

THE FALL OF CLASSICAL EMPIRES

Han, Rome, and Gupta



ANALYZE THE VARIOUS FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE DECLINE OF TWO DIFFERENT EMPIRES BETWEEN 400 B.C.E. AND 600 C.E.

BE SURE TO DISCUSS AT LEAST TWO OF THE FOLLOWING FACTORS IN YOUR RESPONSE; SOCIAL, POLITICAL, CULTURAL, AND/OR ECONOMIC.

Reasons for the Fall of the Han Empire

SOCIAL

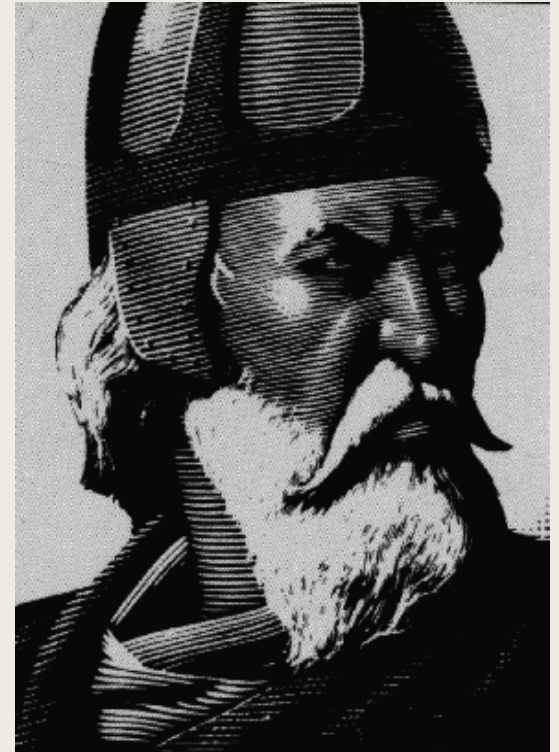
- INEQUALITY or Stratification = Landholding elite held all of the power
 - Led to a series of peasant uprisings and rebellions
 - Ex. Yellow Turban Rebellion
- DISEASE AND EPIDEMICS = transmitted via Silk Road and other trade routes
 - Small Pox and other Western diseases significantly reduced the population

Reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire



SOCIAL

- INEQUALITY or Stratification = constant battle between Patrician, Plebeian, and Non-Citizens (including foreigners and slaves)
- DISEASE AND EPIDEMICS = transmitted via trades routes through Middle East
- MORAL DECAY and APATHY
- DECLINE IN CIVIC DUTY = many felt that the empire did not help them and therefore they lost faith in the government



Reasons for the Fall of the Gupta Empire

SOCIAL

- REGIONALISM = from its beginnings India was broken into divergent regions making it a challenge to unify the entire society

Reasons for the Fall of the Han Empire

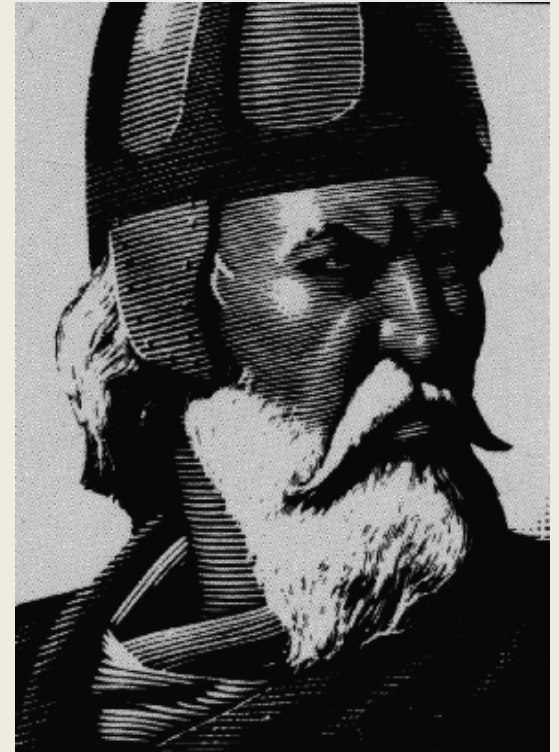
POLITICAL

- POLITICAL INFIGHTING
- GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION AND BRIBERY
- INVASION = bandits, rebels and nomadic invaders attacked weakened borders
 - Ex. Xiongu

Reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire

POLITICAL

- PROBLEMS WITH SUCCESSION = who would become the next ruler or emperor?
 - “Power Vacuum”
- ARISTOCRATIC CONTROL = most of the government, in practice, was controlled by the elite
- WEAKENED MILITARY = lack of tax revenue and interesting in fighting
- OVERREACH = too large to govern
- INVASION = from Germanic tribes
 - Ex. Visigoths



