



The Rise and Fall of
**The Great
Roman
Empire**



Geographic Influence

The surroundings of ancient Rome were a crucial part to their rise of power. The Tiber river was one of the main features to ancient Rome. It provided rich soil which could grow crops like grain and olives. This surplus of crops helped feed the citizens and animals of Rome. Rome was also able to expand its army due to the amount of crops supplied. The Tiber river also proved as a great source of water for ancient Rome.

Another important geographic influence to Rome were the Alps and Apennines, two mountain ranges. These mountains provided crucial protection from outside invasion. Rome was able to build up its city without being hindered by war or destruction from outside civilizations.



Politics

The Roman government was split into three parts, similar to what we have in the United States. These three parts were the assembly the senate, and the consuls.

- The senate was the group with the wealthy families, and was responsible for making laws. These people were not elected into power, the consuls chose them to be in power.
- The assembly was made up of the plebeians, or the common citizens in Rome. They held little power and almost no say in the government.
- The two consuls were the highest and most important positions in Rome. The consuls were known as the leaders of Rome. To become a Consul you would have to be elected into the position.



Economy & Trade

There was very little trade in the Roman Empire. Land ownership and agriculture were viewed as ways of collecting wealth to the nobles and not commerce and manufacturing. They were viewed as less noble pursuits. Roman exports consisted of food, animal products, art, pottery, materials for manufacturing and construction. The most prominent type of trade was the of course, the trading of slaves. Slaves drove the Roman economy from its start as a city-state to imperial collapse.

The Roman Empire fueled the silk road. Merchants were able to travel through countries with ease because they were all under the jurisdiction of the Roman government. The Romans were astonished by silk, however, some politicians tried (and failed) to ban it, claiming that it made people appear to be indecently dressed.



Religion

Romans were originally animistic and they believed that spirits of their ancestors were found in nature. However, due to the influence of the Greek colonies on the Lower Peninsula, Polytheism became the religion of the Romans. Their gods were taken from the Greek polytheistic religion and renamed. The Romans built temples of worship such as the Pantheon to be dedicated as the “home of the gods”.

In 29 AD Christianity became illegal in the Roman Empire and remained so for almost three-hundred years. Christians were persecuted in what is now known as the “Great Persecution” because the Romans believed that Christians offended the *pax deorum* (peace of the gods). However, the emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in 312 AD when he saw a cross in the sky during the Battle of Milvian Ridge and the persecution of Christians ended. In 395, Christianity became the official religion of Rome.

The image shows the interior of the dome of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. The dome is a massive, hemispherical structure with a complex architectural design. It features a series of concentric arches and a central lantern. The interior is decorated with intricate mosaics and frescoes, including a large circular mosaic in the center. The lighting is dramatic, with bright light coming from the lantern at the top, creating a sense of depth and grandeur. The text 'Social Structure' is overlaid in a large, white, serif font on the left side of the image.

Social Structure

The Ancient Roman Empire had a number of different classes with different legal privileges assigned to each one. Each class was treated differently in informal settings, meaning how much respect people showed, what they talked about, how they interacted overall. Generally speaking, you were born into the social class you were in. Unlike the Caste System, it was not impossible to move in ranks and classes, though it was still hard.

At the top of the hierarchy was the emperor, ruler of Rome. After Emperors were senators who governed Rome. Following senators were Equestrians who were wealthy property owners. Plebeians who followed them were working class men who worked for a living. Finally, the lowest people on this class system were slaves. These slaves were prisoners of war, and then rarely an abandoned child owned by a master.

Intellectual Advancement

The Romans discovered a lot when it came to sciences, mathematics, and medicine. Some of these things are their understanding of Astronomy-- they created sundials to measure the time, and they also created a seven day, astrological week, that we still use today.

Some of the medical advances that came about from the Romans were many pills, such as morphine, as well as a better understanding of internal injuries. (e.g. kidney damage and spinal dislocations)



Arts and Technology

Roman architecture was greatly influenced by the Greeks, however the Romans were the first to use arches in many buildings, even though they didn't actually invent the arch. Romans also created aqueducts to transport water to their cities. They developed concrete and created long-lasting roads, and used efficient sewage and sanitary plumbing systems. They created what we know as roman numerals, had efficient heating in homes, developed a postal service, and made precision instruments like surgical tools.

In terms of art, Romans are known for their sculptures, but also produced jewelry, mosaics, pottery, glassware, wall paintings, and more.

Roman Statues

Roman statues like this one are well known as Roman artwork. They are very intricately carved and show that the Romans liked to include a strong aspect of realism in their artwork.

This specific statue is an important one: a full-length portrait statue of Augustus Caesar, the first emperor of the Roman Empire. It stands 2.08 meters tall and weighs 1000 kg.



The Pantheon

The Roman Pantheon was built over 2,000 years ago. It is believed to have been a temple for the gods, and the location where the Emperor often would give speeches to remind people of his divinity. The Pantheon has been destroyed by fires twice. It was rebuilt in the reign of Trajan (98 CE) and finished in the reign of Hadrian (125 CE). It is known to be the most preserved building of ancient Rome.



The Aqueducts

The Romans built aqueducts that carried water up and down Italy. They were powered by gravity downhill and pressure and momentum on the way up. The water ran through lead pipes and the Romans invented concrete to build their aqueducts with. They were constructed in the first and second centuries. Plumbing systems have been found in other civilizations before this time; but none match the magnitude and precision of the Romans.



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