



Unit 5, Lesson 6:

Why do empires collapse?

**A comparative case study of the decline
and fall of Era 3 empires**

What goes up must come down!

- Empires rise, but they also fall.
- This unit will look at empires at their strongest, and then explore why they fell apart.
- Turn and Talk:
 - Thinking back to Unit 4, what factors helped empires develop?
 - Make a prediction: Why did these empires fall apart?

Era 3 Overview...


1000 B.C.E. to 500 C.E.

Cities

- Between 1000 BCE and 500 CE in Afroeurasia, cities grew and multiplied.
- People from many cities traded with each other, sometimes across long distances.
- About 100 CE, the world's two biggest cities were almost certainly Rome, with a population nearing one million, and Luoyang in China's Han empire.
- Most cities at this time served many purposes. They were centers of government, religion, trade, manufacturing, education, and art.

Technology and Expansion

- New technologies allowed rulers to extend their systems of central command farther and farther away from their capitals.
- All across Afroeurasia, armed cavalry (soldiers on horses) replaced chariots as a tool for military conquest and control.
- Soldiers, as well as state messengers, could carry political orders and news across large expanses of land by horseback faster than any other way.



Other innovations helped empires grow as well, such as **advanced road construction** (the Persians and Romans), **canal building** (the Chinese), and the **use of the camel** as the main transport animal in arid (dry) lands.

Turn and Talk:

What other technologies helped empires grow and spread?

Trade

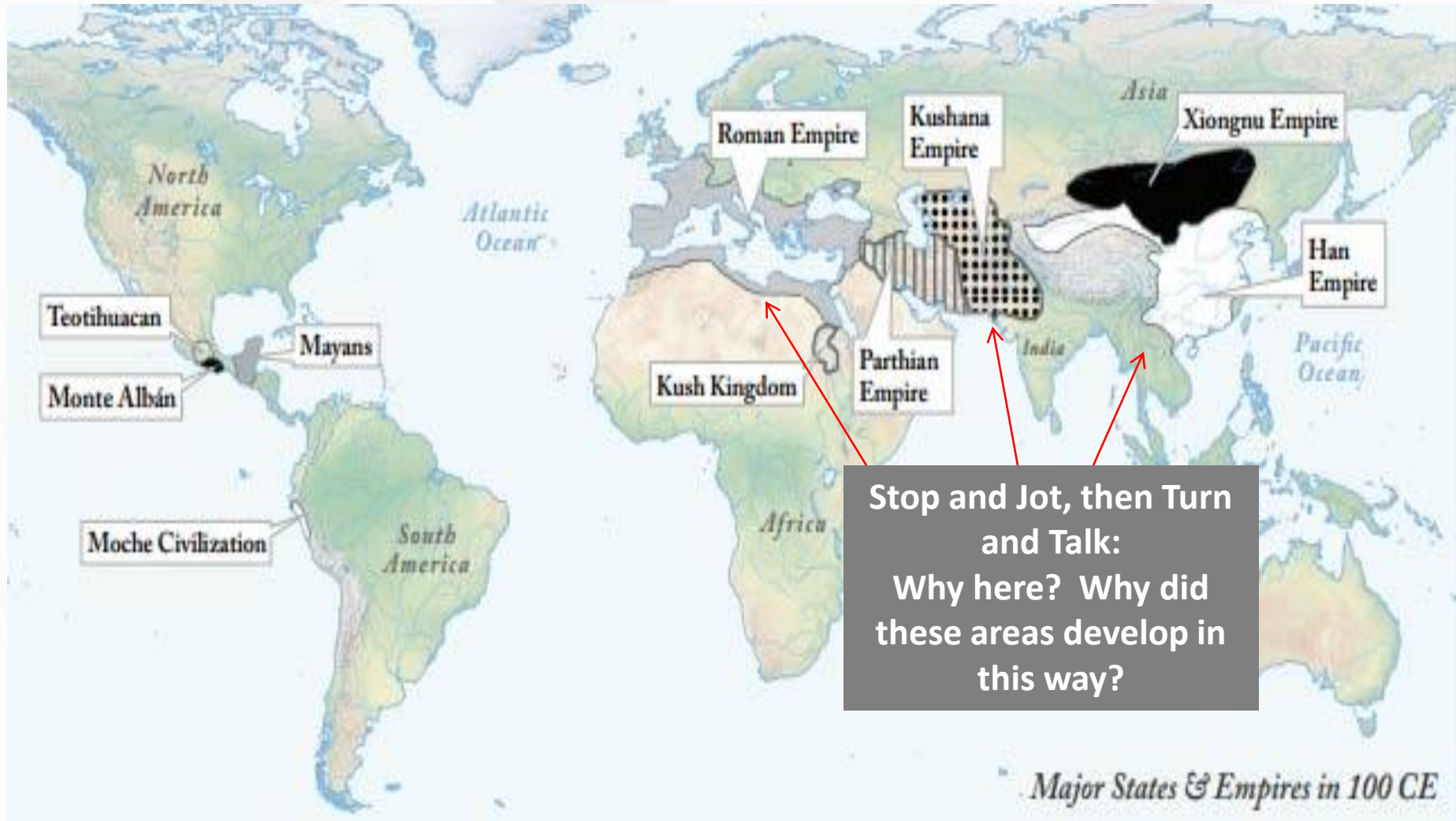
- Long-distance exchanges of products and ideas increased, not just within states but between them as well.
- Between about 300 BCE and 300 CE, merchants extended trade routes across Inner Eurasia on the Silk Roads. They also used ships to carry goods on the Mediterranean and Black Seas and the Indian Ocean.

