

CAREFUL READING EXAMPLE

THIS EXAM IS ONLY AN EXAMPLE AND THE LENGTH AND NUMBER OF QUESTIONS MAY DIFFER IN THE ACTUAL E.P.E

TEXT A

The Mystery of the Maya Collapse

The Terminal Classic period in Mesoamerica between c. 800 and 925 CE saw one of the most dramatic civilization collapses in history. Within a century or so the flourishing Classic Maya civilization fell into a permanent decline. Once great cities were abandoned and left to ruin, in many cases, to be reclaimed by the jungle and so disappear from human memory for centuries. Some northern Maya cities, conversely, prospered like never before in this period, as did the Maya along the Gulf Coast and central highlands of Mexico; however, for the majority of the Maya in the southern lowlands, the period was nothing short of disaster and, as the historian M.E. Coe describes, 'This was surely one of the most profound social and demographic catastrophes of all human history'. The question, then, which has preoccupied scholars ever since the re-discovery in the 19th century CE of mysterious ruins built by, at the time, an equally mysterious civilization, is why did this happen?

Theory & Facts

Early in the study of the Maya collapse all manner of theories were presented as to what exactly had happened, some more plausible than others. Disease, a social revolution, drought, famine, foreign invasion, over-population, disruption in trade routes, earthquakes, and even hurricanes were held responsible. Unfortunately, the inscriptions left by the Maya themselves are strangely silent on the topic. To find the answer, then, we must reconstruct the past starting with what we do know. From the mid to late 8th century CE, relations between city-states deteriorated. There was a decline in trade and an increase in armed conflicts. We know that the death-rate increased in this period, and from 830 CE no new buildings were constructed in the central Maya area. As the Maya were fond of writing dates on their monuments and stelae, it is interesting to note that no dates after c. 910 CE are seen in the lowlands sites.

We also have evidence of large areas becoming completely depopulated and royal dynasties and elites disappearing without trace. Finally, we can say that the collapse was neither unique - smaller scale abandonment of Maya cities had occurred several times before over the centuries - nor was it a sudden one but rather a process of decline which occurred over a period of 150 years between c. 760 and c. 910 CE. Such a slow decline would seem to cross off the list disease pandemics and natural disasters, like earthquakes, as factors in the collapse. Further, in both these cases populations tend to recover relatively quickly, whereas the Maya lowlands were never significantly re-populated.

Then we must also consider what we do not know about the Maya civilization, as different guesses and interpretations of these points can colour the reasons proposed for the collapse. We do not know with any great accuracy the population figures in the Late Classic period. Nor do we know exactly how the Maya farmed, how agricultural production was managed and controlled, or whether trade of this produce was local, regional, or even cross-cultural. These are the facts of the matter and the latest state

of knowledge on the subject; now let us examine the various theories of how the Maya arrived at this situation.

What Causes Civilizations to Collapse?

Firstly, it has been productive to note the process of collapse in other civilizations, such as the Roman Empire. Differences in time, geography, and circumstances mean no direct correlations are possible, but the outstanding point of similarity is that no single factor accounts for a large civilization's collapse. Perhaps another similarity in the complex process which brought the downfall of other empires is the general disregard of rulers for the resources at their disposal and the long-term welfare of the people they ruled. Was this also the case with the Maya? The period prior to the Maya collapse is certainly characterized by extravagant building projects, unproductive wars, and over-exploitation of natural resources, especially land, forests, and water. An ever increasing population may well have driven the Maya to deforest areas which were subsequently eroded. One case which points to the running out of resources is the curious change in wood used in Maya buildings. Sapodilla was the architect's choice prior to the 740s CE for such details as lintels but was then replaced by the inferior wood of the smaller logwood tree. Sapodilla did make something of a comeback, but beams were never the thickness as previously. Had the Maya exhausted their supply of Sapodilla? Had the tree recovered over time or did the Maya even establish protected areas to specifically cultivate the tree?

