

UNIT II: 600 - 1450 C.E.

QUESTIONS OF PERIODIZATION

Change over time occurs for many reasons, but three phenomena that tend to cause it are:

- Mass migrations - Whenever a significant number of people leave one area and migrate to another, change occurs for both the land that they left as well as their destination
- Imperial conquests - If an empire (or later a country) deliberately conquers territory outside its borders, significant changes tend to follow for both the attackers and the attacked.
- Cross-cultural trade and exchange - Widespread contact among various areas of the world brings not only new goods but new ideas and customs to all areas involved.

Some major events and developments that characterized this era were:

- Older belief systems, such as Christianity, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, came to become more important than political organizations in defining many areas of the world. Large religions covered huge areas of land, even though localized smaller religions remained in place.
- Two nomadic groups - the Bedouins and the Mongols - had a huge impact on the course of history during this era.
- A new religion - Islam - began in the 7th century and spread rapidly throughout the Middle East, Northern Africa, Europe, and Southeast Asia.
- Whereas Europe was not a major civilization area before 600 CE, by 1450 it was connected to major trade routes, and some of its kingdoms were beginning to assert world power.
- Major empires developed in both South America (the Inca) and Mesoamerica (the Maya and Aztec.)
- China grew to have hegemony over many other areas of Asia and became one of the largest and most prosperous empires of the time.
- Long distance trade continued to develop along previous routes, but the amount and complexity of trade and contact increased significantly.

This unit will investigate these major shifts and continuities by addressing several broad topics:

- The Islamic World - Islam began in the Arabian peninsula in the 7th century CE, impacting political and economic structures, and shaping the development of arts, sciences and technology.
- Interregional networks and contacts - Shifts in and expansion of trade and cultural exchange increase the power of China, connected Europe to other areas, and helped to spread the major religions. The Mongols first disrupted, then promoted, long-distance trade throughout Asia, Africa, and Europe.
- China's internal and external expansion - During the Tang and Song Dynasties, China experienced an economic revolution and expanded its influence on surrounding areas. This era also saw China taken over by a powerful nomadic group (the Mongols), and then returned to Han Chinese under the Ming Dynasty.
- Developments in Europe - European kingdoms grew from nomadic tribes that invaded the Roman Empire in the 5th century C.E. During this era, feudalism developed, and Christianity divided in two - the Catholic Church in the west and the Eastern Orthodox Church in the east. In both cases, the Church grew to have a great deal of political and economic power.
- Social, cultural, economic patterns in the Amerindian world - Major civilizations emerged, building on the base of smaller, less powerful groups from the previous era. The Maya, Aztec, and Inca all came to control large amounts of territory and many other native groups.
- Demographic and environmental changes - Urbanization continued, and major cities emerged in many parts of the world. Nomadic migrations during the era included the Aztecs, Mongols, Turks, Vikings, and Arabs. Long distance trade promoted the spread of disease, including the plague pandemics in the early fourteenth century.

THE SPREAD OF ISLAM

Religious zeal certainly played an important role in the rapid spread of Islam during the 7th and 8th centuries C.E. However, several other factors help to explain the phenomenon:

- Well-disciplined armies - For the most part the Muslim commanders were able, war tactics were effective, and the armies were efficiently organized.

- Weakness of the Byzantine and Persian Empires - As the Islamic armies spread north, they were aided by the weakness of the empires they sought to conquer. Both the Byzantine and Persian Empires were weaker than they had been in previous times, and many of their subjects were willing to convert to the new religion.
- Treatment of conquered peoples - The Qur'an forbid forced conversions, so conquered people were allowed to retain their own religions. Muslims considered Christians and Jews to be superior to polytheistic people, not only because they were monotheistic, but also because they too adhered to a written religious code. As a result, Muslims called Christians and Jews "people of the book." Many conquered people chose to convert to Islam, not only because of its appeal, but because as Muslims they did not have to pay a poll tax.

THE SUNNI-SHI'A SPLIT

The Arab tribes had fought with one another for centuries before the advent of Islam, and the religion failed to prevent serious splits from occurring in the caliphate. The two main groups were:

- Sunni - In the interest of peace, most Muslims accepted the Umayyads' rule, believing that the caliph should continue to be selected by the leaders of the Muslim community. This group called themselves the Sunni, meaning "the followers of Muhammad's example."
- Shi'a - This group thought that the caliph should be a relative of the Prophet, and so they rejected the Umayyads' authority. "Shi'a" means "the party of Ali," and they sought revenge for Ali's death.

