



Roman Empire, 14-70 AD

The Economy

Agriculture

Marked by rapid growth of vast imperial domains and large estates of wealthy Romans in the provinces. Pliny said that six Romans owned half of the territory of Africa in Nero's day. Large estates in Egypt were granted to the family or favorites of the Emperor, especially under Claudius and Nero. There was a trend of absorbing the medium sized and peasant plots. The evil of absentee ownership was evidenced in the writers of the day, Seneca, Pliny, and Petronius.

In spite of these problems, Italian agriculture was fairly prosperous. A very significant practice started was for landlords to lease their land to free tenants or colonies instead of using slave labor. One result of this was the increase of grain farming. One reason for the increase of tenant farming was either the decrease in the supply of slaves and/or the uneconomic character of slave labor, especially under absentee ownership. Grain raising was profitable in Italy, vineyards in Spain and Gaul.

Writers such as Pliny exposed the abuses of slave labor, however, Pliny viewed slaves as domesticated animals. There were advances in agricultural methods that includes wheeled plows with convex molding boards, crop rotation was adopted, leguminous plants were used to restore the soil, selective breeding was emphasized, and new forage plants were introduced from the Orient.

Some of the results of the large estates were in Sicily, the moderate sized wheat farms owned by natives became large ranches owned by the Roman proprietors. In Africa, extensive irrigation systems based on the conservation of water made North Africa one of the most prosperous sections of the Empire. It was next to Egypt in production of grain, olive, wine and fruit products.

Major products of Egypt were wheat, flax, oil producing plants, wine, dates, and wool. Cotton was not a significant crop. Spain and Gaul soon rivaled Italy in the production of wine and oil. Spain and southern Gaul were made of medium sized farms run by free native tenants supervised by a Roman proprietor.

Industry and Trade

There were major factors that enhanced the industry and trade of the Empire from 14 - 70 AD. There was improved security of travel by sea and land, free intercourse between nations, minimum customs duties, freedom of trade, and roads were built that led to all provinces. New markets developed from frontier camps. River systems became important for commercial purposes. River ports and regular sailings were established. Urbanization of the Empire was advancing with the Emperors realizing that their strength depended much on the cities.

Old industries gained new markets and new products kept arising. In second class or second rate cities, shops lined the street with the operator living in the back and the small craftsmen were the salesman for their products as well as the originator. Most of the economy in the city was the small shop industry, yet there was evidence of factory-made goods.

Observations regarding the industry and trade of the Roman Empire in the first century noted that there was industrial and commercial prosperity in the provinces. There was extreme individual fortunes from exploiting or looting from war. Wealth was spread throughout the entire Empire. In the East, old industries began producing luxuries of all sorts for Rome and the Far East. In Alexandria and Phoenicia,



glass manufacturers and the textile industry immersed. In the West, Spain, Gaul, and Africa (urban class of traders, manufacturers, and landowners) formed a solid basis of the Emperor's power. A capitalistic industry and agriculture arose in Gaul. In the western provinces, mining for silver, lead, and tin in Spain and iron in Gaul, Noricum and Illyricum were exploited.

Foreign trade of the Roman Empire reached its height in the first century. Foreign trade of the Roman Empire and the Far East was of historic consequence in the first century. This was one of the sources of the depletion of the gold of the Roman Empire. The first century was marked by a rapid growth of interprovincial trade. Productive loans at the lower interest of four to six percent were made to finance business ventures.

Slavery still dominated in the trade and industry of Rome and other cities. But, much more numerous now were the free wage laborers and freedmen and lower middle class shop owners and workers. Often a man was given a start in business by his emancipator and often became grain merchants, builders, moneylenders, shop owners, entered professions and even became slave dealers.

Travel in the Early Empire

Throughout all the Empire travel became easy, rapid, and secure. There was an excellent road system. The ordinary land travelers could cover 50-60 miles a day. Lodging was usually third rate, not clean and not good as to company. The toll keepers were generally dishonest. Rich men usually traveled with great pomp. Poor men walked or rode donkeys. Nero had a suite of 1,000 carriages and his horses were shod with silver and had gold decorated harnesses.

Travel by sea was usually from March to November. Sailing was irregular with ships overcrowded and it was recorded that they carried 600 to 1,200 passengers. The one Paul was on was said to have 275 aboard. With favorable winds they could make 100-150 miles in 24 hours. The army called up 20,000 men per year so this formed part of those traveling. This didn't include the shifting of the legions from place to place. All towns had their foreigners. Greeks and Jews were everywhere.

