Section 2. Conservative-restorative policies and prosthetics in ancient Rome

Origins of the ancient master drama in Rome

Rome's ancient master drama unfolded in two major stages. In the early Roman Republic, much like in Greece, small farmers, who were still free citizens and soldiers of the Roman armies, were displaced by large patricians from their farmer positions if they were hit by some unfortunate accident, such as lasting bad weather and several bad harvests. As even the early military campaigns of Rome lasted longer than in Greece, farmers often also had to take on debt and defaulted on it because of their extended absence. For the same reason, the death of soldiers in war was more frequent than in Greece. The second stage followed after the massive inflow of slave labor after the Punic and Macedonian wars in and after the 2nd century BC; this rendered plantations with slaves so profitable that it ignited a new hunger for land.[95]

In its early beginnings, when Rome was still a small town, Servius Tullius, the 6th Roman King (died 543 BC) allegedly erased a part of the plebeian debt and gave previously state-owned land to the poor.[96] In 494 BC, the *secessio plebis* followed which was a mythical withdrawal of the Roman plebs to a holy mountain (mons sacer), much like a general strike, to bolster demands for debt release.[97] The Twelve Tables Code was enacted in 450 as a result of these so-called "condition fights". It restricted archaic rights of patrician creditors to execute against the plebian debtors. Debtors were now granted 30 days to honor the debt and could then, and only then, be carried to the creditor's house by *manus iniectio*, and fettered "in iron chains of no less than 15 pounds for 60 days". The creditor had to feed the debtor and had to present him publicly on three consecutive market days; he was then permitted to sell him *trans Tiberim* or to kill him.[98] There was also debt slavery in which the debtor had to work for the creditor, called *nexus*. Around 120 years later, the *lex Poetelia Papiria des nexis* from 326 BC did away with the iron chains and private prison for debtors.[99]

Francesco de Martino mentions the proposal of a field law by Spurius Cassius in the 5th century BC and that there had been twenty-two further field laws between

95 When the "making" of new slaves, following the Roman empire's expansion, had dried up, great landowners discovered a new interest in keeping local peasant on their fields by turning them into dependent colons (colonati, coloni). This practice, which took place during the final centuries of the Roman empire, predated feudalism and at least granted some income opportunities to the *colons*. Our account of the Roman ancient master drama will end with the colons.

96 *Hegel* (1986) page 360.

97 *De Martino* (1991) page 45.

98 *De Martino* (1991) page 45, 46.

99 *De Martino* (1991) page 47, 48.

486 and 367 BC. He also reports that tribune Potelius unsuccessfully proposed to the consuls of the year 441 BC to examine advantages of distributing fields to the people. Apparently, the conquest of Veji by Rome in 396 BC led to the distribution of some conquered land, which relaxed the situation for a time.[100]

The Lex Licinia Sexta agraria

In 387 BC, Licinius enacted the famous *Lex Licinia Sexta agraria*; this limited the general size of land that could be owned by anybody to 500 jugera and forbade pastures with over 100 large livestock and 500 small livestock on the *ager publicus*.[101] The *Lex Licinia Sexta agraria* also had the option of land assignations. Yet it appears that nobody was willing or powerful enough to at least enforce the limitations of land possession or to implement land assignments.[102] At least the early Roman expansion within Italy generated some new farmer positions, after conquered land was distributed to soldiers, which mitigated the problem again. "Thus", writes Mommsen, "the war, which the money economy had waged on the peasantry over centuries, which was to end first with the ruin of the peasantry and then of the whole community, was discontinued without proper decision because of lucky wars and the huge and magnificent domanial distribution rendered possible thereby."[103]

Wars and plantations

After the Roman victory in the 2nd Punic War in 201 BC things worsened for the small peasantry. Expansive wars fought previously had been short, required an only a limited number of free peasants-soldiers, and had produced only a few slaves. This changed. The more the theaters of war lay remoter from Rome and outside of Italy, the more wars lasted longer, required a greater number of peasants-soldiers and, worse, after victorious wars Romans would turn inhabitants of conquered regions into slaves and use them in plantations as slave laborers.[104] Gigantic plantations, particularly in Sicily, Campania, and North Africa were opened. This ignited a novel motive for land appropriations back home. "With the help of slaves", de Martino

100 *De Martino* (1991) page 28–31, 40.