Even though the caliphate continued for many years, the split contributed to its decline as a political system. The caliphate combined political and religious authority into one huge empire, but it eventually split into many political parts. The areas that it conquered remained united by religion, but the tendency to fall apart politically has been a major feature of Muslim lands. Many other splits followed, including the formation of the Sufi, who reacted to the luxurious lives of the later caliphs by pursuing a life of poverty and devotion to a spiritual path. They shared many characteristics of other ascetics, such as Buddhist and Christian monks, with their emphasis on meditation and chanting.

THE CHANGING STATUS OF WOMEN

The patriarchal system characterized most early civilizations, and Arabia was no exception. However, women enjoyed rights not always given in other lands, such as inheriting property, divorcing husbands, and engaging in business ventures (like Muhammad's first wife, Khadijah.) The Qur'an emphasized equality of all people before Allah, and it outlawed female infanticide, and provided that dowries go directly to brides. However, for the most part, Islam reinforced male dominance. The Qur'an and the shari'a recognized descent through the male line, and strictly controlled the social and sexual lives of women to ensure the legitimacy of heirs. The Qur'an allowed men to follow Muhammad's example to take up to four wives, and women could have only one husband.

Muslims also adopted the long-standing custom of veiling women. Upper class women in Mesopotamia wore veils as early as the 13th century BCE, and the practice had spread to Persia and the eastern Mediterranean long before Muhammad lived. When Muslims conquered these lands, the custom remained intact, as well as the practice of women venturing outside the house only in the company of servants or chaperones.

ARTS, SCIENCES, AND TECHNOLOGIES

Because Islam was always a missionary religion, learned officials known as ulama ("people with religious knowledge") and qadis ("judges") helped to bridge cultural differences and spread Islamic values throughout the dar al-Islam, as Islamic lands came to be known. Formal educational institutions were established to help in this mission. By the 10th century CE, higher education schools known as madrasas had appeared, and by the 12th century they were well established. These institutions, often supported by the wealthy, attracted scholars from all over, and so we see a flowering of arts, sciences, and new technologies in Islamic areas in the 12th through 15th centuries.

Islamic states in northern India also adapted mathematics from the people they conquered, using their Hindi numerals, which Europeans later called "Arabic numerals." The number system included a symbol for zero, a very important concept for basic calculations and multiplication. Muslims are generally credited with the development of mathematical thought, particularly algebra. Muslims also were interested in Greek philosophy, science, and medical

writings. Some were especially involved in reconciling Plato's thoughts with the teachings of Islam. The greatest historian and geographer of the 14th century was Ibn Khaldun, a Moroccan who wrote a comprehensive history of the world. Another Islamic scholar, Nasir al-Din, studied and improved upon the cosmological model of Ptolemy, an ancient Greek astronomer. Nasir al-Din's model was almost certainly used by Nicholas Copernicus, a Polish monk and astronomer who is usually credited with developing the heliocentric model for the solar system.

INTERREGIONAL NETWORKS AND CONTACTS

Contacts among societies in the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, and Asia increased significantly between 600 and 1450 CE, and Africa and Europe became much more important links in the long-distance trade networks. Both the Indian Ocean Trade and the Silk Road were disrupted by major migrations during this period, but both recovered and eventually thrived. Europeans were first brought into the trade loop through cities like Venice and Genoa on the Mediterranean, and the Trans-Saharan trade became more vigorous as major civilizations developed south of the Saharan.

Two major sea-trading routes - those of the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean - linked the newly created Muslim Empire together, and Arabic sailors came to dominate the trade. Muslims also were active in the Silk Road trade to India and China. To encourage the flow of trade, Muslim money changers set up banks throughout the caliphate so that merchants could easily trade with those at far distances. Cities along the trade routes became cosmopolitan mixtures of many religions and customs.

AFRICAN SOCIETIES AND EMPIRES

Beginning around 640, Islam spread into the northern part of the continent, bringing with it the unifying forces of religious practices and law, the shari'a. As Islam spread, many African rulers converted to the new religion, and centralized states began to form. The primary agents of trade, the Berbers of the Sahara, became Muslims, although they retained their identities and tribal loyalties. As a result, Islam mixed with native cultures to create a synthesis that took different forms in different places in northern Africa. This gradual, nonviolent spread of Islam was very conducive to trade, especially since people south of the Sahara had gold.

