MEDIEVAL SOCIETIES

COURSE CODE: B21HS04DC

Discipline Core Course
Undergraduate Programme in History
Self Learning Material

SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

Vision

To increase access of potential learners of all categories to higher education, research and training, and ensure equity through delivery of high quality processes and outcomes fostering inclusive educational empowerment for social advancement.

Mission

To be benchmarked as a model for conservation and dissemination of knowledge and skill on blended and virtual mode in education, training and research for normal, continuing, and adult learners.

Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

Medieval Societies
Course Code: B21HS04DC
Semester - IV

Discipline Core Course
Undergraduate Programme in History
Self Learning Material
(With Model Question Paper Sets)

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY
The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

MEDIEVAL SOCIETIES

Course Code: B21HS04DC
Semester- IV
Discipline Core Course
Undergraduate Programme in History

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

വിദ്യകൊണ്ട് സ്വതന്ത്രരാവുക

Scan this QR Code for reading the SLM on a digital device.

Edition
January 2025

ISBN 978-81-982754-9-3

9 788198 275493

www.sgou.ac.m

Visit and Subscribe our Social Media Platforms

Dear learner,

I extend my heartfelt greetings and profound enthusiasm as I warmly welcome you to Sreenarayanaguru Open University. Established in September 2020 as a state-led endeavour to promote higher education through open and distance learning modes, our institution was shaped by the guiding principle that access and quality are the cornerstones of equity. We have firmly resolved to uphold the highest standards of education, setting the benchmark and charting the course.

The courses offered by the Sreenarayanaguru Open University aim to strike a quality balance, ensuring students are equipped for both personal growth and professional excellence. The University embraces the widely acclaimed "blended format," a practical framework that harmoniously integrates Self-Learning Materials, Classroom Counseling, and Virtual modes, fostering a dynamic and enriching experience for both learners and instructors.

The University aims to offer you an engaging and thought-provoking educational journey. The Undergraduate Programme in History is carefully designed to incorporate recent trends in historical knowledge. Concepts, methodologies, and interpretations are presented as a coherent narrative tailored to fit the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) format. This programme aims to inspire students to pursue further reading in the discipline. Its primary objective is to cultivate competent history learners who are well-versed in the principles of historical understanding.

Rest assured, the university's student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere wish that you achieve the utmost success.

Warm regards.
Dr. Jagathy Raj V.P.   01-01-2025

Contents

1

BLOCK

Decline of the Roman Empire

UNIT 1

Barbarian Invasions

Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ understand the consequences of the Barbarian invasions on Rome

♦ learn about the divisions of the Roman Empire

♦ understand the various factors led to the downfall of the Roman Empire

Prerequisites

The term 'Medieval' comes from the Latin word *medium aevum*, which means "the middle ages. The middle ages covered the period roughly between the fifth century and the end of the 15th century. Tremendous changes occurred in world history during this period.

The Roman Empire was extended from the Euphrates River in Modern Iraq to the shore of the Atlantic, and from the Sahara Desert in North Africa to the Danube and Rhine rivers of Central Europe. The Empire stretched roughly 3000 miles from east to west. Its inhabitants numbered more than 50 million. The Roman Empire was remarkably stable during the early centuries of the Common Era.

In the 5th century, the Roman Empire was invaded by Germanic tribes from the north pushed across its frontiers, destroying trade routes and towns. The Roman Empire was divided among the Germanic tribes.

Keywords

Barbarians, Goths, Franks, Huns, Migrations, Roman Empire, Ostrogoths

Discussion

1.1.1.Roman Empire

The Roman Empire was united by the power of Roman armies. Most wealthy Romans were bilingual in both Greek and Latin. Many ordinary people live on farms and in villages instead of cities. It was also united by the power of the idea of Rome. It was known for its power, its lasting peace and the culture left by its philosophers, artists and poets.

Early Roman Emperors

♦ Diocletian (284-305)

♦ Constantine (306-337)

♦ Valens (364-378)

♦ Theodosius (378-395)

♦ Valentinian III (425-455)

♦ Romulus Augustulus (474-476)

Fig 1.1.1 Map of Roman Empire
Source : Wikipedia

1.1.2 Fall of the Roman Empire

The causes for the decline of the Western Roman Empire can be broadly divided into two. The political, social and economic aspects are on the one hand, and the intellectual and spiritual aspects are on the other. In the sphere of politics, Barbarisation of the Empire is the prime reason for the decline of the Roman Empire.

1.1.2.1 The Infiltration of Barbarians

The Barbarian invasions have a vital role in the history of Europe. A long sequence of the migratory movements of the northern barbarians began in the third and fourth century CE. This long process shaped Europe into its present form. French and Italian historians have tended to see the barbarians as a 'bad thing', destroying a living civilis-ation,

introducing a barbaric 'Dark Age'. According to Romans, the Barbarian lived beyond the frontiers of the Roman Empire.

Conflict of Opinions

- According to J.B. Bury (an Anglo-Irish historian), "The gradual cause of Roman power was the consequence of a series of contingent events. No general cause can be assigned that made it inevitable".

- Edward Gibbon, an English historian, noticed that "the decline of Rome was the natural and inevitable effect of immediate greatness".

- Andre Piganiol, A French historian and archaeologist observed that "The Roman Civilisation did not die a natural death. It was murdered".

- N.H. Baynes, A British historian, remarked that "It was the pitiful poverty of western Rome which crippled her in her effort to maintain that civil and military system which was the presupposition for the continued life of ancient civilizations."

Causes for their Invasions

There were two main reasons for the invasion of Rome by the Barbarians. The first reason is the growth of population, and the second is the attraction of more fertile territories. These barbarians were almost always fleeing. These barbarians were largely Germanic. The early Germans spent their lives hunting and fighting in the forests and plains beyond the frontiers of the Roman Empire. By the third century CE, the conditions had changed dramatically. These Germanic tribes began to fight bitterly between themselves for the control of nomadic routes and patches of cultivable land. These clashes led to vendettas between clans, which continued from generation to generation. In order to survive, the Germans had to find more land for themselves. For them, expansion towards the east was impossible, since the new nomadic groups increasingly competed for the same land. So, the only alternative for them was to move westwards and southwards into Roman territory.

Another important reason was that Roman territories were considerably wealthier and the land itself more fertile. The general climatic condition was tolerable than what was available north of the Danube and East of the Rhine.

Another important reason was the approach of the Huns. The Huns, a fiercely aggressive group of warrior nomads of Central Asia began to spread terror throughout the Germanic lands. In order to protect themselves from the new invaders, they sought refuge with the Romans. Thus, a large-scale invasion of terrified, starving, desperate and therefore aggressive Germanic groups moved towards the Roman Empire. They were fugitives driven in by people. Their cruelty was frequently desperate in nature. These invasions were a set of chain reactions.

According to Jordanes "If the Goths took up arms against the Romans in 378, it was because they had been quartered by on a tiny piece of territory without any resources, where the Roman sold them the flesh of dogs and of unclean animals at an exorbitant price, making them exchange of their sons as slaves for a bit of food. Famine is the main reason for their invasion of Rome."

Germanist and Romanist View

The Germanist View also led to the description of a new type of rural settlement where the old Roman villas were called 'Germanic'. Changes in urban life and the end of classical urbanism were pinned in a

less positive way.

The Germanist view has been countered with the Romanist View or Continuity View. The Germanic view holds that the migrations are the movements of small warrior elites. The view also holds that there was a continuity of settlement patterns and the towns were simply continuing in a process of change.

1.1.2.2 Early Gothic Migrations

The East German people occupied the Western half of the Roman Empire by the fifth century CE. The East German people consist of the Goths, the Vandals, the Gepidsand, the Burgundians, and the Lombards. The others were the Rugians, the Heruls, the Bastarenae, and the Sciri. The earliest migration of East German people was that of the Goths around the second century. They moved from their homes on the lower Vistula to the shores of the Black Sea. It was after their settlement, they broke up into two great divisions, the Ostrogoths and the Visigoths. Their motive for the division was purely geographical. They migrated to the area in successive bands. The earlier comers settled near the Danubian lands, and a few years later, cameras arrived. There were two former groups and they were distinguished as East and West. After that, the whole Gothic nation had been reunited on the shores of Euxine. They conquered the ancient Greek cities of Olbia and Tyras. Soon afterwards, the Gothic attack upon the Roman Empire began.
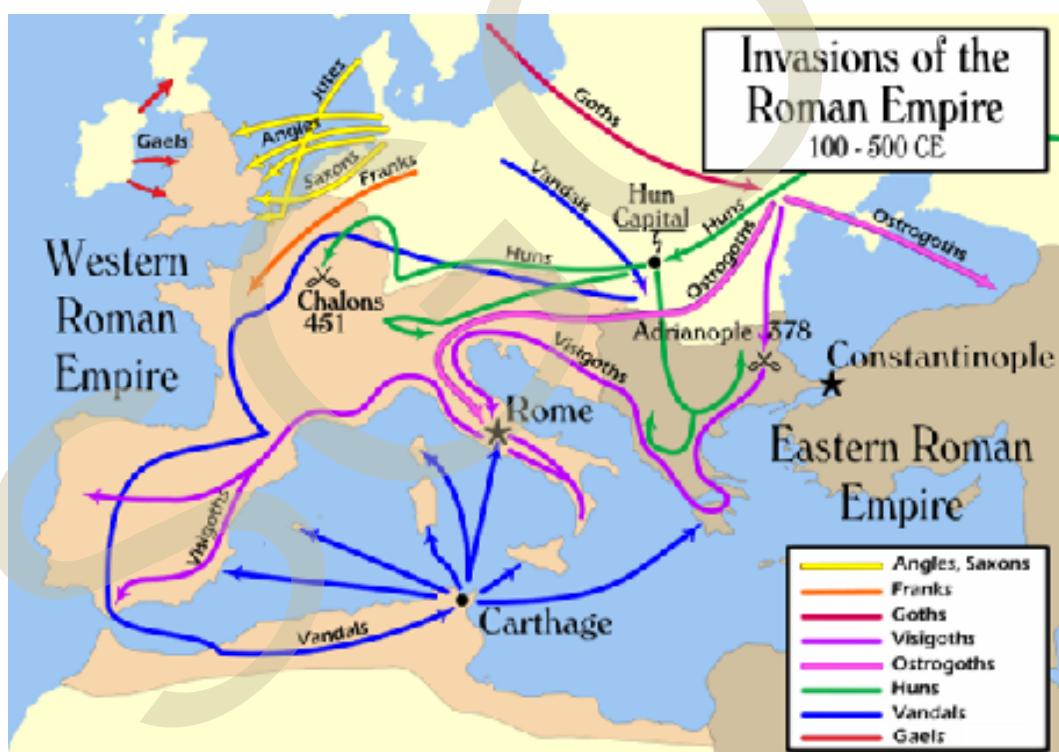
Fig 1.1.2 Barbarian movements
Source : Wikipedia

The Gothic Attacks on the Roman Empire

The Goth invasion of the Roman Empire began around 247 CE. The Goths were successful for two reasons. The most important reason was that the internal weakness of the Empire at that time. The second reason was the simultaneous rise of the new Persian empire, which had become a formidable enemy in the East. The Roman Empire confronted the most grievous and

shameful blow from the Goths. They drew the army of Roman Emperor Decius into a swamp near the mouth of the Danube. They destroyed the army and slew the emperor in 251 CE. They became the terror of the cities of the Black Sea, the Marmora and the Aegean. They attempted a joint invasion by Sea and land. These ravages were decisively repelled by Roman Emperor Claudius I (269 CE). Claudius's achievement made him Claudius Gothicus. The Emperor secured peace from the Goths for a long time in the regions south of the Danube.

1.1.2.3 The Visigoths Occupation of Dacia

The Goths began the actual dismemberment of the Roman Empire by penetrating and ultimately occupying one of its provinces, Dacia (the north of the Danube). Emperor Claudius Gothicus was succeeded by Emperor Aurelian in 270 CE. Emperor Aurelian withdrew the Roman official and military garrisons from Dacia and made Danube once more the frontier of the Empire. Goths had been gradually and steadily encroaching on Dacia for fifteen or twenty years. Emperor Aurelian simply decided to abandon Dacia, which was already virtually lost. Thus, the Roman period of the history of Dacia came to an end in 270 CE and the Gothic period began. Following the next sixty years, incursions of Goths continued.

In 324 CE, Emperor Constantine became the sole Emperor of Rome. He endeavoured to secure the lower Danube by fortifying camps and castles. He also built a wall across the region in the northeast corner of Thrace (now known as Dobrudzha). Towards the end of his reign, forced to conclude a treaty with the Visigoths. Thus, they became the federates of the Empire. They undertook to protect the frontier of the Empire and supplied a certain contingent of soldiers to the imperial army in case of war. In return for this, they received yearly subsidies. Federal relations of this kind are a standing feature of the whole period among the German people. They remained federates of the empire for longer or shorter periods, before they became independent masters of the land they had seized. Through this treaty, Dacia was occupied by the Visigoths.

1.1.2.4 Ostrogoths and Visigoths

Towards the middle of the fourth century, the Ostrogoths and the Visigoths extended their settlement from the river Theiss to the river Dnieper on the east. They remained independent of each other. The Visigoths had no king, and their constitution was republican. But royalty was adopted by Ostrogoths. The Visigoths united with the Ostrogoths. But their wars had been chiefly aggressive.

Hermanric

A great warrior King named Hermanric arose among the Visigoths and Ostrogoths towards the middle of the fourth century. He had created a Gothic Empire which lasted for a few years. He extended his dominion eastwards to the Don and also over the Slavonic peoples. His empire touched both the Black Sea and the Baltic. This is a transitory barbarian empire which soon and suddenly dissolved because they had not organised and consolidated.

Wulfilas

The first introduction of Christianity among German people and the first translation of the Bible into a German tongue marks the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the Germanic world. Wulfilas created Gothic alphabets and also translated the scriptures into Gothic. Wulfilas invented alphabets, which were based on Greek but also partly on runic alphabets (The runes were in use among the Goths).

Vandals

King Genseric, the Vandal King, came to

power in 428 CE. He established his kingdom in North Africa along with 80,000 followers. With his supporters, he marched to Rome in 455 CE. Because of the interference of Pope Leo I, he returned back to his kingdom. In 461 CE. and 468 CE., he had to face two Roman attacks.

The Huns

The Huns were the nomadic hordes that appeared in the reign of Emperor Valens west of the Caspian Sea and swept over Southern Russia. The Huns belonged to a group of Mongolian races, which also included Turks, the Hungarians and the Finns. It is also called the Ural-Altaic race group and is divided into Uralic and Altaic. The Uralic section has three divisions. They are Finnic, Permian and Ugrian. The Altaic section consisted of several classes, of which one was Turkish, and the other was Mongolian.

In 376 CE, the Huns arrived at the easternmost reaches of Europe (today's Romania). There they crushed the Ostrogoths and sent them fleeing into the Balkans. Their next target was the Visigoths. The Visigoths pleaded with the emperor in Constantinople for permission to settle within the imperial province. The Emperor Valens, sympathised with the Visigoths granted them refuge on the usual condition that they serve as a Federation and defend that section of the border. The Emperor Valens failed to provide the arms and material he had promised. He left the Visigoths exposed to continued attack from the Huns. The local imperial official also cheated Visigoths of promised goods and assistance. The Visigoths renounced their alliance with the empire and went on a rampage. They plundered the province of Trance and began to march on Constantinople itself. The Emperor Valens met them in battle near Adrianople in 378 CE. The Visigoths defeated the Romans and killed Emperor Valens.

From 433 to 453, the Huns were ruled by the warlord Attila. Attila's soldiers terrorised Europe. Defeated in Gaul, he turned toward Italy. As they moved toward Rome, they met an embassy of local officials led by the Bishop of Rome, Pope Leo I. Pope Leo persuaded Attila to withdraw. Attila agreed to return to Hungary, where he died shortly thereafter.

1.1.3 Causes for the Downfall of the Western Roman Empire

Barbarian Confederacies

There was great pressure on the frontiers in the late Roman period. This was mainly due to an increase in barbarian numbers due to population growth. It was the Huns have pushed the Goths entered the Roman Empire and pushed other Germanic tribes. The Roman Empire was undergoing its so-called third-century crisis. There appeared a series of larger confederacies like the Alamanni in the South-west of Germany, the Franks along the middle and lower Rhine, the Saxons in the the north of Germany, the Picts in the north of Britain, and the Goths in and around the eastern Carpathians and the lower Danube. These confederacies inflicted great pressure upon the Romans.

1. Geographical Expansions

Rostov Zeff in his masterpiece "Social and Economic History of Roman Empire", the collapse of Roman power explained briefly. He suggested that Rome extended its conquest into the west of Rome. She naturally favoured the growth of towns and centres of Romanisation. But the towns drew their wealth from the countryside and the peasants severely resented this exploitation of their own class by the bourgeoisie. The civilian population became unfit for life in the military camps. The peasants of the army made common cause with the peasants of the countryside. Both wage war of extermination

against their oppressors of the city.

2. Weakness of the Army

The Roman army no longer served as an instrument of Romanisation. It sought to recruit on the local scene, whether it was northern Gaul or Northern Mesopotamia, and tried to entice them into the immediate service on the spot with promises of higher wages. It became an army of mercenaries. The discipline of the army broke down. They began to insist upon ever higher salaries and more frequent donatives. The Roman emperors, from fear of liberty, since the rule of Augustus, had systematically disarmed the citizens and entrusted the defence of the empire to mercenaries.

3. Fall of Roman Economy

The outbreak of plague and a series of earthquakes dealt a serious blow to the economy of the Roman Empire. The introduction of new taxes also affected the lives of mercenaries. A crushing wave of inflation actually affected the economy badly. Several short lived emperors attempted to cover their military expenditures by debasing the coinage. The taxation system gradually eroded. Cities, roads, and water systems fell into despair, since there was less and less money for maintenance. Free farmers unable to earn their living.

The Roman Empire went bankrupt in the third century. It was incapable of continuing to pay its officials and its armies. It was the fiscal system which led to the transformation of the class of municipal councillors into an army of tax collectors unpaid by the state. The class of free peasants were transferred into serfs of the great lords. The financial policies of the Roman Empire provoked hatred among the masses.

4. Superiority of the Barbarians

The military superiority was the main reason behind their success. The superiority of barbarian cavalry was a remarkable one. The weapon of their invasions was the long, slicing, pointed sword and slashing weapons, which were unknown among the Romans. Another important reason is that the barbarian benefitted from the active or passive complicity of the mass of the Roman population.

5. Rise of Christianity

Another important reason behind the fall of the Empire was the development of a new mentality among the masses of the population. The mentality of the lower class was based exclusively on religion and not only indifferent but hostile to the intellectual achievement of the higher classes. This new attitude reached its climax in the triumph of Christianity. The creation of the Christian Church, the adaptation of Christian theology and the creation of powerful Christian literature had influenced the population. It represented a lowering of the high standards of city civilization. Christianity became one of the disintegrating forces and tended to weaken Rome.

Adolf Von Harnack's (German theologian) study states that the percentage of Christians in the eastern portions of the empire fell far below one-half of the total population during 300 CE. In the West, the proportion must be greatly reduced below that in the east.

6. Deterioration of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce

The Romans left the lands to slaves whose number decreased due to famines, diseases and huge taxes. Thus, the economic condition deteriorated. Province after province turned into desert. Draining was neglected, and deserted fields became mosquito-malaria-infested swamps. The land of Italy became barren, sterile, and abandoned. The burden of taxation made the whole land uncultivated.

Another prime reason for the decay of agriculture was the abuses of the fiscal system and the absence of the personal supervision of the proprietor. Soil exhaustion was in fact, an inadequate explanation of the collapse of Roman power.

The disappearance of commodity money from circulation in the Roman Empire was only due to hoarding. Hoarding was due to the lack of deposit banks. The economic disorders began to appear in the second century and they reached their climax during the third century.

7. De-population

The de-population was an important fact and it had far reaching consequences. The process of de-population reached its limits in the time of Augustus. The evil was aggravated in the 4th century CE, when the cultivated lands returned to waste land. The depopulation of the empire led to decline of its culture. The sources of information upon the population of the empire was very meagre. Even so, we reached certain conclusions on the basis of the statements of the historians like Polybius. The depopulation of the third century is primarily a result of decline.

8. Climate Change

Another theory has been proposed by Ellsworth Huntington, which is climate change. In his article, "Climatic Change and Agricultural Exhaustion as Elements in the Fall of Rome", he suggested that the fall of Rome was due to a decline in rainfall suffered during the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries. There would have been a constant decrease in rainfall from 200 to 400 CE. Thus, Rome perished, and its fall was followed by a period of unfavourable climate change. Thus, the period came to be known as the period of the dark age of the Middle Ages.

9. Racial Difference

A form of biological explanation is expressed by Nilsson in his well-known book Imperial Rome. In his book, he suggested that the most important problem for the empire was race. Culture rests on racial character. If the alien races and barbarian peoples were assimilated, they must be interpenetrated by their conquerors. Since the Roman world was a vast one, the barbarians were very numerous. This resulted in intercommunication and mingling of races.

10. Crisis of Authority

G. Ferrero, an Italian historian, suggested that the fall of Rome caused a crisis of authority. The main cause of this crisis was the equivocal and badly defined character of the imperial power. He also adds that in the period after the Roman empire, the destruction of the elite handed over power to a new oligarchy of the newly wealthy and of high officials who came from barbarous elements of the population.

The weakness of the imperial authority in the third century resulted in the rebellion and independence of exposed territorial units of the empire. The districts were forced to undertake their own measures of defence and administration.

1.2.4 The Collapse of the Western Empire

Throughout the fifth and sixth centuries, the entry of Germans, Visigoths, Ostrogoths and the great wave of Swabians, Vandals and Alans crossed the Rhine at the beginning of the fifth century. Gradually, the Burgundians, the Franks and the Alamans moved towards the western and southern Gaul. The seventh century saw the beginning of a massive advance by the Slavs to settle down in the east.

The Huns managed to advance right into

Gaul. Attila, their leader, was defeated by the Roman General Aetius, who forced him to withdraw. The Burgundians who settled at Worms, tried to invade Gaul (France). However, they were defeated by Aetius and his Hun mercenaries. The Ostrogoths, too, had surged into the Roman empire. Under the leadership of Theodoric, they attacked Constantinople. At the beginning of the sixth century, the Western Roman Empire was divided between the Franks, who held Gaul (France); the Burgundians, confined to Savoy; the Visigoths, masters of Spain; the Vandals, settled in Africa; and Ostrogoths, ruling in Italy.

Emperor Julius Nepos had proclaimed his young son, Romulus Augustulus as his successor. In 476 CE, the Scyrian Odoacer rose up at the head of another group of barbarians who were against the Romans. He deposed the young Romulus, and it paved the way for the end of the Western Roman Empire in 476 CE.

1.2.4.1 Division of the Empire

The Western Roman Empire was saved by imperial reform in the late third and early fourth centuries. With energetic creativity, Roman Emperors like Diocletian and Constantine rebuilt the loosely governed empire of early days into an autocracy supported by a huge army and many bureaucrats. They began to divide the empire by providing importance for the development of a distinctive culture known as the 'Medieval West'. The division began as an administrative matter. A line drawn through the Balkans and down through the heart of North Africa by Diocletian. To the West of this line lay Rome, the old capital of Rome, and to the East lay Constantinople, a new capital formed by Constantine. This administrative division became permanent at the end of the fourth century. Thereafter, the Western Roman Empire and Eastern Roman Empire drifted apart with the death of Emperor Theodosius (378-395).

Recap

♦ Political, social, and barbarian invasions weakened Rome

♦ Migratory movements reshaped Europe, triggering Rome's decline

♦ Germanic tribes sought new land, invading Roman territory

♦ Internal weakness and Persian threats enabled Gothic victories

♦ Rome abandoned Dacia; Visigoths became imperial federates

♦ Mongolian Huns pushed Germanic tribes into Roman lands

♦ Increased pressure from tribes weakened Roman frontiers

♦ Exploitation of peasants led to social unrest

♦ Mercenary dependence led to declining military discipline

♦ Inflation, taxation, and disasters crippled economic stability

♦ Barbarian invasions ended Roman rule in 476 CE

Objective Questions

1. Who wrote "Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire"?

2. Who initiated the translation of the Bible into a German tongue?

3. When did Emperor Constantine the Great become the sole Emperor of Rome?

4. Who is better known as "Claudius Gothicus"?

5. Who were barbarians?

6. Who created the Gothic alphabet and translated the scriptures into Gothic?

7. When did the East German people occupy the Western half of the Roman Empire?

8. When did the Roman period of the history of Dacia come to an end?

9. Who arose among the Visigoths and Ostrogoths towards the middle of the fourth century?

10. Who remarked that "the decline of Rome was the natural and inevitable effect of immediate greatness"?

Answers

1. Rostov Zeff

2. Wulfilas

3. In 324 CE

4. Emperor Claudius I (269 CE)

5. One who lived beyond the frontiers of the Roman Empire.

6. Wulfilas

7. fifth century CE

8. In 270 CE

9. Hermanric

10. Edward Gibbon

Assignments

1. Analyse the role of Barbarian invasions in the downfall of the Western Roman Empire. How did different historians interpret the impact of these invasions?

2. Discuss the causes of early Gothic migrations. How did environmental, social, and political factors contribute to the movement of Germanic tribes into Roman territories?

3. Compare and contrast the roles of the Visigoths and Ostrogoths in the decline of the Roman Empire. How did their interactions with Rome shape the course of European history?

4. Analyse the key internal and external factors that contributed to the failure of the Roman Empire. How did economic, military, and social changes weaken the empire's stability?

5. Discuss the role of barbarian invasions and geographical expansions in the decline of the Roman Empire. How did these factors interact with economic and administrative crises to accelerate the empire's collapse?

Suggested Reading

1. Bury, J. B. *The Invasion of Europe by the Barbarians: A Series of Lectures*. 1928.

2. Damrosch, Leo. *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* The Great Courses, 2017.

3. Fouracre, Paul, editor. *The New Cambridge Medieval History*. Vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

4. Le Goff, Jacques. *The Birth of Europe*. Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Reference

1. Backman, Clifford R. *The Worlds of Medieval Europe.* Oxford University Press, 2003.

2. Cosman, Madeleine Pelner, and Linda Gale Jones. *Handbook to Life in the Medieval World.* Infobase Publishing, 2008.

3. Kagan, Donald. *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: Why Did It Collapse?* D.C. Heath and Company, 1968.

4. Langley, Andrew. *Eyewitness Medieval Life*. DK Life, 2011.

5. Le Goff, Jacques. *Medieval Civilization*. Blackwell Publishers, 1988.

2 UNIT

Rise of Religions

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ understand the role of religion in medieval society

♦ learn about medieval historiography

♦ understand the features that defined the medieval period

Prerequisites

There were three Abrahamic religions: Rabbinic Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The first two grew alongside each other, while the third arrived centuries later. Rabbinic Judaism emerged after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, centring around Torah study and Oral Law. Christianity, which began as a sect within Judaism, gained prominence after Emperor Constantine legalised it in 313 CE, eventually becoming the dominant religion in the Roman Empire. Islam, founded in the 7th century CE, spread rapidly across the Middle East, North Africa, and parts of Europe.

The study of the rise of these religions during the medieval period reveals their intertwined histories, marked by both conflict and intellectual exchange. The traditional dating of the European medieval world begins with the fall of Rome in 476 CE, a turning point that led to the fragmentation of the Western Roman Empire and the rise of feudal Europe. This period also witnessed the consolidation of Christianity, the expansion of Islam, and Jewish diaspora communities navigating life under Christian and Muslim rule. Religious interactions were complex, with periods of coexistence alongside tensions, particularly during the Crusades and the Reconquista. The legacy of these interactions continues to shape historical and contemporary religious dynamics.

Keywords

Medieval Historiography, Christianity, Missionaries, Bishops, Western Roman Empire

Discussion

1.2.1 Fall of Western Roman Empire

With the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 CE, the spoils were divided among Germanic tribes. The Visigoths, Franks, Lombards and others carved out kingdoms in the Iberian Peninsula, France, Burgundy, Germany and the Italian states. Out of a vast united Roman Empire arose three major powers: the Eastern Roman Empire of Byzantium, the Papacy and the Islamic Caliphate. The Byzantium Empire represented the continuity of the Roman legacy in the East. The West Roman Catholic church would fill the political, cultural, and administrative vacuum that the Warring Germanic tribes failed to fill.

Islam was a new religion that posed a challenge to Christian Rome and Byzantium. The birth of Islam and the rise of Islamic Civilisation are key events of the seventh century. The official Christianisation of the empire under Theodosius I (379-395) was a transition phase in the history of Europe.

1.2.1.1 Medieval Historiography

Historical, literary, religious, and legal documents shedlight on the lives of the medieval world. In addition to this, art, architecture, coins and other vestiges of material culture provide sufficient data for the study of the medieval world. Western Europe is blessed with an infinite number of written documents, royal monastic chronicles, papal bulls and edicts, Church synod records, royal charters, parish records, sermons, personal letters, biographies, hagiographies (accounts of saint's lives, manuals and others.

The chronicle tradition was not strong in medieval Judaism. However, travel diaries, Synod ordinances *(takkanot)*, and other documents throw light on the medieval world. Royal physical records and charters of land grants provided insight into the lives of Jews in Christendom.

There were no Arab sources dating from the lifetime of prophet, Muhammad. Hence, the historiography of the rise of Islam is problematic. The Quran gives clues to the life of Muhammed and the background of its origin. The Arabian culture was an oral culture. Poets, bards and orators transmitted great events and the history of their heroes through poetry and speeches. The life of Muhammed was written down during the period of Abbasid.

1.2.1.2 Emergence of New Cultures

The medieval world became multi-ethnic jigsaw of people who were migrating with or without fixed borders. The Angle, Saxons and Norman migrations to England; the Goth to Spain, France, Italy and North Africa; the Nordic Viking to the British Isles, France, Germany and the Low countries; the Slav to Byzantium; the Central Asian Turkic tribes to the middle East and Eastern Europe forged new cultures changed those of old Roman empire.

Intermingling of Cultures

Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities

intermingled in the empires of Western Europe, Byzantium. Arabic and Persian literature influenced Christian literature and the Arabic Musical tradition inspired the medieval lyric poets in the same way that Jewish secular and religious literature was revolutionised by contacts with Islam and Christianity. War became a channel for cultural exchange as bitter rivals borrowed military technology from each other. The medieval period was peppered with many cultural, intellectual and commercial cooperation and influence among Christians, Jews and Muslims.

Role of Religion in Medieval Society

The Christian, Jewish and Islamic faiths shared the belief that human society should be ordered according to the divine will. The clergy, rabbis and ulema were positioned at the apex of the social order of their respective societies. The laws and institutions governed the social life of Christians, Jews and Muslims. Religion and ethics dictated the norms regulating family and communal life. The social violence that erupted among communities living side by side sometimes was fuelled by religious differences.

1.2.2 Growth of Christianity in the Western Roman Empire

Catholic Christianity became a dominant religion of the Western Roman Empire. From its very beginning, it was a missionary religion, and proselytization was accepted as a fundamental part of religious practice. The expansion of Christianity was uneven and also lacked uniformity. In addition, Christianity had to compete with other religious traditions, such as Roman cults, Hellenistic traditions, and asceticism.

Christianity began as an urban phenomenon. The first missionaries formed churches in the major metropolises of the Mediterranean and Rome. This trend continued throughout the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire experienced increasing threat from the Germanic tribes in the second and third centuries. As a result, the Roman authorities began to regard the activities of the Christian communities as seditious. During the period of Emperor Decius(249-251), Emperor Valerian(253-260) and Diocletian (284-305), Roman suspicion of Christians reached its apogee in the imperial persecutions.

1.2.2.1 Christianity as State Religion

The persecutions inflicted upon Catholic Christians were brutal. The Western Emperor Constantine (306-337) and his Eastern counterpart Licinius (308-324) went even further in their joint issuing of the Edict of Milan in 313. According to this edict, Christianity and all other religions gave an equal status of legitimacy. It also restored Christian properties that had been confiscated during the period of the persecution. Emperor Constantine is famous for having built a new capital in the East, Constantinople.

1.2.2.2 Role of Monasteries

In the third and fourth centuries, new hermits were found inhabiting the deserts of Rome, Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. These hermits or monks fled the cities into remote rural areas where they sought to attain holiness and spiritual union with God through extreme ascetic practices. They also practiced celibacy, sleep deprivation, fasting and vegetarianism. Some of them spent their entire lives perched atop a column, while others lived in caves, behind walls, or in abandoned tombs or temples. The monastic way of life attracted men and women from all sectors of the society in Egypt, Syria and Palestine and throughout Asia Minor.

1.2.2.3 The Rise of Bishops

With the expansion of Christianity in urban centres of the empire, the religion took root in the countryside. Christianity also expanded among the ranks of the army. Some monks turned from the remote areas of the Roman Empire and returned to urban civilization.

While some other monks shunned all human contact. They formed ascetic communities and devoted themselves to prayers, fasting and other acts of self-denial and manual labour. These ascetic communities were the precursors of the monastic communities that emerged in the sixth century.

Recap

- The fall of Rome led to the emergence of new European and Islamic powers

- Byzantium preserved the Roman legacy; the Church filled the Western vacuum

- Islam's rise challenged Christian Rome and Byzantium

- Medieval historiography relied on documents, art, and oral traditions

- Migration and conquests created diverse medieval cultures

- Religious communities shaped medieval laws and social structures

- Christianity spread despite persecution and Roman opposition

- Monasteries and bishops influenced Christian expansion and society

Objective Questions

1. In which year did the Western Roman Empire fall?

2. Which Germanic tribes established kingdoms after the fall of Rome?

3. Which empire continued the legacy of Rome in the East?

4. Which new religion emerged as a challenge to Christian Rome?

5. Which cultures influenced medieval Christian literature?

6. Which edict granted legitimacy to Christianity in 313 CE?

7. Where did early Christian monks often retreat for ascetic practices?

8. Which Roman emperor built Constantinople as a new capital?

9. Which religious groups coexisted and influenced each other in medieval Europe?

Answers

1. 476 CE

2. Visigoths, Franks, Lombards

3. Byzantine Empire

4. Islam

5. Arabic and Persian

6. Edict of Milan

7. Deserts and remote areas

8. Constantine I

9. Christians, Muslims, Jews

Assignments

1. Discuss the impact of the fall of the Western Roman Empire on the political and cultural landscape of Europe.

2. How did the intermingling of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities shape medieval European culture and intellectual traditions?

3. Analyse the role of historiography in understanding medieval society with reference to different sources used in medieval historical studies.

4. Explain the significance of the Edict of Milan (313 CE) in the growth and establishment of Christianity within the Roman Empire.

5. Describe the emergence of monasticism in early Christianity and its influence on medieval European society.

Suggested Reading

1. Dale, Stephen F. *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and the Mughals*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

2. Langley, Andrew. *Medieval Life*. D.K. Publishing, 2011.

3. Stephenson, Carl. *Medieval History*. Harper & Row Publishers, 1962.

Reference

1. Bennet, Judith. *Medieval Europe: A Short History*. McGraw-Hill, 2010.

2. Faroqhi, Suraiya. *The Ottoman Empire: A Short History*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

3. Van Steenbergen, Jo. *A History of the Islamic World: 600-1800*. Routledge, 2020.

3 UNIT

Establishment and Growth of Judaism

Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ understand the role of Judaism in medieval society

♦ understand the origin and development of Judaism

♦ examine the factors that led to the Jewish revolt

Prerequisites

The Jewish people developed their society and culture within the diverse regions of their medieval diaspora, shaping their identity while adapting to the conditions imposed by different rulers. In Western Europe, Byzantium, the Mediterranean, North Africa, the Middle East, and the Arabian Peninsula, Jewish communities were deeply connected to the Christian and Muslim sovereigns who governed them. Their existence was often marked by both protection and restriction, as their legal and social status varied depending on the policies of the ruling powers.

Jewish religious life had to evolve in response to the dominant presence of Christianity and Islam, which became powerful theological and political forces during the medieval period. The need to navigate these religious landscapes led to intellectual exchanges, legal adaptations, and cultural resilience. Despite living under restrictive laws, medieval Jewish communities remained rational and optimistic, finding ways to preserve their traditions, engage in scholarship, and contribute to the broader societies in which they lived. This era saw the flourishing of Jewish philosophical thought, with figures like Maimonides bridging Jewish, Islamic, and Greek traditions, demonstrating the intellectual adaptability of medieval Jewry. Their perseverance allowed Jewish culture and identity to survive and thrive despite the challenges of exile and religious rivalry.

Keywords

Origin, Torah, Hebrew Bible, Rabbis, Talmud, Mishna, Judaism

Discussion

1.3.1 Jews in the Medieval World

The adoption of Christianity as the official religion during the period of Emperor Constantine the Great (306-307) is considered a starting point for the Jewish Middle Ages. Jews created a distinct society and culture in the medieval diaspora countries. After the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity in the fourth century, Constantine introduced a series of laws restricting the civil and political liberties of the Jews. Prosecution prompted many Jews to disperse into the Mediterranean, Europe, North Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula. As a result, the Jewish Middle Ages characterised multiple centres in the diaspora.

1.3.1.1 Origin of Judaism

Jerusalem was a sacred city of Jews. King David (ruled roughly from 1000 to 961 BCE) captured Jerusalem. He made it the capital of a united monarchy of Israel and Judah. His son Solomon ruled roughly from 961 to 922 BCE. He built a temple there and this is the first temple of Jews. When Solomon died, the United monarchy was divided into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. David's descendants continued to rule there. King Josiah of Judah instituted a religious reform. He made the Jerusalem temple, which is considered as the only accepted place of worship. The Jews would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate their major festivals.

The Babylonians sacked Jerusalem in 587 BCE and destroyed Solomon's Temple. They deported Judean elites to Babylon. When Cyrus, King of Persia attacked Babylon, he allowed the Jews to return home. In 164 BCE Jerusalem became the capital of the Jewish Hasmonean Kingdom.

1.3.2 The Jews and the Romans

The Romans conquered the kingdom of Judah in 63 BCE. When the Romans conquered Judah, they renamed it Judaea. During the initial years, the Romans allowed Jewish rulers to run Judaea. King Herod is an unpopular ruler of Judaea. He also reconstructed the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. After his death, the Romans replaced the Jewish king with Roman officials. During this period the Jews were primarily divided into three groups. The first group is known as Pharisees. The Pharisees taught Torah and strictly obeyed its teachings. They were also taught to apply the Torah in their daily life. They taught in synagogues, and they received support from the common people. They made Judaism a religion of home and family. They believed in oral traditions.

Fig 1.3.1 A Jewish Temple in Jerusalem

The second group, called Sadducees, also accepted the *Torah*. This group consisted of priests and scribes. The Sadducees were mainly concerned about how it applied to the priests in the temple. They thoroughly criticised the ideals of the Pharisees. They did not believe in oral traditions. Instead, they emphasised the law and commandments.

The third group was called Essenes. They were the priests who broke away from the temple in Jerusalem. They lived in deserts and spent their lives praying and waiting for God to deliver the Jews from the Romans. They strictly followed written law.

Judaism began when the Romans destroyed the second temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E. As a result, a group of religious scholars known as Rabbis formulated the Jewish way of life on the basis of the Torah. The Rabbis compiled rules of behaviour into a collection known as the *Mishnah*. Then, they recorded the meanings of those rules in the *Talmud*.

1.3.3 Hebrew Bible and Torah

The Jews use a bible that was written in Hebrew, known as the Hebrew Bible or Hebrew scriptures. A better name for it may be *Tanakh*. It contains 24 books. They were divided into three parts. They were *Torah*(teaching), *Nevi'im* (prophet) and *Ketuvim*(writings). The formulation of the canon for these three parts took place over more than 500 years from the end of the Babylonian exile (538 B.C) to a council of Rabbis (90 CE).

Torah is the most revered part of the Hebrew Bible. The word meaning 'Torah' is 'teaching'. Moses is considered the author of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. These five books were generally considered as *Torah*. The first book, Genesis, tells the story of the creation of the world and the lives of Abraham and his descendants in Canaan. The last four tell of the freeing of the people of Israel from the bondage in Egypt. Moses is the central figure of the last four books. The *Torah* contains the instructions on how to live. The most famous instructions are the Ten Commandments.


Fig 1.3.2 Torah scroll

Nevi'im contains two kinds of prophets.

The "Former Prophets" detail how God was active in his people's past. They include the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. The "Latter Prophets" describe how God was active at their time. They include the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve (minor prophets).

Jews consider *Ketuvim* the least important part of the Bible. It contains a variety of books, such as Proverbs, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles.

1.3.4 Beliefs

Judaism is a way of life rather than a set of beliefs. The *Talmud* concentrated on what one needs to do in order to follow God's commandments, not on what one ought to believe. The Jews generally held several beliefs. These include the conviction that there is only one eternal God who created the universe. He alone deserves worship. He is omniscient and revealed the unchanging *Torah* to Moses as a guide to life.

1.3.4.1 Practices

The main goal of Judaism is to make life holy by following God's commandments(*mitzvot*). These commandments are taken as a sign of God's love and concern. The Jews considered God as a compassionate parent. God forgives people when they sincerely repent of their wrongdoings.

The Jews' observance of the *sabbath* is another important religious practice. They keep the *Sabbath* on time from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. Jews rest on the *sabbath* in imitation of God's resting on the seventh day of creation. This practice of *sabbath* varies in strictness in the different Jewish movements. On the days of *Sabbath*, they lighten the *sabbath* candle and welcome Queen Sabbath. The Jews also generally attend a service at the synagogue on Saturday morning and on Friday evening. This service consists of reading the Bible, prayers and songs.

1.3.4.2 Festivals

The Jews celebrated several major and minor festivals during the course of a year. The holiest days are Rosh ha-Shanah (the New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), which occur in the fall. On Yom Kippur, Jews fast, collectively confess their sins to God and receive God's forgiveness. The other major festivals are *Pesach* (pass over), *Shavuot* (Pentecost or Weeks), and *Sukkot* (Tabernacles). These festivals were later connected with the liberation of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, the giving of the *Torah* to Moses on Mount Sinai, and the wanderings in the wilderness. *Hanukkah, Purim, Simhat Torah*, and Holocaust Day are other minor festivals.

1.3.4.3 Rabbis

The Hebrew word *Rabbi* means my master or my teacher. Rabbis were the experts in both oral and written *Torah*. Rabbis are generally respected for their learning and their services to humanity. They were the leaders of the Jewish community. They have been the chief religious leader of Judaism since the destruction of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE. According to tradition, the term 'rabbis' was first used in Palestine after the destruction of the temple.

1.3.4.4 Talmud and Mishnah

Talmud is the authoritative codification and commentary of oral *Torah*. The Roman troops destroyed the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. As a result, it became impossible for the Jews to practice their religion of ancient Israel and Judah. The Jews were also barred from entering the city of Jerusalem. Hence, the Rabbis who specialised in the study of the *Torah* compiled and preserved the oral traditions into writings known as *Mishnah* and the *Talmud*. *Mishna* is a Hebrew word meaning teaching or repetition. The *Mishnah* was recorded around 200 CE. by the leader of Jews in Palestine, Juda Ha Nasi. The

Mishnah has six orders, they are further divided into 63 tractates and 531 chapters. The six orders discuss

1. Agriculture

2. Appointed times, such as festivals, sabbaths

3. Women in relation to marriage and divorce

4. Damages, civil and criminal law

5. Ordinary temple procedures

6. Regulations concerning purity

1.3.5 Jewish Revolts

A group of Jews known as Zealots decided to fight with the Romans in 66 CE. They dropped the Romans out of Jerusalem. Four years later the Romans re-established their control on Jerusalem. They killed thousands of Jews and forced them to leave Jerusalem in 70 CE. The Romans also demolished the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. The Jews struggled enough to keep the city of Jerusalem in their control, but they were not able to govern it.
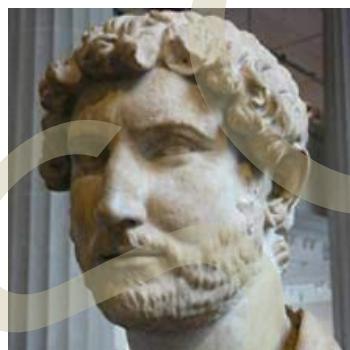
Fig 1.3.3 Simon Bar Kochba

In 132 CE, a military leader named Simon Bar Kochba led the Jews in a battle against the Romans. After three years, the Romans crushed the revolt. Kochba and his military leaders died in this revolt. The Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem and forbade the Jews to live in.

6.3.6 Jewish Mysticism and Magic

Jewish mysticism and magic contrasted dramatically with the nationalism, intellectualism and philosophic sophistication of other remnants of medieval Jewish life. Jewish magic practices bear a striking resemblance to medieval Islam. Both rationalist and mystical achievements were considered to be the integrity of the Jewish experience.

Jewish Mystical Texts

There were two basic types of mystical texts. They are exoteric or revealed and the esoteric or hidden. Exoteric revealed the truth of *Torah* and it was difficult to understand. The *Bible*, *Talmud*, and legal codes were exoteric in nature. But Jewish esoteric text was intentionally exclusionary, using hidden mystery and secrecy. Merkabah mysticism, Zohar Kabbalah, and medieval Hasidism were the three major classes of esoteric Jewish tradition.

Significance of Judaism

Judaism remains a major religion for a small percentage of the world population. At the end of the 20th century, roughly 15 million people practiced Judaism. It also enriched other religions like Christianity and Islam. The Jews have made major contributions to the world's culture.

Recap

- The Jewish Middle Ages began under Emperor Constantine's rule

- Jews dispersed across the Mediterranean, Europe, North Africa, and Arabia

- King David established Jerusalem as Israel's united monarchy capital

- Babylonians destroyed Solomon's Temple and exiled Jewish elites

- Romans conquered Judah, later renaming it Judaea under control

- Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes shaped Jewish religious divisions

- *Torah, Nevi'im*, and *Ketuvim* form the Hebrew Bible's three sections

- Judaism focuses on commandments, *Sabbath,* and religious observances

- Jews celebrate festivals like Yom Kippur, Pesach, and Hanukkah

- Rabbis became Jewish leaders after the Second Temple's destruction

- Romans crushed Jewish revolts, destroyed Jerusalem, and expelled Jews

Objective Questions

1. When did the Roman army destroy the temple in Jerusalem?

2. Who were 'Rabbis'?

3. What is the word meaning of 'Torah'?

4. Who destroyed the Jewish temple in Jerusalem?

5. When did the term 'rabbis' first be used in Palestine?

6. When did Simon Bar Kochba lead the Jews in a battle against the Romans?

7. Who was the famous ruler of Judaea?

8. What is Hanukkah?

9. What is the main goal of Judaism?

Answers

1. 70 C.E
2. A group of religious scholars
3. 'Teaching'
4. Roman Troops
5. After the destruction of the temple
6. 132 CE
7. King Herod
8. A religious festival of Jews
9. To make life holy

Assignments

1. Discuss the impact of Emperor Constantine's policies on the Jewish diaspora in the medieval period.

2. Analyse the significance of the Hebrew *Bible* and *Torah* in shaping Jewish religious and social life.

3. Compare and contrast the beliefs and practices of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes during the Roman rule over Judaea.

4. Examine the causes and consequences of Jewish revolts against Roman rule in the 1st and 2nd centuries C.E.

5. Critically examine the challenges faced by Jewish communities in the modern world, with reference to religious, social, and political issues.

Suggested Reading

1. Collins, John J. *Early Judaism.* William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010.

2. Ellwood, Robert S. *Encyclopaedia of World Religions*. Facts on File, 2007.

3. Goodman, Martin. *A History of Judaism*. Princeton University Press, 2018.

Reference

1. Neusner, Jacob, and Alan J. *Avery-Peck*. The Routledge History of Judaism. Routledge, 2004.

2. Runciman, Steven. *A History of the Crusades*. CUP Archive, 1987.

UNIT 4

Christianity

Learning Outcomes

After the completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ understand the teachings of Jesus

♦ understand the meaning of Dual Papacy

♦ analyse the role of protestant Missionaries

♦ understand the practices of the Christian religion

Prerequisites

Millions of people around the world follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and identify themselves as Christians. Christianity is considered the most widespread religion globally, with its roots tracing back to Judaism around 2000 years ago. Emerging in the 1st century CE, it was initially a small sect within Judaism but gained prominence after the teachings of Jesus and the efforts of his apostles spread across the Roman Empire. Over time, Christianity underwent significant transformations, leading to the formation of various denominations. Differences in theological interpretations, church authority, and religious practices led to divisions among Christians, resulting in multiple branches. The three major branches of Christianity are the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Churches, and the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Roman Catholic Church, led by the Pope, remains the largest Christian denomination, emphasising church traditions and papal authority. The Protestant Churches emerged in the 16th century during the Reformation, advocating for a return to biblical teachings and rejecting certain Catholic doctrines. The Eastern Orthodox Church, which developed after the Great Schism of 1054, follows traditional liturgical practices and maintains a decentralised structure of leadership. Despite these differences, all branches share a common belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ, shaping the religious and cultural landscape of societies worldwide.

Keywords

Bible, Dual Papacy, Catholic, Protestant, Episcopal Model, Congregational Model

Discussion

1.4.1 Jesus Christ

Christianity is a religion centered on the belief in Jesus as the son of God. Jesus was a Jew who lived in Galilee (today northern Israel). The parents of Jesus Christ are Mary and Joseph. It is said that he spent his early life on teaching and working miracles, especially healing. His teachings took several basic forms. His well-known teachings include parables, stories told to teach a religious lesson, beatitudes, etc. Scholars have tried to prove that Jesus has some affinities to early Rabbinical Judaism. For example, Jesus taught in Synagogues, his followers called him Rabbi, and his teachings about love, the commandments and prayers are the ideals of rabbinical teachings.
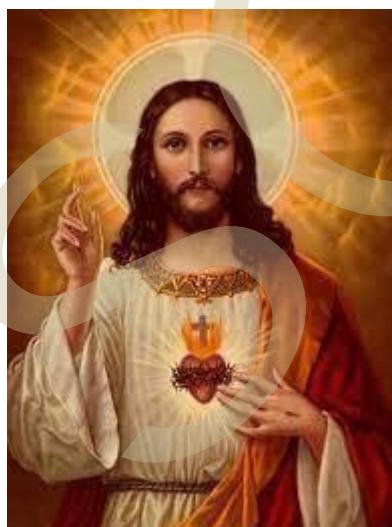
Fig 1.4.1 Jesus Christ
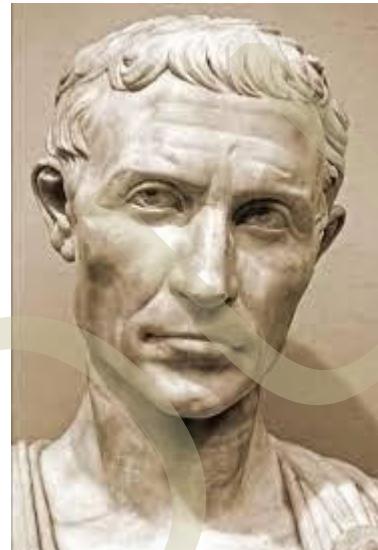
Fig 1.4.2 Pontius Pilate

He was crucified on the charges of sedition against the Roman government by a Roman Governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate. His crucifixion began early on a Friday morning. Jesus's followers travelled throughout the Roman Empire to propagate his teachings.

1.4.1.1 Teachings of Jesus

Jesus identified two preeminent commandments: love God and love your fellow human beings. Several sayings found in the gospel of John pertain directly to Jesus. In these passages, Jesus connects himself very closely with God. For example, "the Father and I are one". He also connects himself with his followers. For example, "I am the bread of Life" and "I am the vine, you are the branches".

Until the fourth century, Christianity was illegal in the Roman Empire. Emperor Constantine (280- 337) removed legal restrictions against Christianity. Emperor

Theodosius (347-395) made all other religions illegal. During this time, Christians systematised their teachings. Their teachings said that God was a trinity: Father(creator), Son and Holy Spirit.

The political ties held by the Western Roman Empire and Eastern Roman Empire were snapped formally in the 11th century. As a result, the Greek-speaking eastern part of the Roman Empire and the Latin-speaking western Roman Empire gradually grew apart. A great schism emerged between the Roman Catholic Church in the West and the Eastern Orthodox Churches in 1054. There were differences in Church teaching and the relative position of the Pope and the patriarch of Constantinople.

1.4.2 Rise of Christian Community

In the years immediately after Jesus, there seem to emerge many communities calling themselves Christian. Some of them banded together to form larger associations. Christianity developed out of a tradition that saw itself as in the line of Jesus' apostles. During the 300's, Christianity became legal and then mandatory in the Roman Empire. The apostolic Orthodox tradition was established there. Bishops governed the territories of the Churches. Christian movements continued to arise and opposed some elements of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

1.4.2.1 Dual Papacy

The friction within the Roman Catholic church led to philosophical divisions and papal dualities. A conclave of cardinals failed to agree on electing a Pope in 1378. Instead of that, they elected two popes. One ruling was at Avignon, and the other was at Rome. In these circumstances, each Pope demanded taxes to be paid and issued edicts to be obeyed. A dual papacy became a triple papacy in 1409. In 1414, the dual papacy was reduced to papal unity. Later, ecclesiastical order was restored.

1.4.3 Protestant Missionaries

During the 16th century, Western Orthodox Churches were split. The reformation led to the creation of many protestant Churches. The Protestants believed that only the Bible had authority in religious matters, not the papacy or religious traditions of the Church. From the 17th century, Christian missionaries accompanied European conquerors and converted people all over the world. The nineteenth century was the era of influential protestant missionaries.

1.4.3.1 Beliefs

Christians generally believed in salvation. The Roman Catholic Church teaches salvation requires both God's gift of race and human actions. There were differences in opinion regarding bread and wine. Catholic and Orthodox Christians believed that the bread and wine actually became Jesus' body and blood. But most Protestants believe that they are the only symbols of Jesus' body and blood of Jesus.

1.4.3.2 Practices

Christian churches have set Sunday as a day of communal worship in recognition of Jesus' insurrection on a Sunday. Reading from the Bible and making prayers are part of the celebration. Protestant worship has emphasised preaching the word of God. Their worship consisted of a sermon along with reading from the Bible, prayers and songs. Most Christians follow a cycle of annual festivals. These festivals are linked to the life of Jesus. Example. The birth of Jesus is celebrated as Christmas, and Easter celebrates Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

Baptism (immersion in water) is a sacrament of admission and adoption into

Christianity. By doing this, one becomes a Christian. Both Catholic and Orthodox Christians practice baptism as a birth ritual. In addition to baptism, the Catholic and Orthodox Christians recognise five other sacraments through which they can receive God's grace. They are confirmation, penance, marriage, holy orders, and anointing with oil for healing. They also gave special reverence to Mary, Jesus's mother, and saints.

1.4.3.3 Organisation of Churches

Christian Churches are organised into two models. They are the episcopal model and congregational model. On the episcopal model, authority resides with a Bishop or Archbishop. Bishops are in charge of an entire area, overseeing the activities of the Church. The ultimate authority of the Roman Catholic Church is the Pope.

In the Congregational Model, authority resides with the local congregation, which selects a person to be its minister. This model is found among many protestants. Usually, congregations are joined together by larger national or regional groups.

1.4.4 Christianity in the World Today

At the beginning of the 21st century, Christianity was the world's largest religion. About a third of the world's population is nominally from a Christian background. Christianity was rapidly shifting from Europe and North America to the Third World, countries of Latin America, Africa and Southern Asia. The most significant Christian history appeared to take place in Europe or the Mediterranean basin.

In Europe, the great cathedrals celebrated traditional Christian festivals. Even though it has lost its considerable vigour. In many countries, religious identity remains important and divisive. But in most parts of Europe, not more than a small percentage of the population attend church regularly.

In the United States, church attendance by the Christians is markedly higher than in Europe. The situation in Canada is between those of Europe and the United States. According to projections, by 2025, half the world's Christians will live in Africa and Latin America. This is because of the rapid population growth in those parts of the world. Christianity is attracting converts in Africa and Latin America.

Pentecostalism has flourished in its vibrancy, its strict moral standards, and its provision for spiritual expression. It is now estimated that one-fourth of the active Christians in the world are Pentecostal. Many other forms of Christianity have appeared in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Today, Christianity is the largest single religion in the World. Christianity was practiced by roughly a third of the world's population. It has made major contributions to European culture. This is considered as one of the major religions of the world.

Recap

- ♦ Jesus Christ's teachings focused on love and religious lessons
- ♦ Jesus was crucified under Roman rule for alleged sedition
- ♦ Christianity was illegal until Emperor Constantine's reforms
- ♦ The Great Schism split Eastern and Western Christianity in 1054
- ♦ Christianity expanded through apostles and legal recognition in Rome
- ♦ The Catholic Church faced divisions, leading to a dual papacy
- ♦ Protestant Reformation rejected papal authority, emphasising the Bible
- ♦ Christian worship includes Bible readings, prayers, and sacraments
- ♦ Christian churches follow episcopal or congregational leadership models
- ♦ Christianity shifted towards Africa, Latin America, and Asia
- ♦ Pentecostalism is a growing force within modern Christianity
- ♦ Christianity remains the world's largest religion with deep influence

Objective Questions

1. Which form of teaching was commonly used by Jesus?

2. Who ordered the crucifixion of Jesus?

3. Which emperor made Christianity legal in the Roman Empire?

4. In which year did the Great Schism occur, separating the Eastern and Western Churches?

5. What was the main belief of Protestant Christians regarding religious authority?

6. What is the significance of baptism in Christianity?

7. Which Christian model of church governance places authority with bishops?

Answers

1. Parables

2. Pontius Pilate

3. Emperor Constantine

4. 1054

5. Only the Bible holds religious authority

6. It is a sacrament of admission into Christianity

7. Episcopal model

Assignments

1. Discuss the major teachings of Jesus Christ and their connection to early Rabbinical Judaism.

2. Analyse the impact of the Great Schism of 1054 on the development of Christianity in Europe.

3. Explain the role of Emperor Constantine and Emperor Theodosius in shaping the legal status of Christianity in the Roman Empire.

4. Evaluate the significance of the Protestant Reformation in transforming Christian beliefs and practices.

5. Assess the shift of Christianity from Europe to Africa and Latin America in the 21st century, considering its historical context.

Suggested Reading

1. Alexander, Cecil Francis. *The Decline of the Medieval Church.* K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1930.

2. Langley, Andrew. *Medieval Life.* DK Publishing, 2011.

3. Stephenson, Carl. *Medieval History.* Harper & Row, 1962.

Reference

1. Cosman, Madeleine Pelner, and Linda Gale Jones. *Handbook to Life in the Medieval World*. Infobase Publishing, 2008.

2. Ellwood, Robert S. *Encyclopaedia of World Religions*. Facts on File, 2007.

5 UNIT

Islam

Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ understand the life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad

♦ learn the core beliefs of Islam

♦ understand the significance of the Qur'an

♦ examine Islam's expansion and cultural impact

Prerequisites

Islam is a major world religion that emerged approximately 1,400 years ago with the teachings of Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century CE. It rapidly grew into a significant religious and social force, shaping civilizations across vast regions. Followers of Islam, known as Muslims, now number over a billion worldwide, making it one of the largest religions. Before the rise of Islam, most people in Arabia practised polytheism, worshipping multiple gods and following tribal traditions. Prophet Muhammad, born in Mecca, began preaching monotheism, emphasising the worship of one God, Allah. Facing opposition in Mecca, he and his followers migrated to Medina in 622 CE, an event known as the Hijra, which marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. Medina became the first Islamic state, where the foundations of Islamic governance and society were established. From there, Islam spread rapidly across Arabia through both peaceful missionary work and military campaigns. Within a century, it expanded beyond the Arabian Peninsula, influencing regions such as North Africa, Persia, and the Byzantine territories. The growth of Islam led to the formation of powerful empires, fostering advancements in science, philosophy, and culture and leaving a lasting impact on world history.

Keywords

Qur'an, Five Pillars, Shi'ites, Sunnis, Zakat, Hadith

Discussion

1.5.1 Prophet Muhammad

Prophet Muhammad was born in Mecca about 1,400 years ago. During his period, Mecca was a prosperous and important centre of trade. Muhammad was a merchant and married a wealthy widow. He spent many nights praying in a cave on a hill near Mecca. There, he was visited by the Archangel Gabriel, who brought him God's Message.

Muhammad believed that God wanted him to deliver God's teachings to the Arab people. He is considered as the last of a series of Prophets of God that began with Adam and continued through Abraham, Moses and Jesus. He began to preach publicly in Mecca. He began to convert people to Islam.

1.5.1.1 Origin of Islam

The Arab word 'Islam' means 'submission'. It meant submission to the will of God. Islam is a religion that took its final form in Arabia after revelation to the Prophet Mohammad(570- 632). The time before Prophet Mohammad is considered 'al-jahiliya', the time of ignorance. During this period semi-nomadic people, especially herders and caravaners, lived in Arabia. They were very loyal to their clans. Their religions were polytheistic and local. The revelations of Prophet Mohammad proclaimed that human beings owed primary loyalty to one true God. It is to whom alone they should obey. As a result, a new community came into being. They were called the *Ummah* of Islam. Ummah was not based on blood relationships but on shared faith. The date of its existence from *hijra*, the flight of Prophet Mohammad and his followers to Mecca to Medina in 622.

1.5.1.2 Qur'an

The Arabic word *Qur'an* means recitation. Muslims consider the *Qur'an* to be the supreme revelation of God to human beings. The book governs every aspect of Islamic life. Muslims also believe that the Angel Gabriel appeared to Prophet Muhammad and commanded him to recite. According to tradition, Muhammad could not write the *Qur'an*. After the death of Prophet Mohammad, the revelations he had received were collected and compiled into a book known as the *Qur'an*. It was recorded on scraps of material that happened to be available: bits of leather, papyrus leaves, ribes of animals. They also committed the revelations to memory. Scholars collected stories of the Prophet's deeds and sayings called the *Hadith*. Tradition attributes the work of compiling the *Qur'an* to Zaid ibn Thabit.

Fig 1.5.1 Old Holy Qur'an

Qur'an consists of Arabic poetic verses

revealed to Prophet Muhammad at various times. The verses of the *Qur'an* are gathered into 114 units known as *surahs*. Some of the surah are extremely long, but others consist of only four lines, more like a stanza than a chapter. The longer *surahs* are towards the beginning of *Qur'an*, and the shorter *surahs* are towards its end.

1.5.2 Beliefs

The Muslims believe that "there is no God, but God and Mohammad his messenger (*Rasul*). Islam maintains that God is absolutely one. It strongly neglected the Christian notion of the Trinity. Islam also holds an absolute division between creation and creator. Muslims also believe that God has revealed Himself everywhere in some form to His creation. They also thought that the *Qur'an* is the complete and final manner in which God addresses human beings.

Islam believes in Angels, one of whom, *Shytan* or *Iblis*, rebelled against God. They also trust that there will be a final judgement at the end of time and that the faithful will enjoy an eternal existence in paradise.

1.5.2.1 Practices

There were five pillars in Islam. All Muslims practice these five pillars. The first pillar is the profession of the faith (*Shahadah*). Without professing the divinity of God, a Muslim cannot truly submit oneself to God's will. The second Pillar is obligatory prayer (*Salat*). The Muslims pray more formally five times a day. They face the town of Mecca and adopt several postures. They also recite a series of prayers. At the mosque, an *imam* preaches a sermon to the assembled congregation, particularly on Fridays.

The third pillar is almsgiving (*Zakat*) to the poor and needy. The Prophet urged his followers to care for the poor and the needy. The Government of Islamic countries generally administered *zakat*. Private charity was also practiced.

The fourth pillar of Islam is fasting during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, the month of Ramadan. During this month, Muslims refrain from eating, drinking and sexual activity from sunup to sundown. This is a significant event in the early history of Islam. It also teaches compassion towards other living beings. Those who are pregnant, sick, old or travelling are not expected to go so fast. The month of fasting ends with a festivel called Id- ul-fitr.

The fifth and last pillar of Islam is a pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca. This mainly takes place during the final month of the Islamic year. On the tenth day of the month, Muslims throughout the entire world sacrifice a goat, sheep or cow. This is known as Id-ul-Adha. All capable Muslims should make a pilgrimage once in their lives.

1.5.2.2 Islamic Calendar

Islamic calendar is based on the cycle of the moon rather than the solar year. The Ramadan fast and pilgrimage to Mecca will have occurred in every season of the year. Shi'ites observe *Ashura*, on the tenth day of the first month of Muharram. It commemorates the death of Husayan, the grandson of Muhammad. Husayan lost his life in battle at Karbala (in Iraq) in 680 C.E.

1.5.2.3 Divisions

At the same time, there emerged several schools of thought. The most important minority among Muslims was the Shi'ites, while the majority, known as Sunnis, were divided by other significant disagreements. The Shi'ites claimed that the Prophet's male descendants should lead the community of Islam. However, the Sunnis accepted the Umayyad dynasty, which ruled in Damascus.

1.5.2.4 Organisation

There were differences of opinion in organising community in Shi'ites and Sunni Muslims. For Sunnis, political and religious leadership may be exercised by different persons. Traditionally, caliphs and sultans oversaw matters of internal order and external defense. Today different officers, namely, presidents and prime ministers, fulfil these functions. *Ulema*, the scholars of Islam are to be considered as the religious head.

For Shi'ites, *Imam*, the male descendant of Muhammad exercise political and religious leadership. Their religious leaders, headed by the *ayatollahs*, are considerably more independent than their Sunni counterparts.

Islam has not traditionally recognised the ideals of separation of religion and government. Religious pluralism was common in Europe, North America and other parts of the world.

1.5.3 Growth of Islam

Islam expanded steadily and rapidly.

After the death of Prophet Mohammad, it extended from Spain and Morocco in the West through the Near East and Iran to Central Asia in the east. During the period of the Abbasid dynasty, Islam developed sophisticated traditions of philosophy and profound schools of mysticism known as Sufism.

After the decline of the Abbasid Dynasty in 1258, the Islamic world was divided among regional powers. The Turks overthrew Constantinople in 1453. The Mughals laid their foundation in India. From South Asia, Islam spread east to Indonesia, the most populous Islamic country today. Muslims also developed several long-lasting societies south of the Sahara in Africa.

Islam is considered one of the world's major religions. One-fifth of the world's population follows Islam. Islam also made many contributions to art, architecture, literature and philosophy to world civilizations.

Recap

- Prophet Muhammad received divine revelation in Mecca

- Islam means submission to God's will

- *Ummah* formed based on shared faith, not lineage

- The *Qur'an* is Islam's supreme religious text

- Islam believes in one God and final judgment

- Five pillars define core Islamic practices

- Ramadan fasting teaches discipline and compassion

- The Islamic calendar follows lunar cycles

- Sunni and Shi'ite sects differ in leadership beliefs

- Islam expanded rapidly across continents

- ◆ Islamic culture enriched art, literature, and philosophy.
- ◆ The Abbasid dynasty fostered philosophy and mysticism

Objective Questions

1. What is the word meaning 'Islam'?
2. Where did Islam take its final form?
3. What is 'al-jahiliya'?
4. What is the word meaning of the *Qur'an*?
5. How many pillars are there in Islam?
6. What is *Surah*?
7. Which is the third pillar of Islam?
8. What is called *Id-ul-Fitr*?
9. When did the Abbasid Dynasty come to fall?

Answers

1. Submission
2. Arabia
3. The time before Prophet Mohammad is considered as 'al-jahiliya'
4. Recitation
5. Five
6. The verses of the *Qur'an* are gathered into 114 units known as *surahs*
7. The third pillar is almsgiving (*Zakat*) to the poor and needy
8. The month of fasting ends with a festival, called Id- ul-Fitr.
9. 1258

Assignments

1. Discuss the significance of Prophet Muhammad's role in the emergence of Islam.

2. Explain the concept of *Ummah* and how it differed from pre-Islamic tribal loyalty.

3. Analyse the importance of the *Qur'an* in shaping Islamic beliefs and practices.

4. Compare and contrast the beliefs and leadership structures of Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims.

5. Examine the factors that contributed to the rapid expansion of Islam beyond Arabia.

Suggested Reading

1. Cosman, Madeleine Pelner, and Linda Gale Jones. *Handbook to Life in the Medieval World*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2010.

2. Ellwood, Robert S. *Encyclopaedia of World Religions*. Facts on File, 2007.

Reference

1. Brandt, William J. *The Shape of Medieval History*. New Haven, 1966.

2. Cosman, Madeleine Pelner, and Linda Gale Jones. *Handbook to Life in the Medieval World*. Infobase Publishing, 2008.

3. Van Steenbergen, Jo. *A History of the Islamic World: 600–1800*. Routledge, 2020.

4. Watt, W. Montgomery. *Islam and the Integration of Society*. Routledge, 1961.

5. Farooqui, Amar. *Early Social Formations*. Manak Publications LTD, 2020.

Struggle Between Empire and Papacy

1 UNIT

Carolingian Period

After the successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ know about the dynasties that ruled over Europe during the Carolingian period

♦ familiarise themselves with various rulers in the dynasty significantly contributed to the development of the Frankish Empire

♦ analyse the changes that transpired in Europe under various rulers

Prerequisites

Gaul, a region that encompassed modern-day France and parts of neighbouring countries, witnessed significant transformations with the migration and eventual dominance of the Franks. Originally one of several Germanic tribes inhabiting Germania, the Franks gradually moved into Gaul, particularly as Roman authority weakened in the fifth century. By the late fifth century, Clovis, a leader of the Salian Franks, established himself as the ruler of a vast Frankish kingdom. His reign marked the foundation of the Merovingian dynasty, named after his ancestor, Merovech. Clovis's strategic embrace of Christianity strengthened his position, as he secured the support of the Roman Catholic Church, which remained a powerful institution despite the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. Under the Merovingians, the Frankish kingdom expanded, absorbing other Germanic groups such as the Visigoths and Burgundians. However, over time, the Merovingian rulers lost effective control, as power increasingly shifted into the hands of high-ranking officials known as the mayors of the palace.

By the seventh century, the mayors of the palace became the real rulers of the Frankish kingdom, with the Pippinid family, especially Pippin I and Pippin II,

consolidating power. Charles Martel further strengthened their control by repelling the Arab invasion at the Battle of Poitiers in 733 and implementing military reforms that shaped European feudalism. His son, Pippin III, deposed the last Merovingian king in 751 CE with papal support, founding the Carolingian dynasty and paving the way for Charlemagne's vast empire.

Keywords

Carolingian Dynasty, Merovingian Dynasty, Clovis, Frankish Empire, Pippin, Martel, Carolingian Supremacy, Charlemagne, Renaissance

Discussion

The Carolingian dynasty and its noble beginnings can be traced back to the Franks who made a royal space for themselves among the Romans. The dynesty got its name etymologically from Carolus, which is the Latinised version of Charles Martel, who was the ruler of Francia from 718 CE onwards. However, the Carolingian Renaissance, which is considered as one of the three major renaissances, occurred between the eighth and ninth centuries, ushering in a new era in Europe. This particular dynasty is also known as Carlovingians, and Karolinger, based on its usages in different regions. Even though it was popularised by Charlemagne and acquired power in the eighth century CE., the dynasty did long history before gaining power.

2.1.1 The Franks

The Franks were one among the Germanic peoples who had resided in Germania, east of the Rhine, for several centuries. Like other Germanic tribes, they likely made their way into Gaul gradually, arriving in small groups until the late fourth century. However, at the beginning of the fifth century, with the Roman military withdrawing from the Rhine frontier, the Franks migrated into Gaul in significant numbers. By the mid-fifth century, they had become a prominent segment of the population in northern Gaul.

During the fifth century, Gaul was home to a diverse mix of ethnic and linguistic communities. The native Celts, who had inhabited the region since pre-Roman times, formed one of the primary groups. There were also Roman settlers, many of whom spoke Latin, as well as a variety of non-Latin individuals, including enslaved people, coloni, and free peasants from different parts of the Roman Empire. Gaul was also populated by Germanic groups such as the Burgundians, Suebi, Alani, Franks, Alemanni, and Visigoths. The Burgundians controlled the southwestern and central parts of Gaul, while the Visigoths held power in the southeast. Rome retained only a small portion of land along the southwestern Mediterranean coast near the Italian border. The Franks, in contrast, were concentrated in the northern regions of Gaul. It is worth noting that northern Gaul had undergone less Romanisation than the southern areas, making it easier for Germanic traditions and customs to take root there.

The latter half of the fifth century marked

the rise of the Franks as a dominant power in Gaul. They expanded their control over most of northern Gaul and were divided into two major groups: the Salian Franks and the Ripuarian Franks. Among them, the Salian Franks emerged as the leading faction. By this time, Frankish society had already developed a class structure. The traditional tribal organisation had eroded, giving way to a system where a small landowning elite held power while dependent Germanic peasants formed the lower class. This elite comprised clan leaders and professional warriors. A monarchy had begun to take shape, though early Frankish rulers had limited authority, often sharing power with other tribal leaders or members of their own families.

In the earlier eras, all adult men of the tribe were recruited as warriors whenever military action was necessary. During peaceful periods, they engaged in farming and livestock rearing. However, as society became more stratified, a specialised warrior class emerged, which also took control of the land. The conquest of Gaul significantly expanded the Frankish territory, leading to the displacement of Roman landowners as the Franks solidified their rule. This transformation deepened social divisions among the Franks, pushing most people into the peasant class and removing them from military service. Over time, the role of Germanic farmers in the army diminished considerably. Many of these peasants, settled on lands previously owned by Roman aristocrats, eventually became indistinguishable from the Roman coloni, formerly enslaved labourers, and other dependent agricultural workers of the region.

Clovis

By the late fifth century, a Germanic leader named Clovis (Chlodwig in German) proclaimed himself king of the Franks. He was a member of the Salian Franks and descended from Merovech, a former tribal leader and his grandfather. Clovis went on to establish a lineage of Frankish rulers who governed Gaul until 751. This ruling family came to be known as the Merovingian dynasty, named after Merovech. The primary historical record concerning the early Merovingians comes from a sixth-century work by Gregory of Tours (539–594), a prominent Christian clergyman. His ten-volume History of the Franks remains an essential source for understanding the Merovingian reign.

Clovis inherited the leadership of the Salian Franks following the death of his father, Childeric I (son of Merovech), in 481. This year is widely recognised as the founding moment of the Frankish kingdom. Traditional historical narratives often associate this event with the emergence of a distinct political and territorial entity—France—separate from Roman Gaul. From this point onwards, we will refer to this region as France for clarity, though the term itself was not commonly used until the late tenth century. The process of naming a territory evolves and varies based on historical, linguistic, and cultural factors, with different languages often assigning different names to the same geographic region.

Clovis managed to consolidate the regions in northern France, which were previously under the control of various Germanic groups. By the late fifth century, he had taken over the territories governed by the Ripuarian Franks and the Alemanni. In 507, he emerged victorious against the Visigoths, expelling them from France. With this success, the Merovingians dominated most of the region, with only one significant Germanic kingdom remaining—the Burgundians in the southwest. However, by the latter half of the sixth century, the Merovingians had also conquered this state.

A crucial element in the rise of Merovingian influence was Clovis's decision to embrace

Christianity. He and his fellow Franks converted to Orthodox Christianity, which enabled them to establish strong ties with the bishops in France. The church was the only structured institution that had persisted since Roman times, possessing extensive landholdings, control over education, and significant social and political clout. Unlike the Franks, most of the prominent Germanic kingdoms in Western Europe had aligned themselves with Arian Christianity. This led to tensions with the Roman church, which had formally rejected Arian beliefs at the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. Consequently, groups such as the Vandals, Goths, and Lombards faced opposition from the Catholic church, while the Franks benefited from ecclesiastical support, which reinforced their rule.

Following Clovis's death in 511, his empire was divided among his four sons, a pattern that would frequently recur in Frankish history. The development of Germanic states exhibited distinctive features as these groups were transitioning from tribal governance to centralised monarchies. Many of the institutions established by these rulers drew inspiration from Roman structures, though they were adapted to fit Germanic traditions. Earlier Germanic kingdoms had an easier time integrating Roman administrative practices. Still, later waves of invasions had further eroded what remained of the Roman state, especially in regions like northern Gaul, where Roman influence had been relatively weak. As a result, the Franks had to create their own monarchical system, retaining aspects of their tribal customs.

One key characteristic of Merovingian rule was that the kingdom was viewed as the personal property of the monarch, following the same inheritance customs as private estates. The idea of individually owned land was still relatively new, but under Frankish traditions, property was typically divided equally among all male heirs. Even though society was patriarchal and class divisions were becoming more pronounced, certain tribal practices—such as equal inheritance among sons—continued. This principle also applied to the kingdom itself, which was split among Clovis's sons.

