

The Gyges' Ring in Plato's Republic

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ABSTRACT: Gyges narrative appears in Plato's *Republic*(359b-360b), where Glaucon tells how Gyges become the ruler of Lydia in Asia Minor (Anatolia). Glaucon's Challenge is the base to all further exposure of justice in Plato's *Republic*. It will be through this Challenge that Glaucon will tell Socrates how to present justice proving it in all ways better than injustice. However, in passage 359d we have a difficulty to the direct identification of Gyges. Through this study we aim to present some proposals for the passage, using for this the lyrical and historical sources for a completed analysis of the Gyges' passage. At the end of the article, we proposal an interpretation of the passage to solve the manuscript problem.

KEY-WORDS: Plato's *Republic*, Gyges' Ring, Glaucon's Challenge, Lyric Poetry.

RESUMO: A narrativa de Gíges aparece na República de Platão (359b-360b), quando Gláucón conta como Gíges se tornou o governante da Lídia na Ásia Menor (Anatolia). O Desafio de Gláucón é a base para toda a exposição posterior sobre a justiça na República de Platão. Será através deste desafio que Gláucón pedirá a Sócrates para que ele prove que a justiça é, de toda maneira, melhor do que a injustiça. No entanto, na passagem 359d há uma dificuldade para identificar Gíges. Através deste estudo, pretendemos apresentar algumas propostas para a passagem, usando para isto as fontes líricas e históricas para uma completa análise da passagem sobre Gíges. No fim do artigo, nós propusemos uma interpretação da passagem para resolver o problema no manuscrito.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: República de Platão, Anel de Gíges, desafio de Gláucón, poesia Lírica.

Problem Exposure

With this study, we intend to highlight the complex character of Gyges that led to several stories about him, the most famous of which tells of how he came to power. His fame went through the Greek world influencing both his contemporaries and those who later came. The Greek lyric developed between the seventh and sixth centuries brought us, in the fragments that remain, a precious treasure of Gyges of Lydia, which later became the basis for both historians and philosophers who discoursed about it. Lydia was a kingdom of western Asia Minor (Anatolia) located generally east of ancient Ionia in the modern western Turkish.

The first source we have about Gyges is from Archilochus of Paros, which describes this way about him:

οὐ μοι τὰ Γύγεω τοῦ πολυχρύσου μέλει,
 οὐδ' εἰλέ πῶ με ζῆλος, οὐδ' ἀγαίομαι
 θεῶν ἔργα, μεγάλης δ' οὐκ ἔρέω τυραννίδος·
 ἀπόπροθεν γάρ ἐστιν ὀφθαλμῶν ἔμῶν.

*I do not care about the things of Gyges, rich in gold,
 Neither does greed pursue me, neither do I envy
 The works of the gods, or love for great tyranny;
 This is far from my eyes.¹*

Archilochus, who lived between 680–640 BC² was a contemporary of Gyges, who would have reigned between 682–644

¹ Fr. 19W. We did the translation.

² For the approximate date of Archilochus we rely on JACOBY, F. The Date of Archilochos. *The Classical Quarterly*, v. 35, n.3, p. 97–109, Jul.–Oct. 1941.

BC.³ This fragment, besides being the first to treat about Gyges, also appears to have been the first to use the Greek term “tyranny.” According to Ure, the word tyranny is not Greek, but may be Lydian in origin⁴. For Adrados, the word designates the absolute power of the Eastern monarchs⁵. According to Euphorion (3rd century BC), Gyges was the first to be called a tyrant⁶. Such a statement may be only an inference from Hippias of Elis, who said that Homer had not used the word τύραννος, but its use only appears in Archilochus (*FHG*, II, fr.7, p.62).

