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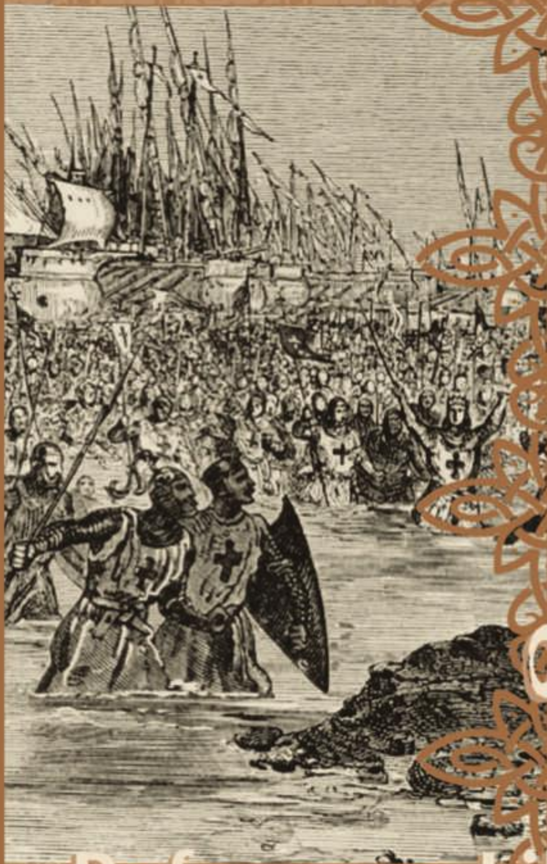

Middle Ages

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Middle Ages Almanac

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Middle Ages: Almanac

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Reader's Guide

The Middle Ages was an era of great changes in civilization, a transition between ancient times and the modern world. Lasting roughly from A.D. 500 to 1500, the period saw the growth of the Roman Catholic Church in Western Europe and the spread of the Islamic faith in the Middle East. Around the world, empires—the Byzantine, Mongol, and Incan—rose and fell, and the first nation-states emerged in France, England, and Spain. Despite the beauty of illuminated manuscripts, soaring Gothic cathedrals, and the literary classics of Augustine and Dante, Europe's civilization lagged far behind that of the technologically advanced, administratively organized, and economically wealthy realms of the Arab world, West Africa, India, and China.

Middle Ages: Almanac offers a comprehensive overview of this period, these empires, and the societies they created. Several of its nineteen chapters are devoted to specific eras, such as the Carolingian Age (about 750–1000) and the late Middle Ages (1300–1500), while others focus on geographical regions, including China, Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Americas. Distinct ethnic and religious groups, among them

the Jewish people; the Mongols; the Arabs, Turks, and other Middle Eastern peoples; the Ghanaians, Songhai, and Malians of West Africa; and the Maya and Aztecs of Central America are extensively covered as well.

Additional features

Nearly one hundred illustrations and maps and dozens of sidebar boxes exploring high-interest topics bring the text to life. Definitions of unfamiliar terms and a list of books and Web sites to consult for more information are included in each chapter. The volume also contains a timeline of events, a general glossary, research and activity ideas, and an index offering easy access to the people, places, and subjects discussed throughout *Middle Ages: Almanac*.

Dedication

To Margaret, my mother; to Deidre, my wife; and to Tyler, my daughter.

Comments and suggestions

We welcome your comments on this work as well as your suggestions for topics to be featured in future editions of *Middle Ages: Almanac*. Please write: Editors, *Middle Ages: Almanac,* U•X•L, 27500 Drake Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535; call toll-free: 1-800-877-4253; fax: 248-699-8097; or send e-mail via www.galegroup.com.

Timeline of Events in the Middle Ages

122 Roman forces begin building Hadrian's Wall, a barrier intended to protect Roman citizens from Picts, or native Scots, on the isle of Britain. The wall is a sign that the Roman Empire has ceased to expand and will begin to shrink in coming years.

135 Banished from Jerusalem by the Romans, Jews begin to spread throughout the Mediterranean.

180 The death of Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius marks the end of the "Pax Romana," or Roman peace. Years of instability follow, and although Rome recovers numerous times, this is the beginning of Rome's three-century decline.

220 The Han dynasty of China comes to an end, plunging the country into three centuries of turmoil.

c. 300 Mayan culture enters the Classic Period, which lasts until 925, during which time the Maya undertake the vast majority of their most important building projects.

300s Buddhism, which originated in India, begins to take hold in China.

312 Roman emperor Constantine converts to Christianity. As a result, the empire that once persecuted Christians will embrace their religion and eventually will begin to persecute other religions.

325 Constantine calls the Council of Nicaea, first of many ecumenical councils at which gatherings of bishops determine official church policy.

325 King Ezana of Aksum accepts Christianity. Eventually most of Ethiopia will become Christianized as a result.

330 Constantine establishes Byzantium as eastern capital of the Roman Empire.

372 Headed westward, the Huns cross the Volga River, displacing the Ostrogoths and setting in motion a chain reaction that ultimately leads to the downfall of the Western Roman Empire.

395 After the death of Emperor Theodosius, the Roman Empire is permanently divided in half. As time passes, the Eastern Roman Empire (later known as the Byzantine Empire) distances itself from the declining Western Roman Empire.

410 Led by Alaric, the Visigoths sack Rome, dealing the Western Roman Empire a blow from which it will never recover.

429 Having subdued Gaul (France) and Spain, the Vandals cross the Mediterranean to North Africa and conquer most Roman territories there.

Mid-400s Angles, Saxons, and Jutes from Scandinavia invade the former Roman colony of Britain.

451 Roman troops score their last important victory, against Attila's Huns in Gaul.

455 The Vandals sack Rome.

476 The German leader Odoacer removes Emperor Romulus Augustulus and crowns himself "king of Italy." This incident marks the end of the Western Roman Empire.

481 The Merovingian Age, named for the only powerful dynasty in Western Europe during the period, begins when Clovis takes the throne in France.

500 Date commonly cited as beginning of Middle Ages.

500–1000 Era in European history often referred to as the Dark Ages, or Early Middle Ages.

529 Benedict of Nursia and his followers establish the monastery at Monte Cassino, Italy. This marks the beginning of the monastic tradition in Europe.

534–563 Belisarius and other generals under orders from Justinian recapture much of the Western Roman Empire, including parts of Italy, Spain, and North Africa. The victories are costly, however, and soon after Justinian's death these lands will fall back into the hands of barbarian tribes such as the Vandals and Lombards.

535 Justinian establishes his legal code, a model for the laws in many Western nations today.

540 The Huns, or Hunas, destroy India's Gupta Empire, plunging much of the Indian subcontinent into a state of anarchy.

541 The Byzantine Empire is hit by the first wave of a plague that will continue to strike off and on for the next two centuries. Millions of people die in these epidemics, which greatly weaken the once-powerful empire.

563 Irish monk St. Columba forms the first important monastic settlement in the British Isles, at Iona off the coast of Scotland. In years to come, with Western Europe's cultural center in Italy under attack from barbarians, monks in places such as Iona and Lindisfarne help preserve reading and writing.

568 The last wave of barbarian tribes descends on Italy as the Lombards invade. They will control the peninsula until 756.

589 More than three centuries of upheaval in China come to an end with the establishment of the Sui dynasty.

590 Pope Gregory I begins his fourteen-year reign. Also known as Gregory the Great, he ensures the survival

of the church and becomes one of its greatest medieval leaders.

Late 500s Invading Europe, a tribe called the Avars introduces the stirrup, which they picked up in their migration from Central Asia. By making horsebound combat possible, the stirrup ultimately paves the way for knighthood and feudalism.

618 A revolt against the cruel Sui dynasty leads to the establishment of the highly powerful and efficient T'ang dynasty in China.

622 Arab prophet Muhammad and his followers escape the city of Mecca. This event, known as the *hegira,* marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar.

632–661 Following the death of Muhammad, the Arab Muslims are led by a series of four caliphs who greatly expand Muslim territories to include most of the Middle East.

661 The fifth caliph, Mu'awiya, founds the Umayyad caliphate, which will rule the Muslim world from Damascus, Syria, until 750.

680 Husayn, son of Ali (the fourth caliph, assassinated in 661), leads an unsuccessful revolt against Umayyad rule. As a result, his supporters, the Shi'ite Muslims—whose power base is chiefly in Persia—break away from the majority, who are called Sunni Muslims.

711 Moors from North Africa invade Spain, taking over from the Visigoths. Muslims will rule parts of the Iberian Peninsula until 1492.

711 Arabs invade the Sind in western India, establishing a Muslim foothold on the Indian subcontinent.

727 In Greece, the Iconoclasts begin a sixty-year war on icons, or images of saints and other religious figures, which they consider idols. Though the Greek Orthodox Church ultimately rejects iconoclasm, the controversy helps widen a growing division between Eastern and Western Christianity.

732 A force led by Charles Martel repels Moorish invaders at Tours, halting Islam's advance into Western Europe.

The battle firmly establishes the use of armored cavalrymen (in other words, knights) in warfare.

750 A descendant of Muhammad's uncle Abbas begins killing off all the Umayyad leaders and establishes the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad, Iraq.

751 The Carolingian Age begins when Charles Martel's son Pepin III, with the support of the pope, removes the last Merovingian king from power.

751 Defeated by Arab armies at Talas, China's T'ang dynasty begins to decline. A revolt led by An Lu-shan in 755 adds to its troubles.

756 Pepin defeats the Lombards in Italy and in an act called the Donation of Pepin turns their lands over to the church. This creates the Papal States, which will exist for more than eleven hundred years.

768 Reign of Charlemagne, greatest ruler of Western Europe during the Early Middle Ages, begins.

793 Viking raiders destroy the church at Lindisfarne off the coast of England. Lindisfarne was one of the places where civilized learning had weathered the darkest years of the Middle Ages. Thus begins two centuries of terror as more invaders pour out of Scandinavia and spread throughout Europe.

800 Pope Leo III crowns Charlemagne "Emperor of All the Romans." This marks the beginning of the political alliance later to take shape under Otto the Great as the Holy Roman Empire.

c. 800 The Khmers, or Cambodians, adopt Hinduism under the leadership of their first powerful king, Jayavarman II, founder of the Angkor Empire.

800s Feudalism takes shape in Western Europe.

820 A group of Vikings settles in northwestern France, where they will become known as Normans.

827 Muslims take Sicily, which they will hold until 1072. Later in the 800s, they very nearly win control of Italy itself.

843 In the Treaty of Verdun, Charlemagne's son Louis the Pious divides the Carolingian Empire among his three

sons. These three parts come to be known as the West Frankish Empire, consisting chiefly of modern France; the "Middle Kingdom," a strip running from what is now the Netherlands all the way down to Italy; and the East Frankish Empire, or modern Germany. The Middle Kingdom soon dissolves into a patchwork of tiny principalities.

862 A group of Vikings called the Varangians invade Eastern Europe, where they come to be known as *Rus,* the first Russians. Under the leadership of Rurik, they establish the city of Novgorod and found a dynasty that will remain in power for more than seven centuries.

907 China's T'ang dynasty comes to an end after almost three centuries of rule, and the empire enters a period of instability known as "Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms."

910 Establishment of the Benedictine monastery at Cluny in France signifies a recovery of the church, whose leaders had become increasingly corrupt in the preceding centuries.

911 The last of the Carolingian line in the East Frankish Empire dies. Seven years later, Henry the Fowler of Saxony, father of Otto the Great, takes leadership of the German states.

960 The Oghuz, a group of Turks that includes the Seljuks, convert to Islam.

960 Beginning of the Sung dynasty in China.

962 Having conquered most of Central Europe, Otto the Great is crowned emperor in Rome, reviving Charlemagne's title. From this point on, most German kings are also crowned ruler of the Holy Roman Empire.

987 Russia converts to Greek Orthodox Christianity and gradually begins adopting Byzantine culture after Vladimir the Great marries Anne, sister of Emperor Basil II.

987 The last Carolingian ruler of France dies without an heir, and Hugh Capet takes the throne, establishing a dynasty that will last until 1328.

1000–1300 Era in European history often referred to as the High Middle Ages.

1000s Guilds, which had existed in ancient times but disappeared from Western Europe during the Early Middle Ages, come back into existence.

1001 Vikings led by Leif Eriksson sail westward to North America and during the next two decades will conduct a number of raids on the coast of what is now Canada.

1001 A second Muslim invasion of the Indian subcontinent, this time by Turks, takes place as the Ghaznavids subdue a large region in what is now Afghanistan, Pakistan, and western India.

1025 Basil II dies, having taken the Byzantine Empire to its greatest height since Justinian five centuries earlier; however, it begins a rapid decline soon afterward.

1035 Death of Canute, the last great Viking ruler, who briefly controlled England, Denmark, and Norway.

1054 After centuries of disagreement over numerous issues, the Greek Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church officially separate.

1060 Five years after Turks seize control of Baghdad from the declining Abbasid caliphate, their leader, Toghril Beg, declares himself sultan and thus establishes the Seljuk dynasty.

1066 William the Conqueror leads an invading force that defeats an Anglo-Saxon army at Hastings and wins control of England. The Norman invasion is the most important event of medieval English history, greatly affecting the future of English culture and language.

1071 The Seljuk Turks defeat Byzantine forces at the Battle of Manzikert in Armenia. As a result, the Turks gain a foothold in Asia Minor (today known as Turkey) and the Byzantine Empire begins a long, slow decline.

1071 A Norman warlord named Robert Guiscard drives the last Byzantine forces out of Italy. Byzantium had controlled parts of the peninsula since the time of Justinian.

1072 Robert Guiscard's brother Roger expels the Arabs from Sicily and takes control of the island.

1075–77 Pope Gregory VII and Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV become embroiled in a church-state struggle called the Investiture Controversy, a debate over whether popes or emperors should have the right to appoint local bishops. Deserted by his supporters, Henry stands barefoot in the snow for three days outside the gates of a castle in Canossa, Italy, waiting to beg the pope's forgiveness.

1080 Invaders from Morocco destroy Ghana, the first significant kingdom in sub-Saharan Africa.

1084 Reversing the results of an earlier round in the Investiture Controversy, Henry IV takes Rome and forcibly removes Gregory VII from power. The pope dies soon afterward, broken and humiliated.

1092 Following the death of their sultan Malik Shah, the Seljuk Turks begin to decline.

1094 Norman warrior Bohemond, son of Robert Guiscard, takes control of Rome from Henry IV and hands the city over to Pope Urban II. Fearing the Normans' power and aware that he owes them a great debt, Urban looks for something to divert their attention.

1095 Byzantine Emperor Alexis Comnenus asks Urban II for military assistance against the Turks. Urban preaches a sermon to raise support at the Council of Clermont in France, and in the resulting fervor the First Crusade begins. Among its leaders are Bohemond and his nephew Tancred.

1096–97 A pathetic sideshow called the Peasants' Crusade plays out before the real First Crusade gets underway. The peasants begin by robbing and killing thousands of Jews in Germany; then, led by Peter the Hermit, they march toward the Holy Land, wreaking havoc as they go. In Anatolia a local Turkish sultan leads them into a trap, and most of the peasants are killed.

1097–99 The armies of the official First Crusade conquer Edessa and Antioch, the first of several "crusader states."

1099 The First Crusade ends in victory for the Europeans as they conquer Jerusalem. It is a costly victory, however—one in which thousands of innocent Muslims, as well as many Europeans, have been brutally slaughtered—and it sows resentment between Muslims and Christians that remains strong today.

c. 1100–1300 Many of the aspects of life most commonly associated with the Middle Ages, including heraldry and chivalry, make their appearance in Western Europe during this period. Returning crusaders adapt the defensive architecture they observed in fortresses of the Holy Land, resulting in the familiar design of the medieval castle. This is also the era of romantic and heroic tales such as those of King Arthur.

1100s Beginnings of medieval trading fairs in Champagne and Flanders, a sign of Europe's reawakening.

c. 1100 Inca civilization emerges in South America. Around this time, the Incas establish Cuzco (now in Peru), the oldest continually inhabited city in the New World.

1113 Founding of the first great chivalric order, the Knights Hospitalers.

1119 Founding of the Knights Templars, the second of the three great chivalric orders.

1127 An invasion by the Juchen nomads forces the Chinese to move their capital from Kaifeng southward to Hangchow. This marks the end of the Northern Sung period and the beginning of the Southern Sung.

c. 1140 In Cambodia Khmer emperor Suryavarman II develops the splendid temple complex of Angkor Wat.

1146 After the Muslims' capture of Edessa in 1144, Pope Eugenius III calls on the help of his former teacher, Bernard of Clairvaux, who makes a speech that leads to the launching of the Second Crusade.

1147–49 In the disastrous Second Crusade, armies from Europe are double-crossed by their crusader allies in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. They fail to recapture Edessa and suffer a heavy defeat at Damascus.

c. 1150 Romanesque, the dominant style of architecture in Western Europe since about 1000, gives way to the much more ornate and advanced style of Gothic. Also in this period the art of stained-glass windows reaches its height.

1158 Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa establishes Europe's first university at Bologna, Italy.

1159 Frederick I Barbarossa begins a quarter-century of fruitless, costly wars in which the Ghibellines and Guelphs—factions representing pro-imperial and pro-church forces, respectively—fight for control of northern Italy.

1160 German cities begin banding together to form the Hanseatic League, designed to help them secure greater trade privileges in international markets.

1163 Building begins on the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, perhaps the most well known example of Gothic architecture.

1165 A letter supposedly written by Prester John, a Christian monarch in the East, appears in Europe. Over the centuries that follow, Europeans will search in vain for Prester John, hoping for his aid in their war against Muslim forces. Even as Europe enters the modern era, early proponents of exploration such as Henry the Navigator will remain inspired by the quest for Prester John's kingdom.

1182 France under Philip II Augustus becomes the first European country to expel all its Jews.

1183 Frederick I Barbarossa signs the Peace of Constance with the cities of the Lombard League, thus ending his long war in northern Italy. After this he will concentrate his attention on Germany and institute reforms that make him a hero in his homeland.

1185 For the first time, Japan comes under the rule of a shogun, or military dictator. Shoguns will remain in power for the next four centuries.

1187 Muslim armies under Saladin deal the crusaders a devastating blow at the Battle of Hittin in Palestine.

Shortly afterward, Saladin leads his armies in the reconquest of Jerusalem.

1189 In response to Saladin's victories, Europeans launch the Third Crusade.

1191 Led by Richard I of England and Philip II of France, crusaders take the city of Acre in Palestine.

1191 Founding of the Teutonic Knights, the last of the great chivalric orders.

1192 Richard I signs a treaty with Saladin, ending the Third Crusade.

1198 Pope Innocent III begins an eighteen-year reign that marks the high point of the church's power. Despite his great influence, however, when he calls for a new crusade to the Holy Land, he gets little response—a sign that the spirit behind the Crusades is dying.

c. 1200 Cambodia's Khmer Empire reaches its height under Jayavarman VII.

1202 Four years after the initial plea from the pope, the Fourth Crusade begins. Instead of going to the Holy Land, however, the crusaders become involved in a power struggle for the Byzantine throne.

1204 Acting on orders from the powerful city-state of Venice, crusaders take Constantinople, forcing the Byzantines to retreat to Trebizond in Turkey. The Fourth Crusade ends with the establishment of the Latin Empire.

1206 Qutb-ud-Din Aybak, the first independent Muslim ruler in India, establishes the Delhi Sultanate.

1206 Genghis Khan unites the Mongols for the first time in their history, and soon afterward leads them to war against the Sung dynasty in China.

1208 Pope Innocent III launches the Albigensian Crusade against the Cathars, a heretical sect in southern France.

1212 The pathetic "Children's Crusade" ends with most of its participants captured and sold into slavery in the Middle East.

1215 In Rome, Pope Innocent III convenes the Fourth Lateran Council. A number of traditions, such as regular confession of sin to a priest, are established at this, one of the most significant ecumenical councils in history.

1215 English noblemen force King John to sign the Magna Carta, which grants much greater power to the nobility. Ultimately the agreement will lead to increased freedom for the people from the power of both king and nobles.

1217–21 In the Fifth Crusade, armies from England, Germany, Hungary, and Austria attempt unsuccessfully to conquer Egypt.

1227 Genghis Khan dies, having conquered much of China and Central Asia, thus laying the foundation for the largest empire in history.

1228–29 The Sixth Crusade, led by Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, results in a treaty that briefly restores Christian control of Jerusalem—and does so with a minimum of bloodshed.

1229 The brutal Albigensian Crusade ends. Not only are the Cathars destroyed, but so is much of the French nobility, thus greatly strengthening the power of the French king.

1231 Pope Gregory IX establishes the Inquisition, a court through which the church will investigate, try, and punish cases of heresy.

c. 1235 The empire of Mali, the most powerful realm in sub-Saharan Africa at the time, takes shape under the leadership of Sundiata Keita.

1236 Mongol forces enter Russia and within a few years subdue the land, which becomes known as the Empire of the Golden Horde.

1239–40 In the Seventh Crusade, Europeans make another failed attempt to retake the Holy Land.

1241 After six years of campaigns in which they sliced across Russia and Eastern Europe, a Mongol force is poised to take Vienna, Austria, and thus to swarm

into Western Europe. But when their leader, Batu Khan, learns that the Great Khan Ogodai is dead, he rushes back to the Mongol capital at Karakorum to participate in choosing a successor.

1243 Back on the warpath, but this time in the Middle East, the Mongols defeat the last remnants of the Seljuk Turks.

1248–54 King Louis IX of France (St. Louis) leads the Eighth Crusade, this time against the Mamluks. The result is the same: yet another defeat for the Europeans.

c. 1250 The Aztecs settle in central Mexico.

1252 In Egypt, a group of former slave soldiers called the Mamluks take power from the Ayyubid dynasty, established many years before by Saladin.

1253 Mongol armies force the Thais from southern China into Southeast Asia, where they are destined to become the dominant power in later centuries.

1258 Hulagu Khan, who controls Mongol forces in southwestern Asia, kills the last Abbasid caliph and declares the region a separate khanate under his leadership as "Il-khan."

1260 The Mamluks become the first force to defeat the Mongols, in a battle at Goliath Spring in Palestine.

1260 Kublai Khan, greatest Mongol leader after his grandfather Genghis Khan, is declared Great Khan, or leader of the Mongols.

1261 Led by Michael VIII Palaeologus, the Byzantines recapture Constantinople from the Latin Empire, and Byzantium enjoys one last gasp of power before it goes into terminal decline.

1270–72 In the Ninth Crusade, last of the numbered crusades, King Louis IX of France again leads the Europeans against the Mamluks, who defeat European forces yet again.

1271 Marco Polo embarks on his celebrated journey to the East, which lasts twenty-four years.

1273 The Hapsburg dynasty—destined to remain a major factor in European politics until 1918—takes control of the Holy Roman Empire.

1273 Italian philosopher and theologian Thomas Aquinas completes the crowning work of his career, the monumental *Summa theologica*. The influential book will help lead to wider acceptance of the idea, introduced earlier by Moses Maimonides, Averroës, and Abelard, that reason and faith are compatible.

1279 Mongol forces under Kublai Khan win final victory over China's Sung dynasty. Thus begins the Yüan dynasty, the first time in Chinese history when the country has been ruled by foreigners.

1281 A Mongol force sent by Kublai Khan on a second attempt to take Japan—a first try, in 1274, also failed—is destroyed by a typhoon. The Japanese call it a "divine wind," or *kamikaze*.

1291 Mamluks conquer the last Christian stronghold at Acre, bringing to an end two centuries of crusades to conquer the Holy Land for Christendom.

1294 At the death of Kublai Khan, the Mongol realm is the largest empire in history, covering most of Asia and a large part of Europe. Actually it is four empires, including the Golden Horde in Russia; the Il-Khanate in the Middle East and Persia; Chagatai in Central Asia; and the Empire of the Great Khan, which includes China, Mongolia, and Korea. Within less than a century, however, this vast empire will have all but disappeared.

1299 Turkish chieftain Osman I refuses to pay tribute to the local Mongol rulers, marking the beginnings of the Ottoman Empire.

1300–1500 Era in European history often referred to as the Late Middle Ages.

1303 After years of conflict with Pope Boniface VIII, France's King Philip the Fair briefly has the pope arrested. This event and its aftermath marks the low point of the papacy during the Middle Ages.

1309 Pope Clement V, an ally of Philip the Fair, moves the papal seat from Rome to Avignon in southern France.

c. 1325 The Aztecs establish their capital at Tenochtitlán, on the site of present-day Mexico City.

1337 England and France begin fighting what will become known as the Hundred Years' War, an on-again, off-again struggle to control parts of France.

1347–51 Europe experiences one of the worst disasters in human history, an epidemic called the Black Death. Sometimes called simply "the Plague," in four years the Black Death kills some thirty-five million people, or approximately one-third of the European population in 1300.

1368 A group of Chinese rebels overthrows the Mongol Yüan dynasty and establishes the Ming dynasty, China's last native-born ruling house.

1378 The Catholic Church becomes embroiled in the Great Schism, which will last until 1417. During this time, there are rival popes in Rome and Avignon; and from 1409 to 1417, there is even a third pope in Pisa, Italy.

1389 Ottoman forces defeat the Serbs in battle at Kosovo Field. As a result, all of Southeastern Europe except for Greece falls under Turkish control.

1392 General Yi Song-ye seizes power in Korea and establishes a dynasty that will remain in control until 1910.

c. 1400 Melaka, or Malaya (modern-day Malaysia), adopts Islam. In later years, it will become a center for Muslim culture in Southeast Asia.

1402 After conquering much of southwestern and central Asia, Tamerlane defeats the Ottoman sultan Bajazed in battle. An unexpected result of their defeat is that the Ottomans, who seemed poised to take over much of Europe, go into a period of decline.

1413 India's Delhi Sultanate comes to an end. As a result, power in the subcontinent is splintered between the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar in the south and smaller Muslim states in northern and central India.

1415 English forces under King Henry V score a major victory against the French at Agincourt, one of the most important battles of the Hundred Years' War.

1417 The Council of Constance ends the Great Schism, affirming that Rome is the seat of the church and that Pope Martin V is its sole leader. Unfortunately for the church, the Great Schism has weakened it at the very time that it faces its greatest challenge ever—a gathering movement that will come to be known as the Reformation.

1418 The "school" of navigation founded by Prince Henry the Navigator sponsors the first of many expeditions that, over the next forty-two years, will greatly increase knowledge of the middle Atlantic Ocean and Africa's west coast. These are the earliest European voyages of exploration, of which there will be many in the next two centuries.

1428 In Southeast Asia, Vietnam unites under the leadership of the Le dynasty, which will turn the country into a regional power and control it until 1788.

1429 A tiny French army led by Joan of Arc forces the English to lift their siege on the town of Orléans, a victory that raises French spirits and makes it possible for France's king Charles VII to be crowned later that year. This marks a turning point in the Hundred Years' War.

1430–31 Captured by Burgundian forces, Joan of Arc is handed over to the English, who arrange her trial for witchcraft in a court of French priests. The trial, a mockery of justice, ends with Joan being burned at the stake.

1431 In Southeast Asia, the Thais conquer the Angkor Empire.

1431 The Aztecs become the dominant partner in a triple alliance with two nearby city-states and soon afterward gain control of the Valley of Mexico.

1438 Pachacutec Inca Yupanqui, greatest Inca ruler, takes the throne.

1441 Fourteen black slaves are brought from Africa to Portugal, where they are presented to Prince Henry the Navigator. This is the beginning of the African slave trade, which isn't abolished until more than four centuries later.

1451 The recovery of the Ottoman Empire, which had suffered a half-century of decline, begins under Mehmet the Conqueror.

1453 The Hundred Years' War ends with French victory.

1453 Turks under Mehmet the Conqueror march into Constantinople, bringing about the fall of the Byzantine Empire. Greece will remain part of the Ottoman Empire until 1829.

1455 Having developed a method of movable-type printing, Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz, Germany, prints his first book: a Bible. In the years to come, the invention of the printing press will prove to be one of the most important events in world history. By making possible the widespread distribution of books, it will lead to increased literacy, which in turn creates a more educated, skilled, and wealthy populace. It will also influence the spread of local languages, and thus of national independence movements, and also spurs on the gathering movement for religious reformation.

1455 Just two years after losing the Hundred Years' War to France, England is plunged into the Wars of the Roses, which will last until 1485.

1464 In the last-ever crusade, Pope Pius II attempts to retake Turkish-held Constantinople for Christendom. However, he dies en route to Greece, bringing the crusading movement to an end.

1472 Ivan the Great of Muscovy marries Zoë, niece of the last Byzantine emperor, and adopts the two-headed Byzantine eagle as the symbol of Russia—the "Third Rome" after Rome itself and Byzantium. His grandson, Ivan the Terrible, will in 1547 adopt the title *czar,* Russian for "caesar"—title of Roman and Byzantine emperors for the past fifteen hundred years.

1492 Spain, united by the 1469 marriage of its two most powerful monarchs, Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, drives out the last of the Muslims and expels all Jews. A less significant event of 1492, from the Spanish perspective, is the launch of a naval expedition in search of a westward sea route to China. Its leader is an Italian sailor named Christopher Columbus, who has grown up heavily influenced by Marco Polo's account of his travels.

1500 Date commonly cited as the end of Middle Ages, and the beginning of the Renaissance.

1517 Exactly a century after the Council of Constance ended the Great Schism, a German monk named Martin Luther publicly posts ninety-five theses, or statements challenging the established teachings of Catholicism, on the door of a church in Germany. The popes had managed to crush earlier efforts at reform, such as those led by Jan Hus of Bohemia, who was burned at the stake under orders from the Council of Constance. By now, however, the movement called the Reformation is much stronger, and Luther is far from its only leader. Over the next century, numerous new Protestant religious denominations will be established.

1521 Spanish forces led by the conquistador Hernán Cortés destroy the Aztec Empire.

1526 Babur, a descendant of Tamerlane, invades India and establishes what becomes the Mogul Empire.

1533 Francisco Pizarro and the Spanish forces with him arrive in Peru and soon bring about the end of the Inca Empire.

1591 Songhai, the last of the great premodern empires in Africa's Sudan region, falls to invaders from Morocco.

1806 In the process of conquering most of Europe, Napoleon Bonaparte brings the Holy Roman Empire to an end.

1912 More than twenty-one centuries of imperial rule in China end with the overthrow of the government by revolutionary forces, who establish a republic.

1914 On the 525th anniversary of the Serbian loss at Kosovo Field—June 28, 1389—Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip fires a shot at Hapsburg heir Franz Ferdinand. This begins World War I.

1918 Among the many outcomes of World War I are the disintegration of several empires with roots in the Middle Ages: the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian empires.

1960s Nearly a thousand years after Leif Eriksson and other Vikings visited the New World, archaeologists find remains of a Norse settlement in Newfoundland.

1975 The African nations of Mozambique and Angola, former Portuguese possessions, become the last major colonies acquired in the Age of Exploration to gain their independence.

1979 The Shi'ite Muslim movement, which began almost exactly thirteen hundred years before, enters world headlines as Shi'ite fundamentalists seize control of Iran.

1989 As Communism begins to disintegrate, Europe gradually becomes more united than it has been since the Roman Empire began to decline eighteen centuries earlier.

1989 A Serbian commemoration of the 600th anniversary of Kosovo Field on June 28, 1989 marks the beginning of resurgent Serbian nationalism. In the decade that follows, the Balkans will once again be the site of a great religious and ethnic power struggle, with Serbia backed by its Greek Orthodox ally Russia against the Catholic Croatians and Bosnian Muslims.

Words to Know

A

Age of Exploration: The period from about 1450 to about 1750, when European explorers conducted their most significant voyages and travels around the world.

Alchemy: A semi-scientific discipline that holds that through the application of certain chemical processes, ordinary metals can be turned into gold.

Algebra: A type of mathematics used to determine the value of unknown quantities where these can be related to known numbers.

Allegory: A type of narrative, popular throughout the Middle Ages, in which characters represent ideas.

Anarchy: Breakdown of political order.

Ancestor: An earlier person in one's line of parentage, usually more distant in time than a grandparent.

Anti-Semitism: Hatred of, or discrimination against, Jews.

Antipope: A priest proclaimed pope by one group or another, but not officially recognized by the church.

Archaeology: The scientific study of past civilizations.

Archbishop: The leading bishop in an area or nation.

Aristocracy: The richest and most powerful members of society.

Ascetic: A person who renounces all earthly pleasures as part of his or her search for religious understanding.

Assassination: Killing, usually of an important leader, for political reasons.

Astronomy: The scientific study of the stars and other heavenly bodies, and their movement in the sky.

B

Barbarian: A negative term used to describe someone as uncivilized.

Bishop: A figure in the Christian church assigned to oversee priests and believers in a given city or region.

Bureaucracy: A network of officials who run a government.

C

Caliph: A successor to Muhammad as spiritual and political leader of Islam.

Caliphate: The domain ruled by a caliph.

Canonization: Formal declaration of a deceased person as a saint.

Cardinal: An office in the Catholic Church higher than that of bishop or archbishop; the seventy cardinals in the "College of Cardinals" participate in electing the pope.

Cavalry: Soldiers on horseback.

Chivalry: The system of medieval knighthood, particularly its code of honor with regard to women.

Christendom: The Christian world.

Church: The entire Christian church, or more specifically the Roman Catholic Church.

City-state: A city that is also a self-contained political unit, like a country.

Civil service: The administrators and officials who run a government.

Civilization: A group of people possessing most or all of the following: a settled way of life, agriculture, a written language, an organized government, and cities.

Classical: Referring to ancient Greece and Rome.

Clergy: The priesthood.

Clerical: Relating to priests.

Coat of arms: A heraldic emblem representing a family or nation.

Commoner: Someone who is not a member of a royal or noble class.

Communion: The Christian ceremony of commemorating the last supper of Jesus Christ.

Courtly love: An idealized form of romantic love, usually of a knight or poet for a noble lady.

D

Dark Ages: A negative term sometimes used to describe the Early Middle Ages, the period from the fall of Rome to about A.D. 1000 in Western Europe.

Deity: A god.

Dialect: A regional variation on a language.

Diplomacy: The use of skillful negotiations with leaders of other nations to influence events.

Duchy: An area ruled by a duke, the highest rank of European noble below a prince.

Dynasty: A group of people, often but not always a family, who continue to hold a position of power over a period of time.

E

Economy: The whole system of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services in a country.

Ecumenical: Across all faiths, or across all branches of the Christian Church.

Empire: A large political unit that unites many groups of people, often over a wide territory.

Epic: A long poem that recounts the adventures of a legendary hero.

Ethnic group: People who share a common racial, cultural, national, linguistic, or tribal origin.

Excommunicate: To banish someone from the church.

F

Famine: A food shortage caused by crop failures.

Fasting: Deliberately going without food, often but not always for religious reasons.

Feudalism: A form of political and economic organization in which peasants are subject to a noble who owns most or all of the land that they cultivate.

G

Geometry: A type of mathematics dealing with various shapes, their properties, and their measurements.

Guild: An association to promote, and set standards for, a particular profession or business.

H

Hajj: A pilgrimage to Mecca, which is expected of all Muslims who can afford to make it.

Heraldry: The practice of creating and studying coats of arms and other insignia.

Heresy: A belief that goes against established church teachings.

Holy Land: Palestine.

Horde: A division within the Mongol army; the term "hordes" was often used to describe the Mongol armies.

I

Icon: In the Christian church, an image of a saint.

Idol: A statue of a god that the god's followers worship.

Illumination: Decoration of a manuscript with elaborate designs.

Indo-European languages: The languages of Europe, India, Iran, and surrounding areas, which share common roots.

Indulgence: The granting of forgiveness of sins in exchange for an act of service for, or payment to, the church.

Infantry: Foot soldiers.

Infidel: An unbeliever.

Intellectual: A person whose profession or lifestyle centers around study and ideas.

Interest: In economics, a fee charged by a lender against a borrower—usually a percentage of the amount borrowed.

Investiture: The power of a feudal lord to grant lands or offices.

Islam: A religious faith that teaches submission to the one god Allah and his word as given through his prophet Muhammad in the Koran.

J

Jihad: Islamic "holy war" to defend or extend the faith.

K

Khan: A Central Asian chieftain.

Koran: The holy book of Islam.

L

Legal code: A system of laws.

Lingua franca: A common language.

M

Martyr: Someone who willingly dies for his or her faith.

Mass: A Catholic church service.

Medieval: Of or relating to the Middle Ages.

Middle Ages: Roughly the period from A.D. 500 to 1500.

Middle class: A group whose income falls between that of the rich and the poor, or the rich and the working class; usually considered the backbone of a growing economy.

Millennium: A period of a thousand years.

Missionary: Someone who travels to other lands with the aim of converting others to his or her religion.

Monastery: A place in which monks live.

Monasticism: The tradition and practices of monks.

Monk: A man who leaves the outside world to take religious vows and live in a monastery, practicing a lifestyle of denying earthly pleasures.

Monotheism: Worship of one god.

Mosque: A Muslim temple.

Movable-type printing: An advanced printing process using pre-cast pieces of metal type.

Muezzin: A crier who calls worshipers to prayer five times a day in the Muslim world.

Mysticism: The belief that one can attain direct knowledge of God or ultimate reality through some form of meditation or special insight.

N

Nationalism: A sense of loyalty and devotion to one's nation.

Nation-state: A geographical area composed largely of a single nationality, in which a single national government clearly holds power.

New World: The Americas, or the Western Hemisphere.

Noble: A ruler within a kingdom who has an inherited title and lands, but who is less powerful than the king or queen; collectively, nobles are known as the "nobility."

Nomadic: Wandering.

Novel: An extended, usually book-length, work of fiction.

Nun: The female equivalent of a monk, who lives in a nunnery, convent, or abbey.

O

Order: An organized religious community within the Catholic Church.

Ordination: Formal appointment as a priest or minister.

P

Pagan: Worshiping many gods.

Papacy: The office of the pope.

Papal: Referring to the pope.

Patriarch: A bishop in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Patron: A supporter, particularly of arts, education, or sciences. The term is often used to refer to a ruler or wealthy person who provides economic as well as personal support.

Peasant: A farmer who works a small plot of land.

Penance: An act ordered by the church to obtain forgiveness for sin.

Persecutions: In early church history, Roman punishment of Christians for their faith.

Philosophy: An area of study concerned with subjects including values, meaning, and the nature of reality.

Pilgrimage: A journey to a site of religious significance.

Plague: A disease that spreads quickly to a large population.

Polytheism: Worship of many gods.

Pope: The bishop of Rome, and therefore the head of the Catholic Church.

Principality: An area ruled by a prince, the highest-ranking form of noble below a king.

Prophet: Someone who receives communications directly from God and passes these on to others.

Prose: Written narrative, as opposed to poetry.

Purgatory: A place of punishment after death where, according to Roman Catholic beliefs, a person who has not been damned may work out his or her salvation and earn his or her way to heaven.

R

Rabbi: A Jewish teacher or religious leader.

Racism: The belief that race is the primary factor determining peoples' abilities and that one race is superior to another.

Reason: The use of the mind to figure things out; usually contrasted with emotion, intuition, or faith.

Reformation: A religious movement in the 1500s that ultimately led to the rejection of Roman Catholicism by various groups who adopted Protestant interpretations of Christianity.

Regent: Someone who governs a country when the monarch is too young, too old, or too sick to lead.

Relic: An object associated with the saints of the New Testament, or the martyrs of the early church.

Renaissance: A period of renewed interest in learning and the arts that began in Europe during the 1300s and continued to the 1600s.

Representational art: Artwork intended to show a specific subject, whether a human figure, landscape, still life, or a variation on these.

Ritual: A type of religious ceremony that is governed by very specific rules.

Rome: A term sometimes used to refer to the papacy.

S

Sack: To destroy, usually a city.

Saracen: A negative term used in medieval Europe to describe Muslims.

Scientific method: A means of drawing accurate conclusions by collecting information, studying data, and forming theories or hypotheses.

Scriptures: Holy texts.

Sect: A small group within a larger religion.

Secular: Of the world; typically used in contrast to "spiritual."

Semitic: A term describing a number of linguistic and cultural groups in the Middle East, including the modern-day Arabs and Israelis.

Serf: A peasant subject to a feudal system and possessing no land.

Siege: A sustained military attack against a city.

Simony: The practice of buying and selling church offices.

Sultan: A type of king in the Muslim world.

Sultanate: An area ruled by a Sultan.

Synagogue: A Jewish temple.

T

Technology: The application of knowledge to make the performance of physical and mental tasks easier.

Terrorism: Frightening (and usually harming) a group of people in order to achieve a specific political goal.

Theologian: Someone who analyzes religious faith.

Theology: The study of religious faith.

Trial by ordeal: A system of justice in which the accused (and sometimes the accuser as well) has to undergo various physical hardships in order to prove innocence.

Tribal: Describes a society, sometimes nomadic, in which members are organized by families and clans, not by region, and in which leadership comes from warrior-chieftains.

Tribute: Forced payments to a conqueror.

Trigonometry: The mathematical study of triangles, angles, arcs, and their properties and applications.

Trinity: The three persons of God according to Christianity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

U

Usury: Loaning money for a high rate of interest; during the Middle Ages, however, it meant simply loaning money for interest.

V

Vassal: A noble or king who is subject to a more powerful noble or king.

Vatican: The seat of the pope's power in Rome.

W

West: Generally, Western Europe and North America, or the countries influenced both by ancient Greece and ancient Rome.

Working class: A group between the middle class and the poor who typically earn a living with their hands.

Research and Activity Ideas

The following list of research and activity ideas is intended to offer suggestions for complementing social studies and history curricula, to trigger additional ideas for enhancing learning, and to suggest cross-disciplinary projects for library and classroom use.

- Obtain a list of movies about the medieval period. Sources include the *Medieval Sourcebook* Web site, "Medieval History at the Movies" (http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/medfilms.html) or *Videohound's Golden Movie Retriever,* published by Visible Ink Press, 2001. Watch several movies about the era and discuss them. How accurately do they portray events in the Middle Ages?

- One of the signs of Europe's recovery during the 1100s was the emergence of international fairs at Champagne and in Flanders. Hold a class "fair," with each student assigned to bring in an item for "sale." What do students learn about one another by doing business together?

- Divide into two groups, representing the people of Europe and those of the Middle East. The Europeans are prepar-

ing to go on a crusade to seize the Holy Land from the Muslims to place it under Christian control. Debate this issue, considering it from as many viewpoints as possible. Is a crusade justified according to the Christian religion? What is the justification for Muslim control of the Holy Land? How could a crusade be avoided?

- Obtain a world map, and use colored pins to indicate the different locations mentioned in this book, including such routes as those of the crusaders, Marco Polo, or invaders of Europe from Central Asia. Discuss the natural features that may have helped Europe become dominant in the period after 1500, as well as the natural barriers that prevented some civilizations from interacting with those of Europe and the Middle East.

- Pretend that you are living in the Middle Ages and describe a typical day. Keep in mind that you would possess virtually none of the modern conveniences that make life easy. There would be no electricity, hardly any commercially manufactured products, and no transportation other than by animal or foot. Few people would be able to read and write, and modern standards of hygiene—for instance, bathing every day—would not be observed. The last two facts were most true for Western Europeans rather than for Byzantines, Arabs, or Chinese. How would people of those cultures look upon an unwashed, illiterate Western European? How would a medieval person seem to someone now and vice versa?

- Most of the famous women from premodern times were queens, and in fact very few women ever had an opportunity to achieve fame of any kind. Discuss the reasons why this was the case, particularly in light of the conditions involved in having children and of taking care of a household. Keep in mind there was very little medical help for problems in pregnancy—nor were there anesthetics to ease the pain of childbirth. There were no disposable diapers, no pediatricians, no baby formula or prepared foods for infants. On top of all these challenges, a woman had to cook and clean without the benefit of modern conveniences. Consider the ways things have changed, not only from the standpoint of technology, but also with regard to attitudes about women's and men's roles.

- The list of Arab or Muslim scientists and mathematicians from the Middle Ages is a long one. Starting with this book, compile a list of such figures and arrange for each member of the class to prepare a brief report on that person's achievements. If possible, include visual aids or models as well. Then, after the presentations, discuss the relative level of technological advancement in Western Europe during the Middle Ages and the Arabs' view of Europeans. Also, consider the relative levels of technological advancement in Europe and the Middle East today. Why and how did things change? Sources for information about Muslim scientists include the U•X•L books *Science and Technology Breakthroughs: From the Wheel to the World Wide Web* and *Math and Mathematicians: The History of Math Discoveries around the World,* as well as these Web sites:
    - "Index of Biographies" (Mathematicians). [Online] Available http://www-groups.dcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/%7Ehistory/BiogIndex.html (last accessed August 9, 2000).
    - *Medieval Technology Pages*. [Online] Available http://scholar.chem.nyu.edu/technology.html (last accessed August 9, 2000).
    - *Muslim Scientists and Islamic Civilization*. [Online] Available http://users.erols.com/zenithco/index.html (last accessed August 9, 2000).
- Hold a "Medieval Biography" day, on which each member of the class takes on the role of an important person from medieval history. Perhaps using the biography and sidebar subjects from *Middle Ages: Biographies,* which offers names from a range of world cultures, start with a drawing in which each person is assigned a "character." Then, in addition to creating a costume appropriate to that person (makeshift armor, for instance, or royal robes), each student should research the person's biography and be prepared to discuss his or her life and significance.
- Go through recent newspapers or newsmagazines and cut out or copy stories relating to issues that concerned people in the Middle Ages as much as they do people today. Such issues would include the conflict of church and state, as well as freedom *for* and freedom *from* religious be-

liefs; the relationship between science and religious faith; the differences between Christianity, Islam, and Judaism; and the clash between societies that have achieved radically different levels of technological advancement.

- Most books and courses of study relating to the Middle Ages place a greater emphasis on Europe than on the cultures of the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Why do you think that is so? Does it seem strange, given the fact that Western Europe at the beginning of the Middle Ages was far less advanced than many other regions at the same time? Do you think it is right or wrong to place such an emphasis on Europe? How would you feel about that question if you had been raised in a society that had hardly been influenced by Europe? Take a position, pro or con, and explain your reasoning in a short paper or debate it as a class. (As you discuss this, keep in mind that almost all societies throughout history have believed that they were the "best.")

- During the Middle Ages superstition often took the place of science, and when people could not explain the causes behind something they often made up superstitious explanations that seem silly to people today. Research the history of a superstition—for instance, fear of the number 13. With superstitions that relate to science in some way, compare the superstition with the actual facts about a subject: for instance, in the Middle Ages people believed in spontaneous generation, but now people know that when food is left out to spoil vermin are drawn to it, rather than the food actually turning into the vermin. Choose some sort of everyday phenomenon, such as wind blowing trees or the operation of a car, and make up a fanciful, superstitious explanation for it of the type a medieval person might have believed. Then compare this superstition with the actual facts regarding the subject—in this case, how the wind blows trees, or how cars operate.

- Medieval history is filled with "what ifs" and things that almost happened. Consider how Europe—and thus America and the world—might have been changed, for instance, if the Muslims had succeeded in taking Constantinople in 718, or had defeated the Franks at Tours in 732; or if the Mongols had kept moving westward into Vienna

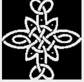
in 1241; or if Tamerlane had not temporarily halted the Turks' conquest of the Balkans in 1402. Conversely, discuss ways that various events or phenomena could have been avoided. Examples include the fall of the Western Roman Empire; the destruction of the gold-rich kingdoms of West Africa; the European conquest of the Aztecs and Incas; or the failure of the Arabs or Chinese to maintain their technological advantages over Europeans.

The Middle Ages

1

The Middle Ages, or medieval (med-EE-vul) period, lasted roughly from A.D. 500 to 1500. It was an era of great changes in civilization, a transition between ancient times and the modern world. With the rise of the Roman Catholic Church and other institutions, Western Europe during this period grew apart from Eastern Europe, which centered around Greece and its Orthodox Church. The Middle East at the same time experienced the explosion of the Muslim, or Islamic, faith, and the region became home to a series of Arab and Turkish empires. Farther east, and in Africa and the Americas, other great empires—among them those of the Chinese, the Mongols, and the Incas—rose and fell.

Most historians link the beginning of the Middle Ages with the fall of the Roman Empire, the long decline of which can be traced to the A.D. 200s. By the 300s, Rome had adopted many practices that would come to characterize medieval life. Whereas ancient Romans had worshiped the old pagan gods such as Jupiter, now the official religion of Rome was Christianity—though a form of Christianity heavily mixed with pagan practices. And whereas the ancient



Words to Know: The Middle Ages

Age of Exploration: The period from about 1450 to about 1750, when European explorers conducted their most significant voyages and travels around the world.

Ancestor: An earlier person in one's line of parentage, usually more distant in time than a grandparent.

Barbarian: A negative term used to describe someone as uncivilized.

Chivalry: The system of medieval knighthood, particularly its code of honor with regard to women.

Church: The entire Christian church, or more specifically the Roman Catholic Church.

Civilization: A group of people possessing most or all of the following: a settled way of life, agriculture, a written language, an organized government, and cities.

Dark Ages: A negative term sometimes used to describe the Early Middle Ages, the period from the fall of Rome to about A.D. 1000 in Western Europe.

Economy: The whole system of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services in a country.

Empire: A large political unit that unites many groups of people, often over a wide territory.

Feudalism: A form of political and economic organization in which peasants are subject to a noble, who owns most or all of the land that they cultivate.

Leprosy: A disease involving the gradual wasting of muscles, deformity, and paralysis; relatively common until modern times.

Medieval: Of or relating to the Middle Ages.

Middle Ages: Roughly the period from A.D. 500 to 1500.

Millennium: A period of a thousand years.

Pagan: Worshiping many gods.

Papacy: The office of the pope.

Peasant: A farmer who works a small plot of land.

Reformation: A religious movement in the 1500s that ultimately led to the rejection of Roman Catholicism by various groups in Europe.

Renaissance: A period of renewed interest in learning and the arts that began in Europe during the 1300s and continued to the 1600s.

Technology: The application of knowledge to make the performance of physical and mental tasks easier.

West: Generally, Western Europe and North America, or the countries influenced both by ancient Greece and ancient Rome.

Roman economy had been based on slavery, Rome in the 300s already had the beginnings of a new system called feudalism (FYOO-dul-izm).

The Western Roman Empire fell in 476, but the Eastern Roman Empire continued as the Byzantine (BIZ-un-teen) Empire throughout the Middle Ages. By the time the Byzantine Empire fell in 1453, the medieval period was coming to an end as Europe began experiencing a full-scale transformation in the arts, science, politics, and even religion. The awakening in the arts and science was called the Renaissance (REN-uh-sahnts), or "rebirth"; similarly, the Reformation (ref-ur-MAY-shun) heralded the re-formation of religion and even politics. The Renaissance and Reformation had their beginnings in the 1300s, and gathered steam after 1450 with the invention of the printing press, which made it possible to spread ideas much more quickly. Around the same time, the Age of Exploration began with the first European voyages around the coast of Africa. These events collectively brought about the end of the Middle Ages, and the beginning of the modern world.

Many people think of the Middle Ages in terms of romance and chivalry: kings, castles, and knights battling over the hand of a fair maiden. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Understanding medieval times

People in the Middle Ages did not think of their time as "a middle period" between ancient and modern times; that idea only arose during the Renaissance. As Europe reawakened in the 1500s, it was hard not to view the Middle Ages as a time of ignorance and confusion, an interruption in the progress of humankind. This was particularly true of the millennium's first half, from about 500 to about 1000. People began to refer scornfully to medieval times as "the Dark Ages," and for many centuries thereafter, this remained the accepted view.

In the twentieth century there was a backlash against this interpretation, and indeed it became almost "politically incorrect" to refer to the medieval period as the Dark Ages. Yet the Dark Ages viewpoint is not necessarily inaccurate. There can be no question that, in terms of political organization and technology, Western Europe took many steps backward during the centuries leading up to and following the fall of Rome.

The Dark Ages interpretation, however, fails to take into account the many great achievements made by Western Europeans during the Middle Ages—from the beauty of manuscript illumination and Gothic architecture to the literary classics of Augustine and Dante. On the political and social level, the Middle Ages laid the groundwork for modern times, bringing into being the first nation-states such as France and England, and establishing the conditions for explosive economic growth in future centuries. The medieval period was far from a dead spot between ancient and modern times.

The Middle Ages around the world

The idea of the Middle Ages in general, and of the Dark Ages in particular, is specifically European in origin—or rather, Western European. In contrast to Western Europe, Eastern Europe

Knights, Castles, and Bad Teeth

The view of the medieval period as the "Dark Ages" is a stereotype, or oversimplified image; so, too, is the other extreme, which one might describe as the "knights in shining armor" viewpoint. This is the idea created by fairy tales and sustained by movies, an impression of the Middle Ages as a time of beauty, romance, and mystery. This view centers around images of chivalry—for instance, the knight rescuing the fair maiden from a dragon or an enemy, and carrying her on his horse to a castle gleaming in the distance.

In fact, if a modern person actually got a chance to meet a real medieval knight and his fair maiden, they would probably be more than a little disappointed—maybe even revolted. Whereas people in ancient Greece and Rome had been reasonably clean according to modern standards, by the time of the Middle Ages most of Western Europe had come to believe that baths were only good as a cure for sickness. If one were not sick, then there was no need for a bath. Therefore the knight and his maiden would be fairly smelly; furthermore, no one had any concept of brushing their teeth, let alone the idea of preventing tooth decay. Teeth simply fell out, and therefore the smile of the fair maiden would indeed be a sight to behold.

At some point, either the knight or his maiden were likely to come into contact with a terrible illness for which there was no cure. Certainly if one got sick, it was a bad idea to visit a so-called "doctor." Doctors in medieval Europe were actually just moonlighting barbers, and they proposed all sorts of hideous "cures" such as bleeding the patient to release impurities from the body. Not surprisingly, life expectancy during much of the Early Middle Ages was only about twenty-five or thirty years. Not only were lives short; *people* were short. Due to a number of factors, most notably poor diet and medical care, the average-sized man was between five and five-and-a-half feet tall, as opposed to six feet tall today. There were also far more people with physical problems of one kind or another: hunchbacks, persons with the dreaded disease leprosy, and others.

experienced no dark age, and indeed became home to a splendid reminder of ancient Greek and Roman glory in the form of the Byzantine Empire.

Nor did the Arabs of the Middle East view the period as a "dark age": beginning in the 600s, Arabia experienced a cultural flowering on a scale seldom equaled in human history. While the ancestors of the English and French were still mostly illiterate peasants living in drafty huts, the Arabs enjoyed a degree of civilization that easily put them on a level with ancient Rome. It is not surprising that

when they first encountered Western Europeans during the Crusades beginning in 1095, the Arabs viewed them as ignorant, foul-smelling brutes. Even in modern times, Arab historians do not typically view the millennium that began in A.D. 500 as a "middle age," especially since the Muslim world does not use the same calendar as Europe: instead of dating their years from the birth of Jesus Christ, Muslims begin with the prophet Muhammad's escape from the city of Mecca in A.D. 622.

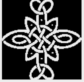
Much farther east, the Chinese not only had their own calendar, but their own long and distinguished history—a history that had nothing to do with Europe. In fact, prior to about A.D. 100, the Chinese did not know that Greece or Rome existed, nor did they much care when they did learn of the fact. In their view, China was the center of the world, and all other peoples were barbarians to varying degrees. Just how barbarian the Chinese thought others were, of course, had a great deal to do with how much or how little their culture was influenced by that of China.

Moving farther east—so far east, in fact, that it is considered west—one finds the Mayan civilization in what is now Mexico and Guatemala. The Maya had never heard of Western Europe, Arabia, *or* China, placing them even farther from the Western European world of knights and castles. Nonetheless, the peoples of America, as well as Africa and other regions covered in this series, had their own unique experience of the period that in the West is known as the Middle Ages.

The Fall of the Roman Empire

2

The fall of the Roman Empire is usually considered the starting point for the Middle Ages. In ancient times, Rome—a term that stood not only for the city of Rome, but for the entire world dominated by the Romans—was one of the world's great civilizations. The city itself was founded, according to tradition, in 753 B.C., and over the years that followed, it gradually began to dominate other cities in Italy. In 507 B.C. the Roman Republic, comprising Rome itself and surrounding areas, was established. In 390 B.C. a nomadic group from the north called the Gauls, or Celts, invaded Rome, and this led the Romans to begin building up their military. The next five centuries saw near-constant warfare, during which Rome expanded its territory to include much of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. There was also nearly constant warfare among the Roman leaders themselves in the century leading up to 31 B.C., when the Roman Empire was established. During the next two centuries, the Roman world enjoyed a period of prosperity and contentment known as the *Pax Romana,* or "Roman peace."



Words to Know: The Fall of the Roman Empire

Assassination: Killing, usually of an important leader, for political reasons.

Bishop: A figure in the Christian Church assigned to oversee priests and believers in a given city or region.

Cavalry: Soldiers on horseback.

Convert: A new believer in a religion.

Ecumenical: Across all faiths, or across all branches of the Christian Church.

Heresy: A belief that goes against established church teachings.

Infantry: Foot soldiers.

Legion: A unit in the Roman military, consisting of between 3,000 and 6,000 soldiers; used collectively to refer to the entire Roman army.

Martyr: Someone who willingly dies for his or her faith.

Nomadic: Wandering.

Persecutions: In church history, Roman punishment of Christians for their faith.

Pope: The bishop of Rome, and therefore the head of the Catholic Church.

Sack: To destroy, usually a city.

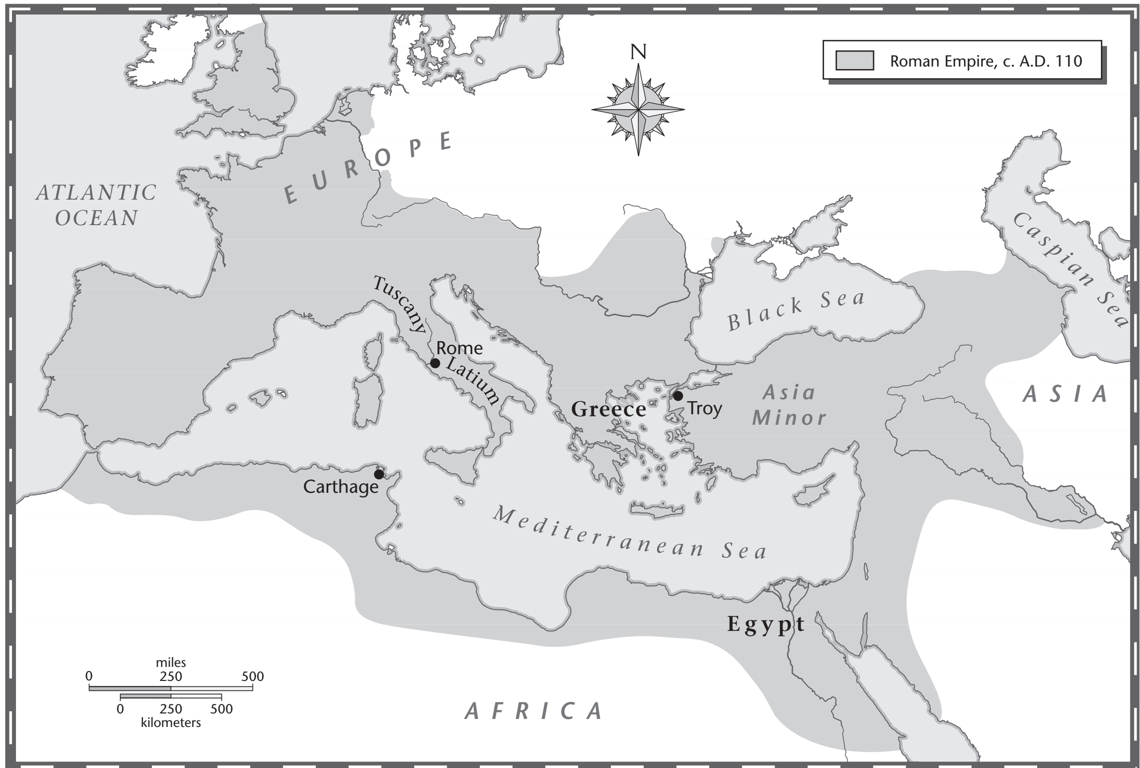
Theologian: Someone who analyzes religious faith.

Tribal: Describes a society, sometimes nomadic, in which members are organized by families and clans, not by region, and in which leadership comes from warrior-chieftains.

The decline of the Roman Empire (A.D. 180–c. 350)

From A.D. 96 to 180, a series of able emperors ruled Rome, but the quality of emperors in the next half-century would be uneven, and several were assassinated. Over the coming years, that method of replacing Roman emperors would become common. Between 235 and 285, Rome had twenty emperors, many of them promoted to their positions by the army. Few died a natural death.

During the third century, an increasing tax burden, a slave-based economy, and other deep-seated economic problems created an ever-widening gap between rich and poor, until there was no one in between. The few Romans who were fabulously wealthy gave themselves up to lives of pleasure, while the many living in poverty faced a future of unrelieved misery. Neither group was having children, the rich because they could not be bothered, the poor because they could not afford them. Both groups practiced widespread abortion and infanticide, or the murder of children. Soon the Roman population began to decrease, and



A map of the Roman Empire at its height, c. A.D. 110. *Illustration by XNR Productions. Reproduced by permission of the Gale Group.*

the Italian countryside was filled with empty houses.

The empire stopped growing along with the population. For centuries, Rome had survived on constant warfare, which brought in slaves and captured treasures. No one thought about expanding the economy by learning better ways to cultivate crops or by creating more goods to sell; therefore once there were no more nations to attack, there would be no more wealth. Up to the A.D. 100s, the system of growth by conquest had worked fairly well; then Rome came to the limits of its power.

All around it, the empire faced natural or manmade boundaries: deserts in North Africa and the Middle East, the military force of the Persians and others on its southeastern borders, the Atlantic Ocean to the west, and the North Sea to the northwest. Worst of all, along its northern and northeastern frontiers, formed by the Rhine (RYN) and Danube (DAN-yoob) Rivers respectively, were dozens and dozens of tribal "barbarians." The mission of Rome's armies turned from

conquest to mere survival, as they tried to hold on to lands they had won centuries before. But Romans themselves had lost their will to fight; therefore as time went on, the ranks of their legions were increasingly filled with foreigners—primarily barbarians.

Barbarians and Christians

The barbarians would later bring down the empire, but the decline of Roman society itself made possible the barbarian takeover. The Romans had grown weak, but the tribes around their borders were strong; and whereas the Romans were cowardly, the barbarians were brave. In many ways, the barbarians—who, despite their brutality, were often honest and noble in their behavior—most resembled the ancient Romans who had built the great society that was now crumbling.

Only one group within Rome could match the barbarians' vigor and energy: a small group of religious believers called Christians, so named because they followed the teachings of Jesus Christ. The Christian religion had originated in the Middle East during the first century A.D. and spread to Rome through the efforts of numerous apostles, or teachers, including Paul, Peter, and others. Most likely Peter and Paul died in Rome during the reign of Emperor Nero (ruled A.D. 54–68), who conducted the first wave of persecutions against Christians.

Over the next two-and-a-half centuries, Rome treated its Christian minority mercilessly: for instance, Christians were fed to lions while cheering spectators watched. One reason for this treatment was Christians' rejection of Roman ways, in particular the pagan religion. Whereas the Romans worshiped many gods, represented with statues everywhere, the Christians had just one god, and it was against their religion to worship statues. The gods of Rome were such a part of life that to reject them was to reject Rome itself: therefore Christians were scorned as "atheists" and dangerous anti-Roman activists.

The Christians meanwhile had their own type of government, with leaders called bishops presiding over each major city. According to tradition, in his last days the apostle Peter became the bishop of Rome, and because Rome was the center of the world at the time, Peter's office came to have a great significance. Therefore the bishop of Rome took on a special title: father, or *papa*—that is, pope. During the Middle Ages, hundreds of men would hold the title of pope, or leader of the Roman Catholic Church, and the papacy (office of the pope) would come to hold great power.

The early popes, however, were far from powerful; and whereas many popes in the Middle Ages did things that Jesus Christ would have condemned—for instance, living on wealth that they had taken from the poor—the early popes typically led lives of poverty. As for the Christians as a whole, it seems that persecution made them more sincere in charity and love, concepts taught by Christ, and indeed it would be hard to find a class

This painting, *The Apparition of the Cross to Constantine,* by Giulio Romano, depicts the event that persuaded Constantine to convert to Christianity. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

of people more heroic than the early Christian martyrs (MAR-turz) who sacrificed their lives for their faith.

The age of Constantine

Rome may have lost its will to rule the world, but it did not die easily. From the late 200s to the early 300s, the empire recovered under the leadership of Diocletian (die-oh-KLEE-shun; ruled A.D. 284–305) and later Constantine. Diocletian was the last emperor to persecute Christians. Constantine later claimed that before going into battle at the Milvian Bridge along the River Tiber (TY-bur) on October 28, A.D. 312, he saw a cross in the sky superimposed over Greek words meaning "In this sign [you shall] conquer." He won the battle and accepted Christianity.

Constantine's version of the Christian faith, however, was mixed with a heavy dose of the old-time Roman religion, and as emperor he remained high priest of the pagan gods. Nonetheless, under his rule, Christianity became not only legal, but socially acceptable. At the same time church leaders, seeing the advantages of working with the Roman system rather than against it, eased restric-

tions against Christians taking part in public life.

Meanwhile more and more people converted to the new religion, and this rising popularity—combined with imperial support and the church's new openness to participation in political affairs—soon gave Christians considerable power. Many church leaders used their influence to foster the principles of brotherhood and tolerance taught by Jesus, but many others seemed eager to turn the tables on the pagans who had mistreated them for so long. Indeed, in many cases, the formerly persecuted Christians themselves became persecutors. One of their most notable victims was Hypatia (hy-PAY-shuh; A.D. 370–415), the only known female philosopher of ancient times, who in 415 was brutally attacked and killed by a group of "Christians" opposed to her pagan teachings.

Constantine made a number of valuable contributions to early Christianity, particularly by linking the power of the church with the power of the state—in this case, the Roman government. He also called an extremely important conference of Christian bishops, who met in the city of Nicaea (nie-SEE-uh) in Asia Minor in 325 to discuss a problem that threatened to destroy Christian unity at the very moment of triumph.

A Greek named Arius (AR-ee-uhs; c. A.D. 250–337) had been preaching that God was separate from all of his creation—and that Christ was one of those creations; this idea came to be called Arianism. Mainstream Christians, by contrast, believed that God the Father and God the Son (Jesus) were one and the same being. Arianism had by then gained a number of converts, particularly in Greece and Egypt. In response, the 220 bishops at the Council of Nicaea declared Arianism a heresy (HAIR-uh-see)—a belief that went against the Christian faith. The bishops also adopted the Nicene (ny-SEEN) Creed, a form of which is still recited in churches today: "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible or invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten ... not made...."

Nicaea was the first ecumenical (ek-yoo-MIN-i-kul) council, a meeting of all believers at which church leaders established the official Christian position on a variety of issues. In the view of Constantine and later church leaders, in order for Christianity to survive and grow, there could be no diversity of opinion. Gradually the church began to call itself "catholic," which means universal. Indeed, for many centuries the church would maintain a semblance of unity, though in fact there were many varieties of Christianity.

Constantine in his later years placed his stamp all over Christianity and the medieval world. Adapting a type of Roman building called the basilica (buh-SIL-i-kuh), he made its open floor plan a model for church design that is still used today. He also established the city of Constantinople (kahn-stan-ti-NOH-pul), which became the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. Realizing that the empire had become too big to control from one city,

in 330 he established a second capital at a Greek city formerly called Byzantium (bi-ZAN-tee-um). Thus he restored the empire for a time, but he could not arrest its steady decline. By the mid-300s, the threat to Rome's borders had become too severe to ignore.

Roman Numerals

The Romans had their own number system, quite unlike the Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.) used throughout the world today. The symbols included:

I = 1
V = 5
X = 10
L = 50
C = 100
D = 500
M = 1,000

All other numbers were created by combinations of these seven numbers; for example, the numbers from 1 to 10 are: I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X. From 11 to 20, the pattern repeated, but with an X at the front, standing for 10: XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX.

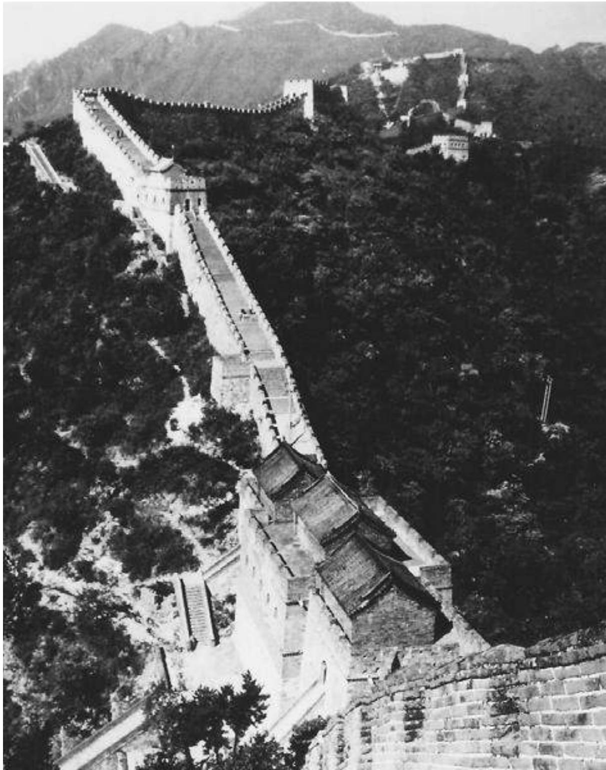
The fall of Rome (c. 350–476)

The ultimate source of Rome's downfall lay many centuries and many thousands of miles away. When the Chinese began building their Great Wall in 221 B.C. to keep out barbarian invaders, they displaced a number of nomadic peoples who had long threatened them from the north. Among these were the Hsiung-Nu (shung-NOO), a group of extremely able horsemen and warriors. The Hsiung-Nu began moving westward, leaving a trail of death and destruction as they went. The first Europeans unfortunate enough to cross their paths in the A.D. 300s gave them a new name: Huns. For more than a century, the very word "Hun" was a synonym for terror.

Meanwhile, a number of other tribal groups emerged in Europe. There were the Gauls, or Celts (KELTZ), who lived in what is now France and the British Isles. Farther east and north were other groups, so many that the Romans had long before given up trying to distinguish between them. They all seemed to have blond hair and blue eyes; therefore the Romans called them by a word that, in the Latin language, meant "related": *Germanus.*

A German group known as the Goths began moving southeastward in the A.D. 200s, and as they did, they split into two groups. The eastern Goths or Ostrogoths settled in what is now Ukraine, and the western Goths or Visigoths put down roots in northeastern Greece and modern-day Romania. No one knew it then, but these two tribes would become key players in the chain of events that brought about the fall of Rome.

Though the Romans called them barbarians and thought of them as uncivilized, in fact the Goths had a



The Great Wall of China, which the Chinese began building in 221 B.C., was built to repel barbarian invaders. *Reproduced by permission of AP/Wide World Photos.*

great respect for Roman civilization. They seemed to understand that the Roman Empire was on the decline, and they hoped to preserve what was best about Rome. Thus it was a particular tragedy when, in 372, the Huns crossed the Volga River and attacked the Ostrogoths. They then moved westward and dealt the Visigoths a harsh blow as well.

The Visigoths begged the Roman emperor Valens (VAY-luhnz; ruled 364–378) for permission to cross the Danube into the empire. Up to that point, Rome had seldom willingly allowed barbarian tribes inside its borders; but Valens agreed to let them in if they would surrender their weapons and give up their children as hostages. The Romans took advantage of the Visigoths' desperation to charge them outrageous prices for food—a loaf of bread, for instance, went for ten pounds of silver—and sold most of the Visigoths' children into slavery.

Because the Visigoths were relatively peaceful and civilized—though that would change in time—the Romans' treatment of them was particularly cruel. This says a great deal about the moral character of the Romans; so too does the fact that the Visigoths were able to bribe Roman officials into letting them keep their weapons. In the end, the Visigoths revolted, and began overrunning the region, burning and looting as they went.

In 378, Valens lost his life in a battle with the Visigoths, a battle that according to one historian was the worst Roman defeat in nearly six hundred years. The victory of the Gothic cavalry also marked the beginning of medieval military tactics: whereas foot soldiers (or infantry) had dominated for more than a millennium, horsemen would now control the battlefield.

The Visigoths sack Rome

It was the beginning of the end for Rome. Theodosius (ruled 379–395) was the last emperor to rule a united realm; thereafter the Eastern Roman Empire would chart a separate course. Among Theodosius's generals was a

Augustine and the *City of God*

One of the greatest minds of the Middle Ages, and indeed in Western history, was the theologian and church leader Augustine (aw-GUS-tin; 354–430). Raised in North Africa, he experimented with loose lifestyles and the Manichaean faith, an obscure Persian religion that viewed all existence as a battle between good and evil, before embracing Christianity in 386. Later he became bishop at the Mediterranean port city of Hippo, now part of northeastern Algeria. Augustine wrote a number of important books, including the *Confessions* and *De civitate Dei,* or the *City of God.* The former, the world's first autobiography, was a deeply personal work, whereas the latter discussed the whole history of the world.

Augustine wrote the *City of God* after the Visigoths sacked Rome in 410. This event was far more devastating than the actual end of the Western Roman Empire sixty-six years later, and wise men throughout the Roman world looked for reasons why it had happened. They did not try to provide a military or political explanation, as modern analysts would; in a fashion more typical of premodern people, they saw the event purely in religious terms. The gods of Rome, many claimed, were angry at the Romans for turning away from them in favor of Christianity.

Not so, claimed Augustine in the *City of God;* in fact, quite the opposite was true. The Visigoths were a punishment from the Christian God for the Romans' continued sinfulness. He then went on to outline a number of ideas that would become essential to medieval European thought. The world was divided into two groups, he wrote: the city or society of people who were loyal to God on the one hand, and those loyal to earthly existence—which was the same thing as loyalty to Satan—on the other. The City of God, as he called the first group, was destined to triumph over the City of Man. This idea provided a basis for later claims by the popes that the church, as the City of God, should dominate the state, or the City of Man.

Augustine. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Attila, leader of the Huns, spread fear throughout Western Europe, though Pope Leo I was able to convince him not to attack Rome. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

brilliant Visigoth king named Alaric (AL-uh-rik; c. 370–410). After Theodosius died, Alaric turned against Rome.

To protect themselves against invasion, the Romans had moved their capital from Rome itself to Ravenna, a city in northeastern Italy surrounded by marshes. Yet Rome still remained the center of the Western world, and one of its greatest defenders was a "barbarian" named Stilicho (STIL-i-koh; c. 365–408). Stilicho's people were the Vandals, a Germanic tribe that, following their defeat by the Visigoths in Constantine's time, had requested and received permission to settle within the empire. Stilicho himself had proven such an able commander and administrator that he essentially ruled the Western Roman Empire, and he was able to repel an earlier attack by Alaric. However, a rival managed to convince the reigning emperor that Stilicho was a traitor, and he was executed in 408—two years before Alaric's troops returned.

The Romans tried to bribe Alaric, who had surrounded the city and cut off all food supplies. For a time, Alaric considered it, but in the end he invaded the city. For three days in August 410, Rome experienced a terror it had not known since the Gauls' invasion exactly eight hundred years before. The Visigoths and their army, which included Huns and runaway Roman slaves, looted, burned, and killed, virtually destroying the city.

Later a rumor would spread that the Visigoths had destroyed Rome because they were pagans and resented Rome's acceptance of Christianity. This rumor helped bring about one of the most important books of the Middle Ages (see box, "Augustine and the *City of God*"), but it was not true: the Visigoths were Christians, though they subscribed to the Arian heresy. They even spared the Church of St. Peter, center of the pope's authority.

Huns and Vandals

Certain barbarian leaders, despite their reputations for cruelty and

ruthlessness, had an odd respect for religion—including the religions of other peoples. Certainly that was true of the Huns, particularly their leader, Attila (c. 400–453). For a few years in the mid-400s, Attila held Western Europe in terror, and when he invaded Gaul in 448, it looked as though he were poised to deal the Roman Empire a fatal blow.

A combined force of Romans and barbarians actually scored a military victory over Attila—Rome's last—in 451, but in the following year he appeared with his troops right outside Rome itself. However, he allowed Pope Leo I, or Leo the Great (ruled 440–461), to talk him out of attacking. This incident was an example of how much political authority the church could wield, establishing an important pattern for later popes. Attila withdrew and died a year later, and after that the Huns faded into the larger European population. Only the name of the country where they briefly settled in the early 400s, Hungary, serves as a reminder that they existed.

In the time between Alaric and Attila, Western Europe had been ravaged by a new threat, the formerly peaceable Vandals. Impressed by Alaric's victories, the Vandals and other tribes plundered and pillaged their way through Gaul and into Spain. By 429, they had crossed the Mediterranean Sea and landed in North Africa, which had been under Roman control for centuries. Led by Gaiseric (GY-zu-rik; ruled 428–477), they quickly subdued the fertile coast, where most of Rome's food was grown. For a time, the Romans were able to bribe Gaiseric, but in 455 his forces sailed across the Mediterranean for Rome itself. This time Pope Leo could not convince the invaders to turn away: they devastated Rome, and ever since, the term "vandal" has been used to describe a destructive person.

Gaiseric, leader of the Vandals, led a devastating attack on Rome in 455, contributing greatly to the fall of the Roman Empire. *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

The final hours

The Western Roman Empire was in its final hours, and after the

Vandals, it was just a matter of time before it caved in completely. Rome itself, once home to some 1.5 million people, had shrunk to one-fifth that size, and it would be more than a thousand years before another Western European city grew larger than ancient Rome. A parade of leaders, each more forgettable than the one before, gained control of the empire's remains; then in 475 a general named Orestes (ohr-ES-teez) placed his son on the throne with the imposing title of Romulus Augustulus.

Around the same time, a new wave of German invaders swarmed over the Italian Peninsula. When Orestes refused to give them one-third of Italy, they replaced his son with their own elected leader, Odoacer (oh-doh-AY-sur; c. 433–493). Thus the Western Roman Empire came to an end on August 23, 476. At the time, however, few perceived the event as particularly significant.

Odoacer sent a message to Zeno (ruled 474–491), ruler of the Eastern Roman Empire—thenceforth the Byzantine Empire—promising that Zeno would have the title of ruler over the West as well if he would allow Odoacer to govern in his place. Zeno had no reason to refuse, and no power in Italy to back him up, so he accepted. To many it seemed as though the empire had been reunited, not destroyed; but in fact Odoacer ruled Italy as a kingdom entirely separate from the Byzantine Empire.

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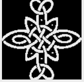
The Merovingian Age

3

Western Europe includes what is now Germany and Italy, the countries between them such as Switzerland and Austria, and lands to the west, including France, Britain, and Spain. At the beginning of medieval times, however, few of these nations existed; only during the course of the Early Middle Ages (c. 500–c. 1000) would they emerge from the ruins of the Western Roman Empire. The first half of the Early Middle Ages began with great unrest, as barbarian tribes swept over the region. Only the Catholic Church served to provide the area with a unifying culture. The church would in turn lend its support to one of those tribes, whose royal dynasty would give a name to an entire era: the Merovingian Age (481–751).

Dividing up Western Europe (400s–500s)

Europe in the late 400s and early 500s was a confusing mass of tribes, mostly Germanic (i.e., from a group of related tribes in northern Europe) and mostly moving westward and southward. More than a few of these peoples gave their names to regions and entire nations, names that would long outlast



Words to Know: The Merovingian Age

Abstract art: Painting or other artwork that shows forms or designs, but does not represent objects as they really appear.

Aristocracy: The richest and most powerful members of society.

Ascetic: A person who renounces all earthly pleasures as part of his or her search for religious understanding.

Canonization: Formal declaration of a deceased person as a saint.

Cloister: A monastery, or sometimes the inner part of a monastery.

Convent: A dwelling in which nuns live.

Dialect: A regional variation on a language.

Divine: Godlike.

Dynasty: A group of people, often but not always a family, who continue to hold a position of power over a period of time.

Excommunicate: To banish someone from the church.

Illumination: Decoration of a manuscript with elaborate designs.

Manorialism: An early form of feudalism that lasted from the late Roman Empire into the Merovingian age.

Monastery: A place in which monks live.

Monasticism: The tradition and practices of monks.

Monk: A man who leaves the outside world to take religious vows and live in a monastery, practicing a lifestyle of denying earthly pleasures.

Nomadic: Wandering.

Nun: The female equivalent of a monk, who lives in a nunnery, convent, or abbey.

Order: An organized religious community within the Catholic Church.

Papal: Referring to the pope.

Purgatory: A place of punishment after death where, according to Roman Catholic beliefs, a person who has not been damned may work out their salvation and earn their way to heaven.

Relic: An object associated with the saints of the New Testament, or the martyrs of the early church.

Representational art: Artwork intended to show a specific subject as it really appears, whether a human figure, landscape, still life, or a variation on these.

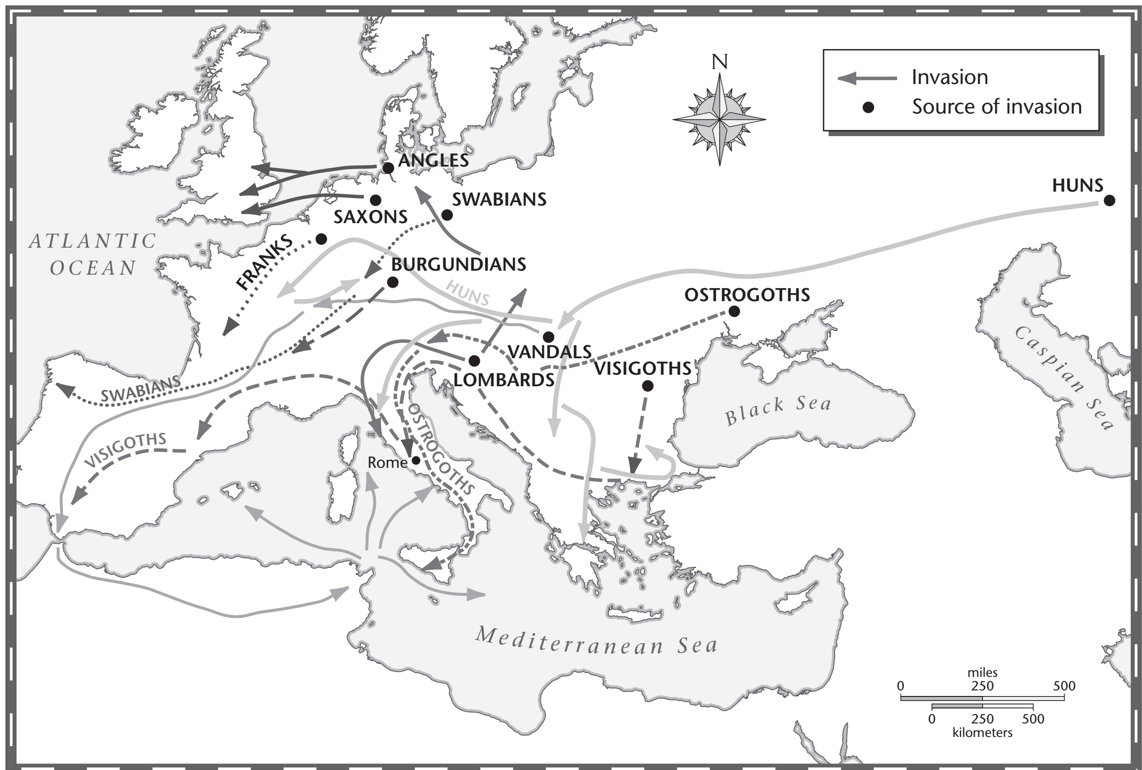
Rome: A term sometimes used to refer to the papacy.

Serf: A peasant subject to a feudal system and possessing no land.

Trial by ordeal: A system of justice in which the accused (and sometimes the accuser as well) has to undergo various physical hardships in order to prove innocence.

Tribal: Describes a society, sometimes nomadic, in which members are organized by families and clans, not by region, and in which leadership comes from warrior-chieftains.

Villa: A type of country estate in Roman times; more generally, any kind of large, wealthy estate.



A map of Western Europe, c. A.D. 500, showing the movements of the various tribes across the continent. *Illustration by XNR Productions. Reproduced by permission of the Gale Group.*

the tribes themselves. Though the Western Roman Empire was finished, out of its collapse would come many beginnings.

Such was the case, for instance, with the Burgundians, for whom a region—later to emerge as an important French kingdom—was named. They came in the 400s, only to be subdued by the powerful Franks, another Germanic tribe, in 534. And there were the Lombards, who in the 500s stormed out of Eastern Europe and into the part of Italy that came to be known as Lombardy. They, too, succumbed to the Franks in 774. As for the Franks, they settled in Gaul—which, because of them, would thenceforth be known as France.

The Franks in time dropped their Germanic language and adopted Latin, which would emerge as a local dialect and then as a full-fledged language, French. Before the Franks and before the Romans, however, Gaul had been controlled by the Celts, a group whose language had little relation to either Latin or German. Celts had spread from the European continent to the isle of Britain, where they came to be known as Britons; and beyond

Hadrian's Wall, built between A.D. 122 and 128, stretches across some seventy-three miles of Scotland. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Britain to Ireland, where the Celtic language of Gaelic is still spoken today.

Britain becomes England

When Rome added Britain to its empire in the first century A.D., Roman power had seemed limitless. Yet it was in Britain that the emperor Hadrian (ruled 117–138) had given physical form to the idea that Rome's power did indeed have limits: Hadrian's Wall. Built between 122 and 128 and possibly inspired by travelers' tales of the Great Wall of China, the wall extended some seventy-three miles across what is now Scotland and was designed to keep out a native Scottish people called the Picts. The Picts overran it several times, however, and threatened to do so again after the Romans permanently withdrew their legions in 410 to protect Rome itself from the Visigoths—another failed project.

By then the Britons had become Romanized and had accepted the Christian religion. They saw themselves as the last line of defense between civilization and barbarism. To assist their defense against the Picts, one of the Britons' leaders asked the help of three Germanic tribes—the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes—living in what is now northern Germany and Denmark. But once they arrived, the Germans realized how defenseless the natives were, so they simply took over the island.

Today the greater part of Britain is named England after the Angles, and the term "Anglo-Saxon" is used to describe persons of English descent. The German invaders' language, which completely replaced the Britons' Celtic tongue, ultimately became English, or rather Old English. An English-speaker today would have trouble recognizing Old English, yet modern English maintains many words from the distant past—usually short, highly direct terms such as "hit" or "gold."

Barbarian kingdoms of Western Europe

To varying degrees, the Germans of Western Europe were true bar-

barians. In place of Rome's highly sophisticated system of justice, they practiced trial by ordeal (see box, "Trial by Ordeal"). They had turned from their own brand of paganism to Christianity; but they possessed little concept of Christian mercy or kindness.

More advanced were the Visigoths in Spain, who chased out the Vandals in the mid-400s and established a kingdom that would rule until the arrival of the Moors in 711. The Visigoths adopted Latin and, like the Franks, developed their own dialect. This became the foundation for one of the most widely spoken languages today: Spanish.

Meanwhile in Italy, the Ostrogoths under Theodoric (c. 454–526) invaded, killed Odoacer, and briefly established the most advanced of the early barbarian kingdoms. Raised with a profound respect for Roman civilization, Theodoric tried to preserve what was best about Rome. To do this, he kept his own people separate from the Romans, and put Romans in charge of Italy's civil administration while his own forces oversaw the military. Not long after Theodoric's death, however, Byzantine armies would eliminate the Ostrogoth kingdom.

The Byzantines, as it turned out, were unable to hold on to Italy, which succumbed to the Lombards a few years later. Italy would never again be the center of power in Europe that it had once been; that center had shifted northward, to what is now France and Germany. There the Franks would establish the first significant Western European kingdom of the Middle Ages, the Merovingian (mair-oh-VIN-jee-un) dynasty.

Trial by Ordeal

The system of law practiced by the Germanic tribes of Europe in the 400s and 500s often demanded trial by ordeal. This meant that in order to prove his innocence, the accused had to walk over hot coals, stand with his arms outstretched for long hours, or endure some other form of torture. If the person was innocent, the logic went, he would be able to withstand these pains.

Sometimes the reasoning was even more twisted—and deadly. In some scenarios, the accused would be bound hand and foot and thrown into a river. A priest prayed that the water would reject the evildoer, meaning that if a person drowned, he was innocent. Those who survived, on the other hand, were guilty—and therefore were executed. Another form of ordeal was trial by combat. Accused and accuser underwent hand-to-hand combat, and whoever survived was judged the innocent party. The only advantage to this system was that it probably kept down the number of false or petty accusations.

The church

The north was on the rise, but Italy still had a few things going for

St. George, patron saint of England, is usually depicted as he is here: on horseback, slaying a dragon. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

it—in fact, two big things. There was the legacy of the Roman Empire on the one hand, and on the other hand the spiritual empire of Christianity, led by the pope. Thanks to Constantine, the church had become tied to the Western Roman Empire, and with the fall of the latter, popes had increasingly taken on the Roman emperors' role as leaders of Western Europe. Popes drew their power in part from the influence of Christianity, but to a perhaps greater extent from the thousand-year influence of Rome. No doubt the apostles Peter and Paul would have been shocked to see this alignment between the church they had helped establish and the empire that had killed them; but much had changed in the five centuries since their time.

The Bible's New Testament had referred to all Christians as "saints," but by the A.D. 100s, believers in Rome and elsewhere had come to recognize certain figures as special. These people were canonized, or formally declared as saints, and thenceforth referred to as such—for example, "St. Peter." By the year 1000, there were more than 25,000 saints.

The saints would eventually come to be worshiped in their own right, complete with pictures and statues representing them, a practice that recalled Roman paganism. Just as there had been a god assigned to nearly every town and every profession—for instance, Vulcan was the god of blacksmiths—now there was a patron saint for each. Later, as nations emerged during the High Middle Ages, each would have its own patron saint; for instance, St. George was England's patron saint.

The identity of Jesus Christ

Belief in saints as intercessors, or go-betweens for God and people, arose in part because of church teachings that encouraged believers to think of God as so holy and so pure that no sinner could dare approach him directly in prayer. The Old Testament had taught the same thing; but according to the New Testament,

Jesus, as God's son, was humankind's intercessor. The early Church, however, placed heavy emphasis on the fact that Jesus *was* God, and therefore downplayed the intercessor role.

This emphasis arose in response to heresies such as Arianism (the belief that Jesus Christ was not God) and Nestorianism. A Persian priest named Nestorius (died 451), who became bishop at Constantinople, had declared that Jesus had two separate identities, one human and one divine. The Council of Ephesus (EF-uh-sus) in 431 declared Nestorianism a heresy, but the belief found many adherents in the East—most notably the Far East, where it established a firmer foothold than any other branch of Christianity.

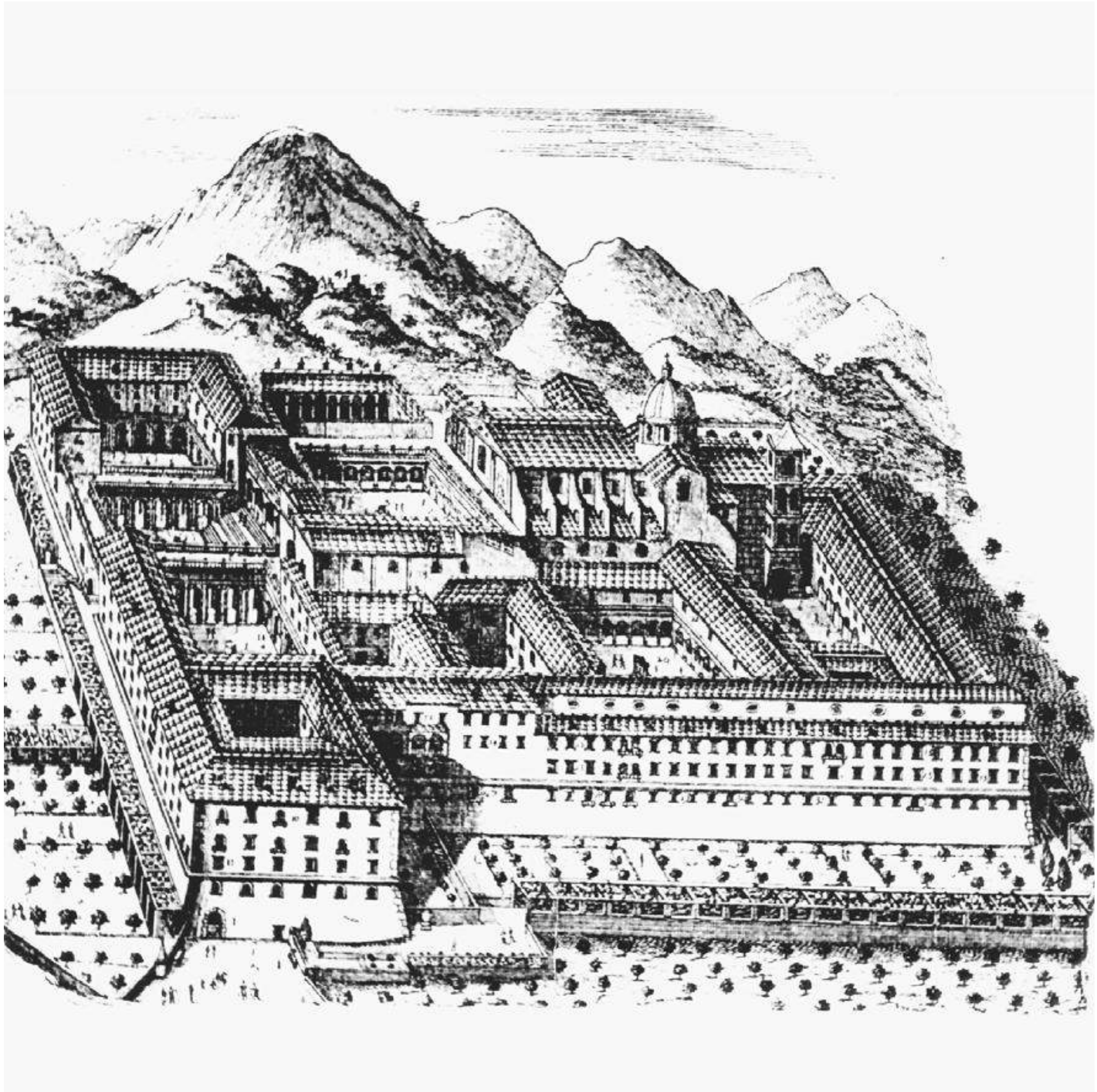
In 451, the Council of Chalcedon (KAL-suh-dahn) declared that Jesus had two natures, both human and divine, in one. This became the accepted position of western Christianity; but the Monophysites (muh-NAH-fu-zytz) in the Middle East, reacting to Nestorianism, began preaching that Christ was *only* divine and not human at all. This led the pope to excommunicate, or banish from the church, most believers in that region. Whole branches of Christianity, most notably the Armenian and Coptic (Egyptian) churches, split with Rome for good.

Jesus had become so removed from humanity that now Christians needed an intercessor to go *to him,* and the Council of Ephesus named one: Mary, mother of Jesus. In declaring Mary "Mother of God," the Council set her up as a potential figure of worship, allowing her to be linked with pagan mother goddesses such as the Greeks' Artemis or the Romans' Diana. The worship of Mary, still practiced in some parts of the world today, gained force during the High Middle Ages. It should be said, however, that for the most part the church did not officially encourage Mary-worship: as with the saints, it was a practice that arose from the people, and the church merely sought to make a place for it.

Monasticism

The 500s saw the appearance of two key figures in church history. The first was Benedict (c. 480–547), who established the tradition of monasticism (moh-NAS-ti-sizm), or the life of monks, men who leave the outside world to live in a monastery or cloister. There had been monks before Benedict, and indeed the idea of the ascetic (uh-SET-ik)—someone who gives up comfort to pursue spiritual wisdom—is an old one. Before Benedict, however, monks and ascetics were inclined to be undisciplined, practicing what amounted to self-torture. Benedict called for an end to such excesses.

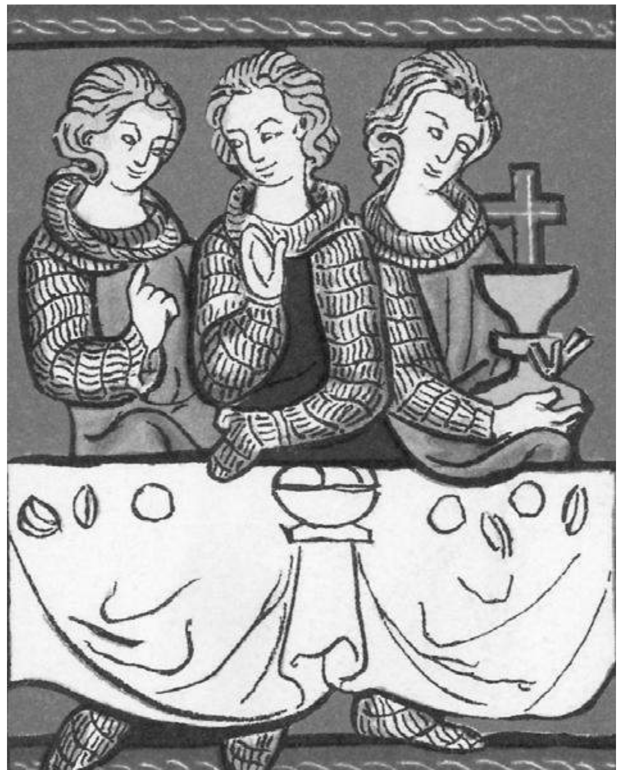
In 529, Benedict and his followers demolished a pagan temple to build Monte Cassino, a high mountain retreat where they established the Benedictine (ben-uh-DIK-teen) Order. Not only were they the first true order of monks, and one that exists today, the Benedictines were the first to require that their members swear vows. Thus a man wanting to become a monk would live in the monastery,



Monte Cassino was built by Benedict and his followers in 529. The Benedictine Order was the first true order of monks, and it still exists today. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

enduring all kinds of hardships; then if he chose to go on, after a time he would take the vows. Among the things monks vowed to give up were sex, laughter, and possessions. They agreed to eat only one meal a day in winter and two in summer when days were longer; to speak only when necessary; to walk with their eyes turned to the ground; not to joke or laugh; and to let their sleep be interrupted for prayer.

Benedictine monasteries spread throughout Europe; meanwhile, the tradition of nuns and convents developed for women who chose to take vows of poverty and chastity. According to legend, the first convent was founded by Benedict's twin sister, Scholastica, near Monte Cassino in 530. Whatever the case, the first order of nuns was the Benedictine, and soon there were as many nuns as there were monks. Over the centuries that followed, these men and women would serve as a symbol of Christian meekness and kindness, often providing shelter and care for the poor. And at about the same time Benedict founded his order, another group of monks did nothing less than preserve Western civilization (see box, "How the Monks Saved Civilization").

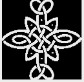


This image depicts the Holy Grail, the cup Jesus drank from the night before he was crucified. This religious relic has never been found. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Gregory the Great

Another key figure in early medieval Christianity was Pope Gregory I (the Great; ruled 590–604). Gregory's name is today associated with Gregorian chants, a type of prayerful singing in Latin with minor variations in tone, performed by Benedictine monks throughout the Middle Ages. Though he did not invent the chants, Gregory ordered that they be written down for future use.

In his writings, Gregory approved of the veneration, or admiration, of relics. Like belief in the saints, the idea that an object could be sacred because of its association with Jesus or the saints had little to do with the Bible, and everything to do with popular beliefs. But that did not stop Gregory from asserting, for instance, that eyesight could be restored by contact with a set of chains supposedly used to imprison Peter and Paul. As the Middle Ages went on, relics abounded, none more venerated than the Holy Grail and the "True Cross." The former was the cup from which Jesus drank on the night before his crucifixion, the latter the cross on which he was killed. Despite many claims to the contrary, neither was ever found.



How the Monks Saved Civilization

One popular misconception concerning the Middle Ages is the idea that the church squelched learning, which it associated with the pagan societies of Greece and Rome. Quite the opposite is true. With the Roman Empire gone and the barbarian tribes threatening to extinguish the candle of civilization, only the church kept it lit.

