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The Middle Ages: Humanism

# Section 1

## Why Charlemagne’s empire died out?

Charlemagne (742- 814) led a great empire after the death of his grandfather and father. He rose to prominence because of his expanding wealth and his close relations with the religious elites (Popes of those times). Despite a large area under his control, he kept on expanding his empire through military invasions and building strong administrative setups (Davis). Several historians have shed light on various reasons for the downfall of his empire. There are some historians’ arguments on administrative failure, extraordinary reliance on close aides, harmonious relations with the Church and expanded land with the failed administrative rule were the reasons for the downfall of his empire. Davis has highlighted these reasons in the following manner.

* After overtaking the Papal States in the surroundings of his Empire, Charlemagne became so anxious to continue such adventures that he paid little heed towards the administrative restructuring of the captured lands. His people whom he appointed his representative there were also much careless and were least attentive toward the affairs of utmost importance (Davis 256).
* Charlemagne’s empire became so large that he often sought help from Church for financial matters, this resulted in the failure of his control on the financial matters.
* The last blow to his empire was the outside attacks from Vikings. They considered this falling empire an easy prey and attacked the empire, which resulted at the end of Charlemagne's reign in days(Davis 259).

## The feudal system on a new forming civilization

Ullmann argues that feudalism had enormous effects on the formation of new civilizations during the Middle Ages (Ullmann). Feudalism discouraged the formation of a unified government. The kings, knights and their closer subordinates were interested in keeping their control over the lands they use to inherit from their forefathers. In order to do so, they normally used to divide lands between them. This resulted in lesser administrative facilities for people living in those lands. This resulted in poor developments of those areas as the Kings and their associates were not interested in resolving the pressing issues of their masses (Ullmann).

Another important reason highlighted by Ullmann, which hindered the progress in the development of civilizations were reduced economic activities. Kings used to make deals with their friends normally in geographical proximities. They largely ignored the trade opportunities offered by the distanced empires. Moreover, Kings used to build personal relations rather than building them on economic grounds. The trickledown effect of such behavior impacted the routines of farmers and peasants, they then had to work for long hours to produce grans for sufficient consumption.

## Reciprocity as the backbone to the Middle Ages

During the middle ages, most of the daily affairs were based on reciprocal terms. State affairs relevant to trade, economics, cultural and social relations and also the bilateral empire relations were based on reciprocal terms. It was mainly observable in the exchange of prisoners and in the exchange of grains and things of daily use consumption. The reciprocity was also followed in the treatment of delegations which normally paid visits for resolving issues pertaining to planned military invasions (Hershey).

Within the empire, the kings also used to follow a reciprocal system. For example, any close aide or a loyal person was treated on the basis of how loyal he had been with the empire. The Kings normally used to grant large areas of lands to peasants who were hardworking. This in result assured the production of more grains and crops. Similarly, the persons who were serving on positions considered close to King were given high social status.

## Critique of the Song of Roland

In the Song of Roland, there are around five themes which in one way or another depict that how middle ages were important. The primary themes of this poem include Loyalty, benevolence to God, the Will of God and Duty. These themes depict that the masses were controlled by presenting them with an attractive side of everything. For example, as mentioned by Davis, Charlemagne was considered close to Bishops and Popes. This shows that he might have urged the Pope to spread a message of submission among masses. During the middle ages, Popes and Bishops were also considered to spread the message of submission to God and then to monarchs.

These themes in the song of Roland suggest that Kings and the ruling administer of that time implied such literary methods just to keep the masses as subordinates. Through the use of literature and by giving prominent positions to Popes and religious elites, they kept the masses in observance. Such techniques helped them especially in the times of war and clashes with other empires as well.

# Section 2

## The causal events which allowed the Renaissance to transform away from the feudal system. There were many events which allowed the Renaissance to transform away from the Feudal system. During the middle ages, there were very few interactions between people of different cultures. As with the time went on, people from different cultures and religions started interacting with each other. This slowly helped in shedding away the impact of feudalism and people became more opened and bearable towards each other (Bennett). Celebrations on specified events became a norm and it helped in making people more interactive towards each other.

The crusades also resulted in the downfall of the established empires and helped in making way for a renaissance, and resulted in the ultimate downfall of the feudal system. The Crusades resulted in the establishment of new governments, which were way better than the way monarchs use to deal with administrative matters. The foremost reason which helped in making people away from the feudal system was innovations and decentralization. These were some casual events that made the way for renaissance and ultimately helped in transforming away from the feudal system.

# Works Cited:

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