Achievements of Rome

The Roman republic established a form of government followed in part by many countries today. “The Roman concept of the citizen evolved during the Roman Republic and changed significantly during the later Roman Empire. After the Romans freed themselves from the Etruscans, they established a republic, and all males over 15 who were descended from the original tribes of Rome became citizens. Citizens of Rome distinguished themselves from slaves and other noncitizens by wearing a toga; most wore a white toga. During the Empire, each emperor wore a purple toga to distinguish himself as the princeps, or "first citizen."

Citizenship varied greatly. The full citizen could vote, marry freeborn persons, and trade. Some citizens were not allowed to vote or hold public office, but maintained the other rights. A third type of citizen could vote and engage in trade, but could not hold office or marry freeborn women.”

In the late Republic, male slaves who were granted their freedom could become full citizens. Around 90 B.C.E., non-Roman allies of the Republic gained the rights of citizenship, and by 212 C.E, under the Edict of Caracalla, all free people of the Roman Empire could become citizens.

The highest positions in the government were held by two consuls, or leaders, who ruled the Roman Republic. A senate composed of patricians (upper class) elected these consuls. At this time, lower-class citizens, or plebeians, had virtually no say in the government. Both men and women were citizens in the Roman Republic, but only men could vote.”

The era of Augustus’ reign (30 B.C.E. – 19 C.E.) in Rome followed years of fighting both outside of Rome and amid its leaders. As the first Roman emperor Augustus led Rome’s transformation from republic to empire during the confused years following the assassination of his great-uncle and adoptive father Julius Caesar. The peace which Augustus restored and kept (the Pax Romana) caused the economy, and the arts to flourish. An ambitious building program was started in which Augustus completed the plans made by Julius Caesar and then continued on with his own grand designs. The famous public baths of Rome were constructed under Augustus by his second-in-command, Agrippa, and the poet Virgil composed his epic the Aeneid. Augustus took great personal interest in the arts and was a personal patron of many artists.

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He increased the number of provinces and reorganized them. He organized the new provinces into two sections: those under the control of the senate and those under the control of the emperor in order to govern efficiently. He established a uniform system of currency and an effective postal system. Augustus ordered the building of a highway that would connect Rome and its empire, and bridges and aqueducts were added.

Many buildings were added to Rome: of them the Curia (Senate House), Chalcidicum (portico of a public building opening to the forum), the temple of Apollo, the temple of Julius Caesar, the Lupercal, and the portico to the Circum of Flaminius are the most prominent.