items, as explained by Ulpian in his prescriptions on *census*-recording (*Dig*. 50.15.4.pr-1). In the first of the two entries, the Roman jurist explains that *census* declarations should include any arable land (*arvum*) that has been sown in the past 10 years; vineyards, olive groves, meadows (*pratum*), grazing land (*pascua*) and woods that produce timber (*silvae caeduae*). Then, in the following

[306] A passage of Pliny is too often taken as if the author were claiming that land in the *suburbium* was notoriously cheap (*HN* 14.50): *est autem usquequaque nota vilitas mercis per omnia suburbana, ibi tamen maxime, quoniam et neglecta indiligentia praedia paraverat ac ne in pessimis quidem elegantioris soli*. Pliny's reliability has been dismissed by Duncan-Jones (1974: 52, n.4; 345), followed by De Neeve (1985: 79) and Morley (1996: 86) because it contradicts all the other sources, stating that the land close to Rome was extremely expensive. To be precise, Duncan-Jones suggests a way to save Pliny's reliability: perhaps, he says, Pliny is implicitly comparing the prices in the *suburbium* with those in Rome. Yet, the right explanation is another. In the passage, *vilitas mercis* does not mean “low price of land” (to my knowledge, nowhere in Latin literature is land considered as a *merx*), but “low quality of agricultural produce”: Pliny is explaining that, even though the agricultural production of the area was of poor quality, and especially in that neighbourhood, “since Palaemon had bought farms that had also been let down by neglect and that were not above the average quality of soil even among those extremely poor estates” (transl. LCL), he managed to transform the estate in a highly profitable enterprise (as Pliny explains in the following sentences).

entry, making the case that the *censitor* should – for a sense of justice (*aequitas*) – take record of any census entry that is not, for established reasons, in the owners' control (*qui … frui certis ex causis non possit*), Ulpian reveals that even single vine-trees and trees of other species were counted in the declarations. It would appear, then, that when estates were entered in the *census*, they were broken down into single items. Most likely, single values were given for single entries (though not for single trees!). Thanks to this procedure, peasants could understand that, when evaluating any given plot of land, they should separate the evaluation of the cultivations and that of the bare land.

Besides, *census* returns also provided a way to account for the variations of land prices according to the different quality of the land. Hyginus, discussing the fiscal arrangements concerning *agri vectigales* (Hyg. 160.22 ss. Campbell), explains that there is great variety (*multas habent constitutiones*): some are charged at a fixed share of the produce (*partem praestant certam*), that could be one fifth or one seventh; in other cases, instead, *vectigal* is expected to be paid in cash. In this case, Hyginus explains that the amount to be paid is established after the evaluation of the land (*per soli aestimationem*); then he comments: “fixed values (*certa pretia*) have been stablished, as for example first quality arable land (*arva prima*), second quality arable land (*arva secunda*), meadows (*prata*), woods that produce acorns (*silvae glandiferae*), woods that do not (*silvae vulgares*), and grazing land (*pascua*) in Pannonia.[307] For all these typologies of land rents have been fixed on single *iugera*, in the same manner as when they are calculated on productivity (*ad modum ubertatis*)”. In sum, Hyginus provides evidence that a system was in place, whereby land surveyors were able to single out land suitable for cultivation from woods and pasture (*arva* vs. *prata*, *silvae* and *pascuae*: these three categories are considered unsuitable for cultivation by Colum. 3.3), and further distinguish arable land into two different categories according to its quality (*arva prima* vs. *arva secunda*). Hyginus

[307] Being essentially scrubland, *pascua* are different from meadows/*prata*, which are irrigated (see n. 284).

mentions its existence only for Pannonia, but this does not imply that it was absent elsewhere.

In the passage, Hyginus is discussing *agri vectigales*: now, the peculiarity of this land in Pannonia is that it is centuriated as if it were colonial land (Hygin. 160.23-24 Campbell: *multi huius modi agrum more colonico decimanis et kardinibus diuiserunt, hoc est per centurias, sicut in Pannonia*). That this distinction into different categories was common in centuriated land is further confirmed by the *sors* of Ilici (see Chapter 1 for details), which labels the land that is being distributed as *siccum*. Considering that in Cato's *De Agricultura* (8-9) land of the same type (*prata* in this case) can be further divided into *sicca* and *irrigua*, the latter being of better quality, it is possible to conclude that also the Ilici *sors* assumes the existence of another category, that we may call tentatively call (*arvum*) *irriguum*.[308] The existence of two different categories of arable land is further suggested by Columella's distinction of *campi pingues* and *sicci* (1.pr.2.4; consider that in Plin. *Ep.* 3.19.5 the *agri aquosi* are also *pingues* and *fertiles*!).

