



A Critical Contribution to Rome's Institutional Structure from the Perspective of Inclusive Institutions Theory

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Abstract— In this article the transformation of the Roman Republic's form of government in the historical process is re-examined with the theoretical framework of Acemoğlu and Robinson's *The Fall of Nations*. The authors draw attention to how overarching institutions shape the economic and political development of societies and analyse the structures of the early Roman Republic in this context. The Early Republic was a period of intense power struggle between patricians and plebeians. While social problems such as the economic and political privileges of the patricians, conquest strategies and debts deepened class tensions, reforms such as the Licinio-Sextian Laws brought important gains for the plebeians and allowed Rome to become more inclusive. These reforms ensured that Rome's political and economic system was controlled by a wider segment of the population and increased social equality and participation. However, the Roman economy was based on short-term gains from conquest rather than the long-term dynamism promised by inclusive institutions in the modern sense. The large land ownership system called *Latifundium*, established after the Punic Wars, allowed large landowners to increase their production by taking advantage of cheap slave labour, leading to the economic weakening of small farmers. According to Acemoğlu and Robinson, Rome did not have a sustainable economic structure due to the slave economy. However, while the slaves obtained from the Punic Wars alone did not put the plebeians in a difficult situation, Rome's cheap grain imports from the conquered lands in an environment without state intervention further weakened the economic power of small farmers. For Acemoğlu and Robinson, the transformation of the republic into an empire signalled the end of institutional inclusiveness and economic development. However, the Augustan period enabled the Roman economy to gain strength through the development of trade and economic innovations. With the reforms carried out by Augustus, the economic structure of Rome was strengthened and a transition to a market-oriented model was achieved.



Keywords— Acemoğlu and Robinson, Inclusive Institutions, Patrician, Plebeian, Roman Republic.

I. INTRODUCTION

Daron Acemoğlu and James A. Robinson, in their book *The Fall of Nations*, define inclusive institutions as arrangements that enable the effective participation of large segments of society in economic and political processes. Inclusive institutions provide individuals with equal opportunities, secure property rights and promote long-term economic growth by establishing a fair legal system. These institutions promote pluralism, contribute to the strengthening of democratic structures and enable

innovation and creative destruction processes. These characteristics both ensure the sustainability of economic growth and help to reduce social inequalities. In the work by Acemoğlu and Robinson this situation is explained by comparing South Korea with North Korea (Acemoğlu & Robinson, 2012, p. 70-83).

Acemoğlu and Robinson see the Glorious Revolution of 1688 as the turning point in the emergence of inclusive institutions (Acemoğlu & Robinson, 2012, p. 102). According to the authors, the failure of the absolutist

attempts of the House of Stuart and the development of a pluralist political system in England in 1688 laid the foundations for inclusive institutions. In this period, the limited state interventions in the economy created a favourable ground for economic growth. Acemoğlu and Robinson compare this transformation in Britain with the institutional structures of the early Roman Republic and draw attention to the similarities between the two historical contexts.

This article aims to critically assess the similarities and differences between the English Revolution of 1688 and the early Roman Republic. It compares the institutional transformation in England with the development of Rome's overarching structures and discusses how the institutional changes of the Augustan period led to the centralisation of Rome. According to the authors, the Augustan reforms prevented creative destruction processes and led to a centralised and self-interested institutional structure. However, according to them the dissolution of the Plebeian Assembly under Tiberius and the transfer of its powers to the Senate marks the end of inclusive institutions in Rome (Acemoğlu & Robinson, 2012, p. 168-171).

The article also argues that inclusive institutions are dependent on class balances and in the absence of this balance, the state evolves into a bureaucratic structure. Acemoğlu and Robinson's characterisation of Roman institutional structures as exploitative is challenged and it is argued that these structures were supportive of trade. The article argues that the relationship between inclusive institutions and economic development is not direct and emphasises the importance of historical context.

In conclusion, this article argues, through the case of Rome, that inclusive institutions do not have a direct relationship with economic development. Given the importance of the historical context, Rome's inclusive structures were based not only on class balance but also on the social mobility generated by the conquests. In this context, it is argued that the conquests integrated the lower segments of society into the system and this integration encouraged political pluralism.

II. THE EMERGENCE OF PATRICIANS AND PLEBEIANS

The In the Early Republic, the highest levels of the state were occupied by patricians, who alone controlled the state apparatus and owned large tracts of land, the ownership of which passed from father to son. In this period, only patricians were admitted to the Senate (Cicero, 2008, *De Legibus*, 2.23) and only patricians could be appointed to

the executive magistrates of the Roman Republic (Gruen, 1974, p. 258, 498, 507–508).

