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PREHISTORIC TIMES

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The paper contains an account of what happened some 30 to 22 thousand years B.C. – the impact of the Last Glacial Maximum (MIS2) on the natural landscape of the preceding Interpleniglacial (MIS3) and on the society of the Moravian Gravettian. It is evident that the impact of climate change was harsher as the economy of the hunter-gatherer society became increasingly specialised and its social structure more complex. Of the several variants of possible reaction to the change, what occurred in this particular case (judging on the basis of the environmental and archaeological record) was the migration of large herds of hoofed animals and of a part of the hunter populations to more favourable climate refugia.

2. Jan Turek

<i>Beakers Instead of Monuments. Tradition and Changes in the Society and Cosmology of European Farmers in the 3rd Millennium BC</i>	55
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The subject of this contribution is the phenomenon of development of prehistoric monuments as symbols of shared social identity, their disappearance from human culture and replacement by individualised

burials, natural shrines and a beaker ideology linked to growing social differentiation and, possibly, a new cult. The collapse of the tradition of collective values started unfolding in the middle of the 5th millennium BCE. A marked change – or even collapse of traditional values – did not occur however until the beginning of the 3rd millennium BCE. Hence the changes that took place stemmed mainly from the development of social relations and the transformations of the cosmology of Later Stone Age agricultural communities.

3. Alžběta Danielisová

***And Then They Quietly Disappeared... the End of the “Celtic Civilisation” in Bohemia* 91**

Celtic colonisation of our territory spanned almost the last five centuries BCE. During this period several phases of stability alternated with times of great change that transformed the whole society. The Celts were unable to withstand the last of these changes, which occurred after the middle of the first century BCE when the vacated area was swiftly filled in by Germanic tribes. The search for the causes of the decline of the Celtic civilisation in our part of the world involves an attempt to introduce the reader to available sources from various angles: historical, archaeological, palaeoeconomic, and the relation of human society to the natural environment. The discussion of these issues suggests that one perspective is often not enough.

4. Evžen Neustupný

***Rhythm of Archaeological Cultures* 119**

The paper presents a non-traditional approach to periodicity in the development of human culture based on alternating periods of boom and decline of arbitrary systems. This could be understood as the pulsation of the arbitrary aspects of artefact culture. The process occurs at more or less regular intervals. The symbolic concept of cyclic alternation of human cultures may have significant implications for a review of the classification of prehistoric cultures as such.

ANTIQUITY

5. Vivienne Gae Callender

***The Collapse of the Minoan Social System* 133**

Despite our knowledge of Neolithic and Bronze Age Crete being just over one hundred years old, recent times have been able to provide us with a fairly reliable history of the society’s rise from its early Neolithic settlements to its collapse just prior to the Iron Age. The reasons for the rather swift collapse of this vibrant society were many and complex:

from systems failures to invasion, from climate change to the inexorable heavy hand of geological misfortune. The following account is a snapshot view of Minoan Crete's development and achievements and the forces which led to its collapse.

6. Jiří Janák

Akhenaten: Monotheism or Monopoly? 187

Few personalities of the ancient world continue to hold as much interest as Akhenaten who carried out a fundamental reform of religion and political ideology in Egypt of the mid-14th century BC. Was Akhenaten then an enlightened religious and political reformer, an idealistic ruler, a sage, a mystic and an ecstatic? Or was he a mentally ill and a physically frail human being? This article represents an attempt to look into the theological and ideological background to the Akhenaten's rule and explore his motivation for carrying out such a momentous political, social and economic reform. Our focus shall be on often overlooked aspects of the Amarna reform, which include the issue of the structure of the Egyptian pantheon, the manner in which the gods were depicted under the classical, pre-Amarna cult, and during the radical change enforced by Akhenaten, as well as on the changes in the concept of the justification of a person after death and the fate of that person in the Afterlife.