Turn and Talk: Which empires traded with each other?

Social Hierarchy

- The majority of the world's population were farmers, herders, or foragers. They subsisted on their own production, and they lived short lives compared to today.
- In big cities, and in empires with lots of wealth, the gap between the rich and the poor increased.
- Cities also had groups of merchants, artisans, scholars, and other people with special skills who accumulated wealth, though not necessarily much political power.
- At the bottom of the social scale were slaves. This era witnessed a huge expansion of slavery and an organized slave trade in many parts of the world.
- In all the urbanized societies of this era, adult males dominated political and social life, as far as we know.

Geography... The Big Picture of the World

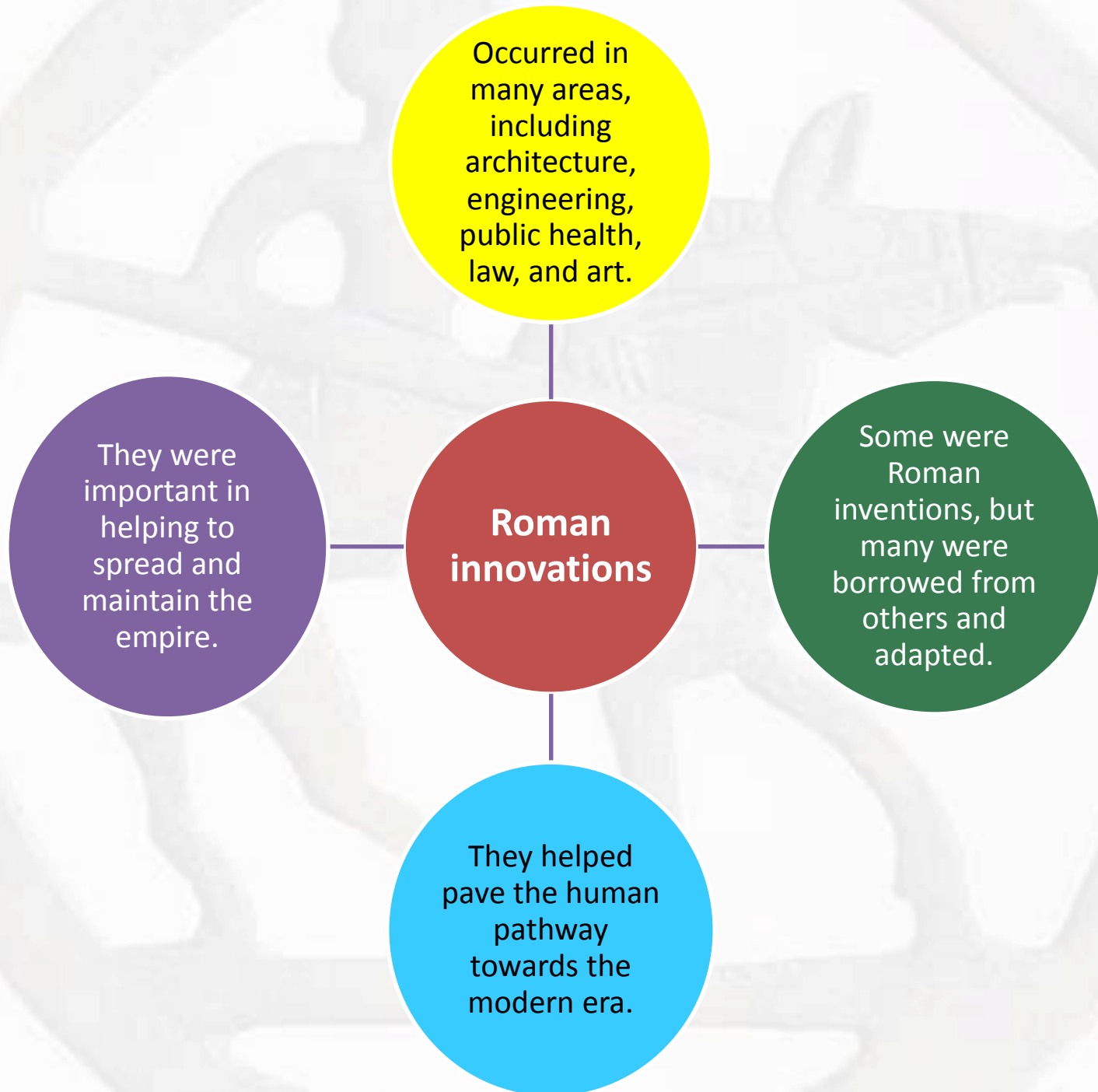


At about 100 CE , there was a nearly continuous chain of states, most of them gigantic, extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific, in Afroeurasia.