This privileged structure had an impact not only on the internal organisation of Rome, but also on the position of the local population living in the conquered lands. The local inhabitants of the conquered territories remained in their places for the most part, although a limited number of them came to Rome. In order to obtain a legal and valid economic status, they had to accept dependence on a patrician family or on the king, who was himself a patrician. As a result of this dependence, they became *Clients* of a patrician family. With the replacement of the royal regime by the Republic, individuals who were dependent on the king were freed from this dependence and thus the first plebeian class was formed (Abbot, 1901, p. 7).

The plebeians, who constituted the class below the patricians in the social structure, mostly carried out their economic activities as citizen-farmers. However, in the face of economic difficulties, small farmers often had to borrow money from patricians. The laws drafted by patrician senators and enforced by patrician judges were largely designed to protect the rights of creditors. In this context, the debt mechanism served as a tool for the divestment of small farms and the expansion of the patricians' large estates. This process continued until the adoption in 326 of the law abolishing the enslavement of plebeians by patrician creditors (Beard, 2015, p. 147-148).

In all republican periods when this mechanism was in place, class warfare was a common phenomenon. In the Early Republic, the patricians had no intention of giving land to the plebeians. For example, in *ager publicus populi*, which in Rome was based on the allocation of conquered lands, i.e. lands declared as public lands as a result of wars, although the aim was to settle war veterans there, the most aggressive families (patricians), who belonged to the upper class, including the ruling class, who could do anything for power, ignored the laws and seized these lands. The most striking example of this is when, after taking two-thirds of the Hernici lands, Consul Spurius Cassius proposed Rome's first agrarian law, which stipulated that half of the conquered lands be returned to the Latins and the other half to needy Romans, while also redistributing public lands occupied by the patricians to them. This law proposal led to the patricians accusing Cassius of treason and executing him (Cicero, 2008, 2.41).

The struggle over whether the ownership of public lands should belong to patricians or plebeians continued for a long time. In this framework, in 474 BC, the commons tribune Gnaeus Genucius tried to put the

consuls of the previous year on trial for delaying the land redistribution proposed by Cassius. However, this attempt was prevented by the consuls of the period, Lucius Furius and Gaius Manlius (Livy, 1905, 2.54). Nevertheless, the patricians could not completely ignore the demands of the plebeians.

III. INCREASING POWER OF THE PLEBEIANS

The power of the plebeians was mainly due to the fact that they were soldiers (Abbot, 1901, p. 7-8). The increasing need for soldiers with the expansion of Rome necessitated the participation of the plebeians in the army and required some concessions from the patricians. One of the most important results of this was the acquisition of the right to land ownership by the plebeians, expressed in the *Agricola Miles* system (Abbot, 1901, p. 8). Similar to the farmer-soldier model of Ancient Greece, this system ensured that the army in the Roman Republic was composed of citizen soldiers who were small-scale farmers. During this period, the army was not professionalised and there was no standing army; the army was assembled only when needed.

The plebeians would periodically leave the city en masse to make their social and political demands heard as their situation deteriorated (Cary & Scullard, 1975, p. 66). In the absence of the plebeians, who made up the vast majority of the Roman population and played a vital role in the production of food and resources for the city, the city life would come to a standstill. For example, in their first abandonment of the city, the Patricians released some of the plebeians from their debts and gave up some of their power by establishing the office of the Plebeian Tribune (Kondratieff, 2013, 1-5). In addition, the plebeians would refuse to continue fighting after a war if they were not allocated land and would resort to a military mass strike (Abbot, 1901, p. 28).

This power resulted in the Licinio-Sextian rogations of 367 BC, which introduced important reforms, although the controversy over public land ownership led to a generation-long period of turmoil and poverty.

Under these laws, the limit of private property on public land was set at 500 *iugera* (about 125 hectares) (Livy, 1905, 6.36) whereas previously it had been limited to only 7 or sometimes 2 *iugera* (Brunt, 1974, p. 35). In addition, indebted landowners were allowed to deduct interest payments from the principal and pay the balance over three years, instead of paying the balance at once. (Livy, 1905, 6.35)

The equal division of land promoted by the Licinia rogation and the Sempronia law was supported by

colonisation activities. These arrangements, involving both plebeians and patricians, reduced the economic pressure of patricians on plebeians and improved the economic situation of plebeians by strengthening small-scale property ownership. Thanks to the settlements in the colonies, the patricians were able to alleviate population pressure in the centre, reducing the problems created by useless youth.

