

Legacies of Ancient Rome and Their Impacts on Western Civilization: a Dialectic Perspective

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Abstract

Like the sun in broad daylight, Ancient Roman Civilization is an significant source of Western civilization, which originated in central Italy where the Tiber River enters the sea. As the saying goes that all roads lead to Rome, which reflects that Rome was famous, prosperous and had a profound impact on the world. Ancient Rome made great contributions to the shaping of western civilization, especially in terms of law, literature, etc. However, the expansion of Roman Empire also caused sufferings to other peoples, including the suppression and repression they imposed on Jews, etc. whose traces can, more or less, be identified in western civilization.

Keywords

Ancient Roman Civilization, Western civilization, Impacts.

1. Legacies of Ancient Rome

Ancient Rome refers to the civilization that arose in the middle of the Italian peninsula from the 8th century BC and expanded into a huge Roman Empire across Europe, Asia and Africa around the 1st century BC. In the process of establishing and ruling the country, Ancient Rome absorbed and learned from the achievements of previous ancient civilizations, then created its own civilization on the basis of them. [1]It is the reason why Ancient Roman Civilization could play a role of connecting the past and the future in the development of Western civilization.

Every nutshell has a concave and convex side. In terms of legacies of Ancient Rome, there are three bad points and five good points to be highlighted. And the negative points come in the first instance.

2. Ancient Roman Civilization's negative impacts on Western civilization

Above all, the habit of extravagance and dissipation is detrimental. As we all know, Ancient Rome conquered many countries because of its strong military force. The defeated captives and the people of the lost country became the slaves of the victorious country--Rome. Large groups of slaves worked in place of the original Roman citizens, so that Roman citizens could have fun without working. After the Romans had enough to enjoy without any pressure to survive, they turned their attention to the craze to vie with each other and indulging in pleasure. At the beginning, the bath was a place for Romans to wash themselves after hard work. However, the nature of the bath began to change after the whole people became rich. In terms of architecture, the baths that were not luxurious enough were less frequented. In terms of content of bath center, only having bath was not enough. Libraries, lecture halls and gyms were also needed within the bath center. The Romans were still not satisfied with simply bathing in the luxurious baths, so they added sex to them. Many Romans openly engaged in sexual immorality in the baths.[2] The luxurious baths swept away the wealth of Rome's wars, leaving the materialistic people and unattended fields.

Second is about the feudal system. Ancient Roman society was a slave society, the slaves were treated as property and tools and were forced to do all kinds of hard work. This system was not

only a serious violation of human rights, but also caused great harm to the freedom and dignity of slaves.

In the third place, Ancient Rome left the legacy of corruption. Corruption in Ancient Rome not only led to political instability, but also increased internal strife. Corrupt officials ignored the public interest for their personal benefit, resulting in a serious weakening of the credibility and effectiveness of the government. The political instability and internal strife posed a serious obstacle to the development of the Roman Empire. Such corruption had an enormous influence on the social system and political culture of later generations. The behavior of corrupt officials was seen as immoral and irresponsible by future generations, and this concept was reflected in the social system and political culture of later generations. At the same time, the corruption in Ancient Rome had become one of the important historical lessons of the anti-corruption struggle in later generations.

3. Ancient Roman Civilization's positive impacts on Western civilization

Now, it is the positive points' turn.

In public works, Ancient Rome left people magnificent structures like the Colosseum, a sophisticated system of roads and the foundational aspect of Western architecture--Roman arch and dome. Arch was one of the most famous elements of Roman architecture, and it was the key to build larger structures. The arch design allowed buildings to support greater weight and create more space inside. The dome extended the arch concept to the roof structure, allowing the interior of the building to be covered with large spans. The Romans were passionate about entertainment and competition, so they built many amphitheatres and arenas. One of the most famous was the Roman Colosseum, also known as the "Colosseum". It was a large circular structure that was used to host gladiator competitions and other recreational events.[4] As the saying goes that all roads lead to Rome, which is not only to express that there are many ways to succeed, but also the true portrayal of the ancient Roman road network development. At that time, roads were the most important infrastructure in Rome. It is because the ancient Roman rulers attached great importance to the infrastructure of roads that they could better rule the country and promote social and economic development. It laid the foundation for Rome's later strength and prosperity.

The legacy of Roman law was a desire to create precisely worded laws that would cover every aspect of the life of the citizens in the state. And Roman law created an expectation for people that their rights would be protected. Also, there was a system to correct mistakes. In terms of the society at that time, Roman law was obviously designed to protect the interests of slave owners through legals, but the natural concept of equality and rights contained in it promoted the relative equality and prosperity of the whole Roman society. The Twelve Tables of Bronze was the foundation of the development of Roman law, and Justinian's Code was an important code with a large system and perfect scale, including both public and private parts. Public part refers to the national level, including the norms of large-scale social activities, which regulated all aspects of protecting the supreme rights and interests of the state. Private part refers to the individual and family level, including property ownership, debt, family marriage and inheritance and other aspects of the legal norms, involving personal rights and family relations in all aspects.