101 De *Martino* (1991) page 43–45.

102 Instead, we have reports once again that when Roman soldiers were away in Rome's subjugation wars, patricians, quite unpatriotically, used the opportunity to illegally occupy their land or to purchase it (*De Martino* (1991) page 131.)

103 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 82, translation by the author.

104 *De Martino* (1991) page 93, 99. In the 2nd century, the military campaigns of Marius, Sulla, Lucullus and Pompeius, specifically in the Eastern Meditaranean, supplied a great number of slaves that apparently added up between one million and three million in the 1st century BC.

writes, "the property owners worked the land from which they had displaced Roman citizens."[105] Equally imported slave corn outcompeted corn made by free Roman farmers. As Mommsen puts it, "now the small farmer was crushed by the overseas corn, in particular by the slaves' corn." Apart from the lower price of slave corn, slaves were not drafted into the army and slave production was, thus, steadier.[106] By the same token, the Roman Republic's expansion created a larger market for agrarian produce and a trade system consisting of latifundia with slave labor and employment-generating spending from the City of Rome and Roman armies was born. This system functioned for centuries. Most of the small independent peasants that had survived all previous distress, were finished off now. With it, the SPQR's original social foundation was dissolved.

Contrary to Greece, the conservative-restorative reaction to the ancient master drama in Rome consisted hardly in efforts to restitute the individual plots to the farmers who had lost them. Conservative-restorative attempts to protect the small peasanty rather primarily focused either on creating new farmer positions in conquered territories abroad or to distribute state-owned domanial land in Italy. State-owned domanial lands, mainly in Italy, were always mostly or wholly *de facto* occupied by the nobility or the *equites*, even though it was officially owned by the Republic[107] and popular demands for the distribution of this land to small peasants, became the central topic in the revolutionary years from 133 to Gaius Julius Caesar in 45 BC.

Tiberius Gracchus

The late Roman Republic's most famous upheaval was the attempted, and partially executed, reform by the Gracchi brothers, who descended from one of the finest Roman families. *Tiberius Gracchus* made a first effort in 133 BC, and, after he had been killed, his younger brother *Gaius Gracchus* followed in 123, – to be ultimately also killed. immediately after having become tribune, *Tiberius Gracchus*, proposed a field law, which largely consisted in a renewal of the *Lex Licinia Sexta agraria* of 387 BC (which had, as we saw, not been implemented). His proposal, once more, solely addressed state-owned domanial land. Truly private property, thus, remained wholly unaffected and the reform essentially only aimed at ending the unofficial occupation of state land by latifundia owners, without paying rent. The reform, accordingly, was quite far removed from a full-on attack on the private property of the landed nobility or landed equites as such. As Tiberius Gracchus foresaw that farmer, if they were given land as wholly free private property, would quickly lose it to grandees

105 *De Martino* (1991) page 131, translation by author.

106 *De Martino* (1991) page 122, 131.

107 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 89 et seq.

who would purchase it from them in the next crisis, he only assigned it as an *inalienable hereditary leasehold*. This was an important modification of the ancient *Lex Licinia Sexta agrarian*.

Secondly, Tiberius Gracchus deviated from prior bottom-down reform attempts insofar as he acted aggressively in a pre-emptive way. He knew that the ordinary government and administration would not implement the reform and managed to create a special executive and administrative body for this purpose, a commission of three men, who were loyal to the program and pushed through the actual land redistributions.[108] He also anticipated, as limited as his proposal was,[109] the nobility to oppose it very powerfully. Quite interestingly, this opposition also took the form of the second tribune of the plebs, *Marcus Octavius*, the colleague of Tiberius Gracchus as, using his *ius intercessionis* to block the reform proposal from being voted on in the people's assembly. Tiberius Gracchus took a very aggressive approach once more. A tribune of the plebs that acts against the plebs, he argued, forfeits its position. He thus applied to the people's assembly to remove Marcus Octavius from the bench of the tribunes. The people cheered and applauded, the motion found a majority, and was passed. Only by means of an open and rather clear breach of the Roman constitution could the reform, thus, advance. The radicality, by which Tiberius Gracchus moved on was regarded as a declaration of war by the latifundia owners and he thereafter always feared for his life, writes Mommsen, and only appeared in public with 3,000 or 4,000 followers. He sought to further strengthen his position with the plebs by proposing other laws in their favor, e.g., distributing the heritage of the king of Pergamon (which had fallen upon the state of Rome) to the new landowners to purchase equipment and tools. He also sought to have his office as tribune extended for another year, a second breach of the Roman constitution, as a preventive defense. This was undertaken to no avail. Noblemen killed him and three hundred of his supporters with wooden staves and threw their bodies into the Tiber River.[110]

Interestingly, even after the bloodbath and although the enacted law had been passed in clear violation of the Roman constitution, Tiberius' law itself was neither expressly set aside nor treated as null and void. On the contrary, the senate actually instructed the redistribution commission to begin its work. The result was impressive. 80,000 new farmer positions or new farms were created, the father of the law's death notwithstanding.[111]

108 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 95 et seq.