Thus, the Merovingian realm fragmented into four independent kingdoms, each governed by one of Clovis's heirs. Rivalries between these states were common, but during this period, Merovingian expansion continued. A major milestone was the conquest of the Burgundian kingdom in 534, which marked the end of the last Germanic state in France from the earlier invasions. By this time, the Merovingians controlled nearly the entire region. In the mid-sixth century, Chlotar I, one of Clovis's sons, briefly reunited the empire. He ruled alone from 558 until he died in 561, during which the Merovingian domain reached its greatest territorial extent. However, after his death, the empire was once again divided, leading to renewed internal conflicts. Despite this fragmentation, the Merovingian dynasty endured until the mid-eighth century. Until around 630, the kings maintained a degree of authority, and the empire was occasionally reunited. However, after this period, power increasingly shifted to the 'mayors of the palace,' high-ranking officials who eventually wielded real control over the kingdom.

During the early seventh century, a group of high-ranking officials known as the mayors of the palace began to assert increasing influence within the Merovingian realm. By the middle of the seventh century, their power had grown to the extent that they were instrumental in determining who would ascend to the throne. During this period, Merovingian monarchs had become mere figureheads under their control. Originally, the mayor of the palace (*major palatii*) served as an administrator responsible for managing different functions of the royal household, including overseeing the personal estates of the king. Some of these officials were

also tasked with mentoring royal heirs. Capitalising on internal strife among the Merovingian domains, the mayors of the palace accelerated the decline of the ruling dynasty.

By the mid-seventh century, one particular family of mayors of the palace rose to prominence—descendants of Pippin I (also known as Pippin I). Both Pippin I and his successor, Pippin II, wielded considerable influence over the northeastern regions of France, especially between Paris and the Rhine. Gradually, they consolidated authority over the Merovingian state, a process that culminated in the dominance of Charles Martel, the son of Pippin II.

2.1.1.2 Charles Martel

Charles Martel faced considerable opposition in his quest for supremacy, battling rival mayors of the palace and Germanic tribal leaders. Only by around 715 CE was he able to establish a stable rule. By this time, the Merovingian ruler had been reduced to a mere symbolic figure, with Charles Martel holding real power.

Martel is often credited as the true architect of a new ruling dynasty, later known as the Carolingians, who eventually replaced the Merovingians. However, the Carolingians did not formally assume the throne until after Martel's death. One of the most significant challenges he encountered was the incursion of Arab forces into France. The Arab expansion into Western Europe began in 711 CE, with Spain as their primary target. Within a short span, they vanquished the Visigothic rulers and established their dominion over vast territories. In the second quarter of the eighth century, Arab forces, under the command of Spain's governor Abd al-Rahman, advanced into southern France. In response, Charles Martel mobilised his troops, ultimately defeating the invading army at the Battle of Poitiers(battle of Tours)

in 733 CE (though the commonly cited date is 732, some scholars have revised it). Located south of Tours, Poitiers was a critical site of confrontation. The Arab forces retreated following their loss, withdrawing back to Spain. This battle was a defining moment in early medieval France as it effectively halted further Arab incursions into Frankish lands, even though its significance may not have been immediately clear at the time.

Martel also laid the groundwork for European feudalism. He initiated reforms aimed at strengthening the military framework of the empire. Under his leadership, the Frankish military transitioned from a primarily infantry-based force to one dominated by mounted warriors. This shift was, in part, a reflection of increasing social stratification among Germanic societies. While military service had previously been expected of all adult males, the emergence of a specialised warrior class gradually excluded the general populace from such duties. Alongside advances in military strategy, these professional soldiers increasingly fought on horseback rather than on foot.

Since maintaining cavalry units was costly, Charles Martel seized extensive church lands to fund his military initiatives. He redistributed ecclesiastical estates among his key military supporters, requiring them to use the land's revenues to sustain cavalry units and soldiers. This large-scale appropriation of church property intensified in the wake of the Arab invasion, as Martel sought to ensure that his forces were well-equipped to counter the threat. Notably, the Arab armies had heavily relied on cavalry, a tactic that proved essential to their military successes.

2.1.1.3 Pippin III

Following Charles Martel's death in 741 CE, his domains were divided between his two sons, Carloman and Pippin III. However, Carloman soon withdrew from

politics, leaving Pippin III as the sole ruler of the Frankish territories by 747 CE. In 751 CE, Pippin III formally deposed the last Merovingian monarch, Childeric III, and declared himself king. His rule was legitimised by the Pope, who anointed him 'King of the Franks.' Unlike his predecessors, who had ruled under the pretence of Merovingian sovereignty, Pippin III officially ended the dynasty and established Carolingian rule.

He strengthened the Frankish state and expanded its influence beyond its borders. By the mid-sixth century, Italy had become a battleground for three major powers—the Byzantines, the Lombards, and the papacy. The Byzantine Empire, following Emperor Justinian's campaigns, had retained control of Sicily, parts of southern Italy, and the strategic city of Ravenna in the north. The Byzantines also maintained a degree of authority over the Pope and Rome itself. Meanwhile, the Lombards had firmly established themselves in northern and central Italy, attempting to unify their rule much like the Franks had done in Gaul. However, their ambitions were soon checked by the intervention of the Franks, who strategically supported the Pope's territorial autonomy against Lombard aggression.

By the early eighth century, the Lombards had expanded their dominion, capturing Ravenna and other territories beyond their core region. Alarmed by these developments, Pope Stephen II sought assistance from Pippin in 753. In return, Pippin aided the Pope in his conflict with the Lombards in Italy. Pippin led two campaigns against the Lombards, forcing them to relinquish some of their territorial gains, particularly lands around Ravenna that had previously belonged to the Byzantine Empire. Rather than returning these territories to the Byzantines, Pippin handed them over to the Pope in what became known as the "Donation of Pippin." These lands, along with others near Rome, formed the basis of the Papal States, which remained under the Pope's rule for centuries, even lasting into the nineteenth century.

In line with Frankish tradition, his kingdom was divided between his surviving sons upon his death in 768 CE—Carloman II and Charlemagne. For a brief period, the brothers governed separate portions of the empire. However, following Carloman II's death in 771, Charlemagne assumed full control. His accession marked the beginning of a transformative period in Western European history. Charlemagne expanded the empire significantly, encompassing vast regions. Under his reign, the political, economic, and military structures that defined classical feudalism began to take shape, leaving a lasting impact on European civilisation. Charlemagne later completed the conquest of the Lombard kingdom in a single campaign. In 774, he took the famed Iron Crown of Lombardy, cementing Frankish dominance over the region.

Recap

- The Carolingian dynasty originated from Frankish rulers
- Dynasty named after Charles Martel, ruler of Francia
- Carolingian Renaissance reshaped Europe in the 8th-9th centuries
- Franks migrated into Gaul after the Roman withdrawal
- Gaul housed diverse ethnic and linguistic groups
- Franks became dominant in northern Gaul
- Clovis unified the Franks and embraced Christianity
- Merovingians ruled Gaul until 751 CE
- Mayors of the palace gained power over kings
- Pippin III overthrew the last Merovingian king
- The Carolingian dynasty established under Pippin III
- Charles Martel halted Arab expansion at Poitiers
- Military reforms led to mounted warriors' dominance

Objective Questions

1. Which Germanic group was the leading faction among the Franks?
2. Who was the founder of the Merovingian dynasty?
3. Which battle marked the end of the Arab expansion into Frankish territories?
4. Who was the first Carolingian ruler officially crowned as King of the Franks?
5. Which religious institution supported the Franks due to their conversion to Orthodox Christianity?
6. Which ruler completed the transition from Merovingian to Carolingian rule?

7. Which Frankish ruler unified the empire after his brother died in 771?

8. What was the title of the powerful officials who ruled on behalf of Merovingian kings?

9. How did Pippin III legitimise his rule?

10. Name the territory ruled by the Franks in the early medieval period.

Answers

1. Salian Franks

2. Clovis

3. Battle of Poitiers

4. Pippin III

5. The Catholic Church

6. Pippin III

7. Charlemagne

8. Mayors of the Palace

9. By seeking the Pope's approval

10. Northern Gaul

Assignments

1. Discuss the origins and rise of the Carolingian dynasty.

2. Analyse the significance of the Battle of Poitiers (732/733) in the context of early medieval Europe. How did it impact Frankish and European history?

3. Explain the transition from Merovingian to Carolingian rule. How did the mayors of the palace contribute to this transformation?

4. How did the Frankish rulers utilise religion to consolidate their power?

Discuss with reference to Clovis and Pippin III.

5. Examine the military reforms initiated by Charles Martel.

Suggested Reading

1. Barbero, Alessandro. Charlemagne: *The Father of the Continent*. University of California Press, 2004.

2. Foracre, Paul. *Charles the Bald*. Routledge, 2000.

3. James, Edward. *The Franks: People of Europe*. Wiley Blackwell, 1991.

4. McKitterick, Rosamond. *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*. Cambridge University Press, 1993.

5. Riche, Pierre, and Michael I. Allen. *The Carolingians Who Forged Europe*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993.

6. Ullmann, Walter. *The Carolingian Renaissance and the Idea of Kingship*. Routledge, 2010.

7. Wood, Ian. *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450–751*. Longman, 1993.

Reference

1. Brinton, Crane, et al. *A History of Civilizations*. Prentice Hall, 1955.

2. Farooqui, Amar. *Early Social Formations*. Manak Publications LTD, 2020.

3. Fichtenau, Heinrich. *The Carolingian Empire*. University of Toronto Press, 1978.

4. Innes, Matthew. *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley, 400–1000*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

5. McKitterick, Rosamond. *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751–987*. Longman, 1983.

UNIT 2

2

Rise of Papacy

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ understand the factors that contributed to the rise of papacy in medieval Europe

♦ familiarise with the concept of Monastic foundations and various orders

♦ analyse the impact of Monasticism on the society

♦ examine the changes brought about by Papacy in the European Middle Ages

Prerequisites

We might be wondering about the origin story and development of the papacy as we see it today in the present world. As with any other institution, it also does have a beginning dating back to, say, the Middle Ages in the wake of changes happening in the Roman Empire and other similar kinds of ones from the Carolingian period. The circumstances that persisted at that point in time made monks lead a secluded life in forests, facing the threats and challenges of such remote places in a collective manner.

Later, these developed into orders stating the dos and don'ts when they lived as a community. This, is the initial stages, addressed the demands of the monks and their community, but as time went on, the situation changed, so did their need, giving rise to the new set of orders with their own specifications and peculiarities, such as the Benediction Order, Franciscan Order, and Dominican Order. Similarly, this new set up of institutions and way of life did have a great impact in building up Europe in all aspects of progressive endeavours as well such as the introduction of Canon Law, art, architecture, and the rise of churches. It also acted as the foundation of the papacy and papal authority throughout the world.

Papacy, Middle Ages, Christianity, Monastic Orders, Canon Law

Discussion

2.2.1 Rise of Papacy

With the fall of Rome and the breakup of the Empire, Civilisation entered a period lasting for about 1000 years. Dawn of Middle Ages Feudalism, revival of town life, increased intercourse with the East, and rising power of the church were great forces which operated during this period.

One great body or institution that undoubtedly benefited from Europe's unsettled condition after the fall of Rome was the Church. Even the barbarians feared and respected the Church's power. The Church joined strength, and according to Henry S., the Church exercised a vast influence on human destinies.

Churches were organised along the lines of Jewish synagogues and were constructed on the model basilicas or public halls of the Romans. The churches were plain and unattractive outside but beautiful inside. The Church reaped large revenue from land and the taxes levied on subjects. Though without an army and police force, it was very powerful. It was more than a religious organisation with its own law - canon law and law courts. There was no distinction between clergy and laymen. The congregation had a head known as Presbyter. A Deacon supervised the Congregation. But in the course of time, Christianity became ritualistic, and a hierarchy of priests evolved.

Among priests in one city, there was a bishop superior to them. Bishops were successors of the Apostles and had divine authority. Bishops who had headquarters in large cities were Metropolitans. Patriarchs ruled over the largest and oldest Christian communities. Then, by 400 CE., there was a definite hereditary sequence of priests in the church. At the apex was the Pope. The Bishop of Rome, who was considered superior to other bishops, became the Pope. The Bishopric of Rome was believed to have been founded by St. Peter. and St. Paul . Peter was the holder of the keys of heaven and was the *Vicar* of God on earth. St. Peter's Church was the mother church and was situated in Rome, a great Centre of civilisation. The absence of an emperor in Rome also enabled the Bishop of Rome to increase his authority.

The Catholic church, organised under the supreme authority of the Pope, came to be known as the papacy. The Western Church was the Roman Catholic Church, and the Eastern Church stood separate from it. Thus, the Roman Catholic Church became an independent organisation of Europe with the Pope as its head. According to J. E. Swain, Rome lost the emperor but gained the Pope. When the emperor disappeared, the empty place was taken by the descendants of St. Peter. They stood out as champions of Italian Civilisation. To H A L. Fisher, "The see of Peter stood out in Western Europe like a lighthouse in a storm".

In the history of the Papacy, there were many Popes who left their impression through their ability and skill. Pope Leo I (440-461) induced Attila, then to withdraw from Italy and save Rome from the Vandals. He upheld the superiority of the Bishop of Rome and interfered in the ecclesiastical affairs of the

East. In 445CE. Emperor Valentinian, at Leo's suggestion, commanded that all Bishops throughout the West should accept as low as all that the Bishop of Rome approved.

Of the early Popes, the greatest was Gregory the Great. Pope Gregory I (590-604) was the son of a rich Roman Senator. He abandoned his rich ways of living and became an ascetic. With his fortune he founded seven monasteries. He ruled Rome like an independent king, organising armies and making treaties. He was mainly responsible for keeping them out of Central Italy. His greatest work was fostering missionary enterprise. He recovered Spain and England for the Roman Catholic Church and prepared the way for the subsequent conversion of Germany.

Popes were generally subordinate to the Emperors of Constantinople till the time of Gregory I. According to Ishwari Prasad, "The Christian church, first persecuted, later tolerated, did not become really dominant until the pontificate of Pope Gregory I. Gregory was the true founder of papal monarchy in Western Europe." Gregory's writings - *Pastoral Care, Morals or Commentary on the Book of Job, Dialogues*, etc. served for centuries as a source of authority in the settlement of theological disputes.

Pope Gregory I defended Rome against the Lombards and revitalised missionary work, notably sending Augustine to convert the Anglo-Saxons in England and overseeing the conversion of the Alani in Spain. A prolific writer, he authored *Moralia in Job*, using allegory to interpret biblical texts and *Dialogues*, detailing the lives and miracles of holy men in Italy. His contributions significantly shaped medieval biblical exegesis and classical learning. By the 10th century, corruption, including simony, plagued the Church. Recognising the need for reform, 11th-century popes initiated changes to restore integrity, a movement that later influenced Martin Luther's Reformation against ecclesiastical corruption.

The Pope crowned a succession of Christian monarchs as Holy Roman Emperors, beginning with Charles the Great, King of Franks, in 800 CE. The Holy Roman Empire continued to have a shadowy existence till 1806 CE. Pope Nicholas II, in 1059, issued a decree taking the election of the Pope out of the hands of the emperors and transferring it to the College Cardinals representing the Roman clergy. Gregory VII (1073-1085) was best known for his controversy with Henry IV of Germany. The papacy clashed with the Holy Roman Empire in the investiture controversy, a struggle over lay influence in Church affairs. Emperor Henry IV opposed Gregory's decree, which limited lay control and led to his excommunication. Eventually, Henry submitted to the Pope's authority, strengthening papal power. The conflict continued until Gregory died in 1085 CE. He was the first to declare explicitly that in future, the name should be used for the Bishop of Rome alone. Pope Gregory VII led the peak of papal reforms, asserting the Pope's supreme authority over local bishops and Christian rulers. He maintained that secular leaders were accountable to the papacy, especially in spiritual matters, and emphasised the dominance of religious authority over political power.

Urban II (1035-1099 CE), a disciple of Gregory, preached the first Crusade to rescue the Holy Land. He preached with power and eloquence and distributed Crosses, which were to be the badges of warriors.

The Roman Church was at the height of power under **Innocent III** (1198-1216). He wanted all to obey the Pope and initiated strong rule in the papal states. To him, the clergy have a superior kind of power compared to the princes since they deal with souls and, later, with bodies. He presided over the Fourth Lateran Council of the

Catholic Church in 1215 CE. The Fourth Lateran Council affirmed the doctrine of transubstantiation, declaring that during the Eucharist, the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. It also reinforced the authority of Catholic priests, emphasising their role in administering the sacraments. The Council addressed various disciplinary matters, reflecting Pope Innocent III's efforts to strengthen religious authority and maintain doctrinal unity.

The seven sacraments were declared essential for salvation, marking key moments in a Christian's life from birth to death, all requiring the Church's guidance. This reinforced the Church's influence over personal and spiritual matters. However, during the Reformation, Martin Luther challenged this doctrine, asserting that only baptism and the Eucharist were biblically instituted by Christ, while the other sacraments were later clerical additions. The Council set standards for priestly qualifications, education, monastic practices, and devotional activities. Under Pope Innocent III's leadership, these reforms solidified his influence within the Church and strengthened the papacy's control over Christian life.

During the papacy of **Boniface VIII** (1294-1303), tensions between monarchs and the Church intensified, particularly over the taxation of clergy. European rulers, including Philip IV of France and Edward I of England, resisted papal interference in political affairs, leading to frequent conflicts. The situation escalated in 1302 when Boniface VIII issued a papal bull asserting his supremacy over Philip IV, who retaliated by arresting the pope. Though Boniface was later freed, the incident deepened the rift between the monarchy and the papacy.

Clement V (1305-1314), a Frenchman, was elected as Pope, and the papal capital was shifted from Rome to Avignon in France.

The period from 1305 to 1377 is known as the 'Babylonian Captivity'. For 72 years, the Popes were Frenchmen under the influence of the King of France. In early 1378, a predominantly Italian group of cardinals chose **Urban VI** as pope. However, later that year, a rival faction of French cardinals appointed **Clement VII**, who set up his papal residence in Avignon, France. This Great Western Schism Continued till 1415, and people lost respect for the church.

In 1409, at the Council at Pisa, the two Popes were deposed, and Alexander V was elected as the Pope. But the other two Popes rejected it. At the Council at Constance which met in 1414, the unity of the Church was restored. The three Popes were deposed and Martin V became the Pope. However, due to Babylonian Captivity and the Great Schism, the Pope was not able to exercise authority over the Kings as earlier. The church had become corrupt from top to bottom. The greed for money and power made the church merciless criticism and open defiance.

John Wycliffe (1320-1384), an English priest and Professor of Theology at Oxford, openly criticised the church. He was the precursor of Martin Luther, and was called the Morning Star of Reformation. Wycliffe supported the state against the church. He wrote pamphlets criticising the policies of the Pope. He called the Pope an Anti-Christ and exposed the malpractices of the clergy, and condemned the worldliness, wealth and luxury of the church. He said that it was quite right for people to refuse to contribute to the upkeep of the priests who led sinful lives. He translated the Bible into English and looked upon it as the only guide. The priests who followed him were called Lollards (Poor Priest).

John Huss (1369-1415), priest and Professor at the University of Prague, was influenced by Wycliffe and the Lollard Movements. He considered Christ as the

head of the church, not the Pope. Through sermons and pamphlets, he criticised the church and the Pope. He was summoned to the Council of Constance in 1415 and burnt at the stake of Constance in 1415. His followers were called Hussites. The dawn of the 14th century saw the beginning of the end of the Middle Ages. The medieval unity broke up, and the ascendancy of the Catholic Church was destroyed.

2.2.1.1 Organisation of the Church

Early Christian Churches sprang up at Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Corinth and Rome. The apostles established Churches in various cities of the empire. Many local Churches were established. Each Church was placed under a Bishop. The details of early Church organisation are not known. All sections of people embraced Christianity. The emperors like Nero and Diocletian persecuted the Christians. But emperors like Justinian, Theodosius Constantans and Charlemagne did a great service to Christianity. Hence Christianity was made the official religion of Rome. The New Testament became very popular among the people. The Church and the Church officials were impossible for the development of education in Europe. The monks maintained several schools. In the field of social service the Churches made their great contributions by opening orphanages, many charitable institutions, and hospitals.

The Church people realised that agriculture was the backbone of the empire. They cultivated the lands. Christianity was responsible for paving the way for a disciplined life among the people of the world. In the field of art and architecture, many wonderful contributions were made by Christianity. Several beautiful monasteries were erected by the monks. Many beautiful Churches and other buildings were erected by the monks. Among them, St Sophia at Constantinople was a notable Church for its beauty. Painting was also developed. Thus, Christianity rendered a remarkable service to humanity.

The Avignon Papacy and the Great Schism greatly weakened the Church. In the Middle Ages, the Church became corrupt from top to bottom. The prestige of the Pope started declining from the 14th century onwards. The corruption of the Church, the influence of the Renaissance and the growth of nationalism paved the way for the Reformation in the 16th century.

2.2.2 Monasticism and Monastic Foundations

The word "monasticism" is derived from the Greek word *monachos* meaning "living alone". Monasticism may be defined as a renunciation of sexual pleasure, the ties of family life and most normal human occupations in order to devote oneself to God. "The monasteries were the greatest achievement of the early middle ages", writes Robert S Lopez in his work, *The Birth of Europe*. It was indeed the greatest civilising force in the Middle Ages. The monastic ideal was based upon the belief that life was intended merely as a preparation for eternity. The teaching of Christ was interpreted as recommending a separation of individuals from society. "Monasticism has had its greatest appeal in times of social and economic disturbances when disillusioned people attempted to seek refuge from the evils of the world", opines J. E. Swain.

Monasticism denotes a life of seclusion from the world, with the object of promoting the interest of the soul. The more pious segregated themselves away from their fellowmen. They retired to mountains, deserts or forests to live in complete seclusion. In their zeal for holiness, they sometimes practised extreme forms of asceticism. Gradually, colonies of these monks sprang up. Christian monasticism began in Egypt

in the late third century, with St. Antony of Egypt as a key figure. Inspired by a sermon urging the renunciation of wealth, Antony gave away his possessions and embraced a life of strict asceticism in the Egyptian desert. It quickly spread to Asia and Europe as well. Organised monastic life offered many inducements other than spiritual progress. Monks were exempted from military service, debts, family obligations, punishments for crime, etc. The monastery offered protection against invaders in addition to food and shelter.

The monastic movements gained prominence in Eastern Christendom due to the work of St. Basil, a Bishop of Cappadocia. He did not encourage extreme self-torture, but encouraged monks to discipline themselves by useful labour. He insisted on poverty, humility and meditation. The monastic institutions began in Western Europe as well in the 4th century. They followed the model of Egypt. However, monasteries developed systematically only from the sixth century onwards. An Italian monk set up a monastery at Monte Cassino in south Italy in 529 CE. The constitution which St. Benedict drew up for the monastery was suited to the needs of the time and was readily accepted by other monasteries. "The Benedictine Rule was to be a document of Western Christianity and Western Christendom," writes J. M Roberts in History of Europe.

St. Benedict (480-543) is one of the central figures in the history of monasticism. His life is similar to that of Gautama Buddha. His Benedictine Rule provided for the government of monasteries and the kind of life which the monks were to lead.

The head of the monastery was an elected abbot who had to be obeyed by other monks. Before becoming a monk, there was a period of problems called Novitiate. The monks had to practise poverty, chastity and obedience. They were not allowed to possess any properties. St. Benedict was a strong believer in the value of hard work. To him, idleness is the enemy of the soul. The Benedictine monks cultivated, washed, cooked, read, taught and copied manuscripts. The monks were allowed to have proper clothes, sufficient food and sleep.

The monastery or abbey where monks lived was built around a central court. There were gardens, orchards, mills, fishponds and fields for raising grain. The monasteries also had hospitals for the sick, guest houses for pilgrims, and special quarters for kings or great nobles.

Monasticism was one of the greatest thriving and dominant forces of the Middle Ages. This word literally means the act or words or state of dwelling alongside others. The big house where the people lived came to be called a monastery, and the life in a monastery led by monks is called monasticism. The organiser and the lawgiver of monasticism were St. Benedict. Egypt became the first Centre of the monastic movement. Antony of Egypt became the founder of monasticism and possessed control over the rest of the clergymen.

At the beginning of the 4th century CE, people led a life of holiness and spirituality and later came to be known as the Monks. The word "monk" comes from the Greek word *monos*, meaning "single" or "solitary," reflecting the essence of monasticism—withdrawal from society for a life of self-denial and devotion to God. While early monks lived in isolation, they later formed communities for mutual support in their spiritual pursuits. The Barbarians destroyed many cities and villages, killing many people in the process which made many people leave cities and go to forest lands where they led a life of saints. There, each monk had their own huts or abodes. In order to face the threat from the wild animals, they lived very near to each other,

forming clusters doing their daily activities collectively forming a certain form of an order with the passage of time.

2.2.2.1 The Benediction Order or Monasteries

St. Benedict of Nursia is rightfully called the 'Father of Western monasticism'. He renounced his riches and led a life of fasting and saintly hood. He was the one who founded 12 monasteries which, the most important one being in Monte Cassino in southern Italy, which became a model for monasteries. They made a set of strict rules for monks who dwelled there. They made sure that it was strictly observed without any flaws. These are as follows:

1. Monks had to lead an unmarried life.

2. They should not possess personal property

3. They should obey or adhere to the order of the concerned Monastery.

4. The members should lead a life of chastity, poverty and obedience.

5. They should at least work 7 hours a day.

Monks were not allowed to bring anything from outside the house as they produced everything within the monastery premises. A constitution for the monasteries was set up under the auspices of Benedict, who believed that idleness was an enemy of the soul. The order built many schools and received great support from Gregory the Great, who was a pope at that point in time. They attempted the conversion of Germans to Christianity on a large scale. St.Benedict died in 544 CE, after which many monks were appointed to this particular Benediction order.

The Benedictine monks had a profound impact on European history. Their monasteries produced popes, archbishops, and bishops while also playing a crucial role in missionary work. Their efforts were instrumental in the Christianisation of Germany and England, with St. Augustine leading the mission in England. These monasteries also served as important centers of learning and culture, where monks, as scholars and writers, contributed significantly to literature. Venerable Bede, for instance, authored a remarkable history of the English Church. As H.A. Dares noted, during a time of widespread unrest and instability in Western Europe, monasteries remained among the few places where literature was produced, ancient manuscripts were preserved, and a structured, humane way of life endured. In the course of time, the Benedictine monks were stained by worldliness and corruption. New movement continues to purify and rejuvenate monastic institutions. The Cluniac movement was founded by the Duke of Aquitaine in 910 CE at Burgundy in France.

Fig 2.2.1 Monastic Order

2.2.2.2 The Cluniac Movement

In the course of time, the Benediction Monks began to lead a life of luxury and corruption. In order to purify the monastic institution, fresh movements sprang up, among which the first of its kind was the Cluniac Order, which was founded by William the Duke of Aquitaine in 910 CE in Burgundy in France. It introduced many changes to the monastic orders prevalent in that historical timeline. It acted as a branch of the Benediction order and insisted on celibacy, devotion and simplicity. It was a holy institution free from all sorts of

corruption and laid much stress on purity, condemning all other evil practices that were liable enough to bring the system down. Pope Gregory VII was one of the important Cluniac Monks.

The movement wanted monks to be free from the contract of kings and feudal lords. It upheld the supremacy of the Pope. Much importance was given to the character of monks; the Cluniac movement was a strong weapon of the papacy in the struggle against the Holy Roman Empire. The Cluniac leaders were men of culture from leading families who worked for the normal and spiritual reform of the Church. By the middle of the 12th century, there were about 300 monasteries subordinate to the abbot of Cluny. It was the greatest ecclesiastic centre and finest church in western Christendom after St. Peters at Rome, writes J.M Roberts. The abbots of Cluny were outstanding men; some advised Popes, and others served as ambassadors to the emperor Pope Leo IX who eagerly promoted Cluniac ideas and ideals. The Cluniac order was also against worldliness, like its Benedictine predecessors, and was a reaction to the Carthusian order.

2.2.2.3 The Carthusian Order

The members of the Cluniac order in course of time led a life of luxury and corruption. The Carthusian order was founded by St. Bruno in 1084 in the mountain valley of Chartreux in France. The monks led a secluded life insisting on prayers and silence. The movement quickly spread to other parts of Europe as well. The secret of the survival of the Carthusian Order was its dedication to an ascetic life with a set of rules.

2.2.2.4 The Cistracian Order

Cistracian Order was a branch of the Benedictine order. It was founded by St. Robert of France in 1098 at Citeaux in Burgundy, France. The monks of this order observed the benediction rules and regulations. They re-introduced manual labour. They worked in the field, raised crops and practised sheep breeding. They led a pious life. The most outstanding leader of the order was St.Bernard. He was the progenitor of the Cistercians and was known as a white monk. In due course of time, this order also became corrupt and immoral. The Order was against idleness and luxury and insisted upon asceticism. The Cistercian Order earned immense prestige in Europe by his selfless and dedicated services.

2.2.2.5 The Mendicant Orders (Begging Order)

In the 13th Century, two mendicant orders were established: Due Franciscan assessment and The Dominican order. They wandered from place-to-place begging and preaching. It was only later on that they had their own monasteries. Their primary aim was not to the salvation of the souls of their members but the salvation of the 'sinned' souls.

a. The Dominican Order

The Dominican Order was formed by a Spanish priest by the name of St. Dominic. He got permission from Pope Innocent III to start a new Order. St. Domenic emphasised absolute poverty and established it with the special purpose of fighting against heresy through preaching. Their primary duty was to convince and convert the heretics to Christianity. Hence, it came to be known as the Order of the Preaching Brothers. They established many educational institutions like schools. Many of them became professors of theology in various universities in Europe and preached among the people of high culture and value. St.Thomas Aquinas, the great theologian and philosopher, belonged to the Dominican Order. They spread the Gospel in Ceylon, Asia, Tibet and China. When the Inquisition Court was set up, the execution of the heretics was handed over to the Dominicans. The Court which

condemned Joan of Arc was presided over by a Dominican. The monk of the Dominican Order moved from worldly life and led a secluded life. They lived and worked among the people. These brothers led a life of piety and used to beg for sustenance.

b. Franciscan Order

The Franscisan Order was founded by St. Francis of Assissi in 1210 CE. The Franciscan Order is one of the four major mendicant orders of the Church, dedicated to upholding the principles of poverty and charity. Numerous congregations of Franciscan men and women exist throughout the Roman Catholic world, making it the largest religious order within the Church. St. Francis was a rich cloth merchant in northern Italy. He gave away his property and lived the life of a beggar. He was called the "father of the poor". He went to hospitals and served. The Franciscan monks did not live in a monastery, moved from place to place and they did manual work. To them, work is devotion to god. He lived according to the teachings of Jesus. He obtained permission from Pope Innocent III to start a new order and to build a monastery there upon. The members should not possess any private property and should be prepared to be poor and sick. The activities of the order quickly spread to Jerusalem, Hungry, France, Spain and the Near East region as well.

Fransiscans preached the Gospel to the poor and the outcast. Meanwhile, the Domenicans appealed to the higher and cultured class and worked to route out heresy. So the former was known as "father of the poor" and later was called the "hammer of heretics".

2.2.2.6 Significance of Monasticism & its Decline

The monastery system offered protection to the life and property of the people throughout Europe. Furthermore, it also helped in spreading Christianity to far reaches of the land. The Monastic and Mendicant Order saved Catholicism from immediate danger. Popes and Bishops who followed monasticism tried their level best to preserve the ideas of Christianity. Monasteries served as a great centre of learning and culture. Members of the saintly order were not only good preachers but also acted as good, efficient teachers. The subjects like history, arithmetic, and philosophy were taught. Monasteries preserved many valuable works in Greek and Latin in their specially designed libraries. It also served as a lodging house for the poor traveller. Alms were usually distributed among the poor, and they took a keen interest in promoting agriculture. New methods of cultivation, such as rotation of crops, were adopted by them. The monks were great builders as well helping in the creation of many churches, cemeteries and monasteries. They aided Monasticism. They helped and strengthened the Catholic Church of Rome. In the struggle between the empire and papacy, monasticism was a strong marvel force on the side of papacy. In the latter stages, the monks lost their respect. The monasteries began to have enormous property.

Black Death

In an age harassed by barbarian invasions, corruption, tyranny of rules, and social and economic disorders, monasticism exercised a civilising influence. The simple and idealistic life led by the monks attracted the public. The monastic orders did much to preserve the teachings of Christianity. The monasteries were citadels of medieval European Civilisation.

Black Death was one of the factors which brought about a decline in agrarian prosperity. Continuous wars and famines were other factors which led to the decline of agricultural production. However, the impact of the Black

Death was highly dramatic. It was a bubonic plague, carried by rats. It seemed to have started in China about 1333, and in 1346, it was raging in Sicily, and by 1348, it had reached France, England and Germany. The effect of the plague was devastating, so in Paris, around 800 people died in a day. Whole villages were virtually wiped out by the plague, and people fled from there, fearing its spread in an unprecedented manner.

The economic effects of the plague were severe. Henry Knighton clearly observes that there was such a scarcity of labourers that women and even small children could be seen at the plague and leading the wagons". The outbreak of the plague continued at regular intervals, beyond the medieval period. Its impact also varied from place to place. "A father did not visit his son", wrote Guy de Charliac, Similarly, doctors did not dare visit the sick for fear of infection in those days. Many ascribed the disease to supernatural causes – the influence of a comet which had appeared in 1345 etc, led to widespread panic.

In France and England, this panic led directly to royal ordinance, on labour, prices and wages. Men were forced to quit their jobs due to rising inflation and related economic issues. In England and France, this ushered in a new era of revolts mostly agrarian in nature. Labour legislations were considered as yet another reason for such uprisings. The plague, coupled with labour laws and feudal policy, contributed to this unfortunate situation in Europe as a whole, impacting all sections of society, including monks and saints.

Canon Law

Papal guidance of the 12th century saw the basic importance of the canon law of the church which charted rules for all sorts of cases pertaining to the clergy as well as addressing the problems of bishops, problems of marriage, inheritance , rights of widows and orphans. Most of the cases were supposed to originate in the courts of Bishops, but the popes insisted that they alone could issue dispensations from the strict letter of the law and the papal consistency -comprising the Pope and Cardinals who served as the final court of appeal. As the power of the papacy and the prestige of the church mounted, cases of canon law courts and Rome rapidly increased. After the middle of the 12th century, legal expertise became so important for exercising papal office that most people began to be trained as canon lawyers, whereas previously, they had usually been monks. Concurrent with the growth of legislation was the growth of administrative apparatus to keep records and collect income. As the century wore on the papacy developed a bureaucratic government that was far in advance of most of the secular governments of that day and made them rich, efficient and strong. Finally, the Popes asserted the powers of the church by gaining greater control over the election of the bishops and by calling general councils in Rome to propagate laws and demonstrate their leadership accordingly.
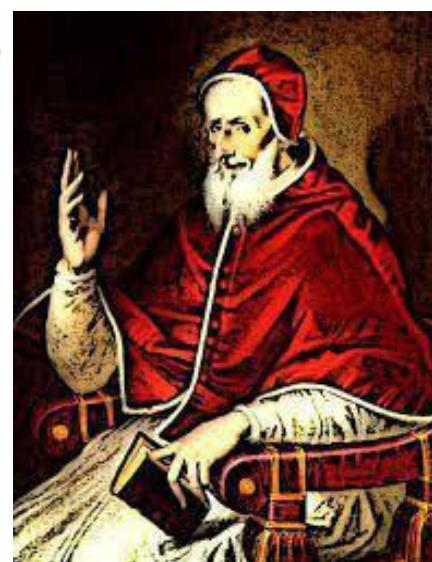
Fig 2.2.2 A Bishop of Medieval Europe

Fig 2.2.3 Canon Law

Fig 2.2.5 Catholic Church and Prolonged Period of Crisis

Fig 2.2.4 Typical Potrait of a Medieval Pope

Recap

- ♦ Rise of the Papacy after Rome's fall shaped European civilisation

- ♦ The Catholic Church gained power despite lacking military force

- ♦ Bishops and Popes became central figures in religious authority

- ♦ Pope Gregory I expanded missionary work and papal influence

- ♦ The Holy Roman Empire was linked to papal authority

- ♦ Investiture Controversy strengthened papal control over secular rulers

- ♦ Urban II's First Crusade marked papal influence in military affairs

- ♦ Innocent III expanded papal power through church councils

- ♦ The Avignon Papacy weakened papal prestige and authority

- The Great Western Schism caused division in the Church
- John Wycliffe and John Huss challenged papal corruption
- Monasticism preserved knowledge and aided religious expansion
- The Benedictine, Cluniac, and Cistercian Orders influenced Europe
- Franciscans and Dominicans promoted poverty, charity, and preaching
- Canon law centralised papal power in Church governance

Objective Questions

1. Who was the first Pope to assert the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome over other bishops?

2. Which Pope is considered the true founder of papal monarchy in Western Europe?

3. Which Pope initiated the first Crusade?

4. Who was the monarch who was involved in the Investiture Controversy?

5. Which council resolved the Great Western Schism?

6. Who was the founder of the Cluniac Order?

7. Which religious order emphasised extreme asceticism and solitude?

8. Who founded the Franciscan Order?

9. Which medieval council affirmed the doctrine of transubstantiation?

10. Who was known as the "Morning Star of the Reformation"?

Answers

1. Pope Leo I

2. Pope Gregory I

3. Pope Urban II

4. Henry IV of Germany

5. Council of Constance

6. William, Duke of Aquitaine

7. Carthusian Order

8. St. Francis of Assissi

9. Fourth Lateran Council

10. John Wycliffe

Assignments

1. Discuss the rise of the papacy after the fall of the Roman Empire. How did the Church gain influence in medieval Europe?

2. Evaluate the influence of monasticism on medieval European civilisation.

3. Compare and contrast the Cluniac, Carthusian, and Cistercian Orders. How did these monastic movements contribute to the reform of the Church?

4. What were the causes and consequences of the Great Western Schism (1378-1415)? How did it affect the authority of the papacy?

5. Explain the significance of Canon Law in medieval Europe. How did the development of papal bureaucracy and legal systems enhance the authority of the Papacy?

6. Discuss the criticisms raised by John Wycliffe and John Huss against the Catholic Church. How did their ideas influence later movements, such as the Protestant Reformation?

Suggested Reading

1. Berman, Harold J. *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition.* Harvard University Press, 1983.

2. Duffy, Eamon. *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*. Yale University Press, 2015.

3. Markus, R. A. *Gregory the Great and His World*. Cambridge University Press, 1997.

4. Partner, Peter. *The Pope's Men: The Papal Civil Service in the Renaissance*. Oxford University Press, 1990.

5. Richards, Jeffrey. *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages, 476–752*. Routledge, 1979.

6. Southern, R. W. *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*. Penguin Books, 1970.

7. Tierney, Brian. *The Crisis of Church and State: 1050–1300*. University of Toronto Press, 1988.

Reference

1. Barraclough, Geoffrey. *The Medieval Papacy*. Thames & Hudson, 1968.

2. Beet, W. E. *The Rise of Papacy A.D. 385–461*. Charles H. Kelly, 1910.

3. Brinton, Crane, et al. *A History of Civilizations*. Prentice Hall, 1955.

4. Farooqui, Amar. *Early Social Formations*. Manak Publications LTD, 2020.

5. Ullmann, Walter. *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages*. Routledge, 2003.

3 UNIT

Charlemagne

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ know about Charlemagne and his significant contributions to the Roman Empire

♦ understand the reforms and changes brought about by him in the then-society

♦ generate awareness about the empire-papacy relationship they used to have during his period

♦ evaluate the administrative set-up and achievements of the Roman Empire under Charlemagne

Prerequisites

Einhard, a scholar and loyal servant of Charlemagne, documented much of what is known about him today between 817 and 836 at the request of Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious. Charlemagne expanded his empire through numerous military campaigns, relying on the support of loyal warriors who had received land grants from him. These grants helped them sustain themselves and equipped them for battle, securing their loyalty.

Beyond his military leadership, Charlemagne introduced significant political and social reforms. He revived a standardised currency system by reintroducing coinage, similar to the Roman model, to facilitate trade. He also promoted education and the arts, establishing schools for both nobles and commoners, which contributed to a cultural revival known as the Carolingian Renaissance. Under his rule, literature, architecture, and the arts flourished, drawing inspiration from Greek and Roman traditions.

Charlemagne maintained strong ties with the Catholic Church. In 799, he rescued Pope Leo III, who had fled Rome after being accused of adultery. Charlemagne reinstated the Pope, who, in gratitude, crowned him Emperor of the Romans on Christmas Day in 800. This event strengthened both Charlemagne's authority and the influence of the Catholic Church, setting a precedent for future Holy Roman Emperors. In 813, Charlemagne crowned his son Louis the Pious as co-emperor. Shortly after, on January 28, 814, he passed away, ending a 46-years reign that profoundly shaped medieval Europe.

Keywords

Charlemagne, Carolingian Renaissance, The City of God, Holy Roman Empire, Frankish Kingdom, Aachen, Count Palatine, Capitularies, Livre Carolinienne

Discussion

2.3.1 Charlemagne(Charles the Great)(768-814)

2.3.1.1 Charlemagne's Accession

After the death of King Peppin III, Charles received Northern Austrasia, Northern Neustria and the Biscayan coast of Aquitaine and Gascony. As Carloman II, his brother, died in 1771, Charles found himself to be the sole ruler of the Frankish Kingdom. His mother, Queen Bertrada, was a pious lady who instilled in him a deep religious outlook. As a youth, he had seen how his father had received Pope Stephen III in Paris and how the papal influence had raised the position of his House to unqualified royal authority. No wonder his actions were aimed at protecting the papal prestige. Charlemagne was not very learned, and he only read a few books to his credit. His favourite book was *The City of God* by St. Augustine. He spoke Old Teutonic and Latin and understood Greek. He learnt to write in his old age but was not very successful.

Extension of Frontiers

Charlemagne was a military genius. In the course of his 46-years rule, he led with dogged determination 53 military campaigns, most of them personally, and was successful in almost all of them. His soldiers admired him as a great leader. He tightened his grip over the hinterland of all the places and enlarged his dominion. In the early years of his rule, he shifted "the centre of gravity from Seine to Rhine". Such extension of power undoubtedly brought in its wake commercial benefits, though it could not match the early Roman Prosperity. It also invited challenges from other powers.

Lombards

In 773 Pope Hadrian II appealed to Charlemagne for help to fight against the Lombards led by King Desiderius. Charlemagne responded with an army, captured Pavia and became King of Lombardy in 774. The Lombard King Desiderius was banished to a monastery. Charlemagne confirmed the "Donotion of Peppin". He

assumed the right to protect the temporal powers of Rome. The Italian conquest of Charlemagne prevented the union of Italy under the Lombards.

Bavaria and Gaul

Charlemagne conquered Bavaria and Saxony and extirpated the power of the harassing Avars(790-805). He fortified the defences of Gaul after conquering it completely and clearing it of all Moors. He held in check the ambitious and expanding Moors of Spain.

Saxony

The powerful tribe of Saxons on the eastern frontier severely tested the endurance of Charlemagne. They had reduced a Church to ashes. He turned his attention towards quelling them by embarking on a series of wars. These wars began early in his reign from 772 CE and lasted untill 804 CE. As the Patrician of Rome and a devout Christian, Charlemagne compelled the conquered people to embrace Christianity. Eventually Saxony was annexed to his Kingdom.

Failure in Spain

In response to the appeal of the Muslim Governor of Barcelona 1777, Charlemagne led an army across the Pyrenees and captured the Christian city of Pamplona. But he could achieve little against the Caliph of Cordova, as the expected revolts against Muslims did not materialise. In 778, almost his whole army was destroyed at one of the passes in the mountains. In 795, he again despatched an army beyond the Pyrenees and secured the Spanish March, a slice of northeast Spain. His Spanish campaign was a failure.

Extent of Empire

Charlemagne's empire was greater than the Byzantine empire, though it was smaller than that of the Abbasid Caliphs. It covered the modern countries of France,

the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, parts of Germany, Spain, Switzerland, Italy, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovkia.

2.3.1.2 Holy Roman Emperor

The extraordinary growth of Frankish Carolingian power in the first twenty-five years of Charlemagne's rule was viewed with awe and pride by the Church. He had been a devout Christian and did much to the propagation of Christianity. Charlemagne had been the Patrician of Rome and the popes elevated him to be the head of the whole of the temporal Christendom. The crowning of Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor was an event of extraordinary importance. This was the climax of the great mutual support and cooperation between the emperor and Pope Leo III. Both needed each other to uphold their power and prestige. The Pope would have lost his power without Charlemagne's support, and Charlemagne could not have won the obedience and loyalty of his Christian subjects without the strong support and blessings of the Church.

The Roman people did not like Leo III, who became Pope on December 26,795. They levelled serious charges of simony, adultery, and perjury against him, and on April 25, 799, they imprisoned him in a monastery. Leo escaped, flew over the Alps to Germany, and begged for the protection of Charlemagne. Charlemagne was decidedly in favour of safeguarding the prestige of the Pope. Charlemagne received the Pope in Aachen (Aix la Chapelle), the capital of Charlemagne. In 800, he escorted the Holy Father back to Rome and expelled the opponents. On Christmas Day, the Pope placed a golden crown on Charlemagne's head. From the Patrician of Rome, Charlemagne thus became the Holy Roman Emperor. The Patriarch of Jerusalem had sent a few days earlier the keys of the Holy Sepulchre to him.

Charlemagne, however, had no desire

to quarrel with the Byzantine Emperor. Though the papal honour had been accorded to the new Western Emperor, Charlemagne preferred to maintain the best of relations with the Byzantine Empire. In 811 Michael who came to the Byzantine throne recognised Charlemagne as Co-Emperor when the latter agreed to his claims over Venice and Southern Italy.

2.3.1.3 Significance of the Coronation

The crowning of Charlemagne had tremendous religious and symbolic value. It cemented the Church-State friendship and created an era of peace and stability, but at the same time it sowed the seed of great conflict between the so-called Roman Emperors and the Popes. Some of the future Popes felt and clearly proclaimed that they were more powerful than the Emperors and that spiritual power was higher than the temporal. They claimed for the Church a place higher than the state. It was argued that if the Pope had the authority to crown the Emperor, he also had the authority to withhold the crown from him.

The coronation increased the prestige and power of the papacy. It was the first time that an emperor was crowned by a Pope. As Charlemagne was elevated to the position of viceregent of God on earth, it greatly helped to advance the divine right theory of kingship. The title 'Holy Roman Emperor' was incorrect. It was a myth, as Charlemagne's empire was neither holy nor Roman. The empire had no holy purpose and was not theocratic in character. Perhaps the word 'holy' was used to distinguish it from the true Roman empire. It was not Roman, as it was not connected with ancient Rome.

The immediate effect of the coronation was favourable to Charlemagne, who was hailed as the protector and guardian of the Christian faith. As far as Charlemagne

was concerned, he continued to dominate the church, and nothing could reduce his authority. The danger to the King's power arose only in the future.

Effect on Byzantium

Charlemagne was cautious in securing the Eastern Roman Empire's acceptance of his new title as 'Roman Emperor'. The Pope's role in his coronation signified the papacy's formal break from Byzantine authority. However, the Byzantines continued to recognise only the emperor in Constantinople as the legitimate ruler of the Roman Empire, considering both the Pope and Charlemagne as usurpers. Some in the West even speculated that Charlemagne might attempt to overthrow Empress Irene and claim Constantinople. A justification for his title was that the Eastern Roman throne had been vacant since a woman had ruled. Aware that his coronation did not erase Eastern emperors, Charlemagne sought to unite both empires by proposing marriage to Irene, who agreed, but her deposition in 802 thwarted this plan. Eventually, in 812, Byzantine Emperor Michael I recognised Charlemagne's title after Charlemagne relinquished claims to Venice, Istria, and Dalmatia. This arrangement revived the idea of a single Roman Empire with two emperors, mirroring the division under Theodosius in 395. The enduring influence of Rome's name reflected the ninth century's political aspirations—particularly the vision of a united Christendom, at least in the West. This was the true significance of Charlemagne's coronation on December 25, 800 CE.

2.3.1.4 Administration

Charlemagne was not only a great conqueror but also an efficient administrator and farsighted statesman. He consolidated and brought the various countries he conquered under good and stable rule. The government was based on the principle of personal rule. The wheels of government

would revolve smoothly only as long as the king was vigilant and strong. He ruled over an extensive empire with headquarters at Aachen (Aix la Chapelle).

Charlemagne believed in absolute power and not in idealistic dreams and Utopian principles. After carefully assessing the challenges of his vast empire, he recognised that maintaining power required a strong military, the loyalty of the nobles, and the endorsement of the Christian Church. He protected this empire from aggression from without and revolts from within. He established peace and order, and promoted the material and moral welfare of his subjects. The king dispensed justice, heard appeals, issued royal orders, settled land disputes and laid down the norms for taxes. As the king himself was the largest landowner in the land, revenue poured from the crown lands. Wars brought bountiful booties. Revenue from judicial fines, tolls, gifts and tributes filled the Imperial coffers. Income was also derived from forests, rivers, mountains and minerals.

Charlemagne found that a standing army was far beyond his sources, and so far, defending this empire, he threw the responsibility on his counts, over whom he exercised vigilant supervision. Charlemagne carried on the administration with the help of the administrative barons, the *Seneschal* or chief of the palace, the *Count Palatine* or the chief justice, the *Palsgraves* or the judges of the palace court, a large number of learned men, clerks and servants. He did not centralise all power but delegated significant authority to the counts, allowing for substantial local self-government.

For administrative convenience, the country was divided into districts. Each district consisted of about six to ten counties. Each county was put in charge of a count to look at secular matters and Bishop spiritual matters. The Counts looked after the administrative, judicial and military affairs. Under them were subordinate officers called the *vicars*. To act as a check on the autocratic tendencies of the count, the emperor sent around Missi Dominici or envoys of the master. The Missi Dominici was drawn from the Tanks of counts and bishops. They were expected to make annual visits to a number of counties and hear complaints of the people of the locality against the Bishop and the count. In the process, they redressed the grievances of the people and rectified their wrongs. They also communicated the royal orders to the local officials. In this way, the Missi Dominici acted as a link between the central government and the local government. Charlemagne himself toured throughout the country and stood as the champion of justice and peace.

Capitularies

Charlemagne's reign marked the first systematic effort to establish a unified and effective government for a large political entity in Western Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire. A collection of Carolingian royal documents, known as capitularies, provides valuable insights into the structure of the Frankish state in the ninth century. Charlemagne's capitularies, in particular, serve as crucial historical sources for understanding his administration. These capitularies, essentially royal letters, contain commands, instructions, and legislative provisions addressing a wide range of subjects. Some establish or clarify laws, others provide guidelines for governance, and some express the emperor's disapproval of certain officials' actions. Collectively, they reveal Charlemagne's serious efforts to create a standardised administrative and legal system across the diverse communities of his vast empire. Under his rule, most of Western Europe experienced organised governance for the first time in centuries.

The sixty-five Capitularies address various

aspects of governance, including agriculture, industry, finance, money-lending and usury, education, religion, slavery, and morality. These superseding the local laws brought about uniformity in administration. He showed special concern for the poor and made provision for poor relief, for which nobles and the clergy were taxed. At the same time, the beggary was made a crime.

Economy

The records of Charlemagne's reign reveal his keen awareness of emerging economic and social changes. While scholars debate the significance of his policies, evidence suggests that he focused on improving agricultural organisation and techniques, developing a more practical monetary system, standardising weights and measures, expanding trade into the North Sea and Baltic regions, and safeguarding merchants from excessive tolls and robbery. His royal decrees aimed to protect the vulnerable from exploitation and injustice. Charlemagne also played a role in shaping the early lord-vassal system, using it to foster order and stability. Though his economic and social reforms were primarily driven by moral principles, they contributed to gradual progress, helping to alleviate the economic downturn and social unrest that had persisted in Western Europe since the collapse of the Roman Empire in the 4th and 5th centuries.

Following years of monetary instability, Peppin III sought to standardise the weight and shape of the silver denier in 755 CE. Charlemagne built upon his father's reforms, working to restore order to the currency system by reaffirming the royal monopoly on coin minting and establishing the silver denier as the official currency of the empire. He streamlined and unified a diverse range of currencies, establishing a new currency standard, the silver-based livre. He abolished the gold sou-based monetary system and, along with Anglo-Saxon King Offa of Mercia,

adopted the framework introduced by Peppin. This shift away from the gold standard was driven by practical necessity, particularly a shortage of gold.

The gold scarcity resulted from a peace agreement with Byzantium, which led to the cession of Venice and Sicily to the Eastern Empire, cutting off key trade routes to Africa. In response, Charlemagne implemented a standardised monetary system that streamlined the diverse currencies in circulation at the start of his reign, thereby facilitating trade and commerce. He introduced a new standard, the livre carolinienne (derived from the Latin libra, meaning pound), which was based on a pound of silver, serving as both a unit of weight and currency. This system valued the livre at 20 sous (from solidus, the modern shilling) or 240 deniers (from denarius, the modern penny). At the time, the livre and sou functioned as accounting units, while only the denier was an actual minted coin.

Charlemagne had taken steps to encourage trade and commerce. Reforms were made for the protection of fairs, regulation of prices, weights and measures, collection of tolls and stability of currency. Roads and bridges were constructed and well maintained, and waterways were thrown open to commerce. A bridge was built on the Rhine at Mainz.

Relation with Caliph of Baghdad

Charlemagne maintained good relations with other states. Charlemagne and Caliph Haran al Rashid, the greatest Caliph of Baghdad, were on friendly terms, and they exchanged letters and gifts. Harun al-Rashid, the fifth Abbasid Caliph, presided over the Abbasid Caliphate at its peak, overseeing political stability, economic prosperity, and cultural flourishing in Baghdad. His reign saw territorial expansion, suppression of rebellions, and strengthened central governance. Harun maintained diplomatic relations with Charlemagne, exchanging gifts, including a water clock, symbolising

the advanced scientific achievements of the Islamic world. Charlemagne, a skilled military leader and diplomat, likely understood the message, strengthening his ties with the Abbasids while expanding his own empire.

2.3.2 Carolingian Renaissance

The Carolingian Renaissance was a period of cultural, literary, architectural, and scholarly flourishing. Charlemagne's extensive conquests exposed him to diverse cultures and learning traditions, inspiring the establishment of monastic schools. This intellectual revival began in the early eighth century with the strengthening of ties between the Franks and the papacy. Charlemagne gathered a group of distinguished scholars to implement an education policy that promoted learning and intellectual exchange. These scholars actively engaged in discussions and writings, fostering a vibrant intellectual atmosphere.

Charlemagne was deeply committed to Christianity, viewing it as both a personal and social concern. He saw the Christian faith as a fundamental force in shaping society and made significant efforts to promote education by mandating that every Bishop establish a school within their cathedral. His Academy played a crucial role in reviving culture by reintroducing Christian and classical traditions. Its mission was to transform Charlemagne's court into "an Athens even more beautiful than the ancient one, ennobled by the teachings of Christ." His motto, "Renovatio Romani Imperii" ("Restoration of the Roman Empire"), reflected his ambition to unify and elevate the Western world through education and faith.

Charlemagne's commitment to expanding education must be understood in relation to his broader efforts to reorganise the state. Establishing institutions for educating a segment of the population was essential to ensuring a supply of literate administrative personnel. Educated officials were necessary for managing the day-to-day operations of the government—maintaining records, writing accounts, drafting letters, and promulgating laws—all of which required at least a basic level of literacy. Furthermore, a common official language was crucial for administering a vast empire composed of diverse linguistic groups. With the combined efforts of the church and the Frankish state, signs of intellectual revival emerged in the ninth century, leading to a relatively more literate society. However, the extent of this literacy should not be overstated. Latin served as the language of the church, law, higher education, and official documents, but it was neither spoken by the common people nor widely used by the political elite. The masses remained largely illiterate, and as Bloch observes, even the early medieval aristocracy, including the monarchy, was significantly lacking in education.

Between the eighth and eleventh centuries (c. 800–1050 CE), monastic schools gained prestige and evolved into centers of advanced study, eventually transforming into universities. By 800 CE, Charlemagne ruled most of the former Western Roman Empire, except for Africa, southern Italy, Britain, and parts of Spain. His efforts to expand Christianity helped unify these vast territories politically. The intellectual contributions of the Carolingian scholars laid the foundation for European culture, emphasising learning as essential to governance and state prestige. Clerics wrote letters, treatises, and admonitions to rulers, with evidence suggesting that some kings took their advice seriously. Centers of learning such as Armagh, Iona, Jarrow, and York were renowned for their scholarship, particularly in Latin and Hebrew, with Northumbria displaying a strong literary tradition due to Roman and Irish influences.

One of the most influential figures of

the Carolingian Renaissance was Alcuin of York, an Anglo-Latin poet, educator, and cleric who served as Charlemagne's spiritual advisor. He led the Palatine School at Aachen, bringing Anglo-Saxon humanism to Western Europe. Alcuin reformed the Roman Catholic liturgy, left behind over 300 Latin letters of historical significance, and systematised the curriculum, promoting the study of the liberal arts as a means to deepen spiritual understanding. In 796 CE, he became the abbot of St. Martin's Abbey at Tours, where he played a key role in the development of the Carolingian minuscule script, the forerunner of modern Roman typefaces. Alcuin was also instrumental in revising the liturgy of the Frankish Church, introducing new practices such as the singing of the Creed, organising votive masses, and refining the Latin Vulgate Bible. Despite his influence in both church and state, he remained a deacon throughout his life.

Another notable scholar of the period was John Scottus Eriugena, an Irish philosopher proficient in the liberal arts and Greek. At the emperor's request, he translated Dionysius's works and wrote *De Divisione Naturae*, an encyclopedic text that significantly influenced contemporary thought. However, some of his theological ideas, particularly concerning free will and predestination, led to ecclesiastical censure.

The Carolingian Renaissance, which spanned the late eighth and ninth centuries, was dedicated to reviving classical learning and culture. Charlemagne's coronation as Emperor of Rome marked the beginning of a new era, ensuring the preservation of ancient texts through the refined Carolingian minuscule script. This artistic and intellectual revival was distinguished by its unique treatment of the human figure and innovative techniques such as niello and chip carving.

Frankish rulers actively supported religious manuscripts, monastic studies, and standardised monastic practices, emphasising high moral and educational standards for the clergy. Education during this period became more accessible, focusing on the liberal arts, which were divided into the *trivium* (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and music).

Charlemagne also played a crucial role in shaping Europe's economic future. He replaced the gold-based monetary system with a new system based on silver pounds. Initially permitting Jewish moneylending, he later prohibited lending at interest, aligning with Church teachings. His economic reforms included price controls and levies on goods and commodities.

Unlike his predecessors, Charlemagne took a keen interest in church reforms, strengthening its institutional power, improving clergy education and moral standards, and enforcing religious discipline. His authority extended over both church and state, regulating ecclesiastical property and defining orthodox doctrine. By fostering classical studies, promoting scholarship, and reforming education, Charlemagne laid the groundwork for the scholastic tradition that would later lead to the rise of universities. The Carolingian Renaissance remains a pivotal moment in the intellectual and cultural history of medieval Europe.

2.3.3 Frankish kingdom after Charlemagne

During his lifetime, Charlemagne designated three of his sons as heirs to different regions of the empire, intending for it to be divided among them after his death. However, two of the designated heirs passed away before Charlemagne. Consequently, upon his death in 814, the surviving heir, Louis I (814–40), inherited the entire Carolingian Empire. The reigns of Louis I and his son Charles II (840–77)

were constantly challenged by internal family conflicts. The centralisation achieved under Charlemagne was short-lived, as, by the mid-ninth century, the empire's unified structure began to disintegrate. The Carolingian Empire fragmented into several semi-independent territories governed by dukes and counts. Though the Carolingian monarchy persisted for another century, it lacked actual authority. It was during this period that feudal institutions took firm root in Western Europe, with feudal lords gaining increasing control over their respective domains. In 987, the Carolingian dynasty was ultimately deposed by Hugh Capet, the Count of Paris, who established the Capetian dynasty. This new ruling house governed France until 1328. However, the Capetians were unable to establish a centralised state, and their ascension did not alter the existing political framework. By the tenth century, the feudal system had become firmly entrenched and continued to thrive throughout the Capetian era.

Recap

- ◆ Charlemagne became sole ruler after Carloman II died in 771
- ◆ Expanded empire through conquests of Lombardy, Bavaria, Saxony, and Gaul
- ◆ Failed Spanish campaign, but secured the Spanish March in 795
- ◆ Crowned Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III in 800
- ◆ Strengthened papal ties and secured Church support for rule
- ◆ Implemented economic reforms, standardising silver-based currency
- ◆ Encouraged trade, and commerce, and protected merchants from exploitation
- ◆ Promoted Carolingian Renaissance, reviving learning and classical traditions
- ◆ Established monastic schools for educating clergy and nobility
- ◆ Used Missi Dominici to oversee local administration and justice
- ◆ Issued capitularies to standardise laws and governance
- ◆ Developed the lord-vassal system to ensure loyalty and order
- ◆ Maintained diplomacy with the Abbasid Caliphate
- ◆ Governance relied on counts, bishops, and structured administration
- ◆ The empire fragmented after his death, leading to feudalism's rise
- ◆ The Carolingian dynasty ended in 987 CE, replaced by Capetian rule

Objective Questions

1. In which year did Charlemagne become the sole ruler of the Frankish Kingdom?

2. Name the Pope who sought Charlemagne's help against the Lombards.

3. Which battle resulted in Charlemagne's defeat in Spain in 778 CE?

4. When was Charlemagne crowned as Holy Roman Emperor?

5. What was the capital of Charlemagne's empire?

6. Who recognised Charlemagne as Co-Emperor in 811 CE?

7. Which monetary standard did Charlemagne introduce?

8. What role did Missi Dominici play in Charlemagne's administration?

9. Who was the famous scholar at Charlemagne's court who led the Palatine School?

10. Which dynasty replaced the Carolingians in 987 CE?

Answers

1. 771 CE

2. Pope Hadrian II

3. Battle of Roncevaux Pass

4. 800 CE

5. Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle)

6. Emperor Michael I

7. Livre Carolinienne

8. Royal inspectors

9. Alcuin of York

10. Capetian Dynasty

Assignments

1. Discuss the significance of Charlemagne's coronation as the Holy Roman Emperor in 800 CE. How did it impact the relationship between the Church and the state?

2. Examine Charlemagne's military campaigns. How did his conquests shape the political and territorial expansion of the Frankish Empire?

3. Analyse the administrative and economic reforms introduced by Charlemagne.

4. Explain the Carolingian Renaissance. How did Charlemagne promote education, arts, and culture, and what were its long-term effects on European intellectual life?

5. What role did Charlemagne play in the spread of Christianity? How did religion influence his rule and policies toward conquered territories?

6. Discuss the decline of the Carolingian Empire after Charlemagne's death.

Suggested Reading

1. Barbero, Alessandro. *Charlemagne: Father of a Continent.* University of California Press, 2004.

2. Collins, Roger. *Charlemagne.* University of Toronto Press, 1998.

3. Einhard. *The Life of Charlemagne*. Translated by Lewis Thorpe, Penguin Classics, 1969.

4. McKitterick, Rosamond. Charlemagne: *The Formation of a European Identity*. Cambridge University Press, 2008.

5. Verhulst, Adriaan. *The Carolingian Economy*. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Reference

1. Brinton, Crane, et al. *A History of Civilizations*. Prentice Hall, 1955.

2. Farooqui, Amar. *Early Social Formations*. Manak Publications Ltd., 2020.

3. McKitterick, Rosamond. *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751–987*. Longman, 1983.

4. Thompson, James Westfall, and Edgar Nathaniel Johnson. *An Introduction to Medieval Europe: 300–1500*. Norton & Company Inc., 1937.

5. Thorndike, Lynn. *The History of Medieval Europe*. Kessinger Publishing, 2010.

UNIT 4

Holy Roman Empire

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of this unit the learner will be able to:

♦ gain insight into the governance of the Holy Roman Empire

♦ analyse the shifting power dynamics between emperors and the papacy

♦ discuss the contribution of Holy Roman Empire to the literature and art

♦ examine the factors contributing to the fall of the Holy Roman Empire

Prerequisites

In the Middle Ages, Europe had a great role to play, especially after the turmoil created by the barbarian's invasion. This was followed by the efficient leadership pioneered by rulers like Otto and Charlemagne leading to significant changes in the then Rome. This time period witnessed great progress in science, religion, art, poetry, philosophy, and administration with its own specificities. Rulers facilitated and patronised such activities so that they could rebuild Rome in a much better way. As we know from the dictum, "Rome wasn't built in a day" it did take some time, but whatever was achieved was phenomenal and unparalleled by any other medieval society of that time period. The way they achieved and what were the main factors that helped them in the same will be discussed in detail.

Keywords

Holy Roman Empire, Christianity, Saxony, Staufer Dynasty, Corpus Juris Civilis, basilicas, Romanesque, Treaty of Westphalia, the Habsburgs

Discussion

2.4.1 Rise of the Holy Roman Empire

Fig 2.4.1 Map of Holy Roman Empire; 972-1032 CE

Source: World History Encyclopedia

The Holy Roman Empire existed from 962 to 1806 CE, standing as one of Europe's largest medieval and early modern states. However, it was never a centralised unitary state but rather a confederation of various small and medium-sized political entities. Its power and stability fluctuated significantly, depending on the strength of its emperor. When the empire's factions aligned, the emperor held immense authority, but more often than not, the member states had conflicting interests and frequently clashed. These internal divisions were frequently exploited by rival European powers, weakening imperial cohesion.

The emperor was elected by the Imperial College, a process that often-undermined dynastic stability. To secure votes, ruling families had to grant privileges to electors, gradually eroding imperial power. If an emperor grew too weak, they risked losing

the throne to a rival family, restarting the cycle. As a result, only the strongest emperors could unify and control the empire, while weaker rulers often held influence only over their personal hereditary lands rather than the broader empire. The empire's roots trace back to the Frankish realm, which expanded across Central and Western Europe in the 8th and 9th centuries. In 800 CE, Charlemagne was crowned emperor by the pope, but his empire quickly fragmented under his heirs. East Francia, the precursor to the Kingdom of Germany, emerged as the dominant successor state.

By the beginning of the 10th century CE there remained four principal Duchies in Germany viz. Swabia, and Bavaria in the South, Franconia in the Centre and Saxony in the North. In course of time Saxony assumed the overlordship over other territories. Its ruler became the Holy Roman Emperor. Conrad I (911-918), the Duke of Franconia became the ruler. He was a weak ruler. The Magyars plundered during his rule. Under him people suffered much. The Church properties were looted.

2.4.1.1 Henry the Fowler (919-936)

After Conrad I, Henry, the Duke of Saxony, was to be elected king. Swahia was easily brought under the control of Henry. In 921, the Duke of Bavaria, Arnulf, accepted Henry's authority. The Duke of Lotharingia accepted his overlordship in 925. He brought peace with the Magyars by signing a treaty for 9 years, and in 929 CE, the Duke of Bohemia accepted his overlordship. In the battle of Unstrut in 933, Henry defeated the Magyars. Henry's passion for hunting earned him the nickname "Fowler". After the death of Henry the Fowler. Otto I, his eldest son, became the Holy Roman Emperor in 936 CE. His reign lasted up to 973 CE.

Otto I wanted to establish his royal power over the tribal duchies. He had been characterised as the German Charlemagne. His ambition was to defend Germany against the Hungarian invasions.

There was a close relationship between Otto and the dukes in the kingdom. But this relationship didn't last long throughout his reign. The Dukes showed ill will and antipathy to the monarchy. His own brothers Thakmar and Henry, who were Dukes, fomented trouble. The other dukes were Eberhard of Franconia and Gilbert of Lotharingia. Frederick also entered the fray. Thankmar was defeated and killed. Eherhand died in the battle, and Gilbert was drowned. Otto took over the direct administration of Tranconia. The first three years of Otto's reign were a constant struggle to put down their rebellions. Moreover, he divided the kingdom among the members of his family. He gave the duchy of Bavaria to his brother. Swabia to his son and Litharingia to a Tranconian brother – in – law.

2.4.1.2 Otto I

In the 10th century, Otto I, King of Germany, was invited by the princess Adelaide to intervene in Italian affairs. After restoring order and marrying Adelaide, Otto marched to Rome, where the grateful pope crowned him emperor in 962, marking the formal foundation of the Holy Roman Empire. Unlike Charlemagne's short-lived empire, Otto's imperial title remained in East Francia (later Germany) for the duration of the Holy Roman Empire's existence.

Otto and the Magyars

The Magyars were the native people of Hungary. They often gave troubles to the enemies of Otto. They marched up to the River Danube and camped at River Lech. All five Duchies of Saxony, Franconia, Lotharinigia, Swabia and Bavaria rolled under Otto's banner. In the battle of Lechfield fought in 955 CE, Otto won a decisive victory

over the Magyars. The victory marked the end of the Hungarian raids. After the victory over the Magyars, Otto assumed the title "Great". The power and prestige of Otto increased. Otto was hailed as the saviour of Christendom.

Otto and the Slavs

The Wends or Slavs settled between the Elbe and the Oder caused troubles. Otto engaged in continuous war with these tribes. He entrusted the subjugation of these tribes to two Saxon Counts, Herman Billung and Gero. Otto won a signal victory over the Slavs on the Rechnitz.

Otto's relations with the Church

Otto effectively controlled the appointment of Bishops. He appointed members of the royal family as Arch – Bishops. Otto's main aim was to maintain a cordial relationship with the Church so as to counter the influence of Dukes and the Counts. He granted lands lavishly to Bishops and Arch-Bishops. The German Church became a state Church. The Bishops administered the royal lands. They were the tutors of Princes and Councillors of kings. They acted as regents in the country. They were in charge of the Government when the king was absent in Italy. The king utilised them for diplomatic services. The Bishops gave military aid to the crown. According to Canon law, every important town had a Bishop. The church promoted learning and education. They supported the king wholeheartedly for each and everything.

Administration

Otto restored order in the country through his constant efforts. He established a new system of administration within the Duchies and Counties. He reserved the right of appointing these dukes. The office became hereditary. He greatly reduced the power of the nobles. He divided the Duchy of Lotharinia into two in 959 CE. He established

his overlordship over Burgundy. He reduced the crime in the country. Germany became the most prosperous state during his reign. He was highly responsible for the creation of a united Germany. He appointed one count Palatine in each duchy. Thus, the system of Government devised by Otto was very strong.

Charlemagne restored the Roman Empire. He was therefore called the first emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Otto was a German king. He established supremacy over the city of Rome and over the Papal states. The empire of Otto was the largest and most powerful state in Europe. Otto assumed the title of 'Lombard King' and 'Roman Emperor.'

Otto's government became the Holy Roman Empire. Pope John XIIcrowned him as Roman emperor in 962 CE. The successors of Arnuel Louis the Child, Conrad I and Henry the Fowler, didn't hold the title of 'Emperor'. Pope John XII sought the help of Otto against Barenger. In 961, Barenger gave a lot of trouble to the Pope and invaded his territories. Immediately Otto reached Rome in 962 with a strong force and defeated him. As a reward for Otto's action, the Pope crowned him Emperor. Thus, Otto saved the Pope from dangers similar to those of Peppin and Charlemagne.

Over time, Pope John XII turned against Otto. Otto deposed him and elected a new Pope, Pope Leo VIII, with the help of the Synod. John XII drove Leo VIII out of the city and resumed the papal throne.

The Romans elected Benedict V as the new Pope after the death of pope John XII without consulting Otto. Enraged by this, Otto travelled to Rome in 964 CE. The deposed Benedict V and placed Leo VIII and returned to Germany. John XIII became the new pope after Leo VIII. But a rebellion broke out in Rome. Once again Otto rushed to Rome and crushed the rebellion ruthlessly. He restored Pope John XIII. Henceforth the authority

of Otto was uncontested in Rome. He died in 973 CE.

2.4.1.3 Successors of Otto I

Otto I was succeeded by his son, Otto II (973–983), who married Theophano, the daughter of Byzantine Emperor Romanus II, in 972 CE. In 982, Otto II suffered a defeat against the Saracens. He was followed by his three-year-old son, Otto III (982–1002). The last ruler of this lineage, from the Hohenstaufen family, was Conrad IV.

The Ottonian Dynasty ruled until 1024, incorporating Bohemia into the empire. They were succeeded by the Salian Dynasty, which added Burgundy, further expanding the empire's territory. However, this growth led to tensions with the church, culminating in the Investiture Controversy, a conflict over whether the pope or emperor had the authority to appoint bishops. The dispute was partially resolved by the Concordat of Worms in 1122, which limited the emperor's religious influence. Despite this, the subsequent Staufer dynasty sought to push imperial authority to its peak in secular affairs, setting the stage for future power struggles between the emperor, the church, and the empire's autonomous states.

2.4.1.4 Staufer Dynasty

The Staufer dynasty was among the most influential ruling houses of the Holy Roman Empire, overseeing its greatest territorial expansion. By the 13th century, their dominion stretched theoretically from Denmark's southern border to the Mediterranean island of Sicily. The first Staufer emperor, Frederick I, known as Barbarossa (r. 1155–1190), due to his red beard, had gained military experience during the Second Crusade before ascending to the throne. However, his rule was marked by relentless conflicts with the thriving mercantile republics in his Italian territories. He launched six military campaigns against these rebellious subjects, but his aggressive policies led to a powerful coalition forming against him, comprising the pope, Sicily, and even the Byzantine Empire. Defeated, he retreated to Germany, determined to seek revenge, but his plans were interrupted by the sultan Saladin's conquest of Jerusalem. Joining the Third Crusade to reclaim the Holy City, Barbarossa met an untimely death when he drowned in a river in modern-day Turkey.

His grandson, Frederick II (1220–1250), left such a profound impact on his era that he was called *stupor mundi*, or "wonder of the world." A scholar and polyglot, he fostered the arts, philosophy, and science, inviting Muslim and Jewish intellectuals to his court in Palermo. His religious tolerance and vast territorial ambitions, however, brought him into constant conflict with the papacy. Excommunicated three times, Pope Innocent IV even branded him the "Antichrist." Despite this, Frederick considered himself a true Christian ruler and embarked on the Sixth Crusade. Instead of relying on military force, he negotiated with Sultan al-Kamil, successfully reclaiming Jerusalem through diplomacy—an achievement where previous crusades had failed.

While Frederick's strength temporarily kept the empire's internal divisions under control, his death in 1250 triggered political fragmentation. Italian republics and northern cities like those in the Hanseatic League took advantage of the power vacuum, expanding their autonomy. Meanwhile, feudal lords in Germany vied for supremacy, leading to decades of instability. The empire remained without a crowned emperor for over sixty years, a period known as the Interregnum, lasting until 1312.

2.4.2 Culture and Economy

Following the decline of the Staufer emperors, political power shifted from the

feudal aristocracy to the emerging burgher class in the cities. As wealth circulated more freely, economic influence began to outweigh land ownership, marking a transition toward a more mercantile society. However, the empire did not become democratic; the Imperial College, which elected the emperor, remained composed of powerful feudal lords. Initially, its secular electors were the dukes of Franconia, Swabia, Saxony, and Bavaria. Still, after the Staufer era, they were replaced by the King of Bohemia, the Count Palatine, and the Margrave of Brandenburg. Despite the aristocracy's continued dominance, the growing wealth of cities allowed burghers to negotiate increasing concessions from their feudal overlords, setting the stage for an early urbanised society.

This economic shift was particularly pronounced in Italy, where maritime republics like Venice, Genoa, and Pisa had gained substantial autonomy under the Staufers. As imperial control weakened, these cities further distanced themselves from the empire, laying the groundwork for the Renaissance. Over time, Italians began to view the northern inhabitants of the empire as distinctly "Teutonic" or "German," highlighting their cultural divergence.

North of the Alps, cities also secured economic privileges from local lords through agreements known as "privileges," often granting them significant autonomy. Burghers grew in power, and craftsmen formed guilds that controlled trade, labour markets, and production. Some of the wealthiest cities banded together in leagues, such as the Lombard League in Italy and the Hanseatic League in northern Europe. The latter, which included cities like Hamburg, Bremen, and Danzig, even secured trade advantages in England as early as the 12th century. This period demonstrated that the Holy Roman Empire could thrive economically despite a decline in central authority. Meanwhile, the imperial throne passed through several

dynasties, including the Luxembourgish, Bavarian, and Bohemian houses, before finally being taken over by the Austrian Habsburgs in 1415, who would rule until the empire's dissolution.

2.4.3 The Reformation and Religious Conflicts

Under Habsburg rule, the Holy Roman Empire entered a period of intense religious strife. The Protestant Reformation erupted in 1517 when Martin Luther's break with the Catholic Church fractured Western Christianity. Many northern cities and regions embraced Protestantism as a means to resist the Catholic Habsburg emperors. This division quickly took on a political dimension, with Protestant strongholds in the north and cities like Strasbourg and Frankfurt opposing the Catholic territories of the Rhineland, Bohemia, and Austria. Emperor Charles V (r. 1519–1556) struggled to manage these tensions while simultaneously waging wars against France and the expanding Ottoman Empire. Overwhelmed, he conceded to Protestant demands in 1555 with the Peace of Augsburg, which allowed each ruler within the empire to determine the religion of their own territory. This agreement temporarily stabilised religious conflicts but also weakened imperial authority, creating a lasting power vacuum.