Much of that light came from Rome, of course, but Rome itself was threatened when the Lombards invaded Italy in 568. Around the same time, a group of monks traveled to the farthest reaches of the Western world—the British Isles. There, in dank, cold monasteries on the harsh coasts of the North Sea and the Atlantic, they copied down the Bible and early church writings. But they did not simply copy; the books they produced were works of art in themselves, with lavishly illuminated lettering that served to illustrate the fact that to these scholars, words were sacred.

Ireland was converted to Christianity by St. Patrick in the 400s, and in the following century, monks began arriving on the British Isles from continental Europe. The first major monastic settlement in the area was founded by the Irish missionary St. Columba (c. 521–597) at Iona, off the coast of Scotland, in 563. Monks from the Iona community in turn founded Lindisfarne off the coast of England in 634. The latter community would become famous for the Lindisfarne Gospels, and Iona became famous for the Book of Kells. Both were gorgeously illuminated manuscripts.

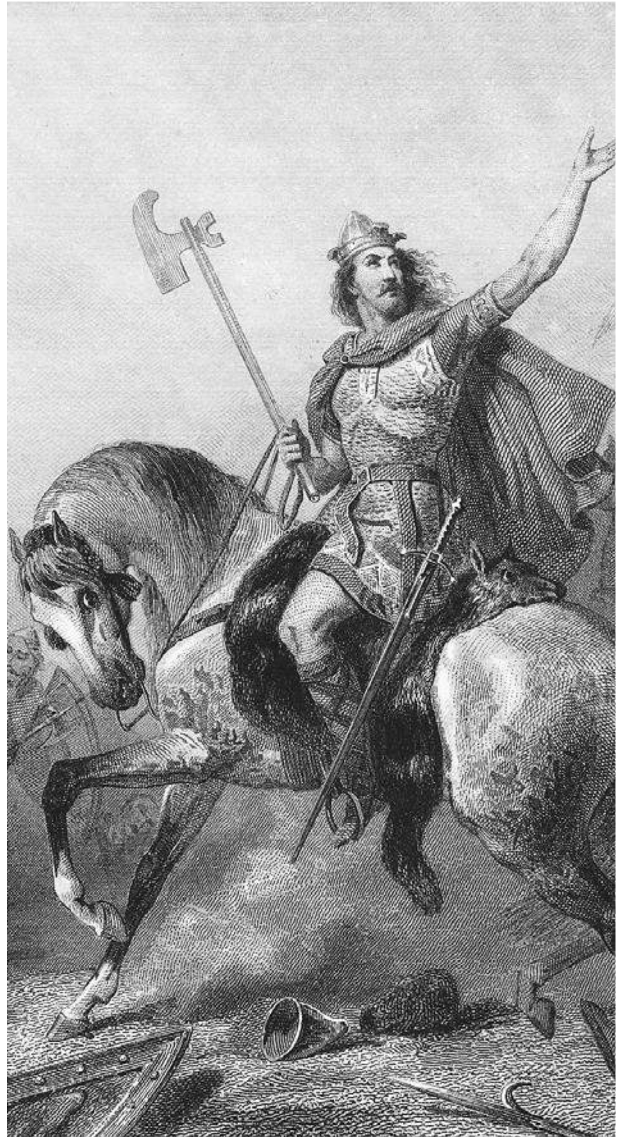
The communities of Iona and Lindisfarne were destroyed by the last great wave of Germanic barbarians in the Middle Ages, the Vikings, in the 790s. Many of the monks left before the Vikings arrived; in any case, they and their brethren had managed to keep learning alive during the darkest years of the Middle Ages.

Eventually the stature of the popes would become such that they created relics of their own, making water or oil "holy" simply by praying over them. By that time, the pope was the most powerful man in Christendom (KRIS-in-dum), or the Christian world, and for that, too, later popes had Gregory to thank. Under his shrewd leadership, the papacy became firmly established as something much more than the office of Rome's bishop; gradually the pope became not just the spiritual, but the political leader of Western Europe.

Gregory reinforced the church's power by teaching that the Bible was a difficult book that required interpretation by those trained to do so: priests and other leaders of the church. A version of the Bible had been translated by St. Jerome (c. 347–c. 419), and its name, the Vul-

gate, a term referring to the language spoken by common people, implied that it was meant to be understood by the masses. The Vulgate, however, was in Latin, a language that had long since been replaced by local dialects for everyday use. Yet it remained strong as a written language, and virtually every educated person in early medieval Europe understood Latin. The problem was that hardly anyone, outside of a tiny minority within the church, was educated: for many centuries, even most kings were illiterate. Eventually people had no idea of what the Bible said, and the church actively discouraged believers from attempting to read the Scriptures.

Finally, from Augustine's writings Gregory adopted the idea of Purgatory, a place for people who were too good to go to Hell, but had not quite made it to Heaven. He took this concept and added to it, suggesting that the loved ones of a deceased person pray for his or her soul. By the 1000s, the concept of Purgatory had become firmly established.

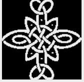


Clovis, a Frankish king who ruled from 481 to 511, was the greatest ruler of the Merovingian dynasty. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

The Merovingians (481–751)

An earlier Frankish king gave his name to a dynasty that emerged among the Franks in the 400s, the Merovingians, but Clovis (ruled 481–511) was its first important king. By accepting mainstream Christianity in 496, he gained the support both of Rome (that is, the pope and the Church) and of powerful local priests.

He was also the only notable Merovingian ruler. This was because Clovis, like many German chieftains, believed that a king should divide his



Merovingian Art

Ancient Greek and Roman artists had tried to depict human beings and other subjects as accurately as possible, and representational art became amazingly precise. Then as Rome began to decline in the A.D. 200s, so did Roman portrayals of the human figure. Faces and bodies began to look all the same, and artists' depictions of people looked more and more primitive.

With the rise of the Merovingians after Rome's fall, art took a sharp turn away from representation and toward abstract images. It was as though Merovingian artists realized that they had lost the ability to accurately represent subjects, so they moved in the opposite direction, producing gorgeous designs with only limited representative quality.

The artwork itself may have been abstract, but the objects produced by the Merovingians—belt buckles, decorative pins for fastening clothing—were decidedly practical. Much Merovingian art was intended to be portable, reflecting their still somewhat unsettled lifestyle, but the Merovingians also made a significant contribution to architecture by introducing the idea of a church bell tower. Monks in Merovingian France illuminated manuscripts and developed an elegant type of lettering called majuscule (MAJ-uh-skyool).

realm equally between all his sons instead of passing it on to the firstborn. While this was a generous idea, in practice it meant that a kingdom's power would be diluted quickly.

Nonetheless, the Merovingians were important in a number of regards. Under Clovis, they conquered much of what is now France—formerly home to the Burgundians and Visigoths, as well as other Frankish tribes—and western Germany. With the support of Rome, they were able to establish themselves as a stronghold of Christianity, a fact that became more important with the rise of Islam in the 600s. This papal-royal alliance set the tone for the Middle Ages. In the realm of the arts, the Merovingians were also trailblazers (see box, "Merovingian Art").

Manorialism

The Franks adopted few aspects of Roman law and administrative rule, but they did maintain one significant link with a late Roman practice. When Roman power was fading and the people could no longer look to the legions, or army, for protection, they had turned to the owners of large villas, or country estates, who controlled private armies. The serfs gathered their dwellings around the villa in what came to be called villages.

Villas were also known as manors (source of the word "mansion"), and the Frankish version of the late Roman system came to be known as manorialism (muh-NOHR-ee-ul-izm). Under manorialism, large num-

bers of serfs became dependent on a large landowner for protection. A serf was like a peasant, a farmer with a small plot of land; but serfs, whose name comes from the same root as "serve," were more like slaves.

The manorial system provided the framework for feudalism. This system helped bring an end to the Merovingians as power shifted from Merovingian kings to the Frankish aristocracy, who exerted influence through the office of majordomo.

The house of Charles Martel

Today the term majordomo, meaning "mayor of the palace," refers to someone who takes charge in place of another, which is essentially what the majordomos did. The later Merovingian kings lived lives of pleasure, and could hardly be bothered to run their kingdoms, but the majordomos were more than happy to assume that job—and the authority that went with it.

This was particularly true of the greatest majordomo, Charles Martel (c. 688–741). Martel, which meant "hammer"—thus suggesting Charles's power—was not a family name, or surname; the custom of surnames would not arise until centuries later. Under his leadership, beginning in 714, the kingdom withstood invasions by the Saxons and Frisians (FREE-zhunz), a Germanic people from what is now Holland.

Even more significant was his defense against invaders from the south: the Moors, Muslims who had conquered Spain and were ready to take over France. Had the Moors succeeded in their invasion of France, which they began in 719, Europe might be quite different today; as it was, a force led by Charles drove back the Muslims at Tours (TOOR) in 732. Given his vital role in the Frankish leadership, it is not surprising that Charles judged it was time for his family to take full control.

Charles Martel was a great leader of the Frankish kingdom during the Merovingian Age, and it was his grandson, Charlemagne, who gave his name to the next great dynasty: the Carolingians. *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

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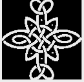
The Carolingian Age

4

Whereas the Merovingian Age had begun in turmoil, but had led to the establishment of Europe's first stable dynasty in centuries, the period from 750 to 1000 started with the establishment of a new dynasty and ended in turmoil. The Carolingians' magnificent empire seemed to recall that of Rome, but their power largely centered around one man: Charlemagne. Once he was gone, the empire began disintegrating. Europe faced new terrors as well, not least of which was the last wave of Germanic barbarians: the Vikings. Other invaders came as well, and it seemed that Europe was on the verge of another dark age.

The Carolingian Age (751–987)

A turning point in the history both of Western Europe and of church-state relations occurred in 751, when Charles Martel's son Pepin III (c. 714–768) sent a message to the pope asking if it would be a sin to remove the Merovingian king from power. The pope, who needed Frankish help to defend against the Lombards, sent word that it would not, where-



Words to Know: The Carolingian Age

Astronomy: The scientific study of the stars and other heavenly bodies, and their movement in the sky.

Chain mail: A lightweight, flexible armor made of interlocking metal rings.

Christendom: The Christian world.

Communion: The Christian ceremony of commemorating the last supper of Jesus Christ.

Epic: A long poem that recounts the adventures of a legendary hero.

Geometry: A type of mathematics dealing with various shapes, their properties, and their measurements.

Mace: A club with spikes on the end, typically used for breaking armor.

Mead: An intoxicating drink of fermented honey, popular among Vikings and other Germanic peoples of Northern Europe.

Noble: A ruler within a kingdom who has an inherited title and lands, but who is less powerful than the king or queen; collectively, nobles are known as the *nobility.*

Nomadic: Wandering.

Vatican: The seat of the pope's power in Rome.

upon Pepin ordered that the last of the Merovingians be thrown into a monastery. Thus once again a pope blessed the establishment of a new dynasty, the Carolingians (kayr-uh-LINJ-ee-unz).

The name came from that of Pepin's son Charles, sometimes known as Carolus Magnus, meaning "Charles the Great." He is better known as Charlemagne (SHAR-luh-main; 742–814; ruled 768–814), and he was the single most important Western European leader of the Early Middle Ages. Under Charlemagne, Western Europe had something it had not seen for centuries: a vibrant, growing empire. Already the Frankish territories comprised most of what is now France and western Germany, but Charlemagne started expanding the boundaries, first by defeating the Saxons to the north in 777. He saw himself as more than a conqueror, however, and with the conquest came the forced conversion of the Saxons to Christianity.

His father Pepin had already dealt the Lombards a harsh blow in 756, after which he turned their territories in eastern Italy over to the church in an act known as the Donation of Pepin. Thenceforth these were called the Papal States, and would exist as such until the 1800s. Charlemagne completed the conquest of the Lombards, receiving their crown as his own in 774. He then turned his attention to Spain, where in 778 he tried unsuccessfully to win back Muslim-held territories for Christendom. Further campaigns resulted in Charlemagne unifying virtually all German territories, including the kingdom of Bavaria in southern Germany.

In 794, Charlemagne established his capital at Aachen (AH-ken;

A map of Europe showing the territorial gains made under Charlemagne's rule. *Illustration by XNR Productions. Reproduced by permission of the Gale Group.*

in modern-day Germany), a city famous for its mineral baths. The year 800 marked the high point of his career, when he became the first European emperor to visit Rome in three centuries. The Byzantine rulers had cut themselves off from Rome; therefore Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne Carolus Augustulus, Emperor of the Romans, on Christmas Day. This was in effect the beginning of the Holy Roman Empire, which, though it never lived up to its magnificent name, was destined to become a significant part of the Middle Ages.

The Carolingian Renaissance

While in Italy, Charlemagne visited the former imperial capital of Ravenna, including the Church of San Vitale. Built by the Byzantine invaders, the church must have inspired him, because upon his return to Aachen, he ordered his architect, Odo of Metz, to design a replica. The chapel at Aachen, as it turned out, was not an exact reproduction: it was a much firmer, less delicate building than the original—and thus it helped establish the essentials of Carolingian architecture.

Charlemagne, who ruled from 768 to 814, was the most significant Western European ruler of the Early Middle Ages. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

A number of qualities distinguished the architecture of Carolingian times from that of the Merovingian era, when civilization was still hanging by a thread. Merovingian buildings were small and boxlike—like a hut, only bigger and more permanent. Carolingian design, by contrast, incorporated the graceful, open basilica floorplan used by Constantine (emperor of the Roman Empire; ruled 310–37). Thus the Carolingians borrowed Italian concepts for a rougher, hardier northern kingdom, and laid the groundwork for both Romanesque and Gothic architecture.

The period of Charlemagne's rule saw a rebirth in the arts and learning; hence it is sometimes called the "Carolingian Renaissance." Much of the credit goes to Alcuin (AL-kwin; c. 732–804), an Anglo-Saxon scholar who at Charlemagne's request became head of the school at Aachen. Surveying the deplorable state of education among the future Carolingian leaders, Alcuin called for a return to the study of Latin and of what the Romans had called the seven liberal arts: grammar, rhetoric (the art of writing and speaking), logic, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy.

Charlemagne himself could barely read and write, yet literacy thrived among the upper classes during his reign. By then parchment, a durable type of paper made from sheepskin, had come into use. Many of the Greek and Roman classics had been saved earlier by monks in the British Isles, but Carolingian monks copied so many manuscripts themselves that many took their versions for the originals. The monks had developed the Merovingian majuscule into a highly readable script called minuscule. Later, they created a more square version of this script that, because people mistook their manuscripts for Roman originals, came to be called "Roman." A slanted version of "Roman" lettering, used at the Vatican, became the basis for italic—that is, Italian—script.

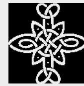
The divided kingdom

Charlemagne's empire did not long outlast him. His son Louis the

Pious succeeded him in 814, but Louis was no Charlemagne, and his rule was marked by quarrels. The Treaty of Verdun in 843 arranged for the division of the empire into three parts, one for each of Louis's sons.

One son received an area that came to be known as the West Frankish Empire, later to become the nation of France. A second son received what was dubbed the East Frankish Empire, which would unify under the name Germany more than a thousand years later. In between was the "Middle Kingdom," the inheritance of the other son. This comprised a strip running from what is now Holland all the way down to Italy.

Through inheritance, the "Middle Kingdom" would soon be dissolved into a patchwork of tiny principalities. The western and eastern empires, by contrast, lasted a bit longer. Descendants of Charlemagne ruled France until 887, and off and on for exactly 100 more years; however, the real power rested in the hands of various feudal lords. Much the same happened in the East Frankish Empire, where in 911 the nobility chose their own king from outside the Carolingian line of succession.



Abu al-Abbas

During Charlemagne's time, fame of the great Frankish emperor spread to Arabia, from whence the powerful caliph Harun al-Rashid sent him an unusual gift in 802: an elephant called Abu al-Abbas. The king and the beast soon became inseparable, and wherever Charlemagne went on his conquests, Abu went as well. Abu died in 810, while his master was on a campaign against the Danes in northern Europe. Abu's ivory tusks were made into chess pieces.

Feudalism

One of the most important legacies of the Carolingian dynasty was feudalism, an economic and political system based on land and loyalty that evolved into a fully defined way of life in the 800s. Central to this evolution were knights, heavily armed cavalry soldiers who could fight either in massed formations or one on one. As such, they represented centuries of change and development in society as a whole.

In early Merovingian times, all soldiers were more or less the same. Many were farmers who had simply left their fields to fight, and most were infantrymen, or foot soldiers. This was a pattern that went back to the ancient Greeks. Then in the late 500s, one of the most important inventions in human history made its appearance: the stirrup.

Actually, a form of stirrup had been used in India since before the time of Jesus Christ, and perhaps the Huns picked up the idea as they moved across Asia toward Rome. Whatever the case, the power of Attila's armies can be attributed in part to

the fact that riders were equipped with hanging rings to hold their feet. This may not sound terribly important, but it made all the difference in battle. A rider without stirrups could use only the strength of his arm to deliver a blow with a sword or lance; if he struck with his full weight, he would be thrown from his horse. A soldier firmly anchored in stirrups, by contrast, could strike with his whole weight and that of his horse as well.

More than a century after Attila, stirrups—and the types of tactics they permitted—took hold among the Merovingians. Soldiers began protecting themselves with armor, typically chain mail, a lightweight, flexible covering made of interlocking metal rings. The first battle using armored cavalrymen was probably a fight between the Franks and Saxons in 626; but it was Charles Martel's victory at Tours in 732 over the Muslims (who had no stirrups) that firmly established the new technology.

How the feudal system worked

To equip a knight was costly: not only did he have his armor and his weapons (sword, lance, mace, and sometimes crossbow), but he needed more than one horse in case the first one was hurt in battle. He also needed a group of servants to assist him, along with food for his horses, his servants, and himself—not to mention years of freedom from other responsibilities in order to train for warfare. Not even a king could afford to support more than a few knights; for this, he had to depend on the nobles within his kingdom.

In early medieval times, all wealth was based on land ownership, and the king owned all the land. Below the king were feudal lords, or nobles, who were allowed to maintain estates on the king's land as long as they supplied him with a certain amount of knights to defend the kingdom. The estate was called a fief (FEEF), a word that, like *feudal,* is related to "fee." The nobles would in turn give knights title to small fiefs of their own, along with the authority to tax those who lived on the land.

The lowest-ranking people in feudal society were the serfs, or peasants, by far the largest group. They were the ones who worked the land, growing food—most of which they turned over to the lords—and paying taxes, which helped maintain knights. There were gradations of rank within the peasantry, with certain types of peasants who acted as foremen over other peasants, but they were all so far below the royalty and nobility that it hardly mattered. In return for their labors, they received protection from outside attack, itself a very real danger in the Middle Ages; but they also tied themselves and future generations to a life only slightly better than slavery.

In the medieval world, this arrangement did not seem unfair. People saw feudalism, if they considered it at all, as a system of mutual obligations in which everyone had a place—even the church. Lords provided their local church and monastery with pro-

tection; in return, priests and monks, who had great influence over the peasantry, supported the nobility and the king.

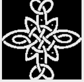
The Vikings (793–c. 1000)

Around the time of Charlemagne's coronation as emperor, just when it seemed that Europe was on the road to safety and unification, yet another great threat appeared from the north. They came from Scandinavia—now Sweden, Norway, and Denmark—where the land was rough and rocky, and people lived on the edge of the sea. With the population growing and the land ever more scarce, they began sweeping over Europe, killing and marauding as they went. Frightened Europeans called them Northmen, Norsemen, or—using a word from the invaders' own language—Vikings.

On January 8, 793, Viking raiders destroyed the church at Lindisfarne off the coast of England—ironically, one of the places where civilized learning had weathered the darkest years of the Middle Ages. In a further irony, Lindisfarne, Iona, and other scholarly centers now became bases for Viking raids throughout the British Isles. The marauders swept through Ireland, drawn by the gold and other wealth of its monasteries, and established colonies on the east coast. Among the latter was Dublin, which later became the Irish capital.

The Vikings were particularly savage in their attacks on Britain, so much so that the natives began uniting against them. This happened in Scotland, and again to the south, where attacks by the Danes helped produce the first true hero of English history. At first King Alfred (849–899) ruled only a small realm called Wessex; by 886, however, he had captured the city of London, and united all English lands that were not under Danish control. The Danes were pushed into the northeast of England, which came to be known as the Danelaw; thereafter, they became landowners and eventually melted into the population.

This illustration of Duke Rollo of Normandy shows an example of chain mail armor. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*



The Medieval Mind

Western Europeans during the Early Middle Ages were inclined to believe the most outlandish ideas, particularly where religious matters were concerned. For instance, they believed Satan was everywhere; thus one monk wrote that "the whole air is but a thick mass of devils." Another chronicler told of how a wicked priest tried to take sexual advantage of a woman. He kissed her with a Communion wafer in his mouth, hoping this would win her by affection; instead, the wafer caused him to suddenly grow so tall he could not leave the church building. He buried the wafer in a corner of the church, then later dug it up—only to find that it had turned into a blood-stained figure of Jesus on the cross. People who heard this story most likely gave it the same solemn respect that a modern person would for a nightly news report.

Superstition was an everyday part of life. Immediately after a death in the house, for instance, all bowls of water would have to be covered so that the loved one's spirit would not drown. Care also had to be taken to ensure that a cat or dog did not walk across the corpse in the coffin, lest the dear departed turn into a vampire. Some superstitions have survived from medieval times—for instance, saying "bless you" when someone sneezes, since sneezing was viewed as an opportunity for a demon to enter the body.

In place of scientific knowledge, people often relied on highly uneducated ideas about cause-and-effect relations. For example, people readily accepted an idea that has since come to be known as "spontaneous generation." If one were to leave food out in a room for long enough, it would of course draw rats; but medieval people, seeing a rat where a piece of cheese had been, reasoned that the cheese had actually turned into the rat. They also believed in what was later dubbed "acquired characteristics," another simple-minded fallacy. According to this notion, if a man lost his right arm in an accident, his children would be born missing their right arms as well.

The spread of the Vikings

In 860, Viking ships sailing westward found a relatively pleasant and fertile land far beyond England. Fearing the overpopulation that had driven them from Scandinavia, they gave it the discouraging-sounding name of Iceland. Beyond Iceland in 982, the Vikings found another land, one not nearly as hospitable. Because they were not worried about people overpopulating this area, they gave it an inviting name: Greenland.

Sailing still farther west, in about 1000 Leif Eriksson landed on what the Vikings called Vinland, probably Newfoundland. There they

did battle with what they called "skraelings"—almost certainly the same people Columbus later mistakenly identified as Indians. Columbus's men had guns, whereas the Vikings' weapons were no more advanced than the war clubs and arrows of the "skraelings." Therefore the Viking colonization of the New World was shortlived, and soon forgotten except in legends of Vinland.

While some Vikings went west, others went south. From their homeland in Sweden, a group called Varangians in 862 sailed along rivers from the Baltic Sea deep into Eastern Europe. Drawn by myths of a rich, golden city—perhaps Constantinople—they founded a great city of their own, Novgorod, and also established their power in Kiev. The Slavs of the area called the Varangians "Rus," and eventually Russia became the name of the region.

Then there were the Vikings who came to be known as Normans, a corruption of "Norsemen." They began moving down the west coast of Europe in the mid-800s, and for the next two centuries battled throughout the western half of the Mediterranean. In 820, another group of Normans settled in an area of northwestern France that came to be known as Normandy. They adopted the French language and culture, and in 1066 would launch one of the most significant invasions in history when they conquered England.

A Viking. *Reproduced by permission of the New York Public Library Picture Collection.*

Decline of the Vikings

By the time the Varangians and Normans were establishing themselves,

Under the leadership of King Alfred, natives of Britain united in an attempt to defend themselves against attacks by Vikings. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

the Vikings as a group were dying out. By about 1000, they had accepted Christianity and become relatively civilized, meaning that they no longer had the same lust for raiding. In place of the old Scandinavian tribal lands, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden emerged as kingdoms, possessing formal governments with capitals and laws.

One last hurrah for the Norsemen came in the early 1000s, when the Danes briefly conquered England. At their high point under King Canute (ruled 1016–35), they controlled England, Denmark, and Norway, but there is a legend about Canute that says something about these last Norsemen's attempts at conquest. Supposedly Canute ordered the tide not to wash in on the shoreline; of course it did anyway, thus proving that there are limits even to a king's power. As it turned out, his empire was shortlived, and the last Danes were pushed out of England by William of Normandy—himself a descendant of Vikings—in 1070.

The end of the Early Middle Ages (843–c. 1000)

The late 800s and 900s were a frightening time in Western Europe. Not only were the Vikings on the move, but the continent faced invasion by other forces from the south and east. The Muslims had already conquered Spain, and in the 800s they began menacing Italy. They drove out the Byzantines, who had held Sicily and southern Italy off and on for centuries, and even threatened Rome itself. At the same time, a group of nomads called the Magyars entered Eastern Europe from Ukraine, where they had been forced out by Central Asian nomads. This seemed like a repeat of events that had helped bring about the fall of the Roman Empire: indeed, the Magyars even took over the old stomping-grounds of Attila the Hun in Hungary, from which they launched attacks on various German states.

The Vikings, or Norsemen, enjoyed great power under King Canute (ruled 1016–35). This illustration depicts the legend of Canute ordering the tide not to wash in. *Reproduced by permission of the New York Public Library Picture Collection.*

During this age, people who looked to the church for comfort were bound to be disappointed. The papacy had severely declined in the 800s and 900s, with murderers, thieves, and adulterers among the ranks of the popes during those years. An example was the man who became known as John XII in 955: among Pope John's many accomplishments were bribe-

Viking Mythology

According to Viking mythology, when soldiers died in battle they would be swept up by warrior maidens called Valkyries (vahl-KEER-uhz) and taken to a kind of heaven. The latter was called Valhalla (vahl-HAHL-uh), and was essentially a more perfect version of the Vikings' own feasting halls, where they dined on legs of mutton and drank an intoxicating honey malt beverage called *mead* (MEED).

Norse mythology became the basis for a number of great medieval epics: the Icelandic *Eddas* (c. 900–1241) and *Volsung Saga* (1200s), as well as the German *Niebelungenlied* (nee-buh-LOONG-en-leed; 1200s). In the nineteenth century, German composer Richard Wagner (REE-kard VAHG-nur) wrote a majestic series of operas, *The Ring,* based on the Nordic myths. One of the most memorable pieces from *The Ring* is called "Ride of the Valkyries."

Depiction of the Viking god Thor. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

taking and wild orgies in the papal palace. Yet this period also saw the beginnings of church reform, led by the Benedictine monks at Cluny in France in 910. The Cluniac (KLOO-nee-ak) movement stood for a new type of monasticism: instead of withdrawing from the world, the Cluniacs sought to strengthen the central authority of the pope as a way of reinvigorating the church, and thus society as a whole.

The 900s also experienced the rise of Western Europe's first great leader since Charlemagne, Otto the Great (912–973). In 955, he defeated the Magyars, who soon became Christianized and settled permanently in Hungary. He then marched into Italy, by then under threat from a variety of local kings. Otto defeated them, and in 962, the pope crowned him emperor, reviving the title held by Charlemagne. A year later, Otto had the crooked Pope John replaced, showing that though the bishop of Rome could crown him, he still held more power. The great struggle of kings and popes, a conflict that would dominate the eleventh century, had begun.

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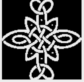
Eastern Europe

5

In ancient times, Greece had built one of the world's greatest civilizations, a center of culture and science that reached its peak in the period 490–404 B.C. Even as Greece declined, its influence spread from Italy to Egypt to India, so that by the time the Roman Empire conquered Greece in 146 B.C., Rome had been thoroughly influenced by Greek civilization. Beginning in A.D. 330, the Roman Empire began to split into Greek, or Eastern, and Roman, or Western, halves. Divisions between the two lands widened after the West fell and the East became the Byzantine Empire. Ethnic differences further widened the gap: while Germans overran the western half of the continent, much of Eastern Europe came under the dominance of a people called the Slavs.

The Byzantine Empire

The Byzantine (BIZ-un-teen) Empire had its beginnings with Constantine, who in 330 founded a second Roman capital at a city overlooking the strait that separates Europe from Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). The city became Con-



Words to Know: Eastern Europe

Civil service: The administrators and officials who run a government.

City-state: A city that is also a self-contained political unit, like a country.

Clergy: The priesthood, or all ministers.

Clerical: Relating to priests.

Deity: A god.

Diplomacy: The use of skillful negotiations with leaders of other nations to influence events.

Hagiography: An idealized biography, often of a saint.

Icon: In the Eastern Orthodox Church, an image of a saint.

Legal code: A system of laws.

Madonna and Child: Mary and the baby Jesus, as depicted in religious art.

Middle class: A group in between the rich and the poor, or the rich and the working class; usually considered the backbone of a growing economy.

Missionary: Someone who travels to other lands with the aim of converting others to his or her religion.

Nimbus: A halo-like cloud said to hover around a deity or exalted person.

Patriarch: A bishop in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Plague: A disease that spreads quickly to a large population.

Protectorate: A state dependent on a larger, stronger state for military protection.

Siege: A sustained military attack against a city.

Strait: A narrow water passageway between two areas of land.

stantinople (kahn-stan-ti-NOH-pul), but later scholars used its old name of Byzantium (bi-ZAN-tee-um) to identify the entire Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine people, however, called themselves Romans, and their land the Roman Empire, which thus continued to exist in the East for another thousand years after the fall of the West.

In 500 Byzantium held most of the lands formerly controlled by the Eastern Roman Empire, including Greece and what is now Bulgaria, Asia Minor, a strip of land from Syria to Palestine, Egypt, and part of Libya. But Justinian (483–565; ruled 527–565), the greatest of Byzantine rulers, resolved to undertake the re-conquest of the Western Roman Empire from the barbarians. His brilliant general Belisarius (c. 505–565) won back North Africa from the Vandals in 534, and Italy from the Ostrogoths in 540. The Byzantines also took southern Spain from the Visigoths in 550.

A map of Eastern Europe in the eleventh century indicating the lands under the control of the Byzantine Empire as well as those controlled by Kievan Russia. *Illustration by XNR Productions. Reproduced by permission of the Gale Group.*

These victories were costly, however, and except for a few parts of Sicily and southern Italy, the Byzantines did not hold their conquests for long. The empire soon had other troubles as well. Beginning in 541, a plague devastated Byzantium, and by the time it ended in the mid-700s, it had killed millions of people. Aside from everything else, this meant that the empire's tax revenues decreased dramatically, leaving it unable to pay for its armies. Enemies, including the Slavs, attacked from all sides, and the first successful rebellion in some three hundred years ended the life of the emperor Maurice (ruled 582–602). For more than a century, the empire was almost constantly at war with Persia, which conquered all Byzantine lands south of Asia Minor, and it was only with the help of the church that Heraclius (hair-uh-KLY-us; ruled 610–41) was able to hold on to Constantinople itself. It seemed that things could not get worse—but they did.

When the even more powerful Arab caliphate replaced the Persians, Byzantium seemed doomed. Yet

thanks to reorganization of the military by Constans II (ruled 641–68), the Byzantines put up a strong defense of their homeland. They reached a turning point in 718, when the Arabs were forced to give up the siege of Constantinople. This had enormous significance for future history: if the Arabs had defeated the Byzantines, they would undoubtedly have conquered and forcibly converted Western Europe—which lacked unifying leadership at the time—to Islam.

By the 900s, Byzantium was on the offensive again, reconquering old territories and dealing severely with a tribe called the Bulgars, who had long posed a threat. These conquests reached their peak under Basil II (BAZ-ul; ruled 976–1025), nicknamed "The Bulgar-Slayer." Basil annexed Bulgaria in 1014, and by 1025 the empire had reached a second high point. Egypt, Palestine, and Lebanon were gone forever, but the Byzantine lands and protectorates stretched from southern Italy to Armenia, and from Croatia to Syria.

The Byzantine system

Justinian had laid the foundations for modern law with his legal code, or system of laws, completed in 535. Roman law dated back almost a thousand years, but Justinian's Code greatly simplified and organized it. Byzantium also had an excellent and highly organized civil service. Placed as they were between many lands in Europe and Asia, the Byzantines had to become skilled at diplomacy, or the art of negotiation. They also became masters at playing their enemies against one another; but when they had to go to war, they were a mighty force.

Having adapted to changing times, the Byzantines developed a strong cavalry, along with something the earlier Roman Empire had lacked: a powerful navy. In fact, the Byzantine fleet used the first modern-style chemical weapon, "Greek fire." The latter was a combination of petroleum, salt peter, quicklime, and sulphur; when sprayed on an enemy's ship it would cause it to burn.

One of the most significant military-related developments, however, had nothing to do with actual fighting. This was the reorganization of the army by Constans II in the mid-600s, an act that may well have saved the empire. With funds running low, he gave soldiers plots of land called "themes" and made them self-supporting. This not only saved money, but also promoted good will with the troops and encouraged a stronger defense, since now the soldiers were defending their own land.

The economy

The "themes" bear some resemblance to aspects of Western European feudalism. Certainly both Byzantine and Carolingian society were made of similar elements: a tiny elite consisting of royalty, nobility, priests, and military; and a vast mass of toiling peasants. The lives of the peasants may not have been much better than those of their counterparts in Western Europe, but thanks to the efforts of

Mosaic of Justinian and his court from the Church of San Vitale. Justinian was the greatest of the Byzantine emperors. *Reproduced by permission of the Granger Collection Ltd.*

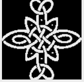
the Orthodox Church, literacy was much more widespread in Byzantium.

The Byzantine Empire even managed to create a middle class, something virtually unknown in the West until the 1000s. Typically these were merchants who profited from the extensive trade routes running through Byzantium, linking Europe and Asia. Thus Constantinople became known as a crossroads for the world and emerged as a most splendid city. At a time when Rome had perhaps 30,000 inhabitants, the Byzantine capital boasted a quarter-million people.

Byzantine culture

From an early time, it was clear that there was not really just one Christian church. The Catholic Church conducted its services in Latin, the Orthodox Church in Greek. Catholics looked to the pope for leadership, members of the Orthodox faith to the *patriarch* (PAY-tree-ark) or bishop of Constantinople. Gradually the Orthodox church came to have its own saints, its own holidays, and its own rules concerning marriage among the clergy.

At the heart of the division between churches was a debate about the identity of Jesus Christ: for Western



The Nika Revolt

Byzantine society in the 500s was dominated by two groups, the Blues and the Greens. The names came from the colors of their respective horse-racing teams, who competed regularly at the Hippodrome, or race track. Horse races in Byzantium were much more important than they are today: by cheering for the emperor's horse or that of a challenger, a citizen was making a political statement, and rivalries could often lead to violence.

It is not surprising, then, that a dispute that originated in the Hippodrome on January 13, 532, ended in massive bloodshed. This was the Nika Revolt, so named because *Nika!* or "Conquer!" was the favorite cheer of spectators at the races. In this particular instance, both the Greens and the Blues joined forces against the emperor Justinian, who had placed extraordinarily high taxes on his people and imprisoned members of both factions.

With an angry crowd gathering outside his palace, Justinian found himself unable to make a decision and began listening to advisors who suggested he should flee. It was then that the Empress Theodora (c. 500–548) stepped in and told him to act bravely: "For my own part," she said, "I hold to the old saying that the imperial purple makes the best burial sheet"—in other words, it is better to die defending the throne than to run away. Justinian listened to his wife's counsel and dispatched an army led by his general Belisarius to deal with the revolt. They trapped the rioters in the Hippodrome, where they massacred some 30,000 of them and reestablished order.

Christians, there could be no doubt that Christ *was* God, whereas most Eastern Christians maintained that the two were separate. In worldly matters, West and East also differed in their views on the relationship between church and state. In Western Europe, popes and kings vied for leadership, but in Byzantium the emperor's power was clear. He could even exercise final say in choosing the patriarch of Constantinople, and the Byzantines viewed the position of the emperor (though not necessarily any individual holding that position) as sacred.

In fact depictions of emperors and empresses in Byzantine art made use of an ancient pagan symbol called the *nimbus,* which was said to hover around a deity. Oddly, this was one of the few aspects of Byzantine culture that made an impact on the West, where artists began using a related symbol, the halo; but haloes were for Jesus, Mary, or the saints—not for rulers.

Iconoclasm

In the Byzantine world, the relationship between art, religion, and

politics was a complicated one, and never more so than in the dispute over Iconoclasm (eye-KAHN-oh-klazm). The latter was the name for a movement, supported by Emperor Leo III (ruled 717–41), which held that all "icons," or images of religious figures, were idols, and hence went against Christian teachings. Under orders from Leo, icons were forbidden, and many existing ones were destroyed. A number of priests died trying to stop soldiers from tearing down statues, and under Constantine V (ruled 741–75) the persecution became even more vigorous.

Many medieval European rulers earned a title to distinguish them from others of the same name, a word or phrase that characterized the man, his reign, or his greatest achievement: thus Pepin III was known as "Pepin the Short," and Basil II became "the Bulgar-Slayer." Constantine's title—Copronymus, which means "name of dung"—says a great deal about the Byzantine reaction to Iconoclasm, which became more and more unpopular as the violence associated with it continued. Western church leaders meanwhile shared in the Byzantines' growing distaste for the Iconoclastic movement: indeed, Iconoclasm never had many supporters in the West, where few people could read. Images were an essential part of worship in Western Europe, and any attack on artwork was seen as an attack on Christianity itself.

Eventually the anti-Iconoclast movement—the Iconophiles (eye-KAHN-oh-fylz)—gained an important supporter on the throne, yet this did little to win favor with the pope in Rome. The new Byzantine ruler was a ruthless one; however, the real problem was that this emperor was an empress: Irene (ruled 780–802). It was considered bad enough that a woman ruled the empire, but she added insult to injury by using her authority to call the Second Council of Nicaea, which condemned Iconoclasm in 787.

The meeting was designated the seventh ecumenical council, implying that it brought together all Christians. In fact the split between East and West was only widening, and the pope's crowning of Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor in 800 was in part a reaction to Irene: since it was illegal for a woman to rule the Byzantine empire, the pope could claim that the Roman throne was vacant, and thereby crown Charlemagne. This in turn angered the Byzantines, who felt that the papacy had challenged their claim as the rightful heirs to the Roman Empire.

Byzantine art

As they became more cut off from "barbarian" Western Europe, the Byzantines became convinced that theirs was a superior culture that must be preserved unchanged. It is easy to understand how they believed this: there was their glorious Greek past, not to mention the fact that for many centuries, Byzantium was the only real civilization on the European continent. Thus the Byzantines developed a highly static, or unchanging, worldview.

This static quality translated to their art, which was brilliant if a bit

A mosaic depicting a Byzantine Madonna and Child. This mosaic is from the Hagia Sophia, the church completed under Justinian's orders in 537. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

stiff. Iconoclasm caused Byzantine artists to develop a strong sense of abstract form—that is, designs and other non-representational shapes—but there was also a reaction to Iconoclasm; thus in the end, Byzantine art was more highly image-oriented than ever. Painting relied heavily on formal depictions of the Madonna and Child (Mary and the baby Jesus), as Western European art did later. The human figure in Byzantine art was elongated, with people's bodies much taller in proportion to head size than they really were. Babies looked like small adults, without the relatively large heads and "baby fat" that distinguishes real babies.

The Byzantines were masters in the form called *mosaic* (moh-ZAY-ik), usually created by arranging colored bits of glass or tile to form a picture. The most famous Byzantine mosaics are those depicting Justinian and Theodora in the Church of San Vitale at Ravenna, built during the brief Byzantine occupation of Italy. The greatest example of Byzantine architecture, however, was not the church in Ravenna but the Hagia (HAH-jah) Sophia in Constantinople. Built by Justinian, the Hagia Sophia was completed in 537 and quickly became recognized as one of the most magnificent structures in the world. It was dominated by a dome that, despite its enormous size—184 feet high and 102 feet wide—seemed to float over thin air. In fact it rests on four arches and the stone piers upholding them.

The Slavic peoples

Among the countless peoples inhabiting what is now western Russia during Roman times, later to be swept westward by the Huns, was a group called the Slavs. Twice they invaded the Byzantine Empire during its troubled years, but eventually they settled down and became mixed with the Avars, Bulgars, and Khazars, other nomadic groups in the region. Slavs and

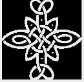
The Hagia Sophia, built by Justinian, is the greatest example of Byzantine architecture. It was built in the Byzantine capital, Constantinople, which is now Istanbul, Turkey. *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

Bulgars founded the first Slavic kingdom, Bulgaria, whose independence Byzantium recognized in 716.

In the 800s, two Byzantine missionaries, the brothers Cyril (SEER-ul; c. 827–869) and Methodius (mi-THOH-dee-us; c. 825–885), began preaching the Christian message in what is now the Czech Republic. This ultimately led to the conversion of the Bulgarians, whose King Boris embraced Eastern Orthodoxy in 865. In a pattern that would be repeated throughout Slavic lands, conversion did not spread upward from the people; rather, it went from the top down, with the king ordering his subjects to convert. Around the same time, the Byzantine protectorate of Serbia accepted Orthodoxy as well. St. Cyril even developed an alphabet, based on Greek letters, which the newly converted peoples adopted, and which Slavic Orthodox nations use today: the Cyrillic alphabet.

Catholic nations

Some eastern European peoples, while linguistically and ethnically Slavic, embraced Roman Catholi-



Byzantine Literature: Tall Tales and Gossip

Byzantine literature is remembered for two opposing tendencies. On the one hand, there was the literature of *hagiography* (hay-jee-AHG-ruh-fee), official biographies of the Eastern Orthodox saints. These were a mixture of truth and legend, designed to provide readers both with entertainment and a moral lesson. Hagiography exaggerated the best qualities of the subject. On the other hand, Byzantium's gossipy historians (who also sometimes presented tall tales as fact) often tried to make people seem worse than they were, not better.

Such was the case with Procopius (pruh-KOH-pee-us), a historian of the 500s. Though he wrote a highly acclaimed account of Justinian's wars of conquest, Procopius secretly held deep grudges against the emperor, the empress Theodora, and others. Therefore he wrote a work in which he told what he *really* thought. Procopius's *Secret History* was not published until many centuries after his death, and no wonder: had it been discovered, he would undoubtedly have been executed. Its chapters have titles such as "Proving That Justinian and Theodora Were Actually Fiends [i.e., demons] in Human Form."

The empress had been a prostitute in her younger days, and Procopius spared no detail regarding her shady past, his account at times verging on pornography. Other historians, by contrast, offer positive accounts of Theodora, and indeed it is hard to trust Procopius. He was a member of the Green faction, whereas Theodora supported the Blues, and this may explain some of his ill will.

cism. Instead of the Cyrillic alphabet, they adopted the Roman alphabet, used in virtually all Western nations (including the United States) today. Just to the north of Serbia was Croatia, whose people became a part of Charlemagne's empire, as did neighboring Slovenia. To the northeast was Hungary, one of the few nations in Eastern Europe that is neither Slavic nor Orthodox: its dominant Magyar population became Catholic after their defeat by Otto the Great in 955.

North of Hungary was Moravia, converted to Orthodoxy by Cyril and Methodius. Later it would become Catholic after its conquest by Bohemia, itself converted during the 800s by German missionaries. Bohemia and Moravia, today part of the Czech Republic, would enjoy periods of great influence during the Middle Ages. Moravia briefly conquered a large area, including Slovakia to the east, in the late 800s; and during the 1200s Bohemia emerged as a great power.

Finally, there was the northernmost and most influential of the Slavic Catholic nations: Poland, whose king adopted Christianity in

СТАНДАРТ

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This Bulgarian newspaper shows an example of the Cyrillic alphabet, which was developed by St. Cyril (c. 827–869). *Reproduced by permission of EPD Photos.*

966. Thus a large part of Slavic Eastern Europe was Catholic, yet to the east was a single Orthodox nation that became larger than all of Eastern Europe combined: Russia.

Kievan Russia

The region just north of the Black Sea has been inhabited since ancient times. All the tribes entering Europe from Asia, including not only the Huns and Turkic peoples but later the Mongols, passed through it; yet the Slavs remained. They were probably the founders of Kiev (kee-YEV), today the capital of Ukraine. Then in 862 the Vikings known as the Varangians arrived from Sweden and established the city of Novgorod (NAWV-guh-rud). Eventually one of the Vikings, whose name was Rurik (died c. 879), emerged as their leader, and founded a dynasty that would remain influential until 1598.

Rurik extended Slavic influence north, into the land of the Finns; but the real empire-building began with Oleg (died c. 912), who merged Kiev and Novgorod into a single entity called Kievan Rus or Kievan Russia. Oleg's daughter-in-law Olga accepted

St. Basil's Church, located in Moscow, Russia, is a magnificent example of an Eastern Orthodox church. *Photograph by Susan D. Rock. Reproduced by permission of Susan D. Rock.*

Eastern Orthodoxy; however, her son rejected it for fear that it would make him a subject of Byzantium. Conversion came during the reign of Vladimir the Great (VLAHD-i-meer; c. 956–1015), who in 987 agreed to marry Anne, the sister of the Byzantine Empire's mighty Basil II.

Vladimir set about forcibly converting Kiev and Novgorod while Basil occupied himself with the Bulgars. A power struggle followed the death of Vladimir, but Yaroslav the Wise (yuh-ruh-SLAHF; ruled 1019–54) restored order and began building a vast Russian empire that stretched the length of Eastern Europe, from the Gulf of Finland to the Black Sea.

The turning point for Eastern Europe

After 1054 and the death of Yaroslav, Kievan Russia began to decline, torn apart by rivalries between various city-states. Turkic nomads, by then a powerful force in Eastern Europe, became more involved in Russian affairs, and in 1097 a group of Russian nobles divided the empire with them. This would make Russia

particularly vulnerable to the Mongol invasion about 150 years later.

The year 1054 also marked a turning point for Eastern Europe as a whole. It was then that the Eastern Orthodox Church formally broke with Rome over a number of issues, including clerical celibacy—that is, the question of whether priests could marry. Orthodox leaders held that they could and should; Rome, particularly after the split with the Orthodox Church, opposed marriage for priests.

Soon afterward, Byzantium experienced another, even more significant, turning point: its loss to the Turks at the Battle of Manzikert in Armenia in 1071. The Turks even took the Byzantine emperor prisoner, and soon afterward helped themselves to all of Asia Minor, thenceforth known as Turkey. Thus less than fifty years after the victories of Basil II, Byzantium lost everything it had gained, and though the empire would continue for three more centuries, Manzikert was a blow from which it would never recover.

How Basil Became the Bulgar-Slayer

In the 980s, Bulgaria's King Samuel (ruled 980–1014) began creating an empire to the north of Byzantium, one that ultimately included parts of Bulgaria, Macedonia, northern Greece, Serbia, and Albania. He even declared himself *czar* (ZAHR)—Slavic for "caesar."

The Byzantines' Basil II rightly saw this as a threat, and the two empires went to war. It took decades to subdue the Bulgarians, but Basil won the decisive Battle of Belasitsa on July 29, 1014. His army captured some 14,000 Bulgarian soldiers, and gouged their eyes out; every hundredth man, however, was allowed to keep one eye so he could lead the other ninety-nine home. It was said that when Czar Samuel saw his army limping home, he died of a heart attack.

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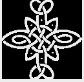
The Islamic World

6

In ancient times, the Middle East produced some of the most outstanding civilizations in the world. First there was Egypt, along with the Mesopotamian civilizations of Sumer, Babylonia, and Assyria; then there were Phoenicia, Israel, Syria, and—far to the east—Persia. During all this time, the least distinguished portion of the Middle East was the hot, dry Arabian Peninsula. The medieval era, however, would see a complete reversal of roles, as the deserts of Arabia produced a mighty faith that swept up the region in a surge of religious passion that remains strong in modern times.

Preparing the way for Islam (300s–632)

In the centuries preceding the birth of Islam (IZ-lahm; "submission to God"), two ancient powers dominated the Middle East. At one end was the Byzantine Empire, which controlled Egypt and, for many centuries, the strip of Mediterranean coastline between Egypt and Turkey. The other great power in the region was Persia, or more specifically the Sassanid (SAS-uh-nid) Empire, which first emerged in A.D. 226.



Words to Know: The Islamic World

Adultery: Voluntary sexual relations between a married person and someone other than his or her spouse.

Algebra: A type of mathematics used to determine the value of unknown quantities where these can be related to known numbers.

Arabesque: A type of ornamentation often used in Arab art, combining plant and sometimes animal figures to produce intricate, interlaced patterns.

Blasphemy: The act of insulting God.

Caliph: A successor to Muhammad as spiritual and political leader of Islam.

Caliphate: The domain ruled by a caliph.

Caravan: A train of pack animals and travelers journeying through an inhospitable region.

Dowry: The wealth that a bride brings to her marriage.

Emir: A military and political leader in Islamic countries, whose domain is called an emirate.

Fasting: Deliberately going without food, often but not always for religious reasons.

Hajj: A pilgrimage to Mecca, which is expected of all Muslims who can afford to make it.

Idol: A statue of a god that the god's followers worship.

Imam: The supreme spiritual leader in Shi'ite Islam.

Interest: In economics, a fee charged by a lender against a borrower—usually a percentage of the amount borrowed.

Indo-European languages: The languages of Europe, India, Iran, and surrounding areas, which share common roots.

Islam: A faith that teaches submission to the one god Allah and his word as given through his prophet Muhammad in the Koran.

Jihad: Islamic "holy war" to defend or extend the faith.

Judeo-Christian: Describes ideas common to the spiritual heritage of both Jews and Christians.

Persia had long been a great cultural center, and it produced a religion that influenced the development of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Zoroastrianism (zohr-oh-AS-tree-un-izm). Founded by the prophet Zoroaster (c. 628–c. 551 B.C.), Zoroastrianism taught of a supreme deity representing ultimate good, who continually did battle with his satanic opposite. Not long after Zoroaster's time, Persian forces took Babylonia, which had a large population of Jews taken as captives from Israel. The

Koran: The holy book of Islam.

Lingua franca: A common language.

Minaret: A slender mosque tower with one or more balconies on which a muezzin stands to call the faithful to prayer.

Mosque: A Muslim temple.

Muezzin: A crier who calls worshipers to prayer five times a day in the Muslim world.

Muslim: A person who practices the Islamic religion.

Mysticism: The belief that one can attain direct knowledge of God or ultimate reality through some form of meditation or special insight.

Philosophy: An area of study concerned with subjects including values, meaning, and the nature of reality.

Pilgrimage: A journey to a site of religious significance.

Prophet: Someone who receives communications directly from God and passes these on to others.

Scientific method: A means of drawing accurate conclusions by collecting information, studying data, and forming theories or hypotheses.

Secular: Of the world; typically used in contrast to "spiritual."

Semitic: A term describing a number of linguistic and cultural groups in the Middle East, including the modern-day Arabs and Israelis.

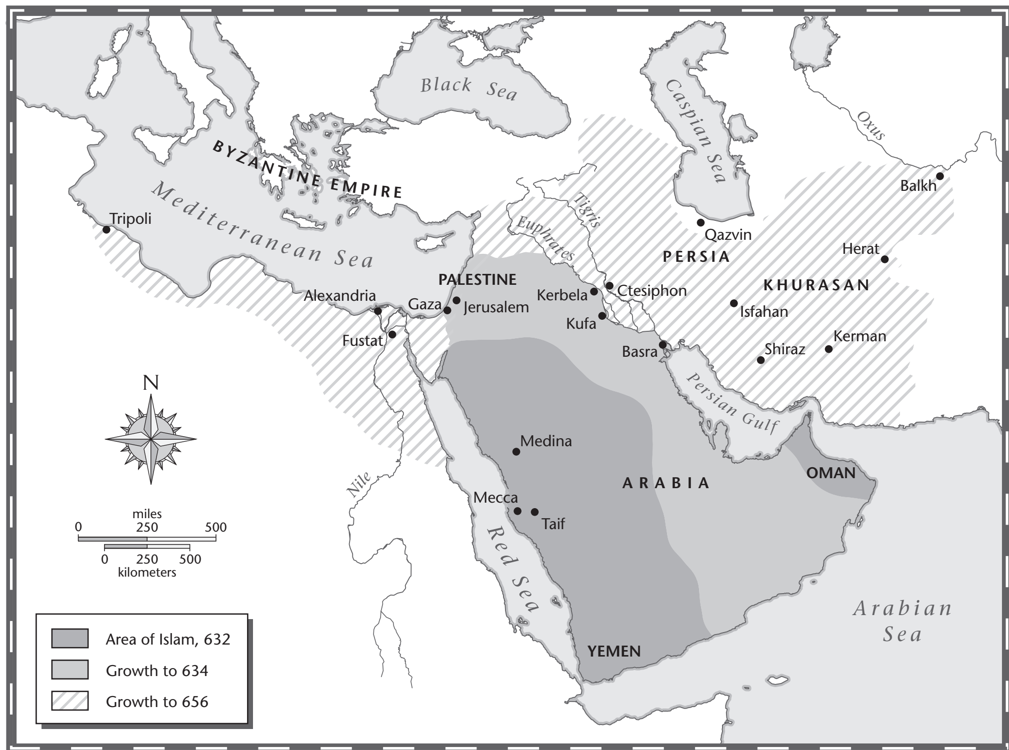
Shi'ism: A branch of Islam that does not acknowledge the first three caliphs, and that holds that the true line of leadership is through a series of imams who came after Ali.

Sunni: An orthodox Muslim who acknowledges the first four caliphs.

Trigonometry: The mathematical study of triangles, angles, arcs, and their properties and applications.

Zoroastrianism: A religion, founded in Persia, that taught of an ongoing struggle between good and evil.

Jews were thus exposed to Zoroastrianism, by then the dominant religion of Persia, and the Zoroastrian idea of a devil entered the Jewish scriptures. (Parts of the Old Testament written prior to this time certainly contained references to evil itself, but there was little concept of a single entity as the source of that evil.) Thanks to the influence of Judaism on Christianity and Islam, the idea of a devil entered those faiths as well. In addition, Zoroastrianism also had an impact on an odd splinter religion known as



A map of the Middle East in the mid-600s shows the growth of Muslim territories in the years following Muhammad's death in 632. *Illustration by XNR Productions. Reproduced by permission of the Gale Group.*

Manichaeism (man-uh-KEE-izm; see box, "Manichaeism").

Arabia before Muhammad

In the early 600s, no one would have suspected that the Arabs would soon destroy the mighty Sassanid Empire and nearly destroy the Byzantines on their way to becoming the dominant power in the region—all within the space of one lifetime. Though coastal regions such as Oman (oh-MAHN) in the east and Yemen (yeh-MAHN) in the west enjoyed considerable trade, and trade routes crossed the interior, Arabia was simply a place for goods to pass through on their way between Africa, Europe, and Asia. The hot, dry, center of the peninsula, an area about half the size of the United States, offered little to attract outsiders.

Arabia was a tribal society, divided between the nomadic (wandering) Bedouins (BED-oo-unz) of the desert and the settled peoples of the coastal areas. A dominant cultural center was Mecca, located halfway

down the coast of the Red Sea that separated Arabia from Africa. Among Mecca's attractions was a shrine called the Kaaba (kuh-BAH), a cube-shaped building that housed a meteorite. According to the traditions of the Arabs, the meteorite had been hurled to Earth by a deity known as Allah (uh-LAH). In addition to Allah were some 300 other gods and goddesses, whose statues filled the Kaaba; yet Allah was supreme, like the God worshiped by Jews and Christians.

Manichaeism

One of the most interesting religious beliefs to emerge during the Middle Ages was Manichaeism, based on the teachings of the Persian prophet Mani (MAH-nee; c. 216–c. 276). Reflecting both Zoroastrian and Christian influences, Manichaeism taught that the universe was sharply divided between good and evil, and between the spiritual and physical worlds. Adherents to the Manichaean system believed that by practicing an ascetic lifestyle, they could help to defeat evil and open themselves up to great knowledge.

Fearing the new belief system, Zoroastrian priests had Mani skinned alive; however, the influence of Manichaeism grew after its founder's death. In his youth, Augustine was a Manichaean, and the religion continued to exert an influence in the East until the 1200s. The beliefs of the Albigenses, a sect that appeared in France about a millennium after Mani's death, mirrored those of the Manichaeans.

Muhammad

In the tribal environment of Arabia, loyalties were fiercely defended and family was essential. The leading tribe of Mecca was called the Quraish (koo-RESH), and it was into this tribe that one of the most influential figures of all time, Muhammad (moo-HAH-med; c. 570–632), was born. Orphaned at the age of six, he grew up poor and worked hard through his teen years, establishing himself as a thoughtful, trustworthy young man.

A wealthy widow named Khadijah hired him to act as her representative in a merchant business that took him to Syria, where Muhammad undoubtedly gained access to various ideas and traditions, including Judaism and Christianity. Khadijah was some fifteen years his senior, but Muhammad so impressed her that when he was twenty-five she made him an offer of marriage that he accepted. Of their many children, the only one who lived to bear him grandchildren was their daughter Fatima (FAT-uh-muh; c. 616–633), whose name means "Shining One."

For many years, Muhammad lived the ordinary life of a prosperous merchant; then in 610, when he was about forty years old, he had a vision in which an angel told him that Allah had called him to be his prophet. The vision frightened Muhammad, but

gradually he accepted his destiny. During the twenty-two years of his life that remained, he would have some 650 of these revelations, which would become the basis for the Koran (kohr-AHN), Islam's holy book.

In 613, Muhammad began preaching his new faith, focusing on three principal themes: that Allah was the only god and all the other deities in the Kaaba were false idols; that the rich should share their wealth with the poor; and that all men would face a final judgment before Allah. The wealthy Quraish were not enthusiastic to hear this, and eventually their hostility forced Muhammad to leave Mecca along with his family (Khadijah died during this period) and his small band of followers. In 622, they settled in a town thenceforth known as Medina (muh-DEEN-uh; "The City"). Muslims (those who practice the Islamic religion) call Muhammad's flight from Mecca the *hegira* (heh-JY-ruh), and date their calendar from this event just as Christians date theirs from the birth of Jesus Christ.

Over the next few years, Muhammad led his followers on several raids against trading caravans from Mecca, and this eventually became outright warfare between Mecca and Medina. In one battle, a tiny Muslim force defeated a much larger Quraish army, which won the new religion many followers. In 630, Muhammad's army—by now more than 10,000 strong—took the city of Mecca, whereupon they destroyed the idols in the Kaaba. The latter, and Mecca as a whole, would thenceforth be the spiritual center of Islam, and non-Muslims were forbidden to enter the city.

The Islamic faith

Islam shares many features with Judaism and Christianity, including worship of a single god whose will is revealed in a holy book. East Asian religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, by contrast, may have holy texts, but usually there is no one book supreme above all others. Islam also holds biblical figures, from Abraham to Jesus, in great esteem. In all, the Koran names twenty-eight true prophets who came before Muhammad; however, Muhammad is clearly understood as the greatest of the prophets. Whereas the Old and New testaments represent the work of many writers over a period of more than a thousand years, Muhammad alone wrote the Koran—or rather, in the belief of Muslims, he received the words of the Koran from Allah.

The Pillars of Islam

The Muslim faith has five central concepts, called "Pillars of Islam." First is the profession of faith, a recognition that "there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet." Second is the institution of formal prayer at five set times during the day. Each city or town in the Muslim world has a large central mosque (MAHSK), or temple, crowned by a tall minaret—often the highest point in the town—from which a muezzin (moo-ZEEN) calls the faithful to prayer. Worshipers

typically roll out prayer mats and bow in the direction of Mecca.

In line with Muhammad's message of charity, the third pillar of Islam is the giving of alms (money or food) to the poor. Fourth is the practice of fasting, or voluntarily going without food for religious purposes, during Ramadan (RAH-muh-dahn), the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Finally, Muslims are encouraged to undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca, called a *hajj,* once in their lifetimes if they can afford to do so.

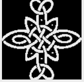
Islam as a political system

Though not one of the five pillars, there is one other concept central to the Islamic belief system: *jihad* (jee-HAHD), or "holy war." Muslims were expected to defend the faith against persecution or blasphemy, and if necessary to go to war for Islam. Obviously this aided in the spread of Muslim influence following Muhammad's death.

Islam was from the beginning intended both as a religious and a secular system, and eventually a whole system of law developed around it. Muslims were forbidden to loan money for interest, to eat pork, or to drink alcohol. Islamic law also gave women more rights than they had enjoyed under pre-Islamic society. The status of women in Islam has been a subject of particular significance, as some Muslim scholars interpreted Muhammad's teachings to mean that women should have few rights. Yet women played an important role in the foundation of Islam, and though men remained dominant under Muslim law, the Koran offered women a number of new legal protections.

No longer could men take as many wives as they wanted, for instance: now they could have only four, and they had to be able to provide financially for those four. Also significant was the fact that the bridal gift or dowry—that is, the money or holdings the groom received at marriage from the bride's family—now became the bride's property. If the husband divorced her, she got to keep the goods. Divorce remained much easier for a man than for a woman, but a man could no longer divorce his wife in anger and take her back the next day; once divorced, he had to wait three months before remarrying her. And whereas pre-Muslim Arabian society punished women more harshly than men for adultery, the Koranic penalty was the same for both participants: "flog each of them with a hundred stripes."

The Muslim emphasis on giving alms made Islam popular among the poor; so too did its teaching that all men were equal under Allah. Islam viewed other religions with toleration and gave Jews and Christians in captured territories special status. However, those who adhered to a faith other than Islam were not allowed to engage in religious activity outside their churches or synagogues, or to build new houses of worship. Furthermore, non-Muslims had to pay a special tax; to people who did not already feel strongly about their faith, this offered another incentive to convert.



The Sufis

In the late 900s and early 1000s, a movement known as Sufism (SOOF-izm) appeared in Persia, where it grew out of Shi'ite Islam. Incorporating ideas from Greek philosophy, Christianity, and even Buddhism, it stressed the mystical union of the soul with God. At its foundation were the ideas of Rabia al-Adawiyya (rah-BEE-ah al-ah-dah-WEE-ah; c. 713–801), a freed slave woman. In her poetry, Rabia presented an ideal love for Allah, which was tied neither to fear of Hell nor hope of Heaven.

The most influential Sufi thinker was al-Ghazali (1058–1111), who worked to reconcile traditional Islam with Sufi mysticism. The Sufis also had a strong influence on the poet Omar Khayyám, and in the present day they remain a small but significant group within the Islamic religion.

Islamic empires

The first wave of conquest (632–661)

Muhammad never clearly named a caliph (KAL-uhf), or successor; thus the first four caliphs—the term became a title for the spiritual and political leader of Islam—were men connected to the prophet through wives he married after Khadijah's death. His favorite wife was Aisha (ah-EE-shah; 614–678), and therefore after Muhammad's death, the first caliph was her father, Abu Bakr (BAHK-ur; ruled 632–34). Next came Umar (ruled 634–44), the father of another wife, and then Uthman (ruled 644–56), who married one of Muhammad's childless daughters. Fourth was Ali (ruled 656–61), the prophet's cousin and husband of Fatima.

When Muhammad died, the Muslims held only the western portion of Arabia; less than thirty years later, the caliphate (KAL-uh-fet) stretched from Libya to Bactria (modern-day Afghanistan), and from the Caspian Sea to the Nile River. Problems over succession, however, threatened to undo these gains and created divisions in the Islamic world that exist even today. Umar was assassinated, and Uthman was killed during a rebellion; Ali, who had opposed the choice of Abu Bakr as first caliph, faced several rebellions himself, including one led by Aisha. He would ultimately be assassinated by members of a breakaway sect, and his assassination would in turn pave the way for a significant division among Muslims.

The Umayyads (661–750)

After Ali's death, Mu'awiya (moo-AH-wee-ah; ruled 661–80), a member of the powerful Umayyad (oo-MY-ahd) family, became caliph. Mu'awiya had opposed Ali vigorously during the latter's lifetime, and though he was not accused of the assassination, it was obvious that he had

Moorish Spain

Among the most notable of Islamic territories was Spain, which came under the control of the Moors in 711. The Moors were a nomadic people from North Africa, where the name of the nation of Morocco reflects the region's Moorish heritage. They were a group distinct from Arabs, but the name "Moor" eventually came to mean all Muslim peoples in Spain, both North Africans and Arabs. The latter arrived in 756, when Abd-ar-Rahman escaped Abbasid assassins to establish an Umayyad stronghold in Spain. There he founded what he called the emirate (IM-uh-ret) of Cordoba. An emir (i-MEER) is a type of commander in Islamic countries. Eventually the Umayyad leaders declared themselves caliphs, suggesting that they saw themselves as the legitimate leaders of the Islamic world.

Christian forces held the north of Spain, and scored a major victory when they retook the northern city of Toledo (toh-LAY-doh) in 1085. By then the Umayyad caliphate had fallen, replaced by more conquerors from Morocco: first the Almoravids (al-muh-RAH-vedz) in 1086, and later the Almohads (AL-moh-hahdz) in 1120. During the 1100s, the Christian reconquest of Spain was in full force, and after they conquered Cordoba in 1236, the Christians had the Almohads on the run. The Nasrid (NAHS-reed) dynasty, also from Morocco, ruled during a final period, beginning in 1238; then in 1492, the Spaniards expelled the last Moors from their country.

The Moors left a strong legacy in the form of architecture, the most notable example of which is a magnificent palace called the Alhambra. Thanks to the Arab influence, Spaniards enjoyed a highly civilized lifestyle while the rest of Western Europe remained mired in the ignorance and confusion that characterized the "Dark Ages."

profited from the death of his old foe. By taking power, he founded a new dynasty that would rule Islam during its period of greatest expansion.

In 680, Ali's son Husayn led a revolt against the Umayyads and was assassinated. His murder became a rallying cause for Shi'ite (SHEE-ight) Muslims, who broke away from the majority group, known as Sunni (SOO-nee) Muslims. The Shi'ites rejected the first three caliphs, and maintained that Ali and the descendants of Fatima, starting with Husayn, constituted a line of infallible leaders or imams (i-MAHMZ). The Shi'ite interpretation of Islam spread among the poorer classes and among non-Arabs—particularly in Iran, where it remains the dominant faith today.

Meanwhile the center of power in the Islamic world shifted

The Alhambra is a magnificent palace built by the Moors in Spain during their control of the region in the Middle Ages. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

northward to the ancient Syrian city of Damascus, which became the capital of the Umayyad caliphate. The Umayyads soon expanded their boundaries to Spain and North Africa in the west, and India and the edge of China in the east. But this vast realm became difficult to govern; also, the Umayyads had a policy of only allowing Arabs to serve as leaders, and this made them many enemies. In 750 a descendant of Muhammad's uncle Abbas (uh-BAHS) led a revolt and began killing off all the Umayyad leaders. Only one escaped: Abd-ar-Rahman (AHB'd ar-ruh-MAHN; 731–788), who established a dynasty of long standing in Spain (see box, "Moorish Spain").

The Abbasids (750–1258)

One of the first steps taken by the Abbasids (uh-BAHS-idz) was to move the capital from Damascus to Baghdad in Iraq, many miles to the east. The Abbasids would flourish for about 150 years, then rapidly lose power; yet they formally held control for half a millennium. During that time, Islamic civilization had its brightest flowering, producing achievements

The Thousand and One Nights

The Thousand and One Nights, better known as *The Arabian Nights,* contains some of the world's favorite tales: Aladdin and his magic lamp, Ali Baba and the forty thieves, and Sinbad the Sailor. From these stories come such familiar concepts as "Open sesame" (the phrase used by Ali Baba to enter a cave filled with treasure), magic carpets, and the genie in the bottle. The collection's 264 tales, first assembled in the 900s, originated from a variety of Persian, Arabian, and Indian sources. From Persia came the "frame story" that ties all the tales together.

It seems that Sultan Shahriyar (SHAR-ee-yar) had decided all women were unfaithful, so he resolved to marry a new wife each evening, then put her to death the next morning. But his bride Shahrazad (SHAR-uh-zahd), or Sheherazade (shuh-HAIR-uh-zahd), managed to stay alive by beginning a new story each night and finishing it the next night—at which time she would begin a new tale, and buy herself another night. After 1,001 nights, during which she produced three sons, the sultan gave up his plans to kill off his wives.

Aladdin watches the genie emerge from the lamp in an illustration from *The Thousand and One Nights*. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

beyond the imagination of most Western Europeans.

During this time, a number of great rulers, most notably Harun al-Rashid (hah-ROON al-rah-SHEED; ruled 786–809), led the caliphate. Harun was the subject of legend and is believed to be the model for the sultan in the *Thousand and One Nights* (see box); likewise the empire he ruled became legendary throughout the world. At a time when the primitive buildings of the Merovingians constituted Western Europe's greatest architectural achievements, the Abbasids built great mosques noted for the intricacy of their design. While superstition took the place of medicine in Europe, the Arabs founded a school for doctors in Baghdad; and just as European monks were starting to use parchment, the

Arabs were learning paper-making from captured Chinese prisoners.

Islamic civilization

An explosion of knowledge

During the Middle Ages, the Muslim world underwent an explosion of knowledge like the one that occurred in ancient Greece during its golden age (490–404 B.C.) In fact, Arab Muslim scholars kept the Greek classics alive, particularly the works of the Greek philosopher Aristotle (AIR-uhs-taht-uhl; 384–322 B.C.). Aristotle may rightly be called the father of the scientific method and the leading proponent of logic, a system of reasoning for testing the accuracy of conclusions. During the period from the 700s to the 900s, at a time when Western Europe was almost wholly ignorant of ancient Greece, writings by Aristotle and other Greeks on everything from medicine to magic were translated into Arabic.

Learning flourished in the great cultural centers of Persia, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, and the Middle Ages saw the emergence of many great scholars. Most notable among these were Avicenna (980–1137) and Averroës (uh-VEER-uh-weez; 1126–1198). Avicenna, a leading Islamic interpreter of Aristotle, wrote some two hundred works on science, religion, philosophy, and other subjects. Averroës, with his attempts to reconcile religious faith and Greek philosophy, would influence a number of Jewish and Christian thinkers.

Mathematics and science

Along with philosophy, science and mathematical knowledge expanded greatly during a two-century period beginning in about 900. Arab Muslims borrowed a system of numerals developed in India, but the Arabs became so famous as mathematicians that these came to be known as "Arabic" numerals. Arab mathematicians laid much of the groundwork for analytical geometry, algebra (itself an Arabic word), and particularly for trigonometry.

The Arabs put their mathematical knowledge to use in astronomy, greatly improving on the stargazing equipment available at the time. Through observatories along the breadth of the Islamic world, from Spain to Iraq, they charted the movement of the stars. Thus they were able to correct many mistakes of the ancients, mistakes accepted as fact by European astronomers until Arab learning trickled into Europe following the Crusades.

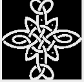
A citizen of Cairo, Baghdad, or Damascus was likely to receive the best medical treatment in the world from physicians who carefully observed the patient's condition before making a diagnosis. Muslim doctors were some of the first to prescribe drugs effectively, and many public hospitals were built in Islamic cities during medieval times.

The arts

As in Byzantium, the Islamic world had its own reaction to images

An Arabian astrolabe, an astronomical instrument, made in 1014. The Arabs made tremendous scientific advancements during the Middle Ages. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

in the 700s. Like the Bible, the Koran forbade the making of graven images or idols, but some took this to an extreme, demanding that no religious buildings include representations of human or animal forms. Outside the mosque, rules regarding representation of living creatures were more relaxed—with one exception. The face of Muhammad himself could not be



Arabic and Farsi

Most peoples of the Middle East today call themselves Arabs. In part this reflects an ethnic heritage, since Arabian tribes in the 600s and 700s intermarried with local populations and extended their influence throughout the region. More significant, however, is the common linguistic heritage of people who speak Arabic, a Semitic language related to Hebrew.

The people of Iran, on the other hand, are distinct from Arabs. Their language, Farsi or Persian, is an Indo-European tongue, meaning that it shares a common heritage with most languages of India and Europe—including English. Ethnically, Iranians are also more closely related to Indians and Europeans than they are to Arabs. Their distinction is reflected in the fact that Iranians embrace the Shi'ite form of Islam rather than the majority Sunni interpretation.

During the Middle Ages, Arab culture and the Arabic language spread throughout the Middle East. Islamic law at that time prohibited translation of the Koran from the original Arabic, which furthered the spread of the language; but the cultural identity of Persia (as Iran was called at that time) was so strong that its people resisted the Arab influence. Persians adopted Arabic-style lettering, yet retained their own language and literature. Eventually Farsi and Arabic both became common languages in the Middle East, often used by people from different groups as a means of communicating.

shown; therefore it was usually represented either with a veil, or covered by a glowing fire.

During the Middle Ages, mosques took on the form that they would retain to the present day, including an open courtyard and "horseshoe" arches modeled on the rounded Roman arches of Byzantium. Minarets became a striking feature of mosque architecture, and the mosques themselves were beautifully decorated in a style of ornamentation known as arabesque (air-uh-BESK). Arabesque, which decorated virtually every available surface, was characterized by graceful flourishes and ornate, flowery lines. Much of it was non-representational, but on secular buildings such as palaces, it might include plants, animals, and even human figures.

Arabian music, based on a five-note scale that gave it a distinctive, haunting sound, developed during medieval times. Early Islamic music grew out of oral poetry, with flutes, stringed instruments, and percussion complementing the poet's song. Sometimes professional female dancers also accompanied the performance.

The splintering of the Islamic world (c. 875–1258)

Beginning in about 900, the Abbasid caliphate began to lose power, and the Islamic world gradually broke into a confusing array of competing dynasties. Of these, only a few—in particular, two Egyptian ruling houses—would go on to assume great significance. Gradually the cultural center of Islam moved away from Baghdad to Egypt, the oldest civilization of all. Even today, Egypt is among the leaders of the Islamic world.

Members of the Shi'ite Ismaili (iz-MY-ah-lee) sect founded a dynasty called the Fatimids, named after Muhammad's daughter, that ruled Egypt from 909 to 1171. They established the city of Cairo, maintained a prosperous economy, and flourished for many years before being overtaken by the Ayyubids (uh-YÜ-bidz).

The Ayyubid dynasty came to power under Saladin (SAL-uh-dun; c. 1137–1198). Europeans who fought against him in the Crusades came to admire Saladin as the greatest of Muslim heroes; yet he was not an Arab but a Kurd, a member of a nation closely related to Iranians. The Ayyubid dynasty ruled Egypt from 1169 to 1252, when they were replaced by Turkish slave soldiers called Mamluks.

The rise of the Mamluks (Turkish rulers) would nearly coincide with the destruction of Abbasid power in Baghdad in 1258. By then, Islamic civilization had spread far beyond the Middle East. Word of Muhammad and the Koran had reached India and Southeast Asia, the rocky coastline of Spain, and desert kingdoms in the heart of Africa. Meanwhile, leadership among Islamic peoples had passed to a nation virtually unknown during Muhammad's lifetime: the Turks.

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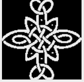
The Turks

7

The name of Turkey, a country that forms a land bridge between Europe and Asia, reflects the Turkish heritage of its majority population. Yet the region was inhabited for thousands of years before the Turks arrived, during which time it was known variously as Asia Minor or Anatolia. Its ancient civilization and culture were much more closely tied to Greece than they were to the Turks, a Central Asian people who arrived only in the Middle Ages. Once they arrived, however, they soon made their influence known, establishing a distinctive culture and several mighty empires.

Early Turkish empires (500s–900s)

As with most ethnic groups, the Turks can be defined not so much on the basis of race or appearance, but according to language. Because of their nomadic (wandering) lifestyle and lack of written records, it is difficult to know much about their movements; nonetheless, it appears that in the 500s a group who spoke a Turkic language were enslaved by a nation known as the Juan-Juan in what is now Mongolia. In about



Words to Know: The Turks

Diplomat: Someone who negotiates with other countries on behalf of his own.

Divan: A council of state in the Ottoman Empire.

Islamize: To convert to Islam.

Khan: A Central Asian chieftain.

Shi'ism: A branch of Islam that does not acknowledge the first three caliphs, and that holds that the true line of leadership is through a series of imams who came after Ali.

Sultan: A type of king in the Muslim world.

Sultanate: An area ruled by a Sultan.

Sunni: An orthodox Muslim who acknowledges the first four caliphs.

Terrorist: Frightening (and usually harming) a group of people in order to achieve a specific political goal.

Vizier: A chief minister.

550, these Turks overthrew the Juan-Juan, who moved westward and became known as the Avars.

Avars, Khazars, Bulgars, and Oghuz

The Avars would remain a threat to the Byzantine Empire for two centuries beginning in the late 500s, but in so doing, they had to face an old enemy. Tribes of Turks had also moved westward, to what is now southern Russia, where they established an empire called the Khazar Khanate (kuh-ZAHR KAHN-et). *Khan* is a title of leadership among Central Asian peoples, and though the khanate was loosely organized as befit a nomadic tribe, the Khazars viewed themselves as enough of a nation to send an ambassador to Byzantium in 568. Later the region came to be known simply as Khazaria, and in the 700s its people converted to Judaism (see box, "The Jewish Kingdom of Khazaria," chapter 8).

In the 600s, another Turkic group moved westward, where they became identified as Bulgars. As they intermarried with Slavs to found the nation of Bulgaria, their Turkish identity vanished. Also during this time, various groups of Turks controlled an enormous expanse of land from China to the Black Sea, and some historians view this as a single, ill-defined "empire." Whatever the case, its impact on history was minor, particularly in the face of the rapid Arab expansion that followed the establishment of the Islamic faith.

Among the Turkish groups in the "empire" to become Islamized (IZ-lum-ized) were the Oghuz (oh-GÜZ), converted by missionaries from Persia in 960. Their Islamic faith had enormous significance for the Turks' future history, as did the fact that many Turks had served the Abbasid caliphate as slave soldiers. The use of slave soldiers, males raised and trained from childhood to serve a military commander, would become a common practice in Turkish-dominated states throughout

A map showing the expansion of the Ottoman Empire in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. *Illustration by XNR Productions. Reproduced by permission of the Gale Group.*

the medieval world. Slave soldiers often gained their freedom, and many went on to become leaders: a slave soldier established the Delhi Sultanate in India in 1206, and a group of slave soldiers called Mamluks won control of Egypt in 1252.

The Seljuks (900s–1243)

In the late 900s, the Oghuz split into several groups, among them the Cumans, who moved into the Black Sea area of southern Russia and would remain there for two centuries. Another tribe of Oghuz, the Seljuks, began migrating southward and westward into Iran, causing their fellow Turks the Ghaznavids to spread into India. By then the Abbasids controlled their caliphate (the region they ruled) in name only; the Buwayhids (boo-WY-edz), a Shi'ite dynasty, actually ruled in Baghdad—that is, until 1055, when the Seljuks seized control. The fact that the Seljuks were Sunni Muslims, like the majority of people in the area, probably helped them win the allegiance of the conquered.

In 1060, the founder of the principal Seljuk dynasty, Toghril Beg (tawg-REEL; c. 990–1063) declared

City walls of Istanbul, Turkey, formerly Constantinople. The walls were built by the emperor Constantine in A.D. 324. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

himself sultan. His successor, Alp Arslan (ruled 1063–72), dealt the Byzantines a near-fatal blow at Manzikert in 1071, and soon afterward the Seljuks gained control of Asia Minor, which they called the Sultanate of Rum—that is, Rome. At this point, they constituted a tiny ethnic minority in the region, but they had established a foothold.

The Seljuks reached the height of their power under Alp Arslan's son Malik Shah (mah-LEEK; 1055–1092), controlling a large portion of the Middle East. After that, they began to decline, partly due to a lack of organization typical among nomadic-style rulers. The Crusades also played a role. The Seljuks had a less tolerant attitude than the Arabs toward Christians visiting the Holy Land, and their harassment of pilgrims—combined with their use of the name "Rome," which implied that they viewed themselves as inheritors of the Roman Empire—angered Europeans.

The Seljuks, finally defeated by the Mongols in 1243, left several important legacies. One was an informal power structure based on loyalty to

The Assassins

Today the word "assassin" refers to anyone who kills for a political purpose; originally, however, the name referred to a group of fanatical killers whose primary targets were the Seljuk Turks.

A terrorist organization associated with the Ismaili sect of Islam, the Assassins were established in 1090 by Hasan-e Sabbah, an Iranian religious leader. Hasan was known as the "Old Man of the Mountain," a title that passed to each successive Assassin leader. Operating from a castle in a valley stronghold, the Assassins conducted acts of terrorism and political killing throughout the Muslim world, but particularly in Iran and Iraq. Because the Seljuks happened to be in power at that time, they were the principal target, and all attempts to uproot the Assassins proved fruitless. During the Crusades, Assassins in Syria terrorized both Turks and Christians, but combined attacks by the Mongols and Mamluks in the mid-1200s brought about the end of the terrorist group.

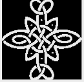
Crusaders brought the word "assassin" home with them, and eventually it entered the languages of Europe. It is thought that the name derives from the Assassins' use of the drug hashish. According to Venetian traveler Marco Polo, Assassin leaders would ensure their men's loyalty by drugging them and taking them to a garden where they could enjoy all manner of earthly delights—pleasures that, they were told, would await them in the afterlife if they died on the field of battle. Contemporary Ismaili sources, however, contain no mention of this "Garden of Paradise."

local religious leaders, who in turn gave their allegiance to political leaders. This made it possible for conquerors to easily replace one another, because the religious leaders served as a buffer between the people and their rulers, who were often foreigners. Another important feature of Seljuk rule was the use of slave soldiers, a group of whom would soon rise to prominence in Egypt.

The Mamluks (1252–1517)

From the time of the Fatimids (909–1171), Egyptian rulers had used the services of Turkish slave soldiers who came to be known as Mamluks (MAM-lükz). In 1252, the Mamluks come to power, and they would maintain control of Egypt for more than 250 years. During that time, the elite Mamluk troops typically chose their rulers, rather than simply passing leadership from father to son.

One of the Mamluks' most astounding achievements came in 1260, when they dealt the Mongols the first defeat in their long campaign of conquest. Their control spread to Syria,



The Janissaries

Around the time he conquered Bulgaria in 1388, the Ottoman sultan Murad established a force similar to the Mamluks, an elite military group called the Janissaries (JAN-uh-sair-eez). The latter was composed of non-Turkish captives who had been converted to Islam and subjected to strict discipline.

In time the Janissaries became so influential that they had the power to make or break sultans. The institution continued to exist for more than 400 years, until 1826, when Sultan Mahmud II (ruled 1808–39) ordered the execution of all Janissaries.

and the Mamluks' capital at Cairo in Egypt flourished. The late 1200s constituted a golden age for the Mamluks, and this was followed by a long, slow decline. In 1517 they were removed from power by yet another group of Turks, the Ottomans.

The Ottomans

In the aftermath of the Seljuks' defeat by the Mongols, various Turkish principalities came to power in Anatolia. Among the most prominent was one controlled by the Osman (ahs-MAHN) family. Around 1300, Osman Gazi (GAH-zee; 1258–c. 1326) founded what came to be known as the Ottoman dynasty.

The rise of the Ottomans (c. 1300–1389)

Osman's son Orkhan (OHR-kahn; ruled 1326–62) greatly expanded Ottoman control, partly by military action but even more so by skillful maneuvering. Orkhan introduced the offices of vizier and divan (di-VAHN), or council of state, and proved his ability as a diplomat in his relations with the Byzantine emperor John VI Cantacuzenus (kan-tuh-kyoo-ZEE-nuhs; ruled 1347–54).

Orkhan supported John militarily in a struggle against another claimant on the Byzantine throne, and in return the Ottomans received the Gallipoli (gah-LIP-oh-lee) Peninsula. A narrow strip of land some sixty-three miles long, Gallipoli happened to lie on the other side of the strait separating Europe from Asia.

Beginning with this small territory, Orkhan's son Murad (moo-RAHD; ruled 1362–89) was able to greatly expand Ottoman territories in Europe. Following his defeat of Serbian and Bulgarian forces in 1371, Murad moved his capital from Bursa in Anatolia to Edirne (ay-DEER-nuh) or Adrianople in Europe, thus showing his determination to keep moving deeper into the continent.

Murad went on to conquer Bulgaria in 1388, and on June 28, 1389, his armies defeated a combined force of Serbians and others at Kosovo (KOH-suh-voh) Field in southern Serbia. The battle established Ottoman power over the southeastern portion of Europe—all except for the remnants

of the Byzantine Empire—but Murad himself did not get to enjoy it for long. Soon after Kosovo, he was assassinated by a Serbian officer.

Troubled times and recovery (1389–1481)

In 1396, on a battlefield in what is now Bulgaria, an army led by Murad's son Bajazed (by-yuh-ZEED; ruled 1389–1402) defeated a combined Hungarian and Venetian force, organized by the pope to protect Europe from an Islamic invasion. The Ottomans seemed poised to begin absorbing more and more of Europe; then from the east came the Mongol armies of Tamerlane, who in 1402 captured Bajazed himself.

As it turned out, Mongol power was as shortlived in Anatolia as in most parts of the world, and upon Tamerlane's death in 1405, the sons of Bajazed began vying for power. The restored line of Ottoman rulers faced numerous military challenges: from Venice in the Aegean Sea; from Hungary in the Balkans; and from rebel forces in Anatolia and Albania. The leader of the Albanian revolt, Skanderbeg or George Kastrioti (1405–1468), was celebrated throughout the Western world for his brave resistance to the Turkish armies, and Albanians remember him as their national hero.

Had the Ottoman Empire kept going the way it was, it would not have lasted much longer, but in fact it continued until 1922. Its recovery began under Mehmed (meh-MET) the Conqueror, who ruled from 1451 to 1481. It was Mehmed who finally brought down the Byzantine Empire in 1453, after which Constantinople became the new Ottoman capital, Istanbul. Mehmed added Bosnia and Herzegovina (hurt-ze-GOH-vi-nuh) to the empire, and by the end of his reign Turkish power extended from the coast of the Adriatic (ay-dree-AT-ik) Sea, which faces Italy, to the region known as the Caucasus (KAW-kuh-sus) in southern Russia.

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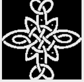
The Jewish World

Because it is written in the most famous of all books, the Bible, the story of the Jews is more well known than that of almost any other nation. The Old Testament tells that they were "God's chosen people," for whom he had selected a special land in Palestine. The Jewish nation of Israel, with its capital in Jerusalem, maintained control of that land for centuries; after 586 B.C., however, a succession of empires ruled. In A.D. 70, about forty years after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, and in 135, banished all Jews from the city. Over the years that followed, the Jews tried unsuccessfully several times to reestablish at least partial control over the area; by the beginning of the Middle Ages, however, many had moved on to find what they hoped would be a better life.

Jews, Judaism, and anti-Semitism

The term "Jew," strictly speaking, refers simply to someone who practices Judaism, the Jewish religion. A faith rich in symbolism and ritual, Judaism provided the founda-



Words to Know: The Jewish World

Anti-Semitism: Hatred of, or discrimination against, Jews.

Ashkenazim: Jews who settled in Central or Eastern Europe during the Middle Ages, along with their descendants.

Cabala: A Jewish mystical system for interpreting the Scriptures.

Diaspora: The settlement of the Jews outside their homeland in Palestine.

Ethnic group: People who share a common racial, cultural, national, linguistic, or tribal origin.

Holy Land: Palestine.

Judaism: The Jewish religion, whose sacred text is the Old Testament.

Ladino: A dialect spoken by Sephardic Jews, combining Hebrew and Spanish.

Messiah: The promised savior of Israel, foretold in the Old Testament.

Rabbi: A Jewish teacher or religious leader.

Ritual: A type of religious ceremony that is governed by very specific rules.

Scriptures: Holy texts.

Sephardim: Jews who settled in Spain during the early Middle Ages and later spread to other parts of the world, along with their descendants.

Synagogue: A Jewish temple.

Theology: The study of religious faith.

Usury: Loaning money for a high rate of interest; during the Middle Ages, however, it meant simply loaning money for interest.

Yiddish: A language spoken by Ashkenazim, combining German and Hebrew.

tion on which both Christianity and Islam developed. The Old Testament, the principal Jewish scripture, contains a number of themes familiar to believers in all three religions: sin and redemption, faith, sacrifice, obedience, and charity. At the center of all these concepts is the idea of law, and Jewish rabbis were trained in the religious law that originated with the prophet Moses in about 1300 B.C.

In practice, "Jew" is often used—and certainly was used in the Middle Ages—to describe an ethnic group whose ancestors belonged to the nation of Israel during ancient times. As a nation, the Jews believed that they had a special relationship with God; therefore the many misfortunes they faced as a people were a punishment from God for disobedience.

After they were taken into captivity by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., the Jews gradually came to believe that God would send them a Messiah, a savior who would liberate them. Many

A page from a Torah scroll. The Torah, which is written in the Hebrew language, comprises the five books of Moses, part of the Jewish scripture. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

people believed that Jesus Christ (c. 6 B.C.–c. A.D. 30) was the promised Messiah, and this was the foundation of Christianity. However, most Jews rejected the idea that Jesus was the Messiah, and a group of Jewish leaders called the Pharisees (FAIR-uh-seez) had even arranged for him to be put on trial by the Romans, who controlled the region at the time. As a result, Jesus was crucified, or nailed to a wooden cross and forced to hang on it until he died. Not all Jews called for his crucifixion, of course, but the fact that some did would later be used as an excuse for anti-Semitism during the Middle Ages. This was more than a little ironic: not only was Jesus Christ a Jew, but the Bible makes clear that all of humanity—not just the Jews or even the Roman soldiers who actually nailed him to the cross—shares the blame for killing the man Christians believe was God in human form.

Jews in the Middle East and North Africa

The settlement of the Jews throughout the world is known as the Diaspora, but in fact many Jews stayed

in Palestine or nearby Syria. After 638, when the Muslims conquered Jerusalem, Jews were allowed to reenter the city, and in general, they lived much better under Muslim than under Christian rule. Jews in southern Arabia fared particularly well: for many centuries, the region that is now Yemen was a wealthy community of Arab merchants who embraced the Jewish faith.

The center of Jewish life during the Middle Ages lay in Mesopotamia and Persia—modern-day Iraq and Iran. Again, the establishment of Islamic rule benefited the Jews. They had suffered some persecution under the Sassanid rulers of Persia, but after Muslims replaced the Sassanids in the 600s, Jews began to hold positions of influence in Persia. Jews gravitated into positions as merchants and bankers, and enjoyed considerable control over the Islamic government's purse strings. The greatest contribution of Jews in Iraq, however, was the Talmud (see box), along with other works of literature and philosophy.

North Africa represented extremes of good and bad for Jewish communities under Islam. During the late 900s in what is now Tunisia, the town of al-Qayrawan (AL ky-rah-WAHN) became the biggest center of Jewish life outside of Iraq. The experience of Jews was also relatively good in Egypt at around the same time, with the tolerant Fatimids in power; but Jewish communities there declined after the 1000s, along with the power of the Fatimids themselves. On the other hand, the rule of the Almohads in Morocco from the mid-1100s to the mid-1200s was particularly harsh. Jews were forcibly converted, and those who refused to accept Islam were slaughtered. As was the case in Europe at about the same time, the Almohads began forcing Jews to wear special clothing to set them apart from the rest of society.

Jews in Spain

During much of the Middle Ages, Spain—or rather the Iberian (eye-BEER-ee-un) Peninsula that includes both modern Spain and Portugal—was a special case in many regards. Geographically and historically it was part of Europe, but culturally it was part of the Islamic world. Likewise Jews in Spain were a distinct group, called Sephardim (suh-FAHR-dim). They even developed their own language, a mixture of Spanish and Hebrew called Ladino (luh-DEE-noh).

The Visigoths had persecuted Jews, who therefore welcomed the Muslim conquest in 711. As in most other Muslim countries, Jews found themselves tolerated, but they began to flourish in the 900s, thanks in large part to one Jewish man: Hisdai ibn Shaprut (kis-DY ib'n shahp-RÜT; c. 915–c. 975). Court physician to Caliph Abd ar-Rahman III, Hisdai acted in the capacity of vizier or chief minister, and often went on important diplomatic missions for the caliph. He also used his influence to encourage Hebrew scholarship in general, and study of the Talmud in particular.

The Talmud

First compiled in the 500s, the Talmud brings together Jewish oral law as a complement or supplement to the written law, the Old Testament. It consists of two major parts, the Mishnah and the Gemara.

Later scholars produced commentaries on the Talmud. Rashi (Shlomo Yitzhaqi; 1040–1105), a rabbi in France, added insights drawn from the Jewish experience in Christian Europe during the Middle Ages. Even more important were the Talmudic commentaries of Moses Maimonides a century later.

A rabbi reading the Talmud. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Jewish culture in Spain reached a high point during the eleventh century. Following Hisdai's example, a number of Jews attained positions of influence in the Muslim government, none of them more prominent than Samuel ha-Nagid (hah-NAH-geed; 993–c. 1055). A Talmudic scholar and military commander, Samuel was the actual power behind the caliph, handling all political and military matters himself. He also found time to write several classics of medieval Jewish scholarship.

Conditions for Spanish Jews began to decline after the Almoravids took power in 1086. Not only were the new rulers less tolerant than the Umayyads (Muslim rulers) had been, but Christians were beginning to reconquer the northern part of the country. The takeover by the Almohads in the 1100s signaled an even further decline in the Jews' situation, yet it was during this period that Spain produced the greatest Jewish thinker of the Middle Ages: Moses Maimonides (my-MAHN-uh-deez; 1135–1204). As Muslim philosophers before him had done, Maimonides attempted to strike a balance between the philosophy of the ancient Greeks on the one hand, and religious faith on the other.

With the Almohads conducting massacres and forced conversions as they had done in Africa, many Jews fled

Moses Maimonides, a great Jewish thinker from the Middle Ages, attempted to blend religious faith with ancient philosophy.

to other parts of Europe. Muslim power in Spain dwindled and conditions worsened in the 1200s, yet Jewish intellectual life continued to bear fruit. During this era, many talented minds embraced the cabala (kuh-BAH-luh), a mystical system for interpreting the Scriptures based on the belief that every word and punctuation mark in the holy texts contains a secret message.

Jews in Europe

European Jews outside of Spain were called Ashkenazim (ash-kuh-NAHZ-im), and in contrast to the Sephardim, they followed worship rituals established in Palestine rather than in Iraq. Beginning in the 800s, Jews in Central Europe began developing their own language, a mixture of Hebrew and German called Yiddish.

It is sad but true that during the Middle Ages, persons acting in the name of Christianity—a religion rooted in Judaism and based on compassion, charity, and love—typically treated Jews with cruelty and brutality. Thus the Jews fared better under pagan rulers in Rome and among the barbarians than they did later, when the Romans and barbarians converted to Christianity.

This is not to say that all Christian peoples treated them badly: in the 500s, the Ostrogoths and later the Lombards in Italy, both Christianized tribes, accorded Jews a high degree of respect. Even in the Carolingian Empire, where all other non-Christian religions were forbidden, Jews were allowed to continue holding services in their synagogues or temples.

Anti-Semitism gathers force

In fact the situation for Jews in Western Europe did not really deteriorate until the Crusades in the 1000s. The timing is ironic, since the purpose of the Crusades was supposedly to recapture the Holy Land—that is, Palestine—from the Muslims; but the Crusaders had no intention of returning it to the Jews. Instead, Jews were seen as enemies because they had rejected Christ, and the fact that they had lost

their nation and were forced to wander seemed like a clear-cut judgment from God.

In the frenzy that attended the First Crusade in 1096, people in a number of German towns slaughtered Jews as enemies of Christ. Thereafter, anti-Semitism would periodically die down, then reemerge in new forms. In 1215, the pope ordered that Jews had to wear special clothing so that Christians would not accidentally associate with them. During the Black Death of the 1300s, a rumor spread that Jews had caused the plague by poisoning wells. Economic problems, too, were blamed on Jews.

The economic explanation

Economic motivation certainly explains some of Europeans' hatred. Jews had long been dominant in the business world, in part because a Jewish businessman traveling to a faraway city knew that he could count on the finances and connections of the Jewish community there. Therefore some, though far from all, Jews were wealthy, a fact that enraged many of Europe's poor.

Furthermore, Jewish skill in business, combined with a growing attitude of anti-Semitism, had forced Jews into positions such as pawnbroker, moneylender, and banker. At that time those professions were viewed with disdain. The Catholic Church had condemned usury (YOO-zhur-ee), which today means lending money at an extremely high rate of interest; in the Middle Ages, however, it meant lending money and charging interest, no matter how low the rate.

In fact, when lenders are able to charge a reasonable rate of interest, this helps the entire economy to grow and benefits the poor as well as the rich. People in medieval times, however, had no notion of such concepts: rejecting reason in favor of emotion, they found it easy to blame the Jews for the problems in their lives.

The Jewish Kingdom of Khazaria

Though Israel ceased to be a nation in 586 B.C. and would not be reestablished until A.D. 1948, a Jewish kingdom did flourish during the Middle Ages. It was ruled not by descendants of the ancient Israelites, however, but by Turks.

This was Khazaria, the kingdom that emerged from the Khazar Khanate in southern Russia. Accounts vary, but it appears that in the 700s, the Khazars converted to Judaism, and thereafter followed all Jewish rituals. The kingdom flourished until the 1000s, when it was conquered by Kievan Russia.

Expulsion and forced conversion

Eventually many nations worked themselves into such a fever of anti-Semitism that they forced all Jews to leave. It happened first in France in 1182, when King Philip II Augustus ex-

pelled all the Jews in order to seize their assets. Over the following years, France pursued an erratic policy toward its Jews, repeatedly inviting them back long enough to grab more wealth, then expelling them again.

England took a much simpler approach to the Jews, who first appeared in Britain following the Norman Invasion of 1066. English nobles had managed to profit off of the Jewish community for some time before King Edward I sent them away in 1290. Jews would not be readmitted to England again until the 1600s.

But the most disastrous situation for European Jews was on the Iberian Peninsula, where Jews had once been tolerated. Beginning in 1391, as the Christian re-conquest of Spain gathered momentum, Jews were offered the option of conversion or expulsion. Some chose conversion—and were dubbed Marranos (muh-RAH-nawz; "pigs") by disdainful Christians. In 1492, Spain ordered all Jews out, and five years later, Portugal did the same. Thereafter the Sephardim spread throughout North Africa and the Middle East.

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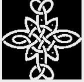
The Eleventh Century

A central theme of the eleventh century (the 1000s) in Europe was the struggle between church and state, or between popes and kings. From the mid-800s to the early eleventh century, a series of corrupt popes succeeded in nearly destroying the reputation of the papacy, just as emperors such as Otto the Great were enhancing their own power. In the 1000s, however, church reformers would bring Rome greater authority than it had ever enjoyed and would eventually launch Europe on an ambitious campaign of military and religious conquest called the Crusades.

Europe on the eve of the Crusades

Just as Charles Martel had established the Carolingian throne on the ruins of the Merovingian dynasty (see Chapter 3: The Merovingian Age), so medieval France grew from the ruins of Charlemagne's empire. In 987, the Carolingian ruler of the West Frankish Empire died without an heir; therefore French nobles and church leaders gathered to choose a successor. They elected a member of France's most powerful family,



Words to Know: The Eleventh Century

Abbess: The head of a convent.

Abbey: A monastery or convent.

Abbot: The head of a monastery.

Absolution: Forgiveness of sins, particularly by a priest.

Antipope: A priest proclaimed pope by one group or another, but not officially recognized by the church.

Cardinal: An office in the Catholic Church higher than that of bishop or archbishop; the seventy cardinals in the "College of Cardinals" participate in electing the pope.

Cleric: A priest.

County: In the Middle Ages, an area ruled by a relatively low-ranking type of nobleman called a count.

Duchy: An area ruled by a duke, the highest rank of European noble below a prince.

Eucharist: Communion, or the Lord's Supper service.

Habit: The clothing worn by a monk or nun.

Infidel: An unbeliever.

Indulgence: The granting of forgiveness of sins in exchange for an act of service for, or payment to, the church.

Investiture: The power of a feudal lord to grant lands or offices.

Mass: A Catholic church service.

Ordination: Formal appointment as a priest or minister.

Principality: An area ruled by a prince, the highest-ranking form of noble below a king.

Saracen: A negative term used in medieval Europe to describe Muslims.

Simony: The practice of buying and selling church offices.

Tonsure: A rite in which a candidate for priesthood had part of his hair removed; later this became the name for the hairstyle of monks and other clerics.

Vassal: A noble or king who is subject to a more powerful noble or king.

Hugh Capet (kuh-PAY; ruled 987–96), whose Capetian (kuh-PEE-shun) dynasty would rule the country until 1328. As his capital, Hugh Capet chose a city along the River Seine (SEHN), a town that had existed long before the Romans captured it in 52 B.C.: Paris.