The fr. 19W indicates the power of Gyges, between wealth and possessions, which makes him the lord of Lydia and tyrant of Asia. Although the poem is in the first person, we know that Archilochus does not pose as a speaker, but he attributes the saying to the character Charon, as Aristotle tells us:

καὶ τὸν Χάρωνα τὸν τέκτονα ἐν τῷ ἰάμβῳ οὗ ἀρχή
οὔ μοι τὰ Γύγεω

*and Charon the carpenter, in iambus, thus begins:
Not to me the things of Gyges⁷*

³ The date commonly accepted by scholars is 687–652 BC, especially after the studies of GELZER, H. Das Zeitalter des Gyges. *RhM*, v. 30, p. 230–268, 1875. However, we agree with SPALINGER, Anthony J. The Date of the Death of Gyges and its Historical Implications. *JAOS*, v. 98, n. 4, p. 400–409, Oct.–Dec., 1978. Spalinger text points in his text to the fact that the death of Gyges is only pointed out in Prism A of the annals of Assurbanipal. Such Prism dates from 643/2 BC, so from this Spalinger calculates the death of Gyges around 644 BC. To calculate the initial date of the reign of Gyges, we relied on the timespan given by Herodotus for the reign of Gyges, thirty-eight years.

⁴ URE, P. N. *The Origin of Tyranny*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922, p. 134.

⁵ ADRADOS, F. R. *Líricos Griegos: Elegiacos y Yambógrafos Arcaicos*, v.1. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1999, nota 2, p. 54.

⁶ MÜLLER, C. *Fragmenta Historicum Graecorum*, vol. III. Paris: Editore Ambrosio Firmin Didot, 1849, fr. 1, p. 72. Other quotations from Müller will be abbreviated by *FHG*, indicated then by volume, fragment or/and page.

⁷ ARISTOTELES. *Arte Retórica*, 1418b30–31. For the Greek we used the edition of W. D. Ross, *Aristotelis Ars Rhetorica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959). We did the translation.

This form of a character saying something about another character is an original feature of Archilochus' criticism. According to West, there is a particular type of poetry that the ancients call iambus to use imaginary characters and situations⁸.

Other lyrical poets before Herodotus prove the historicity of Gyges being these Alcman (fl. 652 BC), Mimnermus (fl. 632 BC) and Hipponax (fl. 540 BC). It is interesting to note that Mimnermus composed elegiac verses of the battle between Smyrna against Gyges and the Lydians, and seems to have written a *Smyrneida*, unfortunately lost⁹. We can also find a poem referring to Anacreon that resembles what Archilochus wrote about Gyges:

οὐ μοι μέλει τὰ Γύγεω, τοῦ Σαρδίων ἄνακτος· οὐδ' εἶλέ πώ με ζῆλος
οὐ δὲ φθονῶ τυράννοισ.

*I do not care about the things of Gyges, Lord of Sardis, Neither does greed pursue me, Neither do I envy the tyrants.*¹⁰

In the *Greek Anthology*, we find a similar poem attributed to Anacreon, changing in its structure lines 3 and 4, although maintaining coherence within the fragment as to wealth and tyranny:

οὐ μοι μέλει τὰ Γύγεω, τοῦ Σαρδίων ἄνακτος,
οὔθ' αἰρέει με χρυσός, οὐκ αἰνέω τυράννου.

*I do not care about the things of Gyges, Lord of Sardis, Nor does gold blind me, Neither do I praise tyrants.*¹¹

⁸ WEST, Martin. *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus*. (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte, Band 14) Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1974, p. 22-39.

⁹ Frs. 13W and 13aW.

¹⁰Anacreontea 8W. We did the translation.

¹¹*Greek Anthology*, XI.47.1-4. We did the translation.

We point out that everything that what is said here about Anacreon was produced after the death of the poet in the Hellenistic period and attributed to the poet in pseudepigraphic form. This material is gathered in the work known as *Anacreontea*. In any case, these, like the other fragments of the other poets, evidence the repercussion of the Lydian Gyges among the Greeks.

Herodotus tells the story of Gyges as follows¹²: Candaules, the sovereign of Lydia, offers Gyges, his personal guard, permission for him to see his naked wife and thus prove that she is the most beautiful. For, according to Candaules, “men trust less in their ears than in their eyes¹³.” Even though he was persuaded [*peíthomai*] by the words of Candaules, that his wife is the most beautiful, Gyges is forced to see to prove this fact. Hidden behind the door of the room, Gyges sees the naked queen and when he was preparing to withdraw, he was seen by her without him noticing. Understanding what happened and realizing that it was the work of Candaules, the queen speaks nothing and waits. The next day, the queen calls Gyges in her presence and presents him two paths [*dyónhodôn*]: he either kills the sovereign or dies¹⁴. To avoid death, he chooses to kill the sovereign and thus takes the woman for himself and the sovereignty [*gynaika kai tèn basiléien*]¹⁵.