In the early 17th century, tensions reignited in Bohemia, a Habsburg-controlled kingdom where Protestantism had been steadily spreading. In 1618, the Protestant nobility revolted, deposing the Catholic Emperor Ferdinand II as King of Bohemia and offering the crown to a Protestant ruler. Ferdinand retaliated, sparking the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), one of Europe's most devastating conflicts. Initially, the emperor regained Bohemia, but his intervention in religious affairs was seen as a violation of the peace agreement in 1555. This alarmed other Protestant leaders, leading Denmark,

Sweden, and eventually France to enter the war against the Habsburgs.

The war was particularly brutal, as most of the fighting took place on German soil, devastating towns, economies, and populations. Protestant forces achieved major victories under the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus, though he was killed in battle in 1632. France, long wary of Habsburg power, later intervened directly, prolonging the conflict. The combination of internal Protestant resistance and external attacks proved too much for the empire to withstand. After prolonged negotiations, the Peace of Westphalia was signed in 1648, bringing an end to the war. This treaty established a new balance of power, solidifying religious tolerance within the empire and further reducing imperial authority. While peace returned, the Holy Roman Empire emerged from the conflict severely weakened, cementing its transformation into a fragmented collection of semi-independent states.

2.4.4 Character of the Roman Empire

The renewed Roman Empire sought to preserve the heritage of ancient Rome while adapting to the medieval European structure. Charlemagne and the later German emperors regarded themselves as the rightful successors of the Caesars, merging Roman legal traditions with feudal governance. The Corpus Juris Civilis played a crucial role in shaping the legal system, while the church exerted significant influence over imperial authority. Pope Gregory IX attempted to codify church laws in a manner similar to Emperor Justinian's legal reforms. However, rather than being a direct revival of the ancient empire, this institution developed under Christian ideals and medieval frameworks.

Christianity played a crucial role in defining the revived empire, setting it apart from its ancient predecessor. The Pope, who had helped transfer imperial authority to Charlemagne, ensured that the empire remained a protector of the Christian faith. While the emperor continued to be seen as a divinely sanctioned ruler, his power was no longer absolute, as he had to contend with both feudal lords and the church. The empire evolved into both a political and religious institution, requiring emperors to manage secular governance while upholding spiritual responsibilities.

Unlike the centralised ancient Roman state, the medieval empire was fragmented, lacking a strong unified structure. The shift from Byzantine rule to the Carolingian Empire marked a fundamental change in governance. Feudalism became the dominant system, and emperors often faced difficulties in maintaining authority over their vast territories. They relied on alliances with regional princes, but the increasing power of these local rulers further weakened imperial control. As a result, the empire's claim to universality was more symbolic than practical, with its real influence limited mainly to Germany and parts of Italy.

Despite its structural challenges, the Holy Roman Empire continued to serve as a unifying force in medieval Europe. It provided a legal and administrative framework that influenced governance across the continent. However, ongoing struggles between secular and religious authorities, along with decentralisation, further reduced its political dominance. While it never reclaimed the full power of ancient Rome, its ideological and spiritual legacy persisted, significantly shaping European civilisation in the centuries that followed.

The fusion of the Roman Empire and the German Kingdom was a pivotal moment in European history, shaping the structure of medieval Germany. When Otto the Great was crowned Emperor in 962, he retained

his position as 'King of Germany', adding imperial authority to his existing rule. This dual role established a unique political entity that would influence Germany and the broader Holy Roman Empire. At the time, Germany was composed of several tribal duchies, including Saxony, Bavaria, Swabia, Franconia, and Lotharingia, which had been loosely connected under Carolingian rule. The election of Conrad of Franconia and later Henry the Fowler marked Germany's emergence as an independent kingdom, and Otto's consolidation of royal power strengthened its central government while maintaining its feudal structure.

Feudalism played a crucial role in shaping the German monarchy, blending elements of tribal governance with the feudal system inherited from the Carolingians. Unlike France and England, where feudal lords gained significant autonomy, early German monarchs maintained stronger control over their vassals. The Church also played a key role in imperial governance, with Otto the Great appointing bishops and abbots as loyal supporters to counterbalance the secular nobility. This system, later known as the "Ottonian Church System," strengthened central authority but also set the stage for future conflicts between the monarchy and the papacy.

The Saxon dynasty, beginning with Henry the Fowler and reaching its peak under Otto the Great, defined the early Holy Roman Empire. Otto I expanded German influence by defeating the Magyars at the Battle of Lechfeld in 955 and securing his imperial coronation in 962. His successors, Otto II and Otto III, continued efforts to assert control over Italy but faced resistance from local rulers and the Byzantine Empire. Otto III sought to revive a classical Roman Empire, uniting German and Italian lands under Christian rule, but his untimely death in 1002 left his vision unrealised.

The Franconian dynasty (1024–1125) marked a period of consolidation and conflict. Conrad II expanded the empire by incorporating the Kingdom of Burgundy, while Henry III strengthened imperial control over the papacy. However, under Henry IV, the Investiture Controversy erupted, leading to his humiliating penance at Canossa in 1077 and weakening imperial authority. By the end of the Franconian period, the empire had transformed into a decentralised feudal state, with regional princes gaining autonomy. This set the stage for ongoing struggles between emperors and local rulers, which would shape the medieval history of Germany.

Under the rule of Frederick II (r. 1215–1250), the Holy Roman Empire reached its greatest territorial extent, encompassing Germany, Italy, and Sicily. However, Frederick's ambitions brought him into direct conflict with the papacy, which saw him as a threat. His refusal to separate the Kingdom of Sicily from the empire led to his excommunication and prolonged conflicts with the pope and rebellious princes. These struggles significantly weakened central authority.

By the mid-14th century, the empire had evolved into a decentralised entity where the power of electors overshadowed that of the emperor. The Golden Bull of 1356 formalised the system of electing emperors, ensuring that seven major princes, including the archbishops of Mainz, Trier, and Cologne, had the sole authority to choose the emperor. This effectively entrenched the empire's decentralised nature, making it more of a confederation than a unified state.

2.4.5 The Rise and Spread of Christianity

The founder of the religion of Christianity was Jesus Christ. He was born at Bethlehem in Judea. His parents were Joseph and Mary.

Joseph was a Jewish Carpenter. Palestine was a Roman province during the birth of Jesus. Augustus Caesar was the ruler of the Roman Empire. Jesus lived in Nazareth for about 30 years. At the age of 30, Jesus was baptised by John, a religious reformer. Jesus travelled to Palestine and preached his new religion. The Central theme of his teaching is the 'Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man'. Love, justice, mercy, purity and sincerity were his principal teachings. The prodigal son, "the good samaritan", and the sower are some of his famous Parables. His teachings had great appeal for the poorer section, among the Jews. He had a large number of followers. The Orthodox Jews got annoyed at the popularity of Jesus. Under their pressure pointing to Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judae arrested Jesus. He was tried before a Jewish Court. Jesus was crucified to death in Jerusalem about 29 CE. It was during the reign of Emperor Tiberius that Jesus was crucified.

The followers of Jesus hailed him as the Messiah or Christ. Philippose Mathays, Thomas, Simob, Yudha, Patrosa, Yaheb, Yokhannan Mathew spread Christianity Jesus selected 12 Anthanayose disciples for the propagation of his new creed. They were later called 'Twelve Apostles'. The foremost among them was Peter, whose original name was Simon. Peter was the first Bishop of Rome. Peter spread Christianity in Rome and Asia Minor. Another disciple, Paul, spread Christianity in Damascus, Syria, Cecilia. He established many Churches. Paul and his followers suffered a lot. He was put to death by Emperor Nero in 67 CE. for the services rendered by Paul to Christianity. He is rightly called. "the Second founder of Christianity." At Antioch, the followers of Jesus came to be called Christians. Emperor Nero followed a policy of terrible persecution. Emperor Diocletian adopted inhuman methods. Christianity became the state religion of Rome in 395 CE.

Several causes contributed to the spread of Christianity. The teaching had great appeal for the people. The missionary activities and Pax Romana greatly helped the spread of Christianity. It also made valuable contributions to art and architecture. Beautiful Churches were built in the Greek and Roman styles.

2.4.6 Concept of the Medieval Empire

The theory of the medieval empire was deeply rooted in the belief that political authority and spiritual authority must be unified under a single system. The empire was conceived as an earthly reflection of divine order, where the Emperor was not merely a secular ruler but also a divinely sanctioned authority, responsible for maintaining peace, justice, and Christian unity across Christendom. This concept drew from the legacy of the Roman Empire, which had long symbolised universal dominion and legal order. The Emperor was regarded as the temporal head of Christendom, mirroring the Pope's role as its spiritual head. Together, they formed a dual leadership that governed both the material and spiritual aspects of life

The medieval theory of the Holy Roman Empire positioned it as an essential institution meant to uphold unity, peace, and justice in Christendom. This idea emerged partly in reaction to the corruption of spiritual institutions, which had disappointed many with their moral failings. With the Papacy embroiled in its own ambitions and power struggles, many began to favour secular authority, seeking stability and order through legal and political structures. The Empire, though diminished in territorial reach, was increasingly seen as a more impartial authority, removed from the local entanglements of feudal kingship. No longer merely a Germanic kingdom, the Emperor was envisioned as a universal figure, embodying spiritual unity and the

legal authority needed to maintain peace among European states.

A central theme in medieval imperial theory was the relationship between the Pope and the Emperor. The two were often likened to the soul and body, with the Pope overseeing spiritual matters and the Emperor responsible for worldly affairs. The Emperor's duty was not just to govern but to ensure that political stability supported the Church's mission. His supreme responsibility was to act as a mediator between nations, enforce justice, and uphold peace in Christendom. This belief was deeply rooted in the medieval mindset, where religion and governance were inseparable.

One of the Empire's defining characteristics was its claim to universal authority. Unlike national monarchs, the Emperor was meant to rise above regional and dynastic interests, acting as a neutral arbiter for all of Christendom. This idea was reinforced by the belief that the Empire's authority was divinely ordained and had continued unbroken from the Roman Caesars. In this view, resisting the Emperor was seen as resisting divine order, making rebellion a sin. Despite the practical decline of imperial control over various regions, the ideological framework persisted, influencing political and legal thought across medieval Europe.

The theory of the Empire also had legal implications. Roman law, which emphasised a strong, centralised authority, was revived and reinforced by imperial thinkers. The Emperor, as the heir to Roman legal traditions, was considered the ultimate source of legitimacy. In an era where feudalism fragmented authority, the Emperor's role as a legal arbitrator was particularly emphasised. The concept of "Imperator pacificus" (the Emperor as the bringer of peace) underlined his responsibility to resolve conflicts and maintain stability in Europe. This legalistic view of the Empire laid the foundation for later European legal traditions.

The medieval theory of the Empire was not confined to legal and political treatises; it permeated theology, literature, and art. Many medieval theologians and scholars found biblical justification for the Empire, interpreting passages as divine endorsements of its authority. Artistic representations also reflected this worldview—mosaics and paintings often depicted Christ bestowing authority on both the Pope and the Emperor, reinforcing their divine legitimacy. This cultural reinforcement helped maintain the prestige of the imperial institution even when its real power waned.

2.4.7 Holy Roman Empire and the New Learning

The relationship between the Holy Roman Empire and the new learning during the Renaissance period was characterised by a fusion of political authority with the revival of classical scholarship. The Empire, which had long based its legitimacy on divine sanction and medieval traditions, found itself confronting an intellectual revolution that sought to reinterpret governance and law through the lens of ancient Roman and Greek thought. This period saw an increasing admiration for classical antiquity, where scholars sought to revive the principles of Roman law, philosophy, and literature.

The Renaissance, often regarded as the rebirth of human intellect, played a significant role in shaping political theories within the Empire. The revival of ancient texts led to a renewed interest in the idea of a universal monarchy, drawing inspiration from the grandeur of the Roman Empire. Many intellectuals, including jurists and poets, looked to the Emperor as a potential unifier of Christendom. Figures such as Dante and Petrarch envisioned an imperial authority that could transcend national divisions, promoting peace and justice based on classical ideals.

However, this revival of classical learning also brought challenges to the traditional medieval structure of the Empire. The increasing influence of humanist scholars, who valued reason and empirical inquiry, led to an intellectual shift away from the ecclesiastical dominance that had historically underpinned imperial rule. The Papacy, which had long exercised considerable power over the Empire, viewed this growing secular intellectualism with suspicion. Many scholars who engaged with Roman law and classical philosophy found themselves in opposition to the Church, as their studies often provided a foundation for resisting papal authority.

Moreover, the Renaissance era saw the Holy Roman Empire struggling to maintain its influence amidst the rise of independent nation-states. The revival of classical political thought coincided with the emergence of more centralised monarchies in France, England, and Spain, which contrasted with the decentralised and elective nature of the Empire. While the Holy Roman Emperors sought to harness the intellectual energy of the period to reinforce their legitimacy, they faced the reality that the ideals of national sovereignty and self-governance were gaining momentum.

In essence, the intersection of the Empire with the new learning was marked by both opportunity and conflict. The revival of classical antiquity provided a theoretical foundation for imperial authority, but it also introduced ideas that ultimately contributed to the decline of medieval universalism. The Renaissance transformed the intellectual and political landscape of Europe, and while the Holy Roman Empire attempted to adapt, it ultimately found itself overshadowed by the rising tide of national identities and new political ideologies.

2.4.7.1 Petrarch and Dante

The revival of classical antiquity during the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance found strong advocates in the figures of Petrarch and Dante. These literary icons sought to reconnect with the intellectual and cultural grandeur of Rome, shaping the intellectual discourse of their time. Petrarch, deeply moved by the writings of Cicero, yearned to revive the "purity" of Ciceronian Latin, believing that the language of his own time had become corrupted. He dedicated himself to the recovery and study of ancient texts, scouring monastic libraries for long-lost manuscripts. This endeavour led him to develop a new educational philosophy that moved away from traditional medieval schooling and instead emphasised classical literature as a means of cultivating moral virtue and intellectual clarity.

Petrarch was not merely a scholar; he was also a poet of great repute. His literary achievements in both Latin and the Italian vernacular secured his position as a cultural icon. His poetry, often centered around the idealised figure of Laura, echoed the courtly love tradition but with a refined humanist sensibility. Moreover, his admiration for the Roman Empire was not limited to literature. He passionately endorsed the revival of imperial greatness and longed for a political order that mirrored Rome's former unity and strength. His enthusiasm for imperial ideals was evident in his support for Rienzi's short-lived Roman republic and his veneration of Emperor Charles IV.

Dante Alighieri, another towering figure of medieval literature, also envisioned a world shaped by Roman imperial values. His masterpiece, *The Divine Comedy*, is not only a poetic journey through the afterlife but also a deeply political work. Dante portrayed the Roman poet Virgil as his guide, symbolising the wisdom of the ancient world. His treatise *Monarchia* further demonstrated his belief in a universal empire, advocating for secular rule under a just and enlightened emperor, independent of papal authority. Like Petrarch,

Dante saw in the Roman Empire an ideal of order and justice, contrasting it with the fragmented and chaotic political landscape of his time. His exile from Florence only deepened his longing for a unified Italy under strong imperial leadership.

The literary endeavours of these men were not merely artistic expressions but also political statements. They used their works to champion the cause of imperial revival, extolling the virtues of Roman civilisation and lamenting the divisions of contemporary Europe. Their influence extended beyond literature, shaping the ideological foundations of Renaissance, humanism and inspiring future generations of scholars and statesmen.

2.4.7.2 Literature in Medieval Europe

Even after the fall of the Roman Empire, Latin remained the language of the educated. It was the official language of the church, with scholars like John Salisbury, Peter Abelard, Roger Bacon, and Thomas Aquinas writing in Latin. Children began their education by learning it, and it was widely used in law and politics. Not only were significant documents like the Magna Carta written in Latin, but private records such as property deeds were also composed in the same language. Church hymns and popular songs were crafted in Latin as well. However, classical Latin had evolved and was no longer the spoken language of the common people.

The revival of grammatical studies in Cathedral schools and universities led to the production of some excellent Latin poetry. The best examples were secular lyrics written in the 12th century by a group of poets known as the Goliards. Long narrative poems known as Romances were developed in France. It was the ancestor of modern novels. Love and adventure were the main themes. Chretien of Troyes, a Frenchman, was the first great writer of Arthurian Romances. Another narrative form was a fable, or *fabliaux*, which were short stories that were written to edify or instruct rather than to amuse. Romance of the *Rose of Frenchman William of Lorris* was completed by John of Meun. It was an illustration of the growing worldliness.

There was a gradual triumph of vernacular languages all over Europe after the 11th century. French, German, Spanish, Italian, etc., became popular as media of literary expression. Vernacular literature aided materially in the development of national consciousness. Most of the literature in vernacular languages was written in the form of heroic epics. The French song of Roland and the Spanish poem of the Cid were epics composed between 1050 and 1150 CE.

Professional wanderers and singers-the troubadours in Southern France, trouveres in northern France and minnesingers in Germany travelled from place to place, reciting stories accompanied by a musical instrument. The theme of their songs was romantic love. These love songs were different from the epics in style and subject matter. In addition to love lyrics, the troubadours also wrote several other kinds of short poems in a language related to French known as Provencal. The troubadours idealised women as marvelous beings.

During the early Middle Ages, significant historical writing in Latin emerged, notably the works of Bede and Charlemagne's biographer, Einhard. Baeda, later called the Venerable Bede (673-735), was one of the greatest of the early Benedictine Scholars. This Englishman wrote an admirable history of the English Church, which was the chief source of information of the period. The Anglo-Saxon epic poem 'Beowulf' was put into written form in the 8th century. It incorporates ancient legends of the Germanic peoples of northwestern Europe. Beowulf is important not only as one of the earliest

specimens of Anglo-Saxon or old English poetry, but also for the picture it gives of the society of the English and their ancestors in the early Middle Ages.

In a period of general unrest in Western Europe, the monasteries were almost the only places where literature could be written and ancient manuscripts preserved. Cassiodorus established two monasteries in the South of Italy and collected valuable manuscripts which his works had to copy and superintended the translation of many Greek works into Latin. He also wrote a sort of encyclopedia of sacred and profane literature. Corridorous preserved many of the great writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans at a time when they were in danger of being swept away by a tide of barbarism.

Gregory of Tours, a sixth-century writer, was the historian of the Franks. He had an intimate knowledge of contemporary events but was not impartial. Yet he is an attractive writer and neither conceals nor invents anything. His narrative powers have earned him the title of 'The Herodotus of the Barbarians'.

Islamic philosophers such as Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes played a significant role in the 12th and 13th centuries. During this time, translations of Arabic, Hebrew, and Greek texts reached the West, profoundly shaping European thought. Medieval philosophy, enriched by figures like Peter Abelard, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas, laid the groundwork for the intellectual developments of the modern era.

Drama was born all over again within the church in the Middle Ages. In the early Middle Ages, certain passages in the liturgy began to be acted out. In the 12th century CE Paris, short religious plays in Latin were performed. Later, vernacular dramas were staged for the whole congregation to understand. Around 1000 CE, dramas were performed outside the church so that they would not take time away from the services. Non-religious stories were introduced in the course of time. Thus, it can be seen that there was a great blossoming of arts and literature in the Middle Ages. It was undoubtedly on the foundation laid by the Middle Ages that the Renaissance, which heralded the modern times, was born.

2.4.7.3 Learning and Science

Many Roman schools vanished due to barbarian invasions but gradually revived during the Middle Ages. Despite being unable to write himself, Charlemagne actively promoted education. The Palace school at Aachen stands as a testament to his efforts. He recruited teachers from different regions to foster learning and encouraged parish priests to establish free elementary schools.

The church played an important role in promoting learning. But they were not in favour of classical learning. To the church, the main function of education was to train leaders for the church. Their curriculum included the study of psalms, church singing, writing, grammar and arithmetic. The monasteries preserved valuable works and copied manuscripts. But monks prioritised spiritual growth over the pursuit of intellectual progress.

The industrial guilds afforded training in practical craftsmanship through the apprenticeship system by working for craftsmen. Similarly, a young man had to go through the right training to become a knight. Court etiquette, riding, art of warfare, etc., were important to young men from 14 to 21 years of age for being eligible for knighthood.

The economic revival, the growth of towns and the emergence of strong government allowed Europeans to dedicate themselves to education in the 11th century. A new spirit cropped up in education, and the demand for trained persons increased. Education

was looked upon as a means of obtaining a better position in the church and state. The increase in the number of students led to a corresponding increase in the demand for teachers.

The main centres of education became the cathedral schools in growing towns. In 1179 CE, the papal monarchy ordered that all cathedrals should set aside income for one school teacher, who could instruct all who wished, rich or poor, without fee. The papacy believed that this measure would enlarge the number of well-trained clerics and potential administrators. In the course of time, there was a change in the curriculum also. A thorough knowledge of Latin grammar and composition began to be inculcated. Roman classics of Virgil were studied. This revived interest in these texts and attempts to imitate them have led scholars to refer to it as a Renaissance of the 12th century.

Until around 1200 CE, students in urban schools were mostly from clerical backgrounds. Afterward, more pupils entered schools with no intention of taking church orders. Some were children of the upper class who began to regard literacy as a badge of status, and others were future notaries or merchants who needed literacy or computational skills to advance their careers. By the 13th century, many schools had grown completely independent of ecclesiastical control. As time went on instruction caused being in Latin. Vernacular languages took their place. With the growth of lay schools, there was an enormous growth of lay literacy.

The institution of university was a medieval invention. The term 'University' is derived from the Latin 'Universitas', meaning a corporation or guild of teachers or students. The universities were institutions that gave specialised instruction in advanced studies that could not be pursued in cathedral schools. The advanced schools of the ancient world did not have fixed curricula or organised facilities, and they did not award degrees.

No curriculum in the Middle Ages included history or anything else like the modern social sciences. Before entering a university, a student had to study Latin grammar. During four years of university, a student would study basic liberal arts. The liberal arts included grammar, and logic called the *Trivium* and *Quadrivium* – music, arithmetic, geometry and astronomy. Italy was the home of universities. In 825 CE, the University of Pavia was founded as a school of law. The University of Bologna was the leading center for legal studies, offering instruction in Roman and Canon law. Universities were also founded in Modena, Vicenza, Padua, Naples, and Rome. Salerno, meanwhile, became renowned for its specialisation in medicine.

The greater centre of university education in France was Paris. It started as a cathedral school but, in the 12th century, became a centre of northern intellectual life. It is comprised of two parts: the undergraduate school of arts and the graduate school of theology, philosophy, law, and medicine. Peter Abelard, John of Salisbury, Thomas Aquinas, Roger Bacon, William of Occam, etc., are the intellectual giants of this university. The most charismatic and controversial teacher of the day was Peter Abelard. Other prestigious French universities included Orleans and Toulouse. In England, Oxford and Cambridge gained prominence, while Salamanca and Toledo were leading universities in Spain. Germany did not establish universities until the 14th century, with its first, Heidelberg University, founded in 1385. By that time, universities had spread across many European countries. Universities modelled after the University of Bologna operated as student-run corporations. Students were responsible for hiring teachers, paying their salaries, and even dismissing them for negligence or ineffective instruction.

The universities of northern Europe followed the model of Paris, which functioned as a guild of teachers. It was organised into four faculties—Arts, Theology, Law, and Medicine—each overseen by a dean. In most northern universities, Arts and Theology were the dominant fields of study. Compared to other disciplines, pure science saw little advancement during the Middle Ages, as the Roman Empire had provided minimal support for scientific pursuits.

The Arabs played a crucial role in preserving Greek learning. The Crusaders encountered these ideas, while Arab scholars also introduced them to universities in Western Europe. They brought innovations such as Arabic numerals, the concept of zero, the decimal system, algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. They introduced the medical knowledge of Galen and Hippocrates, along with their own expertise in medicinal herbs and drugs. Greek and Arabic texts were translated into Latin, allowing Western scholars to gain insight into the works of major philosophers and scientists.

In the 13th and 14th centuries, a genuine scientific movement occurred in Europe. The most advanced 13th century scientist was an Englishman, Robert Grosseteste (1175-1253), Bishop of Lincoln; he was a great thinker, proficient in Greek, and he translated Aristotle's 'Ethics'. He made significant theoretical advances in mathematics, astronomy and optics. He formulated a scientific explanation of the rainbow and the use of lenses. Albertus Magnus (1193-1280) tried to interpret the works of Aristotle according to Christian principles. Aristotle was called second; he considered nature a valid field of investigation. Roger Bacon (1214-1294) insisted on the necessity of experiments to ascertain truth. He seems to have predicted automobiles and flying machines. A disciple of Grosseteste, Bacon followed his teacher's work in optics, the speed of light and the nature of human vision.

2.4.7.4 Architecture

The architecture of the Holy Roman Empire was profoundly shaped by the Ottonian period (10th–11th centuries), which followed the Carolingian era. Ottonian architecture merged Carolingian, early Christian, Roman, and Byzantine influences, reflecting both the political and religious ambitions of the empire. Otto III, in particular, incorporated strong Byzantine elements into art and architecture, largely due to the influence of his mother, Theophano, a Byzantine princess. This fusion of styles resulted in a distinctive architectural tradition, setting the stage for the later Romanesque period.

A major achievement of Ottonian architecture was the development of grand basilicas inspired by early Christian churches but with significant modifications. A prime example is the Abbey Church of St. Michael in Hildesheim, built around 1001 by Bishop Bernward. This church featured alternating pillars and columns, a wooden-roofed nave, and crypts beneath the choirs. Another remarkable structure was the Church of St. Cyriacus in Gernrode (961 CE), known for its gallery-crowned side aisles and innovative use of west and east choirs. These churches also introduced the cubical (cushion) capital, which later became a defining element of Romanesque architecture.

Several significant cathedrals were built during this period, though only a few remain well preserved. Notable examples include Magdeburg, Merseburg, Paderborn, Liège, Mainz, Worms, Strasbourg, Verdun, Basel, Metz, Eichstätt, Bamberg, Regensburg, Augsburg, Lausanne, and Dijon. Many of these churches were wooden-roofed basilicas featuring east and west choirs, while some, like St. Peter's in Utrecht, adopted columned basilica designs. The octagonal chapel of Aachen, originally constructed by Charlemagne, was widely imitated, as

seen in Ottmarsheim (France) and Nijmegen (The Netherlands) in the early 11th century. Another notable structure, the west choir of Essen Minster, reflected this influence by adapting Aachen's octagonal design into a semi-hexagonal ground plan.

In addition to religious architecture, the Holy Roman Empire also witnessed the construction of secular buildings and fortifications, reinforcing imperial power. The architectural innovations of this period laid the foundation for the Romanesque style, which later dominated the empire. The blend of Byzantine elegance, Carolingian magnificence, and early Christian simplicity resulted in a unique architectural legacy, leaving a lasting impact on medieval European architecture.

The Romanesque architectural style was a defining feature of the Holy Roman Empire, flourishing from the mid-11th century until the advent of Gothic architecture. Drawing inspiration from Roman construction techniques, it evolved with distinct regional characteristics shaped by the monastic traditions that played a central role in medieval society. Under Charlemagne, monasteries became more than just places of worship—they functioned as administrative and economic hubs. His efforts to standardise monastic practices led to the development of monastic cities, which served as models for future architectural advancements. These religious complexes integrated spiritual, educational, and economic functions, reinforcing their importance within the empire.

During the Carolingian period, monastic settlements like Centula (799 CE) featured cloisters, chapels, and structured urban layouts, reflecting an early form of organised community life. By 820 CE, the monastic design at St. Gall became a prototype for later Romanesque architecture, incorporating libraries, scriptoriums, dormitories, and

workshops. These centers not only preserved classical knowledge but also influenced the construction of larger religious and secular buildings. Architectural evolution continued during the Ottonian period (10th–11th centuries), which blended Roman, Byzantine, and Germanic elements, leading to a mature Romanesque style.

The Romanesque era witnessed the construction of grand cathedrals and abbeys, symbolising the empire's religious and imperial ambitions. Notable structures include Speyer Cathedral (1030–1137), famous for its vast stone vaults and monumental scale; Worms Cathedral (12th–13th centuries), known for its towering spires and intricate ornamentation; Mainz Cathedral (1036–1137), embodying imperial grandeur with its solid and enduring structure; and Maria Laach Abbey (1130–1156), a prime example of Romanesque monastic architecture. Characterised by thick walls, barrel vaults, rounded arches, and symmetrical layouts, these buildings reflected the strength and stability of the Holy Roman Empire.

Beyond religious architecture, the empire also saw the development of fortified castles and secular structures as expressions of power and authority. Frederick II of Hohenstaufen commissioned Castel del Monte (1230s–1240s) in southern Italy, an architectural masterpiece renowned for its octagonal design. This innovative approach influenced medieval fortifications in Wales and France. By the late 12th century, Romanesque architecture gradually gave way to Gothic design, as seen in Cologne Cathedral, which introduced pointed arches and ribbed vaults. Nevertheless, Romanesque structures remained prominent in Germany, Poland, Hungary, and other parts of the empire well into the 13th and 14th centuries, particularly within Cistercian monastic communities. The enduring impact of Romanesque architecture extended beyond Central Europe, leaving a lasting legacy in

France, Italy, and the wider medieval world, shaping the course of European architectural history.

The devastation of Rome did not begin with Alaric's sack of the city or even with the more severe Vandal plundering led by Genseric. Instead, it was the prolonged and repeated sieges during the war between Belisarius and the Ostrogoths that truly marked the start of the city's irreversible decline. This conflict, though lengthy and draining, would not have been as ruinous had Rome been in a robust state beforehand. By the mid-fifth century, Rome's wealth and population remained substantial, likely comparable to the peak of the empire. However, this prosperity was concentrated in the hands of a small, indulgent aristocracy. The general populace consisted of impoverished freemen with no military training and no political influence, as well as an even larger mass of slaves from various regions whose conditions were even worse than their masters.

The city lacked a strong middle class and effective municipal governance. While institutions like the Senate and Consuls persisted in name, they had long since ceased to wield any real power and were incapable of leading the people. Thus, when the Gothic wars and subsequent Lombard invasions financially ruined the great families, Rome's social structure collapsed entirely. The city's core was too decayed to rebuild itself. The traditional institutions of political engagement had been dormant for too long to be revived, and the people lacked the moral strength to forge new ones. As a result, in the midst of widespread disorder, any remaining authority inevitably gravitated toward the leader of the new religious order—the Pope.

While Rome's downfall mirrored that of other major cities in Italy and Gaul, two key distinctions set it apart. First, its Bishop faced no direct competition from a powerful temporal ruler. The Eastern Roman *vicar*

resided in Ravenna, far removed from the city, only occasionally intervening in papal elections or suppressing significant unrest. Second, unlike other European cities that integrated elements of Teutonic blood and customs, Rome remained largely untouched by such influences. The Teutonic discipline, which helped restructure other regions, was nearly absent in Rome. Consequently, the city failed to rejuvenate itself as others did. Over time, the once-magnificent city fell into stagnation, its leadership firmly held by the Church, while its secular importance steadily diminished.

2.4.8 The Fall of the Holy Roman Empire

After the Treaty of Westphalia, the Habsburgs retained the title of Holy Roman Emperors, but their power became increasingly limited to their hereditary lands in Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary. They successfully defended Vienna against an Ottoman siege in 1683, with Polish support, and used their territorial base to counter French expansion. However, their efforts ultimately failed when Louis XIV of France (r. 1643–1715) pushed his borders eastward to the Rhine. While France remained a major external threat, a more pressing challenge to Habsburg authority emerged from within the Holy Roman Empire itself.

During this period, the Hohenzollern dynasty expanded Brandenburg into the powerful Kingdom of Prussia. Although the Habsburgs initially tolerated this growth, tensions escalated in 1740 when Prussia invaded Silesia, one of the richest Habsburg provinces. Though Austria mounted a strong counteroffensive, they were ultimately forced to cede the region. This rivalry between Austria and Prussia persisted, eventually playing a central role in Germany's unification in the 19th century. However, by then, the Holy Roman Empire had already ceased to exist.

At the turn of the 19th century, France once again posed a grave threat, first through revolutionary armies and later under Napoleon Bonaparte. His military campaigns in Central Europe were devastatingly effective. In 1805, he inflicted a decisive defeat on the Holy Roman Emperor, effectively stripping him of authority beyond his Habsburg lands. The following year, in 1806, the Holy Roman Empire was officially dissolved, and Napoleon reorganised the German states into the Confederation of the Rhine, a French-controlled entity.

After Napoleon's final defeat, the idea of a German confederation persisted. In 1815, the German Confederation was established, uniting all German states, including Prussia and Austria. However, Prussia's growing dominance eventually led to Austria's exclusion from the movement toward German unification. The Habsburgs instead maintained their rule over Austria-Hungary until the First World War (1914–1918), after which their empire was finally dismantled.

Recap

- The Holy Roman Empire existed from 962 to 1806 CE
- It was a confederation of various small and medium-sized states
- The emperor was elected by the Imperial College of Electors
- Charlemagne was crowned emperor in 800, Otto I in 962 CE
- Otto I expanded the empire and defeated the Magyars in 955 CE
- The empire struggled with internal conflicts and feudal divisions
- Investiture Controversy led to conflicts between the pope and emperor
- The Staufer dynasty saw the empire's greatest territorial expansion
- Frederick I Barbarossa and Frederick II clashed with the papacy
- The empire became decentralised with the Golden Bull of 1356
- The Reformation led to religious wars and Protestant resistance
- The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) devastated the empire
- The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 weakened imperial authority
- Napoleon's victories led to the empire's dissolution in 1806
- The German Confederation replaced the Holy Roman Empire in 1815

Objective Questions

1. When was the Holy Roman Empire officially established?

2. Who was the first ruler crowned as the Holy Roman Emperor?

3. Which Frankish king was crowned Emperor in 800 CE?

4. What major conflict arose between the Holy Roman Emperors and the Papacy in the 11th century?

5. Which emperor was known as "Barbarossa" and sought to dominate Italy?

6. Which treaty ended the Thirty Years' War and reduced imperial authority?

7. What was the name of the war in which Prussia invaded the Habsburg lands in 1740?

8. Who was the last Holy Roman Emperor?

9. What entity replaced the Holy Roman Empire after its dissolution?

10. Who was the Holy Roman Emperor during the Protestant Reformation?

Answers

1. 962 CE

2. Otto I

3. Charlemagne

4. The Investiture Controversy

5. Frederick I (Frederick Barbarossa)

6. The Peace of Westphalia (1648)

7. The War of Austrian Succession

8. Francis II

9. The German Confederation (1815)

10. Charles V

Assignments

1. Explain the significance of Otto I's reign in shaping the Holy Roman Empire. How did his policies impact both Germany and Italy?

2. Examine the role of the Staufer dynasty in expanding the Holy Roman Empire.

3. How did economic and social structures evolve within the Holy Roman Empire from the medieval period to the early modern era? What role did cities and the burgher class play in this transformation?

4. What were the major internal and external factors leading to the decline and eventual dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806?

5. Examine the impact of the Protestant Reformation on the Holy Roman Empire. How did religious divisions contribute to political instability?

Suggested Reading

1. Bryce, James. *The History of the Holy Roman Empire*. Musicum Books, 2019.

2. Criswell, David. *Rise and Fall of the Holy Roman Empire: From Charlemagne to Napoleon.* Cambridge University Press, 2005.

3. Davison, Andrew. *Holy Roman Empire: Power, Politics, Papacy.* Oxford University Press, 2014.

4. Wilson, Peter H. *Heart of Europe: The History of the Holy Roman Empire*. Penguin Books, 2015.

Reference

1. Abulafia, David, editor. *The New Cambridge Medieval History. Vol. 5, c. 1198–c. 1300,* Cambridge University Press, 1999.

2. Bennett, Judith M. *Medieval Europe: A Short History.* McGraw Hill, 2011.

3. Bryce, James. *The Holy Roman Empire*. Macmillan and Co., 1871.

4. Whaley, Joachim. *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire. Vol. 1, 1493–1648,* Oxford University Press, 2012.

5. Wilson, Peter H. *The Holy Roman Empire: A Thousand Years of Europe's History.* Penguin, 2016.

5 UNIT

Gregory and Henry IV

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of this unit the learner will be able to:

♦ explain the causes and key events of the Investiture Controversy

♦ analyse the roles of Pope Gregory VII and Emperor Henry IV in the conflict

♦ describe the significance of the Walk to Canossa and its implications

♦ discuss the impact of the Investiture Controversy on the relationship between the Church and State

♦ evaluate the long-term consequences of the Concordat of Worms (1122)

Prerequisites

The Investiture Controversy was one of the most significant conflicts of the medieval period, fundamentally shaping the relationship between the Church and the State in Europe. It revolved around the question of who held the authority to appoint bishops and abbots: the Pope or the Emperor? This dispute, which lasted from 1076 to 1122, primarily involved Pope Gregory VII and Henry IV, Holy Roman Emperor, and led to civil war, excommunications and a redefinition of political and religious power.

This controversy did not emerge suddenly but had its roots in earlier centuries, particularly in the practices of lay investiture, wherein secular rulers appointed church officials. While medieval kings had long exercised power over church appointments, by the 11th century, a movement for reform within the Church sought to remove such secular influence, asserting the Pope's supreme authority. The struggle led to dramatic events, including the excommunication of Henry IV, the Walk to Canossa, and the eventual resolution in the Concordat of Worms (1122).

Keywords

Investiture, Excommunication, Dictatus Papae, Canossa, Simony, Gregorian Reforms, Concordat of Worms, Lay Investiture

Discussion

2.5.1 Church and State in the Middle Ages

In the early medieval period, kings and emperors played a significant role in church administration. This was especially true in the Holy Roman Empire, where rulers such as Otto I (962–973 CE) and Henry III (1039–1056 CE) directly influenced papal and episcopal appointments. These emperors saw the Church as an essential part of their imperial structure, ensuring loyalty by appointing bishops and abbots who would support their rule. This blending of religious and secular authority was common and, for a time, functioned smoothly.

However, in the 11th century, a movement within the Church sought reform. The Cluniac movement, originating from the monastery of Cluny in France, emphasised the importance of moral purity and independence from secular rulers. These ideas gained support, and many clergy members, including Pope Gregory VII, argued that the Church should be free from lay control. Lay investiture, the practice of secular rulers appointing bishops and giving them symbols of office (such as a ring and staff), became the primary issue of this struggle.

Henry IV, who became Holy Roman Emperor in 1084 CE, had inherited a tradition of imperial dominance over the Church. However, Gregory VII, elected pope in 1073, was determined to challenge this system. His reforms sought to eliminate corruption, simony (the sale of church offices), and lay

investiture, directly challenging imperial authority.

2.5.2 The Investiture Controversy (1076–1122)

The Investiture Controversy (1076–1122) was a conflict between the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, particularly between Pope Gregory VII and Emperor Henry IV, over the appointment of church officials. The dispute arose from the practice of lay investiture, where secular rulers appointed bishops and clergy instead of the pope. Tensions escalated in 1076 when Henry IV demanded Gregory VII's abdication, leading to the emperor's excommunication and a civil war between imperial loyalists and reformers. The conflict continued into the 12th century and was resolved by the Concordat of Worms (1122), which established a compromise between the emperor and Pope Callixtus II, limiting secular influence over the Church and restructuring church-state relations in Europe.

2.5.2.1 Background

The reign of Otto I (962–973) of the Germanic Ottonian Dynasty was marked by significant religious patronage, known as the Ottonian Renaissance, to strengthen his influence over the Church. Shortly after his coronation, he restructured the relationship between the secular kingdoms and the papacy, asserting his right to create fiefdoms and appoint bishops and lords to govern them. His patronage included

endowments to bishoprics and monasteries, the establishment of cathedral schools, and the promotion of religious and literary works. Otto and his successors further expanded their control through lay investiture, appointing political allies to key church positions, thereby asserting secular dominance over ecclesiastical offices. This practice continued under the Salian dynasty, particularly Emperor Henry III, who directly intervened in church affairs, appointing bishops and even selecting popes, reinforcing imperial supremacy over the papacy.

In the early 11th century, a reform movement led by the papacy sought to free the Church from secular interference and asserted papal authority over lay rulers. Reformers, including Peter Damian and Hugh of Cluny, opposed investiture, simony (the selling of church offices), and clerical marriage, viewing them as sources of corruption. The movement gained momentum under popes like Leo IX, who codified canon law and asserted papal supremacy over Christian doctrine, contributing to the East-West Schism of 1054. In response to imperial control, Pope Nicholas II issued a papal bull in 1059, reserving papal selection for an ecclesiastical electoral assembly, which later became the College of Cardinals, curbing secular influence over the Church.

2.5.3 Gregory VII and Henry IV

2.5.3.1 Pope Gregory VII and the Gregorian Reforms

Gregory VII, born Hildebrand of Sovana, was one of the most influential popes of the Middle Ages. Before becoming Pope, he served under previous Popes who advocated reform, particularly Pope Leo IX. Gregory was deeply committed to restructuring the Church to ensure that it was free from secular control.

In 1075, Gregory issued a revolutionary decree known as the Dictatus Papae, a document listing 27 statements defining papal authority. Some of the key declarations included:

1. The Pope alone can depose or reinstate bishops.

2. The Pope has supreme authority over all Christian rulers, including emperors.

3. The Pope has the power to depose emperors.

4. The Pope's authority is absolute and cannot be judged by anyone.

5. Subjects are absolved of loyalty to rulers excommunicated by the Pope.

This document was radical in its claims and directly challenged the power of rulers like Henry IV, who had long considered church appointments to be part of imperial authority. The stage was now set for an explosive confrontation.

2.5.3.2 Henry IV's Response and the Synod of Worms (1076)

Henry IV, accustomed to appointing bishops as his predecessors had done, saw Gregory VII's actions as an unacceptable challenge to imperial power. In 1075, Henry ignored Gregory's orders and continued appointing bishops in key territories. This defiance culminated in January 1076, when Henry convened the Synod of Worms, a council of German bishops and nobles, to declare that Gregory was no longer the Pope. The council accused Gregory of overstepping his authority and demanded his resignation.

Henry IV's letter to Gregory VII was particularly aggressive. He addressed the Pope not as Gregory but by his birth name,

Hildebrand, implying that he was not a true pope but an impostor. In a bold move, Henry called upon Gregory to step down, saying: "Descend, descend, you who are damned throughout the ages."

Gregory VII immediately retaliated. In February 1076, he excommunicated Henry IV, declaring that he was no longer the rightful ruler of the Holy Roman Empire. This meant that Henry's subjects were no longer bound to obey him, a devastating political blow.

> After excommunicating Henry IV twice, Gregory VII himself died in exile—a pope deposed by the emperor he tried to depose.

This excommunication had enormous consequences. Many of Henry's rivals within the empire seized this opportunity to challenge his rule. The German nobles, already unhappy with Henry's leadership, turned against him and threatened to elect a new king. With his political position crumbling, Henry was forced to seek reconciliation with the Pope.

2.5.3.3 The Walk to Canossa (1077)

One of the most famous episodes in medieval history is Henry IV's journey to Canossa in January 1077. Realising that his kingship was at risk, Henry travelled to Italy to seek forgiveness from Pope Gregory VII. Gregory had taken refuge in Canossa, the fortress of Matilda of Tuscany, a powerful supporter of the papacy.

Henry IV arrived at Canossa in the dead of winter. According to chroniclers, he stood barefoot in the snow for three days, dressed in a simple woollen robe, begging for Gregory's absolution. Gregory, after much hesitation, eventually lifted the excommunication, but this act did not end the conflict. While Henry

had temporarily saved his throne, the struggle between the Pope and Emperor continued, leading to civil war in Germany and the eventual fall of Gregory VII.

Fig 2.5.1 Henry IV at Canossa, Trustees of the British Museum

Source: World History Encyclopedia

> The term "Walk to Canossa" became a metaphor in European history, symbolising an act of extreme humiliation or submission to authority.

2.5.3.4 Civil War

The reconciliation at Canossa in 1077 was not a resolution but rather a temporary political maneuver. While Henry IV had sought and received absolution, his submission to Pope Gregory VII was largely a strategic effort to regain control over his empire rather than a genuine shift in policy. The German nobles who had opposed Henry, particularly the Saxon princes, remained unconvinced by his penance and proceeded to elect an anti-king, Rudolf of Rheinfelden, the Duke of Swabia, in 1077. This move ignited a civil war within the Holy Roman Empire, marking a new phase in the Investiture Controversy where military conflict would decide the

balance of power.

Gregory VII, seeing the continued defiance of Henry IV, once again excommunicated the emperor in 1080 CE, further deepening the crisis. This second excommunication was meant to strengthen the opposition against Henry, but it instead pushed him toward direct military action. Henry, now desperate to reclaim authority, launched a campaign against Rome, culminating in his invasion of the city in 1084 CE. Gregory VII, unable to resist the imperial forces, was forced into exile, and Henry installed his own pope, Clement III, who crowned him as the Holy Roman Emperor. This dramatic turn of events demonstrated the fragility of papal power when faced with the military force of the emperor. However, while Henry IV had secured his title, he had not secured the lasting legitimacy of his reign. Gregory VII's exile was a setback for the reformers, but the ideological struggle for papal supremacy continued beyond his lifetime.

Gregory VII's final years were spent in exile in Salerno under the protection of the Norman lord Robert Guiscard. Despite his forced departure from Rome, he never renounced his claims to papal supremacy. He died in 1085 CE with the words, "I have loved justice and hated iniquity; therefore, I die in exile." These parting words reflected his unwavering belief that he had acted in righteousness, even as the temporal power of the empire had momentarily triumphed over the papacy. His death did not, however, end the conflict, as his successors continued to uphold his policies, leading to renewed disputes between popes and emperors in the following decades.

2.5.4 Henry IV's Later Years and the Rebellion of Henry V

With Gregory VII gone, Henry IV faced renewed opposition within his empire.

Though he had successfully deposed the Pope and installed his own, resistance against his rule continued, particularly in Germany. The German princes, many of whom had previously supported Rudolf of Rheinfelden, continued to challenge Henry's authority. The emperor spent the next two decades engaged in a series of battles, shifting alliances, and diplomatic maneuvers aimed at consolidating his control.

One of the most significant developments in the later years of Henry IV's reign was the rebellion of his own son, Henry V. The younger Henry, backed by reformist factions within the Church, turned against his father in 1105 CE, forcing him to abdicate. This betrayal was a crucial moment in the Investiture Controversy, as it signaled that even among the imperial elite, support for lay investiture was weakening. The deposed Henry IV died in 1106 CE, leaving behind an empire that was still deeply entangled in conflict with the papacy.

Henry V, despite having overthrown his father with the backing of reformers, soon found himself facing the same dilemma as his predecessors. He attempted to assert his control over church appointments, leading to a renewed clash with Pope Paschal II. In 1111 CE, after a failed negotiation, Henry V went so far as to abduct Pope Paschal II, forcing him to temporarily concede to imperial demands. However, this forced agreement was later nullified by the Church, further prolonging the controversy. The ongoing struggle highlighted that neither side—papal nor imperial—was willing to fully yield.

2.5.4.1 The Concordat of Worms (1122 CE)

By the early 12th century, it became increasingly clear that the controversy could not continue indefinitely without severely weakening both the empire and

the papacy. The prolonged dispute had destabilised Germany, divided the Church, and led to continuous warfare. Recognising the necessity of compromise, Pope Calixtus II and Emperor Henry V finally reached an agreement in 1122, formalised in the Concordat of Worms. This settlement marked a turning point in medieval European politics and laid the foundation for the separation of secular and religious spheres of influence.

The Concordat of Worms established a clear distinction between the spiritual and secular roles of bishops. It decreed that bishops and abbots would be freely elected by the Church without interference from secular rulers. However, to maintain some level of imperial authority, the emperor was permitted to grant secular authority (regalia) to bishops through a symbolic act of investiture. This meant that while bishops were appointed by the Church, they could still hold political and economic power within the empire, but only with the emperor's approval. This carefully crafted compromise ended the practice of lay investiture, ensuring that spiritual authority rested with the pope while allowing emperors to retain some influence over the lands and governance of their realm.

2.5.4.2 Consequences of the Investiture Controversy

The Investiture Controversy had profound implications for both the Holy Roman Empire and the Catholic Church. In the immediate aftermath, the power of the emperor was significantly weakened, while the papacy emerged as an independent institution no longer directly controlled by secular rulers. The resolution of the controversy also set a precedent for the evolving relationship between church and state in medieval Europe.

One of the most important consequences was the decline of imperial authority in Germany. The compromise at Worms reduced the emperor's ability to control the Church, shifting more power to the local dukes and princes. This decentralisation of power would later contribute to the fragmentation of the Holy Roman Empire as regional rulers gained more autonomy over their territories. Over time, Germany would develop into a politically fragmented state, with the emperor holding only nominal control over vast territories dominated by independent lords.

The Church, on the other hand, gained a stronger institutional structure. The Gregorian Reforms had established that the pope held supreme authority over church matters, a principle that would influence the medieval papacy for centuries. The pope's victory in the Investiture Controversy laid the groundwork for the rise of papal monarchy, where popes would exert considerable influence over European politics, including launching Crusades, mediating disputes between monarchs, and even challenging kings directly, as seen in later conflicts between the papacy and monarchs such as King John of England and Philip IV of France.

The controversy also reshaped ideas about kingship and governance. The notion that rulers were not above the Church became more widely accepted, leading to the eventual development of more secular concepts of governance. Over time, as monarchies in France, England, and Spain strengthened their own centralised rule, they sought to define a balance between spiritual and political authority. This struggle would continue well into the modern era.

The Investiture Controversy was not just about religion, but about who truly ruled medieval Europe—the Pope or the Emperor?

Recap

♦ Investiture Controversy was a power struggle between the Pope and the Emperor

♦ It revolved around the right to appoint bishops and abbots

♦ Pope Gregory VII issued the Dictatus Papae in 1075, asserting papal supremacy

♦ Emperor Henry IV opposed Gregory VII's claims and appointed his own bishops

♦ The Synod of Worms (1076) attempted to depose Pope Gregory VII

♦ Gregory VII excommunicated Henry IV

♦ Henry IV's excommunication weakened his political authority

♦ To regain power, Henry IV made the Walk to Canossa in 1077

♦ Gregory VII lifted the excommunication, but conflict continued

♦ The conflict led to civil war in the Holy Roman Empire

♦ Henry IV's son, Henry V, rebelled against him in 1105 CE

♦ Henry V also clashed with the papacy over investiture rights

♦ Controversy ended with the Concordat of Worms in 1122 CE

♦ The Concordat of Worms allowed the Church to elect bishops

♦ The emperor retained the right to grant secular authority

♦ The controversy weakened imperial control over the Church

♦ It strengthened the independence of the papacy

♦ The Investiture Controversy shaped medieval Church-State relations

Objective Questions

1. Who issued the Dictatus Papae in 1075?

2. What was the primary issue in the Investiture Controversy?

3. In which year did the Walk to Canossa take place?

4. Who was excommunicated twice by Pope Gregory VII?

5. Which year was the Concordat of Worms signed?

6. Which monastery played a key role in advocating for Church reform?

7. The term "Lay Investiture" refers to what practice?

8. Who led the rebellion against Henry IV in 1105?

9. What action did Pope Gregory VII take against Henry IV after the Synod of Worms?

10. What was the long-term effect of the Investiture Controversy?

Answers

1. Gregory VII

2. Appointment of bishops

3. 1077

4. Henry IV

5. 1122 CE

6. Cluny

7. Secular appointment of bishops

8. Henry V

9. Excommunication

10. Weakening of imperial authority

Assignments

1. Explain the origin and causes of the Investiture Controversy.

2. Discuss the significance of the Dictatus Papae and its impact on medieval politics.

3. Analyse the events and consequences of the Walk to Canossa (1077).

4. Compare and contrast the strategies of Pope Gregory VII and Henry IV in the Investiture Controversy.

5. Evaluate the impact of the Concordat of Worms (1122 CE) on Church-State relations.

6. How did the Investiture Controversy shape the political landscape of medieval Europe?

Suggested Reading

1. Blumenthal, Uta-Renate. *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century.* University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988.

2. Cantor, Norman F. *The Civilization of the Middle Ages.* Harper Perennial, 1993.

3. Goez, Werner. *Pope Gregory VII and Henry IV.* Translated by Ruth Krautheimer, Cornell University Press, 1995.

4. Robinson, I. S. *Henry IV of Germany 1056–1106.* Cambridge University Press, 1999.

5. Tellenbach, Gerd. *The Church in Western Europe from the Tenth to the Early Twelfth Century.* Cambridge University Press, 1993.

6. Tierney, Brian. *The Crisis of Church and State 1050–1300.* University of Toronto Press, 1988.

Reference

1. Backman, Clifford R. *The Worlds of Medieval Europe.* Oxford University Press, 2003.

2. Bennett, Judith M. *Medieval Europe: A Short History.* McGraw Hill, 2011.

3. Encyclopedia Britannica. *"Saint Gregory VII's Conflict with Emperor Henry IV." Encyclopedia Britannica,* www.britannica.com/summary/Saint-Gregory-VII.

4. Griffith, Mark. *"Investiture Controversy." World History Encyclopedia,* www.worldhistory.org/Investiture_Controversy/ 21 Apr. 2021

5. Hicks, S. B. "The Investiture Controversy of the Middle Ages, 1075–1122: Agreement and Disagreement Among Historians." *Journal of Church and State*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1973, pp. 5–20. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23914971.

3
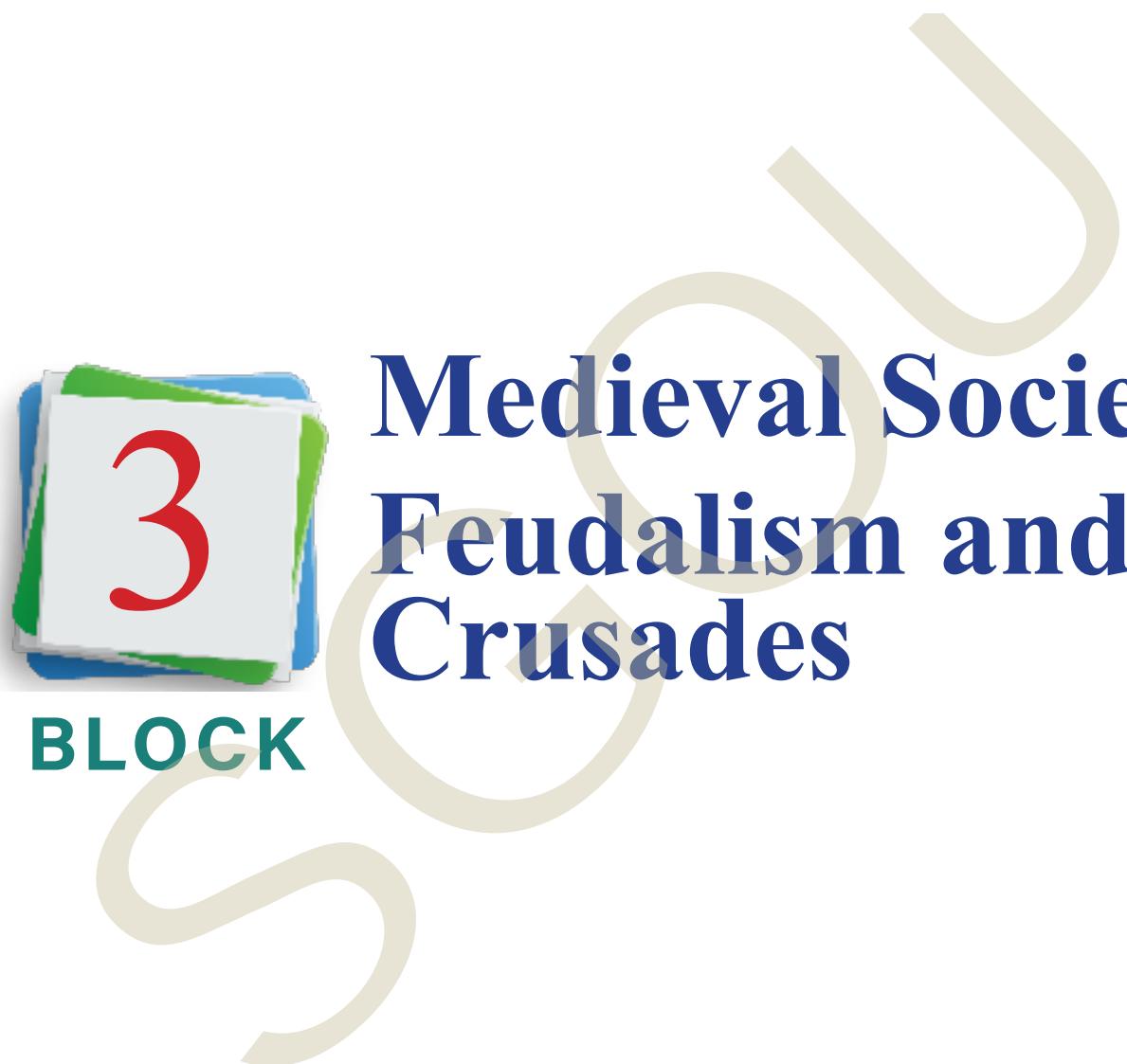
Medieval Society: Feudalism and Crusades

UNIT 1

Origin and Features of Feudalism

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- explore the historical context that led to the emergence of feudalism
- examine the fundamental characteristics of feudal society
- understand the hierarchical structure of feudal society
- trace the geographical and historical development of feudalism across different regions of Europe

Prerequisites

During the sixteenth century, Europe's economic and political system was rooted in feudalism, which revolved around land allocation in exchange for services. The origins of feudalism can be traced back to the late fifth century CE, following the decline of the Roman Empire and the formation of the Frankish state. The Frankish nobility, drawn to fertile lands, cattle, weapons, and horses, established large landed estates. This system provided peasants with security in exchange for their labour and services, leading to the emergence of the feudal order. Over time, feudalism evolved into a structured economic and social system

Keywords

Fief, Hierarchical Structure, Tenants-in-chief, The Law of Primogeniture, Feudal Society

Discussion

3.1.1 Feudalism

The term feudalism is derived from the words *feud, feudal,* or *fief*, which refer to a form of property recognised in medieval legal texts. Theoretically, a fief could take various forms, including a salary, an assignment of revenue, a gift of land, or direct provisions from the lord's household. However, by the tenth century, fiefs were predominantly granted in the form of land.

A fief was a piece of landed property held by a vassal from a lord in exchange for military service and other forms of assistance. The concept of feudalism encompasses multiple interpretations, yet a feudal society is generally characterised by distinct features, including:

1. Personal dependence – A system of reciprocal relationships between lords and vassals, based on loyalty and service.

2. A specialised military class – Nobles and knights formed an elite warrior class, occupying the upper levels of society.

3. Extreme subdivision of property rights – Land ownership was fragmented and distributed among various lords and vassals.

4. A hierarchical land tenure system – Rights over land were structured in a graded manner, with obligations owed to higher-ranking lords or the king.

5. Dispersal of political authority – Political power was decentralised, with local lords exercising significant control over their territories.

This form of society, known as the feudalistic society or feudal regime, emerged in medieval France, Germany, and Italy. It is referred to as feudal because the fief was the central element in this hierarchical system of land rights and obligations.

Marc Bloch, a well-known French scholar, considers feudalism as a system of human relations. He studies it from the point of view of social order. According to him, the fundamental features of European feudal organisation consisted of a subject peasantry, widespread use of the 'service tenement'(the fief) instead of salary, supremacy of a class of specialised warriors, ties of obedience and protection and fragmentation of authority due to decentralised power structure.

Marx and Angles implied that class provided the fundamental foundation of feudal society. According to them, the class relations based on landed estate determined the feudal organisation. The most important analysis of feudal organisation is provided by Marxist writings. Feudalism is seen as a mode of production based on the appropriation of feudal rent by the feudal lords from the peasant tenants in a primarily agrarian society.

3.1.1.1 Origin and Development of Feudalism

By the beginning of the 10th century, a social formation which was fundamentally different from the social formation of Greco-Roman antiquity had come into existence in Western Europe. During this transition, the slave social formation was replaced by the feudal social formation. The two societies -Roman and Germanic, came into close contact and merged. These two societies produced a new society known as feudalistic society. This feudal social

formation contained Roman as well as Germanic elements. The changes taking place in both societies reinforced each other and accelerated the process of feudalisation.

The fall of the Roman Empire and the Germanic invasions resulted in the dissolution of the Roman army in the West. There was no longer a standing army. The state which succeeded the Roman Empire lacked the means to recruit troops on a centralised basis. The tribal military organisation of the Germanic tribes gradually disintegrated as the greater part of tribal people became dependent peasants. The ruling class came into existence in the eighth and ninth centuries and kept the peasants under subjugation.

The Carolingians devised a viable system for recruiting soldiers through fiefs. It was only for this reason that some scholars regard feudalism as essentially a military system. Heinrich Brunner, a German historian, defined European feudalism as a way of organising society for 'instant warfare'. He emphasised the insecurity caused by the Germanic, Hun, Slav, Magyar and Arab invasions. In the absence of a regular army, the king had to rely on his vassals, who relied on their vassals.

With the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, regional and local elites (Roman landed aristocracy) and Germanic chiefs and military leaders usurped the powers of the state. They became the actual rulers of their respective areas. During the course of the ninth century, the regional and local elites (Feudal lords) were formally granted political and judicial authority. The lord's position in the political system was earlier an informal one; now, his power was regularised.

A hierarchical structure was developed whereby the big lords (counts, dukes) derived their authority directly from the king and, in return, sanctioned the authority of lesser lords below them. At each level, a lord was virtually supreme and he was the government. He had enjoyed political and judicial authority in addition to his military influence.

Henri Pirenne, a Belgian historian, explained that the rise of feudalism in Western Europe was a consequence of the decline of trade and urban civilization of the classical period. He believed that 'grand trade' and feudalism were mutually exclusive.

The technological innovations of military nature became available during the feudal period. The most important among them was the introduction of a stirrup (foot rest of the rider). There is no evidence for the use of the stirrup in pre-Carolingian Europe. Stirrup revolutionised methods of warfare by giving the cavalry a decisive edge. Mar Bloch, a French historian, highlighted the role of the stirrup in the development of the Carolingian cavalry. In his work, 'Feudal Society, ' he examined the impact of the stirrup on medieval warfare. Lynn White, an American historian, in his path breaking work 'Medieval Technology and Social Change (1962)',points out that the introduction of the stirrup was one of the factors which led to the rise of feudalism. Till the introduction of the stirrup, horse-riders had to press their knees against the body of the horse to maintain the balance. They would be in danger of falling off the horses.

3.1.2 Features of Feudalism

M.M.Postan, a British historian, classified scholars working on feudalism into two. They are political and military features of the feudal order. In the military interpretation, the essence of feudalism was in the fief, a knightly estate which fulfilled the military needs of the state. In the political interpretation, feudalism is described as a system where administrative and judicial functions of the government were fragmented, and the rule was vested in a feudal lordship.

In the economic interpretation, Marx and Marxists defined feudalism as a political and social order appropriate to the natural

economy, in which land is the main source of income and the only embodiment of wealth. Marx used the term 'Feudalism' a social order whose principal feature was domination of the rest of the society, mainly peasants, by a military landowning aristocracy. There is an exploitative relationship between landowners and subordinate peasants. The basic nature of feudalism was the political domination of peasant producers.

Maurice Dobb, an English economist, defined feudalism as a system under which economic status and authority were associated with land tenure, and the direct producer was under obligation, based on law, to devote a certain quota of his labour or his produce for the benefit of his feudal superior. According to him serfdom is an essential condition of feudalism.

Rodney Hilton, an English Marxist historian, stated that the basic feature of a feudal society was its agrarian character and pretty production based on the peasant family. According to Perry Anderson, a British historian, the feudal mode of production was dominated by land and a natural economy, in which neither labour nor its products were commodities. The class of feudal landlords privately controlled agrarian property and these landlords appropriated a surplus from the peasants through politico-legal relations of compulsion. This led to the juridical amalgamation of economic exploitation with political authority.

The military school model defines feudal societies as those that meet their military needs solely or mainly by knightly services and derive all other features of social order from the fief. This definition covers the entire stretch of the feudal age anywhere in Europe. The Political model describes feudalism as an order in which the estate replaced the state. This model is equally restrictive geographically and chronologically.

3.1.2.1 Feudal Society

Marc Bloch's *Feudal Society* offers a rich and multidimensional analysis of feudalism, presenting it not as a rigid system but as a dynamic and evolving social structure that shaped medieval Europe. He moves beyond the traditional focus on lords and vassals, instead defining feudalism through a set of fundamental characteristics that influenced politics, economics, and daily life.

A key feature of feudal society, according to Bloch, was subject peasantry - the vast majority of the population who worked the land under the control of lords. Unlike in later wage-based economies, peasants did not receive salaries but were tied to their lords through obligations, such as providing labour or a portion of their harvest. Their dependence on their lords was balanced by the need for protection in an era marked by instability.

Another defining aspect was the widespread use of fiefs instead of salaries. Land was the primary source of wealth and power, and instead of being paid in money, vassals were granted fiefs - pieces of land that sustained them in exchange for military service. This system reinforced the economic and political dominance of the warrior aristocracy.

Bloch also highlights the supremacy of a class of specialised warriors. These knights and nobles were bound by a code of conduct that emphasised loyalty, bravery, and military service. Their relationships were governed by ties of obedience and protection, which bound man to man in a web of mutual obligations. Within the warrior class, these relationships took the specific form of vassalage, in which a vassal swore allegiance to a lord in exchange for land and protection.

One of the most significant consequences of feudalism was the fragmentation of

authority, which often led to disorder. With power divided among numerous local lords, central authority weakened, and conflict between rival nobles was frequent. However, Bloch notes that feudalism did not entirely dismantle older forms of organisation. The family and the state continued to exist, with the latter regaining strength during the "second feudal age" as monarchies began consolidating power.

Bloch does not view feudalism as a static system but as one that evolved in response to social and political pressures. He describes its gradual decline due to the rise of stronger monarchies, economic transformations, and changes in military organisation. Ultimately, Bloch's work humanises the people who lived under feudalism, showing how they navigated a world of obligations, loyalties, and shifting power structures.

3.1.3 Structure of Feudal Society

The feudal society in Western Europe developed into a hierarchical form, in which every person was assigned a place according to a graded order. Feudalism was based on contracts made among nobles and it was intimately connected with the manorial system.

3.1.3.1 The King

Medieval Kings were seen as God's deputies on earth. A coronation was a magnificent religious ceremony at which archbishops massaged the new king with holy oil as a sign of his status.

In the hierarchical structure, the lord at each level derived his authority from and owed his allegiance to a superior lord above him and this chain went on right up to the king. The authority of the king was hierarchically distributed among a larger number of feudal lords. This is what Perry Anderson has called 'parcellisation of sovereignty' in medieval Europe. Political power is widely dispersed and not concentrated in one person. In feudal society, the ownership of all land was vested in the king. He donated land (fief or estate) to a number of subordinates known as dukes and earls. They were called feudal lords. They themselves donated a portion of their fief to the lesser lords called the barons. They were given in return for their military service or other forms of assistance. The king depended on their barons to provide knights and soldiers.

3.1.3.2 The Dukes and Earls (Vassals)

The dukes and earls were vassals of the king. A noble pledged himself to be the king's servant or vassal at a special ceremony - kneeling before the king, he swore an oath of loyalty with the words, "Sire, I become your man". A hierarchy of nobles who held fiefs directly from the king were called tenants-in-chief. At the same time, Barons were the vassals of the dukes and earls. They were the most powerful and wealthy noblemen. Below the barons were the knights. The knights did not have any vassals under them. Every feudal lord, except the knight, was a vassal of his superior, and he was a lord himself as well.

3.1.3.3 The Peasants

The peasants constituted the lowest category of the society. They were divided into mainly three categories. They are the freeholders, villeins and serfs. The freeholders received lands from the lords, and they managed it on their own. They did not work for the lords and paid taxes. The villeins gave a part of their produce from their allotted land and gave their labour free for a fixed number of days to their lords. The peasants consisted of serfs who were allowed to use the lord's land for cultivation, and certain conditions were also imposed on them by the feudal lords. The relationship between the serfs and their master or lord

constituted the most significant aspect of feudalism. In this way, feudalism stretched from the top to the bottom of society.

3.1.4 Spread of Feudalism

3.1.4.1 Feudalism Across Europe: Regional Variations

Feudalism did not develop uniformly across Europe. While Northern France and the Low Countries experienced its most thorough implementation, other regions had varying degrees of feudal influence. In Germany, feudal structures were less rigid, while in Eastern Europe, a distinct form of feudalism emerged over time. Each region adapted feudal practices based on its economic and political circumstances, leading to significant variations in feudal governance and social organisation.

3.1.4.2 Feudalism in France and the Low Countries

Northern France was one of the most thoroughly feudalised regions in medieval Europe, with a structured hierarchy of lords, vassals, and serfs. The feudal system was deeply entrenched in landholding patterns and military obligations. In contrast, the Low Countries had a weaker form of feudalism. While noble estates existed, economic transactions often took place through monetary rents rather than labour obligations. Historians have described the region as "a land with feudalism" rather than a purely feudal society. The rise of commerce and early industrial activities led to the earlier decline of feudal practices in this region compared to other parts of Europe.

3.1.4.3 Feudalism in England

In England, feudalism was formally established following the Norman Conquest of 1066, when William the Conqueror redistributed land among his supporters. Land tenure became the foundation of feudal relations, with obligations tied to military service and taxation. Over time, a shift towards monetary rents emerged, especially in economically developed regions such as the wool-producing areas. Unlike in some parts of continental Europe, English feudalism evolved into a centralised monarchy, with the crown maintaining significant control over the nobility.

3.1.4.4 Feudalism in Germany

Feudalism in Germany developed in a fragmented manner due to the decentralised nature of the Holy Roman Empire. Unlike in France, where feudal lords were subject to royal authority, German princes and nobles often wielded independent power, leading to a patchwork of semi-autonomous feudal states. The lack of strong central control allowed local feudal customs to vary widely, and some regions had a more commercialised economy that reduced reliance on classic feudal obligations.

3.1.4.5 Feudalism in Italy and Spain

Feudal structures in Italy were less rigid than in Northern Europe, as many Italian cities developed into powerful economic hubs that relied on trade rather than agricultural landownership. In regions such as Lombardy and Tuscany, urban merchants and banking families played a dominant role in shaping society, limiting the power of feudal lords. Meanwhile, Spain experienced a unique form of feudalism, particularly in the context of the *Reconquista* (the Christian reconquest of Muslim-held territories). The Spanish crown granted vast estates to military orders and nobles in exchange for their role in reclaiming land, creating a feudal system intertwined with religious and military expansion.

3.1.4.6 Feudalism in Eastern Europe and Russia

In Eastern Europe, feudal structures became more pronounced in the late medieval

period, particularly in Poland, Hungary, and the Baltic region. The growing demand for grain exports to Western Europe led landlords to impose greater control over the peasantry, reinforcing a system known as "second serfdom." Unlike in Western Europe, where serfdom declined over time, Eastern European peasants faced increasing restrictions on their mobility and rights.

In Russia, under the Romanov dynasty, the monarchy consolidated power by creating a feudal-like nobility that controlled vast estates. This process peaked under Catherine the Great (r. 1762–1796), whose policies, including the Charter to the Nobility (1785), strengthened aristocratic privileges while further restricting the rights of peasants. Russian feudalism was distinct from Western models in its close association with absolutist rule and serfdom, which persisted well into the 19th century.

Recap

- ♦ Feudalism is defined by land-based hierarchy.
- ♦ Lords granted fiefs for military service.
- ♦ Marc Bloch viewed feudalism as dynamic.
- ♦ Marxists linked feudalism to class exploitation.
- ♦ Carolingians relied on fiefs for soldiers.
- ♦ Henri Pirenne connected feudalism to trade decline.
- ♦ Stirrup revolutionised medieval cavalry tactics.
- ♦ Political authority fragmented among feudal lords.
- ♦ Peasants served under the hierarchical land structure.
- ♦ Feudalism varied across European regions.

Objective Questions

1. What is a fief?

2. In which century were regional and local elites (Feudal lords) formally granted political and judicial authority?

3. Who was the author of Feudal Society?

4. Who coined the term 'parcellisation of sovereignty'?

5. Who was the author of Medieval Technology and Social Change?

6. What was the term used for protection in Medieval France?

7. Who were tenants-in-chief?

8. Who were the dukes and earls?

9. Who defined feudalism as a political and social order appropriate to the natural economy, in which land is the main source of income and the only embodiment of wealth?

10. Who said that the rise of feudalism in Western Europe was a consequence of the decline of trade and urban civilization of the classical period?

Answers

1. The fief was a piece of landed property held by a vassal

2. 9th century

3. Marc Bloch

4. Perry Anderson

5. Lynn White

6. Maimbour

7. A hierarchy of nobles who held fiefs directly from the king were called tenants-in-chief

8. Vassals of the king

9. Karl Marx

10. Henri Pirenne

Assignments

1. Discuss the origin and development of feudalism in Europe. How did it shape medieval society.

2. Analyse the key features of feudalism and explain how the feudal structure functioned in medieval Europe.

3. Evaluate the merits and demerits of feudalism. How did it contribute to the political and economic landscape of the medieval period?

Suggested Reading

1. Anderson, Perry. *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*. NLB, 1996.

2. Backman, Clifford R. *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

3. Bauer, Susan Wise. *The History of the Medieval World*. WW Norton & Company, 2010.

4. Davis, Ralf Henry Carless. *A History of Medieval Europe*. Pearson Longman, 2006.

5. Langley, Andrew. *Eyewitness Medieval Life*. DK Publishing, 2011.

6. Runciman, Steven. *A History of the Crusades*. CUP Archive, 1987.

Reference

1. Barry, Henry Boothby. *The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Feudal System*. Oxford Publishers, 1843.

2. Brandt, W.J. *The Shape of Medieval History*. Yale University Press, 1966.

3. Farooqui, Amar. *Early Social Formation*. Manak Publications, 2022.

4. Sinha, Aravind. *Europe in Transition: From Feudalism to Industrialization*. Manohar Publications, 2016.

UNIT 2

Castles and Manorial System

Learning Outcomes

After the succesful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to :

- ◆ understand the nature and functions of castles
- ◆ explain the structure of the manorial system
- ◆ analyse how manorialism operated in medieval society
- ◆ evaluate the role of castles in governance

Prerequisites

The early eighth century marked a period of political consolidation under the early Carolingians and religious unification under the missionary efforts of Boniface. As the Carolingians strengthened their rule, a rural institution known as manorialism began to take shape. This system structured medieval agrarian society by linking lords and peasants through land tenure and labour obligations. Manorialism provided economic stability, with peasants working the lord's demesne in exchange for protection. The manor functioned as the central unit of production, housing not only agricultural land but also administrative and judicial functions, reinforcing the feudal hierarchy that dominated medieval Europe.

Keywords

Castles, Bailey, Garrison, Knights, Manor, Demesne, Villien

Discussion

3.2.1 Location of Castles

The placement of medieval castles was carefully chosen to maximise defence and strategic advantage. Many were built on elevated terrain, such as hilltops or rocky outcrops, providing a commanding view of the surrounding landscape. This heightened position allowed the castle's garrison to monitor enemy movements and anticipate attacks well in advance.

For castles built on flat ground, artificial mounds, known as mottes, were often constructed to provide additional height and security. A reliable water source was also essential, as access to fresh water was critical for both drinking and defensive purposes, especially during sieges. Some castles were deliberately built on rocky foundations to prevent attackers from tunnelling beneath the walls, a common siege tactic.

Early castles consisted of two enclosed courtyards, known as baileys, surrounded by wooden palisades. Over time, these wooden defences were replaced with imposing stone walls, and by the reign of Henry III in 1265, castle architecture had reached its peak in complexity and effectiveness.

3.2.1.1 The Walls

The walls of medieval castles were their most formidable defensive feature. Rising high above the surrounding landscape, they acted as a nearly impenetrable barrier against invaders. At their base, a deep moat or ditch further hindered access. The walls were typically constructed from large stone blocks designed to withstand prolonged attacks from siege engines such as battering rams and trebuchets.

Towers were strategically positioned along the castle walls at intervals of around 200 feet. These towers played a crucial role in defence, ensuring that every section of the perimeter could be guarded from multiple angles. The towers extended above the height of the walls, providing defenders with a clear view of the battlefield. They also housed archers, who could fire arrows through narrow slits in the walls, known as arrow loops, while remaining well protected from enemy fire.

Over time, the design of castle towers evolved. Initially, they were square-shaped, but by the later medieval period, round towers became more common. Round towers offered several advantages: they were structurally stronger, reduced blind spots in defence, and were more resistant to undermining tactics used by besieging forces. Additionally, many of these towers served as living quarters for soldiers and commanders during both times of peace and conflict.