109 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 100.

110 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 98, 99.

111 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 109, 110.

Gaius Gracchus

Tiberius' younger brother Gaius, who was lucky not to have been killed in the slaughter of his brother, became tribune in 123 BC. He filled his brother's shoes and initiated colonization projects in Tarent, Capua, and in former Cartago, creating 6,000 peasant positions in Cartago alone. Foreseeing that he needed popular support, he granted new rights to Roman citizenship, on condition that the new Roman citizens personally appear in Rome – with they being attracted to Rome through the possibility to purchase corn at rock-bottom-prices. This founded not only the tradition of massive corn distributions in Rome,[112] but also the technique of luring voters into the city with financial promises. The senate responded brutally. After a new people's tribune was elected on 1 January 121 BC, the senate outweighed the head of Gaius Gracchus in gold to whoever would deliver it. 250 of his supporters were slain, his slave killed him, the gold reward was properly paid out, and his body was thrown in the Tiber River, same as his brother's. 3,000 of his supporters were later also prosecuted and hanged.[113] Twenty years of restoration followed. Gaius Gracchus' colonization projects in Capua and Cartago were discontinued. A similar project was initiated in Narbo, at least. Still, as Mommsen writes, "peasant's positions disappeared as rain drops in the sea".[114]

Slave riots, uprisings, and real slave wars broke out on slave plantations. The first Sicilian slave war lasted from 136 to 133 BC; others occurred between 104 and 101 BC. The third wave with the most famous slave war of all, led by Spartacus, came about between 78 and 71 BC. These uprisings attracted colorful and weird figures as their leaders. One such uprising was led by an overindebted *equite* who had declared himself "king" of his liberated slaves. In another rebellion, its Syrian leader, the slave Salvius, was appointed to "king Tryphon"[115] A third chief of a slave rebellion was called "Antiochos, King of Syria".[116] Slave armies sometimes had up to 70,000 soldiers, and when they were defeated, the slaves were all killed. Such was the case when Spartacus was defeated, 6,000 slaves were crucified at the via Appia in 71 BC.[117]

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112 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 109, 114. The main means to finance the corn distributions – according to *Mommsen* volume 3, page 240, the costs were significant – was a new heavy taxation in the province of Asia. The right to collect these taxes was rented out to the *equites* and the right to select the jurors for the jury courts, who were in charge of controlling abuses of these rented-out right was also assigned to them (volume 3 page 120. 121, 125). A big loss for Asia financed a big win for the *equites*, proletarians, and for Gaius Gracchus.

113 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 129–132.

114 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 126, 142, 143.

115 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 142, 145, 147.

116 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 87.

117 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 87, volume 4 page 92.

Marius and Saturninus

The ancient master drama, which was not about slaves but about land losses of free peasants, did not pause either. After *Gaius Marius* won the war against the Cimbri at Aquae Sextae and Vercellae in 101, and after he had been consul for an unprecedented 6 years – another clear breach of the Roman constitution, of which now many more were to follow –, Marius joined forces with *Lucius Appulieius Saturninus*, who was a people's tribune and they undertook another attempt of an agrarian reform. A law was proposed under which Marius' former soldiers were to be given land (promised by Marius previously) and under which the general redistribution of land in Cartago, as had already been planned by Gaius Gracchus, was to recommence. The land, which Marius himself had won from the defeated Cimbri, was also to be distributed. The proposal went on to provide that the temple treasures of Tolosa should be used to finance fixtures and tools for the recipients of the land distributions. *Marius* himself was to manage these, as *Mommsen* puts it, "enormous conquest and distribution plans", for which he would have to become "monarch of Rome for the time of his life".[118] As a complementary measure, *Marius* and *Saturninus both* reduced the prices for the corn "sold" to poor citizens to such an extent that the prices became merely symbolic.[119]