In the Book II of the *Republic*, Plato, through his character Glaucon, will challenge Socrates to make him prove that justice is superior to injustice in any counterfactual situation. His challenge is divided into three parts: the first says what justice is and its origin, the

¹²HERODOTUS. *Histories*, I.8-15. Further quotations to Herodotus will be abbreviated by Hdt., followed by book and part. We use for Greek the text established by Carolus Hude, *Herodoti Historiae*, Tomes I and II, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927).

¹³Hdt. I.8.2.

¹⁴Hdt. I,11.2-3.

¹⁵Hdt. I,12.2.

second says that all those who practice justice, practice it by necessity, but not as a good, and the third says that the life of the unjust man is far better than the life of the righteous man. Gyges' narrative will appear in the second part of the challenge¹⁶:

We will feel better as those who observe justice do it against their will, for the impossibility of committing injustice, if we imagine the next case. We gave both, righteous man and unjust man, the power to do as they please; then we go after them, to see where passion leads each other. Well! We observe that the righteous walks to the same end as the unjust man, because of ambition, something that every creature, by nature, seeks to achieve as a good; but by convention, it is forced to respect equality. In addition, the power I refer to would be something like this: to have the faculty which is said to have been granted to the ancestor of Lydian [Gyges]. He was a shepherd who served, then, in the house of the ruler of Lydia. Due to a great storm and an earthquake, the ground cracked and a crevice opened in the place where he was tending the herd. Admired himself to see such a thing, he descended there and contemplated, among other wonders, a starting point for fantasies, a bronze horse, hollow, with openings, peering through which he saw inside a corpse, apparently much larger than a man, and that he had nothing but a gold ring in his hand. He ripped it off and left. Now, in a customary way, as the shepherds used to gather to tell the king every month about the flocks, and there he went, too, with his ring. While he was sitting in amidst the others, he happened to turn the ring-set inwards toward the inside of the hand, and as he did so he became invisible to those at his side, and they spoke of him as if he had left. Surprised, he ran his hand through the ring again and turned the ring-set out. As soon as he did this, he became visible. Having observed these facts, he tried to see if the ring had that power, and found that if he turned the ring-set inward, he became invisible; if

¹⁶ PLATO. *Republic*, 359b-360b. Other references to the 'Republic' will be abbreviated by *Rep.* then indicating the numbering.

he turned it out, he became visible. Therefore, lord of himself soon made him one of the delegates who went to the king. When he arrived, he seduced the sovereign's wife, and with her help, attacked him and killed him, and so he seized power.

The narrative that we reproduce here refers to a capacity granted to the ancestor of the Lydian, that is put in the diverse editions of the *Republic*, using brackets or not, as Gyges. But who is Gyges? Whose ancestor was he? What is his historical relevance and what is his relation to the development of the narrative told by Glaucon? This and some other questions is what we propose to answer in this work.

In order to clarify these questions, we need to take into account the difficulty of passage 359d1, where we can read τῷ Γύγου τοῦ Λυδοῦ προγόνῳ¹⁷. Scholars are basically divided into two groups when we refer to this studied passage. The first group refers to Adam's commentary on the *Republic*¹⁸, where he argues that the ancestor comes to be from the Lydian Gyges. The second group, in turn, defends Gyges as the ancestor of the Lydian. Taking this difference in principle, we intend to expose each one of the groups and analyse their arguments, also using for our aid other ancient texts that speak of Gyges and that can thus help us with the interpretation of the aforementioned passage.

The Interpretation of Adam

In his edition of *Republic*, Adam thereby places passage 359d: τῷ

¹⁷ We use here the Greek text of *Republic* established by S. R. Slings, *Platonis Rempublicam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). As our work intends to make a comparison of the indicated passage between other editions of the *Republic*, we will not limit ourselves to the text indicated here. Slings uses the sign † between the beginning and the end of the passage to indicate a possible corruption of the Greek original, which leads us to a difficulty to understand of whom Plato was actually speaking.