*(overview materials and map from World History for Us All;
<http://worldhistoryforusall.sdsu.edu/eras/era4.php>)*

A large, faded, light-colored illustration of a Roman chariot. The chariot is a two-wheeled carriage with a driver seated in the front, holding the reins. A horse is harnessed to the front of the chariot. The entire scene is enclosed within a circular frame. The text "Empire Review:" is overlaid in the center in a bold, red font.

Empire Review:



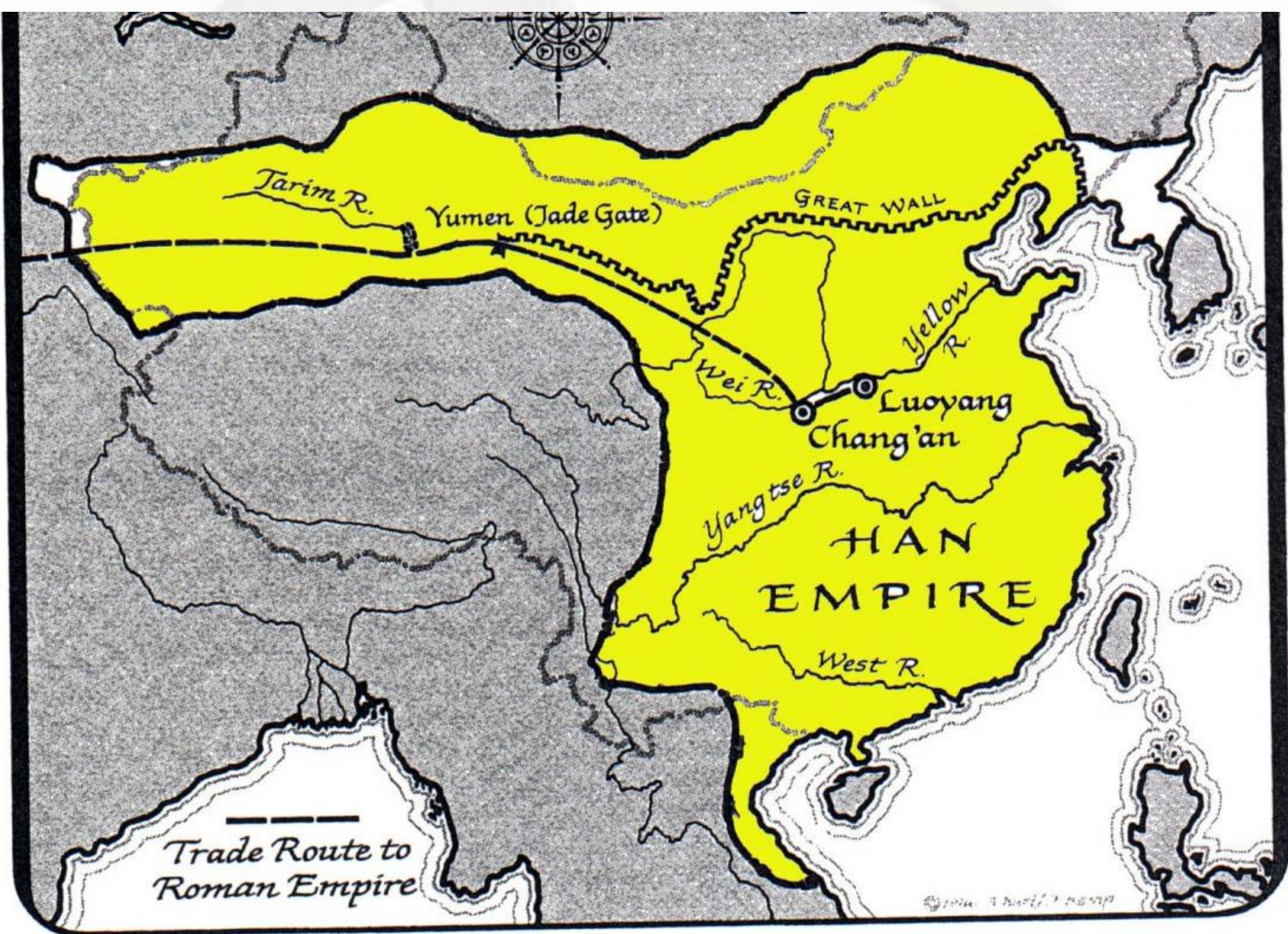
Occurred in many areas, including architecture, engineering, public health, law, and art.

They were important in helping to spread and maintain the empire.