In addition to the flourishing small farming, the plebeians gained representation at the state level. Admission to the Senate and senior judgeships had to be approved by the Plebeian Assembly, and the decision to go to war had to be approved by the Centuriate Assembly (Abbot, 1901, p. 257). The distance between the plebeians and patricians was so reduced that the patrician class became smaller and smaller as the Imperial period approached, and laws were passed to register new patricians (Tacitus, 2004, XI.25).

As a result of the reforms, the nature of the relations between plebeians and patricians changed significantly. Individuals of both plebeian and patrician origin began to be included in new social classes such as *nobiles*, *novus homo* and *equites*. In this process, the concept of plebeian also transformed over time and came to denote poor people with citizen status (Momigliano & Lintott, 2012, p. 1161).

In the period when the plebeians were not included in the system, the power of the patricians, the former nobility, was based on a law-based structure. Membership in the Senate was restricted to certain families, and this situation provided the patricians with an authority supported by legal grounds rather than social power. However, with the sharing of patrician rights with the plebeians, the legitimacy of Senate membership was based on its social organisation.

We can state that this inclusiveness of institutions is expressed by the idea of *mos maiorum*. In *mos maiorum*, which means 'tradition of the ancestors' (Hölkeskamp, 2010, p.17) the important thing was not the person but the class. Classes had obligations to each other as well as obligations to the public. Therefore, individuals were melted into the public (i.e. state) identity. The Early Republic contributed to the development of a strong sense of community at all levels of Roman society by giving even the lowest class a stake in the future of the city. Although the *maiorum* was not a written law, it preached a hierarchical structure based on land ownership (Hölkeskamp, 2010, p.33) (Barton, 1993, p. 176-177). Therefore, the Roman as an individual was not an important element in this conception. Indeed, during the Crisis of the Republic, the populares' favouring of

demagogues would weaken the conservative principles of the *mos maiorum* (Hölkeskamp, 2010, p.42).

One of the areas where the concept of *maiorum* was most evident was the military sphere. According to Montesquieu, the equal distribution of land encouraged by the agrarian laws and the colonisation activities that supported this process contributed to the emergence of an effective army. Montesquieu attributes the success of this system to the soldiers' motivation to protect not only the state but also their own property (Montesquieu, 1891, p. 21-24). He emphasises that this motivation was not observed in other periods and regions, such as the Hellenistic period or the Persian Empire, where land ownership was monopolised.

When the Persian Empire was wiped out by Alexander the Great's attacks, it offered no serious resistance. However, at the Battle of Cannae in 216 BC, Hannibal of Carthage inflicted a major defeat on Rome, but Rome refused to surrender and eventually triumphed. The basis of this difference lies in Rome's social structure. While the Persians imposed heavy taxes on their peasant subjects to pay the salaries of their professional soldiers, the army of the Roman Republic was a militia of free citizens.¹ Unlike the Persian peasants, the Roman peasantry did not benefit directly from the system, and this was an important factor that increased Rome's power of resistance.

In societies where small property ownership forms the basis of the military system, it is expected that these property owners not only provide military service but also play an active role in political processes. While war was a struggle for small farmers to either increase their property or to protect their existing property, politics functioned to achieve these goals.²

IV. A VIEW OF ROME FROM THE THEORY OF INSTITUTIONS

The above account of Rome offers a different perspective on the story of Rome's rise from that claimed by institutional theory. In the context of institutional theory, at the centre of Roman history is the pluralist political

structure that developed through the harmonisation between plebeians and patricians, the guarantee of property rights and the existence of a non-exploitative bureaucracy supported by limited economic interventions (Acemoğlu & Robinson, 2012, p. 159-161).

However, although the expansion of Rome's territory during the Early and Middle Republican periods allowed for the growth of agricultural production, increased tax and rental revenues, and the expansion of trade, it never became a commercial centre, contrary to what Acemoğlu and Robinson claim. On the contrary, Rome continued to exist as a predominantly agricultural society. Moreover, Rome's most important economic source was conquest. The social balance in Rome, and therefore the inclusiveness of its institutions, was largely based on conquests. In this context, it is seen that an economic system that would promote economic efficiency, productivity and general welfare did not exist in Rome.

Thus, contrary to what is argued in Acemoglu and Robinson's analysis, Rome's overarching institutions were shaped solely to ensure the sustainability of resources derived from exploitation, rather than laying the foundation for economic dynamism and inclusive economic institutions, which are the basis for economic success. Although Rome allowed for a certain degree of free trade, as will be discussed in the following sections, it can be argued that this free trade caused significant problems for small farmers and contributed to the weakening of inclusive political institutions. Rome's economic structure was built on short-term plunder and territorial expansion, rather than an economic dynamism that encouraged sustainable development and long-term investment.

