

## ***Reforms Made by the Gracchus Brothers and Marius***

**Siyu(Anthony) Xin<sup>1, a, \*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> *Berkshire School, 245 North Undermountain Road, Sheffield, MA 01257*

*a. xin\_siyu@icloud.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** The revolutions in ancient Rome focusing on Gracchus brothers and Marius, mainly about solving the militia problem - military shortage. The Gracchus brothers pointed out the problems of the suppression of the middle class and forcing them to join the army. Even though they did not provide the best solution. The conservatives Senate refused to acknowledge these problems and used violence to kill these reformers. As in Marius's time, he provided a better solution to the problem by recruiting the lower-class Roman citizens and granting their lands after the serve. The leaders of ancient Rome knew the problems of the empire and the right solution to solve them. But they refused to acknowledge them and insisted there were no problems at all because using these solutions would decrease their power of controlling everything and profit generated. The Roman senators only dealt with the problem when it grows bigger and becomes inevitable instead of solving it early enough when the problem is not severe. The goal of this paper is to compare the refusal of acknowledgment of the problems of the leaders in ancient Rome to the refusal of acknowledgment of the current problems(such as climate change) of the leaders nowadays.

**Keywords:** reforms, ancient Rome

### **1. Introduction**

The Empire of Rome was one of the most powerful empires throughout human history. Most people know the glory triumphs which Rome accomplished and not so many people how they became so successful, not to mention various failures and the history of reforms(attempted reforms) before the Roman Empire was established by Octavian. Rome conquered a number of other countries, enslaving them. However, Rome had a stable relationship with Italian allies around 241 B.C. The reason why they took them as allies is that they need to support their own military force. Rome gave Italy a semi-governed government and certain freedom, in exchange, they seek for an army that obeys Roma's lead, especially in war fairs. (350-260B.C).

### **2. Existing Problems**

Even though the Rome army were half of solders from Italian allies. The problem of military shortage occured and the relation with the Italian allies went downhill. Back in 188BC, the Roman senators decided to no longer grant Roman citizenship to these Italian allies, and only three small Italian communities still had the right to join Roma and become Roman citizens, and it turned out to be a bad decision. They also rejected the representatives sent by Italian allies who wanted to resume granting citizenship 60 years after around 125B.C. And the military shortage problem occurred

because the military only recruited middle-class Roman citizens with enough property (Citizen Malaysia System)), and any others who had less property could even have the right to join the military. And after 6 years of service in assigned territories in Spain, the land which those middle-class soldiers owned became wild, especially for those soldiers who took care of the land themselves, which means the veteran had to re-cultivate their land, and the time of re-cultivating made them poorer. Besides the high standard of recruiting, these middle-class soldiers were not trained formally, which means that the battle force of these armies was weak. And the Gracchus brothers were not the first ones who found the issue. Gaius Laelius was the pioneer. He was a conservative and he is every first person he found the issue. He tried to solve this problem, but eventually failed. However, his thought and bravery encouraged the Gracchi brothers to go deep into solving this problem.

The Gracchi brothers, Tiberius Gracchus and Gaius Gracchus, were Roman reformers who tried to make a reform on Rome's social and political structure in the second century BCE. The Gracchus brothers were politicians who represented the plebs in the Roman government as tribunes. They were also members of the Populares, a group of progressive activists who were interested in and wanted land reforms in order to benefit the poor. They were not the only two who wanted reforms and the problems had been existing for a long time. In 188 BCE, the Roman senators decided to not grant the whole of Italy citizenship but only to three small communities. From a historical perspective, this is a bad decision because it made Italian allies angry about this policy and caused further conflicts. Furthermore, the Roman military forces were gained by forcing middle-class citizens to serve and they had to buy their own equipment. Not only was the army undisciplined and lack in fighting skills, but it also caused a vicious loop between middle-class citizens with the military force: when the middle-class citizens went to serve in the army, it led their land to have no one to take care of, which means they will come back with wasteland and they had to use fewer years to make the land plantable. Both brothers belong to the Scipio-Paulus-Gracchus family tree, and the Gracchus family was one of the most politically influential families at the time.

