

## Reformative Activity of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus According to Plutarch

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### Abstract

The political life of Rome is full of distinguished personalities who at various stages of history have left their mark on it, although the political strategy of existence has determined the path of the future development of Rome. The Gracchus brothers can be considered as such persons, they not only changed the political life of historical Rome, but also created a completely new vision of the economic, social and political system, at a time when Rome was fully preparing to transform from a republican system into an empire. The Punic Wars became a new challenge for the Roman Empire, which was to become a battleground for world hegemony, for this purpose they launched a new phase of the Macedonian Wars, with the aim of making Rome the successor to the Greco-Macedonian Empire. The difficult and contradictory period of the conquest and subjugation of the East was beginning, in parallel with the subjugation of which life in Rome seemed had to improve. The received loot provided opportunities for many things to be done, but the opposite happened, with large numbers of slaves coming in from the Eastern conquests gradually expelled the labor of the free Romans, they began to use the labor of slaves instead of them. At one time the main guarantor of Rome's social and economic system, the free Roman citizen became virtually an "out of play", an excluded parasite, who lost the basic means of work and life. It is in these difficult political and social conditions that the Gracchus brothers begin their involvement. This issue has been carefully studied in Soviet and foreign historiography. Naturally, Soviet Marxist historiography deserved the approval of all those political figures whose protests were directed at the protection of the "impoverished" population. This applies to the slave revolt (e.g., the Spartacus revolt), as well as the Brothers Gracchus's' struggle for justice, and so on. The purpose for Soviet historiography is quite clear, as they wanted to show even more strongly from the inter-class prism of Marxist historiography the Roman slave State and its society, the "true face" of the oppressor and oppressed slaves. The purpose of this article is to look at one of the most dramatic epochs in Roman history, and based on the analysis of the Plutarch's work "parallel biographies", let us outline the aims and features of the political-economic and social reforms of the Gracchus brothers: what were the goals of the reforms, what problems were seen, what way did the brothers found to solve them.

**Keywords:** Reformative Activity, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, Plutarch

One of the most complex and determinative issue of the history of Rome has always been the Gracchus Brothers' difficult and tricky historical life and what exactly caused the existence of this dramatic and bloody epoch, which, afterwards, became titled as Gracchus' era. It's natural that for Rome the civil confrontation and resistance wasn't a novelty, however, the processes which are presented by the activities of Gracchus Brothers, tend to be one of the most dramatic and full of antagonism. It's natural that there are many scientific-popular literatures concerning the indicated issue, in which the complexity and problematic historical lives of Gracchus Brothers are presented differently, more interestingly, however, we consider that even now exists many issues which can be seen from the different spectra, the more that Roman Historical Essays itself gives a large field of interpretation. It's the goal of our article to reconsider the basic tends of historical life of Gracchus Brothers' according to the sources of the Great Roman Historian, philosopher-moralist – Plutarch and based on the given sources of Plutarch, reconsider the lives of Brothers in a new, critical way. Why did we drop our attention to the current source of Plutarch? Because unlikely of other Greek or Roman historians, he is never limited by providing only dry historical references, he, first and foremost, shows the face of a multifaceted cognition of a person of moral-ethical norms. That is his personal credo and aim, for by confronting different Greek and Roman political figures, he tries to show us the parallels and contradictions that may exist with this or that figure, and so that these are not just dry facts, but by observing this or that person, is giving a try to find different attitudes and real opinions to find a logical explanation for the causes and events, with his deep belief that the political, cultural and social face of each person derives from the psycho-emotional and factual circumstances of this or that person. His history coincides with the history of Rome, as Professor Pl. Tsereteli points out, the so-called "Golden Age" in Roman

history. During the time of Great Emperor Adriane (117-138) for three years he has been the prosecutor in Rome. Plutarch was giving lectures and was talking about philosophy<sup>1</sup> As it seems from the above reference Plutarch from the earliest years tried to create a kind of historical records in parallel with being in the civil service. The Greek himself did not lose strong bonds with the Greek world throughout his life, especially with Delphi, the center of the Greco-mystical world.