¹⁸ Cf. ADAM, James. *The Republic of Plato*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 126-7, Appendix I to Book II.

Γύγου τοῦ Λυδοῦ προγόνῳ, explicitly indicating as the ancestor of Lydian Gyges. He argues in this way that the Gyges to which Plato refers is not the same Gyges of Herodotus¹⁹ nor Archilochus²⁰. According to him, most of the amendments made in the Greek text suggest a harmony with passage 612b in Book X of *Republic*, where it appears in the text Γύγου δακτύλιον (Gyges' ring)²¹. However, according to Adam, the ancestor Plato refers to is Lydian Gyges' great-grandfather, also called Gyges, and founder of the house of the Mermnadae, which would include the Gyges of Herodotus. Adam thus suggests that the text would come into harmony with Proclus' commentary²² to the *Republic*, where he puts: τῷ κατὰ τὸν Γύγου πρόγονον διηγῆματι. Adam also disagrees that τοῦ Λυδοῦ refers to Lydian Kroisos, who was the fifth generation of Gyges (Hdt. I.13) and whose name became very well known from the fifth century BC. In this way, suggestions such as Wiegand's²³: τῷ [Γύγου] τοῦ Λυδοῦ προγόνῳ; Jowett and Campbell: τῷ Κροίσου τοῦ Λυδοῦ προγόνῳ, Γύγητι Κροίσου τοῦ Λυδοῦ προγόνῳ and Stallbaum: τῷ Γύγη [τοῦ Λυδοῦ προγόνῳ] are not accepted by Adam for not having a demonstrable justification for the interpretation of the Lydian as being Kroisos. Nor does he accept Schneider's position in supposing that the earliest Gyges is an invention of Plato²⁴.

For Adam, there is no solid reason to connect Gyges of Plato to

¹⁹Hdt. I.8-15.

²⁰ Cf. fr. 19W.

²¹ Such amendments, according to Adam, would be of the type Γύγη τῷ τοῦ Λυδοῦ προγόνῳ, who would try to connect Gyges directly to the ring.

²² PROCLUS. *Platonis Rem Publicam Comentarum*. II.111.4. We use as a basis the edition of Kroll, 1901.

²³ On Wiegand's proposal to use parentheses in Γύγου see WIEGAND. *Zeit. f. d. Alterth.*, 1834, p. 863 apud SMITH, K. F. *AJPh.*, v. 23, n.3, 1902, note 1, p.267-8. The parentheses are also used by Hermann, Baier, Hartman, and Burnet.

²⁴ Cf. SCHNEIDER, C. E. C. *Platonis Opera Graece.*, v. I. Lipsiae, 1830, p. 107.

Gyges of Herodotus. First because the magic ring is not mentioned by Herodotus and not even by Nicolau Damaskenos²⁵, who tells the story of Gyges following a tradition different from that of Herodotus. Adam follows the suggestion of Stein²⁶, that Plato's narrative does not follow the Gyges of Herodotus, but his ancestral homonym, the mythical founder of the family whose name survived on Lake Gyges (λίμνη Γυγαίη)²⁷. Thus, the historical Gyges would not have been the first member of the family to use that name, but his great-grandfather who was also called Gyges²⁸. The story of the later Gyges might have been confused with that of his ancestor or he could have copied it in the act of murder with the help of the queen.

There is also the case of the poem of Nizami²⁹, which tells the story of the shepherd and the ring. Frazer³⁰ tells us that the story appears in the second part of *Sikandarnámah* by Nizami, and Cowell³¹ tells us that Nizami probably learned from the story through an Arabic translation of the *Republic* that came to him. Adam makes us realize that Nizami does not speak the name of Gyges in his poem, as we can see in

²⁵Nicolau Damaskenos lived around the 1st century BC, and his books were largely organized by the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenites (912-956 AD). Damaskenos recounted the story of Gyges in his Book VI of his *Universal History*, of which only a few fragments remain. Despite being a late source of Gyges, Damaskenos seems to have followed the *Lydiakaby* Xanthos, the Lydian, who lived at the same time as Herodotus. For more detail. see *FHG*, III, p. 380-386.