### **3. Background Information about The Gracchi Brothers**

The father of the Gracchus brothers, Tiberius Gracchus, was a Roman prosecutor and consul and served as the Roman consul 177 and 163 years ago. He has held two triumphal ceremonies and is a famous figure in Rome. Mother Cornelia Africana (Cornelia Africana) comes from the prominent Scipio family. Her father was the famous conqueror and the victor of the Second Punic War. The old Gracchus had 12 children with Cornelia. Only two children and one daughter survived, namely the eldest son Tiberius Gracchus and the second son Gaius Gracchus, the two brothers and one sister Sempronia, she married another important general, the victor of the Third Punic War-Scipio. (another Scipio Aemilianus- adopted, his father was not a Scipio, the father is Aemilius Paulus, third methadone war, so adopted to the Scipio family).

### **4. Tiberius Gracchus's Revolution**

The difference between the legislation of the two brothers, farmers need equipment, seed, home, years before producing crops. (elder killed 2nd year as tribune, younger won 2nd, but lost popularity when he wanted to grant citizenships to Italian allies, ) Like the traditional political approach, the Gracchus started with the lowest priesthood, served in the military, and participated in the war with Carthage. When passing through the Italian countryside, they saw the slave owners' manor and slaves working, and for the first time, they had the idea of reforming the status quo and saving the small peasant economy. During the election of the tribunes in 133 BC, Tiberius participated in the election and was successfully elected as the tribunes. Immediately after taking office, he worked with some like-minded veterans and nobles to draft a land bill, which included restriction of land and distribution of

land. However, the introduction of the land bill was strongly opposed by the elders, nobles, and large landlords. At the bill discussion meeting, Tiberius's noble spirit in his speech made the opposition lack the courage to stand up and refute. In the end, the Citizens' Assembly passed Tiberius' land bill by a majority of votes and elected a three-person committee to be responsible for implementation. The land resumption and division work began immediately.

Tiberius' land reform bill, or *lex Agraria*, was approved with public backing despite stiff opposition from the nobles. It only applied to *ager publicus*, or former public land that had been usurped and concentrated in the hands of big landowners. Land concentration lowered the number of landowners, and thus the number of citizens and army recruits. Furthermore, the move from cultivation to grazing was accompanied by a reduction in employment and increased peasant poverty, resulting in a crisis. The reformers' motivations are still being discussed, although it appears that concern for the poor and political stability were key concerns.

The *lex Agraria* established minimum and maximum individual landholdings and a provision for male family children. Excess land would be expropriated, and improvements would be compensated. The law was supposed to be enforced by a standing collegium or commission, but Tiberius was assassinated the year it was passed, delaying its implementation. When Gaius became tribune about a decade later, he resurrected the reform and took it much further. Since rent on significant holdings had been suspended as compensation for expropriation, he colonized additional land and eliminated rent on smallholdings. However, Gaius was assassinated in 121 BCE, and the reform was overturned within a decade: private acquisition of public land was allowed, the land commission was disbanded, public land rent was abolished, all holdings were deemed private property, and squatting on public land was forbidden. Even colonization was stopped, and Gaius' colonies were dismantled. The beginning of a new age of land concentration began.

When resuming land, the big landlords tried every means to conceal the land and tried every possible way to obstruct the land resumption work, which caused great difficulties to the land reform work. As the reform of the land was difficult and slow, the Roman ally Pergamon King Attalus III died of illness, and his will gave the entire kingdom to the Roman people. Tiberius believed that in view of the lack of production conditions such as agricultural tools and seeds, the peasants who were allocated the land should allocate King Pergamon's money to them. But his proposal was unanimously opposed by the elders. Not to be outdone, Tiberius fought hard on reason and decided to run for the next year's consul in order to continue his reform cause. Before the election, he proposed a series of new bills to win over the people: crackdown on the Senate and promote the democratization of politics. People understand that this election is related to the deepening or premature death of the land, and whether Tiberius can be elected as the governor directly affects the interests of Roman citizens. At the election meeting, the citizens of the thirty-five administrative districts voted in turn, and Tiberius had a winning ticket.

Ten years later, Tiberius' younger brother Gaius was elected as the protector. He completely restored Tiberius' land law and advocated the granting of citizenship to Italians, which was supported by the majority of civilians. In 122 BC, the Senate sent troops to besiege Caius. The Gaius organized armed resistance and finally failed due to being outnumbered.

