

The fall of the roman empire

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



Alex Verreault 10/31/2011 35463_1124 The Fall of the Roman Empire The beginning of the Roman Empire came about when Julius Caesar was assassinated by nearly 40 Roman senators in the Theatre of Pompey on the Ides of March, March 15th 44BC. This assassination led to civil war almost immediately and ultimately led to the heir of the Roman Empire, Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus, who essentially declared himself as Emperor; and unified with Mark Antony and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus in a military dictatorship.

This was the legendary start of the Roman Empire, but there were many more years to come of ruler ship. The span of this great Empire ranges from 44 BC to 1453 AD, being ruled by many who were descendents of Augustus. The Roman Empire reached its greatest extent during Emperor Trajan's reign (98 to 117 AD) in which he controlled nearly six and a half million square kilometers of land. Although there were many great known Emperors of the Roman Empire, none of them could have stopped what was inevitable in such a large domain. 1] After many years, the Roman Empire began to slowly fall apart. Although there are many reasons believed to have cause the fall of this great Empire, I will cover only a few. Firstly were social causes; mainly between religion, morals and slavery. Secondly were economic causes: mainly between trade, military costs, and inflation and taxation. Lastly were political causes: the government being ran by the military, the problem of succession and the government did not know how to rule a large, polyglot empire.

Due to the slavery system within the Roman Empire, the spirits of the citizens started to diminish and many people started to feel like they were being deprived of rights. So in turn, there was a decline in citizenry within

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the Roman Empire. Due to the weakening of the citizens morale, people's changing lifestyles, amusements, and literature were degraded by excessive sex and violence. At one point, during the Pax Romana (an approximately 200 year long period of virtual peace), there were approximately 32, 000 prostitutes in Rome. Money was not spent wisely whatsoever. Emperors such as Caligula and Nero were infamous for spending their money foolishly on trashy parties where everyone drank and ate until they were sick [3]. Also, the most popular past time was to watch gladiators fight in the Colosseum. Loyalty and patriotism declined continually because people were focused more on their own personal salvation than the well-being of the state as a whole. The new coming of Christianity played a huge part in this as it was the Emperor Constantine's religion of choice, consequently starting the era of Christian domination.

Some believe that Christianity is largely to blame for the downfall of the Roman Empire. Christianity turned many Roman citizens into pacifists which in turn made it more difficult to defend against attacks on the state. These social causes were one of the big incentives that led to fall of the Roman Empire. [2] Running such a large Empire comes with great costs. There were many trade routes that could be taken throughout the Roman Empire by road and sea routes through the Mediterranean and Black Seas (the roads built by Romans were very efficient and lasted hundreds of years).

The main stream trade route was to port Ostia, which was located at the mouth of Tiber River only 15 miles from Rome. Considering how huge of a role this trade location played in the Roman Empire, it was no surprise that it

would play a huge role in the downfall of Rome itself when the Goth captured Ostia in 409 AD. Trade was crucial to the success of the Empire. [4] When the Empire collapsed, trade throughout the lands that once made up the Empire also collapsed. Not only did trade within the Roman Empire start to decay but so did the work ethics of many and the labor force as well.

This led to a considerable decrease in productivity which led to make the Roman Empire ever more dependent on foreign made products. The development of major cities came to a halt when the trade deficit began to build dramatically. Military costs were impossible to support which led the government to overtax certain areas of the Empire. This in turn led to an economic warfare between different regions and different classes of the rich and the poor. [3] Inflation was another big problem within the Roman Empire. Once the Romans stopped conquering new land, they also decreased the income of gold.

Although there was no sign of significant income, much money was spent on luxury items such as the trashy parties previously mentioned. Since the decrease in gold, there was less gold to use to make coins making them less valuable. Merchants then raised their prices just to keep up with the loss in value. At this point, people started to barter for goods rather than pay for them. Eventually, salaries were paid off in the same manner with food and clothing. [3] Politically, at this point, the Roman Empire was corrupted. One of more difficult problems was the selecting of a new emperor.

The Romans never created an effective system to determine how the new emperor would be selected. The choice was never up to the citizens of the

Empire but to the Senate, the Praetorian Guard (the emperor's private army), and the army. Eventually, it was entirely up to the Praetorian Guard to choose the new emperor and in turn rewarded the guard who then became more powerful. In 186 AD a new practice had began. The army would strangle the new emperor and auction off his throne to the highest bidder. Within the next century, Rome had 37 different emperors and 25 of which were taken out by assassination.

Maintaining an army added to the major costs of the empire as well. This constant drain on the government left few resources for other crucial dealings, such as providing public housing and maintaining quality roads and aqueducts. Eventually, the government began to hire soldiers from unemployed city mobs or from foreign counties. This was unreliable and very expensive to fund. [3] In conclusion, the Roman Empire's collapse was due to many faults within itself and some variables that could not have been controlled such as the many attacks on it.

There were many political, social, and economical causes that led to the end of the Roman Empire. Although there were some huge mistakes made within the Roman Empire, there was also a lot of good that came from it which we in the 21st century benefit from now. Latin was the official language during the Roman Empire and Latin led to the development of many other languages such as English. The Calendar we use today was started by Julius Caesar and the month July was named after Julius Caesar himself. Also, our laws and legal system we use today were influenced largely upon the Roman Empire.

So to say the very least, the Roman Empire is a huge and crucial part of this worlds history and without its once existence, who knows where we would be today. Works Cited [1] N/A. “ Roman Empire. ” Romanpast. com. N/A. 6 March 2011. Web. 31 Oct. 2011. [2] N/A. “ Causes for Fall of Roman Empire. ” Historyking. com. N/A. N/D. Web. 31 Oct. 2011. [3] N/A. “ Fall of the Roman Empire. ” Rome. info/history/empire/fall/. Partnerships for Sustainable Development. 31 Oct. 2011. Web. 31 Oct. 2011. [4] Trueman, Chris. “ Ancient Rome and Trade. ” Historylearningsite. co. uk. N/A, N/D. Web. 31 Oct. 2011.