As Hyginus explains, all the categories of land that had been established in Pannonia had also been assigned fixed values (*certa pretia*): that is, each and every category had a corresponding value established by land surveyors. The existence of these fixed categories and prices was central to peasants' ability to evaluate land. Even though they could not evaluate the quality of soil (which was impossible for any Roman: cf. Chapter 1, section 5), nevertheless peasants had a yardstick that they could use to fit any given plot of land into a certain fiscal category: at that point, thanks to the existence of fiscal value, they were able to have a rough but reliable idea of the value of the land in question.

Of course, land prices varied. They were sensitive to changes in the balance of supply and demand. In fact, we do know that in the Roman world the price of land varied whenever this balance was altered. When Trajan introduced the requirement for candidates to own at least

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[308] For the view that moist land was of better quality than dry land see also Pliny's favourable judgement of the *agri* adjoining his own at Tifernum for being *aquosi* (3.19.5): *agri sunt fertiles pingues aquosi*. For further examples and a discussion of the importance of irrigation see Kay 2014: 157.

one third of their total wealth in the form of land in Italy, Pliny (*Ep*. 6.19) explains that prices rose.[309] On the contrary, when in AD 33 all debtors tried to sell their land at the same time to repay their debts (Tac. *Ann*. 6.16), the price of land collapsed (*vilitas*: see Maiuro 2012: 109-111 for comments). Likewise, they adapted to changes in interest rates. In the 50s BC, as a direct consequence of the war, the volume of circulating money shrank and interest rates grew, causing a fall of prices (Carlà and Marcone 2011: 136-137). As Cicero puts it in a letter to Atticus, “nobody has ever done more to reduce the price of urban properties than Pompey” (7.17.1: *etenim minime amici Pompeio nostro esse debetis. nemo enim umquam tantum de urbanis praediis detraxit*).[310] I would suggest that, despite a certain lack of flexibility deriving

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[309] Incidentally, Pliny also says that at that point more land came on the market, because landowners wanted to take advantage of candidates' willingness to buy at whatever price.

[310] On land prices throughout Roman history, we possess almost no data. The sources usually record only exceptional sales, such as the 60 *iugera* or so sold for 400,000 HS mentioned by Pliny. The only explicit mention of average land prices comes from Columella's calculation of the profitability of viticulture (see Chapter 3), where a price of 1,000 HS per *iugerum* is reported (3.3.8). Otherwise, we only get to see the assumption that land was extremely expensive. The expensiveness of land was even retrojected to the early stages of Roman history. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, for example, reporting the story of the two men from Laurentum who informed the Romans on a plot by the Tarquins (5.57.3), says that they were rewarded with 20 plethra (=*iugera*) of land and 10,000 drachmae (= 10,000 *denarii*). It can be reasonably assumed that Dionysius considered the two parts of the gift to have been roughly equivalent. This would suggest a price of around 2,000 HS per *iugerum.* Hypothesizing that in the story of Marcius Philippus and Volteius Mena the farm purchased by Mena corresponded to the archetypal 7 *iugera* allotment, Mena – who had been given 14,000 HS by Philippus, half as a gift and half as a loan – would have paid the same price per *iugerum*. Such high prices are usually rejected because they would entail excessively low revenues (as low as 2% if land price was HS 1,000 per *iugerum*). Instead, according to Duncan-Jones (1974: 33, n. 3), it is hard to believe that landowners could accept returns lower than 4% (which would make land prices not higher than 500 HS per *iugerum*). A price of 500 HS per *iugerum* would appear in line with the hypothetical inflation rate suggested by Burnett, followed by Hollander (2008: 135) for the Roman republic. According to these scholars, prices doubled between the last two centuries BC, which would make 500 HS per *iugerum* roughly compatible with the lower end of Rathbone's (1993: 146, n. 20) “guess” that in 140 BC land cost “in the range of 200 to 400 HS per *iugerum*”. In fact, in the *Alimenta* tables, the *obligationes* are 6% of the total sums loaned by the emperor. It is hard to believe that landowners could be required to pay more than they were expected to make. Another reason to be suspicious of such high figures comes from a letter of Cicero to Atticus dated to May 45 BC. In the letter, Cicero mentions that an estate of 1,000 *iugera*, close to the *horti Scapulani* that he is interested in buying, has been purchased for 11,500,000 HS (Cic. Att. 13.31.4). Since Cicero is describing an estate with buildings and cultivations, Columella's figure of 1,000 HS per *iugerum* of bare land would appear too high. In principle it would be possible to explain the higher price of land provided by Columella in terms of prices' real growth. In fact, prices grew as a consequence of the monetization of the Egyptian treasury under Augustus, that caused the growth of circulating money and, consequently, the drop of interest rates and the growth of land prices (Suet. *Aug*. 41: *Nam et invecta urbi Alexandrino triumpho regia gaza tantam copiam nummariae rei effecit, ut faenore deminuto plurimum agrorum pretiis accesserit*). It is true that in 33 AD, when all the debtors tried to sell their land at the same time to repay their loans, prices must have collapsed again. The variation, though was ephemeral: thanks to Tiberius' intervention, debtors could borrow money free of interests to repay their creditors,