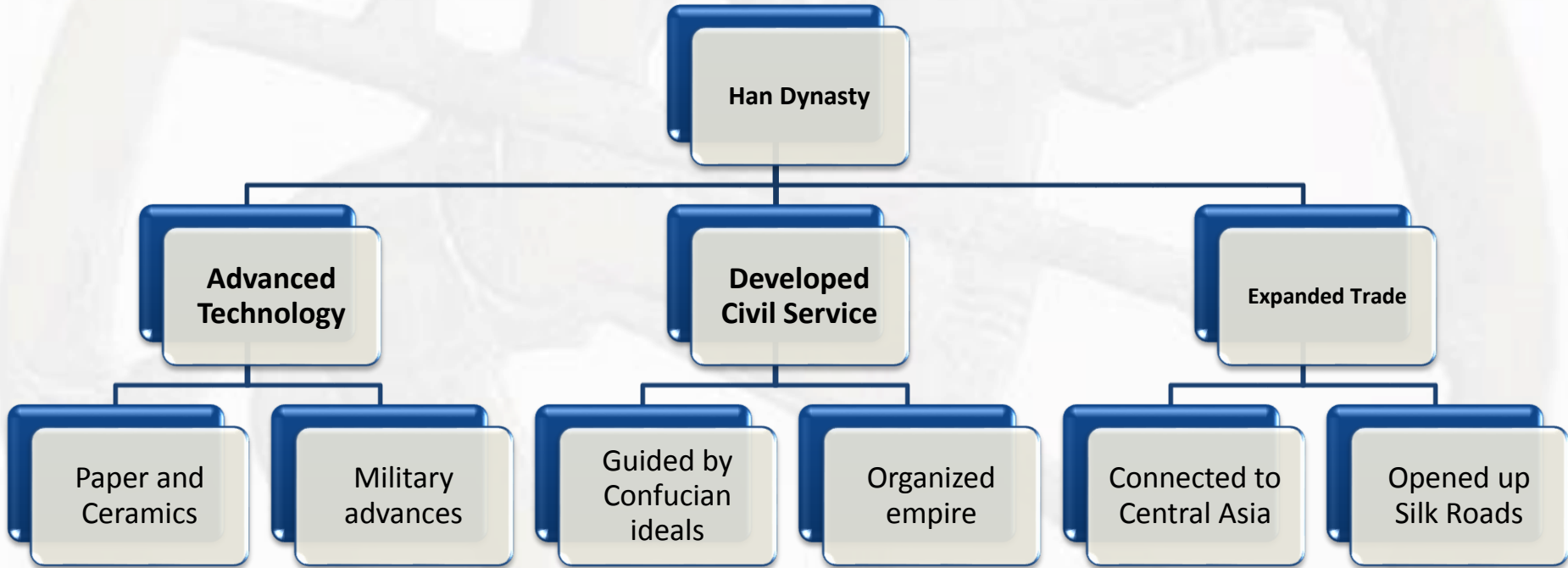
Roman innovations

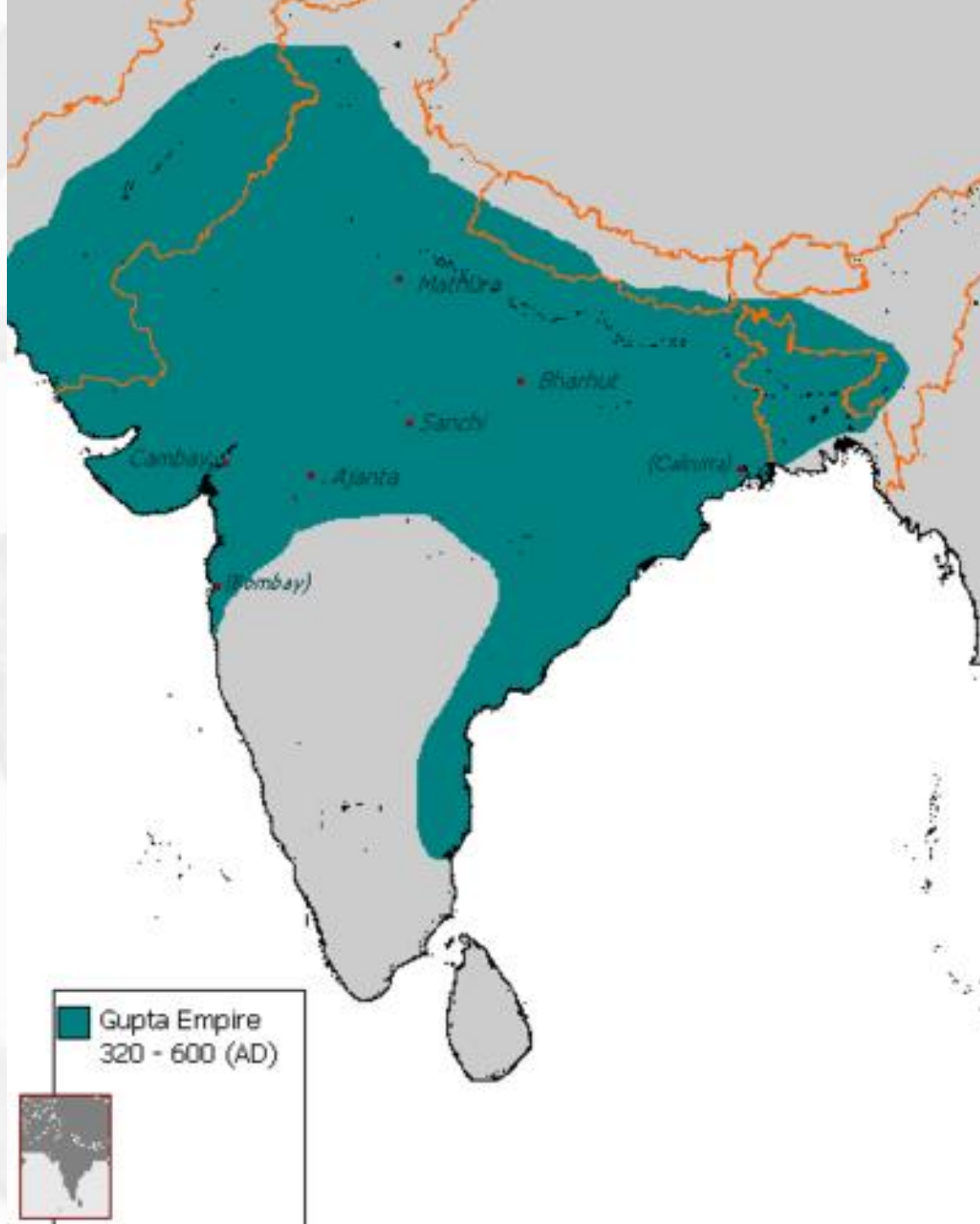
Some were Roman inventions, but many were borrowed from others and adapted.