²⁶STEIN, H. *Herodotos*. vol. I. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1883. Verify note Hdt. I.12, on page 17 of the Stein's work.

²⁷ Cf. Hdt. I.93.

²⁸ Cf. Damaskenos in *FHG*, III, fr. 49, p. 382.

²⁹Nizami Ganjavi, Persian poet born in the vicinity of Ganja in Azerbaijan around 1141 AD.

³⁰ FRAZER, Sir James George. *Pausanias's Description of Greece: Commentary on Books II-V: Corinth, Laconia, Messenia, Elis*. London: Macmillan and co, limited, 1913, p. 417.

³¹ COWELL, E. B. Gyges' Ring in Plato and Nizámí. *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, v. 30, n. 2, p. 151-157, 1861.

his version:

A hot vapor once rent the ground, and brought to light in the chasm a hollow horse of tin and cooper with a large fissure in its side. A shepherd saw it, and discovered in the body an old man asleep, with gold ring on his finger. He took it off, and went next morning to his master to learn the value of his booty; but during his visit he discovered, to his astonished, that when he turned the seal toward his palm he became invisible. He determined to make use of this power, and he proceed to the palace, and secretly entered the council-chamber, where he remained unseen. When the nobles had left it, he revealed himself to the king by this miracle as a prophet. The king at once took him as his minister, and eventually the shepherd succeeded him on the throne.³²

In Cicero's version³³ of Plato's story, he does not speak of an 'ancestor', but in Gyges directly³⁴, although, as Adam points out, there is nothing to indicate a possible relation of Plato's Gyges to Gyges of Herodotus. Thinking in this way, there's a possibility that the proverb "Gyges' Ring"³⁵ is not likely to belong to the Gyges of Herodotus, but rather to his homonym ancestor, which causes Adam to make the following amendment to the passage: <τῷ Γύγγη>, τῷ Γύγου τοῦ Λυδοῦ προγόνῳ. According to him, this solution matches the passage 612b of *Republic*, with Cicero and others who follow Plato speaking of a

³² We took this version from JONES, William. *Finger-Ring Lore*. London: Chatto and Windus, Piccadilly, 1877, p. 508-509.

³³ CICERO. *De Officiis*, III, IX,38.

³⁴ Cicero begins his text about Gyges and his ring as follows: "Hinc ille Gyges inducitur a Platone".

³⁵ According to SMITH, K. F. The Tale of Gyges and the King of Lydia. *AJPh*. v. 23, n. 4, 1902, p. 374-377, the proverb Γύγου δακτύλιος, which can be found in the *Suidae Lexicon Graece e Latine* as meaning ἐπὶ τῶν πολυμηχάνων καὶ πανούργων, would have been used only by later authors, there being no proverb before Plato.

“Gyges’ Ring”³⁶ and not a “Ring of Gyges’ ancestor”.

The Historical Interpretation

Based on the Gyges of Herodotus, the historical interpretation seeks to associate this with the ancestor cited by Plato in passage 359d. For this the scholars of the passage try to approach the Lydian, quoted in the passage, as being some of the descendants of Gyges of the house of Mermnadae, properly Kroisos, who was the last descendant of the family. This, to a certain extent, is due to the fame acquired by Kroisos among the Greeks as having been the first barbarian to subject some Greeks to pay tribute and to make other their friends³⁷. Supporting on passage 612b, Jowett and Campbell³⁸ suggest the change of Γύγου as Κροίσου, which could still have a previous increase of one Γύγη, forming at last Γύγη τῷ Κροίσου τοῦ Λυδοῦ προγόνῳ. If we still count that from eleven references to the term ὁ Λυδός found in Herodotus, six refer to Kroisos and two refer to Alyattes, his father, we have a high recurrence (eight of eleven) of the term “the Lydian” in Herodotus to indicate some of the descendants of Gyges. This