Society

Urban Conditions in Roman Empire (especially Rome)

There was rapid growth in size and number of cities. This was a natural result of general prosperity and expansion of trade. Centers of trade includes London as the chief center for trade with Gaul. Corinth was the intermediary for trade between Rome and Levant. Ephesus was a center for the transit trade for the whole eastern Mediterranean region. Antioch was the trade center for the transcontinental commerce of Asia with Syria and the West.

Rome had over a million in population and covers a radius of 12 miles. Conditions in the cities, especially Rome, was hazardous because of the narrow streets, tall buildings, and the impossibility of protection from fires. Even the widest street had the width only of 16-19 feet. The streets were unlighted at night and in spite of the 7,000 urban police in Rome, it was still dangerous.

The wagons bringing things in and out of the city of Rome were allowed to travel only on the streets at night so this kept a continuous noise factor present. The poor, which made up a majority of the population, lived in part or wholly at the expense of the State and could spend their days lounging in the open spaces and enjoying the frequent shows. The slaves also were sure of a living.

It was the honest free worker in Rome whose position was especially precarious. After the great fire of Nero, Rome became a spectacle of splendid public places, buildings, temples, monuments, colonnades,



baths, underground piping, and there was an abundance of pure water brought to the city for houses and public baths.

High Society

The emperors rather than the aristocracy set the fashions. The new rich and freedmen sought to make up for their lack of breeding by the coarse show. The fact of wealth took complete dominance over other factors such as how the wealth was obtained. No one asked how it came to be or how it was gained. If the man had it, he had it. A freedman of Nero was reported to have called a man worth only about \$3 million, pitifully poor. There was a mad scramble for wealth during the early Caesars.

The largest single private fortune in cash was 400 million sesterces. A sesterces was about one fourth of a denarius. A denarius was 1/84 pound of silver. Therefore 400 million sesterces would equal 100 million denarius. 100 million denarius would equal about 1.2 million pounds of silver. With the ratio of 1 to 15 with gold typical value ratio at that time, this would equal 79,000 pounds of gold. 79,000 pounds of gold would equal about 1.3 million ounces, which at today's prices of about \$1,900 per ounce, would be about \$2.5 billion. This was his cash worth.

Luxury and Wasteful Spending

Lavish spending equaled the drive for wealth. The particular period was from Caligula to Nero, 37-68 AD. Apicius squandered nearly 90 million sesterces on delicacies and killed himself when he only had 10 million left. Agrippina had a dress of woven gold. Lollia Paulina, a wife of Caligula, wore 40 million sesterces worth of gems to a banquet one night. It was said that 200,000 sesterces spent by Lucillus for a dinner was a modest amount.

For the multi-millionaires, one city mansion was not enough. Seneca reported that one new rich man paid 100,000 sesterces apiece for cultivated slaves who learned Greek poetry to prompt him at his banquets when he forgot a line. No expense was saved on Roman furniture or decoration. A great item of expense was the costly art products. The parading of silver plate and gold was overdone. Seneca's father-in-law, according to Pliny, a general on the Roman frontier, carried about with him 12,000 pounds of silver.

Dinner plates were made of silver, each marked with their proper weight. A slave of Claudius had a silver dish weighing 500 pounds and others about half that weight. One discovery produced 97 silver articles for table use. Funerals cost from a moderate 2,000 sesterces to 100,000 sesterces. Anything as high as 1.1 million was considered exorbitant. The burial plots of the new rich were 100 feet by 200 feet and planted with lots of vines and all kinds of trees. Luxury produced many bizarre, coarse and vulgar shows.

Women and Morals

Most information about women of the ancient world relates to a limited wealthy class in the high society of the capital cities. Not much is known about the great mass of women in the middle and lower classes. In literature usually the dark and sordid endures over the virtues. The image of the woman is also seen from the standpoint of Stoic teachings and prejudice. However, the facts of the seamy side of life in high society reported by them was correct.

The usual age of marriage for girls was from 12-16 years of age. The girls entered marriage as a new life of freedom both legally and economically. It was just like walking out into a dream world of reality. The wife controlled her own property through her freedman or lawyer. If the wife was rich, she lorded it over her husband. She was practically unrestrained socially. She had free access to go where her husband



went even into the Emperor's presence. This was the real "women's lib" movement.

