

History of roman empire essay

[History](#), [Empires](#)



Introduction

There are three stages of Roman history including Kingdom that lasted between 753-509BC, Republic that lasted between 509 and 27BC and Empire that lasted between 27BC and 476BC (Dill 103). The Roman Kingdom was founded by Romulus after he murdered Remus his brother. Traditionally, the city had seven kings. It is just one of Italy's many villages which again is divided among several different language groups. It is one of the cities of Latium area, where Latin is spoken. The Roman Republic was founded in 509 BC after the last king was expelled (103). It was founded on the principle that two chief magistrates called consuls, should exist. The consuls had supreme power referred to as imperium. Two principles were considered during the formation of the republican government, one, a magistrate could forbid another magistrates action belonging to the same rank as him or lower. Two, offices were annual and the present magistrates were not allowed to hold another office (Grant 124).

All offices had to be conferred by the people by elections, where the voting system favored only the wealthy making them to be the only ones who held office. Roman Empire occurred in 264 with the Romans subduing all the other citizens of Italy (Condra, 2008, 104). The Roman state absorbed some communities giving them Roman citizenship. Treaty was another way that others were bound to the Roman state, with no independent foreign policy but with internal autonomy. The communities provided the Roman army with troops a system which gave Romans a large manpower source. In 90 BC, Roman citizenship was given to all of Italy after the allies revolted. All the

Italian communities that were non-Roman adopted Latin after they gave up their local languages.

Roman Warfare

The Romans fought the Carthaginians, three wars (Hughes & Hughes 134). The Punic wars were between 264-242, 218-202 and 149-46. Carthage was a town found in North Africa. The Romans began conquering the Mediterranean with the First Punic War. They gained control of Corsica, Sicily and Sardinia after they defeated the Carthaginians. The Carthaginian Hannibal invaded Italy in the Second Punic War, with his army and a number of 70 elephants by crossing the Alps and Pyrenees. Though he inflicted the Romans with massive defeats, they held firm using their manpower resources in order to drive him back to Africa. Lastly, it is in the Third War that the Romans destroyed Carthage. It is in the first and second centuries BC, that the Romans conquered all the lands bordering the Mediterranean thereby establishing boundaries for their empire as Atlantic Ocean in the west, the Euphrates River in the east, Sahara Desert in the South and Rhine and Danube Rivers in the north.

Language Legacy

Most people continued to speak in Greek in the east but in the Balkans and in the west, Latin language was adopted. Modern languages including, Portuguese, French, Spanish Romanian and Italian are derived from Latin (Kurt 32).

The End of the Republic

The downfall of the Republic was brought about by the conquest of the Mediterranean. During the conquest, Roman generals won much money and used it in buying out small farmers. In the beginning of 133BC, politicians showed discontent of this situation and championed in order to support their own careers. These small farmers had also formed the Roman army backbone and the poor were not given permission to serve. For the first time in 107BC, the poor were enlisted in the army with the career soldiers being more loyal to their generals than the state, since after discharge, they would give them land. Lastly, the empire military needs became necessary giving the generals who used their troops against the state, huge commands. In the first century BC, there were three civil wars, which were major (Merivale 46). Julius Caesar emerged victorious in the second, but the senators assassinated him when they saw as if he would make himself the king. Octavian, Caesar's great nephew and his adopted heir, won the third civil war where he created the emperor position for himself by accumulating many traditional powers that he became more powerful than everyone else. He was in control over the armed forces. He was given the title Augustus meaning Revered, as recognition, which all emperors held later (Grant & Kitzinger 112). He advanced new order at home expanding Empire in Africa, east of Danube, Spain and Britain. He introduced the concept of Roman peace (Pax Romana). After his ruling, the running of the Roman Empire was smooth for the next two hundred years with succeeding leaders giving the Empire great buildings, ability of the empire to exist as one, highways, and

gave the people the feeling of part of the government. In short, there was political as well as social stability.

Art and Architecture

The Romans were great engineers but not artistic (Brauer 113). To facilitate the marching of their great armies, they built many roads with many of their water channels surviving today as monuments of their skills. In the 8th and 9th centuries, Latium, where Rome was founded, was filled with small huts with no formal organization or even public buildings. The early Roman architecture was a mixture of both Greek and Italian elements, as well as squat features of the Etruscans top heavy looking buildings. Early Roman temples were constructed like Italian temples in public spaces found in towns and cities. An example is the reconstructed Portonaccio Temple in Veii that is built on a podium with series of colonnades lining the deep porch. It is an Etruscan city, that rivaled Rome from 500BCE. The Romans started building more expensive stone buildings, in 150BCE, where they developed their own techniques for design and construction allowing the buildings to combine massive form with the Greek elegance. The Romans made concrete and built impressive buildings all over the city quickly. The emperors were trying to be better than their predecessors in public architecture contribution. Amidst all this, the Rome city was still in rickety wood buildings in cramped quarters (Dill 154).