Three Main Factors

Maya historians have generally settled on a combination of three main factors which could have caused the Maya collapse: warfare between city-states, overpopulation, and drought. The factors were not always contemporary or found all together in a single city.

Warfare had been a part of Maya culture for centuries, but its intensification and scale increased prior to the collapse so that cities began to build fortifications. Previously, warfare had often been token, in that defeat might result in only a small number of important figures being taken as captives. By the Late Classic period, war seems to have been much more damaging to all involved. The conquest of territory and the capturing of a large number of sacrificial victims now became a priority - the former perhaps to increase agricultural production and acquire resources and the latter to appease the gods and return to the more stable times of earlier centuries. The presence of large numbers of arrow heads at certain sites is further evidence that life in the cities was becoming more precarious.

There may also have been a military threat from foreign states. Supporting the invasion theory are several archaeological finds, notably at Ceibal where a figure known as 'Wat'ul' is depicted who has a distinctly non-Maya moustache and hairstyle but who is wearing Maya costume; stelae with glyphs which are not Mayan; a figure in a mask of Ehecatl; the wind god of central Mexico; and the presence of Fine Orange pottery from the Gulf coast. However, such evidence seems sparse to what one would expect to find if the collapse were down to foreign invasion and, significantly, few cities display evidence of deliberate destruction.

Over-population may well have put an unbearable strain on the agricultural production the Maya were capable of managing. Ever more archaeological evidence shows that Maya cities and peripheral settlements were much more heavily populated than previously imagined. Even worse, scientific evidence clearly indicates that the Maya lowlands suffered a sustained series of droughts between c.

800 and c. 1050 CE. However, it should be noted that not all cities suffered from droughts, as some lakes and rivers never dried up completely. For those regions which did suffer a water shortage, the lack of rain and repeated crop failures make it entirely conceivable that either the lower levels of society - 90% of the population were farmers - or perhaps more likely, non-ruling elites, rebelled against the ruling class, who could no longer justify their role as protectors of society and intermediaries with the gods such as Chahk the rain god. With the consequent collapse of the social structure and city infrastructure, those who could may well have migrated to the north and south and the early Colonial chronicles written in Yucatan Mayan do indeed describe a 'Great Descent' and a 'Lesser Descent'. There is no archaeological record of such a large population movement, only that after the collapse, the 60,000 square miles of the Maya lowlands was deserted.

Conclusion

The most reasonable explanation, then, for the Classic Maya collapse is a combination of interconnected factors. Warfare, social disorder, over-population, and unfavorable climatic conditions combined, perhaps not all together and in varying degrees and with different timing and sequence depending on location, to bring an end to the established order of the southern Maya lowlands.

As already stated, the Classic Maya collapse was not the end of the Maya culture. Northern cities and those in the highlands of Mexico and Guatemala survived up to the Spanish Conquest, and even today seven million people speak Mayan in Mesoamerica. The Maya culture suffered a terrible blow, but it did not disappear completely. In the power vacuum and general social upheaval left by the collapse, one group seized the opportunity to achieve regional dominance: this was the Toltec civilization, and it was they who would pass on the baton of Mesoamerican culture which had begun with the Olmec, been perfected by the Maya, and would end with the Aztecs.

TEXT B

The Qin Dynasty in Ancient China

Qin Dynasty was the first imperial dynasty of China. Its rise and fall was a long but legendary story. It was a story of a small state that managed to gather strength to be the most intimidating state in the realm. However, years after successfully unifying China, it fell miserably to the anger of its own people.

This imperial dynasty emerged from the State of Qin, one of the numerous states of the Zhou Dynasty. Every state in the central plains of China considered this state barbaric, as its people were influenced by many traditions of the barbarians.

