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Western Europe and Byzantium circa 1000 - 1500 CE

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12.1 CHRONOLOGY

962 CE	Otto I crowned Holy Roman Emperor
987 CE	Hugh Capet elected king of France
c. 1000 – 1100 CE	Emergence of Western European feudalism
1031 CE	Fall of the Cordoba Caliphate
1049 CE	Pope Leo IX begins papal efforts at Church reform
1054 CE	Schism between the pope and the patriarch of Constantinople
1066 CE	Norman Conquest of England
1071 CE	Battle of Manzikert annihilates Byzantine field army
1077 CE	Henry IV repents to Pope Gregory VII at Canossa
1085 CE	Fall of Muslim Toledo to the Christian kingdom of Leon-Castile
1088 – 1231 CE	Foundation of Universities of Bologna, Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge
1091 CE	Norman conquest of Muslim Sicily complete
1095 CE	Council of Clermont, calling of the First Crusade
1099 CE	Fall of Jerusalem to Christian Crusaders, establishment of Crusader States
1100 – 1135 CE	King Henry I rules England
1118 – 1143 CE	Emperor John II rules the Byzantine Empire
1122 CE	Concordat of Worms
1125 – 1152 CE	Raymond is archbishop of Toledo, begins sponsoring the translation of Muslim and Greek philosophy from Arabic into Latin
1143 – 1180 CE	Emperor Manuel Komnenos rules the Byzantine Empire
1154 – 1189 CE	King Henry II rules England
1176 CE	Frederick Barbarossa defeated by Lombard League at the Battle of Legnano; Manuel Komnenos defeated by Saljuq Turks at the Battle of Myriokephalon
1187 CE	Kingdom of Jerusalem defeated by Saladin at the Battle of Hattin, fall of Jerusalem, Pope Gregory VIII issues <i>Audita tremendi</i> , calling the Third Crusade

CHAPTER 12: WESTERN EUROPE AND BYZANTIUM CIRCA 1000 - 1500 CE

1189 – 1192 CE	The Third Crusade, a rump (remnant of a larger government) Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem is re-established, but Jerusalem remains in Muslim hands
1203 – 1226 CE	France's Capetian kings extend the control of lands directly ruled by the crown
1204 CE	Crusaders sack Constantinople, break-up of the Byzantine Empire
1212 CE	Almohad Caliphate defeated by Spanish Christian kingdoms at the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa
1215 CE	Magna Carta
1215 – 1250 CE	Frederick II is Holy Roman Emperor
1224 – 1274 CE	Life of St. Thomas Aquinas
1229 CE	A treaty between Frederick II and Egyptian sultan al-Kamil returns Jerusalem to Christian rule
1240 CE	Mongol Conquest of Kievan Rus
1241 CE	Mongol invasion of Hungary
1244 CE	Jerusalem falls to Ayyubid Egypt
1248 – 1254 CE	The Seventh Crusade, France's King Louis IX defeated by Egypt, Egyptian Mamluk <i>coup d'état</i>
1250 – 1273 CE	There is no Holy Roman Emperor
1261 CE	Restoration of the Byzantine Empire
1291 CE	Last Crusader territory in the Levant falls to Mamluk Egypt
c. 1300 CE	Genoese sailors begin exploring the Atlantic Ocean
early 1300s CE	Genoese sailors are visiting the Canary Islands
1309 CE	Beginning of Avignon papacy
1314 – 1326 CE	Civil war in the Holy Roman Empire
1315 – 1322 CE	The Great Famine
1324 CE	Mansa Musa's <i>hajj</i>
1331 CE	Nearly all Byzantine territory in Asia Minor has fallen to the Ottoman Turks
1337 CE	The Hundred Years' War begins
c. 1350 CE	Beginning of Italian Renaissance and Humanism
1347 – 1351 CE	The Black Death, nearly a third of Europe's population dies
1356 CE	The Holy Roman Empire becomes an elected monarchy
1358 CE	French peasant revolt
1378 CE	Beginning of Great Schism
1385 CE	Lithuania united with Poland, Lithuanian monarch converts to Christianity
1396 CE	Ottoman Turks conquer Bulgaria
1397 CE	Union of Kalmar unites Sweden, Denmark, and Norway under a single crown
c. 1400 – 1500 CE	Renaissance Humanism spreads throughout Europe
1404 CE	Castilian effort to conquer the Canaries begins

1415 – 1417 CE	Council of Constance resolves the Great Schism
1440 CE	Lorenzo Valla shows the Donation of Constantine to be a forgery
mid 1400s CE	Iberians are settling the Azores, a plantation economy worked by African slaves begins to flourish in the Canaries and Azores
1453 CE	Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, final fall of the Byzantine Empire; End of Hundred Years' War and English attempts to conquer France
1454 CE	Treaty of Lodi brings nearly a half century of peace to Italy
1455 – 1485 CE	Wars of the Roses in England
1459 CE	Final Ottoman conquest of Serbia
1479 CE	Marriage of Queen Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon creates a united Spanish monarchy
1492 CE	King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella complete the <i>Reconquista</i> with the conquest of Granada, Christopher Columbus, sailing for the Spanish crown, makes landfall in the Western Hemisphere
1494 CE	France invades Italy

12.2 INTRODUCTION

15 July 1099: The Al-Aqsa mosque looked down on the city of Jerusalem, the light of the sun reflecting off of its golden dome. Down below the hill on which the mosque stood, a scene of slaughter was unfolding. Up against the northern wall of the city stood a wooden tower laboriously rolled into place hours earlier, over the top of which had poured a desperate band of European knights, the first over the walls of the Holy City.

Within the walls, the narrow, winding streets between the ancient stone buildings of the city rang with the clash of steel on steel and the cries of the dead and dying. Smoke from fires breaking out within the city mingled with the smell of death. In parts of the city, its defenders, Muslim Egyptians, were still fighting, going down under the sword strokes of the Christian soldiers fighting their way through the streets. In the southwest, a small group of defenders had retreated into the more heavily fortified citadel where they were negotiating a surrender with Count Raymond of Toulouse, a shrewd but irascible noble from the south of France.

Elsewhere in the city, the killing of the soldiers was giving way to a more horrific slaughter, as the mail-clad knights cut down men, women, and children where they stood, torturing some with fire, and threatening others with worse if they did not turn over their valuables. By the end of the day, the Christian soldiers hacking their way through the city streets waded through blood up to their ankles.

As the day went on, soldiers pushed through the piles of dismembered corpses to the gold-en-domed Al-Aqsa Mosque. The mosque stood where Solomon's temple had been millennia before, and the knights, smeared with the blood of slaughter, fell to their knees in prayer, grateful that God had delivered their enemies into their hands.

These men had traveled more than two thousand miles by land and sea. Tens of thousands of their comrades lay dead along the way from starvation, thirst, disease, or battle. But these

warriors had made it from their European homelands to seize control of the city of Jerusalem, a city sacred to Jew, Christian, and Muslim, and bring it under Christian rule for the first time in more than four centuries.

An army made up of many of the soldiers of Western Europe had managed to successfully make war on its Muslim enemies and seize territories in the Middle East, near the heart of Muslim culture and political power. How had they done so? And why? To understand, we must look to the how the European Christian world had developed over the eleventh century.

In the years between about 1000 and 1500, the culture and institutions of Western Europe took on a form that was distinct from the post-Roman Germanic kingdoms of the early Middle Ages and which would, in many ways, lay the foundations of Europe (and the Americas) into modern times. At the end of this period, thinkers seeking to bring about a new birth of ancient learning would look back on the thousand years that had come before as the Middle Ages, a period between the world of the Ancient Greeks and Romans and their own. But although these thinkers ostentatiously rejected the Middle Ages, they were in many ways its heirs. To see how this culture developed, we shall begin in Western Europe in the chaotic years of the early eleventh century.

12.3 QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR READING

1. Who held most political and military power in a feudal system?
2. What were some reasons that European towns started to grow in the eleventh century?
3. Why did Europe's agricultural output increase in the eleventh century?
4. What were some lasting results of the eleventh-century popes' attempts to reform the Church?
5. What did Pope Urban II call on Western Europe's nobles to do in 1095?
6. How did the thirteenth-century Capetian kings of France strengthen their authority?
7. Why did Frederick Barbarossa and Frederick II ultimately fail to establish control over Italy?
8. What was the *Reconquista*?
9. How did noble and peasant diets differ?
10. What caused the death of a third of Europe's population between the years 1347 and 1351?
11. Why were Genoese merchants in the service of Iberian kings exploring the Atlantic and western Africa in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries?
12. Why did Christopher Columbus think he could sail directly from Europe to Asia?

12.4 KEY TERMS

- Albigensian Crusade
- Alchemy
- Babylonian Captivity of the Church
- Bourgeois
- Capetian
- Chain mail
- Christendom
- Commune
- Concordat of Worms
- *Cortes*
- Council of Constance
- Crusade
- Crusader States
- East Francia
- Exchequer
- Feudalism
- Fiefs
- *Filioque* Controversy
- Great Schism
- Holy War
- Humanism
- Investiture Controversy
- *Iqta*
- Italian Renaissance
- Just War
- Legate
- Magna Carta
- Malthusian limits
- Papal bull
- Parliament
- Patriarch
- Pilgrim
- Population sink
- *Portolan* chart
- *Pronoia*
- *Reconquista*
- Scholasticism
- Simony
- *Taifa* states
- Thing
- Three-field System
- Tournament
- Twelfth-century Renaissance
- University
- Vassal States
- West Francia

12.5 THE EMERGENCE OF A FEUDAL ORDER IN WESTERN EUROPE

Out of the chaos and mayhem of the tenth and eleventh centuries, **East Francia**—the eastern third of Charlemagne’s Empire that is in roughly the same place as modern Germany—and England had emerged as united and powerful states. In the aftermath of the Abbasid Caliphate’s political collapse and the gradual weakening of Fatimid Egypt (see Chapter Eight), the eleventh-century Byzantine Empire was the strongest, most centralized state in the Eastern Mediterranean, and indeed, probably the strongest state west of Song China.

Most of the rest of Christian Western Europe’s kingdoms, however, were fragmented. This decentralization was most acute in **West Francia**, the western third of what had been

Charlemagne's empire. This kingdom would eventually come to be known as France. Out of a weak and fragmented kingdom emerged the decentralized form of government that historians often call **feudalism**. We call it feudalism because power rested with armed men in control of plots of agricultural land known as **fiefs** and Latin for fief is *feudum*. They would use the surplus from these fiefs to equip themselves with weapons and equipment, and they often controlled their fiefs with little oversight from the higher-ranked nobles or the king.

How had such a system emerged? Even in Carolingian times, armies in much of Western Europe had come from war bands made up of a king's loyal retainers, who themselves would possess bands of followers. Ultimate control of a kingdom's army had rested with the king, and the great nobles had also exercised strong authority over their own fighting men. The near constant warfare (both external attacks and civil wars) of the tenth and eleventh centuries, however, meant that the kings of West Francia gradually lost control over the more powerful nobles. Further, the powerful nobles often lost control of the warlords of more local regions. West Francia had little governmental authority and much war.

As a result of constant warfare (albeit warfare that was usually local in scope), power came to rest in control of fiefs and the ability to extract surplus from their occupants and to use this surplus to outfit armed men. The warlords who controlled fiefs often did so by means of armed fortresses called castles. At first, especially in northern parts of West Francia, these fortresses were of wood, and might sometimes be as small as a wooden palisade surrounding a fortified wooden tower. Over the eleventh and twelfth centuries, these wooden castles came to be replaced with fortifications of stone. A castle had two roles: it would protect a land from attackers (such as Viking raiders), but it would also serve as a base for the control and extortion of a land's people.

The castle represented Europe's feudal order in wood and stone. Corresponding to the physical structure of the castle was the figure of the knight. Knights in the eleventh century wore an armor called **chain mail**, that is, interlocking rings of metal that would form a coat of armor. The knight usually fought on horseback, wielding a long spear known as a lance in addition to the sword at his side. With his feet resting in stirrups, a knight could hold himself firmly in the saddle, directing the weight and power of a charging horse into the tip of his lance.

Knights and castles came to dominate West Francia and then other parts of Europe for several



Figure 12.1 | A Wooden Castle of the Type that was Common in the Eleventh Century

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reasons. The technology of ironworking was improving so that iron was cheaper (although still very expensive) and more readily available, allowing for knights to wear more armor than their predecessors. Moreover, warfare of the tenth and eleventh centuries was made up of raids (both those of Vikings and of other Europeans). A raid depends on mobility, with the raiders able to kill people and seize plunder before defending soldiers can arrive. Mounted on horseback, knights were mobile enough that they could respond rapidly to raids. The castle allowed a small number of soldiers to defend territory and was also a deterrent to raiders, since it meant that quick plunder might not be possible.

A knight's equipment—mail, lance, and horse—was incredibly expensive, as was the material and labor to construct even a wooden castle. Although knights had originally been whichever soldiers had been able to get the equipment to fight, the expense of this equipment and thus the need to control a fief to pay for it meant that knights gradually became a warrior aristocracy, with greater rights than the peasants whose labor they controlled. Indeed, often the rise of knights and castles meant that many peasants lost their freedom, becoming **serfs**, unfree peasants who, although not property that could be bought and sold like slaves, were nevertheless bound to their land and subordinate to those who controlled it.



Figure 12.2 | Rochester Castle | A stone castle built in the twelfth century.

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Figure 12.3 | Eleventh-Century Knights

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The regions of West Francia controlled by powerful nobles were nearly independent of the crown. But even at the Frankish monarchy's weakest, these nearly independent nobles were understood to hold their territories from the king and to owe allegiance to him if he called on them for military service. In this way, feudalism of the European Middle Ages resembled Western Zhou feudalism. The smaller fiefs that made up the territories of these great nobles likewise were understood to be held from these nobles; the knight who held a fief was, at least in theory, required to render military service to the lord from whom he held it. In practice, though, the kingdom of West Francia (and other regions of Western Europe where such a system held sway) had little cohesion as a state, with most functions of a state like minting money, building roads and bridges, and trying and executing criminals in the hands of the powerful nobles.

12.5.1 Global Context

Thus far, we have discussed feudalism in eleventh-century Western Europe, but a decentralized state dominated by a warrior aristocracy could emerge anywhere that central authority broke down. A similar system emerged in Heian Japan of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when mounted soldiers (in this case samurai rather than knights) came to occupy the social role of a warrior aristocracy (see Chapter Four). Such an arrangement would emerge at the same time in the Middle East: the Great Saljuq Empire was dominated by mounted warriors in control of **iqtas**, units of land whose revenues (often from taxation) would fund these warriors, who in turn held their iqtas from the sultan.