It was Professor Pl. Tsereteli's work we learn from, that in the last years of his life he was a priest of the temple of Delphi. He renewed the cult of Apollon from Delphi and the faith of Oracle.<sup>2</sup>

Plutarch's passion for mysticism, we think, is not accidental. It is the study of different personalities in the process of controversy that he often uses the methods of religious mysticism, which is why medieval historians even called him half a Christian mystic and even a holy father. That is why we wanted to see the historical-mystical, political-social face he saw in the case of the Gracchus brothers. Naturally, before we get directly to the main content of the source, it would be appropriate to talk about the political life of the war that existed at that time. The Third Punic War, which took place in the middle of the second century, finally made Rome De Facto ruler of the world. From this point on, his imperial ambition begins. That began to "control" not only the Mediterranean, but almost all of the Eastern civilizations, and first of all began to strive for the establishment of a large land-based system. The law which prohibited the monopolization of lands for the noble class began to be disobeyed. They became either direct or indirect owners of a large part of the eastern provinces, which greatly increased their financial power. The so-called "nobility" of a large number of prominent farmers emerged, who established a large "Latifundium" farm in the eastern part of the country. They carried out powerful farming work either directly or with the help of local noblesse. There was born an idea, in the current system, to widely inculcate the slavery, using people standing closer with them and fully dependent on them which have long been justified. Therefore, now, the absolutely similar model (the process of transforming lands into the latifundian agriculture) was taken by Rome and spread through its Eastern part, however, unlike the first, in second case, the process of uniting the existing land funds flew with many confrontation and resistance- As so it's called the "Eastern" part was populated by free small owners. They were the ones who were called as ancient free citizen types of Rome. They were the creators and inspirers of that Empire. However, the paradox began. They, in fact, simultaneously becoming the Empire, Signed the ruin "petition" of their Economic and Social Lives. Time by time, opens up the issue of taking out the "lands" (economic lever) from the petty bourgeoisie by different forms: By procurement, by threatening them, by turning them into an economic collapse and etc. At one time the supporting force, the free plebeian of Rome, became an economically disenfranchised, impoverished, parasitic citizen of

Rome, who has left nothing more than being footman of rich oligarchic nobility. It was because the laborers in the enlarged plots of land they owned began to use slaves brought in from the conquered territories at the price of "straw", by that they have killed the last hope of existence for them and turned them into slaves, for whom the respect and pride became a headache. Gracchus Brothers started their historical part from that point.

We, naturally, due to the complexity of the issue, can't fully review the scientific literature on these topics. Our main and only goal is to explain by Plutarch, the view and to understand the main features of the political-economic reforms of the Gracchus Brothers. First of all, it is worth mentioning the fundamental monograph of Professor X, published in 1990 - "Brothers Gracchus", in which he uses in-depth scientific-research parameters to explain all the nuances of Gracchus' work, which became the reason for their triumph and tragedy. The paper itself highlights all the peculiarities of Licinius-Extrius previous agrarian legislation: what became the pretext for the arrival of Elder Gracchus before the agrarian reforms, the subsequent attempts at legislative variability after his brother's assassination, and, finally, the resignation of Gaius Gracchus and its intensity and inflexibility. Much peculiarity of their oratorical Arts should be appreciated. In the book written by professor Pl. Tsereteli, "History of Rome", Chapter second, Epoch of Civil War, there is expressed much attentive and interesting point of view concerning the lives of Gracchus Brothers. Its basic historical source towards the current issue is individual analysis of works by Apiane and Plutarch. Furthermore, the worth-mentioning thing is fundamental research done by Professor Mate Aleksishvili which not directly, but still very interestingly depicts much peculiarity of social layer. In an ancient civilization, from that point, his fundamental research is worth-underlining- "Slavery in an ancient country". Moreover, big help for us concerning our work process was capital two-volume set book published by the professor Sergeev, "Study of Ancient Rome History, Part 1 where he has widely and interestingly spread the basic confrontations and difficulties of Gracchus Brothers' lives which became the reason and, therefore, basis of their liquidation from the political field. Furthermore, there are many attentive opinions

expressed in the following work concerning the aims and problems of Gracchus political lives. During creating our statement, we have widely used very interestingly-written work of Professor Levan Sanikidze – “Late Republic of Rome”, in which the author tries to revive in our imagination the full intensity and tragic side of radical reforms made by Gracchus Brothers in a highly artistic, master, incomparably dramatic way.