Personalities dominated Roman politics from the Gracchi brothers' conflicts through the end of the Roman Republic; critical confrontations were not with foreign powers, but with internal civil wars. The use of violence as a political tactic became commonplace. Many historians believe that the Roman Republic's downfall began with the Gracchi's brutal deaths and ended with Julius Caesar's assassination in 44 BCE. Following that assassination, Augustus Caesar, the first Roman emperor, rose to power.

Details about Sempronian Laws:

1. Lex Agraria ("Ackergesetz"): First of the extensive arable laws on the redistribution of the *ager publicus* and other questions of property law
2. Lex Agraria ("Farm Law"): New application for the first Farm Law of 133 BC. BC, which had been canceled in the meantime
3. Lex frumentaria ("Grain Law"): regulated the cheap sale of grain to the urban plebs: every one should get five bushels a month for 6 $\frac{1}{3}$  ases.
4. Lex judiciary ("Jury Law"): Pushed back the influence of the senators in favor of the knights (*Equites*, Singular *Eques*) in the courts of justice.
5. Lex militaris ("Defense Law"): Young people under the age of 17 were not allowed to be dug up as soldiers. The state also paid for the equipment for the recruits.
6. Lex de provincia Asia ("Law on the Province of Asia"): Introduction of the Roman tax lease system in this province instead of that of the Attalids, which had previously been used.
7. Lex de provinciis con Sullaribus ("Law on the Con Sullar Provinces"): The election of the consuls should in future only take place after it had been determined which province should be assigned to them after their term of office.
8. Lex de provocatione ("Law on Appeal"): Established the right of provocation and its modalities and prohibited interference by magistrates in this right, according to which a citizen who saw himself threatened by magistrates could appeal to the people for assistance.
9. Lex de viis muniendis ("Law on the development of roads"): Promotion of public road construction.

It's challenging to identify Gracchi's objectives based on the available evidence: they were aristocrats, and nothing they accomplished disrupted Rome's social system. The Gracchi brothers' socialist policies undoubtedly resulted in more bloodshed in the Roman Senate and continued and escalating tyranny of the poor. Were they demagogues eager to excite the masses to gain power, as US President John Adams believed, or heroes of the middle classes, as depicted in 19th-century American textbooks.

Whatever they were, 19th-century textbook tales of the Gracchi benefited American populist movements of the time, offering people a method to discourse and think about economic exploitation and possible answers, as American historian Edward McInnis points out.

As Plutarch wrote about the brothers, "Caius Gracchus, at first, either because he feared his enemies, or because he wished to bring odium upon them, withdrew from the forum and lived quietly by himself, like one who was humbled for the present and for the future intended to live the same inactive life, so that some were actually led to denounce him for disliking and repudiating his brother's political measures." Plutarch praises Caius Gracchus as a person who stood out, pointed the problem, and tried to solve this problem with a functioning solution, even though other people in the system were against him. Plutarch also said that "Now that we have duly finished the first part of our story, we have to contemplate fates no less tragic than those of Agis and Cleomenes in the lives of the Roman couple, Tiberius and Caius, which we set in parallel. They were sons of Tiberius Gracchus, who, although he had been censor at Rome, twice consul, and had celebrated two triumphs, derived his more illustrious dignity from his virtue."

In 133 BC, Tiberius served as the office of the people's tribune. After taking office, he proposed the land reform bill:

The land occupied by each landowner shall not exceed 500 jugera, and the two largest adult sons can each own 250 jugera, thus limiting the land occupation of each family to only 1,000 jugera (approximately 250 hectares). All the excess is returned to the treasury, and then a small piece of land of 30 jugera is allocated to poor farmers for hereditary use, but sales and transfers are prohibited to prevent farmers from going bankrupt again.

After the bill was introduced, it received wide support from the majority of Roman citizens. However, the bill violated the interests of large landowners and the elite class, so they used various means to prevent the implementation of the bill. On the one hand, they concealed the amount of land, and on the other hand, they instigated another tribune to use the veto power to prevent the bill from being passed. In order to implement the bill, Tiberius violated the law and proposed to be re-elected as a tribune. However, at the election meeting, the nobles sent mobs to disrupt the venue, which forced the election to be disbanded. In the early morning of the next day, Tiberius's supporters occupied the meeting place of the citizen assembly. The nobles instigated a large number of gangsters and rogues to attack the venue by armed force. In the end, more than 300 Tiberius and his supporters fell in a pool of blood, and their bodies were thrown into the Tiber River.