Literature

Writers including, Virgil, Cicero, Ovid, Horace and Seneca wrote on many topics in poems, epigrams and speeches. Each of them emphasized on

different aspects of the Roman culture with their works giving historians ideas of what was valued then by the citizens and how life was. They wrote fictional tales as well as biographies of their great leaders.

Roman Government

The Roman provinces were ruled by governors who had power to execute and together with the emperor control relations of the local cities while the cities themselves handled the local administration. The usual type of provincial administration was found in provinces like Asia, Macedonia, Bithynia and Syria (Merivale 43). Without force, the Romans encouraged the locals on adopting the Roman customs rewarding increasing levels of Romanization with privileges much higher, with the highest being Roman citizenship grant. The process advanced so far by 212 AD that all free men were made citizens of Empire Roman by Emperor Caracalla. The city of Rome now became important for tradition and ceremony.

Decline of the Roman Empire

In 324 BCE, a new capital was founded by Emperor Constantine on the site of the Greek city of Byzantium. Constantinople was the name that was given to the new city where it seemed like there were two emperors, one in Constantinople and another one in Rome. After 395, the division of the empire (into Eastern and Western) became permanent as religious and social lines were created. In the third century, there were unsteady leaders with questionable competence (Grant & Kitzinger 112). The morals of a once peaceful society started falling, as was the economy, since the German tribesmen moved south taking all available land and resources. By the fourth

century, the costs were so high, that the Empire could not afford to maintain the armies on the borders since their finances could not allow them to. In the fifth century, the Latin speaking Western Empire was invaded by the Germanic tribes where they founded kingdoms making the emperors of Rome increasingly unimportant until in 476, when the last one was deposited (Dio 43).

The Eastern Empire was increasingly dominated by Greek elements after it survived the crisis. It changed its name and was now called the Byzantine Empire which lasted until 1453, when the Turks captured Constantinople. The Byzantine Empire in the east grew strong and powerful establishing a society which was influential while the west was invaded by the northern barbarians who threw the entire region back into the Dark Age where little or no progress was made, a huge contrast to the way life was during the Roman Empire height.

Fabric Production

The Romans like the Greeks, used wool, but later in their clothing production, they imported cotton and linen from Egypt. They also imported silk, but since it was precious and expensive, it was not widely accessible. The Romans produced fabrics of many varieties and weights for use in different styles of cloaks and togas. Colored fabrics were commonly used to represent nobility or even some magistrates, black fabrics were used for mourning. Decorative applied design where gold threads were used on the fabrics, were used for special occasions and also for people who in some way had distinguished themselves either in battle or otherwise. Roman textile production, unlike Greece, was on a larger scale whereby slaves were seen working the looms,

spinning and dyeing the yarns in places which resembled factories, with many workers each with a different task. Clothing was available and was ready made. (Dill 113)

Religion

Romans worshipped many gods, that is, they were polytheists (Kurt 212). They had anthropomorphic gods like the Greeks. Their chief gods included Jupiter, Hera and Venus. The deities that remained close to their values were luck referred to as Fortuna, success referred to as Felicitas, victory referred to as Victoria, health referred to as Salvus and peace referred to as Pax. Religion, morals and values were taught to the family by the father (paterfamilias). The father who was the master of the household, was in charge of education and religion in the family. Once the babies were born, they were checked for deformities and if found, they were abandoned. Boys were valued than girls who were not even given names. Roman girls, unlike the Greeks could own property and had greater respect and freedom in the society.

The Roman Dress

The Roman dress was an unchanging costume or uniform that was deeply symbolic and permanent and that showed their rank, status, citizenship and gender distinguishing them from, foreigners, Greeks, slave members of other groups, nations or even social classes. This symbolic force was emphasized in the 1st century CE, during the era of Augustus whose stability and symbolic value was supposedly true in theory if not in fact. The evidence of the Roman dress is derived from literary references as well as their own

artistic representations of the human figure (Brauer 112). During the late Republic and Empire, the Romans used stone, especially marble with their portrait statutes as well as historical reliefs giving important information about how Roman garments are constructed and worn in both male and female. The wall paintings from Pompeii, give us an idea of the richly used color schemes of the costumes too. The costumes of both men and women identified themselves with the people who wore them. In ancient Rome, most of the garments were made of wool that was woven in a variety of textures and weights which was also dyed in many colors. The slaves wore the firm dark cloth while fine purple wool made togas. Clothes were made by women at home in the early Republic. To Augustus and the later emperors the official dress signaled the rank and social status of freeborn Romans as well as the public roles of magistrates and priests.