It's natural that there exists plenty of scientific-popular literature concerning the above-mentioned issue in Georgian, as well as, in Foreign languages, which I, naturally, got informed about, however, the usage of them in current statement wouldn't be our goal, it can be token for the next research work. The basic goal and peculiarity of our article is postulating and interpreting the literal sources of Plutarch in a transcendent, new way, plus, we want to try explaining those basic reasons and problems, which are depicted in the following source in a huge amount about existing problematic circumstances.

In the beginning, as every historian does, so Plutarch starts by writing about the parents. Who were the parents of Brothers? We come across with interesting answers, as well. On the one side, we get the information about how did their parents marry, on another side, we came across the unbelievable and featured story about how the father managed to kill two snakes (seen in dreams) and by the dictation of wizards, how did he managed to sacrifice his own life for the wife and children. As like the first case, Scipio Africanus, the hero of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Punic War, didn't want his daughter, Cornelia, to be seen as the wife of such an enemy, Gracchus, and only to be married afterwards and as for the second case, greatly defines the greatness and decentness of Cornelia, as a woman. She is mentioned as a descent lady and magnificent mother of her children-children, who have never felt the lack of care and right there he sharply and interestingly constructs the personal and emotional portraits. For him, being a true moralist, the main starting point during the describing different people is detecting one's spiritual, aesthetical or psycho-emotional dynamics of processes. He saw the less passion and charm in self-assured, calm behavior of Tiberius, however, as for Gaius' case, despite the stubbornness and anxiety dominance in his characteristics, still the real leader's passion and persuasiveness is obvious. Interestingly, for him, as a historian-moralist, the age difference between brothers seems to be problematic. Tiberius was nine years younger than Gaius that was an obstacle for crowning the success of their common work. The synthesis of two different characteristics can be read by Plutarch as a sign of better results. When Tiberius was ending his life by suicide, Gaius was still a newborn. Afterwards, for Tiberius' case, he was given a chance to become a priest of Augurs. It helped him to create a political career, for what he never forgets the contribution of future father-in-law – Apius, so, he should be thankful for that. The case of Tiberius is interesting, as Plutarch notes: „he became friends with his future son-in-law and, finally, gave a sentence to marry her daughter. Tiberius felt pleasure for that sentence. Marriage negotiation hereby was approved”<sup>1</sup>. Afterwards, he happily announces to his wife that their daughter was engaged to a son”. Here the real face of Plutarch can be seen: timid, obedient to a person, who couldn't even choose his life companion himself. After that Tiberius is in military work where he meets the first resistance. I mean the campaign against the Numantians, It's true that the leader of the legion was Mantius and even Plutarch recognizes his decency but as a commander he brought a big misfortune and lose to his own doorman and, finally, overcame with many failures, gives a command of retreat. Demoralized by enemy, Mantius were trapped in a narrow valley. To find a solution, Mantius sends ambassador to enemy. Enemies, as Plutarch notes, have laid down their conditions for peace; however, firstly, they took an incentive to make an agreement for the current existing dissolution with Tiberius, as they felt assigned to Big Tiberius. There is an interesting one passage from the ambassador entrusted by Tiberius. „ Negotiations were held, he persuaded Numantians for some conditions, and some conditions were made by him and, finally, concluded the truce”<sup>2</sup>. It meant that this so called shameful truce, Tiberius, in spite of the fact that it provided the saving of many warriors, shouldn't take as a plus, especially next to successful senators.