12.6 GROWTH OF TOWNS AND TRADE

Although the eleventh century was in many ways Western Europe's nadir, it would also see the beginnings of Western Europe's re-urbanization. One reason for these beginnings was that in those lands that had been part of the Western Roman Empire, city walls often remained, even if these cities had largely emptied of people. During the chaos and mayhem of the tenth and eleventh centuries, people often gathered in walled settlements for protection. Many of these old walled cities thus came to be re-occupied.

Another reason for the growth of towns came with a revival of trade in the eleventh century. This revival of trade can be traced to several causes. In the first place, Europe's knights, as a warrior aristocracy, had a strong demand for luxury goods, both locally manufactured products and imported goods such as silks and spices from Asia. Bishops, the great lords of the Church, had a similar demand. As such, markets grew up in the vicinity of castles and thus caused the formation of towns that served as market centers, while cathedral cities also saw a growth of population. Moreover, Viking raids had also led to a greater sea-borne trade in the North Sea and Atlantic. Often, Viking-founded markets served as the nucleus of new towns, especially in those lands where the Romans had never established a state and which were not urbanized at all. The Irish city of Dublin, for example, had begun as a Viking trading post.

Further south, in the Mediterranean, frequent raids by pirates (most of whom were Arab Muslims from North Africa) had forced the coastal cities of Italy to build effective navies. One of



Figure 12.4 | Medieval Market, Fifteenth Century

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the chief of these cities was Venice, a city in the swamps and lagoons of northeastern Italy. Over the eleventh century, the city (formerly under Byzantine rule but now independent) had built up a navy that had cleared the Adriatic Sea of pirates and established itself as a nexus of trade between Constantinople and the rest of Western Europe. Likewise, on the western side of Italy, the cities of Genoa and Pisa had both built navies from what had been modest fishing fleets and seized the strongholds of Muslim pirates in the islands of Corsica and Sardinia. This clearing of pirates from the Mediterranean led to an increase in maritime trade and allowed the renewed growth of the old Roman towns that had in many

cases remained since the fall of the Western Empire. The cities of Genoa and Venice were able to prosper because they stood at the northernmost points of the Mediterranean, the farthest that goods could be moved by water (always cheaper than overland transport in premodern times) before going over land to points further north.

As goods moved north and south between the trade zones of the North Sea and the Mediterranean, nobles along that north-south route realized that they could enrich themselves by taxing markets. They thus sponsored and protected markets in regions of West Francia like Champagne, which themselves would serve as centers of urbanization and economic activity.

The people living and working in towns came to be known as the **bourgeois**, or middle class. These were called a *middle* class because they were neither peasant farmers nor nobles, but rather a social rank between the two. Kings and other nobles would frequently give towns the right to self-government, often in exchange for a hefty payment. A self-governing town was often known as a **commune**.

12.7 GROWTH IN AGRICULTURE

Eleventh-century Europe's economy was primarily agricultural. The eleventh and twelfth centuries saw a massive expansion of agricultural output in the northern regions of Europe, which led to a corresponding growth in the economy and population. The same improvement in iron technology that allowed the equipping of armored knights led to more iron tools: axes allowed farmers to clear forests and cultivate more land, and the iron share of a heavy plow allowed farmers to plow

deeper into the thick soil of Western Europe. In addition, farmers gradually moved to a so-called **three field system** of agriculture: fields would have one third given over to cereal crops, one third to crops such as legumes (which increase fertility in soil), and a third left fallow, i.e., uncultivated either to serve as grazing land for livestock or simply rebuild its nutrients by lying unused. More iron tools and new agricultural techniques caused yields to rise from 3:1 to nearly 8:1 and in some fertile regions even higher. Another factor in the rise of agricultural yields was Europe's climate, which was becoming warmer in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. As a result of both climate and new agricultural tools and techniques, food supplies increased so that Western Europe would go through the majority of the twelfth century without experiencing a major famine.

We should note that at the same time that agricultural yields were rising in Europe, so too were they on the rise in Song China (see Chapter Four). Indeed, compared to China, Europe's agricultural production was still relatively meager. It was nevertheless enough to bring about a dramatic growth in Europe's population.



Figure 12.5 | A Heavy Plow

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12.8 A ROMAN EMPIRE?

Although the Carolingian Empire had collapsed in the ninth century and West Francia remained fragmented, in Central Europe, the rulers of East Francia formed a new empire on the wreck of Charlemagne's. King Otto I of East Francia had defeated the Magyars in 955 (see Chapter Seven), and both Otto and his powerful nobles further subordinated the Slavic peoples to the east to his rule, forcing them either to submit to his direct rule or acknowledge him as their overlord. He followed up on the prestige gained from his victory over the Magyars by exercising influence in Northern Italy, intervening in a dispute between Pope John XII (r. 955 – 964) and Berengar, a petty king. On 2 February 962, Pope John XII crowned Otto as Roman Emperor in a ceremony meant to echo Pope Leo III's crowning of Charlemagne over a century and a half before. Further, Otto deposed Berengar and added Italy to his domains.

Otto was the most powerful ruler in Europe besides the Byzantine emperor. His empire covered most of the German-speaking lands of Central Europe: indeed, Otto and its subsequent emperors would be Germans and the power base of this empire would be firmly Central European. This empire also encompassed northern Italy and much of the territory west of the Rhine. The rulers of this empire would call themselves Roman Emperors and consider themselves the successors to Charlemagne and thus to the Roman Empire. This empire, however, was more modest than Charlemagne's. Although its emperors would claim that all Christian kings owed them obedience, most other realms of Western Europe were independent, especially West Francia (which we shall hereafter refer to as France). Likewise, this empire's control of Northern Italy was always somewhat tenuous, since its rulers' power was based in Germany, far to the north of the Alps.



Map 12.1 | Europe and the Mediterranean in 1054 CE

Author: Ian Mladjov

Source: Original Work

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Because these emperors considered themselves to be Roman Emperors and also protectors of the Church—indeed, Otto I eventually deposed Pope John XII for improperly fulfilling his papal duties—historians call their empire the Holy Roman Empire and its emperors Holy Roman Emperors. The reader should carefully note that these emperors did not use either of those titles. They simply referred to themselves as Roman Emperors and their empire as the Roman Empire. We call the Empire the Holy Roman Empire and the emperors Holy Roman Emperors for the convenience of modern readers, so that they will know that they are reading about neither the Roman Empire, which dominated the entirety of the Mediterranean world in ancient times, nor the Byzantine Empire, a regional power in the Eastern Mediterranean for most of the Middle Ages.

12.9 THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE'S PERIPHERIES: SECONDARY STATE FORMATION

Anthropologists speak of **secondary state formation**, a process by which people who live in a tribe or chiefdom on the periphery of a state will gradually adopt statehood and the ideological trappings associated with statehood. Oftentimes this state formation happens because a people will need to match the resources of a state for raising armed forces, or because a chief will seek the greater prestige and power that comes from being recognized as a king.

In Scandinavia and in Eastern Europe, state formation occurred on the margins of the Holy Roman Empire. In the late tenth century, the Danes, the Poles (a Slavic people), and the Magyars formed the kingdoms of Denmark, Poland, and Hungary, respectively. These kingdoms were often **vassal states** (i.e., subordinate states) of the Ottonian emperors, but they just as often fought to maintain their independence when they had the capability to do so. Another key factor in the move from chiefdoms to states was the adoption of Christianity: the Christian religion, as we have seen earlier (see Chapter Seven), often legitimated a king. The Christian Bible says that a prince is God's instrument of executing justice.¹ In exchange for their legitimation, monarchs would protect the institutional Church. We can see this relationship between Christianity and secondary state formation when King Stephen I of Hungary received his crown from the papacy in the year 1000.

Far to the north, in Norway, a land of narrow fjords and valleys surrounded by pine-covered mountains, King Olaf II was following a similar set of policies. A Christian who had converted in 1013 while fighting in France, he spent his reign as king of Norway (1015 – 1030) both consolidating Norway into a kingdom that recognized royal authority and converting that kingdom to Christianity.

12.9.1 Global Context

In Northern and Eastern Europe, secondary state formation had gone hand in hand with the adoption of Christianity, which legitimated kings and whose clergy, familiar with the written word, provided the skills of literacy to monarchs. A similar pattern occurred elsewhere in the world, particularly in the African Sahel (see Chapter Nine). In Africa's Sahel, between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, as Ghana and then later Mali consolidated into states, their rulers converted their people to Islam, which provided a similar aid to state-building that Christianity did to the rulers of Northern and Eastern Europe.

12.10 EXPANSION OF CHRISTENDOM

In the Middle Ages, the people of Western Europe did not think of Europe as a geographic and cultural area. Rather, they thought of **Christendom**, those peoples and nations of the world that embraced the Christian religion, as a community sharing common ideals and assumptions. We might compare it to the Muslim notion of Dar al-Islam (see Chapter Eight). And in the eleventh century, Christendom expanded. Not only had the peoples to the north and east embraced

1 Romans 13:4

Christianity, but also Christian peoples and kingdoms in the Western Mediterranean expanded militarily at the expense of Islam. In Spain, the movement of the Christian kingdoms of northern Spain to expand their territory at the expense of Muslim al-Andalus would come to be known as the **Reconquista**, the reconquest. It was known as the *re*-conquest because there had been a Christian kingdom in Spain in the sixth and seventh centuries that had fallen to Muslim invaders in 711. Christians would thus have assumed that Spain, even though much of it might be Muslim ruled, was rightfully Christian. The effort by the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula to dominate, conquer, and re-Christianize al-Andalus would become a key element in how Spanish Christians understood their identity both as Christians and Spaniards.

How did the *Reconquista* begin? From the Muslim conquest of Spain in 711 through the early eleventh century, al-Andalus was the dominant military power of the Iberian Peninsula, with Christian kingdoms confined to the marginal, mountainous regions of the peninsula's north (see Chapter Eight). But in 1008, Abd al-Rahman (also known as Sanjul), the caliph's chief adviser, sought to make himself caliph and replace the Umayyad dynasty with his own. The result was nearly three decades of civil war. The Cordoba Caliphate collapsed in 1031, fracturing into what we refer to as the **taifa** states, a set of small, politically weak states. These states were much weaker than the centralized Cordoba Caliphate and so were easy prey for potential conquerors from both the Christian north of the Iberian Peninsula and the Islamic Maghreb.

The Christian kingdoms of Spain had several strengths that enabled them to expand at the expense of the *taifa* states. In the first place, the *taifa* states were not only politically weak, but they were also at odds with each other. In addition, the construction of stone castles in newly-conquered territories allow the Christian kings to secure their conquests. Moreover, the Christian kingdoms



Figure 12.6 | Twelfth-Century Spanish castle

Author: User "Superchilum"
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of Spain could draw on much of the rest of Western Europe for manpower. By the eleventh century, the knight who inherited a fief would usually be the oldest son of the fief's lord. This arrangement meant that Western Europe had many knights who, as younger sons, had not inherited from their fathers (inheritance nearly always passed to males). These landless knights were looking either for employment or fiefs of their own. New conquests along the frontier of Muslim Spain thus gave them the perfect opportunity to seize their own lands. As a result, French knights flowed south in a steady stream across the Pyrenees.

In Southern Italy, a group of knights from the region of France known as Normandy (and who were thus called Normans) had fought in the employ of the Byzantine emperors against the Muslim rulers of North Africa and Sicily. They eventually broke with the Byzantine Emperors and created the Kingdom of Sicily, a kingdom comprised of Sicily and Southern Italy, the lands that they had seized from both the Byzantines and Sicilian Muslims, with the last Muslim territory in Sicily conquered in 1091. These knights too had come south to the Mediterranean in search of new lands.

The Christian kingdoms of both Spain and Sicily were relatively tolerant of their Muslim subjects. Although Muslims under Christian rule faced civil disabilities similar to the *dhimmi* status of Jews and Christians in Muslim-ruled lands, they had a broad array of rights and protections. Indeed, the Christian kings of Sicily often employed Muslim mercenaries in their military service.

These victories by Christian forces over Muslims would be of great interest to the popes, who were seeking to reform the Church and to find ways that knights could be made to serve Christian society.

12.11 CHURCH REFORM IN THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

By the eleventh century, Europe suffered from frequent violence and the Church itself was in a sorry state: Pope John XII, for example, the man who had crowned Otto I, was so infamous for his immorality that it was said that under his rule the papal palace (called the Lateran) was little better than a brothel. From the mid-eleventh century, both popes and other clergymen would seek to reform both the institutional structures of the Church and Christian society as a whole.

The Holy Roman Emperor Henry III (r. 1039 – 1056) set the reforming papacy into motion. In 1049, he had traveled to Rome to be crowned emperor. When he arrived in the city, he found three men claiming to be pope, each supported by a family of Roman nobles. The outraged emperor deposed all three and replaced them with his own candidate, Pope Leo IX (r. 1049 – 1054). Leo IX would usher in a period in which reformers dominated the papacy.

These popes believed that to reform the Church, they would need to do so as its unquestioned leaders and that the institutional Church should be independent from control of laypeople. The position of pope had long been a prestigious one: Peter, the chief of Jesus Christ's disciples had, according to the Christian tradition, been the first bishop of Rome, the city in which he had been killed. Eleventh-century popes increasingly argued that since Peter had been the chief of Jesus's followers (and thus the first pope), the whole Church owed the popes the obedience that the disciples had owed Peter, who himself had been given his authority by Christ.

Such a position was in many ways revolutionary. In the Byzantine Empire, the emperors often directed the affairs of the Church (although such attempts frequently went badly wrong as with the Iconoclast Controversy). Western European kings appointed bishops, and the Holy Roman Emperors believed that they had the right to both appoint and depose popes. To claim the Church was independent of lay control went against centuries of practice.

Moreover, not all churchmen recognized the absolute authority of the pope. The pope was one of five churchmen traditionally known as **patriarchs**, the highest ranking bishops of the Church.

The pope was the patriarch of Rome; the other four were the patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria. With Jerusalem and Alexandria (and often Antioch) under Muslim rule, the patriarch of Constantinople was the most prestigious of the Eastern Orthodox patriarchs, dwelling in a city that was Rome's successor. The patriarchs of Constantinople believed that the Roman pope had a place of honor because Peter had resided in Rome, but they did not believe he had any authority over other patriarchs.