from the fact that *census* was taken every five years, fiscal prices were regularly updated to be in line with market prices. In fact, it appears that at every *lustrum* the censors used updated market prices: for example Livy (Liv. 39.44.1-3), commenting on Cato's decision to enter luxury objects in their owners' *census* declarations at values tenfold higher than their actual price, in one case (*mancipia*) provides the market price *post proximum lustrum*.

A possible objection to my argument would be that, considering that the evaluation of properties during *census* recording was actually done by the citizens, not by the *censitores*, it is not clear how citizens could know the existence of the various fiscal prices in the first place, nor why they should use them to make their *professiones*. In fact, as Northwood (2008) has showed, the value of items entered in census lists corresponded to the market price at which they had been purchased. However, as the various episodes of censors deliberately altering the values declared by citizens show (Northwood 2008: 261-262), censors had the final say on values entered in the *census*. It is possible to claim that the land values entered in *census* declarations were the result of the following negotiation: first the citizens provided the amount at which they had purchased their land (if this had been purchased at all; otherwise they jumped straight to the following step); then, the censors adjusted the various amounts using the fiscal values established by land surveyors. In all likelihood, it was at this point that location premium was accounted for. The possibility that census entries took into account also variables that were ignored by fiscal land values, but were used for market prices, would imply that census returns and market values were in all respects very similar. This would make sense, for example, of Caesar's decision to pay for the land that he was purchasing through forced sales at the price

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without selling land. Note that the *senatus consultum* forcing creditors to invest 2/3 of their credits in Italian land – which could potentially cause prices to grow – remained dead letter, as Tacitus makes clear (*Ann*. 6.16.4: *neque emptio agrorum exercita ad formam senatus consulti, acribus, ut ferme talia, initiis, incurioso fine*). However, this explanation of the different prices provided by Cicero and Columella must remain hypothetical. Considering that also Dionysius of Halicarnassus possibly refers to extremely high land prices, in order to argue that Cicero and Columella are compatible I should claim that Dionysius' Roman Antiquities are earlier than the monetization of the Egyptian treasury, which is of course impossible to prove.

recorded on the *census* lists (Dio 38.1.4-5), in this way hoping to take a remedy to landowners' discontent and agitation.

If my idea that, by attending *census*-taking procedures, peasants could come into contact with fixed fiscal values is correct, then it becomes possible to understand how peasants could be able to evaluate land of which they had no experience (as in the case of land distributions). In this case, it is true, they could not formulate judgements on location. Nevertheless, peasants knew (as I have argued in the previous section) that land prices varied from place to place. For example, having to choose between land in Italy or in the provinces, soldiers could roughly estimate that land in Italy was more expensive. Likewise, most likely they knew (at least those who lived nearby) that land say in the *suburbium* was more expensive than in, say, Apulia. Therefore, they were also able to account for location in their evaluations. In fact, it should be noticed that landowners too had no idea of the abstract principles connecting land prices to location. Simply, they witnessed land closer to towns being more sought after, and its price being higher. In conclusion, it is possible to state that the census spread among Roman citizens not only the view that land was a form of wealth: it also spread a method to quantify it.

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