The fate of cities varied greatly, with periods of significant decline, and with periods of increased urbanization buoyed by rising productivity and expanding trade networks.

**DISEASES**

Justinian’s Plague (Bubonic) of the late 6th Century killed as many as ¼ of Europe’s population. A smallpox/measles outbreak killed off huge chunks of the Han Chinese in 162, 221, and 322. By 742, China had lost ¼ of its population. Increased urbanization and trade/commerce to arise (cities). Every city listed at the bottom is a trade city. Safe trade routes lead to economic prosperity & advancement (but also death/plague).

**AGRICULTURAL DECLINE**

With the lack of Political authority/safety, the agricultural output of the major cultural centers decreased. The chaos that ensued insured a lower crop yield. Along with the weather change known as the “Little Ice Age”, there was simply not enough food production to feed a large urban center.

**LITTLE ICE AGE**

At the end of this era (roughly 1250-1850; different groups have different ideas as to when this occurred), there was a period of cooling that directly affected population and agricultural output. Winters were colder. Glaciers encroached. Rivers canals froze. Generally it affected temperatures by only a few degrees and was not a “true Ice Age” in the technical terms.

**NEW CITIES ON THE RISE**

Novgorod, Timbuktu, Hangzhou, Calicut, Baghdad, Malacca, Venice

**CREASED AVAILABILITY OF LABOR**

If you add up the above factors, you come to one conclusion: There is less invasion, more trade, more food, and more people. So, there is also a greater availability of LABOR (people to do work). As we will see, LABOR will take on many different forms in this era (most often remembered by FEUDALISM & the GUILD SYSTEM).

**OLD CITIES IN DECLINE**

Athens, Rome, Alexandria, Chang’an, Pataliputra

While cities in general continued to play the roles they had played in the past as governmental, religious, and commercial centers, many older cities declined at the same time that numerous new cities emerged to take on these established roles.