12.11.1 The *Filioque* Controversy and the Split between Rome and Constantinople

This difference of opinion as to the authority of the pope would eventually break out in conflict. The church following the pope (which we will refer to as the Catholic Church for the sake of convenience), had a creed in its liturgy that said that God the Holy Spirit proceeds both from God the Father and from God the Son. The Eastern Orthodox version of this creed spoke of God the Holy Spirit as proceeding only from God the Father. Representatives of both churches quarreled over this wording, with the popes attempting to order the Orthodox Churches to state that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son in their creed. We thus call this controversy the **Filioque Controversy**, since Latin for “and from the Son” is *filioque*.

On 16 July 1054, Humbert of Silva Candida, the pope's **legate** (i.e., ambassador) together with his entourage stormed into the Hagia Sophia as the patriarch was celebrating Communion and hurled a parchment scroll onto the altar; the scroll decreed the patriarch to be excommunicated. In response, the patriarch excommunicated the pope. Catholic and Orthodox churches were now split.

12.11.2 Simony and the Investiture Controversy

In spite of the schism between Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the popes turned to reforming the Church in the Catholic west. Two pressing concerns of the popes were the elimination of **simony**, the buying and selling of Church offices, and the protection of the Church's independence from laypeople. The fight of the reforming popes to assert the Church's independence led to the **Investiture Controversy**, the conflict between the popes and Holy Roman Emperors (and other kings of Western Europe) over who had the right to appoint churchmen.

To understand the Investiture Controversy, we need to understand the nature of a medieval bishop's power and authority. A bishop in medieval Europe was a Church leader, with a cathedral church and a palace. A medieval bishop would also hold lands with fiefs on these lands (and military obligations from those who held these fiefs), just like any great noble.

The Holy Roman Emperors believed that they had the right to appoint bishops both because a bishop held lands from the emperor and because the emperors believed themselves to be the leaders of all Christendom. The reforming popes of the eleventh century, particularly Pope Gregory VII (r. 1073 – 1085), objected to this belief. These popes believed that, since their authority as popes came from God, their spiritual authority was superior to the earthly authority of any king or prince. They further claimed their right to be independent rulers of the Papal States in Central Italy, based on the Donation of Constantine (see Chapter Seven).

Gregory VII was up against a man just as strong willed as he in the person of Emperor Henry IV (r. 1056 – 1106). From 1075, their relationship became increasingly adversarial as each claimed the exclusive right to appoint and depose bishops. Eventually, this conflict burst into open flame when Henry claimed that Gregory was in fact not rightfully pope at all and attempted to appoint his own pope. In response, Gregory proclaimed that none of Henry's subjects had a duty to obey him and encouraged his subjects to rise in rebellion.

Without the Church to legitimate Henry IV, his empire collapsed into civil war. As a result, Henry took a small band of followers and, in the dead of winter, crossed the Alps, braving the snowy, ice-covered passes to negotiate with the pope in person. In January, he approached the mountain castle of Canossa where the pope was staying and begged Gregory for forgiveness, waiting outside of the pope's castle on his knees in the snow for three days. Finally, Pope Gregory forgave the emperor.

In the end, though, after a public ceremony of reconciliation, Henry returned to Central Europe, crushed the rebellion, and then returned to Italy with an army, forcing Gregory VII into exile. This Investiture Controversy would drag on for another four decades. In the end, the Holy Roman Emperors and popes would reach a compromise with the 1122 **Concordat of Worms**. The compromise was that clergy would choose bishops, but that the emperor could decide disputed elections. A bishop would receive his lands from the emperor in one ceremony, and the emblems of his spiritual authority from the pope in another. Other kings of Western Europe reached similar compromises with the papacy.

The results of half a century of papal reform efforts were mixed. The Catholic and Orthodox Churches had split with one another, and tensions remain between the two to this day. Although the popes failed to achieve everything they sought, they did gain limited independence of the Church, and they succeeded almost completely in ending the practice of simony. Indeed, one contrast between Western Europe and much of the rest of the world is a strong sense of separation between secular and sacred authority. That separation of Church and state owes much to the troubled years of the Investiture Controversy.



Figure 12.7 | Pope Gregory VII

Author: User "GDK"

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Figure 12.8 | Emperor Henry IV

Author: Unknown

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The successes of the papacy in their efforts at Church reform, together with the military successes seen by Christians in the Western Mediterranean against Muslims, would inspire the popes to an even more ambitious effort: the Crusades.

12.12 THE CRUSADES

12.12.1 Background: Disaster at Manzikert

On the surface, the Byzantine Empire of the eleventh century looked like one of the world's great powers. It dominated the Eastern Mediterranean, with its emperors reigning from Constantinople, a city full of magnificent churches, splendid palaces, and centuries-old monuments of an ancient empire.



Map 12.2 | The Eastern Mediterranean in 1096 CE

Author: Ian Mladjov

Source: Original Work

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But these outward signs of strength concealed several weaknesses. In the first place, the *theme* system (see Chapter Seven) had begun to break down. The plots of land used to equip soldiers had gradually given way to large estates held by powerful aristocrats. These powerful aristocrats often paid less and less in taxes, starving the state of key resources. The *theme* soldiers themselves were used less often (and when they did fight, they were often poorly trained and equipped), with the emperors relying on mercenaries for most of their fighting. The civilian aristocracy and the military were often at loggerheads.

The Byzantine emperors of the later eleventh century were nevertheless able to hold their own against external threats until the arrival of the Saljuq Turks in the Middle East (see Chapters Eight and Eleven). Both the Byzantine emperor Romanos IV (r. 1068 – 1071) and the Saljuq sultan Alps Arslan (r. 1063 – 1072) sought to control the Caucasus Mountains, whose passes controlled access to the Middle East from the Central Asian steppes. Control of this route was especially important as the steppes served as a source from which the Turks in the Middle East could recruit more fighters.

Byzantine and Turk finally clashed. Romanos sought to break the Turkish threat on his eastern flank and so mustered an immense army. This army consisted both of soldiers of the *themes* and mercenary units drawn from many different peoples: Western Europeans, Cumans and Pechenegs from the steppes, Scandinavians, and Turks. Both the heterogeneity of this army and the dysfunctional politics of the eleventh-century Byzantine Empire would prove to be Romanos's undoing.

On 19 August 1071, the forces of the Byzantine Empire met those of the Great Saljuq Empire at the Battle of Manzikert near the shores of Lake Van in Armenia. The thematic troops were of indifferent quality, but worse for the emperor was the treachery of both the Byzantine commander Andronikos Doukas and the Byzantine force's Turkic mercenaries. The Byzantine field army was annihilated. The emperor himself was surrounded and taken captive after his elite guard of Norse mercenaries went down fighting in his defense.

The result was a catastrophe for the Empire. Not only had most of the Byzantine Army been wiped out, but also competing Byzantine nobles took the opportunity of the emperor's captivity to launch their own bids for power. During the decade of civil war that followed, the Empire's holdings in Asia



Figure 12.9 | Alexios Komnenos

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Minor almost all fell under the dominion of the Saljuq Turks. What had been the world's most powerful Christian state now faced destruction.

Eventually, Alexios Komnenos (r. 1081 – 1118) would seize control of the Byzantine Empire and laboriously rebuild its military strength. Alexios was an able and clever military commander who also possessed good long-term sense. He used the tax base of the Empire's Balkan possessions to fund a new army, one composed largely of foreign mercenaries and a small core of Greek soldiers. These indigenous soldiers were often granted out blocks of lands known as *pronoiai* (singular *pronoia*) whose revenues they would use to equip themselves and their soldiers; a *pronoia* was similar to a fief in Western Europe. He also recruited steppe peoples, such as the Cumans and Pechenegs, into his forces. Another group of peoples from which he recruited mercenaries was Western Europeans, particularly from the Holy Roman Empire and West Francia. In March of 1095, he sent a request to the pope for military assistance. The long-term consequences of this request would be earth-shaking.

12.12.2 The First Crusade

The pope who received Alexios Komnenos's request for help was Urban II (r. 1088 – 1099), an associate of reformers like Gregory VII. Churchmen seeking to reform society had looked to quell the violence that was often frequent in Western Europe (especially in France): this violence was usually the work of knights. These reformers were considering how knights could turn their aggression to pursuits that were useful to Christian society rather than preying upon civilians. Fighting against Muslims in Sicily and Spain showed the popes an example of knightly aggression directed towards Christendom's external enemies (see Chapter Eight).

In addition, the Church had long recognized Roman Law's concept of **Just War**: a war could be moral as long as it was defensive, declared by a rightful authority, and likely to cause less damage than if the war had not occurred. By the eleventh century, certain churchmen had further formulated this idea into one of **Holy War**, that is to say, that a war fought in defense of the Church was not only morally right, but even meritorious.

The final element that led to Pope Urban II's turning much of the military might of Western Europe to the Middle East was the idea of Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem was where Jesus Christ was said to have been crucified, to have died, and to have risen from the dead (see Chapter Six). As such, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, built on what was said to be the empty tomb from which Christ had risen was the holiest Church in the Christian world—and this Church had been under the control of Muslims since Caliph Umar's conquest of Palestine in the seventh century (see Chapter Eight). The city remained important to Christians, however, and, even while it was under Muslim rule, they had traveled to it as **pilgrims**, that is, travelers undertaking a journey for religious purposes.

Pope Urban thus conceived of the idea of turning the military force of Western Europe to both shore up the strength of the flagging Byzantine Empire (a Christian state), and return Jerusalem and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher to Christian rule after four centuries of Muslim domination.

On 27 November 1095, he gathered several of the major nobles of Western Europe (as well as many lower-ranked knights) to an open-air sermon at Clermont, where he was presiding over a

Church council. In this sermon, he proclaimed that it was the duty of these warrior aristocrats, as Christians, to defend the Byzantine Empire and to put the city of Jerusalem under Christian rule. The result was an enthusiastic response by those knights, who are said to have cried out, “God wills it!” and to have vowed to set off to Jerusalem and bring it under Christian rule. Furthermore, as word of Pope Urban’s admonition spread throughout Western Europe, more and more of the knightly class answered the call, mustering under the leadership of several powerful nobles.

This movement of the knights of most of Western Europe to fight against Muslims in the Middle East is generally known as the first of a series of **Crusades**. A crusade was a war declared by the papacy against those perceived to be enemies of the Christian faith (usually, but not always, Muslims). Participating in a crusade would grant a Christian forgiveness of sins. We ought to note that such a concept in many ways superficially resembled the Muslim notion of the Lesser Jihad (see Chapter Eight).

As these forces mustered and marched south and east, the religious enthusiasm accompanying them often spilled out into aggression against non-Christians other than Muslims. One group



Map 12.3 | The Crusader States | These regions were known to Western Europeans as Outremer, Old French for “across the sea”

Author: Ian Mladjov

Source: Original Work

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of Crusaders in the area around the Rhine engaged in a series of massacres of Jewish civilians, traveling from city to city while killing Jews and looting their possessions before this armed gang was forced to disperse.

The Crusaders traveled in two main waves. The first traveled to the Byzantine Empire, and was ferried across the Bosphorus but was wiped out by a Turkish army. The second wave, however, was better planned and coordinated, and, upon its arrival in the Byzantine Empire, reached an uneasy truce with the Alexios Komnenos (who had been expecting a modest force of mercenaries and not the armed might of most of Western Europe). The

Crusaders were fortunate. After Nizaris had assassinated Nizam al-Mulk and the Fatimid caliph of Egypt had died (both in 1092), the Middle East fell into political chaos (see Chapter Eight). When the Crusaders marched east in 1096, they encountered not a unified Great Saljuq Empire, but a collection of independent and semi-independent sultans and emirs.

The Crusaders moved east, winning a string of victories in Asia Minor: when they could not be outmaneuvered, the armored knights of Western Europe often stood at an advantage against the lightly armored or unarmored mounted archers that mostly made up the bulk of Turkish forces. Following the path of the crusading army, Alexios was able to restore much of western Asia Minor to the control of the Byzantine Empire, although the central Anatolian plateau would remain under the dominion of the Saljuq Turks. The Crusaders advanced on Antioch, the largest and most prosperous city of the Levant, and, after a siege of nearly a year, both seized control of the city and defeated a Turkish army that attempted to relieve it. The army then marched south to Jerusalem and into territory controlled by the Fatimid caliphate—itsself a Shi'ite state that was no friend of the Sunni Saljuq Turks. Venice and Genoa, meanwhile, transported supplies to the Crusaders by sea. The Crusaders rejected Fatimid overtures for a negotiated settlement and, in June of 1099, arrived outside the walls of Jerusalem. The Crusaders stormed the city's walls, and, as the city fell, it was subject to a brutal sack, with both the city's defenders and its civilian population subject to a bloody slaughter. We must note that there was nothing particularly unique about this massacre. The custom among most pre-modern peoples was that if a city resisted an attacking army, then it would be subject to sack and massacre of its population were it to fall.

After the fall of Jerusalem, the Crusaders established four states in the Levant: the County of Edessa, in northern Mesopotamia, the Principality of Antioch, centered on the city of Antioch



Figure 12.10 | Crusader Castle at Byblos

Author: User "Heretiq"

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and its environs; the County of Tripoli, in what is roughly Lebanon today; and the Kingdom of Jerusalem, which occupied Palestine and whose capital was the city of Jerusalem. These states were ruled by men (and often women) who were Catholic in religion and ethnically Western European. The religion and institutions of these **Crusader States** were nearly the same as those of Western Europe.

These states attracted some settlers, in both their warrior aristocracy and even merchants and peasants. But many of the subjects of the Christian rulers of these kingdoms were Muslims (or Christian Arabs, who had special privileges over their Muslim counterparts, but fewer rights than Catholic, ethnically Western European Christians). Indeed, the Crusader States would consistently suffer from a lack of manpower: although the pope had spoken of rich lands for the taking in Palestine, most of the knights who had gone on the First Crusade (and survived) returned to Western Europe. The Crusader States relied on extensive networks of heavily fortified stone castles for defense. They were fortunate that the Middle East was politically fragmented and Fatimid Egypt was weak. Whether these states would be sustainable in the face of stronger Muslim powers remained to be seen.