Between 600 and 1450 CE, two major empires emerged in West Africa, just south of the Sahara Desert:

- Ghana - By the 700s, a farming people called the Soninke had formed an empire that they called Ghana ("war chief") that was growing rich from taxing the goods that traders carried through their territory. Their most important asset was gold from the Niger River area that they traded for salt from the Sahara. The Arab and Berber traders also carried cloth, weapons, and manufactured goods from ports on the Mediterranean. Ghana's king had exclusive rights to the gold, and so controlled its supply to keep the price high. The king also commanded an impressive army, and so the empire thrived. Like the Africans along the Mediterranean, Ghana's rulers and elites converted to Islam, but most others retained their native religions.
- Mali - During the 11th century, the Almoravids, a Muslim group from northern Africa, conquered Ghana. By the 13th century, a new empire, called Mali, dominated West Africa. The empire began with Mande-speaking people south of Ghana, but it grew to be larger, more powerful, and richer than Ghana had been. Mali too based its wealth on gold. New deposits were found east of the Niger River, and African gold became a basic commodity in long distance trade. Mali's first great leader was Sundiata, whose life inspired an epic poem -The Legend of Sundiata - that was passed down from one generation to the next. He defeated kingdoms around Mali, and also proved to be an effective administrator. Perhaps even more famous was Mansu Musa, a 14th century ruler. He is best known for giving away so much gold as he traveled from Mali to Mecca for the hajj that he set off a major round of inflation, seriously affecting economies all along the long-distance trade routes. Mali's capital city, Timbuktu, became a world center of trade, education and sophistication.
- The Swahili city-states - The people who lived in trade cities along the eastern coast of Africa provided a very important link for long-distance trade. The cities were not united politically, but they were well developed, with a great deal of cultural diversity and sophisticated architecture. The people were known collectively as the Swahili, based on the language that they spoke - a combination of Bantu and Arabic. Most were Muslims, and the sailors were renowned for their ability to maneuver their small boats through the Indian Ocean to India and other areas of the Middle East via the Red Sea and back again.

THE CHRISTIAN CRUSADES (LATE 11TH THROUGH 13TH CENTURIES C.E.)

Pope Urban II called for the Christian Crusades in 1095 with the urgent message that knights from western Europe must defend the Christian Middle East, especially the Holy Lands of the eastern Mediterranean, from Turkish Muslim invasions. The Eastern Orthodox Byzantine emperor called on Urban for help when Muslims were right outside Constantinople. What resulted over the next two centuries was not the recovery of the Middle East for Christianity, but many other unintended outcomes. By the late 13th century, the Crusades ended, with no permanent gains made for Christians. Indeed, Constantinople eventually was destined to be taken by Muslims in 1453 and renamed Istanbul.

Instead of bringing the victory that the knights sought, the Crusades had the ultimate consequence of bringing Europeans squarely into the major world trade circuits. The societies of the Middle East were much richer than European kingdoms were, and the knights encountered much more sophisticated cultures there. They brought home all kinds of trading goods from many parts of the world and stimulated a demand in Europe for foreign products, such as silk, spices, and gold. Two Italian cities - Venice and Genoa - took advantage of their geographic location to arrange for water transportation for knights across the Mediterranean to the Holy Lands. On the return voyages, they carried goods back to European markets, and both cities became quite wealthy from the trade. This wealth eventually became the basis for great cultural change in Europe, and by 1450, European kingdoms were poised for the eventual control of long-distance trade that they eventually gained during the 1450-1750 era.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MONGOLS

The Mongol invasions and conquests of the 13th century are arguably among the most influential set of events in world history. This nomadic group from Central Asia swept south and east, just as the Huns had done several centuries before. They conquered China, India, the Middle East, and the budding kingdom of Russia. If not for the fateful death of the Great Khan Ögödei, they might well have conquered Europe as well. As it is, the Mongols established and ruled the largest empire ever assembled in all of world history. Although their attacks at first disrupted the major trade routes, their rule eventually brought the Pax Mongolica, or a peace often compared to the Pax Romana established in ancient times across the Roman Empire.

THE RISE OF THE MONGOLS

The Mongols originated in the Central Asian steppes, or dry grasslands. Around 1200 CE, a Mongol khan (clan leader) named Temüjin unified the clans under his leadership. His acceptance of the title Genghis Khan, or "universal leader" tells us something of his ambitions for his empire. Over the next 21 years, he led the Mongols in conquering much of Asia. Although he didn't conquer China in his lifetime, he cleared the way for its eventual defeat by Mongol forces. His sons and grandsons continued the conquests until the empire eventually reached its impressive size. Genghis Khan is usually seen as one of the most talented military leaders in world history. He organized his warriors by the Chinese model into armies of 10,000, which were grouped into 1,000 man brigades, 100-man companies, and 10-man platoons. He ensured that all generals were either kinsmen or trusted friends, and they remained amazingly loyal to him. He used surprise tactics, like fake retreats and false leads, and developed sophisticated catapults and gunpowder charges.