Outside of a small region controlled by the Capetians, however, France was divided into a number of principalities, one of the most significant of which belonged to the Normans. Descendants of the Vikings, the Normans had first sailed up the Seine

Scene of William the Conqueror and his army on the attack; this image is part of the Bayeux Tapestry, which provides a visual account of the Norman Invasion. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

in 820, and by 911 the Carolingian king had been forced to make a treaty recognizing their right to occupy a large area of northwestern France. The Normans agreed to convert to Christianity and to protect France from other invaders; in exchange, they received the region between the English Channel and Paris, which became known as Normandy.

In 1002, the English king Ethelred the Unready—so named for his inability to resist the invasions of Canute—married Emma, daughter of Duke Richard I of Normandy. From then on, the Normans had their eye on the English throne, and in 1042, Ethelred's and Emma's son Edward the Confessor became king. During his reign, many Normans settled in England; then in 1066, the Normans launched a full-scale invasion of England. On October 14, they dealt the English a decisive blow on a beach near the town of Hastings. The leader of this victorious force, the new king of England, was William the Conqueror (c. 1028–1087; ruled 1066–1087).

As it turned out, the Norman Conquest would have wide-ranging effects felt even today (see box, "Chickens, Churches, and Normans"); more immediately, however, it posed a challenge for France. Kings of England after William held the title "duke of Normandy"; and after 1154, an English king was also count of Anjou (ahn-ZHOO), a French province. France began reconquering French lands in 1254, and by 1450 would place all of Normandy under the rule of Paris; along the way, however, English claims to French lands would spawn a series of conflicts.

Germany

Germany was formally under the control of the Holy Roman Empire, though that name did not actually appear until 1254. In any case, the Holy Roman Empire was—to quote a joke almost as old as the Middle Ages—neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire. In fact it was a mask for the German empire, itself a loose collection of duchies such as Saxony and Bavaria. Each had its ruling nobles, and with the end of Carolingian power in 911, these began electing kings to lead the various German states.

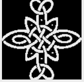
The election of Saxony's king Henry, father of Otto the Great, in 918 led to a century of Saxon domination. Otto vastly expanded Germany, transforming the kingdom into a true empire. His victories over the Slavs to the northeast added lands that would become Prussia, or eastern Germany, and the conquest of the Magyars in the southeast led to the establishment of the "eastern kingdom"—*Österreich,* or Austria. To the southwest, Otto reconquered territories formerly controlled by Charlemagne, including Lorraine and Burgundy, today in eastern France.

With Otto's conquest of Italy and the reviving of the Holy Roman Empire, German kings thenceforth claimed the title of emperor, which they usually received in a coronation ceremony overseen by the pope. Otto's grandson Otto III (ruled 983–1002), whose mother was a Byzantine princess, grew up nourished on grand dreams of an empire. He believed that the empire could become more than just a name. As emperor, he presented a crown to his counterpart in Byzantium, proclaiming him ruler of the East as Otto was of the West. The Byzantines, however, had no interest in an alliance, and Otto's magnificent visions of an empire died with him.

Italy

Italy had revived in the 700s, thanks to its increased contact with the highly civilized Arab world; but by the late 900s, it had become mired in a state of near-constant warfare that would not lift for more than three centuries. During this time, a force for stability was the port of Venice in northeastern Italy. Built on lagoons, islands, and mud flats, the city had existed since the 300s and had flourished as a province of the Byzantine Empire. By the 1000s, Venice remained one of the few Byzantine colonies on the Italian mainland, and

Otto III standing at the tomb of Charlemagne, finding the body of the dead emperor undecayed. Otto III had dreams of leading a great empire as Charlemagne had done almost two hundred years earlier. *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*



Chickens, Churches, and Normans

The Norman Conquest of 1066 was the central "before and after" in English history, and in the history of the English language. The Anglo-Saxon invasion of the 400s had established the Germanic roots of English, but the invasion by the French-speaking Normans added a whole new Latin-based (or Romance) layer. It is for this reason that English is perhaps the richest and most varied of languages.

To use an everyday example, there is the German word for chicken, *Hünchen* (HÜN-ken), which sounds much like its English counterpart. In French, this is *poulet* (poo-LAY), a close relative of the English word "poultry." Thus English has two words, where German and French each have just one. Another example involves the English words "church" and "ecclesiastical" (ee-klee-zee-AS-ti-kul), an adjective meaning "church-related." The first word is close to the German *Kirke* (KEER-kuh), the second to the French *eglise* (ay-GLEEZ).

An English-speaker who studies German will be pleasantly surprised at all the familiar-sound words such as *Buch, Auto,* and *Freund* (FROIND)—respectively "book," "auto," and "friend." German grammar, however, is much more of a challenge to English speakers, since English primarily took on Romance, rather than German, sentence structure.

it would soon become clear that Byzantium lacked the power to control the city.

At the south end of the peninsula was the triangle-shaped island of Sicily, which had fallen under Muslim control in 827. Therefore the church was inclined to view the Normans who conquered it as heroes for Christ, though the truth was not so glorious. These Normans had first come south in the early 1000s, when the duke of Naples used them to subdue Lombard princes eager to reassert their power. In return, the Normans had received a county in Italy, thus establishing a foothold in the area.

The church and the German empire each wanted to oust the Byzantines, Lombards, and others, then establish full control over Italy. Their biggest rivals (besides one another) were the Normans, and specifically Robert and Roger Guiscard (gee-SKARD), sometimes known as the de Hauteville (DOHT-veel) brothers. At first the papacy attempted to stop the de Hautevilles with military force, but by 1059 the pope realized they were too powerful.

So Rome tried a different strategy, much like the one used by French kings with the Normans' ancestors nearly 150 years before: in return for a promise that they would defend the Papal States against all *other* invaders, it conferred the title of duke on both brothers. The de Hautevilles also agreed to drive the Muslims out of Sicily, and Roger began conquering the island in 1061. Meanwhile Robert drove the Byzantines from southern Italy in 1071.

Eastern Europe

In Eastern Europe, Catholic nations prospered: Poland briefly flourished under the Piast (PYAHST) dynasty, and in 1085 Bohemia emerged as an independent kingdom. At the same time, Orthodox lands experienced a severe decline.

After the decline of Kiev, the only significant principality in Russia was Vladimir, an area to the northeast first settled in the 900s. Its people were originally Finnish in origin, but as Kievan Russia fell apart, more Slavs moved into the towns of Vladimir and Rostov, where they intermarried with the Finns to form a stable local population. Around 1147, the Russians established a fortress in the area, and named it Moscow. One day it would become the center of a great empire; but that day was long in the future.

In 1071, the same year they were driven from Italy, the Byzantines had suffered a devastating defeat by the Turks at Manzikert. Fearing Muslim conquest, Emperor Alexis I Comnenus (kahm-NEEN-us; ruled 1081–1118) appealed to the pope for military help. Despite the relatively recent break between the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, Alexis had reason to believe that his Christian brothers would aid him in the fight against the infidels. He had no idea of the forces he was unleashing, however. Over the next two centuries, Byzantium would get more "help" than it could stand as Europeans unleashed a series of wars called the Crusades, which would have a devastating effect on the Byzantine Empire.

A gondola approaches the Bridge of Sighs in Venice, Italy. Venice flourished as a province of the Byzantine Empire during the early Middle Ages. *Photograph by Susan D. Rock. Reproduced by permission of Susan D. Rock.*

The recovery of the church

The church had declined during the 800s and 900s, a period in which many church leaders obtained their posts not through great devotion to God but in return for money. The practice of buying and selling church offices was called simony, and the church took no specific measures against it until the 1000s. Another issue of concern was that of clerical

marriage, which in the view of many church leaders would only encourage priests to think about sex. Therefore the church officially prohibited clerical marriage in 1059.

The pope who put the ailing church on the road to recovery was Gregory VII (ruled 1073–85). Gregory started as a Benedictine monk, and under his leadership the monasteries or abbeys became an important instrument of reform. Gregory's new activist monasticism would later find its fullest expression with the establishment of the Cistercian (sis-TUR-shun) order in France. Cistercian monks, who typically lived in isolated areas, worked hard clearing land for agricultural use, growing crops, making wine, keeping bees for honey, and even mining.

The organization of the church

By the eleventh century, the church had a well-established system of organization for monks and nuns. They were usually led by an abbot or abbess, and they wore simple garments of rough, loose-fitting material called a habit. Monks were a part of the priesthood, and all priests were distinguished by the tonsure (TAHN-shoor), a type of hairstyle in which the top of the head was shaven. After meeting certain obligations, a candidate for priesthood joined the church, then progressed through a series of "minor orders." A man could leave the minor orders if he chose, but ordination—the act of formal appointment as a priest—was irreversible, and leaving the priesthood was a grave sin.

Given its size, the organizational system of the church was exceedingly simple. For a long time, the only level above a priest was a bishop, with the bishop of Rome occupying the leading position as pope. By 1059, however, the church came to recognize certain "cardinal"—most important—bishops, eventually known simply as cardinals. Like bishops, the cardinals represented given regions, though their regions were larger, and there were fewer of them. Originally there were only seven, but in time this number grew to seventy, a group known as the College of Cardinals. Distinguished by their red caps, cardinals were the men who gathered to elect a new pope upon the death of the old one.

Another key instrument of church organization was the ecumenical councils. Actually, the last truly ecumenical one—joining both Eastern and Western churches—was the Fourth Council of Constantinople in 869, or eighth ecumenical council. Then, more than 250 years later, Catholic bishops in 1123 met at Rome's Lateran (LAT-ur-un) Palace, the papal residence. Whereas the first eight councils had focused on issues of belief and heresy, the four Lateran councils and others that followed centered on matters relating to church discipline.

The church-state struggle: round one

With the church on the rise after a period of decline, and with

German emperors seeking to establish their power, the two forces were bound to collide. The showdown came in 1075, when Gregory faced off with Emperor Henry IV (ruled 1056–1106) in a bitter struggle called the Investiture Controversy. The term *investiture* referred to a king's authority to give property to appoint or "invest" local church leaders, a right Henry claimed on the grounds that bishops and abbots held political as well as spiritual power.

On December 8, 1075, Gregory sent Henry orders to stop appointing bishops and abbots, and Henry responded by calling Gregory a "false monk." Gregory then brought the full power of his papal authority to bear: not only was Henry excommunicated (1076) and his rulership of Germany declared null and void, he was condemned to eternal damnation. Henry quickly lost the support of his nobles, so in January 1077, in a symbolic act of humility and submission, he appeared at the castle of Canossa (kuh-NAH-suh) in northern Italy, where the pope was temporarily residing, and waited barefoot outside in the snow for days until the pope granted him absolution.

But the story did not end with Henry in the snow at Canossa. Seven years later, Henry marched into Rome and had Gregory removed, to be replaced by the antipope Clement III (c. 1025–1100). Only the help of Robert Guiscard returned Gregory to power, but in the process Robert's troops so badly devastated the city that the people turned against Gregory. He lived out his days under the protection of the de Hautevilles. Yet Gregory passed his fervor for reform and papal authority on to Urban II (ruled 1088–99), who would prove the ability of the church to make emperors and kings do its bidding.

Transubstantiation: Body and Blood

A central aspect of worship during the Middle Ages was ritual, and nowhere was this tendency more apparent than in the Eucharist (YOO-kuh-rist), or Communion service. The Eucharist had originated with the Last Supper of Jesus and his disciples. There Jesus stated that the bread they ate was his body, which would soon be broken on the cross, and the wine they drank was his blood, which would soon be shed. In the future, he told them, they should eat bread and drink wine together "in remembrance of me."

Originally it was understood that the bread and wine were symbols of Christ's body and blood, but by the 1000s, the church had come to embrace the idea of transubstantiation (trans-sub-stan-shee-AY-shun). According to transubstantiation, the bread became Christ's literal body, and the wine his actual blood. This did not mean it was physically the same as actual flesh and blood, but it was Christ's body and blood all the same. In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council confirmed the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Santiago de Compostela, in northwestern Spain, was a favorite destination for pilgrims because it was said to be the burial place of the apostle James. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

The First Crusade (1095–99)

During the Middle Ages pilgrimages became popular both as an act of devotion to God and as a form of retribution for sins or even crimes (see box, "Punishment, Prison, and Pilgrimage"). A favorite site for pilgrims from France was Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain, where the apostle James had supposedly been buried. In Europe as a whole, the leading spot was Rome, not only as the center of the papacy, but also because of its association with the saints and martyrs of the early Church. Yet one place exceeded the glory even of Rome. This was the place where Jesus himself had walked, and where many events from the Bible had occurred: the Holy Land, or Palestine, specifically the city of Jerusalem.

For centuries, the Holy Land had belonged to the Muslims, or Saracens (SAR-uh-sunz) as many Europeans called them. The Arab caliphate had respected the right of Christian pilgrims to visit Jerusalem, a city holy to Islam as well; yet the Seljuks had proven less tolerant than the Arabs and had begun harassing pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. Therefore when Alexis I Comnenus sent a request to Urban II for military help against the Turks, Urban saw it as something much bigger: a chance to reclaim the Holy Land for Christ, to bring the Orthodox Church back within the Catholic fold—and to make the pope the most powerful man in the world. Furthermore, he needed a foreign war to occupy the energies of the Normans.

Launching of the crusade

Like Gregory before him, Urban had found himself dependent on the de Hautevilles, in his case Robert's son Bohemond I (BOH-ay-maw; c. 1050–1111). Bohemond took Rome from Henry IV in 1094, and thus allowed Urban to take control of the Lateran. Certainly Urban was grateful for the assistance, but he was

also aware that the Normans were interested primarily in conquest and treasure, not the church. Therefore they could easily become dangerous foes, and Urban was only too happy to send them far, far away to attack someone else. In so doing, he claimed, that would be performing God's work.

There were other, equally ungodly, forces motivating the "wars of the cross," or Crusades, that followed. Kings and nobles were eager for a chance to prove the strength of their armies. Later crusades would involve commercial powers such as Venice, whose interest was expansion of trade. Among the common people, plenty were drawn by the desire for riches, or even worse by a lust for killing. Certainly some genuinely believed that they were fighting to rescue God's holy city from the hands of unbelievers—but many of these same people believed that this gave them justification to kill every Muslim or Jew they found.

Punishment, Prison, and Pilgrimage

Medieval justice had severe punishments, such as branding or mutilation, for serious crimes. For less serious offenses, however, or for crimes committed by persons of high social rank, fines were generally imposed. Later, the practice of judicial pilgrimage replaced fines as a punishment.

First introduced in Ireland during the 500s, judicial pilgrimage might seem like an easy sentence. But this was a time when travel in any form was highly uncomfortable—especially if one had to walk barefoot and in chains, as most criminals did. Persons accused of murder often had to walk with their murder weapons chained to them, and these might come in handy, since the roads of Europe were teeming with bandits and cutthroats.

In the speech that began the First Crusade, Urban promised that participants would enjoy the protection of the church over their homes and loved ones while they were away, and that they would earn complete forgiveness for their sins. This was an early example of an indulgence, the granting of forgiveness for sins in exchange for some act of service to the church. Many powerful men heeded his call, and in turn mobilized their armies, setting a pattern for crusades to come. Aside from Bohemond, there was his nephew Tancred; the French noble Godfrey of Bouillon (boo-YAWn) in France, later to be idealized as the perfect knight; Godfrey's brother Baldwin of Boulogne (boo-LAWN); and Raymond IV, count of Toulouse (tuh-LOOS).

The Peasants' Crusade

Alongside these figures were men who possessed neither wealth nor official power, but who could command masses of followers. Most notable among the latter was Peter the Hermit (c. 1050–1115), a French ascetic who mobilized thousands with his speeches; and Gautier Sans Avoir

Pope Urban II launched the First Crusade in 1095 as an attempt to seize the Holy Land from the Muslims. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

(GOH-tee-ay SAWNZ a-VWAH, "Walter the Penniless"), a French knight. These two led the disastrous Peasants' Crusade (1096–97), which shadowed the official First Crusade.

The armies of peasants first made a shameful name for themselves in 1096, when they massacred countless German Jews as "enemies of Christ," then helped themselves to the Jews' possessions. From there they headed southeastward in a traditional pilgrims' route that took them through Hungary. When they entered Byzantine territory at the city of Belgrade, the frightened Byzantines tried to turn them back, so the peasants began looting and pillaging. They were attacked by troops in Bulgaria, and by the time they reached Constantinople, their numbers had been reduced by one-quarter. They began conducting raids against Byzantine homes and churches, so Emperor Alexis wisely offered to ferry the entire peasant army across the strait called the Bosporus (BAHS-pur-us) and into Anatolia. They never got much farther: a local Turkish leader led the "Franks"—the Turks' name for the Europeans—into a trap, and most of them died. Peter himself, away in Constantinople to seek aid from Alexis, survived.

Spoils for the victors

Meanwhile the official crusade was just getting started. Unlike the peasants, the nobles had taken time to organize and prepare their armies, which reached the Holy Land in early 1097. They scored their first major victory at Nicaea in June—but only with the help of Alexis, who claimed the city for Byzantium. A few months later, Baldwin took Edessa in eastern Asia Minor and established the County of Edessa, the first of several "crusader states"; but he seized it from Armenian Christians, not Turks. Meanwhile the main body of crusaders besieged Antioch (AN-tee-ahk), an ancient city on the border between Turkey and Syria that had been an important center of the early church. An-

A Crusader. *Reproduced by permission of the New York Public Library Picture Collection.*

tioch became another crusader state, under the rule of Bohemond.

Then in July 1099, forces under Tancred and others conducted a brutal assault on Jerusalem, and seized the city after slaughtering thousands of Muslims. Ironically, Jerusalem was no longer in the hands of the Turks; a year earlier, it had fallen under the control of the Egyptians, who despised the Turks almost as much as the Europeans did. The Egyptians had promised that once they controlled Jerusalem, the Christians would have full access to all holy sites. But the original purpose of the Crusades had already been lost: the Europeans wanted land and treasure, and they could only get those by stealing. In the end, Godfrey of Bouillon emerged as the ruler of the new Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem.

With the establishment of a fourth crusader state, the County of Tripoli, the crusaders controlled the entire Mediterranean coast of what is now Syria, Lebanon, and Israel. Though the Crusades would continue for centuries, this was the high point from the Europeans' perspective; from then on, they would mostly be fighting to hold on to what they had gained in the 1090s. Eventually the Muslims, caught off guard by the First Crusade, would begin to react in a spirit of jihad. One of the most negative outcomes of the Crusades—a deep hatred of Christians among many Muslims—had been set into motion.

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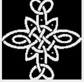
The Twelfth Century

10

Though the Crusades would continue in some form until 1464, the crusading movement reached its peak during the twelfth century, as Europeans fought to maintain what they had gained in the First Crusade. The Crusades were the heart of the Middle Ages, source of the ideas and images most closely associated with the medieval period; but they were also the turning point, the beginning of the end. Conceived in ignorance, greed, and superstition, these so-called "holy wars" would have the unexpected effect of exposing Europeans to new ideas; as a result, the Europeans and their world were forever changed. From 1100, the reawakening of Europe began to pick up speed, and soon there was no turning back.

A changing world

Early in the twelfth century, England had its own Investiture Controversy. William the Conqueror's son William II (ruled 1087–1106), though he proved greedy and foolish as a king, was smart enough to appoint an outstanding man as archbishop of Canterbury, the leader of England's church.



Words to Know: The Twelfth Century

Allegory: A type of narrative, popular throughout the Middle Ages, in which characters represent ideas.

Artillery: Cannons and other heavy firepower.

Archbishop: The leading bishop in an area or nation.

Buttress: An exterior supporting structure.

Chateau: Originally a type of feudal castle in France, but later a name for a large country house.

Classical: Referring to ancient Greece and Rome.

Coat of arms: A heraldic emblem representing a family or nation.

Courtly love: An idealized form of romantic love, usually of a knight or poet for a noble lady.

Heraldry: The practice of creating and studying coats of arms and other insignia.

Intellectual: A person whose profession or lifestyle centers around study and ideas.

Moat: A large deep trench, filled with water, that surrounds a castle.

Page: The first step in training for knighthood, usually undertaken by young boys who performed menial tasks for a knight or feudal lord.

Penance: An act ordered by the church to obtain forgiveness for sin.

Reason: The use of the mind to figure things out; usually contrasted with emotion, intuition, or faith.

Squire: The middle stage in training for knighthood, usually undertaken by teenaged boys who became a knight's personal assistant.

Troubadour: A type of poet in Provence who composed in French rather than Latin, and whose work chiefly concerned courtly love.

Trinity: The three persons of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—which according to Christian theology are also a single entity.

This was Anselm (c. 1034–1109), who quarreled first with William and later with his younger brother Henry I (ruled 1100–1135)—a much more competent ruler—over the powers of the church versus those of the king. Finally Henry and Anselm reached a compromise in 1105.

Anselm and Abelard (c. 1079–1144), two of the medieval world's greatest philosophers, worked to reconcile reason with religious faith. Like Anselm, Abelard was a cleric; indeed, there was simply no other place for an intellectual. His position in the church, however, had not stopped him from

engaging in a celebrated love affair with his young student Héloïse (EL-uh-eez; c. 1098–1164). They conceived a child and were secretly married, but their relationship angered her uncle, a powerful church official, who arranged to have Abelard castrated. Abelard entered a monastery, while Héloïse joined a convent, and they became a symbol of enduring, if tragic, love. During this time he wrote a work in which he questioned established teachings about the Trinity, or the three-part nature of God.

Abelard was an early proponent of Scholasticism, a philosophical movement that attempted to bring together Christian faith, classical learning, and knowledge of the world. It marked the first stirrings of an intellectual reawakening in Europe. More typical of the medieval mind, however, was Bernard of Clairvaux (klair-VOH; 1090–1153), a Cistercian who perceived reason as a threat to religion. This made him an outspoken critic of Scholasticism in general, and of Abelard in particular.

Héloïse and Abelard. Abelard was one of the greatest philosophers of the Middle Ages, but he is also remembered for his tragic love affair with Héloïse. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

The Second Crusade (1147–49)

Bernard was also a passionate speaker, and in the Second Crusade, he combined the roles formerly played by Urban II and Peter the Hermit. After the Muslims captured Edessa in 1144, Pope Eugenius III, a former student of Bernard, called on his help. On March 31, 1146, Bernard made his first crusade sermon in France, and as was the custom, he handed out wooden crosses to those who volunteered to go. So many men "took up the cross" that he ran out of wooden ones, and in an extremely dramatic move, he began cutting his own garments into crosses and passing them out to the crowd.

Among the royal leaders of the crusade were Conrad III, founder of the Hohenstaufen dynasty (hoh-un-SHTOW-fun), which was destined to rule Germany for a century, and Louis VII of France. This Crusade even included a woman, one of the most extraordinary figures of the Middle Ages:

Bernard of Clairvaux, a powerful church leader, called for the Second Crusade in a famous sermon on March 31, 1146.
Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.

Louis's wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine (c. 1122–1204).

The Crusade itself was a devastating failure, largely due to the treachery of the crusaders' supposed allies in the Holy Land. On their way through Anatolia, the crusaders suffered heavy losses, but they were determined to take Edessa. Then the Europeans controlling Jerusalem convinced them to attack Damascus—one of the only Muslim cities in the area still on good terms with the Christians—instead. In Damascus, the Muslims dealt the crusaders a heavy blow; meanwhile the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem negotiated a separate peace with the enemy and withdrew from the fight.

Castles and arms

The Crusades exposed Europeans to the Middle Eastern art of castle-building. Since the fall of the Western Roman Empire, when invasions by barbarian tribes had made it necessary to build forts, castles had existed in a crude form, as earthen mounds surrounded by ditches. Usually the mound had a high wall and perhaps a tower made of wood. In Palestine, however, wood was far from plentiful, and in any case, stone made for more sturdy fortifications. Impressed by the defensive architecture of the Byzantines and Muslims—not to mention their considerably more sophisticated military technology—the Europeans began imitating their fortresses. Some of the greatest castles were built in the Holy Land, to defend the crusader states, and later they appeared in Europe itself (see box).

The Crusades would transform the entire structure of knighthood, beginning with the knight's appearance. The heat in Palestine made chain mail uncomfortable, and to deflect the Sun's rays, crusaders began wearing sleeveless coats, decorated with crosses and other designs, over their armor. Only knights were allowed to wear these "coats of arms," as they came to be called. The exact appearance of

When a Castle Was a Castle

Castles changed dramatically during the Middle Ages, and with each new offensive technique developed by invading forces, castle-builders added new defensive technology. For instance, because castles were vulnerable to attack by sappers, men who dug under the walls and caused the foundations to collapse, builders surrounded castles with moats, or large deep trenches.

To make it easy for troops to retreat into the castle without the enemy pursuing them, builders added drawbridges, which were lowered and raised by a series of cranks. Eventually they also added an outer gate house, a fortified tower that stood in front of the drawbridge and provided an additional line of defense. In place of the single tower that had dominated early castles, later structures included a number of defensive towers, linked by walkways from which defenders could fire.

Within the castle walls was a courtyard where troops could assemble and regroup, and beneath ground level was the dreaded dungeon for prisoners. There were also stables and storerooms just inside the walls, and the main building housed sleeping quarters, a kitchen, the great hall (for dining and meeting), and a chapel.

Castle defenses became increasingly elaborate, but the development of cannons and other new forms of artillery in the late 1300s began to render the medieval castle obsolete. Eventually the chateau (sha-TOH), a massive but delicate structure with real windows instead of small slits from which to fire at attackers, took the place of the castle as a residence for kings and noblemen.

their insignia, which they also carried on their shields, was important because it identified them on the field of battle. Therefore men known as heralds were charged with keeping track of the knights' symbols, and they developed the art of heraldry, which survives today in many a family's or country's coat of arms.

Romanesque turns to Gothic

The world was changing, and so were Europeans' perceptions of it as reflected in art and architecture. From about 1000 onward, a style termed Romanesque (roh-mun-ESK) had dominated; but in about 1150, this gave way to the Gothic, which originated in France and spread throughout the continent during the next four centuries. The names appeared later, and "Romanesque," at least, is accurate, since aspects of this style resembled Roman architecture—particularly its use of vaults and round arches. But there is little in the delicate beauty of Gothic architecture to suggest the

This church, located in Lithuania, is a fine example of Romanesque architecture, which dominated in Europe from about 1000 to about 1150. *Photograph by Cory Langley. Reproduced by permission of Cory Langley.*

Gothic tribes that destroyed the Roman Empire; in fact later art historians used the deceptive name as a way of identifying the entire medieval period with barbarism.

Gothic became the style for cathedrals, which were not simply large churches but the centers of their communities, the place where the bishop had his throne, or *cathedra*. Among Europe's finest Gothic cathedrals are Notre Dame (NOH-truh DAHM; "Our Lady") in Paris, started in 1163; and Chartres (SHART), southwest of Paris, built after the old Romanesque cathedral there burned down in 1194. These two became models for the Gothic style, imitated throughout Catholic Europe, from northern Spain to Poland.

The cathedral's spire was always the highest point in any medieval city. Not only was the building a symbol of man's yearning to reach heavenward, but the height emphasized the power of the church above all other forces in medieval society. In order to achieve this height, Romanesque architects developed buttresses, or exterior supporting structures. These not only made it possible to build higher towers, but also gave buildings a distinctive appearance. What Romanesque churches lacked, however, was light: fearful that windows would weaken the structures, designers allowed only narrow slats.

Architects of the Gothic era solved this problem with a number of innovations. First was the pointed arch, which not only looked more striking than the curved arch, but was also more sound structurally. This allowed more windows and a higher roof. In place of Romanesque-style buttresses, Gothic designers used a flying buttress, a stone support connected to the building by an arch.

The building of a cathedral took place over decades, and there was never a single architect who received credit for the design; instead, a team of architects (typically former stone-

Notre Dame, located in Paris, France, is a magnificent example of a Gothic cathedral.
Photograph by Jeffrey Hill. Reproduced by permission of Jeffrey Hill.

masons) worked under a master architect. Yet even the names of the master architects are lost to history, in part due to the medieval world's lack of emphasis on individual achievement.

The same is true of the many sculptors whose work filled Chartres and other sites. In an age when few people could read and write, the intricate sculptural work decorating virtually every surface provided clearly understandable "sermons in stone" depicting events from the Bible. Stained glass served the same purpose in a particularly striking way. Since the 800s, artists had known how to use melted glass with metallic oxides of various colors; but in the century after 1150, the art of stained glass reached a high point. When sunlight entered a church window and illuminated scenes of Jesus Christ and the saints, it filled believers with the sense that the light of God was shining down upon the world.

The cross and the sword

A new struggle between pope and king, sparked by the efforts of Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (bar-buh-ROH-suh; "Red Beard"; ruled 1152–90)

to forge a single German state, began in the 1150s. Frederick set out to subdue all rival princes, and initially allied himself with Adrian IV, history's only English pope. Soon afterward, however, Frederick broke off the alliance.

He invaded northern Italy in 1154, and after twenty years of fighting, he succeeded only in making himself more and more unpopular with the Italians. One of his most bitter foes was Pope Alexander III (ruled 1159–81), against whom Frederick supported an antipope. Alexander countered by helping to organize the Lombard League, an alliance of cities opposed to Frederick. In 1175 Frederick also had a falling-out with Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony and a member of the powerful Welf family. Soon Frederick's Italian opponents began calling themselves Guelphs (GWELFZ), and joined forces with the church against the emperor and his supporters, the Ghibellines (GIB-uh-leenz; see box, "Church vs. State vs. People").

Frederick suffered a major military defeat in 1176 and made a truce with Alexander a year later. The Peace of Constance in 1183 gave Lombard League cities their freedom. Frederick had meanwhile turned his attention to his homeland, where he adopted an entirely new strategy, supporting the German noblemen he had once opposed. To give the nobles more power, he adopted feudalism, which had long since taken hold in France and England. The resulting peace and unity among the Germans made him one of his nation's greatest heroes.

England's own struggle

As with the Investiture Controversy, events in England reflected the church-state struggle in Central Europe. In 1152, Eleanor of Aquitaine had divorced Louis VII of France to marry Henry II of England (ruled 1154–89), which gave England title to new French lands and further heightened tensions between the two countries. Meanwhile, Henry became involved in a heated dispute with Thomas à Becket (uh BEK-et; 1118–1170), the archbishop of Canterbury.

The conflict centered around the question of whether a church official charged with a crime such as rape or murder should be tried by the church, as Thomas maintained, or the state. Knights loyal to Henry attempted to settle the issue on December 29, 1170, when they murdered Thomas inside his cathedral. This only made Thomas a martyr: he was canonized just three years after his death (a *very* short interval), and Henry had to do penance at Thomas's shrine in Canterbury. Eventually, however, Henry persuaded the pope to make a series of compromises that gave the English king greater power over church affairs.

The Third Crusade (1189–92)

Henry's and Eleanor's son Richard I, the Lion-Hearted (ruled 1189–99), became one of the leading figures in the Third Crusade. He was joined by Frederick I Barbarossa and Philip II Augustus of France (ruled 1179–1223), who is remembered for turning his nation into a great power.

Church vs. State vs. People

Americans typically guard against encroachments on their freedom by church authorities, citing "separation of church and state" as one of the bedrock principles of the U.S. government. Thus it is easy for them to sympathize with the Ghibellines, supporters of the Holy Roman emperor, in their long struggle against the pro-papacy Guelphs. Yet upon closer investigation, one finds that the Guelph-Ghibelline rivalry was really about power and not principle; thus by the 1300s, two centuries after the conflict began, it had become little more than a struggle between various Italian families.

As opposed to government by church or state, America's system is based on a third force, the people, who exercise authority through elected representatives. One of the most important milestones in the development of government by the people occurred during the Middle Ages, when a group of English nobles forced King John to sign the Magna Carta, or "Great Charter," in 1215. Thenceforth England's government would take quite a different course from that of France and other nations on the European continent, which continued to be dominated both by priests *and* kings.

Later, English settlers in the New World brought with them advanced notions about the idea of freedom, and these would find their greatest expression in the U.S. Constitution (1787). In fact the latter does not contain the phrase "separation of church and state": what it does say, in the First Amendment, is that the government may not favor one religious group over another.

To complete this assembly of great personalities was their brilliant opponent: Saladin.

Saladin had united Egypt with Syria and Mesopotamia, then conquered a number of cities in Palestine. On July 4, 1187, he dealt the crusaders a devastating blow in the Battle of Hittin, where the Europeans found themselves on a dry, desolate plain, overcome by thirst. Saladin's forces set fire to the dry grass around them, nearly wiping out the European forces, and went on to capture Jerusalem on October 2.

On his way to the crusade, Frederick drowned in Anatolia. Richard arrived late in Palestine, having stopped to conquer the strategically located island of Cyprus (SY-prus) in the Mediterranean. (Cyprus would remain a crusader state until 1384, and briefly emerged as an imperial power during the mid-1300s.) Arriving in what is now Israel, Richard joined Philip outside Acre (AH-kruh), an important trading center for the Italian city-states of Genoa (JEN-oh-uh) and Pisa (PEE-zuh). Their use of the siege engine, a recently developed catapult for hurling stones

Thomas à Becket was murdered as a result of his conflict with King Henry II of England.

over castle walls, helped the Europeans gain victory at Acre.

In 1191, Philip learned that his only heir had taken ill, so he rushed back to France. This left just Richard and Saladin, two of the most romantic figures of the Middle Ages, squared off against one another. Though their conflict inspired many legends, in fact it ended in a stalemate—and the two men never even met. Richard needed to get back to England, where his brother John (ruled 1199–1216) had been making trouble for him, so in September 1192, he signed an agreement with Saladin. The Muslims still held Jerusalem, but the crusaders had regained a number of areas along the coast.

The age of chivalry

Prior to about 1200, knights had been mere soldiers employed by the nobility; after that time, however, they were recognized as nobles in their own right. During this period, knights began to adopt a code of honor known as chivalry (SHIV-ul-ree; from *chevalier,* the French word for *knight*). In modern times, chivalry is understood chiefly in terms of male courtesy toward women, but in fact this was only part of the larger code, which included offering protection for the weak and defenseless and performing service for God. As with much about medieval times, of course, the truth is rather more complex than the myth: even under the code of chivalry, knights were often brutal creatures. But before the church began its attempts to civilize them in the 900s, introducing concepts that developed into chivalry over the centuries, they were *truly* brutal.

A young boy who wanted to become a knight went to work as a page, waiting table for a knight or lord and performing other menial tasks. In his late teens, a page who had proved himself became a squire, who cared for the knight's horse—his most trusted companion—and carried the knight's shield and armor into battle. Then in his early twenties, a squire who had received the blessings of his lord was chosen for knighthood. A royal, noble, or priestly figure conferred the title of knight by the ceremony of dubbing, touching a young man's shoulders with a sword.

Richard I, also known as Richard the Lion-Hearted, was a leading figure of the Third Crusade, which ended in a stalemate when Richard had to return to England to protect his throne. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

The orders of knights

Eventually, knights began to see themselves as soldiers for Jesus Christ. Just like monks, these knights formed themselves into orders, their stated purpose being to protect pilgrims. First of the three great orders was the Knights Hospitalers, or Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, formed in 1113. They wore distinctive colors and insignia, including the eight-pointed Maltese cross, and built one of the medieval world's greatest castles, Krak des Chevaliers (DAY shuh-VAHL-yay), in Syria. After the end of the Crusades, they occupied a series of Mediterranean strongholds, and in 1530 ended up on the island of Malta, where they became known as the Knights of Malta.

The Knights Templars, or Poor Knights of Christ, were formed in 1119 to defend one of the most sacred spots in Palestine, the Holy Sepulchre (SEP-ul-kur), where it was believed that Christ had been buried before his resurrection. Their name came from that of another holy site, where the temple of King Solomon had stood. In contrast to the Hospitalers' black cloaks with white crosses, the Templars wore white cloaks with red crosses. They developed so much military and economic power, and thus aroused so much hostility in England, France, and Spain, that in 1312 the pope disbanded the order.

King Arthur: Fact and Legend

Such a great legend has developed around King Arthur that it may come as a surprise to learn that the character is based on a real person: a Christian general named Ambrosius Aurelianus, who led the Britons to victory over the invading Anglo-Saxons at the Battle of Mount Badon in 516. This figure became associated with Arthur, and as the centuries passed, legend obscured fact.

There are literally hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Arthurian tales, but most depict Arthur as king over a realm centered in western England and Wales, where he had his castle at Camelot. There he held council with his Knights of the Round Table, among whom the greatest was Sir Lancelot. A pure Christian sworn to defend his king, Lancelot fell in love with Arthur's beautiful queen, Guinevere (GWIN-uh-veer), and was torn by conflicting loyalties. In the end, he gave in to his passion and thus helped usher in the end of Camelot.

The legend of Camelot included numerous mystical elements. There was, for instance, the figure of Merlin, a magician with amazing powers who seemed to live forever. There was the knights' quest for the Holy Grail, said to be the cup from which Christ had drunk at the Last Supper.

This medieval French manuscript illustration shows Lancelot, the greatest of King Arthur's knights, embracing a lady. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

And there was the account of Arthur's death, after which fairies whisked him away to a magical land called Avalon, where he was restored to life and would one day return to save England.

All in all, it is one of the most intriguing tales in Western literature, though in fact it is not purely English in origin. During the Middle Ages, an extensive body of French, German, Italian, Spanish, and even Hebrew Arthurian legends developed.

The last of the great orders was formed in 1191, and consisted primarily of Germans: hence its name, the Teutonic (too-TAHN-ik; German) Knights, or the Teutonic Order. In 1225, they set out to conquer the last two non-Christian European tribes: the Prussians of eastern Germany, and

the Lithuanians farther east. They tamed the wilds of Prussia, destined to become the most powerful of German states, and built Europe's largest castle at Marienburg in 1309.

The literature of chivalry

In addition to the three spiritual orders of knights, there were numerous secular orders throughout Europe—among them the Order of the Garter, which exists today as an honor conferred on Englishmen of merit. Chivalry itself assumed a non-religious character, and became much more concerned with things of this world than with matters of the spirit. In fact chivalry spawned some of the world's first self-help literature, "courtesy books," or manuals that taught people how to behave politely—a rare skill in the Middle Ages. Most popular were courtesy books for pages, squires, and knights. Books for pages taught them how to act like little men rather than boys, whereas squires' courtesy books dealt with more adult issues, such as how to be a brave soldier, a loyal servant of a lord—and a discreet lover of a lady.

A more well-known type of literature associated with chivalry was courtly love poetry, popularized by a new breed of poets called troubadours (TROO-buh-dohrz). The latter, who came from Provence (pruh-VAWNts) in southern France, took the revolutionary step of composing not in Latin, but in the local language, French. Courtly love poetry drew on stories from the past, such as the Celtic legend of Tristan and Isolde (TREES-tahn; ee-SOHld), whose love was doomed because Isolde was married to Tristan's uncle, a powerful king.

One notable type of courtly love poetry was the *aubade* (oh-BAHD), or "dawn song." This was a song of parting, or to put it more bluntly, of a knight who has to beat a hasty retreat from his lady's bedroom in the morning. The aubade was meant to be taken seriously; by contrast, the *Romance of the Rose,* written by two French poets in the mid-1200s, was a biting work of satire demonstrating what its authors perceived as the fickleness of women. It was an example of allegory, a type of narrative popular throughout the Middle Ages in which characters represent ideas.

The great poetic narratives of the High Middle Ages were often called "romances," and they typically concerned one of three basic subjects: the classical world (ancient Greece and Rome); France, or specifically Charlemagne; and Britain's great hero Arthur. An example of the first type was the *Romance of Troy,* written by a French clerk in the court of England's Henry II. The greatest of the Charlemagne epics was the *Song of Roland,* set during the emperor's otherwise uneventful campaign against the Muslims of Spain in 778. Then there was the legend of Arthur, which gained popularity in the 1100s and later found expression in one of the first printed books produced in England, Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* ("The Death of Arthur"; 1470). A

thousand years before Malory, however, there really was a King Arthur—perhaps (see box, "King Arthur: Fact and Legend").

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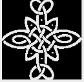
The Thirteenth Century

11

If the twelfth century was the peak of the Middle Ages in Western Europe, the thirteenth century (or the 1200s) offered clear signs that the medieval period was drawing to a close. The Crusades continued, but the crusading spirit lost force; and though the church reached the pinnacle of its powers in the mid-1200s, other elements were gaining influence. Among these competing forces were kings and emerging nation-states such as France and England. But kings and popes were far from the only influential figures in thirteenth-century life: merchants and scholars, though they had little in common, threatened to tear down the power of both church and state.

The end of the Crusades

By the time of the Fourth Crusade (1202–04), Europeans had begun to lose faith in the whole crusading enterprise. Only a figure as strong as Innocent III (ruled 1198–1216), who controlled the papacy at the time of its greatest power, could even have mobilized the people for an-



Words to Know: The Thirteenth Century

Alchemy: A semi-scientific discipline that holds that through the application of certain chemical processes, ordinary metals can be turned into gold.

Apprentice: A first stage in the training of a craftsman, in which a young boy went to work, for no wages, in the shop of a master.

Astrology: The study of the stars and planets with the belief that their movement has an effect on personal events.

Friar: A type of cleric, neither a priest nor a monk, who both preaches and teaches.

Guild: An association to promote, and set standards for, a particular profession or business.

Journeyman: A middle stage in the training of a craftsman, in which a teenaged boy worked for wages; if he proved himself as a journeyman, the guild would declare him a master craftsman.

Mendicant: Dependent on charity for a living.

Minstrel: A wandering musician.

Nation-state: A geographical area composed largely of a single nationality, in which a single national government clearly holds power.

Working class: A group between the middle class and the poor, who typically earn a living with their hands.

other crusade; even so, his initial call for troops in 1198 raised little interest. It took four years to pull together a big enough army.

Other than Innocent, this Crusade lacked the strong figures who had driven the first three ventures; this time the guiding force was Venice, which provided five hundred ships and expected to make a profit. The crusaders set off for Egypt, which they intended to conquer before going on to win back Jerusalem, but they never got past Constantinople. There they became involved in a power struggle in which they helped the Byzantine prince Alexis seize the throne from his father. In the meantime, they had to pay off their Venetian sponsors, so they captured one of the Byzantines' port cities, Zara, in October 1202. When the Byzantines overthrew Alexis in 1204, the crusaders took over Constantinople.

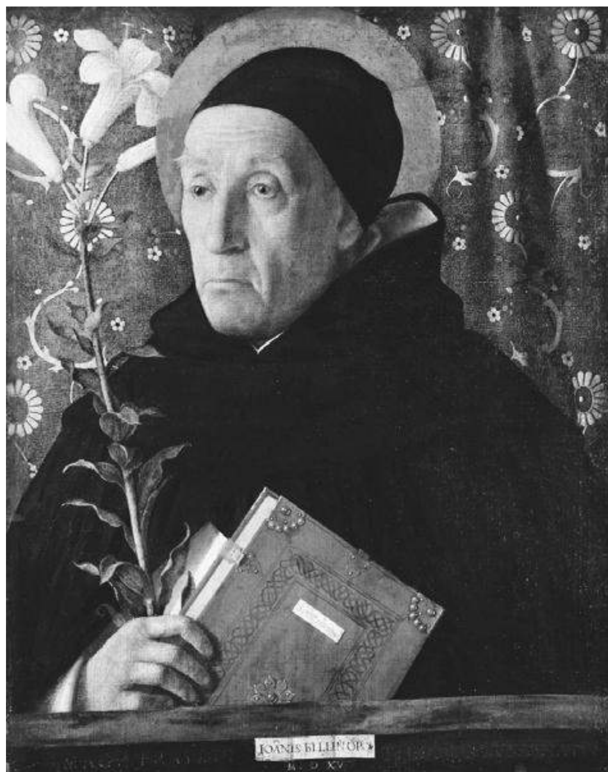
Thus the Byzantine capital became the center of yet another crusader state, the so-called Latin Empire, which consisted of little more than a portion of Greece. The Byzantines retreated to Trebizond in Turkey until the recapture of Constantinople in 1261 by Michael VIII Palaeologus (pay-lee-AHL-uh-gus; ruled 1259–82). Michael founded a dynasty under

which Byzantium enjoyed its last gasp of power, but the damage done by the crusaders was irreparable. This probably bothered the Western Europeans little, however: they despised the Greeks even more than they did the Muslims and were happy to participate in Byzantium's destruction—even though to do so was to erode an empire that had long served as a buffer between Western Europe and its enemies to the east.

The Albigenses and the Inquisition

The next "crusade" did not even take place in the East, and its target was not Muslims but a religious group called the Cathars. Based in Albi, France, they were also called Albigenses (al-buh-JIN-seez), and they practiced a faith similar to Manichaeism. Like the Manichees long before, the Albigenses believed that all of existence was a battle between evil and good, and that they alone were capable of understanding the terms of this battle.

The church considered this heresy, and at first it dealt with the Albigenses by sending them missionaries such as St. Dominic (c. 1170–1221). Dominic later founded the Dominicans, a mendicant (that is, dependent on charity for a living) order of friars—neither monks nor priests, but preachers and teachers. Another mendicant order was the Franciscans, founded by St. Francis of Assisi (uh-SEE-see; c. 1182–1226).



St. Dominic founded the Dominicans, an order of friars who depend on charitable donations. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Innocent III ultimately decided to deal harshly with the Albigenses, and in 1208 launched the so-called Albigensian Crusade. Invaders eager for land and treasure swarmed over southern France, seizing the estates of the nobility and replacing bishops who had sympathized with the Cathars.

The Albigensian Crusade, which ended in 1229, had a powerful effect on history. By displacing much of France's nobility, it greatly strengthened the French king, and from then

on France would have a powerful central government in contrast to the looser system that had prevailed under feudalism. This in turn tied the French royal house close to the church, and eventually the two would become inseparable. The Albigensian Crusade also led to the establishment of the Inquisition by Pope Gregory IX in 1231.

The Inquisition, which lasted until the 1300s, was the name for a court through which the church investigated, tried, and punished cases of heresy. Many inquisitors, Church officials appointed to oversee investigations, were excessive in their methods, but generally the Inquisition was not as harsh as is popularly believed. During the 1200s in France, for instance, only about one percent of accused heretics were burned at the stake; some ten percent were imprisoned, and the rest received lesser sentences. When modern people talk about the horrors of the Inquisition, what they are actually referring to is the *Spanish* Inquisition, an entirely separate system (see box, "The Iberian Peninsula," chapter 19).

Later Crusades

The year 1212 saw the pathetic "Children's Crusade." Some historians believe that the participants in this crusade were not children, but poor people from the countryside who were viewed as childlike innocents by medieval society. Perhaps, many believed, these "children" could achieve what kings and knights had not. In fact they never made it to the Holy Land, and though some returned home safely, many were captured and sold into slavery in the Arab world.

There were other such crusades by the downtrodden; meanwhile, formal Crusades continued with ever-diminishing success. The Fifth Crusade (1217–21), also ordered by Innocent III, included leaders from England, Germany, Hungary, and Austria, and took place entirely in Egypt, which the crusaders tried unsuccessfully to conquer. The Sixth Crusade (1228–29) is significant not so much for its outcome as for its leader: Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (ruled 1212–50), a figure of many and varied talents whose interest in literature and science made his court an exciting place. He and Gregory IX also quarreled openly, as other emperors and popes before them had, and during his reign the Guelph-Ghibelline conflict turned into open warfare.

As for the crusade itself, it was chiefly a matter of diplomacy and not warfare. Though Frederick worked out an agreement with the Muslims regarding possession of Jerusalem and visits to holy sites, neither side was happy with the arrangement. Gregory also organized the Seventh Crusade (1239–40), another failure. The last two numbered Crusades, the Eighth (1248–54) and Ninth (1270–72), were led by France's King Louis IX (ruled 1226–70), better known as St. Louis. By then the Seljuks' power had faded, and the Mamluks were the enemy; but the results were the same.

The Mamluks conquered the last Christian stronghold at Acre in

The Children's Crusade was a failure—the crusaders never even reached the Holy Land, and many were captured and enslaved along the way. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Frederick II, leader of the Holy Roman Empire, led the Sixth Crusade (1228–29).

1291, thus ending two centuries of European presence in the Holy Land. There were still crusades of a limited nature in later years, but the targets were usually in Asia Minor or Egypt. In addition, there were crusades against heretics or rebellious emperors, not to mention the Reconquista (ray-kawn-KEES-tah), or reconquest, of Spain from the Muslims (see box, "The Iberian Peninsula," chapter 19). The last crusade of any kind came in 1464, in response to the Ottoman capture of Constantinople in May 1453. Pope Pius II (ruled 1458–64) led the Crusade himself; but he died en route, and the crusading movement died with him.

The new Europe

In about 1100, Western Europe began changing rapidly, a change characterized by the reemergence of large towns and cities. The largest ones were Paris, with a population of some 200,000; London, somewhat smaller but still a great city; and Rome, struggling to return to its former glory. Then there were the great Italian cities, each with a population of about 100,000: Venice, Genoa, Pisa, and Florence.

Driving this growth was an economic boom, itself a partial result of the Crusades. The latter had exposed Europeans to the idea of international trade, which grew rapidly in the twelfth and thirteen centuries. The largest component of international trade, however, was not commerce with lands outside of Europe, but between European states. Such activity took place at large annual trading fairs that sprang up during the 1100s in two great centers: Champagne, a county in northwestern France; and Flanders, a coastal region in the area of modern-day Belgium and Holland.

Not only did merchants from all over Europe present their wares at these gatherings, but the fairs also facilitated cultural exchanges; and for peasants and poor people, they broke up the monotony of daily life. Soon the fairs became great celebrations

The Positive Side of the Crusades

In the modern view, the Crusades were a shameful episode in European history, a time when savagery in the name of God reached a low point. The truth, however, is far more complex: though the Crusades were unquestionably a brutal act of invasion—not to mention a massive failure—they were crucial to the opening of trade routes to the East and to the reawakening of Europe. Through these vicious, misguided "holy wars," Western Europeans gained exposure to Byzantium and the Arab world, civilizations in which learning had never faded.

Arab figures such as Avicenna and Averroës helped reintroduce Greek learning to the West. In fact, contact with Arab civilization led to nothing short of a full-scale reintroduction of scientific learning in Europe. At that point, neither the Arabs nor the Europeans knew the difference between real science and false science: thus the Arabs passed on both scientific astronomy and the hocus-pocus of astrology, not to mention the "science" most closely associated with the Middle Ages, alchemy. From the latter, however, would come the serious scientific discipline of chemistry.

There are other legacies of the Crusades in almost every aspect of life—for instance, chess. The game originated in India during the 500s, and later spread throughout the Muslim world, where it reached the crusaders. Originally the figures on the chess board were based on ranks within the Indian army; later they took on a specifically European character that reflected the power of the church: hence the most useful piece, after the queen, is the bishop. Of course the king is not a particularly useful piece, but his loss marks the end of the game—checkmate, a term that comes from a Persian expression, *shah mat.*

with all sorts of entertainment provided by acrobats, minstrels, or wandering musicians, and others.

The growth of trade led to greater increases in knowledge. When Marco Polo (1254–1324) of Venice embarked in 1271 on his celebrated journey to China, his immediate purpose was commercial. Yet his later writings would give Europeans their first glimpses of the Far East and would establish geography as a science rather than a collection of fantastic stories about other lands.

International commerce also forced an improvement in European travel conditions. New roads were built for the first time since the fall of Rome, and civil authorities sought to make travel safe by providing protection against highway robbers. This in turn led to the strengthening of national governments: as in the modern United States, maintenance of large

Marco Polo and his brother Nicolo, shown here on horseback behind a caravan of camels, journeyed to China in 1271. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

"interstate highways" was more practical at a national than at a local level.

Guilds and classes

In Germany, which lacked a national government, cities began banding together in 1160 to form the Hanseatic (han-see-AT-ik) League, designed to help them secure greater trade privileges in international markets. The Hanseatic League was itself an outgrowth of another change in commercial life, the reemergence of guilds, or associations, to promote a particular profession or business.

Guilds had existed in ancient times, but had disappeared until the 1000s, and thereafter they became much more organized than their ancient counterparts. There were merchant guilds such as those that made up the Hanseatic League, and there were craft guilds. The latter represented specific crafts, such as that of stonemason, and protected their economic interests while establishing standards for their members. A young man rising through the ranks of the guilds went through stages akin to those of a prospective knight, working first as an apprentice, then as a jour-

neyman in his teens before finally emerging as a master—and thus as a full member of the guild.

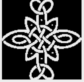
The growth of commerce in general, and the guilds in particular, led to the expansion of the middle class and working class, both of which separated the very rich from the very poor. As for the poor, they had plenty of incentive to move to the cities, where they stood a chance of rising to one of the more fortunate classes; all that awaited them in the country, by contrast, was a lifetime of toil on a feudal lord's manor. The resulting desertion of the countryside, combined with the growth of new classes, signaled the end of feudalism as an economic system—though not yet as a political system. Peasants no longer needed the protection of feudal lords, but the latter retained considerable power and wealth, and would continue to do so for several centuries.

Thomas Aquinas was a philosopher and theologian who felt that reason and faith were not incompatible, though he always placed primary importance on faith.

New ideas

An increase in learning accompanied the expansion of trade. The first real colleges made their appearance in France and Italy during the late 1100s; then in 1221, a French scholar first used the term "university" to describe a type of college that offered students a broader range of studies and greater freedom in which to pursue them. For the first time, education was open to young men outside the priesthood, and this led to an explosion of learning as profound as the economic boom then taking place.

Of course the church itself was still the home of many intellectuals, among them Thomas Aquinas (uh-KWYN-us; 1226–1274). Thomas, who replaced Averroës as the leading interpreter of Aristotle, represents the fullest development of Scholasticism. His contemporary, Roger Bacon (c. 1220–1292), another priest, was a forerunner of modern thought who insisted that a scientific approach to the natural world was not inconsistent with Christian belief. The church, on



Romantic Love—A Matter of Economics?

Unlike marriage, sex, and procreation, romantic love has not always been a part of life; even today, the concept is virtually unknown in traditional societies. In order for romantic love to take root in a society, there has to be a certain amount of wealth and leisure. There also has to be a period between the first manifestations of sexual desire, which typically happen in puberty, and their fulfillment. In societies where most people are poor and live off the land, there is a great incentive to marry at puberty and start having offspring so that children can help on the farm. There is simply no time to fall in love.

The idea of romantic love had existed in ancient Greece and Rome and parts of the Middle East—the Bible's Song of Solomon is clear evidence of this—but had largely faded from Western Europe with the fall of the Western Roman Empire. Then, in the High Middle Ages (1100–1300), it took hold among the upper classes, as the popularity of courtly love illustrates. During the thirteenth century and later, the concept spread to the middle class. Marriage prior to that time had been chiefly a business arrangement, with the young man's family offering some advantage to the young woman's family, and the latter providing a dowry (the wealth that a bride brings to a marriage) in exchange. Perhaps the couple might grow to love one another, but this was only a happy accident, and not considered a vital part of marriage.

With the emergence of the middle class, however, it became possible for a young man and woman to marry for love, and not primarily for money. Ironically, the people who were least free to marry for love were the most wealthy and powerful: the motivation behind the vast majority of royal or noble marriages remained political or economic, not romantic.

the other hand, considered science a threat to its dominant position in European intellectual life.

Nations and non-nations

Across the European continent, nations were coming together and empires falling apart. In Eastern Europe, Byzantium—permanently crippled by the Crusades—limped along, while the city-states of Russia, led by Novgorod, gradually gathered strength. Greatest of Novgorod's leaders was Alexander Nevsky (c. 1220–1263), a prince who repelled invasions by the Swedes in 1240 and the Teutonic knights in 1242. His defeat of the knights, in a battle on a frozen lake, is one of the most celebrated events of Russian history.

Alexander did not act so decisively against a new breed of invaders

Filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein immortalized Russian ruler Alexander Nevsky in his movie of the same name, made in 1938. *Reproduced by permission of the Kobal Collection.*

from the east, the nomadic Mongols of Central Asia. By 1241, they had swarmed over Russia, the Ukraine, Poland, and Hungary, and had reached the gates of Vienna, Austria's capital. Alexander saw the Mongols as protection from enemies to the west, and submitted to their rule. Upon his death, he made his son Daniel ruler over Moscow, which thenceforth became known as the principality of Muscovy. During the centuries that followed, the Mongols would rule Russia until Muscovy became powerful enough to overthrow them; in the process, the Russian system would become characterized by highly centralized authority, with a prince whose subjects did not dare question his power.

Quite the opposite thing was happening in England, where the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215 led to greater power for the nobility over the king—and ultimately to greater power for the people over both. In other countries, too, the central authority lost power, but not by such orderly means as in England. Italy remained a confused collection of warring states, and Germany began

to fall apart when the Hohenstaufens lost the imperial throne in 1254. In 1273, however, the election of Rudolf I (ruled 1273–91) as emperor established the powerful Hapsburg dynasty, destined to remain a factor in European politics until 1918.

The strongest nation in Western Europe was France, where a series of powerful kings increased the dominance of the royalty over all other forces in French life. Philip IV (the Fair; ruled 1285–1314) proved just how strong a French king could be when he went up against Pope Boniface VIII (BAHN-i-fus; ruled 1294–1303) and won. The conflict began when Philip's government established a tax to pay for a series of wars with England, and a group of Cistercians protested the tax. They appealed to Boniface for support, and Boniface ordered all French bishops to Rome so that he could review Philip's policies. Philip responded by supporting a group who kidnapped the pope.

Though Boniface was only held prisoner for a few days, the incident marked the end of the papal dominance over kings. Philip later arranged to have a pope who would do his bidding, Clement V (ruled 1305–14), placed on the throne. In 1309, Clement moved the papal seat from Rome to Avignon (AV-in-yawn) in southern France. This in turn sparked one of the greatest crises in the history of the Catholic Church, as Western Europe was divided between supporters of the Avignon papacy and those who submitted to a rival pope in Rome. The church would recover from this rift, but its power would never again be as great.

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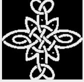
The Mongols

12

The Middle Ages in Europe and the Middle East were marked by three invasions of nomads from Central Asia: first the Huns, then the Turks, and finally the Mongols. The Mongols would conquer the largest empire of all, a vast realm that stretched from the Korean Peninsula to the outskirts of Vienna; but the Mongols' empire would fall apart almost as quickly as it came together. For a brief time, however, the Mongols—a people with no written language, and thus no real past history—would dominate much of the known world and hold many nations in terror.

Genghis Khan (c. 1162–1227)

For centuries, the Mongols had lived on the steppes (pronounced "steps") or plains of Central Asia, herding sheep and occasionally raiding other tribes. There was little to distinguish them from any number of other nomads—that is, until the appearance of an extraordinary young chieftain. His name was Temujin (TIM-yuh-jin); but in 1187, a group of clans declared him their "rightful ruler," and it was by this title—



Words to Know: The Mongols

Horde: A division with the Mongol army; the term "hordes" was often used to describe the Mongol armies.

Steppes: Treeless grasslands and plains in Russia and Central Asia.

Tribute: Forced payments to a conqueror.

Genghis Khan (JING-us)—that his name would resound through history.

After a series of battles, Genghis united the Mongols for the first time in 1206. Soon after he took power, the government of the Sung Dynasty in China sent an ambassador to him, demanding an oath of loyalty. Genghis's response was to sweep into China in 1211 at the head of his army, which like other Central Asian invaders before them was filled with extraordinary horsemen and skilled archers. They were also quite well organized, being divided into groups of 10,000, called a horde, which were further subdivided all the way down to groups of ten men, the basic unit in the Mongol army.

Despite the fact that the Chinese had long despised the Mongols and other nomadic tribes as "barbarians," a number of Chinese generals and government officials were so impressed by Genghis's power that they changed sides. This gave the Mongols the benefit of Chinese knowledge, not only of warfare and technology, but also of another mystery: reading and writing. By 1215, Genghis had taken the city that is today China's capital, Beijing (bay-ZHEENG); the Mongols named it Khanbalik (kahn-bah-LEEK).

Genghis conquered the Manchus, a people of northeastern China related to the Mongols, and in 1218 a Mongol force launched a war on the Korean Peninsula. Meanwhile their leader moved westward, and between 1219 and 1225 he conquered a Turkic khanate that controlled a huge region in Central Asia. Other Mongol forces moved deep into Russia in 1223, but in 1226 Genghis himself turned back toward China to deal with a rebellious group there. He died on August 18, 1227, having conquered more land than any ruler since Alexander the Great fifteen hundred years before.

Conquests in Eastern Europe (1227–41)

In tribal fashion, Genghis had divided his lands between his three sons, who elected the youngest among them, Ogodai, as their leader. But Ogodai lacked his father's vision, or perhaps his ruthlessness, and though the Mongol realms would grow under his leadership, the driving force was gone.

Poor timing, motivated by concerns over succession, characterized Mongol actions in Eastern Europe. Juchi Khan, the son who had led

A map of the Mongol Empire before, during, and after the lifetime of Genghis Khan (c. 1162–1227), when the Mongols were unified and ruled a massive empire. *Illustration by XNR Productions. Reproduced by permission of the Gale Group.*

the attack on Russia in 1223, had returned to the homeland following the death of Genghis; but in 1235 Ogodai sent Juchi's son Batu Khan to resume the attack. Batu's army was composed mainly of Tatars (TAT-arz), another nomadic nation of Central Asia, and by 1236 it had entered the heartland of Russia. The army sacked Moscow and Kiev in 1240, and in 1241 devastated Poland and neighboring Silesia (sy-LEE-zhuh). They poured into Hungary, and by July 1241 were prepared to take Vienna. Then suddenly they were gone: Batu had received word that Ogodai was dead, and he hastened back to Karakorum (kar-uh-KOHR-um), the Mongol capital, to participate in choosing a successor.

If Batu had kept on going westward, it could have changed the whole course of history, with the Mongols perhaps leaving an imprint on Western Europe as they did on Russia. There the Mongol-Tatar force, which came to be known as the Golden Horde, maintained control for several centuries. Though Mongol rule in Russia was not extraordinarily harsh, and the conquerors interfered little with the affairs of the locals, they did ex-

Genghis Khan was a powerful Mongol ruler who united his people and conquered vast amounts of land. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

pect hefty payments of tribute. They also kept Russia isolated from the changes taking place in Europe, and this would have an effect on that land for centuries to come.

A shift to Southwest Asia (1241–60)

The Mongols did not choose the new khan (chieftain), Kuyuk, until 1246, and when they finally renewed their efforts in the west, they shifted their focus from Europe to the Arab lands. This, combined with the fact that Kuyuk had taken an interest in Nestorian Christianity, convinced many Western Europeans that he was doing God's work. (Nestorian Christians believed that Jesus Christ had two separate identities, one human and one divine.) Some even suggested that Kuyuk might be linked with Prester John, a fabled Christian king in the East whose existence had been rumored since the 1100s (see box, "Prester John," chapter 18).

But Kuyuk died in 1248, and it took the Mongols three more years to choose another khan, his cousin Mangu. Mangu sent Hulagu, yet another cousin, into Persia and Mesopotamia (modern-day Iran and Iraq). Hulagu destroyed the Assassins, a terrorist group associated with the Ismaili sect of Islam, in 1256 before sweeping into Baghdad and killing the last Abbasid caliph in 1258. Upon Mangu's death, Hulagu gave himself the title Il-khan, and thenceforth all of southwestern Asia would be a separate khanate under his rule.

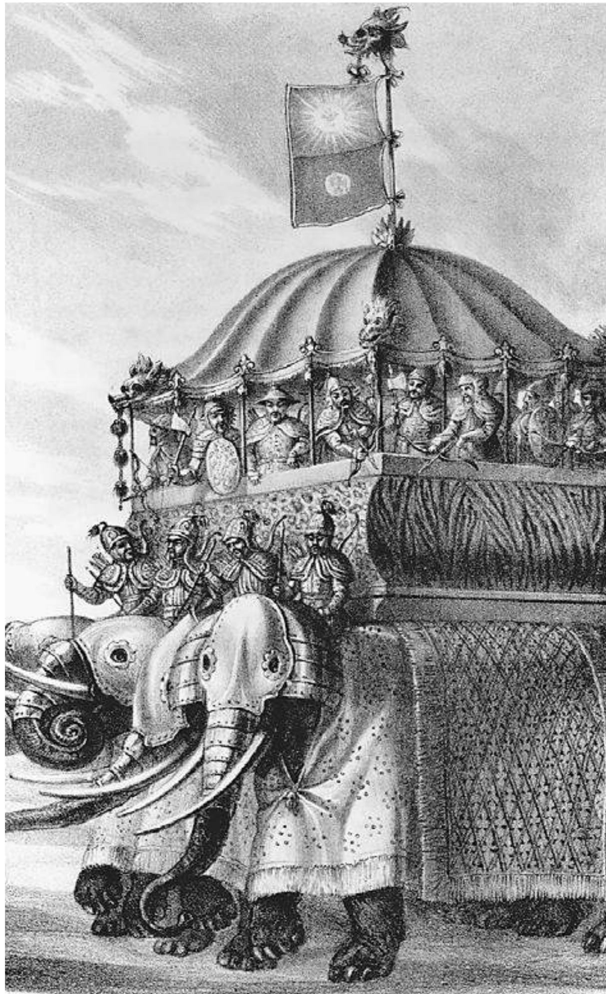
The Mongols had already destroyed what was left of the Seljuks in 1243, and when Hulagu invaded Syria, it appeared they were about to destroy the last remaining Muslim power, the Mamluks. This inspired great hope in Western Europe; but in a battle at Goliath Spring in Nazareth on September 3, 1260, it was the Mamluks who defeated the Mongols. Mongol conquests in the west thus came to an end.

The Mongols in battle in Eastern Europe. *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

Kublai Khan (1215–1294)

In the years after Genghis's death, four separate khanates emerged. Aside from the Golden Horde in Russia and the realm of the Il-Khan in southwest Asia, the Chagatai (chah-guh-TY) khanate, named after one of Genghis's sons, covered the area that today includes Kazakhstan and other former Soviet republics in Central Asia. To the east, in an area that comprised the Mongolian homeland and the Mongols' most prized possession, China, was the realm of the Great Khan, Genghis's successor and the leader of the Mongols. Since Genghis's death, the Great Khans had been minor figures, but in 1260, leadership fell to the greatest of Genghis's descendants: Mangu's and Hulagu's brother Kublai Khan (KOO-bluh).

Kublai and his brothers conquered southern China, all the way to the borders of Tibet, and in 1264 Kublai established his capital at Khanbalik. By 1279 he controlled all of China, and founded the Yüan (yee-WAHN) Dynasty, the first foreign dynasty to rule that country. Kublai extended Mongol conquests deep into eastern Asia, subduing Korea in the north and Burma in the south, but invasion attempts failed in Japan in 1274 and 1281, and in Java in 1293.



Kublai Khan and soldiers traveling on the backs of elephants. Kublai Khan conquered China, and in 1279 founded the first foreign dynasty to rule that country. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

He is best remembered for the splendor of his court in Khanbalik, and for his interaction with the great European explorer Marco Polo, who lived in China from 1275 to 1292.

Tamerlane and the end of the Mongols (1294–c. 1500)

The Yüan Dynasty lasted until 1368, but none of its later rulers possessed Kublai's strength, and the Chinese eventually overcame them. Yet the Mongols had one last moment of glory under Timur Lenk (tee-MOOR; 1336–1405), or "Timur the Lame," who became known to Europeans as Tamerlane. Though he was not related to Genghis Khan, Tamerlane saw himself as a successor to the great conqueror, and he set out to build an empire of his own.

First he established his capital at Samarkand (sah-mur-KAHND), an ancient city in what is now Uzbekistan, in 1370, and in the years from 1383 to 1385 he conquered Khorasan (kohr-ah-SAHN) on the Iran-Afghanistan border, as well as eastern Persia. Conquests between 1386 and 1394 won him Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Georgia (see box, "Georgia and the Mongols"), and in the process he destroyed the power of the Golden Horde in Russia. In 1398 he sacked the Indian city of Delhi, but by 1401 he was moving westward again, attacking first Damascus and then Baghdad. A year later, he defeated the Turks in a major battle, and captured their sultan, Bajazed, who committed suicide. Soon he was heading east once more, intent on conquering China; but he died on the way.

Tamerlane would be remembered for his cruelty as a conqueror and for his establishment of Samarkand as a great cultural center. His descendant Babur founded the Mogul dynasty in India, and Babur's grandson Akbar would prove to be one of the most enlightened rulers in history.

Such contrasts were typical of the Mongols' history: from Genghis's time onward, they had been feared as bloodthirsty conquerors who cooked their enemies in pots of hot water, yet they were also known as patrons of culture who could be fair rulers. Genghis had declared that all Mongols were equal, and in administering many of their conquered lands, the Mongols had likewise treated subject peoples as equals.

Recognizing their own lack of civilization, the Mongols had adopted the civilizations of the lands they ruled and often the religions as well. Ironically, this fact aided in their downfall: too small in numbers to overwhelm any population for long, the Mongols simply faded into the local landscape, and those who remained in Mongolia went back to the simple herding lifestyle they had practiced before Genghis's time.

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Georgia and the Mongols

Like many other countries that made up the former Soviet Union, Georgia received its independence in the early 1990s; yet it had a history that went back to ancient times. Located in the area called the Caucasus (KAW-kuh-sus), a region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, Georgia's history was long tied with that of the Eastern Roman Empire, and the majority of its people were Orthodox Christians. Nonetheless, Muslims conquered it in the 640s, and ruled through the Bagratid (bahg-RAH-teed) family, a powerful Georgian dynasty. Yet when the Abbasid caliphate began to fade, Bagrat III (978–1014) took the opportunity to unite Georgia for the first time.

In 1122, Bagratid rulers seized the Georgian capital of Tbilisi (tuh-BLEE-see), which the Arabs had held for half a millennium, and Georgian power reached its peak under Queen Tamara (tuh-MAR-uh; ruled 1184–1212). The Mongol invasion in 1220, however, spelled the end of independent Georgia, and the country dissolved into a number of competing states. During the 1300s, Georgian rulers tried to reassert their authority, and in 1327 they drove out the Mongols. Tamerlane's invasion in 1386, however, broke the remaining power of the Georgian monarchs.

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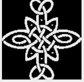
India

13

The religions of India are as vital a part of that country's history as Catholicism was in the story of medieval Europe. First among those religions was Hinduism, which grew out of the beliefs brought by Indo-European invaders. Later, India became home to a second great faith, Buddhism, which became the religion of the Mauryan Empire (324–184 B.C.). However, the other great Indian dynasty of ancient times, the Gupta Empire (c. A.D. 320–c. 540), embraced Hinduism. In the Middle Ages, India became the battleground of a third religion as invaders poured in from the Muslim world.

A land of divisions

India is a vast land, with a variety of climatic zones, but its enormous population has long been concentrated in a fertile strip of land created by the Indus River in the west and the Ganges (GAN-geez) in the east. This was the center of both Mauryan and Gupta power, and mountain ranges to the north—the world's highest—had long protected the land. Only once had India been successfully invaded, when the



Words to Know: India

Anarchy: Breakdown of political order.

Caste system: A means of ranking people into very rigid social groups, closely tied to Hindu concepts of reincarnation.

Karma: According to Hinduism and Buddhism, the force generated by a person's actions, which influences the circumstances of their future reincarnation.

Monotheism: Worship of one god.

Polytheism: Worship of many gods.

Refugee: Someone fleeing political violence.

Reincarnation: The idea that people are born on Earth to live and die, again and again.

Indo-Europeans, a group with roots in what is now southern Russia, entered in about 1500 B.C.

The Indo-Europeans had completely transformed Indian society, but no more invaders came for a full two thousand years. Then in about A.D. 500, the Gupta Empire—which had brought about a golden age, a time of advancements in learning seldom equaled in the ancient world—faced another invasion from the north. Their attackers were the same force that had helped bring down the Western Roman Empire: the Huns, or Hunas as they were called in this part of the world.

North and south

Though northern India fell into a state of anarchy after 540, the south remained relatively protected. Geography made the difference: south of the lush Indus-Ganges region was the Thar Desert, and below that the enormous Deccan Plateau, an extremely dry, hot region. Because of these barriers, southern India had developed along different lines than the north.

In their Sanskrit language and their Caucasian features, the people of the north showed that they were descendants of the Indo-Europeans. The people of the south, by contrast, were much darker-skinned, and the dominant language, Tamil (TAH-meel), bore no relation to the languages of Europe or Iran. After about 300, the Pallava (PAH-luh-vuh) dynasty of Hindu kings, who possibly had northern origins, ruled the south.

The Pallavas reached their peak in the two centuries following 550, a period that saw outstanding achievements in art and architecture as well as settlements in the islands off Southeast Asia. During the Pallava high point, central India remained splintered into a number of small states; but order returned to the north, for a time at least, under the rule of the Buddhist king Harsha (ruled 606–47).

Buddhism and Hinduism

Harsha's court was a place of great artistic refinement, and he was himself a poet and playwright. A vivid account of his reign lives in the writ-

A map of the present-day Indian sub-continent, including the nations of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. *Illustration by XNR Productions. Reproduced by permission of the Gale Group.*

ings of the Chinese traveler Hsüan-tsang (shooy-AHND ZAHNG; 602–664). Hsüan-tsang had come as a pilgrim to visit the many holy sites associated with the founder of Buddhism, an Indian prince named Siddhartha Gautama (si-DAR-tuh GOW-tuh-muh ; c. 563–c. 483 B.C.), whose followers called him the Buddha or "Enlightened One." Yet Buddhism never

A statue of Buddha, or Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

gained a lasting hold on the nation of its birth, even though it shared many common roots with Hinduism.

Both religions accepted reincarnation, the idea that human beings are reborn many times as a way of working out their karma, or the results of their actions. To Hindus, this meant that a person would be reincarnated as a member of a higher or lower caste (KAST; social group), depending on their actions in a past life. People of the higher castes enjoyed great wealth and privilege while the bottom rungs of society were condemned as "Untouchables." Whereas most modern Americans would consider this situation as unjust, Hindus considered this a completely fair result of karmic forces.

Buddhism, by contrast, offered the possibility that one could escape the endless cycles of reincarnation by achieving enlightenment. This gave it great appeal among the lower castes and with descendants of the land's original inhabitants, many of whom had spread southward into southern India and the island of Ceylon (seh-LAHN; now Sri Lanka) after the Indo-European invasion. Buddhism also rejected the Hindu gods and the rituals associated with them.

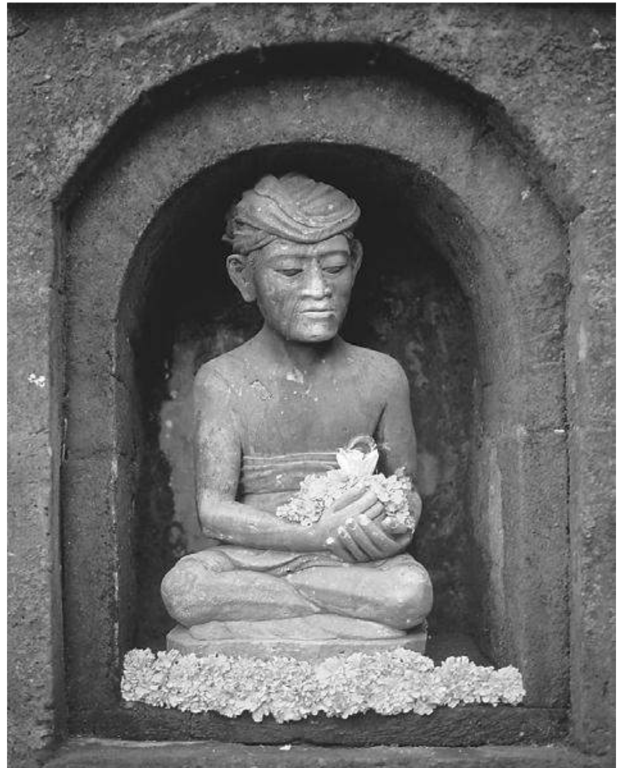
Hinduism and Islam

There may have been disagreement over religious issues between adherents of Hinduism and Buddhism, but the two had much in common; it would be hard, however, to imagine two faiths more different than Hinduism and Islam. Hinduism is polytheistic, meaning that it has many gods, with statues of each; Islam, with its prohibition of religious images and its declaration that "there is no god but Allah," is completely iconoclastic and monotheistic. Hinduism places people in castes; Islam treats all Muslim men (if not women) as equals. Hindus believe that people die many times, whereas Muslims believe they die only once.

The two worlds had been in contact since ancient times, with extensive trade links between ports in India and Yemen. In fact, it was this

relationship that would bring Indians and Arabs into conflict after a group of Arab sailors were shipwrecked on Ceylon. Some of the sailors died, and the local ruler put their widows and children on a boat along with gifts and letters of goodwill to Hajjaj (hah-ZHAZH; 661–714), ruler over the eastern lands of the Caliphate (the domain ruled by the Muslim leader). However, pirates near the Sind, in what is now Pakistan, attacked the boat, captured the wives and children, and stole the gifts. Hajjaj demanded that the ruler of the Sind help him obtain the release of the prisoners and their possessions, and when the nobleman refused, Hajjaj sent an invading force under his son-in-law Qasim (kah-SEEM).

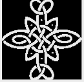
Qasim gained control over the entire Sind in 712, then conquered the neighboring Punjab (POON-jahb) region in the following year. The Muslims proved themselves able administrators, quickly making peace with local officials, who they placed in administrative positions to help them run the government. With the exception of taxes imposed to pay for their military and government, the Arabs interfered little with local affairs, and as they had done with Christians and Jews in other lands, they allowed the Hindus to continue practicing their religion in a limited form.



A Hindu statue. In the Middle Ages, India was divided by three major religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Muslim empires and Hindu kingdoms

With the overthrow of the Umayyads (Muslim rulers) in 750 (see Chapter 6: The Islamic World), the Arabs were unable to retain control over the Sind and Punjab, and during the next 250 years, numerous dynasties competed to control parts of India. In the 800s, a dynasty called the Palas ruled in the east, but in the 900s they were replaced by the Rajputs (RAHZH-pootz). The Rajputs' name means "sons of kings," and they claimed descent from the gods. In fact they apparently descended from the intermarriage of Indians and invaders, particularly Huns and



A Touch of India

The Arab and Muslim worlds would have a great influence on India during the Middle Ages, but the influence went both ways. During the glory days of the Gupta Empire, Indian medicine had been the most advanced in the world, and in the early Middle Ages, numerous doctors from India were invited to work in Baghdad. A number of them served as chief physicians in hospitals, while others translated works of medicine, science, and philosophy from Sanskrit into Arabic.

Indians also shared their advances in the realm of mathematics. One of their greatest achievements was the numeral zero, and this made possible the decimal system and other benefits of the highly practical "base-10" system in use throughout the world today. Indeed, the numbers 0 through 9 are themselves a gift of Indian mathematicians, who taught their system to the Arabs. Europeans adopted it during the Crusades, replacing the hopelessly cumbersome Roman numeral system, but they incorrectly called the numerals "Arabic"—a name that stuck.

Not all Indian contributions to the Arab world were quite so serious in nature. The game of chess first originated in India, then spread to the Arab world, as did a number of stories that went into the *Thousand and One Nights.* Indian music also influenced its Arabic counterpart. Both use five-note scales: for Westerners accustomed to the eight-note octave scale, this gives Indian and Arabic music an exotic sound.

Scythians (SITH-ee-unz), a group from what is now Ukraine who entered India in about A.D. 100. The local Hindu princes considered them barbarians, but submitted to their leadership in a mysterious "fire ceremony" atop Mount Abu in northwestern India.

In the south, the Cholas (KOH-lahz), a Tamil dynasty, replaced the Pallavas as the dominant power in about 850. They conquered the Deccan Plateau and Ceylon, and engaged in trade with China. In the early 1000s, they would even extend their rule into the Ganges valley, becoming the first kingdom of southern India to expand so far northward. Though they maintained power until 1279, their impact was limited from the standpoint of world history.

The Ghaznavids and Ghurids

When the next Muslim invasion of India came in 1001, the driving force was Turkish rather than Arab. These were the Ghaznavids (GAHZ-nuh-vidz), displaced by their cousins the Seljuks. Their leader was Mahmud of Ghazni (mah-MOOD; ruled 997–1030), who subdued a large re-

A mazelike assembly of sandstone buildings survive from medieval times in the Indian city Jaisalmer. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

gion in what is now Afghanistan, Pakistan, and western India. Strong Hindu resistance, however, prevented him from establishing Muslim rule in most of the Indian regions he conquered.

As the Ghaznavids declined, another dynasty called the Ghurids (GÜR-idz) took their place in the region. The greatest of the Ghurid rulers was Muhammad Ghuri, who destroyed the power of the Rajput kings in 1192 and built an empire based in the cities of Lahore (now in Pakistan) and Delhi (DEL-ee). Though he was assassinated in 1206, he managed to establish Muslim control over much of northern India. Adopting a practice common among the Turks, Muhammad Ghuri made use of slave soldiers, and one of these, Qutb-ud-Din Aybak (küt-büd-DEEN eye-BAHK; ruled 1206–10), became his successor. Aybak was the first independent Muslim ruler of northern India, with no ties to an outside realm, and is thus acknowledged as the founder of the Delhi Sultanate.

The Delhi Sultanate

The Delhi Sultanate marked a high point for Muslim rule in India up

to that point, and the Delhi sultans made their capital city a great cultural center. They founded an outstanding library, acknowledged as the greatest establishment of Islamic learning in the East, and Muslim mosques and other buildings—often built from the ruins of Hindu temples—sprouted up throughout their realm. Ironically, the sultanate owed some of its success to the Mongol invasions threatening the Muslim lands to the west, which brought an influx of wealthy and talented refugees.

A number of able rulers followed Aybak, among them his son-in-law Iltutmish (il-TÜT-mush), who consolidated the power of the sultanate and built a number of impressive structures around Delhi. A power struggle followed his death in 1236, and eventually the former slave Balban took control, even though Iltutmish's son actually occupied the throne. Facing a Mongol threat from the west, Balban built up India's military.

Yet another scramble followed Balban's death, with the Khalji (kal-JEE) family assuming control in 1290. The most outstanding figure of this dynasty was the ruthless Ala-ud-din (uh-LAH-ood-deen; ruled 1296–1316), who seized the throne after having his uncle assassinated. He greatly expanded the sultanate's realms, conquering the Deccan and much of southern India, and might have kept going had his advisors not urged him to consolidate his power. Instead he contented himself with the vast wealth he had acquired in his conquests of the south. Like Indian rulers of ancient times, he built a vast and efficient spy network. Ala-ud-din's conquests in the south became the stuff of legend (see box, "The Face That Launched a Siege"), and indirectly influenced the founding of Vijayanagar (vi-juh-yah-NAH-gar), the most powerful kingdom in southern India. Founded in 1336 by Hindus who had become united by their opposition to Ala-ud-din, Vijayanagar would withstand Muslim onslaughts for some two centuries.

In 1320, four years after the death of Ala-ud-din, the Tughluq (tug-LUK) family assumed the throne. Muhammad ibn Tughluq (ruled 1325–51) made Ala-ud-din seem mild by comparison. It was said, for instance, that he punished a rebellious noble by having the man skinned alive and cooked with rice, and then he sent the remains to the wife and children—and the noble happened to be his cousin. His successor, Firuz (fee-ROOZ; ruled 1351–88), was much more even-handed and became noted for his many building projects. After his death, however, the sultanate dissolved into civil war, which left it ripe for attack by Mongol leader Tamerlane in 1398.

Later invaders

Tamerlane sacked Delhi, but as was his practice, he did not stay long. The Tughluqs managed to hold on for another fifteen years until 1413; then other powers rushed into the vacuum. Afghanistan emerged for the first time as an independent nation in 1451, and Vijayanagar gained strength in the south while smaller Muslim king-

The Face That Launched a Siege

In 1303, the Muslim conqueror Ala-ud-din took the city of Chitor (chi-TOOR) in southeastern India, one of many conquests during his southern campaign. He besieged the city for the usual reason conquerors do such things: as a military, political, or even economic objective. However, a fanciful book called the *Annals of Rajasthan* (RAH-jus-tahn) put a much more romantic spin on it. According to this work of "history," it was because he wanted the lovely princess Pudmini (POOD-mi-nee).

The name Pudmini, readers of the *Annals* were assured, is "a title bestowed only on the superlatively [exceptionally] fair." According to this legend, Ala-ud-din promised to spare the city if they would give him the princess; but when that offer was refused, he said he would call off the attack if they only let him see her. This, too, seemed too great a request for those who knew of Pudmini's beauty, so Ala-ud-din—according to the legend—asked merely to look at her reflection in a mirror. The people of the city again denied his request, and instead its women fought alongside the men to defend the Hindu stronghold. In the end, it was said, all the men died in battle, and the women who were not killed committed suicide rather than surrender.

doms divided northern and central India. By the end of the 1400s, Muslim life in India had shifted to the city of Agra, and away from Delhi.

It was in Agra that Babur (BAH-boor, "Lion"; 1483–1530) established his capital when he invaded India in 1526. His bloodline included Turkish and Persian strains, but as a descendant of Tamerlane, he was technically a Mongol. Hence the name for his dynasty was the Persian word for Mongol: Mogul (MOH-gul). The Moguls were Muslims, but Babur's grandson Akbar (ruled 1556–1605) would be noted for his open-mindedness regarding religion. For the half-century of Akbar's reign, at least, India's competing faiths were in harmony with one another.

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Southeast Asia

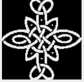
14

The mainland of Southeast Asia is tucked between India in the west and China to the north; hence the name "Indochina," applied to much of the region. India and China were also Southeast Asia's primary cultural influences. But with the spread of Islam to the region during the Middle Ages, a third influence made itself known, primarily in the adjoining Malay Archipelago.

Indochina

China's first imperial dynasty in the 200s B.C. claimed three loosely defined provinces along the South China Sea coast in what is now Vietnam. As powerful as the Chinese emperor was, however, he could hardly control such distant lands. Thus it was easy enough for one of his generals to break away and establish his own kingdom, which came to be known as Van Lang (VAHN LAHNG), an early version of Vietnam.

China later reclaimed the province, then lost it again until finally another powerful Chinese general subdued the



Words to Know: Southeast Asia

Archipelago: A string of islands.

Indigenous: Local; not from outside.

Pagoda: A type of tower monument in the Far East.

Province: A political unit, like a state, that is part of a larger country.

Relief sculpture: A carved picture, distinguished from regular sculpture because it is primarily two-dimensional but textured.

area in about A.D. 40. To the south of the conquered lands he set up two bronze pillars, marking the edge of the civilized world: below that line, he declared, lived ghosts and demons.

Funan and Champa

In fact there were two kingdoms to the south: Funan, which straddled an area that is now part of both Vietnam and Cambodia; and Champa along the coast. Funan controlled a lesser state called Chenla, yet by the 500s, Chenla had become strong enough to absorb Funan.

A century later a new nation emerged in the region to the west and north of Funan and Champa. These were the Khmers (k'MEERZ) of Cambodia, soon to develop one of the most powerful empires in the region. Meanwhile the people of northern Vietnam became culturally and politically tied with China, while southern Vietnam continued an independent existence as Champa.

The Khmer Empire

The Khmers had a close trading relationship with India, and this led to the adoption of Hinduism by their first powerful king, Jayavarman II (jah-yah-VAR-mun; ruled c. 790–850). Jayavarman founded the Khmer Empire, which also became known as the Angkor Empire after two extraordinary creations.

The first of these was Angkor Thom (TOHM), which began to emerge as a city after 900. Angkor Thom covered some five square miles, quite impressive for any medieval city—but particularly one carved out of a jungle. With its moat and walls, its temples, palaces, and tower—all carved in detail with images of Hindu gods—Angkor Thom would have put contemporary London or even Paris to shame. Then there was Angkor Wat (see box), a temple almost big enough to be considered a city in its own right.

The builder of Angkor Wat was Suryavarman II (soor-yah-VAR-mun; ruled 1113–50), who went on to expand his empire into what is now Thailand, Burma, Vietnam, and Malaysia. He also established formal diplomatic relations with China in 1119. A war with the Vietnamese, however, did not prove so successful.

A map of Southeast Asia in the twenty-first century. *Illustration by XNR Productions. Reproduced by permission of the Gale Group.*

The northern Vietnamese had revolted against Chinese rule in 939 and established an empire of their own. Burma, too, had established its independence under Anawrahta (ahn-ow-RAHT-uh; ruled 1044–77). A Buddhist, Anawrahta built many pagodas (puh-GOH-duhz), or tall shrines, in his capital of Pagan (puh-GAHN).

The Khmer Empire remained the dominant power in the region, but in 1176 Champa invaded. Its forces even occupied Angkor Wat until Jayavarman VII (ruled 1181–c. 1215), the Khmer's greatest ruler, drove them out in 1181. He conquered the Champa kingdoms and other neighboring territories and set about rebuilding and improving Angkor Wat.

Competing powers

After Jayavarman, the Khmer Empire declined quickly. Indeed, in the densely packed lands of Indochina, it was always difficult for one kingdom to hold power for very long, and at the first sign of weakness others were more than willing to step in. Under the Tran dynasty (1225–1400), northern Vietnam annexed the Cham-

Workers in the rice fields of present-day Vietnam. *Photograph by Cory Langley. Reproduced by permission of Cory Langley.*

pa lands as Khmer influence faded. But an even greater force was pushing in from the north: the Mongol Yüan dynasty of China.

The Mongols forced a group called the Nan-chao (nahn-ZHOW), ancestors of the Thais, into the region in 1253. The Nan-chao swept into the power vacuum created by the decline of the Khmer, and conquered the Angkor Empire in 1431. Thereafter the Nan-chao and the Vietnamese alternately controlled Khmer lands. Vietnam itself came under Chinese rule in the early 1400s, but reemerged more powerful than ever under the Le dynasty (1428–1788), which fully conquered the southern part of the land.

Farther west, the Mongols brought an end to the Burmese kingdom in 1287, and for the next five centuries anarchy reigned in that country. Between Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia, the tiny, landlocked kingdom of Laos unified under the Buddhist monarch Fa Ngum (fahng-OOM; 1316–73). Educated at Angkor, Fa Ngum returned to his homeland with a Khmer army in 1353, and brought Laotian power to the greatest extent it would ever

reach. Within a few years, however, the Thais had absorbed much of Laos.

The Malay Peninsula and Archipelago

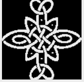
Technically the Malay Peninsula is part of Indochina, but its history was much more closely linked with that of the Malay Archipelago (ar-ki-PEL-uh-goh). An archipelago is a group of islands, and the Malay complex is the world's largest. It forms a huge triangle, with the northern Philippines at the "top"; the Indonesian island of Sumatra (soo-MAH-truh) at the southwest corner, where the Indian Ocean joins the Pacific; and New Guinea on the far southeastern corner. In addition to their shared geography, the people of these islands (and of the Malay Peninsula) speak languages from the same family, Malay.

During the Middle Ages, this region would undergo an experience similar to that of India, where Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim states vied for control. Buddhism and Hinduism came first, and each established strongholds in parts of what is now Indonesia. The Hindu Pallavas of southeastern India had colonized the area from an early time, but by the 600s the dominant faith had become Buddhism.

Buddhism was the religion of the Srivijaya (shree-vi-JY-yuh) Empire, based in Sumatra, which ruled parts of the region from the 600s onward. At its peak in the 1100s, it controlled much of the Philippines, Borneo, western Java, and even the Moluccas (muh-LUK-uz), an island group far to the east. Another Buddhist dynasty, the Sailendras, controlled eastern Java during the 700s and 800s. There they built a great temple complex at Borobudur (boh-roh-bü-DOOR), Asia's largest Buddhist monument, with hundreds of relief sculptures depicting scenes from the life of the Buddha.

An entrance to the temple of Angkor Thom, a medieval city carved out of the jungle during the Khmer Empire in what is now Cambodia. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Hindus dominated the island of Bali (BAH-lee), and Hinduism spread into eastern Java after the Sailendras lost power in 856. There



Angkor Wat

Of all the monuments built during the Middle Ages, few can equal the great Khmer temple complex of Angkor Wat for sheer scope, mysterious beauty, and eery charm. The surrounding moat alone was a vast engineering feat, 600 feet wide and 2.5 miles long. Inside its walls was an enormous temple complex of towers guarding a central enclosure, an architectural symbol of Hindu beliefs concerning the outer and inner worlds.

Like the Gothic cathedrals in France around the same time, Angkor Wat was a gigantic "sermon in stone," with carvings on virtually every surface showing Hindu gods and other aspects of the Khmer culture and religion. But this was a world utterly foreign to the European mind. For one thing, Angkor Wat was not a place where the common people were invited to enter and worship, as they were at Notre Dame or Chartres; it was set aside purely for the royal house. Furthermore, one can only imagine what a European priest would have made of the many sculptures showing bare-chested beauties. Yet this was an everyday sight in the humid jungles of Southeast Asia, where Khmer women wore wraparound skirts with nothing covering their breasts.

Despite these and other scenes depicting ordinary life—planting and harvesting rice, trading goods such as spices and rhinoceros horns with Chinese merchants—Angkor Wat can justly be described as a spooky place. Its abandonment after the Thai conquest in the mid-1400s added greatly to this quality: in the centuries that followed, this gargantuan temple city was forgotten, its towers choked by vines while its inner courts became home to snakes and other creatures of the jungle. It was only rediscovered in the 1860s—by the French, who then controlled Indochina.

the powerful Hindu kingdom of Majapahit (mah-jah-PAH-hit), founded in about 1263, began to extend its influence, taking control of Sumatra as the Srivijayas declined. In 1292, Marco Polo visited the Majapahit kingdom and also noted the existence of a Muslim community on Sumatra.

This was the first proof by an outside observer of the Muslim presence in the region, though in fact Islam had probably arrived two or three centuries earlier. In the two centuries following Marco Polo's visit, Islamic forces would bring down the Majapahits and convert many peoples on neighboring islands. The Balinese, however, remained predominantly Hindu.

Muslim sultanates

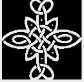
The most significant area of Muslim influence was in Melaka, or

Angkor Wat is a massive Hindu temple complex built by the Khmer Empire in the Middle Ages. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

what is now Malaysia. That area became so heavily Muslim during the 1400s that people used the expression "to become a Malay" to mean converting to Islam. Melaka had been under the control of the Srivijaya through the 1300s, when a king from Singapore, a tiny city-state at the tip of the Malay Peninsula, founded the independent state of Melaka.

The origins of Singapore itself are less clear, though it appears to have been a thriving trade center in the 1200s. It was destroyed by an attack from Java in 1377, and it would not rise to its former prosperity and stability for nearly five hundred years. Melaka meanwhile adopted Islam, probably in about 1400, and its rulers adapted many trappings of Islamic culture, including titles such as shah and sultan.

Trade fueled the spread of Islam: because the Muslims were successful merchants, many local businessmen considered it prudent to accept the new faith. Even the Turks established their influence in the region, and there are reports of gifts such as banners and cannons sent by the Ottoman sultan to Melaka and other far-off lands.



Australia and the Pacific

Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific islands beyond them did not possess true civilizations during the Middle Ages—that is, their people did not build cities or possess a written language—and therefore information about these regions is scarce. Nonetheless, it is clear that life there was far from uneventful.

The native peoples of Australia, called Aborigines (ab-uh-RIJ-uh-neez), first migrated to that continent about 50,000 years ago, but the many islands of Polynesia were inhabited much later. For many centuries, shipbuilders from Indonesia had been constructing canoes big enough to cross wide stretches of ocean, so that by about 650, all Polynesian lands except New Zealand had been settled. A century later, people finally began arriving on New Zealand's North Island.

In about 1000, the inhabitants of Easter Island, a lonely spot several thousand miles off the west coast of South America, began carving the large, mysterious heads for which that place—so named because it was first discovered by Europeans on Easter Sunday 1722—is most famous.

Another "mystery" of the South Seas, however, would not remain a mystery. While visiting the East Indies (modern Indonesia) in the 1290s, Marco Polo heard about a faraway southern continent, which he assumed to be mythical like Atlantis. By the 1400s, however, Indonesian merchants began regularly traveling to this all-too-real place, but it would be another two centuries before Spanish voyagers "discovered" Australia.

Then in 1511 Portugal, by then the leading power of the high seas along with Spain, conquered Melaka and closed it off to trade with the Muslim world. Nonetheless, the spread of Islam continued, reaching Brunei (BROO-ny) on the northern coast of Borneo, as well as the southern Philippines.

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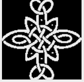
China

15

China has had an organized political system since the founding of the Shang dynasty in 1766 B.C. The nation was first unified, and the empire established, under the Ch'in dynasty in 221 B.C. Over the course of the centuries, China developed one of the world's most brilliant civilizations, even as nomadic peoples—ancestors of the Huns, Turks, and Mongols—threatened its borders. Not surprisingly, the Chinese came to think of themselves as the only civilized people in a world of barbarians. They also viewed history as a series of three- or four-century cycles marked by upheaval, renewal, and eventual decline. Medieval dynasties such as the T'ang (618–907) and Sung (960–1279) would bear out this expectation with eery precision.

New religions, new ideas

In A.D. 220, around the time the Western Roman Empire first began declining, China entered a three-century period of turmoil. This happened largely because the country lacked a strong government, but as time went on, many be-



Words to Know: China

Abacus: The earliest form of calculator, which used movable beads strung along parallel wires within a frame.

Block printing: An early printing process in which a negative, or reverse, image was carved out of wood.

Bureaucracy: A network of officials who run a government.

Calligraphy: The art of lettering, or in China, the art of writing Chinese characters.

Concubine: A woman whose role toward her husband is like that of a wife, but without the social and legal status of a wife.

Famine: A food shortage caused by crop failures.

Grid: A network of evenly spaced lines that intersect one another at right angles.

Mandate: Authority or permission.

Movable-type printing: An advanced printing process using pre-cast pieces of metal type.

Novel: An extended, usually book-length, work of fiction.

Prose: Written narrative, as opposed to poetry.

Sect: A small group within a larger religion.

Shaman: A holy man who enters a state of trance in which (in the view of believers) he contacts the supernatural world.

came concerned about the destructive effect a new religion was having. Just as Romans feared Christianity's challenge to their ancient religion, the Chinese believed that Buddhism was undermining the old-fashioned Confucian belief system.

Based on the teachings of the philosopher Confucius (551–479 B.C.), perhaps the most important figure in all of Chinese history, Confucianism emphasized basic virtues such as loyalty to family, respect for elders, hard work and study, and obedience to rulers. By contrast, Buddhism, which began to take hold in the 300s, urged followers to concentrate on inner peace and enlightenment rather than social concerns. In fact Buddhism was no more nontraditional than Taoism (DOW-izm), a mystical Chinese belief system founded on the ideas of Lao-tzu (low-DZÜ; c. 500s B.C.). Though Taoism emerged from within China rather than outside, it too had once been perceived as a threat by Confucianists.

Taoism had gained acceptance in the mid-second century, and now gradually the Chinese began to accept Buddhism—particularly a variety called Mahayana (mah-huh-YAH-nuh) or "Great Vehicle." Mahayana held

that by achieving enlightenment, a person could become a Buddha, meaning that there was not just one Buddha but many. Meanwhile, another sect, Chan—better known by its Japanese name, Zen—merged Buddhism with a Taoist-like mysticism.

As it turned out, this period between dynasties was a time of great intellectual as well as spiritual development in China. The era saw progress in the study of medicine, the first use of coal for heat, the first appearance of kites, and the writing of the first encyclopedias. No wonder writers of the later T'ang dynasty would look back with longing to this period, which they immortalized in a novel called *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

The Sui dynasty (589–618)

The Sui dynasty (SWEE) would in many ways resemble the Ch'in, which first unified China and built its Great Wall. Both were shortlived, but extremely important; both saw great public works projects; and both were ruled by fierce tyrants. The Sui founder was Wen Ti (DEE; also known by his

The teachings of the philosopher Confucius formed the basis of Confucianism, which valued such principles as loyalty, respect, hard work, and obedience to authority figures. *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

birth name, Yang Chien; ruled 589–604), who seized the throne in one of the many small states that controlled China during the period of upheaval. After eight years spent consolidating his power, he took the imperial throne.