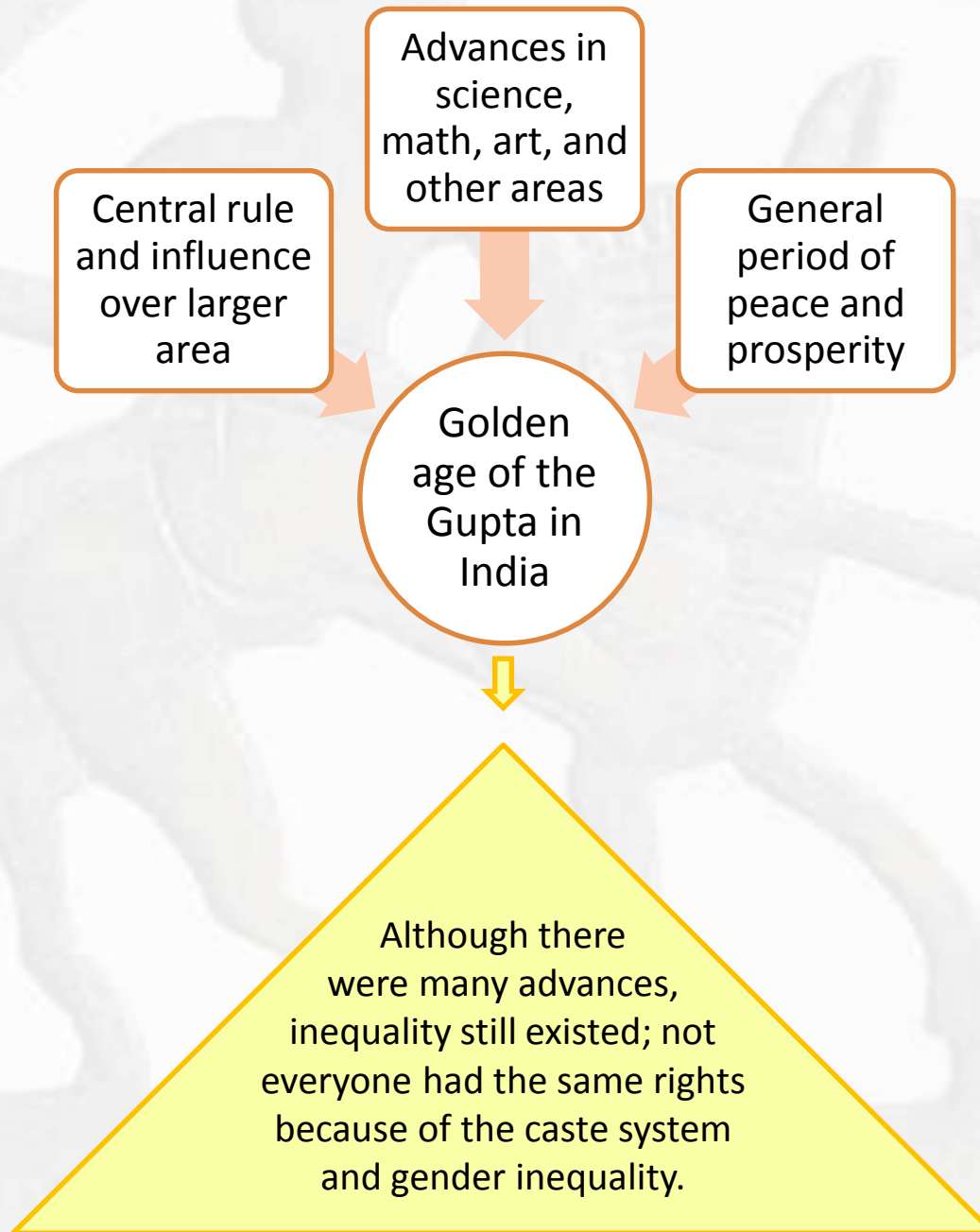
They helped pave the human pathway towards the modern era.




