

Exploring the Reasons the Emperor Julian Failed in the War with the Eastern Country

Ziyi Yang*

Beijing New Talent Academy, Beijing, 101300, China

*Corresponding author: 31808520418@stu.suse.edu.cn

Abstract. The paper does research on the emperor Julian, who is one of the most famous emperors in the late period of the Roman Empire. In the common sense, the late period of the Roman Empire was not as strong as before, which meant the Roman Empire started to collapse. The paper aims to find out what caused the emperor Julian to fail in the war, and this could also be a part of “Why the Roman Empire started to collapse”. This paper selected 18 books and papers to analyze this question, and it found the reasons could be concluded from the political, military and economic factors.

Keywords: War, The Roman Empire, Emperor Julian.

1. Introduction

The Roman Empire used to be one of the most famous and strongest Empire in the history. However, in the later period of the Roman Empire, the failure of it seemed more and more clear. In the early period of the Roman Empire, the whole country was under a very wise and regular control, and the agriculture was the most important thing in residences' everyday life. However, this changed a lot in the later period of the Roman Empire. Since the beginning of the fourth century, the situation on the domestic society of the Roman Empire changed a lot. The wars with other country seemed to happen every year, and the change of the emperor was very fast compared with the early period.

Julian was one of the most famous emperors in the fourth century of the Roman Empire, and the war between the Persia and the Rome had the biggest scale, which this war included 100000 of Roman soldier. This war also included the complex combination of the political system of the Rome, including both army and the emperor. In addition, this war included not only Persia but also other countries, from the west to east, so we could say that this war was the mix of the domestic factors in Roman Empire and the outside factors. However, Julian lost this war and he also died in this war. By investigating the reason that why Julian lost this war, we can find not only Julian himself but also the whole Roman Empire was under a strange condition at that time.

In the recent research this paper could found that Julian was misunderstood in the Middle Ages, but in renaissance he was the light of religious, until the twentieth century, the analyse of Julian finally started in a more objective way. So in this paper, to just focus on this emperor, from his psychology and his behaviour, people maybe able to find why he lost in the war, and from a larger scale, people may also find why the Roman Empire started to collapse since the fourth century. From the CNKI net, there were 23 pages of essay that were about the fourth century of the Roman Empire, about what caused the Roman Empire to collapse

Since the beginning of the 20th century, there were more and more findings about the Roman Empire and the emperor in the later period, Julian. Interestingly, what people thought about Julian changed during the year past. Also the standpoint about the war that was started by Julian changed during the year, too. Before the 20th century, the behaviour of Julian was seen as “hurtful and unreasonable”, because this war caused some of the regions were no longer belong to the Roman Empire anymore. This caused the economic condition in the Roman Empire even worse than before. However, in the 20th century, people changed their mind, as now they thought Julian started this war because he wanted to start the renaissance of the old culture.

In the dissertation < the analysis of the war between the Roman Empire and Persian > talked about the reason that why Julian lost in the war. As he mentioned the corruption in the political system in

the domestic condition in the Rome, as he said “ the corruption in the society was very serious, even the farmers did not want the agricultural work any more, but as same as the wealth people, they went to parties and enjoy their life. And the officers levy high tax on the residences but used the for private use.” From this, we could clear found that the corruption was in the Roman Empire everywhere, even in the common people. And this will cause dramatic effects: the money debt will be enormous. However, this kind of research also had some deficiencies: he said the corruption in military caused the level of the military fell a lot, but he did not mention actually the army changed into new forms. And in some way, this encouraged the average level of the military to increase, but as we mentioned before, the debt in the Roman Empire was enormous, although some of the emperors changed the form of the army, this could not be a factor that improved the level of the army. Because of that, in the specific standpoint, the paper need to do the research in a more comprehensive way, not only saw the connection between two reasons, but found the connections between two or more reasons, or even the truth that may not prove the topic.

Although the paper found the economic factors, the collapse of the economic system was not only caused by the corruption in the society but also caused by the decrease in the land for cultivate: “ more and more places became the place for people to hunt and play, but less place for cultivate the crops.” And so this cause the decrease in the production of the raw materials, because for that, the handicraft industry failed.