Qin was situated in the western part of the realm. Compared to central states, Qin's position seemed to be very inferior. Qin was situated in present-day Gansu province of China. Its lands were not fruitful as the central plains. Water was also scarce. In addition, nomads were also rampant. However, Qin's position gave several opportunities. Qin was far from other warlike states that fought each other for supremacy. No one also wanted Qin barren lands. This eliminated the most dangerous threat of the era. Furthermore, these nomads provided Qin opportunities for expansion. If Qin could overcome these nomads, it could absorb these people, and their lands.

For 300 years after its foundation, rulers of Qin focused on fighting these nomads. Qin rarely participated in the politics of China. However, Qin did intervene in other states' affairs. For example,

Duke Mu of Qin helped place Chong'Er, the prince of Jin, on this throne, and became his faithful ally. In the fourth century BC, Qin managed to defeat all nomads and put them under its control. Qin then became one of the strongest states in the realm. However, Qin troops did not fare well against other Chinese states. The state of Wei attacked and defeated Qin. The Duke of Qin had no choice but ceded lands west of the yellow river to Wei.

This defeat seemed to terrorize rulers of Qin. In 361 BC, Duke Xiao became a duke of Qin. He really wanted to conduct statewide reforms. Fortunately, a statesman arrived from Wei seeking an employment. Duke Xiao was impressed with Shangyang's proposed reforms, so he appointed him chancellor of his state.

Shangyang reformed every part of Qin's society. He emphasized the usage of law and discipline. Everyone, including the heir apparent, must comply to his newly-enacted laws. He introduced meritocracy to the state, especially to its soldiers. Anyone who performed well would be awarded regardless of his backgrounds. Shangyang also forced many farmers to relocate to new regions. This expanded Qin's agricultural capability. The capital was also moved to Xianyang (present-day Xi'an.) Xianyang was surrounded by mountains, so there was only one entrance, which was Hangu pass. If Qin troops could secure the pass, there was no threat to the capital.

Qin's nobility surely resisted the reforms, but Duke Xiao simply ignored the protests. The reforms proved successful. Qin forces managed to crush Wei troops and seized many Wei cities. Wei had no choice but surrendered. However, the nobility's wrath was never faded. After Duke Xiao's death, Shang Yang was accused of treason, and executed. The new duke (later king), Huiwen despised Shang Yang, but chose to continue his reforms. Under his reign, Qin conquered Ba and Shu, which had fertile lands of the south. The conquest made Qin even more formidable.

At this point, other six states (Chu, Qi, Wei, Zhao, Han and Yan) realized Qin's strength. They formed an alliance named "vertical alliance" to resist Qin. The coalition troops attacked Qin, but failed to capture Hangu pass. Qin counterattacked and defeated the coalition army. Despite its success in fending off invaders, Qin government realized that this vertical alliance was still a dangerous threat to Qin. King Huiwen then employed a lobbyist named Zhang Yi to dismantle the alliance. Zhang Yi went to six states to create chaos and apprehension between those states. Soon, the vertical alliance was dissolved.

In the late 4th century BC, King Zhaoxiang rose to the throne. The king started a militaristic policy. Qin sent its army to capture lands of other states. Qin's general, Bai Qi, defeated and killed hundreds of thousands of enemy troops. In the Battle of Changping, Bai Qi buried up to 400,000 Zhao troops alive. These continuous defeats weakened other states significantly, paving the way for Qin's final conquest. King Zhaoxiang also dismantled the last remnant of Zhou Dynasty. The mandate of heaven was on Qin's side.

When Prince Zheng became king of Qin, other six states were more or less Qin's vassals. King Zheng started to send armies to capture these six states one by one. In spite of several setbacks and delays, Qin unified China in 221 BC. After the unification, King Zheng crowned himself emperor, and established the Qin dynasty. He was widely known as "Qin Shihuang" or the First Emperor.

The First Emperor was a fierce, and brutal man. He governed the country with his iron fists. Every citizen must obey to him and the law. If anyone resisted, he could be severely punished. This rule also applied to every subject, including new subjects he had just acquired from the conquests.