12.13 THE TWELFTH CENTURY IN WESTERN EUROPE

In the twelfth century, many of Europe's kingdoms saw a gradual centralization of state power. England had long been Western Europe's most centralized state. In 1066, a group of Normans under their Duke, William the Bastard, invaded England. William defeated the English



Figure 12.11 | King Henry II and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine

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army, making himself the king of England: he was thus known as William the Conqueror. This conquest of England by French-speakers moved the culture, language, and institutions of England closer to those of France. Although England looked more feudal, it nevertheless retained a centralized bureaucratic apparatus. William was able to use this bureaucracy to conduct a nationwide census, a feat of which no European state outside of the Byzantine Empire was capable. Although England would suffer a civil war of nearly a decade and a half in the twelfth century, for the most part, its monarchs, particularly



Figure 12.12 | Dover castle, built by King Henry II

Author: Jake Keup
 Source: Wikimedia Commons
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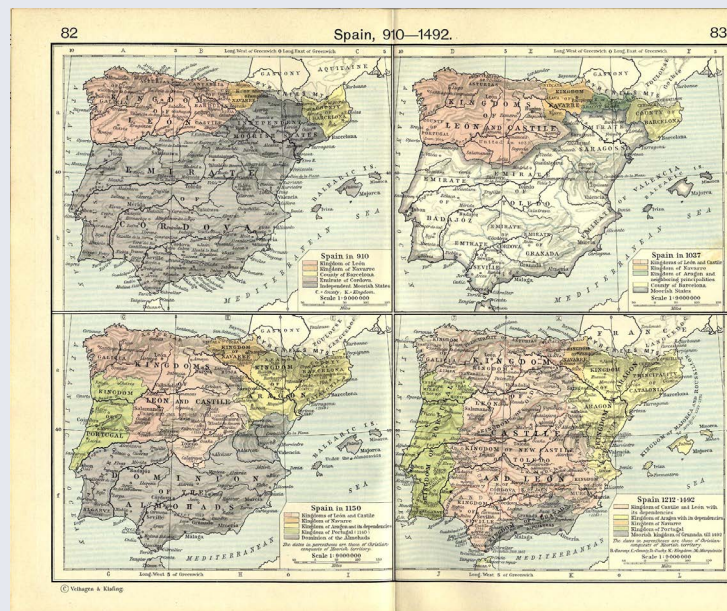
Henry I (r. 1100 – 1135) and Henry II (r. 1154 – 1189), were innovative and clever administrators, creating a network of royal courts and a sophisticated office of tax collection known as the **Exchequer**.

France had entered the tenth and eleventh centuries as the most loosely-governed kingdom of Europe. In 987, France’s nobles elected Hugh Capet, the count of Paris, as king, effectively replacing the Carolingian dynasty. The **Capetian** Dynasty’s kings, however, directly controlled only the lands around Paris. In addition, after the Norman conquest of England in 1066, the Norman kings of England were also dukes of large French territories. Thus, for the

first part of the twelfth century, much of France was under the effective control of the English crown.

In spite of these challenges, the Capetian monarchs gradually built their kingdom into a functional state. They cultivated a reputation as defenders of Christianity in order to gain legitimacy from the Church. They also sought to enforce the feudal obligations that the powerful nobles owed to the crown, often calling on them to serve militarily so as to create a habit of obedience to the king.

To the southwest, the rise of the Muslim Almoravid Empire under the rule of aggressively expansionist Muslim religious reformers in North Africa briefly put the *Reconquista* in jeopardy, but, by the early twelfth century, it had resumed, with the Muslim stronghold of Zaragoza falling to Christian armies in 1118. After the First Crusade, those knights



Map 12.4 | Spain, progress of the Reconquista

Author: William R. Shepherd
 Source: Wikimedia Commons
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who traveled to Spain to help its Christian kings fight Muslims received the same forgiveness of sins that the papacy granted to crusaders in the Levant. Over the twelfth century, four major Christian kingdoms would emerge in the Iberian Peninsula: Portugal, Leon-Castile, Navarre, and Aragon. These kingdoms would develop a sophisticated system of taxation in order to fund the *Reconquista*. In the later twelfth century, they faced the challenge of the Almohad Empire that emerged from the Islamic Maghreb to unite Muslim Spain and North Africa. By the 1150s, Christian Spain was on the defensive once again.

In Scandinavia, too, a set of strong monarchies had emerged in Denmark and Norway by the end of the twelfth century.

12.14 EMPIRES: RECOVERY AND COLLAPSE

12.14.1 Frederick Barbarossa and the Holy Roman Empire

The Investiture Controversy had weakened the power of the Holy Roman Emperors. In the early part of the twelfth century, power in the Holy Roman Empire decentralized in the same way that it had in tenth- and eleventh-century France, while the cities of northern Italy were increasingly governing themselves with little direct authority exercised by the Holy Roman Emperors. The Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (r. 1152 – 1190) sought to arrest this decline and make his subjects adhere to his authority.

Frederick's two overriding goals were to ensure that the great princes of Central Europe and the city-states of Northern Italy acknowledged and submitted to his authority. Northern Italy was a particularly vexing challenge. By the middle of the twelfth century, many of the cities of northern Italy had gradually moved from rule by an urban nobility or bishops to self-government by an elected commune, and these communes were often reluctant to acknowledge imperial authority, especially with respect to the taxes that Barbarossa believed were owed him. Shortly after beginning his reign, Barbarossa sought to implement this authority.

Barbarossa had a great deal of initial success, but eventually the city-states of Northern Italy united into an organization called the Lombard League, and this League allied with the popes, who lent their moral authority to the cause of the northern Italian city-states. Indeed, part of the difficulties faced by Barbarossa was that any pope would be more likely to try to keep northern and central Italy as far from direct control of the Holy Roman Emperors as possible. If the emperors were too powerful in Northern and Central Italy, then they would threaten the papacy's independence, jeopardizing everything the eleventh-century reforming popes had struggled to accomplish. Eventually, this coalition of the papacy and Lombard League inflicted a military defeat on Barbarossa at the 1176 Battle of Legnano, after which Barbarossa was forced to concede a great deal of self-rule within the Empire to the Italian city-states.

Near the end of his reign, Barbarossa would lead an immense army on a crusade. In 1187, the kings of Western Europe found themselves forced to respond to a great catastrophe for Christendom: the city, and, indeed, most of the Kingdom of Jerusalem had fallen to a Muslim army under the sultan Saladin. These kings responded with the effort known as the Third Crusade.

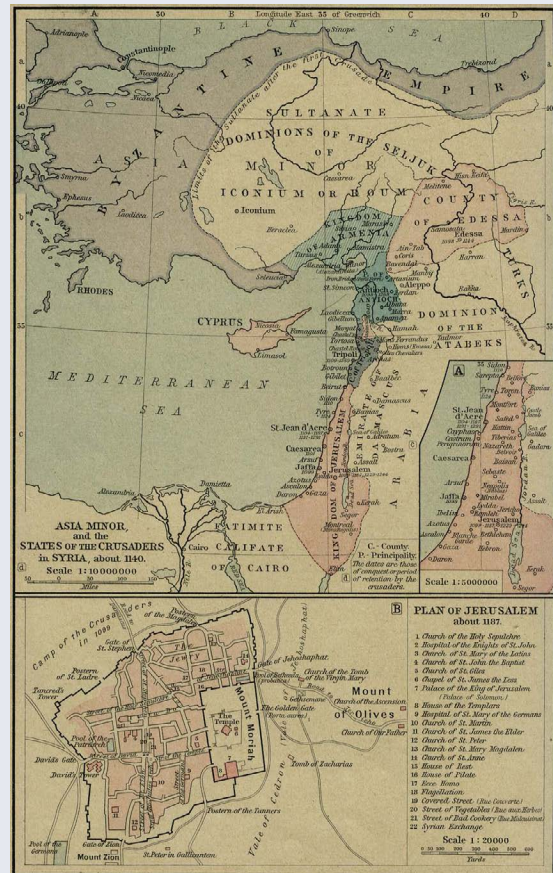
12.14.2 The Komnenoi in Byzantium

The other empire claiming (with somewhat more justice) to be the rightful heir of the Roman Empire was the Byzantine Empire, and, after the disaster of Manzikert, the Komnenos emperors had managed to rebuild a Byzantine army based on the system of *pronoiai* and mercenary forces. Emperor John II (r. 1118 – 1143) followed up on Alexios’s work and established effective Byzantine control over much of Western Anatolia, consolidated imperial hold on Southeastern Europe, and, indeed, forced the Crusader States to acknowledge him as their overlord.



Figure 12.13 | Manuel Komnenos and his wife, Maria of Antioch

Author: Anonymous
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Map 12.5 | The Eastern Mediterranean in the reign of John II

Author: Alexander G. Findlay
 Source: Classical Atlas of Ancient Geography
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At the same time that Barbarossa sought to build the Holy Roman Empire as a credible power, in the east, Manuel Komnenos (r. 1118 – 1180) sought to do the same with his Empire. He managed to suppress the growing power of Venice in the Eastern Mediterranean, form an alliance with the growing kingdom of Hungary, and temporarily force the Turks of central Anatolia to acknowledge his overlordship. In the end, however, the emperor’s reach exceeded his grasp. His attempt to conquer Fatimid Egypt in alliance with the Kingdom of Jerusalem

failed when the military commander of Damascus, Saladin, outmaneuvered both Byzantium and Jerusalem and instead added Egypt to the territory of Damascus, which created a Muslim Empire in the Middle East that menaced the Crusader States (see Chapter Eight). And the emperor's effort to return central Anatolia to Byzantine rule ultimately failed when his army was defeated by the Saljuq Sultanate of Rum at Myriokephalon in 1176. Ultimately, the Byzantine Empire's undoing was not necessarily in individual battles, but rather in that the loss of the wealthy agricultural land of Central Anatolia to the Turks meant that its emperors never quite had the tax base necessary to put their ambitions of a restored Roman Empire into practice.

In the end, the Komnenoi had managed to restore the Byzantine Empire as a regional power, but it was left with structural weaknesses that would eventually prove to be its undoing.

12.15 THE TWELFTH-CENTURY RENAISSANCE

The twelfth century in Western Europe was a time of renewed vibrancy in intellectual activity, and much of this activity centered on Europe's towns and cities. We call this renewal of intellectual activity the **Twelfth-Century Renaissance** in order to separate it from both the Carolingian Renaissance of the eighth and ninth centuries and the Italian Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Both monasteries and cathedrals were centers of education in Western Europe, even during the dark days of the tenth century. Over the eleventh century, thinkers in the monasteries of Western Europe had increasingly sought to apply the tools of logic (in particular Aristotelian logic) to the study of the Bible. But Western Europeans were familiar with very little of Aristotle's work aside from a small number of logical writings that had been translated from Greek into Latin in the sixth century. The twelfth century would see a massive shift, with an immense growth of interest in philosophy on the part of those men (and a few women) who had a formal education. The spur to this interest would come from events in Southwestern Europe.

Al-Andalus had been a major source of Muslim intellectual activity. As early as the tenth century, Christian scholars, such as Gerbert of Aurillac (who eventually became Pope Sylvester II², r. 999 – 1003), had visited Muslim-ruled Spain to read the works of ancient Greek thinkers that were unavailable elsewhere in Western Europe. Gerbert's writings show him to be particularly fascinated with Euclid, Arabic numerals, and the concept of zero.

When Toledo fell to Christian armies in 1085, its libraries became available to the larger Christian world. Muslims had translated most of the philosophy of Aristotle into Arabic in addition to writing extensive original works that engaged with the thought of Aristotle and Plato. Once these books were in Christian hands, Raymond, archbishop of Toledo (r. 1125 – 1152), set up translation teams. People who spoke Arabic and the Romance languages of Spain would first translate these books into Spanish, and these books would then be translated into Latin, which would thus make Aristotle and Ptolemy (as well as the works of Arabic philosophers) available to educated people throughout Western Europe. The availability of texts that had been largely known only by reputation to the thinkers of Western Europe spurred an intellectual revolution,

² Between the sixth and eleventh centuries, a practice emerged whereby the pope would adopt a distinct name from the name he was born with upon ascension to the papacy. The practice continues to the present day.

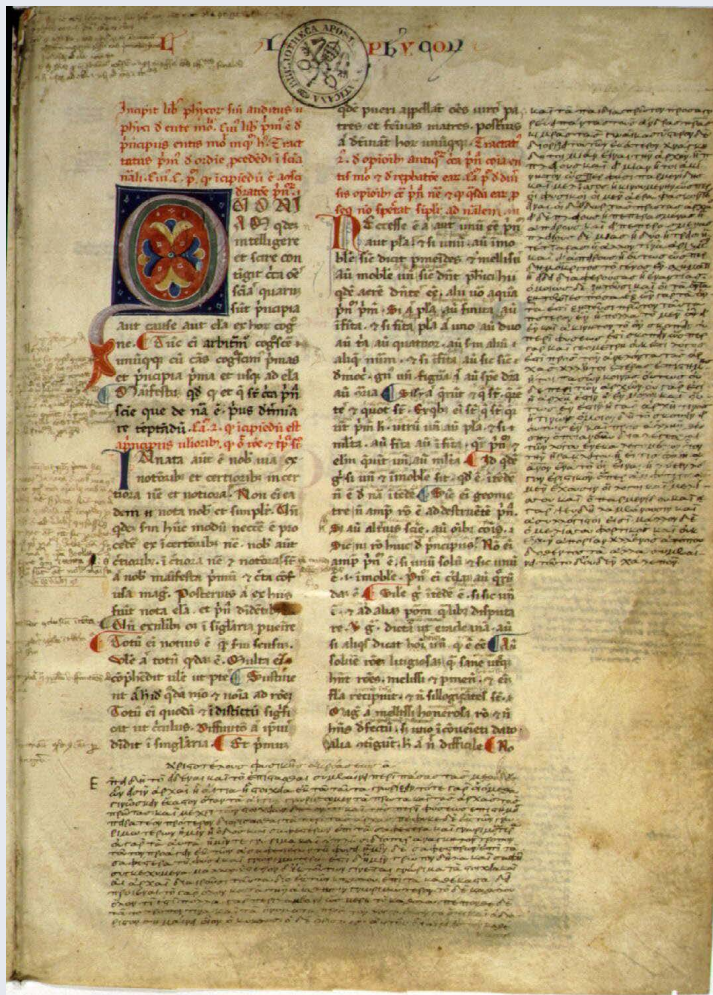


Figure 12.14 | Latin Manuscript of Aristotle’s Physics

Author: Jean-Christophe Benoist
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as the Christian thinkers sought to understand how to reconcile an understanding of the world based on Christianity with the approach of the non-Christian ancient Greeks.