As we mentioned before, the paper could found although there were research on Julian and the war, but the aspects they chose were not really full- scale, so this paper wanted to improve the conclusion that they got and illustrate some of my own questions.

2. The reasons that why Julian failed in the war

The paper will be divided into three parts, at each parts there will be a specific factor to illustrate that why Julian lost in the war with the eastern country. And the clear classification could be seen in the following Table 1.

Table. 1. Analysis of papers of reasons emperor Julian failed in the war with the eastern country

| No. of papers | Reasons of emperor Julian failed in the war | References |
|---------------|---|---|
| 10 | The political factors | [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [9] |
| 4 | The military factors | [10] [11] [12] [13][14] |
| 4 | The economic factors | [14] [15] [16] |

2.1 The political factors

From the politics status, the decline of the Roman Empire started from the early period of 400 AD. The emperors like Anthony exerted all their energy to protect the national power of the Roman Empire. However, the indication of the decline became more and more obvious. The emperor in the later period of the Roman Empire, Septimius tried to make the structure of the Empire imperil, and increase the power of the centralization. But the contradictions that have accumulated during very long time could not be solved in this kind of structures, so the crisis of the 400 AD outburst roundly.

Since the crisis of the Roman Empire happened, the urbanization of the empire had been reversed into the form of the village. The complex and ingenious, the politics structure that contained “check and balance” disappeared, now the Roman Empire mainly focused on the agriculture, so they need some simple system to manage [1]. So the right of autonomy of the city had been gradually canceled [2]. Bureaucratic hierarchy was built. In the early period of 500 AD, the convention of the citizens almost stopped [3]. This kind of style seemed very complex but meaningless. Because of this, by comparing with the early stage of the empire, the public administration was simplified than before, in some places, the power to control the citizens and the military even was given to the military officials [4].

From the late period of the 400AD to the early period of the 500AD, Roman Empire became a legionary autarchy, full of the color of the eastern empire. The operation of the empire was controlled by the bureaucracy [5]. And in order to manage conveniently, the function and the power of the administrative official and the military official were separated. However, this kind of style was very unwieldy, the centralized management system was not a wise way to control an empire. The best solution at that time was “ separated the power”, and gave the power to different officials, but this showed the emperor will have less power.

The corruption could not be ignored. Since the power had been separated to different officials, the officers got much power than before. Some of them exerted their power in unwarrantable way, for example, to plundered other people’s money or even, the other’s wife. The officer knew bribery well, and the governor had many pockets on his clothes, politicians, businessmen, profiteers of all kinds, more or less, all encountered the irresistible attraction of corruption in their lives [6]. “ The powerful figures have started converting freedom into debauchery. Everyone grabbed whatever they could, stole and usurped. The state was governed by arbitrariness of the few chosen ones. The treasury, provinces, duties, glory and triumphs were all in their hands, while the other citizens were oppressed by poverty, burdened by service and legions. The leaders shared the spoils among a small number of people while the population was driven off their land if they it so happened that a powerful neighbour wanted it.” Gaius Sallustius Crispus, Roman historian (86 - 34 B.C.) disappointed with the morals and greed of Roman aristocracy from the second half of the republic, in his book entitled Histories described the situation. For this reason, the corruption of the political system of the Roman Empire was a long term problem.

Additionally, since 321 AD, residents could buy a position for themselves. In the year 363AD, the emperor Julian promulgated a decree and it pointed out that some of people got a job by buying it, but they still appealed in order to make their money back [7].

The justice was built on the money. In 361AD, which was the time under the control of Julian, there were laws that illustrated the extortion behaviour in the judicial procedure: the judge appeared in the court needed to pay money, and then the judge assistant will record the case, and then the guard, the centurion, and the other officer will ask for tip [8].

In 362AD or 363AD, the city Timugad showed litigant price list: in order to start litigation, residents needed to pay money to the subordinates of the governor, if this case did not need any secretary or the distance the herald needed to go was less than one meter, people needed to pay five bushel wheat or the same value of money. If over one meter, so the distance that over one meter needed to pay 2 bushel wheat for each meter, the overseas needed to pay 100 bushel. No matter which condition, the assistant of the chief justice will get half of the money [9]. Scholastici will gain ten to fifteen bushel wheat. Exceptorles gained five, twelve, and twenty bushel wheat. The litigation needed to contain four to six lawyers, which means it was very difficult to come out a regular form of the price list [9].