7. Jakub Maršálek

Unity and Disintegration of Ancient China 213

The focus of this study is the formative period in the development of Chinese civilisation - from 2000 BCE to the rule of the first two imperial dynasties, Qin (221-207 BCE) and Han (206 BCE-220 CE). It points out the causes of the disintegration of the early polities that were based on expansion - so necessary for securing the loyalty of the subordinate aristocracy by providing them with land and luxury goods. Once the expansion came to an end, the bonds between the centre and its subjects loosened. Attention is also paid to the forming of rival centralised states that served as a model for the administration of the first imperial dynasties which united China.

8. Miroslav Bárta

The Heraclitus Law 245

The *Heraclitus Law* describes a mechanism according to which the factors responsible for the rise of a particular civilisation or culture are usually the same as those which, in the end, instigate its crisis, meaning thus a quick and deep loss of its complexity, usually followed by a stage of regeneration and a following rise. Therefore, if we want to understand why a system is exposed to a crisis, it is necessary to analyse the stage

during which the civilisation or culture was emerging. It is there, if the factors involved in its rise are identified, that we usually find the key to understanding the actual stage of the crisis.

THE MIDDLE AGES AND THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

9. Jiří Macháček

Svatopluk's Three Wands: the Collapse and Regeneration of Early Mediaeval Empires 271

Great Moravia is considered to be a controversial subject within European medieval studies. It seems to have been a transient society, which had reached a point somewhere between an advanced chiefdom and early state. However, Great Moravia dominated politically and culturally the eastern part of Central Europe in the 9th century AD. The collapse of Great Moravia it is an extraordinarily interesting example of a thriving Early Mediaeval empire, which experienced a sudden decline over a very short period of time. Its existence spanned roughly from 822, when the Moravians are mentioned for the first time in written sources, to the battle against the Hungarian nomads near Bratislava in 906/7, in which the Moravians no longer took part. It was a complex and strictly stratified society socially, with a relatively high standard of material culture. The development of Moravia can be documented by the large number of archaeological finds acquired over the more than half a century of intensive research activity. The investigation focused mainly on extensive centres with proto-urban characteristics (e.g. Pohansko near Břeclav).

10. Václav Drška

"Lazy Kings without Power" in the Midst of an Empire of Prosperity 315

The impressive rise of Frankish power under King Clovis, the same as the failure of his heirs at the turn of the 6th and 7th century, is a long-discussed theme. The study is a reflection on the causes of the decline of the Merovingians, but also poses other questions: was this really a collapse of power, or has our perception been largely influenced by the perspective of contemporary authors; were the Frankish kings of the first dynasty the real culprits in the disintegration of the state, and did this really occur, or is it (and to what degree) but fiction produced by writers in the service of the new dynasty? The restoration of the kingdom under the Carolingians can be approached in the same way. Their reforms bear the marks of both conscious plan and improvisation, which brought unexpected effects. These, too, were of a transient nature and did not protect the Empire from crisis. But was there really any other

direction for the early mediaeval state to take; is it really possible to contemplate collapses and regeneration in this context?

11. Petr Čornej

Disaster or Way Out of Late Mediaeval Crisis? 335

Comparative studies have shown that the Hussite movement was an inseparable part of the late mediaeval crisis (more accurately 'dysfunction') that which affected Western Christian Europe with varying intensity in approximately the mid-14th century and then continued to wane until the end of the 15th century. The crisis manifested itself on the demographic, religious, economic, social and political levels where it undermined the authority of the institutions of emperor and pope and destabilised the contemporary society. In the Czech Lands, where the crisis emerged towards the close of the 14th century, the effort to find a way out of the difficult situation resulted in Hussitism. This movement tried to resolve the current religious and Church issue simultaneously with the enforcement of a state ruled by the Estates.

12. Markéta Křížová

The Collapse of the Indian Empires? 359

This text deals with the question of the alleged collapse of the indigenous civilisations of America (Aztec and Inca Empire and the Mayan city-states) in the 16th century, *i.e.* after the Spaniards had started their colonisation of the American continent. Despite generally accepted notions, the author perceives these processes not as a "collapse", but rather as a part of a broader process of gradual integration of regions into larger wholes at the beginning of the modern period.