Such translations on the Christian/Muslim frontier continued through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Christendom thus had access to the writings of Muslim philosophers. Western Europeans read natural philosophy, such as al-Haytham’s writings on optics and the Aristotelian commentaries of Ibn Rushd (whose name they pronounced as Averroës). This movement was the translation not only of philosophy, but also of medicine—indeed, in the Muslim world, philosophers often served as physicians—so the medical works of philosophers and physicians such as Ibn Sina (whose name Western Europeans pronounced as Avicenna) were read avidly by Christians in Western Europe.

Philosophy and medicine were not the only fields of study to receive new interest. Western Europeans were also showing a renewed interest in law. Although the kingdoms that

had grown up in Western Europe after the fall of the Western Roman Empire had incorporated some elements of Roman Law as well as the oral law of the Germanic peoples into their legal systems, law codes were for the most part unsystematic. Starting from the eleventh century, scholars, particularly those based in the schools of Bologna, began subjecting The Justinian Code (see Chapter Seven) to intense study, using logical analysis to create a body of systematic writing on the interpretation of law. These men who studied Roman Law would often go to work for kings and emperors, with the result that much European law would often draw its inspiration from Justinian.

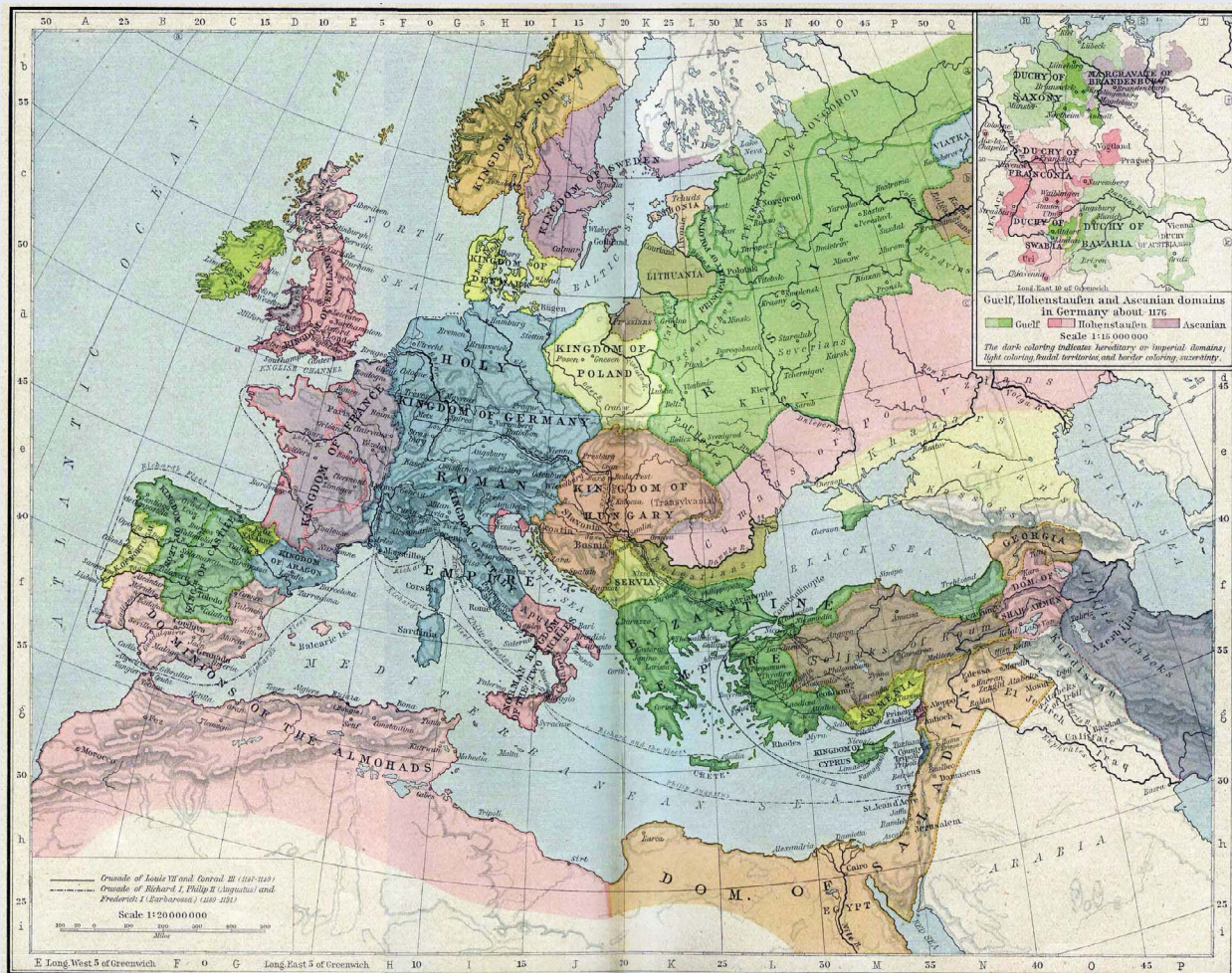
Most schools were still attached to cathedral churches—indeed, these schools in which medicine, law, and philosophy flourished as disciplines of study might be compared to the madrassas of the Muslim world—so the chief field of study in these schools was theology, that is,

the interpretation of the Bible. And theologians increasingly drew on logical analysis and philosophy of language to understand what they believed was God’s revelation to humanity.

Eventually, many of these cathedral schools gained the right to organize as self-governing institutions. We call these institutions **universities**. By the end of the twelfth century, the universities of Bologna, Paris, and Oxford had become self-governing institutions and would serve as the foundation of the university system of the Western world that exists to the present day.

12.16 THE THIRD CRUSADE

The Crusader States had endured from 1099 to 1187 because the Muslim Middle East was politically fragmented. Once Saladin had overthrown Egypt’s Fatimid Caliphate and united Egypt to Muslim-controlled Syria and northern Iraq (see Chapter Eight), he was able to turn his resources to destroying



the Crusader States. Eventually, at the 1187 Battle of Hattin, his forces met the combined forces of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The result was a complete victory for Saladin. With the manpower of most of the Kingdom of Jerusalem killed or captured—knights and noble prisoners would be held for a hefty ransom, while lower-ranked soldiers would go to slave markets—he was easily able to capture most of the castles and cities that made up the kingdom, to include the city of Jerusalem itself.

The result shocked the Christian world, and Pope Gregory VIII quickly issued the **bull** (that is, an official papal pronouncement) *Audita tremendi*, which called on the Christian world to retake Jerusalem. The kings of England and France, Richard I (known as Lionheart, r. 1189 – 1199) and Philip Augustus (r. 1180 – 1223), respectively, took vows to launch a crusade, as did Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. (As usual, the Christians of Iberia took little part in crusades in the Levant, as their efforts focused on the *Reconquista*.)

Although Frederick Barbarossa died en route (he drowned in a stream in the mountains of Anatolia), both Richard I and Philip Augustus eventually arrived in the Levant by sea. Although Philip soon returned to France, King Richard battled Saladin over the course of two years, to results that were mostly inconclusive. The crusading army seized most of the castles and cities on the coast, and these became the center for a restored, but smaller Kingdom of Jerusalem, but the Crusaders ultimately failed to take Jerusalem itself. The Crusade finally ended in a truce in which both parties ratified this state of affairs, with Christian pilgrims allowed to visit the city of Jerusalem, even though it remained under Muslim rule.

12.17 THE FOURTH CRUSADE

While Jerusalem remained under Muslim control, the papacy's goal was to retake it, especially as, in 1198, the man elected pope was one of the most ambitious men to wear the papal crown of the Middle Ages: Pope Innocent III (r. 1198 – 1216). Innocent's goals were to morally reform society and to launch a crusade for retaking the holy city of Jerusalem. In the year of his election, he issued a call to crusade that ended up as a disaster.

Between 1185 and 1204, the Byzantine Empire had drastically weakened. After the death of Manuel Komnenos with his heir still a child, the Empire faced a string of catastrophes. The child-emperor was murdered, his successor was eventually overthrown, and the next emperor after that was likewise overthrown. During this political infighting, the Empire's peripheral territories of Serbia, Cyprus, and Cilicia all seceded. Closer to the center, the Bulgars rose in rebellion in 1186 and re-established an independent Bulgaria within only a few days' march of Constantinople itself. In addition, the chain of emperors, regents, and usurpers reigning between 1185 and 1204 had allowed the Byzantine navy to gradually disintegrate.

In 1202, a group of crusaders (with kings notably absent) contracted with the government of Venice to transport them to fight in Egypt, now ruled by Saladin's heirs. When these crusaders proved unable to pay, the Venetian government requested their military assistance. The son of the deposed emperor (whose eyes had been gouged out) approached the crusaders and Venetians. He offered the crusaders military and financial assistance and for Venice to gain trading privileges in the Empire if crusaders and Venetians would help him regain his throne. The end result was that, in 1204, after a

series of misadventures, a crusader army stormed the walls of Constantinople and put the city to a brutal sack; then, the crusaders parceled out much of the territory of the Byzantine Empire amongst themselves. The most advantageous ports went to Venice, which would use them as the basis of a Mediterranean trading empire that would endure for centuries. The Crusades, which had begun as a result of an appeal for help by the Byzantine Empire, ultimately resulted in its destruction.

Although the Byzantine Empire had been broken up, three states survived that claimed to be legitimate heirs to the Byzantine State. One was established in Western Anatolia with its capital in Nicaea, another, in Epirus, in what is today the country of Albania, while the third was based on the city of Trebizond, on the northern coast of Anatolia. The Nicene Empire would eventually retake Constantinople in 1261, although the restored state would never be the regional power that the Empire had been under the Komnenoi.



Map 12.7 | The Latin Empire in 1212 CE | The Latin Empire of Constantinople (the state established by crusaders after 1204) and Byzantine successor states

Author: Ian Mladjov

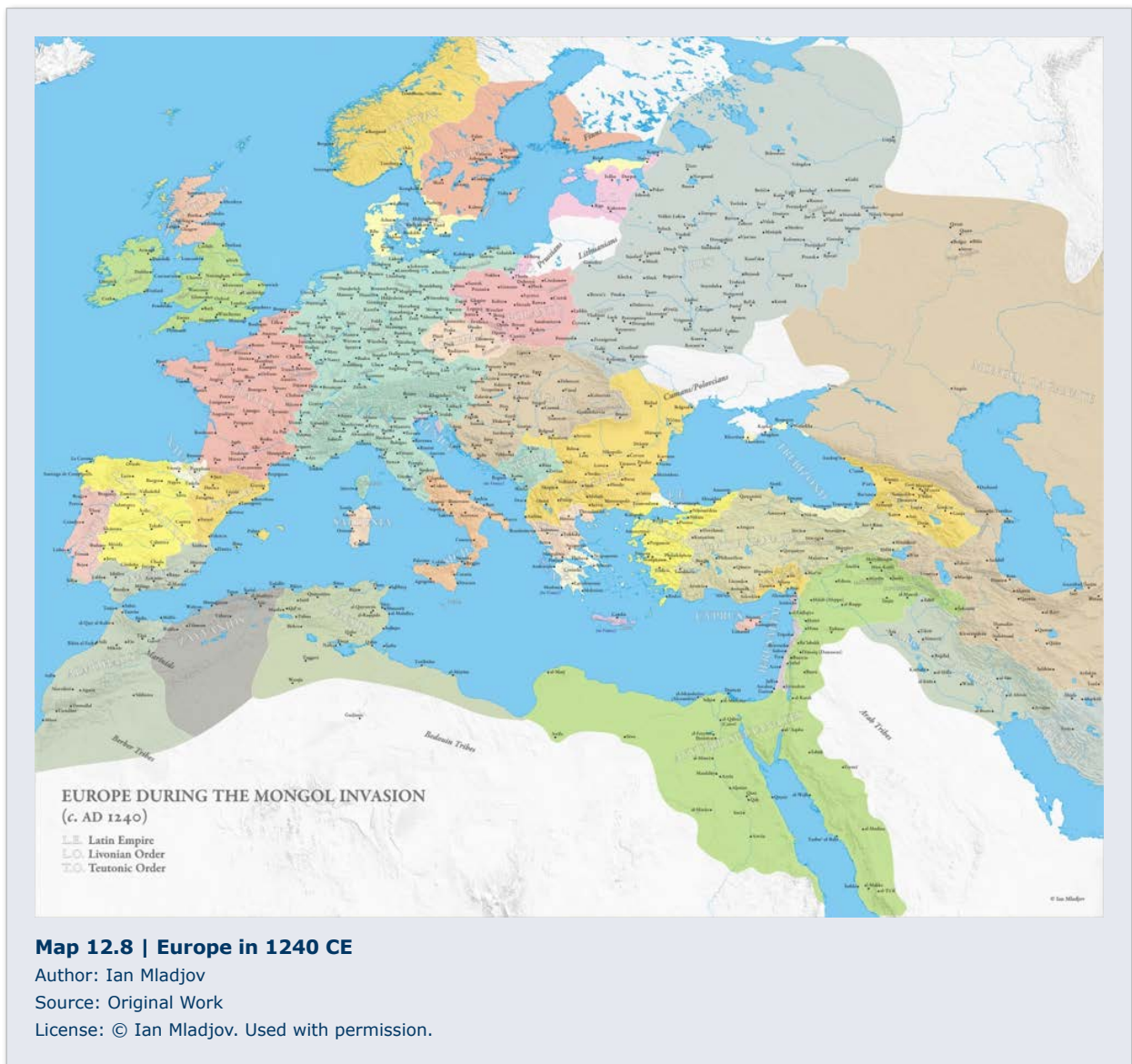
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12.18 THE STATES OF THIRTEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE

12.18.1 Eastern Europe

The thirteenth century would prove catastrophic for both Hungary and the Kievan Rus, for the same Mongols who laid waste to much of Asia would eventually arrive from the steppes of Asia and into the plains of Eastern Europe (see Chapter Eleven). In 1240, the Mongols shattered the Kievan Rus, destroyed the city of Kiev, and left the plains around the city littered with dead bodies stretching out to the horizon. The Ruses would remain Mongol vassals for the rest of the Middle Ages. The Mongol advance continued. In 1241, at the Battle of Mohi, a Hungarian army was annihilated, and the Mongols subsequently slew half the kingdom's population before Batu Khan, the Mongol commander, returned to Mongolia for the election of a new Great Khan (see Chapter Eleven).