Seneca complained that the women attend functions in their finery while they may be accompanied by their nobody husband. The women lived in an atmosphere of intrigue, vanity, passion, and moral license. Divorce was prevalent. Seneca said that the women counted their age not by their years but by their husbands. Juvenal said that some had eight husbands in five years.

There were several reasons for moral laxity. The many slaves in the households of the rich gave them much idle time to pamper their most pernicious desires. The Roman woman found no constructive field of activity but just reveled in self-indulgence. She lived in the atmosphere of scandal and seduction. She was sure of a willing lover among her slaves. Other influences on moral laxity in general were the gross cruelties, tortures, and slaughters over which the most delicate "ladies" gloated. Noble ladies became admirers of athletes, chariot drivers, gladiators and stage singers.

Some women challenged men in the gladiatorial games and pursued other things usually done by men. The women were very influential in politics and often shaped the politics of the emperor. The upper class ladies were highly cultivated in Greek and Latin literature. An outlet for the female energies of the Roman woman found expression in religions, pomp, ceremonies, and emotionalism.

The worship of Isis gave the women much of their desired expression. The immoralities at these temples were so great that Tiberius had many of them completely obliterated. Roman women were strongly addicted to astrology and magic of all types. Demonism among the women found expression in evil trade in love philters (potions), poisons, and procuring.

Daily Life and Social Custom

A typical day for a Roman senator was; up at dawn, dressed with the aid of slaves, shaved by slave barbers and hair trimmed. Beards were introduced by Hadrian in the second century. They wore one or several large signet rings. Letters were dictated to slave secretaries who wrote in shorthand. He had a light breakfast including wine or milk, bread and honey, olives, an egg or bit of cheese.

The master had absolute power of life or death over the slave. On the whole, the slave had a relatively free and easy life. After breakfast the Roman aristocrat would receive his morning clients. These were the poor who would come by for their daily "soup." He would give them something then assign them a task for the day to compensate for what he gave them. This was given them at the close of the day, usually.

The man would then outline the course of the day's activity and his slaves would carry him along in the streets or accompany him on his errands. This includes taking him to his superiors to whom he gave the same expression. Each person had those catering to him, but he would cater to someone above him, bootlicking from the beggar to the emperor. The man would sometimes honor one of his underlings with an invitation to come to supper. There were usually nine guests, three to a couch.

Festivals, Spectacles, and Games

There were 37 festival days in the time of Tiberius per year and this increased to 175 in the fourth century. Titus held one festival alone that lasted 100 days. Trajan held one festival in 107 AD which lasted four months. All major festivals began at sunrise and continued to sunset and only stopped for lunch. Festivals began as religious observances then moved to a means of buying the public support for the Roman Emperor.

Circuses were considered just as bread was, an unavoidable necessity. In 51 AD, 1.7 million sesterces



were spent in Rome for public games. This equaled about 506,000 pounds of silver. In the early empire, a normal 3-day gladiatorial exhibition cost about 400,000 sesterces. Great centers of public amusement were circuses, amphitheaters, arenas, theatres, and stadiums.

The largest circus had a seating capacity of 180,000. Augustus limited the Empire to two gladiatorial shows a year with 120 combatants. Later, however, he gloated of eight in his reign where 10,000 gladiators fought. Five hundred African lions were slain in one of Augustus' shows. Titus had 5,000 slaughtered in the dedication of the Colosseum. Trajan had a great festival and 9,000 animals were killed. Condemned criminals and Christians often were tied to stakes and left to the animals in the arena. Children didn't play cowboys and Indians, they played gladiators.

Regarding the theatre, Rome had three in operation, usually only one at a time. The emphasis of the theatre was two low types of drama, Atellan farces and mimes. Atellan farces were light drama and usually had four main figures. Dotard: foolish old person whose mind is impaired by age. Wise man: just that. Glutton: common meaning for this. Booby: a dunce or stupid fellow. Mimes were the acting out of scenes from life. This usually was a character sketch from the seamy side of life, full of obscenities and vulgarities and appeals to the sensual.

Literature

There was a dominant emphasis on rhetoric and declamation in higher education. There was a predominance of poetry in the curriculums of schools of rhetoric. Education lost touch with life. Verbiage, subtlety and stirring speech was emphasized. Thought stagnated. Two basic forms of training were given, using thesis in declamation and argument based on imaginary cases.

The prevalent method of teaching infused both poetry and prose with declamatory style. (They would "knock" someone else literarily.) There was a practice of public reciting of new prose or verse. This was the way that a book or treatise was launched on the market.