The nobility, yet, somehow succeeded to antagonize Marius and Saturninus and when Saturninus' supporters resorted to physical violence and the senate asked Marius, still being consul, to intervene against old his ally militarily, he did so. On 10 December 100 BC the first battle between Romans since Rome's foundation was fought in Rome. The Populares were defeated on the market and Saturninus and his closest allies were taken prisoner and arrested. While Marius probably contemplated how to save his ally and how they might go on with their joint project, the nobility's youth pre-empted him. They climbed the roof of the building in which Saturninus and his followers were arrested, unroofed the bricks and stoned Saturninus and his followers to death. This was the end of that attempt at reform.[120]

Marcus Livius Drusus

The next example of a land reformer was *Marcus Livius Drusus*, a man of colossal wealth indeed and with a firm commitment to the cause of the oligarchy.[121] He became people's tribune in 91 BC and proposed a law that once more aimed at rebuilding of a strong small peasantry by distributing state-owned lands in Campania and

118 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 211, 212.
119 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 211, 213.
120 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 211, 217, 218.
121 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3, page 223 et seq.

Sicily. Much like others before him, he sought support through the votes of the general Roman poor (including those who would not have wanted to work in fields) by further increasing corn distributions.[122] His law also suggested restituting juror positions to the *nobiles*, to the detriment of the *equites*,[123] which comprised an attempt to lure parts of the oligarchy into his coalition. Yet, the Roman constitution forbade such clever maneuvers and this time the unconstitutional law was quickly repealed. Nevertheless, he was murdered like the Gracchus brothers and Saturninus before him.[124] The efforts of yet another far-sighted member of the oligarchy who wanted to halt the undermining of the Roman peasantry ended with his death.[125]

Publius Sulpicius Rufus

We now enter the times of Sulla and Cinna, leading up to Pompey and Caesar, the end of the republic and of the beginning of the Roman empire. Free peasants had largely disappeared, rather completely in Etruria and Umbria; only some were still existent, e.g., in the valleys of the Abruzzees,[126] when *Publius Sulpicius Rufus* came up with reform projects in the first century BC. After the destinies of the Gracchi, Saturninus and Drusus he sought to protect himself militarily from the outset and for this aim he reactivated, once again, the now-old-but-still-great *Gaius Marius*. Publius Sulpicius Rufus had a people's resolution passed that assigned command for the upcoming Asiatic war with Mithridates to Marius. The resolution also included a request to Sulla to hand over his six legions of 35,000 soldiers to Marius. Two tribunes were sent to Sulla's army camp with this instruction in hand, yet Sulla had them, as *Mommsen* puts it, "torn into pieces". Sulla then marched on Rome to breach the city's peace. Marius was unable to resist militarily and so Sulla took power, decapitated Publius Sulpicius Rufus, and exposed his head atop the market's speaker's stage. Rome remained a bad place for noble social reformers. Marius was also taken to prison and he was even supposed to be murdered. Yet, the German slave, who had the job to do, so the saying goes, collapsed when he saw into the eyes of the famous war hero of Aquae Sextae and Vercellae, and Marius used that moment to escape.[127]

122 They were financed by money creation through the emissions of copper-clad dinars.

123 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 224.

124 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 220, 226.

125 There were also a number of reformers who were atrociously killed, in China, e.g., the Emperor *Wang Mang* (9–23 AD). See *Vogelsang* (2013) page 169.

126 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 229, 238.

127 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 264–268.

Cinna

Mission completed, Sulla himself took his army to Asia in 87 BC to fight Mithridates. His temporary absence, yet, opened the door for another reformer, *Lucius Cornelius Cinna*. Cinna became consul and proposed a law to reverse Sulla's restauration. Both parties, in wise foresight, appeared armed at the voting place on the day of the voting on the proposal and Cinna's co-consul, Octavius, interceded against Cinna's proposal. The situation escalated and arms were put to use; the market ran red with blood and the oligarchy's party killed 10,000 democrats. The event was later called "*Octavius-day*". Cinna escaped, though, and reactivated Gaius Marius again, now for a third time. While Sulla was away, Marius raised an army, once again took Rome, and set up a democratic terror regime. The consecutive killing by the democrats lasted five days and nights and included all of the senate party's leaders. It was now the democrats' turn to expose the oligarchy's decapitated heads on the market's speaker's stage. Marius even became consul for the seventh time and Cinna remained consul for four years, up until 84 BC. The democratic regime also restored the Gracchi brothers' old colonization and land distribution project in Capua and granted debt releases (by $\frac{3}{4}$ of the nominal amounts).[128] Yet, the emphasized reprisals from the Gracchi brothers' programs notwithstanding, the situation had totally changed. Agrarian reform proposals, like corn distribution, were no more than a calculated move in a civil war between army commanders (might we say warlords?), demagogues, and other modern-style politicians seeking mass support for their power aspirations.

