The change in upper-class women's social status between the end of the Roman Republic and the beginning of the Roman Empire

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Abstract. The paper focuses on the history of suffragists at the end of the Roman Republic and the beginning of the Roman Empire. As the wave of supporting equal female rights in the modern world is becoming increasingly popular, this research will help explain women's fighting history for their rights, especially during the political shock period. It would also let us see how the pioneer of female freedom began with the long road. The upper-class Roman women used different ways to get more political and economic rights in front of the patriarchal society. The development in female rights also pushed the status of women onto a higher level in Roman Empire, both in political areas and daily life. However, due to the limitation of the era and lack of support from the mass, no significant success was achieved. Though the women at that time failed to take a completely equal position with men, they still built up the base of modern suffragists.

Keywords: Women politicians; Roman Republic; Roman Empire; Suffragist history.

1. Introduction

The Roman Republic started in the Apennines Peninsula. And its culture was deeply affected by the culture around it, like Etruscan or Egypt. From conquering large areas of land, the requirement of Roman women also changed from time to time. And instead of staying at home and being like a servant to the family, the women in the upper class also found chances to participate in different aspects of society and got power from political ways. In this process, some basic fighting ways for female rights were born and are still used in the modern world.

2. The women at the end of the Roman Republic

2.1 Summary of the Requirements for women in the Roman tradition

The culture of Rome was strongly affected by surrounding states and tribes. For women's morality, Roman absorbed Etruscan's tradition in conquering Etruscan. Etruscan people respected women and allowed women to have proper entertainment activities.

However, during this period, Roman required women to be responsible mothers in a perfect family and do housework single-mindedly. In addition, Roman people let women believe they should remain loyal to their husbands and family members. From the age of kingship to the Republic, Roman society thought that women only needed to play the role of a good wife and mother in the family role in the family, preferably to be silent and virtuous, and even "If their husbands were not around. They are not allowed to express their opinions even on the most important matters if their husbands are not around." [1] Also, in the case of Cratylus, the requirement for women is shown more directly. During a foreign expedition, Tarkvin's sons, Sextus and Cratylus, were talking about how, when they were away, how their respective wives behaved and betted on it. These men rode to Rome at dark and found the king's wives. Rome, and found the king's wives feasting and reveling. At this point, they nine kilometers to the house of Cratylus, and when they arrived at Cratylus' house, they found his wife, Lucretius. When they arrived at the home of Cratylus, they discovered that his wife Lucretia was not sleeping but was busy with her maid in the place. So Cratylus won the admiration of all those

present [2]. This story clearly shows that women's status in Rome is like a maid in the house instead of a citizen who needs entertainment, friends, or other higher social demands.

For those women who didn't marry, their lives were even worse. Their marriage was decided before they became adults and entirely controlled by their parents. Since the wedding didn't need permission from people who married together, and in politicians' eyes, their daughters were just tools to get support from allies. Caesar's daughter had a marriage contract in 59B.C. with Keipio, but to get help from Pompey, Caesar just canceled the contract and set up another without a single word from his daughter [3]. And at the end of the Republic, these women started to affect the whole upper class through their roles.

2.2 The role of upper-class women in the society of the Republic

The conspiracy of Cateline was one of the examples of women taking part in politics. Cateline won the support of women who gained money by prostitution and decided to use their slaves to set fire to the city and kill their husbands so they could have more freedom on their wealth and pay back their debts. One of the women, Sempronia, who was highly educated, could write poems, read articles, and do other artistic activities. But to get rid of the high debts on her back, she betrayed her modesty and attended to a murder case [4]. This woman was written down because these conspiracists gathered in her house to discuss plans. These women believed they wouldn't be punished since a woman couldn't be accused of gaining supreme power, unlike a man. But Cateline was punished by the court, and most women, in this case, weren't punished because even the court thought no woman could plan such a horrible future. It proved the discrimination of Roman people against females.

Another example of an important woman is the mother of Brutus, who killed Caesar, Servilia. Servilia was close to Caesar, focused her life on politics, and encouraged Brutus to attend politics. However, much of her time was spent extricating that accident-prone young man from predicaments rather than positively promoting his career. We have already noticed one example after Pharsalus, and another occurred earlier, in 59, when the informer tried to accuse Brutus in a case of planning to kill Pompey; the case was canceled overnight, and Servilia is believed to have persuaded Caesar, then consul, to get the informer to remove Brutus' name from the list of suspects. We do not know whether he confided in her as he did in Porcia. But she was still Brutus' mother, so putting her best face on it, she took control of the situation as much as she could [5]. The cause she then espoused was probably much closer to her own basic thoughts than any ideas she might have exchanged with Caesar. But at this time, women could still hide behind men and affect them instead of walking ahead and becoming a politician on their own.

