

Recommended: “How Climate Made History”
2021

Thomas A. Burns PhD.

Klamath Falls, Oregon

“How Climate Made History” is a 2015 two part documentary, each part about 50 minutes in length, produced by ZDF Enterprises – Germany’s non-profit public television service.

This documentary is available on youtube.com in various abbreviated and full iterations and through Amazon’s Prime Video which carries the provider “Curiosity Stream,” which I strongly recommend for the high quality of its huge inventory of AV offerings in science and history [only \$25/year!].

“How Climate Made History” reveals the strong correlation between climate conditions and the development and demise through history of virtually all complex societies/civilizations/empires. Even the periods of oscillating growth and decay within the reign of these complex societies often correlates with minor but influential fluctuations in climatic conditions. This is true whether – as this documentary does – we look through history at empires in North Africa, the Middle East, India, China, Europe, or North and South America.

Climate changes on Earth are the result of many variables from regular Sun and Earth cycles to unpredictable minor and major cosmic and volcanic events. Overall, the rule that emerges is that to a very significant degree civilizations arise and fall as climatic conditions favor or deny such development [especially food production].

In the midst of this highly variable “natural” climate situation, here we humans are currently screwing around with planetary climate due to the effects of our own use of fossil fuels to support Western Civilization and its extensions in the vast array of its “tributary” global complex societies. Modern humans are highly adaptable, and in a period of relative climate stability, we have developed a complex society/civilization that is essentially global in scope. In the context of this unusual stability, we have nourished a population that has exploded and that is placing unsustainable demands on natural resources. Even in this stable climate context, humans are extraordinarily vulnerable due to exceeding the planetary system limits. And in our ignorance and hubris, we have the audacity to promote what can amount to devastating climate change OURSELVES.

Ultimately, “How Climate Made History” helps to educate us about the level of our vulnerability and to encourage us to radically change our behavior in behalf of the survival of our “civilization,” and perhaps our species.