12.18.2 The Holy Roman Empire: Failure of Frederick II

The Holy Roman Empire remained Europe's dominant power in the first half of the thirteenth century in spite of Barbarossa's incomplete success. The Empire would, however, be fatally undermined by the struggles between Emperor Frederick II (r. 1215 – 1250) and a series of mostly forceful and able popes. The dispute was the same as that which had occupied his grandfather, Frederick Barbarossa. Unlike Barbarossa, the base of Frederick II's power was in Sicily, for his father, Henry VI (r. 1190 – 1197), had married Constance, queen of Sicily, thus making Frederick II ruler of both the Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdom of Sicily. Like his grandfather, he sought to create an empire that ruled both Italy and central Europe. And for the same reason that the popes had opposed Barbarossa, they, together with the cities of northern Italy, opposed Frederick II. In the end, when Frederick died, the Holy Roman Empire collapsed as a unitary state. For nearly twenty years, it had no emperor, as the papacy's allies hunted down and brutally slaughtered Frederick's heirs, and then, by the time an emperor was elected from the Austrian nobles of the Hapsburg family in 1273, the Empire was more a loose collection of states than a centralized empire.

12.18.3 Expansion of Christendom on the Frontiers

To the northeast, Christendom continued to expand. In the forests and bogs around the Baltic Sea, German-speaking crusaders (as well as Danes) conquered the heathen³ peoples, converting them to Christianity and settling the territory with Germans and Danes. These efforts were recognized by the popes as crusades. By the end of the thirteenth century, all of Europe except for Lithuania was Christian. The kingdom of Lithuania would remain resolutely heathen and militarily resist German Crusaders until 1385, at which time the Lithuanian kings finally converted to Christianity when their kingdom was combined with Poland.

In thirteenth-century Spain, the most significant accomplishment of the Christian monarchs was that, on 16 July 1212, at the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, the combined armies of Castile, Aragon, Portugal, and Navarre met those of the Almohad Caliphate and won a victory so crushing that the power of the Almohads was forever broken. In the decades that followed, Aragon, Portugal, and Castile conquered all of Muslim Iberia, save for Granada.

12.18.4 France and England

Perhaps the most successful thirteenth-century monarchs were the Capetian kings of France. In the years between 1203 and 1214, King Philip Augustus managed to dispossess the English king of almost all of his territory held in France. He was also increasingly successful in using a set of recognized laws to enhance his legitimacy. So he made sure that he had a strong legal case drawn up by expert lawyers before he dispossessed England's King John. Likewise, he created a royal court that was a court of final appeal—and that meant that, even in parts of the kingdom where great lords exercised their own justice, the king had increasing authority. In 1208, Pope Innocent III had called a crusade against the semi-independent territories of southern France because of

³ Generally, we refer to the followers of the Greco-Roman religion that prevailed before Christianity as pagans and the followers of the northern European religion that prevailed before Christianity as heathens.

the presence there of a group of heretics known as the Cathars. In the resulting crusade (called the **Albigensian Crusade** because much of the fighting happened around the town of Albi), crusaders from the north crushed the power of the great nobles of southern France. King Louis VIII (r. 1223 – 1226) then extended the direct rule of the French crown into areas where, for centuries, the French kings had ruled only indirectly.

France's King Louis IX (r. 1226 – 1270) was perhaps its most effective Capetian king. He continued the process of establishing the royal courts as supreme in the kingdom. It was in Louis IX's reign that we can see the beginnings of a sophisticated and accurate royal budget.

When England's King John (r. 1199 – 1216) lost to Philip Augustus, his outraged nobles rebelled, resulting in a civil war from 1215 to 1217. One temporary treaty of this civil war, a treaty known as **Magna Carta** (signed in 1215), would have a much further-reaching impact than anyone who had drafted it could have foreseen. One particular provision of Magna Carta was that if the king wanted to raise new taxes on the people of England, then he needed to get the consent of the community of the realm by convening a council. The convening of such councils,

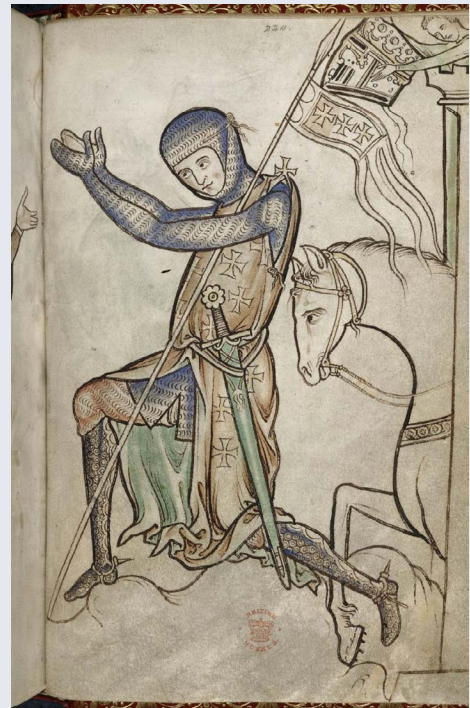


Figure 12.15 | A Knight in Thirteenth-Century Armor

Author: British Library

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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Figure 12.16 | France's King Louis IX

Author: Guillaume de Saint-Pathus

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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known as **parliaments**, would come to be systematized over the course of the thirteenth century, until, by the reign of Edward I (r. 1272 – 1307), they would have representatives from most regions of England and would vote on whether to grant taxes to the king.

Parliaments were not unique to England, however. Most Spanish kings would consult with a body known as a **cortes**, with representatives of both Spain's towns and nobility, and the Scandinavian kings had assemblies called **things**. Indeed, by 1356, the Holy Roman Emperor would be elected by an assembly of the Holy Roman

Empire's greatest nobles, known as electors. England's parliaments, however, would gradually evolve from assemblies convoked when a king wanted to raise taxes to a regular assembly that gave representative voice to the people of England.

As stated earlier, of thirteenth-century Europe's monarchs, France's Capetian kings were some of the most successful. Indeed, King Louis IX's French state was well-administered enough that he was able to manage the logistics of a military campaign fought at the opposite end of the Mediterranean: the war that modern historians often call the Seventh Crusade.

12.19 LATER CRUSADES AND CRUSADING'S ULTIMATE FAILURE

After the Third Crusade, the re-established Crusader States managed to survive and even expand in power for the next several decades. Syria and Egypt were split between Saladin's heirs, and the crusader kingdoms often enjoyed good relations with Ayyubid Egypt: indeed, a truce worked out between Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II and the Egyptian sultan al-Kamil in 1229 resulted in the city of Jerusalem itself returning to Christian rule.



Map 12.9 | The Crusader States in 1243 CE

Author: Ian Mladjov

Source: Original Work

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In the 1240s, however, forces far from the Levant brought down the Kingdom of Jerusalem. As the Mongols gradually conquered Central Asia (see Chapter Eleven), the Khwarazmian Turks were driven from their realm in the steppes into Syria and northern Iraq. They ended up allying with Ayyubid Egypt against the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, and, in 1244, the combined armies of Damascus and Jerusalem were defeated by an Egyptian/Khwarazmian army. Jerusalem fell under Muslim rule, under which it would remain until 1917.

In response to the fall of Jerusalem, Pope Innocent IV (r. 1243 – 1254) called a crusade that would be led by King Louis IX. While it had contingents from other Western European kingdoms, this effort was primarily an effort of the French crown. Although King Louis IX was able to manage the impressive logistical feat of organizing and equipping an army that seized the northern Egyptian port of Damietta, the effort to take all of Egypt was ultimately unsuccessful. Over the course of 1250, the French army was surrounded in the swamps of the Nile Delta outside of Cairo and forced to surrender, with Louis himself captured. The only lasting result in the Middle East was that, during the fighting, the Ayyubid sultan's Mamluks launched a coup d'état and seized power in Egypt, thereby creating in Egypt a military power that would dominate the Levant for nearly three centuries (see Chapter Eight).

Indeed, in the four decades after Louis's failure in the Nile Delta, the Mamluk sultans of Egypt would eventually conquer all of the Crusader States, with the last crusader stronghold in the Levant, the city of Acre, falling in 1291. Although Popes would still call crusades for military efforts against Muslim forces (and indeed, still make calls to retake the city of Jerusalem), crusading had failed. One reason for crusading's ultimate failure was that, as Western European kings consolidated their power, they often had priorities other than crusading. England's Edward I, for example, spent a few months fighting in the Levant in 1271; however, he spent most of his reign fighting to subdue England's neighboring kingdoms of Wales and Scotland.

In the end, the Crusades failed, and their greatest long-term impacts were the destruction of the Byzantine Empire and the growth of the sea power of Genoa and Venice, whose ships and sailors had transported people and supplies between Europe and the Crusader States.

12.20 SCHOLASTICISM

As more and more works of ancient Greek and Muslim philosophy became available to Western European Christians, the question of how to understand the world acquired more urgency. The philosophers of the ancient Greek and Muslim worlds were known to have produced much useful knowledge. But they had not been Christians. How, asked many thinkers, were Christians to understand the world: through divine revelation, as it appeared in the Bible, or through the human reason of philosophers? Indeed, this question was reminiscent of similar questions taking place in the Islamic world, when thinkers such as al-Ghazali questioned how useful the tools of logic and philosophy were in understanding the Quran (see Chapter Eight).

This controversy had raged since at least the twelfth century, when certain devout monks had said, "Whoever seeks to make Aristotle a Christian makes himself a heretic." Out of this controversy, medieval Europe produced its greatest thinker, St. Thomas Aquinas (1224 – 1274). St. Thomas was

a Dominican **friar**. Friars were those churchmen who, like monks, took vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. Instead of living in isolated monasteries, though, friars spent much of their time preaching to laypeople in Europe's growing towns and cities. These friars, whose two major groups were the Franciscans and Dominicans, had schools in most major universities of Western Europe by the early thirteenth century. Aquinas, a philosopher in the Dominican school of the University of Paris, had argued that human reason and divine revelation were in perfect harmony. He did so based on the techniques of the disputed question. He would raise a point, raise its objection, then provide an answer, and this answer would always be based on a logical argument. Aquinas was only part of a larger movement in the universities of Western Europe. We generally call the movement to reconcile Christian theology with human reason through the use of logic **scholasticism**.

Aquinas and the scholastics can be compared to Zhu Xi and the neo-Confucians of Song China. Just as Zhu Xi had sought to integrate Confucian thought with Buddhist and Daoist philosophy, so also Aquinas sought to integrate both Aristotelian logic and Christian theology.

The period not only saw successes in the field of speculative philosophy and theology, but also in the practical application of science. The master masons who designed Western Europe's castles and cathedral churches built hundreds of soaring cathedrals that would be the tallest buildings in Europe until the nineteenth century. We call these cathedrals' architecture **Gothic**. Gothic cathedrals were well known for their use of pointed arches (which may have been copied from Middle Eastern styles) that allowed taller buildings and for stained-glass windows that admitted a dazzling array of light. These cathedrals were in many ways made possible by the prosperity of Europe's towns, whose governing councils often financed the construction of these magnificent churches.

Thirteenth-century Europe showed other developments in technology as well. In 1269, Pierre of Harincourt first came to understand the principles of magnetic poles based on an analysis of the magnetic compass (in use since the twelfth century). At the same time, between 1286 and 1306, based on the pre-existing technology of lens-grinding (much of which had come from the Muslim world), Western Europeans invented eyeglasses. Water clocks had been known throughout the



Figure 12.17 | St. Thomas Aquinas | Note that the artist shows him defeating the non-Christian Aristotelian philosophy of Ibn Rushd.

Author: Benozzo Gozzoli

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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world since ancient times, but, in the years between 1271 and 1300, Western Europeans invented the mechanical clock.



Figure 12.18 | Lincoln Cathedral in England, built in the Gothic style in the thirteenth century | Note the pointed arches and the stained glass. The seats in the church were added in modern times: medieval worshippers stood.

Author: Andrew Reeves
 Source: Original Work
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In the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, Western Europeans gradually adapted the art of **alchemy**, the art of changing (or attempting to change) one element into another, from the Muslim world. Eventually, alchemists (and natural philosophers who studied alchemy) would find new techniques of refining and compounding chemicals, although their ultimate goal, the ability to turn base metals into gold, would never succeed.

In addition to these technologies invented or improved in medieval Europe, the Mongol Empire's opening of trade routes had allowed the importation of East Asian technologies such as gunpowder.

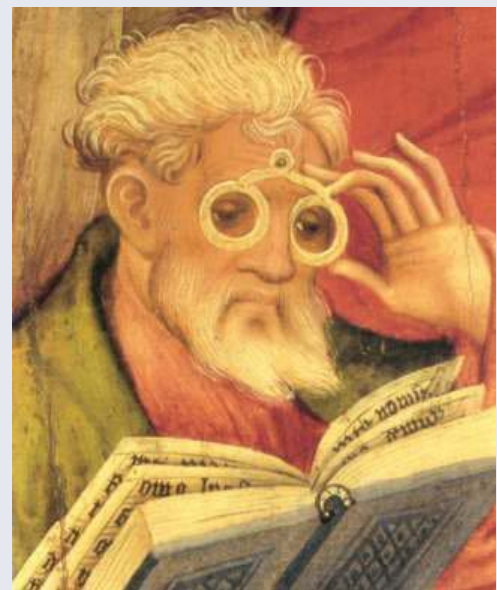


Figure 12.19 | Late medieval eyeglasses

Author: Conrad von Soest
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12.21 DAILY LIFE AT THE MEDIEVAL ZENITH

Even at the height of medieval Europe's prosperity, most people were peasant farmers, living like their ancestors in the Carolingian or Byzantine Empires. They often lived in villages in one- or two-room houses with separate space for livestock. Only the richest of peasants—and some free peasants did prosper—could afford a bed. Most people slept in straw. The most furniture in a peasant household might be a table and stool. The peasant diet was mainly grain, both bread and porridge, and peasants got their protein from both legumes and eggs. The occasional meat came from chickens, those sheep that were too old for shearing, and sometimes pigs. Beef was reserved for nobles.