3.2.1.2 The Gates

The castle gate was the most vulnerable point of entry and was, therefore, heavily fortified. In earlier castles, the main entrance was a simple archway within a thick wall, but as siege warfare evolved, gatehouses became more elaborate and well-defended structures.

A typical gatehouse included a strong wooden door reinforced with iron and a heavy portcullis - a latticed grille made of wood or metal that could be raised and lowered to block the entrance. Some castles also featured a drawbridge, which could be retracted over the moat to further prevent enemy access.

A porter was stationed at the gate at all times and was responsible for controlling who entered and exited the castle. Visitors had to declare their business before being granted

access. In many castles, official business, such as collecting taxes or settling disputes, was conducted within the gatehouse itself, reducing the need for outsiders to enter deeper into the castle grounds.

3.2.1.3 The Outer Bailey

Beyond the main gate lay the outer bailey, the largest open space within the castle complex. This area was enclosed by a fortified wall and served as the hub of daily life for the castle's inhabitants.

The outer bailey housed the majority of the castle's working facilities, including:

Stables and Animal Pens – Knights' warhorses were kept in well-maintained stables, while separate enclosures housed carthorses and livestock. A hay store ensured a steady supply of feed for the animals.

Workshops – Skilled craftsmen such as blacksmiths, carpenters, and armourers worked in dedicated workshops, producing weapons, tools, and other essential items.

Food Production – Large kitchens, bakehouses, and brewhouses provided food and drink for the castle's residents. Many castles also had gardens where vegetables and medicinal herbs were grown. Some even maintained fishponds to provide fresh fish, while dovecotes housed pigeons, which could be used as a food source.

Storage and Siege Equipment – The outer bailey contained granaries and warehouses to store supplies, ensuring the castle could withstand long sieges. Many castles also kept siege weapons, such as catapults and trebuchets, ready for defence.

In addition to these structures, the outer bailey often included a large open area used for training soldiers and practising combat drills. In some castles, tournaments and festivals were held here during times of peace.

3.2.1.4 The Inner Bailey

The inner bailey, also known as the keep or inner ward, was the heart of the castle and the most secure area. Surrounded by high walls and accessible only through fortified gatehouses, it served as the final line of defence if the outer bailey was breached.

Within the inner bailey stood the **great hall,** the central building where the lord of the castle resided and held court. This hall was the focal point of castle life, where feasts, meetings, and important ceremonies took place. It was often lavishly decorated, with tapestries, carved wooden beams, and large fireplaces to provide warmth.

Many castles had chapels within the inner bailey. These chapels not only served the religious needs of the garrison but also reinforced the castle's status as a centre of power. Some lords even sought to have their chapels designated as parish churches, increasing their influence over the local community.

Civilian residents, such as noble families and high-ranking officials, also lived within the inner bailey. Their houses were often multi-storey stone buildings, similar to those found in medieval towns. In some cases, these residences were privately owned, with occupants paying rent for the land on which their homes stood.

The inner bailey also contained essential defensive structures, including additional **mural towers**, which provided further protection against invaders. If the outer walls were breached, the garrison could retreat into the inner bailey and continue to defend the castle from this stronger, more elevated position.

3.2.1.5 Buildings Within the Castle

The buildings within the castle were constructed primarily from timber, with walls made of **wattle and daub** - a technique

using woven wooden strips covered in clay or plaster. More significant buildings, such as the great hall and chapels, were often made from stone for greater durability and fire resistance.

Floors were typically packed earth, sometimes reinforced with sand and clay. In wealthier castles, stone slabs or wooden planks were used for flooring in key rooms. Roofs varied in material - most ordinary buildings were thatched, while important structures were covered with wooden planks overlaid with lead sheets. The latter provided better insulation and protection against fire.

Some castles had advanced features for the time, such as **latrines (garderobes)** built into the outer walls to dispose of waste directly into the moat. Fireplaces and chimneys became more common in later medieval castles, improving heating and ventilation.

Fig. 3.1.1 Castles in Medieval Europe (Google Image)

3.2.1.6 Great Hall

The great hall of the castle was comparable to that of a grand manor house. It served as a public space where visitors to the household could wait and where communal meals were held. The hall was illuminated by window alcoves at either end. From the main wall, a central doorway led to the great chamber - a similarly designed room that provided a more private setting for important transactions. This chamber was also lit by window alcoves and was heated by a fireplace on the southwest wall.

3.2.1.7 Garrison Life

Life in the castle revolved around two main domains: military and administrative. The military function was particularly significant, with the castle garrisoned by knights, watchmen, and ordinary soldiers. In smaller garrisons, the military staff might consist of only a porter and one or two watchmen, whose primary responsibility was surveillance.

3.2.1.8 The Knight

The garrison included both aristocratic knights and common foot soldiers. The king assigned knights from specific manors to garrison duty. By the 12th century, there were 174 knights in service.

A knight's armour was extensive, providing layered protection. His main body armour consisted of a long chain mail tunic,

called a hauberk, worn over a padded cloth tunic known as an aketon. His hands were shielded by mail mittens, while his legs were protected by long stockings of mail. Head protection was especially important, so knights wore a padded coif as an inner layer, topped with a steel helmet.

The lance was the knight's most formidable weapon - typically a wooden spear measuring nine to eleven feet, tipped with steel. As a secondary weapon, knights carried swords that weighed between 2½ and 3½ pounds, with blades measuring slightly over thirty inches.

3.2.1.9 The Duty of Knights in the Castle

Knights were not only a mobile mounted force but also served as the command staff of the garrison. Military leadership was considered the natural privilege of the aristocracy, making it inappropriate for noble knights to mix with common soldiers. This distinction between officers and enlisted men remains a core principle in military organisations today.

Each knight was attended by one or more servants. For more menial tasks, they likely relied on ordinary servants rather than squires. Their responsibilities extended beyond guarding the castle, including administrative and strategic military duties.

3.2.1.10 Foot Soldiers

The bulk of the garrison was made up of ordinary foot soldiers - professional fighters drawn from the landless peasantry and urban working classes. Their wages varied based on their role, with crossbowmen being the highest-paid due to the lethal nature of their weapon. The crossbow was so deadly that the church attempted to ban it, though unsuccessfully.

Other foot soldiers used simpler weapons such as bows and spears. The longbow, with a range of about 200 yards, was an affordable way to strengthen the castle's defences. The spear was the cheapest and most commonly used weapon among foot soldiers.

Unlike knights, foot soldiers had limited armour. Instead of a chain mail hauberk, they might wear a simple padded aketon. Garrison sergeants, though given minor command responsibilities, were still classed as ordinary soldiers. Life in the garrison was often monotonous, with long periods of inactivity punctuated by moments of intense action.

3.2.1.11 Service Staff

Beyond the military personnel, the garrison relied on a large civilian support staff. Kitchens, bakehouses, and brewhouses required workers to provide food for the garrison. Stable hands, gardeners, and herdsmen managed the various tasks of the outer bailey.

The most highly paid members of the support staff were skilled craftsmen responsible for making and repairing military equipment, as well as maintaining the castle itself. Many of these workers lived in houses near their workplaces, while those of lower status likely shared communal living quarters.

3.2.1.12 The Household

At the top of the castle hierarchy was the aristocratic household responsible for its governance. The king was the official lord of the castle and would visit periodically, staying in the bailey. In his absence, the constable acted as the highest-ranking official. The constable maintained a significant household of his own and was tasked with important administrative duties. He personally covered the expenses of the castle's chaplains, servants, watchmen, and engineers.

The castle also hosted visiting aristocrats and high-ranking church officials, many of whom were political allies rather than paid staff. The household staff included key figures such as the chamberlain, who managed private household affairs, the steward, who oversaw public functions, and the usher, who controlled access to the lord. Other notable officials included the marshal, responsible for the horses, the almoner, who supervised charitable activities, and the chaplain. Some aristocrats and officials were accompanied by their wives.

3.2.1.13 Functions of the Castle

The primary role of a manor was to support a knight economically, while the castle evolved as a military stronghold. Early castles were constructed using earthworks and timber, and though some remained in use into the 13th century, stone construction became widespread from the 12th century onwards. Improvements in castle-building techniques led to increasingly sophisticated fortifications, making castles vital strategic centres. By the 12th and 13th centuries, much of medieval warfare focused on controlling these strongholds.

Castles were not solely military fortifications; they also played a crucial role in civilian life. In border regions prone to raids, castles provided refuge for local populations. Many were built within or near towns by feudal overlords, serving both as protective strongholds and as reminders of a lord's authority.

Beyond their military function, castles often served as residences for feudal lords and administrative centres. The constable managed castle affairs, overseeing royal governance in the surrounding region, which included supervising sea traffic in port towns and collecting customs duties.

One of the most vital functions of a castle was its role as a logistical centre. It housed large stores of military supplies, as well as provisions for daily life. Castles also served as accommodations for the king's guests and stood as enduring symbols of royal power and prestige.

3.2.2. The Manorial System

The origins of the Manorial System remain a subject of debate, with its precise beginnings shrouded in uncertainty. However, its key features began to take shape in 8th-century Francia. The system was imposed upon a landscape consisting of villages, forests, and wastelands, forming a structured framework for rural life. In some instances, the boundaries of manors aligned with those of villages, though this was not always the case. At its core, manorialism was a system that linked the landed elite to the peasantry, establishing a structured form of landholding and social organisation.

A medieval manor typically comprised a village, the lord's house or castle, a church, and the surrounding farmland. The lord of the manor governed the community, appointing officials to oversee the villagers' obligations, which included working the lord's land, known as the demesne, and paying rent, often in the form of agricultural produce.
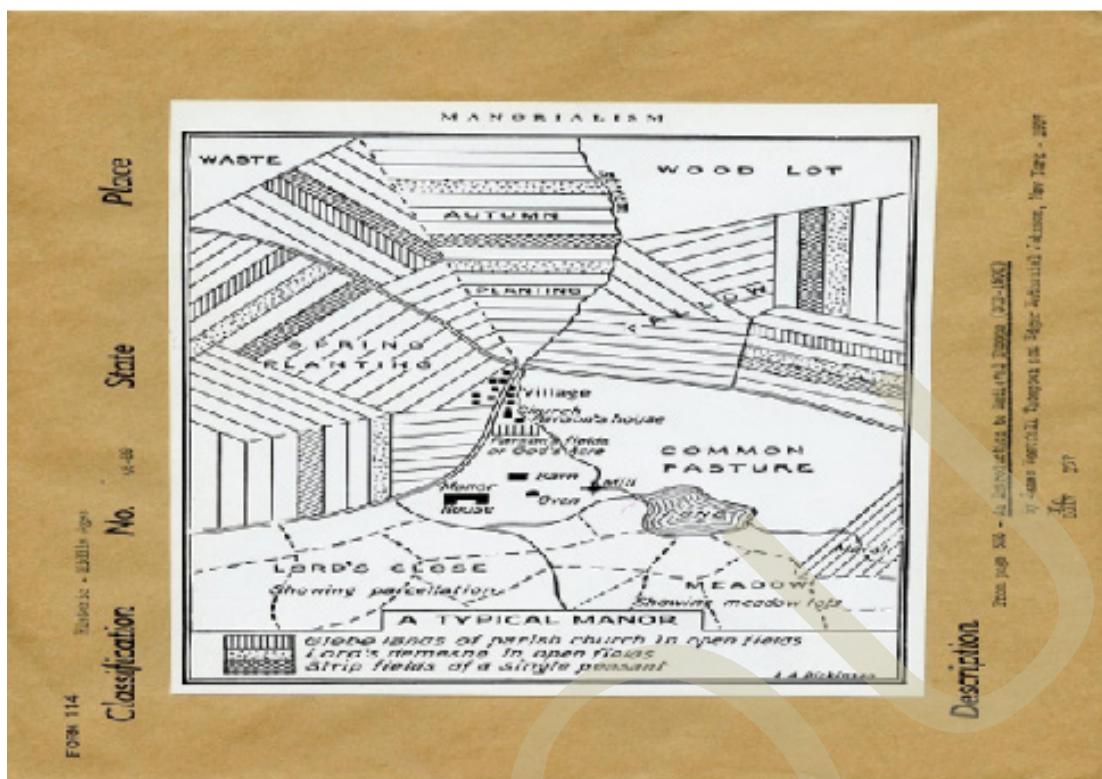
Fig. 3.1.2 Manorial system (source-Google Image)

3.2.2.1 The Manor

The manor served as the fundamental unit of aristocratic landholding and the intermediary link between the peasantry and the feudal hierarchy. While a manor was often similar in size to a village, the two were not always synonymous. Some manors encompassed multiple villages, whereas others were divided among different manors. The wealthiest lords, including kings, retained certain manors under their direct control, using them as sources of provisions and income.

3.2.2.2 Division of Manors

Land within a manor was divided into three main sections: the demesne, the tenants' holdings, and the commons. The demesne consisted of land reserved exclusively for the lord's use. Tenant holdings varied significantly in size depending on regional differences and soil fertility, typically providing enough land to sustain a family. These holdings were subject to labour services and dues, benefiting the lord. Tenants also had common rights to utilise surrounding natural meadows, marshes, and heaths. Despite their communal use, these lands ultimately remained under the lord's ownership.

3.2.2.3 The Manor House

The manor house, the grandest residence in the village, stood in stark contrast to the modest cottages of its tenants. The lord and his family resided in a large stone-built house, accessed through a fortified gatehouse fitted with sturdy oak doors and two locks. A porter's lodge, reached by wooden stairs, was located above the gate. The manor house was surrounded by gardens and stables, enclosed by a high defensive wall and sometimes a moat. As the centre of manorial life, it housed the great hall, which also functioned as the manor court.

Fig. 3.1.3 Manor House in Medieval Europe

3.2.2.5 The Manor Hall

The main entrance to the manor complex opened into a courtyard surrounded by various buildings. By the twelfth century, it became fashionable to construct manor houses using stone, though this was an expensive undertaking. The great hall was an enhanced version of timber-framed dwellings, featuring pillars supporting a high roof and a central hearth. This space served as the venue for communal meals and public affairs. At the rear of the hall stood a raised dais where the lord, his family, and distinguished guests dined.

3.2.2.6 Other Buildings

Around the manor house were numerous service buildings. Kitchens played a vital role in meal preparation, while bakehouses - built of stone with tiled roofs to reduce fire risk - produced bread. Many manors also had malting kilns and brewhouses to provide ale for the household.

3.2.2.7 The Demesne

The demesne comprised the lord's farmland, including arable land, meadows, vineyards, water mills, breweries, and inns. Labour services, a key component of feudal rent, were primarily rendered on the demesne. The produce was used to sustain the aristocratic household. These lands were managed by hired servants and cultivated by a combination of paid workers and serfs fulfilling their labour obligations.

The demesne complex also housed various storage and livestock buildings, including barns, granaries, and cart houses. The estate's livestock ranged from chickens and pigs to horses, sheep, and cattle. The manor's garden supplied vegetables, herbs, and fruits such as apples, pears, cherries, and nuts while also serving as a recreational space for the family.

3.2.2.8 Ownership of Manors

The most powerful lords, including royalty, retained certain manors for direct use. Manor ownership extended to kings, nobles, bishops, and monasteries. Many religious institutions derived income from manors donated by lay patrons. These revenues supported scholars in medieval colleges, much like modern universities. The manorial system structured society so that "those who work" supported "those who pray" and "those who fight."

Manor owners profited through multiple channels:

- **Demesne produce** – Cultivated directly for the lord's household.

- **Tenant rents** – Paid in cash, goods, or labour.

- **Usage fees** – Charges for pastures, woodlands, mills, wine presses, and ovens.

- **Manorial justice** – Court fines and fees provided additional revenue.

3.2.2.9 The Lord

The feudal hierarchy granted land from the king to the most powerful nobles, cascading down to lesser lords and, ultimately, the seigneur governing a single manor. Under the manorial system, peasants - particularly serfs - worked the land in exchange for protection and the right to reside on the estate.

The lord presided over the manor court, issuing fines for lawbreakers. While villagers had to produce most of their necessities, the lord and lady of the manor enjoyed leisure time and oversaw estate operations. Their wealth derived from peasant labour and their ability to enforce authority.

3.2.2.10 Unfree Tenants

Villeins, or unfree tenants, were the most common form of medieval peasantry. They could not leave the manor without the lord's permission, which was often granted in exchange for payment. Villeins owed rents, fines, and labour services and had no ownership rights over their possessions. Their land tenure was at the lord's discretion, and they could be evicted at will.

3.2.2.11 Free Peasants

Free peasants, though fewer in number than villeins, were exempt from labour services and instead paid rent in cash or goods. Some free peasants held freehold tenures, allowing them to inherit and sell land, albeit with the lord's consent. Their rent varied widely but was typically fixed.

3.2.2.12 Serfdom

Peasants under the manorial system fell into two broad categories: freemen and serfs. Freemen paid rent in cash or goods, whereas serfs also performed labour services for the manor. Typically, serfs worked three days a week for the lord, with additional duties imposed when necessary. They were legally bound to the land and unable to leave without permission. By the eleventh century, serfdom had become widespread, often representing an improvement for former slaves, who now had some legal status and the right to sustain themselves on their plots.

By the eighth century, manorialism had taken shape in West Francia, gradually spreading across northern Europe. However, it remained less prevalent in Scandinavia, the Italian Peninsula, and certain regions of Germany and southern France. It became especially entrenched in northern France and later firmly established in England.

3.2.2.14 Officials of the Manor

The Steward

The steward was the highest-ranking official, overseeing the estate's daily operations. He managed farm work and financial accounts and presided over the manor court in the lord's absence. Stewards were well-paid and influential figures in medieval society.

The Bailiff

The bailiff, second in importance, was often a freeholder rather than a serf. Responsible for allocating peasant duties, managing livestock and supervising maintenance, the bailiff also collected rents and ensured the manor's profitability.

The Reeve

The reeve, elected by fellow villagers, worked under the bailiff's authority. He supervised daily tasks, ensuring labourers started on time and that resources were not misappropriated.

Recap

- Medieval castles were built for defence and strategic advantage.

- Castle walls were strong fortifications against enemy attacks.

- Towers housed archers and provided wide battlefield views.

- Gatehouses featured portcullises, drawbridges, and stationed porters.

- The outer bailey contained workshops, stables, and food stores.

- The inner bailey held the great hall and chapel.

- The Great hall was used for feasts and ceremonies.

- Knights and foot soldiers maintained castle security and defence.

- The manorial system structured medieval economic and social life.

- The manor house was the administrative centre of the estate.

- Villeins and serfs provided labour for the lord's demesne.

- Manor officials included the steward, bailiff, and reeve.

Objective Questions

1. Which was a point of access to the castles?

2. What is inner bailey?

3. What is the prime duty of a manor?

4. What is demesne?

5. Where did the main features of the manor system emerge?

6. What was the basic unit of aristocratic landholding?

7. Who was the bailiff's right-hand man?

8. What is the duty of steward ?

Answers

1. Gate

2. Walled area enclosing the high ground

3. The prime duty of a manor is to support the knight economically

4. The demesne is the personal farm of the feudal lord

5. Francia

6. The Manor

7. The Reeve

8. Overseeing the estate's daily operations

9. Aristocratic household

10. Constables

Assignments

1. Discuss how the location of castles influenced their defensive effectiveness.

2. Analyse the architectural evolution of castles from wooden fortifications to stone structures.

3. Compare the roles of knights and foot soldiers in medieval castle garrisons.

4. Evaluate the significance of the manorial system in medieval European society.

Suggested Reading

1. Backman.R. Clifford. *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*, Oxford University Press, 2003.

2. Boothby, Henry Barry. *The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Feudal System*, Oxford Publishers, 1843.

3. Farooqui, Amar. *Early Social Formation*, Manak Publications, New Delhi, 2022.

4. Langley, Andrew. *Eyewitness Medieval Life,* D.K Publishing, New York, 2011.

5. Sinha,Aravind *Europe in Transition, From Feudalism to Industrialization*, Manohar Publications, 2016.

6. Singman, Jeffrey. *Daily Life in Medieval Europe,* Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999.

Reference

1. Anderson, Perry. *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*. NLB, 1996.

2. Backman, Clifford R. *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

3. Bauer, Susan Wise. *The History of the Medieval World*. WW Norton & Company, 2010.

4. Davis, Ralf Henry Carless. *A History of Medieval Europe*. Pearson Longman, 2006.

5. Langley, Andrew. *Eyewitness Medieval Life*. DK Publishing, 2011.

6. Runciman, Steven. *A History of the Crusades*. CUP Archive, 1987.

3 UNIT

Demerits of Feudalism

Learning Outcomes

After the succesful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to :

- ♦ explore the drawbacks of feudalism, focusing on its limitations and long-term impact

- ♦ analyse its influence on medieval society

- ♦ evaluate historical perspectives on feudalism's effects

- ♦ assess the persistence of feudal customs in modern times

Prerequisites

Many writers wrote different opinions regarding feudalism and it is difficult to consider the effects of feudalism and its influence upon the progress of medieval society. But is it sure that feudalism is a very important part of mankind's history? Several attempts have been made to prove that it resembles several institutions of antiquity. Though Feudalism was abolished formally in England and Scotland, it continued till the middle of the last century. In France, it was only destroyed when all other institutions perished with it. Even in the present day, some countries still formally adhere to many of its customs and continue to resist their abolition. It is difficult to find any important laws and customs which it has not more or less affected. So, the demerits of feudalism are a subject of great historical importance.

Keywords

Closed Estate Economy, Serfdom, Economic Stagnation, Social Fragmentation

Discussion

3.3.1 Demerits of Feudalism

3.3.1.1 Fragmented Power and Political Disunity

One of the most significant weaknesses of feudalism was the decentralisation of power. Local lords exercised authority over their own territories, often acting as independent rulers, which weakened central governance. This lack of unity made it difficult to form strong nation-states. For instance, in medieval France, powerful regional lords resisted the king's authority, leading to prolonged internal conflicts like the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453). Without a strong central government, law enforcement and national administration were ineffective, leading to instability and frequent power struggles.

3.3.1.2 Superiority of the Church

During the feudal era, the Church was not just a religious institution but also a dominant political and economic force. Owning vast estates and collecting taxes, it often held more power than secular rulers. From the 9th to the 11th centuries, the Church controlled much of the governance in Western Europe. In England, for example, the *Domesday Book* (1086) recorded extensive Church landholdings, highlighting its wealth and influence. Bishops and abbots played key roles in government, making the Church the supreme moral and financial authority of the time.

3.3.1.3 Scattered Land Holdings

Feudal estates were rarely consolidated into single, manageable territories. Instead, they were fragmented across different regions, leading to inefficiencies in administration and defence. A noble might own land in multiple provinces, making it difficult

to oversee effectively. This scattering of land also resulted in complicated feudal obligations, as estates could fall under the jurisdiction of different rulers or even different linguistic regions. Such divisions weakened feudal lords' ability to maintain a stable and prosperous domain, creating administrative chaos.

3.3.1.4 Lack of Monetary Wealth and Economic Stagnation

Land was the primary measure of wealth, and economic life was largely agricultural. Unlike in later capitalist economies, money played a limited role in feudal society. Nobles and monarchs struggled to raise funds for wars and governance, often resorting to heavy taxation of peasants. This reliance on land-based wealth hindered trade and financial growth. For example, King John of England (r. 1199 - 1216) imposed high taxes on his vassals to fund military campaigns, which led to widespread discontent and the eventual signing of the Magna Carta in 1215.

3.3.1.5 Widespread Serfdom and Peasant Oppression

Serfdom was the foundation of feudal agricultural labour, with the majority of peasants bound to the land. Unlike free tenants, serfs had no mobility and were subject to their lord's authority. They were required to work on the lord's demesne (his personal farmland) and owed additional labour services and dues. In France, serfs had to perform corvée (forced labour) for three days a week, severely limiting their ability to improve their own lives. This system stifled economic and social mobility, keeping the lower classes in perpetual poverty.

3.3.1.6 Restricted Personal Liberties and Social Fragmentation

Liberty was not a common right but a privilege reserved for the nobility. Even among the aristocracy, liberties were tied to feudal obligations and varied by region. The fragmented nature of feudal governance meant that different areas had different laws and customs, preventing the formation of a unified legal system. This lack of common institutions led to frequent disputes and hindered the development of national identity.

3.3.1.7 Weak National Unity and Political Instability

Feudalism encouraged division rather than unity. Lords pursued their own interests, often engaging in conflicts with neighbouring nobles rather than working towards a cohesive state. This fragmentation was particularly evident in the Holy Roman Empire, where regional princes retained significant autonomy, preventing the development of a strong central government. It was not until the late 19th century that Germany finally unified under a single national identity.

3.3.1.8 Militarised Society Over Civil Governance

Feudalism prioritised military service over civil administration. Nobles were more focused on maintaining armed forces than on building effective governance structures. This resulted in inefficient legal and administrative systems. For example, in medieval Spain, feudal lords controlled local justice, often ruling in favour of their own interests rather than ensuring fair legal proceedings for all. This militaristic focus also hindered economic growth, as warfare disrupted trade and agricultural production.

3.3.1.9 Localised Justice and Legal Inconsistencies

Under feudalism, justice was administered by local lords rather than a centralised legal system. This meant that laws varied significantly between regions, leading to confusion and inequality. A crime that was punished severely in one territory might go unpunished in another. Before the legal reforms of King Henry II of England (r. 1154–1189), feudal courts operated independently, creating a patchwork of inconsistent legal practices.

3.3.1.10 Inefficient Agricultural Practices

Despite being an agrarian society, feudalism was detrimental to farming. Land was seen as a source of power rather than a means of increasing productivity. Lords discouraged land sales, preventing efficient use of resources. Innovation in farming techniques was slow, as peasants had little incentive to improve lands that they did not own. Compared to the agricultural advancements of later periods, feudal economies remained stagnant for centuries.

3.3.1.11 Suppression of Trade and Commerce

Feudal lords aimed for self-sufficiency rather than trade, leading to an economic system that discouraged market expansion. Internal trade was often restricted by tolls and tariffs, making long-distance commerce difficult. For example, in medieval France, regulations even limited the transportation of grain between provinces, stifling economic growth. Without a thriving merchant class, towns remained small, and commercial activity was limited.

3.3.1.12 Economic Isolation and the Closed Estate System

Each estate functioned as an independent economic unit, producing everything it needed internally. While this provided stability, it also prevented economic specialisation and trade. Unlike the vibrant trade networks of Renaissance Italy, feudal estates in northern

Europe remained isolated, slowing the development of larger economic centres.

3.3.1.13 Insecurity and Dependence on Lords

Common people lived in constant insecurity, dependent on the goodwill of their lords. Lords could demand taxes, military service, or goods at will. Even when charters granted some protections, these rights were often ignored. This vulnerability led to periodic peasant revolts, such as the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 in England, which was triggered by oppressive taxation and economic hardship.

3.3.1.14 Social Inequality and Limited Upward Mobility

Feudalism created rigid social divisions, with little opportunity for commoners to improve their status. Artisans and merchants faced restrictions, and serfs had virtually no legal rights. In England, guild members had to navigate strict local regulations, while the lower classes remained at the mercy of feudal lords.

3.3.1.15 Weak Central Authority and Limited Monarchical Power

Kings struggled to exert control over their territories as feudal lords resisted central authority. In England, conflicts between the monarchy and the nobility culminated in the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215, which limited royal power and affirmed the rights of the nobility. In France, it took centuries for the monarchy to consolidate power, which eventually led to the absolute rule of Louis XIV in the 17th century.

3.3.1.16 Absence of a Standing Army and Military Weakness

Feudal states lacked professional, permanent armies, relying instead on vassals to provide troops for short periods. This made it difficult to sustain long-term military campaigns. Charlemagne (r. 768–814) attempted to enforce central military authority, but after his death, his empire fragmented, leading to military disorganisation. The rise of standing armies in the 15th century helped end feudalism, as monarchs gained direct control over their military forces.

Recap

- Feudal lords held fragmented political power.

- The Church dominated land and governance.

- Estates were scattered across multiple regions.

- Land-based wealth limited economic growth.

- Serfs had no freedom or mobility.

- Nobility controlled law and justice systems.

- Weak national unity led to conflicts.

- Feudalism suppressed trade and commerce.

♦ Agriculture stagnated under rigid land control.

♦ Towns lacked independence and security.

♦ Lords imposed heavy taxes on peasants.

♦ Monarchy struggled against feudal nobility.

♦ No standing army weakened military power.

Objective Questions

1. Which institution held the most land during feudalism?

2. What was the primary source of wealth in feudal society?

3. What was the status of most peasants under feudalism?

4. Which document limited the power of the English monarchy in 1215?

5. What economic system dominated feudal estates?

6. What was the main military obligation of a vassal?

7. Which group was responsible for administering local justice in feudal society?

8. What type of economy existed under feudalism?

9. What was the term for forced labour owed by serfs to their lords?

10. Which factor contributed most to the decline of feudalism?

Answers

1. The Church

2. Land

3. Serfdom

4. Magna Carta

5. Manorialism

6. Military service

7. Feudal lords

8. Closed economy

9. Corvée

10. Centralised monarchy

Assignments

1. Discuss how fragmented political power weakened feudal states.

2. Analyse the Church's role in feudal society and governance.

3. Evaluate the economic limitations of feudalism on trade and agriculture.

4. How did the lack of a standing army contribute to feudalism's decline?

Suggested Reading

1. Backman, Clifford R. *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

2. Bauer, Susan Wise. *The History of the Medieval World*. WW Norton & Company, 2010.

3. Langley, Andrew. *Eyewitness Medieval Life*. DK Publishing, 2011.

Reference

1. Barry, Henry Boothby. "The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Feudal System." Oxford Publishers, 1843.

2. Pirenne, Henri. *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*. Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936

4 UNIT

Crusades and Their Impact

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ understand the causes and motivations behind the Crusades

♦ analyse key figures and their roles in the Crusades

♦ trace the evolution of the Crusades over time

♦ evaluate the impact of the Crusades on medieval society

Prerequisites

At the end of the 11th century, Western and Eastern Europe were brought into a fierce conflict that would last for 200 years. Voltaire and other Enlightenment historians ridiculed the Crusades as a war of intolerance waged at the behest of a power-mad clergy. These hsitorians believed that the Crusades became an emblem of hysteria, superstition and ignorance of the Dark Ages. However, the romanticists of the early 19th century tried to admire the faithful piety of medieval religion. They tried to rehabilitate the Middle Ages, extolling the beauty of gothic architecture, admiring the virtue of medieval chivalry and eulogising the faithful piety of medieval religion. Walter Scott tried to weave together these two strands of admiration and ridicule in his novel 'The Talisman'(1825). This influential work helped to create an image of the Crusades in the modern mind.

By the 19th century, crusades had become an emblem of European colonialism. All European powers could boast famous crusaders in their histories. Germany had Frederick Barbarossa, England had Richard the Lionheart, and even Belgium had Godfrey of Bouillon. These heroic figures were becoming precursors of modern imperialism.

Keywords

Primogeniture, Papal Authority, Seljuk Turks, Council of Clermont, Latin Empire, Venetian Influence

Discussion

3.4.1 Causes for the Rise of the Crusades

The primary driving force behind the Crusades was religious fervour, with the Catholic Church playing a central role in motivating and mobilising participants. Historian Edward Gibbon viewed the Crusades as an unfortunate example of religious fanaticism, actively promoted by the Church to expand its influence. However, religion was not the sole factor. The Crusades also provided an opportunity for European knights and noblemen to channel their military skills towards a common cause rather than engaging in constant local conflicts. Many warriors sought glory, wealth, and land in the East. At the same time, younger sons of nobility, who lacked inheritance rights under primogeniture, saw the Crusades as a means to establish their own territories.

Political factors also contributed significantly. The Papacy aimed to extend its authority over both spiritual and temporal matters, uniting Christendom under its leadership. Pope Urban II, who launched the First Crusade, saw an opportunity to strengthen the power of the Papacy by leading a military and religious movement.

Additionally, the Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnenos appealed to Western Europe for military assistance against the Seljuk Turks, providing further justification for the Crusades.

Economic motivations were also at play. The prospect of acquiring land, trade routes, and wealth from the East appealed to many European rulers and merchants. Italian maritime republics, such as Venice and Genoa, supported the Crusades to expand their commercial dominance in the Mediterranean.

While 18th-century historians tended to romanticise the Crusades, portraying knights as heroic figures reclaiming the Holy Land, they often overlooked the perspectives of Muslims and Jews, for whom Jerusalem was equally sacred. The Crusades were not solely a noble religious mission but also a complex mixture of political, economic, and military ambitions.

3.4.2 The Major Crusades

3.4.2.1 The First Crusade (1095–1099)

In November 1095, Pope Urban II launched the First Crusade at the Council of Clermont, urging European Christians to

take up arms against the Muslims and reclaim Jerusalem. His speech ignited widespread enthusiasm, drawing support from knights, peasants, and clergy. The Pope also saw the Crusade as an opportunity to enhance the power of the Papacy and unify the Christian world under his leadership.

On 15 August 1096, the Crusader armies set out towards the East. Among them was the "People's Crusade," an unorganised movement of peasants, townspeople, women, and children led by the charismatic preacher Peter the Hermit. Many perished before reaching Constantinople, while others engaged in violent anti-Jewish pogroms along the way.

In 1097, the Crusaders captured Nicaea, the capital of the Seljuk Sultanate, and returned it to Byzantine control. By July 1099, the Crusader army reached Jerusalem and successfully besieged the city. Godfrey of Bouillon was elected as ruler, but he refused the title of "King of Jerusalem," preferring the title "Defender of the Holy Sepulchre." His brother Baldwin I succeeded him in 1100, consolidating Crusader rule in the region. Pope Urban II, who had initiated the campaign, died before learning of its success.

The First Crusade was the most successful in terms of military gains, establishing Christian states in the Levant. However, the Crusaders soon faced challenges in maintaining control over the newly conquered territories.

3.4.2.2 The Second Crusade (1145–1148)

The Second Crusade was launched in response to the fall of Edessa, one of the Crusader states, to the Turks in 1144. Pope Eugenius III issued the Papal Bull Quantum Praedecessores in 1145, calling for a new military expedition. The movement gained traction with the passionate sermons of Bernard of Clairvaux, a prominent Cistercian monk who urged European rulers to take up the cross.

Unlike the First Crusade, this campaign lacked unity and strategic planning. King Louis VII of France and Emperor Conrad III of Germany led separate armies, both of which suffered heavy defeats. The German forces were routed at the Battle of Dorylaeum in 1147, while the French struggled with poor logistics and internal divisions. The crusade ultimately failed to reclaim Edessa, and Bernard of Clairvaux's reputation suffered as a result.

However, the Second Crusade did see one notable success: in 1147, a Crusader army captured Lisbon from Muslim rule, marking a significant victory in the Iberian Peninsula.

3.4.2.3 The Third Crusade (1187–1192)

The Third Crusade was launched following the rise of Saladin, the formidable Muslim leader who unified Egypt and Syria. In 1187, he achieved a decisive victory at the Battle of Hattin, capturing Jerusalem from the Crusaders. This loss provoked a strong reaction in Europe, prompting an expedition led by three of the most powerful monarchs of the time: Richard the Lionheart of England, Philip II of France, and Frederick I (Barbarossa) of the Holy Roman Empire.

Frederick drowned en route, leaving Richard and Philip to continue the campaign. The Crusaders managed to recapture Acre in 1191, but tensions between Richard and Philip weakened their efforts. Eventually, Richard negotiated a truce with Saladin, securing Christian access to Jerusalem but failing to retake the city. The Third Crusade demonstrated the growing strength of Muslim forces and the declining effectiveness of European Crusader armies.

3.4.2.4 The Fourth Crusade (1202–1204)

Pope Innocent III called for the Fourth Crusade to reclaim Jerusalem, but the campaign took an unexpected turn. Instead of marching to the Holy Land, the Crusaders struck a deal with Venice to provide transport in exchange for attacking the rival city of Zara. This diversion marked the first time Crusaders fought fellow Christians.

In 1203, the Crusaders turned their attention to Constantinople, supporting the Byzantine prince Alexios IV in his claim to the throne. When political turmoil led to Alexios IV's murder, the Crusaders stormed Constantinople in 1204, looting and destroying the city. Baldwin of Flanders was crowned the first Latin Emperor of Constantinople.

The Fourth Crusade failed to achieve its original goal and instead deepened divisions between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, weakening Byzantine power.

3.4.2.5 The Albigensian Crusade (1209–1229)

Unlike earlier campaigns, the Albigensian Crusade targeted a Christian sect - the Cathars of southern France - who were declared heretics by Pope Innocent III. The campaign was led by Simon de Montfort and was marked by extreme brutality. One of the most infamous events occurred in 1209 when Crusaders sacked the city of Béziers, massacring an estimated 20,000 men, women, and children.

By the late 1220s, the French monarchy took control of the crusade, leading to the eventual suppression of the Cathars. The campaign significantly expanded royal authority in southern France.

3.4.2.6 The Children's Crusade (1212)

The so-called Children's Crusade of 1212 was an unofficial movement led by young Europeans who believed divine intervention would help them reclaim Jerusalem. Thousands of children and followers set out for the Holy Land, but most perished on the journey or were sold into slavery. Although largely a tragic episode, it reflected the deep religious zeal surrounding the Crusades.

3.4.3. Impact of the Crusades

3.4.3.1 Erosion of the Feudal System

One of the major long-term consequences of the Crusades was the decline of feudalism. Financing a Crusade was costly, and many feudal lords were forced to sell large portions of their estates to raise funds. This led to the redistribution of land and power, weakening the traditional feudal hierarchy. Additionally, many feudal lords perished in battle, allowing monarchs to consolidate power and establish stronger centralised states. The Crusades also contributed to the decline of serfdom, as the need for manpower led to increased opportunities for peasants to gain freedom and economic independence.

3.4.3.2 Expansion of Trade and Economic Growth

The Crusades provided a significant boost to trade, especially between Europe and the Middle East. European merchants, particularly those from Venice and Genoa, established extensive trade networks in the Mediterranean. Goods such as silk, spices, glassware, and precious metals flowed into Europe, leading to the expansion of markets and the development of banking and credit systems. This economic growth contributed to the rise of powerful trading cities and

laid the foundation for the later commercial expansion of the Renaissance.

3.4.3.3 Strengthening of Muslim Power in the Middle East

Rather than weakening Muslim control, the Crusades ultimately reinforced Islamic power in the region. The Muslim world responded to the Crusader invasions by uniting under strong leaders such as Saladin, who successfully defended and later reclaimed Jerusalem. The military strategies and administrative structures developed during the Crusades strengthened Muslim rule in the Middle East, ensuring that the region remained under Islamic control long after the Crusades ended.

3.4.3.4 Expansion of European Geographical and Cultural Horizons

For Western Europe, the Crusades expanded the known world, exposing Europeans to new lands, cultures, and ideas. Contact with the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic world introduced Europeans to advanced knowledge in medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy. This exposure encouraged curiosity and intellectual development, gradually shaping the cultural revival that led to the Renaissance.

3.4.3.5 Increased Power and Authority of the Papacy

The Crusades significantly enhanced the power and influence of the Pope. By uniting European monarchs and nobles under the banner of Christianity, the Pope positioned himself as the supreme spiritual leader of Western Christendom. This strengthened the authority of the Catholic Church, allowing Popes to exert considerable influence over political affairs. However, the failure of later Crusades and the growing power of monarchs eventually led to a decline in papal supremacy.

3.4.3.6 Closer Contact Between Europeans, Muslims, and Byzantines

The Crusades facilitated greater interaction between Europeans and the Islamic and Byzantine worlds. These encounters led to the exchange of ideas, technologies, and artistic influences. Europeans adopted architectural styles, scientific knowledge, and medical advancements from their Muslim counterparts. The interactions also exposed Europeans to new philosophical works, including those of Aristotle, which had been preserved and studied in the Muslim world.

3.4.3.7 Intellectual Revival and Spread of Knowledge

One of the significant intellectual impacts of the Crusades was the revival of learning in Europe. Arabic and Greek texts, particularly in science, philosophy, and medicine, were translated into Latin and became accessible to European scholars. Libraries and universities expanded as these works spread across Europe, laying the groundwork for the intellectual flourishing of the High Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

3.4.3.8 Heavy Loss of Life and Long-lasting Conflict

The Crusades lasted nearly 200 years (1095–1291), resulting in massive casualties. It is estimated that around two million people died in various Crusader campaigns. Entire communities, particularly in the Middle East, were devastated by warfare, massacres, and famine. In some cases, Crusaders indiscriminately killed civilians, including Muslims, Jews, and even fellow Christians. The brutality of the Crusades left lasting wounds and contributed to centuries of hostility between different religious communities.

Recap

- ♦ Religious fervour and Papal influence
- ♦ Political and economic motivations emerged
- ♦ First Crusade captured Jerusalem, 1099
- ♦ Second Crusade failed to reclaim Edessa
- ♦ Saladin recaptured Jerusalem in 1187
- ♦ Fourth Crusade sacked Constantinople, 1204
- ♦ Albigensian Crusade targeted Cathar heretics
- ♦ Crusades weakened the feudal system
- ♦ Trade and knowledge exchange increased
- ♦ Heavy casualties, lasting religious conflicts

Objective Questions

1. Who launched the First Crusade?
2. Which city did the First Crusade capture?
3. Who led the Muslim forces in 1187?
4. Which crusade resulted in Constantinople's sack?
5. What was the main religious motivation?
6. Which Pope called for the Albigensian Crusade?
7. In which did the Third Crusade begin?
8. Which battle led to Jerusalem's fall in 1187?
9. Which trade cities benefited from the Crusades?
10. Which Crusade targeted a Christian sect?

Answers

1. Pope Urban II

2. Jerusalem

3. Saladin

4. Fourth Crusade

5. Reclaiming the Holy Land

6. Innocent III

7. 1187

8. Battle of Hattin

9. Venice and Genoa

10. Albigensian Crusade

Assignments

1. Discuss the political, economic, and religious causes of the Crusades.

2. Compare and contrast the outcomes of the First and Third Crusades.

3. How did the Crusades impact European feudalism and trade?

4. Analyse the role of the Papacy in initiating and directing the Crusades.

Suggested Reading

1. Bell, Andrew. *A History of Feudalism*, Longman, London,1863.

2. Bennett, Judith. *Medieval Europe, A Short History*, Mc Graw Hill Publications, New York, 2011.

3. Damrosch, Leo. *Books that matter: The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, The Great Course Publishers, Virginia.

4. Jones, Robert. *The Crusades : A Brief History(1095-1291)*, Georgia, 2004.

5. Madden, F.Thomas. *The Concise History of the Crusades*, Rowman Littlefield, New York, 2014.

Reference

1. Backman, Clifford R. *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

2. Bauer, Susan Wise. *The History of the Medieval World*. WW Norton & Company, 2010.

3. Langley, Andrew. *Eyewitness Medieval Life*. DK Publishing, 2011.

4. Runciman, Steven. *A History of the Crusades*. CUP Archive, 1987.

UNIT 5

Monasticism

Learning Outcomes

After the succesful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ explain the rise of monasticism in both the Eastern and Western traditions

♦ describe the daily life, duties, and spiritual practices of monks and nuns in medieval monasteries

♦ analyse the significance of the Rule of St. Pachomius in shaping early monastic communities

♦ evaluate the contributions of St. Basil of Caesarea to monasticism and its role in medieval society

Prerequisites

By the end of the fourth century, Christianity absorbed and adapted itself to classical culture. The Christians became increasingly indistinguishable from non-Christians in terms of their daily lifestyles, their ascetic values, their education and their intellectual interests. For many caught in the adoption of an ascetic lifestyle, that is, through the intentional and public renunciation of the wealth and status into which they had been born, in favour of a life of solitary prayer, self-discipline, chastity and study. Encouraged by Popes and supported by Kings, Monasteries (communities of chaste monks and nuns) grew into potent forces in the early medieval West.

Keywords

Abbot, The Priors, The Cistercians, The Carthusians, The Dominicans, The Franciscans, Double Monasteries

Discussion

3.5.1 Life in A Monastery

3.5.1.2 The Abbot

An Abbot was the head of a monastery. Ruled by an Abbot, the monks and nuns were cut from society and governed by special rules. The monks and nuns played an important role in medieval society. They spent much of the time attending the eight daily church services and reading or copying religious texts. Other duties included caring for the poor and sick, teaching younger members of the order, or tending to the gardens, fish ponds, mills and farms. There was a general rule of silence in most religious houses, and daily tasks had to be carried out without speaking. They provide food to the poor, and accommodation for pilgrims and other travellers. Monks went to the monastery church eight times a day in an unchanging round of services.

3.5.1.3 The Priors

The day-to-day activities of the monastery fell to the Priors. Some monasteries had no Abbot and were instead under the authority of the priors. He had a number of inspectors who helped him to make rounds of the monastery each day.

3.5.1.4 Other Officers

Two officers were assigned to the needs of the monastic church. The precentor oversaw the celebration of divine services. He was also in-charge of the library and scriptorium. Sacristan looked after the material needs of the church. The other officer, like Chamberlain, was in charge of collecting monastic income and property. The cellarer was in-charge of the monastery's supply of food, water and other materials.

3.5.2 Origin of Monasticism

St. Anthony (C.250-355) retired to the Egyptian desert to live the ascetic life during the third century. There he created one of the first communities of Christian ascetics. His word of sanctity spread, and ascetics gathered around him. He organised them into a community of hermits who lived together but had little communication with one another. Similar Hermit communities soon arose throughout Egypt and elsewhere. Hermit saints flourished in the fourth and fifth centuries.

3.5.2.1 Simeon the Stylites (c.390-459)

Simeon the Stylites was a Syrian holy man who achieved the necessary isolation by living atop a sixty-foot pillar for thirty years, evoking widespread admiration and imitation. He became the transmitter of divine favour and protection as well as a source of holy wisdom, practical advice, and even profits from pilgrims. Simeon the Stylites and other hermits stood between God and ordinary folk.

Some critics opposed these practices as too extreme and too anti-social. They began to develop forms of monasticism that were more moderate and more communal. This new movement began in the east, where Pachomius and Basil the Great guided more down to early communities of monks.

3.5.3 The Rise of Monasticism in the East

Asceticism got popular during the fourth century and it became increasingly common for those seeking a new type of Christian commitment. The word monastery derives from a Greek word meaning "to live alone". Their aloneness consisted of their physical separation from mainstream society. They renounced the world, their social status, their wealth and all their concerns for the world outside.

Most monasteries were communal in nature. Inside the monastery, a communal spirit and style predominated. Many of these monasteries were quite large. For example, the community in Nitria (Egypt) had five thousand monks. About thousands of monasteries sprang up across Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Asia Minor during the fourth century. These communities created disciplinary codes called Regulae (Rules) for themselves. These Rules organised their daily lives. These rules provide valuable insight into the mentalities and daily realities of early monks. Thus, the monastic movement spread northward and westward into medieval Europe.

3.5.3.1 Rule of St. Pachomius (290-345)

One of the earliest of these Rules was the Rule of St.Pachomius. He was a native of Tabennissi in Upper Egypt. Originally a pagan, he was converted by a group of Christians. He made the Bible the focus of his monastic rule. He required that anyone seeking to enter into his monastery first make his vows, put on his robe and cowl, and take up residence in one of the dormitories, which was divided into the overall monastery. A senior monk was responsible for maintaining discipline and administering each dormitory. St.Pachomius Rules mainly focused on physical work, communal prayer and Bible reading. St.Pachomius was the first monastic leader to establish an organised, canonical network of double monasteries in which male and female monks were linked.

3.5.3.2 Double Monasteries

In monasteries, the sexes lived apart, either in discreetly separated cloisters within the monastery or in individual monasteries that shared a common administration. Female monks largely conducted their own spiritual lives, since there was no need for priests to be in charge. They devoted themselves to prayer and the scriptures. The male monks entered the female converts regularly to tend to the women's material needs. Conversely, the nuns prepare food for the men. But joint meals were expressly forbidden. All interaction between the sexes was carefully regulated. Double monasteries became common throughout the east, until a church council in 787 forbade the establishment of any new such houses. The idea of a double monastery along the Pachomian Model became more popular in the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries.

In Ireland, Britain Gaul and Iberia, some monasteries included both women and men, an abbess ruled over both sexes. The community founded by St. Bridget (c.460-528) at Kildare housed both nuns and monks. These dual-sex houses caused no scandal.

3.5.3.3 Family Monasteries

Early medieval monasteries were closely linked to the powerful local families that supported them. The Abbot was a descendant of the donor, and the monastery offered hospitality and other favours to the donor's family. Like double monasteries, the practice of family monasteries was readily accepted in the early centuries.

3.5.3.4 St.Basil of Caesarea (329-379)

The next great monastic Rule was that

of St. Basil of Caesarea. St.Basil stands in sharp contrast to Pachomius. Basil was a Greek aristocrat of high birth who received education in Constantinople and Athens. He opted for clerical life and was ordained a priest. In 370, he was elected Bishop of Caesarea, and he played an important role in several ecumenical councils.

Basil was a prolific writer and published works show the full range of his interests. His famous work "Address to Young Men on the Reading of the Works of the Gentiles" examines the controversy over the appropriateness of classical literature for Christian leaders. His famous treatise "On the Hexaemeron (also called The Six Days of Creation)" deals with the creation of the universe and shows a detailed familiarity with Greek astronomy and physics. His monastic Rule, the 'Asceticon', is most important. It consists of a long series of questions and answers and Basil's responses to specific questions posed to him by a monastic community.

Basil championed a monastic life that was considerably more communal in nature than the isolated rigorism of Pachomius. He maintained both spiritual brotherhood and service in the world. He recommended that monasteries be placed within cities and villages, not on remote mountains, and that monasteries be limited in size (thirty to forty members was ideal). So that a true sense of community could develop. The monks worship together daily and regularly with the local lay populace in public churches attached to the monastery. They should operate schools and hospitals for their townsfolk. Basil's aim was to create a spiritual community that was truly a community rather than a collection of single ascetics inhabiting a common site. Basil's vision of monastic life proved an enduringly popular one, and basilian-style monasteries quickly proliferated throughout the East from the fourth to sixth centuries.

3.5.5 The Rise of Monasticism in the West

Monasticism first appeared in the West during the late fourth century. St. Athanasius founded several houses in central and northern Italy. It was from here that trained missionaries brought the monastic ideal to Spain, North Africa and southern and central France. St. Martin of Tours is the best-known early proponent of that ideal in the West. In 371, Martin was elected bishop of Tours and for the rest of his life, he struggled hard to balance his monastic calling with his clerical responsibilities. He lived briefly in a few Italian monastic houses and he set off to establish a new community at Liguge, south of Poitiers. He founded other monasteries, created a network of parish churches, counselled emperors and appealed for the curtailment of the violence engulfing Western Europe. His biography 'The Life of St. Martin' written by Sculpicius Severus became the model for all medieval hagiography. The writing of 'saint's lives' became one of the enduring passions of Western medieval monks. The Life of St. Martin depicts him as a Western equivalent of St. Anthony, an ascetic who seeks communion with God through a kind of living martyrdom.

The Life of St. Martin placed special stress on the miraculous power of the saint. This pattern repeated itself thousands of times over the next six to eight centuries of hagiographical writing. According to the text, Martin did more than live a pious life; he performed miracles. Gregory of Tours, the author of the 'History of the Franks', also wrote a miracle-filled book, 'On the Virtues of the Blessed Bishop Martin', that narrated miraculous deeds performed at the site of Martin's tomb. The monasteries were institutions of production sites of medieval saints. These monasteries were responsible for shaping and promoting the belief in saintly miracles in the early Middle Ages.

3.5.5.1 John Cassian (c.360-435)

In 404, John Cassian had served as a monk in both Bethlehem and Egypt, returned to the west and began to encourage communal monasticism. He wrote influential Lantin treatises on monastic life and founded two monasteries in Marseilles on the Mediterranean coast of Gaul, one monastery for women and the other for men.

3.5.5.2 St. Patrick (c.389-461)

In Ireland, another strain of Christian monasticism was emerged. The Irish were introduced to Christianity in the fifth century by St. Patrick. St. Patrick insisted on forming separate communities in isolation from the rest of society in Ireland. The rise of Monasticism in Wales and England was a bit later than in Ireland. Monasticism was a wide-ranging phenomenon in Western Europe. One of the important results of the monastic movement was the proliferation of Rules. These Rules were composed whole, and most new establishments were patched together. The Rule of Pachomius and the Rule of St.Basil appeared in monasteries in Spain, the Netherlands and Central France. Hybrisation of Rule occurred, and especially in France, at least twenty hybrid rules were formed. Irish monasticism was initially closer to Anthony than John Cassian.

3.5.5.3 St. Benedict and His Rule

St. Benedict of Nursia (c.480-550) is called the "father of Western Monasticism". His great contribution was to synthesise the ideas of Pachomius, Basil, Cassian and others into a written Rule of St. Benedict that remains deeply influential to this day. Benedict was a Roman of a good family. He fled the city before completing his education and took up a hermit's life in a cave near the ruins of Nero's country palace. St. Benedict was more than an ascetic. He was a man of keen psychological insight and a superb organiser. His influential Rule prescribed a monasticism marked by moderate asceticism, gentle discipline and flexible orderliness.

He founded a number of monasteries and built his greatest at Monte Cassino atop a mountain midway between Rome and Naples. His sister, Scholastica became patron saint of Benedictine monasteries for women. The Rule of St. Benedict provides for a busy, regulated life, simple but not ruthlessly austere. Benedictine monks and nuns were decently clothed, adequately fed, and seldom left to their own devices. They dedicated themselves to God and attained personal sanctity through prayer and service. Benedictine communities were even open to children, and they were educated in their monastery's school. This practice was known as oblation and the children as oblates. Oblation was common in these centuries and it worked surprisingly well in practice.

The early medieval economy was so primitive that the most common form of endowments or payment to medieval monasteries was land. Monasticism grew in popularity and the wealth of these institutions grew rapidly. It also widened the economic and social gap that separated the monastic world from the secular world.

Fig.3.1.4 St. Benedict(source-Google Image)

3.5.5.4 Contributions of Benedictine Monks and Nuns

Benedictine Rule spread throughout

Western Christendom within two or three centuries of his death. Early monasteries were similar to modern colleges and universities, where each institution was independent of all others but shared a common purpose. The early monasteries were administratively separate but linked in objective.

Benedict had envisaged his monasteries as spiritual sanctuaries. But Benedictine monks and nuns were thrust into the relationship of early medieval politics and thanks to vast estates their abbeys accumulated. Many monks and nuns were linked to powerful aristocratic families. As a result, Benedictine monks and nuns had an enormous impact on the world they renounced. They also controlled the main repositories of learning and produced most of the scholars of the age. They also preserved many texts that have been forever lost. They were eager vessels of missionary activity spearheading the penetration of Christianity into the forests of modern-day Germany, Scandinavia, Poland and Hungary. They produced scribes for record keeping, advisers to princes and candidates for high ecclesiastical offices. Benedictine monasticism became a major civilising influence in the early Christian West. But in theory and in practice sometimes, these monasteries remained dedicated to one primary purpose: prayer, meditation and service to God

3.5.5.5 Pope the Gregory the Great (590-604)

After Benedict's death, Monte Cassino was sacked by the Lombards and its monks were scattered. Some of them took refuge in Rome, where they came into contact with Pope Gregory the Great. Gregory was not a Benedictine monk, even though he was deeply impressed by their accounts of Benedict's holiness and his Rule. Gregory wrote a biography of the saint that achieved tremendous popularity and widespread support for Benedictine monasticism.

In his work St. Gregory tried to popularise the thought of St. Augustine of Hippo. As a result, his work became highly influential in subsequent centuries. His real genius lay in his keen understanding of human nature and his ability as an administrator and organiser. His treatise' *Pastoral Care'was* a work on the duties and obligations of a bishop is a masterpiece of practical wisdom and common sense. This work became one of the most widely read books in the Middle Ages. His commentary on the 'Books of Job' was instrumental in passing along the techniques of allegorical interpretation that Philo of Alexandria had developed in the first century C.E.

As a theologian, he reorganised the financial structure of the papal estates and used the increased revenues for charitable works to upgrade the wretched poverty of his times. He got a legal position in Rome and its region at a time when the Lombards and Byzantines were struggling for control of the peninsula.

Fig 3.1.5 Pope Greagory The Great

3.5.5.6 The Conversion of the Anglo-Saxons

St.Gregory tried to dispatch a group of monks to convert the pagan Anglo-Saxons.

His mission was led by a monk named St. Augustine of Canterbury (St. Augustine of Hippo) and his followers in Kent, Britain. King Ethelbert of Kent and thousands of his subjects were baptized. Canterbury became the headquarters of the new church and St. Augustine himself became Canterbury's first archbishop. Under his influence King Ethelbert of Kent issued first written laws in the Anglo-Saxon language.

3.5.6 New Monastic Movements

A wide variety of new religious movements emerged. These movements were founded by ardent reformers and they were staffed by men and women who had chosen their religious vocations for themselves as adults. These new monastic movements gave personal choice and serious self-examination of its members. The most demanding of the new orders were Carthusians.

3.5.6.1 The Carthusians

The Carthusians emerged in eastern France in the late 11th century and spread across Western Christendom in the 12th century. The monasteries followed a standardised pattern from the 9th century onwards, except for Carthusian monasteries. Carthusians lived in small groups, worshiping together in communal chapels but otherwise living as hermits in individual cells. In Carthusian monasteries, monks lived in individual cells. The main building of Carthusian monasteries was the church, which is the largest and grandest they could afford. The cloister was the centre of community life where monks might scroll, sit or read. Another meeting place was the Chapter house where abbots held assemblies to discuss important matters.

Fig. 3.1.6 Carthusian Monks
(Source- Google Image)

3.5.6.2 The Cistercians

The Cistercians were a great monastic force of the 12th century. They managed for a time to be both austere and popular. The Cistercians believed that performing manual labour was the best way to lead a holy life. They built large monasteries in remote rural areas. Their estates grew so big that lay brothers (those who had taken holy vows but lacked the education to become monks) were taken on to help. These monasteries had produced their own food.

The key figure of the Cistercian movement in 12th century was St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). He was an incisive charismatic leader. His moral teachings were so immense that he became Europe's leading arbiter of political and ecclesiastical disputes.

Fig. 3.1.7 Cistercian Monks and Nuns
(Source-Google Image)

3.5.6.3 The Dominicans

St. Dominic (1170-1221) was a well-educated Spaniard who travelled to Southern France to preach against Cathars. His simplicity won him considerable renown and some volunteers who joined in his work. He essentially crafted a new direction for his followers. Dominic had learned to emphasise institutional as well as individual poverty from his contemporary St.Francis. For Dominic, the poverty of his preachers was a way to attract converts and save heretics. The Dominican order expanded during the course of the 13th century. Dominicans carried their evangelical activities across Europe and beyond, into the Holy Land, Central Asia, Tibet and China. Dominicans took pride in their nickname *Domini Canes, which means* "hounds of God".

Fig. 3.1.8 Dominican Monks
(Source - Google Image)

3.5.6.4 The Franciscans

St. Francis was the most widely admired figure of the Middle Ages. He was a contemporary of St. Dominic. He underwent a profound religious conversion that occurred in several steps.The medieval West took Francis to its heart and made him a saint. His religious austerity was blunted by those who followed him. After his death in 1226, Franciscan missions were active in France, England, the German States, Hungary, Iberia, North Africa, Turkey and the Holy Land. Francis's captivating personality became a crucial factor in his order's popularity. The Franciscan ideal was based on the imitation of Christ.

Recap

♦ Abbot led monasteries with strict rules

♦ Monks followed silence and daily prayers

♦ Priors managed monastery's daily activities

♦ Officers handled church, property, and supplies

♦ St. Anthony pioneered Christian asceticism

♦ Monasticism spread from East to West

♦ St. Pachomius introduced communal monasticism

♦ St. Basil promoted monastic community life

♦ St. Benedict shaped Western monasticism

♦ New monastic movements reshaped religious life

Objective Questions

1. Who was the head of a monastery?

2. How many daily services did monks attend?

3. Who managed monastery affairs in absence of an Abbot?

4. Which monk lived atop a pillar for 30 years?

5. Who is considered the father of Western monasticism?

6. Which saint introduced the Rule of Communal Monasticism?

7. What did monks provide for travellers?

8. Which monastic leader promoted monasteries in cities?

9. Which order emphasised poverty to convert heretics?

10. Which monastic group lived as hermits in cells?

Answers

1. Abbot

2. Eight

3. Prior

4. Simeon the Stylite

5. St. Benedict

6. St. Pachomius

7. Food and accommodation

8. St. Basil

9. Dominicans

10. Carthusians

Assignments

1. Discuss the role of an Abbot in a monastery.

2. Compare and contrast the monastic rules of St. Pachomius and St. Benedict.

3. Examine the impact of monasticism on medieval society.

4. Analyse the spread of monasticism from East to West.

Suggested Reading

1. Backman, R.Clifford. *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003.

2. Bennett, Judith. *Medieval Europe: A Short History*, McGraw-Hill publications, New York, 2011.

3. Langley, Andrew. *Eyewitness Medieval Life*, D.K Publishing, 2011.

4. Singman, L. Jeffrey. *Daily Life in Medieval Europe*, Greenwood Press, London, 1999.

Reference

1. Backman, Clifford R. *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

2. Bauer, Susan Wise. *The History of the Medieval World*. WW Norton & Company, 2010.

3. Langley, Andrew. *Eyewitness Medieval Life*. DK Publishing, 2011.

4 BLOCK

Medieval China And Japan

Sung, Mongol and Ming Dynasties

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ identify the significant political and administrative innovations of the Sung Dynasty

- ♦ explain the Mongol conquest and its impact on Chinese governance and culture during the Yuan Dynasty

- ♦ analyse the maritime and economic achievements of the Ming Dynasty

- ♦ discuss the role of the Silk Road in facilitating cultural and economic exchanges during the dynastic period

Prerequisites

The medieval period in China marks a transformative era where dynasties like the Song, Yuan and Ming shaped the region's trajectory. This unit introduces the administrative reforms, cultural achievements and economic innovations of these dynasties. Understanding the foundation laid by these periods is crucial for exploring how China evolved as a hub of commerce and culture, influencing the wider Asian region. This groundwork lays the foundation for comprehending the complexities and accomplishments of the major dynasties in medieval China.

Discussion

The medieval period in China, spanning the Sung (Song), Mongol (Yuan) and Ming Dynasties, represents an era of transformative developments in governance, culture, economy and interactions with neighbouring states. This era reflects the continuous evolution of Chinese Civilisation through distinct phases, each marked by its own challenges and achievements.

4.1.1 The Sung Dynasty (960–1279)

The Song Dynasty (960–1279) stands out for its intellectual and economic advancements. As a time of remarkable prosperity, it established innovations in governance, particularly through the civil service examination system, which provided a merit-based pathway to power. The dynasty's commitment to education and cultural refinement laid the groundwork for Neo-Confucianism, an influential philosophical movement. The flourishing urban centers of the Song era became hubs of trade and culture, fostering unprecedented levels of literacy and artistic production. Advances in technology, including the invention of movable type printing and gunpowder, further cemented the Song Dynasty's place as a foundational period in China's medieval history.

4.1.1.1 Foundation and Governance

The Song Dynasty, founded by Emperor Taizu in 960 CE, is renowned for its innovative approach to governance and bureaucratic efficiency. Emperor Taizu's consolidation of power laid the groundwork for a stable and centralised administration. One of the key features of the Song government was the implementation of the civil service examination system, which was based on Confucian principles and aimed at selecting officials based on merit rather than hereditary privilege. This system reduced the dominance of the aristocracy and created a more inclusive government structure. The exams required rigorous study of Confucian texts and emphasised ethical governance, fostering a class of scholar-officials who were deeply committed to public service.

The Song rulers also implemented structural reforms to enhance administrative efficiency. Local governments were granted more autonomy to address regional issues, while central authorities maintained overarching control through a well-organised bureaucracy. This dual system ensured that the needs of the provinces were met without compromising national stability. Additionally, the establishment of academies and schools furthered the education of civil servants and common people, creating a culture of intellectual growth and civic responsibility. The Song Dynasty's approach to governance extended beyond political structures. The rulers actively supported infrastructure projects, such as the construction of canals and improved road networks, which facilitated communication and commerce across the empire. By prioritising both intellectual development and practical governance, the Song Dynasty established a legacy of

administrative excellence that influenced subsequent Chinese dynasties.

4.1.1.2 Economic Advancements

The Song period witnessed a significant economic transformation. Agricultural productivity surged due to innovations such as the widespread adoption of Champa rice, a fast-maturing and drought-resistant strain introduced from Vietnam. This agricultural breakthrough allowed farmers to harvest multiple crops annually, supporting population growth and urban expansion. The empire's cities, including Kaifeng and later Hangzhou, became busy centers of trade, culture and administration. These urban hubs were marked by markets that offered a wide range of goods, from silk and ceramics to tea and spices, fostering a thriving internal and external trade network.

Technological advancements played a crucial role in boosting the economy. The development of movable type printing revolutionised the production of books, making literature and educational texts more accessible and sparking a rise in literacy rates. The use of gunpowder in military expeditions and the invention of the magnetic compass for navigation underscored the innovative spirit of the Song era. These technologies not only enhanced domestic capabilities but also contributed to China's influence in neighbouring regions.

The introduction of paper currency by the Song government was another groundbreaking development. This system facilitated large-scale commercial transactions and reduced the reliance on cumbersome coinage. The establishment of state monopolies on salt and iron further strengthened the central government's economic control, ensuring steady revenue streams. Maritime trade also flourished, with Song ships travelling as far as Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Peninsula. These trading ventures brought foreign goods and ideas to China while spreading Chinese culture and products abroad.

4.1.1.3 Cultural and Intellectual Flourishing

The Song Dynasty was a golden age of cultural and intellectual activity, marked by the emergence of Neo-Confucianism as a dominant philosophical and ethical framework. Pioneered by scholars such as Zhu Xi, Neo-Confucianism sought to harmonise Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist principles, providing a comprehensive guide for personal conduct and governance. Zhu Xi's commentaries on Confucian classics became standard texts for the civil service examinations, shaping the intellectual landscape of China for centuries.

Art and literature flourished under the Song, with landscape painting reaching new heights of sophistication. Artists like Fan Kuan and Guo Xi depicted the natural world with intricate detail and emotional depth, reflecting both Daoist appreciation for nature and Confucian ideals of harmony. Poetry also thrived, with poets like Su Shi (Su Dongpo) creating works that blended wit, insight and personal reflection. Scientific achievements were another hallmark of the Song era. Innovations such as the hydraulic-powered astronomical clock designed by Su Song and advancements in mathematics, including the refinement of algebraic methods, demonstrated the dynasty's commitment to intellectual progress. The Song's emphasis on scientific inquiry and practical knowledge set the stage for later developments in global science and technology.

4.1.2 The Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368)

4.1.2.1 Rise of the Yuan Dynasty

The Mongol conquest led by Kublai Khan marked the establishment of the Yuan Dynasty, the first non-Han Chinese dynasty to rule the entirety of China. The Mongols' military prowess and administrative strategies facilitated their dominance. Kublai Khan, a grandson of Genghis Khan, skillfully consolidated his rule by integrating Mongol military strength with Chinese bureaucratic traditions. The foundation of the Yuan Dynasty was marked by campaigns that unified disparate regions of China, bringing an era of political consolidation after decades of fragmentation.

Kublai Khan's decision to establish the capital in Dadu (modern-day Beijing) symbolised the Yuan's central authority and its emphasis on controlling significant trade routes. The dynasty's military campaigns extended beyond China's borders, with efforts to conquer Japan and Southeast Asia, though not all these endeavours were successful. Nevertheless, the Yuan Dynasty's geo-political reach was unprecedented in Chinese history.

4.1.2.2 Governance and Society

Under Yuan rule, a highly stratified social hierarchy was established, with Mongols at the top, followed by Central Asians, northern Chinese and southern Chinese at the bottom. This hierarchy reflected the Mongol rulers' preference for entrusting administrative and military roles to trusted ethnic groups while limiting the power of the Han Chinese majority. Despite these divisions, the Yuan rulers retained many aspects of Chinese governance, including the civil service examination system, though it was temporarily suspended.

The Mongols introduced administrative innovations that facilitated efficient governance across their vast empire. Postal stations and relay networks enabled rapid communication and the movement of goods and personnel. Additionally, they encouraged cultural and religious diversity, promoting the coexistence of Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. This period also saw the flourishing of artistic and architectural exchanges, as the Mongols patronised Persian, Central Asian and Chinese artisans.

The Yuan Dynasty's rule, however, was not without challenges. Heavy taxation and forced labour policies created widespread resentment among the Chinese population. The disparity in treatment between ethnic groups further sparked social tensions, leading to periodic revolts and uprisings. These internal conflicts, combined with natural disasters and economic instability, eventually weakened the Yuan's grip on power.

4.1.2.3 Cultural and Economic Exchanges

The Yuan period was a golden age of transcontinental trade and cultural exchange, largely due to the stability and safety established by the Pax Mongolica along the Silk Road. The Mongols encouraged and protected the movement of goods, ideas and people across their vast empire, which connected China with Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. This extensive network of exchanges introduced new goods, such as Persian textiles and Middle Eastern glassware, into China while Chinese silk, porcelain and paper made their way westward.

Notable visitors to Yuan China, including the Venetian traveler Marco Polo, documented the wealth, sophistication, and advanced infrastructure of the empire. Marco Polo's

accounts of Kublai Khan's court, grand cities and trade networks offered Europeans a glimpse of the East's riches and inspired future explorations. Similarly, emissaries and scholars from across Asia brought their knowledge and cultural practices, enriching Chinese society. The Yuan Dynasty was also instrumental in the transfer of technologies and scientific knowledge. Techniques such as printing, papermaking and gunpowder manufacturing spread beyond China's borders, profoundly influencing global development. The Mongols fostered an environment of intellectual exchange by welcoming scholars, engineers and craftsmen from diverse regions to share their expertise in areas such as astronomy, medicine and mathematics.

Economically, the Yuan Dynasty saw the introduction of significant monetary reforms. Paper currency, first used during the Song period, became the primary medium of exchange under the Yuan, facilitating large-scale trade and commerce. The dynasty's support for maritime trade extended China's economic influence to Southeast Asia, India and the Arabian Peninsula. The Chinese ships carried silk, ceramics, and tea to distant markets, establishing China as a major player in global trade networks. Culturally, the Yuan era was marked by a fusion of Mongol and Chinese traditions. The Mongols patronised Chinese art forms, including painting and theater, while also introducing Central Asian and Islamic artistic influences. The flourishing of drama during this period, exemplified by the development of Yuan Zaju (a form of Chinese opera), reflected this cultural synthesis. Themes of loyalty, justice and moral dilemmas in Zaju's plays resonated with audiences and became enduring features of Chinese literature.

Religious diversity also thrived under Mongol rule. Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, and Christianity coexisted, with the Mongol court often supporting multiple faiths to maintain harmony among their diverse subjects. The construction of mosques, temples and churches during the Yuan period is a testament to this inclusivity. Despite these achievements, the heavy taxation and forced labour policies imposed by the Yuan rulers generated widespread resentment among the native Chinese population. Combined with economic hardships and natural disasters, it led to growing unrest and contributed to the eventual decline of the Yuan Dynasty.

4.1.3 The Ming Dynasty (1368–1644)

4.1.3.1 Restoration and Stability

The Ming Dynasty founded by Zhu Yuanzhang (Emperor Hongwu), marked a return to Han Chinese rule. Emerging from a peasant background, Emperor Hongwu's rise to power symbolised the reclamation of Chinese authority from foreign domination. The dynasty placed significant emphasis on Confucian values and centralised governance, restoring stability and national identity after nearly a century of Mongol rule.

The Ming rulers implemented policies to strengthen imperial authority and reduce corruption. By abolishing the position of Chancellor and concentrating power within the emperor's court, the Ming established a highly centralised bureaucratic system. This restructuring ensured direct oversight of provincial administrations and minimised the influence of potentially rebellious officials. Land reforms aimed at redistributing agricultural land to peasants further strengthened the rural economy and aligned with Confucian ideals of equity and stability. A key architectural legacy of the Ming Dynasty is the Great Wall of China, which was significantly expanded to defend against potential invasions. The construction of the Forbidden City in Beijing reflected the Ming court's grandeur and the dynasty's

focus on consolidating imperial power.

4.1.3.2 Economic and Maritime Achievements

The Ming era witnessed remarkable economic growth driven by advancements in agriculture, trade and industry. The introduction of new farming techniques, such as crop rotation and improved irrigation systems, boosted agricultural productivity. Crops like sweet potatoes and maize introduced from the Americas diversified the Chinese diet and increased food security.

Maritime trade flourished during the early Ming period, highlighted by the legendary voyages of Admiral Zheng He. Commanding a vast fleet of treasure ships, Zheng He led expeditions across the Indian Ocean, reaching as far as East Africa. These voyages established diplomatic ties, expanded trade networks and showcased China's naval prowess. Commodities such as silk, porcelain and tea were exchanged for exotic goods, including spices, ivory and precious stones. Domestically, the Ming saw a surge in artisanal production and commerce. The porcelain industry, centered in Jingdezhen, achieved new heights in craftsmanship and innovation. Ming porcelain became highly sought after in international markets, symbolising the dynasty's economic and artistic achievements. The use of silver as a standard currency facilitated trade and connected China to global economies, particularly through Spanish and Japanese silver imports.

4.1.3.3 Cultural Contributions

The Ming Dynasty is often regarded as a golden age of Chinese culture marked by significant achievements in literature, art and intellectual pursuits. The publication of massive encyclopedias, such as the Yongle Encyclopedia, demonstrated the dynasty's commitment to preserving and disseminating knowledge. Fiction flourished during this period, with novels like Journey to the West, Water Margin and The Plum in the Golden Vase becoming literary classics that continue to influence Chinese culture.

Artistic endeavours during the Ming era were characterised by innovation and refinement. Ming painters, such as Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming, contributed to the Wu School of painting, which is known for its elegant and expressive brushwork. The decorative arts, including lacquerware and textiles also thrived, reflecting the dynasty's artistic sophistication. Religious and philosophical thought during the Ming period saw a revival of Confucianism, which was integrated with Buddhist and Taoist elements. This intellectual synthesis fostered a holistic approach to governance and personal conduct. However, the later Ming period was marked by increasing isolationism and a focus on internal stability, leading to a decline in international engagement.

4.1.3.4 Challenges and Decline

Despite its achievements, the Ming Dynasty faced significant challenges that contributed to its eventual decline. Economic strain from costly military campaigns, corruption within the bureaucracy and natural disasters weakened the central government. Peasant uprisings and invasions by the Manchus ultimately led to the fall of the Ming Dynasty in 1644, paving the way for the Qing Dynasty.

4.1.3.5 Legacy of Sung, Yuan and Ming Dynasties

The Sung, Yuan and Ming Dynasties collectively shaped medieval China's trajectory, leaving a profound legacy in governance, culture and international relations. Each dynasty contributed uniquely to China's development, the Song with its intellectual and economic advancements, the Yuan through its facilitation of global

trade, and the Ming with its restoration of Han Chinese traditions and cultural achievements. Together, these dynasties created a dynamic and interconnected society, where cultural, technological and economic progress influenced not only China but also its neighbours and trade partners.

The Song Dynasty's innovations in agriculture, printing and governance laid the foundation for a more advanced and prosperous society. The Yuan Dynasty's emphasis on trade and cultural exchange transformed China into a hub of global interaction, enriching both its economy and its cultural identity. The Ming Dynasty, in turn, represented a period of consolidation, artistic brilliance and global outreach, though it eventually retreated into isolationism. The combined legacies of these dynasties highlight the enduring significance of medieval China in shaping the history of East Asia and the broader world.

While each of these dynasties differed in their approaches to governance and cultural priorities, together they represent a dynamic period in medieval Chinese history. The advancements in governance, economic integration, and cultural exchange during the Song, Yuan, and Ming periods not only shaped China's internal development but also influenced the broader East Asian world.

