

## Decline of Classical Civilizations

### China

- Cultural unity threatened by Buddhism
- **Social unrest increased, as a revolution led by Daoists gained new appeal.**
- Confucian intellectual activity became less creative
- The free peasants were burdened with new taxes and demands of service with the same landlords
- Many peasants lost their farms and became day laborers on large estates. Some had to sell their children into service.
- Shifted toward a popular religion with added healing practices and magic to earlier philosophical beliefs.
- Yellow Turbans-Daoist Leaders- promised a golden age that was to be brought by divine magic.
- Attacked the weakness of the emperor and the self-indulgence of the current bureaucracy.
- Many students protested against the government morality but failed.
- Chinese population growth and prosperity spiraled further downward and the imperial court was falling in interest and civil war.
- The central government's control diminished
- Local landlords took up much of the slack, ruling their neighborhood to their own wishes
- Inability to push back invasions from borderland nomads.
- Regional rulers and weak dynasties rose and fell
- **Revived at the end of the 6th century**
- Sui dynasty ruled briefly, followed by Tang dynasty, one of the most glorious periods in Chinese history.
- Confucianism and the bureaucratic system were revived, bureaucratic tradition became more elaborate.
- No permanent disruption
- Structure too strong to be overturned
- Bureaucracy declined in scope and quantity but did not disappear
- Confucianism value and styles of life remained in the upper class
- Nomadic invaders had nothing better to offer so they tried to assimilate the Chinese traditions
- Did not have to reinvent its civilization
- **Common**
- Declined from outside nomadic invaders

### India

- Islam threatened northern India in religion and territory
- Decline not as drastic as the other civilizations.
- Hun invaders penetrated deeper into India
- The ability of the Gupta emperors to control local princes was declining.
- Many invaders integrated into the warrior caste of India, forming a new ruling group of regional princes.
- For several centuries, no native ruler attempted to build a large Indian state.
- **Regionalism returned**
- **Gupta was losing control over local princes and could not fight invaders**
- Regional princes, Rajputs, controlled small states and emphasized military prowess.
- Few political events of more than local significance occurred.
- Buddhism declined and Hindu beliefs gained importance as Hun princes converted to Hinduism who had originally worshipped gods of battle and had no sympathy for the Buddhist principles of calm and contemplation.

- Worship of a mother goddess, Devi, spread widely, encouraging a new popular emotionalism in religious rituals.
- A new Middle Eastern religion of Islam, Arab armies fighting under the banners of Allah, reached India's porous northwestern frontier. Islam won some converts in the northwest.
- Hindu leaders reacted to the arrival of this new faith by strengthening their emphasis on religious devotion, at the expense of some intellectual interests.
- Went under further popularization
- Hindu texts were written in Hindi and use of the old language, Sanskrit declined.
- Reactions were largely successful in preventing more than a minority of Indian from abandoning Hinduism.
- Were distracted from further achievements in mathematics and science.
- Islam hit hard at India's economic position and affected its larger impact throughout Asia.

## Rome

- Declined from Germanic invaders and the Huns who attacked Italy, invading the city of Rome amid great destruction.
- Permanent disruption
- Declining population/ diseases reduced population from one million to 250,000 in Rome
- Political confusion produced weak emperors and many disputes over the succession of the throne.
- Intervention by the army in the selection of emperors complicated political life and contributed to the deterioration of rule from the top.
- Series of plague as in China, the plague's source was growing international trade, which brought diseases from southern Asia to new locations like the Mediterranean, where no resistance has been established.
- Economic life worsened. Recruitment of troops became difficult, empire was forced to hire Germanic soldiers to guard its frontier. The need to pay troops added to the demands on the state's budget, just as declining production cut into tax revenues.
- **A process of decline: set of general problems - started by a cycle of plagues that could not be prevented - resulting in a spiral that steadily worsened.**
- Upper class became more pleasure seeking and turned away from political devotion and economic strength that had characterized the republic and early empire.
- Cultural life decayed/ very little sparkle to the art or literature of the later empire. Many Roman scholars contented themselves with writing textbooks that rather mechanically summarized earlier achievements in science, mathematics and literary style. New knowledge or artistic styles were not being generated and even the levels of previous achievements began to fall.
- The later Romans wrote textbooks about rhetoric instead of displaying rhetoric talent in actual political life; they wrote simple compendiums. Example: about animals or geometry, that barely captured the essentials of what earlier intellectuals known and often added superstitious beliefs that previous generations would have scorned.
- Cultural decline began before larger problems arose.
- Something was happening to the Roman elite, possibly because of the deadening effect of authoritarian political rule or because of a new interest in luxurious and sensual indulgence.
- Upper classes no longer produced many offsprings, for bearing and raising children seemed incompatible with a life of pleasure-seeking.
- Can be blamed on impersonal forces that would have been hard for any society to control or a moral and political decay that reflected growing corruption among society's leaders. The plagues would have weakened a strengthening society but would have not taken a downward spiral had not the moral of the ruling class already been sapped by an unproductive lifestyle and superficial