It was Wen Ti's aim to build a strong central government, so he abolished inheritance of office, a corrupt practice that had spread among civil servants. To make sure government workers were qualified, he instituted a civil-service examination system, based on Confucian principles, which would remain in use up to the twentieth century. Furthermore, he introduced a new law code and moved aggressively against Mongol and Turkic nomads in northern China.

Remembered as one of China's greatest rulers, Wen Ti may have been assassinated by his son, Yang Ti (ruled 604–618). Yang Ti built a huge network of canals, most notably the Grand Canal, a thousand-mile waterway that connected the Yangtze (YAHNG-zay) River with the Yellow River to the north. But Yang Ti was ruthless, and his military campaigns proved costly. Though he enjoyed a measure of success in Vietnam and Central Asia, an expedition into Korea (612–14) failed. Yang Ti was assassinated, and thus the Sui dynasty ended, like the Ch'in, after the reign of just two emperors.

The T'ang dynasty (618–907)

The founders of the T'ang dynasty (TAHNG) were a father-son team, Li Yüan (ruled 618–26) and Li Shih-min (ZHUR-min; ruled 626–49). The son instigated a revolt and placed his father on the throne. Chinese emperors usually became known by a "reign title," assigned at the time of their death: thus these two became Kao Tsu (gow-DZÜ) and T'ai Tsung (dy-DZAWNG) respectively. Father and son allied China with a Turkic people called the Uighurs (WEE-gurz) against other Turks, extending T'ang

The ideas of Lao-Tzu, who lived around the 500s B.C., led to the development of Taoism, a mystical Chinese belief system. *Reproduced by permission of the Granger Collection Ltd.*

rule deep into Central Asia and even Tibet, one of the world's most isolated lands (see box, "Tibet").

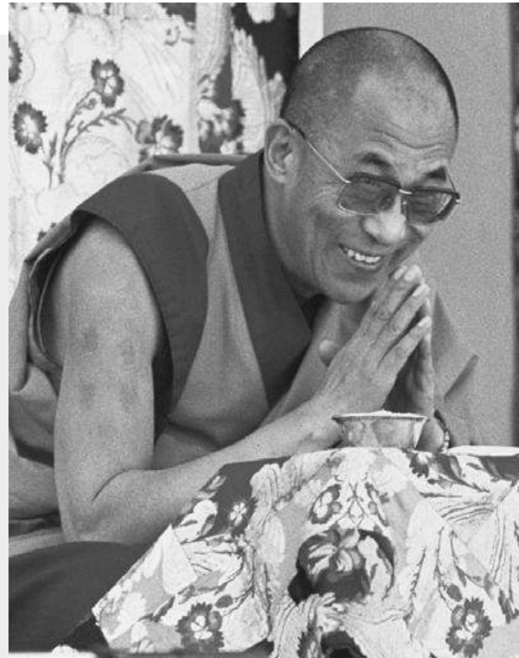
Both rulers issued a series of reforms, and in particular those of T'ai Tsung—considered by many historians the greatest of China's imperial rulers—were particularly sweeping. He put into place a complex but efficient bureaucracy (byoo-RAHK-ruh-see) divided into three branches for making,

Tibet

Situated atop a vast plateau in the Himalayas (him-ah-LAY-uz), the world's tallest mountain range, Tibet is one of the most isolated lands on Earth. Even the name of Tibet's first known king, Srong-brt-san-sgam-po (srawng-burt-SAHNG-SKAHM-poh; ruled 629–50), illustrates how unfamiliar its language and culture are to Westerners. Srong (to simplify his name) ordered the creation of a Tibetan written language and extended his rule into neighboring Nepal (neh-PAHL), as well as parts of India and China.

But the Tibetans would turn out to be a nation of priests, not warriors: Srong also introduced Buddhism and built huge temples and monasteries in and around his capital at Lhasa (LAHS-uh). Though influenced by the Mahayana school, Tibetan Buddhism incorporated elements of a much older native belief system, a religion of gods and demons that included elements of spirit worship and shamanism (SHAH-mun-izm). The religion spread to neighboring mountain lands, reaching as far away as Siberia.

Other distant converts included the Mongols, who in the 1200s succeeded where the Chinese had often failed, bringing Tibet under their political influence. The Tibetans remained linked with the Mongols long after the decline of Mongol power, and only in the 1700s did China succeed in taking at least a measure of control over the area.



The Dalai Lama, political leader of Tibet.
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In the mid-twentieth century, China's Communist government annexed the country following a brutal campaign against the peaceful Buddhist monks of Tibet. During the 1990s, the Dalai Lama (DAHL-ee LAH-muh), political leader of Tibet, emerged as a celebrity in the West, where Tibetan political freedom became a popular cause.

reviewing, and implementing policy. The review board was allowed to criticize the emperor's decisions, and the policy-making branch exercised further checks on imperial authority by making suggestions as well. In a land where strong emperors enjoyed near-absolute power, it was highly unusual

to see a regime exercise such a great degree of openness.

In the area of policy implementation, or carrying out the work of the government, the T'ang system had few rivals. Along the highways and waterways of the empire, the government placed monitoring stations to oversee taxation, review local grievances, police commercial activities, and even provide accommodations for travelers. Overseeing this smooth-running machine was one of the most talented and highly trained groups of civil servants China had ever seen. Even after T'ang power receded, its administrative system would prevail for several centuries.

A thriving economy

T'ai Tsung also instituted badly needed land reforms, redistributing property to reflect changes in the size of peasant families. Though taxes on farmers were high, peasants now felt a sense of ownership over their lands, which could no longer be snapped up by feudal lords. The T'ang government also greatly extended the canal network put in place by the Sui, thus aiding the transport of goods from north to south in a land where most major rivers flowed eastward.

As the economy of T'ang China thrived, new goods such as tea from Southeast Asia made their appearance. China in turn exported a variety of items, including silk and printed materials. The latter was an outgrowth of two outstanding Chinese innovations: paper, first developed around A.D. 100, and block printing, a process whereby a printer would carve out a piece of wood and, using ink, press the block onto paper, leaving behind an image of the carving. Ink came from the black substance secreted by burning wood and oil in lamps. Later, when this innovation passed to the West, it would be incorrectly called "India ink."

A vibrant cultural life

The T'ang capital was Ch'ang-an, today known as Xian (shee-AHN). Located deep in the heart of China, it would serve as capital for a total of eleven dynasties, but under T'ang rule it reached the peak of its splendor. Laid out on a grid, it covered some thirty square miles. With its two million residents, it may well have been the largest city of its time.

The golden age of the T'ang, which lasted until 751, saw great advancements in the arts and sciences. Aside from block printing, which increased the spread of new ideas, two other notable Chinese inventions, fireworks and the abacus (AB-uh-kus), made their appearance during this era. An early form of calculator, the abacus had existed in one form or another since ancient times and was known to the Romans; but the Chinese abacus, still used in parts of the Far East today, became the most well known version.

The T'ang Chinese were eager to import knowledge of astronomy and mathematics from India, and their own cultural advances spread to Korea and Japan, which modeled their

leading cities on the plan of Ch'ang-an. An openness to non-Chinese ways of life characterized the T'ang and distinguished them from most dynasties of the past. Not only did they allow Buddhism to spread, the T'ang emperors tolerated faiths of even more distant origin: Islam, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Nestorian Christianity, and even Judaism.

In such an environment, it is not surprising that the arts flourished. T'ang sculpture became widely noted for its beauty, and the expansion into Central Asia added new musical styles and dances. The era also produced some of China's greatest writers, including the poets Li Po (lee-BOH; 701–762) and Tu Fu (doo-FOO; 712–770). Even after T'ang China had passed its prime, an outstanding intellectual figure made his appearance: the writer and philosopher Han Yü (hahn-YOOEE; 768–824). Han Yü helped revive Confucianism as a living system of thought and established a new, naturalistic, and free-spirited prose style.

An imperial soap opera

T'ai Tsung's son Kao Tsung (gow-DZÜNG; ruled 649–83) found himself almost constantly at war, particularly against the Turks and Tibetans. In 668 he subdued the Koreans, but he did not prove as forceful a ruler as his father. During his later years, the empire was dominated by his concubine, Wu Ze-tian (zeh-CHEE-en; 625–705). By skillful manipulation and a ruthless approach to those who stood in her way, she made herself Kao Tsung's empress in 655, and after his death in 683 became the only female ruler in all of Chinese history. An able administrator and military leader, she proved herself the equal of any male sovereign.

Her grandson Hsüan Tsung (shwee-AHND-zoong; ruled 712–56), who ruled the T'ang dynasty at the height of its power, was also dominated by his concubine, Yang Kuei-fei (gway-FAY). A fascinating character, Yang was one of the only obese women in Chinese history also considered a great beauty. She started out as concubine of Hsüan Tsung's son before the emperor decided he wanted her for himself—along with her two sisters. The soap opera did not end there: later she took the general An Lu-shan (703–757) under her wing as her student, adopted son, and (according to palace rumors) lover.

Decline of the T'ang

Of Iranian descent, An Lu-shan rose rapidly at court and became a favorite of Hsüan Tsung. After Arab forces defeated Chinese troops at Talas in Central Asia (751), however, it became clear that the T'ang had reached the limits of their power. In 755 An launched a rebellion against the emperor. Soon afterward, palace guards killed Yang for her part in the rebellion, and in 757 An was murdered on the orders of his own son. The revolt continued until 763, however, further weakening T'ang power.

The dynasty would maintain control for another almost 150 years,

but its glory days were over, and the spirit of tolerance that had marked T'ang rule soon faded as emperors persecuted Buddhists and other adherents of "foreign" religions. Famine ravaged northern China, and in 881 the rebel leader Huang Ch'ao (hwahng CHOW) sacked Ch'ang-an, forcing the government to Luoyang (lwoh-YAHNG), an ancient capital. In its last three decades, competing forces at court further sapped the dynasty's strength.

The Sung dynasty (960–1279)

After the fall of the T'ang, China entered a period of anarchy known to historians as "Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms." Then in 960, troops loyal to Chao K'uang-yin (ZHOW gwahng-YIN; ruled 960–76) declared him emperor, thus establishing the Sung (SOONG) dynasty.

Like the T'ang before them, the Sung reformed the government to create a stronger, more efficient bureaucracy, but they were not expansionists. Instead, the first two Sung emperors consolidated the empire's holdings, allowing Tibet, Mongolia, Vietnam, and other areas to break away. They tried to defeat the only remaining dynasty from the "Five Dynasties" period, the Liao (LYOW) of Mongolia, but in 1005 gave up and agreed to pay them tribute.

The cost of this tribute, along with other problems, affected the economy, so the powerful minister Wang An-shih (1021–1086) put in place economic reforms. These freed the peasantry from many burdens, but also gave the government huge power over the economy. The Sung system, an elaborate Confucian bureaucracy in which advancement was based on merit rather than social standing, proved to be one of the most efficient governments the world has ever known.

Northern and Southern Sung

Sung diplomats formed an alliance with the Juchen (zhur-SHIN), a dynasty of nomadic tribesmen in Manchuria to the northeast, against the Liao. The Juchen eliminated the Liao threat, but then turned against the Sung. Sweeping southward, in 1127 they destroyed the capital at Kaifeng (gy-FUNG) in central China, forcing the Sung to move south.

Often dynasties of the past had withstood invasion by moving their capitals; thus historians would refer to the Western and Eastern periods of a dynasty, or in the case of the Sung, the Northern and Southern. For the Sung, however, the latter phase was not a time of weakness: instead, they became stronger and more wealthy than before.

During the Southern Sung era, the population of lands under Chinese control reached 100 million, and their new capital at Hangchow (hahng-SHOH) became a mighty city of 1.5 million. Cities spread throughout Sung China, and Chinese culture flourished.

Artistic and technological advances

It was a time of great painters, noted for subtle landscapes influenced by Zen Buddhism. Among these was the emperor Hui Tsung (hwee-DZÜNG; ruled 1100–25), who formed the alliance with the Juchen; certainly he was a better artist than an administrator. This era also witnessed advances in distinctively Chinese arts such as porcelain-making and calligraphy (kuh-LIG-ruh-fee), the art of lettering.

Sung China produced several notable writers as well, among them the philosopher Chu Hsi (jü-SHEE; 1130–1200), who like Han Yü helped to reinvigorate Confucian teachings. He became a leader in the movement called Neo-Confucianism (*neo* means "new"), and Chu Hsi's philosophical writings became required reading for generations of civil service applicants.

Also during the Sung era, the historian Ssu-ma Kuang (sü-mah-GWAHNG, 1019–1086) wrote the *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Chinese Government,* which is one of the most important works of Chinese historical scholarship. Writers of the Sung dynasty also included a woman, the poetess Li Ch'ing-chao (1081–c. 1141). Thus the Sung era produced one of premodern China's few notable women other than imperial wives and concubines; but the Sung also introduced a practice that became a symbol of male domination (see box, "Women and Foot-Binding").

An explosion in scientific knowledge accompanied an economic boom. On the high seas, the development of the magnetic compass made navigation at sea much easier, and along with improvements in shipbuilding, enabled the Sung to send ships called junks on merchant voyages. The larger Sung junks could hold up to six hundred sailors, along with cargo.

Tea and cotton emerged as major exports, and a newly developed rice strain, along with advanced agricultural techniques, enhanced the yield from China's farming lands. China also sold a variety of manufactured goods, including books and porcelain, while steel production and mining grew dramatically.

In this vibrant economy, banks and paper money—one of Sung China's most notable contributions—made their appearance, and the development of movable-type printing aided the spread of information. Instead of carving out a whole block of wood, a printer assembled pre-cast pieces of clay type (later they used wood), each of which stood for a character in the Chinese language. Ultimately, however, the peculiarities of Chinese would encourage the use of block printing over movable type. It is easy enough to store and use pieces of type when a language has a twenty-six-letter alphabet, as English does; but Chinese has some 30,000 characters or symbols, meaning that printing by movable type was extremely slow.

End of the Sung

Great strides in science and technology continued right up to the

end of the Sung dynasty, making its destruction all the more tragic. The Sung created pumps for lifting water, and experimented with water power as a means of operating silk looms and cotton mills. A scientist in 919, between the T'ang and Sung eras, had developed one of history's most significant inventions: gunpowder. The Sung expanded on this knowledge, and even experimented with rocketry.

Rockets made their first appearance in about 1240, in a war against the Mongols, who had been on the move against China since Genghis Khan first attacked in 1211. Yet the Chinese were thrilled when, in 1234, the Mongols defeated the Juchen and took northern China. The Sung probably thought they would let the barbarians destroy each other, then reoccupy their country; but instead the Mongols kept going southward, and by 1279 Kublai Khan's armies had overthrown the Sung.

Women and Foot-Binding

Men in premodern China believed that small feet on a woman were beautiful, and during the Sung dynasty years they developed a means to ensure that women's feet would remain small. In childhood, a Chinese girl would have her feet bound with strips of cloth, which constricted their growth. By the time she became a woman, she would have abnormally small feet, so much so that walking became difficult.

Of course foot-binding only applied to women of the upper classes; peasant girls had to work in the fields, and tiny feet would only slow them down. Nor did the practice attract many admirers outside of China: though Chinese men swooned at the sight of tiny feet, Westerners thought them grotesque. In the modern era, foot-binding became a symbol of the hard-line conservatism that prevailed during imperial times, and the end of the monarchy in 1912 also saw the end of foot-binding.

Yüan dynasty (1279–1368)

When he established his capital at Khanbalik, Kublai Khan named his imperial house Yüan, meaning "beginning." Under the forceful Kublai, lands from Korea to Central Asia to Vietnam bowed to the military power of the Yüan. Kublai did not annex all these countries, but made many of them vassals, regions that relied on Kublai for military protection. The unity of the Mongol realm facilitated travel through areas formerly dominated by bandits and competing warlords. Thus Marco Polo was able to make his celebrated journey to Kublai's court, from which he would bring back to Europe all sorts of innovations: gunpowder, paper money, the compass, kites, even playing cards.

The Yüan were the first foreign ruling house in China's three-thousand-year history, and the Chi-

nese resented them deeply. This had an unintended result. Rather than serve the "barbarians," many talented Chinese opted to become artists and educators rather than civil servants, and this led to a flowering in the arts.

Yet the Yüan depended on the Chinese to run the country for them and did not return their neighbors' contempt toward them. Whereas the Chinese were accustomed to looking down on outsiders, the Mongols were some of the most open-minded people of the Middle Ages. Precisely because they lacked a sophisticated culture, they admired those of the peoples they ruled, and they admired no culture as much as that of China. Thus they were eager to absorb the refined ways of the Chinese, and this produced yet another unintended effect: in becoming more sophisticated, the Mongols lost the brutal toughness that had aided them in their conquests and so become vulnerable to overthrow.

A series of failed invasions, both against Japan and Java, hastened the decline of Mongol power. Furthermore, the Mongols lacked the sheer numbers to truly dominate China: not only were the Chinese older and wiser, in terms of their civilization, they were also more numerous. As with their distant cousins the Huns before them, the Mongols soon faded into the larger population.

The last years of Mongol rule were marked by famines and other natural disasters, which the Chinese took as a sign that their rulers had lost what they called the "Mandate of Heaven"—in other words, the favor of the gods. This is a consistent theme in Chinese history, and such calamities often attended the change of dynasties.

Glory days of the Ming dynasty (1368–c. 1500)

The founder of China's last native-ruled dynasty, the Ming (1368–1644), was Chu Yüan-chang (ruled 1368–98), who led a rebel group that seized control of Khanbalik in 1368. He created a network of secret police and soon consolidated his power throughout the country. Leadership passed to Chu's grandson, but in 1399 Yung-lo (ruled 1403–24), Chu's son, led a revolt against his nephew.

Yung-lo became one of the most fascinating emperors of Chinese history. He sent a series of naval expeditions, under the command of Admiral Cheng Ho (jung-HOH), to westward lands, including India, Ceylon, Yemen, and even Africa. Though the Ming ruled a wide array of tribute-paying states from Japan to Tibet, and from Central Asia to the Philippines, the purpose of these expeditions was not conquest or even trade, but simply to display the superiority of Ming China. These ships brought with them such luxuries as silks and porcelains, and returned bearing exotic animals, spices, and varieties of tropical wood. Centuries later, when archaeologists unearthed the ruins of Zimbabwe in Africa, they found broken pieces of Ming porcelain.

The naval expeditions were costly, and this helped bring them to

Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China, with the Forbidden City in the background. The Forbidden City, a palace five miles in circumference, was built to demonstrate the wealth and power of the Ming dynasty. *Photograph by Susan D. Rock. Reproduced by permission of Susan D. Rock.*

an end; also expensive was the establishment of a vast palace complex. In 1421, Yung-lo moved the capital from Nanjing (nahn-ZHEENG) in the interior to Beijing, where he built a palace five miles in circumference. Containing some two thousand rooms where more than ten thousand servants attended the imperial family, it was not so much a palace as a city: hence its name, "Forbidden City," meaning that only the emperor and the people directly around him were allowed to enter. Built to illustrate the boundless extent of Ming power, the Forbidden City became—aside from the Great Wall—the best-known symbol of China in the eyes of the world.

These ventures, along with the restoration of the Grand Canal (which had fallen into disrepair under the Mongols), placed heavy burdens on the treasury and weakened the power of the Ming. So too did attacks by Chinese, Korean, and Japanese pirates on their merchant vessels, not to mention the appearance of European traders who were often pirates them-

selves. The Ming dynasty would continue for several centuries, but long before it fell to Manchurian invaders in 1644, it appeared to have lost the "Mandate of Heaven."

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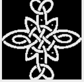
Japan

16

Though Japan had been inhabited for thousands of years, its history did not truly begin until the adoption of writing in the A.D. 400s. Yet the origins of the Japanese remain a mystery. Linguists are divided as to whether their language is related to those of Central Asia or to no other tongues on Earth. Certainly the Japanese language is not related to Chinese, though China would be Japan's greatest cultural influence in its early years.

From the Kofun to the Nara period (250–794)

Japan first emerged as a nation in the Kofun period (250–552), named for the impressive burial mounds built by the Yamato (yuh-MAH-toh; "imperial") clan, which united the nation. Given the suddenness with which the Japanese state appeared, it is possible that Japan may have been influenced by visitors from China, whose historical writings of the time



Words to Know: Japan

Animism: The belief that everything has a spirit.

Anthology: A collection of shorter writings, or excerpts from longer writings.

Census: A count of the people living in a country.

Commoner: Someone who is not a member of a royal or noble class.

Constitution: A set of written laws governing a nation.

Figurehead: A ruler who holds power in name only.

Regent: Someone who governs a country when the monarch is too young, too old, or too sick to lead.

Shogun: A military dictator in premodern Japan.

Typhoon: The equivalent of a hurricane, occurring along the Asian coast of the Pacific Ocean.

refer to it as the "Land of Wa," a realm of over a hundred separate "countries."

During the 300s, the Japanese welcomed a steady influx of Chinese and Korean immigrants, whose skills helped them rise quickly to positions of power. In 405, the Japanese adopted the Chinese written language, which they would use for half a millennium, until they developed a version more suited to Japanese.

The Asuka period (552–645)

A collection of scriptures, sent as a gift from the Paekche kingdom in Korea, helped introduce Buddhism to Japan during the Asuka period. Japan's native religion, Shinto ("way of the gods"), was animistic, meaning adherents believed that everything—living or inanimate, physical or mental—has a spirit. Shinto contrasts sharply with Buddhism: whereas Shinto exalts nature and its reproductive forces, and looks upon death as unclean, Buddhism's focus on enlightenment means that death simply breaks the cycle of eternal suffering.

At first Buddhism sparked a heated debate among Japan's ruling elite, but eventually the two religions became complementary elements in the Japanese way of life. Leading the movement for the acceptance of Buddhism was the Soga clan, whose most powerful member was Prince Shotoku (573–621). In 604, Shotoku issued his "Seventeen-Article Constitution." The constitution gave the central government exclusive authority to tax its citizens and instructed the ruling classes in Confucian ethics, more evidence of the Chinese influence. Shotoku was truly "the father of his country," giving it the name Nippon or Nihon; later the Chinese would use a name meaning "origins of the sun," and it was this version—*Jihpen*—that Marco Polo would take back to Europe with him.

The Hakuh period (645–710)

Soga power weakened after the death of Shotoku in 622, and in 645

A map of the modern-day nations of Japan and North and South Korea. *Illustration by XNR Productions. Reproduced by permission of the Gale Group.*

two men conspired to murder the ruler. These two were Crown Prince Nakano Oe (OH-ee; 626–671) and Nakatomi Kamatari (614–669), but after they gained power, they both took on new names. The prince became Emperor Tenchi, and Kamatari's family became known as Fujiwara, a clan that would later dominate the imperial family.

A particularly strong Chinese influence characterized the Hakuh period, and this was evident in the new idea of the Tenno, or emperor, as a god who descended directly from the Shinto sun-goddess. Unlike their Chinese counterparts, however, most Japanese emperors were figureheads, rulers who held power in name only while others exerted the real influence. In this regard, Tenchi was something of an exception, though even he had to rule alongside the Fujiwara clan. Other measures adopted by Tenchi from the Chinese included the Chinese calendar, a bureaucracy modeled on the Confucian system, and a land-redistribution effort based on the reforms of the early T'ang dynasty.

Rooted in Confucian principles of equality, the Taika land re-

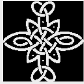
A Shinto temple in Nikko, Japan. The native religion of Japan, Shinto exalts nature, believing that everything has a spirit. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

forms abolished hereditary ownership of lands, created a taxation system, and established a census to provide the government with a means of monitoring taxpayers. This did little to end inequalities, however: the aristocracy found ways to use the reforms to their advantage, and within a century much of the land was back in their hands.

The Nara period (710–794)

Tenchi's successors continued his reforms, which were formalized in 702 with the Taiho law codes. To symbolize the "new" Japan, its rulers began work on a new capital city at Heijo, now known as Nara. The city's designers started out trying to replicate the grid system of Ch'ang-an, China's magnificent capital, but as it took shape, Nara assumed a considerably more Japanese character.

The Nara period also saw a much more wide-ranging adoption of the Buddhist religion—including Buddhist temples and art forms, which the Japanese adapted for their own culture. Like Roman Catholicism, Buddhism has a monastic tradi-



Korea

The history of Korea is actually longer than that of Japan. In ancient times, a powerful state called Choson (choh-SAHN) emerged on the Korean Peninsula, but was destroyed by a Chinese invasion in 108 B.C. China maintained control until A.D. 220, when Korea split into three kingdoms: Paekche (pahk-CHAY) in the southwest, Silla in the southeast, and Koguryo (koh-GOOR-yoh) in the north.

Chinese rulers persisted in trying to control the country, and in 668 formed an alliance with Silla against the other two kingdoms. United under the rule of Silla, Korea adopted Buddhism, and a golden age ensued; but after two centuries the land was once again divided into the three old kingdoms. Then in 936, a new powerful state called Koryo united the country. Its new capital at Kaesong near Seoul was based on the grid plan of the Chinese capital at Ch'ang-an.

Korea withstood invasion by the Liao and Juchen dynasties, which also plagued Sung China, but it fell to the Mongols in 1270. For many years thereafter, the Korean aristocracy was split between pro-Mongol and pro-Chinese factions. Then in 1388, a general named Yi Song-ye seized power. In 1392, Yi established Korea's longest-lived dynasty, which held the throne until the Japanese invasion in 1910.

The Yi dynasty, with its capital at Seoul, adopted Confucianism at the expense of Buddhism. Despite the heavy Chinese influence in this era, during this time Korea adopted its own phonetic alphabet, which replaced Chinese characters.

Japan invaded in 1592, but with the aid of China, Korea resisted the attack. Part of Korea's strength came from its impressive navy, whose "turtle ships" may have been the world's first armored warships. The Japanese threat, along with the eclipse of Ming Chinese power by the Manchus, led the Koreans to increasingly shut themselves off from the world. For many centuries, Korea would be known as the "hermit kingdom."

tion, and the emperor Shomu (ruled 715–749) embarked on an ambitious program of building temples and convents.

Eventually Buddhist clerics became too influential at court for their own good: as it turned out, the nobles and people were not prepared to support Shomu's building program, and it ended soon after his death. His daughter (and successor) Koken came so heavily under the influence of the monk Dokyo that it provoked hostility from the ruling classes. Dokyo tried to make himself Koken's successor, but after Koken's death he was banished from court.

A Japanese samurai on horseback. Like the knights of medieval Western Europe, the samurai were warriors who were governed by their own code of honor in the defense of their feudal lords. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

The Nara period, a time of great cultural flowering, saw the writing of the two oldest Japanese books now in existence. Translated as the *Records of Ancient Times* (712) and *Chronicles of Japan* (720), these "histories" rely heavily on myth, though the second book is more reliable. Both books mention the emperor's descent from the sun-goddess, an idea that probably appeared at the time of Tenchi's reforms as a way of justifying his power. Also during the Nara period, Japan's first poetic anthology, containing some 4,500 poems, appeared as *Collection of a Myriad of Leaves*. The book exhibits a distinctly Japanese style, and includes poems by members of various social classes.

The Heian period (794–1185)

Wishing to sever all ties with the strong Buddhist influence at the Nara court, the emperor Kammu in 794 moved to a new capital at Heian (hay-YAHN; now Kyoto), a city also based on the plan of Ch'ang-an. This move set the tone for the Heian period, in which the Japanese aristocracy sought to cut off all ties with China.

As time went on, in fact, the nobility began to scorn not only foreigners, but even Japanese who lived outside Heian. This contempt for rural Japan had several consequences, among them the rise of the Fujiwara clan. Yoshifusa Fujiwara (804–872) married into the royal family, and in 858 became the first commoner to rule the country, serving as regent for his underage son. This became more common, and eventually it was typical for an emperor to retire early so that his son could "rule"—with one of the Fujiwaras as regent.

Feudalism and the samurai

Heian rulers ignored the countryside, so that by the 900s the provinces had become almost com-

pletely separated from the capital. At the same time, changes in the Taika and Taiho laws made it possible for feudal lords to build large country estates, and these factors helped give rise to feudalism in Japan.

Without a central government, provinces became like tiny nations, settling their disputes with the aid of small fighting bands. This led to the rise of a new warrior class called the samurai—Japan's knights. Like knights, samurai were not soldiers, but individual warriors sworn to defend their feudal lord. They also wore armor, though it was made of bamboo and not metal, and they placed a somewhat greater emphasis on the sword than European knights did. In Europe, lances and crossbows made it possible to fight at a greater remove, but combat in Japan was face-to-face, and swords were so sharp they could slice a man's body in half with a single stroke.

In the Heian and the later Kamakura period, the samurai developed their own code of honor, called *bushido* ("way of the warrior"), but this was quite different from chivalry. For all its flaws, chivalry was based in Christian notions of gentleness and compassion, and as such helped curb knights' penchant for brutality; bushido, on the other hand, defined a samurai's virtue in terms of his ability to strike quickly and decisively against an enemy. Nor was there any European equivalent for ritual suicide, a central aspect of life not only among the samurai, but the Japanese upper classes as a whole (see box, "Ritual Suicide").

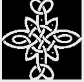
An age of courtly refinement

As in Europe, an emphasis on courtly refinement attended the rise of knighthood in Japan. Despite the official ban on Chinese influences, members of the court read Chinese books, enjoyed Chinese music and dance, and studied Chinese etiquette in order to carry themselves with greater elegance. But they were not mere cultural slaves of the Chinese: the era produced a distinctly Japanese style of painting called *yamatoe,* noted for its simple and delicate lines, which often appeared on screens and sliding doors. Japanese poetry also became markedly distinct from that of China.

New developments in writing spurred the creation of Japanese written characters, called *kana,* to replace Chinese characters, which had proven cumbersome for writing in Japanese. Kana in turn brought on a literary explosion. Europeans would later claim credit for developing the novel as a literary form, but in fact the world's first novel appeared in Japan—and its author was a woman. *The Tale of Genji* by Murasaki Shikibu (c. 978–1026) tells the story of a character named Prince Genji, his life and loves, with astounding subtlety and complexity of plot.

The Kamakura and Muromachi periods (1185–1573)

In the countryside, two clans had long battled for power. The victory of one family, the Minamoto, marked



Ritual Suicide

Though Americans use the terms *hara-kiri* (HAH-duh KEE-dee) and the less well known *seppuku* interchangeably, in fact they are different. *Seppuku* refers to the practice of ritual suicide, whereas *hara-kiri,* an indelicate term seldom used by the Japanese themselves, identifies the method—literally, "belly-cutting."

Any number of occasions would require a samurai to slice open his stomach, using a knife that he carried for that purpose. Dishonor or the need to prevent dishonor was a principal motivation: a samurai would kill himself rather than surrender in battle, and a condemned nobleman had the right to do himself in rather than confront the disgrace of an executioner. On the one hand, a samurai whose master died might commit seppuku so that he could protect his lord in the afterlife; on the other hand, a warrior offended by something his lord had done might slice himself open at the master's gates as a means of protest.

Women and members of the lower classes were denied the "honor" of seppuku; on the other hand, noble ladies could, as a form of protest, commit *jigaki,* suicide by piercing the throat. As part of her training, a woman of the aristocracy learned how to slice her throat properly and—before she did the deed—to bind her legs together so that her body would not be found in an immodest position.

the beginning of the Kamakura period (1185–1333), named after the new capital city. There a shogun, or military dictator, named Yoritomo Minamoto (ruled 1192–99) established his power, but his sons did not prove successful in holding on to it. In their place came the Hojo family, relatives of Yoritomo's widow, who took power in 1219.

Government by the shogunate was exceedingly complex, with the Hojo family ruling lesser shoguns—the equivalent of feudal lords—who in turn controlled a series of figurehead emperors. This, plus the maintenance of two capitals at Kamakura and Kyoto, created a confused situation. Anarchy continually threatened, but the adoption of the fully developed bushido code helped give a measure of stability.

Bushido demanded that both men and women adhere to its high standards of loyalty and discipline. It is interesting to note that unlike feudal societies in Europe, the shogunate permitted women—at least, women of the upper classes—a great degree of freedom, allowing them to own land and hold positions of esteem.

Invasion and overthrow

Some Koreans who feared Japanese power convinced Mongol

leader Kublai Khan that Japan contained great wealth. In 1274, Kublai Khan launched an unsuccessful naval invasion of Japan. When he tried again in 1281, he sent a fleet of some 3,500 ships containing an estimated 100,000 men; but nature was on the side of the Japanese. A huge wind, probably a typhoon, rose up and smashed the Mongols' vessels to shreds. The grateful Japanese dubbed this a "divine wind," or *kamikaze,* a title adopted centuries later by Japanese suicide bombers in World War II (1939–45).

Though it withstood the Mongols, the Hojo Shogunate weakened over the years that followed, and by 1333 it was ripe for overthrow by a faction that placed Emperor Daigo II (1287–1339) in power. The men driving the Temmu Restoration, as it was called, were Ashikaga Takauji (tah-kah-OO-jee; 1305–1358) and Kusunoki Masashige (mah-sah-SHEE-gay; 1294–1336). Both were military leaders, but their motivations could not have been more different. Kusunoki acted out of loyalty to his emperor, whereas Ashikaga, after selling out his allies in the Hojo family, turned against Daigo in 1336 and made himself shogun. Daigo went on to rule a rival government outside Kyoto, while Ashikaga established himself as leader of a new regime in the city of Muromachi.

The Muromachi period

The Ashikaga Shogunate dominated Japan during much of the Muromachi period (1333–1573), but it had to share power with a new class of warlords called *daimyo* (dy-EEM-yoh). This created an unstable situation, but the shogun Yoshimitsu (ruled 1368–94) managed to successfully balance the shoguns and the daimyo. With the death of his grandson in 1428, however, the uneasy peace came to an end, and the shogunate began to weaken. Clan disputes led to all-out conflict in 1467.

The Onin War raged for ten years, destroying the power of the Ashikagas and devastating Kyoto. Warlords controlled the land until 1568, during which time the balance of power on the battlefield shifted from samurai to mass foot-soldiers. The arrival of Portuguese traders in 1543 created an external threat that aided the daimyo in consolidating their power, and the Europeans' introduction of firearms gave them a particularly effective means for doing so. The Portuguese gradually gained a degree of acceptance, and introduced castles to Japan, where they appeared in military towns around the country.

Despite the unrest of the times, a number of vital social changes took place. The feudal system actually gave more power to the people, because the daimyo were closer to the populace than the faraway imperial court had been. Zen Buddhism, which emphasized meditation and discipline, took hold in Japan during this period, as did a number of distinctly Japanese arts such as flower arranging, gardening, landscape painting, Nō theatre, and the tea ceremony. At the same time, new forces were at work in

the upper levels of the Japanese military, and these would end the era of unrest with the unification of the country in 1573.

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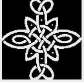
The Americas

17

The most notable civilizations in the New World during ancient times were the Olmec and other groups in Mesoamerica, or Central America, as well as the Chavín culture of the Andes Mountains in South America. Both began developing in about 3500 B.C., and in time a number of other civilizations developed around them. In Mesoamerica, these included the Maya and the people of the Teotihuacán city-state. The Maya would continue to flourish through medieval times, and the Mesoamerican and Andean cultural centers provided a foundation for the brilliant Aztec and Inca civilizations that appeared later.

The Maya

The Maya first emerged in the jungle lowlands of what is now northern Guatemala in about 2500 B.C. By 800 B.C., they had settled the area around them, and in the years that followed, Mayan cities sprang up in what is now southern Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. No doubt they came under the influence of southern Mexico's Olmec,



Words to Know: The Americas

Aqueduct: A long pipe, usually mounted on a high stone wall that slopes gently, used to carry water from the mountains to the lowlands.

Archaeology: The scientific study of past civilizations.

Causeway: A raised highway over water.

Conquistador: A leader in the Spanish conquest of the Americas during the 1500s.

Conscription: Compulsory, or required, enrollment of persons in public service, particularly the military.

Divination: The study of physical material—for example, tea leaves or a person's palms—in order to discover what the future holds.

Extended family: A household comprising not just immediate family (parents and siblings), but also grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and other relatives.

Hieroglyphics: A system of written symbols, often consisting of pictograms, which look like the things they represent, and phonograms, which represent a specific syllable.

Jade: A greenish gemstone that acquires a high shine when polished.

Maize: Corn.

New World: The Americas, or the Western Hemisphere.

Observatory: A building set aside for the purpose of studying natural phenomena such as the movement of bodies in the heavens.

Plaza: A large open area or public square, usually but not always in the center of a town.

Staple: A commodity with widespread or constant appeal.

who flourished between 1200 and 100 B.C. The Olmec were noted for their sophisticated 365-day calendar, their system of mathematical notation, and the creation of some sixteen giant stone heads, weighing as much as 30,000 pounds, which archaeologists in the 1800s began finding throughout the jungles of Central America.

Both the Olmec and the people of Teotihuacán (tay-oh-tee-hwah-KAHN) in Mexico built enormous stone pyramids, the most well known of which was the Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacán. These structures are particularly impressive in light of the fact that no premodern American culture had use of the wheel or—with the exception of the Incas' llamas—domesticated beasts of burden. Teotihuacán, which flourished from A.D. 100 to 750, was at one point the sixth-largest city in the world.

A map of the Americas showing the three major Mesoamerican civilizations of the Middle Ages: the Maya, the Aztecs, and the Incas. *Illustration by XNR Productions. Reproduced by permission of the Gale Group.*

Agriculture and cities

Like the Olmec before them, the early Maya practiced the slash-and-burn method of clearing land, cutting down larger vegetation with stone tools and burning away underbrush. They grew a variety of crops: maize (corn), beans, squash, avocados, tomatoes, and chili peppers.

Agriculture made possible the creation of urban areas, which originated as ceremonial centers—that is, places for worship—but also became home to large populations. The oldest Mayan city dates back to about 2000 B.C., and later became the site of Mérida (MAY-ree-thah), established by the Spanish in 1542.

One of the most notable Mayan cities was Tikal (tee-KAHL) in northern Guatemala. Probably founded in the third century A.D., Tikal thrived from 600 to 900, and became home to some 50,000 people—huge by the standards of premodern America. The city included a school where scholars studied astronomy and other disciplines. Among the structures of

interest found at Tikal were agricultural earthworks and canals, fortifications against invasion, and—sixteen miles to the northwest—an impressive pyramid with four staircases.

The city of Uxmal (üz-MAHL) near Mérida, which flourished at the same time as Tikal, may have been a center for priestesses who led the people in fertility rites associated with the rain god Chac. Palenque (pah-LING-kay), where archaeologists in 1952 found the tomb of a Mayan ruler from the 600s, was said to be the most beautiful of Mayan ceremonial centers, as well as a center of scientific study that included a seven-story tower for astronomical observations.

The Mayan religion

Perhaps the greatest of the Mayan cities was Chichén Itzá (chee-CHEN eet-SAH), built around a number of *cenotes* (si-NO-tees), or deep natural water holes. Chichén Itzá had impressive pyramids, an advanced observatory, a school for the training of male and female priests, and a 545-foot long ceremonial ball court—the largest in the Americas. Each of these structures served a religious purpose.

The pyramids, huge flat-topped structures, were in many cases as impressive as their counterparts in ancient Egypt, and in some regards even more remarkable. Archaeologists have discovered that Mayan pyramids were designed so as to transmit voices perfectly from the summit to the plaza below. Atop other types of temple structures, Mayan builders attached roof combs, which made the building seem to touch the sky. These were perforated in such a way as to catch the wind, making eery sounds that the Maya equated with the voices of the gods. Typically a pyramid included long series of steps on each side, and on the days of religious festivals—with some 160 gods, there were plenty of these—priests would ascend the stairs in view of the populace below.

What the spectators witnessed was not always pretty: the Maya practiced human sacrifice, and often presented captured enemy warriors to appease the gods. The victim would be held down on an altar, and a priest would slit his chest under the rib cage and tear out the heart. The Maya also practiced ritual torture, and sometimes drowned victims in cenotes to plead with the rain god for water.

The Maya also used a ball game, which they called *pok-a-tok,* as a form of worship. Sharing aspects with the modern games of tennis, volleyball, and even basketball, the ball game had taken different forms and names at various places and times in Mesoamerica's history. In its Mayan incarnation, it involved a set of rings through which the ball had to pass. These rings were said to represent the movement of the planets through the heavens. Just as sports were inseparable from religion, so was astronomy—hence the religious significance of the observatory.

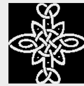
Science and mathematics

The Maya became extraordinary astronomers, carefully observing

the movements of the Sun, Moon, and stars, and predicting eclipses and the orbit of Venus. Like many other premodern peoples, they treated astrology with just as much seriousness as astronomy and performed detailed calculations regarding the birth date of a young man and young woman when it came time for matchmaking.

Along with their multitude of gods, the Maya appear to have worshiped time itself. They adapted the ancient calendar of the Olmec and another group, the Zapotec, who used both the 365-day cycle and a 260-day religious calendar. Once every fifty-two years, the first days of both would match up, and that was a day of celebration for the renewal of the Earth.

The Maya used mathematical notation and systems created by the Olmec, who used the number 20 as a base rather than 10 as in the decimal system. Independent of the mathematicians of India, they developed the number zero, and used it centuries before Europeans became aware of the concept.



Mayan Ideas of Beauty

The Maya had ideas about beauty that modern people would consider perplexing. Because they considered an elongated skull highly attractive, they practiced ritual skull deformation, binding the heads of infants between two boards. People who wanted to look truly spectacular, in the Mayan view, would file their teeth down to sharp points and inlay them with jade.

On the other hand, modern people who practice body-piercing might be surprised to learn that the idea is nothing new: the Maya pierced various parts of their bodies and attached ornaments to them. Also, priests sometimes bled themselves or pierced specific parts of the body—the penis included—in order to achieve higher spiritual consciousness.

The arts, writing, and fashion

Like science, art served a religious—not to mention a patriotic—purpose. Most examples of Mayan artwork can be found in the carvings that appeared in their temples. These showed scenes of leaders torturing and defeating their enemies, and priests and priestesses preparing for sacrificial bloodletting. Alongside these were hieroglyphic writings explaining the events depicted.

The Maya and other Mesoamerican civilizations were exceptional among New World peoples, few of whom possessed a written language. By contrast, the Maya even produced books, though most of these were later destroyed by Spanish priests intent on removing all record of the Mayan religion. Made of fig-tree bark, the books contained astronomical tables, calendars of planting days, and information about religious ceremonies and other aspects of Mayan life. There are also a few surviving works of history (laced with a great deal of myth) and even a play.

The end of the Maya

Mayan culture flourished during the era called the Classic period (c. 300–925), which saw the majority of their building projects; then the Maya went into rapid decline. Most likely an attack by the Toltecs in 950 was more a symptom than a cause of this decline. Other possibilities include an epidemic of some kind, or even discontent with the government. One of the most plausible suggestions is that slash-and-burn agriculture, which is highly detrimental to the soil, simply depleted the land.

Whatever the reasons, the Maya began to abandon their old homeland in the 900s and move northward into Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula. Invasion and subsequent domination by the Toltecs in about 1000 further sapped their strength, but by about 1200, the Maya had absorbed the less numerous Toltecs. Despite the fact that many of their splendid cities had disappeared into the jungle, not to be found until the 1700s, the Maya continued to survive as a civilization throughout the Post-Classic period (c. 1000–1540). They endured the onslaught of the Spanish conquerors, and today some 4 million Maya live in Mexico and surrounding areas.

The Aztecs

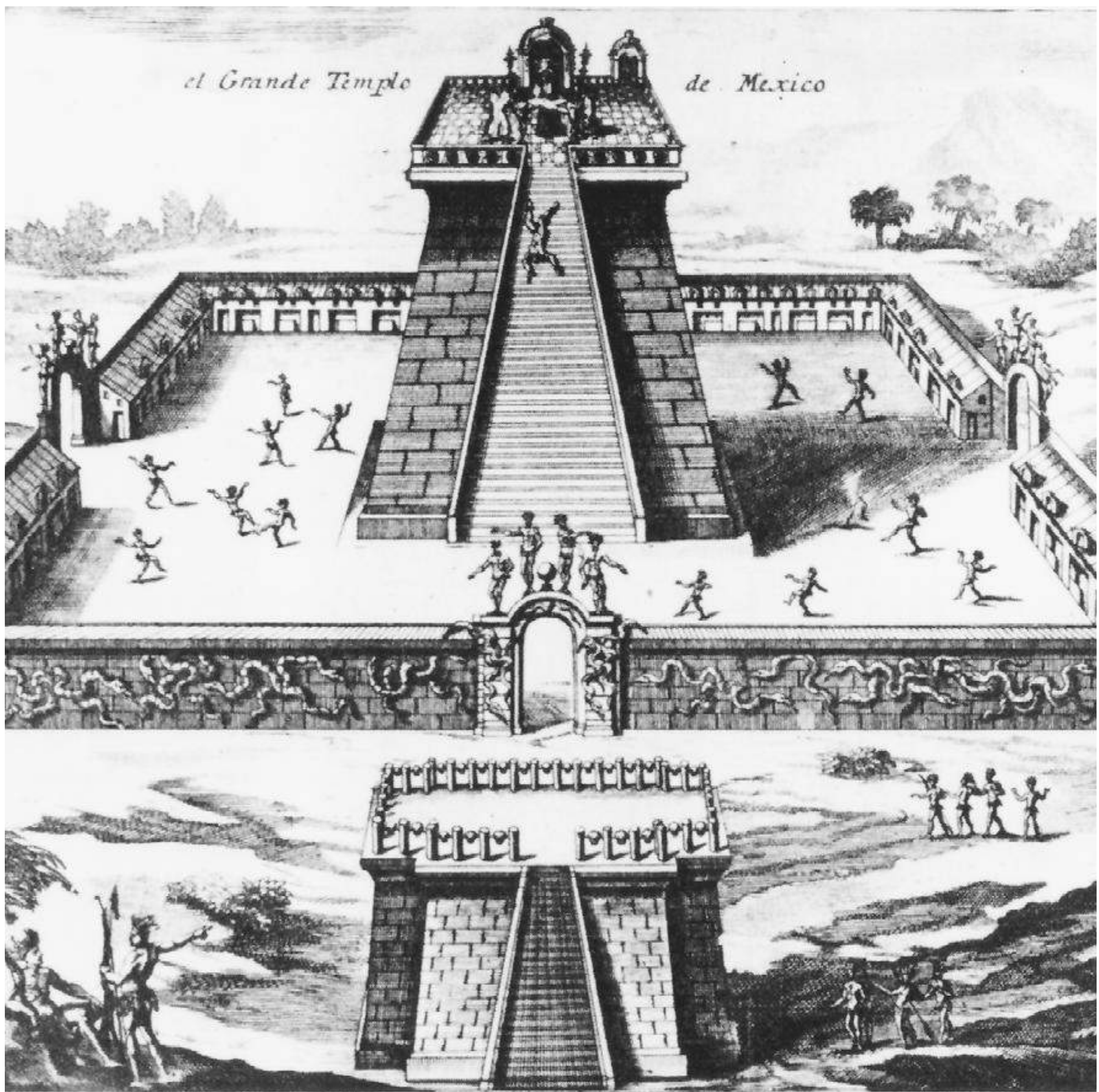
The Aztecs replaced the Maya as the dominant power in the region, but the warlike Toltecs, who began coming down from what is now northern Mexico in the period from about 600 to 800, helped bridge the gap. The Toltecs worshiped the god Quetzalcóatl (kwet-zuhl-KWAH-tuhl), a feathered serpent-god that would later be adopted by the Aztecs. From the destruction of Teotihuacán in about 900, the Toltecs controlled central Mexico, but after they moved into Mayan lands, their departure opened the way for other groups.

Among the new arrivals were the Aztecs, who came from a place they called Aztlan (AHZ't-lahn) to the northwest. They reached central Mexico in about 1250, and established the city that would become their capital, Tenochtitlán (tay-nawch-teet-LAHN), around 1325. According to legend, the gods had told them to settle in a place where they saw a cactus growing from a rock, and an eagle perched on the cactus eating a snake. The Aztec priests claimed to have seen just such a sight on a tiny island along the marshy western edge of Lake Texcoco (tays-KOH-koh).

Today it is easy to find both the place they picked and an image of the strange scene. The area around Tenochtitlán became Mexico City, Mexico's capital, and the scene itself appears on the Mexican flag. Even the name "Mexico" is an inheritance from the Aztecs, who also called themselves *Mexica.*

Tenochtitlán

The industrious Aztecs set about turning the marshes into a city so gorgeous that later Spanish conquerors would dub Tenochtitlán "the Venice of the New World." Like its Ital-



The temple at the Aztec capital city, Tenochtitlán. The Aztecs offered human sacrifices to their gods, sometimes eating the flesh of the sacrificed victim afterward. *Reproduced by permission of the New York Public Library Picture Collection.*

ian counterpart, Tenochtitlán was built on a number of islands, though in this case the islands—"floating gardens," or *chinampas*—were artificial. To create the chinampas, the Aztecs piled lake-bottom soil onto floating rafts made of interlaced twigs, then planted trees and bushes in the soil. Eventually, as the

roots of the plants kept growing deeper, they anchored the rafts in place, and what had been the surface of the lake became a meadow laced with canals.

Aside from their beauty, the canals served a purely practical purpose, aiding the transport of goods and people. The Aztecs also built causeways and bridges to connect the city to the mainland, and constructed aqueducts for bringing in fresh water. The city, designed to conform to precise astronomical principles, was well planned, with wide plazas and streets, as well as some twenty-five large, flat-topped pyramids regularly spaced throughout. The growth of the empire in later times made the Aztecs' capital an extraordinarily wealthy city, with tribute pouring in from subject territories in the form of gold, copper, rubber, chocolate, gemstones, jaguar skins, and jade.

Aztec religion and society

Chief among the Aztec gods was Huitzilopochtli (hwit-zil-oh-POHCH-t'lee), though they also worshiped a number of others, including Quetzalcóatl. In fact, the world's largest monument is a temple to Quetzalcóatl (see box, "The Quetzalcóatl Pyramid"). All of these deities required human sacrifice, which the Aztecs practiced with more frequency —and more cruelty—than any other Mesoamerican peoples.

Of course the accusation of cruelty would have meant nothing to the Aztecs; theirs was not a society that put a premium on mercy or kindness to the weak. It was common for an Aztec priest to cut the heart out of a living person. Nor were victims only drawn from enemy armies: Aztec warriors considered it an honor to be chosen as a sacrifice to the gods, and in one year alone, more than 20,000 people met their end on the altars of Huitzilopochtli. The Aztecs often ate the flesh of the sacrificed victim, and sometimes priests would flay (skin) a body and dance in the skin.

A prominent feature of Tenochtitlán was its skull racks, on which the priests displayed the skulls of sacrificed victims as a sign of the peoples' devotion to the gods. Like the Maya, the Aztecs used two calendars, and the first day of the fifty-third year, when the two came into alignment, required a special sacrifice called the New Fire Ceremony. After cutting out the victim's heart, the priest would build a fire in the open chest cavity to symbolize the continuance of life for the Aztec people.

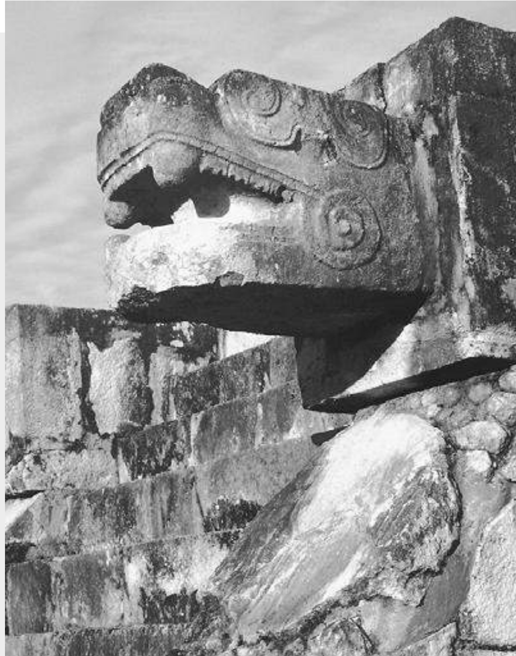
The Aztec Empire

When they first arrived in the Valley of Mexico, the Aztecs came under the dominance of Azcapotzalco (as-kuh-puht-SAL-koh), the leading city-state in the area. Eventually, however, they gathered support from other tribes and conquered the great city. Then in 1431 they formed a triple alliance with two other city-states, Texcoco and Tlatelóco (t'laht-eh-LOH-koh), and soon the three controlled the Valley of Mexico.

Quickly it became clear that the triple alliance was not a gathering of equals: the other two were mere city-

The Quetzalcóatl Pyramid

The world's largest pyramid is located not in Egypt, but some sixty-three miles southeast of Mexico City. Though the Great Pyramid of Egypt is three times as tall as the 177-foot Quetzalcóatl Pyramid, the latter is much larger. The pyramid's base covers nearly forty-five acres—that is, more than one-sixth of a square mile—making it the largest monument (as opposed to a functional structure such as an office building) in the world. Its total volume has been estimated at 4.3 million cubic yards, equivalent to a 200-story building as long and wide as a football field.



A close-up view of sculptures on the Quetzalcóatl Pyramid. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

states, whereas the Aztecs were empire-builders. Using the other two cities' help, they established dominance over the region, and the Aztec Empire eventually covered an area from central Mexico to the Guatemalan border.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given their religious practices, the Aztecs proved to be cruel rulers. Fear and resentment by the conquered peoples around them would later aid the Spaniards in rallying local support against the Aztecs.

The Aztecs' downfall

In 1507, the Aztecs celebrated a New Fire Ceremony, and afterward the emperor Montezuma II (ruled 1502–1520) began hearing strange omens from his priests. By 1519, when he had come to believe that Quetzalcóatl would soon return to Earth, he began hearing rumors of a strange, godlike figure roaming the jungles. This creature had strangely white skin and a beard, something hardly ever seen among the Aztecs. He carried amazing deadly weapons, including a stick that shot fire, and he rode a fantastic four-legged monster.

With his horse—a creature unknown before the arrival of the Europeans—and his gun, the Spanish

Montezuma and Hernán Cortés greet each other. Montezuma initially thought Cortés was a savior for the Aztecs, but in fact he was there to conquer and destroy them. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

conquistador Hernán Cortés (1485–1547) probably did seem like a creature from another world. Meanwhile Montezuma, believing Cortés must surely be the hoped-for savior, sent representatives bearing gold and other treasures, gifts that only excited the conquistador's greed for more. Their superior military technology and tactics—not to mention the surrounding peoples' resentment of the Aztecs—gave the Spaniards an enormous advantage. They conquered and destroyed the Aztecs in 1521.

The Incas

The term *Inca,* though used to describe an entire people, was actually the name for a line of fourteen rulers who controlled the vast Inca Empire before the arrival of the Spanish in 1533. Their native language was Quechua (KECH-oo-ah), still spoken by thousands of people in the Andean highlands of Peru, where the Inca had their origins.

Influenced by the ancient Chavín (shah-VEEN) culture, as well as that of the Huari (HWAH-ree), who

flourished between 300 and 750, the Incas emerged as a civilization in about 1100. Around that time, they moved into a nearby valley and established a capital named Cuzco (KOOZ-koh), meaning "navel of the world." Today Cuzco is the oldest continually inhabited city in the Americas.

Building an empire

Over the next three centuries the Incas, like the Aztecs, began to dominate and receive tribute from surrounding villages. But unlike the Aztecs, they were slow to build an empire—and when they did, it became much bigger than that of the Aztecs. Only in the mid-1400s, during the reign of Viracocha (veer-ah-KOH-kah), did they begin to expand, and then only to an area about twenty-five miles around Cuzco. Viracocha, named after the Incas' principal deity, had a son named Pachacutec (pah-cha-KOO-tek; ruled 1438–71), who lived up to the meaning of his own name: "he who transforms the Earth." Pachacutec and his son Topa built an empire that reached its peak during the reign of Topa's son Huayna Capac (WY-nuh KAH-pahk; ruled 1493–1525).

By then the Incas controlled an area equal to the U.S. Eastern Seaboard (the coastal states from Maine to Florida), and called their realm "Land of the Four Quarters"—in other words, the four directional points of the compass. Its population became as large as 16 million, an extraordinary statistic at a time when England had only about 5 million people. Controlling it all was one of the most efficient, well-organized governments anywhere in the world during medieval times. For this, Pachacutec—considered one of the greatest rulers of all time by some historians—deserves much of the credit.

Roads and other structures

Under the reign of this extraordinary empire-builder, the Incas constructed some 2,500 miles of stone roads, many of them across high mountain passes. These included way stations placed at intervals equal to a day's travel, so that the traveler could rest and obtain supplies. Trained runners, the Pony Express of their day, traversed the road system, keeping the emperor abreast of events throughout his empire. Like the roads built by the Romans, those of the Incas (along with many of their other structures) proved more enduring than those built by later peoples—in this case, the Spanish.

The stones on Inca roads and buildings were cut to fit together so precisely that mortar was not necessary. Inca cities were marvels of urban planning, with broad avenues intersected by smaller streets, all converging on an open central square. At Cuzco this center was occupied by the Temple of the Sun, and later archaeologists discovered an impressive fort near the city. Other feats of Inca engineering include the construction of aqueducts and irrigation canals, as well as rope suspension bridges. The latter, many of them more than 300 feet

An aerial view of Machu Picchu, the mysterious Inca city built high in the Andes. *Photograph by John M. Barth. Reproduced by permission of John M. Barth.*

long, spanned cliffs high above turbulent rivers; and many are still in use.

Machu Picchu (MAH-choo PEEK-choo), tucked high in the Andes, shows much about the Incas' skills as builders. Yet it raises far more questions than it answers. Accessible only by means of a dangerous climb up a 2,000-foot cliff, it had never been seen by a white man until the American explorer Hiram Bingham found it with the aid on a Peruvian guide in 1911. Given the difficulty in even reaching it, archaeologists are unsure how the Incas built Machu Picchu's massive stone structures. Even more perplexing is the purpose behind this isolated city in the clouds.

A sophisticated bureaucratic state

A central mystery of the Incas is their administrative system, which they managed to maintain in the face of extraordinary limitations. Not only did they, like other American peoples, lack the use of the wheel and iron tools, but unlike the Maya and Aztecs, they lacked even a system of writing.

It boggles the mind to imagine how they created a sophisticated bureaucratic state—a place where civil servants kept detailed records of population, food stores, supplies, and other information—under such limitations.

Yet they managed to do so, using the abacus for counting and the *quipu,* knotted strings of varying lengths and colors, for recording numerical information and keeping track of inventories. They also possessed something unknown to the peoples of Mesoamerica: a domesticated beast of burden in the form of the llama (YAH-muh), a relative of the camel that lives in the high Andes.

The rulers demanded a tribute of grain from each village. A portion of this they set aside in case of famine, at which time they would distribute it to the hungry. They also taxed the women for a certain amount of woven cloth, and the men for a certain amount of labor over a given period of time. This form of conscription, similar in concept to the military draft, permitted them to build roads and other structures throughout their empire.

The life of the Incas

Using foot plows, Inca farmers cultivated land and grew a number of crops, most notably potatoes and corn. (Just as the people of the New World had never seen horses, the Europeans had never tasted these foods and many others that were destined to become staple crops in Europe, Asia, and Africa.) In addition to the llama, which was too small to support the weight of adults but could carry lighter loads, they domesticated the alpaca, another relative of the camel that is prized for its wool. Other domesticated animals included dogs, guinea pigs, and ducks.

To identify themselves as members of the Inca Empire, the people sported bowler hats of a type still worn by the Indians of Peru and Bolivia. They lived in extended families, as indeed most people outside the West do today: instead of just a husband, wife, and children, households included aunts and uncles, cousins, grandparents, and other relatives. Nobles could have more than one wife, and beautiful and intelligent women were chosen from villages around the empire to go to Cuzco and become concubines for the nobility. Emperors might have concubines, but the empress was usually the emperor's sister, and their firstborn son became his successor.

Religion and science

The Incas worshiped a variety of gods, though Viracocha was supreme as creator and ruler of all living things. The Incas also practiced human sacrifice, though they were not nearly so enthusiastic about it as the Aztecs, and abandoned the method of tearing out a living heart.

Many things were regarded as sacred, or *huaca,* including mummies, temples and historical places, springs, certain stones, and mountain peaks. (Inca shrines and ceremonial sites have been found at elevations as high as 22,000 feet—more than four miles

Francisco Pizarro journeyed from Spain to the Inca lands, and in 1533, he led a force that toppled the Inca ruler and destroyed the empire. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

in the sky.) The priests practiced divination (DIV-i-nay-shun) to learn the will of the gods, but some of their efforts at curing peoples' ailments verged on genuine science and medicine.

In addition to dispensing herbal remedies, priests actually performed a type of surgery on people who suffered chronic headaches, cutting away part of the skull to relieve pressure on the brain. Sometimes, however, the purpose was less scientific in nature—in other words, releasing evil spirits believed to be the source of the headache. Perhaps most remarkable was the work of priestly "dentists," who replaced broken or decayed teeth with metal crowns similar to the ones used by modern dentists.

Fall of the empire

Though the Incas were much kinder rulers of subject peoples than the Aztecs, their end was much the same. Like Montezuma, the emperor Atahualpa (ah-tuh-HWAHL-puh; c. 1502–1533) believed that the conquering Spaniards were gods; and like Cortés, Francisco Pizarro (c. 1475–1541) came not to save them, but to rob them. Pizarro imprisoned Atahualpa and allowed him to rule his empire from prison for eight months, but this was only in order to gain ransom from the Incas.

Atahualpa ordered his people to fill a room of almost 375 square feet with treasures, whose value has been estimated at $25 million in today's money. Assembled by July 1533, the treasure included precious art objects, most of which were melted down and made into gold coins. Instead of keeping his word, however, Pizarro had Atahualpa killed, then marched on Cuzco and destroyed the empire.

As with the Maya, however, Inca culture survives today, carried on by millions of Indians in the Andean highlands. Peruvian schoolchildren are still taught to recite the names of the fourteen Inca rulers, and the memory of this great American empire remains alive.

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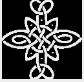
Africa

18

The African continent is divided by one of the most impenetrable natural boundaries in the world: the Sahara Desert. Covering an area larger than the continental United States, this greatest of all deserts ensured that northern Africa—Egypt and the Mediterranean coast—would develop along dramatically different lines than the southern part. Aside from Egypt itself, the two principal African civilizations of ancient times formed on the Red Sea coast, below Egypt and east of the Sahara. Southward lay various lands controlled by the Bantu peoples, tribal groups who would later develop a number of civilizations.

Ethiopia

The name "Ethiopia" comes from a Greek expression meaning "burned skin" and suggesting a dark complexion. Ancient peoples used the term to describe the entire region south of Egypt, but in fact these were two distinct civilizations there: Kush, or Nubia, and Aksum. Founded along the southern Nile River, where the nation of Sudan is today, Kush



Words to Know: Africa

Arid: Dry.

Inflation: An economic situation in which an oversupply of money causes a drop in the value of currency.

Lingua franca: A common language.

Matrilineal: Through the mother's line rather than the father's.

Patron: A supporter, particularly of arts, education, or sciences. The term is often used to refer to a ruler or wealthy person who provides economic as well as personal support.

Racism: The belief that race is the primary factor determining peoples' abilities, and that one race is superior to another.

controlled Egypt for a time (712–667 B.C.) and developed its own form of writing. To the east was Aksum, based in the Red Sea port of Adulis (ah-DOO-lis), in modern-day Eritrea.

Aksum began evolving into a larger Ethiopian state when its King Ezana (AY-zah-nah; ruled A.D. 325–360) subdued Kush in 325. Around this time, a young Syrian missionary converted Ezana to Christianity, which became the religion of Ethiopia from that time forward. Meanwhile, across the Red Sea in an area known as the "incense states," a lush region known for its spices, the Himyarite kingdom of Yemen had made Judaism its religion. Eager to gain control of the "incense states," Ethiopia formed an alliance with Byzantium against the Sassanid Persians and their allies in Yemen. Between the 300s and 500s, Ethiopia gradually assumed control over the "incense states," though much of the area later fell under Persian authority.

Isolated by Islam

In the 600s, the spread of Islam wiped the Sassanids off the map, but this was no cause for rejoicing in Ethiopia. The Muslims dealt a severe blow to Ethiopia's Byzantine allies when they took control over most of the Middle East. Many Greek manuscripts were destroyed during this time, and some only survived through Ethiopian translations. Meanwhile, Muslim power ended Ethiopians' dominance over Red Sea trade and cut Ethiopia off from the rest of the Christian world.

Gradually the nation's focus shifted away from the Red Sea and toward the Nubian interior. In the centuries that followed, large Muslim populations formed along the Red Sea coast and in southern Ethiopia, and Jewish communities appeared in other areas of the country. Yet Christianity remained dominant, and a line of kings who claimed descent from the biblical King Solomon and Queen of Sheba maintained control. Christians in southern Muslim lands such as Egypt looked to Ethiopia for leadership, and this in turn may have influenced Europeans' association of the country with the Prester John legend (see box, "Prester John").

A map of Africa showing the locations of the African kingdoms in 1400 and in 1500. *Illustration by XNR Productions. Reproduced by permission of the Gale Group.*

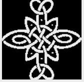
Contacts with Europe

During the latter part of the Crusades, leaders in Ethiopia and Europe entertained the idea of an alliance against the Muslims. In 1317, a Dominican monk called for a joint crusade, with Ethiopia blocking the Red Sea while the Europeans attacked the Holy Land. Though the Muslim world feared such a two-pronged attack, nothing ever came of it.

European interest in Ethiopia remained strong during the 1400s, as the Portuguese tried to establish trade links and gain an edge over Venice in the spice trade. This period also saw exchanges of missionaries between Europe and Ethiopia, and in fact Ethiopian monks attended the Council of Florence in 1441. As an outgrowth of this visit, the papacy set up a house for Ethiopian pilgrims behind St. Peter's. Later Ethiopian visitors to Rome helped increase Europeans' interest in, and knowledge of, their exotic Christian homeland.

The Sudan

Though in modern times there is a nation called Sudan, geographers



Prester John

During the Middle Ages, people all over Europe came to believe in the existence of Prester John, or John the Priest, a Christian king in a faraway land who they believed would come to their aid against the Muslims. This legend first took form in the writings of Otto of Freising (FRY-sing; c. 1111–1158), a German bishop and historian, who claimed that Prester John was a descendant of the Magi (MAY-zhy), the wise men who had attended the birth of Jesus. According to Otto, Prester John's armies had conquered the Persians and forced the Muslims to submit to Christianity.

In 1165, a letter supposedly written by Prester John to several European monarchs turned up in Europe. His land, the letter-writer claimed, was a perfect society in which everyone was wealthy, a place where peace and contentment prevailed. Some Europeans believed that this land must be Ethiopia, known to have a Christian king; therefore in 1177, Pope Alexander III sent a letter to Ethiopia's king, asking for his aid against Muslim enemies. The messenger never returned.

Europeans also identified the homeland of Prester John with India, and the king himself with the Mongols. The myth persisted into the 1500s and 1600s, spurring on the voyages of European explorers eager to find the mythical Christian kingdom.

use the term "the Sudan" to describe a region of some two million square miles south of the Sahara. About the size of the United States west of the Mississippi River, the Sudan runs from the Atlantic coast in the west almost to the Red Sea coast in the east. Its climate is arid, or dry, and farming is difficult, but during the Middle Ages the region became home to a number of wealthy empires.

Ghana

The first of these was Ghana (GAH-nuh), a kingdom that came into existence during the 400s in what is now southern Mauritania. Despite the climate, its people were originally farmers, but over time Ghana's wealth came from a number of sources. One of these was conquest: by the 1000s Ghana had an army of some 200,000 men. A principal source of Ghana's wealth was gold, so plentiful that the king's advisors carried swords made of it. His horses bore blankets of spun gold, and even the royal dogs had gold collars. The king, whose people considered him divine, held absolute control over the gold supply, and further increased his wealth by taxing trade caravans that passed through the area.

Ghana's capital was Kumbi-Saleh, formed from two towns about six miles apart. One town became a local center for Islam, which merchants brought with them from across the desert, and eventually it had twelve mosques. This created an unusual religious situation: officially the king still consulted the wisdom of his traditional priests, but in private he held council with Muslim lawyers and theologians.

The other town remained a stronghold of the native religion, and there Islamic practices were not permitted in public because they might challenge the spiritual authority of the king. Perhaps the influence of Islam helped make Ghana vulnerable to attack by the Almoravids from Morocco, who arrived in 1080. The people of Ghana did not unite to resist the conquerors, and their kingdom came to an end.

Mali

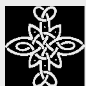
Many nations created in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries share names with regions from premodern times, but in many cases the borders are not the same. Such is the case with Mali (MAH-lee), a kingdom that included nations to the southwest of modern-day Mali, along with a corner of the present nation.

Mali formed as an Islamic kingdom in the 1000s, but took shape as an empire under the leadership of Sundiata Keita (sun-JAH-tah; died 1255), who established his power through a series of conquests that began in about 1235. He greatly broadened the realm controlled by Mali and established a new capital at Niana. By the 1300s, his dynasty ruled some 40 million people—a population two-fifths the size of Europe at the time—in a region from the upper Niger River (NY-jur) to the Atlantic Ocean.

Mansa Musa (ruled 1307–c. 1332) reigned at the height of Mali's power, and became the first African ruler to become widely known throughout Europe and the Middle East. His fame resulted in part from a pilgrimage to Mecca, on which he was attended by thousands of advisors and servants dressed in splendid garments, riding animals adorned with gold ornaments. Along the way, he gave his hosts generous gifts, and in Egypt spent so much gold that he caused massive inflation in the country's economy.

But Mansa Musa was far more than just a showman: an effective administrator who ruled a highly organized state, he was also a patron of the arts and education. He brought Muslim scholars and architects to Mali, where they built mosques, promoted learning, and assisted his advisors in ruling the vast realm.

As with many other great rulers, however, Mansa Musa's power resided mostly in his strong personality and talents; therefore his successors found the vast empire difficult to govern. They were plagued by the breakdown of administrative systems and by the competition of rising states on their borders. One of these was Song-



The Glory of Timbuktu

Today the name of "Timbuktu" is a synonym for a faraway, almost mythical place, and in modern times the city of some 30,000 inhabitants—now known as Tombouctou (tohn-buk-TOO) in Mali—is certainly well off the beaten path. But under the Mali and Songhai empires, it was one of the most extraordinary cultural centers of premodern Africa, and indeed of the world.

Starting in the 1400s, Europeans became fascinated by tales of a great city on the edge of the desert, which housed both wealthy merchants and scholars wealthy in knowledge. In 1470, an Italian journeyer became one of the first Europeans to visit, and more information surfaced with the publication of a book called *Description of Africa* in 1550.

Written by Leo Africanus (c. 1485–c.1554), an Arab captured and brought to Rome, the book remained for many centuries Europeans' principal source of knowledge regarding the Sudan. Leo reported that, of the many products sold in the rich markets of Timbuktu, none was more prized and profitable than books—a fact that says a great deal about the rich intellectual life there.

Unfortunately, a series of wars and invasions by neighboring peoples during the early modern era robbed Timbuktu of its glory. In 1828, a French explorer went to find the legendary Timbuktu, and in its place he found a "mass of ill-looking houses built of earth."

hai (SAWNG-hy), which Mansa Musa had conquered; in the mid-1400s, as his dynasty fell into decline, Songhai won its independence.

Songhai

Established by Muslims in about 1000 on the bend of the Niger, at a spot in the center of present-day Mali, Songhai would eventually extend along much of the river's length and far inland. For a long time it had existed under the shadow of Mali, but it came into its own under Sonni Ali (SAW-nee; ruled c. 1464–92), a brilliant military strategist and empire-builder who in 1468 captured the city of Timbuktu. One of Mali's greatest cultural centers, Timbuktu was destined to reach its peak under Songhai rule (see box, "The Glory of Timbuktu").

Sonni Ali conquered many more cities, ending Mali dominance and replacing it with his military dictatorship. His successor, Mohammed I Askia (as-KEE-uh; ruled 1493–1528), set about reorganizing the entire empire, creating a central administration controlled from the capital in Gao (GOW). He developed a professional army and

even a navy of sorts—a fleet of canoes that regularly patrolled the Niger.

Mohammed also reformed the tax system, established a set of weights and measures, and reformed judicial procedures. Over the course of his reign, he made the Songhai Empire one of the most respected nations in the Islamic world. In 1528, however, his son Musa overthrew him and exiled him to an island. Nine years later, another son brought him back to Gao, where he died in 1538. His tomb is one of the most revered mosques in West Africa.

As with Mali, the death of a strong ruler brought on disorder; and as with Ghana, the conquerors came from Morocco. They arrived in 1590, and this time they had firearms, giving them an overwhelming advantage. Songhai fell in 1591.

Kanem-Bornu and the Hausa city-states

Far to the east of the area where Ghana, Mali, and Songhai had thrived was an area called Bornu, a vast plain in what is now northeastern Nigeria. With the downfall of the earlier states, trade routes—dependent as they were on strong kingdoms to provide them protection—began shifting toward the central Sudan, which was dominated by two centers of power. To the east was Kanem-Bornu (kah-NEM), a state that first developed in about 800, and to the west a group of city-states controlled by the Hausa (HOW-suh) people.

Both Kanem-Bornu and the Hausa lands had a matrilineal (mat-ri-LIN-ee-ul) system, meaning that inheritance was passed down through the mother's line rather than the father's. This gave women an exceptionally high social status, and they were even allowed to hold positions in regional and national government. The adoption of Islam in the 1000s and afterward ended this arrangement.

The Hausa states never formed a unified political entity, which made them vulnerable to attack by neighboring states and ultimately led to their downfall. Kanem-Bornu, on the other hand, did form an empire, which reached the height of its power in the late 1500s. By then, however, the Sudan was not the only location of trade routes across the African continent: the interest of European and Arab traders had shifted to the southwest and the south.

Bantu kingdoms and cities

Starting in about 1200 B.C., the Bantu peoples began migrating from the region of modern-day Nigeria, spreading westward and southward. The Bantu constituted a loose collection of tribes and nations united by language. In each of the Bantu tongues, of which there were eventually sixteen, the word for "people" is the same: *bantu*.

Though Westerners are accustomed to speaking of "Africa" as though it were one country, in fact modern Africa consists of more than

The Great Enclosure in the modern nation of Zimbabwe; these ruins were originally the royal palace. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

fifty official nations—and hundreds upon hundreds of national groups with their own language and way of life. In such an ethnically splintered environment, the average African language has only a half-million speakers. By contrast, Swahili (swah-HEEL-ee), the most well known of the Bantu languages, is today spoken by 49 million people in Kenya, Tanzania, the Congo, and Uganda.

Swahili is the lingua franca of southern Africa, a common language much as Arabic became in the Middle East and as Latin was among educated Europeans of the Middle Ages. No doubt Swahili's broad base has its roots in medieval times, specifically in a group of east African city-states with trade contacts as far away as China.

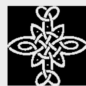
Coastal city-states

The east African coast had been a center of trade since ancient times, and during the 1100s a wave of Arab and Persian merchants arrived. Over the period from 1200 to 1500, when trade there was at its height, the native peoples and the Muslims together established some thirty-seven

city-states in what is now Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique. Most notable among these were Malindi, Mombasa, Kilwa, and later, Zanzibar.

Typically, city-states lay on islands just off the coast, a situation that protected them from land invasion. Indeed, the mainland represented a different world: in the interior were tribal peoples with little exposure to the outside, whereas the offshore islands became thriving centers of international trade. Kilwa was the major port for gold, which went through Egypt to Europe, and iron ore from Malindi supplied the furnaces of India.

The coastal city-states also served as ports of call for Admiral Cheng Ho's expeditions from China. A Ming dynasty scroll commemorates a most unusual event: the arrival of a giraffe from Malindi at the Chinese emperor's court in 1415. After about 1500, however, merchant activity in East Africa began to die out, primarily because of the Europeans' rising dominance of sea trade.



The Zanj

Though Europeans and their descendants in America are most identified with the slave trade, in fact slavery existed in Africa for centuries before the first Europeans arrived in the 1400s. Not only did Africans buy and sell members of other tribes, but Arab and Persian merchants were enthusiastic slave-traders.

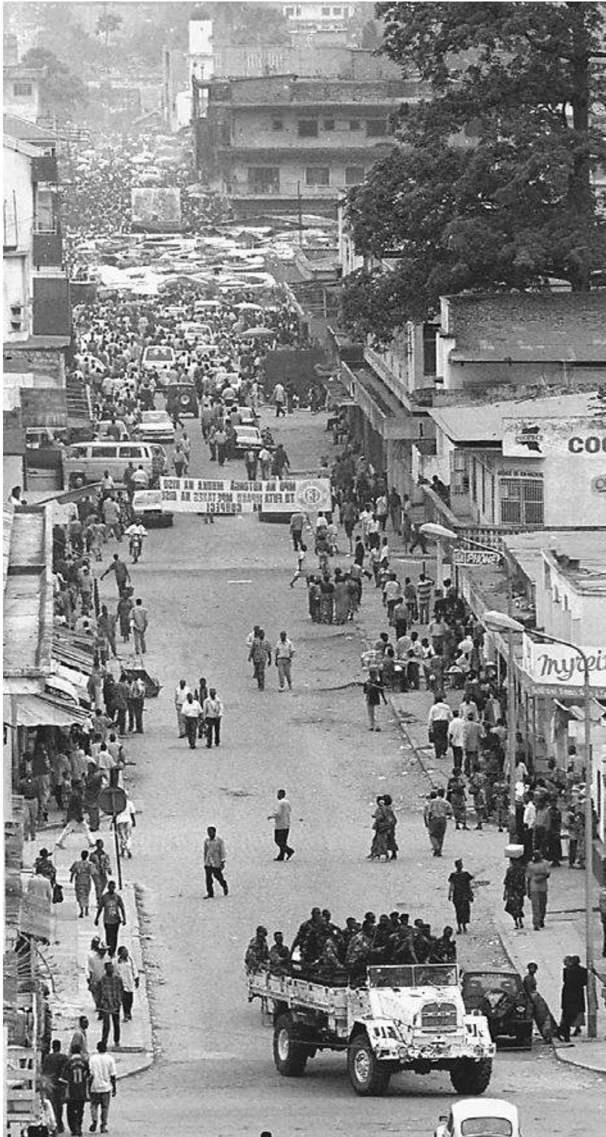
The first Mideastern reference to sub-Saharan Africans, whom the Muslims called Zanj (ZAHNJ), occurred in about 680. These writings prove that racism is nothing new: frequently Islamic writers described the Zanj as their social inferiors, a lazy and dishonest people, and they often commented negatively on the black skin of the Zanj. Yet the Muslims also believed that the Zanj possessed magical powers.

Because the Africans on the continent's east coast admired the Arabs, this made them easy targets for capture. Many of the Zanj were brought to serve as slaves in the Abbasid caliphate, and in 868 a revolt broke out among them. For nearly fifteen years, the rebels controlled much of southern Iraq, but by 883 the Muslim government had suppressed the revolt.

Zimbabwe and Mutapa

In the early 1500s the Portuguese began penetrating East Africa's interior, laying the foundations of the colony called Mozambique (moh-zum-BEEK), which they would retain until 1975. In so doing, they established control over a kingdom called Mutapa, which ruled the entire southern half of Mozambique between the Zambezi (zam-BEE-zee) and Limpopo rivers. As it turned out, the eastern kingdom of Mutapa was an extension of an even older realm controlled from Zimbabwe (zim-BAHB-way).

The latter reached its peak between 1250 and 1450, when it thrived on a flourishing gold trade. Its ruins



Kinshasa, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, became a battleground in the late twentieth century as civil war gripped the nation. *Reproduced by permission of AP/Wide World Photos.*

lie in the southeastern corner of the modern nation called Zimbabwe, though in fact there are two sets of ruins: Great Zimbabwe, older and larger, and Little Zimbabwe some eight miles distant. The most impressive set of stone buildings in premodern southern Africa, Great Zimbabwe extended over more than sixty acres, and included a palace capable of housing a thousand servants. Its circular temple complex, modeled on a tribal chief's enclosure, had walls ten feet thick and twenty feet high, comprising some 15,000 tons of cut stone—all laid without use of mortar.

Though the people of Zimbabwe left behind no written records and the city had long been abandoned when the Portuguese arrived, the royal court of Mutapa in the east provided visitors with an idea of Zimbabwe's glory. The king was attended by a royal pharmacist, a head musician, young pages who had been sent as hostages from subject peoples, and many other aides—including a council of ministers composed primarily of women. Apparently at some earlier stage in Mutapa, women had been in control. There was even a female military contingent, which played a decisive role in the choosing of kings.

Kongo

Far to the northwest of Zimbabwe, along the mouth of the Congo River near the Atlantic coast, was the kingdom of Kongo. The area is today part of Angola, which like Mozambique became a Portuguese colony that only received its independence in 1975. Today, to the north and east, in areas also controlled by Kongo at dif-

ferent times, are the Republic of the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire).

Established in the 1300s by a prince from the north, Kongo spread over a large area in the years that followed. By the time the Portuguese arrived in the 1400s, the nation had developed an extensive bureaucracy. Its economy depended on trade between the coast and the interior, and copper and cloth served as its currency. Perhaps its greatest king was Afonso I (ruled c. 1506–c. 1550), who in 1512 signed a treaty with the king of Portugal. Kongo continued to flourish into the 1600s.

Benin and the Yoruba

As with many another African nation, the modern state of Benin (bay-NEEN) shares a name with an empire of medieval times, but it is not the same country. What is today southern Nigeria was once Benin, which established one of the most highly organized states of West Africa in the two centuries preceding the arrival of the Portuguese in 1485. As with most other African kingdoms, Benin built its wealth on trade, in this case between the Atlantic coast and the Sudan.

The people of Benin were not the only ones who profited from the trade routes between the ocean and the desert. To the west, in what is now Burkina Faso, the Mossi and Yoruba peoples (who later formed a state called Oyo) settled along the upper headwaters of the Volta River. This placed them in close proximity with Mali and Songhai, but the peoples of the Volta were worlds apart from their neighbors to the north. In contrast to the Muslim kingdoms of the Sudan, which maintained strong links with the outside world, the peoples of the coast retained their traditional African religion and way of life.

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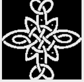
The Late Middle Ages

19

The period known as the Late Middle Ages (1300–1500) can also be considered the beginning of the Renaissance, which had its roots in the changes that began to gather speed during those two centuries. Yet there was plenty about this time that was truly medieval, and whereas some events pointed to the future, other occurrences signaled the end of an era. Among these were the upheaval created by the Black Death and Hundred Years' War, and the decline of the two institutions that had long dominated European life: feudalism and the papacy.

Pestilence and war

In 1300, Europe had about 100 million people; then a series of calamities struck. First Germany and other northern countries experienced crop failures from 1315 to 1317, and these resulted in widespread starvation and death. Then, in 1347, Europe was hit by one of the worst disasters in human history, an epidemic called the Black Death. Sometimes called simply "the Plague," the Black Death killed between twenty-



Words to Know: The Late Middle Ages

Dauphin: The crown prince in prerevolutionary France.

Flagellants: Religious enthusiasts of the Middle Ages who beat themselves with lashes as a way of doing penance.

Joust: Personal combat, particularly on horseback and involving a lance.

Mercenary: A professional soldier who will fight for anyone who pays him.

Nationalism: A sense of loyalty and devotion to one's nation.

Perspective: An artistic technique of representing faraway objects so that they appear smaller than objects close by.

Pogrom: An organized massacre of unarmed people, in particular groups of Jews.

Tournament: A contest in which knights fought, usually with blunted lances, for a prize or a favor given by a lady.

five and forty-five percent of the European population.

The Black Death (1347–51)

The outbreak began in Asia. Thanks to the Mongols' conquests, which had made travel between East and West safer and easier than ever before, it quickly made its way to the Black Sea shore, where it erupted in September 1346. Likewise the opening of trade that had followed the Crusades aided its spread, as Italian merchants unknowingly brought the disease home in their ships. The first outbreak in Western Europe occurred in October 1347, in the city of Messina at the northeastern corner of Sicily. From there it was an easy jump to the Italian mainland, and by the following April all of Italy was infected. Meanwhile, it had reached Paris in January 1348, and within a year, 800 people a day were dying in that city alone. Quickly it penetrated the entire European continent and beyond, from Palestine to Greenland.

The only merciful thing about the Black Death was its quickness. Victims typically died within four days—a hundred hours of agony. If they caught a strain of bubonic (byoo-BAHN-ik) plague, their lymph glands swelled; or if it was pneumonic (nyoo-MAHN-ik) plague, the lungs succumbed first. Either way, as the end approached, the victim turned purplish-black from respiratory failure; hence the name. The ironic thing was that the force at the center of all this devastation was too small to see with the naked eye: a bacteria that lived on fleas, who in turn fed on rats.

The people of the time had no idea of this scientific explanation for the Plague and instead looked for spiritual causes and cures. Some believed that the world was coming to an end, and some joined sects such as the flagellants (FLAJ-uh-luntz), religious enthusiasts who wandered the countryside, beating themselves with whips as a way of doing penance.

The flagellants were closely tied with a rising anti-Semitic trend. Searching for someone to blame, Europeans found a convenient scapegoat in the Jews, who they claimed had started the Plague by poisoning the wells of Europe. This absurd explanation provided justification for many a pogrom (poh-GRAHM), or organized massacre.

Peasant uprisings of the late 1300s

By the end of 1351, the Plague had run its course, but it left behind a population change equivalent to that which would occur in the modern United States if everyone in the six most populous states—California, New York, Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Illinois—died over a four-year period. Not until 1500, about 150 years after the Black Death, would the European population return to the levels of 1300. All over the continent, farms were empty and villages abandoned, leading to scarcity and higher prices—conditions that sparked a number of peasant revolts.

First came the French Jacquerie (zhah-keh-RHEE) in the spring of 1358. The latter took its name from Jacques Bonhomme (ZHAHK bun-AWM), a traditional nickname for a peasant meaning "John the Good Man," and the rebels collectively called themselves Jacques. In the space of a few weeks, the Jacques gathered support from a range of discontented persons, including even minor royal officials. Their targets were the wealthy

People gather around the bed of a victim dying from the Black Death. The Plague, which struck in the mid-1300s, reduced the population of Europe by at least one quarter. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

Wat Tyler, leader of a peasants' revolt in England in 1381, is dragged to his death. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

and powerful, and in their furious onslaught, which consumed much of the region around Paris, they did not spare even the children of their enemies. Then, just as suddenly as it began, the Jacquerie was brutally suppressed by the French royalty and nobility, who ordered wholesale executions of peasants—many of whom had not even participated in the revolt.

Across the English Channel in 1381, revolts against royal taxation broke out in several English counties, including Essex, Kent, and several others. The most well known of the rebel leaders was Wat Tyler from Kent, who captured the sheriff there and destroyed property records. The Essex force did much the same, then joined the faction from Kent and marched on London to meet with fourteen-year-old Richard II (ruled 1377–99).

Though Richard agreed to meet with the rebels against his advisors' counsel, the government's failure to keep the promises he made them only further enraged the peasants. The rebels destroyed a home belonging to John of Gaunt (1340–1399), Richard's uncle, and killed several of John's ad-

visors. The violence associated with the English revolt, however, did not equal that of the Jacquerie.

One hundred fifty years of war (1337–1485)

The Black Death and peasant uprisings occurred against the backdrop of the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453), which actually lasted 116 years, making it by far the longest armed conflict in history. Fought between France and England, the "war" was really a series of wars broken by long periods of truce, and the combined duration of all major battles was less than a month. The real devastation of the war came from the long sieges against towns, as well as periodic raids during times of official ceasefire. In both cases, it was France that sustained the injury.

The first phase of the war saw a series of English victories, most notably at Poitiers (pwah-tee-AY) in 1356. The hero of the latter was Edward the Black Prince (1330–1376) of England, whose military leadership gave England power over northern France. Discontent over Poitiers in turn spawned the Jacquerie, but by 1360 the war had entered a second phase, when little happened except for occasional French raids against the English.

Then after more than fifty years, the English returned to the offensive under Henry V (ruled 1413–22), who led them to victory at Agincourt (AH-zhin-kohr) in 1415. Henry, whose deeds would later be celebrated in several plays by William Shakespeare (1564–1616), solidified his power by marrying Catherine of Valois (val-WAH), daughter of the French king, in 1420.

English victory appeared certain, yet the French were about to unleash a secret weapon. This was a teenaged girl named Joan, just three years old at the time of Agincourt, who at the age of twelve believed she had heard the voice of God telling her to follow the path of holiness. When she was sixteen, this voice commanded her to come to the aid of the crown prince or *dauphin* (doh-FAN), Charles VII (ruled 1422–61), and so Joan of Arc (1412–1431) embarked on one of history's shortest and most brilliant careers. Once she had the dauphin's attention, she laid out a plan to force an English withdrawal from the French city of Orléans (ohr-lay-AWn). Clad in the armor of a boy, she and the tiny army Charles gave her broke the English siege on May 8, 1429, turning the tide of the war.

A year later, in May 1430, Joan was captured by a force from Burgundy, which had temporarily sided with England, and was sold to the English six months later. The English did not simply execute her, but sought to destroy French morale by trying her for heresy. A highly biased court composed of pro-English French priests found her guilty of witchcraft and burned her at the stake. Yet the French initiative in the war did not die with Joan, and France enjoyed victory under Charles. By 1453, the English had lost all their gains in France, and they returned to England in dejection.

More war awaited them in England as the houses of York and Lancaster launched the Wars of the Roses (1455–85), so named because of the flowers that symbolized the competing dynasties. The Lancaster line emerged victorious when Henry VII assumed the throne. Henry's son Henry VIII (ruled 1509–1547) would become one of England's greatest kings, and would father its greatest queen, Elizabeth I (ruled 1558–1603).

Wars and warlords in Italy

The Black Death hit Italy particularly hard, and much of the country remained in a state of anarchy through the 1400s. This led to the rise of mercenary military commanders, warlords, and a new class of ruthless local leadership. In Rome, Cola di Rienzo (RYENT-soh; 1313–1354) led a revolt in 1347, whereby he attempted to restore the glories of ancient Rome; but instead he simply provoked the Roman people and the papacy to anger with his reckless policies.

Much more successful were the Medici (MED-uh-chee), a family of bankers who controlled Florence from 1421 to 1737. The most famous member of the family was Lorenzo di Medici (1449–1492), sometimes known as "Lorenzo the Magnificent." As a ruler he could be a tyrant, but he also became a highly influential patron of the arts who assisted greatly in ushering in the Renaissance.

Whatever Lorenzo's sins, they paled in comparison to those of the Borgia (BOR-zhuh) family, who had their origins in Spain but came to power in Rome. Two of them became popes, Calixtus III and Alexander VI (ruled 1492–1503), and the latter fathered a number of children, the most notorious being the cruel Cesare (CHAY-zur-ay, c. 1476–1507) and his lustful sister Lucrezia (loo-KREET-zee-uh; 1480–1519).

The destruction of Byzantium

One of the most significant events in the history of Eastern Europe was the Battle of Kosovo Field, on June 28, 1389. Byzantium, well on its way to final ruin, had long before recognized Serbia as an independent nation, and at Kosovo the Serbs led a failed effort to protect Orthodox lands from invasion by the Ottoman Turks. As a result, Serbia and Bulgaria fell to the Turks, leaving a permanent Muslim influence on the Balkan Peninsula.

Half a century later, in 1448, Turkish forces defeated a Hungarian army under János Hunyadi (YAH-nos HOON-yahd-ee; c. 1407–1456), again at Kosovo Field. By the early 1500s, the Ottomans had gained control over much of Hungary, and like the Mongols before them, threatened Austria.

By then, the Turks had absorbed what remained of the Byzantine Empire. On the last night of Byzantium's history, May 28–29, 1453—just before troops under Mehmed the Conqueror entered Constantinople—Orthodox priests held the last Christian services in the Hagia Sophia. Four days later, the church reopened, but now it was a mosque, as it is today.

The Iberian Peninsula

Following the Islamic conquest of Spain in 711, the history of the Iberian Peninsula followed a course separate from that of Europe as a whole. At that point there was no such thing as "Spain," except as a geographical designation: there were the Moorish emirates in the south and the Christian region of Asturias in the north.

Gradually a number of power centers evolved in Asturias, and over time these developed into separate kingdoms. Portugal had been calling itself a separate country in the 800s, and under the reign of Afonso I (ruled 1128–85), this became a reality. Christian Spain remained a collection of various principalities, but as the leaders of various states began reconquering lands from the Muslims, a distinctive Spanish Catholic culture began to unite the country.

The destruction of Muslim power in Spain was called the Reconquista (ray-kawn-KEES-tah), and its most famous leader was the warrior Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar (c. 1043–1099), better known as El Cid. As the Reconquista gained force, two kingdoms emerged to dominate the rest of Spain: Aragon and Castile (kas-TEEL), so named because of its many castles. In 1469, by which time the Christians had conquered all of Spain except for Granada in the southeast, Ferdinand II of Aragon married Isabella I of Castile, thus uniting the country.

Spain's few remaining Muslims, along with Jews, became early victims of the Spanish Inquisition. The latter, launched in 1478, was Spain's separate—and much more cruel—version of the Catholic Inquisition. Many people were imprisoned, tortured, or killed under the Spanish Inquisition, which officially ended only in 1834.

In 1492, the same year they conquered Granada, Ferdinand and Isabella expelled all Jews from Spain. Of course the most famous event of 1492 was the discovery of the New World by Christopher Columbus, sent by Ferdinand and Isabella to find a westward sea route to China. Meanwhile Portuguese sailors had greatly extended the influence of their own kingdom, and over the next century, exploration and conquest would make Spain and Portugal world powers.

Greece soon became part of the Ottoman Empire, and would not win its independence until the early 1800s. Meanwhile a new nation was born, one that proclaimed itself the "Third Rome"—in other words, the third Roman Empire after Rome itself and Byzantium. That new nation was Russia. The imperial transformation of Muscovy began when Ivan III (the Great; 1440–1505) began conquering city-states, starting with Novgorod in

1471 to 1478. In 1472, he married Sophia, or Zoë, niece of the last Byzantine emperor, thus establishing his claims as preserver of Orthodox Christianity. At that time, he also added the two-headed eagle, long a symbol of Byzantium, to Muscovy's coat of arms.

In 1480, Ivan established Russian independence by cutting off all tribute to the Tatar-Mongol overlords, who had never recovered from Tamerlane's attacks almost a century before. His grandson Ivan IV (1530–1584), better known as Ivan the Terrible, in 1547 took the old Slavic form of "caesar," and was crowned czar. As his name suggests, Ivan was a cruel emperor, establishing a pattern for most Russian rulers through the twentieth century.

The people and the powers

The Crusades and the Mongol conquests had greatly increased contact between Europe and the rest of the world, and in about 1300, the continent began to experience a sudden explosion of curiosity and creativity. This in turn would spawn the Renaissance in the arts and literature; the Reformation in religion; and the Age of Discovery in exploration and science.

Symbolic of old and new, respectively, were the Scholastic philosophers John Duns Scotus (c. 1266–1308) and William of Ockham (AH-kum; c. 1285–c. 1349). The latter is most famous for "Ockham's razor," which holds that "entities must not be unnecessarily multiplied"—in other words, one should always seek the most simple, logical, and straightforward explanation for something, avoiding conclusions not warranted by the known facts. Ockham's razor was a hallmark of the emerging revolution in science and thought, and it represented the complete opposite of medieval beliefs.

Ockham also supported the German emperor in a struggle with the pope. By contrast, Duns Scotus and his followers, the Scotists, held firmly to the old ways, including belief in the church and all its teachings. In the 1300s, aspects of the Scotists' ideas seemed forward-looking; but as the Renaissance gained momentum and they resisted all new ways of thought, the term *duns* or *dunce* became a hallmark of ignorance.

New ways of seeing the world

The transition from medieval to Renaissance could be seen in a variety of arts. Giotto (JAHT-oh; 1276–1337), the last great pre-Renaissance painter, showed the stirrings of new ideas in his use of highly expressive gestures, which turned a painting into a sort of story. Filippo Brunelleschi (fu-LIP-oh broo-nuh-LES-kee; 1337–1446) applied science to architecture, establishing the concept of perspective, whereby faraway objects appear smaller than objects close by.

Perspective greatly increased the sense of depth in the paintings of Masaccio (muh-ZAHT-choh; 1401–1428), who also took a scientific ap-

proach to lighting. No longer were all figures equally lit, as in medieval art; in Masaccio's paintings, it was clear that light came from a definite source such as the Sun or a candle.

Donatello (c. 1386–1466), a student of Brunelleschi, helped usher in Renaissance sculpture by turning from purely biblical subjects—the only subjects permitted for medieval artists—to scenes from ancient Greece and Rome. In Flanders, the painter Jan van Eyck (YAHN vahn IKE; c. 1395–1441) made equally important strides, becoming the first major artist to depict ordinary, if wealthy, people—merchants who had paid for portraits of themselves and their families.

A change in the language

A number of Italian writers, most notably the poet Dante Alighieri (DAHN-tay al-ig-YEER-ee; 1265–1321), helped bridge the medieval and Renaissance periods. In his masterpiece, the *Divine Comedy* (1308–21), Dante described an allegorical journey through Hell (the Inferno), Purgatory, and Paradise. The book, a "comedy," in the ancient sense, meaning that it ends on a happy note, is a veritable encyclopedia of the Middle Ages. Practically every important person from premodern Europe is mentioned somewhere on its pages.

Like the troubadours before him, Dante wrote in the vernacular, the language of everyday people—in this case Italian instead of Latin. Petrarch (PEE-trark; 1304–1374) also wrote in Italian, but gained his greatest recognition during his lifetime for his work in Latin. Petrarch's purpose in using Latin, however, was very un-medieval. He was one of the first writers to take note of the growing Renaissance movement, and he used ancient Rome's language as a way of harkening back to the last great flowering of civilization.

Medieval events and trends influenced the writings of Giovanni Boccaccio (boh-KAHT-choh; 1313–1375) and Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1342–1400), yet their work was far from medieval in character. In Boccaccio's *Decameron* (dee-KAM-uh-rahn; 1353), a group of young men and women escape the Plague by going to the countryside, and there they amuse themselves by telling tales. What sets the *Decameron* apart from most earlier literature is its natural, everyday tone, which influenced Chaucer in writing *The Canterbury Tales*. The latter is a collection of stories—some moral and uplifting, some bawdy and off-color—told by a group of pilgrims on their way to Canterbury.

A change of systems

The changes in the life of the mind at the end of the Middle Ages reflected larger economic and social changes as feudalism declined and the middle class gained power. It is ironic, then, that the style of armor most commonly associated with the medieval period only appeared during this era (see box, "Plate Armor"), when a number of factors combined to render medieval knighthood and its trappings irrelevant.

Most important among these factors was the development of gunpowder and cannons, which together with the pike, or spear, and the longbow (a weapon six to eight feet in length used for shooting arrows rapidly) completely changed the face of battle. As in Japan around the same time, massed formations became more important than individual warriors. By the time Miguel de Cervantes (sur-VAHN-tays; 1547–1616) wrote his hilarious novel *Don Quixote* (1605–15), knighthood had become something of a joke. Thus Don Quixote (kee-YOH-tay) rides around the Spanish countryside in a tattered suit of armor, fighting battles with windmills.

As knighthood and feudalism became a thing of the past, a new middle class was on the rise. From the time of the Crusades, Europe's economy had been on the upsurge, and changing views on usury and money-lending helped spur an economic explosion. No longer did the charging of interest—essential if an economy is going to grow—seem ungodly. The latter change was in turn tied with a revolution sweeping the world of religion, a revolution that would forever change the way Christians approached God.

The decline of the papacy

Due to the inability of Pope Boniface VIII to control the French king, the papal court had been moved to Avignon in 1309, signaling the beginning of the end of the powerful medieval papacy. Petrarch called the Avignon papacy the "Babylonian Captivity," referring to the period in the Old Testament when the people of Israel were carried off to slavery in Babylon. Worse was to follow, however, as the church became embroiled in the Great Schism (SKIZ-um; 1378–1417).

In 1378, just before he died, Gregory XI (the first non-French pope in years), moved the papacy back to Rome. Upon his death, the cardinals chose Urban VI (ruled 1378–89), but Urban became so unpopular that they elected Clement VII (ruled 1378–94) in his place. When Urban refused to give up his throne, Clement fled to Avignon and there set up a rival papacy. France, Scotland, Sicily, and parts of Spain supported the Avignon popes, while England and most of Western Europe continued to back Rome.