13. Josef Opatrný

The Long Road to Collapse; the End of an Empire on Which the Sun Never Set 393

As late as the 1760s the Spanish colonial empire was one of the largest world empires of all times, at least by land area. The economic decrepitude of the metropolis, its inability to avail itself of the economic possibilities extended by the colonies, and the political development in the Atlantic area at the end of the 18th century then sparked off an independence movement in the Spanish overseas territories, which in 1826 resulted in the collapse of the empire.

14. Jaroslav Pánek

White Mountain and Black Fall of a State Ruled by the Estates 437

Over the course of almost four centuries the Battle of White Mountain

(8 November 1620) turned into a symbolic milestone of Czech history and became rated as a national catastrophe or a return of the Czech Lands to the bosom of the Catholic Church. It is from this angle that national tradition and often also professional historiography evaluate both the prelude to the battle (the Czech Uprising of the Estates against the Habsburgs in 1618-1620) and the long-term preconditions leading to the crushing defeat of the Czech Estates. The current paper is an attempt to capture the White Mountain turn in history from the point of view of the drastic nature of the change, of long-term accumulation of inner tension (political, social, ideological and religious) in the Czech Lands, gradated external pressure (international policy, financial and military) and also from the point of view of the impossibility of return to the previous state of affairs after 1620. The collapse symbolised by White Mountain thus brought far-reaching and complex changes of Czech society, changes of a kind that made it impossible to later restore the classical state ruled by the Estates.

15. Luboš Kropáček

***Collapses and Continuity in the Islamic World* 459**

Allah created the world and will bring it to an end at a time only He knows. Both this general belief and the real experience of their own societies make the Muslims view their history as a course towards a climax, which was attained in the revelation sent to Muhammad and in his accomplishments. Afterwards, however, followed a gradual decline. Our paper gives a survey of interpretations offered by Western and by Muslim scholars to explain the undeniable decline and stagnation of the world of Islam after the glorious period of its rise and expansion. Our account is focused on the roots of decay perceptible in the social and cultural life, especially in the Ottoman Empire. Thereafter, a detailed analysis is given to modern discussions. Attention is paid to a variety of efforts to restore the erstwhile vigour and respect in the world as well as to opposite violent trend to bring about a final apocalyptic clash, such as manifested in the ideology and practice of the “Islamic State”.

MODERN PERIOD AND THE LATEST PERIOD

16. Eduard Gombár

***The Fall of the Ottoman Empire* 487**

The Ottoman Empire was founded on the traditions of Islamic universalism, the Turkish military fief system and Iranian bureaucracy. The first phase of the crisis of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th to 18th century was characterised by the decline of the classical model and, in consequence, military defeats of the Ottoman sultan by

the European Great Powers. In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire entered the second phase of the crisis, which it tried to overcome by modernisation modelled on the European example. However, the pressure applied by the European Great Powers under the diplomacy of the Eastern Question impeded the modernisation process; the involvement of the Turks on the side of Imperial Germany during the Great War led to the definite demise of the Ottoman Empire.

17. Robert Kvaček

***The Fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire And the Founding of Czechoslovakia* 509**

The paper's objective was to prove that although the fall of Austria-Hungary only happened due to its war adventure, which started in the summer of 1914, serious existential crises had been weakening the multinational monarchy for decades earlier. The relative political repose in Austria factually ended with the resignation of the Count Taaffe's long-term government in 1893; since then, the "old Austria" was heading - more or less obviously - towards its fall. With regard to the "starting position" of the Czech national movement 100 years earlier, the foundation of the sovereign Czechoslovakia in the fall of 1918 seemed a "small miracle". In reality, its foundation was a result of the fact that the Czech national polity program had not been implemented in Austria-Hungary even after decades of trying; the world war then completely stopped it: considering what happened with Austria after the war started, neither the Czechs, nor the Slovaks, or members of other nations could expect that the victory of the monarchy would enable them to carry out their national aspirations. This resulted into the above-mentioned foundation of the independent Czechoslovakia and other so called "successor states" in Central Europe.

