

The Empire's Ruling Art

Take the Rule of the Roman Empire over Britain as an Example

Hanxiang Mei^{1,*,†} Runqi Wang^{2,†}

¹Suzhou North America High School

²George School

*Corresponding author. Email: wangr24@georgeschool.org

†These authors contributed equally.

ABSTRACT

In 27 B.C., Gaius Octavian, through his clever political means, declared that he would restore the republican system and establish the Roman Empire. Rome's expansion turned the Mediterranean Sea into an inner lake. Its territory, constituted of all its colonies, formed an ellipse around the Mediterranean. The Roman Empire has vast areas, nationalities, and complex religions. Therefore, to efficiently rule this land of more than 5 million square kilometers is a topic worth exploring. Compared with the discussion of the ruling art of the Roman Empire in the overall view of history, this study is more inclined to find a specific case to analyze the ruling spirit and way of the Roman Empire so as to summarize the general rules of imperial rule and provide some references for the governance of modern countries, especially in maintaining social stability and public unity.

Keywords: Empire, Ruling Art, Roman Empire, Britain

1. INTRODUCTION

In 44 B.C., Gaius Julius Caesar was assassinated, and his will named Gaius Octavian as his successor [1]. Octavian allied with Caesar's colleagues, Mark Antony and Lepidus, known as the "Tresviri Rei Publicae Constituendae," to remove the republican heresies Brutus and Cassius, who had murdered Caesar [2]. Octavian returned to Rome to strengthen his power and to assemble people to rule the western part of Rome. At the same time, Marc Antony went to Egypt and allied with Cleopatra VII, the Queen of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, to govern the eastern piece of Rome. At that time, Gaius Octavian was gathering forces and armies in Rome, while at the same time he was slandering Mark Antony, who was preoccupied with the war in Parthia in the East, by saying that he was about to rebel against Rome in collaboration with a foreign power (i.e., Egypt). In fact, it was not Mark Antony but Cleopatra who was officially declared war by Octavian. On the surface, this was seen as a Roman civil war, but, in Octavian's political propaganda, the Battle of Actium was a battle in which he led the Roman soldiers to defend the sacred territory of the Empire [3]. Egypt was then incorporated into Rome, and Roman history entered two centuries of relative peace. In 27 B.C., the Roman Senate conferred the title of "Augustus" on Gaius

Octavian. Since then, the Roman Empire replaced the Roman Republic, which existed for 483 years, ending the Republican Rome and beginning Imperial Rome. Although it was divided into two parts, the Western and Eastern Roman Empires, in 395 A.D. and fell in 1483, the success of the Roman Empire in ruling over its vast territory and colonies during its over 1400 years of existence is an unsurpassed achievement in the history of human beings.

Broadly speaking, past historical studies have focused on the Roman Empire's ruling techniques more at the theoretical level based on an overall historical perspective. This study, on the other hand, starts from a specific case, taking the rule of a particular region as an example, and explores how the Roman Empire maintained the stability of its rule; it compares the Roman Empire with other empires of different periods and locations, analyzing the resemblances and dissimilarities, and based on them, summarizes the general rules of imperial regulation. This research will begin with the background of the establishment of the Roman Empire, the circumstances of its rule, and the problem of ruling that it encountered. The Roman Empire had an extensive territory that surrounded the Mediterranean Sea, from which colonies spread outward, and continued to use the provincial system with almost 100 provinces making up

the vast territory of Rome. The city of Rome, the capital, was also the center of politics, and the Senate was located here. For its substantial provinces, the Roman Empire took the route of assigning governors to the provinces and ruling through centralization. The vast territory would have resulted in weak associations between its central administration and local governments, as well as weak associations between localities. Second, in order to explore how the Roman Empire actually maintained its rule, this research uses the Roman Empire's rule over a specific province, Britannia, as a particular example and analyzes the governorship, province selection, and assimilation methods of the time from the perspective of Governor Agricola's rule in Britannia. In the end, this study will compare the governing of the Qin Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and the Phoenicians, drawing a general rule pattern of the empires. This study will fill the gap in the historiography of the Roman Empire in terms of particular cases and will also be a reference for modern states on how to rule more effectively.

2. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND RULE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

In 27 B.C., the Roman Empire was formally formed, and the Roman monarchy was established. "This new monarchy (Principate) was wrapped in clever words and sugar coating [3]." When Augustus came to power, the provinces were separated into two categories: those under the authority of the Princes and those under the authority of the Senate. Rome was ruled by decentralizing the provinces through the appointment of governors [5]. The governors would popularize and promote Roman laws in their respective provinces to promote political civilization, along with the Latin language and the establishment of channels for the distribution of products to promote the economy [6]. Considering such a vast and extensive territory, the Roman Empire was confronted with the problem of weak connections between the central areas and the provinces, along with the fragile connections among the provinces.

Rome's expansion took it beyond the concept of city-states to become an empire with more than just one category of race, religion, language, and culture. As one of the largest states in the world's ancient history, the Roman Empire ruled over approximately 5 million square kilometers of land or three percent of the world's whole area. The tremendous imperial era of Rome began with the accession of the first emperor, Emperor Augustus, in 27 B.C. and ended with the collapse of the Roman Empire in the 5th century A.D. In this period, the borders of the Roman Empire expanded and receded. What's more, during the reign of Emperor Trajan from 98 A.D. to 117 A.D., the Roman Empire reached its greatest heyday, with unprecedented economic prosperity and the extension of the Empire's borders from the west coast of Africa to the ancient Arabian Peninsula. The territory is

the largest at 5.9 million square kilometers: from Spain in the west, to the Euphrates in the east, to Egypt in the south, to Britain in the north, and the Mediterranean Sea become the inner sea of the Roman Empire [7].

The city of Rome was located at the center of this vast Empire, which consisted of a large number of Roman provinces. These provinces were defined as foreign territories under the permanent administrative control of Rome [7]. The city of Rome was located at the center of this vast Empire, which consisted of a large number of Roman provinces. These provinces were defined as foreign territories under the permanent administrative control of Rome. In fact, the provinces were not significantly different from colonies. They were far from the core of Rome, the city of Rome, and the governors sent there by the Senate, or the Princes were the full agents of the provinces. In the early years of the Empire, the Princes (Emperor), the center of state power, did not have reasonable control over the governors of the provinces because transportation was not well developed, and the Empire was still expanding through war and military power. Legally, for each province established, the Senate enacted regulations governing the province, determining the boundaries of the area, the number of towns, the rights and duties of the inhabitants, and the tribute to be paid by the province, and the taxes to be collected. Outside of this, neither the Senate nor the emperor asked too much about the governor's actions, which led to the governor having a leading position in the rule of the provinces, a weak link between the central and local governments, and strong independence of each province.

Not only was there no powerful connection between the central and local levels for various reasons, but the provinces were also independent and did not communicate much with each other. With the expansion of the Roman state, the number of provinces increased, and the provincial system was gradually improved, resulting in a system of administration adapted to local conditions and the implementation of the law of the autonomous city, which gave autonomy to provincial cities and the Roman citizenship to those who lived in the provinces. However, since the Roman Empire did not establish its own dominant culture in the early years, some people preferred Greek culture and spoke the Greek language, while others liked Latin culture and the Latin language better. When provinces were established, there was also a tendency to allow the region's people to continue their own culture and their previous way of life. Therefore, not all Roman provinces shared the same culture, language, and sense of identification with the state as the provinces of ancient China. As well, the administration of the various provinces was not uniform, as some provinces were more independent than others, an example being the Client kingdoms. These kingdoms (or called regions) were responsible for their own law and order and protected their own borders, and they could

seek help from the Roman Empire in case of emergency. The right to possess and administer their lands was the highest privilege granted to the people of each province [7].

3. THE ROMAN EMPIRE'S RULE OVER BRITAIN

Britain, formerly called Britannia, has been occupied by Romans since 43 A.D. In 43 A.D., a military invasion led by Plautius captured southern Britannia and established a formal Roman rule. Romans made treaties with nearby tribes, appointed government officials, and sent legions to control the territory. Since 43 A.D., Romans have recognized Britannia as their province.

In the Roman Empire, the governor was the head of provincial government, who held autocratic power in territories under his control. Governor's primary function involved the military, but they also had to supervise other aspects of government. Under the governor, different officials took charge of different duties. A procurator would collect taxes and deal with all financial issues; a legatus iuridicus would assist the governor in handling legal issues. There were constantly several legions in Britannia. Each legion had a commander, and all the commanders submitted to the governor.