Recap

- ◆ The Sung dynasty established a centralized and efficient bureaucracy

- ◆ Civil service exams emphasised Confucian ethics and governance

- ◆ Local governments gained autonomy, but central oversight remained strong

- ◆ Integrated Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist ideas, shaping governance and education

- ◆ Kublai Khan was the first non-Han ruler to govern all of China

- ◆ He combined Mongol military strength with Chinese bureaucratic traditions

- ◆ Capital moved to Dadu (modern-day Beijing), emphasising control over trade routes

- ◆ Expanded military campaigns to Japan and Southeast Asia, though not all were successful

- ◆ The Ming dynasty was founded by Zhu Yuanzhang (Emperor Hongwu), marking the return to Han Chinese rule

- ◆ It emphasised Confucian values and centralised governance to restore stability

- Abolished the Chancellor position, concentrating power within the emperor's court

- Land reforms redistributed agricultural land to peasants, strengthening the rural economy

Objective Questions

1. Who founded the Song Dynasty?

2. What system did the Yuan Dynasty use to ensure efficient governance?

3. What major architectural project symbolises the Ming Dynasty's authority?

4. What type of rice revolutionised agriculture in the Song period?

5. Which dynasty facilitated the Pax Mongolica?

6. Who led the Ming Dynasty's maritime expeditions?

7. Which philosophy dominated the Song Dynasty's intellectual scene?

8. Which empire's fall marked the rise of the Yuan Dynasty?

9. Which artistic school was associated with Ming painters Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming?

10. Which philosophical tradition experienced a revival during the Ming period?

Answers

1. Emperor Taizu

2. Postal Relay System

3. Forbidden City

4. Champa Rice

5. Yuan Dynasty

6. Zheng He

7. Neo-Confucianism

8. Song Dynasty

9. Wu School

10. Confucianism

Assignments

1. Analyse the impact of the Ming Dynasty's maritime trade and its eventual shift towards isolationism

2. Describe the economic significance of the Silk Road during the Yuan period.

3. Discuss the key contributions of Admiral Zheng He's voyages.

4. Discuss the cultural exchanges facilitated by the Yuan Dynasty.

5. Explain the contribution of the Song Dynasty.

Suggested Reading

1. Bauer, Susan Wise. *The History of the Medieval World*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.

2. Brandt, William J. *The Shape of Medieval History*. Yale University Press, 1966.

3. Brook, Timothy. *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010.

4. Davis, R. H. C. *A History of Medieval Europe*. Pearson Longman, 2006.

5. Dreyer, Edward L. *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433*. Pearson Longman, 2007.

6. Runciman, Steven. *A History of the Crusades*. CUP Archive, 1987.

Reference

1. Graff, David A. *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300–900*. Routledge, 2002.

2. Holcombe, Charles. *A History of East Asia: From the Origins of Civilization to the Twenty-First Century.* Cambridge University Press, 2011.

3. Souyri, Pierre François. *The World Turned Upside Down: Medieval Japanese Society.* Columbia University Press, 2001.

4. Twitchett, Denis, and Peter J. Smith, editors. *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 5: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279.* Cambridge University Press, 2009.

2 UNIT

Political Isolation under the Ming

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ describe the early Ming Dynasty's engagement with global trade and diplomacy

♦ explain the reasons behind the Ming's transition to isolationism

♦ analyse the economic implications of the *Haijin* (sea ban) policy

♦ discuss the Ming's cultural and intellectual achievements during its isolationist period

Prerequisites

The Ming Dynasty's political policies serve as a fascinating study in contrast to early expansive maritime engagements and later strict isolationism. Understanding the motivations behind these shifts and their implications on trade, society and culture provides essential context for grasping the larger narrative of China's medieval evolution. This unit examines the dynamics that led to the Ming's unique approach to foreign relations and internal stability.

Keywords

Haijin Policy, Tributary System, Great Wall Defense, Confucian Revival, Kamikaze

Discussion

4.2.1. The Ming Dynasty (1368–1644)

The Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) is remembered for its complex and transformative governance. A defining feature of this period was the gradual shift towards political and cultural isolation. While the early Ming rulers, such as Emperor Yongle expanded China's influence through naval expeditions and trade, later emperors adopted an inward-focused approach. This retreat into isolationism reshaped China's political interactions, economic policies and cultural identity, leaving an enduring legacy in the history of East Asia.

The Ming rulers' initial decades saw unprecedented efforts to establish diplomatic ties, assert dominance and secure trade networks across distant regions. However, these ambitions eventually gave way to a cautious and restrictive outlook. The shift was not merely a reaction to external challenges but also a deliberate attempt to consolidate internal order and safeguard the empire's resources. By emphasising self-reliance and minimising foreign influences, the Ming Dynasty sought to preserve the purity of its cultural and political traditions.

This inward turn was influenced by several factors, including the high costs of maintaining a maritime presence, concerns over the disruptive potential of foreign contacts, and the need to address internal administrative and military challenges. Isolationism, therefore, was not an abrupt policy shift but a calculated strategy that unfolded over decades, reflecting the priorities and worldview of successive emperors. The underlying belief in China's self-sufficiency further reinforced this trajectory, as the Ming court perceived the empire as a self-contained civilisation capable of flourishing without external dependencies.

As the empire withdrew from international affairs, the Ming rulers focused on consolidating their authority within China's borders. This involved significant investments in infrastructure, such as the extension of the Great Wall, to deter northern threats. Additionally, the strengthening of local governance through reforms in the tax system and agricultural policies highlighted the dynasty's commitment to ensuring domestic stability. These efforts not only bolstered internal cohesion but also reflected the Ming's broader vision of centralised control and cultural unity.

While political isolation limited China's external interactions, it also enabled the Ming Dynasty to foster a vibrant cultural and intellectual environment. The relative peace and stability of this period allowed for advancements in literature, philosophy and the arts. The compilation of encyclopedias, the refinement of Confucian thought and the flourishing of traditional artistic forms underscored the dynasty's emphasis on cultural preservation and innovation. However, this focus on internal development came at the expense of adaptability, as China became increasingly detached from global technological and economic trends.

The Ming Dynasty's shift towards political and cultural isolation is a critical chapter in the history of East Asia. It illustrates the complexities of balancing internal priorities with external opportunities, as well as the long-term implications of isolationist policies on a civilisation's trajectory. This nuanced approach to governance and its enduring legacy continue to shape discussions on the interplay between domestic stability and global engagement.

4.2.1.1 Naval Expeditions and Trade

The early Ming Dynasty marked an era of unprecedented maritime strength, with Admiral Zheng He leading seven expansive voyages between 1405 and 1433. Zheng He's fleets, consisting of hundreds of ships and tens of thousands of sailors, symbolised the height of Chinese naval engineering and organisational expertise. These voyages spanned Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa, establishing China's dominance in maritime trade and diplomacy. These expeditions were not solely commercial ventures but also served as platforms to project the Ming Dynasty's power and prestige. They aimed to reinforce the tributary system by securing allegiances from foreign rulers, who sent envoys bearing gifts in recognition of China's supremacy. In return, these states gained access to valuable Chinese goods, including silk, porcelain and tea. This exchange not only strengthened diplomatic ties but also enriched China's economy by integrating it into a vast network of global trade.

Zheng He's expeditions brought a wealth of knowledge and cultural exchange to China. Exotic animals like giraffes, spices and precious gemstones introduced during these voyages expanded the horizons of Chinese society. These exchanges also facilitated the transfer of technologies and ideas, enhancing China's understanding of foreign lands and their resources. However, these voyages required significant resources, including funding, workforce and logistical support, which later rulers viewed as unsustainable.

4.2.1.2 Tributary System

The Ming foreign policy was the tributary system, a hierarchical framework through which neighbouring states acknowledged China's cultural and political superiority. This system was deeply rooted in Confucian principles, emphasising harmony, hierarchy and mutual benefit. States such as Korea, Vietnam and the Ryukyu Kingdom regularly sent envoys to the Ming court, offering tribute and receiving gifts and trade privileges in return.

The tributary system allowed China to assert its influence without direct military intervention. By fostering a network of loyal states, the Ming Dynasty created a stable regional order that underscored its role as the "Middle Kingdom." This arrangement facilitated the exchange of goods, technologies and cultural practices, enriching both China and its tributary states. For example, Chinese agricultural techniques, printing methods and Confucian ideals significantly influenced the development of neighbouring societies. The tributary system also served as a diplomatic tool to manage relations with more distant powers. By recognising China's authority, foreign rulers gained legitimacy and access to Chinese markets. This arrangement reinforced the Ming Dynasty's perception of itself as the center of a civilised world, a concept that shaped its domestic and foreign policies.

While the tributary system was highly effective in maintaining regional stability, it was not without challenges. The rise of European maritime powers, such as Portugal and Spain, introduced new dynamics that gradually eroded the influence of the traditional system. Moreover, internal debates within the Ming court over the costs and benefits of maintaining such a network contributed to the dynasty's eventual retreat from active global engagement.

4.2.2 Transition to Isolationism

4.2.2.1 Decline of Maritime Ambitions

By the mid-15th century, the Ming

government's attitude towards maritime endeavours shifted drastically. Earlier maritime expeditions, which had projected the dynasty's power across the Indian Ocean, were deemed too resource-intensive to sustain. Emperor Xuande and his successors focused on internal stability and decided to halt overseas ventures. This decision included the dismantling of Zheng He's massive fleet and a prohibition on constructing large ocean-going vessels. While intended to conserve resources and prevent over-extension, this marked the end of China's maritime dominance.

4.2.2.2 Economic Policy Shifts

The Ming Dynasty's adoption of the "Haijin" or sea ban policy further reinforced its isolationist stance. This regulation severely restricted private maritime trade and sought to curb piracy along the coastline. However, the policy inadvertently stifled legitimate trade and undermined coastal economies dependent on seaborne commerce. Coastal towns that once thrived on trade with Southeast Asia and beyond suffered economic stagnation. Many merchants were forced to turn to smuggling, leading to an increase in illicit activities along China's shores.

The Ming's prioritisation of land-based trade routes, such as the Silk Road reflected an attempt to sustain economic activity while minimising external influences. However, these routes faced increasing competition from European maritime powers, whose dominance in global trade networks gradually diminished the Silk Road's significance. The shift in trade dynamics left China increasingly isolated from emerging economic opportunities in the Indian Ocean and beyond.

4.2.2.3 Cultural Insularity

The Ming rulers also sought to minimise foreign influences, viewing them as potential disruptors of Confucian moral order. By discouraging the adoption of foreign technologies, religions and philosophies, the court aimed to preserve traditional Chinese values and social harmony. Foreign religions like Christianity brought by Jesuit missionaries were met with suspicion and often restricted to prevent perceived ideological threats.

This insularity extended to scientific and technological advancements. While China had been a leader in innovation during earlier periods, the Ming court's reluctance to embrace new ideas from abroad stunted progress. For instance, European advancements in navigation, astronomy and military technology were largely ignored, leaving China increasingly unprepared to compete with global powers in the early modern era. Despite this, the emphasis on preserving Confucian values strengthened national identity and reinforced the Ming Dynasty's cultural cohesion.

4.2.3 Consequences of Isolation

4.2.3.1 Domestic Stability and Cultural Flourishing

The Ming Dynasty's political isolation enabled the government to focus intensely on internal stability, leading to significant advancements in agriculture and culture. Improved irrigation systems and the introduction of high-yield crops like sweet potatoes and maize supported a rapidly growing population. These agricultural innovations ensured food security and allowed for surplus production, which contributed to the stability of rural economies.

Culturally, the Ming period witnessed a flourishing of art, literature and philosophy. The compilation of the Yongle Encyclopedia, the most extensive collection of knowledge in pre-modern China, underscored the dynasty's intellectual ambitions. Ming porcelain,

produced in Jingdezhen became renowned worldwide for its intricate craftsmanship and aesthetic appeal, symbolising China's artistic sophistication. Additionally, the period saw the rise of significant literary works, including novels like Journey to the West and Water Margin, which reflected the complexities of Chinese society and governance.

Philosophically, the Ming Dynasty revived and refined Confucian ideals, promoting them as the foundation of moral governance and social order. This cultural renaissance reinforced a cohesive national identity and inspired advancements in education, as schools and academies proliferated to disseminate Confucian teachings. Despite the lack of foreign engagement, the Ming era's cultural achievements laid the groundwork for enduring traditions in Chinese art and thought.

4.2.3.2 Weakening of Global Influence

The Ming Dynasty's retreat from active global engagement marked the beginning of a decline in China's influence on the world stage. The cessation of naval expeditions and the enforcement of the Haijin policy limited China's participation in the growing maritime trade networks dominated by European powers. Portugal, Spain, and later the Dutch and English filled the void left by China, asserting control over lucrative trade routes in the Indian Ocean and beyond.

China's diminishing global influence was not only economic but also diplomatic. While the tributary system maintained limited regional interactions, it could not match the extensive networks established by European colonial powers. This relative isolation hindered China's ability to adapt to new technologies and economic systems that were transforming global trade and geopolitics.

The decline in maritime trade also affected domestic economies. Coastal regions that had previously thrived on international commerce experienced economic stagnation, forcing many communities to rely on smuggling and illicit trade. This shift weakened the central government's control over these areas and contributed to internal dissent, further eroding China's capacity to project power externally.

4.2.3.3 Susceptibility to External Threats

While isolationism allowed the Ming government to focus on fortifying its borders, it ultimately left the empire susceptible to external threats. The expansion of the Great Wall, though monumental, proved insufficient against the growing power of the Manchus, who posed a significant challenge from the northeast. The Ming's limited engagement with neighbouring states and external powers meant that it could not form effective alliances or gather intelligence to counter emerging threats.

Additionally, the isolationist stance hindered the adoption of military innovations. European advancements in gunpowder weaponry, fortifications and naval technology were largely ignored by the Ming court, leaving China at a strategic disadvantage. When the Manchus launched their campaigns, the Ming's outdated military strategies and technologies were no match for the highly organised and well-equipped Qing forces.

The inward focus also contributed to administrative inefficiencies and corruption within the Ming bureaucracy. With limited external challenges to unite the empire, factionalism and power struggles became more pronounced, weakening the central government. This internal instability, combined with external pressures, culminated in the eventual fall of the Ming Dynasty in 1644, when the Manchus established the Qing Dynasty. The Ming Dynasty's transition from active engagement with the

world to political isolation had profound and lasting effects on China's history. While isolationism fostered domestic stability and cultural achievements, it also limited China's global influence and economic growth. This inward turn shaped the trajectory of Chinese civilisation, reflecting both the strengths and vulnerabilities of a centralised and self-reliant empire.

Recap

- Ming-era ban on private maritime trade to combat piracy and protect sovereignty

- diplomatic framework in which neighboring states acknowledged China's suzerainty in exchange for trade privileges and political recognition

- A massive compendium of knowledge compiled during the reign of Emperor Yongle

- Zheng He's fleet carried giraffes from Africa to China as gifts for the emperor

- The Haijin policy, while aimed at curbing piracy, inadvertently stifled legitimate trade and led to the rise of illicit smuggling networks

- The construction of the Great Wall during the Ming period solidified its role as a symbol of Chinese resilience against northern invasions.

- Emperor Yongle's relocation of the capital to Beijing and construction of the Forbidden City symbolised the dynasty's centralised authority

- The Ming's reliance on tribute rather than trade shaped its foreign relations for centuries

- The suppression of private maritime trade under the Haijin led to economic challenges along the coastal provinces

Objective Questions

1. What was the primary purpose of Zheng He's voyages?

2. What policy restricted maritime trade during the Ming period?

3. Which emperor initiated the construction of the Forbidden City?

4. What was the main philosophy revived during the Ming era?

5. What region's trade routes became a focus during the Ming's isolation?

6. Which Chinese literary classics reflect the complexities of Chinese society and governance?

7. Who established the Qing Dynasty?

Answers

1. Establishing Tributary Relations

2. Haijin Policy

3. Emperor Yongle

4. Confucianism

5. Silk Road

6. Journey to the West and Water Margin

7. The Manchus

Assignments

1. Discuss the factors that led the Ming Dynasty to adopt isolationist policies.

2. Describe the role of the tributary system in the Ming's foreign policy.

3. Analyse the primary achievements of the Emperor Yongle.

4. Critically analyse how isolationism influenced the Ming's cultural landscape.

5. Analyse the Ming Dynasty's reliance on the Great Wall for defense.

Suggested Reading

1. Bauer, Susan Wise. *The History of the Medieval World*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.

2. Brandt, William J. *The Shape of Medieval History*. Yale University Press, 1966.

3. Brook, Timothy. *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010.

4. Davis, R. H. C. *A History of Medieval Europe*. Pearson Longman, 2006.

5. Dreyer, Edward L. *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433*. Pearson Longman, 2007.

6. Runciman, Steven. *A History of the Crusades*. CUP Archive, 1987.

Reference

1. Andrade, Tonio. *The Gunpowder Age: China, Military Innovation, and the Rise of the West in World History*. Princeton University Press, 2016.

2. Brook, Timothy. *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010.

3. Dreyer, Edward L. *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433*. Pearson Longman, 2007.

4. Mote, Frederick W. *Imperial China: 900–1800*. Harvard University Press, 1999.

UNIT 3

The Manchus and Feudalism in China

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ identify the origins and expansion of the Qing Dynasty

♦ explain the structure and function of the Eight Banners system

♦ discuss the characteristics of feudalism in Qing China

♦ analyse the social and economic roles of landlords and peasants under the Qing

Prerequisites

The Qing Dynasty's rise marks a significant chapter in China's history, characterised by Manchu innovation and integration with traditional Chinese governance. This unit sets the stage for understanding how the Manchus consolidated power and implemented a unique system of administration and feudal relationships. It is essential to explore the Qing's distinct approach to governance, which combined traditional Confucian principles with their own cultural identity, shaping the empire's complex socio-economic fabric.

Keywords

Qing Dynasty, Eight Banners, Queue Hairstyle, Confucian Governance, Landlord-Tenant System, White Lotus Rebellion, Manchu Identity, Feudal Hierarchies

Discussion

4.3.1 The Rise of the Manchu Qing Dynasty

The rise of the Manchu Qing Dynasty in 1644 marked a pivotal moment in Chinese history, signalling the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of a transformative era. Emerging from the northeast, the Manchus, originally a confederation of Jurchen tribes, unified under the leadership of Nurhaci and later Hong Taiji. With their military strength and strategic wisdom, they successfully overthrew the Ming and established the Qing Dynasty, which lasted until 1912, making it the last imperial dynasty of China.

The Manchus' governance reshaped the political, social and economic landscape of China. Their rule combined traditional Chinese bureaucratic practices, such as the civil service examination system, with their own distinct cultural identity, including the establishment of the Eight Banners system. This blending ensured administrative stability while maintaining a clear distinction between Manchu and Han Chinese elites. The Qing Dynasty's policies strengthened central authority while also expanding China's territorial boundaries to include regions like Tibet, Xinjiang and Mongolia.

Simultaneously, the socio-political framework of pre-modern China was heavily influenced by the concept of feudalism, albeit distinct from its European counterpart. In China, feudalism was characterised by hierarchical relationships among the state, landlords and peasants. Landlords wielded significant power in rural areas, often functioning as intermediaries between the imperial government and the peasantry. This structure created a deeply stratified society where economic disparities were pronounced and peasants bore the brunt of heavy taxation and labour obligations.

4.3.1.1 Origins and Early Expansion

The Manchus trace their origins to the Jurchen tribes of Northeast Asia, a semi-nomadic people with deep-rooted traditions of tribal governance and military organisation. These tribes were unified under the leadership of Nurhaci, a charismatic and strategic leader, in the late 16th century. Nurhaci's efforts culminated in the establishment of the Later Jin Dynasty in 1616. His introduction of the Eight Banners system, a revolutionary military and administrative structure, played a pivotal role in consolidating power. This system divided the Manchu population into eight distinct groups, each with its own military and civilian responsibilities, fostering unity and discipline among the tribes.

Nurhaci's successor, Hong Taiji, expanded upon these foundations. Recognising the need for a broader identity to unify their diverse subjects, Hong Taiji renamed the state the Qing Dynasty in 1636. This rebranding signalled the Manchus' ambition to rule all of China. Hong Taiji also initiated reforms to integrate Han Chinese elites into their governance structure, laying the groundwork for a more inclusive and sustainable administration.

4.3.1.2 Overthrow of the Ming Dynasty

The collapse of the Ming Dynasty provided a significant opportunity for the Manchus to establish their rule. The Ming court was plagued by internal corruption, fiscal crises and widespread peasant uprisings, such as the rebellion led by Li Zicheng. These challenges left the dynasty vulnerable and eroded its legitimacy among the population. In 1644, the Manchus capitalised on this

instability through a strategic alliance with Ming general Wu Sangui. Facing an imminent threat from Li Zicheng's rebel forces, Wu Sangui opened the gates at Shanhai Pass on the Great Wall, allowing the Manchu army to enter Beijing. Once in the capital, the Manchus swiftly consolidated their power, installing the young Shunzhi Emperor as the Qing ruler. The transition from Ming to Qing rule was marked by a combination of military campaigns and strategic diplomacy. The Manchus employed the Eight Banners system to maintain order and suppress resistance, ensuring a relatively smooth consolidation of their authority across China. By incorporating Han Chinese officials into their administration and promoting policies that balanced Manchu and Chinese interests, the Qing rulers solidified their legitimacy and set the stage for nearly three centuries of rule.

4.3.1.2 Manchu Governance

Integration of Han Chinese Bureaucracy

The Qing rulers were acutely aware of the need to balance their rule between Manchu and Han Chinese populations. To ensure administrative stability and legitimacy, they maintained the long-standing Confucian bureaucratic system, which had been central to Chinese governance for centuries. The civil service examination system rooted in Confucian philosophy continued to be the primary mechanism for recruiting officials. This system upheld the meritocratic ideals that were deeply ingrained in Chinese political culture, allowing talented Han Chinese individuals to ascend to positions of power.

However, the Qing also implemented measures to retain their dominance. They established parallel institutions that prioritised Manchu interests, most notably through the Eight Banners system. This structure not only functioned as a military

framework but also served as a mechanism for placing Manchu bannermen in significant administrative and military roles. These dual systems ensured that the Qing court retained control over critical aspects of governance while integrating Han Chinese elites into the broader administrative apparatus. This delicate balance helped prevent large-scale dissent and fostered a sense of continuity between the Ming and Qing administrations.

4.3.1.3 Cultural Policies

Cultural integration and preservation were central to Qing governance. The Qing rulers adopted many Chinese traditions, including Confucian rituals, festivals and ceremonies, to legitimise their rule. However, they also sought to preserve their distinct Manchu identity. This dual approach was evident in policies such as the enforcement of the queue hairstyle, which required all men to shave their foreheads and wear their hair in a braid. This mandate symbolised loyalty to the Qing regime and served as a visible marker of submission.

The Qing court also promoted the Manchu language and customs, ensuring their preservation despite the overwhelming influence of Chinese culture. Bannermen (elite military units and hereditary warriors of the Qing Dynasty) and their families were encouraged to maintain traditional Manchu practices, including archery and horseback riding. This cultural duality adopting Chinese traditions while preserving Manchu heritage was a hallmark of Qing governance, reflecting the dynasty's efforts to balance integration with cultural distinctiveness.

4.3.1.4 Military Expansion and Diplomacy

The Qing Dynasty's territorial expansion was one of its most enduring achievements. Through a combination of military campaigns and strategic diplomacy, the Qing

incorporated vast regions into the Chinese empire, including Tibet, Xinjiang and Mongolia. These expansions were not merely territorial but also aimed at securing the empire's borders and asserting its dominance in East Asia. The Qing's tributary system reinforced its regional authority, establishing relationships with neighbouring states such as Korea, Vietnam and the Ryukyu Kingdom. These states recognised China's suzerainty in exchange for trade privileges and political protection. This system not only ensured regional stability but also bolstered the Qing's image as the "Middle Kingdom", the cultural and political center of East Asia.

Despite its successes, the Qing's military campaigns often placed significant strain on the empire's resources. The costs of maintaining large armies and managing distant territories sometimes led to internal discontent and fiscal challenges. Nevertheless, the Qing Dynasty's ability to expand and consolidate its territory remains a testament to its military and administrative wisdom.

4.3.2 Feudalism in China

Feudalism in China presents a distinct framework compared to its European counterpart. In Europe, feudalism often referred to decentralised power structures where lords granted land to vassals in exchange for military service and allegiance. In contrast, Chinese feudalism revolved around hierarchical land ownership and agrarian production, rooted in Confucian ideals of harmony and order. The state maintained ultimate authority over the land, but local landlords exercised significant power, functioning as intermediaries between the imperial government and the peasantry.

The hierarchical system created a social structure where landlords controlled vast estates, and peasants, who constituted the majority of the population, worked on the land. Unlike in Europe, where feudal lords held considerable autonomy, Chinese landlords operated under the oversight of a centralised state. This dynamic ensured the continuity of imperial rule while simultaneously entrenching economic disparities in rural society.

4.3.2.1 Land Ownership and the Peasantry

Land ownership in Qing China was characterised by a significant concentration of wealth. Large estates were often owned by gentry families who leased land to tenant farmers. These tenants paid rent in cash or a share of their harvest, leaving them vulnerable to fluctuations in agricultural production and market prices. Peasants were also subject to additional burdens, including taxes and corvée labour (unpaid and forced labour) obligations imposed by the state. While some wealthier peasants managed to accumulate modest landholdings, the majority remained dependent on landlords, perpetuating cycles of poverty and exploitation. This system created significant economic disparities, fostering resentment among the rural populace. Periodic uprisings, such as the White Lotus Rebellion, reflected the tensions inherent in this feudal structure.

4.3.2.2 Economic and Social Implications

The feudal structure had profound economic and social implications for Qing China. While it enabled agricultural productivity and sustained the empire's vast population, it also entrenched inequalities that hindered economic mobility. The dependence of the peasantry on landlords created a rigid social hierarchy, limiting opportunities for upward mobility and perpetuating cycles of exploitation. The economic disparities inherent in this system contributed to the destabilisation of rural areas, particularly during periods of famine or economic downturn. As discontent grew,

it often manifested in large-scale rebellions, challenging the Qing government's ability to maintain order. The interplay between feudal structures and state authority thus remained a defining feature of Qing China, shaping its political, economic and social landscape.

4.3.2.3 Rural Economy

The agrarian economy under the Qing Dynasty formed the backbone of Chinese society, supporting the livelihoods of the majority of the population. Agricultural advancements during this period significantly enhanced productivity. Improved irrigation systems, including the construction of canals and water reservoirs, ensured more efficient use of arable land. Crop rotation techniques and the adoption of New World crops such as sweet potatoes, maize, and peanuts diversified agricultural production and bolstered food security. These innovations helped sustain a rapidly growing population estimated to have reached over 400 million by the late Qing period.

Despite these advancements, the unequal distribution of land perpetuated systemic poverty among rural communities. Large tracts of land were controlled by wealthy landlords, while tenant farmers and landless labourers struggled to make ends meet. Heavy taxation, combined with rent obligations, often left peasants with little surplus, making them vulnerable to famine and economic downturns. In times of poor harvests or natural disasters, rural economies faced severe disruptions, leading to widespread suffering and discontent. The rural economy's reliance on agriculture also limited opportunities for diversification and industrial growth. Unlike Europe, where proto-industrialisation emerged during the early modern period, Qing China's feudal framework discouraged significant shifts away from agrarian production. This economic stagnation contributed to the empire's inability to compete with rapidly industrialising nations in the 19th century.

4.3.2.4 Social Hierarchies

The Qing feudal system reinforced a rigid social hierarchy that defined individuals' roles and opportunities within society. At the apex of this structure were the Manchu nobility and Han gentry, who held significant political and economic power. Landlords, positioned just below these elites, controlled vast estates and exerted considerable influence over rural communities. Tenant farmers and labourers constituted the lower tiers, enduring harsh working conditions and limited mobility.

This stratification was deeply rooted in Confucian ideals, which emphasised harmony and order within a hierarchical framework. The gentry's role as intermediaries between the state and the peasantry was seen as essential to maintaining social stability. However, this arrangement also entrenched inequalities, as landlords often exploited their tenants through exorbitant rents and corvée labour demands. Periodic uprisings, such as the White Lotus Rebellion (1796–1804), highlighted the tensions inherent in this system. Sparked by economic hardships and resentment toward local elites, these rebellions underscored the peasantry's dissatisfaction with the feudal order. While the Qing government managed to suppress such movements, they exposed the vulnerabilities of a society divided along class lines.

4.3.2.5 Role of Women in Rural Society

Women in rural Qing China faced additional challenges within the feudal framework. Confucian norms dictated strict gender roles, emphasising women's subordination to male family members. Most rural women contributed to household economies through agricultural labour, textile

production and other domestic tasks. Despite their contributions, they were often denied property rights and faced limited access to education or opportunities for upward mobility. Widows and unmarried women were particularly vulnerable, as they lacked the support networks provided by traditional family structures. Some women found ways to navigate these constraints, such as participating in informal labour markets or engaging in local trade, but systemic inequalities persisted throughout the Qing period.

4.3.2.6 State Interventions in Agrarian Life

The Qing government occasionally implemented land reforms to address these inequalities. Policies like the "equal field system" aimed to distribute land more equitably among peasants, but these efforts were often undermined by local elites who resisted state interference. Additionally, the government's reliance on tax revenues from landlords limited its ability to enforce such reforms consistently. Despite these challenges, the state played an active role in regulating agrarian life. Officials oversaw irrigation projects, implemented grain storage systems to mitigate famine and attempted to mediate disputes between landlords and tenants. However, these interventions often fell short of addressing the systemic issues underlying rural poverty and social unrest.

4.3.2.7 Economic Challenges

The economic challenges inherent in the feudal system became increasingly apparent during the late Qing period. Population growth outpaced agricultural expansion, leading to diminishing returns and greater pressure on rural communities. Environmental degradation, including deforestation and soil erosion, further strained the agrarian economy. These factors contributed to widespread poverty and periodic famines,

which eroded the legitimacy of the Qing regime.

The arrival of Western powers in the 19th century exacerbated these issues. Unequal treaties imposed after the Opium Wars opened Chinese markets to foreign exploitation, disrupting local economies and undermining traditional industries. The influx of imported goods, such as British textiles, displaced domestic production, leaving many rural households without alternative sources of income. These external pressures compounded the internal weaknesses of Qing feudalism, accelerating the empire's decline.

4.3.3 Decline of Feudalism and the Qing Dynasty

4.3.3.1 Internal Challenges

By the 19th century, the Qing Dynasty faced mounting internal challenges that severely undermined its stability. Population growth had surged during the preceding centuries, but agricultural production failed to keep pace. This imbalance resulted in widespread famine and discontent among the peasantry, who bore the brunt of the empire's economic inefficiencies. Environmental degradation, including deforestation and soil erosion, compounded these problems, making arable land increasingly scarce.

Corruption within the Qing bureaucracy further exacerbated these issues. Officials frequently misappropriated funds meant for public works, such as irrigation projects and famine relief, leading to the collapse of critical infrastructure. This inefficiency weakened the state's capacity to govern effectively, eroding public trust in the regime. Additionally, the reliance on local elites for tax collection created a system rife with abuse, as landlords exploited their positions to extract exorbitant rents and levies from already impoverished peasants.

Social unrest became increasingly common

as these pressures mounted. Movements such as the Nian Rebellion (1851–1868) highlighted the growing dissatisfaction with the Qing government's inability to address the needs of its people. These internal challenges signalled the beginning of the end for the feudal system that had underpinned Qing rule for centuries.

4.3.3.2 External Pressures

The arrival of Western powers during the 19th century exposed the Qing Dynasty's weakness on an unprecedented scale. The Opium Wars (1839–1842, 1856–1860) marked the beginning of a series of conflicts that severely undermined China's sovereignty. The Treaty of Nanking (1842), which concluded the First Opium War, imposed unequal terms on the Qing government, including the cession of Hong Kong to Britain and the opening of several treaty ports to foreign trade.

These treaties disrupted traditional economic structures by flooding Chinese markets with foreign goods, particularly British textiles, which displaced domestic production. The influx of opium further destabilises society, exacerbating poverty and addiction across all levels of Chinese society. The Qing government's inability to counter these developments revealed its military and technological inferiority compared to industrialised Western nations. The broader geo-political context also played a role in accelerating the Qing's decline. The emergence of global trade networks marginalised China's traditional tributary system, which had long been a cornerstone of its regional influence. The loss of control over its peripheries, including regions such as Taiwan and Korea, further diminished the Qing's standing on the world stage.

4.3.3.3 Rebellions and Reform Movements

The widespread dissatisfaction with the feudal system and Qing rule culminated in a series of uprisings that shook the empire to its core. The Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864) led by Hong Xiuquan was one of the most significant of these movements. Inspired by a blend of Christian theology and anti-Manchu sentiment, the Taiping movement sought to overthrow the Qing Dynasty and establish a new social order based on equality and shared wealth. Although ultimately suppressed, the rebellion caused massive devastation, resulting in the loss of millions of lives and the destruction of vast swathes of agricultural land.

Other uprisings, such as the Dungan Revolt (1862–1877) and the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901), further highlighted the Qing government's inability to maintain control. These rebellions, driven by a combination of economic grievances and cultural resistance to foreign influence, underscored the deep-seated tensions within Chinese society. In response to these challenges, the Qing government attempted to implement reforms through movements such as the Self-Strengthening Movement (1861–1895). This initiative aimed to modernise China's economy and military by adopting Western technologies and practices while preserving Confucian values. However, conservative factions within the court resisted these changes, fearing that modernisation would undermine traditional power structures. As a result, the movement's impact was limited leaving China ill-prepared to confront the challenges of the modern era.

4.3.3.4 Economic and Social Disintegration

The cumulative impact of internal unrest and external pressures led to the disintegration of Qing feudalism. The

traditional landlord-tenant relationship, which had been the backbone of the rural economy, began to break down under the strain of war and economic exploitation. Tenant farmers increasingly abandoned their lands, contributing to the rise of banditry and lawlessness in rural areas. The influx of foreign goods and the disruption of local industries further eroded the economic foundations of feudal society. Artisans and small-scale producers, who had previously thrived within the self-contained economies of rural China, found themselves unable to compete with industrialised imports. This economic marginalisation deepened poverty and exacerbated social inequalities. The nationalisation of railroads became the immediate cause of the revolution.

4.3.4 Legacy of the Manchu Dynasty

The collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1912 marked the definitive end of feudalism in China. The establishment of the Republic of China under Sun Yat-sen's leadership signalled a new era of political and social reform. Efforts to dismantle feudal structures included land redistribution programmes and the promotion of industrialisation aimed at creating a more equitable and modern society.

The social and economic impact of Qing feudalism left a lasting legacy in Chinese history. While the system sustained the empire for centuries, it also entrenched inequalities that hindered modernisation and contributed to social unrest. The rigid hierarchy of rural society stifled innovation and adaptation, leaving China ill-prepared to confront the challenges of the modern era. Efforts to address these issues during the late Qing period, such as the Self-Strengthening Movement, were often too limited in scope to effect meaningful change. The eventual collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1912 marked the end of imperial rule and the beginning of efforts to dismantle the

feudal framework. The social and economic disparities that characterised Qing China, however, continued to shape the nation's trajectory well into the 20th century.

On the one hand, the Qing era witnessed significant territorial expansion, cultural achievements and economic development, which strengthened the empire's cohesion and fostered a sense of national identity. The incorporation of regions such as Tibet, Xinjiang and Mongolia not only expanded China's borders but also established a multi-ethnic empire that would shape the country's future.

Culturally, the Qing Dynasty contributed to a vibrant intellectual and artistic tradition. The compilation of the Siku Quanshu (Complete Library of the Four Treasuries) exemplified the dynasty's commitment to preserving and organising China's literary heritage. Artistic achievements, particularly in porcelain and painting, flourished during this period, leaving an indelible mark on Chinese and global culture.

Economically, advances in agriculture, including the adoption of New World crops, bolstered food security and supported population growth. However, the feudal structure entrenched during the Qing Dynasty also perpetuated significant social and economic inequalities. The hierarchical relationship between landlords and peasants created a rigid social order that limited mobility and exacerbated rural poverty. While the Qing government occasionally attempted reforms, such as land redistribution, these efforts were often undermined by entrenched elite interests. This failure to address systemic inequalities contributed to periodic uprisings and long-term dissatisfaction among the peasantry.

The feudal system's rigidity also delayed China's modernisation. Unlike Europe, where feudal structures began to dissolve with the rise of industrialisation

and capitalism, Qing China remained predominantly agrarian well into the 19th century. This economic stagnation left the empire vulnerable to external pressures, including the encroachment of Western powers and the disruptions caused by global trade networks. The inability to adapt to these challenges underscored the limitations of the Qing's feudal framework.

The collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1912 marked the end of imperial rule and the beginning of a new chapter in Chinese history. The establishment of the Republic of China under Sun Yat-sen signalled an era of reform and transformation. Efforts to dismantle feudal remnants included land redistribution programmes, the promotion of industrialisation and the adoption of modern governance structures. However, the deep-rooted inequalities and systemic inefficiencies inherited from the Qing period presented significant obstacles to progress. The rise of warlordism and the challenges of nation-building during the early republican era highlighted the enduring impact of Qing feudalism on China's socio-political landscape.

Recap

- ◆ Manchus, originally Jurchen tribes, unified under Nurhaci and later Hong Taiji

- ◆ Manchus capitalised on instability, allied with Wu Sangui, and entered Beijing in 1644

- ◆ Integration of Han Chinese bureaucracy through the Confucian civil service exam

- ◆ Cultural policies balanced Confucian traditions with Manchu customs

- ◆ Different from European feudalism, with landlords acting as intermediaries between the imperial state and peasants

- ◆ Landlords held significant power, leading to economic disparities and peasant exploitation

- ◆ The Qing Dynasty's agrarian economy supported most of the population, benefiting from irrigation improvements and the introduction of New World crops

- ◆ Despite agricultural advancements, land remained concentrated among landlords, leaving tenant farmers impoverished

- ◆ Qing feudalism reinforced a rigid class system dominated by the Manchu nobility and Han gentry

- ◆ Confucian norms upheld strict gender roles, limiting women's rights and opportunities

Objective Questions

1. Who founded the Qing Dynasty?

2. What system managed the Manchu military and administration?

3. Which hairstyle symbolises loyalty to the Qing?

4. What was the primary role of landlords under Qing feudalism?

5. Which rebellion reflected peasant discontent during the Qing rule?

6. When did the Qing Dynasty declined?

7. Name one crop introduced during the Qing era.

8. What ideology supported Qing governance?

9. In which year was the Treaty of Nanking signed?

10. Who was the successor of Nurhaci?

Answers

1. Nurhaci

2. Eight Banners System

3. Queue

4. Collecting Rents

5. White Lotus Rebellion

6. 1912

7. Maize

8. Confucianism

9. 1842

10. Hong Taiji

Assignments

1. Describe the relationship between landlords and peasants under Qing rule.

2. Discuss the role of Confucianism in Qing governance.

3. Discuss the causes and outcomes of the White Lotus Rebellion.

4. Discuss the impact of Qing feudal policies on agricultural production and rural society.

5. Analyse the strategies used by the Qing Dynasty to integrate Manchu and Chinese traditions.

Suggested Reading

1. Bauer, Susan Wise. *The History of the Medieval World.* W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.

2. Brandt, William J. *The Shape of Medieval History.* Yale University Press, 1966.

3. Brook, Timothy. *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties.* Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010.

4. Davis, R. H. C. *A History of Medieval Europe.* Pearson Longman, 2006.

5. Dreyer, Edward L. *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433.* Pearson Longman, 2007.

6. Runciman, Steven. *A History of the Crusades.* CUP Archive, 1987.

Reference

1. Elliott, Mark C. *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China.* Stanford University Press, 2001.

2. Fairbank, John K., and Merle Goldman. *China: A New History*. 2nd ed., Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006.

3. Kuhn, Philip A. *Origins of the Modern Chinese State*. Stanford University Press, 2002.

4. Spence, Jonathan D. *The Search for Modern China*. 3rd ed., W. W. Norton & Company, 2013.

5. Zhao, Gang. *The Qing Opening to the Ocean: Chinese Maritime Policies, 1684–1846*. University of Hawaii Press, 2013.

4 UNIT

Kamakura Shogunate in Japan

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ explain the establishment of the Kamakura Shogunate and the rise of the Samurai class

♦ discuss the dual governance system between the shogunate and the imperial court

♦ analyse the cultural and religious developments of the Kamakura period

♦ describe the challenges and decline of the Kamakura Shogunate

Prerequisites

The Kamakura period represents a pivotal moment in Japan's history when the Samurai class rose to prominence, fundamentally altering the nation's governance and societal structure. This unit introduces learners to the political innovations and cultural developments of the era, highlighting the emergence of a feudal system and its implications for Japan's medieval history.

Keywords

Kamakura Shogunate, Samurai Class, Bushido, Zen Buddhism, Dual Governance, Noh Theater, Mongol Invasions, Minamoto Clan

Discussion

4.4.1 The Kamakura Shogunate (1185–1333)

The Kamakura Shogunate (1185–1333) marked the beginning of feudal governance in Japan, initiating a profound transformation in the country's political, social and cultural systems. Established by Minamoto no Yoritomo following his decisive victory over the Taira clan during the Genpei War, the Shogunate represented a significant shift in power dynamics. For the first time, authority moved away from the imperial court in Kyoto to a military government headquartered in Kamakura. This new political structure emphasised the dominance of the Samurai class, who would play a central role in shaping Japanese society for centuries to come.

The Kamakura era was characterised by the consolidation of a decentralised feudal system. Unlike the aristocracy-centered governance of the Heian period, the shogunate distributed power among regional military governors (*Shugo*) and estate stewards (*Jito*). These officials were responsible for maintaining law and order in the provinces, collecting taxes and enforcing the Shogunate's policies. This decentralisation was instrumental in establishing a stable political order while fostering loyalty among the Samurai class.

One of the defining features of the Kamakura period was the emergence of Bushido or the way of the warrior. This evolving code of conduct emphasised virtues such as loyalty, honour, discipline and martial prowess. Bushido not only guided the behaviour of the Samurai but also influenced broader cultural values, intertwining with religious and philosophical ideals. Zen Buddhism, with its focus on discipline and inner tranquillity, resonated particularly strongly with the Samurai ethos, shaping their spiritual and intellectual development. The Kamakura Shogunate also had to contend with significant external challenges, most notably the Mongol invasions in 1274 and 1281. These invasions led by Kublai Khan tested Japan's military resilience and highlighted the strategic and spiritual unity of its people. The successful repulsion of the Mongols, aided by the fortuitous kamikaze, or divine winds, became a symbol of divine protection and national pride.

The Kamakura era represents a transformative period in Japanese history laying the groundwork for the feudal structures that would persist through the Ashikaga and Tokugawa Shogunates. By decentralising power, fostering the rise of the Samurai, and navigating both internal governance and external threats, the Kamakura Shogunate established a legacy that profoundly influenced Japan's historical trajectory. This era offers critical insights into the interplay of military governance, cultural development and societal transformation in medieval Japan.

4.4.1.1 Origins of the Kamakura Shogunate

Rise of the Minamoto Clan

The late Heian period (794–1185) was a time of profound change marked by increasing military and political tensions between the aristocratic elites and the emerging warrior families. The central government's inability to address rural unrest and growing local autonomy created a fertile ground for the rise of powerful regional clans. Among these, the Minamoto (or Genji) and Taira (or Heike) clans emerged as dominant forces, often clashing over political and military supremacy.

The Genpei War (1180–1185) represented the culmination of these tensions, as the Minamoto and Taira clans fought for control of Japan. The war began with a series of regional skirmishes and escalated into a full-scale national conflict. Minamoto no Yoritomo, who had consolidated his power in the Kanto region, led his forces against the Taira. Key victories, such as the Battle of Ichi-no-Tani in 1184, showcased the strategic prowess of Minamoto generals. The decisive engagement came at the Battle of Dan-no-ura in 1185, where the Minamoto fleet triumphed over the Taira in a dramatic naval encounter. This victory not only eliminated the Taira as a political force but also established the Minamoto clan as the preeminent power in Japan.

4.4.1.2 Establishment of the Shogunate

Following his military success, Minamoto no Yoritomo focused on consolidating his authority. Recognising the limitations of the imperial court's centralised governance, he sought to create a new system that would empower the Samurai class while maintaining nominal allegiance to the emperor. In 1192, Yoritomo was granted the title of 'Seii Taishogun'(barbarian-subduing generalissimo) by Emperor Go-Toba. This formal recognition of his authority marked the official establishment of the Kamakura Shogunate.

The Shogunate's headquarters in Kamakura, far from the imperial court in Kyoto, symbolised the shift in political power from the aristocracy to the warrior class. Kamakura's location in the Kanto region offered strategic advantages, including defensible terrain and proximity to Yoritomo's power base. The Shogunate's administrative structure relied on a network of regional officials, including military governors (*Shugo*) and estate stewards (*Jito*), who managed local affairs and ensured loyalty to the central government.

The dual governance system established by the Kamakura Shogunate was innovative in its blending of traditional and feudal elements. While the emperor and his court continued to perform ceremonial and cultural roles, the Shogunate exercised real political and military control. This arrangement allowed the Shogunate to legitimise its rule while avoiding direct confrontation with the imperial institution. By institutionalising Samurai dominance, the Kamakura Shogunate laid the foundation for the feudal order that would define Japanese society for centuries.

4.4.1.3 Political Structure and Governance

The Kamakura Shogunate introduced a dual governance system that redefined Japan's political landscape. While the imperial court in Kyoto retained nominal sovereignty, including its ceremonial and cultural roles, actual power rested with the Shogunate in Kamakura. This system allowed the Shogunate to consolidate military and administrative authority while preserving the emperor's symbolic status as a unifying figurehead. The division of responsibilities between the court and the Shogunate ensured continuity in traditional institutions while accommodating the growing influence of the Samurai class.

The Shogunate established its headquarters in Kamakura, geographically distant from Kyoto, to emphasise its autonomy and military orientation. Kamakura's strategic location in the Kanto region provided defensible terrain and a power base for the Minamoto clan. This separation of political and ceremonial centers reinforced the dual governance system, where the Shogunate controlled practical governance, and the imperial court remained the symbolic heart of Japan.

To administer the provinces effectively, the Kamakura Shogunate relied on a network of appointed officials, including Shugo (military governors) and *Jito* (estate stewards). *Shugo* was tasked with maintaining law and order, overseeing local Samurai and ensuring provincial loyalty to the Shogunate. They played a crucial role in managing regional security and collecting taxes, acting as the Shogunate's representatives in the provinces.

Jito, on the other hand, was responsible for managing individual estates, resolving disputes among peasants and overseeing agricultural production. They collected rents and ensured that the Shogunate's tax revenues were delivered. This decentralised administration fostered loyalty among the samurai, as their allegiance was tied directly to the lords who controlled their land and livelihoods. However, this system also created tensions, as regional lords often prioritised their interests over those of the central government.

4.4.1.4 Legal Reforms

One of the Kamakura Shogunate's most enduring contributions was the introduction of the Goseibai Shikimoku (Joei Code) in 1232. This legal code was specifically designed to address the needs of the warrior class and establish a framework for governance. The code emphasised principles of justice, impartiality and loyalty, reflecting the ethical values of the Samurai. The Goseibai Shikimoku provided clear guidelines on issues such as inheritance, land ownership and conflict resolution. It sought to resolve disputes among Samurai in a manner that upheld social harmony and reinforced feudal loyalties. The Code also addressed broader administrative concerns, including the management of estates and the responsibilities of *Shugo* and *Jito*. Its implementation helped stabilise the feudal system by providing a consistent legal framework that endured well beyond the Kamakura period.

4.4.1.5 Challenges of Feudal Governance

Despite its successes, the Kamakura Shogunate's governance structure faced significant challenges. The decentralised nature of feudal administration often led to conflicts between regional lords and the central government. Shugo and Jito occasionally used their positions to consolidate personal power, undermining the Shogunate's authority. Additionally, the financial strain of maintaining a military-oriented government and addressing external threats, such as the Mongol invasions placed considerable pressure on the Shogunate's resources.

The dual governance system, while innovative, also created ambiguities in authority, particularly during periods of political instability. The symbolic authority of the emperor occasionally clashed with the practical power of the Shogunate, leading to tensions that would resurface in later periods of Japanese history. Nonetheless, the Kamakura Shogunate's political structure and governance innovations laid the groundwork for the feudal systems that would dominate Japan for centuries, influencing both the Ashikaga and Tokugawa Shogunates.

4.4.1.6 Society and Culture

The Rise of the Samurai Class

The Kamakura era witnessed the emergence of the Samurai as the dominant social and political class in Japan. Samurai culture, shaped by ideals of loyalty, martial skill and honour, became the defining ethos of the period. The term bushido, or the way of the warrior, began to crystallise during this time. This evolving code emphasised virtues such as courage, self-discipline and unwavering allegiance to one's lord. The Samurai's role extended beyond the battlefield, as they also

served as administrators and local leaders, reinforcing their influence within the feudal hierarchy.

Samurai training emphasised not only martial prowess but also intellectual cultivation. Many Samurai engaged in the study of Confucianism, which provided a philosophical framework for ethical conduct and governance. The blending of martial and intellectual disciplines helped establish the Samurai as a well-rounded class capable of both defending and managing the state.

4.4.1.7 Religious and Philosophical Developments

The Kamakura period was a time of significant religious and philosophical growth, with Buddhism playing a central role in shaping the cultural and spiritual landscape. Zen Buddhism introduced from China, resonated deeply with the Samurai class due to its focus on discipline, meditation and self-mastery. Samurai found in Zen a philosophy that complemented their rigorous training and emphasised mental clarity in the face of adversity. Pure Land Buddhism also gained widespread popularity during this era, particularly among the common people. This sect emphasised salvation through faith in Amida Buddha and offered a sense of hope and solace to those facing the hardships of feudal life. Its simplicity and accessibility made it a unifying force across different social strata. Nichiren Buddhism, founded by the monk Nichiren, introduced a more activist approach to spirituality. Centered on devotion to the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Buddhism advocated for social reform and moral responsibility. This sect's emphasis on individual agency and community engagement reflected broader societal shifts during the Kamakura period.

4.4.1.8 Artistic and Literary Achievements

The Kamakura period witnessed a flourishing of artistic and literary expression, much of which was influenced by the prevailing warrior culture and religious trends. Monumental Buddhist sculptures, such as the Great Buddha of Kamakura, exemplified the era's religious fervour and technical innovation. These works reflected both the spiritual aspirations and the material wealth of the period. Literature also thrived during the Kamakura era, with works such as The Tale of the Heike chronicling the dramatic rise and fall of the Taira clan. This epic narrative, steeped in themes of loyalty, impermanence, and the Samurai ethos, offered profound insights into the values and struggles of the warrior class. Other literary forms, including poetry and essays, explored themes of nature, philosophy and human relationships, contributing to a rich cultural heritage.

4.4.1.9 Cultural Integration and Legacy

The Kamakura period's integration of Samurai ideals, Buddhist philosophy and artistic innovation created a unique cultural synthesis that left a lasting impact on Japanese society. The emphasis on discipline, loyalty, and moral conduct established by the Samurai class has continued to shape Japan's cultural identity for centuries. The artistic and literary achievements of the era not only enriched Japan's cultural heritage but also provided a foundation for subsequent developments during the Ashikaga and Tokugawa periods.

4.4.2 The Decline of the Kamakura Shogunate

The decline of the Kamakura Shogunate and the subsequent Kenmu Restoration highlighted the limitations of decentralised feudal governance in addressing Japan's

evolving political and social needs. The inability to manage internal dissent, economic pressures, and the rising ambitions of rival factions exposed the limitations of the shogunate's structure.

Despite its decline, the Kamakura Shogunate left an enduring legacy in Japanese history. It established the framework for feudal governance that would persist through subsequent Shogunates, including the Ashikaga and Tokugawa periods. The rise of the Samurai as a dominant social and political force during the Kamakura era reshaped Japan's cultural and political identity, emphasising values such as loyalty, discipline and martial skills. The Kenmu Restoration, though brief, underscored the enduring tension between centralised imperial authority and decentralised feudal power. This dynamic would continue to shape Japan's political landscape for centuries, influencing the development of governance and the relationship between the emperor and the Samurai class.

The decline of the Kamakura Shogunate serves as a critical turning point in Japanese history, illustrating the complexities of feudal governance and the challenges of maintaining stability in a decentralised political system. Its legacy, both in terms of achievements and shortcomings, provides valuable insights into the evolution of Japan's medieval society and the enduring influence of the Samurai.

4.4.3 External Challenges: The Mongol Invasions

4.4.3.1 The First Mongol Invasion (1274)

Under the leadership of Kublai Khan, the Mongol Empire sought to expand its influence into Japan, driven by ambitions to integrate the nation into its vast dominion. In 1274, Kublai Khan dispatched a fleet carrying tens of thousands of troops from Korea, comprising Mongols, Chinese and Korean forces. The Mongols introduced advanced weaponry, including gunpowder bombs and explosive projectiles, which posed a significant challenge to the Samurai defenders. Unlike the traditional one-on-one combat favoured by the Samurai, the Mongols employed mass infantry formations and coordinated assaults, disrupting Japanese defensive strategies.

Despite initial Mongol successes, the invasion was abruptly halted by a powerful typhoon that devastated their fleet. This event, later celebrated as the *Kamikaze* or divine wind, was interpreted as a sign of divine favour protecting Japan. The typhoon's impact forced the Mongols to retreat, marking the end of their first attempt to conquer Japan. The Japanese attributed their survival to a combination of divine intervention and the resilience of the Samurai warriors who had fiercely resisted the invaders.

4.4.3.2 The Second Mongol Invasion (1281)

Kublai Khan's determination to subjugate Japan culminated in a second, more ambitious invasion in 1281. This campaign involved two separate fleets, one departing from Korea and the other from southern China, with a combined force of over 1,40,000 troops and thousands of ships. The scale of this invasion dwarfed the first, underscoring the Mongols' commitment to overwhelming Japan through sheer numbers and coordinated attacks.

The Japanese, having learned from the first invasion, fortified their defences along key coastal areas, including Hakata Bay. Samurai forces employed guerrilla tactics, nighttime raids, and fortified positions to disrupt Mongol operations. Despite these efforts, the sheer size of the Mongol forces threatened to overwhelm Japanese defences. However, as the campaign dragged on, a second typhoon struck, inflicting catastrophic

damage on the Mongol fleet. Thousands of ships were destroyed, and tens of thousands of soldiers perished or were captured. The remnants of the Mongol forces were forced to retreat, ending Kublai Khan's ambitions to conquer Japan.

4.4.3.3 Impact of the Mongol Threat

The Mongol invasions had far-reaching implications for Japan, both militarily and socially. On a military level, these invasions underscored the importance of coastal defence and strategic preparedness. The construction of defensive walls and fortifications along Hakata Bay highlighted the Shogunate's commitment to safeguarding the nation. The invasions also demonstrated the effectiveness of Samurai tactics and their ability to adapt to new forms of warfare, such as the mass infantry tactics employed by the Mongols.

Economically, the cost of defending against the Mongols placed a significant strain on the Kamakura Shogunate's resources. The construction of fortifications, mobilisation of troops, and maintenance of readiness for future invasions required substantial financial and material investments. This economic burden was compounded by the Shogunate's inability to adequately reward Samurai for their service, as there were no spoils of war to distribute. This lack of compensation led to growing discontent among the Samurai class, undermining their loyalty to the Shogunate.

The invasions also had profound cultural and spiritual consequences. The typhoons that thwarted the Mongol fleets were interpreted as manifestations of divine intervention, reinforcing the belief in Japan's divine protection. This idea of Kamikaze became a cornerstone of Japanese national identity, symbolising resilience and spiritual unity in the face of external threats. The invasions further solidified the Samurai's role as the defenders of Japan, elevating their status within society and reinforcing their commitment to the ideals of bushido.

4.4.4 Internal Challenges

The Kamakura Shogunate faced significant internal challenges as it struggled to maintain cohesion and address growing dissent. The decentralised nature of feudal governance often led to conflicts among Samurai families, whose loyalty was primarily directed toward their local lords rather than the central government. This fragmentation undermined the authority of the Shogunate, making it increasingly difficult to enforce policies or maintain order across the provinces.

The Hojo regents, who exercised de facto power within the Shogunate, faced mounting opposition from rival clans and dissatisfied Samurai. The Hojo's dominance over key positions created resentment among other warrior families, who felt excluded from political and economic opportunities. This discontent was exacerbated by the Shogunate's inability to address the grievances of lower-ranking Samurai, who had borne the brunt of Japan's military efforts, particularly during the Mongol invasions.

Economic strain further compounded the Shogunate's difficulties. The cost of defending against external threats, maintaining fortifications and mobilising troops placed immense pressure on the Shogunate's limited resources. Additionally, the lack of spoils from the Mongol campaigns meant that many Samurai went unrewarded for their service, leading to widespread dissatisfaction within the warrior class. The financial burden of supporting a decentralised feudal system, combined with diminishing revenues from taxation and agriculture, weakened the Shogunate's economic foundation. Periodic natural disasters, such as famines and earthquakes, also contributed to the instability of the Kamakura period. These events disrupted agricultural production and

exacerbated existing social and economic inequalities. The inability of the Shogunate to provide effective relief or address the root causes of these crises further eroded its legitimacy and capacity to govern.

4.4.4.1 Kenmu Restoration and the Ashikaga Shogunate

The decline of the Kamakura Shogunate culminated in the Kenmu Restoration (1333–1336), a short-lived attempt by Emperor Go-Daigo to reassert imperial authority and dismantle the Shogunate's power. Dissatisfied with the existing feudal structure, Go-Daigo sought to restore the emperor's central role in governance and eliminate the influence of the warrior class over political affairs. The restoration marked a dramatic shift in Japan's political landscape, as it challenged the foundations of Samurai dominance established during the Kamakura era.

The Kenmu Restoration began with a coalition of Samurai, disillusioned with the Hojo regents, rallying behind Go-Daigo's cause. Key figures such as Ashikaga Takauji and Nitta Yoshisada played pivotal roles in overthrowing the Hojo and capturing Kamakura. The restoration briefly restored the emperor's authority, but Go-Daigo's reforms, which sought to centralise power and reward loyalist court nobles over Samurai, alienated many of his supporters.

Ashikaga Takauji, initially an ally of Go-Daigo, turned against the emperor in response to these policies. In 1336, Takauji defeated imperial forces and established the Ashikaga Shogunate, marking the end of the Kamakura period and the beginning of the Muromachi era. The Ashikaga Shogunate retained many elements of feudal governance while introducing new structures to consolidate power more effectively. The transition reflected the enduring influence of the Samurai class and the challenges of balancing centralised authority with the demands of feudal lords.

4.4.5 The Legacy of Kamakura Shogunate

The Kamakura Shogunate left a profound and enduring legacy in Japanese history, serving as a foundational period that shaped the country's governance, social structures and cultural identity. One of its most significant contributions was the establishment of a decentralised feudal system that allowed regional autonomy under the leadership of the Shogunate. This framework of governance, which relied on the loyalty of local military governors (Shugo) and estate stewards (Jitō), set the stage for subsequent Shogunates, including the Ashikaga and Tokugawa eras.

The Shogunate's legal and administrative reforms also had a lasting impact. The introduction of the Goseibai Shikimoku (Joei Code) in 1232 provided a comprehensive legal framework tailored to the needs of the warrior class. This code emphasised justice, loyalty and conflict resolution, ensuring the stability of the feudal order and influencing Japanese legal traditions for centuries. By institutionalising the role of the Samurai as both warriors and administrators, the Kamakura Shogunate reinforced their prominence in Japanese society.

Culturally, the Kamakura period was a time of significant artistic, literary and religious innovation. The rise of Zen Buddhism during this era left a profound mark on Japanese culture, influencing everything from martial practices to garden design and the arts. Monumental works like the Great Buddha of Kamakura and literary masterpieces such as The Tale of the Heike reflected the era's spiritual and aesthetic values. These cultural achievements not only enriched Japan's heritage but also established enduring traditions that continue to define its national identity.

The Kamakura era's emphasis on

military discipline and local governance also shaped the trajectory of Japanese society. The bushido ethos, which began to crystallise during this period, emphasised virtues such as courage, honour, and loyalty, which became a cornerstone of the Samurai identity. This warrior code influenced not only the behaviour of the Samurai but also broader societal norms, reinforcing a culture of discipline and responsibility. However, the Kamakura Shogunate's legacy is not without its complexities. The decentralised nature of its governance created vulnerabilities, as regional lords often prioritised their interests over those of the central authority. The economic strain of maintaining a feudal system, coupled with the challenges of defending against external threats like the Mongol invasions, exposed the limitations of the Shogunate's structure. These challenges ultimately contributed to its decline, highlighting the difficulties of balancing local autonomy with centralised control.

The lessons of the Kamakura Shogunate resonate beyond its historical context. Its successes and failures offer valuable insights into the dynamics of governance, the interplay between tradition and innovation, and the role of cultural identity in shaping political and social systems. By examining the legacy of this era, we gain a deeper understanding of the forces that shaped medieval Japan and the enduring influence of its institutions and values. The Kamakura Shogunate represents a transformative period in Japanese history, marking the rise of the Samurai class and the establishment of a feudal system that defined the country for centuries. Through its legal, administrative, and cultural achievements, the Shogunate laid the groundwork for subsequent developments in governance and societal structure. Its innovations in decentralised governance and the codification of Samurai values created a framework that endured through the Ashikaga and Tokugawa periods.

The era's challenges, including internal dissent, economic pressures and external threats, underscore the complexities of maintaining stability in a feudal system. Despite its decline, the Kamakura Shogunate's legacy of resilience, adaptability and cultural enrichment continues to inspire reflections on leadership and societal evolution. As a pivotal chapter in Japan's medieval history, the Kamakura Shogunate offers a compelling narrative of ambition, innovation, and transformation. Its enduring impact is evident in the cultural and institutional traditions that define Japan's identity today.

Recap

- The Kamakura Shogunate was Japan's first military government, established by Minamoto no Yoritomo in 1192

- Zen Buddhism, introduced from China, resonated deeply with the Samurai's discipline and focus on self-mastery

- The Great Buddha of Kamakura, built during this period, remains one of Japan's most iconic Buddhist statues

- The Mongol invasions of 1274 and 1281 were repelled with the help

of typhoons, later called *kamikaze* or divine winds

♦ The dual governance system allowed the emperor to retain symbolic power while the Shogunate exercised military control

♦ Noh theatre, blending performance with philosophical themes, emerged as a significant cultural achievement of the Kamakura period

♦ The Kamakura period saw the compilation of Japan's first military codes of conduct, reflecting the rise of the warrior ethos

♦ The Samurai's adoption of Zen practices influenced their approach to combat and personal discipline

Objective Questions

1. Who established the Kamakura Shogunate?

2. Which philosophy greatly influenced the Samurai class?

3. What system of governance characterised the Kamakura era?

4. Which natural disaster thwarted the Mongol invasions?

5. What religious practice became prominent among the Samurai?

6. What was the primary role of the Shogun?

7. What is The Tale of the Heike primarily about?

8. Which sect emphasised salvation through faith?

9. Who was the founder of Nichiren Buddhism?

10. In which year was Goseibai Shikimoku (Joei Code) introduced?

Answers

1. Minamoto no Yoritomo

2. Zen Buddhism

3. Dual Governance

4. Typhoons (Kamikaze)

5. Zen Meditation

6. Military Leadership

7. The rise and fall of the Taira clan

8. Pure Land Buddhism

9. Nichiren

10. 1232

Assignments

1. Describe the role of the Samurai class in Kamakura governance.

2. Discuss the cultural impacts of Zen Buddhism during this period.

3. Discuss the significance of the Mongol invasions on Japanese defence strategies.

4. Describe the role of Noh theatre in the cultural life of the Kamakura period.

5. Critically analyse the internal and external challenges of Kamakura Shogunate.

Suggested Reading

1. Bauer, Susan Wise. *The History of the Medieval World*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.

2. Bennett, Judith. *Medieval Europe: A Short History*. McGraw-Hill, 2010.

3. Brandt, William J. *The Shape of Medieval History*. Yale University Press, 1966.

4. Friday, Karl F. *Japan Emerging: Pre-Modern History to 1850*. Routledge, 2018.

5. Steenbergen, Jeroen Van. *A History of the Islamic World, 600–1800*. Routledge, 2020.

6. Yamamura, Kozo, editor. *The Cambridge History of Japan*. Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Reference

1. Adolphson, M. S. *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Premodern Japan*. University of Hawaii Press, 2000.

2. Conlan, Thomas. *In Little Need of Divine Intervention: Takezaki Suenaga's Scrolls of the Mongol Invasions of Japan*. Cornell East Asia Program, 2001.

3. Friday, Karl F. *Samurai, Warfare and the State in Early Medieval Japan*. Routledge, 2004.

4. Hall, John W. *Japan: From Prehistory to Modern Times*. University of Michigan Press, 1970.

5. Mass, Jeffrey P. *The Kamakura Bakufu: A Study in Feudalism and Governance*. Stanford University Press, 1974.

Muromachi Era and The Mongol Invasion

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ explain the political and cultural dynamics of the Muromachi period under the Ashikaga Shogunate

♦ analyse the significance of the Mongol invasions and their impact on Japan's defence strategies

♦ describe the centralised governance established by the Tokugawa Shogunate

♦ discuss the cultural achievements and isolationist policies of the Tokugawa era

Prerequisites

This unit explores Japan's evolution from the fragmented feudal governance of the Muromachi era to the centralised and stable rule of the Tokugawa Shogunate. The Mongol invasions, pivotal in shaping Japan's defensive strategies and Samurai ethos, acted as a crucial bridge between these periods. Understanding the transitions in governance, society and culture during these eras offers essential context for appreciating Japan's medieval and early modern development.

Keywords

Muromachi Shogunate, Mongol Invasions, Ashikaga Clan, Tokugawa Shogunate, Bushido, Sakoku Policy, Noh Theater, Sankin-kotai

Discussion

4.5.1 Mongol Invasion

The Mongol invasions of Japan, though preceding the Muromachi period, had profound and lasting implications for Japanese society, governance, and military strategy. These invasions, orchestrated by Kublai Khan of the Mongol Empire, occurred in 1274 and 1281. Both campaigns were massive undertakings, involving significant military resources and innovative tactics. Still, they ultimately failed due to a combination of fierce Japanese resistance and natural disasters, famously referred to as the kamikaze or divine winds.

4.5.1.1 The First Mongol Invasion (1274)

The first invasion, launched from Korea, involved a fleet carrying an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 Mongol, Chinese, and Korean troops. The Mongol forces introduced advanced weaponry, including gunpowder and employed coordinated infantry and cavalry tactics that differed from the traditional one-on-one combat preferred by the Samurai. Despite initial Mongol successes, the invasion was halted by a sudden typhoon that destroyed much of their fleet, forcing a retreat.

4.5.1.2 The Second Mongol Invasion (1281)

The second invasion was far larger, with over 140,000 troops divided into two fleets: one departing from Korea and the other from southern China. The Japanese, having fortified their defenses after the first invasion, engaged in fierce resistance using fortified positions and guerrilla tactics. Once again, a powerful typhoon struck during the campaign, devastating the Mongol fleet and causing massive casualties. The remnants of the invading forces were forced to retreat, marking the end of Kublai Khan's attempts to conquer Japan.

The Mongol invasions had profound effects on Japan. The experiences underscored the importance of maritime defence and led to the construction of coastal fortifications, such as stone walls around Hakata Bay. The invasions also contributed to the militarisation of Japanese society, as the Samurai were recognised as essential defenders of the nation. This period saw the development of more organised military structures and the refinement of combat tactics that would influence later eras.

Culturally and spiritually, the concept of kamikaze became deeply ingrained in Japanese identity, symbolising divine protection and national unity. The belief that Japan was uniquely blessed and protected by the gods reinforced a sense of exceptionalism that resonated throughout its history. Economically, the cost of defense and fortification strained the Kamakura Shogunate's resources, contributing to its eventual decline. The inability to adequately reward the Samurai who had defended the nation led to dissatisfaction and weakened loyalty, further destabilising the Shogunate. The Mongol invasions, though unsuccessful, marked a turning point in Japanese history. They highlighted the resilience of Japanese society and its ability to adapt to external threats while leaving a legacy that shaped military and cultural practices for centuries.

4.5.2 The Muromachi Period

The Muromachi and Tokugawa periods represent transformative chapters in Japanese history, marked by significant shifts in governance, military innovation and cultural development. The Muromachi era

(1336–1573) began with the establishment of the Ashikaga Shogunate under Ashikaga Takauji, which introduced new dynamics in feudal governance. This period saw the emergence of powerful regional lords or daimyō, who wielded considerable autonomy, often challenging the central authority of the Shogunate. The era was also characterised by internal conflict, most notably the Onin War (1467–1477). This decade-long conflict devastated Kyoto and marked the beginning of the Sengoku or Warring States period, a time of protracted civil war and political fragmentation.

During the Muromachi era, cultural advancements flourished despite the political turmoil. Zen Buddhism profoundly influenced art, architecture and philosophy, giving rise to iconic cultural practices such as the tea ceremony and Noh theatre. However, the decentralisation of power and the inability of the Ashikaga Shogunate to assert effective control over regional daimyo ultimately led to its decline, setting the stage for the unification of Japan under strong military leaders.

4.5.2.1 Muromachi Period: Ashikaga Shogunate

Founding of the Ashikaga Shogunate

The Ashikaga Shogunate was established in 1336 by Ashikaga Takauji following the fall of the Kamakura Shogunate. Takauji, originally a loyalist of Emperor Go-Daigo, rose to prominence during the Kenmu Restoration (1333–1336), which aimed to restore imperial authority. However, disagreements over governance and policy led Takauji to turn against the emperor. Aligning himself with powerful Samurai factions, he emerged victorious in the ensuing conflicts and established his rule. Moving the capital back to Kyoto symbolised a return to the imperial city as a political center, although the Ashikaga Shogunate maintained a distinctly decentralised approach to governance.

Takauji's establishment of the Shogunate marked the beginning of the Muromachi period, named after the district in Kyoto where the Shogunate's administrative headquarters were located. Unlike its predecessor, the Kamakura Shogunate, the Ashikaga Shogunate placed less emphasis on centralised control, reflecting the evolving dynamics of Japanese feudalism.

4.5.2.2 Decentralised Feudalism

The Ashikaga Shogunate's reliance on regional daimyo to maintain order distinguished it from earlier systems of governance. These powerful lords wielded considerable autonomy within their territories, controlling private armies and managing local affairs. This decentralisation created a fragile balance of power, as the Shogunate's authority often depended on the loyalty and cooperation of these regional leaders. While this system allowed the Ashikaga Shogunate to delegate governance effectively, it also led to significant challenges. The autonomy of the daimyo often resulted in conflicts over land and power, contributing to a fragmented political landscape. The inability of the Shogunate to enforce consistent policies across all regions weakened its central authority, setting the stage for prolonged instability.

4.5.2.3 Cultural Advancements

Despite its political challenges, the Muromachi period was a time of remarkable cultural flourishing. Zen Buddhism, which had gained prominence during the Kamakura period, continued to influence Japanese art and architecture. The iconic Kinkaku-ji (Golden Pavilion) in Kyoto, commissioned by Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, exemplifies the synthesis of Zen aesthetics and Japanese design. The development of the tea ceremony, or chanoyu, during this era further reflected the integration of Zen principles into daily

life. Noh theater also emerged as a major cultural innovation during the Muromachi period. Combining performance, music, and philosophical themes, Noh plays emphasised subtlety and depth, resonating with the spiritual ideals of the time. This period's artistic achievements enriched Japan's cultural heritage, leaving an indelible mark on its history.

4.5.2.4 Decline and the Onin War

The Ashikaga Shogunate's decline began in earnest with the Onin War (1467–1477), a protracted conflict that devastated Kyoto and marked the beginning of the Sengoku period. This internal strife was sparked by disputes over succession and the growing ambitions of regional daimyo. The war left the capital in ruins and effectively ended the Shogunate's ability to govern as a central authority. Although the Ashikaga line nominally continued until 1573, its influence had been irreparably weakened, paving the way for the unification efforts of leaders like Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi.

The Muromachi period, though marked by political fragmentation, remains a pivotal era in Japanese history. Its legacy lies in the cultural advancements and the complex interplay of power between the shogunate and regional daimyo. It provides a foundation for the transitions that would follow in Japan's journey toward unification and modernisation.

4.5.3 Tokugawa Period: Unification and Stability

In contrast, the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603–1867) established by Tokugawa Ieyasu marked a period of restoration and stability. Following his victory at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, Ieyasu centralised governance and implemented policies that

ensured nearly 250 years of peace.

Together, the Muromachi and Tokugawa periods illuminate Japan's transition from medieval feudalism to early modern statehood. The Muromachi era highlights the challenges of decentralised governance and the cultural resilience of a society in turmoil. At the same time, the Tokugawa Shogunate exemplifies the benefits and complexities of centralised control, isolationist policies and cultural flourishing.

4.5.3.1 Rise of Tokugawa Ieyasu

The Tokugawa Shogunate also known as the Edo period, was established in 1603 by Tokugawa Ieyasu after his victory at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. This decisive battle ended the Sengoku period, a century of civil war and political fragmentation, and paved the way for the unification of Japan under a centralised government. Ieyasu's strategic insights and alliances enabled him to consolidate power effectively. By establishing his capital in Edo (modern-day Tokyo), he signalled a shift in political power away from Kyoto, the traditional seat of the emperor, toward a more practical and militarily secure location.

Ieyasu's governance was marked by pragmatism and a focus on stability. In 1605, he abdicated in favour of his son, Tokugawa Hidetada, to ensure a smooth succession and the continuity of his dynasty. This move exemplified the careful planning that characterised Tokugawa rule. The establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate not only ended centuries of warfare but also ushered in an era of peace and order that would last for over two centuries.

4.5.3.2 Centralised Governance

The Tokugawa Shogunate implemented a centralised system of governance that

balanced power between the Shogunate (bakufu) and regional domains (han) controlled by the daimyo. This system, known as the bakuhan system, ensured that while the shogunate maintained ultimate authority, the daimyo were allowed a degree of autonomy in managing their territories. The daimyo were categorised into three groups: the shinpan (relatives of the Tokugawa family), the fudai (longtime allies), and the tozama (former opponents who were later integrated into the Tokugawa structure). To prevent rebellion and maintain control, the Tokugawa Shogunate instituted the alternate attendance system (sankin-kotai). Under this policy, daimyo were required to spend alternate years in Edo and their domains, leaving their families as hostages in the capital. This system not only ensured loyalty but also drained the financial resources of the daimyo, reducing their capacity to challenge the Shogunate.

The Tokugawa administration also enforced a rigid social hierarchy, with the Samurai class at the top, followed by farmers, artisans and merchants. This hierarchy was designed to reinforce social order and stability. The Samurai, who no longer had wars to fight, were repurposed as administrators and bureaucrats, further integrating them into the governance structure. This system created a clear and stable societal framework that minimised conflict and dissent.

4.5.3.3 Isolationist Policies

One of the defining features of the Tokugawa Shogunate was its isolationist sakoku policy, implemented in the 1630s under Tokugawa Iemitsu, the third Shogun. This policy restricted foreign trade and interaction, limiting commerce to specific ports such as Nagasaki, where the Dutch and Chinese were allowed to trade under strict supervision. The sakoku policy aimed to eliminate external influences, particularly those from European powers and Christian missionaries, whose activities were perceived

as a threat to the Shogunate's authority and Japan's traditional social order. The sakoku policy remained in place for over two centuries, shaping Japan's historical trajectory until the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry and the opening of Japan in the mid-19th century.

4.5.3.4 Cultural Achievements

The Tokugawa period was a time of cultural renaissance, marked by significant advancements in art, literature and urban culture. The peace and stability of the era allowed cities such as Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka to thrive as centers of commerce and artistic innovation. This period saw the rise of ukiyo-e woodblock prints, which depicted scenes of everyday life, landscapes and famous actors. Artists such as Katsushika Hokusai and Utagawa Hiroshige gained enduring fame for their contributions to this art form.

Kabuki theater also flourished during the Tokugawa period, offering vibrant and dramatic performances that appealed to both the samurai and the merchant classes. Kabuki's elaborate costumes, dynamic acting and engaging storytelling, made it one of the most popular forms of entertainment of the time. Meanwhile, bunraku (puppet theater) emerged as another significant cultural development, showcasing the sophistication of Japanese theatrical arts. Literature saw the emergence of haiku poetry, with Matsuo Basho as its most celebrated figure. Basho's works, characterised by their simplicity, depth, and connection to nature, reflected the aesthetic and philosophical sensibilities of the Tokugawa era. The period also witnessed the growth of popular fiction, which catered to the tastes of an increasingly literate urban population.

4.5.3.5 Economic and Social Impact

The Tokugawa period's stability and

isolation fostered economic growth and social cohesion. Agricultural productivity improved through advancements in irrigation and crop rotation, supporting population growth and urbanisation. The development of a merchant class, known as the chonin, brought prosperity to cities and facilitated the growth of a vibrant market economy. Although merchants were ranked low in the social hierarchy, their wealth and influence often surpassed those of the Samurai. The peace of the Tokugawa period also allowed for the development of infrastructure, including roads and post stations, which facilitated trade and communication. The Tokaido road connecting Edo and Kyoto, became a vital artery for the movement of goods and people, symbolising the interconnectedness of the Tokugawa polity.

4.5.3.6 Legacy of Tokugawa Shogunate

The Tokugawa Shogunate left an indelible mark on Japan's history. Its centralised governance, social order and cultural achievements set the stage for Japan's modernisation in the Meiji era. While the sakoku policy limited Japan's engagement with the outside world, it also preserved its traditions and cultural identity, allowing for a uniquely Japanese response to the challenges of the 19th century.

