

Contribution of Romans in the Field of Geography

After the Greeks, the political power passed into the hands of Romans. The Romans' major contribution was mainly in the field of historical and regional geography but they also made contributions in the field of physical and mathematical geography. Among the Romans, Strabo and Ptolemy contributed the most.

Strabo (64 BC-20 AD)

Strabo was born in Amasia (central Turkey, 50 miles south of black sea) about the year 64 BC. He died in AD 20. Strabo received a good education and was able to travel widely in Greek world. He lived for several years in Rome and also worked in the library at Alexandria. He had sailed on the black sea, he made a trip up the Nile in 24 BC, and he went at the border of Armenia. He wrote many books after he returned to Amasia.

Strabo

- Strabo accepts Aristotle zone of habitability as defined by Eratosthense.
- He accepts the calculation of the earth circumference made by Posidonius.

Strabo also gives a correct explanation of the floods of the Nile attributing them to the heavy summer rains in Ethiopia.

More about Strabo

Strabo's treatise Geography is considered as the most important geographical work that has come down to us from the classical period. Strabo's main contribution was in the field of historical geography. He said that there is an intimate relationship between history and geography.

He wrote that Italy has a protected geographical location because of which the people of this country are more advanced and developed. Strabo in his geographical treatise presented a general survey of the entire habitable world known during that period.

Strabo in his book gave an adequate description of the geography of Spain, Gaul, Britain, the Alps, Italy, Sicily, countries extending to the east of Rhine and to the north of Danube, Greece and the neighboring islands and of the Asia.

Ptolemy (100-170 AD)

Another great geographer of Roman period was Ptolemy. Ptolemy was one of those geniuses who developed sound principles of mathematical geography. His writings inspired the geographers and explorers of the Great Age of Discovery (14th, 15th century AD) to explore the unknown world.

Some of Ptolemy's concepts coincide with that of Aristotle: the earth is a sphere that remains stationary in the center while the celestial bodies revolve around it in circular orbits. His best known works are—The Almagast and The Outlines of Geography. The Almagast deals with complicated problems of mathematical geography and astronomy. The Outlines of Geography deals with the exact determination of the position of places by means of latitudes and longitudes.

Ptolemy believed that geography is a science which deals with the art of map-making. The basic objective of Ptolemy's book was "to reform the map of the world" on the basis of astronomical principles. He stressed on determining the latitudes and longitudes of all the important points of the earth's surface for making a map of the world. He made great improvements in previously drawn maps.

Ptolemy also made great contributions in the field of mathematical geography. He contributed in determining the circumference of the earth, dimensions of the habitable world, prime meridian, graticules and design of projection.

He also made an attempt of dividing the earth into climatic zones. His description of Caspian Sea was very accurate one. He said that the Caspian Sea is an inland sea. He also studied about the various tribes of Central Asia.

Thanks