Han Dynasty Empire (206 B.C.—A.D. 220)







- 
- **With a partner, identify three important characteristics that these empires shared at their heights.**

1-

2-

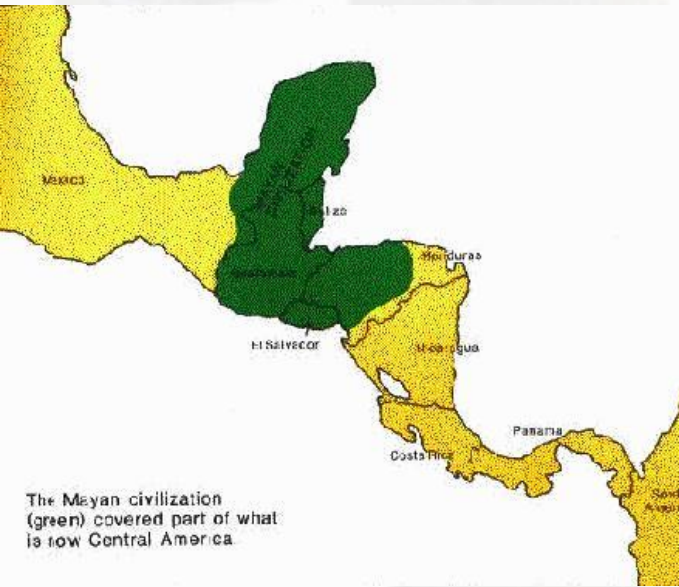
3-

The Mayans developed an advanced civilization, but had separate city-states that were never controlled by any one authority. They did not develop advanced weapons and transportation.

Romans and Han China developed empires with advanced transportation systems and weapons technologies. Their access to large mammals and iron ore made this possible.

Stop and Jot:

So why do you think the Mayans didn't form a unified empire?



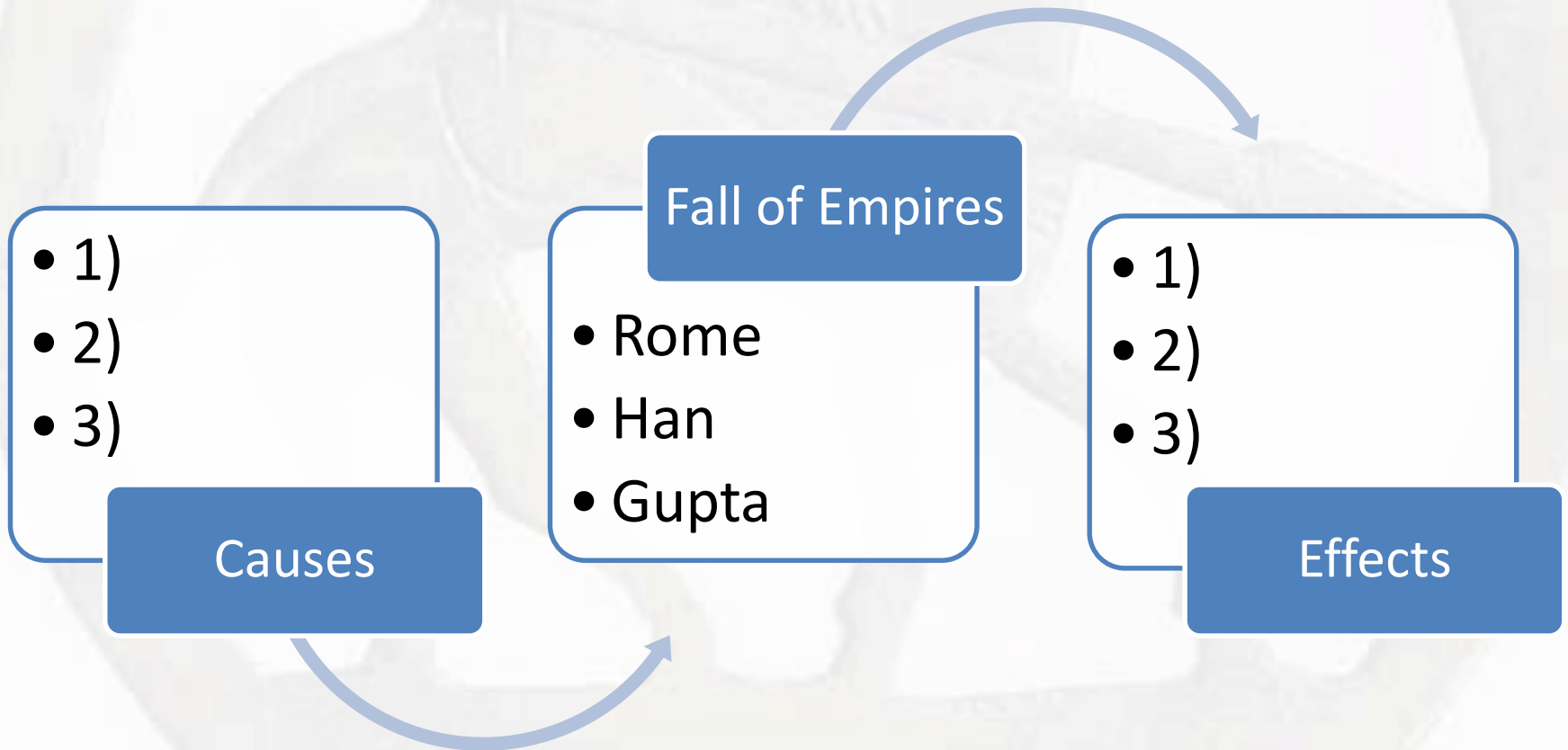
The Mayan civilization (green) covered part of what is now Central America