In terms of language, the letters used in Western European countries are the Latin letters of ancient Rome. Now some of the major Western languages, such as English, French, Italian, German, Spanish, etc., were directly derived from the ancient Roman Latin. Even our modern Chinese has directly benefited from the ancient Roman civilization-- Bopomofo uses the Latin alphabet.

In terms of the calendar, Ancient Rome left the Julian calendar to future generations. Although ancient Egypt produced the solar calendar, ancient Babylon created the lunar calendar, and ancient China used the lunar calendar, it is the ancient Roman calendar that has the greatest impact on people's life today. [5] In the first century BC, Caesar completely revised the calendar and formulated the famous "Julian calendar". This calendar divides each year into twelve months, thirty-one days in the big month, thirty days in the small month, and twenty-eight days in the average month, making a total of 365 days in a year. The names of July and August are also named after Caesar and Augustus, who were the founders of the Roman Empire. The Julian calendar has been the dominant calendar in most of Europe until today and the names of the days and months we use today were also created by the Romans.

Last but not least, in literature, the legacy of Ancient Rome is nourishment for the mind. The era of Octavian's reign was known as the Golden Age of Roman literature, and three great poets stood out in this era. Among them, Virgil imitated Homer's epic and wrote *Inuit*. His works were tortuous and vivid. Horasi was good at rhythm and writing beautiful prose. He had numerous famous works, including *Ode* and *Satire*. Ovid was known for writing madrigals and love poems, and his *Metamorphosis* was truly touching.

4. Ancient Rome' negative impacts on Western Civilization

Undoubtedly, the strong and prosperous Ancient Rome had impacts on Western Civilization. Every coin has two sides, the impacts are no different.

Let's come to the negative side first. One is about imperialism and conquest. The Roman Empire conquered and ruled many areas for its own benefit, including expansion and colonization through war. For example, they imposed the suppression and repression Jews. Such behaviors had led to the dispossession and destruction of some regions, harm to people and breaking in culture and society.

The other is about slavery in ancient Rome. The ancient Roman society adopted an extensive system of slavery, and slaves were greatly exploited and oppressed economically and socially. This system led to inhumane treatment and social inequality.

5. Ancient Rome' positive impacts on Western Civilization

Now for the positive side. Before the advent of the Roman Empire, Westerners disliked large states, instead, they were in favor of small cities like the Greek city-states. In other words, before the Romans established the Roman Empire, Westerners had no interest in the idea of empire, it was the Romans who introduced the idea of empire to Westerners. It can be said that the first contribution the Romans made to Western civilization was the establishment of a large Roman Empire. From then on, the idea of empire took root in the minds of Westerners, who finally abandoned the Greek ideal of small states and became more and more fond of large states.

The second great contribution the Romans made to Western civilization was their legal achievements. Speaking of the Roman Code, it can be said that the reputation of the Roman code was second to none among the ancient people in the world in terms of legal content, scale, integrity, systematization and historical influence. Although the Romans were not as romantic as the Greeks, they also had their own strengths, such as doing things rigorously, seriously, and thinking rationally and comprehensively. Therefore, the rigorous and practical Rome created the richest and largest legal system in the world at that time, such as public law, civil law, property law, procedure law, marriage and family law. Roman law covered almost every aspect of social life.[3] Roman legal achievements, which made an important contribution to Western culture, such as the university education produced in the Middle Ages, which always regarded law as the core curriculum; The ideas of humanism, innate human rights, rule of law and so on

proposed by Western modern culture were also closely related to Roman law. It is no exaggeration to say that without the influence of Roman law, there would have been no Renaissance or Enlightenment in the west, and no Western nation-states based on bourgeois constitutions, such as modern Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, etc.

In addition to the above points, from a literary point of view, Ancient Rome also had an impact on Western culture. Ancient Roman literature, as a continuation of Greek literature, brought the Greek literary tradition to the West. The works of ancient Roman writers such as Virgil, Ovid, Homer, etc. were highly respected in the Western world and became a source of inspiration for later European literature.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, ancient Roman heritage was rich, diverse and had a wide influence on Western culture. However, we should also see the shortcomings of ancient Roman culture and draw lessons from them. While inheriting and developing the ancient Roman culture, we should pay more attention to the criticism and innovation of culture and promote the healthy development of culture.

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