Figure 12.20 | Peasants Keeping Pigs

Author: User "Pannage"

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Nobles often lived in large rural houses. They were sometimes attached to castles, but many castles were unoccupied in times of peace. The noble diet was heavy in meat; indeed, nobles often suffered from gout, a painful swelling of the joints from too much meat in the diet. Meat dishes were lavishly cooked in spices, like cardamom, cinnamon, cumin, pepper, and saffron (chilies were unknown in the Eastern Hemisphere in pre-modern times).

Peasant recreation might include ball games, wrestling, and, of course, drinking. Beer was northern Europe's commonest drink, while, in southern Europe, people drank wine. The best quality wines were a luxury, with nobles throughout Europe drinking the wines of Italy and southern France.

Noble recreation included chess (introduced from the Muslim world around the eleventh century), hunting (usually forbidden to peasants), and the **tournament**, in which knights would form into teams and fight each other, sometimes with blunted weapons, but sometimes with regular weapons, relying on their armor to protect them. Accidental fatalities in hunting and tournaments were common.

Europe's growing cities had narrow, unpaved streets with pools of waste, through which pigs, dogs, and other animals would wander. Paris, whose streets King Philip Augustus had ordered paved and lined with ditches to carry away waste water, was the exception rather than the rule. Likewise, although London had a network of pipes to carry water from springs by 1236, the inhabitants of most cities got water from wells, and these were often contaminated. Indeed, the disease from parasites and contaminated water meant that cities were **population sinks**, with more people dying than were born. Their population increased largely because of people migrating from the countryside, since by the twelfth century, most towns of Western Europe recognized a runaway serf as legally free if he or she had resided within the walls of a town for a year and a day.

Medieval Europe remained a patriarchal culture. The division of labor in peasant, middle-class, and noble households, however, meant that women played an active part in economic life. Women peasants would often labor alongside men in the fields, and women often ran taverns. Likewise, among nobles, women usually managed the household and might direct the economic activity of the great agricultural estates.

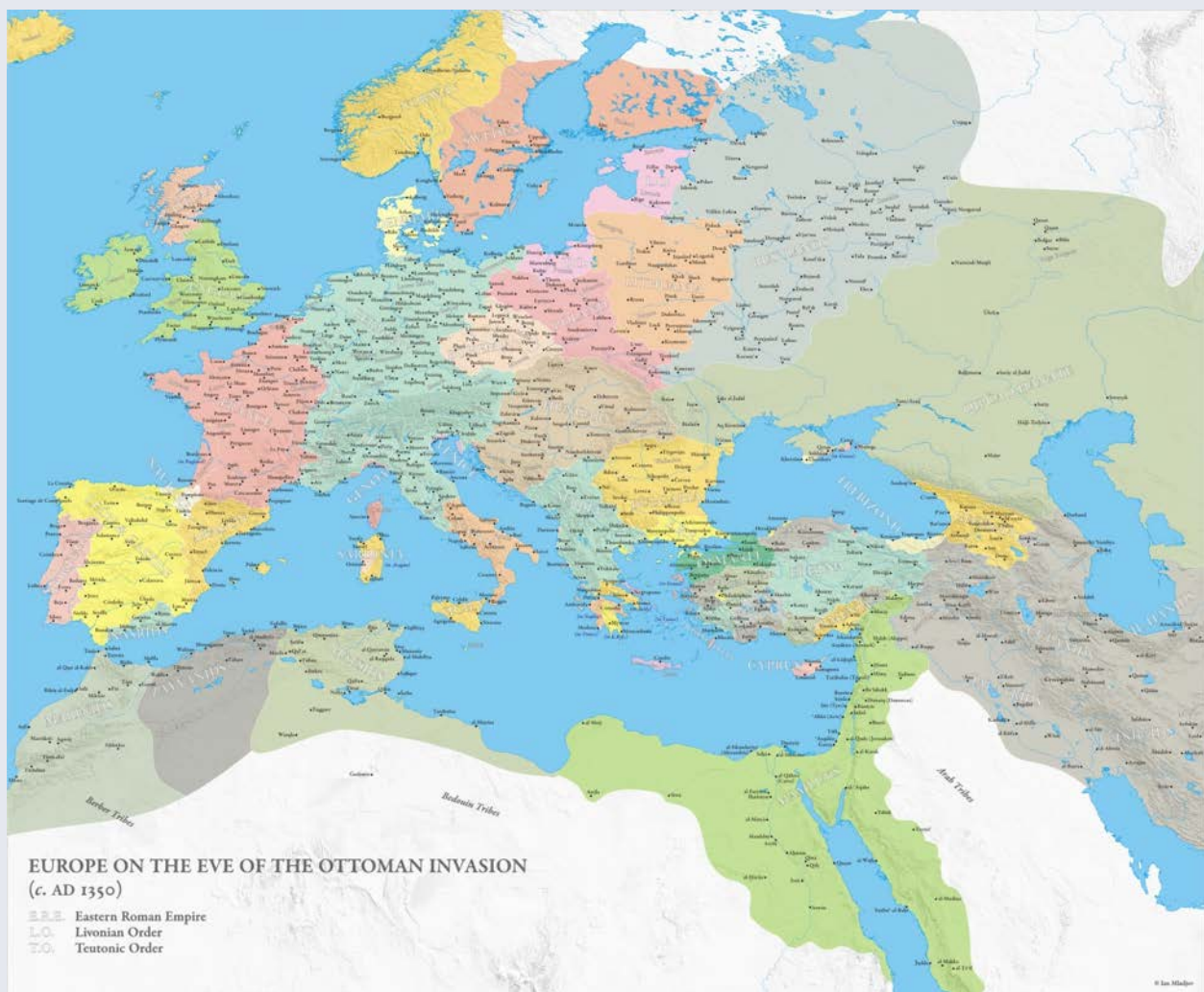
But women remained subordinate. Although they could be nuns, women could not be ordained as clergy. Legally, a woman was subordinate to her husband. And even though nobles increasingly read love poetry that placed women in a position of honor and devotion (and this poetry may originally have been modeled on the Arabic love poetry common in al-Andalus), this very devotion emphasized the woman as a prize to be sought after rather than as a partner.



12.22 FOURTEENTH CENTURY CRISES

As the thirteenth century drew to a close, Europe began to run into its **Malthusian limits**, i.e., how many people a land's resources can support before food starts to run short. At the same time, the previously-warm climate began to cool, making conditions less suitable for agriculture. Famine returned to Europe.

Between 1315 and 1322, a set of extremely rainy, wet summers—accounts written at the time speak of castle walls being washed away in flood waters—caused crops to fail, resulting in massive famines and starvation. At the same time, livestock throughout western Europe died in droves from outbreaks of Rinderpest, Anthrax, and other diseases.



Map 12.10 | Europe in 1350 CE

Author: Ian Mladjov

Source: Original Work

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Many peasants starved. Many more suffered from malnutrition. Contemporary accounts refer to hungry peasants resorting to cannibalism. Like all other crops, cash crops also failed, so that those who did survive were poorer.

Scarcely a generation had passed after the Great Famine when Europe was hit by a global pandemic: the Black Death. The Black Death was almost certainly an outbreak of Bubonic Plague, caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*. This disease has an extremely high mortality rate—certain varieties can have a mortality rate of over ninety-nine percent, and even the more survivable varieties usually kill the majority of the infected. The Plague acts in three ways: the variety called Bubonic Plague results in painful, swollen lumps around the armpits, crotch, and neck (locations associated with the lymph nodes); when they burst, a foul-smelling pus emerges. The septicemic variety results in skin turning black and dying all over the body, and the pneumonic variety—almost always fatal—shows no visible symptoms, but affects the lungs, and can cause a victim to go from healthy to dead in the space of twenty-four hours.

The pandemic began in the Yuan Empire (see Chapter Eleven). Unfortunately for the rest of the world, the trade routes opened by the Mongols meant that not only could ideas and technology travel, but that disease could as well. The Plague began in the East and Central Asia, but it quickly spread to the Middle East and North Africa, to the Swahili Coast, and eventually to Western Europe.

Its impacts were calamitous. A little over half of Europe's population died. After the first outbreak of the Plague, between 1347 and 1351, less virulent outbreaks continued to strike Europe nearly every year until 1782. Europe's population began a long decline; it did not start recovering until the fifteenth century. It did not return to its pre-Plague levels until the seventeenth (and in some regions, the eighteenth) century. Casualty rates among clergy were as high as sixty percent, with some monastic houses having casualty rates as high as ninety-nine percent, as monks living in communal environments were more likely to spread disease.



Figure 12.22 | Victims of the Black Death | Note that above, we can see St. Sebastian in heaven praying to God on behalf of the Plague's victims. He was known for having been executed by arrows during the reign of Diocletian, and so Christian art usually pictured him as being covered in arrows. Author: Jose Lieferinx
Source: The Walters Art Museum
License: CC0

In the aftermath of the Plague, however, living conditions for those peasants who survived improved in many ways. Because there were fewer people, those who survived had access to more lands and resources. In addition, the need to find peasants to work the lands of the nobility meant that nobles often offered better wages and living conditions to those who would settle on their lands. As a result, peasant wages rose and serfdom in Western Europe gradually vanished. Although in some kingdoms, monarchs and their assemblies attempted to create legislation to reinforce the social status of the peasantry, these efforts were often unsuccessful. This failure to maintain pre-existing status distinctions stood in contrast to Mamluk Egypt, where, in the aftermath of the Plague, Egypt's ruling class of largely Turkic Mamluks managed to keep the peasantry in a firmly subordinate role and prevent the rise of peasant wages.

12.23 WAR

Famine and disease were not the only disasters to strike late medieval Europe. The fourteenth century also saw an increase in both civil wars and wars between states. The Holy Roman



Figure 12.23 | England's King Edward III Surveying the Dead after the Battle of Crécy | Note that by the fourteenth century, a knight's armor was a combination of chain mail and metal plates.

Author: Jean Froissart
Source: Wikimedia Commons
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Empire saw nearly a decade of civil war (1314 – 1326) between rival emperors and, because of the close relations of their kings, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway experienced frequent combinations of civil and interstate war until the 1397 Union of Kalmar brought the three together under one crown.

The longest-running of these wars was between England and France, the so-called Hundred Years' War (1337 – 1453). In 1328, the French king Charles IV died without a direct heir. England's king, Edward III (r. 1327 – 1377), related to the French royal family, claimed to be rightful heir to the crown of France. The resulting war would last over a century, although it was broken by frequent, lengthy truces. Although France had many more people than England, the kingdom of England was often able to defeat it. The main reason was that the English kings made increasing use of trained, disciplined infantry armies. Horses are effective in battle against raiders or other horsemen. A horse, however, is less effective when

an infantry formation is able to present a solid front against the horses and use missile weapons on those horses before they can close with their enemy. Using a combination of archers and infantry, the English were able to inflict severe defeats on the French at both Crécy (26 August 1346) and Poitiers (19 September 1356).

The war was particularly hard on the civilians of the French countryside: the method of waging war of a pre-modern army often involved invading enemy territory and burning crops, looting villages, and murdering civilians. French peasants, who had suffered first from the Plague and then from war, rose in rebellion in 1358, but this rebellion was ruthlessly crushed, with the peasants slaughtered and leaders brutally executed.

The Hundred Years' War would spill over into Spain, which itself was suffering from a vicious war between Castile and Aragon that eventually caused a Castilian civil war, with both French and English intervening.

The wars of the fourteenth and especially fifteenth century saw not only an increasing use of trained, professional armies, but also the employment of gunpowder weapons, invented in Song China and first seen in Europe in the early 1300s. At first, firearms were limited to heavy, cumbersome artillery pieces that were deployed from fixed points. Their use on the battlefield and in sieges was limited, although by the fifteenth century, cannons could blast open the gates of most existing fortifications. By the mid-1400s, the arquebus, a man-transportable firearm, appeared on the battlefield in Spain, bringing gunpowder to the individual infantryman.

12.24 SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES

Meanwhile, in Eastern Europe, the restored Byzantine Empire was unable to fully re-establish itself even as a regional power in the Aegean. The warring Italian city-states of Genoa and Venice controlled many of the best ports of the Aegean and Black Sea, and a new Turkic power, that of the Ottomans, was rising in Central Anatolia in the aftermath of the Mongol destruction of the Saljuq sultanate. Emperor Andronikos II (r. 1282 – 1328) hired a company of mercenaries from the region of Spain called Catalonia, but this Catalan Company, although it won some victories against the Turks, eventually turned on its employer and established a state in Athens that would last for seventy years. With the failure of the Catalan Company to shore up Byzantine defenses in Anatolia, by 1331, nearly all Byzantine territory in Asia Minor had



Figure 12.24 | Late Medieval Serbian Monastery

Author: Petar Milosevic

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fallen under Turkish rule; shortly thereafter, the nascent Ottoman Empire began expanding into southeastern Europe.

The disintegration of the Byzantine state did allow for the fourteenth-century flourishing of Serbian and Bulgarian Empires, whose cultures emerged as a melding of both Greek and Slavic elements to create a unique synthesis of cultures and institutions. In the end, though, these Empires would eventually be overwhelmed by the Turks, with the Ottomans conquering Serbia between 1389 and 1459 and Bulgaria in 1396. But even as the Byzantine state crumbled, intellectual activity flourished in the Orthodox Church. Greek intellectuals of the fourteenth century sought to engage with the thought of Aquinas and experiment with new forms of prayer and meditation.

In the end, Ottoman power swept away all resistance, Bulgar, Serbian, and Byzantine, and in 1453, the Turkish army conquered Constantinople. After two thousand years, the last remnant of the Roman Empire was gone. In the meantime, though, the fall of the Byzantine Empire would also be one factor eventually contributing to Europe's Renaissance.

12.25 THE LATE MEDIEVAL PAPACY

In 1250, the papacy looked like it was at its high point. After nearly two centuries of struggle, the popes had definitively broken the power of the Holy Roman Empire. Within less than a century, however, the power and prestige of the papacy would be heavily damaged.

The first major blow came when Pope Boniface VIII (r. 1294 – 1303) clashed with King Philip IV (r. 1285 – 1314) of France. When King Philip attempted to tax French clergy, Pope Boniface resisted strongly, claiming not only that a king had no right to tax any clergy, but also that all earthly authority was subordinate to the authority of the popes, who were rightful lords of the earth. This conflict ended when King Philip had a gang of mercenaries kidnap and abuse the pope. Even though Boniface himself escaped, he died of the shock shortly thereafter.