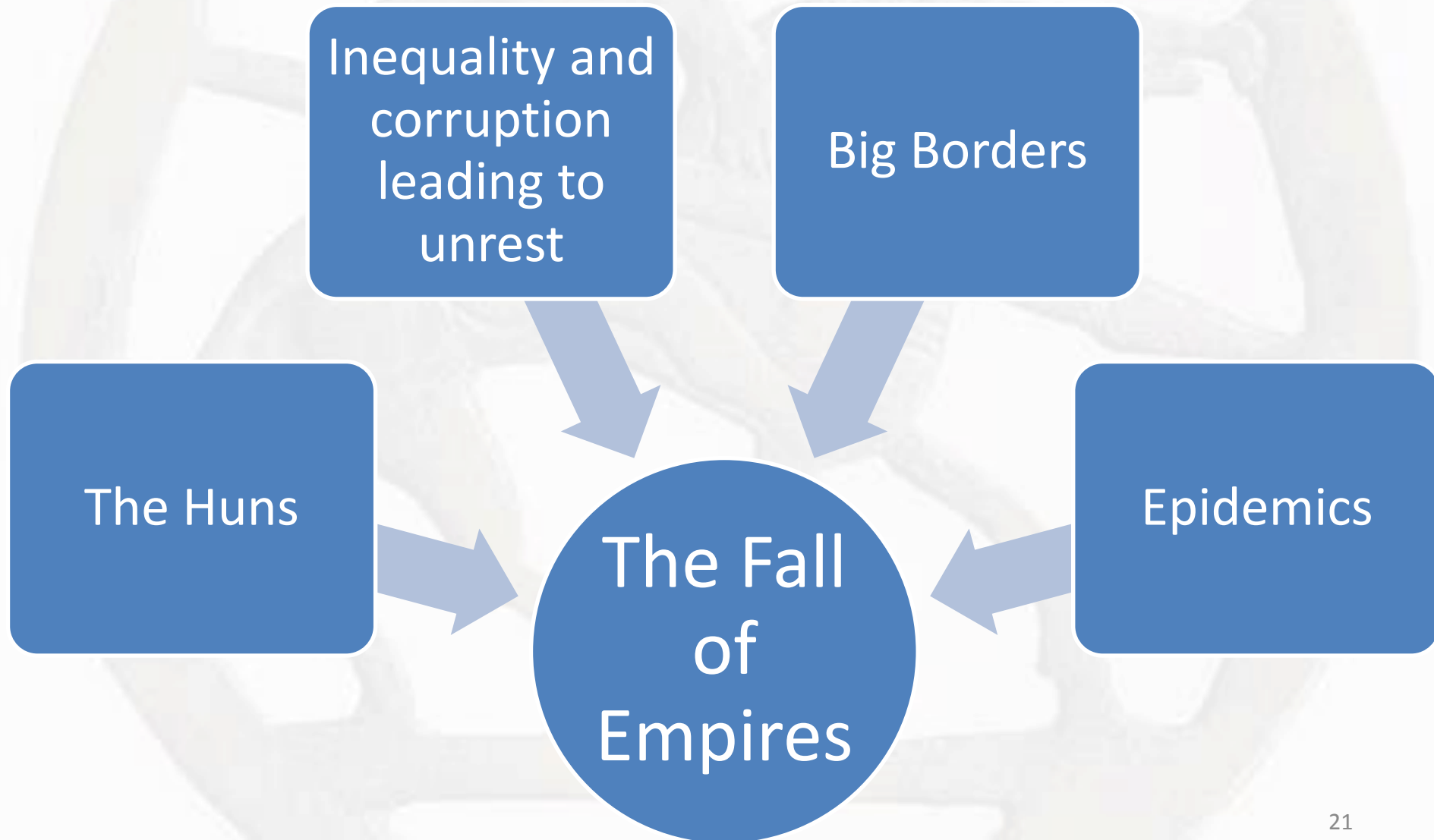
Why do empires fall?

Problems that were key factors in the fall of empires	Internal	External	Type of Problem (E,P, S, C, or N)	Which empires did this apply to?
Taxes				
Corruption				
Warfare				
Drought and/or floods				
Social unrest / rebellion				
Disease				
Invasions from outside forces				

On your own sheet of paper, summarize three causes and three effects of the Fall of Empires in Era 3.



Common features of the falls....