The Tokugawa period's combination of stability, isolation and cultural flourishing offers valuable insights into the dynamics of governance and societal development. The Muromachi and Tokugawa periods represent pivotal eras in Japanese history, illustrating the evolution of governance, society, and culture. The Muromachi era's decentralised feudalism marked by the rise of powerful daimyo and the cultural influence of Zen Buddhism, laid the groundwork for unification efforts and introduced enduring cultural traditions such as the tea ceremony and Noh theater. Despite the political instability that characterised the later Muromachi period, its cultural achievements left a profound legacy that shaped the trajectory of Japanese civilisation.

In contrast, the Tokugawa Shogunate established a centralised system of governance that brought unprecedented peace and stability to Japan for over two centuries. Its implementation of the bakuhan system, strict social hierarchies, and the sakoku policy ensured internal cohesion and preserved Japan's cultural identity in an era of global change. The Tokugawa period's cultural renaissance, with advancements in art, literature, and urban culture, reflected the flourishing creativity of a society at peace.

Together, these periods highlight the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation, resilience and adaptation, and local and central authority in shaping Japan's historical trajectory. By examining the Muromachi and Tokugawa eras, we gain a deeper understanding of Japan's transition from medieval feudalism to early modern statehood, offering valuable insights into the complexities of governance, cultural development, and societal transformation.

Recap

♦ First Mongol Invasion (1274) launched from Korea with 30,000–40,000 Mongol, Chinese and Korean troops.

♦ Mongols used advanced weaponry (gunpowder, coordinated tactics) unfamiliar to the Samurai

♦ Second Mongol Invasion (1281): Japanese fortified defenses and used guerrilla tactics to resist the invasion

♦ The Ashikaga Shogunate was founded by Ashikaga Takauji after overthrowing Emperor Go-Daigo

♦ Daimyo controlled private armies and local governance, weakening central authority

♦ Zen Buddhism influenced art, architecture, and philosophy

♦ Development of tea ceremony (chanoyu) and Noh theater

♦ Kinkaku-ji (Golden Pavilion) was built by Ashikaga Yoshimitsu as a symbol of Zen aesthetics

♦ The Onin War (1467–1477) and Decline marked the beginning of the Sengoku (Warring States) period

♦ The Ashikaga Shogunate lost power, continuing in name only until 1573

Objective Questions

1. Who established the Ashikaga Shogunate?

2. Which natural disaster helped Japan repel the Mongol invasions?

3. Which philosophy deeply influenced Muromachi-era art and culture?

4. What was the primary system of governance during the Tokugawa period?

5. Which policy restricted foreign interactions during the Tokugawa era?

6. What is the term for the required attendance of daimyo in Edo?

7. Name a popular form of theatre that emerged during the Tokugawa Shogunate.

8. Which battle marked the rise of Tokugawa Ieyasu to power?

9. Who led the First Mongol invasion of Japan in 1274?

10. Who were daimyos?

Answers

1. Ashikaga Takauji

2. Typhoons (Kamikaze)

3. Zen Buddhism

4. Bakuhan System

5. Sakoku Policy

6. Sankin-kōtai

7. Kabuki Theater

8. Battle of Sekigahara

9. Kublai Khan

10. Powerful regional lords

Assignments

1. Describe the impact of the Mongol invasions on Japanese defence and military tactics.

2. Discuss the cultural contributions of Zen Buddhism during the Muromachi period.

3. Explain the Tokugawa Shogunate's sakoku policy and its effects on Japan's economy.

4. Discuss the role of sankin-kōtai in maintaining Tokugawa control over the daimyō.

5. Explain how the Tokugawa period's isolation shaped Japanese culture and society.

6. Compare the governance styles of the Ashikaga and Tokugawa Shogunates.

Suggested Reading

1. Bauer, Susan Wise. *The History of the Medieval World*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.

2. Bennett, Judith. *Medieval Europe: A Short History*. McGraw-Hill, 2010.

3. Friday, Karl F. *Japan Emerging: Pre-Modern History to 1850*. Routledge, 2018.

4. Screech, Timothy. *The Tokugawa World*. Routledge, 2020.

5. Totman, Conrad. *A History of Japan*. Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

6. Varley, H. Paul. *Japanese Culture*. University of Hawaii Press, 2000.

Reference

1. Berry, Mary Elizabeth. *The Culture of the Civil War in Kyoto*. University of California Press, 1994.

2. Borton, H. *Japan's Modern Century*. Macmillan Publishing, 1970.

3. Hall, John W. *Japan: From Prehistory to Modern Times*. Tuttle Publishing, 1991.

4. Keene, Donald. *World Within Walls: Japanese Literature of the Pre-Modern Era, 1600–1864*. Columbia University Press, 1976.

5. Sansom, George. *A History of Japan: 1334–1614*. Stanford University Press, 1961.

5

BLOCK

Medieval West Asia

Age of Caliphs

Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ trace the historical origin and spread of Islam

♦ familiarise with the life and achievements of Prophet Muhamad

♦ examine the main doctrines of Islam

♦ understand the governance structure under the Rashidun, Umayyad, and Abbasid Caliphates

Prerequisites

As students of history, you might have heard about the rise and spread of many religions and faiths all across the world in different timelines. It is quite a natural phenomenon embodying the needs and reforms demanded by the corresponding society directly or indirectly. Here also, the same rule was applicable as we could see ever since the emergence of Islam through Prophet Muhammad; it abruptly ended the issues related to warring tribes, poverty, lack of better administration and issues pertaining to the formation of a state. Islam brought about unity among the masses; its principles were highly appealing to people, which in turn increased its followers all over the world and definitely brought about central administration ensuring peace, prosperity and orderly life for its subjects. The first Caliphate was established after the death of the Prophet where Abu Bakr was adorned as its first Caliph. Caliph Rashidun made tremendous contributions to the spreading of Islam unifying people under one religion and ensuring a centralised administration promising prosperity throughout their empire.

We are talking about a period when there existed a multicultural society in West Asia at the beginning of the seventh century. The two empires that came prior to this

period such as the great Byzantine Empire and Sassanid Empire declined due to its losses to Ottomans and Arabs accordingly. Meanwhile, one could also witness intense political activities taking place in the lands of Iraq, Syria and adjacent regions, making way for a new order dominated by the Arab people, especially from the Hejaz communities. The new Order thus formulated was based on the concepts and ideologies of Prophet Muhammed who was considered the voice of Allah or the Supreme God as called by the Arabs.

Keywords

Islam, Muhammad, Doctrines, Rashidun Caliphate, Umayyads

Discussion

5.1.1 Prophet Muhammed and the Founding of Islam

Prophet Muhammed is considered the main champion of the religion, better known as Islam that emerged in West Asia during this time period. It is said that he received revelations from God through a sustained period of divine contact, which he alone got while he spent his time alone in remote jungles and caves. This was noted down by him and later came to be known as the Holy 'Qur'an' which became the Holy book of Islam and its followers, the Muslims.

Prophet Muhammed was born in Mecca in 570 CE. and belonged to the Hashim clan of the Quraysh tribe. One peculiarity of this community to which he was born was that they were well established in trade and commerce and consequently were considered the wealthiest merchants of Arabia. However, the family to which Muhammed was born was a middle-class one, unlike those in their tribe. Trade and Commerce were the main sources of income for these people, and hence, they continued their lives in the cosmopolitan world, having connections with almost every nook and corner of the world. In fact, it wouldn't be wrong to say that the

world itself got connected just because of the restless efforts of this community in the medieval period.

Muhammad was a trader in animal skins. His birthplace, Mecca, had commercial links with Africa, Syria, and Iraq. Long before the advent of Islam, Ethiopia had established a presence in Arabia through military expeditions and trade. During the sixth century, southern Arabia was actually occupied by Ethiopians, who also sent traders to live in cities such as Mecca, which were not under their direct control. Similarly, during the period of Muhammed, Arabs were nomads inhabiting the Arabian Peninsula and the Syrian desert regions. They were notoriously conflict-ridden through competition for scarce resources, their differences erupting in tribal warfare and revenge-seeking endeavours. Even though they maintained a defence system of their own consisting of an army, horsemen, chariots and camels, they were usually primitive in nature.

They mostly worshipped and engaged in rituals to appease Pagan Gods. The situation really craved for a change, especially in religious concepts and in the form of uniform

control that could provide them with endless possibilities for development and progress in the upcoming future. Muhammed was raised by his uncle Abu Talib.

Later, he went on to search for the truth of life and in search of spirituality, where he spent most of his time meditating in secluded places. Around the age of forty, during one of his retirements in Mount Hira, he heard a voice and saw a vision which summoned him to offer worship to the God who had created the world, one God of the monotheists. Encouraged by his wife, Khadijah, he accepted the summons as coming from God himself.

Thereupon, he received further messages which he interpreted as divine revelation, and the prayer recitation of which formed a major element of the new cult. The messages collectively were called the Qur'an. For a time, only his wife and a few close friends shared the cult with him. But after some years, the messages demanded that he summon his fellow Quraysh to the worship of God. From a monotheist, he was to become a Prophet to his people.

Fig 5.1.1 Ka'aba : Pilgrimage Centre of Muslims

In the initial stages, his wife's uncle and other members of his family embraced this religion which was followed by others who were near and close to him. At the same time, the Quraysh tribe went against him as his teachings and practices challenged their so-far practiced culture and religious rites based on the worship of pagan God and other related practices. Muhammad, during this time, also grieved due to the untimely

death of his wife, Khadeeja and uncle Abu Talib in the 619 CE.

He finally had to leave for Medina in 622 CE due to intense opposition from Quraysh tribes and in search of a new abode from where he could build up his new religion. This movement to Medina in this particular year is known as the hijra, the date from which the Muslim era began. Medina was an agricultural oasis inhabited by various feuding tribes, such as the Aws and Khazraj. Although the city had a king, his authority was largely symbolic, as real power rested with tribal leaders and other influential figures who maintained close ties with the ruler. They depended largely on agrarian activities for their sustenance and lacked social unity. It can be considered as a land of warring tribes, before the arrival of the Prophet. Muhammad was welcomed by the people of Medina with open hands, and they began to see him as the one who settled their problems and saw in him their future saviour with a divine purpose. They were highly influenced by his charismatic personality. He was just, polite and diplomatic and thus often acted as the arbitrator of their disputes.

The Prophet fused his power and soon entered into an armed struggle with the Quraysh. The community of Medina sided with him in his endeavours. Three major battles cemented the power of the Prophet in West Asia, wherein he fought the exiled Meccans in the battle of Badr in 624 and defeated them, thereby earning a name for him all over Arabia. This also acted as a conducive force in attracting the masses to the Islamic religion. Later in the battles of Uhud in the following year and Khandaq in 627, he again had to fight those from the Meccan region as they wanted to oust him from Arabia as they viewed him as a potential threat to them.

In the first battle of Uhud, he lost, however, in the second battle, he won a decisive victory

. Many from other communities converted to his religion due to his ever-increasing popularity in West Asian regions and Arabia. People began to see him as one among them and yielded to his teachings and advice.

The initial stages of development were quite challenging as the Jewish religion and Christianity were the two prominent world religions alongside other pagan worshiping systems that persisted in these religions. People were reluctant to accept new doctrines proposed by the Prophet, which he received as messages from God himself. This was later compiled together and became their holy book, which we all now know as the Qur'an. Hence, a common ancestor was traced between the Abrahamic religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, with some noticeable changes. Even when looking into the principles and lineage of these religions, it is almost the same with some changes, which in turn gives them a new identity.

The prophets that came prior to Muhammad, as mentioned in the Qur'an, are the same as the prophets indicated in the Old Testament of the Bible where we can see even Jesus Christ is stated as a prophet who came before the Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet, alongside his followers, even made a visit to Ka'aba to acknowledge Islam religion and its followers officially in 628 CE.

The issues Prophet Muhammad faced with Quraysh ended with a peace agreement concluded in Al-Hudaybiyyah between both parties, according to which the latter allowed the followers of Islam to visit their place as part of their pilgrimage in return of the dropping off of the claim of Muhammad to be regarded as the Prophet of God by the inhabitants of Mecca region. Even though this was the condition, as time went on, all the people from Mecca began to accept the position of Muhammad and thereby began to follow Islam as well. In 630, the leaders of the city of Mecca surrendered it to Muhammad who occupied it without resistance. He gave amnesty to everyone and announced the principles of the new order that every claim of privilege or blood or property is abolished by him except the custody of the shrine Ka'aba and the watering of the pilgrims.

5.1.2 Main Doctrines of Islam

Islam, or the ultimate submission to God as the word signifies, is based on five pillars of faith ensuring and hardening the relationship between Allah, God and human beings. They are the following.

1. *Shahadah* (The Confession of Faith)

The confession of faith is the fundamental expression of Islamic faith and the core of all Islamic law, whereby they confess that "There is no God but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God" (*la illaha illa 'lah Muhammadun rasul 'llah*). In Islam, it is the first thing spoken to a newborn and the last thing whispered into the ears of the dead.

2. *Salat*

This states about the prayer offered to God, which they stress upon doing five times a day. It must be performed in the direction of Mecca, involving first standing, inclining, prostrating oneself, and sitting. The call to prayer is sounded by the muezzin (Muslim crier) from a tower within the mosque. The prayers are read from the *Qur'an* and must be chanted in Arabic as given in *Qur'an*. Islam also mentions dua, which is a kind of prayer or blessing in one's own language.

3. *Sawm Ramadan*

This indicates the fasting procedures in the holy month of Ramadan, which demands that believers refrain from eating and drinking all kinds of food and drink and from sexual

relationships from dawn until dusk. It is observed as a form of spiritual purification, self -discipline and devotion to God.

4. *Zakat*

This is related to the procedure of alms giving. Islam doesn't support the accumulation of wealth like some other religions that support that concept on varying grounds. As a matter of fact *Zakat* attains a significant position in following Islamic rules and traditions. They believe that helping the poor and needy will shower blessings from Allah or the almighty himself.

Zakat is also related to the payment of 2½ of their wealth as taxes for helping the less fortunate people. This is often followed during the month of Ramadan and especially in the festive occasions. These all activities will make him more pious and inclined to spirituality than go for worldly pleasures which are not real and only for the time being.

5. *Hajj*

It is the pilgrimage to Ka'aba of Mecca, which should be done by every able believer of Islam at least once in their lifetime as part of their religious beliefs. Here, they reiterate past events commemorating its validity in uniting them as a single uniform force, enriching their brotherhood and universal love for the world. Moreover, it is an act of ultimate surrender to the supreme God who unified them as a community through divine messages delivered to Prophet Muhammad.

The main message of Islam is monotheism. Muslims believe that all the Prophets sent by God to humanity shared the same central message, which was the message of monotheism. Monotheism is a term used to refer to the belief in the existence of only one deity (God). Muslims believe that there is only one God who created the universe and everything within it. This one God created the

heavens, the earth, the stars, the mountains, the oceans, humans, animals, plants and everything else in existence.

Muslims believe that since there is only one God who created us and who continues to sustain us, then it follows logically that only this one God is worthy of worship. If we want to thank someone for the blessings we have, it should be this one God. If we want to ask someone for more blessings, it should be this one. The followers of Islam believe that just as God created human beings, He has also created angels. However, humans were given free will, whereas angels are always obedient to the will of God. Angels are not able to disobey God, and they carry out all the tasks entrusted to them by God. Muslims do not delve into useless details of how angels were created or where and how they exist. This is knowledge that is beyond human's understanding as human beings. Human beings were created within this universe, and everything they observe around them is a creation of God. God created the laws of physics that govern our existence. Even though these laws apply to the entire universe as we know it, they do not apply to God because He is the one who created them in the first place. It is impossible for us to understand something that falls outside the normal laws of physics that we know.

Muslims believe that God created humans and that He wanted us to be able to live a good life. He does not want us to be misguided or to live miserable lives. He also does not want us to harm other humans or to do other morally evil actions. Therefore, God will hold every human being accountable for every action they have done in their life. In order to teach humanity what is right and what is wrong, God has sent Prophets and Messengers to guide us. These Prophets and Messengers are human beings just like the rest of us. But they were selected to take on the role of receiving guidance and

revelations from God through the angel Gabriel and to spread the message among the rest of humanity.

As mentioned in the previous section on Prophets and Messengers, Muslims believe that God revealed certain messages to guide humanity and to teach them right from wrong. The goal of all of these messages was to guide people to worship God only and to liberate humanity from the oppression of worshipping false Gods such as idols or kings. Also, the messages were sent to help humans establish a set of laws that would enable them to minimise injustice and evil actions and to make them live happy and fruitful lives. These messages are known as the Holy Books. They include the *Torah*, *Bible* and the *Quran.*

5.1.3 Age of Caliphs : Rashidun Caliphate

The death of the Prophet on 8 June 632 meant that the Muslim community was faced with a number of problems which had not arisen during his lifetime. He had left no generally acknowledged successor and had made it clear that he was "the seal of the Prophets", the last and greatest, and there could be no question of anyone inheriting his role. The first question which confronted the Muslims, therefore, was one of leadership: Who should lead the *Umma* and what status and power should such a leader have? Was he to be the first among equals, like a tribal chief, arbitrating and solving disputes, or was he to have more real and effective power, even a measure of divine sanction for his decisions? Was he to be chosen by the community or to take power by some process of hereditary succession within the Prophet's clan? If the question of leadership

was in doubt, so too was the question of deciding who was to form the élite in the new community, whether to choose those who demonstrated their piety and zeal for Islam from an early stage or those who had political experience and status before the coming of Islam. These questions were to become the major concerns of the Muslims in the years which followed Muḥammad's death, and the problems they caused, compounded and complicated by the conquests and settlements of the surrounding areas, were to prove extremely intractable. It was a very unusual situation in the history of human societies, since there were no precedents and no established and generally accepted ideas of authority and social structure which the community could use as reference points.

During the Prophet's lifetime, the tensions within the *Umma* resulting from the incorporation of the Meccan oligarchy had been kept under control, and the efforts to subdue and win over the rest of Arabia must have absorbed the energies of the whole community. After his death, however, the divisions came to the surface once more. When Muḥammad's death became known, the Muslims were, in the words of a contemporary, "like sheep on a rainy night". While the Anṣār debated in the saqīfa of the Banū Sā'ida, 'Umar seized the initiative by swearing allegiance to Abū Bakr as a leader. Then, the triumvirate of Muhājirūn leaders, Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Abū 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrāḥ went to the meeting place of the Anṣār and put an end to their deliberations, obliging them to acquiesce in their own choice. The next day, Abū Bakr was formally acknowledged as a leader in the mosque before the whole community.

Fig 5.1.2 Map showing the Extent of the Rashidun Caliphate

5.1.3.1 Abū Bakr (632 – 634)

Abu Bakr was acknowledged as both Commander of the Faithful (*Amīr al-Mu'minīn*) and Caliph (*khalīfa*). Commander of the Faithful was the term by which the ruler was usually addressed and the term used in decrees and correspondence. Abū Bakr could not be a Prophet, but at the same time, it was unthinkable that he should take a secular title like a king, which would deny the unique nature of the *Umma* and imply a degree of power which he did not have. The title khalīfa, however, left many questions open and left scope for the office to develop. He was acknowledged by the taking of the bay'a, that is, an oath of allegiance by the members of the community, and the taking of the bay'a, not a coronation ceremony, was to formalise the accession of all succeeding caliphs. Abū Bakr was the first of the four caliphs (his successors being 'Umar, 'Uthmā n and 'Alī) who led the community from 11 to 40 (632–661) and are often known as the Rā shidū n or "rightly guided" caliphs, to distinguish them from the Umayyads who followed them. During this period, the great Islamic conquests were begun and the outlines of the Muslim state were decided.

Abū Bakr was, in many ways, an ideal choice. Now an older man, he had been one of the first converts to Islam; it was with Abū Bakr as his sole companion that Muḥammad had made the perilous journey from Mecca to Medina at the time of the Hijra, and it had been Abū Bakr who led the prayers during the Prophet's last illness. He was also related to Muḥammad by marriage, since his daughter Aisha bint Abu Bakr had married Muḥammad and become his most influential wife. It was not just his close connections with the founder of the umma which made Abū Bakr acceptable; however, he showed qualities which were to prove invaluable to the community in the difficult early years and were to have a profound effect on its development. He was gracious and diplomatic, with a vast knowledge of the tribes and tribal politics of the Arabian Peninsula, all perhaps a heritage of his Quraysh origin.

Various upheavals against the caliphate were known as the *Ridda*. The word *Ridda* is usually translated as "apostasy" and implies that those who were involved had previously been Muslims but had rejected their new faith. Abū Bakr faced these challenges with energy and determination. Almost as soon as Muḥammad was dead, the Najd tribes sent representatives to ask that, while remaining Muslims, they should not be obliged to pay

taxes to Medina. While many among the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn were prepared to accept such terms, Abū Bakr was not and he at once collected an army and marched out to defeat a small section of the Ghaṭafān at Dhū'l-Qaṣṣa, the last time a Caliph was to lead an army in person until the disturbances after the death of 'Uthmān, thirty years later. After this small victory, Abū Bakr entrusted the command of the Muslim army to Khālid bal-Walīd.

In this manner, he won a series of brilliant victories. He turned his attention first to the Najd tribes. Here, after the breakdown of negotiations with Medina over the taxation issue, Ṭalḥa b. Khuwaylid al-Asadī, an experienced tribal chief, had put together a coalition of tribesmen from the Ṭayy, Ghaṭafān and Asad. Khālid succeeded in detaching some of the tribes of Ṭayy from the alliance and defeating the rest at Buzākha.

Khālid, who defeated the Ḥanafīs on behalf of Abu Bakr, had a crushing defeat with massive carnage in which their leader Musaylima was also killed. As a result of this unanimous victory, the survivors agreed to accept the suzerainty of Medina over them. Besides Khalid, there were also others like Bahrayn, Ikrima etc. who were the close associates of caliphs who tried to expand the Muslim dominance all over the world either through wars or based on mutual agreements.

When Ikrima was instructed to reassert the Muslim presence in Umān, he did so with an army largely raised from among the Hawāzin themselves. In the same way, the army which Muhā-jir led to Yemen was recruited, not in Medina but in Mecca and among the Bajīla tribes and the people of Najrān. Muslim authority was soon re-established among the divided peoples of Yemen, and the tribes of the area were encouraged to participate in the campaigns being launched from Medina towards Syria. In South Arabia, taxation seems to have

been the main source of discontent, and a rebellion among the tribe broke out, which however, was suppressed by Mujahir and his forces and was sent to Medina, where, in honour of his status as a great chief, he married Abū Bakr's sister and, despite his role as an "apostate" was integrated into the Muslim élite.

5.1.3.2 Umar (634 – 644)

When Abu Bakr died in August 634 with a short period of reign and an enormous achievement backing up his legacy, the situation was such that the conquest of Arabia was almost over and even started the same for Syria as well. During all this time Umar was one of his close associates as well as his advisor. Hence, when Umar was appointed as the next successor after his death, there was absolutely less resistance from other members as they already knew that this was the man who was going to take charge as the next Caliph and lead them towards their ultimate goal.

As per the Muslim tradition, he was a stern, uncompromising, and incorruptible ruler. He is famous for his personal austerity and high standards and expected the same from his subjects and the officials who supported him in his palace. Like Abū Bakr, he was also a man of very considerable practical ability. Not only did he direct the Islamic conquests, but he also developed the system of settlement and, in particular, the *dīwān* system with its arrangements for paying pensions to the conquerors rather than distributing lands among them, a system which was to have far-reaching results for the political future of the Islamic world.

During his reign, he completed the conquest endeavours started over by his predecessor Abu Bakr which he completed in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Egypt. In the matter of appointment of members to his council and other important officials, he also has his own

strategies, which he executed successfully without much opposition from anyone.

The establishment of a pax Islamica in Arabia meant that such opportunities were no longer available; one Muslim tribe should not raid another. Only by directing the energies of the tribesmen against an outside enemy could the unity of the Muslim state be preserved. The ghazw had been an essential part of Arab life in the *Jāhiliyya* (the times before Islam) – now, under Islam, all the Muslims were to cooperate in launching raids against their opponents. In addition, the launching of the conquests gave the Muslim leadership great powers of patronage; only those who were Muslims could participate in the conquests and share the rewards, which were to be determined by the Medina government. Many tribesmen must have felt that joining the armies of Islam was a way to an earthly, as well as a heavenly, paradise. The conquests were, in short, a necessary consequence.

There was often a question about the immense conquest that took place during Umar's reign, which is often a controversial one, especially when we consider the immense wars that took place in Syria, Iraq and other regions of Arabia. First of all, conquest was necessary in those days as we have stated that these regions were full of tribes and communities that feuded with each other and even took to arms for trivial reasons. This was also one of the reasons for the degeneration and under development in these regions and hence these situations demanded a powerful force that could unite them and lead them towards the path of progress and advancement. The Caliphs who came after Muhammad were bound to fulfil this noble aim and did the same through wars and agreements.

The Caliph's control was not only limited to Egypt, Syria and Iraq, rather it extended towards other regions such as Jerusalem and Damascus which accepted the authority of Caliphate over them. Umar even attempted to establish a Muslim garrison town at Jābiya, the old Ghassanid centre south of Damascus, where the Muslims were to live separate from the local population. Similarly, the rest of the province was divided into junds in which divisions of the conquering army were settled. This policy initiated by him was, however, a failure in the Syria region, where people were against such policies. Moreover, people were highly affected by an epidemic and Umar was more concentrated on dealing with the same rather than concentrating his attention on other factors.

Umar had to face many internal conflicts from the regions he conquered and it seems from the evidence that he spent a great deal of his time in settling those issues with high end strategy and utmost efficiency. He dealt with the threats of the Byzantine empire and made places like Edessa and its nearby regions to succumb to his suzerainty. Representatives of Umar made a series of treaties with the leaders of the urban communities, which guaranteed their property and freedom of worship in exchange for a tax called *jizya* while payments in kind for the support of the Muslims were taken from rural areas.

In a few districts where there was more prolonged resistance they left an agent with a few men, but in the main tax collection was left to the local people. A peculiar problem was caused by the Banū Taghlib, Christian Arabs who inhabited the middle Euphrates area. They stubbornly refused to accept Islam but demanded to be taxed just like *ṣadaqa* demanded of other tribes but not the belittling poll tax. Umar who was the then governor by this time, consulted 'Umar, who was in favour of strong measures until it was pointed out that they might defect to the Byzantines, and in the end a compromise was reached with the Taghlib paying the ṣadaqa but at double the rate demanded of Muslim tribes.

Expansion to the Egyptian region was pioneered by *Amr* under the orders of *Umar,* but this was only a partial order as he had shown some reluctance to forge a full fledged attack in the initial stages. Finally, Umar ceded to the demands of his subordinates and gave orders for attack. As per the instructions from the higher authority,'*Amr*'s small troop probably entered Egypt in the late autumn and soon took *Faramā* (Pelusium), the first port on the Nile delta, before moving on to attack the great fortress known as Babylon, just to the south of the site where Cairo was later constructed.

Prior to the arrival of the Caliphate troops, the Byzantine Empire had a stronghold over the country, and taking this as an opportunity, missionaries and other Christian religious leaders forcefully converted the inmates of this region to Christianity. It was done in order to establish the rule of Christian kingdom in all facets of their day to day life so that if any alien forces tried to attack them whole of people would stand together against them.

Amr who was selected for this particular campaign was already aware about it and was prepared to bring down Byzantine forces in order to make things easy for him in Egypt. However, he was worried about the small forces he had with him in doing so. Luckily for him some more forces joined him, though in the course of the expedition, full commanding power was handed over to Amr himself. He defeated the opposition forces and took control of Heliopolis with the help of his reinforcement in the month of June 640, and began the siege of Babylon from September onwards. This went on for six months and initially ended with the fall of Cyrus as one of their commanders by the name Heraclius died fighting the army of the Caliphate.

The Arab forces then advanced on Alexandria, defeating the Byzantines again at Nikiou en route. Alexandria, well fortified and easily supplied from the sea, should have been able to hold out for many months but in the event, confusion amounting almost to civil war in Byzantium and in the local garrison paralysed the resistance, and Cyrus made terms for the surrender of the city. After an eleven-month period of grace, it was finally surrendered. Thus, by 642 CE., the situation was such that the entire Egypt came under their control, and they maintained it without much resistance until 645 CE.

A new town was established for the Muslims at Fusṭāṭ, by Babylon, and this, rather than Alexandria, became the new capital. Arabs chose a place towards the edge of the land to keep constant communication with their own homeland. Outside Fusṭāṭ, Arab settlement was very limited; there was a small garrison in Alexandria and some other towns, but no large-scale immigration followed the conquest. The administration of the Byzantines was taken over and streamlined. Still, many of the old methods and officials continued to be used at a local level. At the same time, Arabic language documents were issued by the governors from the first year after the conquest.

It was Umar who laid down the principles according to which 'aṭā was to be distributed in a system known as the dīwān. The dīwān recorded the names of all those entitled to salaries and the rates at which they were to be paid, for not all Muslims were to enjoy the same pay. The different scales were paid according to the individual's *sābiqa*, that is to say, his precedence in Islam.

These rules thus brought into execution level by the concerned authorities resulted in the creation of a new privileged class who enjoyed the highest salaries, and it was quite possible for one man to be getting ten times the amount given to his neighbour, even if they came from the same tribe and background, simply because he had joined

the armies of Islam five years before the latter one. This could be particularly embarrassing if the late arrival belonged to a family which, in the tribal scale of values, had enjoyed high prestige even before their lands were taken over by the followers of Islam. This is the main reason why we could see that '*Umar'*s system was defended with enthusiasm by those who had come early but caused strong resentment among many latecomers.

The rule of the various provinces was entrusted to leaders called amīrs, a term which can be loosely translated as governors. These amīrs tended to be fairly independent of the government in Medina and responsive to the needs of the men they had led to victory. In particular, despite some pressure from *Umar* himself they seem to have used most of the revenues of their provinces for the benefit of the Muslims who had settled there rather than to their headquarters stationed in Medina

The reign of *Umar* went well, especially with expansionist policies, taxation, reforms, creation of new settlements, etc. Furthermore, it had seen the development of many important Muslim institutions, the dīwān, the urban settlements and the development of a privileged group of those who received the highest 'aṭā'. However, his period was short-lived when he got murdered at the hands of a Persian slave in Medina, which left the throne vacant for a time period.

5.1.3.3 Uthman(644 – 656)

Umar, on his deathbed, had appointed a Committee by the name of Shura to choose his successor, who were possibly from the Muhajirun members. Two main candidates emerged as possible candidates who were none other than Ali, Prophet's cousin and son in-law and Uthman who had been a supporter of the prophet right from the beginning and was from the Umayya clan. Even though the first preference was Ali it

didn't go well as his policies and beliefs went in contrast to his predecessors. For Uthmān, however, the conditions posed no problems; despite his early adherence to Islam, Uthmān had retained his links with his clan and benefited from the experience in practical affairs which his upbringing as a Meccan merchant had given him. He became Caliph with a definite political programme to ensure that the Muslim empire remained under the control of the Quraysh.

Centralisation of powers was the main feature of the Caliphate under Uthman. Most of the posts were abolished while other official's powers were restricted in order to execute this order. There was opposition to these measures, but they were suppressed with an iron hand by the forces of the Caliph. Similarly, he proclaimed that from then on, the financial affairs of the provinces were to be decided not by local leaders but in Medina. He also ordered the creation of a definitive form of the *Quran* to insist its law upon his subject in an orthodox manner.

The Administration of Uthman was perfect except for some differences of opinion that came in taking away the rights of Muslims and in focusing all financial transactions to the Medina region. This also could not stand for long due to the diplomatic and timely intervention of the Caliph and his associates. When we look at the expansionist policies, we could see the expansion of the empire to the west side in Nubia and North Africa. He also administered the development of a naval force under the Governors of Syria and Egypt. Cyprus was forced to pay tribute and even defeated the forces of Byzantine in the naval battle of the Masts.

In the east, there were constant attacks on Iran, and they became successful in defeating them as well. There was also an attempt of counterattack from the part of the Iranians, which was also defeated without any further opposition. Besides this, some army troops

were sent to mountainous regions of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Egypt and from the records it is clear that it only remained an expedition and cannot be considered a military warfare since it could not add to the expansion of the empire in this respect.

Arab armies usually avoided the mountainous areas where traditional rulers, social structures, religions and languages remained almost unimpeded. This contrast had profound effects on both the political history of the area and the cultural life since it was precisely in those areas where the local aristocracy remained, influencing Persian culture as such. We could find that almost all of the Persian kingdom under the Sassanians were captured by Uthman before his death with some remote regions left here and there. Although this was the condition, Arab settlement here was too less due to issues like civilian unrest and troubles created by Turks. Egypt was yet another place that faced internal issues during the time of the Uthman Caliphate, which, however, was resolved as some tribes in this region sided with them to suppress the rebellion.

As discussed earlier about Uthman's reign, though there were many merits for his administration and welfare policies which he enacted strongly upon people, there were also issues pertaining to this. In the later stages of his reign, he had to face many differences of opinion arising from inside his council, especially those related to the reforms and financial changes that were brought about by making Medina the headquarters. Uthman also created enemies among certain tribes due to his policies. The traditional attitude that he adopted only brought him fewer followers and a large number of enemies. The difficulties he faced in suppressing internal rebellions from among the places he conquered made him unpopular among his subjects as well.

The condition became so intense in 656

that the position was so bad that rebellions in the provinces and disturbances in Medina itself led to the Caliph's murder under dramatic circumstances. He was killed in his own house, defenceless and unarmed as he sat reading the *Qur'an*. His assassination was one of the most traumatic incidents in early Islamic history, and its effects were to have a profound bearing on the future development of the Islamic state.

5.1.3.4 Ali Ibn Ali Talib (656 – 661)

Ali Ibn Ali Talib became the next Caliph without much opposition amidst a situation where the unity among Muslims was undergoing great challenges ever since the death of Uthman. He was often admired by his followers for his eloquence, wisdom, piety and disciplined way of life. Ali accepted the position of being their next Caliph on the condition that it may be made public so that if there was anyone who opposed such a decision, they could do it publicly. Ali also, besides having learned the *Qur'an* by heart, he paid great attention to the *Sunnah* (the teachings and practices of Prophet Muhammad). He used to seek to verify its narration and authenticity. He is reported to have said: "When I narrate to you from the Messenger of Allah, it is far more beloved to me that I be hurled down from the Heavens than for me to lie against him."

Zubayr and Talha, along with some other Muslim leaders, approached Ali to avenge the death of Uthman, the Caliph who governed the Caliphate right before him. He didn't make a sudden decision on this as he knew people were already violent by then and it needed time to bring out the real culprits acting behind the scenes, and obviously in the case of the murder of a former Caliph. Ali's stance in this affair, however, was misinterpreted. In Ali's opinion only a trial could determine someone's guilt. Moreover, he was aware of the fact that it was the evil plot of jewish instigator Abdullah Ibn

Saha that started civil unrest in the Medina region against Uthman in the first place. Unfortunately, this delay or silence on the part of the Caliph was also misinterpreted as an action of favouring those who killed the former Caliph.

However, he consulted Naila, the wife of a deceased Caliph from whom he couldn't gather much information about the real murderers. Some communities like Bani Ummayyah, who did not accept the authority of Ali, began to leave Medina. This made Ali maintain good relationships with the Quraysh and Ansar Tribes to establish strongholds over his subjects. Further, he removed most of the inefficient governors who were appointed during the time period of Uthman. Bani Umayyah people considered Muawiya as their leader who did everything to incite anger in the minds of the people and stir their anger against the Caliph for not avenging the death of Uthman. He even blamed Ali for not taking action against the culprits.

When the governors of Kufa and Syria returned to Medina, Ali sent a letter to Abu Musa Ash'ari and Muawiya to stand down and give way for new governors to take up their positions in these places. While Abu succumbed to the demands of the letter, Muawiya turned down the requests of the letter and warned the Caliph through an informer that he was going to attack him with a force of more than 60,000 men who were successfully turned against the case of Murder issue pertaining to Uthman and the issues that were created thereupon.

Meanwhile, Muawiya declared himself as the Caliph of Jerusalem and started an open rebellion, which became the first civil rebellion of the Islamic Empire, also known in history as 'the First Fitna'(651–666 CE). This was the period when Ali moved from Medina to Kufa due to unbearable opposition from Medina and adjacent regions, even though he was officially elected or appointed

Caliph after Uthman. Similarly, Zubayr and Tahal went to Mecca in the pretext of pilgrimage and joined the protests against Ali, who were led by Ayisha, the wife of the deceased Prophet. This means Ali was facing a dual threat at the same time.

This was the time when the whole of the Muslim community got divided into the Shias and the Sunnis. Those who accepted and followed Ali's authority came to be known as *Shias*, and those who followed the other Caliphs as opposed to Ali became the Sunnis accordingly. Ali was considered a descendant of the direct bloodline of the Prophet himself. Hence, those who followed Ali believed in direct descendance from the Prophet Muhammed himself.

In the war of First Fitna, the Muslim empire encountered massive losses in men and property. It further weakened the Caliphate of Ali, and people began to validate his rule as being fragile compared with his predecessors. He was unable to contain the civil unrest among the masses. The Fitna began right after the Persians assassinated the Caliph of the Muslims, which predated the Battle of the Camel, in which war between the companions by instigation from rebels took place. In fact, it was the murder of Umar ibn al-Khattab that started the chain reaction, which resulted in the Battle of the Camel in 656 BCE.

The Battle of Camel and Ali's conquest of Basra was a death blow to his enemies initially as it was short-lived when Ibn Saba and his followers formed another front against Ali by turning Persian provinces against him one by one so that he may not be able to rule peacefully from his place and which might make him drop his plan for invading Syria. Thus, he had to confront two oppositions all at the same time, one from the Saba sect inspired by the Kharjites and the other from Muawiya. The latter went on a war with Ali by openly despising him and rebelling

against his policies. This battle is known as the Battle of Siffin in the pages of history, and here, the victory sided with Ali, but the life of Muawiya was spared since they begged for the same in front of the Caliph by taking *Qur'an* in their hands. This was later followed by an arbitration between the Caliph and the Governor where Muawiya's representative betrayed the Caliph and his close associates, thereby declaring Muawiya as the winner of the Battle.

Ali was occupied with suppressing Kharijite uprisings, which allowed Muawiya to take advantage of the situation. Muawiya gradually gained control over various provinces through force. Eventually, in 661, Ali was assassinated in Kufa by an attacker believed to be a Kharijite. However, it remains unclear who was behind the assassination, similar to what happened to his predecessor. The death of Ali ended the Rashidun Caliphate adorned by the reign of four Caliphs who were considered the first and foremost among the true followers and believers of the Prophet. This was the period which can undoubtedly be called as the golden period in the history of Islam since the achievements, expansion and prosperity of the Islamic state or Empire were at the topmost level during this era after which they gave way to Umayyad and Abbassid Caliphates details of which we will discussing the next unit.

Recap

- The condition of West Asia in the seventh century necessitated the emergence of Islam

- The Prophet Muhammad pioneered the growth and development of this newly found religion

- The Rashidun Caliphate emerged as a consequence of the death of the Prophet to guide Islam and its followers to new heights

- First four Caliphs, namely Abu Bakar, Umar, Uthman and Ali, constituted the Rashinud Caliphate

- They established an Islamic Empire through treaties and conquests that engulfed almost all of West Asia including places such as Mecca, Medina, Persia, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, etc

- The Rashidun Caliphate ended with the death of Ali, after which it gave way for the emergence of Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates

Objective Questions

1. Name the religion that emerged in the first half of the seventh century.

2. Who is considered as the progenitor of Islam ?

3. Which Caliphate emerged after the death of the Prophet?

4. Who were the first four Caliphs of the Caliphate?

5. Who was the last ruler of the Rashidun Caliphate?

6. In Islamic law (*Shari'ah*), what is the mandatory charitable tax requiring Muslims to give 2.5% of their wealth to help the less fortunate?

7. Which year did the Battle of Uhud take place?

8. What was the main feature of the Caliphate under Uthman?

9. Who declared himself as the Caliph of Jerusalem?

10. What is the name of the first civil rebellion in the Islamic Empire?

Answers

1. Islam

2. Prophet Muhammad

3. Rashidun Caliphate

4. Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman,Ali

5. Ali Ibn Ali Talib

6. Zakat

7. 625 CE

8. Centralizations of powers

9. Muawiya

10. The First *Fitna*

Assignments

1. Make a comparative analysis on the condition of West Asia prior to the emergence of Islam and the changes that came forth after that.

2. Discuss the importance of *Zakat* (charity) in promoting social justice in Islam.

3. Analyse the impact of Islamic principles on daily life and culture.

4. Discuss the key differences between Islamic and Western calendars.

Suggested Reading

1. Al-Suyuti. *History of the Caliphs.* Oriental Press, 1970.

2. Armstrong, Karen. *Islam: A Short History*. Modern Library Books, 2000.

3. Armstrong, Karen. *Muhammad: A Prophet of Our Time*. HarperOne, 2007.

Reference

1. Hazleton, Lesley. *The First Muslim: The Story of Muhammad*. Atlantic Books, 2014.

2. Kennedy, Hugh. *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.

3. Tayeb-El-Hibri. *Parables and Politics in Early Islamic History.* Columbia University Press, 2010.

UNIT 2

Umayyad and the Abbasids

Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ familiarise themselves with the transition that took place in the Ancient Islamic world
- ♦ explain the rise and growth of the Umayyad Caliphate
- ♦ analyse the reasons for the downfall of Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates

Prerequisites

The Caliphate that thrived under Rashidun Caliphs ended and was overrun by Umayyads under Mu'awiya, who came out as an end result of civil unrest that took place in the Arabian countries. The new Caliphate thus formed couldn't be compared with any other as they have its own unique nature that distinguished it from others. Many rulers came under this newly established Caliphate and gave their own contributions on various levels, and it continued unless and until it was overtaken by another faction who believed in Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet, known in the history as Abbasids and they established the Abbasid Caliphate which is often described as the 'Golden Period of Islamic Civilization'. One of the most notable among the rulers of this period was Harun-al-Rashid, who brought significant changes in his kingdom, which is appreciated and remembered even today. However, after his reign, the empire began to get weak for various reasons, and it was finally overrun by the Mongols in 1258 CE, which ended the Caliphate forever.

Keywords

Umayyad, Mu'awiya, Abbasid, Harun-Al-Rashid, House of Wisdom, Mongols

Discussion

5.2.1 Islamic Empire

As Muhammad planned, his successors spread Islam beyond Arabia through military conquest. These military expeditions were never nomadic migrations because families only followed the bedouin after a conquest was complete. However, victories over the Byzantines and the Sasanians seemed to confirm the power of Allah, encouraging yet more Arab conquests. Once the concept of holy war took root, there was no reason for dialogue with non-Muslim states. The world was divided into two starkly different zones, the *Dar al-Islam,* the "House of Islam", and the *Dar al-Harb,* the "House of War", with the result that peace was not seen to be interrupted by war but rather continuous warfare against infidels came to a halt whenever outright victory or a truce occurred.

The Arab onslaught could not have been launched at a better moment for the attackers. Perhaps as much as one-third of the West Asian population outside Arabia had been carried off by plague, even before the bitter struggle between the Sasanian Persians and the Byzantines added widespread destruction. Yet the unexpected Arab advance in the last decade of Emperor Heraclius' reign so shattered the Byzantine confederacy that some of his subjects thought that it indicated the loss of divine approval for the Christian empire. Sophronius, the patriarch of Jerusalem, said the Muslims would not have triumphed had the Christians remained truly devout. Instead, they had "injured the gift-giving Christ and impelled his wrath against us". It fell to the lot of this senior churchman to surrender his city to the second Caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab, in 638.

The Arab general who conducted the siege offered either conversion to Islam or capitulation and the payment of a fine for the safety of the inhabitants; otherwise, he informed Sophronius that they faced death. The patriarch knew that Damascus and Aleppo had already come to terms, their Christian places of worship being spared any damage or confiscation. At Aleppo, indeed, there would be no change at all: so few Muslims took up residence in the city that a monumental mosque was unnecessary. A violent assault could only mean the destruction of the Holy Places, so Sophronius offered to surrender Jerusalem to the Caliph without realising how much the Muslims esteemed the city themselves. Umar received news of Sophronius' offer while in Syria and responded at once, arriving post-haste on a camel. The two men met on the Mount of Olives. Taken back by Umar's shabby appearance, Sophronius lent the Caliph a cloak until his dirty camel-hair garment could be washed. A Muslim version of the story, however, puts an entirely different slant on the historic encounter. It relates how Umar changed his dirty riding clothes and rode into the city, where the Arabs refused to acknowledge him as the true Caliph until he changed back into them.

Fig 5.2.1 Map showing the extent of the Umayyad Caliphate

The Umayyad Dynasty or Caliphate was established by Muawiya in 661 CE who at that point in time acted as Governor to Syria on behalf of Ali, the last ruler of Rashidun Caliphate. This Caliphate began to be recognised and attained prominence only after the death of Ali, the last Caliph. The Umayyads had usurped the Caliphate in the confusion following the assassination of Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law. Their power base was Syria, where they had a local following well before the arrival of Islam.

They ruled efficiently by suppressing every opposition and internal rebellion with brute force. In fact, they ruled over vast areas comprising Egypt, Spain, and Transoxiana, along with some parts of India and North African regions. Besides, some parts of the Mediterranean also came under their control for some time. Even though their empire was doing good, it encountered constant civil rebellions, which weakened the kingdom from within. This, coupled with the administration of weak rulers, led to the downfall of this Caliphate as well.

5.2.2.1 Muawiya (661 – 680 CE)

Muawiya (661 – 680 CE) was the first ruler of the Umayyad Caliphate, who rose to power after the death of Ali. He was very shrewd, ambitious, cunning and always longed for power. Thus, using unfair means in treaties or agreements with other rulers was not an issue for him. For example, he convinced Hasan, who succeeded Ali(the real Caliph) from Kufa, to abdicate the throne in favour of Muawiya so that the former may be relieved of his duties with a high pension. Although this was the condition, Muawiya later felt that Hasan would pose a threat and had him killed through poisoning by his wife in 670 CE.

His reign continued for up to twenty years, during which time he made an excellent administration, which historians and scholars consider as the golden period of the Umayyad Caliphate. People never suffered poverty under him, even though his external affairs policies invited controversial opinions from those who studied about his period. He led military expeditions to Asia, particularly in the regions of modern-day Pakistan and Afghanistan, alongside his other conquests which were focused on the Moroccan region. In fact, he was also successful in acquiring parts of the Byzantine and Persian empires. Muawiya was the first ruler who introduced the police system better known as shurta, personal bodyguards and even appointed diwan to look after local administration by getting inspiration from Umar's reign in Rashidun where he followed a similar kind of administrative system.

Umayyad Caliphs helped the Arab power to grow beyond any expectations. To cut down inter-tribal feuds, blood money was paid to pre-empt retaliation and tribes were dispatched in different directions. Not everyone was pleased with distant campaigns, although it did not stop Arab forces from reaching as far west as Spain and as far east as India. The naval expedition to India in 644 witnessed Umar's assassination and was not followed up until 711 when another force of 12,000 men reached the Indus region.

5.2.2.2 Yazid

The next major ruler of the Umayyad Caliphate was Yazid who was the son of Muawiya, who reigned as the next ruler from 680 – 683 CE. When Yazid was appointed, it ushered in a new era of dynastic rule which many Arabs did not like and obviously there was resentment from many of them including his brother Husayn Ibn Ali and Abdullah Ibn Zubayr, another close associate of Prophet Muhammad's family having great influence on people in these regions.

Yazid is considered a negative figure when one ponders through Islamic history, which was mainly due to his measures and rising unpopularity among the masses. Mostly, by around 680 CE, Husayn, along with his supporters marched to Iraq, planning to gather his forces and then attack Damascus. Yazid, in the meantime, closed the gates of Kufa and sent an army under the command of Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad to seize Husayn and his rebel army. The battle between them took place in Karbala, near the Euphrates, where Husayn's army, including seventy fighters, were all brutally butchered, and Husayn was also beheaded mercilessly. This incident ushered in the second civil war of Islamic history known as the Second Fitna (680-692 CE).

The Second Fitna was a period of general political and military disorder and civil war during the early Umayyad Caliphate following the death of the first Umayyad Caliph Mu'awiya I that lasted for about twelve years. The war involved the suppression of two challenges to the Umayyad dynasty, the first by Husayn ibn Ali, as well as his supporters including Sulayman ibn Surad and Mukhtar al-Thaqafi, who were defeated with heavy casualties on both sides.

The next target of Yazid was Medina, where he ordered an attack on the rebels who opposed and questioned his authority. This military expedition led to what is known in history as the Battle of Al-Harra (633 CE), where opponents in there were crushed. However, after the war in Medina, the city was subjected to severe inhuman actions such as plunder, rape, pillage and murder. Yazid was not going to stop with this, and he marched his troops to Mecca, where he confronted Abdullah, who was ruling that region as a self-proclaimed ruler. The city was besieged for several weeks, during which the cover of the Ka'aba (Islamic holy site) caught on fire. During this campaign, Yazid died and due to this, their troops were forced to retreat back.

5.2.2.3 Marwan ibn Hakam (r. 684-685 CE)

Marwan ibn Hakam (r. 684-685 CE), took over the position as next Caliph of the Umayyad Dynasty. He was a senior member of the Umayyad clan and a cousin of Muawiya; Although he promised that he would return back to the kingdom to Khalid, the younger son of Yazid, it is clear that he had no intention of doing so through his actions. His empire came to be known as Hakkamites or Marwanides. During his reign Marwan recaptured Egypt, which had revolted and joined the Zubayr faction. However, he became unsuccessful in containing Abdullah's revolt since his reign was short-lived and he died nine months after assuming the position in 685 CE. This task

now fell upon the shoulders of his brilliant son, Abd al-Malik (r. 685-705 CE). Marwan's son became the next Caliph and successor of Marwan.

5.2.2.4 Abd al-Malik (r. 685-705 CE)

Abd al-Malik (r. 685-705 CE) had to face stiff opposition from the combined forces of Al Mukhtar of Kufa and Abdullah. They became a real menace for the new Caliph, and he finally decided to send a military expedition under his commander Ubaidulla which was also defeated by the combined forces led by Abdullah and Al Mukthar. However, this was only an initial victory for the opposition as differences began to arise between Al-Mukthar and Abdullah over establishing the Alid Caliphate. Each of them wanted the Caliphate for themselves, and when such an issue arose, they would obviously break up and this is what happened here as well. They Parted their ways which was taken advantage of by Abd-Al-Malik, who waited for this long just to see his rivals weaken each other. In 687 CE Al Mukhtar was killed by Zubayrid forces during the siege of Kufa. Although Al Mukhtar died there and then, his revolt ultimately led to the evolution of Shi'ism from a political group to a religious sect.

Now, Abd al-Malik shifted his attention towards Mecca, where he sent his most loyal and ruthless general, the governor of rebellious Iraq, Hajjaj ibn Yusuf to subjugate his Abdullah, who stood no chance against Hajjaj's mighty army. Consequently, Abdullah and his forces were defeated and the former succumbed to death in 692 CE. In this way Abd-al-Malik destroyed his complete opposition and brought about long-lasting stability to his kingdom. He centralised the administration to resist any kind of internal plot and uprisings by any governors under him. Mostly, he is responsible for bringing a uniform code for the whole Arab Empire

which in turn helped in the rapid spread of Islam without making much effort for the same. The Caliph was farsighted and intelligent in making decisions and executing them with utmost efficacy and accuracy. Moreover, he introduced a new coinage system for his Empire.

Abd al-Malik's construction of the Dome of the Rock, one of the world's architectural masterpieces, drew upon Byzantine building techniques and craftsmanship, but it was an unequivocal statement of Islam's establishment as a great religion. Besides celebrating this event, Abd al-Malik had a political motive too. His rivals briefly seized Mecca, so the Dome of the Rock offered an alternative centre for pilgrimage. Furthermore, he was also able to conquer almost all of North Africa by 693 CE which proved much beneficial for his kingdom in the long run. The outreach of Islam went up to Europe, especially in Spain and adjacent regions during his time period, which even continued during his successor's reign as well.

5.2.2.5 Al Walid I (705-715 CE)

Al Walid I (705-715 CE) was the next significant ruler in the series who gave much importance to the process of extending their empire even further. He mostly used his associates for this purpose. For example, from the records, it is clear that Muhammad ibn Qasim and Qutayba ibn Muslim subjugated parts of modern-day Pakistan and Transoxiana for him.

A Berber named Tariq ibn Ziyad was the one who started the Spanish conquest in 711 CE when he defeated an army commanded by Gothic king Roderic at the battle of Guadalete. Meanwhile, Musa ibn Nusayr the governor of North Africa and his forces conquered most of Al Andalus by 714 CE. Musa was on the threshold of attacking Europe through the Pyrenees, but at this

very juncture, the attack was called off by the Caliph himself due to some unknown emergencies that might have happened in his capital.

5.2.2.6 Sulayman(715 – 717 CE)

When Walid died, Sulayman, his younger brother, took over the charge as the next ruler even though the former desired to hand over his throne to his son. Sulayman ruled from 715 – 717 CE during which time he released many prisoners held over by Hajjaj in his prison. His reign is often witnessed by scholars and historians as an utter failure due to his illogical moves that brought about great loss to the kingdom. This can be illustrated by the fact that when he sent a large force to conquer the Byzantine capital without any forethought or by seeking any expert advice in 717 CE, it ended up in a humiliating defeat where the damage remained irreversible and perpetual. This was the first-ever major loss suffered by the Muslims suffered at the hands of a foreign force. Unfortunately, Sulayman's reign only lasted for 2 years , and he too succumbed to death after that. Before his death, he nominated his cousin Umar ibn Abd al-Azis as he found that his sons were too young to handle the Empire and perform the duties of a ruler.

5.2.2.7 Umar ibn Abd al-Azis

Umar ibn Abd al-Azis, often known as Umar II (717-720 CE), made many reforms in accordance with Islam, which he opposed. This quality of his, supplemented by many of his admirable actions such as stopping public cursing of Ali, facilitating conversion and halting attacks on peaceful neighbouring empires, has earned him much posthumous fame as he has often been dubbed as the fifth Rashidun Caliph.

He stopped all military expeditions, knowing that the internal state of the empire needed to be improved before anything else. He had also entered negotiations with the non-Arab Muslims. Unfortunately, his reign and fame were short-lived as he was poisoned by his own family members due to his firm stance on things based on justice, peace and harmony with neighbouring countries.

5.2.2.8 Yazid II

Yazid II succeeded him and proved to be a womaniser rather than a real ruler. He used to spend most of his time with concubines and wives, spending time in luxury and extravagance. His Governors took this as an opportunity to be reckless just like him. Meanwhile, some others declared themselves as independent rulers under his empire. The kingdom was on the verge of destruction economically, and it was at this time that his reign ended in 724 CE when he was succeeded by Hisham, his brother, who ruled till 743 CE.

5.2.2.9 Hisham (724 CE- 743 CE)

Hisham had to go through difficult times of chaos and turmoil caused by internal civil war and depleting resources. He used the strategy of innovative reforms to tackle this situation and could find the desired results to some extent. He even introduced a coinage system of his own in the model of the Caliphs who ruled prior to him. He was able to subdue a Hindu revolt that arose in the Sindh region but unfortunately he couldn't do that with the Berber revolt that took place in the Moroccan region influenced by the teachings of Kharijite zealots. In the Battle of Nobles fought between both parties in the year 740 C.E., a great deal of carnage was experienced by the Caliph, nobles and his army. Most of his generals and nobles were brutally massacred in this battle. In 743 CE Berbers took control over the city of Morocco. In the meantime, another rebellion also occurred in Al Andalus where it was suppressed and brought under their control with the help of an able General named Abd al-Rahman al-Ghafiqi. The province was

restored to order but further expansion into Europe was checked after the defeat at the Battle of Tours (732 CE) against the Franks under Charles Martel.

Many rulers like Walid II, Yazid III, and Ibrahim came after the death of Hashim but they all couldn't make as much progress as the latter since the kingdom was going through a phase of civil war often known in the history of the Islamic world as Third Fitna (743 – 747 CE). Many tribes had also started revolting against the establishment amidst the chaos, taking this as an ample opportunity to overthrow the regime.

This was the time when Marwan II assumed the throne and was revered in history as a great military commander. He was the one ruler who became successful in suppressing the Third Fitna in 747 CE. However, he had no diplomatic skills at all and this is the reason why he couldn't save the Umayyad Caliphate from the real opposition which they faced from Abbasids in the future. These Abbasids were the Arabian faction that claimed to be the real descendants of Abbas, the uncle of Prophet Muhammad.

They conjoined hands with Khurasan tribes in Iran to launch an attack on the Umayyads. Marwan, who was the ruler at that point, was struggling economically and used to have only a limited number of army due to their face-off with the Fitna rebels. Moreover, he was also not in a position to recruit more as the finance didn't allow for the same. Furthermore, governors were also not efficient enough to resist such an attack.

Most of the tribes in the eastern part also supported the Abbasids with men and money. Eventually, when the army of the Caliph faced the mighty army of Abbasids near the Zob River in 750 CE, the victory sided with the latter, ultimately resulting in the end of the Umayyad dynasty. They and their forces were annihilated completely in a merciless manner. The king fled to Egypt and tried to muster up his forces from western provinces, but the Abbasids caught up with him and killed him then and there. Abbasids, after the decisive victory over the Umayyads, took the throne for themselves and declared as the new Caliph who was to rule from the Kufa region. Abu al-Rahman I was the only survivor from the Umayyad Dynasty who managed to escape the persecution of Abbasids to Al Andalus who later went on to establish the Emirates of Cordoba in around 756 CE.

Fig 5.2.2 Map showing the extent of the Abbasid Caliphate

5.2.3 Abbasid Caliphate (750 – 1258 CE)

The rule of Abbasids is often considered as the 'Golden Period', in the history of Islamic Civilization. They had a coalition of members from Persian mawali, Eastern Arabs, and Shiites. They were mostly Shi'ite supporters and naturally were against the Sunnis. They maintained the hereditary control of the Caliphate, forming a new dynasty. The alliance with the Shiites was short lived, and the Abbasids became champions of Sunni orthodoxy, upholding the authority of their family over that of Ali, and continuing the subjugation of the Shiites. When we ponder more into this, we could find that they were more inclined to Persian culture and its developments and hence tried to mimic the same in their kingdom as well. They highly honoured the Persian Civilization and their court was heavily influenced by Persian customs and members from the powerful Persian Barmakid family, who acted as their advisors and counsellors, aiding them throughout their reign.

Abbasids did move their capital from Damascus to Baghdad, a city that was founded in 762 by al-Mansur near the banks of the river Tigris. The city marvelled and prospered under the Abbasids and became the epicenter of the Islamic world in a short period. Its location proved to be highly beneficial for the Abbasids as they could connect directly with the Persian Empire and their culture. Science, technology, art, literature, poetry, the art of papermaking, etc., received patronage and support from Abbasid rulers. In fact, they learned the art of making quality paper at an affordable cost from the Chinese.

5.2.3.1 Harun-al-Rashid

The fifth Caliph of the Abbasid dynasty, Harun al-Rashid, is remembered as one of history's greatest patrons of the arts and sciences. Under his rule, Baghdad became the world's most important centre for science, philosophy, medicine, and education. The massive size of the Caliphate meant that it had contact and shared borders with many distant empires, so scholars at Baghdad could collect, translate, and expand upon the knowledge of other civilizations. He made every effort to strengthen the power of the court, but the regime remained militarily weak. Even though he managed to assert his authority over provincial interests, Harun al-Rashid was the last ruler to exercise undisputed dominion in the Muslim world. Reliance on Turkish soldiers recruited from the Central Asian steppe lands left his successors so dangerously exposed to rebellions and civil unrest.

5.2.3.2 Al-Ma'mun

Ma'mun, the successor of Harun-al-Rashid continued with the policies of patronages and developmental activities started over by his father. He was the one who founded the Bayt al-Hikma, which is otherwise known as the "House of Wisdom", situated in the beautiful city of Baghdad. It acted as a library, an institute for translators, and even embodied the characteristics of an ancient University all at the same time. It was a multicultural spot where great innovations were made and ideas were exchanged. Evidence also bears testimony to the fact that discussion forums, including experts in certain disciplines, were also conducted here with the consent of those who were to be involved in the same.

Fig 5.2.3 House of Wisdom Established by Ma'mun of the Abbasid Caliphate

It is here that great discoveries pertaining to mathematics, science and optics were made. Countries like India, Greece and Persia made significant contributions in this regard. Scholars such as Al-Kindi revolutionised mathematics and synthesised Greek philosophy with Islamic thought. Al-Beruni and Abu Nasr Mansur made remarkable achievements in the fields of geometry and astronomy. Al-Khwarizmi was the one who developed the concept of "Algebra" here and similarly, Ibn al-Haytham made his own name in the field of optics and scientific concepts by using the facilities of this particular place. It wouldn't be easy to believe that the Caliph Ma'mun himself made some innovations from this place.

The agricultural sector underwent great changes under the administration of the Abbasid Caliphate. Advanced techniques of irrigation were used during this time period. Moreover, they established novel types of turbines and mills to reduce labour and further enhance productivity within a short span of time. Similarly, they introduced crops like rice, cotton, and sugar from India, citrus fruits from China, and sorghum from Africa as part of enhancing the food diet for the rulers and subjects of the empire. The people were having their best time under the administration of the Abbasid Caliphate, which is why historians state it

as the Golden Age of Islamic Civilization, as they experienced great progress in all areas of life.

The Caliphate had to maintain an empire of multi-ethnic proportions and challenges did occur in the same. As a matter of fact, many internal issues arose right from the time of Harun-Al-Rashid himself, when he had to face the revolts from North African and Persian regions. His son Al Ma'mun adopted the radical Mu'tazili theology, which was influenced by Greek philosophy and held that God could be understood through rational inquiry, and that belief and practice should be subject to reason. Thus, he established the mihna, an inquisition in which the adherence of scholars and officials to Mu'tazili theology was tested, and they could be imprisoned or even killed if they did not follow the theology. As a consequence to this, his reign saw a growing discontent among his subjects leading to an inevitable division between the Islamic sovereign and the Isalmic people. This division became more prominent and binding when the Caliph created a personal army composed of Central Asian soldiers who were loyal and answerable only to him.

The successors of Ma'mun were weak and struggled to maintain the empire due to a lack of resources. Hence, in order to stabilise the revenue, they granted farm taxes

to governors and military commanders, which was foolishness on the part of the Caliphate, as these generals, with their own army and land, began to acquire those places and finally declared themselves as independent rulers free from the authority of Caliphate.

5.2.3.3 Al - Mu`tasim (r. 833–842)

The Caliph Al-Mu'tasim (r. 833–842) furthered the gap between the Caliph and his people. Expanding on al-Ma'mun's new army, he created his own military force of slave soldiers called Ghilman (later known as "Mamluks"). These slaves began acting superior to the people of Baghdad, which eventually led to internal issues within the kingdom. The then Caliph Mu'tasim, instead of resolving the problem, took this as an opportunity to move the capital from Baghdad to Samaria, a place that was 60 miles north of the present capital. In this new pace, only the Caliph and forces reigned supreme, and no subjects were allowed near to them. Military under him enjoyed a special type of privilege, which they exploited to the maximum by widening the gap between the ruler and his subjects.

Al-Muwaffaq, the brother of Caliph Al-Mu`tamid, tried to change this situation, and as the regent of the Caliph, he first moved back the capital to Baghdad. He then ruled from there by defeating the Zanj rebellion leading to yet another period of prosperity and happiness. His subjects liked him and he even came up with many reformative measures that proved beneficial to them.

5.2.3.4 Al-Muqtadir (908 - 932 CE)

Al-Muqtadir, who ruled from 908 - 932 CE, is considered one of the major reasons for the disintegration of the Abbasid Empire. He was raised by the court members and acquired the power at a very tender age. He was a mere puppet under the hands of his advisors or court members who took advantage of him and controlled his decisions in everything related to state affairs. He was incapable and weak as a ruler; thereby, he acted as the tool of various factions of nobles in his court. During this time, we can see many territories declaring their independence from the Abbasid Caliphate as they understood that the ruler was weak and wouldn't do anything against them in this regard. Eventually, Abbasid authority extended hardly beyond Baghdad. In the end, Al-Muqtadir was killed by his own city guards after he bankrupted the state to the point where he could not even pay their salaries in time.

5.2.3.5 Al-Radi (934–940)

Al-Radi (934–940) is often considered the last Abbasid Caliph to exercise any real authority. He tried to raise a powerful governor of Iraq who would have the power to control all other emirs under him and even created the title amir alumara,"emir of emirs," for the governor of Iraq. This plan failed, as this gave enormous power to the governor leaving the Caliph with nothing more than a titular head. Shiite Bouyids took it as an opportunity to take it as a hereditary position for themselves thereby declaring themselves as the de facto rulers of Iraq. In short, from this point onwards the power of Caliphs was restricted to nothing more than a religious head having only control over Baghdad and adjacent regions.

5.2.4 The Seljuk Domination

In the eleventh century, when Seljuk Turks took control over this region by bringing down Bouyid rule, they continued to keep the Abbasid Caliph as the titular ruler while exercising true authority over the empire as Sultans. Seljuk's reign ended in the twelfth century, and we can find Caliph Al-Nasir made an attempt to restore the Abbasid Caliphate in Iraq. He re-captured Mesopotamia and came in direct conflict with a Persian king

by the name of Khwarezm. Nazir sought the help of Mongols to defeat him and they did help in this matter. However, this strategy backfired under the weak successors of Nazir, wherein Mongols completely destroyed Khwarezm and then turned their attention towards Baghdad and the Caliphate.

The Caliphate faced a Mongol invasion during the reign of Caliph Al-Mu'tasim(1242–1258). They captured the city in 1258 and sacked it. They killed the Caliph and completely demolished the city. Mongols massacred around a million people, with the books of the 'House of Wisdom' were destroyed and other libraries burned down to the ground.

Recap

♦ The Rashidun Caliphate ended with the assassination of Caliph Ali

♦ The Umayyad Dynasty continued the Caliphate tradition at Mu'awiya

♦ The Empire was extended further under the Umayyads

♦ The Abbasid Dynasty ended the rule of the Umayyads and continued the Caliphate rule under them

♦ The Abbasid rule is considered as the Golden Age of the Islamic world

♦ The Abbasid Caliphate came to an end with the invasion of Mongols

Objective Questions

1.   Who established the Umayyad Caliphate?

2.   Who were the followers of Abbas?

3.   Name the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate.

4.   Who was the last ruler of the Abbasid Caliphate?

5.   Who was responsible for ending the reign of the Abbasid Caliphate?

6.   Who established the "House of Wisdom" better known as Bayt al-Hikma ?

7.   Who was the successor of Harun-al-Rashid?

8.   Who was the first ruler who introduced the police system better known as Shurta?

9.   Which two forces fought in the Battle of Tours (732 CE)?

10. During whose reign did the Battle of al-Harra (683 CE) take place?

Answers

1. Mu'awiya

2. Abbasids

3. Baghdad

4. Al-Radi

5. Mongols

6. Al Ma'mun

7. Al Ma'mun

8. Muawiya

9. The Franks and the Umayyads

10. Yazid I

Assignments

1. Make a list of the rulers of the Umayyad Caliphate and their corresponding achievements during their time period.

2. Briefly describe the activities that took place in "House of Wisdom" and their contributions to the world.

3. Discuss the contributions of Harun al-Rashid to the Abbasid Caliphate.

4. Describe the administrative structure of the Umayyad Caliphate.

5. Compare and contrast the political structure of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates.

Suggested Reading

1. Alkhateeb, Firas. *Lost Islamic History: Reclaiming Muslim Civilization from the Past*. C. Hurst & Co., 2017.

2. Bennison, Amira K. *The Great Caliphs: The Golden Age of the Abbasid Empire*. Yale University Press, 2009.

3. Hawting, G. R. *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661–750*. Routledge, 2000.

4. Pichard, Christophe. *Sea of the Caliph*. Harvard University Press, 2018.

5. River, Charles. *The Umayyad Caliphate: The History and Legacy of the Second Islamic Kingdom Established After Muhammad's Death*. Independent Publisher, 2020.

Reference

1. Kennedy, Hugh. *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the Seventh to Eleventh Century*. Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2018.

2. Tayeb-El-Hibri. *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Harun al-Rashid and the Narrative of the Abbasid Caliphate*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

3. Tayeb-El-Hibri. *The Abbasid Caliphate*. Cambridge University Press, 2021.

UNIT 3

Harun-al-Rashid

Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ get awareness about the reign of Harun-al-Rashid

♦ assess Harun al-Rashid's governance, including centralised administration

♦ examine his contributions to the political and cultural peak of the Abbasid Empire

♦ discuss the merits and flaws of Harun's rule

Prerequisites

As we discussed earlier, there were three Caliphates who ruled over the ancient Islamic world: The Rashinuds, Umayyads, and Abbasids. Among them, the Abbasid Caliphate is considered as the 'Golden Period of Islamic world ' in this time period. Even though this is described in general, much of its developments can be ascribed to rulers like Harun-al-Rashid (786 – 809), who strived hard to suppress opposition and then patronised various forms of arts, science, technology, artists, art forms, etc. His reign was the hallmark of the Abbasid Caliphate, so his fame was not only limited to West Asia but also to other continents like Europe, which is clearly evidenced by the documents procured from these places falling into this time period. Trade and Commerce reached its zenith point of advances during this time period. More cities, palaces, monuments and buildings of public use were built alongside many renovative activities. The reform and efficacy of his administration left an invaluable mark on social, cultural, political and economic paradigms of the then period under the Abbasid Caliphate.

Discussion

5.3.1 Early Life

Hārūn al-Rashīd was the son of Al-Mahdī, who was the third ʿAbbāsid Caliph and al-Khayzurān, mother of Harun al-Rashid, a woman from Yemen who is known for efficiency and strong personality in using the same for the state affairs as well as to nurture her family. Al-Hadi was the elder brother of Harun-al-Rashid. They were well taught in the Qur'an, music, arts and legal affairs right from an early age. Yahya ibn Khalid al-Barmaki, from Persia, was his tutor and mentor who guided him in his state affairs and all kinds of military expeditions. Later, he was appointed as the minister to the ruler.

5.3.2 Ascension and Officers of Harun-al-Rashid

He, on the death of his brother Al-Hadi, ascended the throne without any opposition. At the time of his accession on September 14, 786, he was only twenty-five. The reign of Harun al-Rashid is considered the most brilliant period of Arab rule. Harun-al-Rashid is considered as one of the greatest rulers of all time. His name and fame reached all over the world. He also held a good rapport with the famous Frankish king Charlemagne. The glory of Harun al-Rashid is mostly due to the ability and wisdom of the men to whom he entrusted the government of the empire for the first seventeen years of his reign.

Yaḥyā the Barmakid was made the vizier or the minister, who was also related to his sons Al-Faḍl and Ja'far at this period, was not only an initiator of policy but also had attached to himself a corps of administrators to carry out his decisions. Al-Khayzurān also had considerable influence over the government until she died in 789. Thereafter until 803 Barmakid largely controlled the empire, but the Caliph was not wholly dependent on them, since certain offices of state were held by other men.

5.3.3 Wars and Conquests

The reign witnessed a lot of internal unrest, especially in Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and several eastern provinces. Still, the central government headed by Harun-al-Rashid was powerful enough to subdue them all and thereby reinstate peace and order in these regions within no time. Harun-al-Rashid led expeditions to Byzantine from 780 to 782, which was successful as far as Muslims were concerned since these military campaigns ended up in a treaty with the Byzantine Empire. For this success, Hārūn received the honorific title of 'al-Rashīd' ("the one following the right path") and was named second in succession to the throne and appointed governor of Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, with his tutor Yaḥyā acting as actual administrator. These moves were presumably engineered by al-Khayzurān and Yaḥyā. The two are even said to have induced al-Mahdī to make Hārūn his immediate successor, but al-Mahdī died in August 785 without officially changing the succession.

This was followed by a series of campaigns targeted at the Asia Minor region, where they were able to capture places like Hiraqlah and Affunawah in 806 CE. Later, Harun became successful in conquering Kabul,

Sanhar and Hindu Kush, thereby making it part of his kingdom.

5.3.4 Administration

It is worth mentioning here that Khalid bin Barmik also occupied distinguished positions under Al Safa and Al-Mansur. Yahya's government and administration were strong, firm, wise and benevolent. Nothing was neglected and priority was given to those activities conducted for the well-being of the people. His sons occupied the highest positions in the administration. Fadhl had successively held the governorship of Khurasan and Egypt. Ja'far had also been governor of various important provinces. Later on, due to old age, Yahya bin Khalid resigned from the post and was replaced by his son, Ja'far, who discharged his duties with great accomplishment. For a period of seventeen years, the Barmakid family governed the empire of Harun al-Rashid with distinction and peculiarity. It was directed that after him, the throne should go to his other son Abd Allah, whose title was al-Ma'mun (the Trusted) and subsequently, after Ma'mun, his third son Qasim, under the title al-Mu'tamin would ascend the throne. The three sons, during their lives, were to hold the empire in parts: the West was to be under the control of Al-Amin, the East under Al-Ma'mun and Mesopotamia and the Marches under al-Mu'tamin.

Trade and commerce flourished during this time period and added much to the economy of the empire. People were satisfied with the rule as indicated by complete cooperation with the ruler in the reformative endeavours he took up in his kingdom. He became an inspiration for establishing the "house of wisdom" which embodied almost all the functionalities of an ancient University. He had his own coinage system which was unique in its own way and was valued all over the world. Many significant monuments and edifices were raised during his time in the empire. Culturally, the Abbasid Caliphate reached the epitome of development as the ruler patronised art forms and gave much impetus to them. People enjoyed peace and prosperity throughout the Kingdom. Furthermore, the fame of Harun-al-Rashid and his Kingdom reached beyond seven seas and even became a legendary character in the work of Arabian Nights.

In 803 CE. Harun-al-Rashid dismissed the Barmakid family from service and eventually ordered the execution of those in service, which eventually made a black mark on his reign. To speak about the Barmakid family for a long period of seventeen years, they have been serving the Caliph with trustworthiness, allegiance and great efficacy. When the empire became powerful and unified, the income had increased with no bounds, and the arts of civilised life were cultivated everywhere. However, their grandeur, their lavish charity made them idols of the masses. This rising popularity of the Barmakid family created jealousy in the minds of others who were looking for an opportunity to oust them out from the territory.

Barmakids obviously created envy in the minds of others, especially courtiers and nobles who served the king as they were the favourites of both King Harun as well as the masses. Hence, they plotted against them and reported to the ruler that the Barmakid family was trying to dethrone the King with the help of the masses. Harun-al-Rashid, unfortunately, believed in this rumour without further enquiry and by forgetting their valuable services for generations in the blind fury of suspicion and despotic anger. Harun al-Rashid issued the order for the execution of Ja'far, the wazir, and imprisoned Yahya and his other sons Fadhl, Musa and Muhammad.

Ibn-Khaldun, a fourteenth-century Arab historian, argues that the true cause of the fall of the Barmakids is to be found "in

the manner in which they seized upon all the authority, and assumed the absolute disposition of the public revenue, so much so, that Rashid was often forced to the necessity of asking for and not obtaining from the chancellor small sums of money". Their influence was unlimited and their renown had spread in every direction. All the high offices of the state, civil as well as military, were filled by functionaries chosen from their families or from among their partisans.

5.3.5 Golden Age of Caliphate

The reign of Harun al-Rashid is considered the most prosperous time among the Abbasid Caliphs. He will always be weighed among the great rulers of the world. Charlemagne was one of his contemporaries' who attained great fame, just like Harun. Harun was, without any doubt, more powerful and represented the higher culture. He was very truthful in performing his religious duties and promoted the same among his subjects. Harun always provided financial help for poor people for going for Hajj, and he himself has performed it 5 or 6 times during his lifetime. This was clear evidence of his generosity without any pretension and exercised a great impact by his character on society.

The kingdom of Harun-al-Rashid never experienced any kind of lack of any sort as he deployed officers to report to him periodically about the welfare of his subjects. Similarly, frequently used to have night walks with his dominions with his associates to directly see and witness the condition of his kingdom and to know about the needs of people under him so that he could rectify and resolve it as early as possible. Without creating much delay in the process. He also made personal inspection of frontiers and passes.

During his reign, everyone was safe as an efficient law system functioned under him with officials entrusted to execute their functions

without fail in this regard. Discipline was at its epitome in this period so that merchants, scholars, traders and pilgrims journeyed through the vast empire without any fear and it states the excellence and grandeur of his administration and empire. Schools, colleges and universities, Masajids, hospitals and dispensaries, caravans, roads, bridges and canals with which Harun al-Rashid covered the empire bear testimony to the interests he had taken in public welfare and works related to the same. Pilgrims and pilgrimages were given dire importance in this period as no one was allowed to create any hurdles or troubles for them. Furthermore, topmost security was also given to them to carry out their journey with ease and peace. Harun himself administered this department to ensure the safety and security that he had promised the pilgrims arriving at Mecca and Medina.

