Imperial Rome Essay, Research Paper

During the Imperial Rome era, the lifestyles were quite different in which we in the present are very much used to. The civilization of the Roman Empire depended on the vitality of its cities. This meant that the society was based upon the strength that its cities contained. Almost all cities during this period were inhabited with a population of 20, 000. Only a select few had a populace of 75, 000 or more. The city of Rome in total had approximately 500, 000 residents. These figures compared with today s numbers seem incomparable but were large at the time. As people moved into Rome to start a living during the Imperial days, they were somewhat overwhelmed by its size, bustle, and noise. This was of the norm as most other cities that they fled were probably small subtle towns. With the continual expansion of people, there were two distinct classes of society, the rich and the poor. For the wealthy individuals or families, life was full of luxuries, along with comfortable living conditions. The prosperous inhabited elegant homes, which were called domus. These dwellings included spacious areas, magnificent courtyards, several rooms designed for specific purposes (e.g. sleeping dinning) and a quaint and peaceful environment. With the space that these well-crafted monstrous homes occupied, most of Rome s territory was built for the rich. This caused serious problems as only a small portion of the population inhabited these lodgings and colossal structures that were built such as theatres and forums, leaving a small amount of space for the mass of Rome s population. Apartments, which were called insulaes or islands, were constructed to provide a less than livable home for the majority of people. They were usually five or six stories high to accommodate the most people possible, as every inch of space was considered a necessity. The most renowned insulae was the Insula of Febiala, which seemed to have towered above the Rome of the Antoinines like a skyscraper. Even though these islands provided a so called home for the financially impaired, basic needs were not met as simple yet vital elements seized to exist. Such components may of included heating, plumbing, and proper waste disposal, which ultimately lead to unsanitary conditions. Furthermore, with the improper funding for the maintenance of these insulaes, the potential for collapses continually grew, as the buildings were truly unstable. In addition, wooden beams that supported the floors often erupted into flames due to the candles and torches used for light. The attraction to Rome also created further problems due to the fact that vacant rooms were falling like flies, which in turn meant that rents would soon be unaffordable to the average buyer. These awful and perilous living conditions make us truly understand as to why Rome spent most of their time outdoors.

The culture of the early empire was simply a time of general property and a flourishing material and artistic culture. During the period between the death of the almighty Augustus and the time of Marcus Aurelius, the name silver age was given as the literature composed was of a high quality nature. Most writers focused on the gloomy, negative, pessimistic aspects of Rome, which is understandable since most of society could relate to these pieces of work living in a hellhole and all, sounds the alarm of the night, with a neighbor yelling for water . On the other hand, during the 3rd century, writers began to escape the tortured tales by exercising their imagination and redirected their thoughts toward romance. The Greeks were more renowned for this type of art. This provided the suffering thoughts of the poor a free escape path from reality into a fantasy filled world.

Architectural advances were also present during the Imperial Rome epoch. With the engineer advances, the construction of a freestanding kind of amphitheatre was made possible. A semi-circular arch was introduced by the Romans, which expanded on the post-and-lintel structure of the Greeks. The use of concrete was also perfected during this time period, which lead to spectacular creations, for example the Colisseum built by the Flavian emperors. The Romans took the most pride in the Pantheon as it composed all the latest architectural advances.

Augustus, the first ruler of Rome after it became an empire, restored civil order, peace and prosperity to a Rome that had suffered several decades of civil wars following the assassination of Julius Caesar. Augustus, also known as Octavius, received the title imperator , from which derived the word emperor . This title was of significance as it was connected with the imperial house and military power in which everything was based upon. Imperial Rome began in chaos as Julius Caesar vanquished every enemy in his path, which was followed by a 200-year period of peace referred to as the Pax Romana . Augustus and his successors drew power from the support of the Roman people.

An elaborate bureaucracy eventually stabilized the rocky empire, which also lead to its unfortunate collapse. It intervened in public affairs to provide relief for the poor and funds for the army. Decade by decade it s power grew. Through taxation and confiscation, the bureaucracy came to control vast amounts of land. The mines were nationalized and wool and cloth were woven in state-run factories. The state created a national bank and laid down maximum prices and wages. To help unemployed, it banned mechanization so that winches were not allowed to be used for hoisting columns for the Capital. Rome funded some of these programs by a dangerous method- debasing the currency. The silver denarius, for example, eventually became the copper denarius.

The Romans were at their best as mechanics and lawyers. They built roads and waterways, viaducts and coliseums, some of which still stand. They also showed a passion for order as they created codes that served as an example to lawmakers.

There have been many arguments over the downfall of the seemingly indestructible Roman Empire. Firstly, the frontiers were too extensive to be defended property. Rome did not have the manpower to police them effectively and they were subject to the constant pressure of invading barbarians. Secondly, The regional armies were too willing to get themselves involved in supporting various claimants to the throne, and often dissipated their energies in fighting civil wars. Thirdly, the barbarians were too numerous to be contained, and the constant wars to hold them in check sapped Rome s manpower and material resources. Lastly, the great cost of running the affairs of state fell to heavily on the peasant, who became impoverished and resentful.

The Roman Empire formed out of the shambles of the Old Republic. Octavian, the surviving general of the civil wars that resulted from the alliances of the First and Second Triumvirates, was faced with the daunting task of rebuilding the structure of the entire empire.

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