It's true that they indirectly still showed as shameful fact that Tiberius couldn't expose much self-confidence during the diplomatic negotiation and couldn't secure fully the interests of Rome, despite the fact that it was his direct duty. Thereby Plutarch states that Tiberius was so engaged in having fun with Numantians that he even agrees to be welcomed in their city and have a feast with them, but still hesitantly. Numantians gave him plates, as Pretor always set up, they also asked him to take any item he would be interested in with prey. He, as a true Godly Augur, took only incense, as he used it during sacrifice liturgy. As Plutarch states, he also said farewell to them in a friendly way. The successful part of Rome society rated it as a shameful truce; however that step made by Tiberius Gracchus was still acquitted positively. The protest of underclass society saved Tiberius from anger and in all of that the commander-in-chief was blamed. What does the current passage tell us? Firstly, the compliant characteristics and humility, lack of

confidence, lack of principality of Tiberius during concluding the truce reflected the unsuccessful results of the truce; Secondly, he takes care of saving the plates more than expressing the strength. For him, the priority is to take plates and incense with him more than taking back such an item, which would be far more based on public purpose. It's true that for that stage, Tiberius escaped from the great anxiety of Optimals, but, as Plutarch outlines „Lower ring servants questers and tribunes were blamed to have broken the oath and violated the truce“.

Plutarch continues supporting Tiberius and recalls the example of Scipio Junior. He, who neutralized the great wave of anger towards the Tiberius. Even the Scipio had a chance to kill Tiberius, however, he didn't do this. Here Plutarch reaches very interesting and, partly logical, conclusion: „From my viewpoint, Tiberius would be avoided from misfortune if, during arriving at his early political arena with his laws, Scipio were in Rome at that time. He has been in Numantia and waging the war when Tiberius tried to enforce the laws.“<sup>3</sup>. It's another verdict upon Tiberius. He couldn't recognize the importance of choosing the time and space correctly, plus, Tiberius, as a compliant and less bold person, couldn't reach a good result without the help of anyone. Afterwards, Plutarch describes how small lands gradually became large latifundian farms, leading to the complete impoverishment and degeneration of many Roman citizens; How the rich raised prices on leased land and how they gradually ousted the poor; The free landowner, who was losing everything and in return Barbaros' slave labor was widely used, further process - Tiberius's public tribunal making a new mine, blocking the laws proposed by Tiberius, vetoing the status quo, and vetoing the tribunal. It's also interesting how Tiberius reacts, he asks Octavius to stand together against unfair laws, but Octavius neglects. Plutarch here underlines excessive moral purity of Tiberius, which is conditioned by the framed upbringing. As Plutarch outlines, Tiberius promised Octavius, who was considered to be a successful landowner, financial benefits in exchange for the extra land confiscation, but, in vain. Then he starts independently standing upon the laws and harassing rich honors. Rich society, as Plutarch observes, gave a sign of mourning and by this sign they reported the closeness of dictatorship. There is such an interesting moment which outlines the compliant, gentle and fluctuating nature of Tiberius when ex consuls imploring him with tears to neglect the laws created by him and, afterwards, to be confirmed denial by the senate. Tiberius asked an interesting question: „ Then, how should we behave?“ - it was similar to the reaction of man who has decided making big deals by dictation of others and dependent on them. The Optimals in the Senate refused, and Tiberius had no choice but to remove from the road the second-road blocking tribune Octavius. Another humiliating lobbying expressed from the side of a man who wants to go through the big reformatory way at the expense of demolishing personal dignity. „Tiberius obstructed the voting and again started begging for things to Octavius.

He hugged him in front of people, kissed him and told:„ Don't make yourself feel ashamed and I will not be forced to be the cause of such strict and extreme measures.“<sup>4</sup>. This step made by him is sharply nonsense and, first and foremost, here is shown the type of person with immature ideas and ambitions, he for whom the decision-making process is destructive. As soon as he makes a decision, the tragedy begins. Based on the adopted laws, the fair redistribution of land should start. Of course successful rich oligarchs saw what would follow their property owned by scarcity and took an action fast without any doubt, unlikely Tiberius. The clearest example of this is the behavior of Nazika, as they say the correct action is prerequisite of gaining right weapon. First a friend and comrade was poisoned and killed and instead of being an awakened, he revealed an amazing paradox „Save those kids and their mother, because I have no hope to survive from the enemies“<sup>5</sup>. Man, who has no hope of securing himself, he, naturally, can't take care of surviving others. That's already a last song of defeated governor. Another expression of his weakness and immaturity- during the battle between him and immoral person, Anrus, the following question was asked:„ if your friend decides helping me, would you take away his position?“ he had no answer. That's the example of his weakness and immaturity and paradox behavior. The enemies of Tiberius, in parallel with the mobilization of arms, the restlessness of Tiberius's legislative activities as if they had not acted against him, and the logical end to the life of this man who could not figure out major state affairs needed powerful, often assertive, and not mere compromises and divisions. The death, in spite of sorrow, still was a logical. One and only, through the Plutarch vision, who was punished by the deportation to Asia, was Head Murderer- Nazika. The logic of Plutarch is significant. It's not surprising that people didn't hate Nazika as much<sup>6</sup>. He said through the mouth of the most desirable man what might possibly express the mood of a section of people: „May the one who does the same be as brutally punished as he“<sup>7</sup>.