values.

- **As the quality of imperial rule declined, life became more dangerous and economic survival more uncertain, many farmers clustered around the protection of large landlords, surrendering full control over their plots of land in the hope of military and judicial protection.**
- The decentralization of political and economic authority foreshadowed the manorial system of Europe. This system of estates gave great political power to landlords and did provide some local stability. It weakened the power of the emperor and also tended to move the economy away from the elaborate and successful trade patterns of Mediterranean civilization in its peak
- Many estates tried to be self-sufficient
- Trade and production declined and cities shrank in size as a result
- Empire was locked in a vicious circle, in which responses to the initial deterioration merely lessen the chances of recovery.
- Economic prosperity was threatened by Arab merchants
- **Some emperors tried to reverse the tide.** Diocletian tightened up the administration of the empire and tried to improve tax collection. Regulation of the dwindling economy increased and he also attempted to direct political loyalties to his own person, exerting pressure to worship the emperor as god. Prompted him to persecute Christians with particular viciousness, for they would not give Caesar preference over their God.
- Constantine experimented with other methods of control. Set up a second capital city, Constantinople, to regulate the eastern half of the empire more efficiently. Result: Effective political and economic unit, Christianity spread under his sponsorship, but new problems were linked to his success.
- Division made the weakness of the western half worse. Attempts to regulate the economy reduced economic initiative and lowered production; tax revenues and army declined again
- Germanic invaders were welcomed by peasants as they were burdened with social and economic pressure of the declining empire
- German kingdoms were established in many parts of the empire. The Germanic invaders numbered at most 5% of the empire's population. The decline of Rome was so great that this "small, poorly organized force" was able to put an end to its political structure.

#### **Rome's Fall**

- Split the unity of the Mediterranean that had been won through the Hellenistic culture and then the Roman Empire. This was a sign of the end of the Roman Empire was a more serious affair than the displacement of the classical dynasties.
- For Greece and Rome they had not produced the shared political culture and bureaucratic traditions of China that could slow revival after a period of chaos.
- Mediterranean civilization had not generated a commonly religion that appealed deeply enough or satisfied enough needs, to maintain unity amid political fragmentation as in India.
- Fall of Rome divided the Mediterranean into three zones, which formed the starting points of three distinct civilizations that would develop later.
- The eastern part of the empire did not fall. Civilization was more deeply entrenched here than in some of the Western European portions of the empire.
- Emperors continued to rule Greece and other parts of southeast Europe, also the northern Middle East.
- The eastern empire, Byzantine Empire, was a product of late imperial Rome. Although its language was Greek, it maintained the authorities of late Roman rulers.

#### **China/Rome**

- Declined from outside invaders
- Suffered from serious internal problems before the invaders final blows.
- Three centuries of chaos
- Series of diseases that resulted from growing trade

#### **India/Rome**

- Declined from outside invaders
- Series of diseases that resulted from growing trade

#### **How were invasions on classical civilizations successful?**

**Political:** Deterioration of political institutions. All empires were under the weak- willed rulers which created weaker political boundaries, that can be easily invaded.

**Social:** The emergence of new religion created weakness inside the borders of the civilization as conversions were occurring and their religion were declining. As a result religion was given more attention to preserve their culture, but created a weakness inside allowing invasions to occur. Started up anarchy among people, which gave them the idea to revolt against government and start using more regional methods of government

**Economic:** Economic trade routes such as the Silk Road in China allowed plagues from other tribes to spread into the classical civilizations of Rome, China and India. As most inhabitants there had no immunizations from these plagues, most died and resulted in a diminishing population and also as a result, a weakened army.