Roman occupation was based on cities and towns. Each city was ruled by a civitas, a public entity in charge of judicial and civic issues. The civitas was usually composed of upper-class, wealthy citizens. Before Romans came, the British population lived in nomadic tribes without permanent residences. Thus, cities and towns in Britannia were built by Romans, and they were mainly located near the coast because of their proximity to other provinces of the Empire.

In 43 AD, Plautius was appointed the first governor of Britannia due to his significant military record. Latter governors were either appointed by the Senate or directly by the Emperor; they all made certain contributions to the Roman administration and further conquest of Britannia. In 78 AD, Agricola was made governor of Britannia and completed bringing the whole of Britannia under Roman rule a few years later.

Under Agricola, the effort of ruling Britannia was reinforced, in which cultural assimilation played a significant role. Cultural assimilation is the act of imperial elites spreading their more advanced culture to local elites, a common practice imperial elites use to manage and integrate areas they conquer. British locals were mostly tribe leaders who weren't used to agricultural civilization. Agricola brought Roman cultural practices to them. "To induce a people, hitherto scattered, uncivilized and therefore prone to fight, to grow pleasantly inured to peace and ease, Agricola encouraged individuals and assisted communities to build temples, public squares, and proper houses. He praised the keen and scolded the

slack, and competition for honor worked as well as a compulsion. Furthermore, he trained the sons of the leading men in the liberal arts and preferred the Britannia's natural ability over the Gauls' trained skill. The result was that in place of distaste for the Latin language came a passion for commanding it. In the same way, our national dress came into favor, and the toga was everywhere to be seen. Thus, they strayed into the enticements of vice – porticoes, baths, and sumptuous banquets. In their innocence, they called this 'civilization', while in fact it was a part of their enslavement." [6]

According to Tacitus, Agricola built Roman-style architecture in Britannia and founded schools for tribe leaders' sons to learn Roman studies. Local elites soon adopted speaking Latin, dressing in Roman costume, and enjoying Roman recreations such as baths and extravagant banquets. Afterward, British local elites began to share more similarities with Roman elites than the rest British people, resulting in a stronger Roman dominance.

British were forced to be assimilated by Romans. "Yet the Britanni show more spirit; they have not yet been softened by protracted peace. The Gauls, too, we are told, were once pre-eminent in war, but then with peace came sloth, and valor was lost with liberty. The same thing has happened to those of the Britanni who have long been conquered; the rest are still as the Gauls once were." [6] Romans brought peace to the British for the first time after a long series of internal conflicts. Without constant fighting, British local customs became outdated. In a society with stable food resources and political conditions, preparing for warfare or collecting food was no longer their priority. Instead, they spent more time on Roman public baths and held magnificent banquets, as mentioned above. Catching up with the changing society, the British had to adopt the more civilized Roman culture, further integrating them into the Roman Empire.

History in Roman Britain after the reign of Agricola was barely recorded.

4. THE GENERAL RULE OF ANCIENT EMPIRES TO MAINTAIN THEIR RULE

Though existing in different areas and periods, other empires often share certain similarities with the Roman Empire in the pattern of conquest and administration including assimilating local elites, founding autocratic local government, and establishing commercial intercourse.

Firstly, empires can't function without the assimilation of local elites. After the Qin state conquered the other five states of the Zhou Dynasty, it became an empire consisting of people who spoke different languages and practiced different cultures. The empire standardized measurement and currency and, most significantly, unified language. The standardized script

had criteria on the shape and size of every character, and it was usually written in standard calligraphy called the lesser-seal style. Previously, people from different states had different written scripts, which hindered trade and the flow of ideologies. Qin Empire's newly created script solved the problem by enabling them to communicate. The unification of written language primarily influenced the local elites since they were the only legible people in that period. As in the Roman Empire, Romans built up schools to teach British tribe leaders Latin. As both cases show, the ability to communicate and exchange ideas is crucial at putting the imperial elites and local elites into the same interest group. Local elites find themselves more in common with the imperial elites than the rest of their own race and become more willing to work for the Empire. To conclude, both the Qin Empire and the Roman Empire unified and maintained the areas they conquered by culturally assimilating local elites.

