

# The relationship between roman culture and those it absorbed essay sample

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Ancient Rome had an empire that covered most of Europe at one time and encompassed many different cultures, including the Celts, the Greeks and the Jews among others. Areas such as Morocco, Northern England and the Euphrates river were ruled over by the Romans at one time, and The Romans had to keep a balance between themselves and all these different peoples; if they imposed too much of their own beliefs and practices upon their new citizens, the empire would quickly dissolve under the strain of holding together so many rebelling nations.

To resolve this problem, the Romans developed a very simple solution; they began to incorporate aspects and elements of each different religion and society into their own. This was of great benefit to the Romans, firstly, it would pacify the population of the countries which they conquered; and secondly, they could take the best elements of each place and claim it as their own, showing themselves as the superior culture when in fact many facets of it were taken from other people who the Romans had simply absorbed. The Roman Empire 100AD Wikipedia (c) (1)

Many of Rome's greatest written works are either heavily influenced by, or directly copied from, myths or legends from other people and cultures. One of the most famous examples is Virgil's Aeneid, dedicated to the emperor Augustus, and telling the story of Aeneas, a Trojan fleeing from the destruction in his home city, who's destiny is to go on to found Rome. The story, which recounts Aeneas's many adventures on the way to founding Rome, clearly borrows its hero and original storyline from that of Homer's 'Iliad' and the sequel 'The Odyssey'.

The Iliad tells the semi-mythical story of the fall of Troy, Aeneas' home city, which was destroyed by the Greeks. Aeneas was said, in the story, to be a Trojan Lieutenant. Homer is considered to have written down the story of the Iliad, a story already part of Greek oral tradition, 720 BC, and the Odyssey (the sequel, which tells the struggles of Greek soldier Odysseus and also bears a striking resemblance to the Aeneid) 680 BC. The Aeneid, however, was written over 600 years later, between 27 BC and 19 BC.

It adapted the story of Aeneas and was, in effect, a piece of political propaganda glorifying the Roman republic and the Emperor Augustus, whom Aeneas was supposed to represent. Many of the 'Trojan' characters stayed the same, such as Aeneas and his father Anchises, and the fact that he was Venus' son. Aeneas' journey eventually led him to found Rome, and Aeneas was supposed to represent the emperor Augustus in the story. An excellent example of the 'propaganda' aspect of the story is where Anchises, Aeneas' father from the Iliad, is telling Aeneas of the future of Rome.

He says: 'Lo! Caesar and all the Julian/ Line, predestined to rise to the infinite spaces of heaven. / This, yea, this is the man, so often foretold to you in promise,/ Caesar Augustus, descended from God, who again shall a golden/ Age in Latium found. ' clearly, this was not the tone and aim of Homer's original tale, in which Aeneas, though a hero, was still a minor character compared to many of the others. Roman medicine was heavily influenced by many other cultures, particularly the Greek one.

Ancient Greece was highly advanced in medicine: they originally came up with the idea of the four humours and many of their cures were based on scientific principles that are still used today, and their ethical approach to medicine has again been adapted and is much the same today as it was 2000 years ago, when the Romans first adopted it.

To consider dear to me as my parents him who taught me this art; to live in common with him and if necessary to share my goods with him; To look upon his children as my own brothers, to teach them this art if they so desire without fee or written promise; to impart to my sons and the sons of the master who taught me and the disciples who have enrolled themselves and have agreed to the rules of the profession, but to these alone the precepts and the instruction.

I will prescribe regimens for the good of my patients according to my ability and my judgment and never do harm to anyone. To please no one will I prescribe a deadly drug nor give advice which may cause his death. Nor will I give a woman a pessary to procure abortion. But I will preserve the purity of my life and my art. I will not cut for stone, even for patients in whom the disease is manifest; I will leave this operation to be performed by practitioners, specialists in this art.

In every house where I come I will enter only for the good of my patients, keeping myself far from all intentional ill-doing and all seduction and especially from the pleasures of love with women or with men, be they free or slaves. All that may come to my knowledge in the exercise of my

profession or in daily commerce with men, which ought not to be spread abroad, I will keep secret and will never reveal. If I keep this oath faithfully, may I enjoy my life and practice my art, respected by all men and in all times; but if I swerve from it or violate it, may the reverse be my lot. ‘

This oath is still taken by doctors today, and much of the ethical statements written in the oath are still followed; for example, doctors will not give any person drugs to wilfully kill them, or make their condition any worse. The medical theories such as The Four Humours, as mentioned above, was a concept first considered by revered Greek doctor Hippocrates (who also came up with the Hippocratic oath). It states that people fall into one of the four humours: sanguine, phlegmatic, melancholic and choleric, and any illness that they had was caused by an imbalance in one of these humours.