18. Ondřej Houska

***A Doomed System? Myths and Facts about the Collapse of the Versailles Peace System* 529**

The peace organization that arose after World War I is traditionally denounced as a short-sighted Diktat that knocked defeated Germany to its knees. One of the main reasons for the Nazis' ascension to power and the start of World War II is often seen in the supposed exaggerated harshness of the so-called Versailles Peace System. This study indicates that historiography refuted such a claim upon the discovery of archives. In reality, the Versailles System could have been a functioning foundation for the peaceful reconciliation of international relations. Its main problem was not an exaggerated harshness, but the inability of Germany to admit its military defeat.

19. José Manuel Serrano Álvarez***War as a Phenomenon of Collapse and Regeneration******in the 20th Century*** 553

This article is an overview of the origins and causes of wars focused primarily in the twentieth century. The main elements of analysis are related to the philosophical and ideological motivations, as well as by structural changes in industrial societies in technology. The article tries to analyze whether the idea of progress and war have had a relationship in the perception of armed conflicts during the twentieth century. Finally, ideas and concepts that, from a political point of view, were important in the magnitude and increased war, especially until 1945, will be searched.

20. Martin Kovář***The Collapse in Time******The Fall That Saved Great Britain*** 573

The goal of this study has been to consider the causes and circumstances surrounding the fall of the British Empire and whether the Imperium Britannicum could have, in some modified version, survived, and potentially, for what amount of time. The result of this consideration is that the effective collapse of the Empire, which the British public came to accept in connection with Indian and Pakistani independence in 1947, and especially with the Suez Crisis in 1956, was already beginning at the close of the World War I, not to mention that most of the symptoms of the crisis could already be observed at the turn of the 19th century. The deciding factors were economic. The war that Great Britain led from 1914–1918 was beyond its means, and this applies even more so to the war from 1939–1945. The island nation was a victor at the war's end, however, the price that it paid for this triumph was terrible: complete economic exhaustion, financial, military, and political dependence on the USA, and – finally – the collapse of the Empire. With regard to the circumstances that accompanied the collapse of the colonial empires of other European states, the Brits managed the complicated situation rather well; the sentiment for “the good old times”, felt, and to some extent still observed in today's modern British society cannot change this.

21. Michal Pullmann***The Decline and Fall of the Communist Regimes in Central and (South) Eastern Europe*** 591

This contribution analyses the collapse of the Communist regimes from three perspectives – economic-political, socio-historic, and cultural. According to the central argument, the primary integrative ties of

the state socialist system were weakening and gradually falling apart during the later phase of Communism: the Communist ideological rhetoric, the homogeneity of society, and the ability to reach economic effectiveness and political unification. The unsolved problems culminated in the mid-eighties: Gorbachev made an attempt at systemic change with perestroika and glasnost; however, this attempt did not lead to the revival that Gorbachev had hoped for, but instead to the collapse of the entire system.

22. Jiří Ellinger

The United States of America after September 11, 2001

***The Beginning of the Decline of the American “Empire”?* 613**

The analysis of the position of the United States after September 11, 2001 points to the arguable degree of success of America’s response to the unprecedented terrorist attacks of 9/11, which together with the financial and economic crisis of 2008 have created the impression that the United States is finding itself in a deep crisis and that its global influence has been dwindling to give room to newly emerging powers. The current debate among leading American experts provides the material for this research into the question about whether the United States (marked by many as a present-day empire) is truly in a critical initial phase of decline and whether there are any useful historical analogies to its current situation as well the question about what the new 21st century global order might be.

MAN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

23. Jan Kozák

***Collapses? Collapses vs. Natural Disasters* 643**

The first part of the article introduces, discusses and compares two basic categories of collapses – those of natural origin and collapses due to anthropogenic causes. In the second part the reader is presented with a gallery of commented images – engravings depicting the world’s largest natural disasters (seismic and volcanic) spanning a period from the 13th until the end of the 19th century, which document and illustrate both the advancement in Earth sciences and the development of the global civilisation today. The brief conclusion describes the current state.