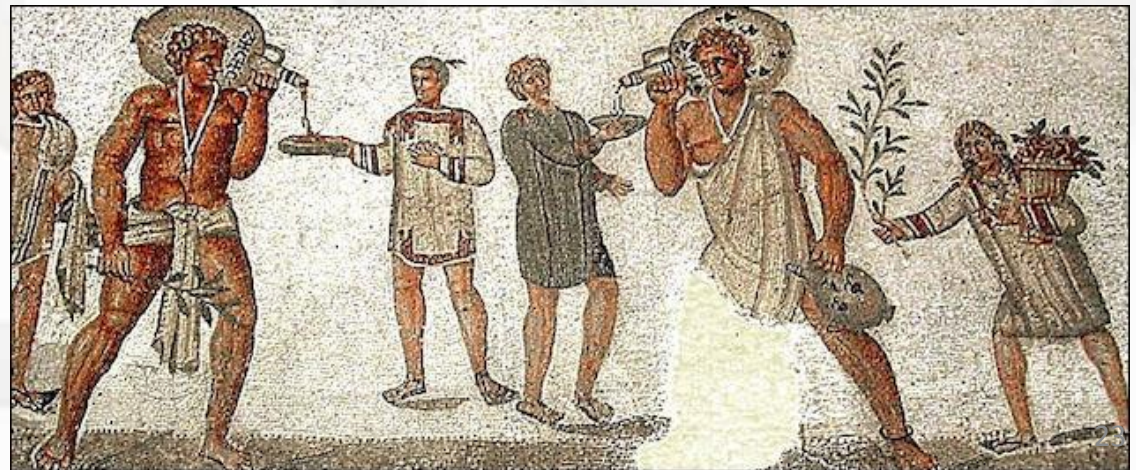
The Huns

- Nomadic pastoralists (herders) from the steppe lands of Central Asia (from around what is now Mongolia).
- The development of the stirrup allowed them to fight from horseback very effectively, even shooting arrows accurately from the saddle.
- They began to move south and west in search of better pasture lands. In this process, they clashed with Rome, Han China, and the Gupta of India, entering all of these territories.
- The Huns contributed to the fall of all of these empires.
- **Attila the Hun**, was the ruler of the Huns from 434 until his death in 453. He was greatly feared by the Romans at the end of their empire.



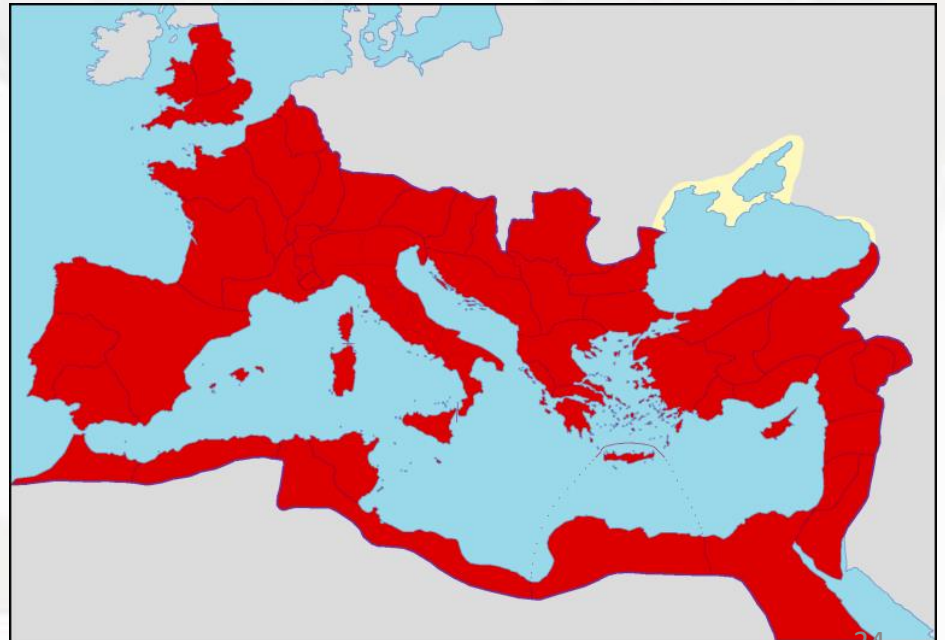
Political corruption and inequality

All of these empires were characterized by large gaps between the rich and the poor, and there was also a lot of corruption and greed on the part of the ruling class. This led to rebellions and unrest and weakened central control.



Extensive Borders

All three empires had vast borderlands that needed protection and guarding. Their borders grew too large for them to effectively patrol and control.



Epidemics

As trade increased and spread ideas and goods across this vast region, it also helped diseases spread. Large numbers of people in all of these empires died from these epidemics, likely weakening economic production and social stability.



How did these factors affect each empire?

- Han – The lack of a central government led to a long period of problems, but later empires emerged and took advantage of the intact culture and beliefs and the history of Chinese bureaucracy and dynastic rule.
- Rome – Governmental systems in the western part of the empire completely disappeared. Conflict and a lack of any central control over the former empire became the norm.
- Gupta – Culture and social systems stayed intact, and local rulers continued to play a key role.

Consequences of the Loss of Central Control

- Trade was interrupted at times, but never completely stopped. The different areas were more fragmented, but people continued to exchange goods over large areas.
- As political systems lost power, religion gained power. Christianity became very important in the former Roman Empire.
- The lack of central control in these areas led to a time of increased local and regional conflict.
- Cultural and technological advances didn't completely stop, but they did slow down. Some knowledge was even "lost," or at least less commonly used and applied, than before.

Exit Pass

What advice would you give to an emperor in one of these empires as they began to lose control?