The Mongols were finally stopped in Eurasia by the death of Ögödei, the son of Genghis Khan, who had become the Great Khan centered in Mongolia when his father died. At his death, all leaders from the empire went to the Mongol capital to select a replacement, and by the time this was accomplished, the invasion of Europe had lost its momentum. The Mongols were also contained in Islamic lands by the Mamluk armies of Egypt, who had been enslaved by the Abbasid Caliphate. These forces matched the Mongols in horsemanship and military skills, and defeated them in battle in 1260 before the Mongols could reach the Dardanelle strait. The Mongol leader Hulagu decided not the press for further expansion.

THE MONGOL ORGANIZATION

The Mongol invasions disrupted all major trade routes, but Genghis Khan's sons and grandsons organized the vast empire in such a way that the routes soon recovered. They formed four Khanates, or political organizations each ruled by a different relative, with the ruler of the original empire in Central Asia designated as the "Great Khan," or the one that followed in the steps of Genghis. Once the Mongols defeated an area, generally by brutal tactics, they were generally content to extract tribute (payments) from them, and often allowed conquered people to keep many of their customs. The Mongol khans were spread great distances apart, and they soon lost contact with one

another. Most of them adopted many customs, even the religions, of the people they ruled. For example, the Il-khan that conquered the last caliphate in the Middle East eventually converted to Islam and was a great admirer of the sophisticated culture and advanced technologies of his subjects. So the Mongol Empire eventually split apart, and the Mongols themselves became assimilated into the cultures that they had "conquered."

TWO TRAVELLERS

Much of our knowledge of the world in the 13th and 14th century comes from two travelers, Ibn Battuta and Marco Polo, who widened knowledge of other cultures through their writings about their journeys.

- Marco Polo - In the late 13th century, Marco Polo left his home in Venice, and eventually traveled for many years in China. He was accompanied by his father and uncle, who were merchants anxious to stimulate trade between Venice along the trade routes east. Polo met the Chinese ruler Kublai Khan (Genghis Khan's grandson), who was interested in his travel stories and convinced him to stay as an envoy to represent him in different parts of China. He served the khan for 17 years before returning home, where he was captured by Genoans at war with Venice. While in prison, he entertained his cellmates with stories about China. One prisoner compiled the stories into a book that became wildly popular in Europe, even though many did not believe that Polo's stories were true. Europeans could not believe that the fabulous places that Polo described could ever exist.
- Ibn Battuta - This famous traveler and prolific writer of the 14th century spent many years of his life visiting many places within Islamic Empires. He was a Moroccan legal scholar who left his home for the first time to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. After his hajj was completed, he traveled through Mesopotamia and Persia, then sailed down the Red Sea and down the east African coast as far south as Kilwa. He later traveled to India, the Black Sea, Spain, Mali, and the great trading cities of Central Asia. He wrote about all of the places he traveled and compiled a detailed journal that has given historians a great deal of information about those places and their customs during the 14th century. A devout Muslim who generally expected fine hospitality, Ibn Battuta seldom kept his opinions to himself, and he commented freely on his approval or disapproval of the things that he saw.

Although few people traveled as much as Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta did, the large empires of the Mongols and other nomadic peoples provided a political foundation for the extensive cross-cultural interaction of the era.

CHINA'S HEGEMONY

Hegemony occurs when a civilization extends its political, economic, social, and cultural influence over others. For example, we may refer to the hegemony of the United States in the early 21st century, or the conflicting hegemony of the United States and Russia during the Cold War Era. In the time period between 600 and 1450 CE, it was impossible for one empire to dominate the entire globe, largely because distance and communication were so difficult. Both the Islamic caliphates and the Mongol Empire fell at least partly because their land space was too large to control effectively. So the best any empire could do was to establish regional hegemony. During this time period, China was the richest and most powerful of all, and extended its reach over most of Asia.

THE "GOLDEN ERA" OF THE TANG AND SONG

During the period after the fall of the Han Dynasty in the 3rd century C.E., China went into a time of chaos, following the established pattern of dynastic cycles. During the short-lived Sui Dynasty (589-618 C.E.), China began to restore centralized imperial rule. A great accomplishment was the building of the Grand Canal, one of the world's largest waterworks projects before the modern era. The canal was a series of manmade waterways that connected the major rivers and made it possible for China to increase the amount and variety of internal trade. When completed it was almost 1240 miles long, with roads running parallel to the canal on either side.