Despite those women entering politics by their role in marriage, taking part in religious activity is another way for women to attend politics. When personal rights were just like an average male citizen in the society, Vista Virgin had the right to represent the will of god Vista, and with the power of Vista, they were believed to be pure and honest, so secret file storage was also their duty. Vista Virgin is a group of women who took guard of the holy fire in front of the temples. They are chosen at young ages, and when they are selected from more than 20 families, their fathers lose the right to control them. These girls needed to work for more than 30 years, including 10 years of studying, 10 years of guarding, and 10 years of teaching girls like themselves 20years ago. The power of Vista Virgin was almost close to some of the most influential people in a state. They had the right to pardon prisoners on death row and the priority to use roads since whoever met Vista Virgin on the road needed to get off to make Virgin pass. First, even the passengers were officers or wealthy merchants. They had wealth rights and made a will after the death of their father. They also did the job of government file management. These Virgins saved even the contract created by Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus.

But at the same time, with these powerful, these Virgins had many other discriminations faced, such as no sexual activity during the 30 years and never shut down the fire they guard. If they disobeyed these rules, they would be starved in a small room as punishment. Also, marrying a Vista Virgin seemed unfortunate in Roman society. So even though the law allowed them to match with

people after work, few people would like to form a family with them [6]. Though the virgins had an unfortunate fate, these ordinary women would only have a worse life model.

3. Life of upper-class women at the beginning of the Roman Empire

3.1 The change in law status and rights for upper-class women

In the Roman Republic, marriage was the so-called "Patriarchal Marriage," meaning that women were just a tool in the family that served the husbands and offspring. At this time, the right to choose marriage for women was not respected by fathers. But all changed in the Roman Empire. Cicero's daughter chose her lover to marry. Though Cicero didn't believe this marriage would last long, he still admitted the consequence instead of blaming his daughter and canceling the contract [7].

Also, at this time, permission for marriage by offspring is essential to confirm the contract. Still, the rights of parents to decide on marriage were limited and became optional. Especially in the date of Augusto, the power of parents was limited by law in the family. For example, in the Republic, the power of husband to wife was limited since wives couldn't enter their husbands' families. The guardian rights were still in their father's hand, and they would be buried in the graveyard of their born family after death. At this time, the fathers could order the daughter to divorce and come back home. But in the era of Augusto, this right was canceled. And to the second and third centuries, the patriarchate passed a law to give the mother the right to inherit and leave an inheritance to her offspring. These laws brought more possibilities for upper-class women to be independent and have a free life without strict control by husbands or parents.

Since the Romans conquered a large area of land from Republic to Empire, the demand for new blood in the army and different jobs became increasingly severe. Emperor Augusto used women's rights to make a deal to encourage the birth of new kids. He declared that if a woman was born with more than three kids in a family, the woman need not put her wealth under the guard of her husband. In contrast, she could deal with business or law problems independently without her husband or father [8].

This law brought some long effects. First, due to the widespread use of slaves, the family's will to born kids declined in the form of a centralized family. This law prevented the Roman population crisis since women were more willing to have kids and get their own chance to open a shop or other jobs to feed the family and the husbands. Also, the dowry tradition was prevalent at this time, and the value of dowry for wealthy people was relatively high. Cicero prepared more than one million Sestertius for his daughter's marriage. Making things more complex, Emperor Maximian declared that the father did not have the power to take dowry back from his daughter if she divorced. This means that every upper-class woman had a large amount of money to do whatever they wanted, making the family's economic rights more equal. Not only could husbands make money by working, but wives could also use their dowry to invest in land or start a small business in the local market. The breaking of prohibition between different classes also happened in the era of the Empire.

This law made class flow faster through marriage between nobles and ordinary people [9]. In addition, Poor nobles could marry their sons to wealthy merchants' daughters to improve their savings, and merchants could use the blood of nobles to increase their social status, which was a reasonable deal. For many other upper-class women, however, the Empire was a new era of finding more power and rights for females.

3.2 New role of upper-class women in the society

In Roman Empire, the wife of many rulers took part in government or even the army in front of the public. Part of the reason should be blamed for the frequent divorcement of emperors. From the divorce, only women who desired more power would come and compete for the seat of the queen. So these women began to manage the country by controlling the emperor or officers on beds. Augusto had married three times, and his last queen, Livia, helped Augusto in governing much. She openly attended the decision of succession to the throne and killed two sons of Augusto. The only kid who

luckily got rid of the hand of Livia was banished to a remote island so he would not threaten the seat of Tiberius. And after Tiberius became the emperor, he was annoyed by Livia because she was required to share the heart and power of the emperor with Tiberius only because she was his mother. To prevent being seen as controlled by Livia, Tiberius avoided long meetings with Livia, though he had to follow her advice at some moments. In addition, under the effort of Livia, the senate decided to add the name "the son of Livia" behind "the son of Augusto" in the name list of Tiberius, which made Tiberius angry. In front of the public, Livia also became popular. She commanded and encouraged people to put off the fire near the temple of Vestal like a true emperor.