The ability of the patricians to maintain their profitable war policies depended on establishing good relations with the plebeians. Therefore, the position of the plebeians in the system was due to this situation. Moreover, the plebeians benefited economically from this process without any sacrifice on the part of the patricians. Although most of the spoils went to the state (Schatzman, 1975, p.63) and the senator-generals (Livy, 1905, 4.53 & 26.47), for the plebeian's victory meant a share of the spoils (especially gold and silver), captives (future slaves) and new lands (which means farms and manors). The fact that the battles often took place over short distances (Biglino, 2024, p. 12), made them more acceptable for small farmers.

A similar non-bureaucratic institutionalisation in Rome can also be observed in 1688 England, which Acemoğlu and Robinson closely examined. According to the authors, the main source of the UK's economic

¹ Although Acemoğlu and Robinson do not state it directly, the primary reason for their opposition to professionalisation in the Augustan period is that the system that prevented the state from evolving into an exploitative structure due to wars no longer existed. As a matter of fact, during the Imperial period, Roman peasants displayed a passive attitude against the barbarian attacks in the Eastern and Western regions.

² The second reason for Acemoğlu and Robinson's opposition to military professionalisation under Augustus, although not directly stated, is that military professionalisation prevented the inclusiveness of institutions.

development is that the inclusiveness of institutions has a positive impact on economic growth. (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012, p. 102-113 & 185-200) However, contrary to Acemoglu and Robinson's claims the origin of the non-bureaucratic structure in England lies in the gradual dissolution of feudal and capitalist interests in a historically early period. In the 17th century, the rise of the nobility, situated between the yeomanry and the aristocracy, is notable (Tawney, 1941, p.4).

The English aristocracy differed from the aristocracies of continental Europe in the way it responded to the massive inflation of the 16th century. The English aristocracy adapted to the difficult economic conditions by managing their estates more efficiently and improving their agricultural arrangements (Tawney, 1941, p. 4) In particular, landowners consolidated their estates into large farms, enclosed commons, invested in land reclamation and pursued other ventures such as mining or property speculation (Tawney, 1941, p. 14).

In this context, landowners and landowning merchants or bankers, who subsisted on the income from commercial farming and increased land rents, can be considered as members of a single class rather than as separate classes. Given the source of their income, both groups were equally bourgeois in character (Tawney, 1941, p. 18). As a result of this transformation, part of the class of feudal lords linked their income to agricultural capitalism and thus became as much a part of the new bourgeoisie as the urban merchants.

Thus, the class consensus in England allowed feudal-bourgeois dignitaries to directly take over some of the functions undertaken by the bureaucracy in other states on the continent. Bourgeois and feudal elements played an active role in the administration of the state without forming a separate and distinct social group. In addition, the English landowners, whose material position was strong, did not need to resort to direct or extra-economic coercive methods to obtain surplus value, compared to France, with the profits from increased land rents.

Nor did they need a state that indirectly appropriated surplus-value through political means (taxation and civil service) or war, as in the Early Republican period. The main requirement of this class was a low-cost state structure that would maintain order on the home front, protect private property and guarantee the functioning of contractual economic processes (Brenner, 1982, p. 87-88).

It is also seen that the state did not have the power to overcome the class structure. Henry VIII's French War of 1543-1546 is of decisive importance in this respect, since he sold off a large part of the lands seized from the

Church during the Reformation to finance the war, thus destroying the monarch's only major chance of establishing a solid economic base independent of parliament (Anderson, 1974, p. 125).

Therefore, in parallel with the decline in the power of the state in England, the cooperation between the noble class and the bourgeoisie led to institutionalisation without the need for a bureaucratic state. A similar situation was observed in Rome, where the Roman administration was under the control of a broader and pluralistic group rather than a narrow elite. However, the underpinnings of this system were based on a conquering economic model, unlike Acemoglu and Robinson's thesis that inclusive political institutions transformed into value-producing economies. Indeed, as mentioned above, reforms such as laws expanding the political participation of the plebeians and the granting of land ownership to the plebeians were directly linked to the increase in the resources generated by wars.

It can even be argued that the class structure in Rome limited the capacity to generate wealth. In the case of Rome, the relations between the plebeian and patrician classes were similar to England in institutional terms, but closer to France in terms of class dynamics. At the end of the 13th century, lords in England held about a third of the cultivated land directly in their estates, while French lords held between one-eighth and one-tenth. Much of the remaining land was under the control of powerful small farmers (Kosminsky, 1958, p. 92-95, 203-206).