ECONOMIC REVOLUTIONS OF THE TANG AND SONG DYNASTIES

Even though the Song military weakness eventually led to the dynasty's demise, it is notable for economic revolutions that led to Chinese hegemony during the era. China's economic growth in turn had implications for many other societies through the trade that it generated along the long-distance routes. The changes actually began during the Tang Dynasty and became even more significant during Song rule. Some characteristics of these economic revolutions are:

- Increasing agricultural production - Before this era, Chinese agriculture had been based on the production of wheat and barley raised in the north. The Tang conquest of southern China and Vietnam added a whole new capability for agriculture & the cultivation of rice. In Vietnam they made use of a new strain of fast-ripening rice that allowed the production of two crops per year. Agricultural techniques improved as well, with the use of the heavy iron plow in the north and water buffaloes in the south. The Tang also organized extensive irrigation systems, so that agricultural production was able to move outward from the rivers.
- Increasing population - China's population about 600 C.E. was about 45 million, but by 1200 (the Song Dynasty) it had risen to about 115 million. This growth occurred partly because of the agricultural revolution, but also because distribution of food improved with better transportation systems, such as the Grand Canal and the network of roads throughout the empire.
- Urbanization - The agricultural revolution also meant that established cities grew and new ones were created. With its population of perhaps 2,000,000, the Tang capital of Xi'an was probably the largest city in the world. The Song capital of Hangzhou was smaller, with about 1,000,000 residents, but it too was a cosmopolitan city with large markets, public theatres, restaurants, and craft shops. Many other Chinese cities had populations of more than 100,000. Because rice production was so successful and Silk Road and Indian Ocean trade was vigorous, other farmers could concentrate on specialty fruits and vegetables that were for sale in urban markets.
- Technological innovations - During Tang times craftsmen discovered techniques for producing porcelain that was lighter, thinner, more useful, and much more beautiful. Chinese porcelain was highly valued and traded to many other areas of the world, and came to be known broadly as chinaware. The Chinese also developed superior methods for producing iron and steel, and between the 9th and 12th centuries, iron production increased tenfold. The Tang and Song are best known for the new technologies they invented, such as gunpowder, movable type printing, and seafaring aids, such as the magnetic compass. Gunpowder was first used in bamboo flame throwers, and by the 11th century inventors had constructed crude bombs.
- Financial inventions - Because trade was so strong and copper became scarce, Chinese merchants developed paper money as an alternative to coins. Letters of credit called "flying cash" allowed merchants to deposit money in one location and have it available in another. The Chinese also used checks which allowed drawing funds deposited with bankers.

NEO-CONFUCIANISM

The conflict between Buddhism and Confucianism during the late Tang Dynasty eased under the Songs, partly because of the development of Neo-Confucianism. Classical Confucians were concerned with practical issues of politics and morality, and their main goal was an ordered social and political structure. Neo-Confucians also became familiar with Buddhist beliefs, such as the nature of the soul and the individual's spiritual relationships. They came to refer to *li*, a concept that defined a spiritual presence similar to the universal spirit of both Hinduism and Buddhism. This new form of Confucianism was an important development because it reconciled Confucianism with Buddhism, and because it influenced philosophical thought in China, Korea, Vietnam, and Japan in all subsequent eras.

PATRIARCHAL SOCIAL STRUCTURES

As wealth and agricultural productivity increase, the patriarchal social structure of Chinese society also tightened. With family fortunes to preserve, elites insured the purity of their lines by further confining women to the home. The custom of foot binding became very popular among these families. Foot binding involved tightly wrapping young girls' feet so that natural growth was seriously impaired. The result was a tiny malformed foot with the toes curled under and the bones breaking in the process. The women generally could not walk except with canes. Peasants and middle class women did not bind their feet because it was impractical, but for elite women, the practice - like wearing veils in Islamic lands - indicated their subservience to their male guardians.

KOREA AND JAPAN

During the 7th century Tang armies conquered much of Korea, resulting in the Korean Silla Dynasty's king recognizing the Tang emperor as his overlord. Tang forces withdrew from the peninsula, and even though Korea paid tribute to China, the Silla rulers were allowed to have a great deal of autonomy. Significantly, though, the tributary relationship developed in a great deal of Chinese influence diffusing to Korea.

On the other hand, Chinese armies never invaded Japan, and even Kublai Khan's great forces could not overcome the treacherous straits that lie between Korea and Japan. The straits had isolated Japan since its beginnings, and its many islands and mountainous terrain led to separations among people who lived there. As a result, small states dominated by aristocratic clans developed, with agricultural communities developing wherever they were possible. Some Chinese influence, such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Chinese writing characters diffused to Japan, but it remained unique in many ways. Two examples are:

- Shintoism - This native religion venerated ancestors, but also had a host of nature spirits and deities. Confucianism and Buddhism did not replace Shintoism, and it remained as an important religion in Japan.
- Separation of imperial power from real political power - Even though a Japanese emperor did emerge to rule the various clans, he served as a ceremonial figurehead and symbol of authority. The family that really ran things from 794 to 1188 were the Fujiwaras - who had military might that allowed them to manipulate the emperor. An important divergence from Chinese influence occurred during the late 11th century when the Minamoto clan seized power and installed their leader as the shogun, a military leader who ruled in place of the emperor.