As for his younger brother. For the first stage, because of fear, Gaius didn't express political passion, however, once saving his friend publicly caused heterogeneous attitudes. In the rich, powerful, optimat society it was becoming an additional headache, as for poor, unauthorized society-hope. Afterwards there was a military career. Optimats, at first

calmly, but soberly observed the fate of Gaius which was a prerequisite of forced step. Then, a few years later, a military career and a move that almost brought him trouble. If not his fortune-telling,

Oratory art, he wouldn't escape from death. His words are interesting „I have been a questor of a consul Oreste for three years when the law gave me a right to leave Sardinia after leaving one job. From all the warriors I was the one who took the full-pocket, on the way back home absolutely empty while others drained the amphora full of wine taken from home and took back with full of gold and silver“<sup>8</sup>.- This is the best way of persuading and oratory. Next stage is, likely his brother, becoming public tribune, but now the optimats do feel more careful about it. He only have been chosen as a fourth tribune. The Roman epoch of Gaius Gracchus starts.

The first step was the law against Gaius Gracchus, which limited him to become a public tribune, for he was already expelled once by Tiberius, but this law has stopped because of incentive made by the mother. Plutarch quotes an interesting passage to illustrate Gaius' poisonous speech, which was a message to adulterer, voluptuous person „Even you have born the children like every Roman does? Cornelia, women, has lasted even longer without a man, than you, men“<sup>9</sup>.

In this character, it's sharply illustrated the poisonous, inaccurate and careless nature of person. There starts his difficult period of the legislative life. He at the same time starts a fight against the respective part of senate to weaken its powers and develops his wide legal state. First resistance started from here, after that there was wide reconstructive and legislative work. The attitude of Plutarch should be outlined hereby. If he criticizes the immaturity and procrastination of decision-making processes from the Tiberius' side, here, in case of Gaius, he criticizes raucous, inaccurate decisions which multiplied the amount of enemies, at the same time, unlike Tiberius, the enemy's hostile camp quickly regained consciousness and, given the circumstances, quickly began to think about its elimination. Moreover, Gaius, with his immeasurable actions, gave a lot of grounds for this. Added to this was excessive self-confidence. To illustrate, one example is enough, but there are many cases in the work, "when he was about to leave the house, his wife fell on the knees at the door, she grabbed one hand with a tiny boy and second hand with him"<sup>10</sup>. With his words, Plutarch feels as if the death comes closer and, unfortunately, becomes inevitable regularity, which is the companion of the big work. Afterwards, the death comes even closer, he tries to avoid it, but at the same time, recognizes its inevitability. He tries to do great work, but has no tactic and elementary diplomatic skills. In parallel with the nature of the pine, it is not distinguished by foresight and observation, on the contrary, the feeling of danger is often easily taken, and human destiny, naturally, does not forgive so many mistakes. This was the end of Gaius Gracchus, told by an unknown person. That's how it ended.

In the end, there is a discussion about the tragedy of their mother, Cornelia. As if she internally was ready for being a witness of the gruesome end of her children's lives. „ How much encouragement is given to a person in grief by the innate goodness and good upbringing ... Fate is not at all capable of destroying the skill of overcoming sorrow with generosity, even in the face of boundless calamity“<sup>11</sup>. That's the fate given to Cornelia by the epoch. From our analyzing writing based on the given sources the viewpoint of Plutarch is well-illustrated. His sources is a good example of how can you establish advantages or disadvantages of reformer political figures in many ways, in different dimensions, since understanding and comprehension of each person is developed through the way they're following. That's his moral-ethical substance that conditions, afterwards, his personal characteristics.

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