Therefore, when analysed in terms of property distribution, it can be said that Rome has a similar structure to France. The importance of this similarity lies in the fact that the dominance of small property owners in the countryside significantly limited the development of the market economy. Regardless of the existence of key elements of economic development, such as the participatory system or property rights, capital could not flourish in small farming areas. Indeed, small-scale parcel farming in France has led to low levels of profitability due to the lack of economies of scale, resulting in a very limited accumulation of capital by landowners. Low profitability led farmers towards self-sufficiency, which prevented the creation of domestic demand for urban-industrial sectors (Trebilcock, 1981, p 135).

In this context, it is important to note that Rome does not have the dichotomy between Western and Eastern Europe that Acemoglu and Robinson construct. Acemoglu and Robinson associate the difference between Western and Eastern Europe with exemption from feudal obligations, criminal sanctions and rules, and argue that this plays a key role in the emerging market economy

(Acemoğlu & Robinson, 2012, p. 100-101). However, from the perspective of the issue of freedom, the status of peasants in France was higher than in England. However, the main difference lies in the relationship of the classes in England with the market, which is not directly parallel to the concept of freedom. As a matter of fact, as will be discussed in detail later, the period when agriculture was opened to the market in Rome coincided with a period when slavery was more widespread.

V. DISPROPORTIONATE INCREASE IN WEALTH OF THE UPPER CLASS

However, the stability provided by the imperial surplus from conquests began to deteriorate in the Middle Republican Period between 274-148 BC. In this period, in parallel with the rapid expansion of Rome, great riches were obtained, but the financing of wars caused serious financial burdens and led to the state's indebtedness. In this process, especially the Punic Wars can be considered as a breaking point for Rome. In order to finance the long-lasting wars, a loan was taken from the senators, and it was planned to pay this debt in three instalments (Livy, 1905, 29.16). However, the financial difficulties caused by the ongoing wars caused the creditors to demand that the third instalment be paid through the transfer of public lands and low taxation of these lands. The acceptance of these demands led to the creation of the *Trientabulum* lands (Livy, 1905, 28.46) and laid the foundations for the large-scale system of land ownership known as *Latifundium*.

Latifundiums often included large-scale farmland, including a *villa rustica*, which was used as a luxury manor house. The operation of these farms relied on the labour of a large number of slaves, often kept in an *ergastulum* (Marzano, 2007, p. 149). *Latifundiums* were engaged in animal husbandry (e.g. sheep and cattle breeding) and the production of products such as olive oil, grain, garum (fermented fish sauce) and wine for sale and profit (Carandini, 1995, p. 31-36).

As larger estates increased economies of scale and productivity advantages, owners of the senatorial class entered a period of rapid economic consolidation thanks to their exemption from land tax. *Latifundium* owners reinvested their profits by purchasing smaller neighbouring farms (White, 1970, p. 26). This was because smaller farms had low productivity and could not compete with the advantages of large-scale agribusiness. This led to the intensification of agricultural production and the expansion of large-scale land holdings during the Roman period.

VI. DECLINE OF THE SMALL FARMERS

The economic growth of the wealthy classes was to the detriment of the warring classes with small property, because the rich captured their economic share. During these wars, small farmers remained at the front much longer than in the Early Republic (Brunt P., 1971, p. 404). As a result, small farmers' lands could not be cultivated and their owners lost them (Gabba, 1976, p. 157). Moreover, during the wars, farms were destroyed by both Carthaginian and Roman soldiers (Livy, 1905, 22.3 & 22.14). Roman farmers returning from the front line lacked the financial resources to restore their devastated lands. Therefore, many small farmers were forced to either sell their land or abandon it altogether.

However, many returning farmers found that their land had been taken over by large landowners. These large landowners, who benefited from the labour power of slaves, who were put on the market at low prices among the spoils of war, made great fortunes and further accelerated the economic collapse of small farmers. The riches brought to Rome by the wars were largely directed towards the rich classes, and this situation led to a disruption of the class balance.

The rich class, who managed the revenues obtained from the wars, invested in agriculture with this income. The Patricians focussed on the production of lucrative goods such as olives, grapes and animal products, and bought the colonial lands given as a reward to the veterans of the Roman army. By producing with slaves on these lands, they owned larger plots of land than small farmers and economically suppressed small farms by using slave labour (Boren, 1992, p. 70). Unlike tenant labour, slaves carried a fixed cost, so patricians were incentivised to work longer and harder.

After the Punic Wars, the Roman economy evolved into a market-oriented economic structure in which prices were determined by the interaction of supply and demand. The goods and services produced changed hands in the markets. Although, as in today's capitalist economic model, distant geographies were not economically united. However, even if not in the modern sense, there was a Mediterranean market after the Punic Wars (Temin, 2013, p. 4) Even the 'comparative advantage' in the capitalist economy was in question. Although this situation was not expressed in the case of Rome, it is a situation that will continue in the empire, where Acemoğlu and Robinson claim that the exploitative institutions that they claim to restrict the functioning of the market were allocated in Rome. However, this was a situation that would work to the detriment of the small farmer.