The Japanese developed a system of feudalism, a political and economic system less developed than those of centralized empires, but more powerful than a purely local government. Feudalism was accompanied by a set of political values that emphasized mutual ties, obligations, and loyalties. The Japanese elites - who came to be known as daimyos - found military talent in the samurai, professional warriors who swore loyalty to them. Samurai's lived by a warrior's code - the bushido - that required them to commit suicide (seppuku) by disembowelment if they failed their masters.

DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE (500-1450 C.E.)

The era from about 500 to 1000 C.E. is sometimes referred to as the "Dark Ages" in European history, partly because many aspects of the Roman civilization were lost, such as written language, advanced architectural and building techniques, complex government, and access to long-distance trade. For the most part, these early people of Europe could not read or write, and lived much as their nomadic ancestors had. In their isolation, they slowly cleared the forested areas for farming, but their greatest need was for protection. Dangers lay not only from animals in the forests, but also from other people that had settled in nearby areas. However, the need for protection grew to be most important when the Vikings from Scandinavia invaded many areas of Europe in the 8th and 9th centuries, followed by the Magyars, who came from the east in the late 9th century. In response, Europeans established feudalism, with many features similar to Japanese feudalism, but also with many differences.

European feudal institutions revolved around political and military relationships.. The feudal political order developed into a complicated network of lord-vassal relationships, with lords having overlords, and overlords owing allegiance to kings. On these foundations early kingdoms, such as England and France, were built, but in other areas, such as modern-day Germany, the feudal organization remained highly decentralized.

COMPARATIVE FEUDALISM - JAPAN AND EUROPE

	JAPAN	EUROPE
Similarities	System was grounded in political values that embraced all participants.	
	The idea of mutual ties and obligations was strong, with rituals and institutions that expressed them.	
	Feudalism was highly militaristic, with values such as physical courage, personal or family alliances, loyalty, ritualized combat, and contempt for non-warriors.	
Differences	Feudalistic ties relied on group and individual loyalties.	Feudalistic ties were sealed by negotiated contracts, with explicit assurances of the advantages of the arrangement.
	Legacy was a group consciousness in which collective decision-making teams were eventually linked to the state.	Legacy was the reliance on parliamentary institutions in which participants could discuss and defend legal interests against the central monarch.

THE DIVISION OF CHRISTENDOM

The Roman Empire was divided into two parts during the 4th century C.E. when imperial power shifted eastward from Rome to Byzantium. The emperor Constantine moved to the new center, and renamed the city Constantinople. As Christianity spread, it developed religious centers in both Rome and Constantinople, and as the two areas grew more politically independent, Christian practices and beliefs also split in different directions. Even though the church remained officially tied for many years after Rome fell in 476, in effect two different churches developed: the Eastern Orthodox Church in the east and the Roman Catholic Church in the west. The schism became official in 1054, when the Roman Pope and the Patriarch in Constantinople agreed that their religious differences could not be reconciled.

THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

While the west was falling to the Germanic invasions in the 4th and 5th centuries C.E., the eastern empire remained intact, partly because it withstood fewer attacks. This Byzantine Empire survived for almost a millennium after the western empire collapsed. For a time, it was a powerful Christian Empire, but it came under pressure from Islamic Turkish people by the 11th century, and finally fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453.

THE CHURCH IN THE WEST

While political and economic decentralization characterized western Europe between 500 and 1000 C.E., the Catholic Church emerged as a unifying institution with great religious, political, and economic power. The time period is sometimes referred to as the "Age of Faith" because the church was so central to life in Europe.