In 1409, the Council of Pisa attempted to rectify the situation by removing both popes and replacing them with a new one. Not surprisingly, the Avignon and Rome popes refused to step down, so now there were *three* popes, including the new one at Pisa. Only in 1417 did the Council of Constance end the Schism by removing all three popes and choosing Martin V (ruled 1417–31) to lead the church. All non-Roman popes of the Great Schism were declared antipopes. The Council of Constance also declared that the decisions of an ecumenical council had more authority than those of an individual pope, which further signaled the decline of the papacy.

Winds of reformation

The downfall of the papacy had come not because of external ene-

Plate Armor

The type of armor most often associated with the medieval period is plate, or full-body armor; but ironically, it did not make its appearance until the Middle Ages were almost over. Improvements in the crossbow in the early 1300s made it necessary to develop a more protective style of armor, though in fact the concept behind the "new" armor was old: the barbarians who helped bring down the Roman Empire had worn plates of armor held together with animal skins.

With the advent of plate armor, helmets became more protective, and usually covered the entire face, with eye slits in the metal. Knights typically wore a particularly heavy piece of armor on their left shoulder, since most men were right-handed and they were therefore most likely to take blows on the left side.

Yet as armor changed in these ways, even more significant changes—particularly the development of firearms—were occurring on the field of battle. Therefore armor began disappearing from the battlefield.

Knights still wore armor for tournaments, however: in the joust, in which two knights rode at one another and each tried to unhorse the other with his lance, armor made for valuable protection. It could also be worn for purely decorative purposes, as was the case through the 1600s. This ceremonial armor typically included detailed decorations, and gleaming, polished metal plates.

mies, but because of problems within the church itself—particularly its efforts to control politics. From the church's viewpoint, this could not have come at a worse time, because Rome now faced a threat more formidable than all the armies of Islam: a new group of religious leaders who questioned the authority of the church to stand between God and Christians. These leaders led a movement that came to be known as the Reformation. It arose from attempts to change Roman Catholicism and resulted in the founding of Protestantism. First among the movement's leaders was John Wycliffe (WIK-lif; 1330–1384), who rose to prominence in England just as the Great Schism was beginning.

Wycliffe challenged virtually every doctrine of medieval Christianity, and in fact questioned the idea that the Catholic Church was *the* Church. He declared that the church of Rome was not the "real church," which he said existed wherever two or more believers in Jesus Christ were gathered together. Transubstantiation (see box, page 101), he said, was an empty be-

Jan Hus was a religious reformer who was burned at the stake for heresy. *Reproduced by permission of the Hulton-Getty Picture Library.*

lief, since there is nothing in the Bible to support it; and he condemned the monastic way of life because its idea of separation from the world went against the Bible as well.

These were the kind of teachings that could get a man killed, but Wycliffe survived in large part because he had powerful friends. Less fortunate was Jan Hus (HOOS; 1373–1415), a Bohemian reformer. Influenced by Wycliffe, Hus challenged a practice whereby the church peddled forgiveness by granting indulgences in exchange for monetary contributions. Ordered to appear before the Council of Constance in 1414, he was tried for heresy, and on July 6, 1415, was burned at the stake.

New nations

Hus was a hero not only of the Reformation, but of Bohemian or Czech nationalism because he supported greater Czech authority over the German-dominated University of Prague, Bohemia's capital. Later, when the Reformation reached its height, German nationalism would in turn be tied with the movement led by Martin Luther (1483–1546). Similarly, Henry

VIII's establishment of the Church of England (known as the Anglican, or in the United States, Episcopal Church) strengthened the formation of a distinctly English identity.

As the Middle Ages ended, medieval lands became incorporated in larger nations. Such was the fate of Burgundy, which briefly created a court noted as a center of music in the 1400s. By 1477 it had ceased to exist, divided among a number of growing nations, most notably France. To the south, Spain and Portugal (see box, "The Iberian Peninsula") had emerged as nations, as did Holland and a number of other countries to the north.

New horizons

Spain's unification coincided with the opening stages of the Age of Discovery. Already Portugal had become a powerful force on the high seas, primarily through the efforts of Prince Henry the Navigator (1394–1460), who made no voyages himself but directed a number of expeditions around the coast of Africa. While the rest of Europe was embroiled in political struggles, tiny Portugal began building a colonial empire many times larger than Portugal itself. Spain asserted itself as a nation by sending three ships under the command of Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) to find a sea route to China.

What Columbus found was not China, of course; but that is another story, since by Columbus's time the Middle Ages were clearly over. Yet Columbus did not bring on the end of the Middle Ages, nor did Ockham or Dante or Hus or any number of other great figures. The man who deserves credit, perhaps more than any other person, for launching the modern era was a German printer by the name of Johannes Gutenberg (yoh-HAH-nes; c. 1395–1468). Improving on ideas pioneered by the Chinese several centuries before, Gutenberg developed a process of movable-type printing that would change the world as no one had ever done.

A fast and economical process of printing meant that books could be widely distributed, and this in turn led to an explosive growth in literacy. It also strengthened vernacular tongues. Newly literate merchants and others did not want to read dry old documents in Latin; they wanted to read the latest novel or a report on explorations in the East Indies in their native language, whether that be German, Italian, or English. This of course meant that the church would no longer be able to maintain the wall it had set up between believers and their God. In fact the first book Gutenberg printed in 1455 was a book constantly mentioned in the Middle Ages, yet rarely seen and almost never read: the Bible.

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Where to Learn More

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Reader's Guide

The Middle Ages was an era of great changes in civilization, a transition between ancient times and the modern world. Lasting roughly from A.D. 500 to 1500, the period saw the growth of the Roman Catholic Church in Western Europe and the spread of the Islamic faith in the Middle East. Around the world, empires—the Byzantine, Mongol, and Incan—rose and fell, and the first nation-states emerged in France, England, and Spain. Despite the beauty of illuminated manuscripts, soaring Gothic cathedrals, and the literary classics of Augustine and Dante, Europe's civilization lagged far behind that of the technologically advanced, administratively organized, and economically wealthy realms of the Arab world, West Africa, India, and China.

Middle Ages: Biographies (two volumes) presents the life stories of fifty people who lived during the Middle Ages. Included are such major rulers as Charlemagne, Genghis Khan, and Eleanor of Aquitaine; thinkers and writers Augustine and Thomas Aquinas; religious leaders Muhammad and Francis of Assisi; and great explorers Marco Polo and Leif Eriksson. Also featured are lesser-known figures from the era,

including Wu Ze-tian and Irene of Athens, the only female rulers in the history of China and Byzantium, respectively; Mansa Musa, leader of the great empire of Mali in Africa; Japanese woman author Murasaki Shikibu, who penned the world's first novel; and Pachacutec, Inca emperor recognized as among the greatest rulers in history.

Additional features

Over one hundred illustrations and dozens of sidebar boxes exploring high-interest people and topics bring the text to life. Definitions of unfamiliar terms and a list of books and Web sites to consult for more information are included in each entry. The volume also contains a timeline of events, a general glossary, and an index offering easy access to the people, places, and subjects discussed throughout *Middle Ages: Biographies*.

Dedication

To Margaret, my mother; to Deidre, my wife; and to Tyler, my daughter.

Comments and suggestions

We welcome your comments on this work as well as your suggestions for topics to be featured in future editions of *Middle Ages: Biographies*. Please write: Editors, *Middle Ages: Biographies,* U•X•L, 27500 Drake Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535; call toll-free: 1-800-877-4253; fax: 248-699-8097; or send e-mail via www.galegroup.com.

Timeline of Events in the Middle Ages

180 The death of Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius marks the end of the "Pax Romana," or Roman peace. Years of instability follow, and although Rome recovers numerous times, this is the beginning of Rome's three-century decline.

312 Roman emperor Constantine converts to Christianity. As a result, the empire that once persecuted Christians will embrace their religion and eventually will begin to persecute other religions.

325 Constantine calls the Council of Nicaea, first of many ecumenical councils at which gatherings of bishops determine official church policy.

330 Constantine establishes Byzantium as eastern capital of the Roman Empire.

395 After the death of Emperor Theodosius, the Roman Empire is permanently divided in half. As time passes, the Eastern Roman Empire (later known as the Byzantine Empire) distances itself from the declining Western Roman Empire.

410 Led by Alaric, the Visigoths sack Rome, dealing the Western Roman Empire a blow from which it will never recover.

413–425 Deeply affected—as are most Roman citizens—by the Visigoths' attack on Rome, **Augustine** writes *City of God,* one of the most important books of the Middle Ages.

455 The Vandals sack Rome.

c. 459 Death of **St. Patrick**, missionary who converted Ireland to Christianity.

476 The German leader Odoacer removes Emperor Romulus Augustulus and crowns himself "king of Italy." This incident marks the end of the Western Roman Empire.

481 The Merovingian Age, named for the only powerful dynasty in Western Europe during the period, begins when **Clovis** takes the throne in France.

496 **Clovis** converts to Christianity. By establishing strong ties with the pope, he forges a strong church-state relationship that will continue throughout the medieval period.

500 Date commonly cited as beginning of Middle Ages.

500–1000 Era in European history often referred to as the Dark Ages, or Early Middle Ages.

524 The philosopher **Boethius**, from the last generation of classically educated Romans, dies in jail, probably at the orders of the Ostrogoth chieftain Theodoric.

529 Benedict of Nursia and his followers establish the monastery at Monte Cassino, Italy. This marks the beginning of the monastic tradition in Europe.

532 Thanks in large part to the counsel of his wife Theodora, **Justinian**—greatest of Byzantine emperors—takes a strong stand in the Nika Revolt, ensuring his continued power.

534–563 Belisarius and other generals under orders from **Justinian** recapture much of the Western Roman Empire, including parts of Italy, Spain, and North Africa. The victories are costly, however, and soon after Justin-

ian's death these lands will fall back into the hands of barbarian tribes such as the Vandals and Lombards.

535 **Justinian** establishes his legal code, a model for the laws in many Western nations today.

540 The Huns, or Hunas, destroy India's Gupta Empire, plunging much of the subcontinent into a state of anarchy.

c. 550 Death of Indian mathematician **Aryabhata**, one of the first mathematicians to use the numeral zero.

589 The ruthless **Wen Ti** places all of China under the rule of his Sui dynasty, ending more than three centuries of upheaval.

590 Pope **Gregory I** begins his fourteen-year reign. Also known as Gregory the Great, he ensures the survival of the church, and becomes one of its greatest medieval leaders.

Late 500s The first Turks begin moving westward, toward the Middle East, from their homeland to the north and west of China.

604 Prince **Shotoku Taishi** of Japan issues his "Seventeen-Article Constitution."

c. 610 An Arab merchant named **Muhammad** receives the first of some 650 revelations that form the basis of the Koran, Islam's holy book.

618 In China, **T'ai Tsung** and his father Kao Tsu overthrow the cruel Sui dynasty, establishing the highly powerful and efficient T'ang dynasty.

622 **Muhammad** and his followers escape the city of Mecca. This event, known as the *hegira,* marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar.

632–661 Following the death of **Muhammad**, the Arab Muslims are led by a series of four caliphs who greatly expand Muslim territories to include most of the Middle East.

645 A conspiracy to murder the Japanese emperor places the reform-minded Emperor Tenchi on the throne and puts the Fujiwara clan—destined to remain influential for centuries—in a position of power.

661 The fifth caliph, Mu'awiya, founds the Umayyad caliphate, which will rule the Muslim world from Damascus, Syria, until 750.

690 **Wu Ze-tian** becomes sole empress of China. She will reign until 705, the only female ruler in four thousand years of Chinese history.

711 Moors from North Africa invade Spain, taking over from the Visigoths. Muslims will rule parts of the Iberian Peninsula until 1492.

711 Arabs invade the Sind in western India, establishing a Muslim foothold on the Indian subcontinent.

727 In Greece, the Iconoclasts begin a sixty-year war on icons, or images of saints and other religious figures, which they consider idols. Though the Greek Orthodox Church ultimately rejects iconoclasm, the controversy helps widen a growing division between Eastern and Western Christianity.

731 **The Venerable Bede** publishes his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* his most important work.

732 A force led by Charles Martel repels Moorish invaders at Tours, halting Islam's advance into Western Europe.

750 A descendant of **Muhammad**'s uncle Abbas begins killing off all the Umayyad leaders and establishes the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad, Iraq.

751 The Carolingian Age begins when Charles Martel's son Pepin III, with the support of the pope, removes the last Merovingian king from power.

751 Defeated by Arab armies at Talas, China's T'ang dynasty begins to decline. A revolt led by An Lu-shan in 755 adds to its troubles.

768 Reign of **Charlemagne**, greatest ruler of Western Europe during the Early Middle Ages, begins.

782 English scholar **Alcuin** goes to France, on the invitation of **Charlemagne**, to organize a school for future officials in the Carolingian empire.

787 **Irene of Athens** convenes the Seventh Council of Nicaea, which restores the use of icons in worship.

793 Viking raiders destroy the church at Lindisfarne off the coast of England. Lindisfarne was one of the places where civilized learning had weathered the darkest years of the Middle Ages. Thus begins two centuries of terror as more invaders pour out of Scandinavia and spread throughout Europe.

797 Having murdered her son, **Irene of Athens**—who actually ruled from 780 onward—officially becomes Byzantine empress, the only woman ruler in the empire's eleven-hundred-year history. It is partly in reaction to Irene that the pope later crowns **Charlemagne** emperor of Western Europe.

800s Feudalism takes shape in Western Europe.

800 Pope Leo III crowns **Charlemagne** "Emperor of All the Romans." This marks the beginning of the political alliance later to take shape under **Otto the Great** as the Holy Roman Empire.

c. 800 The Khmers, or Cambodians, adopt Hinduism under the leadership of their first powerful king, Jayavarman II, founder of the Angkor Empire.

801 Death of **Rabia al-Adawiyya**, a woman and former slave who founded the mystic Sufi sect of Islam.

820 A group of Vikings settles in northwestern France, where they will become known as Normans.

843 In the Treaty of Verdun, **Charlemagne**'s son Louis the Pious divides the Carolingian Empire among his three sons. These three parts come to be known as the West Frankish Empire, consisting chiefly of modern France; the "Middle Kingdom," a strip running from what is now the Netherlands all the way down to Italy; and the East Frankish Empire, or modern Germany. The Middle Kingdom soon dissolves into a patchwork of tiny principalities.

c. 850 Death of Arab mathematician **al-Khwarizmi**, who coined the term "algebra" and who is often considered the greatest mathematician of the Middle Ages.

860 Vikings discover Iceland.

863 **St. Cyril** and **St. Methodius**, two Greek priests, become missionaries to the Slavs of Central and Eastern Europe. As a result, the Greek Orthodox version of Christianity spreads throughout the region, along with the Cyrillic alphabet, which the brothers create in order to translate the Bible into local languages.

886 King Alfred the Great captures London from the Danes, and for the first time in British history unites all Anglo-Saxons.

907 China's T'ang dynasty comes to an end after almost three centuries of rule, and the empire enters a period of instability known as "Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms."

911 The last of the Carolingian line in the East Frankish Empire dies. Seven years later, Henry the Fowler of Saxony, father of **Otto the Great**, takes leadership of the German states.

c. 930 Arab physician **al-Razi** writes his most important work, *The Comprehensive Book,* which sums up the medical knowledge of the era.

955 German king Otto I defeats a tribe of nomadic invaders called the Magyars. The Magyars later become Christianized and found the nation of Hungary; as for Otto, thenceforth he is known as **Otto the Great.**

957 Death of **al-Mas'udi**, perhaps the greatest historian of the Arab world.

960 In China, troops loyal to Chao K'uang-yin declare him emperor, initiating the Sung dynasty.

962 Having conquered most of Central Europe, **Otto the Great** is crowned emperor in Rome, reviving Charlemagne's title. From this point on, most German kings are also crowned ruler of the Holy Roman Empire.

982 Vikings discover Greenland. Four years later, Erik the Red founds a permanent settlement there.

987 Russia converts to Greek Orthodox Christianity and gradually begins adopting Byzantine culture after Vladimir the Great marries Anne, sister of Emperor **Basil II.**

987 The last Carolingian ruler of France dies without an heir, and Hugh Capet takes the throne, establishing a dynasty that will last until 1328.

1000–1300 Era in European history often referred to as the High Middle Ages.

1001 Vikings led by **Leif Eriksson** sail westward to North America, and during the next two decades conduct a number of raids on the coast of what is now Canada.

1001 A second Muslim invasion of the Indian subcontinent, this time by Turks, takes place as the Ghaznavids subdue a large region in what is now Afghanistan, Pakistan, and western India.

1002 Holy Roman Emperor **Otto III** dies at the age of twenty-two, and with him die his grand dreams of a revived Roman Empire.

1002 In Japan, **Murasaki Shikibu** begins writing the *Tale of Genji,* the world's first novel.

1014 After years of conflict with the Bulgarians, Byzantine Emperor **Basil II** defeats them. He orders that ninety-nine of every one hundred men be blinded and the last man allowed to keep just one eye so he can lead the others home. Bulgaria's Czar Samuel dies of a heart attack when he sees his men, and Basil earns the nickname "Bulgar-Slayer."

1025 **Basil II** dies, having taken the Byzantine Empire to its greatest height since **Justinian** five centuries earlier; however, it begins a rapid decline soon afterward.

1039 Death of Arab mathematician and physicist **Alhazen,** the first scientist to form an accurate theory of optics, or the mechanics of vision.

1054 After centuries of disagreement over numerous issues, the Greek Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church officially separate.

1060 Five years after Turks seize control of Baghdad from the declining Abbasid caliphate, their leader, Toghril Beg, declares himself sultan and thus establishes the Seljuk dynasty.

1066 **William the Conqueror** leads an invading force that defeats an Anglo-Saxon army at Hastings and wins control of England. The Norman invasion is the most important event of medieval English history, greatly affecting the future of English culture and language.

1071 The Seljuk Turks defeat Byzantine forces at the Battle of Manzikert in Armenia. As a result, the Turks gain a foothold in Asia Minor (today known as Turkey), and the Byzantine Empire begins a long, slow decline.

1071 A Norman warlord named Robert Guiscard drives the last Byzantine forces out of Italy. Byzantium had controlled parts of the peninsula since the time of **Justinian.**

1072 Robert Guiscard's brother Roger expels the Arabs from Sicily, and takes control of the island.

1075–77 Pope **Gregory VII** and Holy Roman Emperor **Henry IV** become embroiled in a church-state struggle called the Investiture Controversy, a debate over whether popes or emperors should have the right to appoint local bishops. Deserted by his supporters, Henry stands barefoot in the snow for three days outside the gates of a castle in Canossa, Italy, waiting to beg the pope's forgiveness.

1084 Reversing the results of an earlier round in the Investiture Controversy, **Henry IV** takes Rome and forcibly removes **Gregory VII** from power. The pope dies soon afterward, broken and humiliated.

1084 **Ssu-ma Kuang**, an official in the Sung dynasty, completes his monumental history of China, *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government.*

1094 Troops under the leadership of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar—better known as **El Cid**—defeat the Moorish Almoravids at Valencia. This victory, and the character of El Cid himself, becomes a symbol of the Reconquista, the Christian effort to reclaim Spain from its Muslim conquerors.

1094 Norman warrior Bohemond, son of Robert Guiscard, takes control of Rome from **Henry IV** and hands the city over to Pope Urban II. Fearing the Normans'

power and aware that he owes them a great debt, Urban looks for something to divert their attention.

1095 Byzantine Emperor Alexis Comnenus asks Urban II for military assistance against the Turks. Urban preaches a sermon to raise support at the Council of Clermont in France, and in the resulting fervor the First Crusade begins. Among its leaders are Bohemond and his nephew Tancred.

1096–97 A pathetic sideshow called the Peasants' Crusade plays out before the real First Crusade gets underway. The peasants begin by robbing and killing thousands of Jews in Germany; then, led by Peter the Hermit, they march toward the Holy Land, wreaking havoc as they go. In Anatolia, a local Turkish sultan leads them into a trap, and most of the peasants are killed.

1099 The First Crusade ends in victory for the Europeans as they conquer Jerusalem. It is a costly victory, however—one in which thousands of innocent Muslims, as well as many Europeans, have been brutally slaughtered—and it sows resentment between Muslims and Christians that remains strong today.

c. 1100–1300 Many of the aspects of life most commonly associated with the Middle Ages, including heraldry and chivalry, make their appearance in Western Europe during this period. Returning crusaders adapt the defensive architecture they observed in fortresses of the Holy Land, resulting in the familiar design of the medieval castle. This is also the era of romantic and heroic tales such as those of King Arthur.

1105 King Henry I of England and St. **Anselm of Canterbury**, head of the English church, sign an agreement settling their differences. This is an important milestone in church-state relations and serves as the model for the Concordat of Worms seventeen years later.

1118 After being banished because of her part in a conspiracy against her brother, the Byzantine emperor, **Anna Comnena** begins writing the *Alexiad,* a history of Byzantium in the period 1069–1118.

1140 After a career in which he infuriated many with his unconventional views on God, French philosopher **Peter Abelard** is charged with heresy by **Bernard of Clairvaux** and forced to publicly refute his beliefs.

c. 1140 In Cambodia, Khmer emperor Suryavarman II develops the splendid temple complex of Angkor Wat.

1146 After the Muslims' capture of Edessa in 1144, Pope Eugenius III calls on the help of his former teacher, **Bernard of Clairvaux,** who makes a speech that leads to the launching of the Second Crusade.

1147–49 In the disastrous Second Crusade, armies from Europe are double-crossed by their crusader allies in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. They fail to recapture Edessa and suffer a heavy defeat at Damascus. Among the people who take part in the crusade (though not as a combatant) is **Eleanor of Aquitaine.**

1154 After the death of England's King Stephen, Henry II takes the throne, beginning the long Plantaganet dynasty. With Henry is his new bride, **Eleanor of Aquitaine.** Now queen of England, she had been queen of France two years earlier, before the annulment of her marriage to King Louis VII.

1158 Holy Roman Emperor **Frederick I Barbarossa** establishes Europe's first university at Bologna, Italy.

1159 **Frederick I Barbarossa** begins a quarter-century of fruitless, costly wars in which the Ghibellines and Guelphs—factions representing pro-imperial and pro-church forces, respectively—fight for control of northern Italy.

1162 **Moses Maimonides,** greatest Jewish philosopher of the Middle Ages, publishes his *Letter Concerning Apostasy,* the first of many important works by him that will appear over the next four decades.

1165 A letter supposedly written by Prester John, a Christian monarch in the East, appears in Europe. Over the centuries that follow, Europeans will search in vain for Prester John, hoping for his aid in their war against Muslim forces. Even as Europe enters the modern era, early proponents of exploration such as

Henry the Navigator will remain inspired by the quest for Prester John's kingdom.

1170 Knights loyal to Henry II murder the archbishop **Thomas à Becket** in his cathedral at Canterbury.

1174–80 Arab philosopher **Averroës** writes one of his most important works, *The Incoherence of the Incoherence,* a response to hard-line Muslim attacks on his belief that reason and religious faith can coexist.

1183 **Frederick I Barbarossa** signs the Peace of Constance with the cities of the Lombard League, and thus ends his long war in northern Italy. After this he will concentrate his attention on Germany and institute reforms that make him a hero in his homeland.

1185 For the first time, Japan comes under the rule of a shogun, or military dictator. Shoguns will remain in power for the next four centuries.

1187 Muslim armies under **Saladin** deal the crusaders a devastating blow at the Battle of Hittin in Palestine. Shortly afterward, Saladin leads his armies in the reconquest of Jerusalem.

1189 In response to **Saladin**'s victories, Europeans launch the Third Crusade. Of the crusade's three principal leaders, Emperor **Frederick I Barbarossa** drowns on his way to the Holy Land, and **Richard I** takes a number of detours, only arriving in 1191. This leaves Philip II Augustus of France to fight the Muslims alone.

1191 Led by **Richard I** of England and Philip II of France, crusaders take the city of Acre in Palestine.

1192 **Richard I** signs a treaty with **Saladin**, ending the Third Crusade.

1198 Pope **Innocent III** begins an eighteen-year reign that marks the high point of the church's power. Despite his great influence, however, when he calls for a new crusade to the Holy Land, he gets little response—a sign that the spirit behind the Crusades is dying.

c. 1200 Cambodia's Khmer Empire reaches its height under Jayavarman VII.

1202 Four years after the initial plea from the pope, the Fourth Crusade begins. Instead of going to the Holy Land, however, the crusaders become involved in a power struggle for the Byzantine throne.

1204 Acting on orders from the powerful city-state of Venice, crusaders take Constantinople, forcing the Byzantines to retreat to Trebizond in Turkey. The Fourth Crusade ends with the establishment of the Latin Empire.

1206 Qutb-ud-Din Aybak, the first independent Muslim ruler in India, establishes the Delhi Sultanate.

1206 **Genghis Khan** unites the Mongols for the first time in their history and soon afterward leads them to war against the Sung dynasty in China.

1208 Pope **Innocent III** launches the Albigensian Crusade against the Cathars, a heretical sect in southern France.

1209 **St. Francis of Assisi** establishes the Franciscan order.

1215 In Rome, Pope **Innocent III** convenes the Fourth Lateran Council. A number of traditions, such as regular confession of sin to a priest, are established at this, one of the most significant ecumenical councils in history.

1215 English noblemen force King John to sign the Magna Carta, which grants much greater power to the nobility. Ultimately the agreement will lead to increased freedom for the people from the power of both king and nobles.

1217–21 In the Fifth Crusade, armies from England, Germany, Hungary, and Austria attempt unsuccessfully to conquer Egypt.

1227 **Genghis Khan** dies, having conquered much of China and Central Asia, thus laying the foundation for the largest empire in history.

1228–29 The Sixth Crusade, led by Holy Roman Emperor **Frederick II**, results in a treaty that briefly restores Christian control of Jerusalem—and does so with a minimum of bloodshed.

1229 The brutal Albigensian Crusade ends. Not only are the Cathars destroyed, but so is much of the French nobility, thus greatly strengthening the power of the French king.

1231 Pope Gregory IX establishes the Inquisition, a court through which the church will investigate, try, and punish cases of heresy.

c. 1235 The empire of Mali, most powerful realm in sub-Saharan Africa at the time, takes shape under the leadership of Sundiata Keita.

1239–40 In the Seventh Crusade, Europeans make another failed attempt to retake the Holy Land.

1241 After six years of campaigns in which they sliced across Russia and Eastern Europe, a Mongol force is poised to take Vienna, Austria, and thus to swarm into Western Europe. But when their leader, Batu Khan, learns that the Great Khan Ogodai is dead, he rushes back to the Mongol capital at Karakorum to participate in choosing a successor.

1242 **Alexander Nevsky** and his brother Andrew lead the Russians' defense of Novgorod against invaders from Germany.

1243 Back on the warpath, but this time in the Middle East, the Mongols defeat the last remnants of the Seljuk Turks.

1248–54 King Louis IX of France (St. Louis) leads the Eighth Crusade, this time against the Mamluks. The result is the same: yet another defeat for the Europeans.

1252 In Egypt, a group of former slave soldiers called the Mamluks take power from the Ayyubid dynasty, established many years before by **Saladin.**

1260 The Mamluks become the first force to defeat the Mongols, in a battle at Goliath Spring in Palestine.

1260 **Kublai Khan**, greatest Mongol leader after his grandfather **Genghis Khan**, is declared Great Khan, or leader of the Mongols.

1261 Led by Michael VIII Palaeologus, the Byzantines recapture Constantinople from the Latin Empire, and

Byzantium enjoys one last gasp of power before it goes into terminal decline.

1270–72 In the Ninth Crusade, last of the numbered crusades, King Louis IX of France again leads the Europeans against the Mamluks, who defeat European forces yet again.

1271 **Marco Polo** embarks on his celebrated journey to the East, which lasts twenty-four years.

1273 The Hapsburg dynasty—destined to remain a major factor in European politics until 1918—takes control of the Holy Roman Empire.

1273 Italian philosopher and theologian **Thomas Aquinas** completes the crowning work of his career, the monumental *Summa theologica*. The influential book will help lead to wider acceptance of the idea, introduced earlier by **Moses Maimonides**, **Averroës**, and **Abelard**, that reason and faith are compatible.

1279 Mongol forces under **Kublai Khan** win final victory over China's Sung dynasty. Thus begins the Yüan dynasty, the first time in Chinese history when the country has been ruled by foreigners.

1291 Mamluks conquer the last Christian stronghold at Acre, bringing to an end two centuries of crusades to conquer the Holy Land for Christendom.

1292 Death of **Roger Bacon**, one of Europe's most important scientists. His work helped to show the rebirth of scientific curiosity taking place in Europe as a result of contact with the Arab world during the Crusades.

1294 At the death of **Kublai Khan**, the Mongol realm is the largest empire in history, covering most of Asia and a large part of Europe. Within less than a century, however, this vast empire will have all but disappeared.

1299 Turkish chieftain **Osman I** refuses to pay tribute to the local Mongol rulers, marking the beginnings of the Ottoman Empire.

1300–1500 Era in European history often referred to as the Late Middle Ages.

1303 After years of conflict with Pope Boniface VIII, France's King Philip the Fair briefly has the pope arrested. This event and its aftermath marks the low point of the papacy during the Middle Ages.

1308 **Dante Alighieri** begins writing the *Divine Comedy,* which he will complete shortly before his death in 1321.

1309 Pope Clement V, an ally of Philip the Fair, moves the papal seat from Rome to Avignon in southern France.

1309 After years of fighting, Sultan **Ala-ud-din Muhammad Khalji** subdues most of India.

1324 **Mansa Musa**, emperor of Mali, embarks on a pilgrimage to Mecca. After stopping in Cairo, Egypt, and spending so much gold that he affects the region's economy for years, he becomes famous throughout the Western world: the first sub-Saharan African ruler widely known among Europeans.

1328 Because of a dispute between the Franciscans and the papacy, **William of Ockham**, one of the late medieval period's most important philosophers, is forced to flee the papal court. He remains under the protection of the Holy Roman emperor for the rest of his life.

1337 England and France begin fighting what will become known as the Hundred Years' War, an on-again, off-again struggle to control parts of France.

1347–51 Europe experiences one of the worst disasters in human history, an epidemic called the Black Death. Sometimes called simply "the Plague," in four years the Black Death kills some thirty-five million people, or approximately one-third of the European population in 1300.

1368 Led by Chu Yüan-chang, a group of rebels overthrows the Mongol Yüan dynasty of China and establishes the Ming dynasty, China's last native-born ruling house.

1378 The Catholic Church becomes embroiled in the Great Schism, which will last until 1417. During this time,

there are rival popes in Rome and Avignon; and from 1409 to 1417, there is even a third pope in Pisa, Italy.

1383 **Tamerlane** embarks on two decades of conquest in which he strikes devastating blows against empires in Turkey, Russia, and India and subdues a large portion of central and southwestern Asia.

1386 **Geoffrey Chaucer** begins writing the *Canterbury Tales*.

1389 Ottoman forces defeat the Serbs in battle at Kosovo Field. As a result, all of Southeastern Europe except for Greece falls under Turkish control.

1390 **Tamerlane** attacks and severely weakens the Golden Horde even though its leaders come from the same Mongol and Tatar ancestry as he.

1392 General Yi Song-ye seizes power in Korea and establishes a dynasty that will remain in control until 1910.

1398 **Tamerlane** sacks the Indian city of Delhi, hastening the end of the Delhi Sultanate, which comes in 1413.

1402 After conquering much of Iran and surrounding areas and then moving westward, **Tamerlane** defeats the Ottoman sultan Bajazed in battle. An unexpected result of their defeat is that the Ottomans, who seemed poised to take over much of Europe, go into a period of decline.

1404–05 **Christine de Pisan**, Europe's first female professional writer, publishes *The Book of the City of Ladies,* her most celebrated work.

1405 Ming dynasty emperor Yung-lo sends Admiral Cheng Ho on the first of seven westward voyages. These take place over the next quarter-century, during which time Chinese ships travel as far as East Africa.

1417 The Council of Constance ends the Great Schism, affirming that Rome is the seat of the church and that Pope Martin V is its sole leader. Unfortunately for the church, the Great Schism has weakened it at the very time that it faces its greatest challenge ever: a gather-

ing movement that will come to be known as the Reformation.

1418 The "school" of navigation founded by Prince **Henry the Navigator** sponsors the first of many expeditions that, over the next forty-two years, will greatly increase knowledge of the middle Atlantic Ocean and Africa's west coast. These are the earliest European voyages of exploration, of which there will be many in the next two centuries.

1421 Emperor Yung-lo moves the Chinese capital from Nanjing to Beijing, where it has remained virtually ever since.

1429 A tiny French army led by **Joan of Arc** forces the English to lift their siege on the town of Orléans, a victory that raises French spirits and makes it possible for France's king Charles VII to be crowned later that year. This marks a turning point in the Hundred Years' War.

1430–31 Captured by Burgundian forces, **Joan of Arc** is handed over to the English, who arrange her trial for witchcraft in a court of French priests. The trial, a mockery of justice, ends with Joan being burned at the stake.

1431 In Southeast Asia, the Thais conquer the Angkor Empire.

1431 The Aztecs become the dominant partner in a triple alliance with two nearby city-states and soon afterward gain control of the Valley of Mexico.

1438 **Pachacutec Inca Yupanqui**, greatest Inca ruler, takes the throne.

1440 **Montezuma I** takes the Aztec throne.

1441 Fourteen black slaves are brought from Africa to Portugal, where they are presented to Prince **Henry the Navigator.** This is the beginning of the African slave trade, which isn't abolished until more than four centuries later.

1451 The recovery of the Ottoman Empire, which had suffered a half-century of decline, begins under Mehmet the Conqueror.

1453 Due in large part to the victories of **Joan of Arc**, which lifted French morale twenty-four years earlier, the Hundred Years' War ends with French victory.

1453 Turks under Mehmet the Conqueror march into Constantinople, bringing about the fall of the Byzantine Empire. Greece will remain part of the Ottoman Empire until 1829.

1455 Having developed a method of movable-type printing, Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz, Germany, prints his first book: a Bible. In the years to come, the invention of the printing press will prove to be one of the most important events in world history.

1456 A commission directed by Pope Calixtus III declares that the verdict against **Joan of Arc** in 1431 had been wrongfully obtained.

1470 One of the first printed books to appear in England, *La Morte D'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory helps establish the now-familiar tales of Arthurian legend.

1492 Spain, united by the 1469 marriage of its two most powerful monarchs, Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, drives out the last of the Muslims and expels all Jews. A less significant event of 1492, from the Spanish perspective, is the launch of a naval expedition in search of a westward sea route to China. Its leader is an Italian sailor named Christopher Columbus, who has grown up heavily influenced by **Marco Polo**'s account of his travels.

1493 **Mohammed I Askia** takes the throne of Africa's Songhai Empire, which will reach its height under his leadership.

1500 Date commonly cited as the end of Middle Ages, and the beginning of the Renaissance.

1517 Exactly a century after the Council of Constance ended the Great Schism, a German monk named Martin Luther publicly posts ninety-five theses, or statements challenging the established teachings of

Catholicism, on the door of a church in Germany. Over the next century, numerous new Protestant religious denominations will be established.

1521 Spanish forces led by the conquistador Hernán Cortés destroy the Aztec Empire.

1526 Babur, a descendant of **Tamerlane**, invades India and establishes what becomes the Mogul Empire.

1533 Francisco Pizarro and the Spanish forces with him arrive in Peru and soon bring about the end of the Inca Empire.

1591 Songhai, the last of the great premodern empires in Africa's Sudan region, falls to invaders from Morocco.

1806 In the process of conquering most of Europe, Napoleon Bonaparte brings the Holy Roman Empire to an end.

1912 More than twenty-one centuries of imperial rule in China end with the overthrow of the government by revolutionary forces, who establish a republic.

1918 Among the many outcomes of World War I are the disintegration of several empires with roots in the Middle Ages: the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian empires.

1960s Nearly a thousand years after **Leif Eriksson** and other Vikings visited the New World, archaeologists find remains of a Norse settlement in Newfoundland.

Words to Know

A

Age of Exploration: The period from about 1450 to about 1750 when European explorers conducted their most significant voyages and travels around the world.

Alchemy: A semi-scientific discipline that holds that through the application of certain chemical processes, ordinary metals can be turned into gold.

Algebra: A type of mathematics used to determine the value of unknown quantities where these can be related to known numbers.

Allegory: A type of narrative, popular throughout the Middle Ages, in which characters represent ideas.

Anarchy: Breakdown of political order.

Ancestor: An earlier person in one's line of parentage, usually more distant in time than a grandparent.

Anti-Semitism: Hatred of, or discrimination against, Jews.

Antipope: A priest proclaimed pope by one group or another, but not officially recognized by the church.

Archaeology: The scientific study of past civilizations.

Archbishop: The leading bishop in an area or nation.

Aristocracy: The richest and most powerful members of society.

Ascetic: A person who renounces all earthly pleasures as part of his or her search for religious understanding.

Assassination: Killing, usually of an important leader, for political reasons.

Astronomy: The scientific study of the stars and other heavenly bodies and their movement in the sky.

B

Barbarian: A negative term used to describe someone as uncivilized.

Bishop: A figure in the Christian church assigned to oversee priests and believers in a given city or region.

Bureaucracy: A network of officials who run a government.

C

Caliph: A successor to Muhammad as spiritual and political leader of Islam.

Caliphate: The domain ruled by a caliph.

Canonization: Formal declaration of a deceased person as a saint.

Cardinal: An office in the Catholic Church higher than that of bishop or archbishop; the seventy cardinals in the "College of Cardinals" participate in electing the pope.

Cavalry: Soldiers on horseback.

Chivalry: The system of medieval knighthood, particularly its code of honor with regard to women.

Christendom: The Christian world.

Church: The entire Christian church, or more specifically the Roman Catholic Church.

City-state: A city that is also a self-contained political unit, like a country.

Civil service: The administrators and officials who run a government.

Civilization: A group of people possessing most or all of the following: a settled way of life, agriculture, a written language, an organized government, and cities.

Classical: Referring to ancient Greece and Rome.

Clergy: The priesthood.

Clerical: Relating to priests.

Coat of arms: A heraldic emblem representing a family or nation.

Commoner: Someone who is not a member of a royal or noble class.

Communion: The Christian ceremony of commemorating the last supper of Jesus Christ.

Courtly love: An idealized form of romantic love, usually of a knight or poet for a noble lady.

D

Dark Ages: A negative term sometimes used to describe the Early Middle Ages, the period from the fall of Rome to about A.D. 1000 in Western Europe.

Deity: A god.

Dialect: A regional variation on a language.

Diplomacy: The use of skillful negotiations with leaders of other nations to influence events.

Duchy: An area ruled by a duke, the highest rank of European noble below a prince.

Dynasty: A group of people, often but not always a family, who continue to hold a position of power over a period of time.

E

Economy: The whole system of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services in a country.

Ecumenical: Across all faiths, or across all branches of the Christian Church.

Empire: A large political unit that unites many groups of people, often over a wide territory.

Epic: A long poem that recounts the adventures of a legendary hero.

Ethnic group: People who share a common racial, cultural, national, linguistic, or tribal origin.

Excommunicate: To banish someone from the church.

F

Famine: A food shortage caused by crop failures.

Fasting: Deliberately going without food, often but not always for religious reasons.

Feudalism: A form of political and economic organization in which peasants are subject to a noble who owns most or all of the land that they cultivate.

G

Geometry: A type of mathematics dealing with various shapes, their properties, and their measurements.

Guild: An association to promote, and set standards for, a particular profession or business.

H

Hajj: A pilgrimage to Mecca, which is expected of all Muslims who can afford to make it.

Heraldry: The practice of creating and studying coats of arms and other insignia.

Heresy: A belief that goes against established church teachings.

Holy Land: Palestine.

Horde: A division within the Mongol army; the term "hordes" was often used to describe the Mongol armies.

I

Icon: In the Christian church, an image of a saint.

Idol: A statue of a god that the god's followers worship.

Illumination: Decoration of a manuscript with elaborate designs.

Indo-European languages: The languages of Europe, India, Iran, and surrounding areas, which share common roots.

Indulgence: The granting of forgiveness of sins in exchange for an act of service for, or payment to, the church.

Infantry: Foot soldiers.

Infidel: An unbeliever.

Intellectual: A person whose profession or lifestyle centers around study and ideas.

Interest: In economics, a fee charged by a lender against a borrower—usually a percentage of the amount borrowed.

Investiture: The power of a feudal lord to grant lands or offices.

Islam: A religious faith that teaches submission to the one god Allah and his word as given through his prophet Muhammad in the Koran.

J

Jihad: Islamic "holy war" to defend or extend the faith.

K

Khan: A Central Asian chieftain.

Koran: The holy book of Islam.

L

Legal code: A system of laws.

Lingua franca: A common language.

M

Martyr: Someone who willingly dies for his or her faith.

Mass: A Catholic church service.

Medieval: Of or relating to the Middle Ages.

Middle Ages: Roughly the period from A.D. 500 to 1500.

Middle class: A group whose income level falls between that of the rich and the poor, or the rich and the working class; usually considered the backbone of a growing economy.

Millennium: A period of a thousand years.

Missionary: Someone who travels to other lands with the aim of converting others to his or her religion.

Monastery: A place in which monks live.

Monasticism: The tradition and practices of monks.

Monk: A man who leaves the outside world to take religious vows and live in a monastery, practicing a lifestyle of denying earthly pleasures.

Monotheism: Worship of one god.

Mosque: A Muslim temple.

Movable-type printing: An advanced printing process using pre-cast pieces of metal type.

Muezzin: A crier who calls worshipers to prayer five times a day in the Muslim world.

Mysticism: The belief that one can attain direct knowledge of God or ultimate reality through some form of meditation or special insight.

N

Nationalism: A sense of loyalty and devotion to one's nation.

Nation-state: A geographical area composed largely of a single nationality, in which a single national government clearly holds power.

New World: The Americas, or the Western Hemisphere.

Noble: A ruler within a kingdom who has an inherited title and lands but who is less powerful than the king or queen; collectively, nobles are known as the "nobility."

Nomadic: Wandering.

Novel: An extended, usually book-length, work of fiction.

Nun: The female equivalent of a monk, who lives in a nunnery, convent, or abbey.

O

Order: An organized religious community within the Catholic Church.

Ordination: Formal appointment as a priest or minister.

P

Pagan: Worshiping many gods.

Papacy: The office of the pope.

Papal: Referring to the pope.

Patriarch: A bishop in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Patron: A supporter, particularly of arts, education, or sciences. The term is often used to refer to a ruler or wealthy person who provides economic as well as personal support.

Peasant: A farmer who works a small plot of land.

Penance: An act ordered by the church to obtain forgiveness for sin.

Persecutions: In early church history, Roman punishment of Christians for their faith.

Philosophy: An area of study concerned with subjects including values, meaning, and the nature of reality.

Pilgrimage: A journey to a site of religious significance.

Plague: A disease that spreads quickly to a large population.

Polytheism: Worship of many gods.

Pope: The bishop of Rome, and therefore the head of the Catholic Church.

Principality: An area ruled by a prince, the highest-ranking form of noble below a king.

Prophet: Someone who receives communications directly from God and passes these on to others.

Prose: Written narrative, as opposed to poetry.

Purgatory: A place of punishment after death where, according to Roman Catholic beliefs, a person who has not been damned may work out his or her salvation and earn his or her way to heaven.

R

Rabbi: A Jewish teacher or religious leader.

Racism: The belief that race is the primary factor determining peoples' abilities and that one race is superior to another.

Reason: The use of the mind to figure things out; usually contrasted with emotion, intuition, or faith.

Reformation: A religious movement in the 1500s that ultimately led to the rejection of Roman Catholicism by various groups who adopted Protestant interpretations of Christianity.

Regent: Someone who governs a country when the monarch is too young, too old, or too sick to lead.

Relic: An object associated with the saints of the New Testament or the martyrs of the early church.

Renaissance: A period of renewed interest in learning and the arts that began in Europe during the 1300s and continued to the 1600s.

Representational art: Artwork intended to show a specific subject, whether a human figure, landscape, still life, or a variation on these.

Ritual: A type of religious ceremony that is governed by very specific rules.

Rome: A term sometimes used to refer to the papacy.

S

Sack: To destroy, usually a city.

Saracen: A negative term used in medieval Europe to describe Muslims.

Scientific method: A means of drawing accurate conclusions by collecting information, studying data, and forming theories or hypotheses.

Scriptures: Holy texts.

Sect: A small group within a larger religion.

Secular: Of the world; typically used in contrast to "spiritual."

Semitic: A term describing a number of linguistic and cultural groups in the Middle East, including the modern-day Arabs and Israelis.

Serf: A peasant subject to a feudal system and possessing no land.

Siege: A sustained military attack against a city.

Simony: The practice of buying and selling church offices.

Sultan: A type of king in the Muslim world.

Sultanate: An area ruled by a Sultan.

Synagogue: A Jewish temple.

T

Technology: The application of knowledge to make the performance of physical and mental tasks easier.

Terrorism: Frightening (and usually harming) a group of people in order to achieve a specific political goal.

Theologian: Someone who analyzes religious faith.

Theology: The study of religious faith.

Trial by ordeal: A system of justice in which the accused (and sometimes the accuser as well) has to undergo various physical hardships in order to prove innocence.

Tribal: Describes a society, sometimes nomadic, in which members are organized by families and clans, not by region, and in which leadership comes from warrior-chieftains.

Tribute: Forced payments to a conqueror.

Trigonometry: The mathematical study of triangles, angles, arcs, and their properties and applications.

Trinity: The three persons of God according to Christianity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

U

Usury: Loaning money for a high rate of interest; during the Middle Ages, however, it meant simply loaning money for interest.

V

Vassal: A noble or king who is subject to a more powerful noble or king.

Vatican: The seat of the pope's power in Rome.

W

West: Generally, Western Europe and North America, or the countries influenced both by ancient Greece and ancient Rome.

Working class: A group between the middle class and the poor who typically earn a living with their hands.

Peter Abelard

Born c. 1079
Died 1142

French philosopher

Peter Abelard was a philosopher, meaning that his writings addressed the nature of values and reality. Like most European thinkers of his time, Abelard was particularly concerned with a better understanding of Christianity. This led him into investigations of ethics, or the philosophy of right and wrong. His belief that sin has more to do with a person's attitude than with their actions would hardly raise any eyebrows today, but in twelfth-century France, such ideas nearly got him killed. In a time and place when the authority of the Bible and the Catholic Church were absolute, Abelard seemed to be questioning both. Similarly, his explanations concerning the nature of ideas placed him at odds with many of the leading minds of the day.

But Abelard is not remembered merely as a thinker; his tragic but tender love affair with Héloïse, a student who became his wife and later simply his friend, is a compelling story in its own right. Today the two occupy a place among the ranks of the world's great lovers.

"God considered not action, but the spirit of the action. It is the intention, not the deed, wherein the merit or praise of the doer consists."

Ethics

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

Fighting with ideas and not swords

Peter Abelard was born in Le Pallet (pah-LAY), a village in the region of Brittany, a peninsula in the northwest part of France. His father, Berengar, was a lord and knight, and his parents expected him to follow in these professions, but from an early age he showed a greater interest in fighting with ideas than in fighting with swords.

In medieval Europe, there was only one place for an intellectual, a person whose profession or lifestyle centers around study and ideas: the church. This meant that he would have to pursue a career in the priesthood, which in turn meant that he could never marry—a fact that would later have a great effect on his life.

At the age of fifteen, Abelard left his parents, his three brothers, and his sister, to study under Roscelin de Compiègne (rawz-LAn duh KAHn-pyan). A priest and philosopher, Roscelin had recently been forced to change his teachings about the Trinity (the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost who make up the three parts of the Christian God) because his claim that they were actually three separate gods went against established beliefs of the church. Like Roscelin, Abelard would later get into a great deal of trouble with his ideas.

"The unconquerable rhinoceros"

In 1100, Abelard went to the French capital of Paris, where he began studying under Guillaume (gee-YOHM), or William, of Champeaux (sham-POH). William was a high official at the Cathedral of Notre Dame (NOH-truh DAHM), the greatest church in France, and therefore a powerful man. Perhaps if young Abelard had been as wise as he was smart, he would not have humiliated William as he did in a public debate concerning the nature of ideas.

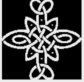
Abelard's victory over William won him a number of admirers among his classmates, who dubbed him *Rhinoceros indomitus,* or "the unconquerable rhinoceros." But it made a lifelong enemy of William, and by 1102, Abelard had left Notre Dame to establish a school of his own outside the capital. Meanwhile William, no doubt because of his recent shaming by Abelard, left Notre Dame for another appointment as well.

Abelard suffered a brief illness and returned to Brittany, but in 1108 was invited to take William's old job at Notre Dame. This so infuriated William that he returned to Paris and forced Abelard out, whereupon the young scholar began teaching at another school. Most of the students at Notre Dame left the cathedral to study under Abelard, their new hero.

Anselm of Laon

After another brief period at home, in 1113 Abelard went to study with Anselm of Laon (LAH-own; died 1117). Like William before him, Anselm—not to be confused with Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1034–1109), a philosopher regarded by many historians as Abelard's equal—was a highly respected teacher; and as with William, Abelard made a fool of him.

Because Abelard skipped many of Anselm's classes, some of his classmates challenged his lack of respect. Abelard



Li Po

Like Abelard, the Chinese poet Li Po (BOH; 701–762) was a brash, highly talented figure whose recklessness often got him into trouble. Because his ancestors had been exiled to the northern part of China, they had intermarried with the Mongols, a hardy tribal people of that region. As a result, Li Po was taller than most Chinese. He also had different ideas about the world, having been exposed primarily to Taoist (DOW-ist) rather than Confucian teachings. Confucianism, which dominated Chinese thinking, taught submission to people in authority, whereas Taoism urged followers to seek meaning by removing themselves from society.

From his youth, Li Po seemed wild and uncontrollable, and as a young man he associated with ruffians who were fond of sword-fighting. Though he married and had children, he spent much of the time wandering the countryside by himself, and he began writing what many scholars consider some of the finest work composed by a Chinese poet. He also took to excessive drinking; he believed that when he was drunk he had a higher understanding of reality.

At one point Li Po was befriended by the emperor Hsüan Tsung (shwee-AHND-zoong; ruled 712–56), who so admired his work that he once served Li Po food with his own hands—an almost unthinkable act of humility for a Chinese ruler. One of Li Po's most famous poems was "A Song of Pure Happiness," which he wrote in celebration of the emperor's beautiful concubine, Yang Kuei-fei (see box in Irene of Athens entry).

At a later point, however, Li offended a member of the imperial court—perhaps even the emperor himself—and he again wandered the country. During this time, he associated with Tu Fu (doo-FOO; 712–770), a poet whom many critics consider Li Po's equal. Tu Fu had an entirely different approach to life than Li Po, and was a calming influence on him.

During the widespread rebellion led by Yang Kuei-fei's lover, An Lu-shan, which nearly toppled the government of the T'ang dynasty, Li Po was imprisoned. He only gained his release through the help of a soldier he had befriended many years before. He returned to his wife and lived out his days quietly. According to folklore, Li Po died of drowning: supposedly he was drunk in his boat on a beautiful evening, and leaned too far over the side to admire his reflection in the moonlit water.

announced that he could do a better job than his teacher, and to prove it he prepared a lecture of his own. The subject was Ezekiel, one of the most challenging books of the Bible, and Abelard spent a single day in preparation. The next day, he spoke so brilliantly that most of Anselm's students deserted him in favor of Abelard.

Thus Abelard gained a new enemy, and Anselm saw to it that the upstart was forbidden from teaching anywhere in the region. By then, however, William's old job at Notre Dame was vacant once again, and Abelard took it. He could not have suspected that his great pride was about to lead him into misfortune.

Abelard and Héloïse

A handsome man with deep brown eyes, Abelard was a commanding presence. In his style of teaching, he rejected the old method of simply reading a text along with all the established commentaries on it; instead, he favored an active approach, introducing an idea and then grappling with it verbally through careful analysis. This made him an exciting lecturer, and won him countless admirers.

Among these was a high official at Notre Dame named Fulbert (fool-BEHR), who in 1117 invited Abelard to come live with him and tutor his niece Héloïse (EL-oh-eez; c. 1100–1164). Abelard was thirty-eight and Héloïse seventeen—tall, with fine features, a gracious manner, and great intelligence. The outcome of their long hours together should not have come as a surprise to anyone: as Abelard himself recalled, "More words of love than of our reading passed between us, and more kissing than teaching."

Tragedy

By the time Fulbert realized what was going on and ordered Abelard to leave his home, Héloïse was pregnant. Abelard took her with him to Brittany, where she gave birth to a son they named Astrolabe. (They placed the boy in the care of Abelard's sister Denise.) Abelard proposed marriage, and Fulbert was agreeable—not least because he would have one of the most admired men in France for an adoptive son-in-law. Surprisingly, it was Héloïse who objected, on the grounds that marriage would ruin Abelard's chances for advancement in the church, and that family responsibilities would keep him from his work. Furthermore, she maintained that their love was stronger than any legal vows.

Nevertheless, they went ahead with the marriage, which they kept secret to protect Abelard's reputation. Soon, however, Fulbert began bragging about the fact that Abelard was his relative, and when the two publicly denied that they were married, Fulbert became abusive toward his niece. Abelard arranged for Héloïse to escape to a convent, or nunnery, in Argenteuil (ar-zhahn-TWEE).

Fearing that Abelard intended to force Héloïse to become a nun, thereby breaking off the marriage, Fulbert decided to take revenge. He bribed Abelard's servant to leave his master's door unlocked, and one night Fulbert, accompanied by a few hoodlums, broke into Abelard's bedroom and castrated him.

Despite the many enemies he had made, Abelard had many friends as well, and the public was outraged when they learned what had happened. Abelard's servant and one of Fulbert's henchmen were captured, blinded, and castrated; as for Fulbert, he lost his position and was forced to leave the city.

New enemies

Feeling that his misfortune was a punishment from God, Abelard became a monk in 1119, and told Héloïse to become a nun. But soon he was back to his rebellious self, raising hackles among the monks at the monastery of Saint-Denis by criticizing their methods. Therefore when he requested permission to return to his work as a teacher, the monks were happy to see him go.

In 1120, Abelard wrote a book about the nature of the Trinity that so infuriated some of Anselm's disciples that they organized a meeting at Soissons (swah-SAWn) in 1121 and condemned him on religious grounds. Abelard returned to the monastery, but again made enemies, and with the help of a powerful friend established a monastery of his own dedicated to the Paraclete, or Holy Ghost. This caused problems too, since monasteries were supposed to be dedicated to the entire Trinity or to Christ.

In 1123, Abelard published one of his most important works, *Sic et Non* ("For and Against"), which presented some 160 seemingly illogical statements by church leaders and ar-

gued that only through reasoning could one understand them. It was bad enough to place such an emphasis on reason as opposed to religious faith, but also in 1123, his *Ethics* put forth the idea that sin is a matter of one's intentions rather than one's actions; in other words, a sin can only be a sin if one knowingly commits it. Students continued to flock to Abelard, but when he realized he had gained a truly powerful enemy in **Bernard of Clairvaux** (see entry), he took a job in Brittany—far from Paris.

Abelard's latter years

In 1128, Héloïse established a convent in the buildings formerly occupied by Abelard's monastery. Meanwhile Abelard's enemies in Brittany tried several times to have him killed, so he escaped and in 1132 wrote a volume translated as *The Story of My Misfortunes*. Héloïse obtained a copy and wrote him a letter in which she made it clear that she still loved him. Abelard responded: "If ... you have need of my instruction and writings in matters pertaining to God, write to me what you want, so that I may answer as God permits me." She understood that he no longer wanted to speak of love, but they continued to correspond on questions of faith.

By 1136, Abelard was back in Paris, preparing to debate Bernard. But Bernard was not about to engage in an argument he knew he would lose, and on June 3, 1140, he charged Abelard with heresy (HAIR-uh-see)—that is, holding ideas that went against established church beliefs. Abelard appealed to Pope Innocent II (ruled 1130–43), but he learned that the pope supported Bernard, so he agreed to make peace. In private, however, he wrote a work the English title of which is *Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian*. In it he still maintained that reason, as opposed to blind faith, was a necessary part of religious belief.

By this time, Abelard was sixty-three and in ailing health. He died on April 21, 1142, and in accordance with his wishes, was buried at the Paraclete. When Héloïse died twenty-two years later, she was laid to rest beside him. Later their bodies were moved to Père-Lachaise (PAYR luh-SHEZ), a famous cemetery in Paris, where their headstone reads, "ABELARD: HÉLOÏSE—For Ever One."

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Ala-ud-din Muhammad Khalji

Born 1200s
Died 1316

Indian sultan

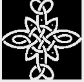
Ala-ud-din was one of the most noteworthy of India's Muslim rulers during the Middle Ages. Although Hinduism and not Islam (the religion of Muslims) is the majority religion in India, Muslim invasions in the 700s and afterwards spread the faith throughout the subcontinent, so that by Ala-ud-din's time Islam dominated the land politically if not in terms of population. Ala-ud-din launched an ambitious and bloody campaign of conquest that took him deep into southern India—and might have gone on to even more far-flung campaigns if he had not wisely heeded the suggestions of his advisors.

"The usual policy of the Sultans was clearly sketched by Ala-ud-din, who required his advisers to draw up 'rules and regulations for grinding down the Hindus, and for depriving them of that wealth and property which fosters disaffection and rebellion.'"

Will Durant, Our Oriental Heritage

Muslims and Hindus

Today the Indian subcontinent is divided into several countries, most notably India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The latter two, in the west and east, respectively, have Muslim majorities, whereas India's population is overwhelmingly Hindu. It would be hard to imagine two religions more different than Islam, which worships a single God, and Hinduism,



Hindu and Buddhist Rulers of India

Throughout the Middle Ages, there were numerous Hindu- and Buddhist-dominated kingdoms in India, primarily in the central and southern portions of the subcontinent. These have received far less attention than their Muslim counterparts, largely because the southern realms were not significantly connected to events outside the country. By contrast, the Delhi Sultanate was religiously linked with the Middle East and confronted invasions by the Mongols and Tamerlane.

Nonetheless, it is fascinating to study Hindu dominions such as the Chalukya (KUH-luh-kyuh) empire, which rose and fell periodically between about 600 and about 1200. Most notable among the rulers of the Chalukya, who controlled the Deccan Plateau of central India, was Pulakesin II (pul-uh-KAY-shin; ruled 610–42). Like his foe Harsha (see box in Mansa Musa entry), against whom he scored a victory in 620, Pulakesin received a visit from the Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsang.

Among the kingdoms with which Pulakesin did battle was that of the Pallava dynasty. The latter ruled southern India from about 300 to about 900, and established settlements in the Malay lands of Southeast Asia. The Pallavas were overtaken by the Cholas, a dynasty of Tamils from Ceylon who controlled southern India from about 900 to about 1200.

Most notable among the Chola rulers were a father and son, Rajaraja I (ruled 985–1014) and Rajendra (ruled 1014–44). Rajaraja built their empire into a large and unified one, defeating a number of other kingdoms along the way. He was also the first significant ruler of India to employ naval forces, which he used for conquests of Ceylon and the Maldive Islands. Rajendra extended Chola rule far into the north of India, up to the Ganges River, and conducted extensive trade with Southeast Asia.

with its many gods. In large part because of the clash between Hinduism and Islam, India was separated into Hindu and Muslim nations when it achieved independence in 1947.

The roots of Hinduism in India go back thousands of years, but Islam only entered the country with an invasion by forces from the Middle East in 711. Thus began the first of many Muslim dynasties in India, this one a short-lived sultanate in what is now Pakistan. These Muslim invasions took place primarily in the north; in southern India, Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms prevailed (see box).

Muslims pray at Jama Masjid, India's largest mosque, during the holy month of Ramadan in January 2000. Islam is not the majority religion in India today, but in Ala-ud-din's time, it was politically dominant. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

The Delhi Sultanate

During the late 900s, successive waves of Turkish invaders established their power in the cities of Lahore (now in Pakistan) and Delhi. One of the Turks' slaves was Qutb-ud-Din Aybak (kütbüd-DEEN eye-BAHK) who achieved his independence and in 1206 became ruler over an empire centered at Delhi. This marked the founding of the Delhi Sultanate, the first independent Muslim kingdom in India, with no ties to an outside ruler.

In 1290, the Khalji (kal-JEE) family began thirty years of control over the sultanate. The most important Khalji ruler, and the one who held the throne for the majority of those three decades, was the ruthless Ala-ud-din Muhammad (uh-LAH-ood-deen).

Taking control of the sultanate

Little is known about Ala-ud-din's life until the sultan—his uncle and father-in-law—appointed him governor of

Kara, a state within the sultanate, in 1292. Three years later, Ala-ud-din marched on a number of enemy cities, and began making plans to overthrow his father-in-law.

Ala-ud-din moved farther south than any Muslim conqueror yet had when, in 1296, his troops plunged into the Deccan Plateau that forms the center of India. There they defeated a Hindu raja, or lord, in the region of Devagiri (day-vah-GEER-ee). As a result of this victory Ala-ud-din seized 17,250 pounds of gold, 200 pounds of pearls, and 28,250 pounds of silver. His men, buoyed by their success, supported him in his march to the capital, where he had his father-in-law killed and declared himself the sultan.

Wars of conquest

The next fifteen years, from 1296 to 1311, were spent on a seemingly endless series of wars in which Ala-ud-din sought to gain control over southern India. He dealt severely with Hindu rajas whenever his forces clashed with theirs, and adopted the Muslim practice of treating a war of conquest as a *jihad* or "holy war."

By 1303, he had subdued most of the powerful kingdoms in north central India. Then he turned his attention to fighting back the Mongols, who were trying to invade the country from the northwest, and this took three years of his time. He then turned his attention to conquering central India, and by 1309 his forces had reached the southernmost tip of the subcontinent.

Alexander II

It had been centuries since any ruler had achieved this feat. Ala-ud-din was compared to Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.), the Greek conqueror who subdued more land in a shorter period of time than any general before or since. Alexander had special significance to India, since it was there that his wars of conquest had stopped. Alexander's example, in fact, had spawned the creation of India's first large empire under the Mauryans (324–184 B.C.), who united much of the country.

Conscious of Alexander's example, and of his reputation, Ala-ud-din issued coins that referred to him as "Alexander II." From his position of glory as ruler over most of the subcontinent, he considered an ambitious plan of world conquest. His advisors, however, told him that his energies would be better spent on consolidating his rule than on trying to conquer new lands.

Ala-ud-din wisely listened to his counselors. Certainly he had plenty of reason not to risk his gains, since he was already the wealthiest sultan in the history of Delhi. He did toy with the idea of starting a new religion—presumably one based on himself—but turned from this vain scheme to the serious business of running an empire.

Ala-ud-din's authoritarian state

The rule of Ala-ud-din was tyrannical and authoritarian, making use of secret police and spies. Known for his harsh treatment of enemies, he was particularly cruel toward Hindus, who he considered enemies of Allah. He imposed severe taxes on them, and forbade them to possess weapons or ride horses.

On the other hand, Ala-ud-din cultivated the arts, making Delhi a city more splendid than ever before. Thanks to the Mongols' invasions of the Middle East and Central Asia, waves of wealthy and talented Muslim refugees had poured into Delhi; and this, combined with the wealth he had gathered in his wars of conquest, helped Ala-ud-din turn the city into a center of learning and culture.

Ala-ud-din also built a number of lasting monuments, even as his own life was fading away. Years of hard living had

Muhammad ibn Tughluq

The dynasty that replaced the Khaljis four years after Ala-ud-din's death was the Tughluq (tug-LUK) family. Its most notorious member was Muhammad ibn Tughluq (c. 1290–1351), who assumed the throne in 1325.

Like Ala-ud-din, Tughluq was known for his ruthless treatment of Hindus, and the harsh measures he used to suppress rebellions. He once punished a rebellious noble by having the man skinned alive and cooked with rice; he then sent the remains to the man's wife and children—and the noble happened to be his cousin.

Yet Tughluq, who hosted the visiting traveler Ibn Battuta (see box in Marco Polo entry), proved a less effective ruler than Ala-ud-din. He lost both territory and influence during his reign, weakening the Delhi Sultanate and hastening its eventual downfall at the hands of **Tamerlane** (see entry) in 1398. Tughluq himself lost his life during an expedition against rebels in 1351.

caught up with him, and in his last years he was weak both physically and mentally, allowing himself to be dominated by one of his generals. He died in January 1316, and the Khalji dynasty ended just four years later.

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Alexander Nevsky

Born 1220
Died 1263

Russian prince and hero

Numbered among the greatest of Russia's heroes, Alexander Nevsky saved his country many times, both in battle with invaders from the west, and later by negotiating with the Mongols. The defeat of the Teutonic Knights of Germany was a particularly dramatic event, a battle on ice that would form a memorable scene in a 1938 film about Alexander's defense of Russia. By contrast, the role Alexander took with regard to the Mongols seemed like a case of giving in to a foreign invader. Yet he had little choice, and in retrospect it seems certain that he acted wisely.

"Let the manly images of our great ancestors [such as] Alexander Nevsky ... inspire you in this war!"

From a speech by Soviet dictator Josef Stalin following the German invasion of Russia in 1941

The many Russias

Russia first emerged as a political entity in about 900 under the leadership of Kiev (kee-YEV), a city-state that is now the capital of Ukraine. Thus historians refer to the country during this period as "Kievan Russia," though in fact Russia was far from a single, unified nation. It was instead a collection of city-states—actually duchies, or regions controlled by dukes—that were sometimes at war with one another and sometimes at peace.

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of Hulton-Getty/Tony Stone Images.*

Most of these political units were strictly controlled by princes, but the northern city-states of Novgorod (NAWV-guh-rud) and Pskov (SKAWV) had more relaxed governments, at least by Russian standards. There, in a region close to other lands in Northern Europe, business interests had an influential role in easing the traditionally harsh control of Russian leaders.

After 1054, Kievan Russia began to disintegrate, and more than a century of turmoil followed. By the late 1100s, however, at least a measure of stability returned as the Grand Duchy of Vladimir-Suzdal (VLAH-duh-meer SÜZ-duhl) assumed leadership.

Surrounded by enemies

To the east of Vladimir were the Volga Bulgars, a group of Turks who had settled in the region, and with whom the Russians maintained an uneasy peace. To the northwest were the Germans, Danes, and Swedes on the Baltic Sea, along with Letts or Latvians and Estonians; and to the west was Lithuania, then a significant power. At a time when religion dictated political allegiance, the Russians, who had embraced the Greek Orthodox Church, found themselves faced with enemies on many sides: the Muslims in the east, and the Catholics in the west and northwest.

Early in the 1200s came a new wave of potential enemies, a group who embraced no religion the Russians even recognized: the Mongols, whose leader was **Genghis Khan** (see entry). When the Mongols attacked the Volga Bulgars, the Russians were divided as to which side they should take, with some states coming to the aid of their neighbors. The princes of Vladimir stayed out of the fight.

Mongol invasion

Then, in 1237, Genghis Khan's nephew Batu Khan swept over the Bulgars and conquered several Russian cities—including Vladimir. The Russian prince Yuri led the defense of Russia, but was killed in the fight, and the Mongols kept moving toward Novgorod, one of the most valued of the Russian states.

Then, as suddenly as they had appeared, the Mongols turned away. The cause was probably the spring thaw, which turned the hard ground into mud that made it hard to cross. The Mongols made a vast camp on the Volga River, which would serve as their base for many years to come. By 1240, they were on the move again, razing Kiev and marching deep into Europe, where they overcame Polish and German forces to conquer Hungary.

They had nearly reached Vienna, Austria, in 1241 when suddenly they turned back again. This time the reason was that the ruling khan, or chieftain (Genghis's successor) had died, and Batu rushed back to Mongolia to ensure that he got a piece of the inheritance. Thus Europe was saved from Mongol conquest, but the Mongols put down roots in Russia, where their empire became known as the "Golden Horde." "Horde" is the English version of the Mongols' word for their huge encampments, *orda;* and "golden" signified the great wealth the Mongols had gained through conquest.

Mongol rule in Russia was an established fact. Thus in 1238, when Yuri's brother Yaroslav II (yuh-ruh-SLAHF) assumed leadership of the Russians, he had to gain the Mongols' approval before he could declare himself leader. The Mongols did not want the trouble of controlling Russia politically: they simply wanted to collect tribute, or taxes, and they needed Russian princes to ensure that the collection of these taxes—which included not only money but a tenth of each year's harvest—went smoothly.

Alexander becomes Nevsky

Taking advantage of the Mongols' weakening of Russia, the Swedes had invaded Russian lands in 1236 on the pretext that they were there to convert people from Eastern Orthodoxy to Catholicism. It was then that Alexander, son of Yaroslav, made his first mark on history. Born in Vladimir, he had been raised among the tumultuous events of the Mongol invasion, and was prepared for war. Thus at the age of sixteen, he led a force that met the Swedes in battle on the River Neva (NAY-vah) on July 15, 1236. It was a small victory, but it made Alexander's name: from then on he would be known as Alexander of the Neva, or Alexander Nevsky.

Heroes of Catholic Europe

Americans sometimes mistakenly lump all of Eastern Europe together, primarily because after World War II (1939–45), most of its nations fell under communist dictatorships allied with the Soviet Union. In fact, there is a sharp distinction between Eastern European nations that accepted Greek Orthodoxy during the Middle Ages, and those that became Roman Catholic. Orthodox lands, such as Russia, Bulgaria, and Serbia, adopted the alphabet of **St. Cyril** (see dual entry with St. Methodius), and tended to have more rigid governments. Catholic lands, among them Hungary, Poland, and the modern Czech Republic, were more closely tied with Western traditions.

One of the first important leaders of Catholic Eastern Europe was St. Wenceslas (WIN-suh-slaws; c. 907–929), prince of Bohemia—roughly equivalent to the Czech Republic. His grandmother raised him as a Christian, but his mother maintained old pagan traditions, and later had the grandmother killed. Wenceslas remained faithful to Catholicism, however, and encouraged the sending of missionaries to convert the Germans, many of whom still maintained pagan religions. Known for his kindness and his devotion to God, Wenceslas (the subject of the Christmas song "Good King Wenceslas") was killed by his brother Boreslav, who wanted to take the throne. Soon after his death, he was declared a martyr, or someone who has died for the faith, and was made a saint. It is interesting to note that the name Wenceslas in the Czech language is Václav (VAHK-luv), and that after the Czech Republic threw off communism in the 1990s, its first president was the poet Václav Havel (HAHV-ul).

Having proven himself, the teenaged Alexander was given control over Novgorod, which was soon threatened by German invaders. These were the Teutonic (too-TAHN-ik) or German Knights, a group that had been formed as a semi-religious order, but whose real business was war and conquest. In the winter of 1242, Alexander and his brother Andrew raised a force from Novgorod to meet the invaders.

The "Battle on the Ice"

Winters in northern Russia are long, and the surface of Lake Chudskoe was still frozen when the Russian force marched out to meet the Germans, along with their Finnish

King Stephen I of Hungary (977–1038) also grew up in a world heavily influenced by paganism, but accepted Catholicism in 997. This meant that his people also accepted Catholicism, a fact that excited Pope Sylvester II. In his haste to crown a new Christian king in 1000, Sylvester sent Stephen a crown bearing a cross that was slightly bent. This remained the crown of Hungary—even appearing on the flag of the later Austro-Hungarian Empire—until 1918. In 1083, Stephen was declared a saint.

Another important Hungarian ruler was László I (LAHZ-loh; c. 1040–1095). In 1091, László conquered Croatia and Bosnia, and extended his rule into Transylvania. Facing a resurgence of paganism, he took measures to ensure that Catholicism regained strength in the country, and supported Pope **Gregory VII** in his conflicts with Holy Roman Emperor **Henry IV** (see dual entry). He also instituted a new legal code that helped restore order in Hungary, which had been troubled by years of internal conflict, and was later declared a saint.

Among the greatest of Poland's rulers was Casimir III (KAZ-uh-meer; 1310–1370), also known as Casimir the Great. Under his reign, Poland's territory and influence increased greatly, and he dealt successfully with both Bohemia and the same Teutonic Knights that had threatened Alexander Nevsky's Russia. Polish armies under Casimir even occupied Russia in the 1340s. Casimir instituted a series of laws, founded the University of Cracow, and ushered in a golden age of Polish history that lasted for some three hundred years.

allies, on April 5, 1242. In a scene made famous for modern filmgoers by the director Sergei Eisenstein, the invaders rushed at the defending Russians, who suddenly surprised them by closing ranks around the enemy and attacking them from the rear. The Russians scored a huge victory in the "Battle on the Ice," which became a legendary event in Russian history.

Two years later, Alexander drove off a Lithuanian invading force, and though he soon left Novgorod, the people there had become so dependent on his defense that they asked him to come back as their prince. With Novgorod now in the lead among Russian states, Alexander was the effective ruler of Russia.

Movie still from Sergei Eisenstein's 1938 film *Alexander Nevsky,* starring Nikolai Cherkasov as the Russian prince. *Reproduced by permission of the Kobal Collection.*

Coexisting with the Mongols

As leader, Alexander faced a less dramatic, but much more important, challenge than he had when doing battle with the invaders of Novgorod: the question of whether, or how, to coexist with the Mongols. He could have chosen to resist, as other Russian princes did—and could have lost everything trying, as was the case with most of the others. Faced with this reality, as well as the fact that the Mongols were willing to leave the Greek Orthodox religion alone, whereas the Germans and others wanted to convert the Russians, Alexander chose coexistence.

Proclaimed Grand Prince of Vladimir in 1252, Alexander continued to deal with invasions from the west, but most of his energy was spent on the Mongols. He assisted them in carrying out a census, or a count of the people, as part of their aim to raise taxes on the Russians. He even executed other Russian leaders who resisted the Mongols' efforts at census-taking.

The foundations of modern Russia

Alexander died in 1263 and was succeeded by Andrew, who died a year later. Alexander's son Yaroslav then took control until 1272, and when he died he left the town of Moscow to his son Daniel. The latter, only two years old at the time, would grow up to build Moscow as a mighty force, and in time it would become the leading city of Russia.

Despite his cooperation with the Mongols, Alexander is remembered as a hero. In the 1700s, when the Mongols were long gone and Russia was emerging as a great power, Peter the Great, czar (ZAR) or emperor of Russia, built the city of St. Petersburg on the Neva. There he dedicated a shrine to Alexander, who had been named a saint in the Orthodox Church. In 1836, on the 600th anniversary of the Battle of the Neva, the principal street of St. Petersburg was named Nevsky Prospect in his honor.

Over one hundred years later, by which time Russia had become the Soviet Union under the dictatorship of Josef Stalin, the country faced the threat of another German invasion—this time by the Nazis under Adolf Hitler. It was then that Eisenstein made his famous film, with a memorable musical score by the great composer Sergei Prokofiev. The scene of the "Battle on the Ice" was a compelling one, and it sent a warning that Hitler chose not to heed.

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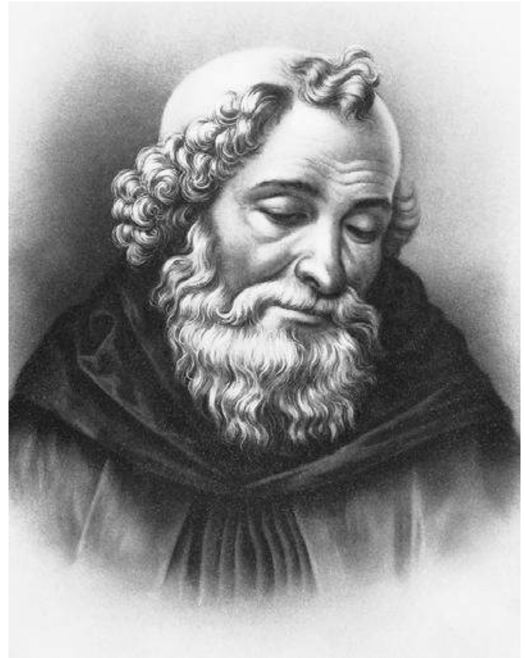
Augustine

Born 354
Died 430

North African church leader and philosopher



Aside from Jesus Christ and others from the New Testament, no one had as great an influence on the shaping of the Christian faith as Saint Augustine, who helped bridge the period between ancient and medieval times. He grew up in a world heavily influenced by the Roman Empire, but during his life the power of Rome became increasingly shaky, and he promoted Christian faith as a more stable foundation than any earthly kingdom.

Augustine served as bishop or church leader over the North African city of Hippo, and he wrote literally hundreds of books discussing specific aspects of Christianity. Many of the questions addressed by Augustine have long since been decided, but two of his works, *Confessions* and the *City of God,* remain classics with an eternal appeal.

"Suddenly every vain hope became worthless to me, and with an incredible warmth of heart I ... began now to arise that I might return to thee.... How ardent was I then, my God, how ardent to fly from earthly things to thee!"

From the Confessions

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Christians and pagans

He was born Aurelius Augustinus (aw-gu-STY-nus) on November 13, 354, but it was by the name Augustine (aw-

GUS-tin) that he would become famous. His hometown was Tagaste (tuh-GAS-tee), a city in what is now Algeria, which at that time was part of the Western Roman Empire.

Like many Romans, Augustine's father Patricius believed in the old Roman religion, which was pagan, meaning that its followers worshiped a variety of gods. Many other Romans, including Augustine's mother Monica, had accepted Christianity. The latter religion had developed in the three centuries following the deaths of Jesus and his followers, and had gained wide acceptance among the emperors of Rome.

As for young Augustine, he did not believe in the pagan gods, but he refused to accept Christianity either. He later recalled in the *Confessions,* a book detailing his experiences as a youth and his eventual acceptance of the Christian faith, that Monica prayed for him often during his wayward youth.

A reckless young man

Because Augustine's parents wanted their son to get ahead in life, they enrolled him at one of the best Roman schools, in the city of Madura. In 370, when he was sixteen years old, he completed his studies there, and hoped to go on to the equivalent of college. However, his father had to raise the money for his studies, so in the meantime, Augustine returned home. He spent a year in Tagaste, during which time he associated with other young men who encouraged him to engage in reckless living, including sexual activity, theft, and acts of destructiveness.

In 371, Augustine went away to Carthage to continue his studies. Located in what is now Tunisia, Carthage was the greatest city of Roman Africa—but it was also a place where a young person could get into a great deal of trouble. While there, Augustine became involved in a number of sexual relationships, one of which resulted in the birth of a son, Adeodatus (ay-dee-AHD-uh-tus). He also spent time with a gang of troublemakers called the "wreckers," and flirted with a faith called Manichaeism (man-uh-KEE-izm).

A religion which had originated in Persia or Iran, Manichaeism had many Christian elements. Yet it differed

A view of modern Carthage, Tunisia. In Augustine's time, Carthage was the greatest city of Roman Africa and Augustine's home for many years. *Photograph by Jason Laure. Reproduced by permission of Laure Communications.*

sharply from Christianity in a number of other ways, most notably in Manichaeans' claim that they alone had special knowledge concerning the true nature of good and evil. Augustine would remain associated with the Manichaeans for nine years, and encouraged many of his friends to accept that faith. Despite his later rejection of Manichaeism, Augustine recognized that his interest in the religion was an early step in the quest for understanding that would lead him to Christianity.

On to Rome

Patricius, who became a Christian on his deathbed, died in 372; however, a wealthy man named Romanianus agreed to support Augustine in the completion of his education. When he finished his schooling in 374, at age twenty, Augustine returned to Tagaste, where he planned to teach. However, when Monica learned that her son was a Manichee,

she refused to allow him into her home, so he returned to Carthage.

Augustine remained in Carthage for a few years, but he knew that if he really wanted to make a good career for himself, he would have to get closer to Rome itself. Therefore in the fall of 383, he moved to the northern Italian city of Milan (mi-LAHN), where he got an important job as a teacher of rhetoric, the art of speaking and writing. Though he was well on his way to great success, he found that something was lacking in his life, and he became deeply depressed. In the midst of his unhappiness, he reached out for the faith of his mother: Christianity.

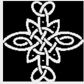
From convert to bishop

In fact Monica herself had by then come to Italy, and she was a great influence on Augustine during this time of searching. So was Ambrose (339–397), the bishop of Milan, another key figure in the establishment of medieval Christianity. But perhaps the greatest influence on Augustine's conversion was his direct reading of the Bible itself, which he undertook after hearing a child at play chanting "Pick up and read, pick up and read." In July 386, Augustine converted to Christianity, and on Easter Sunday 387 was baptized, or lowered into water as a symbol of death and rebirth in Christ.

Soon after his conversion, Augustine planned to go back to Africa, but he had to go alone: just before the time they were supposed to leave, Monica became sick and died—but she died happy, knowing that her son had become a Christian. In 388, he established a monastery, a place for men who wanted to escape the outside world and spend a quiet life searching for spiritual understanding, in Tagaste. Augustine, however, was not destined to have a quiet life. In 391, while visiting the nearby town of Hippo, he became a priest, and five years later became the bishop of Hippo.

Addressing religious disputes

During the years that followed, Augustine would face a number of disputes between mainstream Christianity



Simeon Stylites the Elder

Like Augustine, Simeon Stylites the Elder (SIM-ee-un stuh-LIT-eez; c. 388–459) was later named a saint—that is, someone officially recognized by the church for their holiness. Yet whereas Augustine lived a life closely tied to the central events of his time, Simeon was an offbeat figure at the fringes of society. The name *Stylites* is a variation on a Greek word meaning "pillar-hermit," and in fact Simeon was the most famous of these men, who went out into the desert and lived atop tall pillars or columns.

Simeon was born in northern Syria in about 388, and he spent his childhood and teen years working as a shepherd boy. At age sixteen, he decided to become a monk—someone who leaves the outside world to search for spiritual understanding in a center called a monastery. Many monks engage in self-denial, for instance by going without food for long periods of time, but Simeon took things much further. He wrapped a rope tightly around his body and lived that way for more than a year, until his flesh rotted and no one could stand to be near him because of the smell. When the abbot, leader of the monastery, inspected Simeon's bed and found it covered with maggots, he ordered him to leave the monastery.

Simeon spent three years living in a hut, where he pushed himself to ever more difficult feats, for instance by standing for long periods. When this proved too easy, he forced himself to live atop a cliff in the desert. By then, however, word of Simeon's impressive self-denial—which many interpreted as a sign of great devotion to God—had spread throughout the area, and followers came seeking spiritual wisdom. Determined to remove himself from the world, Simeon arranged for the erection of a pillar with a small platform on top. It was there he would live for the remainder of his life.

Initially, Simeon's pillar was about nine feet high, but over time it was replaced by increasingly taller ones; by the time of his death he was living on a column fifty or sixty feet high. Followers still came to him, climbing a ladder along the side, and his many admirers included Roman emperors and bishops. After thirty years atop the pillar, Simeon died on September 2, 459.

and other versions of the faith. Among his first opponents were the Manichaeans, and in this conflict Augustine found himself pitted against old friends. Some, such as Honoratus (for whom he wrote a book called *On the Virtue of Believing* in order to explain Christian faith), converted to Christianity; others, including Fortunatus—subject of a book by Augustine called *Against Fortunatus the Manichee*—did not.

After Augustine won a public debate with the Manichaean leader Felix in 404, Manichaeism ceased to be a significant force in Hippo.

Another threat came from the Donatists (DOH-nuh-tistz), a North African splinter group who rejected the mainstream church leadership—that is, the bishop of Rome, who became known as the pope. Beginning in 410, Augustine also squared off with the Pelagians (puh-LAY-jee-unz). Their leader, Pelagius (c. 354–c. 418), taught that humanity was born without sin, and did not need the help of God to achieve goodness. This directly contradicted mainstream Christianity, which held that all humans were sinful in the absence of God. Augustine led the fight against Pelagianism with works such as *On the Merits of Sinners and Forgiveness* (411).

In his latter days, Augustine found himself in conflict not only with the Pelagians, but with groups around the Christian world who embraced the idea of predestination (pree-des-ti-NAY-shun). Predestination is the belief that a person's ultimate fate—that is, whether they will go to Heaven or Hell—is already decided before their birth. It has some basis in the Bible, but so too does the idea of free will, or the belief that humans have complete freedom to choose whether or not they will follow God. Augustine set out to demonstrate that free will and predestination were both true, and furthermore that predestination did not give people a license to sin.

City of God

In his early years as the bishop of Hippo, Augustine had written the *Confessions*. This work could properly be called the first real autobiography, or personal history, because it is not nearly as concerned with outside events as it is with the inner life of Augustine himself. It is one of Augustine's two greatest contributions to literature, the second being *City of God,* which he wrote between 413 and 425.

The event that inspired the writing of the latter book was the sacking, or destruction, of Rome by an invading tribe called the Visigoths in 410. In hindsight, historians recognize the sacking of Rome as the beginning of the end of the West-

ern Roman Empire, which ceased to exist in 476; at the time, people viewed it as the worst disaster in the history of the world. Believers in Rome's pagan religion blamed Christians, saying that the destruction of the city was a punishment from the gods.

Augustine took exactly the opposite position: the destruction of Rome, he said, was God's punishment for the Romans' persisting belief in their old pagan religion. In *City of God,* he pointed out many examples in Roman history when the people had called on the gods' help, but to no avail. Perhaps drawing on his past belief in Manichaeism, which viewed the world as an eternal struggle between good and evil, Augustine now explained all of existence as a conflict between the "City of God," or the church, and the "City of Man"—that is, the belief systems that opposed Christianity.

Facing the end of the ancient world

As Augustine was writing *On the Predestination of the Saints* in 429, shadows were gathering over the world he knew. A tribe called the Vandals, who like the Visigoths were barbarians or uncivilized people, had conquered Spain, and in the spring of 429 the Vandals launched an attack on Africa. By the wintertime, they had begun a siege, or sustained military attack, against Hippo. On August 28, 430, while the Vandals were besieging the city, Augustine died.

The Vandals would later launch such a vicious attack on Rome itself that their name became a synonym for reckless destructiveness. Yet even they respected the name of Augustine: when they captured and destroyed the city in 431, they allowed a library containing his books to remain standing.

The fact that Christian beliefs are so clearly established today is a tribute to the work of Augustine and others who lived in a time when basic issues had not yet been decided. In his own life, he saw the rapid decline of Roman civilization and the beginnings of the barbarian triumph that would plunge Western Europe into centuries of confusion. His work helped Christians weather this painful transition.

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Averroës

Born 1126
Died 1198

Spanish-Arab philosopher

As a thinker, Averroës represented the pinnacle of Islamic civilization in Spain; he was also the last of his line. Though devoutly committed to the beliefs of Islam, he placed great value on the workings of human reason, and in his many writings sought to explain how it was possible to be a person of both faith and thought. Unbeknownst to him, he would exert his greatest influence in the Christian lands of Western Europe, where his legacy brought about a renewed interest in the writings of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle.

"Motion is eternal and continuous; all motion has its cause in a preceding motion. Without motion there is no time. We cannot conceive of motion having either a beginning or an end."

Commentary on Aristotle's Physics

The world of Averroës's birth

His name at birth was Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Rushd, and to this day he is known in the Arab world as ibn Rushd (IB'n RÜSH't). In the West, however, he is best known by the "Latinized" version of his name, Averroës (uh-VEER-uh-weez).

Averroës was born in the Spanish city of Córdoba in 1126, at a time when Spain had long been ruled by Muslims.

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the New York Public Library Picture Collection.*

The first caliphs, or rulers, had come from the Arabian dynasty of Umayyads (oo-MY-edz), but in 1086 they had been replaced by the Almoravids (al-mohr-AHV-idz) from Morocco. In 1120, just before Averroës's birth, another group of Moors called the Almohads had overthrown the Almoravids.

The double life of the Almohads

Each successive wave of invaders had been less cultured, and more inclined to demand that their people maintain an unwavering belief in the principles of Islam handed down by the prophet **Muhammad** (see entry). Each had in turn been softened by the refined, sophisticated ways of the brilliant Spanish Muslim civilization. This softening had contributed to the overthrow of the Umayyads, and then of the Almoravids; therefore the Almohads, determined to hold on to power, had to lead double lives.

Inside the houses of the caliphs and other powerful figures, men were privately permitted to use their minds, and to discuss the great questions of philosophy, or the study of the underlying meaning of the world. Among the lower classes, however, no deviation from hard-line Islam was permitted. In this way, the rulers hoped to preserve their power over the people. It was the destiny of Averroës, on the one hand a philosopher, and on the other hand an Islamic judge or *qadi* (KAH-dee), to live such a double life.

Both his grandfather and father had been qadis, and when Averroës came of age, he accepted the family calling. He not only studied law, but also medicine and a variety of other subjects, and it was probably during his early years that he first became intrigued by philosophy.

An audience with the caliph

At the age of thirty, Averroës went to Marrakech in Morocco. The latter was the capital of the Almohad caliphate, a realm that included what is now Spain and Portugal, as well as all of North Africa to the west of Egypt and the north of the Sahara Desert. A few years after Averroës moved to Marrakech, 'Abd al-Mu'mim, the caliph who had subdued much

of this empire, died and was replaced by his son, Abu Ya'qub Yusuf (ruled 1163–1184).

In about 1169, the scholar Ibn Tufayl (too-FYL; c. 1105–1184) introduced Averroës to the young caliph. It was said that on their first meeting, Abu Ya'qub Yusuf, knowing about Averroës's wisdom, tried to engage him in a discussion of the ancient Greek philosophers. Aware of the strict rules against "ungodly" forms of learning, Averroës kept his mouth shut, but was amazed when the caliph turned to Ibn Tufayl and began engaging in a learned discourse. As a result, Averroës felt safe to embark on a lively discussion with the caliph, who was so impressed with his learning that he called on Averroës to become his teacher.

Commentaries on Aristotle

Abu Ya'qub Yusuf commented that the existing translations of Aristotle were inadequate. As a result, Averroës undertook the translations himself, and this led to a series of books that would make his fame.

Considered by many to be the greatest of the Greek philosophers, Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) wrote on a wide range of subjects. In the realm of philosophy itself, for instance, he examined matters such as logic, or the system of correct reasoning, and metaphysics, or the fundamental nature of being. He was also concerned with psychology, literature, and drama, and as a scientist his achievements in areas ranging from physics to botany were many and varied. Aristotle's work represented a past high point in human thought, the "Golden Age" of Greece, when great minds explored the frontiers of possibility.

In contrast to Aristotle, Averroës was not an original thinker; rather, he was, as later admirers called him, "The Great Commentator," whose greatest contribution lay in helping others understand Aristotle's thought. This was particularly valuable because, in the confusion that had attended the fall of the Western Roman Empire—and with it the virtual collapse of European civilization—much of the learning from ancient times had been lost.

Averroës was handicapped by the fact that he read no Greek, and therefore had to rely on second- or third-hand

translations into Arabic. Yet he managed to overcome much of the misunderstanding that had plagued earlier scholars of Aristotle. Many of these had confused Aristotle's ideas with those of his teacher, Plato, an equally brilliant figure whose views were almost exactly opposite of Aristotle's. Averroës, in his commentaries, helped to separate that which was truly Aristotle from things that later scholars had mistakenly attributed to him.

Other writings and ideas

Other than his many commentaries on Aristotle's works, such as the *Rhetoric, Poetics,* and *Nichomachean Ethics,* Averroës's writings included an encyclopedia of medical knowledge, which he wrote between 1162 and 1169. Further evidence of his interest in medicine was a commentary he wrote on Galen (c. A.D. 130–c. A.D. 200), a Greek physician in the Roman Empire who was the ancient world's last great scientist.

Averroës remained committed to the idea that man could apply his intellect to problems and solve them through reasoning power. This may not sound like a groundbreaking concept, but in the twelfth century it was. One of Averroës's most important works, written between 1174 and 1180, was *The Incoherence of the Incoherence,* a response to attacks on philosophy by the hard-line Muslim theorist al-Ghazali (gah-ZAH-lee) in his 1095 book *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*.

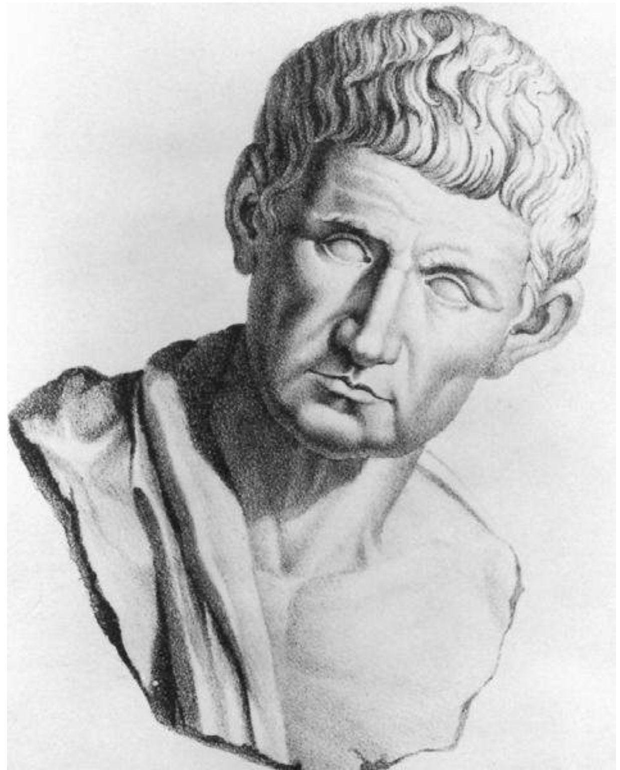
Later generations of admirers in Europe, perhaps wishing to separate Averroës from his Muslim roots, overestimated the degree to which he revolted against mainstream Islam. He genuinely believed that there was no contradiction between learning and faith in Allah, a point he demonstrated in *On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy,* also written in the period from 1174 to 1180.

Disgrace under al-Mansur

In 1169, the same year he began his friendship with Abu Ya'qub Yusuf, Averroës was appointed qadi of Seville, another great city of Muslim Spain. Two years later, he returned to his hometown of Córdoba as qadi, but spent much of the

decade that followed traveling around the Almohad caliphate, probably on business for the caliph.

Following the retirement of Ibn Tufayl, Averroës went to Marrakech in 1182 to become Abu Ya'qub Yusuf's personal physician. The caliph died two years later and was succeeded by his son, Abu Yusuf Ya'qub, known as al-Mansur, or "The Victorious." Al-Mansur took a generally favorable view of Averroës, but in 1195, when he needed the support of the *fuqaha* (a group of highly conservative Islamic scholars), Averroës suffered as a result.

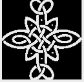


The great Greek philosopher Aristotle. Through his translations of and commentaries on Aristotle's works, Averroës brought a greater understanding of Aristotle's ideas. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

The reason for this switch of allegiance was the fact that the caliphate was in grave danger of attack from Christian forces in the north who were undertaking the Reconquista (ray-kawn-KEES-tah) or reconquest of Spain for Christianity. Desperate wartime situations sometimes create witch-hunt atmospheres, and so it was in Córdoba, where Averroës's books were publicly burned and Averroës himself was subjected to great scorn for his unorthodox ideas. It was a sign of how al-Mansur truly felt about Averroës, however, that his actual punishment—a very short exile in the town of Lucena (loo-SAYN-uh)—was minor.

The sunset of Spanish Islam

Later in 1195, the caliph ended Averroës's sentence practically before it began, and sent orders for the philosopher to rejoin his court in Marrakech. This reversal of positions resulted from the fact that al-Mansur no longer needed the help of the *fuqaha:* on July 19, 1195, he had scored a victory against the Christians at Allarcos (ah-YAHdr-kohs), a town between Córdoba and Toledo. So Averroës went to Marrakech, where he lived less than three more years. He died in 1198, and al-Mansur followed him by just a few months.



Priscian

The career of Priscian, who flourished in c. A.D. 500, had many parallels to Averroës's life. Whereas Averroës lived in a European country dominated by an African power, Priscian grew up in a part of North Africa dominated by Vandal invaders from Europe. Both men represented the end of a civilization—Arabic and Roman, respectively—and both men preserved the learning of the distant past for future generations.

Priscian was a grammarian, or a specialist in grammar—specifically, Latin grammar. Grammar textbooks, as every student knows, require the use of sentences as examples; but instead of making up his own sentences, Priscian used great quotes from the esteemed poets of Greece and Rome. Thus thanks to Priscian, a whole range of materials by writers such as Homer in the earliest days of Greece to the late Roman scholars were preserved at a time when barbarians were destroying important texts.

Priscian wrote a long poem concerning the Roman weights and measures, which provides an encyclopedic array of knowledge to students of Roman life. In addition, he produced at least one example of a panegyric (pan-uh-JY-rik), a highly popular form in the later Roman Empire. Panegyrics were poems praising a ruler, in Priscian's case the Byzantine emperor Anastasius. Priscian's most significant work, however, was the sixteen-book *Institutiones grammaticae,* which became a classic grammar text used by **Alcuin** (see English Scholars, Thinkers, and Writers entry) and others in the Middle Ages.

Though it seemed that al-Mansur had saved the caliphate, in fact Allarcos was the last significant victory by Muslim armies in Spain. Fourteen years later, in 1212, the Spanish Christians scored a decisive victory at Las Navas de Tolosa, which effectively ended Moorish rule in Spain.

The brilliance of Muslim civilization had long before faded away in its homelands of Arabia, Syria, Iraq, and Persia far to the east. For a time, Islamic culture had thrived in the west, thanks to the successive caliphates that ruled Morocco and the Iberian Peninsula. Now that flame, too, had gone out; but in a turn of events that would have probably surprised Averroës, the torch of his ideas was passed to Christian Europe.

Ever since Christians reconquered Toledo in 1085, Western Europeans had taken a renewed interest in the an-

cient treasures of Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic learning preserved by the Spanish caliphate. This interest had grown over subsequent years, and when the Reconquista brought a new flood of works by Averroës and others into Christendom, these were met with enthusiasm. Soon translations of Averroës's work appeared in English, German, and Italian, and more were to follow. Averroës would have an enormous impact on Europe in the years to come—and there was an irony in that, because as a devout Muslim, he would have had little admiration for the societies that admired him.

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Basil II

Born 957
Died 1025

Byzantine emperor and conqueror

Ruler of the Byzantine Empire from 976 to 1025, a time when the power of the Muslim caliphate had faded and the Seljuk Turks had not yet made their impact, Basil II brought his realm to its greatest height since the time of **Justinian** (see entry). His story shares certain themes with that of England's King Alfred and Mali's Sundiata Keita (see boxes): in each case, the ruler of a beleaguered people led them in wars of conquest that united them and brought them to new glories. As leader of a world power, Basil would have the most impact of the three, but his victories would also be the most short-lived.

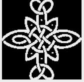
"Basil II was the greatest military genius and the greatest military organizer of his time, one of the greatest of all time."

Romilly Jenkins, Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries A.D. 610–1071

An unlikely hero

Unattractive and uneducated, Basil made an unlikely hero in Greek society, which placed a high emphasis on physical beauty and learning. Given the fact that he was raised in the imperial palace—he was the son of Emperor Romanus II (roh-MAIN-us; ruled 939–63)—his lack of education is hard to understand; so, too, is the fact that he never married.

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*



King Alfred the Great

Many rulers have been given the title "the Great," usually after their lifetime; Alfred (848–c. 900), however, was the only king of England ever assigned this distinguished title. In fact he was the first monarch to unite all of England under his rule: before Alfred's time, the land was divided among a number of smaller kingdoms, ruled either by Angles, Saxons, or Jutes. His own Saxon kingdom of Wessex was just one of these competing states.

The one unifying factor in these lands was religion, thanks in large part to the missionaries sent by Pope **Gregory I** ("the Great"; see entry). Alfred himself went to Rome as a small child, and was awed by the power of the church, the splendor of the city's imperial legacy, and the great wisdom passed down in Latin books from the writers of old.

Meanwhile, his homeland was in turmoil, thanks to a series of invasions by the Danes—one of the most prominent Viking groups—starting in 787. Young Alfred first made a name for himself in his early twenties, in 871, known as "the year of the battles." He scored a major triumph against the Danes at Ashdown, but lost his brother, King Ethelred, in another battle; subsequently the Witan, the Anglo-Saxon governing body, crowned Alfred king of Wessex.