Secondly, like how the Romans set up administrative divisions in their fellow provinces like Britain, the Ottoman Empire in the late Fourteenth Century had similar counterparts. While in the Roman Empire, either the Emperor or the Senate would appoint a governor as the head of each state's administration. The Ottoman Empire had its own governors called the beylerbeys. Both Roman governor and beylerbey shared a wide range of responsibilities, including allocating territory, commanding the army, and executing justice.[8] For significant officials in both empires, a military career was the most important criterion of their competency because military expansion was the Empire's foundation. Like how a Roman procurator would deal with financial issues and a *legatus iuridicus* would handle legal issues, there were various positions under the beylerbeys taking charge of different government areas. In the Ottoman Empire, judges were called the *kadi*, and they were composed of *ulema*, who were men of learning. When the governors were out for battle, *kadis* became temporary governors to take charge of the province. Within a province, there were smaller districts called the *sancaks*, which meant banners. Each *sancak* had a leader called *sancakbeyes*. Despite the difference in the size of the territory, *sancakbeyes* had the same function as the beylerbeys. They were also prominent military commanders who took charge of other things, and they had their own *kadis* who replaced them when they went to fight.

Thirdly, the establishment of trade posts is essential to maintain imperial rule, although it is often ignored. Romans established trading posts near the coast around Britannia Island for commerce. London, Britain's capital today, derived its name from the Roman town, Londinium. Though they didn't form an empire, the influential Phoenicians also founded their network in the Mediterranean Sea. Around 1500 B.C., the Phoenicians had already occupied the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and in the 8th century B.C., they

formed cities and towns all around the sea.[9] "Indirect rule is only effective, however, to the extent that local leaders are accepted as legitimate by their populace. So the problem facing the Aztec empire builders was how to extract as much surplus as possible from this populace while retaining the local leaders as effective allies." [10] By founding local trading posts near transportation routes, Phoenicians and Romans maximized their profits while maintaining control. Britain exported lead, wool, and tin, while Romans provided them with wine, oil, and pottery. Similarly, Phoenician's sailors sailed around the Mediterranean Sea to exchange regional specialties involving papyrus, glass, ivory, textiles, etc. Increased economic activities advanced the local economy, improving people's living conditions and thus making the populace support the Empire's rule. Trading is an essential part of empire founding since it stimulates expansion and sustains occupation.

5. CONCLUSION

In this study, we conclude how the Roman Empire maintained control over territory by analyzing its government on Britannia from the perspectives of forms of governance, cultural influence, patterns of settlement. We also compare it with other empires' governance in their belonging territories, including the Qin Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and the Phoenicians, to find their typical pattern of governance. We conclude that these empires were similar to the Roman Empire in the cultural assimilation of local elites, the establishment of extraordinary local administrations, and the founding of towns as trading posts. In the study, we mostly used Tacitus: *The Agricola* and *The Germania*, a primary resource to conduct reliable information about how the actual Roman occupancy in Britannia was like 2 thousand years ago. Besides, we used other secondary resources to discover the background of the Roman Empire and specific information about other empires for comparison.

The significance of our study lies in the finding of some universal patterns in empire governance. It can be an example for future researches seeking to find a general historical pattern from a small case.

One deficiency of this study is its limited scope. The study focuses on empires' settlement, forms of government, and cultural impact. However, there are other perspectives that we didn't include. Moreover, our information source is limited. To ensure information accountability, we predominantly used Tacitus: *The Agricola* and *The Germania*, which is a primary resource as our reference. However, as a history book, Tacitus: *The Agricola* and *The Germania* is inferior in its complexity to analytic secondary research papers, which hinders us from making deeper analyses. In addition, the book is appreciably biased since the author Tacitus wrote it for praising and memorizing his uncle, Agricola. Fourthly, when analyzing the universal pattern of empire

governance. We list three examples and compare them with the Roman Empire to conduct our result. Since the number of samples is limited, we can only speculate that all empires share a certain degree of similarity in some perspectives of their occupancy.

The recommendation for future research is to provide more perspectives about how empires maintained their control and use more examples to make a more thorough conclusion of the universal pattern of empire governance.

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