## 5. Caius Gracchus's Reform

Ten years after, Tiberius Gracchus's brother, Caius Gracchus was elected as a tribune, and he continued with his brother's land law and announced an updated version of the Sempronian Laws. With the support of civilians and, he was re-elected as a tribune for the next year and proposed two more radical new laws-the Colonial Law and the Civil Rights Law. It was proposed to open up colonies as a supplementary measure to ensure the implementation of the land law. Caius also proposed to grant Roman citizenship to Latins and Italian allies, but Roman citizens, regardless of class, were unwilling to allow non-Romans to share their citizenship, because it caused widespread dissatisfaction. Under this circumstance, he lost the third election when he was running for the tribune. After Caius left the system, the veterans and nobles attacked him publicly. During the discussion of the proposal to abolish Caius's colony in Carthage, fierce disputes occurred, leading to large-scale fighting. Over three thousand people of the Caius faction were killed, and Caius also committed suicide while being unwilling to be captured. The reform of the Gracchus brothers failed.

Although the reform measures of the Gracchus brothers had achieved some results, they have curbed land annexation and alleviated the shortage of troops, especially in the Gaius reform, paying attention to the development of the interests of the knighthood, and paying attention to the elimination of the political differences between the Romans and Italian allies' citizenship, which is in line with historical trends. But the reform ended in failure. The conservatives, represented by the aristocracy, were so powerful that the reformists ultimately failed in the struggle. In the face of Rome's extremely complex land situation, the land policy proposed by the reformists is imperfect and somewhat divorced from reality, and there were many loopholes and lacks supporting measures. The elite and the civilian class were not firm in their positions, and they were all in favor of the reformists, who opposed the expansion of citizenship and the encroachment of their interests. However, the reform of the Gracchus brothers weakened the power of the nobles of the Roman Senate to a certain extent, raised the status of the middle class and the civilian class, and caused the long-term confrontation between the Senate and the middle and lower classes, which opened the beginning of the Roman Civil War.

All kinds of contradictions are intertwined, forming a complicated picture of the struggle during the civil war. The facts show. The old system is no longer suitable for the new situation and must be reformed. The insightful people in the ruling class have already sensed the seriousness of the problem and proceeded to take action. Starting in 133 BC, the Gracchus brothers were the first to propose reforms in order to gain fighting power for the country. However, Tiberius Gracchus's measures were only artificially rejuvenating small farmers in order to revitalize the military-agricultural integration system, and the foundation was too narrow. Although Gaius Gracchus tried to attract a wider social class, he acted too hastily, and the result was counterproductive. Coupled with the resolute opposition of the noble conservatives, reforms have failed successively. After that, not only did Roman social

problems remain unresolved, they became more serious and urgent, and social contradictions and struggles intensified.

## 6. Gaius Marius's Reform

After Gracchi brother's attempts to reforms. Marius created a new solution in order to solve the problem of military shortage. He was radical because of the reaction of the senate, when he got to Spain, the Army was not a good army. With the fighting in Spain and seeing what the Roman army was like and how it worked and didn't work. And in fact that Marius came from outside the traditional Roman political class, it is important because it allowed him to see things in a different way. Both Tiberius Gracchus and Gaius Gracchus came from the heart of the traditional political Elite, which made them see things in a traditional way right. They knew that they needed to offer public land to poor Romans so that they would be middle-class Romans and they could recruit them. However, that was not a permanent solution. Marius was able to see things in a different way allowing him to basically forget about the traditional Roman army in the recruitment system entirely. He knew that they needed to recruit poor Romans and they also needed to give uniforms and equipment at public expense. He also realized that they needed to give those soldiers proper and professional training at public expense, so that the army would be well trained, well-organized, and well disciplined. Marius guaranteed that during the period of service, the State would provide armor and weapons for soldiers uniformly and they will be paid according to the rank. When soldiers are discharged from the army, they can also share their land in conquered areas. In doing so, the soldiers were given food and clothing during their service and after retirement, ensuring their loyalty, while combining the previously unresolved struggle of civilians for land with military service. Also to address the shortage of troops, the Gracchus brothers saved the ancient civil service by increasing the number of citizens who could join the army (allocating land to the landless and expanding the granting of Roman citizenship). However, although this ancient system applied only to city-states, it could not be adapted to Rome, which was expanding rapidly at the time. Marius, on the other hand, boldly reformed the system, seeing its flaws and the inevitability of the recruitment system as an alternative to conscription. Although Marius's reforms were mainly military, these measures had a profound impact on the development of Roman history. The reform expanded the military and enhanced the combat effectiveness of the army. As Plutach described, "Of the third name for Gaius Marius we are ignorant, as we are in the case of Quintus Sertorius the subduer of Spain, and of Lucius Mummius the captor of Corinth; for Mummius received the surname of Achaicus from his great exploit, as Scipio received that of Africanus, and Metellus that of Macedonicus."