Much of the writing, especially from 14-54 AD was in no sense pure literature but was work of an encyclopedic character. During the first century, Stoicism became an intellectual and moral force in the Roman society and Seneca was its outstanding representative.

Leaders of Palestine During The First Century AD

Political Chronological Structure: Herodian Line

Herod the Great: 37 BC - 4 BC

Archelaus: 4BC – 6 AD

Philip: 4BC – 34AD ruling contemporaries Antipas: 4BC - 39AD

Herod Agrippa I: 37-44 AD

Herod Agrippa II: 50-100 AD

Roman Procurators of Judea to Siege of Jerusalem.

Coponius: 6-10 AD

M. Ambivius: 10-13 AD

Annius Rufus 13-15 AD

Valeuis Gratus: 1-26 AD



Pontius Pilate: 33-36 AD

Marcellus: 36-38 AD

Maryllus 39-04 AD

Cuspius Fadus 44-46 AD

Tiberius Alexander 46-48 AD

Ventidius Cumanus: 48-52 AD

Antonius Felix: 52-59 AD

Albinus: 61-65 AD

Gessius Florus: 65-70 AD

Chronological Establishment of Roman Provinces

272 BC - All Italy to Cisalpine Gaul under Rome

242-41 BC - Sicily ceded to Rome

238 BC - Sardinia and Corsica ceded to Rome

201 BC - Carthaginian Spain ceded to Rome

227 BC - Organization of Sardinian and Corsica as provinces

146 BC - Africa made a Roman province

133 BC - The Kingdom of Pergamum willed to Rome

129 BC - Province of Asia organized

121 BC - Narbones Gaul becomes a province

75 BC - Bithynia becomes a Roman province

63 BC - Pompey annexes Syria.

27 BC - Dalmatia (Illyricum, earlier) becomes a Roman province

25 BC - Galatia becomes a Roman province, also Pamphylia

25 BC - Numidia included in the province of Africa

14 BC - Alpes Maritimae becomes a province

4 BC - Judea becomes a Roman province

17 AD - Upper and lower Germany become Roman provinces under military legate

17 AD - Cappadocia and Commagene become provinces

40-42 AD - Two Maructamas become provinces

43 AD - Southern Britain becomes a Roman province

44 AD - Judea again a Roman province

114 AD - Armenia made a Roman province



The Roman Empire's Major Wars and Battles

509-508 BC: Overthrow of Monarchy and Etruscan rule.
480 BC: War Against the Volscians
460 BC: War Against the Aequi
392 BC: Fall of Veii to Rome
390-(387) BC: Battle of Allia and sack of Rome by Gauls
338-336 BC: The Latin War
325-304 BC: War with the Samnites
318 BC: Defeat of Rome at Caudine Forks
309-307 BC: War with the Etruscans
298-290 BC: War with the Allied Samnites, Etruscans, and Gauls
297 BC: Capture of Bovianum by Rome
295 BC: Victory of Rome at Sentinum
290 BC: Rome Subdues Samnium
285 BC: Defeat of Gauls and Etruscans at Lake Vadimo
281-272 BC: War with Tarentum and Pyrrhus
280 BC: Battle of Heraclea
279 BC: Battle of Ausculum
275 BC: Battle of Beneventum
272 BC: Tarentum surrenders: All Italy to Cisalpine Gaul under Rome
264-241 BC: First Punic War
260 BC: Naval Victory of Rome at Mylae
256-255 BC: Regulus Unsuccessful against Africa
250 BC: Naval defeat of Rome at Drepana
242-241 BC: Roman Victory at Aegatian Isles
241 BC: Sicily ceded to Rome
229-228 BC: First Illyrian War
225 BC: Defeat of Gauls at Telamon
224-222 BC: Conquest of Boii and Insubres
220-219 BC: Second Illyrian War
219 BC: Hannibal besieges Saguntum
218-201 BC: Second Punic War



