

The rise and fall of rome's culture



The Roman culture grew with the rise of the Roman Empire. As the Roman Empire grew and extended its boundaries, it influenced many people in all the regions that the Romans conquered. The Roman Empire expanded from a small city to become one of the most extensive regions and powerful empires in the world. Since its recognized early beginnings in the eighth century BCE, kings ruled the city of Rome for more than two centuries. Republican Rome began sometime from 509-31BCE. During this time, the city developed democratic governance. It was during this time that Rome began to conquer the surrounding regions in Europe and then progressed to capture other regions in Asia and Africa. The occupation of these regions marked a beginning for the Roman civilization, and it enabled the Romans to spread their culture to the areas where they ruled. Imperial Rome began after the end of the Republican Rome after the reign of the emperor had been introduced (Cunningham and Reich 87). The location of the city enabled it to further expand. The Romans could access the sea easily, making it one of the most important destinations for travelers. Cities were important in ancient Rome because they helped in the spread of the Roman culture. More people lived in the cities compared to the rural areas. The cities were centers of civilization in the Roman world and the high population favored the spread of the Roman culture. The people in the conquered lands adopted the Roman culture easily and quickly, but they also maintained different elements of their own cultures.

The Roman culture influenced people of different countries and traditions. The Romans had the ability to absorb different cultures and integrate them with their own, especially when they recognized the superior nature of that

culture. Thus, they came to admire the Greek culture, so they borrowed some pieces of it and blended it with their own culture. The Etruscan culture had a great influence on the Romans. After the Etruscans had captured Rome and mixed with the Romans, the latter assimilated the culture of the Etruscans in different ways. The Etruscans had developed places of worship, like temples and shrines, and infrastructure, like roads. They also introduced public games, e. g., chariot racing. They even influenced the Roman fashion by introducing the toga. The Romans learned many things by interacting with the Etruscans. When they drove the Etruscans away from their land, the Romans kept the culture and other technology that they had learned from the enemy and they advanced them in their own way (Cunningham and Reich 88). The Romans also copied the cultural elements of the Greeks. They admired the Greeks because of their intellect and art. The Greeks had colonized part of Italy, and the Romans got a chance to interact with them, once they defeated the Etruscans and settled there.

Many people were willing to adopt the Roman culture. This was especially the case with the elite members of the different societies in the regions that the Roman army conquered. The elite and rich members of the society wanted to associate with the powerful empire, and they were usually the first ones to adopt the culture of the Romans. They were especially impressed with the technologies and advancement of the Romans, including the Roman system of governance. The Romans, on the other hand, were willing to let the non-Romans adopt their cultures. They had copied different cultural elements, especially that of the Greeks, and they helped to advance this culture to various regions. Many poor people in the regions the Romans had

captured wanted to hold on to their traditions. They were often the last to adopt the culture of the Romans. Although they did agree to adopt this culture, they often maintained their traditional culture by learning how to integrate the two different cultures.

The Romans knew and understood the importance of urbanization, so they created urban settings. They developed facilities that would make the cities livable and enjoyable. Their development of aqueducts was especially important and significant to the people. It ensured that all the people living within Rome had access to water. The Roman cities were the center of cultural, social, and legal life. They contained many amenities and facilities including amphitheaters, theaters, temples, and baths. They acted as centers of entertainment for the people. The people performed Greek and Latin plays in the cities. The cities held different contests, such as chariot racing and gladiatorial combats. The baths were some of the most important features in cities. The bathing process was intensive, as it involved different stages. This included the application of warm oil on the skin, the steaming and scraping of the body in the steam room, and a bath in the swimming pool. The baths acted as therapeutic centers, and the concept continues today (Ermafinger 20).

The Romans used the Latin language, and they spread their language to various places. They used classical Latin in different forms of writing, but the ordinary people spoke a different form of Latin. The language was common among ordinary people, especially in the Western side of the Empire. Latin was the administrative language of the empire, so many of the elite used it. The use of the language was important in maintaining stability and ensuring

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development of trade. The Latin language developed into different forms in different countries. For example, it developed into the Romance languages such as Italian, French, Spanish, and Portuguese (Bulliet et al. 157). The Romans understood the importance of stability, and they did not force their ideals on people. This enabled the locals to maintain their culture, while at the same time copying some of the cultural elements of the Romans, which they admired. For instance, many people wore the toga, which was a cultural dress of the Romans. There was no single religion in the Empire because of many traditions and different people living there. People had a different view on religion, as they did not use it to describe a belief system, as is the case today. The Romans had copied the religion of the Greek culture, although they had modified it to suit their traditions. The Romans depended on Greek myths, and they used them as a basis for their religion (Huskinson 254). For example, they coined the Roman names for different Greek gods. When the Empire expanded, the Romans did not enforce their religious beliefs on other peoples.

One of the greatest influences of the Roman culture was the Roman law. The Romans developed the Law of the Twelve Tables, and as time went by, they saw the need to revise the law to make it more relevant and less confusing for the people. A huge part of that law has become a model law for many countries today. The law was popular among many people because the lawmakers made it good and fair. Moreover, although the Romans developed the law, different people in the conquered land were able to adapt it to suit their conditions. This enabled the law to progress, and remained continuously relevant. The Romans were also able to influence the political

governments of different regions. This influence continues today, especially in federal government, where there is separation of the federal and state governments.

The Roman Empire had both good and bad leaders. Some of the leaders were wise and they knew how to run the extensive empire. Other leaders were not so knowledgeable about ruling, so they ended up dividing the empire and causing disunity among the people. The fall of the Roman Empire was a beginning of the end of Roman culture. This is because there were no longer people dedicated to advancing it. Most of the soldiers recruited in the war did not pledge allegiance to Rome because they were not Romans, and their lack of patriotism meant that they were not willing to defend the Empire (Hingley 56). The Roman soldiers had been one of the most influential forces in spreading the Roman culture. They would build villas and cities in the conquered non-Roman regions, thus introducing Roman architecture to these regions. They would also impose the ideas and culture of the Romans on the local people. The people would adopt the Roman culture and use it to their best interest (Ermafinger 1-2).

Moving of the capital from the Western side of the Roman Empire to Byzantium contributed to the fall of the Empire. Rome was the center of power and it was where the emperor resided. The city of Byzantine was strategically located, and it survived after the death of Constantine.

However, much of the Western side of the Roman Empire was ruined. The Eastern side largely adopted the Greek culture. Its strategic location made it wealthy because of trade, and it was well located to defend itself. The Western side of the Empire retained most of the Roman culture. The cities in

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the Western side of the Empire were poor. They largely depended on agriculture, and years of poor farming practices and decades of war had contributed to the decline in land productivity. The rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire also contributed to the decline of Roman culture. Christianity condemned the actions of the Roman world, and so the practicing of Christianity meant the end to some of the Roman cultural practices (Ermafinger 6). Christians neither had the desire to fight in wars, nor did they worship the numerous gods of the Romans. This led to the end of the numerous temples in the city.

The Roman Empire was one of the most diverse and extensive empires in the world. It extended to different countries and established its influence in all its regions of operation. The Romans wanted many people to adopt their culture and they encouraged this by use of the military and by appealing to people in different ways. They did not force their culture on other peoples, nor did they demand that the local people abandon their culture. This appealed to many people, since they were able to take in the cultural elements of the Roman Empire that they liked, while at the same time maintaining their own culture. However, bad and poor leadership contributed to the fall of the Empire, and this led to the decline of the Roman culture in many regions. Despite the fall, some aspects of the Roman culture continue today.