Reformative measures were issued by Harun al-Rashid to bring forth unity among the Islamic community. He extended the department established by his grandfather Mansur for the translation of different works into Arabic and increased the staff for more efficiency and accuracy in the work. Eminent personalities like Asmai (the grammarian), Ibrahim Mosuli (the musician), Gabriel (the physician) and many others were patronised by Harun-al-Rashid himself. He was a great patron of art and learning, and is best known for the unsurpassed splendour of his court and lifestyle. Some of the stories, perhaps the earliest, of "The Thousand and One Nights" were inspired by the glittering Baghdad court.

Harun played a predominant role in connecting the cultures of East and West as he was known to the other countries through the grandeur and glory of his kingdom and also through trade-related activities. Emperors and kings of other places highly respected him and sent ambassadors and gifts to his court. Historians and scholars describe him as having a curious soul, always eager to

know and understand more about anything related to state affairs and knowledge. This one character made him entirely different from those who came before or after him. He was the first to receive his Court Embassies from the Emperor of China in the East and from Charlemagne in the West. His court presented the most brilliant look, attended by the learned and the wise from every part of the world. He is also known for his excellent military and horse riding skills which he utilised in warfare and military expeditions.

Sponsorship and financial help were given to promote art, science and philosophy. Hanafi School of law developed and began to spread throughout his kingdom in this period with Jurists headed by Imam Abu Yusuf and Qazi al-Quzzat. History has placed the period of Harun al-Rashid as the most dazzling period of Baghdad. Harun al-Rashid breathed his last on Jamad al-Thani in 809 CE, which obviously was irreversible for the entire Islamic Empire of that timeline.

Recap

- Harun-al-Rashid ascended the throne amidst a series of civil unrests and rebellions
- Reign of Harun is often considered the Golden Period of the Abbasid Caliphate
- Administration was pioneered by efficient Officers from the Persian Bermaid family
- People experienced progress and development in all aspects of life
- The Barmakid family was dismissed from the service in 803 CE
- The School of Hanafi developed during this period
- The life of Harun-al-Rashid ended in 809 CE

Objective Questions

1. Who is the ruler of the Abbasid Caliphate mentioned in the "Arabian Nights"?

2. What was the name of the family that aided Harun in his administration?

3. Which was the School of Law that developed during the reign of Harun-al-Rashid?

4. In which year did Harun-al-Rashid dismiss the Barmakid family from the service?

5. Who was the famous grammarian of this period?

6. Who was the first to receive his Court Embassies from the Emperor of China in the East and from Charlemagne in the West?

7. Which famous European ruler was a contemporary of the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid?

8. Which Abbasid Caliph patronised eminent personalities like Asmai (the grammarian), Ibrahim Mosuli (the musician), and Gabriel (the physician)?

9. What role did Yaḥyā the Barmakid hold in the Abbasid Caliphate?

10. Who was the tutor and mentor of Harun-al-Rashid?

Answers

1. Harun-al-Rashid

2. Barmakid Family

3. Hanafi School of Law

4. 803 CE

5. Asmai

6. Harun-al-Rashid

7. Charlemagne

8. Harun-al-Rashid

9. Vizier or the minister

10. Yahya ibn Khalid al-Barmaki

Assignments

1. Create an account of the military expeditions of Harun-al-Rashid during his reign.

2. Describe the importance of Baghdad during Hārūn al-Rashīd's rule.

3. Discuss the significance of the House of Wisdom (*Bayt al-Hikma*).

4. Discuss how Hārūn al-Rashīd is depicted in "One Thousand and One Nights" (Arabian Nights).

5. Compare the rule of Hārūn al-Rashīd with that of his predecessor, Caliph Al-Mahdi.

Suggested Reading

1. Bosworth, C. E. *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Volume 30: The Abbasid Caliphate in Equilibrium*. State University of New York Press, 1989.

2. Gordon, Matthew S. *The Rise of Islam*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005.

3. Hitti, Philip K. *History of the Arabs: From the Earliest Times to the Present*. Macmillan, 1937.

4. Kennedy, Hugh. *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World: The Rise and Fall of Islam's Greatest Dynasty.* Da Capo Press, 2005.

5. Tabari, al-. *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Volume 28: The Abbasid Authority Affirmed.* Translated by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, State University of New York Press, 1995.

Reference

1. Alkhateeb, Firas. *Lost Islamic History: Reclaiming Muslim Civilization from the Past.* C. Hurst & Co., 2017.

2. Armstrong, Karen. *Islam: A Short History.* Modern Library Books, 2000.

3. Bennison, Amira K. *The Great Caliphs: The Golden Age of the Abbasid Empire.* Yale University Press, 2009.

4. Clot, André. *Harun al-Rashid and the World of the Thousand and One Nights.* Saqi, 2014.

4 UNIT

Safavid Dynasty

Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ analyse the role of Shah Ismail I (1501–1524) in establishing the dynasty and converting Iran to Twelver Shi'a Islam

♦ describe the foundation of the Safavid Empire in Persia (Iran)

♦ familiarise with the religious policy of the Shahs of Persia

♦ made aware of the administration and causes of the decline of Safavids

Prerequisites

The Safavid Dynasty (1501–1736) was one of the most significant ruling dynasties of Persia (modern-day Iran). It is best known for establishing Twelver Shi'a Islam as the dominant religion of Persia, shaping Iran's religious and cultural identity. The Safavids empire was based in what is now Iran and also included parts of Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, eastern Georgia, parts of the North Caucasus, Iraq, part of Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The Safavids were known for their religious and political centralisation, and their patronage of the arts and literature. The Safavid history became a focal point of investigation for modern scholars exploring questions of empire, religious community and conversion and relations among Muslims, Christians and Jews. The debates among both Shi'ite and Sunnite reformists and militants over the nature of political authority in Islam find some of their formative elements in 16th and 17th century Iran.

Keywords

Imam, Tariqa, Mahdi, Wakil, Wazir, Harem, Shiism

Discussion

5.4.1 Rise of Safavids (1501-1736)

The Safavid period is of great significance to historians of Islam in that it captures the imperial adoption and institutionalisation of Shi'ism in Persia. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the historical circumstances made Safavid Persia the home of leading Arab Ulama who hoped to suppress folk and heterodox notions of Shi'ism and define orthodoxy on the basis of Jafari legal parameters and clerical consensus. Nine Safavid theologians of an Amili background led glamorous careers and produced works of great import and relevance to Persian society in particular and the Shiite world at large. The terms Shi'ism and Sunnism underwent significant shifts from the early Safavid period until the mid-16th century, as well as in the late 17th century.

Ottomans and Safavids were the greatest powers of West Asia, and the rivalry was further fuelled by dogmatic differences: the Ottomans were Sunnis, the Safavids were staunch Shia Muslims, who were seen as heretics by the Ottomans. The Ottomans and Safavids were rivals and fought several wars against each other. The Ottoman Empire, along with other Sunni armies brought down the Safavid empire in 1726.

The Safavids began not as a political dynasty but as the hereditary leaders of a Sufi order based in the city of Ardabil, located in today's northwestern Iran. The order of Ardabil was founded in the 13th century by the Sufi master Zahed Gilani. Zahid appointed his son-in-law and disciple, Safi al-Din Ardabili, to succeed him. Safi al-Din renamed the Order after himself, Safaviyya, and made a number of reforms that reshaped it from a local order to a religious movement that sought followers from around Iran and neighbouring countries.

Safavids accepted Shiite Islam late in the 14th century. Among the influential scholars of the Safavid empire during the first half of the 16th century, three Amilis, in particular, contributed to the development of the Safavid religious order and clerical leadership. Later 16th century CE. Safavid society, deeply shaped by Twelver Shi'ism, exhibited several integrated themes: the Shahs had focused their political and dynastic aspirations. The Safavids, with the Amilis as their agents, decisively imprinted Persia's doctrinal precepts and judicial practices and brought about political changes in Persian society that are subject to debate even today.

5.4.2 Safavid Empire under Shah Ismail and His Successors

After the decline of the Timurid empire (1370-1506), Iran was politically splintered giving rise to a number of religious movements. The demise of Tamerlane's political authority created a space in which several religious communities, particularly Shi' ones, could come to the fore and gain prominence. The first Safavid Shah Ismail (1501-1524 CE) came to power in 1501. He built an empire using troops with gunpowder weapons and by constructing a bureaucracy that had many features of the modern state. He was the religious leader who founded the Safavid dynasty and converted Iran from the Sunni to the Twelver Shi'a sect of Islam. The proclamation of the Twelver denomination of Shi'a Islam as the official religion of his newly founded Pension empire caused sectarian tensions in the Middle East when he destroyed the tombs of the Abbasid Caliphs.

In 1500 CE, Ismail I invaded neighbouring Shirvan to avenge the death of his father,

Sheik Haydar, who had been murdered in 1488 by the ruling Shirvanshah Dynasty. In 1501, he enthroned himself the Shah of Azerbaijan, proclaimed himself king of kings and minted coins in his name proclaiming Twelver Shi'ism as the official religion of his domain. The establishment of Twelver Shi'ism as the state religion of Safavid led to various Sufi orders(tariqa) openly declaring their strict position. The Safavids quickly became the strongest force in Iran under Ismail's leadership.

The neighbouring Ottoman empire was powerful, and it created troubles for the Safavids. The Ottomans, a Sunni dynasty, considered the active recruitment of Turkmen tribes of Anatolia (Asia Minor) for the Safavid cause as a major threat. To counter the rising Safavid power, in 1502, Sultan Bayezid forcefully deported many Shiite Muslims from Anatolia to other parts of the Ottoman realm. In 1511, the Sankulu rebellion was a widespread pro-Shia and pro-Safavid uprising directed against the Ottoman Empire from within the empire.

In 1514, Sultan Selim marched through Anatolia and reached the plain of Chaldiran near the city of Khoy, where a decisive battle was fought. Ottomans had the advantage of artillery, which the Safavid army lacked. In the Chaldiran war, Ismail was defeated, and his capital was captured, but the Safavid empire survived. The war between the two powers continued under Ismail's son, Emperor Tahmasp I, and the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent until Shah Abbas retook the area lost to the Ottoman by 1602.

5.4.2.1 Shah Tahmasp (1524-1546)

Shah Tahmasp (1524-1546) succeeded his father Ismail in 1524 when he was ten years and three months old. During the Ottoman-Safavid war (1532-1555), Ottomans captured Tabriz. Also captured Yerevan, Karabakh and Nakhjavan, destroyed places, villas and gardens and threatened Ardabil. Tahmasp sent his ambassador to Suleiman's court in September 1554 and sought peace. Temporary terms were followed by the Peace of Amasya in June 1555, ending the war with Ottoman for the next two decades. The treaty was the first formal diplomatic recognition of the Safavid empire by the Ottomans. Under the peace, the Ottomans agreed to restore Yerevan, Karabakh and Nakhjavan to the Safavids and, in turn, would retain Mesopotamia (Iraq) and eastern Anatolia. Suleiman agreed to permit Safavid Shia pilgrims to make pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. One of the notable events of Tahmasp's period was the offered military assistance to Mughal Humayun to regain his territories in return for Kandahar. Most of the successors of Tahmasp were found to be weak and pleasure- loving and the empire had to face incessant threats from the Ottomans.

In 1588, Shah Abbas I (1588-1629) was installed as a nominal Shah. In the course of time, Abbas could transform the empire from a tribal confederation to a modern imperial government. He was able to build up a central, standing army loyal only to him. This freed him of his dependence on Qizilbash warriors loyal to local tribal chiefs. Abbas I is generally considered one of the greatest rulers of Iranian history.

5.4.2.2 Religion: Shia Islam

The Safavids declared Shia Islam the state religion of Iran in the early 1500s, and it remains so to this day, encompassing about 10 percent of the worldwide Muslim population. The authority of the Safavids was religiously based and their claim to legitimacy was founded on being direct male descendants of Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, and regarded by the Shi'a as the first imam. The Shia movement originated with a dispute over Muhammad's successor after his death

in 632. One faction, which became known as the Sunnis, supported the candidacy of Abu Bakr al Sadiq, Muhammad's father-in-law. The other faction wished the leadership to remain within Muhammads biological family and backed Ali ibn Abi Talib, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, whom they believed the Prophet had chosen as his successor. This group became known as the Shia.

About 95 percent of Shia also believe Ali was the first of twelve infallible leaders chosen by God, so this sect is often called the Twelvers. Safavid Shah Ismail I established the Twelver denomination of Shia Islam as the official religion of the empire, making it one of the most important turning points in the history of Islam. Safavids suppressed other religions and forms of Islam. They were messianic, meaning they believed in a great religious prophet called Mahdi. Shah was held to be the divinely ordained head of state and religion and Iran became a feudal theocracy. The Safavid empire faced expensive wars against the Sunni majority states that surrounded it. In the course of time, the Safavid empire was eventually subsumed into other empires, Kingdoms and countries.

5.4.2.3 Administration

The rise of the Safavids was marked by developments that significantly influenced the nature of political, military and revenue administration. They created a strong central government and administration. During their rule. Iran emerged as a modern nation state, Shiism was established as the official state religion, and royal absolutism was reinforced by theories of divine right. At its inception, the Safavid state constituted a form of theocracy, and in theory, there was no separation between religion and state.

Early Safavid power in Iran was based on the military power of the Qizilbash. Qigilbash chiefs were appointed to the office of Wakil and they served as the commander of their forces. Two other leading officials were headed by religious institutions. Wazir headed the bureaucracy. Wazir was overshadowed by the Wakil and by Qizilbash officers.

The empire was divided into so many provinces. Provincial administration was largely in the hands of the Qizilbash tribal leaders. Royal princes were appointed as provincial governors. A large part of the country was indirectly administered and alienated from the immediate control of the central government. Governors undertook to maintain and provide military contingents in exchange for their appointments. Wazir, the leading men of the administration were the chief revenue officer and the muster master of the army. Ismail's successors, and most ostensibly Shah Abbas I successfully diminished the Qizilbash's influence on the affairs of the state. The bureaucracy was gradually expanded in 1275 and there were six ministers: finance, war, foreign affairs, justice, interior, stipends and endowments. Later, other ministers, such as commerce, agriculture and industry, education and public works were added. Other important departments included customs, the mint, and the telegraphs.

The extension of the crown lands and the direct administration of the provinces did not lead to improved government. Rather, oppression and economic exploitation grew more severe. Although the governors had remitted little revenue to the centre and were not easily subject to state control, at least they had maintained an interest in the prosperity of their provinces. Shah Abbas I himself abandoned the practice of appointing his sons to important governorships, following the revolt in the name of his son, Mohammad Baqer, in 1614-15. Mohammad Baqer was put to death, and his two surviving sons were blinded. Persian became the official language of the royal courts, although in practice practically everyone in the empire was multilingual.

Internal and external trade flourished in the empire. A major export of the Safavid empire was its raw silk- and silk textiles. Persian carpets were also especially popular in Europe. Spices, such as saffron, cardamon, and cinnamon, were valuable commodities in the Safavid trade. They taxed the silk trade. They ultimately succeeded in establishing a new Persian national monarchy. Safavid culture is often admired for the large-scale city planning and architecture and achievements made during the reign of later Shahs.

Despite Safavid's decline in 1736, the legacy that they left behind was the revival of Iran as an economic stronghold between East and West, the establishment of an efficient state and bureaucracy based upon "Checks and balances," their architectural innovations, and patronage for fine arts. The Safavids have also left their mark down to the present era by establishing Twelver Shiism as the state religion of Iran, as well as spreading Shia Islam in major parts of the Middle East, Central Asia, Caucasus, Anatolia (Asia Minor), the Persian Gulf, and Mesopotamia (Iraq).

5.4.2.4 Decline of the Safavid State

In addition to fighting its perennial enemies, the Ottomans and Uzbeks, as the 17th century progressed Iran had to contend with the rise of new neighbours. The Russian Mascovy expanded its influence into the Caucasus Mountains and Central Asia. In the east, the Mughals of India had expanded into Khorasan (now Afghanistan) at the expense of Iranian control, taking Qandahar. The Dutch East India Company and later the English East Indian Company used their superior means of maritime violence to control trade routes in the Western Indian ocean. As a result, Iran was cut off from Overseas links to East Africa, the Arabian peninsula, and South Asia. The Dutch and English were still able to drain the Iranian government of much of

its precious metal supplies. The successors of Abbas I were, therefore, rendered ineffectual, and the Iranian government declined and finally collapsed when a serious military threat emerged on its eastern border in the early 18th century. The end of the reign of Abbas II in 1666 marked the beginning of the end of the Safavid dynasty. Despite falling revenues and military threats, later Shahs had lavish lifestyles.

The successors of Shah Abbas I continued to keep their potential heirs in the harem, and in time, the eunuchs usurped power. Shah Solayman (1666-94) is said to have remained in the harem for seven years without emerging once. Shah Sultan Hosagn (1694-1722) gave his life over to drinks and debauchery. The costs of the court and harem mounted, the army and administration were neglected and abuses and corruption grew.

The breakdown of the frontier defences was evident as early as 1698-99 when Baluci tribesmen raided Kerman, a historical city in Iran. The eastern frontier was thereafter repeatedly breached by Gilzay and Abdali Afghans. Sultan Hosayn tried to forcibly convert his Afghan subjects in Kandahar from Sunni to the Shin sect of Islam. In response, a Ghilzai Afghan chieftain named Mir Wais Hotak revolted and killed Gurgin Khan, the Safavid governor of the region, along with his army. In 1722, an Afghan army led by Mir Wais son Mahmud advanced on the heart of the empire and defeated the government forces at the battle of Gulnabad. In 1722, after a siege of six months, Gilzay Afghans, under Mahmud, entered Isfahan,a city in Iran. Shah Sultan Hosayan was forced to abdicate the throne, and an Afghan tribal chief proclaimed himself as Shah of Persia.

Abbas III was the last ruler of the Safavid dynasty. He was the son of Shah Tahmasp II. In September 1732 Abbas III was appointed nominal ruler of Iran. Nader Khan, who was the real ruler of the country, assumed the

positions of deputy of state and viceroy. Abbas III was deposed in March 1736, when Nader Khan had himself crowned as Nader Shah.

Recap

- ♦ The Safavid Dynasty was one the most significant ruling dynasties of Persia
- ♦ The Ottoman Empire brought down the safavid empire in 1726
- ♦ The first Safavid Shah Ismail came to power in 1501
- ♦ The Safavid decleared Shia Islam the state religion of Iran in the early 1500's
- ♦ The Safavid created a strong central government and administration

Objective Questions

1. Name the Sufi master who founded the order in Ardabil.
2. When did Safavids accept Shiite Islam?
3. Who was the founder of the Safavid dynasty?
4. What was the significance of the 'Peace of Amasya'?
5. Which Mughal ruler was helped by Shah Tahmasp of Persia to get back his territories?
6. In which year was the battle of Gulnabad fought?
7. In which year did the Safavid Empire officially decline?
8. Who succeeded Shah Ismail I as the ruler of the Safavid Empire?
9. When did the first Safavid Shah Ismail (1501-1524 CE) come to power?
10. When did the Treaty of Peace of Amasya signed?

Answers

1. Zahed Gilani

2. 14th century

3. Ismail

4. Formal diplomatic recognition of the Safavid empire by the Ottomans

5. Humayun

6. 1722

7. 1736

8. Tahmasp I

9. 1501

10. June 1555

Assignments

1. Analyse the administrative system of the Safavid dynasty in Persia.

2. Discuss the causes which led to the decline of the Safavid empire.

3. Analyse the role of the Qizilbash in the rise and governance of the Safavid Empire.

4. Evaluate the military strategies and administrative reforms of Shah Abbas I in strengthening the Safavid state.

5. Compare and contrast the Safavid Empire's relations with the Ottoman Empire and the Mughal Empire.

Suggested Reading

1. Amanat, Abbas. *Iran: A Modern History*. Yale University Press, 2017.

2. Drisaab, R. J. *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire. I.B*. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2004.

3. Lambton, Ann K. S. *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*. Oxford University Press, 1969.

4. Savory, Roger. *Iran Under the Safavids*. Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Reference

1. Brandt, William J. *The Shape of Medieval History*. New Haven, 1966.

2. Davis, R. H. C. *A History of Medieval Europe*. Pearson Longman, 2006.

3. Langley, Andrew. *Medieval Life*. DK Publishing, 2011.

4. Stephenson, Carl. *Medieval History*. Harper & Row Publishers, 1962.

5. Wise Bauer, Susan. *The History of the Medieval World*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.

5 UNIT

Ottoman Turks

Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ get introduced to the origin of the Ottoman empire

♦ familiarise with the power and strength of the Ottoman empire

♦ get awareness about the capture of Constantinople by the Turks and how it changed the course of world history

♦ explore the contributions of Ottoman Turks to the world

Prerequisites

This unit will deal with the rise of Ottoman Turks as a powerful force in world history. In the Crusades 11th and 12th centuries, the Seljuk Turks bore the brunt of the attack. The Mongol menace that the Seljuk Turks had to face in the 13th century greatly weakened their power. After the disappearance of the Mongol menace, the Seljuk Turks rallied under the banner of the Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman Empire was a transcontinental empire that lasted from the 14th century to the early 20th century. It was based in modern-day Turkey and covered parts of Europe, Asia and Africa.

Keywords

Amirate, Muhr-u Suleyman, Dar al Shifa, Piri Reis map, Kitab-i- Bahriye

Discussion

5.5.1 Origin of Ottoman Turks

The Ottomans belonged to the Oghuz Turkish tribes Osman or Ottoman (1281-1326), from whom the dynasty derives its name " Osmanlis", or Ottoman was their Amir around 1300 CE. The Turks started their westward movement from Central Asia Minor towards the Aegean shores, swallowing what was left of the Asiatic territories of the Byzantine Empire. In the process, they established a number of amirates. One of the amirates situated not far away from Bursa was Sogut. This amirate belonged to the House of Osman. The rise of a small principality into an expat was an important event which changed the course of history. The gradual but steady penetration of the Ottomans into the Byzantine Empire opened new pastures for further aggrandizement in all directions. The disintegration of the Byzantine empire, and the absorption of Serbia, Bulgaria, etc., into the Ottoman empire constituted a major change in the political history of Europe. It was a prelude to the vast changes that were affected at the beginning of modern times.

5.5.1.1 Osman I (1281 - 1326)

Osman was the founder of the Ottoman dynasty. Bursa was made his headquarters. In 1301, he won a victory over the Greeks near Nicaea. He carved out a small territory with the cities of Bursa, Inegal, Sogut, Bolu and Kandira as the outer points.

5.5.1.2 Orhan

Osman was succeeded by his son Orhan in 1326. He assumed the insignia of royalty and was considered the first Sultan of the dynasty. During his time, the Turkish territories in Anatolia extended as far as Ankara. He struck silver coins in his name. He reformed the civil and military administration. He replaced the clannish army with a standing army. He took advantage of the civil war in the Greek empire by obtaining a foothold in Gallipoli, a European base.

5.5.1.3 Marad I

Orhan was succeeded by his son Murad in 1359. He captured Adrianople in 1361, and it became the Ottoman European capital. Taking advantage of the weakness of the Byzantine power, the governors of various provinces asserted their independence and styled themselves as kings. Taking advantage of the troubles in the Byzantine Empire, Murad I attacked Bulgaria, Serbia and Macedonia. The rulers of Serbia and Macedonia were defeated and killed in the battle of Maritsa in 1371. The whole of Macedonia came under the control of Murad I. In 1373 the Bulgarian ruler begged for mercy by giving his daughter in marriage to the Sultan. The Byzantine Emperor John V became the vassal of Marad I. But he could not enjoy the fruitfulness of victories as he was killed by a Serbian in the first battle of Kosovo in 1389. His forces avenged the death by a very decisive victory. The Serbian ruler Lazar was caught and put to death. Lazar's son became a vassal to Bayazid, the new Sultan. Now, the Ottomans became masters throughout the former territories of the Seljuks.

5.5.1.4 Bayazid I

Murad I was succeeded by his son Bayazid I in 1389. He brought the Serbian war to a close and brought Serbia under his vassalage. He was able to bring many small Turkish principalities in Asia Minor under his control. He annexed Bulgaria in 1393. He reduced Wallachia to vassalage in 1394. In 1394, he laid siege to Constantinople, which lasted seven years. In 1397, he captured Konya,

the former capital of the Seljuk Turks. In 1398, he extended his territories along the Black Sea up to Samsun.

Bayazid had to fight against Timur. The battle of Ankara or Angora was fought on 28 July 1402 near Ankara between the forces of Bayazid I and the emir of the Timurid empire, Timur. The battle was a major victory for Timur. The vanquished Sultan was taken captive in chains during the victorious marches of Timur. Bayazid died in captivity in 1403. Fortunately, Timur had no interest in the direct administration of the conquered territories. Under Mohammed I, the third son of Bayazid, the Sultanate was restored. From 1402-1413 followed an interregnum during which period the three Sons of Bayazid started a fratricidal feud for supremacy in which Mohammed I became victorious.

5.5.1.5 Mohammed I (1413-1421)

Mohammed I was the younger son of Bayazid I. It was generally believed that the Ottoman Empire had come to an end in 1402. But it was restored to more or less its former position by Mohammed I. Though he could not be considered the second founder of the Ottoman Empire, he was at least the restorer of the shattered empire.

5.5.1.6 Murad II (1421-1451)

Murad II was the eldest son of Mohammed I. The early part of his reign witnessed two insurrections, but they were suppressed. His attempts to capture Constantinople failed. He overcame his difficulties in South West Anatolia in 1425. In 1430 they recaptured Tessalonica (Salonika) from the Venetians. He inflicted a crushing defeat on the Balkan coalition forged by Hunyadi (Hungarian national hero) at Varna in 1444. Hunyadi suffered another reverse in the second battle of Kossova in 1448. Murad's ambitious and adventurous spirit brought victories at the right time in the history of the Ottomans.

5.5.1.7 Mohammed II (1451-1481)

Murad II was succeeded by his son Mohammed II, the conqueror of Constantinople. The imperial city was coveted ever since the time of the founder of the dynasty. Osman dreamed Bayazid thundered at the gates, Murad II patiently waited for its fall, and it was left to Mohammed II to batter the gates of Constantinople and sound the death-knell of the Byzantine empire. Mohammed II laid siege to the city on April 6, 1453. The siege went on for 55 days, and Constantinople, the second Rome, fell on May 29, 1453. Constantine XI, the last Byzantine emperor, was defeated and killed. The inhabitants of Constantinople took shelter in the Church of St. Sophia. But they are captured and sold as slaves. The Church was changed into a mosque, Constantinople became the capital of the Ottoman Turks in 1457 when the old capital was transferred from Adrianople.

The capture of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks was a momentous event in the history of Europe. The fall of Constantinople and of the Byzantine Empire was a watershed of the Late Middle Ages, marking the effective end of the Roman empire. This state began in roughly 27 BCE and lasted nearly 1500 years. For many modern historians, the fall of Constantinople marks the end of the medieval period and the beginning of the early modern period. The city's fall also stood as a turning point in military history. Since ancient times, cities and castles have depended upon ramparts and walls to repel invaders. The Walls of Constantinople, especially the Theodosian Walls, protected Constantinople from attack for 800 years and were noted as some of the most advanced defensive systems in the world at that time. However, these fortifications were overcome

with the use of gunpowder, specifically from Ottoman cannons and bombards, heralding a change in siege warfare. The Ottoman cannons repeatedly fired massive cannonballs weighing 500 kilograms over 1.5 kilometres, which created gaps in the Theodosian Walls for the Ottoman siege.

The capture of Constantinople produced reaching results; Constantinople occupied a conspicuous position in the trading world. It was through it that the West carried on trade with the East. As the Turks imposed heavy duties on the goods that passed through their land, the Europeans were forced to discover an alternative trade route to the East. The city was a great centre of learning. After the capture of the city, many Greek scholars who were created as aliens in that inhospitable region returned to Italy and gave an impulse to the study of the Greek language and literature. This led to the Renaissance.

5.5.2 Ottomans After the Capture of Constantinople

It was during the reign of Suleiman I, the Magnificent (1520-1566) that the Ottoman Turks made remarkable progress in extending their territories. In the naval battle of Lepanto (1571) between Philip II of Spain and Ottoman Turks, the latter received a fatal blow to their naval power. The Balkan peninsula, which was under the control of Turkey, was inhabited by Christian races such as Greek, Rumanian, Bulgarian and Serbian. The people of these regions were put to much hardship and ill-treatment by the Ottoman Sultan. Russia championed the cause of these suffering people, and this led to a war with Turkey during the reign of Catherine II. By the treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji (1774), Russia got Azov. In turn, Turkey renounced her sovereignty over all lands north of the Black sea. The Black Sea was opened to the navigation of Russia. Russia was recognised as the protector of the Churches in Constantinople. The Empress

of Russia, Catherine II, annexed Crimea in 1783 and this led to a second war with the Turks. By the treaty of Jassy (1792), Russia retained Crimea and secured Ochakov. The advance of Russia in the Balkans was viewed with great concern by the other powers of Europe. So a major problem that faced them in the 19th century was liberating Christian nations in the Balkans from the oppressive rule of Turkey in such a way as to avoid any extension of Russian influence in this region.

Among the subject races of Turkey in the mainland of Europe, Serbia became independent in 1830; Greece in 1832; Rumania in 1862; and Montenegro and Bulgaria in 1878. Cyprus was occupied by Britain in 1878 and Crete was united with Greece in 1908. A new state called Albania came into existence in 1913. With the exception of a small strip of land around Constantinople, all the other territories in the Balkan Peninsula shook off the Turkish yoke before 1914. After the First World War, Turkey was proclaimed a Republic in 1923 and Mustapha Kemal Pasha became the head. Ankara became the capital of the Turkish Republic. Mustapha Kemal Pasha abolished the Caliphate in 1924 and made Turkey a secular state. The name of Constantinople changed to Istanbul in 1930.

5.5.3 Arab Contributions to the World

The Ottoman Empire was known for its ethnic diversity. The official religion of the empire was Sunni Islam. The empire was an Islamic Caliphate, which means it was ruled by a Sultan who claimed the title of Caliph. The Caliph is the head of Islam and the spiritual and political leader of Muslims worldwide. The empire was a diverse society that included Christians, Jews, and other religious minorities. The rulers of the empire created the millet system to govern the non-Muslim population. This system gave non-Muslim communities their

own legal systems. The rules of the empire discouraged conversion from Islam but encouraged conversion to it. They often persecuted religious minorities, especially in the later years of the empire. The empire controlled territories that included Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, the three holiest Muslim centres.

The Ottoman Empire was a centre of scientific study. They made many contributions to the world in the areas of art, science, medicine, geography, military, architecture, etc. They made advances in mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, philosophy , etc.

5.5.3.1 Art

The Ottomans were known for their art, which included calligraphy, painting, poetry, textiles, and music. The expat was a centre of culture, and Istanbul was an artistic hub. The Flemish-French painter Jean Baptiste Van Mour painted the scenes of Ottoman life. Ottoman art is known for its vibrant colours, intricate patterns, and luxurious textures. It was the dominant style of art in Turkey before the 20th century.

Ottoman art often features floral motifs, such as carnations, hyacinths, honeysuckles, roses, and tulips. The "Muhr-u Suleyman" is a five-pointed star that appears in Ottoman art. Cloud motifs are a stylised representation of clouds moving across the sky. Ottoman ceramics often feature botanical patterns in brilliant colours. Carpets were woven in Cairo and throughout Asia Minor. Silk velvets were woven in Bursa. Ceramic wares and tiles were made in Iznik, near Istanbul. Ottoman art was inspired by the Seljuks and the Beyliks in its early stages.

5.5.3.2 Science

During its 600-year rule, the Ottoman Empire made significant advancements in science and technology across various fields, including mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. The Islamic Golden Age was traditionally believed to have ended in the 13th century. However, some scholars extend it to the 15th and 16th centuries, considering the continued scientific advancement in the Ottoman Empire, Persia and Mughal India.

Taqi ad-Din Muhammad (1526-1585) was an Ottoman polymath active in Cairo and Istanbul. He was the author of more than 90 books on a wide variety of subjects, including astronomy, clocks, engineering, mathematics, mechanics, optics, and natural philosophy. In 1574, the Ottoman Sultan Murad III invited Taqi ad-Din to build an observatory in the Ottoman capital, Constantinople. Taqi ad-Din constructed instruments such as an armillary sphere and mechanical clocks that he used to observe the Great Comet of 1577. He also used European celestial and terrestrial globes that were delivered to Istanbul in gift exchanges. As a polymath, Taqi al Din wrote numerous books on astronomy; mathematics, and theology. His method of finding coordinates of stars were reportedly so precise that he got better measurements than his contemporaries like Tycho Brahe and Nicolas and copernicus. Taqi al Din also described a steam turbine with the practical application of rotating a spit in 1551. He worked on and created astronomical clocks for his observatory. He also wrote a book on optics, in which he determined the light emitted from objects, proved the Laws of Reflection observationally and worked on refraction.

5.5.3.3 Medicine

The Ottoman Empire made advances in medicine. Different modalities of treatment existed throughout the Ottoman Empire. Different methodologies included humoral principles, curative medicine, preventive medicine, and prophetic medicine. Physicians treated the physical body, and the musicians used music therapy to treat the mind. Music

was regarded as a powerful healing tune, and different sounds could create different mental states of health. The first Ottoman hospital, Dar al Shifa (house of health) was built in the Ottoman's earlier capital city of Bursa in 1399. Another Ottoman hospital established was the Faith Complex in 1470. Unique features of the hospital were the separation of patients by sex and the use of music to treat the mentally ill. Notable Ottoman medical literature includes the work of the Jewish doctor Musa bin Maymun, who wrote one of the first pieces of literature primarily about dentistry. The Ottomans invented surgical instruments like forceps, scalpels, catheters, pincers, and lancets for effective treatment.

5.5.3.4 Geography

Ottoman admiral Piri Reis was a navigator, geographer and cartographer active in the early 1500s. He is known today for the maps and charts collected in his *Kitab-i- Bahriye* (Book of Navigation) and for the Piri Reis map, one of the oldest maps of America still in existence. His book contains detailed information on navigation, as well as accurate charts describing the important ports and cities of the Mediterranean Sea. His world map drawn in 1513, is the oldest known Turkish atlas showing the New World.

5.5.3.5 Architecture

The Ottoman Empire's architecture helped to define the culture of the time. They built elaborate mosques and public buildings. Their style included influences from Seljuk Turks, Byzantine, Persian, and Islamic Mamluk traditions, which melded into the Ottoman empire culture after the conquest of Constantinople. The structure of domes, vaults, minarets, and buttresses peaked in development in the 16th century. During this time, a focus was on the creation of seemingly weightless domes surrounded by vaults and thin minarets to allow light

and shadows. "The empire's capital city, Istanbul, was home to great buildings like Aya Sophia(Hagia Sophia).

5.5.3.6 Mechanical Technology

In 1559, Taqi al Din invented a six cylinder Monoblock pump. It was a hydro powered water raising machine incorporating values, suction and delivering pipes, piston rods with lead weights, trip levers with pin joints, etc.

5.5.3.7 Technical Education

Istanbul Technical University has a history that began in 1773. It was founded by Sultan Mustafa III as the Imperial Naval Engineers' School, and it was originally dedicated to the training of shipbuilders and cartographers. In 1795, the scope of the school was broadened to train technical military staff to modernise the Ottoman army to match the European standards.

5.5.3.8 Military

The Ottoman Empire in the 16th century was known for its military power throughout southern Europe and the Middle East. The Ottoman artillery included a number of cannons, most of which were designed by Turkish engineers. The Dardanelles Gun was designed and cast in bronze in 1464 by Munir Ali and weighed nearly a ton. The musket appeared in the Ottoman Empire by 1465. Damascus steel was used in the production of firearms, such as the musket, from the 16th century. Their expertise in making advanced weapons helped them to destroy the strong fort of Constantinople and capture the city in 1453 CE. The fall of Constantinople into the hands of the Turks became a great event in World history because it could make a great change in the course of World history.

Recap

♦ The Ottomans belonged to the Oghuz Turkish tribe

♦ Osman was the founder of the Ottoman dynasty

♦ The capture of Constantnople by the Ottoman Turks was a momentous event in the history of Europe

♦ During the reign of Suleiman I, the Ottomans made remarkable progress

♦ The Ottomans made significant contributions to the world in the areas of art, science, medicine, geography, military and architecture

Objective Questions

1. Who was the founder of the Ottoman dynasty?

2. Who is considered the first Sultan of the Ottoman dynasty?

3. Which Ottoman ruler died while being held captive by Timur?

4. Name the ruler of the Byzantine Empire at the time of the capture of Constantinople.

5. In which year did Constantinople become the capital of the Ottoman Turks?

6. Name the naval battle fought between Ottoman Turks and Philip II of Spain.

7. Which of the Russian Empresses fought against the Ottoman Turks?

8. When did Turkey become a Republic?

9. What was the official religion of the Ottoman Empire?

10. Whom did Ottoman Sultan Murad III invite to Constantinople to build an observatory?

Answers

1. Osman I

2. Orkhan

3. Bayazid I

4. Constantine XI

5. 1453 CE

6. Battle of Lepanto

7. Catherine II

8. 1923

9. Sunni Islam

10. Taqi ad Din Muhammed

Assignments

1. Analyse the circumstances which led to the rise and growth of Ottoman Empire in West Asia

2. Discuss the contributions of the Ottoman Turks to the Arab world.

3. Discuss the features of the structures like the Hagia Sophia, Topkapi Palace and Suleymaniye Mosque.

4. Explain the role of the Millet System in governing non-Muslim communities.

5. Identify the internal and external factors that contributed to the empire's weakening in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Suggested Reading

1. Braudel, Fernand. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. Vol. 2, University of California Press, 1995.

2. İnalcık, Halil. *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*. Vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

3. Imber, Colin. *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

4. Kinross, Lord. *The Ottoman Centuries*. Morrow Quill Publishers, 1977.

5. Starr, S. Frederick. *Lost Enlightenment: Central Asia's Golden Age from the Arab Conquest to Tamerlane*. Princeton University Press, 2015.

Reference

1. Dale, Stephen F. *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and the Mughals*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

2. Faroqhi, Suraiya. *The Ottoman Empire: A Short History*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

3. Flick, Alexander C. *The Decline of the Medieval Church*. K. Paul Trench, Trubner, 1930.

4. Langley, Andrew. *Medieval Life*. DK Publishing, 2011.

5. Stephenson, Carl. *Medieval History*. Harper & Row Publishers, 1962.

6

BLOCK

Transition to Modern Period

1

Rise of Universities

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

After completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ introduce to the origin of universities in the world

♦ familiarise with the medieval universities and their functioning

♦ explain the role of the Church and rulers in establishing and organising these universities

♦ made aware of how the socio-political, economic and religious currents of the medieval period reflected in these universities

Prerequisites

In the previous blocks, you explored various medieval societies worldwide. The present block focuses on the transition from the medieval to the modern period. We will examine various features of the medieval period and how it paved the way for the emergence of the Modern World. This unit specifically discusses the rise of universities in the medieval world and how it reflected the socio-political, economic and religious undercurrents of the period.

In the Classical period, Plato and Aristotle laid the foundations of academic learning in Athens. During the Roman period, Alexandria and Antioch were the prominent centres of learning. The concept of universities had precedents in Islamic, Jewish, and Christian traditions. In Islam, *majlis* and *madrasas* were associated with the mosque to learn the Quran and religious texts. The Jewish tradition had synagogue schools, while the Christian tradition established monastic schools. However, monastic schools mainly focused on training monks. By the twelfth century, there was a growing demand for new fields of study, including philosophy, the arts, science, and mathematics. This led to the emergence of universities during the Middle Ages.

Keywords

Scholasticism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Pedagogy, 'Nations', Classical Learning, University, Society, Church, Roman Law

Discussion

6.1.1 The University

The term 'university' denoted an organised group of teachers and students. It is derived from the Latin word *Universitas Societas magistrorum discipulorum que.* The term *Universitas* is used for 'commercial guild'. *Universitas* was like a legal guild or corporation that enjoyed legal privileges, had its criteria and standards and was regulated by itself. Like mercantile guilds admitting the learned trader into the guild, Universities also developed curricula, degrees and titles for those students who met their criteria. These were self-governing institutions, and the students had legal privileges. The freedom enjoyed by the students sometimes created arguments with the local people.

Fig 6.1.1 The University of Bologna
Source:https://historiana.eu/historical-content/source-collections/bologna-and-the-rise-

6.1.2 Precursors of the Universities

The precursors to medieval universities were the educational traditions of the Roman Empire. Building on these foundations, the Carolingian Renaissance ushered in an intellectual awakening in Western Europe. Moreover, Charlemagne promoted education in the medieval period by training clerics at his palace at Aachen. The schools run at Cathedrals in Paris were the beginning stages of universities. Their focus areas were liberal arts, including grammar, logic, geometry, arithmetic, rhetoric, astronomy and music.

6.1.2.1 Cathedral School

In the late Roman Empire, Cathedral schools were founded to impart education to the clergy of the Church. These Schools at Chartres and Notre Dame in Paris were the precursors of universities in the medieval period. They continued to exist through the period of Charlemagne, who provided an impetus to them. During the 10th century, Chartres was a learning centre where John of Salisbury, William of Conches, and Thierry of Chartres served as teachers. The University of Paris, one of the oldest universities in Europe, was associated with the Cathedral School of Notre Dame.

Fig 6.1.2 Chartres Cathedral (2007), Paul M.R. Maeyaert
Source:Historiana.eu

6.1.2.2 Medical School

The medieval sources from the 11th century refer to the medieval learning centres, including the Medical School in Salerno. Even though the origin of this institution is obscure, it is known as one of the oldest learning centres in medieval Europe. It was believed to have been founded in c.1050 and survived for around 200 years. They relied much on the knowledge of Medicine of Arabs and ancient Greeks. The first medical text written on surgery is a handbook named *Practica Chirurgiae*. It is an illuminated

manuscript of the 13th century, authored by a renowned physician at Salerno called Rogerius. King Frederick II controlled the degrees at Salerno Medical School. However, by the thirteenth century, other universities emerged in Europe.

6.1.3 Medieval Universities

Around the 11th century, the first medieval University, the University of Bologna, was founded in Europe. Subsequently, universities were established in Paris and Oxford.

Fig 6.1.3
Source: https://worldhistory.live/universities-scholastic-centers/

6.1.3.1 The University of Bologna

At the beginning of medieval universities, guilds of teachers and students were formed. Later, it was recognised by the rulers through royal charters. The University of Bologna was established in 1088, and the charter from Emperor Frederick Barbarossa was issued in 1158. Bologna demonstrated the developments during the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Western Europe's urban, intellectual and economic life. It also witnessed extensive growth in the wealthiest cities and church constructions.

Most of the activities in Bologna were centred around the Church, San Stefano Basilica. It was a complex of seven churches in Bologna. With the development of the urban economy, the university and the churches also developed. Religion, particularly Catholicism, played a significant role in the everyday life of the University. Catino di Pilato or 'Pilate's Cat' is a fountain basin of the 7th century in Pilate's Courtyard at the University of Bologna. It was to commemorate the crucifixion of Jesus.

The University of Bologna attracted students from all over Europe. It is visible in a depiction that in 1167, the later Archbishop

of Canterbury and Chancellor to King Henry II of England, Thomas Becket, studied law at the university.

In 1230, the university students were divided into two groups called 'nations' - the Cismontane and the Ultramontane. While Cistomontane consists of three Italian Nations - Lombards, Tuscans and Romans, the Ultramontane were foreigners. German Scholars were more in number among the Ultramontane. Their respective nations served the welfare of the students. Teachers did not have any influence on the functioning of these groups. They created a group called 'colleges'.

Fig 6.1.4 Stefano Basilica – a complex of seven churches in Bologna, Univ of Bologna

Source:historiana.eu

Roman Law

A Law School was established at the University of Bologna in the interest of the Roman Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa (Frederick I). In 1155, the emperor gave the students special rights in *Authentica Habita.* Later, in 1158, Pope Alexander sanctioned it as the Charter of Bologna University.

Even after the decline of the Roman Empire, Roman Law and the Latin language continued to persist. In the latter half of the 11th century, with the expansion of trade, Roman law gained much importance due to the growing need for a legal system. During this period, Bologna emerged as a centre for the study of Roman jurisprudence. Scholars such as Irnerius and Gratianus were among the most influential teachers of Law at the University of Bologna. Towards the mid-twelfth century, Decretum Gratiani (Gratianus) codified Church law. It was widely recognised and became one of the important features of medieval jurisprudence. Irnerius founded the Bologna School of Glossators. The teachers and scholars, known as Glossators - Bulgarus, Martinus, Bassianus, Placentius, and Accurinus, revived medieval Law Studies.

Fig 6.1.5

Source: https://worldhistory.live/universities-scholastic-centers/
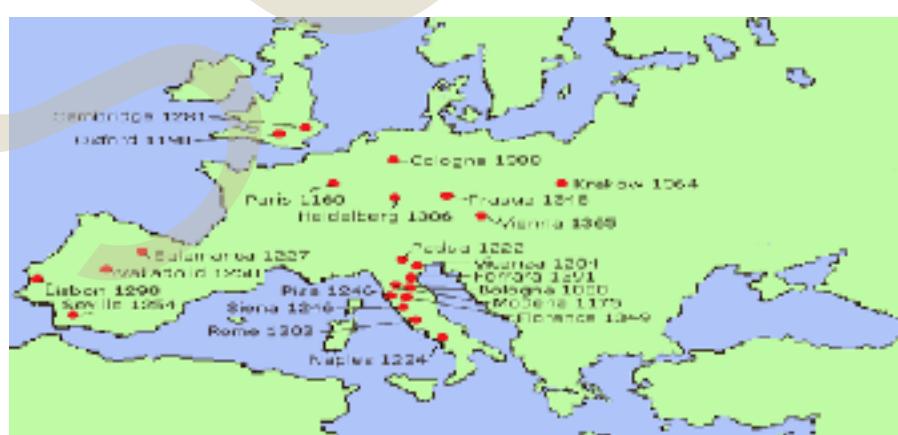
6.1.3.2 The University of Paris

As mentioned earlier, the University of Paris was an offshoot of Notre Dame Cathedral of Paris. The University received its 'official' recognition in 1200 from the King Philip Augustus of France. The Church played a central role in the establishment of the University. The papacy urged the Franciscan and Dominican schools to merge with the University. Later, in 1231, Pope Gregory IX issued *Parens Scientiarum*, a Bull, to grant the rights to the University and give degrees and govern itself.

Federated schools controlled by the elected rectors and deans were a feature of the University of Paris. University is also known as the 'University of Masters' as they decide the curriculum and examinations.

Fig 6.1.6 Notre-Dame de Paris, European cathedral constructed during the medieval period
Source:Shutterstock

6.1.3.3 The University of Oxford

Oxford was also one of the earliest universities in Europe. Like the University of Paris, the Oxford Scholars received special rights from the papacy in 1214. In 1231, the Pope acknowledged Oxford as a university. Nevertheless, the royal charter was issued to recognise the university's rights later in 1248.
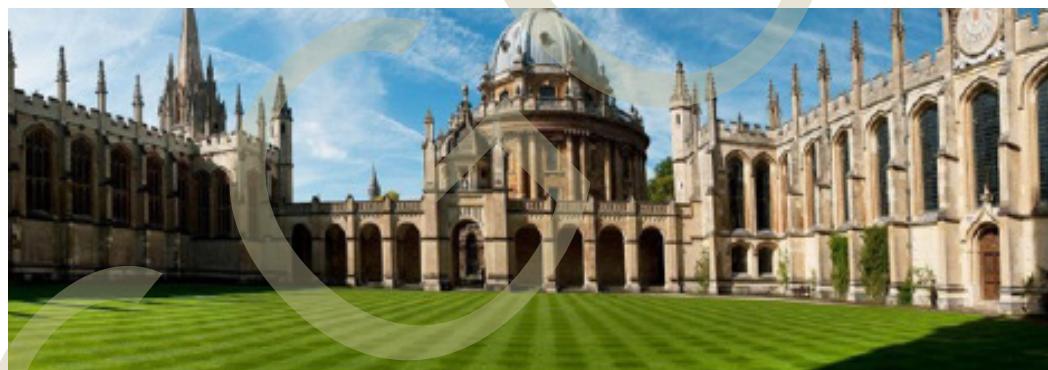
Fig 6.1.7 University of Oxford
Source: https://www.ox.ac.uk/

By the early 12th century, Oxford had developed into a centre of learning, likely influenced by Henry II's 1167 decree barring English students from attending the University of Paris. Modelled on Paris, Oxford initially offered studies in theology, law, medicine, and the liberal arts. In the 13th century, the university gained prominence, particularly in theology, with the establishment of Dominican and Franciscan orders. The earliest colleges-University College (1249), Balliol College (c. 1263), and Merton College (1264)-were founded as endowed residences for impoverished scholars. Scholars such as Roger Bacon advanced scientific studies at Oxford, distinguishing it from Paris in its approach to the physical sciences. The university gradually secured royal charters, though its religious institutions faced suppression during the Protestant Reformation. Despite lacking formal buildings in its early years, Oxford emerged as a leading medieval centre of learning.

6.1.3.4 The University of Cambridge

Cambridge University traces its origins to 1209, when scholars fleeing riots in Oxford settled in Cambridge. In 1209, two scholars of Oxford University were accused of murdering a local woman, and the people hanged them. This incident paved the way for the establishment of another university in England, the University of Cambridge, which received recognition in 1231. King Henry III provided rights and privileges to the schools at the University of Cambridge, which Oxford did not receive for 17 years. In 1284, Bishop Hugo de Balsham founded Peterhouse, the university's first college, modelled after Oxford's system. Over the next three centuries, 15 more colleges were established. In 1318, Pope John XXII formally recognised Cambridge as a *studium generale*, granting it the status of a medieval centre for advanced study. While initially overshadowed by Oxford, Cambridge gained prominence in the early 16th century, particularly after Desiderius Erasmus introduced Renaissance humanism to the university.

6.1.3.5 The University of Padua

The University of Padua was formed through secession, a prevalent practice in the Middle Ages. A group of students and teachers unsatisfied with the University of Bologna founded an institution in Padua in 1222. It survived through the medieval period and became an important part of the Italian Renaissance during the late 15th and 16th centuries. Galileo Galili was one of the teachers at the University of Padua.

6.1.3.6 The Charles University, Prague

The Roman Emperor Charles IV founded a university in Prague, the capital of Bohemia. It was the first university established outside Italy. In 1348, the Pope urged recognition of the university throughout the Christian world through a letter attached and a charter granted by the emperor.

Charles University followed the curriculum of the University of Paris, offering instruction in liberal arts, law, theology, and medicine. It became a major intellectual centre in Europe. Like the University of Bologna, students were divided into four groups based on their "Nations."

There was a rule that a Rector had to be elected by the faculties of the university. However, in 1372, the Law faculty refused to cooperate. Moreover, tensions arose between Czech and German teachers and students, leading to conflicts among the faculties. Furthermore, in 1409, the Kutna Hora royal decree granted the Bohemian nation three votes in the university affairs, which increased the tension. This decree granted the Bohemian nation at the university the privilege of dominating the other three nations. Some German faculties and students formed the University of Leipzig as a rival university.

6.1.3.7 The Jagiellonian University of Cracow

The Jagiellonian University was established in Cracow, a Polish city, in 1364. It was founded after the establishment of Charles University and before Vienna University. Jagiellonian emulated the sense of identity-based on nationality, which escalated during that period. It sought to achieve the intellectual accomplishments of other universities in Western Europe.

6.1.3.8 The University of Uppsala

In Northern Europe, the Universities, including Uppsala and Copenhagen, were established during the Medieval Period. In 1477, the University of Uppsala in Sweden was established with the help of Jakob Ulvsson, Catholic Archbishop of Uppsala.

During the Reformation in the early sixteenth century, Sweden faced political turbulence. Being a Catholic centre, the university met a dropout of students to Wittenberg University in Germany. Hence, Uppsala struggled to attract students. Towards the end of the 16th century, Uppsala University turned to Protestantism and, in 1595, then received another charter.

6.1.3.9 The University of Copenhagen

After the establishment of Uppsala University, the University of Copenhagen was founded the following year, in 1478. In 1531, the university faced a threat of closure from the Catholic Church, as it was considered to be promoting Protestant ideas and practices. During the 1520s, Denmark was exposed to Protestantism. However, Kings Christian II (who ruled from 1513 to 1523) and Frederick I (who ruled from 1523 to 1533) did not support these ideas. However, Christian III, the successor of Frederick I and who became King in 1536, accepted Lutheranism in the Church. Hence, the University of Copenhagen became a Protestant University in 1537.

Fig 6.1.8 University of Copenhagen, Royal Library of Copenhagen
Source: Europeana

6.1.3.10 Universities Beyond the Western Europe

Beyond Western Europe, centres of higher learning flourished in various regions. The **University of al-Qarawiyyin** in Fez, Morocco, founded in 859 CE by Fatima al-Fihri, a Muslim woman, considered as the world's oldest continuously operating university, with a strong focus on Islamic law, mathematics, and natural sciences In Cairo, the **Al-Azhar University**, established in 972 CE under the Fatimid Caliphate, became a major centre for Islamic jurisprudence, Arabic literature, and theology. Al-Azhar was originally constructed as a *jāmiʿ* (assembly mosque) in Cairo around 970 CE. It opened for public worship in 972 CE and became an *Ismāʿīlī* centre of learning in 988 CE, focusing on Islamic law, theology, and Arabic studies. However, following the Ayyubid conquest of Egypt, Saladin suspended its academic activities for nearly a century. Al-Azhar was revived under the Mamluks (1250–1517), who transformed it into a centre of Sunni Islamic scholarship, elevating its status as one of the most respected institutions in the Islamic world. It suffered damage from an earthquake in the early 1300s but was subsequently restored, with major renovations undertaken during the 14th and 15th centuries. Under Ottoman rule (1517–1798), Al-Azhar flourished further, gaining autonomy and becoming the preeminent institution for Islamic education, attracting scholars from across the Muslim world.


Fig 6.1.9 Al-Azhar Mosque
Source: Wikipedia

Meanwhile, the *House of Wisdom (Bayt al-Hikma)* in Baghdad, patronised by Caliph Al-Ma'mun in the 9th century, played a crucial role in the translation and study of Greek, Persian, and Indian texts, particularly in medicine, astronomy, and philosophy. *Bayt al-Hikmah* (House of Wisdom) was a royal library and intellectual hub in Baghdad, established during the Abbasid Caliphate. It flourished under Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (786–809 CE) and reached its peak under his son, Caliph al-Maʾmūn (813–833 CE). Initially influenced by Persian traditions, it housed Arabic translations of Middle Persian chronicles and scientific texts. Scholars such as Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Khwārizmī, credited with the development of algebra, and the Banū Mūsā brothers, who contributed to mechanical engineering, were associated with the institution. During al-Maʾmūn's reign, Greek philosophy and science were incorporated into Abbasid scholarship, shaping Islamic intellectual traditions. However, following al-Maʾmūn's death, *Bayt al-Hikmah's* influence declined, and after the Mongol sack of Baghdad in 1258, the remaining collection was lost. While often romanticised as a translation centre, its true role was more as a royal library and a symbol of Abbasid patronage of learning.

In the Byzantine world, the **University of Constantinople,** founded in 425 CE by Emperor Theodosius II, provided instruction in philosophy, medicine, and law, shaping intellectual traditions within the empire. The **Magnaura School,** revived in the 9th century, emphasised classical learning, particularly in rhetoric, mathematics, and astronomy. Byzantine scholars also preserved and transmitted ancient Greek knowledge, influencing both the Islamic world and Renaissance Europe, especially after the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

In **Al-Andalus, Córdoba** became a renowned centre of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian scholarship. The Jewish intellectual movement, particularly in the 10th–12th centuries, thrived under figures like Maimonides (1135–1204 CE), who contributed significantly to medicine, philosophy, and Jewish legal thought. Meanwhile, in Mesopotamia, the Babylonian Talmudic academies of Sura and Pumbedita, active between the 3rd and 6th centuries CE, played a foundational role in the development of Jewish legal traditions.

6.1.4 The Structure of the Medieval Universities

The organisational structure and teaching and learning patterns of medieval universities were similar. The primary subjects taught in these universities were theology, law, philosophy and medicine. The medieval universities relied much on the ancient Greek tradition in this matter. Ancient Greeks dealt with seven Liberal Arts, forming a *trivium* of grammar, rhetoric and logic and a *quadrivium* of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. These liberal arts were studied before studying law.

At the University of Bologna, rectors controlled the coordination of studies, hired teachers, set fee structures and decided the curriculum. The student body also had a role in hiring and paying the teachers. At the University of Paris, they were hired by the Church. The lecturers at Oxford and Cambridge were hired and paid from State funds.

Arts faculties mainly consist of male candidates aged between 14 and 16 years who have already been educated in a Latin school. The art studies were two or fewer years without examinations or academic titles. The degree of *baccalarius* required higher studies such as theology and law. Their duration of study was 2- 3 years. After that, for the Masters in Arts, another 2 - 3 years were required, including the teaching responsibility of the younger students.

Fig 6.1.10 A class at Bologna University(late 14th century) Illustration by Laurentius de Voltolina
Source: Wikimedia Commons

6.1.5 Scholasticism

The teaching method followed in medieval universities was Scholasticism, another feature of the Middle Ages. It was based on debating and resolving the contradictions and focused much on tradition and dogma. However, it provided much space for the scholars to challenge the traditional doctrine through a new method of logical reasoning called 'dialectics.' Peter Abelard was a dialectician and theologian of the medieval period who was associated with the Church at Mont-Sainte-Geneviève. He was accused of heresy and contradictory statements about the Church in his work, *Sic et Non* (Yes and No). Anselm of Canterbury confronted him by defending the traditional dogma through logical arguments.

Fig 6.1.11 Aristotle teaching the young Alexander the Great and other children

Credit: The British Library

Source: Europeana

The academic instruction was provided in the Latin language. The teaching method involved reading the authorities' text on that discipline and the lecturer's commentary. A disputation session followed to debate the particular text and resolve the questions on it. The students had to memorise the authorities' arguments and use logical reasoning in the debate. This pedagogical method demanded a long period of study in the universities. While Liberal Arts subjects required 4 to 5 years of study, law and Theology required 12 or more years of learning.

6.1.6 Colleges

Colleges were initially residence halls for poor sections of students. It was later changed to academic centres. The oldest College in Paris, **Sorbonne,** was a college for theologians and later became a university. **College of Spain** at Bologna is also one of the oldest colleges. The colleges became a central part of the teaching and life of the scholars at Oxford and Cambridge. The universities became administrative centres conducting examinations and awarding degrees.

The teachers at Bologna University formed guild-like associations. The members were selected through examinations and acquired *licentia docendi* or teaching licenses. The students yearned to receive such a license to prove their academic achievement, which was the initial form of an academic degree. Academic titles such as 'Master' and 'Doctor' are still used to represent academic prestige. The word 'Master' comes from the Latin word *Magister.*

6.1.7 The Medieval Universities and Religion: The Role of Church

The Church had a significant role in the Medieval Universities in Europe. Mostly, they controlled the imparting of knowledge as they monopolised the production and circulation of the manuscripts in the University. The

churches, such as St. Vitale and St. Agricola in Bologna, were among the seven churches associated with the University of Bologna.
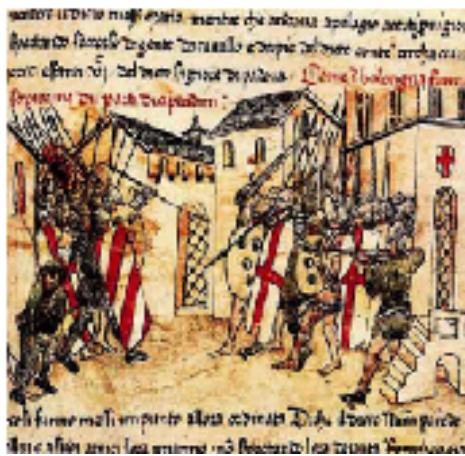
Fig 6.1.12 Fighting between Guelph and Ghibelline factions in Bologna c1369. Taken from the Chronicle of Lucca by Giovanni Sercambi.

Source:Wikimedia Commons.

Universities were the sites often exposed to religious and political contentions. During the 12th century, Italian city-states were subjected to factional disputes between Guelphs and Ghibellines. While the former supported the papacy, the latter the Roman Emperor, respectively. This development was reflected in the Universities as well. Emperor Frederick II established the University of Naples in 1224 in the kingdom of Sicily as a rival university of those in the Northern Italian states.

The Medieval Universities in Europe were often exposed to and adapted to the socio-political and economic undercurrents. They left their legacies, developed the study areas, and introduced new subjects. Towards the end of the medieval period, various other universities emerged in different parts of Europe, particularly central and northern Europe. Along with the expansion of universities, the ideas that followed also changed.

As mentioned earlier, medieval universities were much influenced by 'Universal Christendom', which held a shared tradition of religion and culture under the control of the Church. They had Latin as language and manuscript books. Nevertheless, their roots were shaken by the end of the medieval period. The influx of new ideas such as Humanism, Reformation, and Counter-reformation, as well as the spread of these ideas through the printing press, happened. It had a massive impact on the universities as well.

6.1.8 Printing and Libraries

University libraries gained much importance during the age of printing, leaving behind the monastic libraries. They became the repositories of knowledge. Towards the end of the medieval period, printing shops were set up in most university towns. While Venice and Rome had their print shops during the 1460s, Bologna, Genoa, Padua, and Florence had theirs in 1471. After that, Cracow opened a print shop in 1473 and Pilsen in 1476. London and Oxford opened their print shops in 1478.

Fig 6.1.13 Library of the University of Bologna, photograph by Hector Buissneg
Source: Wikimedia Commons

6.1.9 The Emergence of Literate Class

With the development of Universities in the Medieval period, a social class rose into existence in the European cities - a university-educated literate urban group. During the 12th century, those who studied law began to occupy positions in the courts. The administrative authorities required officials to handle the posts, including jurists and chancellors.

6.1.10 'Academic Pilgrimages'

One prominent feature of the medieval period was the academic journeys to distant places to gain knowledge and share experiences. *Perigriantio academica* is the Latin term used to denote such travels, which were crucial for the progress of Medieval Universities. However, scholars from distant places found it unaffordable to travel to universities. Living in areas exposed to political and economic turbulence was also a challenge. To tackle this kind of issue in the university, region and language wise, cooperative student unions - 'nations' - were formed. However, a network was created in the 15th century with an increased number of universities in Europe. The regional consideration affected the influx of foreign students to some of the medieval universities. Gradually, the 'nations' ended, making the universities accessible to the affluent sections rather than all.

6.1.11 Humanism, Reformation and the Transition period

The medieval period witnessed the development of new ideas, including humanism, rationalism and the scientific spirit. Thus, the Renaissance attributed new meanings and definitions to human life and belief systems. Moreover, a focus on the observation of nature led to the basic developments in the scientific field. These new ideas were circulated through the printing press developed during this period. Several developments in the religious sector, including the emergence of the Protestant church.
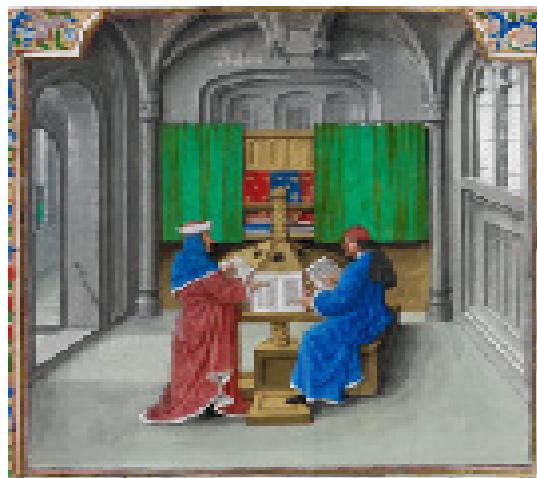
Fig 6.1.14 Miniature of Boccaccio and
Petrarch reading manuscripts.
Credit: The British Library
Source: Europeana

As mentioned earlier, the latter half of the 14th century witnessed an intellectual movement in Italy known as humanism. Brunetto Latini, Petrarch, Dante and Boccaccio were some of the famous humanists who believed in the cultural rebirth of Christendom by studying ancient Roman and Greek traditions. Humanism criticised Scholasticism and influenced the university teaching and learning methods and learning centres, including the Platonic Academy in Florence.

Around 70 Universities were founded in the medieval period. Some universities were disestablished for some time around the reformation period. The rest survived except for two universities - **Vicenza** (Italy) and **Palencia** (Spain).

In the early modern period, the universities challenged the control of the Catholic Church over them. Many scholars showed leniency towards Humanism. A shift to the academic mode based on Greek and Latin tradition was declared during the foundation of the **University of Wittenberg** in 1502. It was an announcement to reject Scholasticism.

There were institutions named **Academies,** which were quasi-universities. The affluent section patronised and funded them when the universities resisted the introduction of specialist courses, including history, geography, law, public administration and natural sciences.

Recap

♦ Universities as legal guilds or corporations

♦ The precursor of the medieval universities - Roman Empire, Carolingian Renaissance - Charlemagne - schools run at Cathedrals in Paris

♦ Focus areas - liberal arts, including grammar, logic, geometry, arithmetic, rhetoric, astronomy and music

♦ Cathedral schools at Chartres and Notre Dame in Paris

♦ Medical School in Salerno - oldest learning centre in medieval Europe - first medical book - Practica Chirurgiae

♦ Recognition of universities through royal charters

♦ Division of university students - 'nations' - the Cismontane and the Ultramontane

- *Authentica Habita* and student privileges granted by the emperor

- Bologna University as a learning centre of Roman jurisprudence-codification of Church law- Bologna School of Glossators

- University of Paris as an offshoot of Notre Dame Cathedral of Paris

- The role of the church in the establishment of the university - merging of Franciscan and Dominican schools with the University - Federated schools

- Seven Liberal Arts - a *trivium* of grammar, rhetoric and logic and a *quadrivium* of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music

- Medieval universities: duration of the study period and subjects taught

- Scholasticism and dialectics - Latin language

- Colleges at Sorbonne, Bologna, Oxford and Cambridge

- Guild-like associations in the university - membership and academic titles

- Medieval universities and the role of the Church

- Universities as the sites of religious and political contentions - factional disputes between Guelphs and Ghibellines

- Impact of socio-religious, intellectual and political conditions on universities

- The emergence of the university-educated literate urban groups as a new social class

- Academic journeys or *Perigriantio academica*

- End of 'nations'

- The developments of new ideas - humanism, rationalism and the scientific spirit - circulation through the printing press

- The emergence of the Protestant church

- Humanism and its criticism of Scholasticism

- Universities and the opposition to the Catholic Church

Objective Questions

1. Which is the Latin word used to denote 'university'?

2. Which were the two prominent schools in Europe before the establishment of universities?

3. Who encouraged the training of clerics in his palace premises?

4. Which Cathedral school in Paris later turned into the university of Paris?

5. What is the name of the first medical text written on Surgery, and who wrote it?

6. Who regulated the degrees in Salerno Medical School?

7. Which is the first Medieval university in Europe, and When was it founded?

8. Which were the two groups of 'nations' created at Bologna University?

9. Who codified Church Law in the mid-twelfth century?

10. Who founded the Bologna School of Glossators?

11. Who was known as Glossators?

Answers

1. *Universitas Societas magistrorum discipulorum que*

2. Cathedral Schools at Chartres and Notre Dame in Paris, and Medical School at Salerno

3. Charlamagne

4. Notre Dame Cathedral School

5. *Practica Chirurgiae* written by Rogerius

6. The King Frederick II

7. The University of Bologna, 1088

8. Cismontane and the Ultramontane

9. Decretum Gratiani (Gratianus)

10. Irnerius

11. Bulgarus, Martinus, Bassianus, Placentius, and Accurinus

Assignments

1. Discuss the factors that led to the rise of universities.

2. Critically analyse the relationship between church and medieval universities.

3. Analyse the curriculum of medieval universities. What subjects were taught, and how did they reflect the intellectual and social needs of the time?

4. Evaluate the impact of medieval universities on European society.

5. Discuss the significance of the medieval universities beyond the Western Europe.

Suggested Reading

1. Baldwin, John W., and Richard A. *Goldthwaite, (ed.). Universities in Politics: Case Studies from the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period.* Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972.

2. Brandt, William J. *The Shape of Medieval History.* Yale University Press, 1966.

3. Cobban, Alan B. *The Medieval Universities: Their Development and Organization*. Methuen, 1975.

4. Flick, Alexander C. *The Decline of the Medieval Church*. K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1930.

5. Gabriel, Astrik L., editor. *The Economic Frame of the Medieval University.* Notre Dame University Press, 1977.

6. Kibre, Pearl. *Scholarly Privileges in the Middle Ages: The Rights, Privileges, and Immunities of Scholars and Universities at Bologna,*

Padua, Paris, and Oxford. Medieval Academy of America, 1961.

7. Kibre, Pearl. *The Nations in the Medieval Universities*. Harvard University Press, 1948.

8. Leff, Gordon. *Paris and Oxford Universities in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*. Wiley, 1968.

9. Rashdall, Hastings. *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*. Edited by F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden, Vols. 1–3, Oxford University Press, 1936.

10. Ridder-Symoens, Hilde de, editor. *A History of the University in Europe: Vol. 1, Universities in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge University Press, 1992.

11. Swanson, Robert N. *Universities, Academics, and the Great Schism*. Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Reference

1. Bauer, Susan Wise. *The History of the Medieval World.* W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.

2. Bennett, Judith. *Medieval Europe: A Short History*. McGraw-Hill, 2010.

3. Davis, R. H. C. *A History of Medieval Europe*. Pearson Longman, 2006.

4. Gabriel, Astrik L. *Garlandia: Studies in the History of Medieval Universities.* Notre Dame University Press, 1969.

5. Grafton, Anthony, and Lisa Jardine. *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe*. Harvard University Press, 1986.

6. Langley, Andrew. *Medieval Life.* DK Publishing, 2011.

7. Le Goff, Jacques. *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*. Blackwell, 1993.

8. Makdisi, George. *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West.* Edinburgh University Press, 1981.

9. Stephenson, Carl. *Medieval History*. Harper & Row, 1962.

UNIT 2

2

Trade and Urbanization

Learning Outcomes

After completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ get an overview of the trade pattern of the medieval world

♦ familiarise with the factors that led to the demographic changes that happened in the world during the medieval period

♦ explain the relationship between trade and urbanisation

♦ introduce to how the transition from the medieval economy to the modern capitalist occurred

Prerequisites

The medieval society performed overland trade till the late fifteenth century. Essential trade commodities included spices, silk and cotton from the east and gold and precious stones from Africa. The spices were brought from India through the Italian traders. The emergence of the Ottomans in Eastern Europe created trouble for the European traders on the terrestrial trade routes to Asia. Moreover, the crusades against the Muslims were a factor in finding new overseas trade routes through the sea. Hence, the late fifteenth century and the early sixteenth century witnessed voyages and explorations to different parts of the World. The Europeans who pioneered the search for new sea routes were the Portuguese and Spaniards. Their knowledge of navigation helped them to discover the Americas through Columbus and further Vasco - da Gama's discovery of a new sea route to India. The trade and commerce of the medieval World flourished. Thus, modern trading practices developed, and the commercial economy grew. The competition in the market led to the formation of new colonies. These developments led to the emergence of the bourgeoisie class, the decline of the feudal order and the beginning of the capitalist order. Hence, Europe

emerged as a major trade centre in the World and, in turn, the emergence of the modern World. European integration into world trade was based on the exchange of goods. In this unit, let us discuss the developments in trade activities and the urbanisation process across the medieval World.

Keywords

Export, Import, Urbanisation, Urbanism, Urban History, Urban Population, Migration, Bullion, Insurance, Imperialism

Discussion

6.2.1 Trade in China during the Medieval Period

Even though Chinese exports were reaching Europe via the Levant through the Arabs, China had maintained its distance from Europe in terms of trade connections for all these ages. During Marco Polo's seventeen-year stay in China in the 1270s, large quantities of Chinese silk, textiles, porcelain, and other trade goods were exported to coastal Europe, East Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. These goods were transported via sea and caravans. However, from the early fourteenth to the late fifteenth century, there was a sharp decline in trade that affected all of Eurasia. Many sea travellers were interested in Marco Polo's account of the richness and luxury of the Asian people since it was so laudatory.

Fig 6.2.1 An illustration of late medieval market
Source:https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1301/trade-in-medieval-europe/

The political issues of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) in China and the economic crisis began to subside when the Europeans discovered new sea routes to Asia and America. The prices of Chinese items were very high in the Middle Eastern and European markets. Furthermore, Portuguese settlements in Asia and their foray into the Indian Ocean opened up more business opportunities. Lisbon and Antwerp were now receiving large quantities of Chinese porcelain. During the seventeenth century, the Dutch also began importing considerable quantities of luxury goods from China. Nevertheless, the only commodity the Chinese were interested in was silver; they had no desire to purchase any produced goods from Europe. The burden of a rising population, escalating financial issues, increased reliance on silver as a currency, and a sharp fall in domestic production in China were considered to be the driving factors behind her decision to begin importing silver from the West.

The Chinese government had strict control over trade. The government's trade policy was alleviated in the 15th century to promote silver mining in the Chinese empire, but it did not increase production. However, their economies were significantly impacted by events that happened elsewhere. The silver mined in Central Europe increased

by over 500% between 1460 and 1530. Western Eurasia's economic activity was subsequently boosted and fostered by this. Moreover, it became a significant location for purchasing expensive oriental goods, especially the Chinese. Through this route, silver from Europe reached China.

Later, the discovery of silver mines in Central and South America significantly expanded the world supply of silver bullion. As a result, there were three main routes for silver to travel via to reach Asia. The first was from Acapulco on Mexico's west coast to Manila in the Philippines, and the second was from the Spanish colonies in America to Portugal, where Portuguese traders then transported it to Asia. The third route was the European nations like the Netherlands, England, and France transported substantial amounts of silver to make purchases of Asian goods. Meanwhile, silver output in Japan was significantly increased by the political unification of Japan under Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. A significant amount of silver entered China due to commerce between China and Japan, and the Portuguese involvement in this trade enhanced its volume.

The British, Dutch, and French entered China via Macao (1557) after the Portuguese reached Malacca. On the other hand, the growth of commerce between Spain and Manila was advantageous to the Chinese since it resulted in a constant rise in the import of silk by the New World. Additionally, it created possibilities for mass migration to Mexican mining areas. Imports of silver and international commerce caused issues for the Chinese during the same period. Despite the inability to resolve the persistent precious metal deficit, these imports accelerated urbanisation. Even if global trade never stopped, its volume decreased until the seventeenth century.

With the arrival of the British, opium became an alternative to silver, and the favourable economic balance was shaken in the nineteenth century. The Chinese economy was threatened by an intensive kind of commerce carried out by the western countries. The Chinese response to Western imperialism followed by these developments was to incorporate Western science and technology by preserving their traditions. As a result, global trade became a reason for the transformation of China.

6.2.2 Arabs and Trade in the Medieval World

Fig 6.2.2 Late Medieval Land and Sea Routes

Source: https://www.worldhistory.org/image/9759/late-medieval-land--maritime-trade-routes/

The Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean were the two most lucrative trading zones of the Middle Ages. The Arabs had effectively integrated these two zones. During this period, most sea-borne trade between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean occurred through the Red Sea. Because of the political unrest, the commerce belt had frequently switched back and forth between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Cairo became a significant hub for manufacturing and trade. Egypt maintained frequent trade exchanges with the Italian states at this time. Even though Egypt and Persia were mighty maritime powers on the East African coast, neither had a regular fleet stationed in the Indian Ocean.

Although Arab maritime dominance continued till the eighteenth century, the advent of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean changed maritime history. Albuquerque, the Portuguese ruler of Goa, could not scale Aden's fortified walls in 1513. It was the main entry point at the mouth of the Red Sea. Later, on the Persian Gulf's northern side, he captured Ormuz. The Portuguese strategy was to team up with Persia against the Ottoman Empire by using the religious differences between the two of them. Rather than pursuing territorial conquests, the Portuguese established naval stations and a network of supplementary trade. Unlike the Europeans who established trade routes in the New World, they did not develop new courses in Asia. Asia has long-established trade routes in the Indian Ocean connecting East Africa, the Arab coast, India, Southeast Asian islands, and the Chinese coast. The Portuguese initially took part in it before using their superior naval might to solidify their domination. They can be referred to as the first global merchants who enabled other European countries to access the oceanic trade of Asia.

The Arab trade shifted west after the Portuguese arrived in the Indian Ocean.

The demand for Iranian silk increased as the Chinese and Italian silk industries experienced setbacks. Since the middle of the fourteenth century, Tabriz has served as the trading hub for Asian products, taking the position of Baghdad and the other cities in this area. However, when circumstances changed, Basra became a significant silk hub. Until the Suez Canal was built in the eighteenth century, the Arab region gradually lost its position in global trade. With the discovery of the oil mines, crucial in developing the modern trading system, its significance rapidly rose.