Irrespective of their ecstasy, the democratic party was always aware that Sulla could soon return from Asia with a strong, victorious army. And return Sulla did; he marched on Rome a second time and once again defeated the defendants in the "Battle of the Colline Gate" (of Rome) in 82 BC. This put an end to democratic rule. Cinna himself had already been killed in a mutiny by his soldiers previously. Marius had preferred to die a natural death prior to Sulla's return; all that Sulla could do was to exhume Marius' corpse and throw it into Arno River. Sulla now ignited a period of terror by the oligarchic party, with Sulla's proscriptions becoming famous. Sulla still even made some land distributions, mostly to his retired soldiers; but the times at which free farmers had been the basis of the Roman republic and its war machine had long gone. This dynamic was broken for good; because Sulla's army's mercenaries had no land of their own, they had joined the army and the share of the booty that they received afterwards bore only superficial resemblance to previous reform attempts. In fact, ex-soldiers who received land assignments after their service could no longer use it because they no longer knew how to work land. They either sold it or rented it out.

128 *Mommsen* (1976) volume 3 page 316–327.

The end of the republic

The republic ended and Rome moved towards Principate and Dominate. Some emperors made assignments of land thereafter, but battles over land reforms no longer appear to have become significant throughout the empire's history. The military success of the Roman empire's further expansion probably enabled it to feed its soldiers and *proletarii*, and if it did not then there was at least no way for them to become farmers once again. Yet, just as the Roman economy now largely depended on a slave-based agriculture, it also depended on a continued influx of new slaves, which necessitated ongoing new conquests. *Stability, thus, required steady expansion*. Yet, the circumference of the Roman empire had become too stretched after it had made the Mediterranean a *mare nostrum* and reached Spain, France, Britain, Germany, Odessa, Greece, Turkey, Persia and even Egypt and North Africa. Now geometry became its destiny. The empire's borders and its connecting lines had become longer and longer, indefensible ultimately, and the Roman expansion came to an almost natural end (much like biological organisms cannot grow limitless in size). Consequentially, the influx of slave labor stopped, leading to what was to be called the crisis of the 3rd century AD. The crisis undermined the slave-based Roman economy. Not only the foreign people who, thus, avoided to be enslaved profited, but also the Romans themselves: Free labor (at least freer than slave labor) was in demand again. The leasing of land (*locatio conductio rei)* by latifundia-owners to peasants had been known since the middle Republic, but it had only been occasionally practiced. Now working leased land by "colons" (*coloni, colonati*) moved up to become the dominant form of agrarian production. *Cicero* mentions *colons* for the first time in a speech in 69 or 68 BC, but *colons* were already as important or more important than slaves in the 2nd century AD.[129] Initially, they were seemingly free men, which, though, began to change in the 4th century AD. Their relative power had obviously weakened once again.[130] The ancient social master drama had obviously been transformed into a semi-feudal structure, and prosthetic spending played no major role at that time.

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129 *Johne* (1994) page 5.

130 Colons could no longer terminate lease agreements, were bound to the land as were their children, and could even be sold with the land. They needed their landlord's consent to marry and concerning certain legal transactions and their procedural rights were restricted. In the Codex Justinianus 11, 52, 1 they were described as free men, but slaves to the ground on which they were born "...licet condicione videantur ingenui, servi tamen terrae ipsius cui nati sunt aestimentur" (quoted after Johne page 8). Their position worsened further to such a degree that emperor *Justinian* asked wherein the difference between a slave and a *colonatus* would consist of in 530 AD, see Codex Justinianus 11, 48, 21 (quoted after Johne page 8). Indebtedness, as always, played a role in this demotion (*Savigny* (1822) 1–26).