Subsequent Danish victories forced Alfred to go into hiding. During this time, in an incident shrouded in legend, he went in disguise to a poor peasant's hut. The woman of the house, having no idea who he was, asked him to keep watch over some loaves of bread she was baking. Preoccupied by concerns for his country, Alfred let the loaves burn, and when the wife returned, she rebuked him sharply and

Though he was short, dressed poorly, and hardly spoke, a marriage of advantage could have been arranged with some other ruling house, and it would have been expected, because rulers in the Middle Ages placed a huge emphasis on fathering a son and successor. Basil's decision not to marry was particularly unfortunate, given the fact that none of his successors proved his equal: perhaps if he had had a son, he might have exerted greater influence on the next generation of leaders.

Bardas Sclerus and Bardas Phocas

A brilliant strategist and an extraordinarily capable leader, Basil spent most of his reign in the saddle, fighting a

King Alfred the Great.

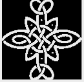
boxed his ears. The next day, Alfred came in his royal clothes, attended by servants, to apologize to the woman.

In the struggle against the Danes, Alfred introduced two highly significant concepts: the militia, ancestor of citizen-soldier forces such as America's National Guard; and the first English navy. The latter was destined to become a powerful force in the nation's history through the twentieth century. Yet Alfred won peace with the Danes ultimately not through warfare, but through negotiation. He settled an agreement with a long-despised foe, the Dane's King Gutrum, whereby the northern part of England, the Danelaw, came under Danish control, while the Anglo-Saxons—with Alfred as their king—ruled the south.

With the Danish threat minimized, Alfred devoted much of his latter career to scholarship. He translated works of **Boethius,** Pope **Gregory I** (see entries), and the **Venerable Bede** (see entry on Historians) as well as the Bible, from Latin to the Old English spoken by the Anglo-Saxons.

number of conflicts. The first of these was an off-and-on conflict with two opposing men of influence, Bardas Sclerus and Bardas Phocas, each of whom intended to gain control over the empire. In line with its ancient Roman heritage, the Byzantine Empire did not recognize hereditary noblemen; but again like Rome itself, it had a powerful aristocratic class, to which both men belonged.

Each wanted to take the throne from Basil, and this conflict probably influenced his lifelong opposition to the Byzantine aristocracy. In 996, he would pass a law intended to simultaneously reduce the aristocrats' influence, gain the support of the poor, and fill the imperial coffers: according to this law, rich landlords were required to pay the taxes of the



Sundiata Keita

Like Basil II, Sundiata Keita (sun-JAH-tah kah-EE-tuh; died 1255), who was crippled at birth, came from unpromising beginnings. Yet he would grow up to establish the great empire of Mali, which would reach its height some years later under **Mansa Musa** (see entry).

Sundiata's family were rulers of a small West African kingdom called Kangaba, which they had controlled for about two centuries. They were constantly under threat from neighboring Kaniaga (kahn-ee-AH-guh), whose ruler in Sundiata's time was Sumanguru (sü-mahng-GÜ-roo). Sumanguru killed eleven of Sundiata's brothers, but did not consider the crippled Sundiata worth killing.

The Sundiata story is steeped in legend, making it hard to pick out the facts, but it appears that he was "miraculously" cured in his twenties, and was suddenly able to walk without difficulty. He soon distinguished himself as a hunter, and attracted a following of other young hunter-warriors. Meanwhile another surviving brother had become vassal king of Kangaba, subject to Sumanguru, and he considered Sundiata a threat. Sundiata finally had to go into exile, taking refuge with a king in nearby Mema (MAY-mah).

Ultimately the people of Kangaba became increasingly unhappy with the cruel system imposed on them by Sumanguru, and they finally revolted, forcing

local poor. In the meantime, during the late 980s, Basil found himself with his back against the wall, lacking support in his fight against the two would-be emperors. It was then that he hit on a brilliant idea.

Basil sent a message to the ruler of Kievan Russia, Vladimir (see box in St. Cyril and St. Methodius entry), informing him that if the Russians would provide him with six thousand soldiers, Basil would allow Vladimir to marry his sister. Marriage to a Byzantine princess, which would greatly improve his standing in the world, was exactly what Vladimir desired, and his support proved crucial to Basil's later victories. Bardas Phocas was defeated, and died in 989. Basil wisely allowed the blind and aging Bardas Sclerus to go free, and as a result gained the loyalty of the latter's many supporters.

Sundiata's brother to flee. Seeing his chance, Sundiata formed an alliance with Mema and other states, and won control of Kangaba in 1234. He marched against Sumanguru in 1235, winning a great victory at Kirina on the Niger River—a bloody battle in which the hated Sumanguru lost his life.

The people of surrounding lands viewed Sundiata as a liberator, and thus he was able to spur them on to wars of conquest that expanded his realm in all directions. This led to the creation of Mali, an empire whose name means simply "where the king lives." Sundiata established his capital at Niani (nee-AHN-ee), which became renowned as a center of learning and trade.

Basil becomes the Bulgar-Slayer

Basil next turned his attention to the Bulgarians' King Samuel, who had earlier defeated him in a military engagement. From 990 to 994, he waged a series of brutal and successful campaigns against Samuel, but his attention was diverted by conflicts with the Muslim Fatimids in Egypt.

In 997, Samuel adopted the title *czar* or "caesar," which indicated that he had his eye on the Byzantine throne. This resulted in a third campaign that lasted from 998 to 1003, and once again Basil had to leave because of conflicts in the East. The Byzantines nonetheless managed to take some key cities, and after a decade they drove the Bulgarians to a last stand.

In 1014, Samuel sent some fifteen thousand men to defend an important mountain pass. Basil attacked from the rear, capturing about fourteen thousand soldiers, and he pro-

ceeded to deal them an extraordinarily harsh punishment. Byzantine soldiers blinded ninety-nine out of every 100 Bulgarian soldiers, leaving the last man with one good eye so that he could lead the others home. When Samuel saw the ghastly specter of his returning soldiers, he died of shock.

On to Armenia

Forever after known as the "Bulgar-Slayer," Basil incorporated Bulgarian lands into his empire, and set his attention on a land that had attracted Byzantine interest for many years: Armenia. Led by the Bagratid (bahg-RAH-teed) dynasty that also controlled nearby Georgia, the Armenians had united to resist Byzantine rule, and Basil responded by making a tactical withdrawal—that is, he took one step backward so that he could move forward by two steps. With the decline of the Fatimids, he regained territories in Syria and Iraq, and by 1001 was ready for the conquest of Armenia.

When he was not fighting the Bulgarians, Basil devoted much of his attention to conquering Armenia, a process that lasted beyond his lifetime. Byzantium was destined to control the country for only a short time, however: less than fifty years after Basil's death on December 15, 1025, the Seljuk Turks dealt the Byzantines a devastating blow at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071. This resulted in the Byzantines' loss of virtually all the lands Basil had gained, and sent the empire into a long, slow decay.

Yet Basil's legacy remained fixed, in part through his able administration of the empire, which along with his military victories brought Byzantium to its greatest glory since Justinian nearly five centuries before. He also influenced the Christianization of Russia, which would forever be tied to the Eastern Orthodox Church. At the time of his death, he was planning the reconquest of Sicily from the Arabs, and perhaps if his successors had been men of Basil's caliber, the empire's later history would have turned out to be quite different.

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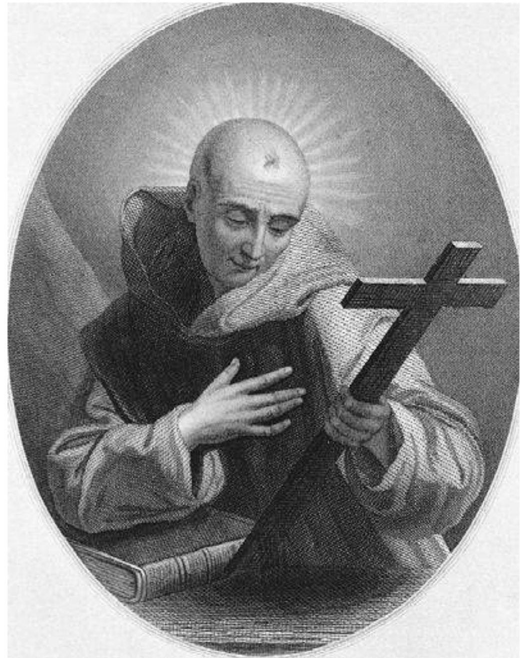
Bernard of Clairvaux

Born 1090
Died 1153

French monk and religious leader



Aside from royalty, politically influential figures of medieval Western Europe tended to be popes or other high church officials. Bernard of Clairvaux, by contrast, was a mere monk of the Cistercian order, and throughout his career held no official position of significance in the church—yet he was one of the most influential figures in the Catholic world.

In addition to his reform of the Cistercians, which he helped make one of the most powerful orders in Christendom, Bernard is remembered for his pivotal role in promoting the Second Crusade. When the latter ended in failure, he was widely criticized. He is also remembered with some disapproval as the man who tried to have **Abelard** (see entry) imprisoned for his unorthodox views. Yet he was also a figure of great sincerity, occasional compassion, and fascinating complexity.

"Men are saying it is not you but I who am the Pope, and from all sides they are flocking to me."

Letter to Pope Eugenius III, a former student

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

Saving the Cistercian Order

Little is known about Bernard's life prior to the time he joined the Cistercian (sis-TUR-shun) order. An order is an

organized religious community within the Catholic Church, and the Cistercians were monks who sought out a particularly austere, or hard, lifestyle. They did this because they believed that only by denying the needs of the physical body could they truly concentrate on God.

The life of a Cistercian was not for everyone, and though it had only been founded in 1098, its numbers were dwindling when Bernard joined twelve years later. Twenty-year-old Bernard arrived at the Cistercians' abbey in the French town of Citeaux (see-TOH; hence the name Cistercian) with great religious zeal. Like a military recruit who opts for the marines or special forces in the other armed services, he was eager to be tested, and courted the challenges of the Cistercian way of life. So great was his enthusiasm, in fact, that he brought with him thirty male friends and relatives he had convinced to join him. In so doing, he saved the entire Cistercian movement, which at that point consisted of only thirteen members.

The Cistercians quite literally gave Bernard the name by which he is known. When the abbot at Citeaux saw how Bernard had saved the monastery there, he appointed him to establish a second one at Clairvaux (klayr-VOH) some seventy miles away. By the end of Bernard's life, the Cistercians would claim not one or two, but 340 monasteries, and much of the credit belongs to him.

Bernard v. Abelard

Bernard was clearly a strong-willed person, and he had very definite ideas about religious faith. In a dozen books and many hundreds of letters, he addressed a variety of issues, but always with one or two central themes. In Bernard's view, religious meditation—one of the principal activities of a monk's life—was better than action. Action, in his mind, was an example of man's will, whereas contemplation and meditation forced the believer to submit to God's will. He also maintained that religious faith was infinitely superior to intellectual, or mental, reasoning power. Once again, it was a matter of submitting to God rather than trusting in one's own strength.

In his zeal, Bernard worked to promote his ideas through his writings, and this ironically forced him to leave

Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov and His Family

Bernard of Clairvaux is remembered, along with his many achievements, for his reaction to the efforts of Abelard and others to reconcile religious belief on the one hand and reasoning ability on the other. Catholics such as Bernard were not the only religious believers likely to oppose such efforts to understand faith: many Muslims were slow to accept the ideas of thinkers such as **Averroës** (see entry) and Avicenna (see box in Moses Maimonides entry), who made a similar attempt to bring together the worlds of faith and reason. **Moses Maimonides** (see entry) also tried to find a balance between the life of the spirit and the life of the mind—and he too found opposition among fellow Jews.

An interesting case in point is Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov (TAWV; c. 1380–c. 1441) and his son and grandson. ("Ibn" and "ben" are, respectively, Arabic and Hebrew titles meaning "son of." Shem Tov and his descendants each added a "ben" or "ibn" to their father's names, meaning that their names grew progressively longer.)

Shem Tov was a cabalist, an adherent of the cabala (kuh-BAH-luh; also *kabbala* and *qabala*). The latter is a mystical Jewish belief system based on the idea that every single word—and letter, and number, and even accent mark in Hebrew—of the Jewish scriptures has a specific meaning. To cabalists, the word of God is filled with a sort of secret code that is extremely difficult to grasp and can be revealed only by spiritual means rather than by intellectual or mental effort.

Given these beliefs, it is not surprising that Shem Tov was vehemently opposed to Maimonides's reliance on the teachings of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, who believed that all knowledge can be perceived through the mind. But there was a sort of generation gap in Shem Tov's family, because his son Joseph ben Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov (c. 1400–c. 1460) took a much friendlier approach toward the work of Maimonides, Aristotle, and others. A court physician in Castile, Spain, Joseph attempted to draw parallels between philosophy and religion, and in particular compared Aristotle's ideas with those of the Jewish scriptures.

By the time of Joseph's son Shem Tov ben Joseph ben Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov (flourished 1461–1489), attitudes in Shem Tov's family had undergone a 180-degree shift. This third-generation Shem Tov was an admirer of Maimonides, and wrote commentaries on Averroës as well. By the grandson's time, of course, the Middle Ages were drawing to a close, and viewpoints were beginning to change.

behind the life of meditation he valued. He soon became a prominent spokesman for the church, a defender of the faith as he saw it. In the late 1130s, he engaged in his infamous conflict with Abelard, whose teachings challenged established church beliefs. To a modern person, Abelard's ideas, such as his position that reason has a place in religion—that it is possible both to think and to believe—hardly seem controversial; but that was not so in the twelfth century.

Bernard was not the only person who saw Abelard as a danger, but he was certainly the most eloquent spokesperson for the church in the matter. For several years, Bernard and Abelard conducted a heated public argument, rather like two boxers in a shouting match before the big fight. The showdown finally came in June 1140, when the two were supposed to engage in a public debate. But the sides were hardly matched: Bernard represented the power of the church—which in the Middle Ages could call on the police force and legal system to do its bidding—whereas Abelard was merely a brilliant scholar with a strong student following.

On the other hand, Bernard was intimidated by Abelard's nimble skill at argumentation, and he had no intention of engaging in a debate with him. Therefore he arrived at the meeting prepared to put Abelard on trial for heresy, or beliefs that went against the teachings of the church. Given the situation, Abelard had no choice but to back down.

The Second Crusade

Bernard's power and influence continued to rise, particularly when in 1145 a former monk who had studied under him at Clairvaux became Pope Eugenius III. This made Eugenius, as head of the Catholic Church, the most powerful man in Western Europe—but since he took Bernard's advice on many matters, it was debatable who actually held more power.

In 1146, Eugenius called upon Bernard's help in a matter of great importance. Half a century earlier, the Catholic nations of Europe had mobilized for the First Crusade (1095–99), in which they seized control of the Holy Land from the Muslims. Now they had lost their stronghold at Edessa near Jerusalem, and the pope wanted to launch a

new crusade. Bernard, at first reluctant, finally agreed to preach a crusading sermon at Palm Sunday—the beginning of Easter week, the most important time of year for Christians.

Bernard of Clairvaux was the object of harsh criticism after the Second Crusade, which he had promoted, proved to be a disaster. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

The response to Bernard's message—he preached more such sermons, and sent out letters promoting the proposed crusade—was overwhelming. Some of that response, however, was unwelcome. One of the most awful aspects of the First Crusade was its unexpected arousal of anti-Semitic attacks in which many Jews were killed and many others lost all their property. The dawning of a new crusade brought with it a new wave of anti-Jewish hatred, and among its leading proponents was a German Cistercian named Rudolph. Bernard denounced Rudolph, pointing out that Jesus Christ himself was a Jew.

The crusade turned out to be a disaster, and in the aftermath Bernard, who had earlier been celebrated, became the target of blame. Despite the failed project, Bernard continued to believe in the crusading ideal. He actively supported the Knights Templars, a group of warriors who claimed to be soldiers for Christ. In fact many Templars joined the group simply for personal gain, and often their behavior was savage.

The admiration of foes

Bernard behaved in an underhanded way on two notable occasions: in the proposed debate with Abelard, and later in a similar situation with another opponent. For the most part, however, it could be said that while he may have been many things, he was neither dishonest nor insincere. He also tended to think that others would act the same, and thus could not understand, for instance, that someone might go on a crusade for a reason other than to do God's will.

Despite his shortcomings, he was widely admired, and after his death in 1153, followers claimed to have experienced a number of miracles around the site of his grave. But perhaps the greatest testimony came from men whom Bernard would undoubtedly have considered enemies: Martin Luther and John Calvin, sixteenth-century leaders of the Reformation, in which Protestant denominations broke away from Bernard's beloved Catholic Church. Despite those differences of belief, Luther praised Bernard, and Calvin said of him, "the Abbot Bernard speaks in the language of the truth itself."

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Boethius

Born 480
Died 524

Roman philosopher

In his *Consolation of Philosophy,* written in a prison cell as he awaited execution, Boethius developed a view of the world that came to symbolize the medieval age in Europe. True virtue, he explained, lay not in changing one's fate, but in accepting the fate one was assigned by Fortune. His personification of "Fortune" and "Philosophy" as women also set the tone for countless medieval allegories, symbolic stories in which characters represented ideas. Though he was born after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, Boethius was a Roman to the core, and as with **Augustine** (see entry), his writings represent a vital link between the ancient and medieval worlds.

"In all adversity of fortune, it is the most unhappy kind of misfortune to have been happy."

From The Consolation of Philosophy

A distinguished Roman family

Four years before Boethius (boh-EE-thee-us) was born, the Western Roman Empire came to an end when the Germanic chieftain Odoacer (oh-doh-AY-sur; c. 433–493) removed the last Roman emperor from power and declared himself "king of Italy." At the time, people did not perceive the fall of the Roman Empire as an earth-shattering event,

Boethius, with a woman who is intended to represent the human embodiment of Philosophy. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

one which many historians regard as the beginning of the Middle Ages. For one thing, there still was a Roman Empire—only it was the Eastern Roman Empire, based in Greece and referred to by modern scholars as the Byzantine Empire.

Though in fact he ruled Italy as a separate kingdom, Odoacer had declared himself a servant of the Eastern Roman emperor, and many Romans believed that business would continue as usual. Certainly that was the impression among Boethius's family, a distinguished line that could trace their roots back more than six centuries. Several of his relatives, along with other leading Roman citizens, served Odoacer in important positions.

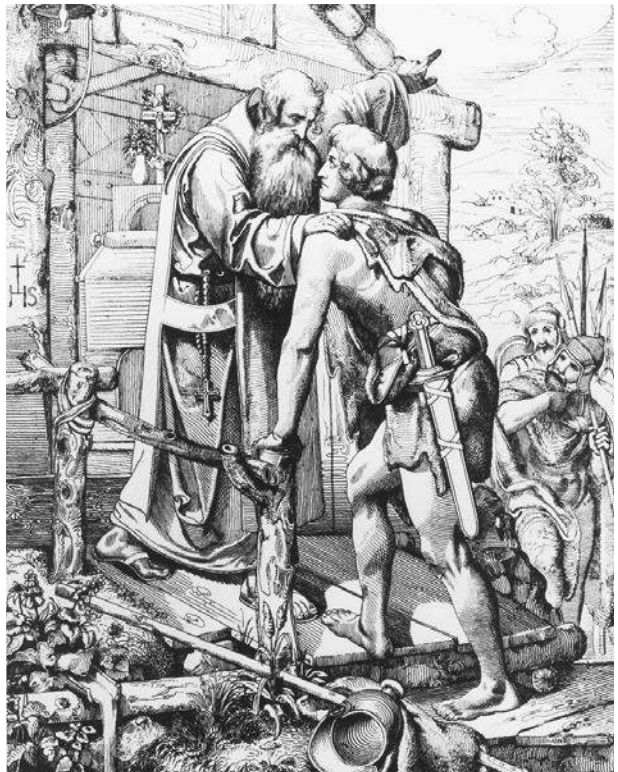
Education for leadership

Before he reached his teens, Boethius, whose full name was Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, lost his father. Therefore another prominent Roman named Symmachus (SIM-uh-kus) became his guardian, and looked after his education. Boethius's generation was one of the last to enjoy the full range of learning from Greece, which had been expanded by the writings of great Roman figures.

In the course of his education, he was exposed to the writings of Plato (PLAY-toh; 427–347 B.C.), whose *Republic* offered a model for participation in government by philosophers, or men who devoted their time to contemplating the deepest questions of existence. Plato was one of the greatest of the ancient Greek philosophers, and his ideas were to have an effect on Boethius throughout his life.

Not only was he fluent in Greek, but Boethius also wrote in a classical form of Latin. The latter language would continue to survive during the Middle Ages, but in a different form; the Latin that Boethius knew was more closely linked to that of the Roman Empire's golden age centuries before than it was to the Latin used by Europeans just a few decades after his time. Boethius, however, had no idea that the world of classical Rome was fading so rapidly: in his mind, his education was training for leadership, after which he would take a prominent role, as members of his family had done for centuries.

A flourishing career



Odoacer (right; listening to the hermit Severin) was a Germanic chieftain who removed the Roman emperor from power and declared himself king of Italy in 476. Though people did not realize the importance of this event at the time, Odoacer's takeover marked the end of the Western Roman Empire. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

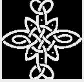
A good marriage—that is, marriage to someone of equal or higher social rank—was essential to the career of a noble Roman. Thus Boethius was married to Symmachus's daughter Rusticana, with whom he had two sons. Years later, in his prison cell, he would look back on the joy he had shared with his family, and this only added to his sorrow. Hence his statement that "in all adversity of fortune, it is the most unhappy kind of misfortune to have been happy."

Boethius rose through the ranks, reaching the position of consul in 510. Centuries earlier, under the Roman Republic (507–31 B.C.), the city's two consuls had ruled not only Rome, but all of its territorial possessions as well. Times had changed, however, and Rome was no longer even the capital of Italy. The government had moved to the city of Ravenna, where a new king was in charge: Theodoric (c. 454–526), an Ostrogoth or eastern Goth chieftain who had slain Odoacer.

Theodoric was to have a tragic effect on Boethius's career, but that still lay in the future as Boethius busied himself with his political duties and his studies. The former included service in the senate, the body that had governed Rome for a thousand years. As for his studies, these included the topics of the quadrivium, a group of four subjects studied by Romans for ages: arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. Boethius wrote considerably on these and other subjects.

Trouble with the authorities

He would not have long to enjoy the privileges of his birth, because events soon took place that would ultimately bring about the end of his life. Troubled by corruption, long



Ashikaga Takauji

In viewing the Middle Ages, it would be hard to find two individuals more different than Boethius and Ashikaga Takauji (tah-kah-OO-jee; 1305–1358), who founded a dynasty of Japanese *shoguns,* or military leaders. The comparison is worthwhile because both men were members of their countries' noble classes; but whereas Boethius was accused of treason in his lifetime and was believed innocent by later generations, Ashikaga is remembered as, among other things, a traitor. Furthermore, Boethius's life was defined by his ability to suffer injustice in silence, whereas Ashikaga took action against what he considered an unjust situation.

This contrast is particularly interesting in light of what many people believe about Western civilization, of which Boethius was a part, in contrast to the Eastern civilizations of Japan, China, India, and other countries. According to this line of thought, the Eastern tradition is characterized by silent submission to one's fate, whereas the West is more associated with the idea of taking action to correct perceived wrongs. In the case of Boethius and Ashikaga, exactly the opposite was true.

Though Japan was formally under the control of an emperor, the real power lay in prominent families such as the Kamakura, who established the first of two shogunates that were to control the country off and on between 1192 and 1573. Ashikaga founded the second of these shogunates, but not before he helped bring down the Kamakura in a somewhat underhanded way.

Typically, Japanese emperors were children who were easily manipulated by the shoguns and powerful families, but in 1318, a full-grown adult named Go-Daigo

a factor in the Roman government, Boethius made enemies in high places when he tried to protect honest men from attacks by greedy and power-hungry leaders.

His real misfortune began, however, in 522, when he came to the defense of a senator accused of treason. It appears that Boethius may have thought the senator guilty, but he wanted to protect the reputation of the senate, and this exposed him to charges of suppressing evidence. He was then accused of aiding Justin I, the Byzantine emperor, against Theodoric. Therefore Theodoric ordered that he be imprisoned in the town of Pavia (PAHV-ee-uh).

(goh DY-goh; 1288–1339) assumed the throne. When Go-Daigo revolted against the shoguns, they exiled him in 1331, but he escaped two years later. The leaders trusted Ashikaga to capture him, but in the process of doing so, Ashikaga made a deal with Go-Daigo.

Claiming to be a secret supporter of the emperor, Ashikaga joined forces with him to overthrow the Hojo family, who had assumed control of the Kamakura shogunate. Once Go-Daigo was restored to power, however, he proved an inept ruler, and offended Ashikaga by appointing his son, rather than Ashikaga himself, as shogun. In 1336, Ashikaga ousted Go-Daigo, and replaced him with an emperor who appointed him to the all-important shogun position.

Thus was born the Ashikaga shogunate (1338–1573), sometimes referred to as the Muromachi period because its cultural life centered on the Muromachi district of Tokyo. And indeed it was a time of cultural flourishing, for which Ashikaga deserves much of the credit. His place in Japanese history is somewhat uncertain, however, due in part to the fact that many scholars believe he was overshadowed by his powerful grandson Yoshimitsu (ruled 1368–95).

A greater source of controversy regarding Ashikaga, however, relates to what many consider his treacherous actions. In that vein, he is often compared unfavorably to Kusunoki Masashige (mah-sah-SHEE-gay; 1294–1336), a warlord who remained faithful to Go-Daigo and committed suicide after he was defeated by Ashikaga. Regardless of his moral stature, however, Ashikaga was undoubtedly a brilliant strategist and leader who ushered in a culturally significant era of Japanese history.

The Consolation of Philosophy

Boethius would spend the remaining two years of his life in jail, where he wrote his most enduring work, *The Consolation of Philosophy.* He had written a number of books before, but without the *Consolation* his name might well have been forgotten. As it was, he set the tone for a thousand years of European history.

Though he was a devout Christian, the *Consolation* is a work of philosophy and makes little direct reference to Christian principles. Its message that suffering should be endured might seem to bear a close relation to the teachings of Christ,

Theodoric, an Ostrogoth chieftain who came to rule Italy after killing Odoacer, imprisoned Boethius, accusing him of supporting Theodoric's rival, Byzantine emperor Justin I. *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

but Christ taught that believers in God should endure suffering with the hope of a reward in Heaven. The *Consolation,* by contrast, seems to say that suffering is its own reward, and in this it is more closely tied to the ancient Roman tradition of Stoicism (STOH-uh-sizm), which held that true nobility is found in withstanding hardship.

Nonetheless, the message that "Lady Philosophy" delivers to Boethius—the book is built around the idea that the spirit of philosophy came to visit him in his cell, clothed in the body of an otherworldly woman—has an underlying Christian theme. By the end of the work, Philosophy shows him that God's justice can be seen even in the most random and arbitrary-seeming misfortune. Furthermore, she shows him that although man has free will to choose good or evil (a central belief of Christianity), true freedom lies in choosing virtue.

Echoes of Boethius

Boethius died in prison in 524, either by execution or as the result of torture. He quickly came to be regarded as a martyr, or someone who dies for their faith, though in fact he died for his convictions about morality and politics. Nonetheless, he was declared a saint, and he had an enduring effect on medieval thought.

Much of that effect may be judged as unfortunate from the viewpoint of a modern person: by teaching people to accept their fate, one might reason, Boethius was condemning them to unnecessary suffering. But to take that approach is to view Boethius from the perspective of the present, rather than from that of the sixth century.

Among Boethius's many admirers were the ninth-century Anglo-Saxon king Alfred the Great (see box in Basil II

entry) and the sixteenth-century English queen Elizabeth I, both of whom produced translations of *The Consolation of Philosophy.* Esteemed by figures such as **Dante** (see entry) and the English writer **Geoffrey Chaucer** (see English Scholars, Thinkers, and Writers entry), he continued to exert an influence almost a millennium after his death.

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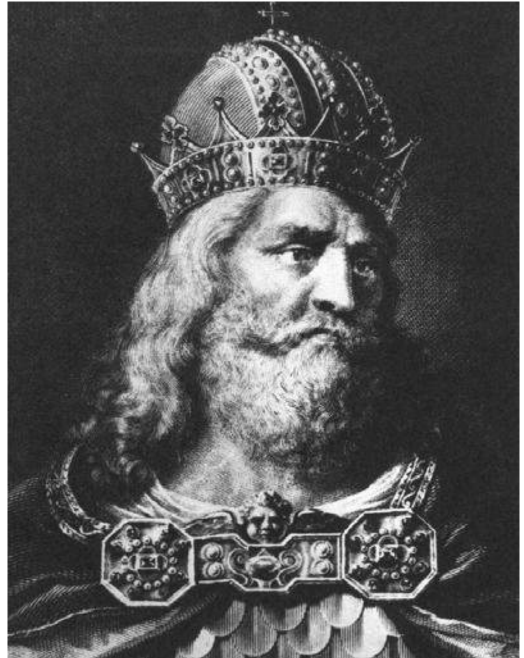
Charlemagne

Born 742
Died 814

Frankish king and emperor of the West



"He never withdrew from an enterprise which he had once begun and was determined to see through to the end; and danger never deterred him."

Einhard, Life of Charlemagne

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

Charlemagne was unquestionably the most important ruler in Western Europe between 400 and 1000. Only **Clovis** (see entry) could compete for that distinction, but Charlemagne—who like Clovis came from the nation called the Franks—achieved far more than Clovis could even have imagined. In Clovis's time the Franks, one of many tribes that invaded former Roman territories, conquered much of what is now France, in the process giving their name to the country; Charlemagne's power, by contrast, would extend throughout the entire western portion of the European continent.

Yet Charlemagne's impact went far beyond the military victories that built his vast empire. By forging an alliance with the church, he solidified the idea of kings and popes as joint political leaders. Furthermore, by encouraging the arts and scholarship, he fostered a rebirth of learning in the West.

Merovingians and Carolingians

When Charlemagne (SHAR-luh-mayn) was born, France was under the rule of the Merovingian (mayr-uh-VIN-

jee-un) dynasty or royal house, whose power Clovis had established nearly three centuries before. But later Merovingians had proven to be weak rulers, and were dominated by palace officials called majordomos, or "mayors of the palace." The greatest of the majordomos was Charlemagne's grandfather, Charles Martel (known as "The Hammer," c. 688–741), who was clearly the real power in Merovingian France.

When Charles died, his son Pepin III (c. 714–768) decided to take the throne, and in 751 sent a message to the pope, spiritual leader of western Christianity, asking if it would be a sin to remove the Merovingian king from power. The pope, who needed Pepin's help to defend Italy against an invading tribe called the Lombards, gave his blessing, whereupon Pepin seized the throne. Thus he began a new dynasty, which historians call the Carolingian (kayr-uh-LINJ-ee-un) in honor of its greatest ruler, Pepin's son Charlemagne.

Training for kingship

Actually, he only became known as Charlemagne, or "Charles the Great," much later: in his boyhood he had simply been known as Charles. At the time Pepin took power, Charlemagne was only nine years old, and in that same year, his younger brother Carloman was born. Pepin raised both boys to succeed him, since it was the Frankish custom for a king to divide his lands between his sons.

No doubt part of Charlemagne's education involved training in the arts of war, which he practiced by riding and hunting. He did not learn how to read and write, since at that time only priests and other members of the church acquired such skills. Later in life, Charlemagne attempted to teach himself reading and writing, but it is doubtful that he ever became fully literate. Nonetheless, he received a valuable education in kingly skills by accompanying his father on several trips around France.

Certainly he looked like a king. Famed for his piercing blue eyes, Charlemagne as an adult was a giant, standing six feet, four inches at a time when most men were a foot shorter. He was also a devout Christian, and when he started a family, a loving father.

In 768, when Charlemagne was twenty-six, Pepin died, leaving Charlemagne and Carloman as joint rulers. Three years later Carloman—with whom Charlemagne was not close—died, leaving Charlemagne as sole ruler of the Franks.

A series of wars

Charlemagne spent the early years of his reign in an almost constant state of war. In 772, his forces went to war against the Saxons, a Germanic tribe to the north of France. The Saxons were pagans, meaning that they worshiped many gods, and in his first campaign against them, Charlemagne chopped down a tree that they considered a sacred symbol of their religion.

Between 773 and 776, he did battle with the Lombards, subduing northern Italy. He then turned his attention to Spain, which was under the control of Islamic or Muslim forces from the Middle East. Though the Muslims defeated Charlemagne's forces in 778, the campaign was memorable because it served as the basis for the *Song of Roland,* a twelfth-century French legend.

In 781, Charlemagne had his son Pepin crowned king of Italy by the pope, and in the following year he increased the intensity of his ten-year-old campaign against the Saxons. A rebellion led to a stern punishment by Charlemagne, whose soldiers beheaded some five thousand Saxons. Meanwhile, he continued his campaign in Italy, and by 786 had gained control of the entire Italian peninsula.

The Carolingian Renaissance

Despite his preoccupation with military matters, Charlemagne was also highly interested in education and set about to foster scholarship throughout his empire. Thus in the 780s he ushered in a period sometimes referred to as the "Carolingian Renaissance" (RIN-uh-sahnts), the latter term referring to a rebirth of learning.

Charlemagne achieved this renaissance by inviting to France scholars from various parts of Western Europe, most notably **Alcuin** (AL-kwin; c. 735–804; see English Scholars, Thinkers, and Writers entry) from England. Alcuin called for a return to the study of Latin, and to standards of education

Charlemagne is considered the most important Western European ruler of the Middle Ages. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

that had prevailed under the Greek and Roman civilizations. He directed a school at Charlemagne's palace, a training ground for young men who would later work in the government. Another important scholar in Carolingian France was Charlemagne's secretary, Einhard (c. 770–840), whose *Life of Charlemagne* is one of the principal sources of information about the king.

Before the invention of the printing press, books had to be copied by hand, and more than ninety percent of the works from ancient Rome that exist today owe their survival to Carolingian monks. The originals of such books have long since disappeared, and without the Carolingians, who copied them, no one would know of these writings. Furthermore, much of the lettering system used today—Roman script (best known through the Times Roman font on most computer printers), italics, even lowercase lettering—owes its existence to the monks of Carolingian France.

Architecture also flourished under Charlemagne. The emperor was so impressed by the Church of San Vitale at Ravenna in Italy, built after **Justinian** (see entry) conquered that country, that he was determined to have his own version. The result was the chapel at Aachen (AH-kin), a city in what is now western Germany that Charlemagne designated as his capital in 794. Charlemagne's architect, Odo of Metz, designed a highly distinctive building rather than an imitation, and the chapel served as a model for later styles of architecture in Western Europe.

Emperor of the Romans

The establishment of a permanent capital was an achievement in itself, since medieval kings tended to move from place to place. The Carolingian age signified the beginning of a return to the civilized way of life that had prevailed before the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476, and in 800, Charlemagne received a title that recognized him as the leader of a new Roman Empire.

The year before, Pope Leo III had been attacked by mobs in Rome and imprisoned. He had escaped and gone to Aachen for help, and Charlemagne had assisted him with a contingent of soldiers. Soon they restored the pope to power,

and Charlemagne himself came to Rome in mid-December 800. On Christmas Day, the pope placed a crown on his head and declared him "Emperor of the Romans." Historians regard this as an early foundation for the Holy Roman Empire, which would take shape nearly two centuries later.

Though this empire was more of an idea than a reality, it would still play a significant part in European politics throughout the remainder of the Middle Ages. Certainly the Byzantine emperors, who ruled the Eastern Roman Empire from Greece, took the title seriously enough that they regarded it as an insult to their own claims to the Roman throne. Only in 813 did they recognize Charlemagne's use of the title.

Though much of Charlemagne's reign was spent in military pursuits, he also surrounded himself with thinkers and educators and fostered a rebirth of learning in his kingdom. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

The legacy of Charlemagne

The coronation of Charlemagne was the high point of his career. He devoted the remaining fourteen years of his life

The Palatine Chapel in Aachen, Charlemagne's capital, was the site of the crowning of his successor, his son Louis the Pious, in 813. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

to the administration of his empire rather than to the conquest of new territory, and he spent most of his time in Aachen, which was famed for its soothing mineral baths. In 806, he started making arrangements to pass his lands on to his three sons, but by 813, only one was still living. Therefore in a magnificent ceremony at Aachen, he placed the crown on the head of his son Louis the Pious. On January 21, 814, following a bath in the mineral springs, Charlemagne developed a sudden fever and died a week later.

His empire did not last long: in the Treaty of Verdun (843), Louis divided it between his three sons, and it gradually fell apart. Descendants of Charlemagne ruled France until 887, and parts of Germany until 911. The idea of a unified western empire, however, was a powerful one, and later Otto the Great (912–973) would revive the concept when he founded the Holy Roman Empire. A later Holy Roman emperor, Frederick I Barbarossa (ruled 1152–90) had Charlemagne canonized, or declared a saint.

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Christine de Pisan

Born c. 1364
Died c. 1430

French poet and essayist

Christine de Pisan was the first known woman in Europe to earn her living by writing. As a poet, she won much acclaim among the nobility of France and neighboring lands. Her extensive essays and works of scholarship, most notably *The City of Ladies,* provide a valuable contribution to an understanding not only of her own ideas, but also of European society during the Middle Ages.

Christine was a true feminist who used her pen to make the case that women should enjoy the same rights before God as men. She did not undertake her poetic work or other writings out of lofty ideals, or as a hobby; rather, she wrote because she had to support her family.

"I am alone and I want to be alone."

Line from a poem written after her husband's death, on her decision not to remarry

In the court of Charles V

Christine de Pisan (pee-ZAHN; sometimes rendered as Pizan) was born in the Italian city of Venice in 1364. Her father, Tommaso di Benvenuto da Pizzano, was a professor of astrology at the university of Bologna (buh-LOHN-yuh),

Portrait: *Photograph by Gianni Dagli Orti. Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

another Italian city. Astrology is a system that attempts to show that a person's destiny is influenced by the position of the stars and planets at the time of her birth, and though it has long since been discredited as a science, medieval people held it in high regard. Accordingly, Tommaso received two highly attractive invitations soon after Christine's birth: he could serve either in the court of the Hungarian king or that of the French king, Charles V. He opted to go to Paris, the French capital, which was noted for its outstanding university.

After a year in France without his family, Thomas de Pisan, as he was now called in the French style, agreed to stay on as court astrologer, alchemist (practitioner of another medieval non-science based on the belief that plain metals such as iron could be turned into gold), and physician. He therefore sent for his family, and his wife and four-year-old daughter joined him. Christine therefore had an opportunity to grow up amid the lively atmosphere of the court presided over by Charles, who was nicknamed "the Wise." Her father saw to her education, and she learned to read and write, something usually taught only to girls in the highest levels of medieval society.

Marriage, children, and tragedy

When she was fifteen years old, Christine married Étienne (ey-TYAn) du Castel, a scholar nine years her senior. Theirs was a happy marriage that produced three children. The second child, a son, died in infancy; the first child, a daughter, later became a nun. The last child, a son named Jean (ZHAWn), born when Christine was twenty-one, grew up to serve in the court of the duke of Burgundy.

Beginning in 1380, when she was sixteen, a series of tragedies struck Christine's life. First Charles V died, and Christine's father was dismissed from his position at court. A few years later, her father became ill and died in poverty. In 1389 Étienne succumbed to the plague, an epidemic disease that periodically struck Europe throughout the Middle Ages. Christine was left without a father or a husband—and with two children to support.

Queen Margaret of Denmark

It is interesting to note that the birth and death dates of Western Europe's first female professional writer, Christine de Pisan (c. 1364–c. 1430) correspond closely with those of its first ruling woman monarch, Queen Margaret of Denmark (1353–1412). Over the course of her career, Margaret united her homeland with Norway and Sweden, the two other principal nations of Scandinavia, to form the largest single political entity in Europe at the time.

Scandinavia had long before ceased to be the homeland of the much-feared Vikings, and in their place were several kingdoms divided by politics and language. The mid-1300s saw an incredibly complex series of maneuvers to determine which royal house would control the area, and an alliance of German cities known as the Hanseatic League tried to exert its influence. When she was ten, Margaret's father Valdemar IV arranged her marriage to King Haakon (HAH-kohn) VI of Norway.

Valdemar died without a male heir in 1375, and Margaret's only child Olaf became king. Five years later, Haakon died as well, and Margaret arranged for Olaf to succeed to the Norwegian throne. Then in 1387, Olaf died, and after a power struggle with another claimant to the Swedish throne, Margaret became queen of all three lands in 1389. In 1400 she designated an heir, her great-nephew Erik, but she continued to control affairs until her death twelve years later. Though she was often criticized for her harsh policies, Margaret was able to forge an alliance of all three Scandinavian lands. The union with Sweden would last for more than a century, and the one with Norway until 1814.

Queen Margaret. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

Forced to write

As with **Murasaki Shikibu** (see entry), the world's first novelist (and also a woman), Christine was forced into her career through personal tragedy. Unlike Murasaki, however, she did not write simply to console herself in her loss,

though that was certainly a factor. Primarily, however, she turned to the vocation of writing, at which she had earlier displayed a talent, in order to feed her family.

Later Christine would recount how, at age twenty-five, she was forced to take on "the role of a man." In medieval Europe, women were not supposed to be breadwinners, but she had little choice: though her husband had left behind a small inheritance, it became tied up in legal battles, and she did not see any money from it for a decade. Yet she was determined to support herself, rather than seek out a marriage to someone she did not love simply as a means of paying the bills: hence a famous line from a poem written after her husband's death: "Seulete suy et seulete vueil estre" (I am alone and I want to be alone).

First mature writings

At that time, the most popular type of literature in Western Europe was courtly love poetry, which dealt with themes of idealized romance. Christine disagreed with many of the principles behind such poetry, as she would later reveal, but she had to write material for a buying audience. In modern times, a writer sells his or her work to a publisher, who distributes it to a wide public; but in the medieval world, there simply was no wide reading public. A writer such as Christine composed her verses for nobility and royalty, who acted as her patrons, financially supporting her work.

Christine soon broadened her output to include short narratives or stories, and didactic works, or writings meant to instruct. The latter was another popular format in medieval times, an era that saw the beginnings of what modern people would call "self-help" literature. One type of didactic writing, for instance, was the courtesy book, a sort of how-to manual for people who wanted to learn how to behave around the higher classes of society. She augmented her writing with an extensive program of study, and by the turn of the fourteenth century, when she was about thirty-five, she began to write the first of her more mature works.

Among these were works such as *The Book of Changes in Fortune* (1400–3), in which she questioned the power of fate to alter human affairs, as it had her own. Using a practice

common to many medieval writers, she represented Fortune as a Roman goddess, and examined Fortune's effect on events throughout history. Another work from this period was *The Book of the Road of Long Study* (1402–3), which was an allegorical piece along the lines of the *Divine Comedy* by **Dante** (see entry)—in other words, it used characters and actions to illustrate ideas. Both books achieved wide acclaim, and therefore King Charles VI commissioned her to write a biography of his predecessor, which became *The Book of the Deeds and Virtues of the Wise King Charles V* (1404).

Christine's feminism

Another allegorical work of the Middle Ages that attracted widespread attention was the thirteenth-century *Romance of the Rose,* which portrayed a man's love for a woman as a difficult and almost unrewarding quest. Christine, who took issue with the portrayal of women in the *Romance,* was moved to write several pieces as a response. Among these was *The Epistle to the God of Love* (1399), in which Cupid becomes so disgusted with men's mistreatment of women that he forbids all men in his court from saying bad things about them.

For some time, Christine had been feeling the stirrings of what might be called feminism, a desire to stand up for women's rights. Of course "feminism" is a modern idea, and Christine had no concept of issues that concern feminists today—for instance, women receiving less pay for doing the same job as a man. Her appeals regarding treatment of women began with a critique of how they were portrayed in literature. She had stopped writing courtly love poetry, she said, because she came to see it as poetry written to make men feel better about mistreating women. The ideal of courtly love, reduced to its essentials, involved a man and woman who were not married to one another, but who shared a romantic and usually sexual relationship: thus the man got what he wanted without having to make a commitment.

The Book of the City of Ladies

Though Christine also wrote *The Tale of the Rose* (1401) and *Epistles on the Romance of the Rose* (1401–2), her most cele-

brated response to the *Romance*—and indeed her most well known work—was *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1404–5). The latter asks why misogyny (mi-SAHJ-uh-nee; hatred of women) has been such a popular theme throughout history. In the narrative, the author suggests that it is because men have controlled the writing of works about women, and in an allegorical tale she describes how she became depressed by this realization.

At that point, she explains, Reason, Justice, and Righteousness appeared to her in the form of three crowned ladies and commissioned her to establish a "city of ladies." The idea of this "city" is a clear reference to **Augustine**'s (see entry) *City of God,* indicating that she saw her city within the context of the Christian faith. She pointed to a number of passages in the Bible indicating that God had given men and women the same spiritual abilities and responsibilities.

Christine was also influenced by Giovanni Boccaccio's *Concerning Famous Women* (see box in Murasaki Shikibu entry), and like Boccaccio, she examined a number of women from history. The extent to which she imitated Boccaccio's approach has been debated by critics since then, but it is clear that Christine's attitude toward her subject was quite different from that of Boccaccio. He left contemporary women out of his narrative, he said, because there were too few remarkable living women to mention.

A model for women

In 1405, Christine followed up *City of Ladies* with a companion volume entitled *The Treasure of the City of Ladies,* or *The Book of Three Virtues*. In it, she offered a model as to how women of different classes should conduct themselves in society. Her purpose was not to put anyone in their place; rather, it was to help women have dignity in a world that often tried to take it from them.

Over the years that followed, as France was embroiled in the catastrophes brought on by the Hundred Years War (1337–1453) and other forms of unrest, Christine continued to write. Her last work, in 1429, celebrated the greatest hero on either side of that war, **Joan of Arc** (see entry). In the following year, Christine died at the age of sixty-five.

Over the next century, Christine's writing would exert a strong influence on a number of less well known female writers. Then, in the 1700s, memory of her virtually disappeared, only to be resurrected again in the late nineteenth century. Since then, interest in this independent, talented woman has continued to grow.

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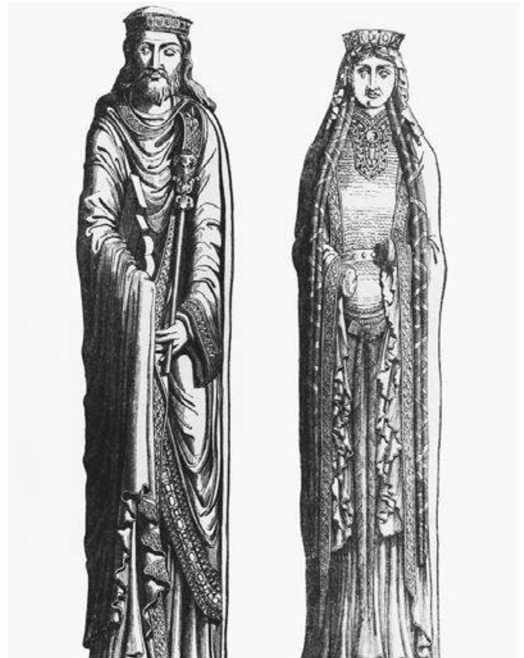
Clovis

Born c. 466
Died 511

Frankish king



Americans look to George Washington as the father of their country; but Clovis, who lived more than twelve hundred years before Washington, was the father of the French nation. He was the first significant king of the Franks, a tribe that gave its name to the entire country; and even more important, he was the first notable ruler in Western Europe following the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476. Clovis succeeded in gaining the blessing of the Christian church in Rome, which was eager to ally itself with a new leader after the fall of the empire. He also united the peoples of what is now France and surrounding areas, establishing the foundations of the medieval political order.

"Clovis' army was near to utter destruction. He saw the danger; his heart was stirred; he was moved to tears, and he raised his eyes to heaven, saying, 'Jesus Christ, whom Clotilde declares to be the son of the living God ... I beseech the glory of thy aid.'"

Gregory of Tours, History of the Franks

Gaul and the Franks

In ancient times, France was known as Gaul, an important province of the Roman Empire. But as Roman power began to fade, the western portion of the empire was overrun by various tribes that the Romans described as all related to one another—*Germanus* in Latin. These Germanic peoples were highly

Portrait: Statues of Clovis (left) and his wife Clotilde. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

uncivilized compared to the Romans, who described them as barbarians; but this did not mean that the "barbarians" were incapable of wisdom, as Clovis's career illustrates.

Clovis came from the branch of the Franks known as the Salians, who lived along the northern coast of France. Along the Rhine River, which today forms part of the boundary between France and Germany, lived another group of Franks called Ripuarians (rip-yoo-WAYR-ee-unz). In about 450, Clovis's grandfather Merovech (MAYR-uh-vesh) declared himself king of the Salians, thus establishing what came to be known as the Merovingian (mayr-uh-VIN-jee-un) dynasty.

The Merovingians sought to adopt elements of Roman civilization, which they rightly recognized as being more advanced than theirs, while retaining their distinctly Germanic culture. This was the policy of Clovis's father, Childeric (KIL-dur-ik; died c. 481), and it would be Clovis's after he took the throne at age fifteen.

The young king and warrior

Young Clovis quickly proved his abilities as a leader, uniting the Salian and Ripuarian Franks and annexing territories to build a kingdom that included much of what is now France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and western Germany. He achieved this partly through warfare, but partly through skillful negotiation, which set him apart from many "barbarian" kings who preceded him. Whereas his predecessors had typically slaughtered all the inhabitants of an area, Clovis allowed them to live, which was actually in his best interests: not only did he win their good will, but his kingdom acquired new taxpayers who added to its wealth.

One of the greatest conquests of his early career was his victory over a lingering Roman stronghold in Gaul. A group of Roman citizens had gathered under the leadership of Syagrius (sy-AG-ree-us; c. 430–486), who was destined to be the last Roman governor of the region. Near the town of Soissons (swah-SAWn) in 486, twenty-year-old Clovis led his armies to victory over Syagrius, whose forces comprised mainly hired Germanic warriors rather than Romans. Later, Clovis had Syagrius executed.

Marriage to Clotilde

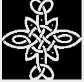
Five years later, in 491, Clovis defeated the Thuringians (thur-IN-jee-unz), a Germanic people who had formerly controlled a large region to the northeast of his own kingdom. Thus he added enormous lands to his growing empire. Around this time, he sent representatives to the court of the Burgundians, yet another Germanic tribe who controlled an area in southeastern France. These visitors were there not to make war, but to assess the situation among the Burgundians, and what they discovered was not good.

The Burgundian king Chilperic (KIL-pur-ik) and his wife, they learned, had been murdered by Chilperic's brother Gundobad. That meant that the princess Clotilde (kluh-TIL-duh; c. 470–545) and her sister were orphans—and that Gundobad might try to kill them as well. Furthermore, Clovis's representatives informed him, Clotilde herself was both beautiful and intelligent. Therefore Clovis negotiated with Gundobad to secure Clotilde's safe passage to his own kingdom, where he married her in 493.

Conversion to Christianity

Clotilde was a Christian, and like most Burgundians, she adhered to the mainstream form of Christianity that would later come to be known as Roman Catholicism. By contrast, many other peoples in the region had accepted Arianism, a branch of Christianity that taught that Christ was not God, but simply another one of God's creations. This viewpoint was unacceptable to the bishop of Rome (the pope), spiritual leader of the church.

Clovis refused to accept Christianity in any form, despite the urging of his wife, but continued to worship the old gods of his people. Meanwhile Clotilde gave birth to their son, and he allowed her to have the baby baptized, or sprinkled with water as a symbol of Jesus Christ's death and rebirth. But when the boy died, Clovis took this as a bad sign from the gods. They had another son, Chlodomir (KLOH-doh-mur), and again Clotilde arranged to have him baptized. This son, too, fell ill, and Clovis told her that he would die as well, but Chlodomir recovered.



King Arthur

As most people in the English-speaking world know, there are a great number of stories surrounding King Arthur, a legendary figure who ruled England in medieval times. It was said that as a boy, Arthur had gone by the name of Wart, and had pulled a sword from a stone that no one else could remove, thus fulfilling an ancient prophecy concerning England's future king. With his beautiful queen, Guinevere (GWIN-uh-veer), Arthur reigned from his palace at Camelot, supported by the brave Knights of the Round Table and his trusted magician Merlin. There are so many stories—all of them fictional, and many involving supernatural elements—surrounding Arthur and the others that it may come as a surprise to learn that there really was a King Arthur. At the very least, there was a military leader in the 500s in what is now Wales, in the western part of Britain, and he may have served as the basis for the Arthur legend.

In 546, the historian Gildas wrote about the Battle of Mount Badon (516), in which a general named Ambrosius Aurelianus led the Celts of Britain to victory over the invading Anglo-Saxons. A number of medieval writers associated Ambrosius with Arthur, though many modern scholars dispute the claim. The next mention of Arthur came in 796 from the historian Nennias, who remembered him as a commander of the Britons who in one day killed more than nine hundred of the enemy. Supposedly Arthur died in battle in 537.

Already by Nennias's time, Arthur had slipped from history into legend, and over the centuries that followed, writers such as Geoffrey of Monmouth (MAHN-muth; c. 1100–1154); Chrétien de Troyes (kray-TYAn duh TWAH; flourished 1170); and Sir Thomas Malory (flourished 1470) added to the stories surrounding Arthur. In modern times, figures such as German composer Richard Wagner; English poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson; American novelist Mark Twain; and many others each offered their own versions of Arthurian legends.

Soon afterward, Clovis went to war against the Alemanni (al-uh-MAHN-ee), a large group of tribes to the northeast. In 496, Clovis's forces engaged the Alemanni at Tolbiacum (tawl-BY-uh-kum), near the present-day city of Cologne, Germany. According to Gregory of Tours (TOOR; 538–594), the Franks' leading historian, Clovis was losing the battle until finally in desperation he prayed to Clotilde's God for victory, promising to convert to Christianity if he won the battle. Soon afterward, the Alemanni began to flee from the Franks. True to his promise, Clovis and some three thousand

Lancelot leaving Queen Guinevere's room. One of the legendary King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table, Lancelot is said in some tales of King Arthur's court to have had a love affair with the queen. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Stories about Arthur have formed the basis for countless poems, books, paintings, plays, operas, musicals, films, and Web sites; and yet, buried beneath all the legend, there is enough fact surrounding Arthur that he is listed in *Merriam-Webster's Biographical Dictionary* as a real human being. It is even possible that there was a Welsh princess named Guinevere, though she probably did not live in the same century as Arthur. Furthermore, the identification of Arthur with England and knighthood is historically inaccurate. Knighthood did not develop until many, many centuries after Arthur's time; and the name "England" (along with the language of English) has its roots not with Arthur's Celts or Britons but with their enemies, the invading Anglo-Saxons.

of his warriors were baptized as an outward symbol of their conversion to Christianity.

The foundations of medieval Europe

In his acceptance of mainstream Christianity rather than Arianism or some other offshoot, Clovis ensured the blessing of the pope. The latter encouraged the peoples of Clovis's kingdom, most of whom were conquered Romans and

The Arc de Triomphe in Paris, France. By designating Paris as his burial site, Clovis established the city's importance, foretelling its position as the center of the French world. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

not Franks, to support Clovis. This in turn helped bring Clovis success in campaigns against other tribes, including the Visigoths in 507, and provided the foundations for the relationship between church and government during the Middle Ages.

Clovis put in place another important foundation when he authorized the creation of a legal code, or set of laws, known as the Salic Law. Modeled on Rome's highly developed legal system, Clovis's code would govern the Franks for centuries to come. When Clovis died in 511 at the age of fifty-five, his death inaugurated another important tradition: by arranging before he died to be buried in Paris, then a small town dating back to Roman times, he established the importance of that city, which is today the undisputed center of the French world.

In generations to come, the most popular name among French kings was Louis (LOO-ee), a form of "Clovis" and thus a tribute to the fifth-century king who virtually es-

tablished the nation of France. The Merovingian kingdom, however, barely outlasted Clovis. In accordance with Germanic tradition, he had divided his realms between Chlodomir and his other three sons, which greatly weakened the power of his government. Still, Clovis had set in place the idea of a unified kingdom, and some 250 years later, this concept would gain new meaning under the leadership of **Charlemagne** (see entry).

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St. Cyril

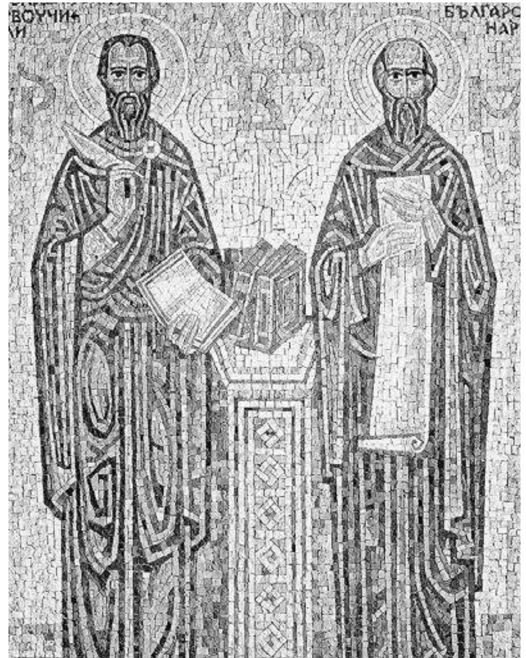
Born c. 827
Died 869

Byzantine missionary

St. Methodius

Born c. 825
Died 885

Byzantine missionary



St. Cyril (left) and St. Methodius. *Photograph by Gianni Dagli Orti. Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

In 863, the brothers Cyril and Methodius went as Christian missionaries to Central Europe. There they found a people ignorant not only of the Christian message, but even of reading and writing. Before they could teach them about Jesus Christ, the two Greek missionaries had to help them develop a written language, and thus was born the Cyrillic alphabet, used today in Russia and other countries. Perhaps even more important, however, was the indirect role played by Cyril and Methodius in spreading Greek Orthodoxy to other lands—most notably Russia.

"What was at stake was a great prize, the nature of the future Slav civilization. Two great names dominate the beginning of its shaping, those of the brothers St. Cyril and St. Methodius, priests still held in honour in the Orthodox communion."

J. M. Roberts, The Age of Diverging Traditions

Constantine and his brother

Although Methodius (mi-THOH-dee-us) was the older of the two brothers, Cyril (SEER-ul) became more famous. Much more is known about Cyril than about his older brother—including the fact that during most of his lifetime, Cyril went by the name of Constantine.

The two boys were born in the city of Thessalonica (thes-uh-luh-NYK-uh), today called Salonika, in Greece. Their

hometown was then the second most important city in the Byzantine Empire, the most important being the capital at Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey). It was to Constantinople that fourteen-year-old Constantine went in 841, after their father died. In the capital city, the imperial chancellor Theoctistus took Constantine under his wing, and arranged for the gifted young man to study at the imperial court academy.

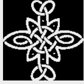
At the academy, Constantine studied under Photius, one of the most learned men of his time, who was destined to become patriarch of Constantinople. (The patriarch is the leading figure in Greek Orthodox Christianity, much as the pope is for Roman Catholicism.) When Constantine finished his studies, Theoctistus offered him marriage to his daughter, and a powerful position at the court; but Constantine had already made up his mind to follow spiritual pursuits. In 850, he became a professor of philosophy at the imperial academy.

The early activities of Methodius are much less well known. He was living in a monastery in northwestern Asia Minor (now Turkey) in 855, when Constantine joined him, and the two went on living there for eight years. He may also have served as governor in the province where they were born, but other than that, his early life is a mystery.

Apostles to the Slavs

Constantine, or Cyril, and Methodius would become known as "Apostles to the Slavs." An apostle is a figure in the Christian church who is sent out to teach and train others, and the Slavs were a group who populated much of Eastern Europe. In 862, Rostislav, king of Great Moravia (now part of the Czech Republic), asked the Byzantine emperor Michael III for a group of missionaries—people who travel to other lands with the aim of converting others to their religion—to come and teach the Slavic Moravians about Christianity. In particular, he asked for Constantine and Methodius, who had become famous for their abilities as scholars.

Rostislav's request had political as well as religious purposes. To his west were Germans who had embraced Roman Catholicism, and had converted the Moravians to Christianity. The fact that the Moravians looked to German priests for



Olga and Vladimir

The Greek Orthodox Church has a set of saints entirely different from those of Roman Catholicism, and among these Orthodox saints are Cyril and Methodius. Two others are Olga (879–969) and Vladimir I (V'LAHD-i-meer; c. 956–1015), both rulers of Russia who were instrumental in bringing Christianity to that country.

Before she embraced Christianity, Olga was an extremely cruel woman who punished the men who murdered her husband, Prince Igor of Kiev, by having them scalded to death. She was baptized in Constantinople in 957, and arranged for missionaries to be sent to Russia; but the Christian faith did not take hold at that time. Thus Vladimir, her grandson, grew up in a world still dominated by the old pagan gods that the Russian people of Kiev had inherited from their Viking ancestors.

In rising to a position of leadership, Vladimir had to do battle with several of his brothers (he had eleven), as well as with rival nations surrounding Kiev. He turned to Christianity not necessarily because he believed in the teachings of Jesus Christ, but because he saw political advantages in embracing the Christian faith. Becoming Christian would give Russia close political ties with the Byzantine Empire, and Vladimir liked the Christian idea of a single, all-powerful God who should never be questioned—just the way he expected his people to view him.

Vladimir I. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

In the summer of 990, Vladimir commanded the destruction of all pagan idols in Russia, and ordered his people to undergo mass baptisms. He put in place a religious schooling system, and initiated a program of tithes, meaning that the people had to give a certain portion of their money to the church. This became unpopular, and led to a revolt by his son Yaroslav (yuh-ruh-SLAHF). Despite this uprising, which Vladimir was not able to suppress before his death, he had permanently converted Russia to Christianity.

leadership gave the Germans cultural dominance over his people, a dominance Rostislav was determined to break.

The Byzantines in turn saw political advantages to fulfilling Rostislav's request, since it would give them a chance to expand their version of Christianity deep into Europe. For many centuries, two principle branches of the Christian faith—one centered around Rome, the other on Constantinople—had been moving further and further apart. Although at that time the Greek Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Church were still united (they would only officially split in 1054), the Byzantine and Orthodox leadership saw an opportunity to establish a strong Central European foothold, and they took it.

The Cyrillic alphabet

Arriving in Moravia, the two brothers set about their first task, which was to develop a written version of the Moravians' Slavonic language. To do this, they needed an alphabet, so they used the letters of the Greek alphabet as a foundation. This would only take them so far, however, because Slavonic had sounds unknown to the Greeks. Therefore Constantine created special symbols to reflect these.

The resulting alphabet is today known as Cyrillic, and is used in Russia, Bulgaria, Serbia, and other parts of Eastern Europe. Constantine and Methodius made it the basis for a now-dead language called Old Slavonic or Church Slavonic. During the next four years, the brothers busied themselves translating the Greek Orthodox liturgy (that is, the prewritten rites for church services, baptisms, etc.) into Slavonic. Thanks to Constantine and Methodius, the Moravians were able to build a self-sufficient church.

Rome and the end

In the autumn of 867, their mission apparently finished, the two brothers made their way toward Constantinople, bringing with them a group of men who were candidates for the Orthodox priesthood. But as they were leaving, they received an invitation from Pope Nicholas I to visit him in Rome.

Therefore they decided to go there, intending to stay just a short time before returning to Constantinople; but in fact the trip took two years, and Cyril would never see Greece again.

Pope Nicholas died while they were on their way to Rome, and the new pope, Adrian II, welcomed them in his place. Seeing an opportunity to exert his own influence in Central Europe, Adrian agreed to ordain, or formally appoint, the prospective priests the brothers brought with them.

Soon afterward, Constantine and Methodius learned that Michael III had been assassinated. This left them uncertain as to how they should proceed, since they might very well return to Constantinople and find themselves in trouble with the new emperor. Constantine, at least, did not have to make a decision: he became ill and, soon after becoming a monk and taking the new name Cyril, he died on February 14, 869. Methodius chose to go back to Moravia, where he continued to work until his own death on April 6, 885.

As it turned out, Moravia would later come under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, and thus of Western European culture. Today the Czechs are predominantly Catholic, and use a Roman alphabet similar to that of English. The Orthodox believers driven out of Moravia spread eastward, to Bulgaria and later Russia—lands where Orthodoxy established a strong and lasting hold—in the late 800s and early 900s.

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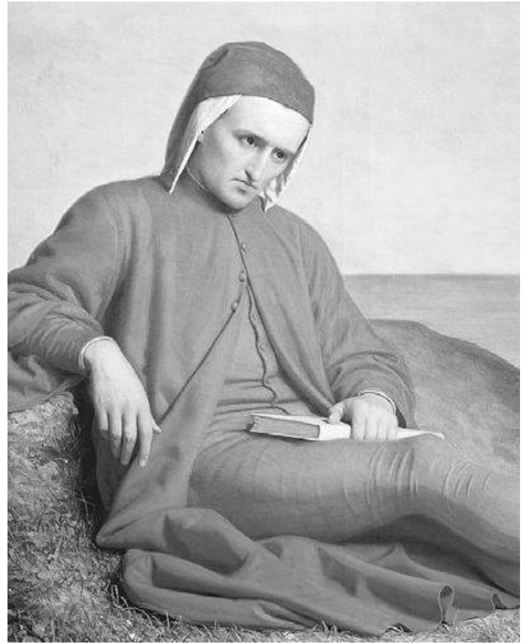
Dante Alighieri

Born 1265
Died 1321

Italian poet



When listing the world's greatest writers, critics almost always include Dante Alighieri, whose reputation is so great that he is often identified simply as "Dante." His reputation rests primarily, but not solely, on the *Divine Comedy,* an extended poetic work depicting a journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven.

A book rich in images and details, the *Divine Comedy* can be read on a number of levels. To a student of the Middle Ages, it provides a vast and varied view of the time, particularly its leading figures and its attitudes. As a work written in Italian at a time when all "serious" literature was in Latin, it formed the foundation of Italy's literature and its national consciousness.

"Midway upon the journey of our life / I found myself within a forest dark, / For the straightforward pathway had been lost."

Divine Comedy, *opening verse*

Pivotal early events

Born in the northern Italian city of Florence, Dante Alighieri (DAHN-tay al-eeg-YEER-ee) had the first significant experience of his life when he was eight years old. It was then, in 1274, that he first met Beatrice Portinari, who was a

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

few months younger than he. Nine years later, on the threshold of adulthood, he again saw her, and instantly regarded her as a symbol of God's perfection in human form. From then until the day he died, he would love her deeply, though they never had a relationship of any kind; rather, Beatrice was Dante's muse, or the inspiration for his work.

During the course of his teens, Dante showed an early ability as a writer, and he studied under several great Florentine masters of literature. Among these was Brunetto Latini, celebrated for writing in Italian rather than Latin. Latini introduced the eighteen-year-old Dante to Guido Cavalcanti, another poet who had a great influence on the young man.

Also at eighteen, Dante inherited a modest family fortune, both of his parents having died when he was younger. Two years later, he married Gemma Donati in a union apparently arranged by their fathers years before. The couple would later have three children, and their son Pietro would grow up to become a well-known commentator on the *Divine Comedy.*

Marriage did not stop Dante from loving Beatrice, however; nor did her death in 1290, when Dante was twenty-five. It was then that he began writing poetry in earnest, attempting to overcome his grief. In the process, he also overcame the influence of his early teachers and forged his own style.

Political involvements and exile

Dante studied at a number of great universities in Western Europe, and his reaction to the death of Beatrice brought on an intensive reading of ancient and early medieval philosophers. In 1289, however, he left school to enlist in the Florentine army, and fought in the Battle of Campaldino that year.

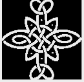
Italy at that time was torn by a church-state conflict that pitted the Guelphs (GWELFZ), supporters of the Roman Catholic Church, against the Ghibellines (GIB-uh-leenz), who backed the Holy Roman emperor. In Florence, the political division was even more complicated due to a split between the Black Guelphs and the White Guelphs. Dante sided with the White Guelphs, who took a less hard-line approach toward the Ghibellines than the Black Guelphs did; but the pope, leader of the Catholic Church, put his support behind the Black Guelphs.

This painting by Eugène Delacroix (de-la-KWAH; 1798–1863) shows the Roman poet Virgil leading Dante through Hell and Purgatory in Dante's ***Divine Comedy.*** *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

In the years between 1295 and 1301, Dante became intensely involved in politics and held a number of public offices. The Blacks staged a coup (KOO), or sudden takeover, in Florence in 1301, and forced all Whites to leave the city. Among those banished was Dante, who was stripped of all his possessions and forbidden from re-entering the city the following year. He would spend the remainder of his life wandering throughout Italy, living in a variety of cities.

Dante's other writings

Dante had written his first major work in 1293, during the five-year period between Beatrice's death and the beginnings of his political involvement. This work was *La vita nuova,* or *The New Life,* a collection of poems to Beatrice, which critics praised for its "sweet new style" and its refreshing approach to love as a spiritual experience.



Omar Khayyám

Like Dante, Omar Khayyám (c. 1048–c. 1131) was a poet, but Khayyám established an equally great reputation as a philosopher, mathematician, and astronomer. Khayyám, who lived in Persia (now Iran), wrote a paper on algebra that is considered one of the most significant works on that subject from medieval times.

He is most famous to Western readers, however, from the *Rubáiyát,* a collection of verses first translated into English in 1859 by the English poet and scholar Edward FitzGerald. Among the most famous lines from the *Rubáiyát* as translated by FitzGerald is "A Book of Verses underneath the Bough, / A Jug of Wine, a loaf of bread—and Thou / Beside me singing in the Wilderness— / Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!" The last word is a poetic version of *enough,* and the line means, in effect, "with you even a wilderness is paradise."

Little is known about Khayyám's life, except that he was commissioned by Malik Shah, sultan of the Seljuk Turks, to work on reforming the calendar. He also helped plan an observatory in Persia, and spent his later years teaching mathematics and astrology. Seven centuries after his death, the rediscovery of his work by FitzGerald brought on an explosion of interest in Khayyám, who became perhaps more famous in the modern West than he had been in the medieval Middle East.

In exile, he wrote another collection of poetry, *Il convivio* (*The Banquet*; 1304–7); and two significant prose works. The first of these was *De vulgari eloquentia* (*Eloquence in the Vernacular Tongue*; 1303–7), a defense of Italian literature. Ironically, *De vulgari* was in Latin, as was *De monarchia* (*On Monarchy*; c. 1313), an examination of Dante's political views. By far the greatest of his works, however, was the *Divine Comedy,* which he began in 1308 and completed just before his death thirteen years later.

The *Divine Comedy*

The term "divine" is a reference to God, an abiding presence throughout the narrative. As for the "comedy" part, it is not a comedy in the traditional sense; rather, the term refers to the fact that the story, told in a series of 100 "chap-

ters" called cantos, has a happy ending. Dante placed the events of the *Divine Comedy* at Easter Weekend 1300, when he was—as he wrote in the opening lines of Canto I—"Midway upon the journey of our life" (thirty-five years old).

This fifteenth-century illustration from the manuscript of Dante's *Divine Comedy* shows Virgil and Dante with the Condemned Souls in Eternal Ice. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

The *Divine Comedy* depicts Dante's journey into the depths of the Inferno or Hell, guided by the departed soul of the Roman poet Virgil (70–19 B.C.). At the end of the *Inferno,* he is forced to leave Virgil behind as he travels into Purgatory, a place of punishment for people working out their salvation and earning their way into Heaven or Paradise. In these two sections, his guide is Beatrice.

The *Divine Comedy* is not meant to be understood as a literal story; rather, it is an allegory or symbolic tale. It concerns such spiritual matters as faith, revelation, and eternity; it also addresses the political issues of Dante's time. Clearly, however, there is something eternal and universal in the *Divine Comedy,* and this helps to explain the continued appreciation for this work.

In 1373, more than half a century after Dante died, Florence—the city that had once rejected him—honored his memory by commissioning Petrarch (PEE-trark; 1304–1374) to deliver a series of lectures on the *Divine Comedy.* Since that time, Dante has been in and out of favor, depending on the attitudes of the era; but overall his reputation continues to grow with the passage of time.

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El Cid

Born c. 1043
Died 1099

Spanish warrior and hero

"This man, the scourge of his time, by his appetite for glory, by the prudent steadfastness of his character, and by his heroic bravery, was one of the miracles of God."

Ibn Bassam, Arab chronicler

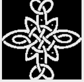
Portrait.

The pages of medieval history are filled with figures whose biographies are equal parts legend and fact—or in some cases, more legend than fact—from the saintly **Rabia al-Adawiyya** (see entry) to the devilish Vlad Tepes (see box in Tamerlane entry). Perhaps nowhere is this mixture of fact and fiction more evident than in the life of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, better known as El Cid.

Mythologized as a valiant Christian knight who fought heroically against the Muslims, he was in reality a soldier of fortune who spent most of his career in conflict with a Christian king, and who at one time served a Muslim emir. At least parts of the legend are accurate: El Cid was without question a brave and talented warrior, and he was at least as honorable as most knights of his time. Certainly there is an air of romance even to the tale of the *real* El Cid, and it is on this foundation of air that the legend was built.

Trained as a warrior

In about 1043, Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar (rohth-REE-goh



Harun al-Rashid

Harun al-Rashid (hah-ROON; rah-SHEED; 766–809) served as caliph or ruler over the Arab Muslim empire at the height of its glory under the Abbasid (uh-BAHS-id) dynasty. Like El Cid, he also became a figure of legend, thanks to his association with the famous *Thousand and One Nights,* known in the West as *The Arabian Nights.*

The name Harun al-Rashid—sometimes rendered as *Haroun* and/or *ar-Rashid*—is Arabic for "Aaron the Upright." Born in what is now Iran, he was the third son of the caliph al-Mahdi and his wife al-Khayzuran (kay-zoo-RAHN), a former slave who became the most influential woman in the caliphate. She used her sway to help Harun rise to power following the death of his father, and at the young age of twenty, he assumed control over the most powerful empire in the world at that time.

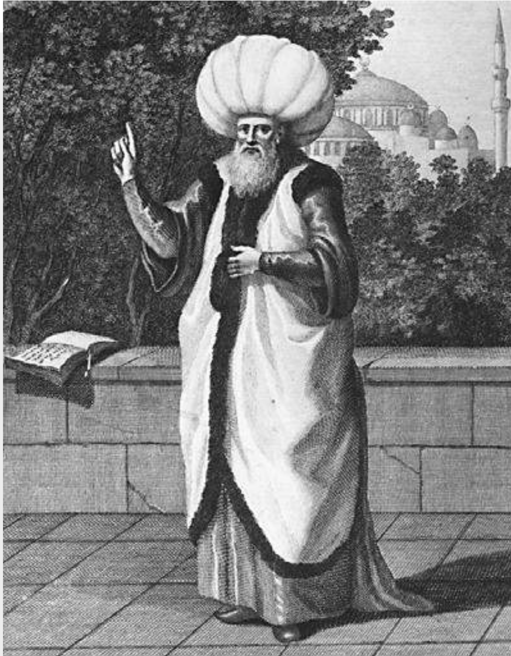
During the late 770s and early 780s, before he became caliph, Harun was engaged in military conflicts against the Byzantine Empire, the second most powerful force in the region. His leadership of the troops was largely symbolic, however: the real control rested with Ibn Khalid (IB'n kah-LEED), his advisor. Ibn Khalid and his two sons would hold key positions in Harun's court.

Harun spent much of his reign in conflict with the Byzantines. With **Irene of Athens** (see entry), he established a successful relationship of non-aggression (neither side would attack the other), but his relations with her successors were not as good. Wisely preferring to use peaceful means to protect the caliphate wherever possible, Harun established a special military province to act as a buffer on the Byzantine frontier.

The threats were not just outside the caliphate: within its borders, Harun had to deal with revolts by a number of nation-

dee-AHZ duh BEE-bahdr) was born to a noble family in the Spanish kingdom of Castile (kas-TEEL). By that time, Muslim forces had ruled southern Spain for three centuries, while Christian kingdoms dominated the north. Of these kingdoms, Castile—so named for its many castles—was the most powerful, and Rodrigo's family belonged to its highly esteemed warrior class. He was well connected on both his mother's and father's sides, and as a child learned to read and write—unusual skills in medieval times, even among the nobility.

His father died when he was fifteen years old, and Rodrigo went to live in the household of Fernando I, king of Castile. Fernando's son, Prince Sancho, took Rodrigo under his



Harun al-Rashid. *Reproduced by permission of the Hulton-Getty Picture Library.*

al groups seeking independence from their masters in Baghdad, the Abbasid capital. Toward the end of his life, he sought to ensure a smooth succession through his sons, but they proved not to be as cool-headed as their father, and after his death their greed for power led them into war with one another.

The era of Harun is remembered as a golden age, one closely associated with the *Thousand and One Nights.* The sultan in the latter book, whose young bride tells him a new tale every night, is said to have been modeled in part on Harun. Also famous is an exchange between Harun and **Charlemagne** (see entry), to whom Harun reportedly sent the gift of an elephant. It is perhaps a measure of Harun's prestige, and that of the Abbasid caliphate, that nowhere in the Abbasids' official histories is his contact with Charlemagne—the most important figure in the history of Western Europe during the early medieval period—even mentioned.

wing, teaching him military arts that would serve him well in times to come. Though the kingdoms of the north were by then engaged in the Reconquista (ray-kawn-KEES-tah), an effort to place Muslim lands under Christian rule, Rodrigo's first taste of battle at age twenty came in a conflict between two Christian kingdoms, Castile and Aragon (AHdR-uh-gawn).

Conflict between brothers

In 1065, when Rodrigo was twenty-two years old, Fernando died. As eldest son, Sancho received Castile, while his younger brothers Alfonso and García respectively inherited

the smaller kingdoms of León (lay-OHN) and Galicia (gah-LEETH-ee-ah). This situation was a recipe for future conflict, but in the meantime, Rodrigo was given the important position of royal standard bearer, which put him in direct control over the king's bodyguard.

Rodrigo proved a faithful servant to his lord, and distinguished himself in battle numerous times. In 1067, he led forces against Sancho's rivals in the kingdoms of Aragon and Navarre (nuh-VAHdR). Soon Sancho and his brother Alfonso squared off against one another, and forces led by Rodrigo scored a decisive victory over Alfonso at Golpejera (gohl-pay-HAY-dah) in 1072. Shortly afterward, Sancho became king of León as well as Castile, and he banished Alfonso.

Alfonso triumphant

Sancho held his new position for less than a year: in the fall of 1072, he was assassinated, and suddenly Alfonso assumed control of Castile and León. Not surprisingly, Rodrigo was not among Alfonso's favorites, yet the new king made no move to attack his old enemy. Instead, Rodrigo was stripped of all rank, and military positions were given to various leaders from León, include Count García Ordóñez (ohdr-DOHN-yez).

In 1074, however, Rodrigo recovered much of his former prestige by marrying Jimena Díaz (hee-MAY-nah), the king's niece. It is likely the king himself arranged the marriage, proof that Rodrigo's standing at the court had risen once again. But the soldier would not remain in his master's good graces for long.

Fall from grace

In 1079, Rodrigo made a fatal blunder from the standpoint of his reputation with Alfonso. He attacked a group of mercenaries, or men who fight for pay, in the service of Granada. Though Granada's rulers were Muslims, the men in the party seized and imprisoned by Rodrigo were from León—and they included Ordóñez, one of Alfonso's favorites. Instead of letting them go when he realized they were well

connected, however, Rodrigo pressed Ordóñez's family for ransom money, an act that infuriated the king.

Two years later, in the summer of 1081, Moorish bandits from Toledo (doh-LAY-doh) attacked a Castilian stronghold. The king was away, and Rodrigo led the defending force, which chased the invaders to Toledo and proceeded to take some 7,000 prisoners. Instead of being overjoyed when he learned of this, Alfonso was angered that Rodrigo had acted without his authorization, and he ordered the soldier banished from Castile.

Years as a mercenary

Rodrigo spent the next five years in Zaragoza (zah-duh-GOH-zah), serving the Muslim ruler al-Mu'tamin (mü-tah-MEEN). In 1082, he led al-Mu'tamin's troops to a major victory over Count Ramón Berenguer II (bayr-un-GAYR) of Barcelona. There followed a series of successes, and even after al-Mu'tamin died in 1085, Rodrigo remained loyal to his successor.

In May 1085, Alfonso seized Toledo, which had been in Muslim hands for three centuries, and laid siege to Zaragoza. This prompted the Muslims to call in help from the Almoravids (al-muh-RAH-vedz), who controlled Morocco. The Almoravids, who soon became the dominant Islamic force in Spain, defeated Alfonso in battle on October 23, 1086, and this prompted him to open up communication with Rodrigo once again.

Attempts at reconciliation with Alfonso

Alfonso soon reinstated Rodrigo, and placed him in charge of an army. In 1089, however, Rodrigo failed to reinforce Alfonso's troops in an attack against the Almoravids, and this infuriated the king. Rodrigo's wife and children were briefly imprisoned, and Rodrigo himself was exiled for good.

He moved to Spain's eastern coast, where he became a warlord who answered to no king. This worried Berenguer, who raised a force against him in May 1090, but the outcome of this engagement was that Rodrigo captured Berenguer. As a

result, he obtained ransom money and official recognition of his power, and by the end of the year, he held most of the region aside from the city of Valencia.

Rodrigo's interest in Valencia would thwart yet another attempted reconciliation with Alfonso. It so happened that Alfonso, who sent troops into the area in 1092, also wanted Valencia. Rodrigo retaliated by invading Castile and devastating lands under the control of his old foe Ordóñez, acts that resulted in a withdrawal of Alfonso's forces from Valencia. Rodrigo began a siege against Valencia in the summer of 1093, and the city fell to him a year later, on June 15, 1094.

The legendary El Cid

Rodrigo and other leaders of Christian Spain were not the only ones who considered Valencia important: when the Almoravids learned of the city's conquest by Rodrigo, they quickly sent a force against him. Leading a much smaller army, Rodrigo devastated the Almoravids in battle on October 14, 1094—the first time the Moorish invaders had suffered a defeat since their arrival in Spain eight years before.

Ironically, the man who had spent so much of his life in the saddle, sword in hand, died peacefully in his bed on July 10, 1099. Following his death, his wife Jimena struggled to maintain control over Valencia, a conflict in which Alfonso came to her aid. After three years, however, Alfonso could no longer defend the city, and he urged Jimena to give it up and come to Castile. Valencia fell to the Almoravids in May 1102, and it would not return to Christian hands until 1238.

By that time, Rodrigo's life story was being turned into a myth, which became the *Poema de mio Cid,* a work of anonymous authorship sometimes translated as *The Lay of the Cid*. The nickname El Cid, meaning "The Master" in Arabic, actually came from Rodrigo's enemies, who were some of his greatest admirers. Thus the Arab historian Ibn Bassam wrote that the legendary foe of his people "was one of the miracles of God." To Spaniards, El Cid became immortal as a romantic hero, a defiant individual who triumphed over powers much greater than himself.

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Eleanor of Aquitaine

Born 1122
Died 1204

Queen of France and England

Eleanor of Aquitaine was a rare individual indeed. As wife of Louis VII, she ruled France, only to divorce her husband and marry Henry of Anjou, who would later make her queen of England. Marriage may have gotten her into positions of power, but what Eleanor did with that power was her own special gift. Both shrewd and intelligent, she was a highly cultured woman who managed to stay atop the shifting political structures of Western Europe, and at the same time cultivated learning and the arts in her lands.

The court at Aquitaine

During her long and varied life, Eleanor often found herself (or in many cases, put herself) at the center of conflicts. It was perhaps a trait she learned from her father, Duke William X of Aquitaine in France. William dared to disagree with **Bernard of Clairvaux** (klayr-VOH; see entry), a religious leader who was perhaps the most powerful man in Western Europe—even more so than the pope, official head of the Catholic Church.

"Seek, my child, those things which make for peace. Cease to stir up the king against the Church and urge him a better course of action. If you will promise to do this, I in my turn promise to entreat the merciful Lord to grant you offspring."

Bernard of Clairvaux's advice to Eleanor

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

Besides the tendency to quarrel, an interest in the arts seemed to run in Eleanor's family. Her grandfather, William IX, became distinguished as a troubadour (TROO-buh-dohr), a type of poet in medieval France. Eleanor herself grew up surrounded by music and literature at her father's court, a French center of culture.

A powerful fifteen-year-old

In 1137, however, fifteen-year-old Eleanor was suddenly jolted from what might have been a quiet, easy life when her father died without a male heir. As his oldest child, Eleanor became not only duchess of Aquitaine, but countess of Poitou (pwah-TÜ). Any man who married her would control even more of France than the king did, and this put Eleanor in danger of kidnapping and forced marriage.

It so happened that before his death, William had asked the king to become Eleanor's guardian. Now King Louis VI (LOO-ee) took her under his wing in a way that also served his own interests, by arranging her marriage to his son, the future King Louis VII (c. 1120–1180; ruled 1137–1180). Shortly after the wedding, Louis VI died, making Eleanor—not yet sixteen years old—queen of France.

Queen of France

Louis VII seemed more suited to a career as a monk or priest than as king of France, and in fact he had been raised for a life in the church, and would never have become king if his older brother had not died in a riding accident. Thus Louis was not inclined to make trouble for the pope and other Catholic leaders, whereas Eleanor had a mind of her own.

Eleanor's younger sister Petronille (pet-roh-NEEL) was having an affair with Count Ralph of Vermandois (vayr-mun-DWAH), and she wanted to make an honest woman of herself by marrying him. The problem was that Ralph already had a wife, and divorce was not possible under church laws. The only way around this was to have a marriage annulled, or declared illegal, so Eleanor arranged this for her sister.

As it turned out, however, Ralph's former wife had powerful friends, not least of whom was the pope, who lashed out at France with all the power he had. This put Louis VII, a reluctant participant in the conflict, in a difficult position. Finally Bernard of Clairvaux stepped in and helped settle the dispute. He also advised Eleanor that if she would quit making trouble with the church, God would give her the thing for which she had long been hoping: a child.

The Second Crusade

Eleanor did stop quarreling with the church, and in 1145 she did give birth to a daughter, Marie. Shortly afterward, Bernard organized the Second Crusade (1147–49), an effort to win control of the Holy Land for Christian forces, and Louis took part as a means of winning back the favor of the church.

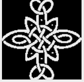
Eleanor went with him, and in the Syrian city of Antioch (AN-tee-ahk), an important crusader stronghold, she met her uncle, Raymond of Toulouse (tuh-LOOS). Raymond was only twelve years older than she, and they instantly became close. The nature of their relationship has long been disputed by historians; regardless of whether they became lovers, however, they were certainly close friends.

During their long hours talking, Raymond became the first person to learn of Eleanor's misgivings regarding her marriage. "I thought I had married a king," she told him, "but I find I have married a monk." Raymond suggested that she could obtain an annulment on the basis of consanguinity (kahn-sang-GWIN-i-tee)—blood relationship, or the fact that she and Louis were too closely related.

In fact medieval monarchs and nobles often married close relatives, but it made for a good excuse, and Eleanor announced to Louis that due to consanguinity and a desire to remain in Antioch with Raymond, she was not returning to France. Louis, however, forced her to return.

Divorce and remarriage

Despite the birth of a second daughter, not to mention help from the pope in sorting out their marital problems,



King John

Though he came from a distinguished family—son of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine, brother of Richard the Lion-Hearted—King John of England (1167–1216; ruled 1199–1216) was not a great man. Yet his very lack of greatness has benefited the world more than anything his more admirable relatives did: it was John's greediness and cruelty that caused the drafting of the Magna Carta (1215), one of the most important documents in the history of free government.

John was the youngest of Henry's sons, and in spite of the fact that from an early age he showed himself to be spiteful, childish, and domineering, he was his father's favorite. Henry had already promised most of his lands to his older sons, but he set about securing properties for John. The latter finally received dominion over Ireland, but mismanaged it so badly that he had to surrender control. In the meantime, Henry's attempts to grab land for John put him into conflict with his wife and other sons, who led a revolt against him. John himself joined in the revolt against his father, and this was a crushing blow to Henry, who died in 1189.

No sooner had Richard become king than he went away to take part in the Third Crusade (1189–92), leaving John as his heir if anything should happen to him. John lost no time in conspiring to take the throne, and when Richard heard about this, he tried to return from the crusade. On the way, he was kidnapped and taken prisoner in Austria, where he remained for two years. It is said that John actually sent letters to Richard's captors, asking them not to release him.

But the English nobility and their people, with whom Richard was very popular, raised the money for his ransom, and in 1194 Richard returned to England. Rather than deal harshly with John, however, Richard let him be. Five years later, in 1199, Richard died from an infected arrow wound, and John became undisputed king of England.

John proceeded to mismanage England as he once had Ireland, taxing the people so ferociously that many starved. Looking for a replacement, his nobles were willing to put their support behind John's

Eleanor's marriage to Louis was doomed. In 1152, she left him, and soon afterward arranged to have her marriage annulled. As a woman possessing huge lands, however, she could not afford to remain unmarried for long; therefore just two months after the end of her first marriage, she married a man eleven years her junior, Henry, count of Anjou (ahn-ZHOO; 1133–1189).

nephew Arthur, count of Anjou, but in 1204 Arthur was murdered—some say by John himself. One person who claimed that John had committed the murder was the French king Philip, who used this as an excuse to take over most English holdings in France.

Forced back to England, John imposed even more heavy taxes on the people, and began robbing them of all their possessions as a way of adding to his fortunes. He also quarreled with the Roman Catholic Church, and eventually Pope **Innocent III** (see entry) placed a ban on all church activities—including weddings—in England. For six years, no church bells rang in the entire country.

This did not bother John, who helped himself to all lands formerly controlled by the church; but when he learned that France was about to launch an invasion against him, he turned to the pope for help. As a sign of repentance, he "gave" England to the pope, who could now demand huge taxes of the English people each year. By 1214, the church taxes alone were equal to nearly one-third of the nation's yearly income, and the burden became too much for the noblemen of England.

Lacking a replacement for John, the nobles decided they would set down some new rules. This they did in 1215 with the Magna Carta, or "Great Charter," a document containing sixty-three articles concerning the rights of the nobility. The noblemen forced John to sign it at a meeting in a meadow called Runnymeade along the banks of the Thames (TEMZ) River.

John had no choice but to sign the document, yet he spent the rest of his life—just one year, as it turned out—behaving just as he had before. Now, however, the English lords had a document spelling out their rights, and the obligations of the king. This led ultimately to the creation of Parliament, the body of representatives that today holds the real power in England. Thus the Magna Carta, originally designed to protect only the upper classes, became a model for government by the people, and later influenced the U.S. Declaration of Independence and Constitution.

Henry's mother Matilda was a grandchild of **William the Conqueror** (see entry), as was the reigning English king, Stephen. Stephen had usurped, or seized, the throne from Matilda, and Henry fought with him for control. The outcome was an agreement, the Treaty of Winchester (1153), which stated that when Stephen died, Henry would take the throne. Stephen died in 1154, and thus

within two years, Eleanor went from being queen of France to queen of England.

Henry's accession to the English throne established the ruling House of Plantagenet (plan-TAJ-uh-net), destined to rule for nearly 250 years; and during much of that time, England and France would find themselves at war. The roots of the problem went back to the marriage of Henry and Eleanor, which combined the French duchies of Aquitaine and Anjou, and (following Henry's accession to the English throne) placed both of those territories under the rule of England. Thus the English royal house controlled more of France than the French crown did. Perhaps Eleanor could have eased things by asking the king's permission before marrying Henry—but since the king happened to be her ex-husband, she knew he would never give his consent.

Conflict between father and sons

Eleanor bore Henry numerous children over the years from 1153 to 1166, including four sons. During much of this time, Henry was away, overseeing his lands in France, and Eleanor ruled England as regent. Then in 1168, Henry returned full control of Aquitaine—the ruler of which he had become at the time of their marriage—to Eleanor, and she moved there.

The marriage with Henry had not turned out to be much happier than the one with Louis, though for opposite reasons. Certainly Eleanor could not accuse Henry of being monk-like: he was a lusty, battle-hardened warrior, an unfaithful husband and a selfish father.

In 1170, Eleanor persuaded Henry to follow a French custom and crown his eldest son Henry while he continued to reign. The father agreed to do so, but did not permit the son—who never lived to reign, and is known to history as Henry the Young King—to hold any power.

Eleanor became increasingly displeased with Henry's unwillingness to pass on the throne to one of their children. Therefore over the course of the 1170s and the early 1180s, she joined forces with Louis VII, who apparently let bygones be bygones, especially because he and Eleanor now had a mu-

tual enemy. Together with her sons, they periodically waged war against Henry. But the king held on to power, and in 1186 he had Eleanor imprisoned in Salisbury Castle.

John kneels down before King Richard I, asking forgiveness for his attempt to take the throne from Richard. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Richard and John

Eleanor spent three years in prison, gaining release upon Henry's death in 1189. For such a well-traveled and cultured person, those years of confinement were especially difficult—not to mention the fact that by now she was almost seventy years old. But Eleanor still had many good years left, and she devoted them to her sons—or rather to her eldest surviving son, **Richard I** (the Lion-Hearted; see entry).

Richard took the throne upon the death of his father, and Eleanor became his trusted (and very powerful) counselor. She oversaw Richard's affairs, arranging a beneficial marriage for him and in 1192 putting down a revolt led by another son, John (see box). When Richard was kidnapped following the Third Crusade, she ran the country, and it was she who delivered his ransom to Germany in the dead of winter, 1194. Therefore she was all the more devastated when Richard, having returned to England, died from an infected arrow wound in 1199.

This left John, who was as greedy and cruel as Richard was noble, on the throne. Though John was not Eleanor's first choice for king, he was all that she had left, and she supported him when Arthur of Anjou, one of her grandsons, tried to claim the throne. Despite her help, John proved a failure as a king, and lost most of the family's French possessions.

At least Aquitaine remained in Eleanor's control, and as her life drew to a close, she possessed little more than she had when it began. Still suffering from the loss of Richard, she went to live with the nuns at the abbey of Fontevrault

(fawn-tuh-VROH), where her favorite son, Richard, and her second husband were buried. She died in the spring of 1204, at the age of eighty-two.

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English Scholars, Thinkers, and Writers

Alcuin

Born c. 735
Died 804

English scholar and teacher

St. Anselm of Canterbury

Born c. 1033
Died 1109

Italian-English church leader and philosopher

Thomas à Becket

Born 1118
Died 1170

English church leader and chancellor

William of Ockham

Born c. 1290
Died 1349

English philosopher

Geoffrey Chaucer

Born c. 1340
Died 1400

English author and poet

"Defend me with your sword, and I will support you with my pen."

Promise allegedly made to Emperor Ludwig IV by William of Ockham

Because it is an island and geographically separated from the European continent, England's civilization became quite different from the rest of Europe. Successive waves of invasion gave it many influences, contributing to the broad reach of the English language. Likewise England developed an emphasis on freedom and individualism unmatched among European nations. These concepts became central to the foundation of America, and thus all Americans—regardless of ethnic heritage—can claim ties to the English traditions.

The five men profiled below, all noted as scholars, thinkers, and/or writers, each contributed to the development of the English mind. Each man deserves far more attention than space permits, because each in his own way changed the world.

Alcuin

A scholar trained in the church, Alcuin (AL-kwin) is best known for his work as headmaster over a school in France, a job he was given by **Charlemagne** (see entry) in

782. By that time he was almost fifty years old, and had long directed a cathedral school in England, but on returning from a trip to Rome, he met the emperor. It was a time known to some historians as the Dark Ages, when learning had nearly come to a standstill: few people could read and write, and even those literate few had a poor command over Latin, the language of the educated. Thus Charlemagne was badly in need of a scholar to teach the nobility and priests of his empire, as well as the royal family.

Under Alcuin's direction, the palace school at Charlemagne's capital trained a new generation of administrators in a manner that resembled that of the ancient Romans. This contributed significantly to the "Carolingian renaissance," a bright spot of renewed interest in learning during the dark centuries from 500 to 1000. Also notable was Alcuin's reorganization of the liturgy—that is, the procedural instructions for church services—in Charlemagne's empire. This would have an enormous impact far beyond Alcuin's lifetime: many of the reforms he established remain in use among French Catholics to this day.

So, too, would his training of the new educated class in France, Germany, and other lands ruled by Charlemagne. In the latter part of Alcuin's life, just after his retirement in 796, Viking attacks on the British Isles threatened to extinguish the lamp of learning: for instance, the library at York, one of the most important in England, was completely destroyed by the invaders. It was only through the efforts of men from the European continent—students of Alcuin's students—that the scholarly tradition was reestablished in England.

St. Anselm of Canterbury

Though born in Italy, Anselm is best remembered for his work in England. He first visited in 1078, when he was about forty-five and serving as an abbot, or head of a monastery, in France. Nine years later, a dying **William the Conqueror** (see entry) sent for Anselm to read him his last rites, but the abbot arrived too late.

At that time the Archbishop of Canterbury, leading priest among English Christians, was a former teacher of Anselm's named Lanfranc. Lanfranc died in May 1089, and

William's son William II (sometimes known as William Rufus) was so determined to control the English church that he refused to appoint a new archbishop for four years. After he almost died in 1093, however, William became fearful that he was disobeying God by not appointing a new archbishop, and would be punished for doing so. He chose Anselm for the role.

The result was a series of conflicts between Anselm and William that would persist throughout the latter's reign. For instance, the king tried to stop Anselm from traveling to Rome in 1095 to receive a pallium, a woolen shoulder covering that symbolized papal approval, from Urban II (see box in Innocent III entry). Despite William's attempts to limit his influence, Anselm did his best to help the king, and personally blessed William before leaving on a second trip to Rome in late 1097. While he was away, Anselm completed his most important work, *Why God Became Man;* and William, who had tried to seize all of Anselm's property, died.

St. Anselm of Canterbury. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

Initially Anselm's relationship with William's brother Henry I was no better than it had been with William, but the two finally reached an agreement in Normandy in July 1105. Soon afterward, at the Conference of Westminster, church and state spelled out their mutual obligations in a written agreement. The latter became the model for the Concordat of Worms (1122), which settled a similar dispute between the pope and the Holy Roman emperor. Anselm died in Canterbury on April 21, 1109, and in 1163 a new archbishop of Canterbury put him forward for canonization, or sainthood.

Thomas à Becket

That archbishop was Thomas à Becket (the *à* is pronounced "uh"; often he is simply called Thomas Becket). A

Thomas à Becket. *Reproduced by permission of the Granger Collection Ltd.*

member of a distinguished family, Thomas grew up to lead a life of privilege that included an education at Paris, then Europe's leading center of learning. His fortunes changed, however, when he was twenty-one: his mother's death and his father's subsequent financial problems forced his return to England.

Young Thomas soon became personal secretary to Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, and this job gave him considerable opportunities for travel. In 1154, when Thomas was thirty-six, a new royal house took control of England under the leadership of Henry II, husband of **Eleanor of Aquitaine** and father of **Richard I** (see entries) and the future King John (see box in Eleanor of Aquitaine entry). Theobald recommended Thomas to Henry, who appointed him as his chancellor—one of the king's key advisors—in 1155.

For the next six years, Thomas enjoyed the power and privilege that went with a position at the king's right hand. Yet when Theobald died in 1161, events took a quite different turn. Henry appointed Thomas to the archbishop's seat in 1162, and probably assumed that his former chancellor would remain his faithful servant. Thomas, however, took the role of archbishop seriously, seeing himself as a representative of God rather than as a lackey to a king. This conviction would bring about his undoing.

The first major dispute between king and archbishop involved the legal rights of church officials who committed crimes under the secular (non-church) laws of the land. Henry maintained that they should be tried in government courts, whereas Thomas held that their trials should take place in church courts. This conflict became so heated that in 1164, Thomas fled England to seek refuge with Eleanor's former husband, Louis VII of France.

During his six years of exile, Thomas carried on lengthy negotiations with Henry, who in 1170 arranged for the coronation of his son, known to history as Henry the Young King. Infuriated that Henry would take it upon himself to crown a new king—a privilege that belonged exclusively to the archbishop—Thomas returned to Canterbury. Equally angered, Henry was at dinner one night when he demanded of his guests, "Who will rid me of the turbulent priest?"

Four knights responded, and hastened to Canterbury, where on December 29, 1170, they murdered Thomas while he was praying. As a result, Thomas became a widely admired martyr, canonized just three years after his death. The act of assassination had an effect exactly opposite of that which Henry had desired.