While the Patricians were turning the land into pastures, vineyards and orchards, the need for grain in Rome was increasing rather than decreasing. Rome turned to imports to meet this need. The new lands conquered by Rome were particularly favourable for grain production. Grains from the former Carthaginian territories (today Spain, North Africa and Sicily) (Garnsey & Rathbone, 1985, p. 23) killed the competition of small farmers in Rome. Because these grains were too cheap for the small farmer in Rome to compete. What made it cheaper was the reduced transport costs brought about by the naval superiority established by Rome as a result of the Punic Wars (Livy, 1905, 30.38; 38.35).

The unequal market conditions that emerged with the Punic Wars led to the inability of small farmers to maintain their economic position and therefore to migrate to urban centres. Although some plebeians continued to work on the estates of the rich, landowners generally preferred slave labour because it was cheaper (Brunt, Italian Manpower, 1971, p. 70).

Small property ownership was disintegrating, but this had internal as well as external causes. In Italy in the 2nd century BC, an expanding population and divisible inheritance practices meant that modest farms were divided into small plots that became insufficient to feed a family (Roselaar, 2010, p. 215-216) increasing pressure on food resources. As a result, farmers sold their land to wealthier individuals and turned to wage labour around Rome, where demand for land was high (de Ligt, 2004, p. 725).

In fact, these problems could have been solved through colonisation, as in the Early and Middle Republican periods. However, colonisation was not preferred in order to include the conquered lands in the latifundium system and to prevent possible rebellions by Latin allies (Roselaar, 2010, p. 222). For this reason, some of the farmers tried to make a living in the cities by working in public services, as itinerant labourers and by selling food. However, the stagnation in monumental construction projects from 140 BC onwards led to a decline in wage rates, and the material livelihoods of this segment of the population were further reduced (Roselaar, 2010, p. 216).

All these developments signalled the end of the *agricola miles* concept. Due to the loss of property of small farmers, the property criterion for participation in the army during the Punic Wars was reduced from 11,000 assers to 4,000 assers. However, this arrangement was not sufficient and with the reform efforts of the Gracchus brothers, this limit was reduced to 1,500 assers (Livy, 1905, 1.43). Nevertheless, the gap between the

requirements of the army and the property losses of small farmers had grown so large that this regulation was also insufficient³ and finally, with the Marius reforms in 107 BC, the property criterion was completely abolished in the recruitment process (Plutarch, 1920, IX.1-4).

VII. INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE IMPERIAL PERIOD

As stated above, the understanding prevailing in the Early and Middle Roman Republic periods was based on the principle of *mos maiorum*. Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus is one of the most concrete examples of the *mos maiorum* principle. While he was retired from public service and living a simple life of farming, he was called to duty in Rome's struggle against the Aequi tribe and won victory in sixteen days (Hillyard, 2001, p. 23). Subsequently, his renunciation of his power and privileges and his return to farming reflects both the understanding of public duty and the principle of *mos maiorum*.

However, the understanding of *mos maiorum* came to an end when the state came under the control of the rich and turned into a structure that did not promise a promising social future. At the same time, the Marius reforms and the permission of propertyless citizens to join the Roman army regardless of their property status reinforced this process.

In the process of the disproportionate increase in wealth of the upper class, the Plebeian tribunate gradually alienated itself from the small farmer class and became alienated from them. The asymmetrical relations established with the landless after the Punic Wars shaped the social support of both the Senate and the tribunate. Not only did the wealthy elites provide electoral support by using their material power, but also the peasants who lost their property and migrated to the cities fell into a situation that can be characterised as social parasitism by trying to make a living with state aids. Despite their anger against the rich, they did not develop any stance against the exploitation of slaves and other subjects in the Roman Empire. Because this group indirectly benefited from slave labour and remained economically dependent on their masters.

In addition to this group, demagogues mobilised especially those who were classified as small farmers but

³ Of course, the loss of property was effective in the formation of gaps in the army, but this was not only due to the loss of property. With the rapid expansion of Rome through the Punic Wars, the number of soldiers required increased as much as the rate of expansion. Because this expansion also meant that Rome was bordering more than 10 powerful enemies (such as the Macedonians, Thracians and Seleucids) at the same time.

were at risk of losing their status due to debt. Tiberius Gracchus, for example, took advantage of this situation to propose an agrarian law, which envisaged the limitation of public land and the transfer of surplus land to poor citizens (Roselaar, 2010, p. 221). This led to the lynching and murder of Tiberius by a group in the senate who saw him as a threat. The tragic end of Tiberius Gracchus symbolised the end of the traditional political order in Rome which was able to find solutions through negotiation (Beard, 2015, p. 226-227) (Mouritsen, 2017, p. 165) peer pressure and respect for higher authority. This event was a turning point that shook the stability of the Roman Republic and paved the way for the Republic's famous crisis.