Reasons for the Fall of the Gupta Empire

POLITICAL

- LACK OF CENTRALIZED LEADER OR BUREAUCRACY
 - Ex. Raj Princes
- INVASION = from White Huns to the north



Reasons for the fall of the Han Empire



CULTURAL

- **RELIGION** = traditional beliefs in Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism challenged by arrival and popularity of Buddhism

Reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire



CULTURAL

- **RELIGION** = Christianity challenges traditional Roman institutions
- State not united by religion or philosophy
- Divided by **LANGUAGE**
 - ✦ Latin in west, Greek in east



Reasons for the fall of the GUPTA EMPIRE



CULTURAL

- **RELIGION** = Hinduism remained a unifying force and caste system continued to exist
 - ✦ challenges from Buddhism and eventually the influence of Muslim invaders

Reasons for the Fall of the Han Empire

ECONOMIC

- **CROP FAILURE / FLOODING**
 - ✦ Contributes to overall agricultural decline
 - ✦ -9 million die
- **FAILED LAND REFORM**
 - ✦ Attempts to break up the control of the propertied elite are not unpopular



Reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire

ECONOMIC

- DECLINE IN TRADE
 - Dependence on foreign products leads to trade deficit and overuse of resources
- LOSS OF TAX REVENUE
 - Cut into ability of government to financially support the people
- FAILING INFRASTRUCTURE



Reasons for the fall of the GUPTA EMPIRE

ECONOMIC

- REMAINED RELATIVELY STABLE
 - **But still controlled regionally**



Aftermath: China



- End of Empire = 220 CE
- Confucianism is able to hold society together despite the collapse of the government
- Broken into 3 kingdoms
- Note: not until 589 CE that China reunites under Sui, then Tang Dynasties



Aftermath: Mediterranean

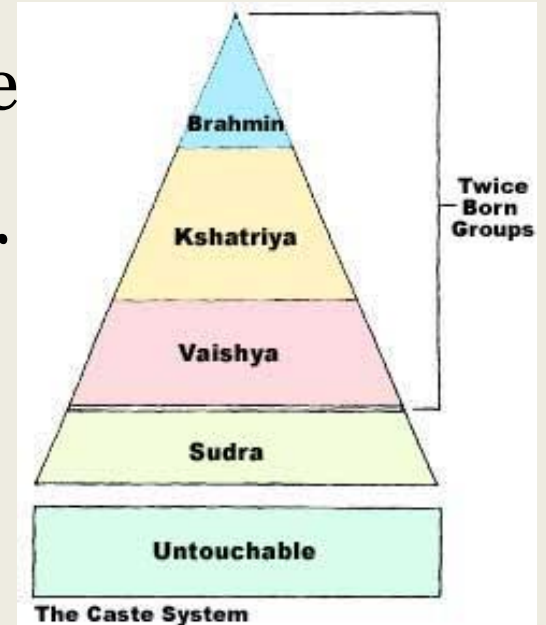


- End of Empire = 476 CE
- In 324 CE, Constantine moved capital from Rome to Byzantium, renames Constantinople
- The Eastern Roman Empire would adopt Christianity as the state religion, and merge religion and politics.
 - The east was older, richer and more stable than the west, with larger and most prosperous cities
- The Western Empire did not do this, so their was constant fighting between the Pope and kings
 - Feudalism's Roots are established

Aftermath: India



- End of Empire = 550 CE (last of the Classical Civilizations to fall)
- Caste system holds society together
- Hinduism gains against Buddhism
- Economic prosperity continues
- Regional factionalism prevents unification of sub-continent
- Note: India not united until British



FALL OF CLASSICAL EMPIRES: RECAP

- SOCIAL = “Decay and Disease” weakened social unity
- POLITICAL = “Corruption, Decentralization, and Invasion” made control of the people difficult
- CULTURAL = “Introduction and Evolution” of Religions challenged authority
- ECONOMIC = “Declining agriculture and commerce” reduced revenues and created social disruptions

Analyze the various factors that contributed to the decline of two different empires between 400 B.C.E. and 600 C.E. Be sure to discuss at least two of the following factors in your response; Social, Political, Cultural, and/or Economic.

STATES AND EMPIRES COLLAPSED FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS AND IN A VARIETY OF WAYS. *THE END COULD COME SUDDENLY OR GRADUALLY, AND IT COULD BE DUE PRIMARILY TO INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL FACTORS.*



OFTEN THE PROBLEM STEMMED FROM OVERREACH: THE STATE ASSUMED TO MANY RESPONSIBILITIES, SPENT TOO MUCH MONEY, OR CONQUERED TOO MUCH TERRITORY FOR ITS RULERS, BUREAUCRACIES, AND MILITARY TO HANDLE. THIS OVERREACH STIMULATED DISUNITY AND DECLINE AMONGST THE MAJOR CLASSICAL CIVILIZATIONS EVENTUALLY TRIGGERING THE FALL OF EACH EMPIRE.