So on the above, it was very clear that the later period of the Roman Empire was full of corruption. Even at the period that under the control of Julian. So this made the Empire had very less of money on the development of the military, and then became one of the most significant reasons that caused the war to fail.

2.2 The military factors

The combination of the army changed. During the year past, the level of the manpower resources declined a lot. Because the contradiction between the army and the residents, there were less and less people who wanted to be soldiers. Before 400AD, the army of the Roman Empire were mainly made by the men from Italy, but in the middle period of the 400AD, people from Italy did not want to tend in the army anymore, and so did the people from other provinces. So the government had to enlisted people from remote region, and because of that, the average level of the army declined [10].

Additionally, the army intervned the domestic politics in the third century in Rome, which this behaviour was not be allowed before the third century. They could not get any feedback from the

wars, so they attended in the politics actively. In 238-253 AD, the emperor from the Roman Empire changed 15 times, as they could control the behaviour of the emperors, the armies now had a lot of power, the have weapons, and money. However, these could only be found in the higher stages of the army. The generals found they easily defeat the emperor, and if the emperor did not follow what want to see, it was very easy to kill them [11]. So since the third century, the army started to control the politics, and this behaviour lasted to the forth century, even every emperor was under the control of the army.

Although the army had a lot of power and could control the whole system of the politics, but the quality of the military equipment became more inferiority. There even no armour from the third century had been preserved. This was because the way of making the armour changed. Before the third century, the metal was the main resource used to make the armour, but now(the third century) leather, linen had became the main resources. This kind materials were really easy to be destroyed. For this reason, it was very clear that the army from the Roman Empire was not able to fight with other countries, as the armour they wore could not support and protect them in long time wars.

And at the same time, the structure of the army changed. Actually, in the forth century, the emperor started to realize the harmful of the structure of the army, so they started the revolution in the army. However, to change the form of the Roman army had a very high risk and it was inevitable that this change will cause a huge amount of money to support. As we mentioned before, since the third century, the army had the most proportion of the money, so the situation for the emperor was “lack of money” [12]. As we mentioned before, the corruption in the political system caused the run off of the wealth, so the emperor could only add the pressure on the residences and enforced them to pay more taxes to filled up the gaps in the money. However, the government did not use a reasonable way to levy the taxes, but used a way called “piety”, which was a way that use savage torture to intimidated the lower class people. Because of that, in the forth century, the wages that the officers got decreased a lot than before, thus caused the collapse of the whole tax system, although the emperors wanted to change the condition, but it seemed to be irreversible.

Some of the factors that was particular for the Julian to lose in the war. The Persia, in the forth century, their management of the country became more stable. While in the Roman Empire, the domestic condition seemed like “a mess”. In addition, the build of the city, the hydraulic system, and the defensive system in Persia developed a lot [13]. Also, they Persian now were very familiar with the tactics of the Roman Empire, they knew how to fight with the Roman military, so the Ctesiphon was very difficult to be defeated now. Many scholars thought that this was the main reason that why Julian lose in the war with the Persia.

2.3 The economic factors

The economical condition in the forth century seemed quite different from other period of time. In the early period of the Roman Empire, almost all of the Roman residences attended in the production of the crops and other agricultural products. In a literary review in the early Rome, it said: “ If ancestors wanted to praise a people, he will say that this guy was industrious peasantry, and this was the sovereign honour of a people” [14]. But after the development, the bureaucrat started to use the money to build their won house and they also made a lot of farmland into hunting ground. Because of that, there were less lands in the Roman Empire that could be used as the place to cultivate. Less lands means the fewer production of the farm produce [14]. Additionally, the wealthy people found thousands of ways to escape from the taxation. They oppressed the poor and lower class residence to pay more tax to them or just let the poor people to pay the tax for them. The farmers lost their enthusiasm of cultivating the crops as they found they were under the control of the wealthy people, the more they produced, the more they needed to pay to the others [15]. Additionally, because of the wealthy people always enjoyed the leisure equipment like bath, the farmers were also be affected by this: they started to enjoy the things like bath, pit. In the book called < the agriculture> wrote: “ they(slaves) planted the land in a very horrible way, and this caused a lot of seeds waste. Also they did not care about the mature of the crops. Sometimes they just cut the crops down [16].” This caused