218 BC: Rome Invades Spain
217 BC: Defeat of Rome at Ticinus, Trebia, Traisimeni
216 BC: Disaster at Cannae; Revolt of Capua
215 BC: First Macedonian War
214 BC: Revolt of Syracuse
212 BC: Siege and recovery of Syracuse
211 BC: Capua subdued. Roman defeats in Spain.
207 BC: Defeat of Hasdrubal at Metaurus
202 BC: Battle of Zama
201 BC: Carthaginian Spain ceded to Rome
200-196 BC: Second Macedonian War
197 BC: Battle of Cynocephalia
192-189 BC: War with Antiochus III and Aetolians
191 BC: Defeat of Antiochus at Thermopylae
190 BC: Defeat at Magnesia
171-167v Third Macedonian War
168 BC: Battle of Pydna
149-148 BC: Fourth Macedonian War
149–146 BC: Third Punic War
147-139 BC: War with Viriathus
146 BC: Revolt of Achaeans, destruction of Corinth and Carthage, Africa made Roman Province
143-133 BC: Numantine War in Spain
136-132 BC: Revolt of Slaves in Italy
122 BC: Conquest of Balearic Isles
111-105 BC: Jugurthine War
105 BC: Defeat of Romans by Cimbri and Teutons
104-100 BC: Slave War in Sicily
102 BC: Marius defeats Teutons at Aquoi Sextiae
101 BC: Marius defeats Cimbri at Vercellae
90-88 BC: Italic or Social War
89-85 BC: Sulla and First Mithradatic War
88 BC: Massacre of Italians in Asia



88-86 BC: Sulla takes Athens and Peiraeus
87-83 BC: Marian revolt and Violence in Rome
74-63 BC: Third (2nd) Mithradatic War
73-71 BC: Crassus and the Slave War in Italy
67 BC: Pompey's Command against the Pirates
63 BC: Pompey annexes Syria, takes Jerusalem
58-56 BC: Caesar's Conquest of Gaul
55-54 BC: Caesar Invades Britain
54-52 BC: Violence and Anarchy in Rome
53 BC: Defeat and death of Crassus at Carrhae
52-51 BC: Revolt of the Gauls under Vercingetorix
49-46 BC: Civil War between Caesar and Senate
48 BC: Caesar's Victory at Pharsalus
47 BC: Caesar's defeat of Pharnaces at Zela
46 BC: Victory at Thapsus in Africa
45 BC: Caesar defeats Rebels at Munda
42 BC: Defeat of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi
31 BC: Battle of Actium
30 BC: Octavian Annexes Egypt
16 BC: Conquest of Noricum
15 BC: Conquest of Raeti and Vindelici
14 BC: Alpine peoples conquered by Rome
14- BC: Conquest of Pannonia
12 BC: Invasion of Germany
6-9 AD: Revolt of Pannonia
9 AD: Revolt of Arminius in Germany
14-17 AD: Campaigns of Germanicus in Germany
43 AD: South Britain conquered
58-63 AD: Parthian War
59-60 AD: Revolt of Britons
66 AD: Revolt of the Jews
68 AD: Revolt of Vindex in Gaul



69 AD: Revolt of Civilus and the Batavi.
70 AD: Destruction of Jerusalem
83 AD: Campaigns in Germany
85-89 AD: Wars in Dacia
88-89 AD: Revolt of Saturninus
101-102 AD: First Campaign in Dacia
105-106 AD: Conquest and Annexation of Dacia
114-117 AD: Parthian War: Jewish Revolt in Cyrene
116 AD: Rebellion in Mesopotamia
132-134 AD: Jewish Rebellion in Palestine
161-166 AD: Parthian War
167-175 AD: Marcomannic War
175 AD: Revolt of Cassius in the East
177-180 AD: Campaigns in Germany
193 AD: Civil War
194 AD: Pescennius defeated (Civil)
195-196 AD: Invasion of Parthia
197 AD: Albinus defeated at Lugdunum
197-199 AD: Parthians Campaign resumed (Conquest of Upper Mesopotamia)
206-211 AD: Campaigns against Caledonians in Britain
214 AD: Parthian War
230-233 AD: War with Persia
234 AD: War on the Rhine
251 AD: Goths Invade Roman Empire
267 AD: Goths sack Athens
271 AD: Revolt of Palmyra
274 AD: Recovery of Gaul and Britain
276 AD: Roman Empire Repels Alamanni and Franks
283 AD: Capture of Ctesiphon
285 AD: Defeat of Carinus (ended 50 years of military anarchy)
286 AD: Revolt of Carausius in Britain
297 AD: Galerius ends Persian invasion



306-310 AD: Civil War

324 AD: Defeat of Licinus at Chrysopolis

328 AD: Decisive Victory over Alamanni on the Rhine

332-334 AD: Decisive Victory over Goths and Sarmatians

378 AD: Goths defeat Romans at Adrianople; Barbarian Invasions

476 AD: End of Roman Rule in the West