³⁶ For the later tradition that followed the story of Plato of the ring of Gyges, without pretension to exhaust the question, we put here all the sources that we found from our researches: Luciano. *Bis accusatus sive tribunalia*, 21; Id. *Navigium*, 42; Socraticorum *Epistulae. Ep.*, 14.2; Joannes Stobaeus. *Anthologium*, III.9.63; Libanius. *Epistulae*, 432.5; Id. *Orationes*, 56.10; *Ibid.*, 64.35; Gregorius Nazianzenus. *Contra Julianum imperatorem* (orat. 4), 35.628; Id. *Funebris oratio in laudem Basilii Magni Caesareae in Cappadocia episcopo* (orat. 43), 21.3; Id. *Carmina moralia*, 683; Id. *Carmina de se ipso*, 1435; Philostratus. *Vita Apollonii*, 3.8; Id. *Heroicus*, 669; Anonymous. In *Aristotelis artem rhetoricam commentarium*, (CAG, 21.2) 256.6; Theon. *Rhet. Graeci*, I.159; Tzetzes. *Chiliades*, I.137–66; *Ibid.*, VII.195–202; Nonnus. *Invect.*, 1.55; Anonymous. *Violarium da Eudocia*, 247; *Suidae Lexicon*, gamma letter Γύγου δακτύλιος, sigma letter Σφενδόνη Γύγου; *Anthologiae Graecae*, Appendix, Epigrammata demonstrativa 253; The next will be quoted from the *Paroemiographi Graeci* edited by Leutsch&Schneidewin, volume I: Diogenianus, 3.99; Gregorius Cyprius, 2.5; volume II: Diogenianus, 2.20; Greg. Cyp., 2.58; Apostolius, 5.71; Macarius, 3.9.

³⁷ Cf. Hdt. I.6.2.

³⁸ JOWETT, B.; CAMPBELL, L. *Plato's Republic. The Greek Text*, v. III: Notes. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1894, p. 61–62.

strengthens the interpretation which says that Plato's omission of the ancestor's name was purposeful, since it would be implied assuming that the Lydian quoted in the passage would be known by the Greeks merely by the use of the above-mentioned term. Burnet³⁹, in response to Adam, will say that we must remember the special interest of the Greeks of the 5th century BC. for Kroisos, who, according to Burnet, would make sense of the use of ὁ Λυδός, and with this, Plato would be trying to reproduce the tone of the old myths.

Sources prior to Herodotus prove the historicity of his Gyges, but only a late source (Damaskenos) tells us about the possible existence of a great-grandfather of this Gyges, who would also be called Gyges. The lineage of Herodotus would begin with Daskylos, then Gyges, Ardys, Sadyattes, Alyattes and Kroisos. The lineage of Damaskenos would be bigger and would begin with Gyges I that would have two children: Ardys and Daskylos I. From Daskylos I would come DaskylosII, Gyges II, Alyattes, Sadyattes, Alyattes and Kroisos. Despite being a late source, Damaskenos seems to lean on Xanthos, the Lydian, who was contemporary with Herodotus. Even so, Damaskenos tells us nothing of the feats of this first Gyges that would have given the name of the Mermnadae house, just as there are no sources before Herodotus that speak of this Gyges I. As for Gyges II there are several ancient sources that prove his historicity.

It is interesting to note that the sources before Herodotus are all lyrical, which demonstrates a tradition among the lyric poets of narrating events they have heard about. The historical interpretation of passage 359d, as we understand it, must take into account not only Herodotus but also all this lyrical poetry prior to this and which affirms the fame of Gyges among the Greeks.

³⁹ BURNET, John. *Platonica II. The Classical Review*. v. 19, n. 2, p.100, 1905.

A New Interpretation of the Passage

The study of the passage chosen in Plato presents a series of difficulties, as demonstrated by the presentation of the two interpretations above. However, for the treatment of it, both have proved insufficient in their arguments. To solve this problem we propose a new interpretation of the passage, but first we must analyse at what point the previous interpretations are defective.

As to the first of these, we note that Adam, in the treatment of his interpretation, does not answer two questions that we consider important:

A) If Gyges is the Lydian named and his great-grandfather's ancestor, whose name is also Gyges, then Gyges II should be great-grandson of the king. However, Herodotus introduces him as being from the personal guard of Candaules, sovereign of Lydia (Hdt. I.8.1). And even if we take the version of Damaskenos, there is nothing that cites a reign of Gyges I or a possible overthrow of him or one of his descendants. So if we consider Gyges I as the one who overthrew the ruler of Lydia, why would his great-grandson Gyges II have the same need to overthrow the ruler of Lydia?