the fallen of the economics. The agriculture was the basic of the handicraft industry, and the lack of raw materials caused the decline of the commerce. So finally, this will cause the run out of money, which the income of the government could not afford the money that is used to maintain their life. The holidays in the early Roman Empire were 66 days, but in the fourth century, the number reached to 175 days, almost half of the year, the Roman residences stayed at home and celebrate. And the money used to held the party on each holiday were all from the government, so this will really aggravate fiscal problems. The lack of money of the government meant they had no money to supports the development of the army, so the equipment of the army could not be updated immediately, and thus cause the differences in the equipment from the Roman Empire and in the Persia, so it will be difficult for the Roman Empire to fight with the Persians as they did not have any advantages in the war.

3. Conclusions

The failure of the war was affected by several reasons. One of the most important reason was the collapse of the political system. The new system made more people now able to be an officer, and to enjoy the power of the officers. Because of that, the trade of the “position” became very easy. People could use their money to buy place in the system of government, which no one will be caught by this behaviour. Once the residents became the officer, he or she now were able to enjoy the benefits that the positions brought to them. For this reason, the corruption was very serious, the lack of control caused the officers to held parties without counting the income, also they did not deal with their own job but used their power to let other people to wait upon them. So the government now do not have much money to support the daily life consumption, for example, the upgrading of the military equipment. So the military could not get the timely replenishment, and so the fighting capacity of the army will drop a lot.

Also, the corruption in the political system also affected the military. The headmaster of the army now even able to control who will be the emperor of the country. In order to avoid killing by the military, the emperor will give the army a lot money to comfort them. However, although the military got the money, they will not focus on their job, too. But like other officers in the political system-- they will use the money in some private way. So the level and the standard of the military in Roman Empire will have big differences compared with others. So the objection in the domestic society and the low development in Roman Empire will easily cause the debacle in the war.

The next reason was the economic reason, which had a very strong connection with the previous two reasons. The lack of money in the system will easily cause the economic problems, as people now may not able to afford their daily life. This will cause the problem of lack of the raw materials, and therefore caused the handicraft industry start to fall, the economic condition changed. Base on this research, in the future people will have the ability to connect the emperor with their empire.

From this paper, people may able to find out the importance of “ from the short period of time to see the whole trend of an empire”. And when they search for why the Roman Empire started to collapse, they can think about more factors that may affect the collapse of the Roman Empire. In addition, this paper wanted people to find out more connections between different factors that caused the Roman Empire to collapse: as the corruption in the political system also affected the development of the economics, the increase in the power of the military was a reason that stimulated the corruption in the system.

References

- [1] Rostovtzeff, M. The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire [J] volume1. pp. 505-506
- [2] A.H.M, Jones, the Decline of the Ancient World [J] p21
- [3] A.H.M. Jones, The Decline of the Ancient World [J] p242

-
- [4] Cameron, A., Garnsey, P. The Cambridge Ancient History Volume XIII [M], Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998
- [5] Cameron, A. , Garnsey, P. The Cambridge Ancient History Volume XIII[M], Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998
- [6] Pharr, C. The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions[M]. Williams Princeton University Press.
- [7] Dio, Dio's Roman History[J] 1982, Volume IX pp. 162-165 London, William Heinemann.
- [8] Dinghe, Z. Handong, Z. The World History [M], Jinan, the Shandong People Publication, 2001
- [9] Edward, The collapse of the Roman Empire [M], Beijing, the Commercial Press, 1997
- [10] Harries, J. & Wood, I. The Theodosian Code [M], Ithaca, Cornell University, 1993
- [11] MacMullen, R. Corruption and the Decline of Rome [M], America, Yale University Press, 1988
- [12] Rostofu, the economical History of the Roman Empire [M], Beijing, the commercial Press, 1986
- [13] Si'en, S. Constantine [M], Beijing, the Commercial Press, 2001
- [14] Pei, L. A study of Roman and Persia Wars, Northwest University, 2021
- [15] Tumpson, The History of the economics in the middle age [M], Beijing, the Commercial Press, 1997
- [16] Xin, R. the East European Culture [M], Beijing, China Social Science Press, 2001