The Catholic Church established its influence in several ways:

- Development of a church hierarchy - The Pope in Rome came to be the head of the church, with cardinals that reported to him. Under the cardinals were archbishops, who governed bishops that were spread all over Europe. Individual priests lived in villages and towns and were supervised by the bishops.
- Establishment of wandering ministries - Not only did the church have priests attached to almost every village, but it also had wandering priests who represented its influence. Two orders were the Franciscans, known for their vows of poverty and ability to relate to peasants, and the Dominicans, a more scholarly order who ministered more to educational needs.
- The establishment of monasteries- Monasteries also spread all over Europe. These retreats from civilization were inhabited by monks who devoted their lives to study, worship, and hard work. Convents for nuns also were established, and both monasteries and convents served many vital functions:
 - 1) Refuge for those in trouble - The monasteries and convents were seen as safe havens that represented the protection that the church offered to people.
 - 2) Communication to the central church hierarchy - Abbots headed monasteries, and they served as another means of keeping church officials in touch with what was going on.
 - 3) Centers of scholarship, education, and libraries - Monks very often were the only people in Europe that could read and write, and they spent large amounts of time copying ancient manuscripts that otherwise might have been lost in the various invasions. Some monasteries eventually formed the first European universities that began their library collections with books the monks had copied.

THE LATE MIDDLE AGES - 1000- 1450 C.E.

Starting around 1000, Europe showed signs of revitalizing, largely because of the results of the Christian Crusades that put Europeans in touch with more sophisticated cultures to the east through the long-distance trade routes. Before about 1300 Europe was populated by serfs, or peasants tied to lands owned by nobility, living in rural areas relatively isolated from others. No large cities existed yet, like the metropolises in China, the Middle East, and northern Africa. Many demographic changes took place that radically altered life in Europe:

- The Agricultural Revolution - Largely through contacts with others, Europeans learned and adapted agricultural techniques and inventions that greatly increased their crop production. They perfected the three-field system, in which they rotated crops, allowing a field to remain fallow every third year. They also used iron plows much better suited to the heavy soils of northern and western Europe. Watermills, horses, and horse harnesses (all in use in other areas of the world) contributed to farming efficiency.

- Population increases - With the increase in crop production came population growth, with more hands available to expand agriculture.
- Revival of trade - This revival started in Venice and Genoa, Italian cities that profited from trade during the Crusades. However, the growing population sparked demand for more products so that trade intensified town to town, and a new trade area in present-day northern France, Belgium, and the Netherlands.
- Growth of towns/new towns - The growing trade, crop production, and population stimulated villages to become towns, and the towns became centers for craftsmen, merchants, and specialized laborers.
- Commercial Revolution - Once European towns connected to the long-distance trade routes, they learned to use financial innovations developed elsewhere, like banks and bills of exchange
- Guilds - Craftsmen formed guilds, or trade associations for their particular craft. These organizations came to be quite powerful, passing laws, levying taxes, and challenging powerful merchants. The guilds set standards for goods, regulated labor, and supervised apprentices as they learned the trade.

EARLY RUSSIA

The Russians adopted the Eastern Orthodox religion, and established the Russian Orthodox Church. The princes of Kiev established firm control over the church, and they made use of the Byzantine legal codes put together by Justinian. Russia, like the rest of Europe, was built on feudalistic ties, and over time the Kievan princes became less powerful than those that ruled Muscovy (Moscow), a province northeast of Kiev. When the Mongols invaded in the 13th century, the Muscovites cast their lot with the inevitable victors, serving the Mongols as collectors of tribute. The Mongols bestowed many favors, and Moscow grew in influence. Once Mongol power weakened, the princes saw their opportunity to rebel, and they seized the territory, calling their leader the "tsar," a derivative of the word "Caesar."

THE AMERINDIAN WORLD

Prior to 1492, the western and eastern hemispheres had very little contact with one another. Even though Christopher Columbus was certainly not the first to go from one hemisphere to the other, his voyage does represent the beginning of sustained contacts, a trend that was a major turning point in world history. However, during the period between 600 and 1450 C.E., large empires emerged in the Americas, just as they did in Europe, Africa, and Asia. One group - the Maya - adapted to the jungles of Central America and the Yucatan Peninsula. The two largest organized relatively late in the era: the Aztecs of Mesoamerica, and the Inca of South America.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

The era from 600 to 1450 C.E. was a time when civilization spread geographically, covering many more parts of the world than previously. However, it was also a time of great migrations of people that had wide impacts on the people in settled areas. Arabs, Vikings, Turks, and Mongols, all moved from one part of the globe to another, instigating change wherever they went.