As a summary: The social master drama consisted in free farmers of antiquity losing their land to the nobility, or to other latifundists at a large scale. A segregation between owners and non-owners resulted therefrom in ancient Greece and ancient Rome. We have examined attempts to maintain the small peasantry as a social base, first by trying to secure the individual land for them, where their families had often worked for generations and second by assignments of new lots of conquered land to army veterans, to displaced farmers or to other poor people. Ultimately, both types of conservative-restorative policies, which were quite often or mostly initiated by members of the nobility or by other wealth owners, were typically thwarted by their classmates. A great many ex-farmers were, thus, demoted to the ranks of *proletarii* and were propelled forward, in fact, already into the social master drama of modern capitalism, and now depended on being employed by firms or became reliant upon transfer payments. At this juncture, at least the polis of Athens and the Roman empire that were both holding imperial positions were able mitigate the fate of their own demoted peasants by extending significant prosthetic employment-generating spending. Prosthetic employment-generating spending to firms consisted of purchasing weapons, carriages, and boats, thereby leading to employment in either manufactures, workshops, or shipyards or in the construction of representative architecture or events, such as festivities and circuses. In Rome, private luxury, e.g., countryside or city villas with fancy baths, heating, and water systems and mosaics also played a material role. The less free farmer-soldiers there were, the more the sons of former farmers at least, could find jobs as mercenaries. There were also many paid public offices in Athens (the true purpose of which were transfer payments, not the services actually rendered) and corn distributions in Rome. All substitute income options for displaced farmers, yet, except for the lucky discovery of a new streak in a silver mine in Laurium by Athens, depended upon the possibilities of a successful imperial robber-state and were no generally available means to deal with the ancient master drama. Ultimately, external violence mostly financed prosthetics in one way or another, even in the erection of the Acropolis or the Pantheon. Money creation existed only as uncontrollable finding and mining of gold or silver, as robbing it, or as debasing commodity money, which one occasionally crossed the border into fiat money in Greece and Rome and became no relevant source of financing in the aggregate. Hence, if control over the subjugated prosthetics financiers was lost, then the society would internally get into great stress and the social order might collapse. Dependency on the subjugation of others was prosthetics' first dilemma in antiquity; the absence of controllable larger-scale money creation was the second.

Nothing of what Solon or Roman social reformers asked for essentially contradicted the economic and political rule of the Greek or Roman nobility as such. Never had the reformers demanded a socialist utopia, the ending private agrarian land ownership or only the expropriation of a significant part of the existing *latifundia*. But limiting *latifundia* growth, or giving parts of domanial state land to small farm-

ers, was already too much for the narrow-minded nobility. One could, thus, argue that the fights between reformers and anti-reformers were actually battles between short-sightedness and long-termism or between individual class members' greed and the ruling class's general interest. Or one could argue that the ruling classes of Greece and Rome were enchained by the prisoners' dilemma (where a single player, by allowing space for their particular interest, works towards the ruination of his class). States, even as small as Athens, or as large as Rome, with a large sector of goods procurement by violence would do better not to eliminate those who did most of the physical robbing. Accordingly, one might surmise that it was a fault of the Greece nobility not to pay heed to Solon and the likes and Rome should have listened more to its Cassius, Potelius, Licinius, the Gracchi, Drusus, Rufus, Saturninus, or even to Cinna. One may also doubt this consideration and ask: Could Rome at all have become Rome, including the stretched and over-stretched empire, with an army of only farmer-soldiers and a rather egalitarian society? Did not a similar attempt fail in Sparta? Did not Alexander the Great triumph with a project that more closely resembled Rome? These questions are outside of the scope of this book. From antiquity we return to modernity and to the modern master drama.

Section 3. China: A glance at 2000 years of East-Eurasian ancient master drama

Constituents of the ancient master drama in China

No other country has a history as long and coherent and with a size and mass like China. It is as if Rome had remained a unified world empire from the Punic wars to today, yet at several times its historic extension and population. Still, in the West, Chinese history has remained a field of interest for a small group of specialists, mostly sinologists, only, and is normally not exploited for general theoretical endeavors. The author had the intention to break that pattern. After he had worked out major lines of the ancient master drama in Western Eurasia, he wanted to spend some time in China to examine its ancient master drama more length. This original intention fell victim to the travel restrictions in the Corona pandemic and to the increasing awareness of the author that an account written by someone not capable of reading Chinese would have to remain of limited value. Therefore, the original intent shrunk to a short glance at the Chinese ancient master drama. Here are the insights:

First, readers of books on Chinese history are stricken with the observation that the ancient master drama is significantly more present and explicit there than in historic writing on Western Eurasia. Rural property relations, the de-facto or de-jure land-owning by a small peasantry, or its loss of the land to "engrossing" latifundia