Gaius Gracchus, who endeavoured to carry out extensive reforms, was violently murdered in a similar manner as his brother. However, in order to protect himself and his supporters from possible legal prosecution during the reform processes, Gaius followed a different strategy than his brother and tried to gain the support of the powerful equites class (Mousourakis, 2007, p. 45). These attempts to overcome the authority of the Senate led to the emergence of a violent political conflict. Although this strategy pursued by Gaius was continued by figures such as Marcus Livius Drusus (Paterculus, 1924, II. XXXII. 1-4), it gained a different dimension with the reforms of Marius and laid the foundations of a new political era shaped around direct relations with commanders, especially in the case of Lucius Appuleius Saturninus. The process that started with the assassination of Tiberius Gracchus triggered the erosion and gradual weakening of the institutional structure of the Roman state.

The process of professionalisation of the army, which began with the Marian reforms, enabled the institutionalisation of the military structure to become bureaucratised more rapidly than the disintegrating state mechanisms. With these reforms, the previous system based on the loyalty of small property owners was replaced by a shift in loyalty to the generals who paid them salaries or allocated them land, as soldiers began to live on the salaries they received from the army and focused on achieving the highest booty. In line with the *mos maiorum* concept, this situation reinforced the loyalty to the commanders instead of the state.

Thus, the command of the army also became a source of economic and political power. With the loss of the principle of *mos maiorum*, examples of public virtue such as Cincinnatus were replaced by figures such as Sulla, who appointed himself dictator by force. Therefore, as Acemoğlu and Robinson argue, the institutional structure in Rome had dissolved long before the reign of Augustus.

In this context, Acemoğlu and Robinson's institutional theories of the rise of empires do not provide a sufficient explanation for the development of the Roman Empire. For instance, the authors argue that the Roman economy stagnated during the imperial period. According to them, examples from the reigns of Tiberius and Vespasian suggest that Roman emperors had a greater capacity to prevent economic and political changes than the rulers of the Republic, and that emperors used this power to prevent technological developments due to their fear of the economic effects of creative destruction (Acemoğlu & Robinson, 2012, p. 171).

In this context, the authors argue that sustainable development is not possible in countries ruled by a narrow elite class. The main reason for this is that elites were not inclined to allow technological or systemic changes that might threaten their dominance. However, as de Ste. Croix, argues, the emperors' behaviour in not encouraging technological advances is open to debate and does not provide a sufficient justification to explain the circumstances (de Ste. Croix., 1981, p. 194-195).

In the early period of the Empire, it is observed that it did not have an overgrown bureaucratic structure that would hinder economic development. During this period, there were approximately 150 civil servants in Rome, as well as 150 senatorial and equestrian positions, along with lower-level officials in the provinces (Mann, 1986, p. 274). Although Augustus reduced the powers of the Senate, as stated above, this did not constitute a blow to the institutional structure. With the reduction of the powers of the Senate, policies such as the Gracchus Brothers, which brought the grievances of the plebeian class to politics and created instability, were limited. Moreover, in order to balance the economic and political power of the plebeian class, the political power of the wealthy class, which used their influence in the senate to exert uncontrolled influence, was weakened, thus reducing social tensions. The reduction of social tensions was reinforced, for example, by Julius Caesar and Augustus by creating new settlements and allocating land to the plebeian class (Walter, 2005, p. 23).

Although the famous Roman trade, which Acemoğlu and Robinson discuss within the framework of the theory of inclusive institutions, developed especially after the Punic Wars, it gained considerable momentum during the social peace achieved by Augustus, the so-called Pax Romana (Goldsworthy, 2016, p. 392). The importance of this situation is that Roman trade emerged at a time when overarching institutions began to erode. The main reason for this was the replacement of small farmers by free agricultural trade. Moreover, it is observed that financial markets developed during the imperial period, lending

financial institutions emerged (Temin, Financial Intermediation, 2004, p. 705–733) and a basic banking system was established based on the use of money to express debt and prices (Harris, 2008, p. 2).

Free trade, which developed in the aftermath of the Punic Wars and which Acemoğlu and Robinson claim restricted the functioning of the market (Acemoğlu & Robinson, 2012, p. 164, 168-9) was established in Rome and continued during the imperial period.