- Arabs - The most significant effect of the Arab movement from the Arabian Peninsula was the spread of Islam. Arabs invaded, settled, and eventually ruled, the Middle East, northern Africa, and southern Europe. Although the political structure of the caliphate did not survive, Islam held the areas together culturally as it mixed with native customs and religions. Despite the political disunity and the splits between Sunni and Shi'a, the Islamic World emerged as an entire cultural area during this era.
- Vikings - The Vikings swept into many parts of Europe - from Normandy, to Mediterranean areas to Russia - during the 8th and 9th centuries, looting and destroying communities, churches, and monasteries. Some settled and intermarried with natives, forming new groups such as the Normans and the Rus (Russians). However, a very important consequence of their invasions was the development of feudalism in Europe. The attacks convinced Europeans that protection was vital, and so they organized into a network of lords and vassals, that eventually built kingdoms with great armies ready to fight.
- Turks - The Turkish people were originally Indo-Europeans who migrated into the Middle East during various times of the era. The Seljuk Turks invaded the Byzantine Empire, sparking another great migration from Europe to the Middle East - the Crusaders. Seljuk Turks were indirectly responsible, then, for Europe's growing interest and involvement in long-distance trade. By the end of the era the Ottoman Turks were on the rise. They captured Constantinople and many other parts of Europe, and they gained control of trade on the Mediterranean. Turks even invaded India, forming the Delhi Sultanate, and introduced Islam to India with such force that the consequences reverberated through the rest of Indian history.

- **Mongols** - The Mongol conquests have been depicted as assaults by savage and barbarian people who brought nothing but death and destruction to the areas they attacked. Whereas no one can deny the brutality of the Mongols, their conquests had a much more varied impact on world history than has been acknowledged by many historians in the past. At the peak of their power, the Pax Mongolica meant that once-hostile people lived together in peace in areas where most religions were tolerated. From the Il-Khan in the Middle East to the Yuan Dynasty in China, Mongol rulers established order, and most importantly, provided the stage for intensified international contact. Protected by Mongol might, the trade routes carried new foods, inventions, and ideas from one civilization to the others, with nomadic people acting as intermediaries.
- **Bantu-speaking people** - Another important source of cultural diffusion during this era was the Bantu Migration, which took place in Africa. Bantu-speaking people originally lived in an area south of the Sahara, but probably because the desert was spreading southward they began to migrate to better land. They spread south and east into many parts of Africa, and their language became a basis for the formation of many later languages. The Bantu Migration is generally believed to be a major source for Africanity, or a set of cultural characteristics (including language) that are commonly shared on the continent. Examples include music, the use of masks, and scarification (permanent beauty etchings on the skin).

CULTURAL DIFFUSION AND THE 14TH CENTURY PLAGUES

As Eurasians traveled over long distances, they not only exchanged goods and ideas, but they unwittingly helped disease to spread as well. Since people who have had no previous exposure to a disease react to it much more seriously than those that have, the consequences were profound. The bubonic plague erupted in epidemics throughout most of Asia, Europe, and north Africa. Even though it abated in subsequent centuries, it broke out sporadically from place to place well into the seventeenth century. The plague probably originated in southwestern China, where it had been incubating for centuries, but once long-distance trade began, it spread rapidly during the 14th century. The pathogen was spread by fleas that infested rats and eventually humans. Mongol military campaigns helped the plague spread throughout China, and merchants and travelers spread it to the west. By the 1340s it had spread to Black Sea ports and to Italian cities on the Mediterranean. From there, the plague spread rapidly throughout Europe as far as the British Isles.

Important results of the plague (other than individual death) are:

- **Decline in population** - In China decreasing population caused by the plague contributed to the decline of the Yuan Dynasty and lent support to the overthrow of Mongol control there. Europe's population dropped by about 25% during the 14th century. In Egypt population levels did not recover to pre-plague days probably until the 19th century.
- **Labor shortages** - The plague was no respecter of social class, and the affected areas lost craftsmen, artisans, merchants, religious officials, farmers, bureaucrats and rulers. In many areas farms fell into ruin, towns deteriorated, and trade almost came to a standstill. Labor shortages turned into social unrest, and rebellions popped up in many areas.

IMPORTANT ISSUES: 600-1450 C.E.

During this era several major religions spread across large areas, creating cultural regions that unified based on their belief systems. As historians, we may speak of "Islamic lands" or "Christendom" or "Confucian Asia," and these terms are handy for comparisons. They may be used effectively to point out commonalities as well as differences. However, cultural areas are imperfect as units of analysis. Some problems include:

- **Imperfect boundaries between areas** - If you are comparing political units with definite boundaries, the geographic differences are clear. However, in using cultural labels, how do you categorize areas of mixed influence? For example, parts of the Middle East during this era had significant numbers of Muslims, Christians, and Jews, with a mixture of customs from all three religions. Southeast Asia, a crossroads area for trade, had virtually every religion imaginable.
- **Wide differences within the culture zones** - The areas are so broad that the categories often blur important cultural differences within. For example, Christendom's two parts were very different, and Christianity was interpreted in many ways. Muslims in Mali had only limited commonalities with Muslims in Central Asia.