On the other hand, the Romans’ medicine was based very much on prevention instead of cure, and the main of their medical knowledge arose from the need for a healthy army. A good deal of Roman medicine consisted of faith healing, and when epidemics broke out there were often offerings made to those such as Apollo, God of healing, as widespread illness was seen as a sign of a God’s displeasure. Many aspects of Roman religion were taken from other religions and integrated into their own. There are many examples of this all over the Roman Empire, particularly in Greece and Britain.

Perhaps the most famous example of religious ‘ plagiarism’ in Britain are the baths of Aqua Sulis, which literally translates as the waters of Sulis. It

combines the idea of the baths, which were an integral part of Roman life, and the local Celtic Goddess Sulis. The Celts, like the Romans, were polytheistic, and Sulis was known as the Goddess of thermal spring water, like those in present day Bath. The waters at Bath had long been revered as having healing qualities, and the Romans adopted this view.

They built the baths over the spring, which meant that they could use the spring water as a natural source to be piped into the bath, and a temple, and worshipped at the spring to Sulis Minerva, combining their own Goddess Minerva (Goddess of Wisdom) with the Celtic Sulis. It was popular with both the Romans and the local Celtic community, as their beliefs had been taken into account when the Romans had built the baths. The worship of Sulis Minerva spread all over the Empire from Britain. The Roman Baths at Aquae Sulis, dedicated to the local Celtic God Sulis.

The Baths at Aquae Sulis are an excellent example of the fusion between the Roman technology and the Celtic beliefs. Here is a Roman drain, used to take away excess water from the baths. Another religion that the Romans borrowed heavily from was the Greeks. The religions were very similar in many respects, a fact that has been noted by several scholars. Many of the Roman Gods have Greek equivalents, such as Jupiter and Zeus, or Neptune and Poseidon. Both religions are polytheistic, and have much the same myths integral to them. Much of the Empire's art was also based on Greek ideas.

Roman sculpting was very much to life, and depicted realistic people. However, Greek sculpture was very much based on the Hellenic ideal, and many faces of the statues were indistinguishable, all having the same regular features and full face. This style of sculpture, sometimes called the 'Hellenic' style of sculpting, became common practice in Roman society, partly because the Romans imitated the cultured Greeks in their art so as to appear more refined themselves, and partly because, when Greece became a Roman province, many Greek artists were willing to carry on utilising their talents for the Romans.

A Greek Statue, thought to be of Poseidon or Zeus A Bust of Cato the Elder, more in the Roman Style of sculpting A bust of Xenophon in the Greco-Roman style, found in Alexandria Finally there is the Roman Gladiators, the first Roman gladiator spectacle was in the 3rd century BC, with the last being around the 2nd century AD, the fights were an integrated part of roman culture by the 1st century BC.

The fights came in three different forms; gladiators versus gladiators, gladiators versus animal, and finally gladiators versus the condemned criminals. The gladiators were usually professional fighters or slaves who came from gladiator schools, the most famous of which were the schools in Capua and Pompeii, although some of the fighters were captives from such areas as Africa and Gaul, some were innocent bystanders to the Roman empire, but some were prisoners of war from some of the great battles that were fought in Gaul.

The prisoners from Gaul were often some of the more favoured fighters as they were ferocious and merciless because that was the only trade they knew, war. The Colosseum, as show below, was the largest of the amphitheatres, its capacity was 50, 000 citizens. Its construction started around 70 AD but was not finished until 80 AD, since its construction it is estimated that around 500, 000 people and over 1, 000, 000 animals died during the various activities; animal hunts, executions, re-enactments of famous battles and the gladiatorial battles.

The Latin name for this magnificent building is Amphitheatrum Flavium and derives from the two emperors who were in power during its construction; Vespasian, who was in power at the beginning of its erection, and Titus, who was in power at the end of its erection. Both the emperors' family names were Flavius (from the gens Flavia), therefore the name Amphitheatrum Flavium, was given to this monumental construction. Colosseum (Rome) Wikipedia (c) (1)

In conclusion, today it is very difficult to tell what aspects of Roman culture can truly be claimed as their own. The Roman culture can instead be perceived as an amalgamation of the cultures it conquered, as opposed to a definite culture in its own right. Even within their very own games (The gladiatorial battles) there was an essence of other cultures. It borrowed extensively from many different civilizations, but particularly from the Greeks, as at the time that Rome conquered Greece the Greeks were far superior to them in many aspects.



As shown by the incorporation of the Celtic Goddess Sulis into their worship, the Romans also successfully used parts of other religions to build up a good relationship between themselves and their conquered provinces, a canny move on their part as it meant that they were able to hold a vast empire together for hundreds of years without enforcing a permanent military rule on those it occupied. Romans seemed to see their culture as a tool rather than a terribly sacred part of their lives, something to show off their prowess and pacify their people rather than to force upon others.