In order to avoid further antagonizing the French crown, the College of Cardinals (those churchmen in Rome who elect the pope) elected Clement V (r. 1305 – 1314), a Frenchman, to succeed him. Clement, however, never took up residence in Rome. In 1309, he settled the papal court in



Figure 12.25 | The Kidnapping of Pope Boniface VIII

Author: Giovanni Villani

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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Avignon, a city owned by the papacy which sat just across the border of the Kingdom of France. To many observers at the time, it looked as though the papacy had been relocated to France under the thumb of the French monarchy.

The Italian poet Petrarch referred to the period when the papacy resided at Avignon as the **Babylonian Captivity of the Church**. He was referring metaphorically to the account in the Old Testament (also referred to as the Hebrew Bible) in which the people of Judaea had been held captive in the city of Babylon. Petrarch was insinuating that God's community was now held captive in a foreign land rather than occupying Rome, the city of St. Peter and thirteen subsequent centuries of popes.



Figure 12.26 | The Papal Palace at Avignon

Author: Jean-Marc Rosier

Source: Original Work

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The crisis would only grow worse. In 1377, Pope Gregory XI (r. 1370 – 1378) moved the papal court back to Rome. At his death, the cardinals, pressured by an angry Roman mob, elected Urban VI, an Italian. Urban, however, soon proved to be erratic and abusive, so many cardinals fled Rome to Avignon, where they elected another pope. The result was that the Catholic Christian world now had two popes, each one claiming to be the rightful representative of Jesus Christ on earth. This period, lasting from 1378 to 1417, is known as the **Great Schism**; it resulted in a divided church, with different bishops following different popes. A 1409 council convened to

depose both popes and appoint a single pope instead resulted in three popes, as neither Rome nor the Avignon papacy recognized this new pope.

In the end, although the conflict was resolved with the **Council of Constance** (1415 – 1417) deposing all three popes and selecting a new one, the prestige of the papacy had been tarnished. The popes spent much of the later fifteenth century attempting to rebuild the Church's authority and prestige, although whether they would fully succeed remained to be seen.

12.26 THE EUROPEAN RENAISSANCE

No intellectual movement can be traced to a single cause. An idea has many parents and even more children. But if we look to the Mediterranean world of the fourteenth century, we can find at least a few causes of an intellectual and cultural movement historians generally call the **Italian Renaissance**. Renaissance comes from the French word for rebirth. It was an intellectual movement whose ideals were to return to the art, literature, and culture of Ancient Greece and Rome.

Northern Italy was well-suited to allow for the emergence of the Renaissance. Thanks to Mediterranean trade, it was one of the wealthiest and most urbanized regions of Western Europe. It was also politically fragmented so that the princes of its many courts all offered sponsorship to artists and intellectuals. Moreover Italy's education system had focused more on the literature of Ancient Rome than the rest of Europe, whose scholastic curriculum often focused on logic and philosophy.

In this environment, the Italian poet Francesco Petrarca's (1307 – 1374) writings prompted a greater interest in the literature of Ancient Rome. This focus on studying literature rather than philosophy and theology is often known as **humanism**, since poetry and literature were called humanistic studies in medieval schools. Another key element of the humanistic movement was that its proponents believed in studying the ancient texts themselves rather than the centuries of commentaries that had grown up around these texts. These values of returning to the original texts shorn of their commentaries also led to an increase in the study of how the writers of ancient Rome had used the Latin



Figure 12.27 | Manuel Chrysoloras

Author: Paolo Uccello
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language and even of how Latin style had altered during different times in the Roman Empire's history.

Originally, humanistic scholars had focused on the study of Latin. But other circumstances soon brought about a greater emphasis on the study of Greek. As the Byzantine Empire crumbled before the Ottoman Turks, many Greek-speaking refugees fleeing the Aegean area settled in Italy, particularly in the city-state of Florence. These refugees brought Greek books with them and founded schools for the study of Greek. In Western Europe after the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century, the study of Greek had declined.



Figure 12.28 | Santa Maria del Fiore

Author: User "Enne"

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Figure 12.29 | Donatello's David

Author: Donatello

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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As a result, most readers had known of the literature of Ancient Greece, but they had usually only known it in Latin summaries. By the twelfth century, Western Europeans had read the philosophy of Aristotle and the science of Ptolemy, but usually they knew these philosophers only in translations—which had often been translated from Greek to Arabic to Latin.

So a return to the study of Greek meant that scholars were now reading Greek literature in its original language. Manuel Chrysoloras (c. 1350 – 1415) established a school for the study of Greek in Florence. Western Europeans now had direct access to most of the writings of Plato and Homer for the first time in centuries.

This interest in the culture of the ancient world also led to an interest in the art and architecture of Greece and Rome. Churches, such as Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence (built between 1420 and 1436), sprang up in imitation of the domed temples (and churches) of ancient Rome, while sculptors such as Donatello (1386 – 1466) produced naturalistic sculptures the like of which had not been seen in more than a thousand years.



Figure 12.30 | Niccolò Machiavelli

Author: Santi di Tito

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Figure 12.31 | Desiderius Erasmus

Author: Holbein

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This intellectual movement was not simply an affair of scholars and artists. Indeed, its impacts would be far-reaching throughout Western Europe. The children of princes and wealthy merchants gradually came to be educated along humanistic lines, and the fashion for a humanistic education would eventually spread from Italy to the elites of all Western Europe.

Humanism's political impacts would be broad ranging as well. Since the eighth century, the popes had relied on the text of the Donation of Constantine in their struggles with the Holy Roman Empire and to demonstrate their right to rule as earthly princes as well as to spiritually direct the Church. In 1440, the humanist scholar Lorenzo Valla (1407 – 1457) analyzed the Donation of Constantine—and showed definitively that it was a forgery. Its Latin writing style was most certainly *not* the Latin of fourth-century Rome. Valla had shown that one of the foundational documents by which the papacy claimed legitimacy as an earthly power was a fraud.

Even the ideals of how a ruler should govern came under the influence of Renaissance humanism. In his analysis of the historical writings of Ancient Rome, the humanist Niccolò Machiavelli (1469 – 1527) argued that the circumstances of history show that a prince should not necessarily attempt to rule virtuously, but instead should ruthlessly set aside ethics and morality in order to accomplish the goals of the state. One should note that in many ways rulers already behaved this way, but Machiavelli gave an intellectual justification for doing so.

And, of course, an intense study of the language of ancient texts would lead to an intense study of the ancient text that was most important for Western Europe of the later Middle Ages: the Bible. Humanists such as the Dutch scholar Desiderius Erasmus (1469 – 1536) used the tools of linguistic investigation to analyze the Greek text of the New Testament. Other scholars also began looking at the Bible not with the intellectual tools of logic and philosophy, but with linguistic analysis. They began to look at such a text

as it had been written, and not at the intervening fourteen centuries of commentary. The results of such reading were explosive.

12.27 STATES IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES AND RENAISSANCE

As Europe transitioned into the fifteenth century, two of Europe's most organized states remained locked in destructive warfare. England's king Henry V (r. 1413 – 1422) came close to conquering all of France, aided largely by the fact that France itself was riven by a civil war between two powerful houses of nobles, the Armagnacs and Burgundians. Eventually, however, when France's rival houses ended their differences, the unified nation was able to expel English troops, using trained and disciplined infantry funded by a centralized apparatus of taxation. The Hundred Years' War thus ended in 1453. England's loss in France was followed by a civil war (usually known as the Wars of the Roses because the rival factions used a red and a white rose, respectively, as their emblems) that lasted from 1455 to 1485.

In Northern Italy, at the same time as the brilliant artistic achievements of the Italian Renaissance, the city-states of Italy were locked in near-continual warfare until the 1454 Treaty of Lodi brought almost half a century of peace to the Italian peninsula. That peace would come to an end, however, in 1494, when King Charles VIII of France (r. 1483 – 1498) turned the power of the newly consolidated French state to an invasion of Italy. In the wars that followed, the cannons used by the French army were able to effortlessly batter down the Italian cities' and castles' medieval walls. A new era of warfare was beginning.

12.28 IBERIA AND THE ATLANTIC: NEW WORLDS

To the southwest of Europe, events in Iberia would eventually bring about several changes that would usher in the end of Europe's Middle Ages and the beginnings of modern times.

Portugal, Castile, and Aragon were steeped in the traditions of the *Reconquista*, of expanding the dominion of the Christian world by force of arms. The *Reconquista* had established a habit in the Iberian kingdoms of conquering Muslims lands and reducing their Muslim and Jewish inhabitants to subordinate status (or in some cases to outright slavery). By the fifteenth century, these kingdoms had nearly completed the *Reconquista*. As stated earlier, only Granada remained under Muslim rule.

Meanwhile, over the fourteenth century, both Venice and the Ottoman Empire had forced the Italian city-state of Genoa out of the Eastern Mediterranean, so its sailors and ship owners turned their focus to the western half of the Mediterranean Sea. Constantly on the lookout for new markets, Genoese merchants already knew from trade with the Islamic Maghreb that West Africa was a source of gold. In 1324, Mansa Musa's *hajj* to Mecca (see Chapter Nine) had put so much gold into circulation that the price of gold fell by twenty-five percent in the Mediterranean market. If the Muslim rulers of Morocco controlled the overland routes by which gold traveled from Mali to the Mediterranean, then perhaps certain sailors could bypass the overland route by sailing into the Atlantic and around the Sahara and arrive at the source of Africa's gold.



Map 12.11 | Iberia in 1462 CE

Author: Ian Mladjov

Source: Original Work

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By 1300, the combination of the compass, a map called the **portolan** (a map that could accurately represent coastlines), and ships that by operating on sails rather than oars needed fewer people meant that European navigators could begin venturing into open waters of the Atlantic that the Arabs and Ancient Romans had largely avoided.

Genoese merchants began tentatively sailing into the Atlantic. In the early 1300s, they were regularly visiting the Canary Islands. These merchants (and others from Western Europe) increasingly served in the employ of Iberian kings. In 1404, King Henry III of Castile (r. 1390 – 1406) began Spanish efforts to conquer the Canaries and convert their indigenous peoples to Christianity. Over the next century, the Spanish would conquer and settle the islands, driven by the *Reconquista* ideal of the military spread of the Christian faith. In the mid-fifteenth century, the kingdom of Portugal began the conquest and colonization of the Azores, nearly 700 miles to the southwest of Iberia in the Atlantic.

Genoese merchants established sugar plantations on these chains of islands, and those plantations were worked by slave labor. Earlier, in the thirteenth century, Venetian merchants had begun to grow sugar (long cultivated in the Muslim world) in their island colonies in the Mediterranean, and labor for these colonies came from the Mediterranean slave trade. Genoese merchants copied this economic model first in Sicily and then, when they began to operate in the Atlantic, in the Canaries and Azores. Often they would purchase the slaves for these

plantations from Africans on the continent's Atlantic coast. Thus began a slave trade that would be as lucrative for its operators as it was brutal for its victims.

The lure of African gold drew mariners serving Iberian monarchs south and west. By 1482, the Portuguese had established the fort and trading post of São Jorge da Mina on the coast of Guinea. And in the Iberian peninsula, in 1479, Isabella, the Queen of Castile, married King Ferdinand II of Aragon, creating a united Spanish kingdom. In 1492, these monarchs, devout Catholics both, completed the *Reconquista*, conquering Granada, the last Muslim territory in Spain. All of Spain was now under Christian rule, and the king and queen were eager to continue spreading the Catholic religion.

They sponsored a voyage by the Genoese sailor Christopher Columbus. Columbus had miscalculated the size of the world, so he believed that it would be possible to sail to Asia by traveling west across the Atlantic Ocean. European mariners knew the world was a sphere but believed that it was impossible to carry adequate supplies to sail around the world due to the sheer distance between Europe and Asia. When Columbus made landfall in 1492, it was not in East Asia (for he had in fact been wrong, drastically underestimating the size of the world), but rather in a set of lands previously unknown to the peoples of the Eastern Hemisphere. The world was about to be forever changed.

12.29 CONCLUSION

Over the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a rise in agricultural production led to an increase in Western Europe's wealth and population. The chaos of the tenth and eleventh centuries had



Map 12.12 | A Portolan Map of Europe and Africa from 1375 CE | Note the depiction of Mansa Musa holding a gold nugget on the bottom of the map and the Azores and Canaries on the bottom left

Author: Cresques Abraham

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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brought about the origin of a feudal system dominated by knights. Feudal Europe was thus able to respond to the Byzantine Empire's requests for help when its field army was annihilated by Saljuq Turks, resulting in the First Crusade and establishment of a set of Crusader States in the Eastern Mediterranean, but these Crusader states were gradually conquered by Muslim powers over the next two centuries. An army of Crusaders would eventually defeat and break up the Byzantine Empire, and although that empire would be re-established, it was never strong enough to resist the pressure of the Ottoman Turks, who finally conquered it in 1453.

As Western Europe grew in population and urbanized, the urban cathedral schools became the center of an increase in intellectual activity over the twelfth century known as the Twelfth-Century Renaissance. Thinkers of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance used the philosophy of the Ancient Greeks and Arabs to understand the world, and in the thirteenth century the intellectual movement known as scholasticism would seek to reconcile Christianity with Arabic and Ancient Greek Philosophy. By the end of the Middle Ages, Europe's intellectuals would seek to study the writings of the Ancient Greeks and Romans, and not the commentators of the previous thousand years. This movement was known as Renaissance humanism.

Europe's states—with the notable exception of the Holy Roman Empire—gradually consolidated, but the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw increasing interstate warfare. The states that emerged out of this endemic war, however, were more militarily powerful and more centralized. At the same time, sailors in the service of Spain and Portugal were exploring the Atlantic and West Africa until the close of the fifteenth century, when Western Europeans discovered the existence of the continents of the Western Hemisphere.

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12.31 LINKS TO PRIMARY SOURCES

Fordham University's Internet Medieval Sourcebook contains a wide variety of primary source documents from the Middle Ages (that is, 500 to 1500) hosted by Fordham University. From the main page one can find links based on period and category.

The Internet Medieval Sourcebook:

<http://legacy.fordham.edu/Halsall/sbook.asp>

Georgetown University's The Labyrinth likewise contains a large selection of links to both primary sources and art and art historical materials. Some of the pages have succumbed to "link rot" due to the relative age of the site, but it remains one of the best collections of primary source material available online for free.

The Labyrinth:

<https://blogs.commonstons.georgetown.edu/labyrinth>