24. Petr Pokorný***When Processes Meet Events: Late Holocene Degradation And the Collapse of Temperate Forest Ecosystems* 685**

This chapter aims to show that collapse dynamics can be a part of natural processes at landscape level as well. To illustrate this phenomenon, we chose an example of the transformation of forest communities in prehistory. During 2nd millennium BC, productive, nutrient-rich broadleaf deciduous forests, which formed at the end of the Older Holocene, and which survived relatively steadily over the Middle Holocene, came to sudden decline in Central Europe. “Modern” types of less productive and nutrient-poor beech, fir and pine forests have replaced them. The working hypothesis, which has succeeded in supporting rich documents, points to a natural change in connection with the progressive depletion of the ecosystem through decline in biologically active mineral compounds. It is the same kind of development that was characteristic of the temperate ecosystems of our planet during all previous interglacial stages of the Quaternary. Nutrients, especially biologically active forms of phosphorus, have arrived to the ecosystems in the form of a wind-transported dust during the loess accumulation phase of the Last Ice Age. The humid and warm Holocene climate, which has been acting for many millennia to soil substrates enriched with this wind-transported dust, has resulted in progressive soil degradation due to the successive loss of nutritive compounds; surface acidification thus resulted in a retrogressive soil and biological successions. Against the backdrop of such gradual controlling climatic and related geochemical processes, numerous biotic and abiotic events can be observed – forest fires, windswept occurrences, erosion, immigration and expansion of new organisms. Were also people responsible? To answer this question, a comprehensive environmental-archaeological research has been conducted in the Czech Republic. Indeed, correlations suggest that people really could participate in the changes, especially through logging and nomadic animal herding.

25. Karel Černý***Epidemics in Human History* 699**

The chapter attempts to unpick the complex interaction between epidemic crises, the history of human society and its possible collapse. While epidemics have been “plaguing” the human race for millennia, we argue that they are by no means a homogeneous phenomenon. Careful historical examination has shown that they have to be studied from various perspectives. We start first with the term “epidemic” as it was understood by physicians in the past. The next section

presents three frameworks for historical research about epidemics: paleopathological, cultural, and bio-medical. Each has its own specifics and leads to a different understanding of epidemic crises. The final section is based upon the selection of several prominent microbiological agents (plague, leprosy, TB, syphilis, smallpox, HIV, flu) in order to comment on the specific aspects of their interaction with society. Although societal collapse, or fear of it, is an important theme throughout this chapter, we also suggest that “plagues” have often had a rather heterogeneous impact because the threat which they posed was sometimes eagerly answered, leading to progressive cultural, social or scientific changes.

26. Lenka Lisá

About the Collapses Hidden under the Surface of the Landscape 741

Using two episodes from different periods and different parts of the world, the text introduces the reader to a way of understanding the surrounding landscape and its predicative value in pointing out the possible causes and consequences of collapses of human societies. The reader is offered an excursion to the Bronze Age on the north-western margin of Prague where in that age the unrestrained activities of farmers triggered an ecological disaster. History is repeated in the second episode when the reader is transferred in mind to the eastern coast of Scotland, to the romantic landscape of the Culbin Forest.

27. Václav Cílek

Raw Materials and the End of the World – from Collapse to Regeneration 753

Due to population growth and the increasing demands of mankind, we currently find ourselves in yet another transitional period of European civilisation. A characteristic feature of this period is that we have reached the limits of traditional growth and face both relative and absolute scarcity of certain raw materials and resources. The raw materials which will soon irreversibly run out are not many, but there will be a relative scarcity of practically all of them, with the exception of aluminium, iron, natural gas and a few others. Most of the traditional deposits of gold, silver, tin, and also oil are approaching the last third of their lifetime. The author anticipates that in approximately the coming three decades there will be a concurrence of climate, economic, food and energy crises which thanks to our historical experience and the ability for regeneration we shall probably be able to successfully overcome, albeit at a palpable cost.

28. Vladimír Brůna, Kateřina Křováková, Peter Chrastina

Memory of the Most Landscape777

The authors reflect on the landscape as a space in which since time immemorial man has moved around, worked, lived and also ended his road through life. The specific subject is the Most Basin, known today especially for its up to 45-metres-thick coal seams. It has been the exploitation of this brown coal that has brought about irreversible changes of the Most landscape - a loss of its memory. The study offers a view of the Most landscape from many angles: it deals with its structure, the functions of the individual elements of the landscape and also with the identification of changes that took place in space and time - all this by applying many scientific research disciplines.

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