Qin Shihuang would like to abolish old traditions and delete history of other six states, so he started a campaign to burn books, and buried scholars alive. This surely infuriated many of his subjects. The emperor also forced them to build several gigantic projects such as the Great Wall, his mausoleum (terracotta army) and the Epang palace. Certainly, the population was not happy, but no one dared resisting, because everyone feared the emperor. The rebellion did not occur because of this only reason.

Qin Shihuang suddenly died in 210 BC. Huhai, his second son, usurped the throne, by killing the heir apparent. The second emperor was a tyrant. Soon, the peasants started the rebellion. This was followed by the nobility of the defunct six states. The imperial Qin army was decisively defeated by Xiang Yu in the Battle of Julu. The second emperor was assassinated in the capital. Within months, the new emperor surrendered to the rebel forces. He was initially spared, but executed at the end. The Qin Dynasty was over.

Part 2 Detailed Reading (25%)

80 minutes

- **This part of the exam aims to test:**
 - **your ability to identify the main ideas and important details of two texts with a similar theme,**
 - **your understanding of the relationship between the two texts.**
- **There are three tasks:**
 - Task 1 – Answer questions 1–5 about Text A (1 point each).**
 - Task 2 – Answer questions 1–4 about Text B (1 point each).**
 - Task 3 – Complete a short paragraph based on some of the important information from Text A and Text B (0.5 point each).**
- **For tasks 1 and 2, the questions are in the same order as the answers appear in the text.**
- **For task 3, answers may be from any part of the texts.**
- **You will lose points if you include irrelevant information in your answers.**

Task 1 (5 points)

1. What is the question that historians are preoccupied about?

2. What do the inscriptions left by the Mayans say?

3. How fast was the collapse of the Mayans?

4. What happened in the period before the Mayan collapse? (GIVE ONE ANSWER)

5. Why did the Mayans want more sacrificial victims?

6. What was written in the Colonial Chronicles?

Task 2 (5 points)

1. What was the main reason for the fall of the Qin Dynasty?

2. Why did people not want the land that the Qins occupied?

3. What did the Qins do in order to become one of the strongest states in the realm?

4. How did Shangyang improve farming?

5. Why was the Ba and Shu a good place to conquer?

6. How did Qin Shihuang delete history?

Task 3 (3 points)

- Use information from one, or both, of the texts to complete the paragraphs about two ancient empires.
- For some answers, you may need to write short phrases. For others, you will need to write only one word.
- You can use you own words or words from the texts.
- The first question (0) is given as an example.

It could be said that not one singular cause but a number of overlapping and interconnected factors likely contributed to the 0. collapse of these two empires. Of course the Qin Dynasty finally fell after the sudden death of its leader and the resulting 1. _____ that followed.

Things are a little less clear in the case of the Mayans. There was most certainly 2. _____ that resulted in a huge strain on resources. This was further

exacerbated by long periods of drought and external and internal conflicts. Conflict was also common in the Qin Dynasty but it was the terrible treatment of its 3. _____ that led to internal descent and dissatisfaction with the regime.

Although the Qin Empire eventually collapsed it left a huge legacy including architectural projects such as the Great Wall of China. The Mayans likewise left a significant cultural impact, with millions of people who still 4. _____.

ANSWER KEY

TASK 1

1. Why did this/the collapse happen?
2. They didn't say anything / they were silent
3. It was slow/it took 150 years
4. Extravagant building projects/wars/exploitation of natural resources
5. To appease the gods (and to return to a more stable time)
6. A Great Descent/and or a Lesser Descent

TASK 2

1. The anger of its people
2. The lands were not fruitful/the lands were barren
3. Defeated nomads
4. They relocated them
5. The land was fertile
6. They burned books/they killed scholars

TASK 3

1. peasant rebellion
2. over population
3. own people
4. speak the Mayan language/speak Mayan