## 7. Sulla

Lucius Cornelius Sulla began his career in the military as an associate of Marius, where he learned and applied Marius's military reforms and methods. Then he became a quaestor in Africa to help Marius. then appointed aggratus' s senior officer. During the social wartime, around 90 BC, he created and trained a new style of the army which he learned from Marius. However, when he published a law banning these new and efficient ways of training and recruiting, it seems to be a paradox since he himself learned and applied those methods in wartime.

As Plutarch said, "Lucius Cornelius Sulla belonged to a patrician, or noble, family, and one of his ancestors, Rufinus, is said to have been consul, although he was not so conspicuous for this honor as for the dishonor which he incurred. For he was found to be possessed of more than ten pounds of silver plate, contrary to the law, and was for this reason expelled from the senate. His posterity became at once obscure, and continued so, nor did Sulla himself enjoy a wealthy parentage."

In 88 B.C., Lufus, a tribune, used an armed force under his control known as the "Opponents of the House of Elders" to force through a bill that stripped Sulla of command and handed it over to Marius. Sulla heard that she had led the army against Rome. Thus, for the first time in The history of Rome, the Roman army marched into its own city, and the civil war entered a new phase. As Marius failed to muster enough resistance in time, Sulla quickly entered Rome, executed Lufus, and canceled his reforms. Marius was forced to flee. At this point, Marius went through the most difficult time of his life. He died, drifted away from the bumps, faced death several times, and was fabulously spared. Finally, on an island near the African continent, a queue of less than a thousand people was gathered, waiting for the time to come.

After Sulla led the army out of Rome, the reformists took the opportunity to elect Qinna as governor in 87 BC. Qinna opposed Sulla's policies and faced repression by Sulla's party. He fled Rome to collect troops around the country to fight the Sulla faction. Marius news, immediately landed in Etruscan, and Qinna joined forces to march towards Rome, surrounded the capital and cut off food transportation forced the House of Elders had to surrender. After taking control of Rome's political situation, they restored the Luftwings act, canceled some of the debt, increased food distribution, and introduced currency reforms. At the same time, they imposed unprecedented reigns of terror, declared municipal enemies unprotected by law, and hunted down Sulla members, resulting in the killing of many prominent figures and innocent people.

## 8. Conclusions

On the great effort made by the pioneer reformers, Gracchus brothers, and Marius, the issue of military shortage was resolved, despite the senator's conservative ideas, they proposed laws and persist their goal of making Rome a better and stronger country. Even though the senators were refusal to address the social tensions among the Roman middle class, the military service, and the relation with Italian allies, those reformers risked their life on solving those problems that long existed in Rome's past. As a person living in modern society, I think people nowadays should learn from Roman history and be acknowledging the currently existing problems, such as climate change (greenhouse effect) before it is too late.

## References

- [1] *Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. (n.d.). History of land reform. Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved November 15, 2021, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/land-reform/History-of-land-reform#ref320303>.*
- [2] *Ancient rome. Ducksters. (n.d.). Retrieved November 15, 2021, from [https://www.ducksters.com/history/ancient\\_rome\\_republic.php](https://www.ducksters.com/history/ancient_rome_republic.php). Plutarch. Plutarch's Lives. with an English Translation by. Bernadotte Perrin. Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press. London. William Heinemann Ltd. 1921. 10.*
- [3] *Plutarch. Plutarch's Lives. with an English Translation by. Bernadotte Perrin. Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press. London. William Heinemann Ltd. 1921. 10.*
- [4] *Plutarch. Plutarch's Lives. with an English Translation by. Bernadotte Perrin. Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press. London. William Heinemann Ltd. 1920. 9.*
- [5] *Plutarch. Plutarch's Lives. with an English Translation by. Bernadotte Perrin. Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press. London. William Heinemann Ltd. 1916. 4.*