William of Ockham

Like the three men profiled above, William of Ockham (AHK-um; sometimes spelled *Occam*) spent his entire career as a member of the church. A Franciscan monk (see entry on St. Francis), he taught at Oxford University and is most often associated with his writings on the nature of ideas.

Ockham reacted against Scholasticism, a philosophical movement that attempted to bring together Christian faith, classical learning, and knowledge of the world. Scholasticism had represented a great move of progress when it had its beginnings with **Abelard,** and by the time it reached its high point with **Thomas Aquinas** (see entries), it became a solidly entrenched way of thinking among Western European philosophers. Ockham helped bring about the end of Scholasticism and the beginnings of modern thought. He effectively ended a long-running Scholastic debate over the nature of ideas, holding that there is no such thing as a universal, only individuals—for instance, there is no perfect form of *red,* only numerous examples of red objects.

In forming this argument, Ockham maintained that "entities must not be unnecessarily multiplied." This, the famous "Ockham's razor," means that people should always seek the most simple and straightforward explanation for something. For example, if a man's cap falls off while he is

sleeping, it is probably because he leaned forward in his sleep and it slid off—not because angels and demons got into a tug of war over his hat until one of them dropped it.

Clearly, Ockham's reasoning went against the grain of the medieval mind. So, too, did his political beliefs: if Anselm and Becket leaned too far to the side of the church, Ockham was equally strident in his support of secular power, particularly that of Holy Roman Emperor Ludwig IV. Ockham became involved in a dispute between the Franciscans and Pope John XXII, and was forced to flee the papal court at Avignon (AV-in-yawn) in France in 1328. Most of his writings during the last two decades of his life involved political attacks on the pope, and support for secular rulers.

Geoffrey Chaucer.

Geoffrey Chaucer

The career of Geoffrey Chaucer illustrated the transition from church power to secular power. Chaucer, known as "the father of English poetry" and the first widely celebrated writer in English, earned his living not as a priest or monk, but through the support or patronage of wealthy and powerful men such as the nobleman John of Gaunt. Chaucer's fortunes rose and fell with those of Gaunt and the royal house, including Gaunt's sons who became kings as Richard II and Henry IV.

Chaucer's first important work, *Book of the Duchess,* was written to comfort Gaunt following the death of his first wife, Blanche, in 1368. Later, in honor of Richard, he wrote *House of Fame* and *Parlement of Foules*. The former was said to have been influenced by **Dante** (see entry), and the latter was an allegory, or symbolic work of a type well known in the Middle Ages, discussing the nature of love. The spelling of the second title indicates that the English known to Chaucer is

what today is referred to as Middle English, describing the period in the language's development between the Norman Invasion of 1066 and the invention of the printing press in the mid-1400s.

Adapting an earlier work by Giovanni Boccaccio (see box in Murasaki Shikibu entry), Chaucer wrote *Troylus and Criseyde* (KRES-i-duh), set during the Trojan War in ancient Greece. Chaucer's last work, however, was his masterpiece: the *Canterbury Tales*. Begun around 1386, the poem involves a group of travelers on their way to Becket's shrine at Canterbury. They represent a spectrum of medieval society, from a highly respected knight to various peasants, and each has a tale to tell. These tales, most of which are just as entertaining today as they were six centuries ago, represent a spectrum of medieval themes, including courtly love, allegory, and stories of instruction.

It was a measure of the respect with which Chaucer was viewed that following his death on October 25, 1400, he was buried at Westminster Abbey, a great church in London. The abbey had formerly been reserved for burial of royalty, but Chaucer was the first of many distinguished commoners buried there. The section where he was laid to rest came to be known as Poet's Corner, and later housed the remains of several highly admired English writers.

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St. Francis of Assisi

Born 1182
Died 1226

Italian religious leader

Francis of Assisi is remembered as a great example of sainthood as that term is understood both within the Catholic Church and by the world in general. As with **Augustine** (see entry), an encounter with God transformed him from a reckless youth to a sober, thoughtful defender of the faith. Unlike Augustine, however, Francis produced no significant writings: rather, his triumph was in his deeds for the poor and the needy. His kindness to all creatures and his belief that all deserved God's good will became legendary, and later, tales circulated of his preaching to the animals.

"Francis, go repair my house, which is falling in ruins."

Christ's words to him, as reported by Francis

A spoiled boy

The eldest son of Pietro and Pica Bernardone was born with the name Giovanni, or John, in the central Italian city of Assisi (uh-SEE-see). His father, a wealthy cloth merchant, was away on business at the time, but as soon as Pietro returned, the family began calling the boy by the nickname Francesco, or Francis.

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Francis was a spoiled child, doted on by his parents, and he took little interest in things that proved difficult. Thus he never excelled in school, and throughout his career had such a limited command of writing that he typically dictated his letters and signed them with a simple cross.

Yet he learned to speak Latin, the language of learning at the time, and French, then the language of international business. He also helped his father by cutting cloth in the latter's store, and it was said that he loved to flirt with the pretty young female customers.

Parties and wars

Francis grew up on dreams of glory, encouraged by his father, who wanted him to become a knight. In his teen years, however, he showed little of the discipline necessary for anyone who aspired to knighthood. Francis and his gang of friends, mostly wealthy youths who had plenty of money and time, were given to partying, practical jokes, and idleness. Like the others, he cared little for anything beyond the pleasures of the moment, but even then, Francis distinguished himself by his generosity, both to his friends and to the poor.

The teenaged Francis little suspected how soon his sheltered world would be destroyed. At that point, much of Italy was caught in a struggle with the Holy Roman Empire, a confederation of German principalities that controlled much of Europe, but in 1197, Assisi declared its independence. The foreign rulers of Assisi, loyal subjects of the empire, fled to the nearby town of Perugia, whose people had long been enemies of Assisi. In 1201, Perugia declared war on Assisi, and Francis was taken prisoner during the Battle of Ponte San Giovanni in November 1202.

He was held captive in Perugia for a year, during which time he began suffering health problems. Francis had always been weak, and his years of drinking and staying out late had only further weakened him; now confinement added to ailments that he would suffer throughout his life. At the age of twenty-two, he seemed like an old man, and he spent weeks in bed. When he could finally walk again, he found that something had changed.

A change of direction

The first thing Francis noticed was that all the things he had loved—partying, feasting, riding—no longer held the same pleasure for him that they once had. Still, he resolved to get on with the business of becoming a knight, and rode away to join the armies of Pope **Innocent III** (ruled 1198–1216; see entry) in their ongoing battles with the Holy Roman Empire.

On his way to join the army, Francis stopped overnight in the town of Spoleto (spoh-LAY-doh), where he had a dream. In it, God asked him which lord he would serve: an earthly lord or commander in the army, or the Lord God in Heaven. Francis was so moved that he returned to Assisi.

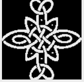
At home, people dubbed him a coward, and his parents were puzzled and embarrassed by Francis's behavior. All his old friends were away at war, and he began spending long hours praying in churches around the town. In 1206, he was kneeling at the Chapel of San Damiano when he heard what he believed was the voice of Christ saying to him: "Francis, go repair my house, which is falling in ruins."

In the aftermath of this strange experience, Francis renounced worldly riches and began begging in the streets. By this he hoped to raise funds to restore churches such as San Damiano, which was clearly in need of repair. But he was also begging to support himself, and his father was mortified by his behavior. In April 1207, he had Francis brought before a magistrate or judge, who he hoped would order him to stop begging, go home, and start living in a way appropriate to his upbringing.

Francis requested that his hearing occur before a bishop, to which the father agreed, and in the bishop's presence the young man stripped off his clothing and announced: "I have called Pietro Bernardone my father.... Now I will say Our Father who art in heaven, not Pietro Bernardone." Thus he renounced his old life, and began a new one.

The start of the Franciscans

Up to this point, Francis still believed that God wanted him to literally repair churches, but in the follow-



St. Dominic

Not only was St. Dominic (c. 1170–1221) almost an exact contemporary of St. Francis, but he too established a mendicant order of friars—that is, preachers and teachers who lived on alms or donations. Unlike Francis, however, Dominic seems to have been a devout follower of Christ even from his early years as a boy in Spain.

In Spain at that time, the Christian north was locked in a struggle against the Muslim south. As a result of the war, famine broke out in the town of Palencia, where the teenaged Dominic was studying for the priesthood. He was enraged by the unwillingness of the wealthy to help the poor, and sold all his possessions to feed the hungry.

In his mid-twenties, Dominic became a priest in the town of Osma, and there began a lifelong friendship with the bishop Diego. The king of Castile (kas-TEEL), the dominant Christian region in Spain, sent the two men to Rome on a diplomatic mission, and on their way through southern France, they were astounded by the differences between that region and their homeland.

Because of the struggle with the Muslims, the Christians of Spain were serious about their faith, whereas in southern France the priests had given in to lives of pleasure. The most devoted believers seemed to be the heretics, or people who

ing year he came to realize that his mission was one of repairing people's hearts—of fixing the church on the inside, in places that could not be seen. He began to model his life on that of Christ, as told in the Gospels from the New Testament; therefore he wandered the land, preaching, caring for the sick, and maintaining little in the way of material possessions.

At that time there were many wandering preachers, men who thundered about God's wrath, or the coming judgment of the world, or even about a particular leader who they claimed would be struck down by God. Francis's message was different: like Christ, he taught about God's love, and soon he attracted many followers.

In time, there were people who not only wanted to hear his message, but many who sought to live as Francis did. Thus was born the Franciscan order, a group of friars (preachers and teachers). In order to establish this order, however,

had adopted beliefs that went against established church teachings. Chief among the heretical groups were the Cathars, sometimes known as the Albigenses (al-buh-JIN-seez).

The typical response of the church to heresy was condemnation and punishment, but Dominic took a different approach. Moved by what he saw as their misguided faith, he sought to reason with the Cathars, and persuade them of their errors. For some time, he made considerable progress in his efforts at conversion, but two occurences doomed his mission. First was the death of Diego, who he had depended upon in his efforts; then, in 1208, the murder of a church official in the area sparked the Albigensian Crusade, a "holy war" against the region. The result was slaughter and mayhem, and Dominic returned to Spain in disgust.

All was not lost, however: Dominic attracted a group of friars around him, and in 1215 was granted permission to start the Dominican Order. As with the Franciscans, the Dominicans included women, in separate orders of nuns. In the last six years of Dominic's life, the order spread throughout Europe; and in the 1500s, Spanish exploration spread the Dominican influence to East Asia and the Americas.

Francis had to get the pope's approval, and at first Innocent refused. After meeting with Francis, however, the pope himself had a strange dream.

In it, he saw the Church of St. John Lateran, the principal church in Rome, start to tilt over and fall; then suddenly a man in rags—who Innocent recognized as Francis—caught it and saved it. The pope approved the establishment of the Franciscan order, and in 1223 he authorized it as a Rule, a group under which other orders were established.

An inclusive message

As was the case with St. Dominic (see box), the order established by Francis had a place for women. An early follower was Clare of Assisi, member of a noble family, who ran away from home with her cousin Pacifica. They went to Fran-

cis, who cut off their hair and gave them clothes of rough material, a symbol that they renounced the things of the world. Joined later by Clare's younger sister Agnes, the three nuns developed an order known as the "Poor Clares."

Clearly Francis's message was one that included rather than excluded people. Although stories about him preaching to the animals are almost certainly legendary, they help to symbolize the fact that he believed God's love was for everyone. He even tried to travel to the Holy Land and to Morocco, where Christians were engaged in crusades against Muslims, in hopes of ending the fighting. This was a rare viewpoint for his time, when most Christians in Western Europe regarded such "holy wars" as service to God. Unfortunately, Francis's health and other problems prevented him from making those journeys.

In his latter years, Francis saw the order he had established grow in numbers, but it lost something in its growth. Francis had intended his group to be small, composed of men and women willing to undergo the utmost in hardship; but as the movement grew, its standards were lowered to accommodate more people.

A legendary figure

Seeking to separate himself from the hustle and bustle of the world, Francis went on a pilgrimage to the mountain of La Verda, north of Assisi. It was there, according to legend, that he received the stigmata—nail marks on his hands and feet, and a wound in his side. The stigmata was a phenomenon said to occur to the most devout, and the wounds exactly replicated those Christ had suffered during his crucifixion.

Poor health brought an early end to Francis's life, at the age of forty-four. Another tale about him held that in death, his body was renewed: his skin became white, and his face lost all signs of aging, while the wounds of Christ turned black. Whatever the truth of these claims, they attested to the legendary status he had already acquired within his lifetime. Just two years after his death—an extremely short interval—he was canonized, or declared a saint.

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Genghis Khan

Born c. 1162
Died 1227

Mongolian chieftain and conqueror

No empire in history has ever been as large as that conquered in the 1200s by the Mongols, who began their conquests as a simple nation of shepherds and nomads in Central Asia. What welded them into a mighty fighting force was not a religion, or a political belief, or even a shared need for land or food; it was a man, a severe but shrewd warlord known to history as Genghis Khan.

"A man's greatest work is to break his enemies, to drive them before him, to take from them all the things that have been theirs."

The son of a chieftain

Today Mongolia is a quiet, underpopulated, and underdeveloped land to the north of China. For centuries, it had been home to a hardy nomadic people who had no written language or—until the Middle Ages—cities of their own. The man who briefly made Mongolia the most powerful nation on Earth was born with the name Temujin (TIM-yuh-jin) in 1162.

According to legend, Temujin came into the world grasping a lump of clotted blood, a sign of the forcefulness and violence that would dominate his life. His father was a chieftain

Portrait.

named Yesugei (YES-oo-gay), who, when the boy was still young, arranged his marriage to Borte (BOHR-tuh), the daughter of a neighboring chieftain. The families celebrated with a feast, but while returning to his clan's area, Yesugei was poisoned by Tatars (TAT-arz), another nomadic group in the region.

A harsh childhood

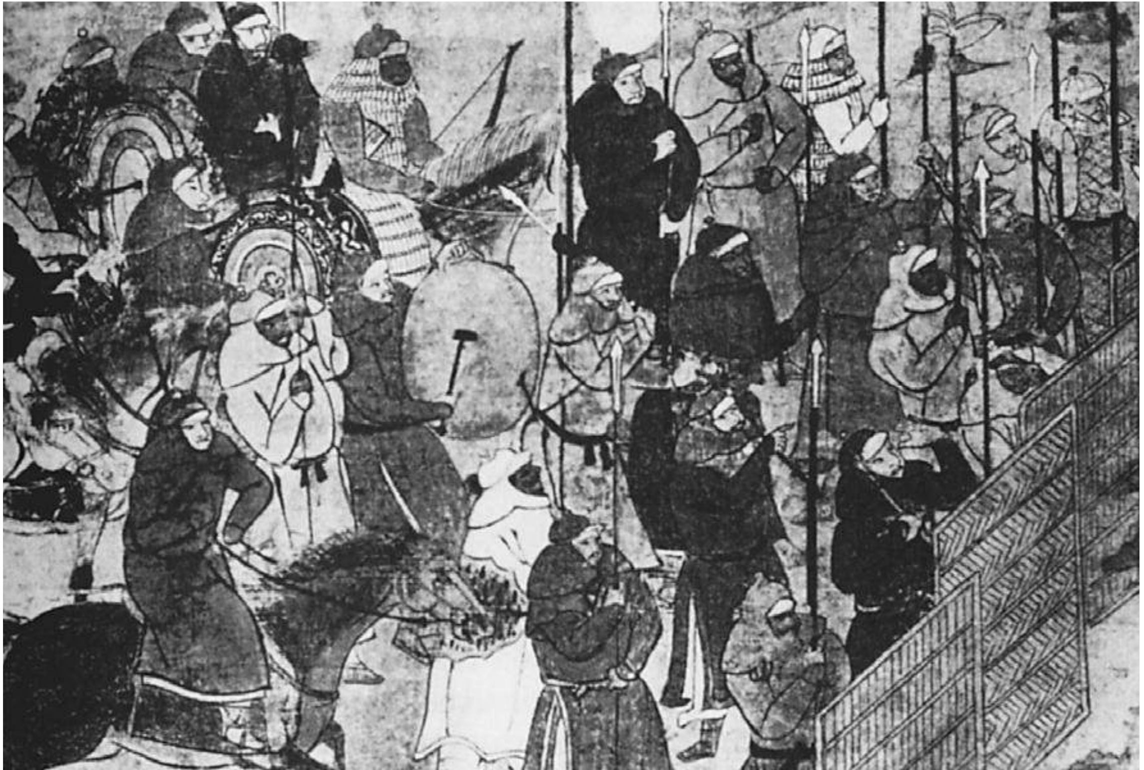
Not only was Temujin's mother Ho'elun (hoh-LOON) left a widow and her children fatherless, but the status of nine-year-old Temujin, his father's designated heir, was uncertain. When the leader of another clan, Targutai (tar-goo-TY), seized all their possessions, Temujin's family was defenseless. They might have died had it not been for the resourcefulness and determination of his mother.

Over the next five years, Ho'elun kept her family—Temujin, a younger brother, two older half-brothers, and other smaller children—alive by avoiding the areas controlled by Targutai. This meant that they had to live off of the worst hunting and grazing grounds, and many times they barely made it through a winter without starving. The experience was unquestionably a hardening one for Temujin, who no doubt grew up quickly in the harsh environment of the Central Asia steppes (pronounced "steps"; vast areas of arid land with few or no trees).

When Temujin was fourteen, Targutai learned that he was still alive, and ordered his capture. Temujin managed to escape from a wooden harness in which his captors confined him, and taking advantage of their drunkenness during a feast, he fled their camp and returned to his family. The people who helped him in his escape, and the young men who joined forces with him immediately afterward, would later have honored places in his army. From among their ranks would come several of the hard-driving generals later referred to with admiration as the "Four Coursers of Genghis Khan."

Building his army

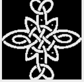
Steadily Temujin began taking what had been promised to him long before, and in due course he married



Mongol warriors gathering for battle. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Borte. In honor of their marriage, his new father-in-law gave him a special cloak, and Temujin quickly gave the cloak as a present to Toghrul (tohg-ROOL), a powerful chieftain who had once been an ally of his father's. In the Mongolian culture, which placed a strong emphasis on honoring those more powerful, it was an extremely wise move.

Thus when Borte was kidnapped by a band of enemy tribesmen, Temujin was able to call on the aid of Toghrul. He also asked the help of a childhood friend named Jamukha, and their three forces—Temujin hastily raised an army of his own—defeated the enemy tribe and rescued Borte. For some time after this, Temujin and Jamukha were the closest of friends, but for some reason they later parted ways. Shortly after Jamukha and his men left Temujin's camp, in 1187, a group of clans proclaimed Temujin "Genghis Khan" (JING-us KAHN), meaning "rightful ruler."



Brian Boru

There is no historical indication that Brian Boru (buh-ROO; c. 941–1014), king of Ireland, had any of the cruel ways typically attributed to Genghis Khan; nonetheless, there were similarities between the two men, though they were widely separated by time and space. Both grew up hiding from enemies, surrounded by a nation disunited and given to internal quarrels, and both would later unite their people and lead them to victory. The empire won by Genghis barely outlasted his grandchildren; Brian's united Ireland did not outlast his own lifetime.

Brian's father led one of several kingdoms that constituted Ireland, and though the Irish had a single "high king," the position lacked any real authority to unite the nation. This made them vulnerable to attacks from outsiders, and in Brian's time Ireland was under constant threat from the Danes, descendants of the Vikings. Together with his older brother and others, Brian waged a long war against the Danes. Later, however, his brother tired of fighting and agreed to make peace with the enemy, but Brian refused to so, and continued fighting.

Eventually Brian won over enough kingdoms to pose a serious challenge to the Danes, and he set out to conquer all of Ireland. In 999, he won the capital city of Dublin, and in 1002 became high king. Now more than sixty years old, he turned his attention from battle to administration, seeking to solidify the position of the high

Betrayed by old allies

Despite his impressive title, Genghis was but one of several khans, or chieftains, and in the years that followed, tensions between him and other leaders—particularly Jamukha—would grow. In 1198, both men aided the Chinese in a successful war against a common enemy, the Tatars. The shared effort, however, did little to reunite Genghis and Jamukha, and in 1191, clans opposed to Genghis's leadership recognized Jamukha as Gur Khan, or "sole ruler." They then launched an attack against Genghis, who managed to ward them off with the aid of Toghrul's troops.

In 1203, however, Jamukha influenced Toghrul to join his side, and they plotted to double-cross Genghis. Once again, the celebration of a betrothal—that is, the promise of a marriage, in this case of Toghrul's son to Genghis's daugh-

Brian Boru. *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

king. He also formed a strong alliance with the Catholic Church, and instituted a system of church schools to strengthen education throughout the country.

In later years, Brian referred to himself as "emperor of the Irish," and seems to have consciously modeled his rule on that of **Charlemagne** (see entry) and other great European figures. Though he had authority over the other kings of Ireland, many opposed his power. Eventually his enemies formed an alliance with the Danes, and marched against Brian on Good Friday, April 23, 1014. Brian was killed, and though ironically his side won the battle, their cause was lost without their leader. Brian's vision of Irish unity died with him.

ter—would provide the occasion for the betrayal. Toghrul's son tried to lure Genghis to a feast, where they would kill him, but one of Genghis's advisors figured out what was going on, and urged him not to go.

Genghis gathered his forces, and called on the clans that had sworn their allegiance to him, but they doubted his ability to win against the superior forces of his enemies, so they chose to stay out of the battle. That battle was inconclusive, but soon afterward, Genghis defeated Toghrul. Next came Jamukha, who he captured some months later. Reportedly Genghis offered his old friend the opportunity to let bygones be bygones, but Jamukha was supposedly so ashamed at his capture that he demanded to be killed. Whether or not this is true, Genghis's men killed him, and in 1206 the Mongols united as a nation for the first time and proclaimed Genghis "ruler of all men."

Conquering China

With a swift and sudden fury, Genghis—then about forty-four years old—rode onto the pages of history, leaving an indelible mark in the twenty-one years that remained for him. The reasons behind his conquest of such a large empire are not clear, but it seems as though he simply started going and never stopped. The Mongols were extraordinarily fierce warriors who struck terror in the hearts of their victims, a terror that was justified by the heaps of corpses they left behind them. It simply did not occur to Genghis to let people live: in his mind, leaving survivors would require him to devote troops to overseeing them, and he wanted to keep on moving.

His viewpoint on conquered peoples began to change somewhat when, in 1211, after subduing several other peoples along the Chinese border, he and his armies went after China itself. The Chinese had long regarded the Mongols as just one of many "barbarian" groups at the fringes of their empire, and had believed that the Mongols' rightful place was as servants to China. Now that was about to change. By 1215, Genghis's hordes, as the Mongol troops were called, had reached Peking, now more commonly known as Beijing (bay-ZHEENG; capital of modern China), which they virtually destroyed. Soon afterward, a former official of the Chinese emperor pointed out to Genghis that if he allowed some people to continue living in the lands he conquered, they could pay him valuable tax money to finance further warfare. Genghis accepted this sound advice, and changed his tactics in the future.

The conquest of the world

In 1216, a sultan in Persia unwisely offended Genghis, who sent his troops westward to take what is now Iran, Afghanistan, southern Russia, Georgia, and Armenia. By 1223, the Mongols controlled a region that stretched from the borders of Turkey to northern India to China.

Genghis himself, about sixty-five years old, died on August 18, 1227, of complications resulting from falling off a horse. He was buried in northeastern Mongolia, and it was said that forty beautiful maidens and forty horses were slaughtered before his grave.

In the years that followed Genghis's death, the Mongolian empire would grow to reach from the outskirts of Vienna, Austria, in the west, to the Korean Peninsula in the east. It was an almost unbelievably vast realm, and the driving force behind its conquest had been Genghis. Within less than two centuries, the Mongols' empire would fade into memory, and the Mongols themselves would retreat to their homeland.

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Gregory I

Born c. 540
Died 604

Italian pope

When Gregory I, or Gregory the Great, became pope in 590, the church and indeed all of Western Europe was in ruins. People still believed that the Western Roman Empire, smashed by barbarian invasions more than a century before, could be resurrected with the help of the Eastern Roman Empire in Greece. Gregory himself started out with that belief, but when he got no help from the emperor in Constantinople, he began building the church as a powerful, self-sufficient political entity.

"I have taken charge of an old and grievously shattered ship."

On becoming pope

A Roman prefect

As with many figures from the premodern period, little is known about Gregory's early life. He was born in about 540, a member of a wealthy Roman family. The family enjoyed great political power as well, but the Rome they lived in was a mere shadow of its former glory: two centuries of destruction by barbarian tribes such as the Lombards had left it in ruins. This ruining of Rome was both physical, in terms of the buildings and structures, and spiritual. The old laws of

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Granger Collection Ltd.*

Roman society had broken down, and along with them the order that had made Rome a great empire many years before.

Yet Rome retained some of the trappings of its former life, including the office of prefect, a magistrate or judge. Gregory, after receiving a classical education—his was one of the last generations of Romans to have access to the old-fashioned learning that had produced so many well-educated Romans in the past—became prefect in 573. This might have been enough for some men, but Gregory had his eyes on higher things.

A monk forced into politics

From an early age, Gregory had been a strongly committed Christian, and in his thirties he became interested in the life of a monk. Monks separated themselves from the rest of society to pray, meditate, and work, often under severe conditions, in monasteries. At first Gregory was content to establish monasteries for others: he set up one in Rome and six more on lands owned by his family in Sicily, an island to the south of Italy. But some time around 574 or 575, he decided to leave the outside world and become a monk himself.

After six years of living in a monastery, sharing hardships with the other monks, Gregory was given a job by Pope Gelasius II. Recognizing Gregory's training and ability, the pope asked him to go to the imperial court in Constantinople and plead with the emperor there for troops and supplies to help defend Rome against another wave of Lombard invasions. Thus Gregory was forced to leave the monastery and enter the realm of politics.

The mission to Constantinople proved fruitless, but in the meantime Gregory had attracted the attention of church leaders. As a result, when Gelasius died in 590, they chose Gregory as his successor.

Gregory's world

The term "world," as used in the Christian religion, does not necessarily mean the planet Earth, or the nations of the world; rather, "worldly" is the opposite of "godly." In a

tradition that went back at least to **Augustine** (see entry), Christians considered things of the world—even things such as earning a living, which few people believed to be morally bad—as less important than things of the spirit.

Gregory would spend his entire career torn between the sacred and the *secular,* which comes from a Latin word meaning "world." As a monk, he favored a regimen of austerity, sleeping on hard beds, eating and sleeping little, and focusing his attention on God. However, as bishop of Rome, or pope, he had to be concerned with matters such as protecting and feeding the people under his charge.

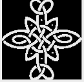
The hardships Gregory forced on himself made him physically weak throughout his reign as pope, a fact that makes his accomplishments all the more great. Gregory is remembered as one of four "Doctors of the Church," or church fathers, along with Augustine, Ambrose (339–397), and Jerome (c. 347–c. 419). The other three were roughly contemporaries of each other, all living at a time when the Western Roman Empire was entering its final decline. Yet Gregory's era, some 250 years later, was an even more frightening time.

In the year he became pope, there was a famine and flood in Rome, as well as a plague in various parts of Europe. Gregory and other Christians took such events as evidence that the world was coming to an end, and for support they pointed to passages in the New Testament that seemed to say the end would be sooner rather than later. Thus he felt a sense of mission to bring as many people as possible into the Christian fold before Christ returned to judge the world, as predicted in the Bible.

A strong pope

With his sense of urgency concerning the end of the world, Gregory was able to marshal his weakened body to enormous feats of energy. He left behind some eight hundred letters, along with several books, and these attest to a highly complex, energetic man with an iron will. The people of Western Europe needed just such a figure to lead them.

It is thanks to Gregory that the pope became the leader of Western Christianity. In his time, a number of other bishops



Boniface VIII

If Gregory represented the beginnings of popes' great political power during the Middle Ages, Boniface VIII (BAHN-i-fus; c. 1235–1303; ruled 1294–1303) seven centuries later symbolized the end of that power. Born Benedict Caetani (kah-ay-TAHN-ee), he was the son of wealthy parents in Anagni (ah-NAHN-yee), a town in central Italy. He studied law, but by the age of thirty had begun a career in the church as secretary to Cardinal Simon of Brie. When the latter became Pope Martin IV in 1281, he made Benedict a cardinal.

Thanks to gifts both by kings and a series of popes, Benedict became wealthy as well as powerful during his time as cardinal. Meanwhile a struggle raged between different political groups eager to win control of the papacy. It took them more than two years after the death of Nicholas IV in 1292 to choose a successor, and when they did it was a highly unlikely candidate: a hermit named Peter of Morrone, who became Pope Celestine V. Peter had no desire to be pope, and resigned after four months. Later, critics would charge that Benedict had urged the resignation; whatever the case, he now became pope as Boniface VIII.

Popes and kings had long been locked in a struggle for power, and Boniface set out to show his superiority over the kings of France and England by stating that his priests had no obligation to pay taxes to their governments. Boniface wanted the priests to pay taxes to *him,* just as all kings were supposed to pay taxes to the pope. The response was one of anger, particularly from King Philip IV of France, who refused to pay any taxes at all. Boniface backed down in 1297, saying that priests should make "gifts" to monarchs in times of emergency.

In 1301, Philip had a French bishop arrested for a variety of crimes, includ-

vied with the bishop of Rome for supremacy. There was the bishop of Constantinople, whose office, renamed "patriarch," would become the leading position in the Greek Orthodox Church after the split with the Roman Catholic Church in 1054. There were also bishops in Jerusalem, the city where Jesus had walked; in Antioch, an early Christian stronghold in what is now Syria; and Alexandria, an Egyptian center of Greek culture.

Gregory, however, believed that there was a biblical basis for the bishop of Rome assuming leadership. Once again he tried to receive help from the emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, or Byzantine Empire; but Emperor Maurice

Pope Boniface VIII. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

ing treason, and asked Boniface to remove the man from his office. Boniface refused, and revoked all the privileges that the French king enjoyed in the way of influencing church affairs. Philip started a smear campaign against Boniface, including charges that he had arranged the murder of Celestine V, who had died earlier. Boniface issued a decree called *Unam Sanctum* in which he stated that the pope held the keys to eternal salvation, and was therefore *the* leader of all Christian society.

Just how much power Boniface really had became apparent when Philip arranged to have him condemned by a number of French church leaders in 1303, then sent soldiers to arrest the pope. Philip only imprisoned Boniface for two days, from September 7 to 9, but in those two days history was changed. Never again would popes rule as unquestioned leaders of Europe, and from that point on, the power of kings grew while the power of the papacy slowly faded. Boniface died five weeks later, on October 12, defeated and humiliated.

turned a deaf ear to his requests that Maurice recognize his leadership in the church. Later, Maurice was murdered by one of his generals, but Gregory in the meantime had decided that he could lead the Christians of Italy with or without the help of the emperor.

The foundations of medieval politics

Gregory's decision formed the cornerstone of medieval politics: instead of relying on a king to protect against the Lombards, or to distribute grain in times of famine, Gregory took on

the job himself. Thus the papacy became a political as well as a spiritual office. The power of the popes would rise to staggering heights in centuries to come, and it could all be traced back to Gregory—yet Gregory did what he did, not because he wanted power, but because he felt there was no choice.

During his extraordinarily active career, Gregory ransomed prisoners and constantly welcomed refugees from war-torn Italy into the relatively safe confines of Rome. He took power over corrupt bishops who were buying and selling church offices (a sin known as simony), committing adultery, and doing other things inappropriate to their roles as spiritual leaders. He dealt harshly with heresy, or behavior that went against church doctrine, yet often negotiated with Lombard leaders who still embraced the heretical branch of Christianity called Arianism. He constantly promoted the purity of the monastic lifestyle and tried to keep the church free from worldly corruption; yet he built up its political power to such a degree that corruption was bound to seep in.

Among Gregory's achievements were the conversion to Catholic Christianity of the Lombards from the Arian heresy, and of the Anglo-Saxons from paganism. The conversion of the English took place under Augustine of Canterbury (died 604), who Gregory sent to Britain. Augustine became the first archbishop of Canterbury, the religious leader of Britain. Gregory also showed his ability to negotiate with the Franks in France, and the Visigoths in Spain, even though neither of these groups formally accepted the leadership of the pope.

Gregory's effect could be observed throughout Europe, from the haunting tones of Gregorian chants—a type of singing performed by Benedictine monks, written down for future generations under his orders—to the many tales of miracles associated with him and with his death in 604. Yet his greatest legacy was in the formation of the church as a political power, and of Western Europe or Christendom as a political and spiritual alliance united under the leadership of a strong pope.

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Gregory VII

Born c. 1020
Died 1085

Italian pope

Henry IV

Born 1050
Died 1106

German king and Holy Roman emperor

"In the name of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I withdraw ... from Henry ... the rule over the whole kingdom of the Germans and over Italy. And I absolve all Christians from the bonds of the oath which they have made or shall make to him; and I forbid any one to serve him as king."

"First Deposition and Banning of Henry IV," February 22, 1076

Gregory VII was the pope, leader of the Catholic Church, and Henry IV, as Holy Roman emperor, ruled a number of lands. Thus they were the two most powerful men in Western Europe, and in 1075, they faced off in a power struggle called the Investiture Controversy that would have an enormous impact on history.

The immediate cause was the right of the emperors to appoint bishops and other church leaders, a right that the pope claimed solely for himself. In reality, the conflict between Gregory and Henry represented a much larger battle between church and state, a battle that would influence events in the Middle Ages and would continue to affect public life even in modern times.

Gregory's early years

The future Pope Gregory VII was born with the name Hildebrand in Rovaca, a village in northern Italy, in about 1020. In medieval Europe, it was not uncommon for a young

man to know—or rather, to be told—what he would do for a living when he was still very young. Thus as a boy Hildebrand began an education for the priesthood, and later became a monk in the Benedictine order.

Hildebrand underwent much of his education in Rome, center of the Catholic Church and home of the pope. In 1032, Benedict IX had become pope, but with his loose lifestyle and riotous living, he became unpopular, and was overthrown twelve years later. Benedict managed to return to the papal throne, however, for a short time before selling his position to the future Pope Gregory VI.

The fact that someone could sell off the papal throne, which was supposed to be sacred before God, said much about the state of affairs in the Catholic Church at the time. As pope, Hildebrand would do much to reform the church, yet he got his start in papal affairs by serving as chaplain to Gregory VI from 1045 to 1047.

Emperors and popes

Centuries earlier, Pope Leo III had crowned **Charlemagne** (see entry) as "Emperor of the Romans." From this title had arisen the idea of the Holy Roman Empire, which comprised a number of small states in what is now Germany and surrounding countries. Though the empire was seldom a strongly unified realm, the title of emperor had great symbolic status for German kings, who were usually crowned at special ceremonies in Rome.

In 1046, three men—Benedict, Gregory VI, and Sylvester III, who had briefly occupied the throne after Benedict—all claimed the papal throne. King Henry III of Germany, father of Henry IV, traveled to Italy to straighten out the situation. His solution was to remove all three and install a new pope, Clement II, who crowned him emperor.

Gregory VI was forced into exile in Germany, and he took Hildebrand with him. Two years later, however, in 1049, Hildebrand returned to Rome as advisor to Pope Leo IX, and over the years that followed, he would occupy a number of important positions within the church.

Henry's early years

When Hildebrand was thirty years old, his future rival Henry IV was born in Germany. Not long afterward, in 1056, Henry III died, and therefore his six-year-old son became king of Germany. Until he reached the age of sixteen, however, Henry's mother Agnes of Poitou (pwah-TÜ) ruled in his place as regent.

In the early years of his reign, Henry fought a series of conflicts with nobles—rulers within his kingdom who had inherited title and lands, but held less power than the king—from the German region of Saxony. In 1075, however, the twenty-five-year-old king would face the most powerful opponent of his life: Pope Gregory VII.

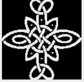
Pope Gregory VII was determined to rid the church of corruption and increase the power of the papacy, which resulted in a historic confrontation with Emperor Henry IV. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Gregory the reformer

On April 21, 1073, Pope Alexander II died. Soon afterward Hildebrand, who had become immensely popular among the people of Rome, was elected pope by the cardinals, the highest officials within the church other than the pope himself. In honor of Gregory VI, he chose the title Gregory VII.

Gregory set about reforming the church, which had long been in decline. Not only could church offices be bought and sold, but increasingly more corrupt men had taken positions of power, thus weakening the moral authority of the pope and other church leaders. With the church in a shambles, Gregory was determined to put it back on the right course—and to show the Holy Roman emperor who was boss.

For many years, emperors had been investing, or appointing, bishops within the church. On February 24, 1075, however, Gregory issued orders banning lay investiture, or appointment of bishops by leaders outside the church. Not long afterward, he put down on paper a list of twenty-seven key points about the papacy, or the office of the pope: for instance,



Matilda of Tuscany

Though she was related to Emperor Henry IV, Matilda of Tuscany (c. 1046–1115) took part in the Investiture Controversy on the side of Pope Gregory VII. Her family had long controlled lands in northern Italy, including Canossa, site of the castle where Gregory and Henry had an important meeting in 1077.

Matilda was raised in an unconventional way for a young girl of the Middle Ages, receiving the sort of comprehensive and wide-ranging education that was normally set aside only for boys. Clearly she was being groomed for leadership, and upon the death of her father and brother in 1052, Matilda became countess of Tuscany.

Knowing that neighboring princes might want to invade a region "ruled" by a six-year-old girl, her mother married Godfrey, duke of Lorraine (a region on the border between France and Germany.) However, Godfrey was in conflict with Emperor Henry III of Germany, who imprisoned both mother and daughter from 1055 to 1056.

No doubt as a result of this experience, Matilda was no supporter of her German cousins. Furthermore, she became closely involved in church affairs, and her family were close friends with the future Pope Gregory VII. Therefore when the Investiture Controversy between Henry IV and Gregory VII came to a head, Matilda sided with Gregory. Nonetheless, the fact that she was related to Henry made her a natural go-between for the two opposing sides.

he wrote that no one had the right to question the pope's actions, and that kings and princes should kiss the pope's feet.

The conflict begins

In June 1075, Henry won a victory over the rebellious German princes with the help of his cousin Rudolf, duke of the German region of Swabia. He recognized that the German nobles wanted to challenge his power and would encourage a conflict between the pope and himself. He relayed this information to the pope, but in November 1076, he appointed a high church official himself in direct violation of the pope's order. This resulted in a letter from Gregory that threatened Henry's excommunication, or removal from the church.

Matilda of Tuscany. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

Like her mother before her, Matilda had sought to strengthen her position through marriage, in her case to her stepbrother Godfrey the Hunchback in 1069. The purpose of this marriage was political, and after her infant son died in 1071, she returned to Italy. Godfrey died in 1076, but she remarried in 1089, once again for political reasons. This time the groom was Welf V, a German duke who supported the new pope, Victor III, against Henry. By this time she was forty-three, and Welf only seventeen.

Matilda enjoyed a much closer relationship with Henry V, son of Henry IV, than she had with his father. But when she died in 1115, leaving no heirs, Henry V claimed most of her lands. She was later celebrated in a long poem by Donizo, her chaplain at Canossa.

Angered by the pope's letter, in January 1076 Henry called together twenty-four bishops in the German city of Worms (VURMZ), and they sent a letter of protest to the pope. Along with this letter, Henry sent one of his own that called the pope "a false monk." This in turn enraged Gregory, who on February 22 issued orders declaring that Henry was excommunicated and damned to hell; furthermore, the people of his kingdom were forbidden from submitting to him.

The snows of Canossa

This put Henry in a very serious position, since medieval people were far more likely to follow the pope than they were a king. Rudolf took advantage of the situation to

turn against Henry and gather support. Henry sent a message to the pope in which he offered to submit, but by then the pope had realized what the German nobles already knew: that if he allowed Henry to submit to him and thereby called off the fight, he would lose influence in Germany.

Henry went south, hoping to meet with Gregory, but he found his way blocked by nobles who wanted to prevent the meeting. Finally, in January 1077, he managed to cross the Alps, a high range of mountains between Germany and Italy. He arrived on January 25 at the pope's temporary residence, a castle belonging to Matilda of Tuscany (see box) at Canossa (kuh-NAH-suh) in northern Italy.

Barefoot and dressed in rags to indicate the fact that he had humbled himself before the pope's spiritual authority, Henry waited in the snow outside the castle. To test the king's sincerity, Gregory allowed him to remain outside in the cold for three whole days; then he agreed to forgive him, and ended his excommunication.

A change of fortunes

The scene at Canossa made for great drama; however, it was not the end of the story. On March 26, 1077, Rudolf declared himself king of Germany, and Rudolf and Henry began warring with each other for the throne. Henry demanded that Gregory help him by excommunicating Rudolf. Gregory, however, was more inclined to support Rudolf. When the war began to go in Henry's favor, Gregory declined to excommunicate Rudolf and instead re-excommunicated Henry.

This resulted in a war of words between church and state, or pope and king, and both enlisted the help of learned men who referred to the Bible on the one hand, or Roman law on the other, to prove that their leader should rule Europe. Henry even tried to replace Gregory with an antipope (someone not recognized as a true pope by the church), Clement III. The death of Rudolf in October 1080 helped him immensely, and he crushed all further resistance to his rule. By the early 1080s, he was on the offensive against the pope.

By 1083, Henry had captured the part of Rome that included the papal residence at St. Peter's, and he imprisoned

Gregory. On March 21, 1084, Henry won control over most of the city, and soon afterward placed Clement III on the papal throne. Clement in turn crowned Henry Holy Roman emperor, and excommunicated Gregory.

A painful ending

Now desperate, Gregory called on the help of Robert Guiscard (gee-SKARD), leader of a powerful Norman family that controlled the island of Sicily. Robert's forces marched on Rome and drove out Henry's army, but when the Romans resisted them, the Normans looted and burned much of the city. This in turn made Gregory a very unpopular man, and he fled Rome under the protection of the Normans.

Gregory died in exile soon afterward, on May 25, 1085. Henry went on living for twenty-one more years, but his life would end as painfully as Gregory's had. In 1093, his sons rebelled against him, and in 1105 one of them had him imprisoned. Henry escaped, but died soon afterward.

Church and state

In 1088, Urban II (see box in Innocent III entry), who had inherited Gregory's enthusiasm for papal authority, became pope. Seven years later, while Henry was caught up in struggles with his sons, Urban launched the First Crusade, a war to recapture the Holy Land from the Muslims who controlled it. In so doing, he greatly built up the authority of the popes over political leaders.

Henry's son Henry V, who had imprisoned his father, later reached an agreement with Pope Calixtus II in the Concordat of Worms (1122). The latter recognized the power of the popes, who for the next three centuries would remain among the most powerful leaders in Western Europe.

But popes would not rule without challenges from kings, who eventually gained more control. Even today, the struggle between church and state—that is, between the authority of government and that of religion—continues. In most Western countries, however, the political power is clearly in the hands of the government.

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Henry the Navigator

Born 1394
Died 1460

Portuguese prince, supporter of exploration

As a supporter of some of the first European voyages of exploration, Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal added immeasurably to Westerners' knowledge of other lands—yet he never actually took part in any voyages. Committed to spreading the Christian faith to other lands, he was very much a man of the Middle Ages, yet he helped bring about changes that would usher in the modern era.

"[The prince will] be engaged in important and propitious conquests in lands which were hidden from other men."

Horoscope prediction given at Henry's birth

A prophecy at his birth

Henry's father, John I, was the first king in the house of Aviz, which would rule Portugal for nearly two centuries beginning in 1385. A year later, Portugal signed a treaty with England, and to seal the agreement, Philippa of Lancaster, an English noblewoman, was married to King John. The couple had several sons, and the third one to survive—death in infancy or childhood was common in the Middle Ages—was Henry.

Medieval people placed great store by astrology, the belief that a person's fate is influenced by the position of the

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

stars and planets at the time of their birth. Though there is no scientific basis for astrology, it is interesting to note that at his birth, Henry's astrological chart or horoscope predicted that the young prince would "be engaged in important and propitious [favorable] conquests in lands which were hidden from other men." It was a prophecy that would later come true.

Educated in Christian principles

Henry grew up with an education typical of a young prince, but because he had older brothers, he was not expected to rule. His mother was a devout Christian, and therefore he was taught on the one hand extensively from the Bible, in particular Christian principles of morality, or right and wrong. On the other hand, because kingdoms had to be defended through war, he received what was called "bodily training," or an education in how to fight and lead battles. Henry grew up to be tall, and though his complexion was naturally light, the time he spent outdoors gave him a tan. It was said that people who did know him thought he had a fierce expression, but in fact he was gentle by nature.

As a result of his education, young Henry had three strong aims in mind: to expand Portugal's commercial interests, to increase scientific knowledge, and to spread the Christian faith to other lands. Much of neighboring Spain remained in the hands of the rival Islamic or Muslim faith, as did North Africa across the Mediterranean Sea. Henry believed strongly in the spirit that had fueled the Crusades, wars of religious conquest to win lands from the Muslims and place them under the control of Christian Europe.

The crusade for Ceuta

In the summer of 1415, when Henry was twenty-one years old, his mother died, and on her deathbed, she gave each of her three sons a piece of what was believed to be the cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified. Though it is doubtful that anyone knew the location of the "true cross," medieval Europeans believed strongly in such relics, or objects with religious significance; and furthermore, Henry was deeply moved by the loss of his mother. This no doubt in-

spired him to undertake the first significant act of his adult life, a crusade to take Ceuta (THAY-ü-tah), a city in Morocco.

In August 1415, Henry helped lead the campaign for Ceuta, which turned out to be successful. This won him considerable honors, and put him a long way toward his life's mission, which was to learn more about the African continent and outlying islands. A year later, he sent the explorer Gonzalo Velho to the Canary Islands, off the northwest coast of Africa in the Atlantic Ocean. This was the beginning of his involvement in commercial quests to expand Portugal's empire.

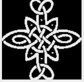
Establishes "school" at Sagres

Perhaps to get away from his family and make a life for himself independent of their influence, in 1420 Henry moved to Lagos (LAH-gohs), on the southern coast of Portugal. He tried unsuccessfully to conquer the highly important city of Gibraltar (ji-BRAWL-tur), then controlled by the Moors, or Muslims from North Africa. Failing this, he turned his attention to gaining as much knowledge as he could about the "country" of Guinea (GI-nee).

Today there is a nation known as Guinea, but when Europeans of Henry's time used the term, they applied it broadly to the western coast of Africa. Henry had a lifelong interest in the region, and began gathering around him explorers and men of science who would help him gather knowledge about it. To this end, he established an informal "school" in the Portuguese city of Sagres (SAH-greesh), on the extreme southwestern tip of Portugal.

Successes and failures

The first major expedition launched by Henry's school took place from 1418 to 1420, and resulted in the establishment of Portugal's first overseas colony at Porto Santo on the Madeira (mah-DEER-uh) Islands to the northwest of the Canaries. Ships also began sailing south to explore the coast of Guinea, and as each expedition returned, Henry's cartographers (kar-TAHG-ruh-furz), or mapmakers, developed new maps incorporating the knowledge added by the returning explorers.



Cheng Ho

Like Henry the Navigator, Admiral Cheng Ho (jung-HOH; c. 1371–c. 1433) is a memorable figure in the history of exploration, but unlike Henry, Cheng actually led the voyages for which he is famous. Over the course of more than a quarter-century, he commanded a Chinese fleet that sailed to Southeast Asia, India, Persia, Arabia, and even Africa.

The son of Muslims in southern China, Cheng was born Ma Sanpao (MAH sahn-POW), and when he was twelve years old, he went to serve in the court of Prince Yan, the future emperor Yung-lo of China's Ming dynasty. When Yung-lo took power, he gave Ma Sanpao the new family name of Cheng, a sign of honor. At some point, Cheng was castrated and made a eunuch (YOO-nuk). When and why this happened is not known, though Chinese emperors often relied on eunuchs because they believed they could trust them around their many wives and concubines.

Initially the emperor put Cheng Ho to work building palaces in his capital city, but in 1405 he commissioned him as an admiral, a high-ranking naval officer equivalent to a general in the army. Yung-lo sent him on his first voyage, which lasted two years and involved some 27,000 men on more than sixty ships. They traveled to ports in Southeast Asia, as well as the islands of what is now western Indonesia, before reaching Ceylon and finally Calicut, in southern India.

Despite the fact that Henry's expeditions had the potential to add greatly to Portugal's wealth, he had many critics. Furthermore, he invested a great deal of his own money in the voyages, and for nearly fifteen years, his captains made little progress in finding a sea route to Guinea.

In September 1433, Henry's father died, and this forced him to turn his attention to family matters. His brother Edward I took the throne, but his reign was short and troubled, ending in his death in 1438. The new king, Afonso V, was Henry's nephew—but he was only five years old, and Henry had to assist in ruling the country as regent.

Later other counselors took over Henry's duties in the capital, and he was able to return to his primary interests. In 1437, he and his brother Ferdinand launched a campaign to

Though their purpose was peaceful, and they brought with them gifts for the princes they met, Yung-lo also intended for his fleet to demonstrate Chinese power in other lands. In any case, Cheng often became involved in conflicts, as on the first voyage, when a pirate attacked his fleet and killed some five thousand of his men. Cheng captured the pirate and brought him back in chains to China, where he was executed.

On a later voyage, the king of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) tried to double-cross Cheng and attacked his ships while the Chinese were away in the Ceylonese capital. Learning of this, Cheng reasoned that the king had dispatched all his troops to the harbor and thus had left the city undefended, so he attacked the city. Victorious, he brought the king of Ceylon back to China, where he was treated with kindness, but was replaced with a ruler more favorable to Chinese interests.

Later voyages took Cheng and his fleet to Persia and Arabia, and even—on the fourth expedition (1413–15)—to Africa. The fleet returned from this voyage bringing with them a giraffe, which they presented to the emperor's court. After Yung-lo died in 1424, Cheng's future was uncertain, but finally in 1430, he and his fleet were allowed to embark on a seventh—and, as it turned out, last—voyage. They went as far as Hormuz in Persia, but Cheng himself died in Calicut. With him died a golden age of Chinese exploration, never to be repeated.

take the city of Tangier (tan-JEER) in Morocco. This turned out to be a massive failure, with the Moors capturing Ferdinand, who died in prison five years later.

A turning point

Devastated by the loss of Ferdinand and his failure in Tangier, Henry again concentrated on voyages along the African coast. He wanted to learn not just about the coastal regions, but about the interior, and encouraged his sea captains to use the continent's river systems as a means of reaching farther inland. Therefore he ordered the construction of an outpost at Arguin (ar-GWEEN) Island, off the coast of what is today the nation of Mauritania. This too led to a setback, as

one of the captains he hired managed to steal part of the money Henry invested in the voyages.

Despite his many frustrations—and the fact that he was continuing to lose money—Henry was also starting to see some successes, particularly with his sailors' exploration of the Azores (uh-ZOHRZ), an island group west of Portugal. In 1454, the pope officially recognized the possessions gained by Henry's voyagers, and since all of Western Europe looked to the pope's spiritual leadership, this was an important victory. By the late 1440s and 1450s, Henry's interests had shifted from voyages for purely scientific purposes toward expeditions specifically intended to expand Portugal's commercial interests.

A Christian warrior to the end

One of those commercial interests was slavery, and in particular the traffic in human beings captured from Africa. Slavery had long before ceased to exist in Europe, but a new chapter in the history of the slave trade began in 1441, when one of Henry's captains presented him with fourteen slaves as a "gift." Many Portuguese favored the slave trade, which would grow in coming years, but Henry rejected it for both moral and practical reasons. On a practical level, he saw slavery as an unprofitable business, and on a moral level, he knew that it was not likely to produce many converts to Christianity.

During the 1450s, Henry's sailors continued to gather information about Africa while Henry himself became increasingly withdrawn from public contact. Yet he remained a crusader to the end, and his passions were stirred when in 1453 he learned that the Muslim Turks had conquered the Christian city of Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey), thus bringing an end to the Byzantine Empire. In 1458, the sixty-four-year-old Henry took part in a crusade, along with Afonso V, to take a town in Morocco held by the Muslims. Though the Portuguese were victorious in the battle, the tide of events was against them, and Morocco remained in the hands of the Muslims.

Henry knew he was dying, so he returned to Sagres in 1460 and made out his will. Unmarried, he had no children, and in any case, he left behind not a fortune but a considerable debt brought on by his years of investment without no-

ticeable returns. Yet through his efforts, he opened up the world to European explorers, and helped launch the Age of Discovery that was just then beginning to dawn.

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Historians

The Venerable Bede

Born 672
Died 735

Anglo-Saxon historian and theologian

Ssu-ma Kuang

Born 1019
Died 1086

Chinese government official and historian

Al-Mas'udi

Died 957

Arab historian

Anna Comnena

Born c. 1083
Died 1148

Byzantine princess and historian

"As such peace and prosperity prevail these days, many ... have laid aside their weapons ... rather than study the arts of war. What the result of this will be, the future will show."

The Venerable Bede

The work of historians is always important, seldom more so than in the Middle Ages. Not only did people then lack modern forms of communication, but in Western Europe at least, the medieval period was a time when the pace of learning slowed for several centuries. Thus it became all the more important to access the wisdom of the past, a time when communication and learning had flourished under the civilizations of Greece and Rome. But history was also important as a means of guessing what might happen in the future. When the Anglo-Saxon historian St. Bede noted that the people of England had ceased to study the arts of war, he hinted that this might have disastrous consequences. Four centuries later, another English historian, William of Malmesbury (c. 1090–c. 1143), would describe the consequence of the English lack of preparedness when he chronicled the then-recent invasion led by **William the Conqueror** (see entry).

Bede, al-Mas'udi, Ssu-ma Kuang, and Anna Comnena came from a variety of places, as their names suggest: respectively, England, the Middle East, China, and Greece. Each had a different viewpoint on history, informed by differing life ex-

The Venerable Bede.
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periences. One was a priest, another a traveler, the third a government official, the last a princess—and as a woman, she had a particularly unique perspective. To varying degrees, each wrote history to serve their own purposes, yet each performed a service to the world by preserving a record of their time and place.

The Venerable Bede

Bede, often referred to as "The Venerable Bede," was born in England more than two centuries after Anglo-Saxon invaders from what is now Germany and Denmark swept in and conquered the Celtic peoples who had controlled Britain for nearly a millennium. To Bede, that invasion was a central event of his people's history, though later critics came to believe that he missed a larger perspective: in fact the invasion had been coming for a long time, and was not so much one event as a series of events.

As was typical of intelligent young men in medieval Europe, Bede was trained for a career in the church. This began for him at the age of seven, when his parents put him in a monastery, a place where monks studied the Bible and the writings of early church fathers such as **Augustine** and **Gregory I** (see entries). His primary teacher was the abbot—that is, the head of the monastery—Ceolfrid (CHAYL-frid).

In 686, when Bede would have been about fourteen years old, the abbey was devastated with a plague, or an epidemic of disease, but he continued his studies. Despite the fact that he lived in England, far from the Italian and Greek centers of ancient European civilization, Bede became a master of the Latin and Greek languages, and even learned some Hebrew. He advanced rapidly in the church, becoming a deacon at age nineteen, even though that position was usually reserved for

men much older. He was ordained as a priest at the age of thirty. Apart from a few short trips—most notably a visit to Lindisfarne, a celebrated English center of learning off the coast—Bede traveled little during his life.

Bede wrote numerous works on history and theology, or the analysis of religious faith. As a medieval scholar steeped in the teachings of the church, he saw history as an unfolding of God's purposes, and in his view, church history *was* history. Accordingly, his most famous work was *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum,* or *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (731). The term "ecclesiastical" refers to the church, and Bede's historical writings in general make little mention of secular events, or things of a non-spiritual nature.

Despite the shortcomings in some of his historical analysis, most notably his reliance on questionable information concerning the distant past, Bede offered a valuable record of events in the early part of the medieval period. He died on May 25, 735, at the age of sixty-three, and within a century, the term "Venerable," meaning distinguished, was attached to his name. In 1899 he was canonized, or recognized as a saint.

Al-Mas'udi

The writings of al-Mas'udi (mahs-oo-DEE) illustrate the heights that Arab and Islamic civilization reached in the Middle East during the medieval period. His engaging style and talent for insightful observation, along with his comprehensive approach to the history of his people, earned him great acclaim. Later generations in Europe would dub al-Mas'udi the "Herodotus of the Arabs," a reference to the first true historian, Herodotus (hur-AHD-uh-tus; c. 484–c. 424 B.C.) of ancient Greece.

Born in Baghdad, now the capital of Iraq, al-Mas'udi descended from a close friend of the prophet **Muhammad** (see entry). He apparently traveled widely during his life, though the extent of his travels is not clear, and it appears that he never actually visited Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka) or the China Sea, as he claimed. Yet in the period from 915 to 917 he traveled eastward to Persia and India, then voyaged to Zanzibar on the east coast of Africa and Oman on the Arabian Peninsula. He made a number of other journeys, to Palestine, the Caspian Sea, and other areas, over the decade that followed. As to the purpose of al-Mas'udi's journeys, this is not known. Perhaps like Herodotus centuries before, he was collecting information for his historical writings; in any case, his travels certainly informed his writing, which shows an impressive range of knowledge.

Of the more than thirty writings attributed to al-Mas'udi, only two can be clearly identified as his. The more famous of these has been translated as *The Meadows of Gold,* and consists of two volumes that respectively recount the history of the world prior to and after the time when Muhammad brought the Islamic message. His work has provided historians with valuable insights on the life of Arab leaders such as Harun al-Rashid (see box in El Cid entry) and others. Al-Mas'udi spent his later years in Cairo, Egypt, where he died in 957.

Ssu-ma Kuang

Unlike most historians, Ssu-ma Kuang (sü-MAH GWAHNG) participated not only in the writing of history, but also—in his capacity as a government official in China's Sung dynasty—in the making of history. In fact, it was his high position in the court that led the Sung emperor to commission him to write a history of China, known in English as the *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government.*

A talented young man, Ssu-ma Kuang completed his education at age nineteen and, as was the custom in China, took an examination to enter the civil service, or government bureaucracy. He rose quickly through the ranks, and legend has it that he made a name for himself when he saved a drowning child by breaking the water tank into which the child had fallen.

When it came to changes in the government and life of China, however, Ssu-ma Kuang favored a more deliberate approach than the one he had used to save the drowning child. He was committed to the principles of Confucius (c. 551–479 B.C.), a highly influential ancient Chinese philosopher who taught respect for elders and people in positions of authority. Like Confucius, Ssu-ma Kuang was a conservative, or someone who favors slow change. This put him at odds with Wang An-shih (1021–1086), another prominent government official who favored sweeping reforms to the Sung government.

Ssu-ma Kuang's work as a historian began some time before 1064, when he presented the emperor with a chronological table, or timeline, of Chinese history from its beginnings to the present day. The emperor was so impressed with this and later work that he ordered Ssu-ma Kuang to prepare a full-scale history of China, which would become the *Comprehensive Mirror.* At about the same time he received this directive, however, Ssu-ma Kuang clashed with Wang An-shih, and was forced to leave the court. During the years that followed, he devoted himself to the writing of his history.

The *Comprehensive Mirror* is not the most exciting work ever written, but it is certainly thorough. Ssu-ma Kuang and the scholars working with him carefully checked a range of historical documents, and were painstaking in their efforts to achieve accuracy. Finally, in 1084, he presented it to the emperor, who gave it his approval. So, too, have many later historians, who have seen the book as a significant milestone in the development of history as an area of study. In part from Ssu-ma Kuang's writing, the Chinese developed a view of history not as a straight-line progression, but as a series of cycles, with the rise and fall of each successive dynasty merely a part of the cyclical process.

In his later years, Ssu-ma Kuang became increasingly involved in power struggles with Wang An-shih, and by 1085 he had returned to a position of influence. He was able to defeat many of Wang's reforms by 1086, the year in which both men died. So great was Ssu-ma Kuang's position of honor in the government that all business in the Chinese capital ceased on the day of his funeral. But his victory over Wang was not complete: subsequent years saw a continued battle in

the Chinese leadership between those who adhered to Ssu-ma Kuang's conservatism and those who favored Wang An-shih's reformist approach.

Anna Comnena

Not only was she the world's first notable female historian, Anna Comnena (kahm-NEE-nuh) had a remarkable front-row seat for one of the most monumental events in history. It so happened that she was the eldest daughter of the Byzantine emperor Alexis I Comnenus, who in 1095 requested help from the pope in fighting the Turks, who were threatening his land from the east. The result was the First Crusade (1095–99), in which the Western Europeans marched through the Byzantine Empire on their way to seize Palestine from the Muslims. About twelve years old at the time, Anna saw these events unfold, and recounted them in her *Alexiad,* a record of her father's reign.

Anna was born in the Byzantine capital of Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey), which at that time was Europe's leading center of culture. As a princess, she received a highly advanced education, and like many Greeks of her time, she came to regard Western Europeans as uncouth barbarians compared to the highly civilized people of the Byzantine Empire. Her later experience with the crusaders would reinforce this opinion.

In 1097, when she was fourteen, Anna married Nicephorus Bryennius (ny-SEF-ur-us bry-EN-ee-us), a historian eighteen years her senior. Despite the fact that the empire had once been ruled by a woman, **Irene of Athens** (see entry), Anna had no plans to take the throne, especially because she had a younger brother, John. Yet at the age of thirty-five, she launched an unsuccessful plot to make her husband emperor. John found out about the conspiracy, and sent Anna away to a monastery for the rest of her life. There she wrote the *Alexiad,* a history of the period from 1069 to 1118—that is, from the time her uncle Isaac Comnenus established the dynasty to the end of her father's reign.

The suffix *-ad* in Greek usually means that a work is the glorious tale of a great nation, and certainly Anna's histo-

ry provides an image of the Byzantine Empire under her family's rule as a highly civilized realm. In her writings on the behavior of the crusaders from Western Europe, she portrayed them as greedy invaders who, while pretending to help her father, were actually interested in taking advantage of him. Though there is no question Anna had a prejudiced view toward Western Europeans in general, and the crusaders in particular, her assessment was largely accurate, as subsequent events illustrated. The crusaders did little to help the Byzantines, and in 1204 they actually turned against their supposed ally, seizing control of Constantinople and holding it for fifty-seven years.

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Holy Roman Emperors

Otto the Great

Born 912
Died 973

German king,
Holy Roman emperor

Otto III

Born 980
Died 1002

German king,
Holy Roman emperor

Frederick I Barbarossa

Born 1123
Died 1190

German king,
Holy Roman emperor

Frederick II

Born 1194
Died 1250

Sicilian and German king,
Holy Roman emperor

There is a joke almost as old as the Middle Ages themselves, to the effect that the Holy Roman Empire was neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire. Actually the observation, originally made by the French writer Voltaire in the 1700s, has a grain of truth. A revival of the realm established first under **Charlemagne** (see entry), the Holy Roman Empire represented an attempt to restore the glories of the Roman Empire of old, but its center was in Germany, and it was seldom unified. As for being "holy," this title referred only to the fact that rulers of the empire, like the four men profiled here, were traditionally crowned by the pope. Ironically, as the career of Emperor **Henry IV** (see dual entry with Gregory VII) illustrated, the popes were to be the emperors' greatest foes in their quest for power.

"The Renewal of the Roman Empire"

Inscription on seal ring of Otto III, signifying his life's goal

From Charlemagne to Otto

By the time Pope Leo III crowned him "Emperor of the Romans" in 800, Charlemagne controlled most of Western Europe. Initially it seemed that he had revived the Western Roman Empire, but a number of forces conspired to prevent this from

happening. One was the resistance of the Eastern Roman Empire, which still existed—and would continue to exist until 1453—in the form of Byzantium. Another was the fact that Charlemagne's successors were not his equals. Finally, Charlemagne's son ended all imperial hopes by dividing his lands between his three heirs. In 911, the year before the future Otto the Great was born, the last of Charlemagne's line lost his throne.

Germany at that time was mostly covered with forests, and geography—mountains, rivers, and other natural barriers—served to further divide the land. The region consisted of five duchies, or realms controlled by a duke: Franconia, Saxony, Thuringia (thoor-INJ-ee-uh), Swabia (SWAY-bee-uh), and Bavaria. The dukes elected one of their members as king, and Otto's father, Henry the Fowler of Saxony (c. 876–936), was elected king in 919. Despite the election, however, he had to fight to bring the other duchies under his control.

Otto the Great's early years

Otto spent his early years training for leadership, which for a medieval king involved a great deal of education in fighting, but little in the way of classroom education. Though he would later support learning in his kingdom, Otto himself only learned to read and write in his middle age. At the age of eighteen, he was married to Edith, an Anglo-Saxon princess from England with whom he had two sons. Six years later, Otto's father died, and he was elected king of Germany.

From the beginning, Otto faced opposition from all sides, including a number of revolts instigated by a brother and a half-brother. By 939, however, he had resolved these problems—at least for the time being—and the kingdom enjoyed relative peace for the next twelve years. During this time, he consolidated his power by placing trustworthy family members in positions of influence, and led a successful campaign to subdue Bohemia in 950.

Otto is crowned Holy Roman emperor

Edith died in 946, but Otto would marry a second time. Unlike his father, Otto had dreams larger than Germany

itself, and made it his goal to restore the empire of Charlemagne by conquering Italy. An opportunity presented itself in 950, when a princess named Adelaide, widow of the king of Italy, sent a plea for help. She had been imprisoned by a noble named Berengar (BAYR-un-gur), who had seized the throne, and Otto marched his troops into Italy, rescued the princess, and married her.

Otto the Great.

In the years immediately following, a number of problems—including a revolt at home, led by one of his sons—prevented Otto from completing his Italian campaign. He also faced an enemy that had long plagued Germany's eastern borders: the Magyars, who would later establish the nation of Hungary. In a battle on August 10, 955, Otto decisively defeated them, in the process earning the title "Otto the Great." Later that year, Adelaide gave birth to a son, who would reign as Otto II from 973 to 983.

In 961, Otto and Adelaide led a sizeable army into Italy, and on February 2, 962, Pope John XII crowned the couple as emperor and empress. Otto would spend most of his remaining years in Italy, fighting to maintain control. In 972, he arranged the marriage of his son to the Byzantine princess Theophano (thee-AHF-uh-noh), a move designed to ensure his family's future imperial status. Later that year, he returned to his beloved Germany, where he died on May 7, 973.

From Otto the Great to Otto III

Otto III, born seven years after the death of his grandfather, would grow up nourished on dreams of empire. In large part, this was due to the influence of Adelaide and Theophano, who raised him on tales of Byzantine glory. Indeed, the role of women was a consistent and powerful theme

in the story of the medieval Holy Roman emperors, who were strongly impacted by their mothers and wives. After the death of Otto II in 983, Theophano and Adelaide ruled the empire as regents until Otto came of age at fourteen.

Like his grandfather, Otto spent much of his career in Rome, where in 996 his cousin Pope Gregory V crowned him emperor. Two years later, Gregory died, and Otto made his friend Gerbert pope as Sylvester II. Otto the Great had established the tradition of Holy Roman emperors choosing popes when, a year after his coronation, he had removed the corrupt John XII from his papal seat. In so doing, the grandfather had established a source of later conflict with the popes.

The fact that Otto III spent most of his reign in Rome rather than in Germany indicates his grand designs of a restored Roman Empire. So, too, does the motto on his seal ring, which he used to inscribe official documents: "The Renewal of the Roman Empire." He sent a crown to the Byzantine emperor **Basil II** (see entry), proclaiming him ruler of the East as Otto was ruler of the West. Basil had no interest in forming such an alliance, but he did offer his niece in marriage to Otto. Twenty-two-year-old Otto, however, did not live long enough to marry.

From Otto III to Frederick I

Power in the Holy Roman Empire passed from Otto's Saxon house to the Salian (SAY-lee-un) house, which would include Henry IV, in 1024. The Salian line ended when Henry V died without an heir, and was replaced in 1138 by the Hohenstaufen (hoh-un-SHTOW-fin) dynasty. The Hohenstaufens would maintain the throne until 1250, and their line would include Frederick I and II.

Frederick I, nicknamed Barbarossa (bar-buh-ROH-suh) or "Red Beard," was born more than a century after Otto III. A nephew of Hohenstaufen founder Conrad III, he joined his uncle on the disastrous Second Crusade in 1147, and learned much from the mistakes made by the Europeans in that doomed effort. Conrad died in 1152 without an heir, but he had designated nineteen-year-old Frederick as his successor.

Frederick I fights to control Italy

Like his predecessors, Frederick would spend much of his career trying to maintain control over Italy. This enduring instability, in fact, would ensure that the "Holy Roman Empire" remained little more than a name. Crowned emperor in 1155 (though he had actually assumed power three years earlier), he established Europe's first university in the Italian city of Bologna (buh-LOHN-yuh) in 1158. In 1154, however, he had become drawn into a long and essentially fruitless campaign to subdue Lombardy, a large region in northern Italy.

Frederick I Barbarossa. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

In this effort, Frederick encountered a number of foes. One was Pope Alexander III (ruled 1159–81), who in 1160 excommunicated Frederick, or formally expelled him from the church. In 1167, Alexander helped organize the Lombard League, an alliance of cities opposed to Frederick. Then in 1175 Frederick began to have trouble with Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony, who opposed him both in Germany and Italy.

Frederick defeated Henry's forces in Germany in 1181, and in 1183 signed the Peace of Constance, which gave Lombard League cities their freedom. He strengthened his position in Italy by arranging the marriage of his son, the future Henry VI, to the Norman princess Constance, who controlled Sicily and the southern portion of the Italian Peninsula.

The death of Frederick I

He also restored his relationship with the popes, and in 1189 Pope Clement III convinced him to join **Richard I** (see entry) and Philip of France in the Third Crusade. Like many crusaders before, Frederick became embroiled in conflicts with the Byzantine Empire, and he never made it to the intended

destination of Palestine. Having defeated Byzantine forces in battle, he and his armies were crossing a river in Anatolia (modern-day Turkey) when Frederick drowned in late 1189.

During his reign, Frederick strengthened the feudal system in Germany, and would be remembered as one of his nation's greatest heroes. According to a German legend, Frederick was not dead but asleep at a stone table in Thuringia, his red beard continuing to grow—and when Germany needed him again, he would awaken. Eventually the myth would also become associated with his grandson, Frederick II.

The early career of Frederick II

It was ironic that Frederick II would be associated with a Germanic legend since he was not completely German, and only spent time in Germany because his role required it. Raised in Sicily by his mother Constance, Frederick at age fifteen married another Constance, sister of Pedro II of Aragon in Spain. Despite the fact that this was an arranged marriage—like most unions involving royal figures of the Middle Ages—it appears that Frederick and Constance grew to genuinely love one another. When she died in 1122, he had his crown placed in her tomb.

Frederick was extremely well educated for a medieval ruler, and would maintain a lifelong interest in the arts and sciences. Affairs of state plagued his early years, however, and since he was something of a foreigner, he had to spend much of his time securing his power in Germany. Soon after he was crowned German king in 1215, he made a promise to undertake a crusade; however, he would spend the next fourteen years putting off the intended trip.

The Sixth Crusade

German kings usually became Holy Roman emperors, but not always, and Frederick had to wait until 1220 to receive the imperial crown. Widowed two years later, he married Isabella, sister of King Henry III of England, in 1225. He faced continual pressure from the popes to go on his promised crusade, and in the late 1220s Gregory IX excom-

municated him for his failure to do so. This seemed to appeal to Frederick's cantankerous nature, and he responded by going to the Holy Land anyway.

The result was the Sixth Crusade (1228–29), which was chiefly a matter of negotiation rather than warfare. By then, Europe had lost much of its crusading spirit, and the shrewd Frederick—who, unlike most Europeans, had a profound respect for the Muslims and their culture—secured a treaty that briefly restored Christian control of Jerusalem.

Frederick II. *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

The court of Frederick II

The real fighting was back in Europe, where the pope and other enemies threatened his control over Sicily and other lands. These efforts occupied most of Frederick's attention during the last two decades of his life, but he found time to establish a highly organized state in Sicily. He also gathered around him so many scholars and artists that his court had no rival for cultural achievements.

Frederick distinguished himself by his willingness to associate not only with Christians, but with Muslims and Jews, and he drew representatives of all these cultures to Sicily. He even wrote a scholarly work, *On the Art of Hunting with Hawks,* and encouraged the arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture in Sicily.

Though he became the source of many bizarre rumors—for instance, many referred to Frederick, notorious for his opposition to the popes, as "The Antichrist"—he was undoubtedly one of the most fascinating men of his time. He died on December 13, 1250, at the age of fifty-six. On his tomb were inscribed the words, "If probity [high ideals], reason, abundance of virtue, nobility of birth, could forfend [prevent] death, Frederick, who is here entombed, would not be dead."

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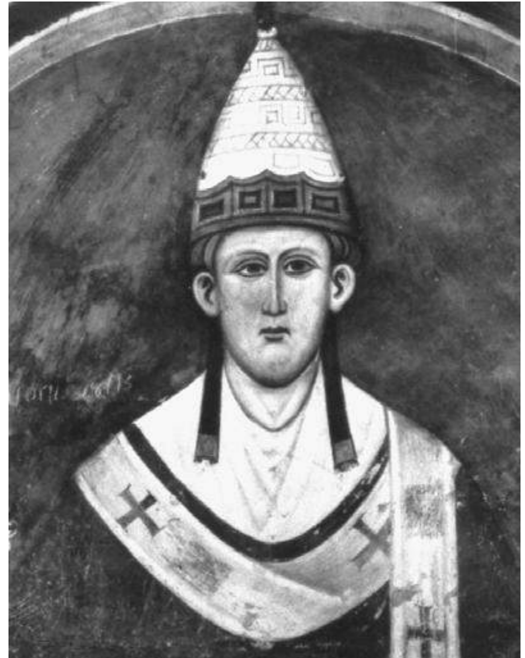
Innocent III

Born c. 1161
Died 1216

Italian pope



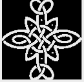
The papacy, or office of the pope, reached its peak during the reign of Innocent III, who held the position from 1198 to 1216. A ruthless negotiator and an expert manipulator of men, he was a politician who outwitted some of the greatest strategic minds on the European continent. Yet it would be a mistake to view him merely as power-hungry or politically ambitious; Innocent was also a man of sincere religious beliefs whose passion for what he believed was right actually contributed to some of the worst excesses of his rule.

The church had come a long way since St. Benedict (see box) led his monks to new standards of discipline more than six centuries before. Nor was the pope's role under the same threats faced by Urban II (see box) a century before Innocent. Urban had declared war on religious enemies overseas; Innocent's launch of the Albigensian Crusade proved that the church could deal even more severely with perceived enemies at home.

"So the great Pope passed and with him, in some sense, passed the greatness of the medieval Papacy itself, for none was to arise after Innocent who was to be, as he had been, the arbiter [controller] of the destinies of Europe."

L. Elliott Binns, Innocent III

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*



Benedict of Nursia

Innocent represented the church at the height of its wealth and earthly power, whereas St. Benedict of Nursia (c. 480–547) symbolized an entirely different side of the church. Benedict's focus was exactly the opposite of Innocent's, and if he had been offered wealth and power, he would likely have shunned it. Though there had been monks before Benedict, it was his achievement to give order and discipline to the monastic movement.

According to his biographer, Pope **Gregory I** (see entry), Benedict was a serious young man from the beginning, and as a teenager shied away from the wickedness he saw in Rome. He resolved to live a life of solitude in a cave, where a kindly old monk helped him by bringing him bread and water every day. Nonetheless, Gregory assured his readers, Satan came many times to tempt Benedict, at one point assuming the form of a beautiful young woman. Benedict mastered his lust by flinging himself into a patch of briars and thorns.

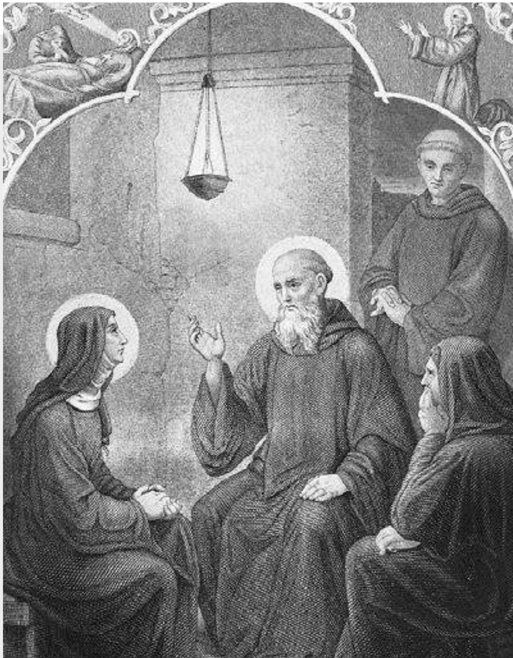
After he had spent three years as a hermit, Benedict was approached by a group of monks who wanted him to teach them discipline. Benedict agreed to be their master, but warned them that he would be a stern leader. They must not have believed him, because they accepted his leadership and then became so disillusioned with his severity that they tried to poison him. Disgusted, Benedict went back to his cave.

Eventually, however, so many followers gathered around him that Benedict decided he would have to establish a monastery. He chose Monte Cassino, for-

A pope before he was a priest

It would be ironic indeed if this most un-innocent of men had been given that name at birth, but in fact he was born Lothario de Segni (SAYN-yee). Like many another pope, he came from an Italian noble family and received the finest education available at what were then Europe's two greatest universities, in Paris and Bologna (buh-LOHN-yuh), Italy.

It was one of the many curious facts of Innocent's career that he had not even been ordained, or formally appointed, as a priest when he became pope at age thirty-seven. He had reached the position of deacon, an office in the church below that of priest, when he was twenty-seven. Three years later, thanks in large part to a good relationship he had culti-



St. Benedict of Nursia (center). *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

merly the site of a temple honoring the god Apollo. Later his sister Scholastica established a convent, a place for nuns, at Monte Cassino.

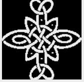
Benedict died in 547, but the Benedictine Rule—that is, the system of life he had established for his monastery—long outlasted him. During his time, monks had tended to apply a variety of systems, some even more severe than Benedict's. Benedict discouraged his followers from going to the kind of extraordinary measures taken by lone figures such as Simeon Stylites (see box in Augustine entry). Other monastic systems emphasized the relationship between the monks and their leader, whereas Benedict's placed its emphasis on the relationship between monks. As pope, Gregory I heartily approved of the Benedictine Rule; and by the 800s, it became the prevailing monastic system in Western Europe.

vated with Pope Clement III (ruled 1187–91), he was promoted to cardinal, the highest position short of pope.

Cardinals took part in the elections of popes, and Lothario's colleagues voted him to the church's highest position upon the death of Celestine III in 1198. He then chose the name of Innocent, and six weeks after his election was hastily ordained as a priest.

Ruler of kings

Innocent was the first pope to refer to his office as the "Vicar of Christ"—a title, meaning that the pope was Christ's direct representative on Earth, that all subsequent popes have



Urban II

Urban II, most noted for starting the First Crusade in 1095, assumed the position of pope a few years after **Gregory VII.** While Gregory had been perhaps the most important pope of the Middle Ages, his troubles with Emperor **Henry IV** (see dual entry with Gregory VII)—troubles Urban inherited—had left Rome a heap of smoking rubble. Therefore Urban wisely chose to stay away from the city, home of the papacy, and spend much of his time as pope traveling through Catholic realms.

Gregory had come from poverty, but Urban, born Odo in France, came from nobility. Perhaps his noble upbringing, and the fact that he had not had to fight for everything in life, taught him to be a bit more accommodating toward rivals: unlike Gregory, he knew when to give in, and often made concessions to powerful French leaders.

Urban was the first pope to model the papal government on that of a European monarchy; thenceforth, and up to the present day, the center of papal power would resemble a royal court in function. Heavily influenced by the monastic system at Cluny, where as a young man he had developed a passion for reform, he set about changing the church's finances. Also, like popes before and since, he became heavily involved with European political affairs.

He arranged a marriage between two supporters, Matilda of Tuscany (see box in Gregory VII and Henry IV entry) and Count Welf of Bavaria; and though the mar-

used. It was just one of the many extravagant claims Innocent made for the papacy.

Innocent believed that the popes, "seated on the throne of dignity ... judge in justice even the kings themselves." He participated in a seemingly endless series of intrigues with political leaders of Europe, promoting the career of **Frederick II** (see Holy Roman Emperors entry) as Holy Roman emperor and tangling with King John of England (see box in Eleanor of Aquitaine entry).

Angered by John's refusal to pay him what he considered his fair share of England's finances, Innocent placed England under what was called the interdict in 1208. For six years, until John relented, all religious services in the country were forbidden. Later Innocent did the same thing to the

riage ended badly when Welf learned that Matilda intended to leave her inheritance to the church and not to him, Urban was able to use both of them against his archenemy, Henry IV. In contrast to Henry, there were a number of European leaders who accepted Urban's leadership unquestioningly: not only Matilda, but Henry's son Conrad, a number of Norman rulers, and the kings of Spain.

The latter were engaged in a war to take their land from the Muslims, a war from which **El Cid** (see entry) was to emerge the most noted hero. Perhaps it was from this conflict that Urban first hatched the idea of the Crusades. Whatever the case, when Byzantium's Alexis I Comnenus—father of **Anna Comnena** (see Historians entry)—sent him a request for a few troops to help battle the Turks, Urban began to conceive of a vast "holy war" to seize Palestine from Muslim hands.

Urban announced the idea at the Council of Clermont in France in 1095, where he made a stirring and memorable speech. This would ultimately lead to some two centuries of fighting, but none of the Crusades was destined to be as successful (from the viewpoint of the Europeans, that is) as the first. It ended in 1098 with the capture of Jerusalem and three other "crusader states" in what is now Israel, Lebanon, and Syria.

Ironically, Urban died two weeks before Jerusalem's capture. He had lived to see his old foe Henry punished, however, by being denied participation in the crusade.

powerful King Philip II Augustus of France. Thus he proved that although he did not command armies as large as those of Europe's monarchs, he still ruled their people's hearts and minds, and could undermine a king whenever he chose.

Reforms of church law

Having been a student of law at the University of Bologna, Innocent set out to reform the laws of the church. Those laws, he maintained, should govern the actions of church leaders throughout Christendom, and secular laws should hold secondary importance. Within the church, he undertook a campaign against simony, or the buying and selling of church offices, and reintroduced discipline to monasteries that had become too relaxed in recent years.

One of the most important aspects of Innocent's role as lawgiver was his convening of the Fourth Lateran Council in Rome in 1215. Among the many concepts established at this highly important meeting of more than a thousand church officials was the idea that Catholics should go to confession at least once a year. Formerly church members had believed that they should make confession—that is, tell a priest about their sins—just once in a lifetime; within three centuries of Innocent's time, confession was a once-a-week event.

Two uncontrollable crusades

By the time of Innocent's rule, Europeans had engaged in a century of crusades intended to take control of the Holy Land from Muslims. Except for the First Crusade, they were a disaster, and perhaps none were worse than the two that occurred under Innocent's leadership: the Fourth Crusade (1202–4) and the Children's Crusade. The latter was an absolutely miserable affair, whose participants mostly ended up captured and sold as slaves; and the former ended with the takeover of Constantinople and part of the Byzantine Empire by greedy knights representing business interests in Venice.

Actually, the two crusades were not really Innocent's fault. Though he can be blamed for starting the Fourth Crusade, he intended for it to result in the capture of Jerusalem, not Christian Constantinople, and he heartily disapproved of the so-called crusaders' actions. The fact that the Fourth Crusade went as it did, and that the Children's Crusade even occurred, illustrated the limits even of Innocent's power.

The attack on the Cathars

There were other crusades, however, over which Innocent seemed to be perfectly in control. Most notable was the Albigensian Crusade (al-buh-JIN-see-un; 1208–29), an attack on the Cathars, a sect in southern France that taught that the physical world was evil. Because God had also created the physical world, the church judged this belief heretical, or something that went against established teachings.

The Albigensian Crusade would later lead to the Inquisition, a wholesale attempt to root out heresy under Pope Gregory IX in 1231. A positive side effect of the crusade, however, was the introduction of mendicant groups of friars—preachers and teachers who survived by begging alms—under **St. Francis of Assisi** and St. Dominic (see St. Francis of Assisi entry and box). The Franciscans reached out with compassion to the poor, and the Dominicans tried to reason with unbelievers. Both represented the gentler side of the church, quite unlike the murder and mayhem sweeping southern France as part of Innocent's crusade.

Most powerful man in Europe

Another outgrowth of the Albigensian Crusade, a "holy war" that outlasted Innocent by many years, was the strengthening of the French royal house. By seizing lands belonging to noblemen in southern France, the church aided the kings of France, who would in turn try to assert their power over the popes. This led to a clash between King Philip IV and Pope Boniface VIII (see box in Gregory I entry), a conflict Boniface was destined to lose. Six years later, the French king would move the papal seat from Rome to the city of Avignon in southern France.

That conflict, however, still lay far in the future when Innocent died of malaria in May 1216. As he breathed his last, the papacy was secure in its absolute power over all of Western Europe. Yet, almost as a sign of things to come, robbers broke into the place where Innocent's body was prepared for burial, and on the night before the funeral stripped him of his clothes and jewels. The next day the corpse was found, half-naked, and the man who had briefly held the most powerful position in Europe was laid to rest.

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Irene of Athens

Born c. 752
Died 803

Byzantine empress

Irene of Athens was the only woman to serve as sole ruler over the Byzantine Empire, and by calling the Seventh Ecumenical Council, she helped bring an end to the iconoclastic controversy that had rocked Byzantine society for years. Ironically, however, her greatest impact on history was unexpected. The Byzantine emperor controlled what remained of the Roman Empire, but according to Roman law, no woman could legally rule. Therefore when Irene took control it could be claimed that the Roman throne was vacant, and this gave the pope the opportunity to recognize **Charlemagne** (see entry) as the ruler of a new Roman Empire.

"She ruled with ability and without scruple [moral restraint]."

Will Durant, The Age of Faith

The iconoclastic controversy

The Byzantine Empire, or Byzantium (bi-ZAN-tee-um), grew out of the Eastern Roman Empire. After the collapse of the Roman Empire's western portion in 476, the two former halves of the empire grew apart. Eventually the Greek Orthodox (Eastern) and Roman Catholic (Western) churches would part ways, and one of the central issues that brought

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

about this division was the iconoclastic (eye-kahn-oh-KLAS-tik) controversy.

Byzantine emperor Leo III (ruled 717–41) declared that all icons, or images of religious figures, were idols. An idol is a statue of a god, and the Bible had forbidden idol worship; therefore Leo and his followers, who called themselves iconoclasts, began destroying all religious images. Under Constantine V (ruled 741–75) the division between iconoclasts and iconophiles (eye-KAHN-oh-fylz), or people who believed that there was nothing sinful about worshiping religious images, became even more severe. This led to acts of violence as iconoclasts destroyed images, often killing the priests who tried to protect their churches.

Irene takes power

The future empress Irene came from an old family of Athens, the center of Greek culture. She was said to be a woman of great beauty, and thus she won the admiration of Leo IV, son of Constantine V. The two married in 769, when Irene was seventeen years old, and a year later, they had a son, Constantine VI.

Leo died in 780, and many claimed that Irene poisoned him in order to take power herself. However, she could never legally rule the empire: the emperor held a number of offices, including that of commander-in-chief of the military, which were simply off-limits to women. Furthermore, under Roman law succession was not hereditary: in other words, an emperor could not simply pass his throne on to his son, let alone his wife or daughter, because his replacement had to be elected by the leaders of the government. Those leaders chose ten-year-old Constantine VI as the new emperor, but Irene promptly took power as regent, someone who governs a country when the monarch is unable to do so.

Long a supporter of the iconophiles, Irene now began slowly restoring icon-worship. In the Greek Orthodox Church, the patriarch (PAYT-ree-ark) of Constantinople held a position similar to that of the pope, leader of the Roman Catholic Church; and when the iconoclast Paul IV died in 784, she replaced him with a patriarch sympathetic to the

iconophile cause. She began removing generals and other officials loyal to the iconoclasts, and by 786 was prepared to make an even bolder step.

The Seventh Ecumenical Council

Many of the beliefs accepted by most Christians today were established not by the Bible, but by ecumenical (ek-yoo-MIN-i-kul; across all faiths) councils. The First Ecumenical Council had met in the city of Nicaea (nie-SEE-uh) in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, in 325; now Irene convened the Seventh Ecumenical Council to address the issue of icon-worship.

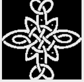
On May 31, 786, a group of religious leaders, including representatives sent by the pope, tried to meet in Constantinople, the Byzantine capital. By then, however, sixteen-year-old Constantine VI had begun to rebel against his mother, and troops loyal to him broke up the meeting.

Irene responded by sending the soldiers to Asia, where she claimed they were needed to defend the empire, and replaced them with a unit more favorable to her position. Having thus cleared the way, Irene arranged for the gathering to be held at Nicaea. Though she did not join the group of more than three hundred bishops who met between September 13 and October 13, 787, Irene managed the proceedings from Constantinople. As expected, the council restored the worship of icons.

Conflict with her son

Eager to establish her position, in 782 Irene had tried to arrange the marriage of her son to the daughter of Charlemagne, the most powerful ruler in Western Europe other than the pope. Charlemagne called off the marriage in 786, probably as a response to the fact that she had planned to convene the ecumenical council without consulting him first. Therefore in 788, she married Constantine to the daughter of a wealthy official in Greece.

Up to this point, Irene had maintained the pretense that Constantine was the real power in Byzantium, but when



Yang Kuei-fei

Like Irene, Yang Kuei-fei (YAHNG gway-FAY; d. 756) exerted enormous influence over a great empire; but unlike Irene, she did so from the background, and never officially ruled. Yang Kuei-fei was a concubine—a woman whose role toward her husband is like that of a wife, but without the social and legal status of a wife—to Hsüan Tsung (shwee-AHND-zoong; ruled 712–56), who ruled China's T'ang (TAHNG) dynasty at the height of its power.

Yang Kuei-fei was said to be one of the only obese women in Chinese history who was also considered a great beauty. She started out as concubine of Hsüan Tsung's son before the emperor decided he wanted her for himself—along with her two sisters. Later she took the general An Lu-shan (703–757) under her wing as her adopted son and (according to palace rumors) lover.

While the emperor, overcome by love for Yang Kuei-fei, neglected his official duties, others struggled for control. Principal among these were Yang's brother and An Lu-shan, who had long been a trusted friend of Hsüan Tsung. T'ang forces suffered a defeat by Arab troops in 751, and An Lu-shan, seeing his chance to take power, launched a rebellion in 755.

Angry palace officials blamed Yang and her brother for the uprising, and pressured Hsüan Tsung to order her execution, which he did. Two years later, An Lu-shan was killed. The tragic story of Yang Kuei-fei would later become a favorite theme among Chinese poets and writers.

she demanded that her name appear before his on official documents, her son rebelled. A power struggle followed, and by 790 Constantine succeeded in taking control. He embarked on a series of unsuccessful wars, however, and became so unpopular that in January 792 he brought Irene back into a position of authority.

This would prove to be a bad decision for Constantine, considering his mother's desire for power, and in January 795, he made another ill-advised move when he left his wife and married one of her ladies-in-waiting. Irene had supported her son in this action, probably because she knew that it would turn many church officials against him—and it did. Realizing that his mother was prepared to remove him, Constantine tried to escape, but he was captured, and on August

15, 797, Irene had him blinded. As a result of this mutilation, he died soon afterward, a result Irene apparently intended.

Conflict over the title "Roman Empire"

Now Irene ruled Byzantium as sole empress, but in so doing, she went too far. Up to that point, she had enjoyed at least a measure of support from the pope. In the West, where few people could read and write, icons were an essential part of worship, and therefore the pope had supported the use of icons. This had effectively made him Irene's ally. On the other hand, the pope was not happy with the idea of a woman controlling Byzantium, and since it was not legal for a woman to rule Byzantium, he could claim that the Roman throne was vacant. Therefore in 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne "Emperor of the Romans."

Henceforth the term "Roman Empire" would be used to describe the realm ruled by Charlemagne and by later monarchs of the Holy Roman Empire, and the West would never again recognize Byzantium's claim as the true Roman Empire. This was to be one of the most lasting outcomes of Irene's reign, and certainly the most unfortunate from the Byzantine perspective.

At the time, however, the results were not so clear, and Charlemagne sought to strengthen his claim to the title by proposing marriage to Irene. She agreed to the union, recognizing that it would strengthen her hold on power, but she did not remain on the throne long enough to marry Charlemagne.

The end of Irene's reign

A series of misfortunes occurred in the years of Irene's sole rulership, most of them the direct outcome of the confusion that resulted from her seizure of power. Arab forces under Harun al-Rashid (see box in El Cid entry) scored a major victory over the Byzantines, who were forced to pay the Arabs large sums of money. Irene had meanwhile lowered taxes, hoping to win favor from her people, and this further reduced the Byzantine treasury.

In 802, in a revolt led by the Byzantine minister of finance, Irene was overthrown. She escaped to the isle of Lesbos. Despite the many enemies she had made, Irene had many supporters as well, and they continued to support her during the final year of her life. She died in 803 and was later declared a saint in the Greek Orthodox Church.

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Reader's Guide

The Middle Ages was an era of great changes in civilization, a transition between ancient times and the modern world. Lasting roughly from A.D. 500 to 1500, the period saw the growth of the Roman Catholic Church in Western Europe and the spread of the Islamic faith in the Middle East. Around the world, empires—the Byzantine, Mongol, and Incan—rose and fell, and the first nation-states emerged in France, England, and Spain. Despite the beauty of illuminated manuscripts, soaring Gothic cathedrals, and the literary classics of Augustine and Dante, Europe's civilization lagged far behind that of the technologically advanced, administratively organized, and economically wealthy realms of the Arab world, West Africa, India, and China.

Middle Ages: Biographies (two volumes) presents the life stories of fifty people who lived during the Middle Ages. Included are such major rulers as Charlemagne, Genghis Khan, and Eleanor of Aquitaine; thinkers and writers Augustine and Thomas Aquinas; religious leaders Muhammad and Francis of Assisi; and great explorers Marco Polo and Leif Eriksson. Also featured are lesser-known figures from the era,

including Wu Ze-tian and Irene of Athens, the only female rulers in the history of China and Byzantium, respectively; Mansa Musa, leader of the great empire of Mali in Africa; Japanese woman author Murasaki Shikibu, who penned the world's first novel; and Pachacutec, Inca emperor recognized as among the greatest rulers in history.

Additional features

Over one hundred illustrations and dozens of sidebar boxes exploring high-interest people and topics bring the text to life. Definitions of unfamiliar terms and a list of books and Web sites to consult for more information are included in each entry. The volume also contains a timeline of events, a general glossary, and an index offering easy access to the people, places, and subjects discussed throughout *Middle Ages: Biographies*.

Dedication

To Margaret, my mother; to Deidre, my wife; and to Tyler, my daughter.

Comments and suggestions

We welcome your comments on this work as well as your suggestions for topics to be featured in future editions of *Middle Ages: Biographies*. Please write: Editors, *Middle Ages: Biographies,* U•X•L, 27500 Drake Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535; call toll-free: 1-800-877-4253; fax: 248-699-8097; or send e-mail via www.galegroup.com.

Timeline of Events in the Middle Ages

180 The death of Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius marks the end of the "Pax Romana," or Roman peace. Years of instability follow, and although Rome recovers numerous times, this is the beginning of Rome's three-century decline.

312 Roman emperor Constantine converts to Christianity. As a result, the empire that once persecuted Christians will embrace their religion and eventually will begin to persecute other religions.

325 Constantine calls the Council of Nicaea, first of many ecumenical councils at which gatherings of bishops determine official church policy.

330 Constantine establishes Byzantium as eastern capital of the Roman Empire.

395 After the death of Emperor Theodosius, the Roman Empire is permanently divided in half. As time passes, the Eastern Roman Empire (later known as the Byzantine Empire) distances itself from the declining Western Roman Empire.

410 Led by Alaric, the Visigoths sack Rome, dealing the Western Roman Empire a blow from which it will never recover.

413–425 Deeply affected—as are most Roman citizens—by the Visigoths' attack on Rome, **Augustine** writes *City of God,* one of the most important books of the Middle Ages.

455 The Vandals sack Rome.

c. 459 Death of **St. Patrick**, missionary who converted Ireland to Christianity.

476 The German leader Odoacer removes Emperor Romulus Augustulus and crowns himself "king of Italy." This incident marks the end of the Western Roman Empire.

481 The Merovingian Age, named for the only powerful dynasty in Western Europe during the period, begins when **Clovis** takes the throne in France.

496 **Clovis** converts to Christianity. By establishing strong ties with the pope, he forges a strong church-state relationship that will continue throughout the medieval period.

500 Date commonly cited as beginning of Middle Ages.

500–1000 Era in European history often referred to as the Dark Ages, or Early Middle Ages.

524 The philosopher **Boethius**, from the last generation of classically educated Romans, dies in jail, probably at the orders of the Ostrogoth chieftain Theodoric.

529 Benedict of Nursia and his followers establish the monastery at Monte Cassino, Italy. This marks the beginning of the monastic tradition in Europe.

532 Thanks in large part to the counsel of his wife Theodora, **Justinian**—greatest of Byzantine emperors—takes a strong stand in the Nika Revolt, ensuring his continued power.

534–563 Belisarius and other generals under orders from **Justinian** recapture much of the Western Roman Empire, including parts of Italy, Spain, and North Africa. The victories are costly, however, and soon after Justin-

ian's death these lands will fall back into the hands of barbarian tribes such as the Vandals and Lombards.

535 **Justinian** establishes his legal code, a model for the laws in many Western nations today.

540 The Huns, or Hunas, destroy India's Gupta Empire, plunging much of the subcontinent into a state of anarchy.

c. 550 Death of Indian mathematician **Aryabhata**, one of the first mathematicians to use the numeral zero.

589 The ruthless **Wen Ti** places all of China under the rule of his Sui dynasty, ending more than three centuries of upheaval.

590 Pope **Gregory I** begins his fourteen-year reign. Also known as Gregory the Great, he ensures the survival of the church, and becomes one of its greatest medieval leaders.

Late 500s The first Turks begin moving westward, toward the Middle East, from their homeland to the north and west of China.

604 Prince **Shotoku Taishi** of Japan issues his "Seventeen-Article Constitution."

c. 610 An Arab merchant named **Muhammad** receives the first of some 650 revelations that form the basis of the Koran, Islam's holy book.

618 In China, **T'ai Tsung** and his father Kao Tsu overthrow the cruel Sui dynasty, establishing the highly powerful and efficient T'ang dynasty.

622 **Muhammad** and his followers escape the city of Mecca. This event, known as the *hegira,* marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar.

632–661 Following the death of **Muhammad**, the Arab Muslims are led by a series of four caliphs who greatly expand Muslim territories to include most of the Middle East.

645 A conspiracy to murder the Japanese emperor places the reform-minded Emperor Tenchi on the throne and puts the Fujiwara clan—destined to remain influential for centuries—in a position of power.

661 The fifth caliph, Mu'awiya, founds the Umayyad caliphate, which will rule the Muslim world from Damascus, Syria, until 750.

690 **Wu Ze-tian** becomes sole empress of China. She will reign until 705, the only female ruler in four thousand years of Chinese history.

711 Moors from North Africa invade Spain, taking over from the Visigoths. Muslims will rule parts of the Iberian Peninsula until 1492.

711 Arabs invade the Sind in western India, establishing a Muslim foothold on the Indian subcontinent.

727 In Greece, the Iconoclasts begin a sixty-year war on icons, or images of saints and other religious figures, which they consider idols. Though the Greek Orthodox Church ultimately rejects iconoclasm, the controversy helps widen a growing division between Eastern and Western Christianity.

731 **The Venerable Bede** publishes his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* his most important work.

732 A force led by Charles Martel repels Moorish invaders at Tours, halting Islam's advance into Western Europe.

750 A descendant of **Muhammad**'s uncle Abbas begins killing off all the Umayyad leaders and establishes the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad, Iraq.

751 The Carolingian Age begins when Charles Martel's son Pepin III, with the support of the pope, removes the last Merovingian king from power.

751 Defeated by Arab armies at Talas, China's T'ang dynasty begins to decline. A revolt led by An Lu-shan in 755 adds to its troubles.

768 Reign of **Charlemagne**, greatest ruler of Western Europe during the Early Middle Ages, begins.

782 English scholar **Alcuin** goes to France, on the invitation of **Charlemagne**, to organize a school for future officials in the Carolingian empire.