B) Glaucon before exposing the shepherd's narrative in the *Republic* states that he is not the one speaking, but that he is expressing the opinion of the majority (δοκεῖ ... πολλοῖς)⁴⁰. However, if there are no records of the feats of Gyges I, which *polloí* would be the ones with whom Plato would be talking?

To demonstrate the problems of the historical interpretation we will use the explanations of Slings⁴¹ on passage 359d1 and the criticism he makes of the historical point of view:

i) The ring is always called 'Ring of Gyges', as in the

⁴⁰*Rep.*, 358a.

⁴¹ SLINGS, S. R. Critical Notes on Plato's Politeia II. *Mnemosyne*, v. 17, fasc. 3-4, p. 381-383, 1989.

passage 612b. Comments after Plato keep the term⁴². A commentary to mss A [τὴν κατὰ Γύγην τὸν Λυδὸν ἱστορίαν καὶ τὸν δακτύλιον] leaves out the ancestor and also the commentary to mss F [περὶ τῆς τοῦ Γύγου σφενδόνης]. The exception is only in Proclus and serves only to prove that the ADF texts already existed in Antiquity.

ii) It does not seem to us that Plato was concerned about the Lydian genealogy, but we may try to maintain that 'Ring of Gyges' is a short term for 'Ring of the Gyges ancestor'. However, other elements of the story, such as the assassination of the sovereign and the cooperation of the queen, are said about Gyges himself, and not about his great-grandfather, who has the same name.

iii) τοῦ Λυδοῦ can not refer here to Kroisos, even though Herodotus has referred to him several times as ὁ Λυδός. In this context τοῦ Λυδοῦ should mean 'the present sovereign of Lydia', which would not make sense⁴³. In the context of the passage, ὁ Λυδός could not refer to Kroisos per excellence.

iv) It is no coincidence that the Lydian word transcribed as γύγης, really meant "grandfather; ancestor"⁴⁴. This was known by the Greeks and appears in the *Lexicon* by Hesychius: γ972 (Latte) γύγαι·πάπποι⁴⁵.

Hesychius lived in the 5th century AD and is known for having compiled a lexicon of unusual and little-known Greek words. Because he lived at the same time as Proclus (who was also from the 5th century AD), we believe that the insertion of προγόνῳ to the passage 359d1 is late and probably of this time, influenced by the lexicon of Hesychius. It seems that by the time of Plato the word γύγης would be easily

⁴² See note 36 above.

⁴³ Contra ver Burnet, op. cit., p. 100.

⁴⁴ Cf. FAUTH, W. Zum Motivbestand der Platonischen Gyges legende. *RhM*, v.113, 1970, p. 28f.

⁴⁵ Perger correction from πάπποι gave by cod.

associated with the word πάππος, however, with the progressive loss of its meaning, the insertion of προγόνω was used to recall such etymological root. We agree with Slings that the insertion of τῷ προγόνω would be an error in relation to the primitive text. Ast⁴⁶ in his edition of *Republic* corrects the passage by removing the τῷ and προγόνω from the passage, but keeping the genitive intact [Γύγου τοῦ Λυδοῦ], which does not account for the insertion. It seems to us that the best way to correct the text would be the explanation of Slings which thus poses as being the original passage: Γύγητι Λυδοῖ. In this way, it would be in harmony with passage 612b, keeping Gyges as sole possessor of the ring in the Platonic text, as would also be in accordance with the later inclusion of the terms τῷ and προγόνω without prejudice to the interpretation of the 359d⁴⁷ passage.

⁴⁶ AST, E. *Platonis quae exstant Opera*. Tomus IV, Politiae Lib. I-VIII. Lipsiae: Libraria Weidmannia, 1822, p.70.

⁴⁷ Once the modifications were made, the text could be translated as follows: "To have the faculty which is said to have been granted to Gyges, the Lydian" or the later inclusion of the terms "to the Lydian ancestor Gyges".

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