At last, Tiberius even saw Livia as his enemy. Some people believed it was because Livia repeated to order Tiberius to appoint a man who got the citizen right as a judger, which was forbidden by law. Tiberius declared that he would only follow this requirement if Livia signed her name on the proving file written the forcing of Livia did this appointment instead of the emperor. And Livia found some letters written by Augusto and showed them to the public to prove Tiberius was selfish and stubborn. The event could explain why Tiberius resigned as the emperor [10].

Women not only affected politics as the role of mothers, but they could also be rulers' lovers and tell them rumors on the bed to change their thoughts or fight for the right of women to become a suffragist. Queen Messalina and Queen Agrippina were two examples of this kind of woman. Their difference was in the way they governed the country. Messalina was more erratic than Agrippina. Messalina affected emperor Claudius to judge a senator who betrayed Roman for the death penalty [11]. She even went to brothels to prostitute without pressure on the economy since the whole Roman Empire vault was behind her. She also set up a wedding with her boyfriend, leaving no idea to Claudius. And if the emperor's guard leader did not kill her, she might have been forgiven by the emperor and remained her life.

For Agrippina, things changed because she was more talented in politics than Messalina, and her requirement was simple---get more power. She governed the state well and showed in public a severe face, unlike Messalina. To make Nero the prince, she used whatever she could to let Claudius give up his son Brittanicus, and she succeeded in this complement. However, after Nero became the emperor, though Agrippina did everything, she failed to control Nero and was killed quickly. But whatever, she was the first woman sitting in front of the army flag of Roman. She even took the thank of pardoning prisoners with the emperor nearby. In political ways, she set up a soldier colony in her born province and named it her name to show her power. At different times, she was the emperor's sister, wife, and mother, which was the base of her ruling. Agrippina controlled Roman by marrying and having kids, but the most important thing was her political talents.

Roman Empire also watched the rise and failure of suffragist organizations. In 331B.C., more than 150 women were accused of using poison to kill their husbands and other essential things in Rome. And this event caused the first time in Roman law history to judge a group of people simultaneously. But this event also had a positive effect on the equality of law. In the past, family laws were used to judge women, but at this time, women proved they had the same ability as men and could use public law to believe them. This was a try to get more political rights for noble women, and though it failed due to recklessness, it showed women's braveness in fighting for their rights. Some peaceful women's activities also offered women political rights. Married women once elected a female governor in Anatolia. Women produced a poster and walked on the street to support one of the candidates as their city mayor [12].

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Roman Empire was more progressive than the Roman Republic regarding women's rights, but there were still many differences from the modern world. The development in female rights also pushed the status of women onto a higher level in Roman Empire. Though the women at that time failed to take a completely equal position with men, they still built up the base of modern suffragists. Noticeably, when the women rulers were running the government like Agrippina,

none of them ignored the possibility of an anarchy state in the enormous empire. The traditional male power was still large enough to cover the change and follow old times' customs even though there might be new legislation. Unfortunately, only egoists could attract enough attention from powerful men like judgers or the emperors and get power in bed. And none of the egoists dare to make their husbands pass significant changes to women's status, such as allowing women to attend government clients' work.

These activities of upper-class women with violent fights for more political power, such as the husband poisoning case, did complete some targets on the road of women's rights. The dowry from the wife's family was divided into three parts, one for the wife as personal wealth. Also, the Maximian Emperor used women's rights to exchange newborn children. It was an example of the upper class's powerful artificial compromise with the whole women group.

However, all these laws were designed for upper-class women; part of the reason was average women never fought for their rights in history. This was another reason why the movement failed for upper-class women. Whatever noble women did was still on a small scale, and nobody cared about the significant need of ordinary women. Social work for women to do was limited at that time. Male workers and enslaved people from foreign countries were typical at that time. With the husband working outside, a whole family could be fed, and society did not need women to play any extra roles. The unique part of upper-class women came from their status and demand, which differed from ordinary people.

This study combines the history of the development history for upper-class women in the Roman Republic and Empire, which benefits the female rights movement leaders today. And modern women should learn from the spirit of Ancient Roman women to fight for their proper rights. However, the research now still has some disadvantages. The information about women in ancient times was still lacking though some books were published. But as I say, future studies should focus more on ordinary women because they are the basement of every country. No country was based on a small group of noble or powerful people without the support of low-class people.

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