6.2.3 Medieval Europe and its Trade Aspirations

In the early medieval period, the merchants were peddlers who offered their merchandise to villages and towns. With time, around the 12th century, Europe's production of goods increased, and trade flourished. Merchants turned into dealers and employers from the peddlers. They also started buying ships and sending them to new trade routes connecting Europe. In the early fourteenth century, commodities such as metals, silks and luxury items were brought from the Eastern Mediterranean to Britain and Flanders by the Cargo ships from Genoa and Venice. In exchange, coal, wool and lumber were taken to those places. Likewise, the German and Dutch vessels carried Iron, copper and lead to the Mediterranean in exchange for wine, oil and salt.
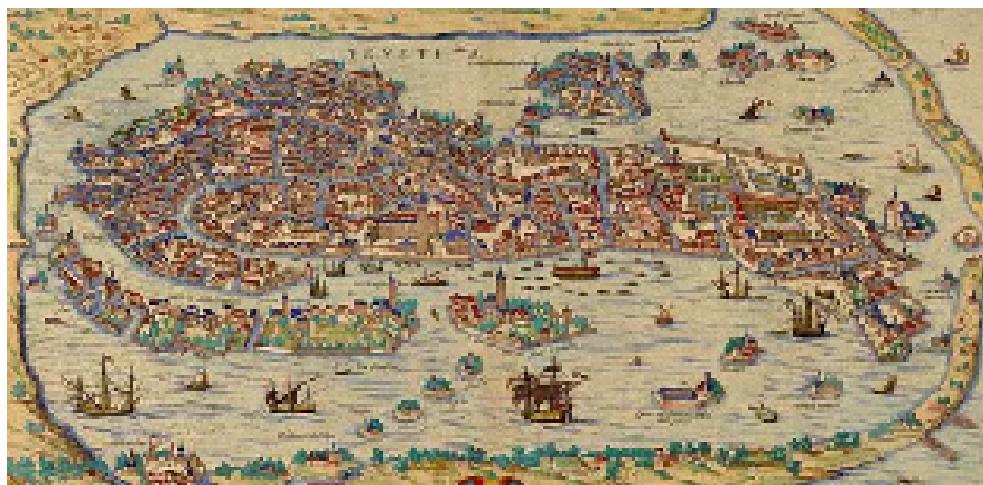
Fig 6.2.3 Medieval Venice as the centre of trading network
Image Credit: G. Braun/Public domain
Source: wondriumdaily.com

6.1.3.1 Changes in Trade and Commercial Activities

The modern world economy, which began to form in the sixteenth century with the opening of new trade networks and a considerable increase in world trade, significantly impacted the European economy. The balance of European society was drastically altered by the introduction of bullion from the New World. It led to the advent of capitalism and entrepreneurship, and innovation in the trade and industrial sectors. Moreover, Urbanization increased due to population growth, generating the demand for industrial goods.

Fig 6.2.4 A medieval trade fair
Image Credit: Gillis Mostaert/Public domain
Source: wondriumdaily.com

To meet the rising demands, the structure of trade underwent substantial changes. The financial operations increased as a result. All of these variables catapulted Europe into the modern period. The fifteenth century witnessed an increase in the volume of trade. Trade organisations were a result of the rising commercial economy. Trade was handled in the late medieval era by individuals or family ties. The *commendas* and *societas*, two types of commercial organisations, operated in Italy for a brief period. Changes in commercial operations were required as a result of increased trade volume.

In the late medieval era, groups like Merchant Adventurers of England, which were regulated companies, appeared. Many other businesses, including the Eastland Company, the Levant Company, and the Muscovy Company, were given specific areas to operate their trade monopoly. It was then pursued by the establishment of joint stock companies. These companies could operate in a corporate form, have a permanent character, and have more financial means through public shares. The Dutch East India Company, also known as the *Oost Indische Compagnie*, the English East India Company, the English Mineral and Battery Works Company, the *Compagnie des Indes*,

and the French East India Company were just a few of the organisations that began operating by the seventeenth century in Europe.

6.2.3.2 Banking

The expansion of the exchange economy on a global scale started to alter the market structure. The Medieval economy, which was self-sufficient, became a well-developed exchange economy. It further led to replacing weekly bazaars or fairs with permanent market systems. Many employees began to use specialised marketing techniques, including retail trading, storage and brokerage. However, postal services, newspapers, and trade information connected the newly established trading Communities. The merchant banker family activities in Germany and Italy began to change to public banking. These banks were founded in many cities, including Venice, Milan, Amsterdam, Hamburg, and Nuremberg.

The merchants kept their accounts in a double-entry bookkeeping system, which was developed by the 14th-century traders. Each account of money and deals was recorded in two ledgers. One ledger was for credits, and another one was to mark debits. The accounts of these ledgers were supposed to balance each other. Meanwhile, money lenders in Italy became wealthier with the interest they imposed on their services. Banking developed along with the money lending system. Florence, Genoa, Venice and Siena did well in it. Florence had two rich banks, which collapsed in the mid-14th century. The debt of Edward III of England (1312-1377) was due to the non-repayment of a considerable amount taken as a loan.

New financial transactional methods were used for the expanded banking infrastructure. It shows the beginning of the European Commercial Revolution in the latter part of the sixteenth century. The

Italians invented many credit instruments, including promissory notes, letters of credit, bills of exchange, and business techniques like the bookkeeping system, double-entry accounting, and the insurance system. The rest of Europe adopted these types of credit instruments on a much broader scale in the sixteenth century. By the seventeenth century, the capacity to negotiate credit instruments had become a significant element of business operations. With the growth of the commercial network, trading risks on lengthy sea voyages intensified, which helped spread the idea of insurance.

6.2.3.3 Insurance

Italian traders developed maritime insurance dating to the 1400s, and it was later expanded to cover other types of commercial activity. In many regions of Europe, stock exchanges were established due to the growing demand for capital for investments in trade and manufacturing. Both in terms of scale and terms of organisation, the Amsterdam stock market achieved tremendous strides. In Fernand Braudel's words, these stock markets "were the meeting place of bankers, merchants, businessmen, currency dealers, brokers, and investors." They brought up the modern idea of financial transactions.

6.2.4 The Decline of the Guild System and Rise of Rural Cottage Industries

Agriculture, trade, and industry were adequately integrated into the economic activities from the late fourteenth century onwards. Several new industries emerged, including glass production, copper, brass, paper, and—most significantly—textiles, while many traditional crafts survived and grew. Although it took a while for technology to advance, changes in how these manufacturing activities were managed were constant. Meanwhile, agricultural income

had drastically decreased due to the Black Deaths and the economic downturn. The most significant change was the dissolution of medieval craft guilds in several regions of Europe and the establishment of rural cottage industries in Germany, Britain, the Netherlands, and France. It was done to bypass the stringent rules of guilds, raising production costs without increasing productivity.

Rural industries produced less expensive textiles for common people by taking advantage of reduced wages and water power costs. The putting-out system gradually replaced the guilds, and this phase is referred to as proto-industrialisation, which gave rise to modern industry. Coal mining advanced rapidly during a period of increasing population pressure and timber scarcity in Europe. As a result of technological advancements, the iron industry grew and prepared the way for the industrial revolution. It had far-reaching effects on the European economy and the rest of the world due to imperialism and economic forces.

6.2.5 Urbanization

Urban History has drawn the attention of historians mainly since the 1960s. The urbanization phase of medieval Europe, particularly France and Britain, was the focus of these studies. There are differences of opinion among scholars regarding the rise of towns in medieval Europe. Some of them consider medieval towns to be a continuation of Roman cities. However, it was contested because Roman townships were devastated, and the Roman institutions did not survive in the medieval world.

Urbanism and townships have been linked with the idea of civilisation. Towns were often identified as the places of wealth, aristocracy, mansions, and literary, intellectual and cultural Centres. The medieval period witnessed an urbanization process throughout the world. As a result, there was a rise in the number of towns. The civilisation was connected with urbanism and towns as it was considered the hub of intellectual, literary and cultural activities. The medieval period witnessed the urbanization process worldwide, hence a rise in the number of medieval towns. The oppressed peasant communities found opportunities in towns away from the clutches of feudal lords. According to Fernand Braudel, towns and cities were important turning points and watersheds in human history. He associated the urbanization of the Italian Renaissance and the European rise to prominence with the revival of towns and cities. The cities and towns were the driving forces for the transition to the modern period.

6.2.5.1 Demographic Changes in the Medieval World

Global population estimates increased from 195 million to 440 million between 600 CE and 1500 CE. However, there were regional variations present. Between 500 CE and 1450 CE, the population of Europe increased significantly, rising from 27.5 million in 500 CE to 73.5 million in 1340 CE before declining to 50 million in 1450 CE. There were times when the population abruptly decreased and began to increase again.

The demographic shifts are associated with the changes in the mode of production. As farming techniques improved, more land was cultivated, facilitated by the growth and adoption of iron implements such as iron axes, spades, iron-edged hoes and ploughs. Where agricultural technology, urbanisation, and trade were critical drivers of economic development, population densities were the highest. Urbanisation and migration were two more key drivers of population change. Marriage trends, fertility, birth and death patterns, family and household structure, diseases, famines, and other natural disasters

were other factors that affected demographic shifts.

6.2.5.2 Migrations

A series of migrations happened worldwide during the medieval period. The migration of Germanic peoples to the east, while Slavic communities pushed south into the Balkans and eastward to the Volga, caused continuous battles and strife in Europe from the sixth to the eleventh centuries. Arabs migrated to North Africa in the seventh century, and by the eighth century, they had crossed across and virtually conquered all of Spain. The Magyar tribes, conquerors from the east, seized Hungary in the ninth century, from which point they invaded nearby European regions. Turkish tribes began to march toward Western Asia in the tenth century. By the thirteenth century, the powerful Mongols had invaded northern China and conquered the Central Asian State of Khwarazm Shah. Nearly one-third of the people of the Slavic Kingdoms perished when the Mongol army destroyed them all between 1237 and 1241.

The Slav population suffered significant losses due to the Ottoman Turks entering Asia Minor and the subsequent conquest of the Balkan Peninsula in the fifteenth century. Due to protracted hostilities like the Hundred Years War (1337-1453) between England and France, other European states saw population decline. The crusades (1096-1270), primarily spearheaded in France and Germany, decreased the European population and that of the Near East. Another significant cause of the population decline was the Black Death between 1347 and 1352. It took almost 40% of the population of Europe. However, these cities generally returned to their pre-plague population in two centuries.

6.2.5.3 Urban Population

The urban population mainly engaged in professions other than agriculture, including specialised crafts. One of the significant features of these places was the established marketplaces. They depended on rural areas for their food supply.

Urbanization was one factor which influenced the distribution of people. The urban population began to rise when people shifted to cities and towns from the rural areas. Few cities in the early medieval period had a population greater than 10,000. However, after the eleventh century, the urban population expanded quickly. The urban regions, including Mediterranean Europe, constituted seven to eight per cent of the total population by the fourteenth century, particularly in Mediterranean Europe. The population estimate was based on the settlement distribution and the city size. Before the fourteenth century, population figures were as follows - Paris consisted of more than 200,000 people; Palermo and Naples raised their populations to around 100,000 due to increased commerce.

Even though the Black Death affected the population, the urban economy recovered, and the population was raised significantly. By the end of the Middle Ages, the urban population had gone above the pre-plague level. Even though the figures are contested, it shows a considerable expansion of the urban population. By the fifteenth century, Paris had a population of 274,000, Bruges had 125,000, Milan had 125,000, Venice had 111,000, Genoa had 100,000, and Grenada had 100,000.

Recap

- Chinese trade in the medieval period- Chinese exports to Europe

- The political atmosphere in China and the economic crisis

- Major exporters of Chinese goods in the Indian Ocean

- Factors behind the import of silver from the West to China

- The commercial relationship between China and Japan

- Transformation of the Chinese economy and the Western imperialism

- Arab trade- Portuguese entry into the Indian Ocean trade

- European trade in the medieval period- transformation in trade pattern

- Introduction of bullion from the New World

- Increase in the volume of trade- formation of trade organisations

- Banking - double-entry bookkeeping system

- Italian credit instruments and business techniques- Insurance system

- Establishment of stock exchanges

- The dissolution of medieval craft guilds

- The establishment of rural cottage industries - Putting Out system - Proto Industrialisation - modern industry.

- Technological advancement- growth of the iron industry- industrial revolution

- Urbanization - demographic shifts- change in the mode of production

- Migration across the medieval world

- Urban population - Rise in population due to urbanisation process-

- Population decline - Hundred years war - Crusades - Black Death.

- Urban History writing - 1960s- France and Britain- scholarly debates in the rise of towns

- Urbanism - township - the idea of civilisation

Objective Questions

1. Who exported Chinese goods to Europe via the Levant?

2. Name the Chinese products exported to coastal Europe during Marco Polo's time.

3. Who were the major traders in the Indian Ocean during the medieval period who exported Chinese goods?

4. Name the driving factors that led China to import silver from the West.

5. Which were the prosperous trade zones in the medieval period?

6. What was the main entry point at the mouth of the Red Sea?

7. What types of credit instruments did the Italians create in the Middle Ages?

8. Which business techniques did the Italians use during the Middle Ages?

9. Which were the two factors which made a drastic decrease in the agricultural income in the medieval period?

10. What was the primary reason behind the establishment of rural cottage industries?

11. How much did the global population estimate between 600 CE and 1500 CE?

12. Which were the major causes of the population decline in Europe during the medieval period?

Answers

1. Arabs

2. Chinese silk, textiles, porcelain, and other trade goods

3. Portuguese and Dutch

4. Increased reliance on silver as a currency, a growing population, increasing financial problems, and a steep decline in domestic production in China

5. The Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean

6. Aden's fortified walls

7. Promissory notes, letters of credit, bills of exchange

8. Bookkeeping system, double-entry accounting, and the insurance system

9. Black Deaths and the economic downturn

10. Evading the stringent guild regulations that raised production costs without increasing productivity

11. From 195 million to 440 million

12. The Hundred Years War (1337-1453), the Crusades (1096- 1270) and the Black Death (1347 -1352)

Assignments

1. Discuss the historical debate concerning the emergence of medieval towns.

2. Write a short note on the relationship between trade and urbanisation in the medieval world.

3. Analyse Chinese exports to Europe, the political and economic factors shaping trade, key Indian Ocean exporters, and the reasons for silver imports from the West.

4. Discuss medieval financial innovations, including banking, double-entry bookkeeping, Italian credit instruments, stock exchanges, and early insurance.

5. Explain the decline of craft guilds during the medieval period.

Suggested Reading

1. Bennett, Judith. *Medieval Europe: A Short History.* McGraw-Hill, 2010.

2. Bloch, Marc. *Feudal Society. Vol.* 1, University of Chicago Press, 1961.

3. Bloch, Marc. *Feudal Society.* Vol. 2, Routledge, 1989.

4. Brandt, William J. *The Shape of Medieval History.* Yale University Press, 1966.

5. Dale, Stephen F. *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and the Mughals*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

6. Davis, R. H. C. *A History of Medieval Europe.* Pearson Longman, 2006.

7. Faroqhi, Suraiya. *The Ottoman Empire: A Short History*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

8. Langley, Andrew. *Medieval Life*. DK Publishing, 2011.

9. Stephenson, Carl. *Medieval History.* Harper & Row, 1962.

10. Van Steenbergen, Jo. *A History of the Islamic World: 600–1800.* Routledge, 2020.

11. Yamamura, Kozo, editor. *The Cambridge History of Japan*. Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Reference

1. Clark, Peter, and Paul Slack. *English Towns in Transition, 1500–1700*. Oxford University Press, 1976.

2. Cowan, Alexander. *Urban Europe, 1500–1700*. Routledge, 1976.

3. De Vries, Jan. *European Urbanization, 1500–1800.* Harvard University Press, 1984.

4. Friedrichs, Christopher R. *The Early Modern City, 1450–1750.* Routledge, 1995.

3 UNIT

Guild System - Craft and Merchant Guilds

Learning Outcomes

After completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ introduce to the guild system of the Medieval period

♦ explain how guilds developed during the Middle Ages and their roles, the hierarchy and many guilds types

♦ made aware of the dissolution of the guild system and the proto-capitalist phase

Prerequisites

During the 10th and 11th centuries, many towns and cities emerged in Europe after the migrations and the agrarian crisis of the Dark Ages. Until then, the merchants were peddlers who offered their goods to villages and towns by travelling and handling the transactions alone. The bandits and the feudal lords often threatened them. To protect themselves, they organised together and were entitled the transportation of merchandise through delegates. Furthermore, around the 12th century, the production of goods increased, and trade flourished in Europe. Merchants turned into dealers and employers from the peddlers, and they based themselves in the towns. Their organisations became strong and legally acknowledged by the state. Before the formation of guilds in medieval Europe, there were craft guilds in Rome called 'collegia' under the strict authority of the Roman magistrates. However, with the decline of the Roman Empire, it vanished. However, there is hardly any connection between these ancient and medieval guilds. Instead, the medieval guilds resulted from the economic changes during the post-war age.

Keywords

Craft Production, Craftsmen, Merchant Guild, Craft Guild, Production, Putting-out system, Factory System

Discussion

6.3.1 Craft Production and the Craftsmen Across the Medieval World

Textile production was the most significant craft production worldwide during the medieval period. Various places became the primary hubs for manufacturing various types of textiles. During this time, the woollen clothing trade was controlled by Europe, silk by China, cotton clothing by India and other parts of Asia and Africa, and carpet weaving by Central Asia and parts of Arabia. The expansion in production was influenced by extensive trade in textiles worldwide.

Although pottery making was a common craft production all over the world, Chinese porcelain predominated. Like porcelain, glass was only produced in a few locations, and Europe controlled the industry. Metallurgy was another industry which was prevalent partly all around the world. Iron was the most accessible metal available compared to other metals such as copper, silver, gold, tin, and lead. Gold and silver were often used to make ornaments and mint currency.

The artisans in the Arab world were householders. They were under the control of the Umayyad caliphs. The details of the artisans, such as Masons, carpenters, and embroiderers, were listed and were sent to the places according to the demand. In China, artisans worked in the iron and salt mines, imperial workshops, and arsenals. During the T'ang dynasty, corporations (hang) under strict regulation first appeared. These corporations were autonomous and located in towns. In Japan, artisans were organised into clans and employed by the concerned authorities. They were employed by the Temples, and such artisans were assigned to a post known as the Za. In the latter half of the twelfth century, they claimed monopoly rights.

Fig 6.3.1 Shoemakers from Das Ständebuch (The Book of Trades), 1568
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guild#/media

Fig 6.3.2 vendor belong to 13th century, depicted on a stained glass window of Chartres Cathedral, France.

Source: https://www.worldhistory.org/image/9465/medieval-spice-merchant/

In India, many artisans and craftsmen

worked in royal *karkhanas*. It was regulated by the rulers and nobles of the state. The goods made in these *karkhanas* were not for sale; instead, they were intended for the royal household's consumption or the private use of aristocrats. The state regulated minting everywhere. In France and England, minting was carried out in a single workplace run by an authorised moneyer. Initially, local communities or princes managed such enterprises, and by the latter half of the thirteenth century, the government began to have control over minting. Even if the state controlled the mints in India, anyone could use them. The common people could take silver to a mint, and then the coins were produced and distributed. Officials from the mint examined the metal quality and composition. These mints demanded additional fees for the making.

6.3.2 Guild System in Europe

Various associations that controlled industrial activities were known as guilds during the twelfth century. These were established in Northern Germany, Holland, Normandy, and the regions of England. Each guild was made up of artisans from a specific vocation. Additionally, it had a patron saint, and the members had a deep sense of identity. These were known by the Latin name *officium* in most European cities. These guilds monitored the production system. They created strategies to stifle competition and relished their monopoly rights.

The Guilds were the foundation of various industries in Europe. It has been noted that the religious organisations of ancient Germany can be linked to the origins of the medieval European guilds. The Carolingian empire had guilds even in the ninth century. Guilds had formed in cities by the outset of the 11th century. These could be broadly categorised as groups made up of artisans and groups with merchants as members. Guilds of merchants sought to maximise their profits. These guilds

paid low wages and imposed strict work regulations to achieve their goals. They possessed political influence and used the law to protect their objectives. Furthermore, the actions of merchants were regulated by these guilds. In the Germanic nations, they were referred to as either guild or Hanes and in the Roman countries, as *Caritas*.

Meanwhile, craft guilds were set up along the lines of specific trades. Members of these guilds generally owned and operated small enterprises or family workshops. Craft guilds were active in a variety of economic fields. Victuallers' guilds purchased agricultural products, transformed them into consumables, and sold finished goods. Brewers, butchers, and bakers were some examples. When it was profitable, manufacturing guilds would export their long-lasting products from their towns to clients worldwide. Manufacturers of textiles, weapons, and metal products are a few examples. Third-type guilds offered expertise and services for sale - clerks, teamsters, and entertainers.

Fig 6.3.3 Norwich Guildhall in England, constructed in 1407-1413

Source:https://www.worldhistory.org/image/9466/norwich-guildhall/

In medieval towns and cities, non-professional guilds also existed. These groups serve both secular and religious purposes and are referred to as *fraternities* and *confraternities* as well as social, religious, or parish guilds. The secular operations of

these organisations included offering mutual insurance to members, giving members emergency credit, representing members in court, and assisting the offspring of members in paying for apprenticeships and dowries.

In European communities, guilds had economic reasons, such as maintaining the consistency and quality of the goods and services that their members provided and safeguarding their means of subsistence. The unwavering objective of the guilds was to stop non-member artisans from producing goods in the city or the nearby countryside. It sometimes resulted in conflicts between the guilds and aristocracy who supported rural workers or commercial merchants who employed non-guild artisans for their cheap labour. However, there was also internal conflict within guilds, typically between wealthy masters and poorer masters who desired to restrict the number of journeymen who may work in a single shop.

Guild members claimed the legality of economic monopolies to safeguard their interests, and the urban economy of early modern Europe relied heavily on monopoly privileges. Nevertheless, some businessmen advocated for the freedom of trade in specific production sectors during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to end the guild monopolies. Moreover, many of the major capitalist businesses in early modern Europe, particularly the overseas trading firms that were forerunners in the extraction of wealth from the New World or the Indies, relied on royal charters or other privileges that gave their members the exclusive right to deal in particular goods or to trade in particular areas.

Guilds were assumed in the eighteenth century as impediments to economic freedom and barriers to economic prosperity. Across the 20th century, the idea that prevailed in the guilds was that they were regressive organisations that impeded social and economic advancement. However, many historians criticise it because guilds never consistently resisted technical advancement or entrepreneurial activity. Nevertheless, they persistently defended the rights of their members to live as independent economic actors. During the early modern period, guilds usually contributed to promoting the interests of their members and preserving the independence and integrity of skilled craft output.

While the study of guilds often focuses on medieval Europe, similar organisations existed in non-European societies. In the Islamic world, urban trade was controlled by merchant and artisan guilds, often linked to religious and political institutions. In China, trade and craft guilds (huiguan and gongsuo) regulated production, influenced governance, and maintained social welfare. African guilds, particularly in West Africa, played a crucial role in regulating trade routes and craft specialisations.

Unlike Europe, where guild membership was largely based on trade, in India, it was closely linked to the caste system. Artisans and merchants often belonged to hereditary occupational groups, restricting mobility between professions. Guilds also played a role in social hierarchy, reinforcing caste distinctions while providing economic security.

6.3.2.1 Guild Structure

A hierarchy of workers could be found inside each guild - journeymen, apprentices, and masters. The workers could be categorised as small business owners because they owned tools and raw materials. While many journeymen who had finished their apprenticeship might have achieved master status, many others were unable to get to the level of master. It was observed that there were not many masters throughout this time. One who was wealthy and had a

higher social rank became a master.

Fig 6.3.4 The Syndics of the Drapers' Guild painted by Rembrandt, 1662
The Sampling officials assess the quality of cloth that weavers offered for sale to members of their guild

Source: Wikipedia

Despite not being official guild members, journeymen played a crucial role in the production system of the guilds. It was assumed that a new journeyman would dedicate a few years to visiting various towns, gathering experience, and refining his abilities by serving a series of masters on a contract basis. The journeyman would eventually want to settle permanently in one location, generally his hometown. Theoretically, journeymen were regarded as masters in training who may advance to full mastership after fulfilling requisites such as payment of a fee, delivery of a commendable artwork, and engagement to a suitable spouse. However, masters frequently tried to restrict their ranks by enforcing higher fees or stricter admission requirements.

Compagnonnages in France and Gesellenvereinigungen in central Europe were the organisations for journeymen, and their significance grew as many members confronted the possibility of never achieving mastery. When the journeymen moved to a new town, these groups not only assisted them in finding employment and housing but also gave them the camaraderie and support they needed to protest or go on strike in response to unfair pay or working conditions. Sometimes, guilds are referred to as a precursor of trade unions. Actually, rather than guilds, the organisations of journeymen were the models for the labour unions that developed in the nineteenth century.

6.3.3 Dissolution of the Guild System

The large long-distance merchants had to reduce their prices to compete when markets declined after 1350, and they began to produce items instead of using the guilds. It was known as the 'proto-capitalist phase', consisting of two major production systems.

6.3.3.1 Putting Out System

The working circumstances for artisans varied depending on many factors. The nature of the production was one chief factor. Production was mainly arranged at the household level in Europe. Small artisans have the necessary tools and raw materials to meet potential demands. Smiths were also the owners of landed properties. Their extra labour was put to use repairing cross-border ploughshares that were becoming increasingly in need, as well as paying the rent on 61 horseshoes.

Fig 6.3.5 Windsor Guildhall, a meeting place for guilds
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guild#/media/File:Windsorguildhall.jpg

There was evidence of the existence of industrial artisans in urban areas before the thirteenth century. They were entrusted with the production of goods. However, not all were privileged enough to produce anything

for sale. The relationship between the artisans and merchants was complex. The affluent merchants developed the "putting out system" to maximise output.

There were intermediates in the production process of the putting-out system. Merchants supplied artisans with the materials they needed, and artisans delivered the finished products. The artisan, constantly pressed for funds to buy raw materials, now received a steady supply and was paid on a piece rate. The artisans lost authority over the selling of the goods. In return, the merchants were guaranteed a consistent supply and had considerable influence over quality.

The merchants or master craftsmen were the intermediaries who controlled the putting-out system and monopolised significant profits. Artisans often used their tools and workspaces in this system. When expensive or valuable raw materials are involved, the provider opts for the artisans to work at a specific location. Individual artists managed small-scale productions either at their homes or workplaces. They frequently moved between villages, producing and selling daily commodities. Sometimes, small-scale artisans employed hired labour, apprentices, and journeymen. Peasants, primarily female workers, were engaged in some production sectors like the mining industry or yarn spinning.

Many skilled and unskilled labours were employed in certain production areas, including shipbuilding, construction works, mining for minerals and metals, and metallurgy. The creation of weapons or opulent goods for the State and Kings was another area where extensive use of artisans was observed. However, such production was done for royal ventures rather than for the market. Specialised workers handled various procedures and processes in the production of textiles at each level. Carding, spinning, weaving, washing, dying, and even printing were all carried out by experienced craftsmen who formed their artisanal group.

6.3.3.2 Nature of Production

During this time, there are visible changes in how production is organised. In the majority of the crafts, individual artisanal production predominated. By implementing the putting-out system, production volume increased, but artisans lost control over obtaining raw materials and product marketing. These two processes were taken over by the merchants who handled them. It also happened that various production activities and stages became more specialised, and it was apparent in the textile industry.

Many craftsmen were employed for the production process in large industries - shipbuilding, mining, and construction. The primary purpose of guilds and other organisations was to maximise control over diverse trades. These organisations mostly supported skilled artisans. The total amount of production rose due to expanding commercial operations. The state, merchants, and larger craftsmen were the primary beneficiaries of the increased production. A significant number of artisans continued to fight to maintain control of the production process and make a living.
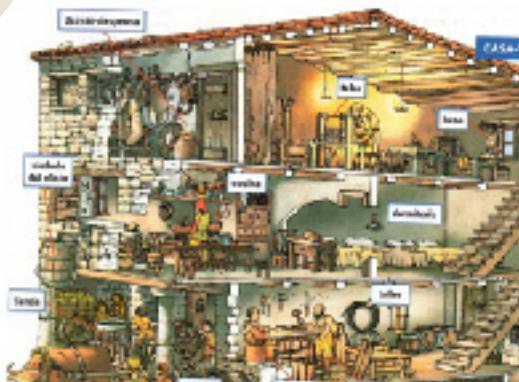

Fig 6.3.6 Medieval artisan workshop
Source: http://apuntes.santanderlasalle.es/ historia_1/antiguo_regimen_industria/casa_taller_ artesano.jpg

The skill of artisans determined their position. The unskilled labourers were not organised and received minimal wages.

Guilds had a minimal role in ensuring a secure work atmosphere. Moreover, they hardly possessed any resources or political power to improve the output at many times. In Florence, masters accepted the dominance of capitalist merchants when they could not gather resources for purchasing raw materials. During the seventeenth century, advancing money to artisans was common in India to obtain the necessary quantities of cotton, silk, and saltpetre.

The workers had long hours of work - more than sixty hours in the summer and around forty-four hours in the winter. Construction workers, particularly masons and stone cutters, endured difficult working conditions. Additionally, labourers were under pressure to complete the project, whether it belonged to the state, aristocracy, or church.

6.3.4 Resistance of Workers

The salaries paid to the various groups of craftsmen varied. Master fullers, dyers, shearers, and weavers, who had personal tools, received much money. Beaters and washers made meagre wages. To negotiate more wages, labourers went on strike during the thirteenth century. There were also protests against the dominance of communal oligarchies. Numerous trade disputes occurred in Flanders in 1280, and Bruges and Tournai were all affected by the turmoil that workers caused.

Artists, small entrepreneurs, and drapers are associated together. Artisans filed court appeals to resolve their complaints, and the employers solicited the assistance of the French King. A popular uprising occurred, initiated by the workers, against the French King's annexation of Flanders. The fullers, weavers, and shear workers of Bruges were led by the weaver Pierre de Coninck.

In other regions of Europe, the agitation of artisans became common. Meanwhile, weavers and fullers in Brussels, Louvain, and Antwerp rose in rebellion in 1302. They undermined the influence of merchant guilds and established influence in local politics. On Vivorde, the Duke crushed the rebels in 1306. There were many restrictions imposed on the workers in Britain. In 1275, fullers in Leicester were charged with holding an unauthorised gathering. The Ciompi uprising, named after the unorganised woollen industry workers, took place in Florence in 1378 and was an attempt to gain political rights. Armourers, grocers, doublet manufacturers, druggists, blacksmiths, furriers, and hosiers collectively participated in the attempt. They hardly received any assistance from the members of the existing guilds. The uprising was ruthlessly crushed down, so the oligarchy continued to hold control. Such a situation highlighted the diverse perspectives of the workers. Unorganised and low-skilled labourers were in a miserable state.
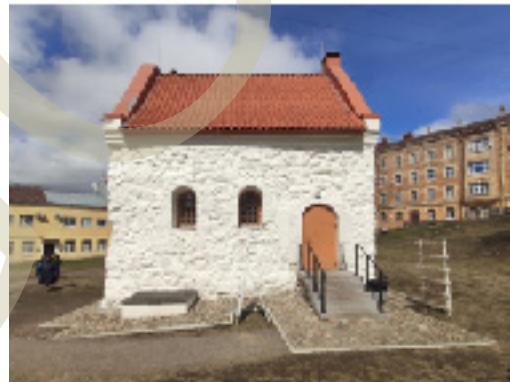

Fig 6.3.7 Merchant Guild House, Russia
Source:https://en.wikipedia.org/ wiki/File:Merchant_Guild_House_ Vyborg_(south_side).jpg#/media/ File:Merchant_Guild_House,_Vyborg_(south_ side).jpg

Furthermore, conflicts between guild craftsmen and merchants or within the guilds themselves were usually caused by changes connected to the growth of capitalism. When merchant entrepreneurs took over the sources of raw materials or the marketplaces for finished goods, they effectively turned the masters into wage labourers by preventing them from acting independently in the

economy. These patterns had already started to emerge in several late-medieval towns. Thus, they were hardly new to the early modern period. Early modern times saw an acceleration of these developments, which led to artisans making more determined efforts to protect their traditional rights.

Recap

- ◆ Craft Production - textiles- woollen - Cotton - silk- pottery making

- ◆ Craftsmen employed in various sectors- medieval world - Arab- China- Japan- India

- ◆ Guild system- Europe- Division- Merchant guilds- Craft guilds - their composition and functions

- ◆ Non- professional guilds- secular and religious functions

- ◆ Conflicts between guilds and aristocracy

- ◆ Organisation structure of the Guild system- hierarchy of workers

- ◆ Working conditions and nature of production

- ◆ Decline of the guild system

- ◆ Putting- Out system - intermediaries- Merchants or master craftsmen

- ◆ Production areas- labours used - Worker's protest

Objective Questions

1. Which were the most significant craft production worldwide during the medieval period?

2. Which were the major textile items traded during the medieval period?

3. Who controlled the craftsmen in the Arab world?

4. When did the first corporation or hang appear in China?

5. Which post was designated for the Temple artisans in Japan?

6. Which are the two categories of guilds?

7. What were the guilds referred to in Germanic nations and Roman countries?

8. What was the non-professional guild referred to in the medieval period?

9. What are the secular functions of the non-professional guilds?

10. What was the objective of the Merchant Guilds?

11. Mention the economic role of the guilds.

12. What is the hierarchy of the workers in each guild?

13. Which organisations support journeymen in France and central Europe?

14. Who controlled the putting-out system?

Answers

1. Textile production and pottery making

2. Woollen clothing, silk, cotton clothing and carpet

3. Umayyad Caliphs

4. During the period of the T'ang dynasty

5. Za

6. Merchant guilds, Craft guilds and non-professional guilds

7. Hanes and Caritas, respectively

8. Fraternities and confraternities, as well as social, religious, or parish guilds

9. Mutual insurance to members, giving members emergency credit, representing members in court, and assisting the offspring of members in paying for apprenticeships and dowries

10. Maximisation of their profits by paying low wages and imposing strict work regulations to achieve their goals

11. Maintain the consistency and quality of the goods and services that their members provided, safeguard their means of subsistence and stop non-member artisans from producing goods in the city or the nearby countryside

12. Journeymen, apprentices, and masters

13. Compagnonnages in France and Gesellenvereinigungen in Central Europe

14. Merchant or master craftsmen

Assignments

1. Assess the impact of the guild system on the socio-economic life of the medieval world.

2. Discuss how the dissolution of the guild system paved the way to industrialisation.

3. Explain the structure and functioning of craft and merchant guilds in medieval societies.

4. Discuss the factors that led to the decline of the guild system and its impact on medieval trade.

5. Compare the guild system in medieval Europe with similar institutions in other regions, such as India or the Islamic world.

Suggested Reading

1. Chaudhuri, K. N. *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company*. Cambridge University Press, 1978.

2. Chaudhuri, K. N. *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean*. Cambridge University Press, 1985.

3. Chaudhury, Sushil, and Michel Morineau, editors. *Merchants, Companies and Trade: Europe and Asia in the Early Modern Era*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

4. Das Gupta, Ashin. *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant, 1500–1800: Collected Essays of Ashin Das Gupta.* New Delhi, 2001.

5. Das Gupta, Ashin. *"Indian Merchants and Trade in the Indian Ocean, c. 1500–1750."* The Cambridge Economic History of India, vol. 1,

Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 407–433.

6. Das Gupta, Ashin, and M. N. *Pearson, editors. India and the Indian Ocean, 1500–1800.* Calcutta, 1987.

7. Epstein, Stephan R., and Maarten Prak, editors. *Guilds, Innovation and the European Economy, 1400–1800.* Cambridge University Press, 2008.

8. Hunt, Edwin S., and James M. Murray. *A History of Business in Medieval Europe, 1200–1500.* Cambridge University Press, 1999.

9. Langley, Andrew. *Medieval Life.* DK Publishing, 2011.

10. Stephenson, Carl. *Medieval History.* Harper & Row, 1962.

Reference

1. Anderson, Perry. *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism.* NLB, 1996.

2. Bloch, Marc. *Feudal Society. Vol.* 1, University of Chicago Press, 1961.

3. Bloch, Marc. *Feudal Society.* Vol. 2, Routledge, 1989.

4. Ogilvie, Sheilagh. *The European Guilds: An Economic Analysis.* Princeton University Press, 2019.

5. Pirenne, Henri. *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe.* Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1937.

6. Postan, M. M., and Edward Miller, editors. *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, II: Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages.* Cambridge University Press, 1987.

7. Prakash, Om. *European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India.* Cambridge University Press, 1998.

8. Smith, Alan K. *Creating a World Economy: Merchant Capital, Colonialism and World Trade, 1400–1925.* Westview Press, 1991.

9. Steensgaard, Niels. *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century: The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade.* University of Chicago Press, 1974.

10. Tracy, James D., editor. *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350–1750.* Cambridge University Press, 1990.

4 UNIT

Changes in Agriculture

Learning Outcomes

After completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ get an overview of the agrarian system of the world during the medieval period

♦ familiarise the economic conditions which led to the transformation in the agrarian sector of the Medieval world

♦ get an outline of the decline of the feudal order

Prerequisites

The European economy flourished between 1000 and 1300. An improved warm climate enhanced the cultivation and hence, the market economy. The peasants sold their surplus to purchase essentials such as clothes, tools and other commodities. An increase in trade activities led to the emergence of more towns. Nobles and knights shifted to opulent castles. All these developments were a result of the agricultural transformation. In other words, it accelerated several socio-political, religious and cultural accomplishments during the Central Middle Ages. In this unit, we will discuss the change that happened in the agricultural pattern of the Medieval World and its connection with the medieval economy. It will also deal with the shifts brought to the mode of production and its reflection on medieval society.

Keywords

Technology, Productivity, Feudalism, Commercialisation, Agricultural Revolution, Yield, Specialised Agriculture

Discussion

6.4.1 Agricultural Practices of Medieval Europe

European peasants produced grain, vegetables, meat, eggs, and wool in Europe's countryside. The areas of England, Northern France, and Germany were fertile and received ample rain. The Italian and Iberian regions possessed lighter soils and a dry climate. All these areas had lands suitable for the rearing of sheep and cattle. The Mediterranean part of Southern Europe had vineyards and Olive farms- vines as an essential beverage and olive oil. Northern Europe cultivated grain and engaged in dairying; hence, butter was used instead of oil. The economy of Europe was closely connected to the production of goods by the peasants. When the production of goods increased, the economy also grew.

Transformation of Landscape

During the tenth and eleventh centuries, a considerable transformation was made to the landscape of Europe by clearing forests, draining swamps and reclamation of land from the sea by constructing dikes. As a result, the land was transformed for cultivation. The local people fell their trees and converted wetlands for cultivation. Another method the nobles adopted was that they incentivised people to live in uncultivable land.

6.4.1.1 The Rotation System of Agricultural Fields

In some places, the peasants cultivated the land on a rotation basis. In the medieval period, fertilisers were not available much, and the peasants filed cases to get the rights to manure. Hence, to maintain the productivity of the land, the land was kept uncultivated. Earlier, the peasants followed a two-field system of rotation. When one field was brought under cultivation, the other one was left fallow.

Towards the eighth century, a three-field system began to be followed—a three-year cycle in which spring cultivation was required for fall harvesting of the crops. For early summer harvesting, fall planting was needed, followed by fallow. The three-field system occupied two-thirds of the land under cultivation at a time. However, the three-field system was unsuccessful in many villages as the soils could not hold more cultivation and the unfavourable climatic conditions for planting. Yet, some places had improved systems, including four or five fields or even a complex system of rotations.

6.4.2 Agrarian Technology

Gradual advancement in agricultural technology also favoured productivity. Horse collars were made in a way that did not harm the horses. Besides that, tandem harnesses and horseshoes increased the efficiency of horses and oxen used in the fields. Axles on wagons and metal tools were also used. The old Roman plough was not efficient on the heavy soils of Northern Europe. Hence, harnessed horses and oxen drove a heavy and wheeled plough.

Fig 6.4.1 Depiction of a padded horse collar (Image: By Medieval manuscripts – Medieval Technology and Social Change by Lynn White/ Public domain)
Source:https://www.wondriumdaily.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Earliest_european_harness.png

Watermills and windmills were widely used on agricultural farms. This technology

reduced human effort in the most tedious work in the fields. Wind or water power replaced hand milling, which was mainly done by women. The windmills also helped to drain wetlands.

Judith Bennett, an American historian, mentions this as an ''agricultural revolution. According to Bennett, the changes happening in the agricultural sector improved agricultural production, encouraged population growth, and ushered in an improved living standard, leading to the enhancement of specialised production and trade. Bennett connects the consequences of these agricultural developments to three ''trends''- doubling crop yields, easing famine, and improving life expectancy.

Fig 6.4.2 Two-wheeled heavy plough
Credit :Giraudon/Art Resource, New York
Source:https://cdn.britannica.
com/14/2214-004-47CF7790/Peasant-plow-
illustration-manuscript-Les-Tres-Riches.jpg

In the 12th century, the yield became 1:4, i.e., the harvest of four bushels received for every bushel Sown. Before that, only two bushels could be harvested from every bushel sown. Moreover, no significant famines were reported between the 11th and 14th centuries. Peas and beans were produced through a three-field rotation System. Cheese, eggs, fish and meat were the protein and iron-rich foods eaten. Pork and rabbit became

significant dishes. In the medieval period, women had more life expectancy than men. The improved iron-rich diet reduced female anaemia. All these trends were associated with the agricultural revolution that happened during the medieval period.

Fig 6.4.3 A medieval watermill
Location : National Library of France
Source:https://www.wondriumdaily.com/
rise-europe-middle-ages/

6.4.3 The Decline of Feudalism

The late fifteenth century and the early sixteenth century were considered the transition from the medieval to the modern period, especially in the European context. This period marked the assimilation of ideas from different parts of the world. Furthermore, this period witnessed voyages and explorations to other parts of the world to find new trade routes. It eventually led to the expansion of trade and commerce. The competition in the market led to the formation of new colonies. One of the most notable features of the transition period was the decline of the feudal order and the subsequent changes in the agricultural sector.

In Block 3, we have discussed the origin, features and demerits of feudalism in medieval society, especially Medieval Europe, in detail. Towards the end of the medieval period, feudalism began to decline. It was a gradual process and not a linear process. However, different regions had different paces of decline in the feudal order. Areas such as Britain, the Netherlands, parts of France and Northwestern Europe were the first to face the fall of the feudal mode.

However, in places such as Eastern and Central Europe, feudalism continued even after the 17th century. The demographic, economic and social factors related to the feudal mode led to the emergence of modern society. The bourgeoisie replaced feudal aristocrats.

6.4.4 Transformation of Agriculture in the Late Medieval and Transition Period

The exploitation of peasants by the feudal lords, increasing revenue demand due to the war, inflation, growing needs of the population and urbanization added to the crisis in the agricultural sector. It accelerated the necessity to integrate different regions into a global market system. The agricultural industry was pressured to respond and adapt to the new market demands, leading to agricultural commercialisation. It was this period that witnessed the beginning of industrialization.

More areas came under cultivation, and the yield was improved per unit of land. Towards the end of the medieval period, three-field rotation systems became prominent in most parts of Europe. The soil was used more intensively by adopting new cropping methods. The practice of lying the land fallow was not followed in the regions of Low countries. During this period, Peas, beans, turnips, green vegetables, and fodder crops were cultivated. Some historians identify that China implemented and popularised concepts such as crop rotation, planting the crops parallel to each other in rows of equal distance and vigorous hoeing of weeds among the Europeans.
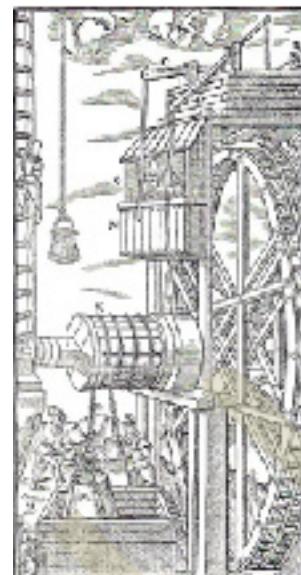

Fig 6.4.4 Watermills used to power a mine. (Image: By Georgius Agricola/Public domain)

Source:https://www.wondriumdaily.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/430px-Agricola1.jpg

A keen interest in agriculture led Arabs to make innovations in this field. As a result of the irrigation projects on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in "Sawad" or Black Land, they enjoyed great prosperity under the Umayyads and early Abbasids. In Spain and other parts of Europe, the Arabs introduced rice, sugarcane, cotton trees, saffron, spinach, and a variety of fruit crops. Agricultural projects like flood control, artificial irrigation, and agricultural product transportation have concerned the Chinese and Arabs. As a result of agricultural innovations in China, square pallet chain pumps, swan-neck hoes for weeding, rotator winnowing fans, and multi-tubes for sowing seeds in drills were developed. Progress has been made in soil conservation, crop improvement and canal connections. It was all long-term and gradual transformation rather than revolutionary.

Nevertheless, European agricultural transformation cut across the territorial boundaries and was reflected in the areas of production and trade. It was a radical change in society and the economy. European agriculture has promoted cross-border trade.

The Baltic region has become the breadbasket of food grain in Europe, transporting grain by sea to all parts of Europe. The Netherlands and several other areas concentrated more on dairy farming. Spain, Britain and the Alpine countries have focused on sheep breeding and became exporters of wool to distant production centres such as Flanders. An extensive drainage and embankment construction program was launched at the end of the 15th and 16th centuries. Land reclamation occurred in several parts of Europe. Land enclosures have become commonplace in many other places. The market demands have led to a shift from farming to large-scale grazing. In the later centuries, the agricultural sector expanded significantly.

Fig 6.4.5 Roman bridge and an Islamic water wheel, The Albolafia Water Mill, for irrigation in Cordova, Spain

Source: Wikipedia

Specialised agriculture met the local needs and encouraged the division of labour. The new farming methods were widely discussed in medieval Europe through the establishment of printing presses and the spread of literature. However, much of Europe remained clinging to feudalism, and overcoming its shackles took a long time. The late fifteenth century witnessed an agrarian change after the long years of stagnation. The peasants began to focus on the regional specialisation in agricultural production. Farmers and landowners concentrated on sales and exports to increase their income. Towards the sixteenth century, the price revolution influenced the transformation of agriculture according to capitalist requirements. All these developments accelerated the decay of the feudalist structure of agriculture and encouraged capitalist agriculture.

Medieval agricultural transformations were not solely economic but also deeply social and environmental. The increasing demands of feudal lords, rising taxes, and labour obligations often led to widespread peasant unrest. Major revolts, such as the Jacquerie in France (1358) and the English Peasants' Revolt (1381), reflected resistance to feudal exploitation and economic hardships, especially following the Black Death. Furthermore, the expansion of cultivated land through deforestation, swamp drainage, and land reclamation had significant environmental consequences. Overuse of land led to soil depletion, while widespread deforestation caused timber shortages, impacting construction, fuel supply, and shipbuilding. These environmental pressures, coupled with periodic climate changes, contributed to famines and agrarian crises in the later medieval period.

Labour in agriculture was also shaped by gender roles, with women actively participating in fieldwork, food production, and dairy farming. In some cases, particularly after the Black Death reduced the male workforce, widows and unmarried women took on managerial roles in agricultural estates. However, legal restrictions often limited their access to landownership and economic mobility. The increasing commercialisation of agriculture, especially the wool trade in England and Flanders, linked rural economies to growing urban centres and trade networks like the Hanseatic League. Moreover, innovations from outside Europe, such as Arab irrigation techniques and Chinese advancements in rice cultivation, influenced medieval European agriculture.

Recap

♦ Agricultural Practices of Medieval Europe

♦ Changing landscape - clearing forests, draining swamps and reclamation of land

♦ The rotation system of agricultural fields - two- field, three- field and even complex systems

♦ Agrarian Technology - increased productivity - Horse collars, tandem harnesses, horse Shoes - wheeled plough - Axles, wagons and metal tools - watermills - windmills

♦ 'Agrarian Revolution' - Judith Bennett - improved agricultural developments

♦ The decline of feudalism - the transition to the modern period - the rise of the bourgeoisie class

♦ Agrarian transformation in the late medieval period

♦ Crisis in the agrarian sector - exploitation of peasants - urbanisation - increase in population - increased revenue demand.

♦ The pressure of market - commercialisation of agriculture

♦ The Chinese contribution to the agricultural sector

♦ Arab innovation in the field of agriculture - Tigris and Euphrates River irrigation projects - introduction of crops in Spain and other parts of Europe

♦ Dairy farming- sheep breeding- wool export

♦ Land reclamation- drainage- embankment

♦ Specialised agriculture - the division of labour

Objective Questions

1. Which was the main system followed by medieval Europe to improve cultivation?

2. Which agrarian technologies were used in the medieval period?

3. Who mentioned the agricultural developments that happened in the medieval world as the Agricultural Revolution?

4. What are the three trends Bennett mentioned as the consequences of agricultural developments?

5. Which were the regions where the decline of feudalism happened initially?

6. Name the parts of Europe where feudalism continued even after the 17th century.

7. Which class replaced the feudal aristocracy in the modern period?

8. What are the factors that added to the crisis in the agricultural sector?

9. How did the agrarian sector respond to the new market demands?

10. Whose period did the Arabs witness much prosperity in the agricultural field?

11. Which are the crops introduced by Arabs to Spain and other parts of Europe?

12. Which is the breadbasket of food grain in Europe?

Answers

1. Rotation system of agriculture

2. Horse collars, tandem harnesses, horse Shoes, wheeled plough, axles, wagons, metal tools, watermills and windmills

3. Judith Bennett

4. Doubling crop yields, easing famine and improving the life expectancy of people.

5. Britain, the Netherlands, parts of France and Northwestern Europe

6. Eastern and Central Europe

7. Bourgeoisie class

8. The exploitation of peasants by the feudal lords, increasing revenue demand due to the war, inflation, growing needs of the population and urbanisation

9. Through the commercialisation of agriculture

10. Umayyads and early Abbasids

11. Rice, sugarcane, cotton trees, saffron, spinach, and a variety of fruit crops

12. Baltic region

Assignments

1. Examine the impact of the agrarian revolution on the medieval world.

2. Explain the historical debate on the decline of feudalism.

3. Discuss the key agricultural practices of medieval Europe and their impact on food production and society.

4. How did the commercialisation of agriculture and market pressure contribute to agrarian transformation in late medieval Europe?

5. Assess the contributions of Chinese and Arab agricultural innovations to medieval European agriculture.

Suggested Reading

1. Lefebvre, Georges. *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism.* Edited by Rodney Hilton, Verso, 1997.

2. Pirenne, Henri. *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe.* Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1937.

3. Postan, M. M., and Edward Miller, editors. *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe: Vol. II. Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages.* Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Reference

1. Bennet, Judith. *Medieval Europe: A Short History*. McGraw Hill, 2010.

2. Bloch, Marc. *Feudal Society*. Vol. 1, University of Chicago Press, 1961.

3. Cipolla, Carlo M. *Before the Industrial Revolution: European Society and Economy, 1000-1700*. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1976.

4. Langley, Andrew. *Medieval Life.* DK Publishing, 2011.

5. Stephenson, Carl. *Medieval History*. Harper & Row Publishers, 1962.

5 UNIT

Position of Women in the Medieval Society

Learning Outcomes

After the completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

♦ get an overview of the status of women in medieval Europe

♦ familiarise themselves with the role of women in different fields

♦ get an awareness of the impact of socio-economic, political and legal developments in the medieval period on women

♦ explain the hierarchy of women in the medieval European society

Prerequisites

The earlier medieval European narratives excluded the essential part of medieval society, the women of each social class. Those women who played an active role in medieval society as land owners and shopkeepers and worked along with their male counterparts were not given enough emphasis. The medieval public records mentioned them as a daughter or wife of someone. This kind of narration also lacked the inclusion of minorities and non-Christians, including Jews and Muslims. By the end of the eighth century, Muslims had control over most parts of the Byzantine Empire, Northern Africa and Spain. However, recent studies focus much on the excluded sections in the European writings. It helped to understand the functioning of medieval society much more clearly. This unit deals with the position of women in medieval society. It is impossible to generalise the history of women as each had diverse life experiences.

Keywords

Abbesses, Wergalds, Castellans, Clerical Celibacy, Modesty, Nunneries, Convent

Discussion

6.5.1 Women in Medieval Europe

In medieval Europe, the status of women was shaped by social norms and religious beliefs that placed them below men in virtue and intellect. A French priest in 1386 remarked that men were "much nobler and of greater virtue" than women. They were considered inferior to men by the church. Women were supposed to be gentle, obedient and submissive to their fathers and husbands. However, most of them were working women—some were peasant women who worked in the fields to meet the needs of their homes. Some women worked in the artisans' workshop, and some as tradeswomen. The affluent women organised their households and managed their husband's matters. However, their role in the country's affairs was limited except for some powerful abbesses, noblewomen and queens. Moreover, women were mostly excluded from the universities for higher learning during the medieval period. Those spaces were male-exclusive.


Fig 6.5.1 Illustration from a 15th-century CE manuscript

Source: https://www.worldhistory.org/image/10198/medieval-tenant-farmers/

Noblewomen were entitled to manage estates when their husbands were at court, on a crusade, or if they died in any battle. Those women resolved disputes, handled affairs of farms and controlled the financial matters while their husbands were unavailable.

Some women fought battles and protected their castles when they were under siege. There is a depiction of the maid of Orleans, St. Joan, who was also a daughter of a French peasant, in which she is wearing armour. St. Joan thought she heard voices at 13 to overthrow the British from France. Hence, she led the French army and won the battle. Nevertheless, she was deceived and handed over to the British. They burned her, considering her a witch.

In medieval society, landowners had a powerful position, irrespective of gender. An unmarried woman having property was entitled to equal legal rights as men. She had the right to make a will and possess her seal and sign documents. However, she was supposed to surrender her land and rights to her husband. After his death, she was granted one-third of his land to support herself.

The women combined various jobs at a time as they received less pay than men. Hence, women were involved in various occupations such as shopkeeping, spinning, baking and brewing ale. Some women earned their living through writing. Christine de Pisan (c. 1364- 1429) was a woman in medieval Europe who wrote poetry and books. She criticised the glorification and insult of women by male authors in their writings. Her writings marked a protest against such a practice.

Women played a crucial role in medieval healthcare, particularly in midwifery, herbal medicine, and domestic care. In twelfth-century Italy, Trotula of Salerno authored influential medical texts on women's health, offering practical guidance on childbirth and gynaecological issues. Hildegard of Bingen, a German abbess and scholar, wrote extensively on herbal remedies and holistic healing. However, from the late medieval period, the

increasing professionalisation of medicine led to the exclusion of women from formal medical practice. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, midwifery and traditional healing practices came under scrutiny, with accusations of witchcraft becoming a means to discredit female practitioners.

Beyond Europe, women in various medieval societies exercised influence in different ways. In Japan, during the Heian period (794–1185), courtly women like Murasaki Shikibu produced literary works such as The Tale of Genji, reflecting elite women's lives. However, with the rise of the samurai class in the Kamakura period (1185–1333), gender roles became more restrictive. In the Islamic world, women like Shajar al-Durr ruled Egypt during the Mamluk period, which demonstrate political agency. In medieval India, Razia Sultana (r. 1236–1240) defied prevailing norms to rule the Delhi Sultanate, though her reign was brief due to resistance from nobles unwilling to accept a female ruler.

Fig 6.5.2 An illustration of Christine de Pisan, taken from The Book of the Queen
Source: https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/women-in-medieval-society

6.5.2 Noblewomen and their Status

Now, let us look at the trajectories of developments in the medieval period concerning women, especially noble women. The socio-economic, political and legal developments of the medieval period had a drastic impact on women. After the dissolution of the Roman Empire around the 5th century, Western Europe was divided into successor political entities of the Germanic kingdoms. Among the Germans, women had great value and a huge fine was imposed on those who abducted or violated their women. Wergalds, the monetary fund of a person's life, was fixed for death, abduction or violation.

The sixth century witnessed the emergence of Franks among the successor states of Germanic kingdoms and the spread of Christianity among the Germans, mainly through marriage alliances. Meanwhile, Noble women found themselves as patronesses of the Church, monasteries, and abbesses of these foundations.

When the Franks disintegrated, the royal and noble families fought severely. During this time, women took charge of many affairs of the state. However, their status and power were not acknowledged in medieval society. During the eighth and ninth centuries, Charlamagne created an

empire and brought several legal reforms. Significant reforms concerning women during Charlamagne's period are listed below:

- Women's legal rights over land.

- Queen as the head of the royal household

In the family inheritance, daughters now had the claim for share. Widows received the power to control the property of their husbands or sons. Moreover, the Queen received the power to administer the royal land and treasury. It also added several other responsibilities and powers. However, Charlemagne appointed two posts to rule efficiently - Missi Dominici and Counts. Women were not entertained to hold those posts.

Later, after the death of Charlamagne, during the latter half of the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries, the centralised administration system collapsed. The power was localised among the counts, dukes, their descendants and Castellans. Castellans were the new descendants of counts or dukes but controllers of castles who had powerful words as their allies. Meanwhile, the authority of the centre slackened. The emergence of powerful noble families accompanied all these developments. Those who controlled fiefs began to implement justice and other such services. They also found dynasties in Western Europe. Those dynasties were powerful and ruled for an extended period.
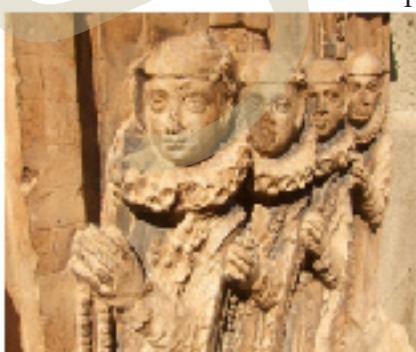
Fig 6.5.3 Carving of medieval women at Peterskirche, Munich

Source: https://www.worldhistory.org/ image/10196/medieval-women/

The noblewomen shared power and prestige when their families' established dynasties. Moreover, they inherited a share in their family estate and became managers. They organised and defended their households when their husbands were away for military campaigns. Meanwhile, in Britain, the noblewomen had the right to rule in their own right, unlike their continental counterparts. Frankish queens could only rule in the name of their sons or husbands.
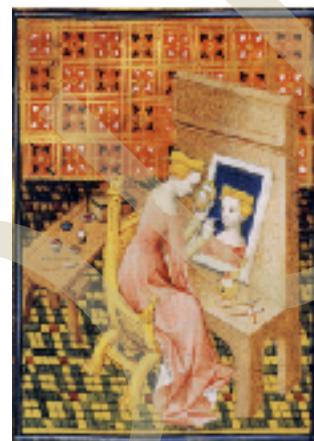

Fig 6.5.4 Medieval women painting self - portrait

Source:https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:De_ mulieribus_claris_-_Marcia.png

Anglo- Saxon women were potent aristocratic members in the eleventh century. However, later, their inheritance was limited, and they were dispossessed of their lands during the advent of the Normans. During the high Middle Ages, the Church insisted that women observe clerical celibacy. With time, when medieval society became bureaucratic, women were not much encouraged. Nevertheless, they found new ways to establish their influence.

6.5.3 Dressing

In medieval Europe, clothing reflected social status, morality, and religious values. Young and unmarried women often wore their hair loose, a sign of youth and purity. In contrast, married women were expected to cover their heads with linen veils or wimples.

It symbolised modesty and obedience. These coverings also served practical purposes, protecting hair from dust and maintaining hygiene. Among the wealthy, elaborate headpieces, such as golden nets or cauls, were worn over braided hair, which reflects their status.

Laws regulated what women of different classes could wear. Sumptuary laws restricted luxurious materials like silk, fur, and fine embroidery to the nobility, while common women wore simple wool or linen dresses. These garments were long and layered, with fitted bodices and flowing sleeves. Footwear, too, varied - peasants typically wore wooden clogs or leather shoes, while noblewomen used embroidered slippers. Jewellery was another marker of status, with gold and gemstones reserved for aristocratic women.

Textile work was central to women's labour. Many women spun wool into thread using handheld spindles, a task often performed by the unmarried, leading to the term 'spinsters.' The spinning wheel, introduced from India in the 13th century, gradually replaced the spindle, increasing efficiency and transforming textile production. Women's work in spinning and weaving was essential to both household economies and urban trade, with many earning their livelihood in cloth-making guilds.

Fig 6.5.5 An illustration of women engaged in spinning (1170c)
Source:https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/

6.5.4 Convents, Nunneries and Education of Women

For many medieval women, convents provided an alternative to marriage and household life. Families, especially noble ones, often placed daughters in nunneries either as an act of piety or to avoid the complications of dowries and marriage alliances. Life in a convent mirrored that of monks, with strict rules governing daily routines, prayers, and work. Some abbesses exercised considerable authority, managing large estates, overseeing agricultural production, and running scriptoria where manuscripts were copied.

Education for women was largely confined to religious institutions. In nunneries, girls from noble and merchant families were taught reading, writing, and Latin, skills necessary for religious study and administrative tasks. Some women excelled in scholarly and theological work. Hildegard of Bingen, a 12th-century abbess, wrote extensively on medicine, music, and theology, while Christine de Pisan, one of the earliest professional female writers, challenged misogynistic ideas in medieval literature.

As mentioned above, outside of convents, opportunities for women's education were scarce. Universities remained closed to them, and learning beyond basic literacy was rare for common women. However, some noblewomen received private tutoring, allowing them to participate in literary and intellectual circles. Despite social restrictions, women in religious and aristocratic settings made significant contributions to cultural and intellectual life.

Some nunneries were to lead a devout life, and they offered education to the nuns. Many unmarried women joined convents and nunneries. Their life in such places was similar to those of the monks. As mentioned earlier, many abbesses were decisive in

medieval Europe. Many of them were landowners and employers. Most women received reading, trade, and household training to prepare them for marriage. Others who entered nunneries also learned reading and writing. In the nunneries, they learned Latin.

Recap

- ♦ Absence of the identity of women in the medieval public narratives

- ♦ Recent studies - emphasis on women and the minorities

- ♦ Women in Medieval Europe - status of women in the medieval society

- ♦ Working women- peasants, artisans, tradeswomen

- ♦ Powerful abbesses- noble women- queen

- ♦ Exclusion of women from universities

- ♦ Role of noblewomen in the absence of husband

- ♦ Women in the battlefields- the story of St. Joan

- ♦ Status of women with property- property rights after marriage- the inheritance of women

- ♦ Discrimination in the pay of women and men

- ♦ Women as writers- Christine de Pisan and her criticism on the glorification and insult of women by male authors

- ♦ Germanic women - wergalds or monetary fund

- ♦ The emergence of Franks - marriage alliances- the disintegration of Franks

- ♦ Charlamagne's legal reforms- Women's legal rights over land- Queen as the head of the royal household

- ♦ Anglo- Saxon women as aristocratic members- the advent of Normans

- ♦ Dressing of medieval European women

- ♦ Convents - nunneries- education of women- Latin language

Objective Questions

1. Who was the French woman considered to win the battle against the British and then later killed by them through deceit?

2. Which section of women had equal legal rights as men in Medieval Europe?

3. What were some primary occupations the European women did during the medieval period?

4. Mention one female writer who criticised the male authors through her poetry and books against their insults towards women.

5. What is Wergalds?

6. Who introduced some legal reforms which favoured women during the eighth and ninth centuries?

7. Which were the two significant reforms concerning women brought by Charlamagne?

8. Which were the two posts entitled by Charlamagne for an efficient rule?

9. Who were Castellans?

10. From where did Europeans adopt the spinning wheel?

Answers

1. St. Joan

2. Unmarried women with property

3. Shopkeeping, spinning, baking and brewing ale

4. Christine de Pisan

5. The monetary fund of a person's life was fixed for death, abduction or violation

6. Charlamagne

7. Women's legal rights over land and the Queen as the head of the royal household

8. Missi Dominici and Counts

9. The new descendants of counts or dukes(Controllers of castles)

10. India

Assignments

1. Write a short note on the role and function of women in medieval European society.

2. Discuss the role of women in religious institutions, focusing on convents, nunneries, and their access to education.

3. Examine medieval inheritance laws and property rights for women.

4. How did women participate in the economy as peasants, artisans, and traders?

5. Discuss the contributions of women to medieval literature, with reference to Christine de Pisan.

Suggested Reading

1. Bauer, Susan Wise. *The History of the Medieval World*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.

2. Bennett, Judith. *Medieval Europe: A Short History*. McGraw-Hill, 2010.

3. Brandt, William J. *The Shape of Medieval History*. New Haven, 1966.

4. Dale, Stephen Frederic. *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and the Mughals*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

5. Faroqhi, Suraiya. *The Ottoman Empire: A Short History*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

6. Flick, Alexander Clarence. *The Decline of the Medieval Church*. K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1930.

7. Langley, Andrew. *Medieval Life*. DK Publishing, 2011.

8. Runciman, Steven. *A History of the Crusades*. Cambridge University Press, 1987.

9. Stephenson, Carl. *Medieval History.* Harper & Row, 1962.

10. Van Steenbergen, Jo. *A History of the Islamic World: 600–1800*. Routledge, 2020.

11. Watt, William Montgomery. *Islam and the Integration of Society.* Routledge, 1961.

Reference

1. Anderson, Perry. *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*. NLB, 1996.

2. Bloch, Marc. *Feudal Society*. Vol. 1, University of Chicago Press, 1961.

3. Bloch, Marc. *Feudal Society.* Vol. 2, Routledge, 1989.

4. Davis, R. H. C. *A History of Medieval Europe*. Pearson Longman, 2006.

5. Gordon, Matthew. *The Rise of Islam.* Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005.

6. Mitchell, Linda E., (ed.). *Women in Medieval Western European Culture*. Routledge, 2011.
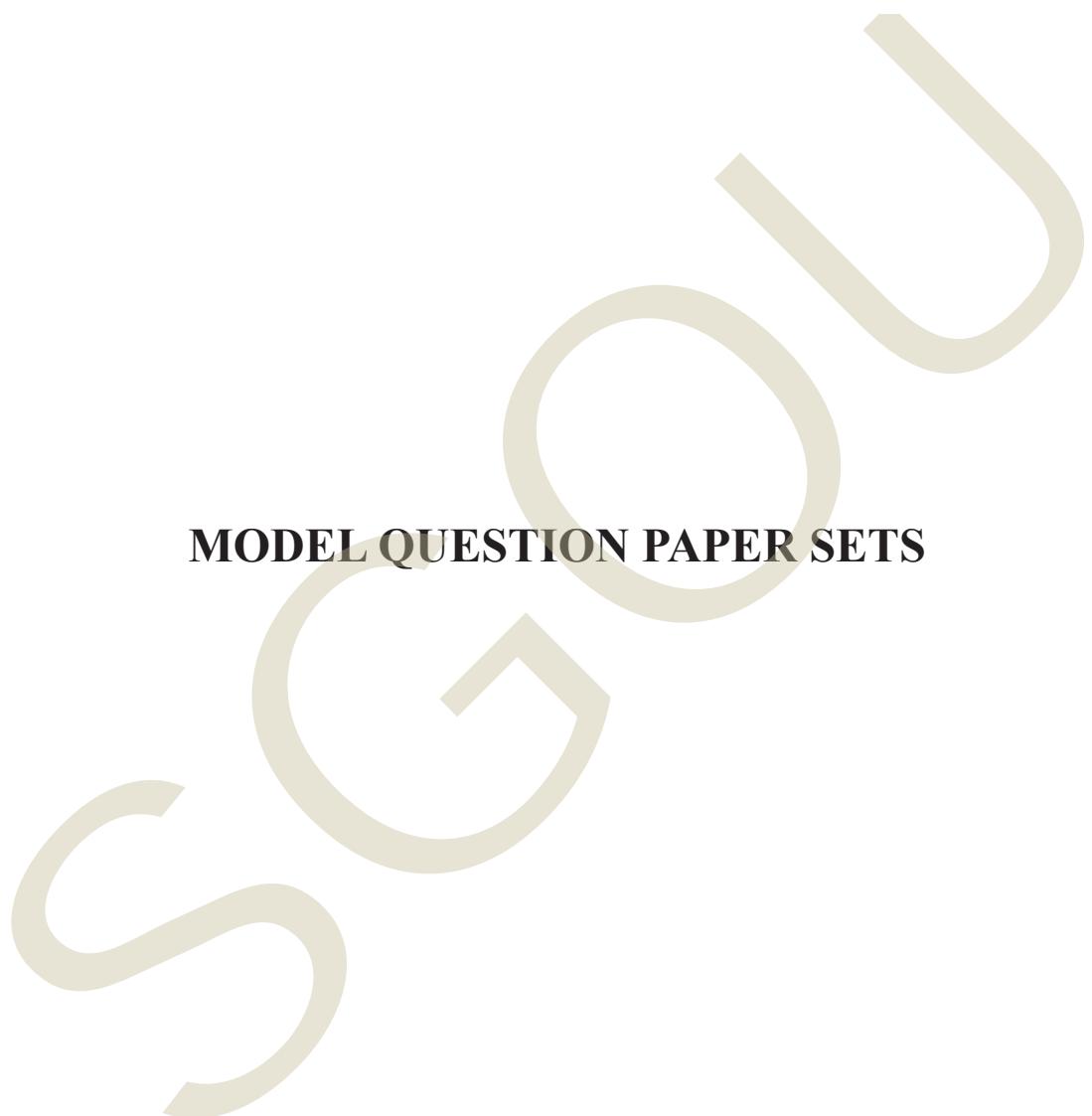
MODEL QUESTION PAPER SETS

QP CODE: ………   Reg. No :...................

Name: ………………

FOURTH SEMESTER **B.A HISTORY** EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE CORE COURSE

B21HS04DC - MEDIEVAL SOCIETIES

(CBCS - UG)

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours   Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any **ten** *questions of the following. Each question carries* **one** *mark.*

(10X1 = 10 Marks)

1. Which Roman Emperor legalised Christianity with the Edict of Milan in 313 CE?

2. Which Roman emperor officially made Christianity the state religion?

3. Which Jewish festival is known as the Day of Atonement?

4. Who was the founder of the Merovingian dynasty?

5. Who is considered as the 'Morning Star of Reformation'?

6. Which battle ended the Arab expansion into Frankish lands?

7. Who provided military service in the feudal hierarchy?

8. Name the author of the work 'Feudal Society'.

9. Who founded the Song Dynasty?

10. Which philosophical movement became influential during the Song Dynasty?

11. Who were the Shugo under the Kamakura Shogunate?

12. Where did Prophet Muhammad receive his first revelation?

13. Which official in a manor was responsible for allocating peasant duties and managing livestock?

14. Who was the founder of the Umayyad Caliphate?

15. Who was responsible for promoting education in the medieval period by training clerics at his palace at Aachen?

SECTION B

Answer any **ten** *questions of the following. Each question carries* **two** *marks.*

(10X2 =20 Marks)

16. Torah

17. Qur'an

18. Huns

19. The Franks

20. Franciscan Order

21. Manor

22. Knight

23. Albigensian Crusade

24. White Lotus Rebellion

25. Neo-Confucianism

26. 'The First Fitna'

27. Hajj

28. University of Bologna

29. Putting Out System

30. Merchant Guild

SECTION C

Write a short note on any **five** *questions of the following. Each question carries* **four** *marks.*

(5X4 = 20 Marks)

31. Discuss the factors that contributed to the downfall of the Western Roman Empire.

32. Discuss the impact of Emperor Constantine's adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire.

33. Examine the significance of medieval historiography in understanding medieval society.

34. Explain the role of Clovis in the establishment of the Merovingian dynasty.

35. Compare the roles and rights of free peasants, villeins and serfs within the manorial system.

36. How did St. Benedict's Rule contribute to the spread of monasticism in the West?

37. Describe the long-term social and economic impacts of the Crusades on both Europe and the Middle East.

38. Explain the economic consequences of the Ming Dynasty's isolationist policies.

39. Analyse the importance of the fall of Constantinople in 1453. What were the long-term consequences of this event for both the Ottoman Empire and Europe?

40. Explain the concept of Scholasticism and its impact on teaching and learning in medieval universities.

SECTION D

Answer any **two** *questions of the following. Each question carries* **ten** *marks.*

(2X10 =20 Marks)

41. Discuss the cultural and intellectual achievements of the Carolingian Renaissance. How did it contribute to the revival of classical learning and the strengthening of Christianity?

42. Examine the legacy of the Kamakura Shogunate in shaping the feudal system in Japan. How did its governance structure influence the Ashikaga and Tokugawa Shogunates?

43. Explain the golden age of the Abbasid Caliphate under Harun al-Rashid, considering both his domestic and foreign achievements.

44. Analyse the importance of guilds in medieval European society.

Model Question Paper (SET- B)

QP CODE: ………   Reg. No :...................

Name: ………………

FOURTH SEMESTER **B.A HISTORY** EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE CORE COURSE

B21HS04DC - MEDIEVAL SOCIETIES

(CBCS - UG)

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours   Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any **ten** *questions of the following. Each question carries* **one** *mark.*

(10X1 = 10 Marks)

1. What is the meaning of the word "Torah"?

2. Who captured Jerusalem and made it the capital of Israel and Judah?

3. What was the name of the first temple built by the Jews?

4. Who is known as the Father of Western monasticism?

5. Which council restored the unity of the Church after the Great Western Schism?

6. What document officially ended the Investiture Controversy?

7. What was the lowest class in the feudal hierarchy?

8. Which event significantly weakened the feudal system in Europe?

9. Which city served as the capital of the Yuan Dynasty?

10. Which major technological innovation during the Song Dynasty revolutionised literacy and printing?

11. Who was responsible for introducing the police system (Shurta) in the Umayyad Caliphate?

12. What is the pilgrimage to Mecca called?

13. What was the name given to Prophet Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina?

14. Which title was given to Harun al-Rashid after his military expeditions against the Byzantine Empire?

15. Which medieval woman is known for writing books challenging the negative portrayal of women in male-authored texts?

SECTION B

Answer any **ten** *questions of the following. Each question carries* **two** *marks.*

(10X2 =20 Marks)

16. Hebrew Bible

17. Shi'ites and Sunni

18. Cluniac

19. Capitularies

20. Clovis

21. Serf

22. Monasticism

23. Ming Dynasty

24. Confucianism

25. Wu School

26. Zakat

27. Wakil and Wazir

28. Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb

29. The University of Cambridge

30. Guild System

SECTION C

Write a short note on any **five** *questions of the following. Each question carries* **four** *marks.*

(5X4 = 20 Marks)

31. Write a short note on Talmud and Mishnah.

32. Discuss the causes of the Investiture Controversy. Why was the issue of lay investiture so significant in the struggle between the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire?

SGOU - SLM - BA History- Medieval Societies

33. Examine the factors that led to the decline of the Holy Roman Empire.

34. Discuss the significance of the Cluniac Movement.

35. Compare and contrast the military and political interpretations of feudalism as discussed by historians like Heinrich Brunner and M.M. Postan.

36. Discuss the status and role of noblewomen in medieval society.

37. Discuss the factors that led to the rise of the Manchu Qing Dynasty in 1644. How did the Manchus manage to overthrow the Ming Dynasty and establish their own rule?

38. How did Harun al-Rashid's administration contribute to the prosperity and stability of the Abbasid Caliphate?

39. Explain the Millet system in the Ottoman Empire.

40. Discuss the process of urbanisation in medieval Europe. How did the rise of towns and cities contribute to the transition from the medieval period to the modern era?

SECTION D

Answer any **two** *questions of the following. Each question carries* **ten** *marks.*

(2X10 =20 Marks)

41. Examine the hierarchical structure of feudal society in Europe.

42. Explain the significance of the Kamakura Shogunate in transforming Japan's political system. How did it change the structure of governance from the Heian period?

43. To what extent did noblewomen in medieval Europe have political and legal power? Illustrate their roles with examples from the medieval period.

44. Discuss the political, social, and economic factors that contributed to the downfall of the Western Roman Empire.

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യയാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കൂരിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ
ജ്ഞാനകേന്ദ്രമേ ജ്വലിക്കണേ

കുരീപ്പുഴ ശ്രീകുമാർ

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

Regional Centres

Kozhikode
Govt. Arts and Science College
Meenchantha, Kozhikode,
Kerala, Pin: 673002
Ph: 04952920228
email: rckdirector@sgou.ac.in

Thalassery
Govt. Brennen College
Dharmadam, Thalassery,
Kannur, Pin: 670106
Ph: 04902990494
email: rctdirector@sgou.ac.in

Tripunithura
Govt. College
Tripunithura, Ernakulam,
Kerala, Pin: 682301
Ph: 04842927436
email: rcedirector@sgou.ac.in

Pattambi
Sree Neelakanta Govt. Sanskrit College
Pattambi, Palakkad,
Kerala, Pin: 679303
Ph: 04662912009
email: rcpdirector@sgou.ac.in

Medieval Societies

COURSE CODE: B21HS04DC

YouTube

Sreenarayanaguru Open University