For example, wheat, which is the most open to intervention because it is a staple food, was intervened from time to time during the reign of Augustus, but this situation was in the minority. In most years, the wheat market was allowed to function on its own (Temin, The Roman Market Economy, 2013, p. 33). Although distant geographies did not have an economically unified structure as in today's capitalist economic model, the economy of the Roman Empire was a market-oriented economic system in which prices were determined by the interaction of supply and demand (Temin, The Roman Market Economy, 2013, p. 4). The goods and services produced were circulated by changing hands in the markets and roman cereal producers provided a significant surplus for the market (Erdkamp, 2005, p. 12-54). In addition, the procedure known as *cessio bonorum*, developed by Julius Caesar and Augustus, enabled debtors to avoid being at the mercy of creditors and imprisonment by transferring all or a large part of their property in exchange for their debts, thus protecting them from the threat of personal execution and *infamia* (de Ste. Croix., 1981, p. 166).

Objections to the inefficiency of the imperial economy have a valid basis. Large-scale imperial projects such as public constructions or propaganda building works were important items that burdened the Roman economy (Bond, 1957, p. 149-159). However, these projects were also critical to the stability of the empire by providing employment. Because the empire was established in a period when the institutions of the Republic were degenerating as a result of the instability experienced in the Late Republican Period.

Nevertheless, the issues that Acemoğlu and Robinson problematise the empire have gained relevance in the later periods of the empire. There was no fixed bureaucratic structure in Rome during the Republican Period. For example, taxes were collected through the fief system. State duties were financed by the income of the people who undertook these duties. During the reign of Augustus, this system underwent a radical transformation; the less centralised application of the *iltizam* system, which was to be observed in a more developed form in the Ottoman Empire, was abolished and a taxation mechanism

operating through salaried officials was established. However, by the 4th century, Rome began to experience bureaucratic bloating and more than 30,000 civil servants, one civil servant for every 2,000 people, were employed in the Roman State (Lendon, 1997, p.3).

VIII. CONCLUSION

The form of government of the Roman Republic has undergone many transformations in the historical process and these transformations are re-examined with the theoretical framework put forward by Acemoğlu and Robinson in 'The Fall of Nations'. The authors emphasise how overarching institutions shape the economic and political development of societies and present the structures of the early Roman Republic as an important example in this context. Acemoğlu and Robinson explain the political structure of the early Roman Republic through class conflicts and social struggles with the plebeians and state that the reforms in this process played a fundamental role in the construction of inclusive institutions.

The Early Republican period in Rome was a period in which the power struggle between patricians and plebeians intensified. Economic and political privileges of the patricians, strategies of conquest and social problems such as debts deepened class tensions. However, as Acemoğlu and Robinson point out, reforms such as the Licinio-Sextian rogations, which were carried out during this period, provided important gains for the plebeians and paved the way for a more inclusive structure of Roman society. Such reforms made it possible for Rome's political and economic system to be controlled by a wider segment of the population, while ensuring greater equality and participation in society.

Acemoglu and Robinson's idea that inclusive institutions developed is supported by changes in the social structure of the Roman Republic. However, the Roman economy was based on short-term gains from conquest rather than the long-term dynamism promised by inclusive institutions in the modern sense. However, while Rome's strategies of conquest provided the economic base for the population, this structure became unsustainable in the long term. The large land ownership system called *Latifundium*, established after the Punic Wars, allowed large landowners to increase their production by taking advantage of cheap slave labour, leading to the economic weakening of small farmers.

According to Acemoğlu and Robinson, Rome did not have a sustainable economic structure due to the slave economy. However, the slaves obtained from the Punic Wars alone did not leave the plebeians in a difficult situation. After the Punic Wars, in the absence of state

intervention in the market, Rome was able to import cheap grain from conquered lands, which further weakened the economic power of small farmers.

For Acemoğlu and Robinson, the transformation of the republic into an empire signalled the end of institutional inclusiveness and economic development. However, the Roman economy accelerated its commercial developments not before the Punic Wars, when, contrary to what the authors claim, institutions were inclusive, but during the reign of Augustus, when the authors claim that institutions lost their inclusiveness. Augustus carried out important reforms in order to stabilise the system controlled by the elites. The Pax Romana period encouraged the development of trade and paved the way for economic innovations thanks to the Roman Peace. Augustus' reforms in the tax collection system created a more efficient taxation mechanism and strengthened the economic structure of Rome. These reforms led to Rome's transition to a market-oriented economic model, which allowed Rome to continue its expansion with the resources that this model offered. These fundamental structural transformations also led to long-term changes in the political structure of the Roman Republic.

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