787 **Irene of Athens** convenes the Seventh Council of Nicaea, which restores the use of icons in worship.

793 Viking raiders destroy the church at Lindisfarne off the coast of England. Lindisfarne was one of the places where civilized learning had weathered the darkest years of the Middle Ages. Thus begins two centuries of terror as more invaders pour out of Scandinavia and spread throughout Europe.

797 Having murdered her son, **Irene of Athens**—who actually ruled from 780 onward—officially becomes Byzantine empress, the only woman ruler in the empire's eleven-hundred-year history. It is partly in reaction to Irene that the pope later crowns **Charlemagne** emperor of Western Europe.

800s Feudalism takes shape in Western Europe.

800 Pope Leo III crowns **Charlemagne** "Emperor of All the Romans." This marks the beginning of the political alliance later to take shape under **Otto the Great** as the Holy Roman Empire.

c. 800 The Khmers, or Cambodians, adopt Hinduism under the leadership of their first powerful king, Jayavarman II, founder of the Angkor Empire.

801 Death of **Rabia al-Adawiyya**, a woman and former slave who founded the mystic Sufi sect of Islam.

820 A group of Vikings settles in northwestern France, where they will become known as Normans.

843 In the Treaty of Verdun, **Charlemagne**'s son Louis the Pious divides the Carolingian Empire among his three sons. These three parts come to be known as the West Frankish Empire, consisting chiefly of modern France; the "Middle Kingdom," a strip running from what is now the Netherlands all the way down to Italy; and the East Frankish Empire, or modern Germany. The Middle Kingdom soon dissolves into a patchwork of tiny principalities.

c. 850 Death of Arab mathematician **al-Khwarizmi**, who coined the term "algebra" and who is often considered the greatest mathematician of the Middle Ages.

860 Vikings discover Iceland.

863 **St. Cyril** and **St. Methodius**, two Greek priests, become missionaries to the Slavs of Central and Eastern Europe. As a result, the Greek Orthodox version of Christianity spreads throughout the region, along with the Cyrillic alphabet, which the brothers create in order to translate the Bible into local languages.

886 King Alfred the Great captures London from the Danes, and for the first time in British history unites all Anglo-Saxons.

907 China's T'ang dynasty comes to an end after almost three centuries of rule, and the empire enters a period of instability known as "Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms."

911 The last of the Carolingian line in the East Frankish Empire dies. Seven years later, Henry the Fowler of Saxony, father of **Otto the Great**, takes leadership of the German states.

c. 930 Arab physician **al-Razi** writes his most important work, *The Comprehensive Book,* which sums up the medical knowledge of the era.

955 German king Otto I defeats a tribe of nomadic invaders called the Magyars. The Magyars later become Christianized and found the nation of Hungary; as for Otto, thenceforth he is known as **Otto the Great.**

957 Death of **al-Mas'udi**, perhaps the greatest historian of the Arab world.

960 In China, troops loyal to Chao K'uang-yin declare him emperor, initiating the Sung dynasty.

962 Having conquered most of Central Europe, **Otto the Great** is crowned emperor in Rome, reviving Charlemagne's title. From this point on, most German kings are also crowned ruler of the Holy Roman Empire.

982 Vikings discover Greenland. Four years later, Erik the Red founds a permanent settlement there.

987 Russia converts to Greek Orthodox Christianity and gradually begins adopting Byzantine culture after Vladimir the Great marries Anne, sister of Emperor **Basil II.**

987 The last Carolingian ruler of France dies without an heir, and Hugh Capet takes the throne, establishing a dynasty that will last until 1328.

1000–1300 Era in European history often referred to as the High Middle Ages.

1001 Vikings led by **Leif Eriksson** sail westward to North America, and during the next two decades conduct a number of raids on the coast of what is now Canada.

1001 A second Muslim invasion of the Indian subcontinent, this time by Turks, takes place as the Ghaznavids subdue a large region in what is now Afghanistan, Pakistan, and western India.

1002 Holy Roman Emperor **Otto III** dies at the age of twenty-two, and with him die his grand dreams of a revived Roman Empire.

1002 In Japan, **Murasaki Shikibu** begins writing the *Tale of Genji,* the world's first novel.

1014 After years of conflict with the Bulgarians, Byzantine Emperor **Basil II** defeats them. He orders that ninety-nine of every one hundred men be blinded and the last man allowed to keep just one eye so he can lead the others home. Bulgaria's Czar Samuel dies of a heart attack when he sees his men, and Basil earns the nickname "Bulgar-Slayer."

1025 **Basil II** dies, having taken the Byzantine Empire to its greatest height since **Justinian** five centuries earlier; however, it begins a rapid decline soon afterward.

1039 Death of Arab mathematician and physicist **Alhazen,** the first scientist to form an accurate theory of optics, or the mechanics of vision.

1054 After centuries of disagreement over numerous issues, the Greek Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church officially separate.

1060 Five years after Turks seize control of Baghdad from the declining Abbasid caliphate, their leader, Toghril Beg, declares himself sultan and thus establishes the Seljuk dynasty.

1066 **William the Conqueror** leads an invading force that defeats an Anglo-Saxon army at Hastings and wins control of England. The Norman invasion is the most important event of medieval English history, greatly affecting the future of English culture and language.

1071 The Seljuk Turks defeat Byzantine forces at the Battle of Manzikert in Armenia. As a result, the Turks gain a foothold in Asia Minor (today known as Turkey), and the Byzantine Empire begins a long, slow decline.

1071 A Norman warlord named Robert Guiscard drives the last Byzantine forces out of Italy. Byzantium had controlled parts of the peninsula since the time of **Justinian.**

1072 Robert Guiscard's brother Roger expels the Arabs from Sicily, and takes control of the island.

1075–77 Pope **Gregory VII** and Holy Roman Emperor **Henry IV** become embroiled in a church-state struggle called the Investiture Controversy, a debate over whether popes or emperors should have the right to appoint local bishops. Deserted by his supporters, Henry stands barefoot in the snow for three days outside the gates of a castle in Canossa, Italy, waiting to beg the pope's forgiveness.

1084 Reversing the results of an earlier round in the Investiture Controversy, **Henry IV** takes Rome and forcibly removes **Gregory VII** from power. The pope dies soon afterward, broken and humiliated.

1084 **Ssu-ma Kuang**, an official in the Sung dynasty, completes his monumental history of China, *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government.*

1094 Troops under the leadership of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar—better known as **El Cid**—defeat the Moorish Almoravids at Valencia. This victory, and the character of El Cid himself, becomes a symbol of the Reconquista, the Christian effort to reclaim Spain from its Muslim conquerors.

1094 Norman warrior Bohemond, son of Robert Guiscard, takes control of Rome from **Henry IV** and hands the city over to Pope Urban II. Fearing the Normans'

power and aware that he owes them a great debt, Urban looks for something to divert their attention.

1095 Byzantine Emperor Alexis Comnenus asks Urban II for military assistance against the Turks. Urban preaches a sermon to raise support at the Council of Clermont in France, and in the resulting fervor the First Crusade begins. Among its leaders are Bohemond and his nephew Tancred.

1096–97 A pathetic sideshow called the Peasants' Crusade plays out before the real First Crusade gets underway. The peasants begin by robbing and killing thousands of Jews in Germany; then, led by Peter the Hermit, they march toward the Holy Land, wreaking havoc as they go. In Anatolia, a local Turkish sultan leads them into a trap, and most of the peasants are killed.

1099 The First Crusade ends in victory for the Europeans as they conquer Jerusalem. It is a costly victory, however—one in which thousands of innocent Muslims, as well as many Europeans, have been brutally slaughtered—and it sows resentment between Muslims and Christians that remains strong today.

c. 1100–1300 Many of the aspects of life most commonly associated with the Middle Ages, including heraldry and chivalry, make their appearance in Western Europe during this period. Returning crusaders adapt the defensive architecture they observed in fortresses of the Holy Land, resulting in the familiar design of the medieval castle. This is also the era of romantic and heroic tales such as those of King Arthur.

1105 King Henry I of England and St. **Anselm of Canterbury**, head of the English church, sign an agreement settling their differences. This is an important milestone in church-state relations and serves as the model for the Concordat of Worms seventeen years later.

1118 After being banished because of her part in a conspiracy against her brother, the Byzantine emperor, **Anna Comnena** begins writing the *Alexiad,* a history of Byzantium in the period 1069–1118.

1140 After a career in which he infuriated many with his unconventional views on God, French philosopher **Peter Abelard** is charged with heresy by **Bernard of Clairvaux** and forced to publicly refute his beliefs.

c. 1140 In Cambodia, Khmer emperor Suryavarman II develops the splendid temple complex of Angkor Wat.

1146 After the Muslims' capture of Edessa in 1144, Pope Eugenius III calls on the help of his former teacher, **Bernard of Clairvaux,** who makes a speech that leads to the launching of the Second Crusade.

1147–49 In the disastrous Second Crusade, armies from Europe are double-crossed by their crusader allies in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. They fail to recapture Edessa and suffer a heavy defeat at Damascus. Among the people who take part in the crusade (though not as a combatant) is **Eleanor of Aquitaine.**

1154 After the death of England's King Stephen, Henry II takes the throne, beginning the long Plantaganet dynasty. With Henry is his new bride, **Eleanor of Aquitaine.** Now queen of England, she had been queen of France two years earlier, before the annulment of her marriage to King Louis VII.

1158 Holy Roman Emperor **Frederick I Barbarossa** establishes Europe's first university at Bologna, Italy.

1159 **Frederick I Barbarossa** begins a quarter-century of fruitless, costly wars in which the Ghibellines and Guelphs—factions representing pro-imperial and pro-church forces, respectively—fight for control of northern Italy.

1162 **Moses Maimonides,** greatest Jewish philosopher of the Middle Ages, publishes his *Letter Concerning Apostasy,* the first of many important works by him that will appear over the next four decades.

1165 A letter supposedly written by Prester John, a Christian monarch in the East, appears in Europe. Over the centuries that follow, Europeans will search in vain for Prester John, hoping for his aid in their war against Muslim forces. Even as Europe enters the modern era, early proponents of exploration such as

Henry the Navigator will remain inspired by the quest for Prester John's kingdom.

1170 Knights loyal to Henry II murder the archbishop **Thomas à Becket** in his cathedral at Canterbury.

1174–80 Arab philosopher **Averroës** writes one of his most important works, *The Incoherence of the Incoherence,* a response to hard-line Muslim attacks on his belief that reason and religious faith can coexist.

1183 **Frederick I Barbarossa** signs the Peace of Constance with the cities of the Lombard League, and thus ends his long war in northern Italy. After this he will concentrate his attention on Germany and institute reforms that make him a hero in his homeland.

1185 For the first time, Japan comes under the rule of a shogun, or military dictator. Shoguns will remain in power for the next four centuries.

1187 Muslim armies under **Saladin** deal the crusaders a devastating blow at the Battle of Hittin in Palestine. Shortly afterward, Saladin leads his armies in the reconquest of Jerusalem.

1189 In response to **Saladin**'s victories, Europeans launch the Third Crusade. Of the crusade's three principal leaders, Emperor **Frederick I Barbarossa** drowns on his way to the Holy Land, and **Richard I** takes a number of detours, only arriving in 1191. This leaves Philip II Augustus of France to fight the Muslims alone.

1191 Led by **Richard I** of England and Philip II of France, crusaders take the city of Acre in Palestine.

1192 **Richard I** signs a treaty with **Saladin**, ending the Third Crusade.

1198 Pope **Innocent III** begins an eighteen-year reign that marks the high point of the church's power. Despite his great influence, however, when he calls for a new crusade to the Holy Land, he gets little response—a sign that the spirit behind the Crusades is dying.

c. 1200 Cambodia's Khmer Empire reaches its height under Jayavarman VII.

1202 Four years after the initial plea from the pope, the Fourth Crusade begins. Instead of going to the Holy Land, however, the crusaders become involved in a power struggle for the Byzantine throne.

1204 Acting on orders from the powerful city-state of Venice, crusaders take Constantinople, forcing the Byzantines to retreat to Trebizond in Turkey. The Fourth Crusade ends with the establishment of the Latin Empire.

1206 Qutb-ud-Din Aybak, the first independent Muslim ruler in India, establishes the Delhi Sultanate.

1206 **Genghis Khan** unites the Mongols for the first time in their history and soon afterward leads them to war against the Sung dynasty in China.

1208 Pope **Innocent III** launches the Albigensian Crusade against the Cathars, a heretical sect in southern France.

1209 **St. Francis of Assisi** establishes the Franciscan order.

1215 In Rome, Pope **Innocent III** convenes the Fourth Lateran Council. A number of traditions, such as regular confession of sin to a priest, are established at this, one of the most significant ecumenical councils in history.

1215 English noblemen force King John to sign the Magna Carta, which grants much greater power to the nobility. Ultimately the agreement will lead to increased freedom for the people from the power of both king and nobles.

1217–21 In the Fifth Crusade, armies from England, Germany, Hungary, and Austria attempt unsuccessfully to conquer Egypt.

1227 **Genghis Khan** dies, having conquered much of China and Central Asia, thus laying the foundation for the largest empire in history.

1228–29 The Sixth Crusade, led by Holy Roman Emperor **Frederick II**, results in a treaty that briefly restores Christian control of Jerusalem—and does so with a minimum of bloodshed.

1229 The brutal Albigensian Crusade ends. Not only are the Cathars destroyed, but so is much of the French nobility, thus greatly strengthening the power of the French king.

1231 Pope Gregory IX establishes the Inquisition, a court through which the church will investigate, try, and punish cases of heresy.

c. 1235 The empire of Mali, most powerful realm in sub-Saharan Africa at the time, takes shape under the leadership of Sundiata Keita.

1239–40 In the Seventh Crusade, Europeans make another failed attempt to retake the Holy Land.

1241 After six years of campaigns in which they sliced across Russia and Eastern Europe, a Mongol force is poised to take Vienna, Austria, and thus to swarm into Western Europe. But when their leader, Batu Khan, learns that the Great Khan Ogodai is dead, he rushes back to the Mongol capital at Karakorum to participate in choosing a successor.

1242 **Alexander Nevsky** and his brother Andrew lead the Russians' defense of Novgorod against invaders from Germany.

1243 Back on the warpath, but this time in the Middle East, the Mongols defeat the last remnants of the Seljuk Turks.

1248–54 King Louis IX of France (St. Louis) leads the Eighth Crusade, this time against the Mamluks. The result is the same: yet another defeat for the Europeans.

1252 In Egypt, a group of former slave soldiers called the Mamluks take power from the Ayyubid dynasty, established many years before by **Saladin.**

1260 The Mamluks become the first force to defeat the Mongols, in a battle at Goliath Spring in Palestine.

1260 **Kublai Khan**, greatest Mongol leader after his grandfather **Genghis Khan**, is declared Great Khan, or leader of the Mongols.

1261 Led by Michael VIII Palaeologus, the Byzantines recapture Constantinople from the Latin Empire, and

Byzantium enjoys one last gasp of power before it goes into terminal decline.

1270–72 In the Ninth Crusade, last of the numbered crusades, King Louis IX of France again leads the Europeans against the Mamluks, who defeat European forces yet again.

1271 **Marco Polo** embarks on his celebrated journey to the East, which lasts twenty-four years.

1273 The Hapsburg dynasty—destined to remain a major factor in European politics until 1918—takes control of the Holy Roman Empire.

1273 Italian philosopher and theologian **Thomas Aquinas** completes the crowning work of his career, the monumental *Summa theologica*. The influential book will help lead to wider acceptance of the idea, introduced earlier by **Moses Maimonides**, **Averroës**, and **Abelard**, that reason and faith are compatible.

1279 Mongol forces under **Kublai Khan** win final victory over China's Sung dynasty. Thus begins the Yüan dynasty, the first time in Chinese history when the country has been ruled by foreigners.

1291 Mamluks conquer the last Christian stronghold at Acre, bringing to an end two centuries of crusades to conquer the Holy Land for Christendom.

1292 Death of **Roger Bacon**, one of Europe's most important scientists. His work helped to show the rebirth of scientific curiosity taking place in Europe as a result of contact with the Arab world during the Crusades.

1294 At the death of **Kublai Khan**, the Mongol realm is the largest empire in history, covering most of Asia and a large part of Europe. Within less than a century, however, this vast empire will have all but disappeared.

1299 Turkish chieftain **Osman I** refuses to pay tribute to the local Mongol rulers, marking the beginnings of the Ottoman Empire.

1300–1500 Era in European history often referred to as the Late Middle Ages.

1303 After years of conflict with Pope Boniface VIII, France's King Philip the Fair briefly has the pope arrested. This event and its aftermath marks the low point of the papacy during the Middle Ages.

1308 **Dante Alighieri** begins writing the *Divine Comedy,* which he will complete shortly before his death in 1321.

1309 Pope Clement V, an ally of Philip the Fair, moves the papal seat from Rome to Avignon in southern France.

1309 After years of fighting, Sultan **Ala-ud-din Muhammad Khalji** subdues most of India.

1324 **Mansa Musa,** emperor of Mali, embarks on a pilgrimage to Mecca. After stopping in Cairo, Egypt, and spending so much gold that he affects the region's economy for years, he becomes famous throughout the Western world: the first sub-Saharan African ruler widely known among Europeans.

1328 Because of a dispute between the Franciscans and the papacy, **William of Ockham,** one of the late medieval period's most important philosophers, is forced to flee the papal court. He remains under the protection of the Holy Roman emperor for the rest of his life.

1337 England and France begin fighting what will become known as the Hundred Years' War, an on-again, off-again struggle to control parts of France.

1347–51 Europe experiences one of the worst disasters in human history, an epidemic called the Black Death. Sometimes called simply "the Plague," in four years the Black Death kills some thirty-five million people, or approximately one-third of the European population in 1300.

1368 Led by Chu Yüan-chang, a group of rebels overthrows the Mongol Yüan dynasty of China and establishes the Ming dynasty, China's last native-born ruling house.

1378 The Catholic Church becomes embroiled in the Great Schism, which will last until 1417. During this time,

there are rival popes in Rome and Avignon; and from 1409 to 1417, there is even a third pope in Pisa, Italy.

1383 **Tamerlane** embarks on two decades of conquest in which he strikes devastating blows against empires in Turkey, Russia, and India and subdues a large portion of central and southwestern Asia.

1386 **Geoffrey Chaucer** begins writing the *Canterbury Tales*.

1389 Ottoman forces defeat the Serbs in battle at Kosovo Field. As a result, all of Southeastern Europe except for Greece falls under Turkish control.

1390 **Tamerlane** attacks and severely weakens the Golden Horde even though its leaders come from the same Mongol and Tatar ancestry as he.

1392 General Yi Song-ye seizes power in Korea and establishes a dynasty that will remain in control until 1910.

1398 **Tamerlane** sacks the Indian city of Delhi, hastening the end of the Delhi Sultanate, which comes in 1413.

1402 After conquering much of Iran and surrounding areas and then moving westward, **Tamerlane** defeats the Ottoman sultan Bajazed in battle. An unexpected result of their defeat is that the Ottomans, who seemed poised to take over much of Europe, go into a period of decline.

1404–05 **Christine de Pisan**, Europe's first female professional writer, publishes *The Book of the City of Ladies,* her most celebrated work.

1405 Ming dynasty emperor Yung-lo sends Admiral Cheng Ho on the first of seven westward voyages. These take place over the next quarter-century, during which time Chinese ships travel as far as East Africa.

1417 The Council of Constance ends the Great Schism, affirming that Rome is the seat of the church and that Pope Martin V is its sole leader. Unfortunately for the church, the Great Schism has weakened it at the very time that it faces its greatest challenge ever: a gather-

ing movement that will come to be known as the Reformation.

1418 The "school" of navigation founded by Prince **Henry the Navigator** sponsors the first of many expeditions that, over the next forty-two years, will greatly increase knowledge of the middle Atlantic Ocean and Africa's west coast. These are the earliest European voyages of exploration, of which there will be many in the next two centuries.

1421 Emperor Yung-lo moves the Chinese capital from Nanjing to Beijing, where it has remained virtually ever since.

1429 A tiny French army led by **Joan of Arc** forces the English to lift their siege on the town of Orléans, a victory that raises French spirits and makes it possible for France's king Charles VII to be crowned later that year. This marks a turning point in the Hundred Years' War.

1430–31 Captured by Burgundian forces, **Joan of Arc** is handed over to the English, who arrange her trial for witchcraft in a court of French priests. The trial, a mockery of justice, ends with Joan being burned at the stake.

1431 In Southeast Asia, the Thais conquer the Angkor Empire.

1431 The Aztecs become the dominant partner in a triple alliance with two nearby city-states and soon afterward gain control of the Valley of Mexico.

1438 **Pachacutec Inca Yupanqui**, greatest Inca ruler, takes the throne.

1440 **Montezuma I** takes the Aztec throne.

1441 Fourteen black slaves are brought from Africa to Portugal, where they are presented to Prince **Henry the Navigator.** This is the beginning of the African slave trade, which isn't abolished until more than four centuries later.

1451 The recovery of the Ottoman Empire, which had suffered a half-century of decline, begins under Mehmet the Conqueror.

1453 Due in large part to the victories of **Joan of Arc**, which lifted French morale twenty-four years earlier, the Hundred Years' War ends with French victory.

1453 Turks under Mehmet the Conqueror march into Constantinople, bringing about the fall of the Byzantine Empire. Greece will remain part of the Ottoman Empire until 1829.

1455 Having developed a method of movable-type printing, Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz, Germany, prints his first book: a Bible. In the years to come, the invention of the printing press will prove to be one of the most important events in world history.

1456 A commission directed by Pope Calixtus III declares that the verdict against **Joan of Arc** in 1431 had been wrongfully obtained.

1470 One of the first printed books to appear in England, *La Morte D'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory helps establish the now-familiar tales of Arthurian legend.

1492 Spain, united by the 1469 marriage of its two most powerful monarchs, Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, drives out the last of the Muslims and expels all Jews. A less significant event of 1492, from the Spanish perspective, is the launch of a naval expedition in search of a westward sea route to China. Its leader is an Italian sailor named Christopher Columbus, who has grown up heavily influenced by **Marco Polo**'s account of his travels.

1493 **Mohammed I Askia** takes the throne of Africa's Songhai Empire, which will reach its height under his leadership.

1500 Date commonly cited as the end of Middle Ages, and the beginning of the Renaissance.

1517 Exactly a century after the Council of Constance ended the Great Schism, a German monk named Martin Luther publicly posts ninety-five theses, or statements challenging the established teachings of

Catholicism, on the door of a church in Germany. Over the next century, numerous new Protestant religious denominations will be established.

1521 Spanish forces led by the conquistador Hernán Cortés destroy the Aztec Empire.

1526 Babur, a descendant of **Tamerlane,** invades India and establishes what becomes the Mogul Empire.

1533 Francisco Pizarro and the Spanish forces with him arrive in Peru and soon bring about the end of the Inca Empire.

1591 Songhai, the last of the great premodern empires in Africa's Sudan region, falls to invaders from Morocco.

1806 In the process of conquering most of Europe, Napoleon Bonaparte brings the Holy Roman Empire to an end.

1912 More than twenty-one centuries of imperial rule in China end with the overthrow of the government by revolutionary forces, who establish a republic.

1918 Among the many outcomes of World War I are the disintegration of several empires with roots in the Middle Ages: the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian empires.

1960s Nearly a thousand years after **Leif Eriksson** and other Vikings visited the New World, archaeologists find remains of a Norse settlement in Newfoundland.

Words to Know

A

Age of Exploration: The period from about 1450 to about 1750 when European explorers conducted their most significant voyages and travels around the world.

Alchemy: A semi-scientific discipline that holds that through the application of certain chemical processes, ordinary metals can be turned into gold.

Algebra: A type of mathematics used to determine the value of unknown quantities where these can be related to known numbers.

Allegory: A type of narrative, popular throughout the Middle Ages, in which characters represent ideas.

Anarchy: Breakdown of political order.

Ancestor: An earlier person in one's line of parentage, usually more distant in time than a grandparent.

Anti-Semitism: Hatred of, or discrimination against, Jews.

Antipope: A priest proclaimed pope by one group or another, but not officially recognized by the church.

Archaeology: The scientific study of past civilizations.

Archbishop: The leading bishop in an area or nation.

Aristocracy: The richest and most powerful members of society.

Ascetic: A person who renounces all earthly pleasures as part of his or her search for religious understanding.

Assassination: Killing, usually of an important leader, for political reasons.

Astronomy: The scientific study of the stars and other heavenly bodies and their movement in the sky.

B

Barbarian: A negative term used to describe someone as uncivilized.

Bishop: A figure in the Christian church assigned to oversee priests and believers in a given city or region.

Bureaucracy: A network of officials who run a government.

C

Caliph: A successor to Muhammad as spiritual and political leader of Islam.

Caliphate: The domain ruled by a caliph.

Canonization: Formal declaration of a deceased person as a saint.

Cardinal: An office in the Catholic Church higher than that of bishop or archbishop; the seventy cardinals in the "College of Cardinals" participate in electing the pope.

Cavalry: Soldiers on horseback.

Chivalry: The system of medieval knighthood, particularly its code of honor with regard to women.

Christendom: The Christian world.

Church: The entire Christian church, or more specifically the Roman Catholic Church.

City-state: A city that is also a self-contained political unit, like a country.

Civil service: The administrators and officials who run a government.

Civilization: A group of people possessing most or all of the following: a settled way of life, agriculture, a written language, an organized government, and cities.

Classical: Referring to ancient Greece and Rome.

Clergy: The priesthood.

Clerical: Relating to priests.

Coat of arms: A heraldic emblem representing a family or nation.

Commoner: Someone who is not a member of a royal or noble class.

Communion: The Christian ceremony of commemorating the last supper of Jesus Christ.

Courtly love: An idealized form of romantic love, usually of a knight or poet for a noble lady.

D

Dark Ages: A negative term sometimes used to describe the Early Middle Ages, the period from the fall of Rome to about A.D. 1000 in Western Europe.

Deity: A god.

Dialect: A regional variation on a language.

Diplomacy: The use of skillful negotiations with leaders of other nations to influence events.

Duchy: An area ruled by a duke, the highest rank of European noble below a prince.

Dynasty: A group of people, often but not always a family, who continue to hold a position of power over a period of time.

E

Economy: The whole system of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services in a country.

Ecumenical: Across all faiths, or across all branches of the Christian Church.

Empire: A large political unit that unites many groups of people, often over a wide territory.

Epic: A long poem that recounts the adventures of a legendary hero.

Ethnic group: People who share a common racial, cultural, national, linguistic, or tribal origin.

Excommunicate: To banish someone from the church.

F

Famine: A food shortage caused by crop failures.

Fasting: Deliberately going without food, often but not always for religious reasons.

Feudalism: A form of political and economic organization in which peasants are subject to a noble who owns most or all of the land that they cultivate.

G

Geometry: A type of mathematics dealing with various shapes, their properties, and their measurements.

Guild: An association to promote, and set standards for, a particular profession or business.

H

Hajj: A pilgrimage to Mecca, which is expected of all Muslims who can afford to make it.

Heraldry: The practice of creating and studying coats of arms and other insignia.

Heresy: A belief that goes against established church teachings.

Holy Land: Palestine.

Horde: A division within the Mongol army; the term "hordes" was often used to describe the Mongol armies.

I

Icon: In the Christian church, an image of a saint.

Idol: A statue of a god that the god's followers worship.

Illumination: Decoration of a manuscript with elaborate designs.

Indo-European languages: The languages of Europe, India, Iran, and surrounding areas, which share common roots.

Indulgence: The granting of forgiveness of sins in exchange for an act of service for, or payment to, the church.

Infantry: Foot soldiers.

Infidel: An unbeliever.

Intellectual: A person whose profession or lifestyle centers around study and ideas.

Interest: In economics, a fee charged by a lender against a borrower—usually a percentage of the amount borrowed.

Investiture: The power of a feudal lord to grant lands or offices.

Islam: A religious faith that teaches submission to the one god Allah and his word as given through his prophet Muhammad in the Koran.

J

Jihad: Islamic "holy war" to defend or extend the faith.

K

Khan: A Central Asian chieftain.

Koran: The holy book of Islam.

L

Legal code: A system of laws.

Lingua franca: A common language.

M

Martyr: Someone who willingly dies for his or her faith.

Mass: A Catholic church service.

Medieval: Of or relating to the Middle Ages.

Middle Ages: Roughly the period from A.D. 500 to 1500.

Middle class: A group whose income level falls between that of the rich and the poor, or the rich and the working class; usually considered the backbone of a growing economy.

Millennium: A period of a thousand years.

Missionary: Someone who travels to other lands with the aim of converting others to his or her religion.

Monastery: A place in which monks live.

Monasticism: The tradition and practices of monks.

Monk: A man who leaves the outside world to take religious vows and live in a monastery, practicing a lifestyle of denying earthly pleasures.

Monotheism: Worship of one god.

Mosque: A Muslim temple.

Movable-type printing: An advanced printing process using pre-cast pieces of metal type.

Muezzin: A crier who calls worshipers to prayer five times a day in the Muslim world.

Mysticism: The belief that one can attain direct knowledge of God or ultimate reality through some form of meditation or special insight.

N

Nationalism: A sense of loyalty and devotion to one's nation.

Nation-state: A geographical area composed largely of a single nationality, in which a single national government clearly holds power.

New World: The Americas, or the Western Hemisphere.

Noble: A ruler within a kingdom who has an inherited title and lands but who is less powerful than the king or queen; collectively, nobles are known as the "nobility."

Nomadic: Wandering.

Novel: An extended, usually book-length, work of fiction.

Nun: The female equivalent of a monk, who lives in a nunnery, convent, or abbey.

O

Order: An organized religious community within the Catholic Church.

Ordination: Formal appointment as a priest or minister.

P

Pagan: Worshiping many gods.

Papacy: The office of the pope.

Papal: Referring to the pope.

Patriarch: A bishop in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Patron: A supporter, particularly of arts, education, or sciences. The term is often used to refer to a ruler or wealthy person who provides economic as well as personal support.

Peasant: A farmer who works a small plot of land.

Penance: An act ordered by the church to obtain forgiveness for sin.

Persecutions: In early church history, Roman punishment of Christians for their faith.

Philosophy: An area of study concerned with subjects including values, meaning, and the nature of reality.

Pilgrimage: A journey to a site of religious significance.

Plague: A disease that spreads quickly to a large population.

Polytheism: Worship of many gods.

Pope: The bishop of Rome, and therefore the head of the Catholic Church.

Principality: An area ruled by a prince, the highest-ranking form of noble below a king.

Prophet: Someone who receives communications directly from God and passes these on to others.

Prose: Written narrative, as opposed to poetry.

Purgatory: A place of punishment after death where, according to Roman Catholic beliefs, a person who has not been damned may work out his or her salvation and earn his or her way to heaven.

R

Rabbi: A Jewish teacher or religious leader.

Racism: The belief that race is the primary factor determining peoples' abilities and that one race is superior to another.

Reason: The use of the mind to figure things out; usually contrasted with emotion, intuition, or faith.

Reformation: A religious movement in the 1500s that ultimately led to the rejection of Roman Catholicism by various groups who adopted Protestant interpretations of Christianity.

Regent: Someone who governs a country when the monarch is too young, too old, or too sick to lead.

Relic: An object associated with the saints of the New Testament or the martyrs of the early church.

Renaissance: A period of renewed interest in learning and the arts that began in Europe during the 1300s and continued to the 1600s.

Representational art: Artwork intended to show a specific subject, whether a human figure, landscape, still life, or a variation on these.

Ritual: A type of religious ceremony that is governed by very specific rules.

Rome: A term sometimes used to refer to the papacy.

S

Sack: To destroy, usually a city.

Saracen: A negative term used in medieval Europe to describe Muslims.

Scientific method: A means of drawing accurate conclusions by collecting information, studying data, and forming theories or hypotheses.

Scriptures: Holy texts.

Sect: A small group within a larger religion.

Secular: Of the world; typically used in contrast to "spiritual."

Semitic: A term describing a number of linguistic and cultural groups in the Middle East, including the modern-day Arabs and Israelis.

Serf: A peasant subject to a feudal system and possessing no land.

Siege: A sustained military attack against a city.

Simony: The practice of buying and selling church offices.

Sultan: A type of king in the Muslim world.

Sultanate: An area ruled by a Sultan.

Synagogue: A Jewish temple.

T

Technology: The application of knowledge to make the performance of physical and mental tasks easier.

Terrorism: Frightening (and usually harming) a group of people in order to achieve a specific political goal.

Theologian: Someone who analyzes religious faith.

Theology: The study of religious faith.

Trial by ordeal: A system of justice in which the accused (and sometimes the accuser as well) has to undergo various physical hardships in order to prove innocence.

Tribal: Describes a society, sometimes nomadic, in which members are organized by families and clans, not by region, and in which leadership comes from warrior-chieftains.

Tribute: Forced payments to a conqueror.

Trigonometry: The mathematical study of triangles, angles, arcs, and their properties and applications.

Trinity: The three persons of God according to Christianity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

U

Usury: Loaning money for a high rate of interest; during the Middle Ages, however, it meant simply loaning money for interest.

V

Vassal: A noble or king who is subject to a more powerful noble or king.

Vatican: The seat of the pope's power in Rome.

W

West: Generally, Western Europe and North America, or the countries influenced both by ancient Greece and ancient Rome.

Working class: A group between the middle class and the poor who typically earn a living with their hands.

Joan of Arc

Born c. 1412
Died 1431

French military leader and martyr

Few people ever make history, and a person who does so in his or her teens is extremely rare. Joan of Arc, who came to prominence at the age of seventeen, never lived to see twenty. In less than three years, however, she turned the tide of a century-long conflict, and proved that a girl could lead men to victory.

"I have come to raise the siege of Orléans and to aid you to recover your kingdom. God wills it. After I have raised the siege I will conduct you to Reims to be consecrated. Do not distress yourself over the English, for I will combat them in any place I find them."

Statement to Charles VII

Joan claimed to hear voices, which she said came from the saints, giving her wisdom from God. Whatever the source of her knowledge, she was uncannily wise beyond her years, and she might have led France to greater and greater victories if she had not been captured by her nation's enemies. Under trial as a heretic, her prophetic gift was turned against her as evidence that she was doing the Devil's work, not God's, and she was burned at the stake. The verdict of history, however, rests on the side of Joan.

The Hundred Years' War

When Joan was born in about 1412, France had been locked in a war with England for more than seventy-five

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

years. The conflict would drag on throughout her lifetime and beyond, becoming known as the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453), even though it actually lasted for 116 years.

Most of the war was fought in France, which was devastated not so much by the fighting itself—there were few actual battles during the Hundred Years' War—but by English raids on French towns. Then, in 1415, when Joan was about three years old, the English under King Henry V scored a major victory at Agincourt (AH-zhin-kohr).

After Henry died in 1422, regents who ruled England in the name of his infant son Henry VI continued the attacks. In 1428 they began a siege, or sustained assault, on the city of Orléans (ohr-lay-AWN).

Voices and visions

Joan was born in about 1412 in Domremy (doh[n]-ray-MEE), a village in the prosperous region of Champagne. Her family, despite later legends maintaining that she grew up in poverty as a shepherd girl, were in fact successful farmers.

So many tales would surround Joan's life that it was sometimes difficult to separate out the facts. For instance, artists often depicted her as possessing a physical beauty that matched her purity of spirit, but this was probably not the case. Contemporary records make no mention of her appearance (had she been a great beauty, presumably these records would have mentioned it) except to note that she was strongly and solidly built.

One thing that is known, because Joan reported it herself, was that when she was about thirteen, she began hearing voices and seeing visions. The priests at her trial would later accuse her of receiving messages from demons, and some modern scholars dismiss the voices and visions as the product of mental illness. Joan, however, claimed that she was hearing from God through the voices of long-deceased saints.

On her way to meet the king

As the siege of Orléans wore on, Joan came to believe that the voices had a special message for her. It was her des-

tiny to save France from the English, and to do that, she needed to get the king's approval to lead an army into battle. At some point, her father tried to arrange her marriage to a local youth, but Joan had made a vow to remain a virgin, committed to Christ, and she refused.

Knowing that her father would not permit her to seek out the king, she convinced her uncle to help her get an audience with one of the local authorities. It is hard to imagine how Joan, a seventeen-year-old girl in a world where even grown women were expected to stay away from men's affairs, got anyone to take her seriously.

Finally, however, she had an opportunity to meet with Sir Robert de Baudricourt (roh-BAYR; BOH-dri-kohr), who was at first amused and then impressed by her determination. In early 1429, he arranged for her to meet with the king.

Gaining Charles's trust

In fact the king, Charles VII, had yet to be crowned. By the standards of what was required to be a king in medieval times, he was a timid figure, and later his unwillingness to make a stand would cost Joan dearly. On meeting him, Joan announced boldly that she had come to raise, or end, the siege and lead him safely to the town of Reims (RAM), the traditional place where French kings were crowned or consecrated.

Given his lack of resolve, Charles was particularly hesitant to take her claims seriously, and he forced her to undergo a series of tests concerning her faith. These tests included lengthy questioning by priests, who wanted to make sure that she was hearing from God. She passed all the tests, as she would later point out when she was brought up on charges of witchcraft.

In time Charles agreed to send her into battle, and she acquired a distinctive suit of white armor, probably made to fit a boy. As for a sword, legend holds that she told one of the king's men that he would find a specially engraved sword buried beneath the altar in a certain church—and he did. Whatever the truth of this story, it was yet another item brought up against her later as "proof" that Satan had given her special insight.

Victory after victory

To the English troops at Orléans, the sight of Joan in her white armor leading a tiny French force must have looked the way David did to Goliath in the biblical story. But just as the future king of Israel killed the giant, Joan was to lead her force to victory over a much stronger opponent. First she led the capture of the English fort at Saint Loup outside Orléans, and in a series of skirmishes, she forced the English to lift the siege. She was wounded both on the foot and above the breast, but she stayed in the battle until they had victory.

Two weeks later, Joan, claiming she had been healed by the saints, was ready to go back into action. By now she was the most popular person in France, and soldiers who had previously scorned the idea of a woman leading them into battle became zealous followers. They took the village of Patay on June 18, 1429, and their victory led a number of towns to switch their allegiance from England to France.

Joan informed Charles that he should next march on Reims, but he did not immediately heed her advice. After he relented and they began moving toward the city, they were stopped at Troyes (TRWAH), an English stronghold that they seemingly could not conquer. With supplies running out, the men were starting to grow hungry, but Joan urged them not to give up the siege, telling the troops that they would have victory in just two more days. Once again she was proven right, and on July 17, 1429, Charles was crowned in Reims with Joan standing nearby.

Trouble on the horizon

Charles and the leaders of the French army never fully accepted Joan into their confidence and often excluded her from strategy meetings. In many cases they would seek her advice after having met amongst themselves, only to discover that they should have asked her in the first place.

Joan's extremely unorthodox ways were bound to make her enemies, and not just on the English side. Many of the French remained uncomfortable with the idea of a female leader, and civilians as well as soldiers remarked scornfully about her habit of always wearing men's clothes. Nonethe-

Joan of Arc (on horseback) led French troops to many victories in battle against their English enemies.

less, she had far more admirers than opponents among the French, and everywhere she went, crowds tried to touch her in the hopes that she could heal sicknesses—a gift she never claimed.

Then in September 1429, she failed to take Paris, and was wounded again, this time in the leg. Two months later, she failed to take another town. Meanwhile, she was growing restless with Charles's indecisiveness; therefore she set out to assist the fortress at Compiegne (kawn-pee-AN) in the northeast, which was under attack. It was to be her last military campaign.

Capture and trial

During a battle in May 1430, Joan was captured by John of Luxembourg, who was loyal to the Duchy of Burgundy. Burgundy, a large state to the north of France, was in

William Wallace

Like Joan, William Wallace (c. 1270–1305), subject of the 1995 Academy Award–winning film *Braveheart,* led a heroic struggle against the English on behalf of his people. As with Joan, his fight was to end in his own trial and execution—but he, too, would remain a powerful symbol.

A minor Scottish nobleman from the western part of the country, William grew up in a time when his land faced severe oppression from the English. In his early twenties, he became the leader of a rag-tag guerrilla army that set out to oppose them.

With the support of the lower classes and the lesser nobility—but not the greater nobles, who favored coexistence with their English masters—William led what was called the Rising of 1297. They scored a major victory against the armies of King Edward I at Stirling Bridge on September 11, but were badly defeated at Falkirk on July 22 of the following year.

In the wake of Falkirk, William fled the country, going to France and Italy in hopes of gaining support for a new campaign against Edward. He never obtained it, and on August 5, 1305, after he had returned to Scotland, one of his former lieutenants turned him over to the English.

William Wallace. *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

William was tried for war and treason, and as with Joan, the results of the trial were a foregone conclusion. Dragged by horses to the gallows, he was hanged and then disemboweled (his intestines were removed). Edward ordered William's severed head to be placed on display on London Bridge, and sent his body in pieces to be displayed at four castles around Scotland. His move backfired, however: the murder of William became a rallying cry for the Scots, who soon raised a much more formidable effort against England.

turn allied with the English, to whom they gave her after receiving a handsome payment. The English were thrilled, and immediately handed her over to Peter Cauchon (koh-SHAWn), bishop of Beauvais (boh-VAY), for trial. Neither

Charles nor any of the other French leaders made any significant effort to rescue her.

The legal proceedings that followed represented a ghastly miscarriage of justice, even by medieval standards. Because she was charged with heresy, or defying church teachings, she should have been confined in a jail controlled by the church, where she would have had female guards. Instead, she was thrown into a dungeon controlled by the civil authorities in the town of Rouen (rü-AN), and there she was guarded by five of the most brutish soldiers the English could muster.

Her trial wore on for months and months, and Cauchon's tactics failed to wrangle a confession from Joan. He and the other interrogators could never successfully tie her to witchcraft, and eventually the charges were whittled down to a claim that she was not cooperating with the trial. Scrambling to find a case, Cauchon emphasized her wearing of men's clothing as evidence of her disloyalty to the church. Finally on May 24, 1431, he managed to bully the exhausted Joan into signing a statement that she was guilty of a wide range of crimes. She even agreed to wear women's clothing.

The martyrdom of Joan

Cauchon had led Joan to believe that after signing the statement, she would be moved to a church prison. Instead, he had her thrown back into the dungeon. Realizing that she would never get out alive, she made a final act of protest by putting on men's clothing again. Now Cauchon had her where he wanted her: not only was she a heretic, but she had gone back to her heresy after recanting, or disavowing, it.

On May 30, Joan's death sentence was read aloud in the town square of Rouen. Her captors were so eager to see her killed that, in another breach of law—the church had no power to pass a death sentence in France—they immediately hauled her off to her execution. She was tied to a pole, and branches were heaped around her; then the fire was lit, and Joan was burned at the stake.

The English and their French allies—most of those involved in the trial were her countrymen—were so afraid of Joan and her alleged witchcraft that they arranged to have

her ashes thrown in the River Seine nearby. And indeed Joan did exert a force after her death: her efforts contributed significantly to France's final victory in 1453.

By that time there was a massive movement to reverse the sentence against Joan. In 1456, a commission directed by Pope Calixtus III declared that the verdict against her had been wrongfully obtained. Joan soon became one of the most widely loved and admired figures in Europe, and in 1920, she was declared a saint.

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Justinian

Born 483
Died 565

Byzantine emperor

The Byzantine Empire, which grew out of the Eastern Roman Empire in Greece, carried Roman culture into the Middle Ages. It was a splendid and sometimes powerful realm, a stronghold of civilization in a dark time, and Justinian was perhaps its greatest ruler.

Justinian reconquered the Western Roman Empire, which had fallen to invading tribes in 476, and briefly reunited former Roman lands under his leadership. More lasting was his legal code, or system of laws, which provided the foundation for much of the law that exists today. Justinian built dozens of churches, most notably the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, and under his reign, Byzantine arts—including mosaics, colored bits of glass or tile arranged to form a picture—reached a high point.

"If you wish to save yourself, Sire, it can easily be done.... For my own part, I hold to the old saying that the imperial purple makes the best burial sheet!"

Theodora, urging Justinian to take action during the Nika Revolt of 532

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

In his uncle's care

The Byzantine (BIZ-un-teen) Empire, sometimes known as Byzantium (bi-ZAN-tee-um), controlled much of southeastern Europe, western Asia, and northern Africa from

its capital at Constantinople (kahn-stan-ti-NOH-pul), which today is the city of Istanbul in Turkey. Justinian, however, grew up far from the centers of power, in a village called Tauresium. His family had been humble farmers just a generation before, but his uncle Justin (c. 450–527) had changed their fortunes when he went to Constantinople and became a member of the imperial bodyguard charged with protecting the life of Emperor Leo I.

Eventually Justin became commander of the imperial guards and a military leader of distinction. Having no children of his own, Justin brought his nephews—including Justinian—to Constantinople, where he helped them gain an education and embark on careers. Justinian enjoyed the benefits of a superb education, something Justin, who never learned to read and write, did not have. As was the Roman custom (the Byzantines referred to themselves as "Romans"), Justinian proved his ability by service in the military.

Co-ruler and sole ruler

In 518, the reigning emperor died, and Justin was chosen as his successor. Now the uncle called on his nephews, who had the education he lacked, to assist him in leading the empire, and none of these men distinguished himself more than Justinian. The latter became one of Justin's key advisors, and early in Justin's reign uncovered a plot against his uncle by one of the emperor's rivals.

Although Justinian was in his late thirties by now, Justin formally adopted him at some point during the 520s as a means of preparing to pass on leadership to him. In 525, the emperor designated his nephew as his preferred successor, though under the Roman system, succession was far from automatic: the emperor's chosen successor had to prove himself. Evidently Justinian did, because Justin promoted him to co-emperor on April 4, 527, and when the uncle died on August 1, Justinian became sole ruler.

Marriage to Theodora

Justinian had passed the age of forty before marrying, and when he did marry, it required the changing of an an-

cient Roman law. The reason was that the woman with whom he chose to share his life, Theodora (see box), was an actress—and in the Byzantine world, actresses had positions in society similar to that of prostitutes (and in fact, many actresses *were* prostitutes). Men of Justinian's class were forbidden from marrying women such as Theodora. Therefore Justinian, who fell deeply and passionately in love with the young woman (she was half his age) after meeting her in 522, had prevailed on Justin to strike down the old Roman law. Thus Justinian and Theodora were able to marry in 525.

Justinian and Theodora would gain enemies, among them the historian Procopius (pruh-KOH-pee-us), whose book *Secret History* portrays them as scheming villains. Although many aspects of Procopius's book are unfair, it is true that they reigned as co-rulers, with the wife sometimes exercising more influence than the husband. Despite Theodora's checkered past, to which Procopius devoted several gossipy, scandalous chapters, not even he could claim that she was ever unfaithful to Justinian after their marriage. It appears that they enjoyed a very happy married life, and that the empress proved a great asset to her husband.

The turning point

Theodora demonstrated her importance to the emperor during the Nika Revolt of 532, when Constantinople was nearly destroyed by rioters. Byzantine society was dominated by two rival groups called the Greens and the Blues, distinguished by the colors of horse-racing teams that competed at the Hippodrome, or stadium. Justinian and Theodora favored the Blues, and when he made an appearance in their company at the Hippodrome on January 13, 532, this sparked a riot. Suddenly the Greens attacked the Blues, chanting a favorite cheer from the races: "*Nika!*" (Conquer!). Constantinople was plunged into five days of bloodshed, fires, and looting, which very nearly destroyed the city and toppled Justinian's government. By January 18, leaders of the Blues and Greens, realizing that Justinian's high taxes were the source of all their troubles, had joined forces against Justinian, and were ready to storm the palace.

Theodora sat by in silence while Justinian's advisors suggested that he try to escape the city. Then she stood and

Detail of a mosaic of empress Theodora from the Church of San Vitale at Ravenna, Italy. Byzantine arts—particularly mosaics—flourished under Justinian's rule. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

addressed the imperial council with one of the most remarkable speeches in history. "It is impossible for a man, once born, not to die," she said, and went on to remind her husband that with the great wealth of the imperial court, they could easily escape. But, she said, she agreed with a saying of the ancient orator Isocrates (eye-SAHK-ruh-teez; 436–338 B.C.) "that the imperial purple makes the best burial sheet"—in other words, that it is better to die a king than to live as a coward. Justinian was moved to action by Theodora's speech, and he sent an army led by his great general Belisarius (c. 505–565) to crush the rioters. The soldiers ruthlessly slaughtered more than thirty thousand people in the Hippodrome.

The Nika Revolt was a critical turning point in Justinian's reign because his response to it (thanks to his wife and his general) helped him gain a firm grip on power. Also in 532, Byzantium signed a peace agreement with an age-old enemy to the east, Persia (modern-day Iran). This gave Justinian the freedom to turn westward and pursue his greatest ambition: the reunification of the Roman Empire.

Wars of conquest

Led by Belisarius, the Byzantine armies in 534 won back North Africa from the Vandals, a tribe who had taken the region from Rome more than a century before. Thus he prepared the way for Justinian's primary aim, the reconquest of Italy from another tribe, the Ostrogoths. In 535, Belisarius conquered the island of Sicily, just off the Italian coast, and by 536, controlled the city of Rome itself.

After four bitter years of war, the Ostrogoths tried to crown Belisarius himself as "Emperor of the Western Empire,"

but Belisarius double-crossed them, and claimed all of Italy for Justinian in 540. The Ostrogoths responded by sending a message to Khosrow (kawz-ROW; ruled 531–79), the king of Persia, initiating a two-pronged offensive against the Byzantines. The Persians took several key cities, and this forced Justinian to send Belisarius eastward to deal with the Persian threat.

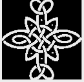
Without Belisarius in Italy, Rome and other cities fell back into the hands of the Ostrogoths. In 550, however, Justinian sent a new general, Narses (NAR-seez; c. 480–574), to conquer Italy. Over the course of the next thirteen years, he subdued the Ostrogoths and their allies, but in so doing he practically destroyed Italy; nevertheless, the Byzantines, who had also won back southern Spain, now controlled a large part of the former Roman Empire.

Detail of a famous mosaic of Justinian from the Church of San Vitale in Italy.
Reproduced by permission of the Granger Collection Ltd.

Though Justinian spent most of his energy waging his wars of conquest, those wars were far from clear-cut successes. Not only did he cause great destruction to Italy itself, but he became intensely involved in the religious politics there, removing one pope in favor of another, and ordering the deaths of people who opposed his views on religion. Furthermore, the effort was hardly worth it: except for parts of Italy, the Byzantines lost most of the reconquered lands within a few years of Justinian's death.

Laws and buildings

Justinian's importance as a leader lies not in his record as a conqueror, but in his contributions to civilization. Early in his reign, he had begun the project of reforming Byzantine law, which had become hopelessly complicated over the centuries. Looking back to ancient Roman models, Justinian's appointed legal authority, Tribonian, greatly sim-



Theodora

The empress Theodora (c. 500–548) came from far more humble beginnings than her husband, Justinian. Born somewhere in the east, perhaps Syria, she grew up in Constantinople. Her family was extremely poor and had to rely on the kindness of others to survive.

In the Byzantine rivalry between two opposing groups, the Greens and the Blues, Theodora became a lifelong supporter of the Blues, but not for any political reasons. Her father Athanasius had worked in the Hippodrome as a bear-keeper for the Greens, but he died when Theodora and her two sisters were very young. Her mother quickly remarried, and Theodora's stepfather tried to take over Athanasius's old job. The man in charge of assigning the positions, however, had accepted a bribe to give it to someone else, and no amount of pleading on the mother's part could sway the Greens. The Blues, however, saw this as an opportunity to shame the Greens, and gave the stepfather a job.

Times were extremely hard for Theodora and her family, but she was a talented and extraordinarily beautiful young woman. She started out acting in mime shows at the Hippodrome, but soon she was performing in the nude, and eventually she followed her older sister in becoming a prostitute. Unlike modern America, where actors and actresses are respected members of society, in Byzantium actresses were lowly members of society, partly because many of them were prostitutes.

At the age of sixteen, Theodora became the lover of a powerful man named Hecebolus (hek-EB-uh-lus). Appointed governor of a province in North Africa, Hecebolus took her with him, but after four years he left her, penniless and far from home. She spent the next year working her way back home, once again plying her trade as a prostitute.

But something remarkable happened in the Egyptian city of Alexandria, where she came in contact with a form of Christianity called the Monophysite (muh-NAH-fu-syt) faith. Whereas mainstream Christianity taught that Jesus Christ was both God and man, the Monophysites be-

plified the system, creating a code that established the basis for much of modern law.

Another area of great achievement during Justinian's reign was in the arts. Among the few lasting reminders of the Byzantine presence in Italy, for instance, is the Church of San Vitale in Italy, a gorgeous piece of architecture that later inspired **Charlemagne** (see entry) in the building of his own

lieved that he was *only* God. Theodora did not care about religious distinctions, however: what drew her to the Monophysites was that, unlike many mainstream Christians at the time, their ministers preached directly to women. She became a Christian, renounced her former lifestyle, and in 522 returned to Constantinople. There she settled in a house near the palace, and made a living spinning wool.

Also in 522, she met Justinian, a man old enough to be her father. He fell madly in love with her and arranged for his uncle, the emperor Justin, to change the laws preventing men of the upper classes from marrying actresses and prostitutes. They were married in 525, and appear to have had an extremely happy married life. When Justinian became co-emperor with Justin on April 4, 527, Theodora accompanied her husband to the Hippodrome, where they were greeted by cheering crowds. It must have been a moving experience for her, now an empress, to visit that place where, as a girl, she had been a lowly performer.

Throughout the two decades that followed, Theodora exercised considerable influence over Justinian, and sometimes seemed to hold greater power than he. She rightly saw that the empire's real interests lay in the east, rather than in Italy, which Justinian reconquered at great cost. She also pushed for laws that improved the status of women, for instance by prohibiting forced prostitution. Furthermore, she helped protect the Monophysites from persecution by mainstream Christians; but perhaps the greatest example of Theodora's leadership was her role during the Nika Revolt.

Theodora's advice about how to handle the rioters moved Justinian to order his general Belisarius to put down the revolt. In the bloody aftermath, Justinian emerged as absolute ruler over Byzantium. He could never have enjoyed such great power without his wife, a woman as renowned for her wisdom as for her beauty. When she died of cancer on June 28, 548, Justinian was heartbroken.

chapel at Aachen. The interior of San Vitale contains mosaics depicting Justinian and Theodora, and these portraits are perhaps the two most famous artworks from Byzantium's 1,100-year history.

Certainly the most well-known Byzantine structure is the Hagia (HAH-juh) Sophia, one of more than thirty churches in Constantinople built under Justinian's orders following

An aerial view of the Hagia Sophia, completed in 537 under Justinian's orders, in what is now Istanbul, Turkey. *Photograph by Yann Arthus-Bertrand. Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

the Nika Revolt. Completed in 537, the church is dominated by a dome that, despite its enormous size—184 feet high and 102 feet wide—seemed to one observer in Justinian's time as though it were "suspended by a gold chain from heaven."

Justinian's last years

Between his wars and his building projects, Justinian ran up enormous expenses, which he attempted to pay for through high taxes on his people. Taxes under Justinian were so high that many people lost everything—another cause for bitterness on the part of Procopius and others.

In 548, Justinian lost his beloved Theodora to cancer, and his last years were lonely ones. In 562, the uncovering of an assassination plot against him made him aware of the need to choose a successor; but like Justin, he had no children of his own. Therefore he promoted his second cousin

and nephew, both named Justin, into positions from which either could succeed him as emperor. After he died on November 14, 565, at the age of eighty-three—extraordinarily old for the time—his nephew took the throne.

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Kublai Khan

Born 1215
Died 1294

Mongol ruler of China

"The greatest Lord that is now in the world or ever has been."

Marco Polo

Though he belonged to the Mongol nation, conquerors of half the known world, Kublai Khan is remembered more for his peacetime activities than for his record as a warrior. Grandson of the fierce **Genghis Khan** (see entry), Kublai himself subdued China and established that nation's first foreign-dominated dynasty, the Yüan (yee-WAHN). But he was also an enthusiastic supporter of the arts and sciences, and through his contact with **Marco Polo** (see entry), he became widely known in the Western world.

Genghis and Kublai

Khan is a term for a chieftain in Central Asia, home of the Mongol people. The Mongols were a nomadic, or wandering, nation that had little effect on world events until the time of Genghis Khan (JING-us; c. 1162–1227), Kublai's grandfather. Genghis led them on a series of conquests that would make the Mongols rulers over the largest empire in history.

In the year of Kublai's birth, Genghis destroyed the city known today as Beijing (bay-ZHEENG). The Mongols,

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the New York Public Library Picture Collection.*

who began rebuilding it as their own headquarters in China, named it Khanbalik (kahn-bah-LEEK), and it was from there that Kublai would one day rule. Twelve years later, Genghis died, having divided his lands among his three sons. Kublai himself became ruler over a large area in northern China when he was sixteen years old.

Descendants of Genghis

Over the years that followed, leadership of the Mongols would pass from one to another of Genghis's descendants, and during this time the empire became more and more divided. Genghis's son Ogodai ruled from 1229 to 1241, during which time he expanded the Mongol conquests into Eastern Europe. Five years would pass between his death and the election of a new khan, Kuyuk, in 1246. Kuyuk lived only two more years, and it took the Mongols three additional years to choose another khan, his cousin (and Kublai's older brother) Mangu.

Mangu ruled from 1251 to 1259, during which time his cousin Hulagu invaded Persia and Mesopotamia (modern-day Iran and Iraq). After Mangu died, Hulagu declared himself "Il-khan," and from then on, southwestern Asia would be a separate khanate (KAHN-et) under the rule of Hulagu and his descendants. By that time, Kublai was forty-four years old. Little is known about his life up to this point, but he was about to emerge onto center-stage.

Kublai becomes Great Khan

In the years after Genghis's death, four separate khanates emerged: the Il-Khanate in Southwest Asia; the Chagatai (chah-guh-TY) khanate in Central Asia; the Golden Horde in Russia; and the lands of the Great Khan. The latter was the most important part of the Mongol empire, comprising the Mongolian homeland and the Mongols' most prized possession, China. Whoever ruled this area was considered the true ruler of all the Mongols.

In 1260, Kublai was busy in southern China, fighting against the armies of the Sung dynasty. The latter, which had

ruled the land since 960, still controlled the southern part of China, and the Mongols considered it essential to destroy this last holdout of Chinese resistance. It was while Kublai was leading armies against the Sung that he was proclaimed Great Khan, on May 5, 1260.

A month later, Kublai's younger brother Arigböge (urug-BOH-guh) declared himself Great Khan with the support of many Mongol leaders. The latter believed that Kublai had been too influenced by Chinese ways, and had become too soft to call himself a Mongol. Yet Kublai proved his strength as leader when he managed to surround Arigböge's forces and prevent supplies from reaching them. By 1264, Arigböge had surrendered.

Conquering China

Now as the undisputed Great Khan, Kublai turned his attention to eliminating the Sung Chinese. Since southern China, with its hills and marshes, was not suited to the Mongols' usual horsebound fighting force, Kublai had to build up a navy, something the Mongols had never possessed. They had their first significant victory over the Sung in 1265, and from 1268 to 1273, they concentrated on subduing two cities on the Han River that had so far resisted them. Victory over those strongholds gave them access to the river, and in 1275 they won a massive naval battle.

The emperor of China was a four-year-old boy, and his grandmother ruled in his place as a regent. She tried to arrange a compromise with Kublai Khan, but the Great Khan had no interest in compromising. By 1279, the Sung had surrendered, and Kublai's Yüan dynasty controlled all of China.

China under the rule of the Great Khan

Kublai proved a wise and capable leader: rather than crush the Chinese, he allowed their cities to remain standing, and sought their help in running the country. He put in place a number of agencies to ensure that all the people received equal treatment, and that corruption did not flourish within the government. The Mongols in general, and Kublai in par-

ticular, tended to be open-minded in matters of culture and religion, especially because they did not have a well-developed civilization that they intended to impose on others by force. Thus they allowed a number of religions to flourish, including Nestorian Christianity (see box).

It should be stressed, however, that the Mongols *were* conquerors, and some of the fiercest warriors in history. China's population dropped dramatically during the time of the Mongols' invasion and subsequent rule, and though this can partly be attributed to natural disasters, some of the blame has to rest with the Mongols themselves.

Given the Mongol record of conquest and bloodshed, then, Kublai's embracing of civilization is all the more remarkable. Not only did he promote the arts and sciences, but he created a highly advanced legal code, or set of laws, and attempted unsuccessfully to impose an alphabet that would make translation between Chinese and other languages easier.

Marco Polo

Kublai also encouraged trade with other lands, and in particular opened up paths between Europe and East Asia. Under his reign, a network of postal stations that doubled as travelers' inns dotted the route between East and West. As a result of Kublai's opening of trade routes, Marco Polo arrived along with his uncle and father.

The Italian journeyer would later write a record of his travels, in which he immortalized Kublai Khan as the greatest ruler on Earth. Marco Polo praised the Great Khan's brilliance as a leader, and celebrated the wealth of his kingdom. Yet during Polo's stay in China, which lasted from 1275 to 1292, Kublai Khan's reign reached its peak and then began a steady decline.

Foreign troubles

Perhaps because he was eager to prove himself as a conqueror, and thus to establish his reputation as a "true" Mongol, Kublai had been attempting to subdue Japan since 1266. In the meantime, he had won control of Korea in 1273. A year later, a force composed of some 29,000 Mongol, Chi-

Rabban Bar Sauma

Many people know about visits to China by medieval European travelers, the most famous of whom was Marco Polo; much less well known were travelers from the East who went to Europe. Among these, perhaps the most notable example was Rabban Bar Sauma (ruh-BAHN BAR sah-OO-muh; c. 1220–1294).

Bar Sauma came from the Uighur (WEE-gur), a Turkic nation under the rule of the Mongols. He was born in Khanbalik, and embraced Nestorianism, a branch of Christianity that had split from the mainstream Christian church in A.D. 431. Since that time, Nestorianism had flourished mainly in the East.

At the age of twenty, Bar Sauma became a Nestorian monk and began to preach the Christian message, attracting many followers. Among these was a young man named Mark. The latter accompanied Bar Sauma when, at about the age of fifty-five, he made a pilgrimage or religious journey to Jerusalem.

They went with the blessing of Kublai Khan, and met with the catholicos, the leader of the Nestorian church, in what is now Iran. He in turn sent them as ambassadors to the Il-Khan, a relative of Kublai Khan who ruled Persia. Later Mark became a bishop, and when the catholicos died, he took his place.

A new leader of the Il-Khanate in 1284 wanted European help against the Muslim Arabs of the Middle East, and he sent Bar Sauma westward to seek their aid. Bar Sauma departed from what is now Iraq in 1287, and as he later wrote in the record of his travels, he visited the Byzantine Empire before arriving in Italy. There he hoped to meet with the pope, leader of the Catholic Church, but the old pope was dead and he had to wait for the election of a new one.

While he waited, Bar Sauma traveled throughout Western Europe, visiting parts of Italy and France. Back in Rome in 1288, he met the new pope, Nicholas IV, who expressed an interest in joining the Il-Khan in a war against the Muslims. This never happened, but Bar Sauma (who died in 1294 in Baghdad, now a city in Iraq) helped open the way for more travelers between East and West.

nese, and Korean soldiers crossed the Korean Strait to Japan, but a storm destroyed many of their boats, and the surviving troops headed back to China.

At the same time, Kublai faced a threat on his western border from his cousin Khaidu (KY-dü), ruler of the Chagatai

English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) immortalized Kublai Khan in his poem of the same name written in 1816. *Drawing by J. Kayser.*

khanate. Not only did Khaidu's rivalry force Kublai to devote troops to defending the western frontier of his empire, it also ended any illusions Kublai may have had concerning a great Mongol alliance. Clearly the realms won by his grandfather would never again be a single entity with a single ruler, and no doubt this fact made Kublai all the more determined to conquer Japan for himself.

After the Japanese murdered two of his ambassadors in 1279, Kublai sent some 150,000 troops to Japan. In August 1281, a typhoon—that is, a great storm on the Pacific Ocean—struck the Mongol ships and killed more than half of their fighting force. The Japanese praised the typhoon as a gift from the gods, and the loss was a devastating blow to the Mongols: clearly it was possible for them to lose, and indeed they would get considerably more experience at losing in coming years.

The 1280s saw a failed campaign in Annam and Champa, which constituted what is now Vietnam; and in 1290, Tibet revolted against Mongol rule. The Mongols put down the rebellion, but only at a great cost, and in 1293 they failed to conquer the island of Java in modern-day Indonesia.

The Great Khan's last days

By the time Marco Polo left China, Kublai Khan was nearing the end of his life. His last days were not happy ones, and in addition to military problems, he faced personal devastation when both his favorite wife and his son were killed. He suffered from gout, a disease that makes the body's joints stiff and inflamed, and heavy drinking only added to his health problems. A combination of alcoholism and depression, which probably caused him to overeat, made the Great

Khan extremely overweight. He died on February 18, 1294, at the age of eighty.

The Chinese had never accustomed themselves to foreign rule, and without Kublai's strong influence, the Yüan dynasty soon lost power. In 1368 it was overthrown, and eventually the Mongols themselves faded into the shadows of history. By the twentieth century, Mongolia was one of the most sparsely populated countries on Earth, and hardly seemed like a nation that had once ruled the world.

Yet thanks to Marco Polo and others, the memory of Kublai would live on. More than five hundred years after the Great Khan's death, the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge immortalized him in the poem "Kubla Khan" (1816), which began with a reference to "Xanadu" (ZAN-uh-doo). The latter was Shang-tu, a great city built by Kublai, a city whose remains have long since all but disappeared.

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Leif Eriksson

Born c. 970
Died c. 1020

Viking explorer

"There was dew on the grass, and the first thing they did was to get some of it on their hands and put it to their lips, and to them it seemed the sweetest thing they had ever tasted."

Description of Markland, from Erik the Red's Saga

Almost five hundred years before Christopher Columbus's ships landed in the New World, Leif Eriksson and his crew of Vikings became the first Europeans to reach North America. As was the case with Columbus later, they had no idea where they were—except that they knew they had found a land rich in natural resources. But whereas Columbus and others who followed possessed firearms, giving them military superiority over the Native Americans, the Vikings had no such advantage. Therefore they did not conquer the lands they discovered; but there is virtually no doubt that they set foot on them.

Iceland

One cannot discuss the career of Leif Eriksson (LAYF) without referring to that of his father, Erik the Red. Erik was a Viking, born in Norway in about 950. By that time, groups of Vikings—sometimes called Norsemen or Northmen—had long since fanned out from their homeland in Scandinavia. They committed murder and mayhem in Ireland, which they attacked in about 800, and various other Vikings spread to

Russia, where they became known as Varangians, as well as to France and Sicily, where they were called Normans.

In 860, the Vikings discovered an island far to the northwest of Ireland. Because the place was lush and fertile and they feared overpopulation—the reason they had left Scandinavia in the first place—the explorers gave it the forbidding-sounding name of Iceland. It was to Iceland that Erik's family went in his childhood, after his father was forced to leave Norway.

Greenland

Beyond Iceland was another island about 175 miles away, close enough that it could be seen on clear days. This uninviting land had been named Greenland in the hopes that settlers might bypass Iceland for Greenland's supposedly fertile lands. When he grew up, Erik, like his father, managed to run into trouble, and decided to take his family to Greenland in 981.

He had been drawn partly by tales of wealthy Irish settlers there, but when he reached the island he found that he and those with him were the only people. They continued to explore, sailing as far west as Baffin Island, now part of Canada. At that time both Baffin Island and Greenland supported much more life than they do now, and the Vikings lived well.

They settled in Greenland, where in 986 Erik founded a permanent settlement. Around this time, a Viking named Bjarni Herjolfsson (BYAR-nee HUR-julf-sun) was sailing from Iceland to Greenland when his ship was blown off course. Historians now believe that he was the first European to catch sight of North America, but he did not land. That feat would be accomplished a few years later by Erik's son.

North America

Leif was one of four children, all of whom would one day travel to North America. Unlike his father, who clung to the Vikings' old pagan traditions, Leif accepted Christianity and is credited with bringing the religion to Greenland. In

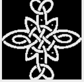
Leif Eriksson stands at the head of a boat off the coast of Vinland, which was probably located at the northeastern tip of what is now Newfoundland, Canada. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

1001, when he was about thirty years old, he sailed westward with a crew of thirty-five.

It is believed that Leif's crew landed first on the southern part of Baffin Island, then sailed to the coast of Labrador on the Canadian mainland. There they landed on what may have been Belle Isle, an island between Labrador and Newfoundland that they dubbed Markland, or "forest land." From there they went on to a place they called Vinland, or "land of the vine" (grapes)—probably a spot on Newfoundland's northeastern tip. There they established a settlement they called Leifrsbudir (LAYFRS-boo-deer), "Leif's booths."

Later journeys of Leif's siblings

Leif's party returned to Greenland in 1002, but his brother Thorvald made a journey to Vinland that lasted from 1003 to 1005. They fought with Native Americans,



Other Medieval Explorers and Geographers

The Middle Ages are not commonly considered a time of great exploration, yet the era produced a number of great journeyers, among them **Marco Polo**, Ibn Battuta, Cheng Ho, and Rabban Bar Sauma (see Marco Polo entry and boxes in Marco Polo, Henry the Navigator, and Kublai Khan entries, respectively). In addition to these were a host of other explorers and geographers.

Hsüan-tsang (shooy-AHND ZAHNG; 602–664) was not the first Chinese journeyer to visit India, but his travels were notable due to their enormous cultural significance. A Buddhist monk, Hsüan-tsang wanted to study the religion in the land where it was born, so in 629 he set off alone. Travel into China's western regions was forbidden under the T'ang dynasty, so he slipped across the border, making a perilous journey across what is now southern Russia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. He was the first Chinese traveler to visit all the major regions of India, where he had many adventures. He studied for a time in a Buddhist school, and he visited the courts of Harsha (see box in Mansa Musa entry) and other kings. He brought back Buddhist scriptures that helped lead to the expansion of the religion in China, and he remains a celebrated figure whose deeds are recorded in Chinese operas, paintings, films, and even comic books.

Al-Idrisi (1100–c. 1165) was a journeyer, but his greatest significance to medieval exploration lies in his work as a geographer. Born in Morocco, he visited Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), North Africa, Spain, France, and perhaps even England before reaching Sicily, where he found his life's work. In 1144 Roger II, the island's Norman king, commissioned al-Idrisi to oversee the creation of a massive work of geography that came to be known as the *Book of Roger.* The latter represented the cutting edge of geographical knowledge in its time.

Like al-Idrisi, Yaqut (yah-KÜT; 1179–1229) is remembered as much for his scholarship as for his journeys. Born a slave in Syria, he was freed when he was in his

who they called "skraelings," and Thorvald was killed by an arrow. In 1006, Thorvald's crew sailed home, but another brother, Thorstein, returned to the area to recover Thorvald's body. He ran into storms and died upon his return to Greenland.

In 1010, Leif's brother-in-law, Thorfinn, who had married Thorstein's widow, Gudrid, founded a settlement on Vinland. Gudrid and the other females on this voyage were the first European women in North America, and her son

Hsüan-tsang. *Reproduced by permission of the Granger Collection Ltd.*

twenties and began wide-ranging journeys that took him all the way from the Arabian Peninsula to Central Asia. His book *Kitab mu'jam al-buldan* is among the first organized, scholarly works of geography to combine history, culture, and science in a consistent structure. Yaqut's writing is particularly significant due to the fact that he was one of the last Islamic scholars to have access to libraries in Central Asia that were destroyed by the Mongol invasions soon afterward.

Despite the losses caused by the Mongols, their conquests also opened the way for the eastward journeys of Europeans such as Marco Polo and "Sir John Mandeville." Actually, Sir John probably never lived—but that did not stop *The Voyage and Travels of Sir John Mandeville, Knight* from becoming a medieval best-seller. Published in about 1360, the book contained a record of journeys through Asia, including a detailed report on the lands of Prester John, a Christian king to the East who had been rumored to exist for centuries. Dreams of finding Prester John's kingdom, as well as other fantastic lands described by Sir John Mandeville, helped drive Europeans in their quest for exploration that began in the mid-1400s. Thus it can be said that the fictitious Sir John, whose book may have been written by a doctor in Liège (lee-EZH, now part of Belgium), also contributed to geographical knowledge in a roundabout way.

Snorri, born in the summer of 1011, was the first European child born on the continent. The Norsemen traded furs with the skraelings, but later they fell into conflict, and warfare drove them back to Greenland.

Leif's half-sister, Freydis (illegitimate daughter of Erik), also traveled to Vinland, where she set up a trading partnership with two Norse brothers, Helgi and Finnbogi. She double-crossed her partners, however, and had them murdered along with their families.

The legendary Leif

When Freydis returned, Leif did not have the heart to punish her, so he allowed her to go free. By that time, he had settled into his rule as leader of the colony in Greenland, and he never sailed westward again. Nor did any of the other Vikings, but their legends were recorded in *Erik the Red's Saga* and other epic poems describing their voyages.

For many centuries, historians regarded these tales as merely fanciful stories, but in the 1900s evidence began to mount that indeed Norsemen had landed in the New World half a millennium before Columbus. In the 1960s, nearly a thousand years after the founding of Leifrsbudir, archaeologists found remains of a Norse settlement in Newfoundland.

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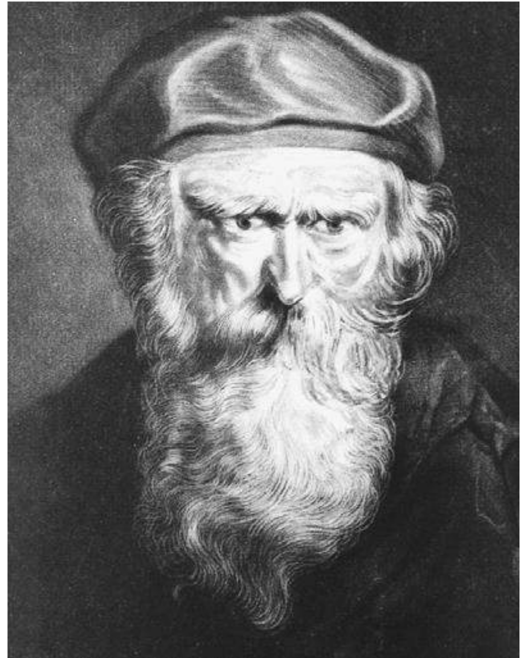
Moses Maimonides

Born 1135
Died 1204

Jewish philosopher



The philosopher Moses Maimonides wrote about a number of subjects, and became justifiably recognized as a man of wisdom not only in spiritual but in scientific matters. As a scholar of the scriptures, he added immeasurably to the literature of the Jewish faith. As a student of philosophy, he achieved a synthesis, or joining, of the ancient Greeks' wisdom with the faith of the Old Testament. As a physician and scientist, he may be considered one of the earliest fathers of psychology as a discipline.

"When speaking, [a scholar] will not raise his voice unduly. His speech with all men will be gentle.... He will judge everyone favorably; he will dwell on the merits of others, and never speak disparagingly of anybody."

Mishneh Torah

The second Moses

He is known to much of the world as Maimonides (my-MAHN-i-deez), and some scholars of Jewish thought refer to him by the nickname Rambam, but during his lifetime he went by the name Moses ben Maimon (my-MOHN). In Hebrew, *ben* means "son of," and Maimonides's father Maimon was a well-known scholar of the Jewish scriptures. Those scriptures include the Old Testament, and particularly its first five books, known as the Torah. To these, extensive books of

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

commentary were added over the years: the Mishnah and the Gemara, which together constitute the Talmud. Much of Maimonides's writing would be concerned with these books of spiritual wisdom.

As for the name Moses, there were few greater names in Jewish history that Maimon could have given to his boy. At the time when the first Moses led the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, as described in the Old Testament Book of Exodus, the Israelites celebrated the first Passover, a highly important festival in the Jewish calendar. The "second Moses," as Maimonides came to be called, was born on the eve of Passover, March 30, 1135, which also happened to fall on a Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, or holy day. To Maimon, all these facts seemed significant, a sign that his son was destined for greatness.

Life in Córdoba

The Jews had long been scattered from their homeland in Palestine, and many, like Maimonides's family, had settled in Spain. The latter was controlled by Muslims, who established a number of flourishing cultural centers such as Córdoba, where Maimonides was born. There Maimonides had an opportunity to interact with people from a variety of cultures, and by interacting with others he supplemented the learning he gained at home and in his father's library.

As a child, Maimonides was a serious-minded boy with a strong sense that he had a mission in life. Therefore he spent little time playing, and devoted much of his attention to educating his younger brother David. When he was thirteen, the quiet life of his family was disrupted when the Almohads (AL-moh-hahdz), an extremist Muslim group, seized control of Córdoba. The Almohads were far less tolerant of other religions than the previous Muslim rulers had been, and the years that followed were tense ones. Finally, in 1160, when Maimonides was twenty-five years old, the family moved to the city of Fez in Morocco.

Years of wandering and tragedy

In Fez, Maimon and David built a successful jewelry business while Maimonides continued to devote himself to

his studies, particularly of medicine. Once again, the family lived quietly for a time, and once again their peaceful life was shattered—this time by Maimonides himself. In about 1162, he published his first significant work, translated as *Letter Concerning Apostasy.* Apostasy means rejection of a religious faith, and in this case referred to the Jews' rejection of Islam in favor of holding on to their traditions.

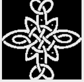
Maimonides's work gave comfort to many, and made him an instant celebrity within the Jewish community, but in light of his sudden prominence, the family judged it wise to leave Morocco. In 1165, they moved to Palestine, but after five months they relocated to Alexandria, Egypt. There tragedy struck a double blow: first Maimon died, then David drowned. Maimonides was devastated, particularly by the death of his younger brother, and he later recalled that for a whole year his grief prevented him from moving on with his life.

But he had to move on, especially because now, at the age of thirty, Maimonides had the responsibility of supporting David's widow and children. Settling in Cairo, he began to make a living as a physician, and he continued his studies. At some point he had married, but his first wife died. Soon afterward, he remarried and had two children, a girl and a boy. The son, Abraham, would later follow in Maimonides's footsteps as a leader in Cairo's Jewish community—as would ten more generations of his family.

The writings of Maimonides

Despite the wide-ranging nature of his scholarly pursuits, Maimonides used a consistent approach to all subjects: first he would study an array of concepts and information, then he would work to bring together all this knowledge and spell it out in a clear, easily understandable form. Thus his work has continued to remain fresh to readers over the centuries.

His principal writings on religious thought were *The Illumination* (1168) and the *Mishneh Torah,* later translated into English as *The Code of Maimonides*. The first of these books was an attempt to render the complex legal writings of



Avicenna

As Moses ben Maimon became more well known in Europe by the westernized name Maimonides, so the Islamic philosopher and scientist ibn Sina is better known in the West as Avicenna (av-i-SEN-uh; 980–1037). More than 150 years before Maimonides, Avicenna was the first to attempt a synthesis, or joining, of ancient Greek philosophy with the principles of religious faith—in this case, Islam.

Born in what is now Afghanistan, Avicenna displayed an early talent as a student, and at the age of ten had already read the entire Koran (kü-RAHN), the Muslim holy book. His family valued study as well, and engaged in lively discussions regarding a number of subjects. Avicenna gained other useful knowledge from an Indian teacher who exposed him to Indian principles of mathematics, including the numeral zero, first used by Hindu mathematicians.

Still more exposure to learning came from a well-known philosopher who stayed with the family for several years and convinced Avicenna's father to allow the boy to pursue a full-time education. The teenaged Avicenna rapidly mastered difficult texts in the sciences and religious scholarship, and was soon teaching physicians and engaging in discussions of Islamic law with highly trained scholars.

His study of logic, or the system of reasoning and testing conclusions, led him to read Aristotle. This reading initially upset him, because he did not know how to square the teachings of the ancient Greek philosopher with those of the Koran. One day, however, his reading of another Islamic scholar helped him unlock the seeming contradiction, and Avicenna was so overjoyed that he gave alms, or money, to the poor in gratitude.

the Mishnah into a form that average readers could understand, and the *Mishneh Torah* classified the vast knowledge contained in the Talmud.

Maimonides's most important philosophical work was the *Guide of the Perplexed,* in which he analyzed the ideas of the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), and reconciled these with Jewish beliefs. Although many Jewish scholars had recognized Aristotle's contributions to knowledge, many had found it hard to accept his ideas because he did not worship the God of the Israelites. Maimonides, however, was able to find much in Aristotle that was relevant to Jews' beliefs about morality and other questions.

Avicenna. *Reproduced by permission of the New York Public Library Picture Collection.*

Over the years that followed, Avicenna held a number of positions, primarily in the courts of various sultans and emirs, the equivalent of kings and dukes in the Muslim world. He wrote more than a hundred books on a variety of subjects, and had a number of adventures as he went from place to place. Among his writings, the *Canon of Medicine* was particularly important, and became a principal source of medical knowledge both in the Middle East and in Europe for centuries. He also wrote poetry, inventing the *rubáiyát* form later used by Omar Khayyám (see box in Dante Alighieri entry).

Like many Muslims of his time, Avicenna owned slaves, and one of these turned against him when he was in his fifties. Hoping to steal his money, the slave put opium, a dangerous drug, into Avicenna's food; but with his knowledge of medicine, Avicenna was able to treat himself and recover. The drug overdose weakened him, however, and in 1037 he had a relapse and died.

Continued influence

In his discussions on the nature of man in the *Guide of the Perplexed,* Maimonides bridged the subjects of philosophy and medicine in an approach that formed the basics of psychology, the study of the human mind. He also wrote directly on the subject of medicine in a number of other works.

Through such writings, Maimonides exerted an influence on thought that continued long after his death in 1204. This influence was not limited to Jewish thinkers, but to the world of scholars in general. Along with Arab writers such as Avicenna (see box) and **Averroës** (see entry), he helped open Christian Europeans' minds to the possibilities of bringing

together the principles of religious faith with those of scientific study.

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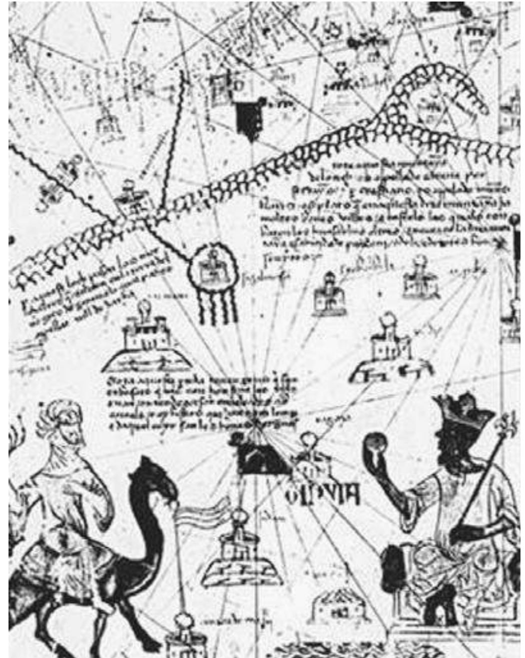
Mansa Musa

Born c. 1280
Died c. 1337

Emperor of Mali



Mansa Musa, emperor of Mali in West Africa, was the first African ruler to become widely known throughout Europe and the Middle East. His was an extraordinarily wealthy land, and it enjoyed respect far and wide, while at home he oversaw a growing and highly organized realm. A devout Muslim, he helped extend the influence of Islam throughout his region, and became celebrated for his pilgrimage to the Muslim holy city of Mecca, during which he stopped in the Egyptian capital of Cairo and spent so much gold that he nearly wrecked the Egyptian economy.

"'This man,' el Mehmendar also told me, 'spread upon Cairo the flood of his generosity: there was no person ... who did not receive a sum of gold from him. The people of Cairo earned incalculable sums from him.... So much gold was current in Cairo that it ruined the value of the money.'"

Al Omari, Egyptian historian

Portrait: Mansa Musa, lower right corner of map. *Reproduced by permission of the Granger Collection Ltd.*

The empire of Mali

The modern nation called Mali (MAH-lee) is a landlocked country which, like much of Africa, suffers under extreme poverty. In the 1990s, the average yearly income there was about the same as the average *weekly* income in the United States. But the medieval empire of Mali was quite a different place. For one thing, it lay along the Atlantic coast, to the

southwest of present-day Mali; and more important, it was incredibly wealthy.

The source of Mali's wealth, like that of Ghana (GAH-nuh), an earlier kingdom in the region, was gold. The kings of Ghana had exerted tight control over the gold supply, and the dynasty or royal line that ruled Mali was similarly strong. The founder of this dynasty was Sundiata Keita (sun-JAH-tah kah-EE-tuh; see box in Basil II entry), who established his power through a series of conquests that began in about 1235.

Muslim influence

Mansa Musa—"Mansa" was a title equivalent to *highness*—was either the grandson or the grandnephew of Sundiata, and became Mali's ninth ruler in about 1307. As for his early life, little is known, though it appears likely that he was educated in the Muslim religion.

Islam had taken hold in Mali around 1000, but historians disagree as to whether Sundiata was a Muslim or not. As for Musa, he later became famous for his devotion to the faith. Like many Muslims, he would undertake the *hajj* (HAHJ), the ritual journey to the Islamic holy city of Mecca in Arabia, a duty for all Muslims who can afford to do so. He was apparently the third Malian ruler to do so.

Musa's devotion to Islam put him at odds with groups in Mali who maintained the traditional African religions. Those religions were pagan, meaning that they involved many gods, most of whom had some connection with nature (for instance, a sun god). The conflict between Islam and traditional religions was a serious one, and had helped lead to the downfall of Ghana, whose kings had tried and failed to bring the two religions together.

A strong empire

For the most part, however, Musa was able to avoid serious conflicts over religion, primarily because he was a strong ruler and an effective administrator. His armies were constantly active, extending the power of Mali throughout the region. Even while he was away on his pilgrimage to

Harsha

Like Mansa Musa, the Indian ruler Harsha (c. 590–647) built a great empire in which the arts and culture flourished. Harsha was similarly committed to a religion that placed him in conflict with other groups around him, and as with Musa's Malian empire, the vast realm controlled by Harsha did not long outlast him.

Fifty years before Harsha's time, the Gupta Empire of India had fallen, just as the Western Roman Empire had fallen before it, and in part from the same cause: an invasion by the Huns. In the aftermath, India was ruled primarily by rajas or princes such as Harsha's father, who controlled a small kingdom in the northwestern part of the country.

Harsha did not intend to become a ruler, but a series of misfortunes in his family forced him into action. First his father died; then his mother committed *suttee* (ritual suicide of a widow, a tradition in India); his brother and brother-in-law were murdered; and his sister was placed in danger. Eager for revenge against his brother's murderer, Sanaska (whom he never caught), sixteen-year-old Harsha began a war of conquest that would occupy most of his career.

Over the course of thirty years, Harsha subdued the northern portion of India, the river valleys where most of its people lived. Despite the fact that he was a warrior, he had a great deal of compassion for the poor, an outgrowth of his strong Buddhist faith. The latter placed him in conflict with adherents of the majority Hindu religion, but won him many admirers as well, including the Chinese traveler Hsüan-tsang (shooy-AHND ZAHNG; 602–664). The latter's writings are the principal source of information regarding Harsha's career.

In addition to his skills as a conqueror and ruler, Harsha was also an accomplished playwright. Among his plays was *Priyadarsika,* a clever work using the play-within-a-play structure. Harsha's final play, *Nágánanda* (translated as *The Joy of the Snake-World*), explores Buddhist and Hindu themes.

Mecca, they captured a stronghold of the powerful Songhai (SAWNG-hy) nation to the east. Eventually his empire would control some 40 million people—a population two-fifths the size of Europe at the time—over a vast region nearly the size of the United States.

The power of Mali was partly a result of Musa's strong leadership, but undergirding his power was the wealth of the

A woman walks past a mosque in modern-day Timbuktu, Mali, a country marked by extreme poverty. Under Mansa Musa's rule, the empire of Mali was wealthy and powerful. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

nation's gold. That wealth in turn owed something to events far away. For many centuries following the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476, Europe's economy had been weak; but beginning in about 1100—in part as a result of the Crusades, a series of wars against the Muslims for control of the Middle East—the European economy had begun growing again. This growth created a need for gold coins, which drove up gold prices and in turn increased Mali's wealth. Like the rulers of Ghana before them, the dynasty of Sundiata Keita established a monopoly, or state control, over the gold supply.

Gold wealth in turn spurred cultural advances under Musa's reign. Upon his return from Mecca, Musa brought with him an Arab architect who designed numerous mosques, Muslim places of worship, as well as other public buildings. Some of those mosques still stand in present-day Mali.

Musa also encouraged the arts and education, and under his leadership, the fabled city of Timbuktu became a renowned center of learning. Professors came from as far away as Egypt to teach in the schools of Timbuktu, but were often so impressed by the learning of the scholars there that they remained as students. It was said that of the many items sold in the vast market at Timbuktu, none was more valuable than books.

The pilgrimage to Mecca

In 1324, Musa embarked on his famous pilgrimage to Mecca, on which he was attended by thousands of advisors and servants dressed in splendid garments, riding animals adorned with gold ornaments. He stopped in Cairo, the leading city of Egypt, and spent so much gold that he caused an oversupply of the precious metal. As a result, the value of gold

plummeted throughout much of the Middle East for several years; thus, as an unintended result of his generosity, Musa nearly caused the collapse of several nations' economies.

Musa died in 1337 (some sources say 1332), and none of his successors proved to be his equal. Later kings found the vast empire difficult to govern, and they were plagued by religious and political conflicts. By the mid-1400s the Songhai, who rejected Islam in favor of their tribal religions, broke away from Mali and established their own highly powerful state.

But even more powerful forces had been awakened far away—yet another unintended result of Musa's display of wealth. Europeans had some idea of the vast gold supplies in Mali, but when rumors from Egypt began spreading westward, this sealed the fate of the African kingdom. Previously, European mapmakers had filled their maps of West Africa with pictures of animals, largely creations of their own imaginations intended to conceal the fact that they really had no idea what was there. But beginning in 1375, maps of West Africa showed Musa seated on a throne of solid gold. Eager to help themselves to the wealth of the distant land, Portuguese sailors began making their way southward. It was the beginning of the end of West Africa's brief flowering.

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Mathematicians and Scientists

Aryabhata

Born 476
Died c. 550

Indian mathematician and astronomer

Al-Khwarizmi

Born c. 780
Died c. 850

Arab mathematician, astronomer, and geographer

Al-Razi

Born c. 864
Died c. 925

Arab physician and philosopher

Alhazen

Born 965
Died 1039

Arab mathematician and physicist

Roger Bacon

Born 1213
Died 1292

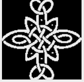
English philosopher and scientist

In modern times, people are accustomed to thinking of the West—Western Europe and lands such as the United States that have been heavily influenced by Western Europe—as being at the forefront of mathematical and scientific knowledge. This was not always the case, however: during the Middle Ages, the focal point of learning in math and science lay far to the east, in India and the Arab world.

The five biographies that follow illustrate the process whereby knowledge seeped westward, from the Hindu mathematician Aryabhata in the 500s to the English scientist Roger Bacon seven centuries later. In between were many, many scientists, mathematicians, and philosophers in the region that produced perhaps the greatest intellectual achievements during the medieval period: the Middle East. Al-Khwarizmi, al-Razi, and Alhazen—along with Avicenna (see box in Moses Maimonides entry), **Averroës** (see entry), **al-Mas'udi** (see Historians entry), Omar Khayyám (see box in Dante Alighieri entry), al-Idrisi, and Yaqut—were far from the only notable Arab and Persian thinkers: just some of the greatest.

"Praise God the creator who has bestowed upon man the power to discover the significance of numbers. Indeed, reflecting that all things which men need require computation, I discovered that all things involve number.... Moreover I discovered all numbers to be so arranged that they proceed from unity up to ten."

Al-Khwarizmi, Kitab al-jabr wa al-muquabalah



Two Great Byzantines

Much of the driving force behind advances in science during the Middle Ages came from the rediscovery of ancient Greek texts by Arab scientists. During the early part of the medieval era, the writings of Aristotle and others were lost to Western Europe, where learning in general came to a virtual standstill. By contrast, knowledge of the Greek writers remained alive in the Greek-controlled lands of the Byzantine Empire.

One of the greatest Byzantine commentators on science was not even a scientist but a philosopher and theologian who also wrote about grammar—as his name, John the Grammarian or Johannes Philoponus (yoh-HAHN-uhs ful-AHP-uh-nus; c. 490–570), suggests. Johannes challenged the assertion by Aristotle that a physical body will only move as long as something is pushing it. On the contrary, Johannes maintained, a body will keep moving in the absence of friction or opposition. Five centuries later, Avicenna would uphold Johannes's idea; and many centuries after that, the concept would be embodied in one of the laws of motion established by Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727).

Also important was the surgeon Paul of Aegina (i-JY-nuh; c. 625–c. 690). He was the first to practice obstetrics, the branch of medical science dealing with birth, as a specialty. His writings summed up virtually all that was known about medicine up to his time, and greatly influenced the work of later Arab scientists.

Aryabhata

During the 500s, at a time when Europe was descending into darkness and Arabia had not yet awakened, India had a thriving scientific community at the city of Ujjain (ü-JYN) in the central part of the subcontinent. Yet Aryabhata (ar-yah-BAH-tuh), one of India's greatest mathematicians, came from Pataliputra (pah-tuh-lee-POO-trah) in eastern India. The city, which had served as the capital of the Mauryan Empire centuries before, had long since fallen into ruins. Symbolic of its state of disrepair was the fact that Pataliputra was a center of superstition where priests taught that Earth was flat and that space was filled with invisible and demonic planet-like forms. The persistence of these ideas made the achievements of Aryabhata all the more impressive.

As was typical of Hindu scientists, Aryabhata considered mathematics of secondary importance to astronomy, and most of his achievements in math were in service to his study of the planets. His greatest work, the *Aryabhatiya,* brought together teachings from ancient Greek and Indian astronomers, and contained a number of cutting-edge ideas: for instance, Aryabhata suggested that the reason why the stars and planets seem to move around Earth is that Earth is in fact rotating on its axis, and moving around the Sun. It would be nearly a thousand years before a Western astronomer, Nicolaus Copernicus, recognized the same fact.

Among Aryabhata's mathematical achievements were great advances in trigonometry (the study of triangles and their properties), as well as the principle of inversion. The latter involves starting with a solution and working backward, developing the steps whereby one reached that solution. Perhaps most notable was Aryabhata's use of two vital concepts, the numeral zero and the idea of number position, or decimal place-value (i.e., tens, hundreds, thousands, etc.). These would have enormous impact as they moved westward. Finally, Aryabhata calculated the most accurate number for pi—a figure equal to approximately 3.14, used for finding the area of a circle—up to that point in history.

Al-Khwarizmi

The word *algebra* is just one of the legacies given to the world of mathematics by al-Khwarizmi (KWAR-iz-mee), a mathematician in the city of Baghdad (now capital of Iraq) who wrote *Kitab al-jabr wa al-muquabalah.* The English name for algebra, a branch of mathematics used for determining unknown quantities, is taken from the second word of the book's title.

Al-Khwarizmi was not only interested in mathematics as an abstract study, but for its practical application; thus one of the principal uses for algebra, as described in his book, was for helping men divide up their inheritances proportionately. In assessing business transactions from a mathematical standpoint, al-Khwarizmi maintained that these transactions involved "two ideas," quantity and cost, and "four numbers"—unit of measure, price per unit, the quantity the buyer wants to purchase, and the total cost.

As with Aryabhata, al-Khwarizmi and his readers considered mathematics merely as a tool in service to other things, including astronomy. The latter was particularly important to Muslims, who needed to know the exact location of the holy city of Mecca, toward which they prayed five times a day. He offered tables and techniques for computing the direction to Mecca and the five times for prayer, which were based on the Sun's position.

Al-Khwarizmi's ideas would prove perhaps even more influential in the West than in the Middle East. A testament to his impact is the word *algorithm,* a term derived from his name and referring to any kind of regularly recurring mathematical operation such as those routinely performed by a computer. One modern scholar maintained that al-Khwarizmi was the single most important mathematician in a fifteen-hundred-year period between about 100 B.C. and the mid-1400s.

Al-Razi

Like al-Khwarizmi, the physician and philosopher al-Razi (RAH-zee), better known in the West as Rhazes (RAHZ-ez), spent much of his career in the great Islamic cultural center of Baghdad. There he wrote a number of important works and established the medieval world's most advanced hospital. In selecting the location for the hospital, it was said that al-Razi had pieces of meat hung in various parts of the city, and picked the place where the meat was slowest to decompose, reasoning that the air was most healthful there. As a doctor he was noted for his compassion, caring for his patient's emotional well-being in addition to their physical bodies, and even helping to support them financially while they recovered at home.

Al-Razi's written works include a ten-volume encyclopedia of medicine as well as a book translated as *Upon the Circumstances Which Turn the Head of Most Men from the Reputable Physician* (c. 919). In it he addressed questions as vital to the medical practice today as they were eleven hundred years ago, warning doctors that patients think they know everything, and encouraging the physicians themselves not to fall under the sway of this mistaken belief. His most important work was *The Comprehensive Book* (c. 930), an encyclopedia in twenty-four volumes that summed up the medical knowledge of his time.

Like many doctors in the premodern period, al-Razi accepted the ancient Greeks' idea that drawing blood would help a patient recover. He did, however, urge caution in doing so, and warned physicians not to apply the technique on the very old, the very young, or the very sick. He applied a variety of herbs and medicines, the uses of which he said he had learned primarily from female healers around the Muslim world.

Al-Razi. *Reproduced by permission of the Granger Collection Ltd.*

As both a doctor and a philosopher, al-Razi was interested in alchemy, which was based on the idea that ordinary metals can be turned into precious metals such as gold. Although alchemy was not a real science, it influenced the development of chemistry. Al-Razi's experiments in alchemy may have contributed to his later blindness, and when he died he was in poverty, having given all his wealth to the care of his patients. But he is remembered with great honor: in its School of Medicine, the University of Paris—one of the first institutions of higher education established in the Middle Ages—included the portraits of just two Muslim physicians, al-Razi and Avicenna.

Alhazen

Born in the city of Basra in what is now Iraq, Alhazen (al-HAHZ-un) achieved fame as a scholar and was invited to undertake a special project in Egypt. The caliph or leader of the Fatimids, an Islamic sect that controlled Egypt in his time, asked him to develop a means for controlling the flooding of the Nile River. Eager for advancement, Alhazen had insisted that he could do so. As he sailed southward on a barge toward the city of Aswan (AHS-wahn), however, he observed the magnificent structures built by the ancient Egyptians, and realized that if the river's flooding could be controlled at all, the people of that great civilization would have managed it

thousands of years before. (Only in the 1960s was the Egyptian government, using modern technology, able to construct a dam to deal with this problem.) As for Alhazen, he got out of the job by pretending to be insane, then laid low until the caliph who had hired him died in 1021.

During the remaining eighteen years of his life, Alhazen wrote about a wide array of subjects, most notably optics, or the science of vision. In his day, a number of beliefs about vision prevailed, all of them inherited from ancient times, and all extremely fanciful from the standpoint of modern knowledge. Some theorists promoted the idea of extramission, which maintained that the eye sent out rays that made it possible to see objects. Others claimed intromission, which took a variety of forms but basically came down to the idea that the object sent out rays to the eye. Alhazen was the first to realize that in fact light comes from self-luminous bodies such as the Sun or a lamp, then is reflected off of objects to the eye, which "catches" the reflected rays.

In addition to this and other theories put forth in his most famous work, *Optics,* Alhazen wrote about a number of related subjects such as rainbows, shadows, and the *camera obscura,* an early ancestor of the camera. He also wrote about astronomy, and like a number of Arab thinkers, helped chip away at mistaken beliefs inherited from the Greek astronomer Ptolemy (TAHL-uh-mee; c. A.D. 100–170)—including the idea that other planets revolve around Earth as part of imaginary circles. His greatest achievement, however, was the *Optics,* which influenced Roger Bacon and a number of scientists through Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), the first to add significantly to Alhazen's ideas.

Roger Bacon

Though he wrote widely about a number of scientific disciplines, the greatest contribution of Roger Bacon was in the philosophy of science. Like many Europeans of his day, Bacon, a Franciscan monk from England, was heavily influenced by the scientific knowledge of the Middle East, to which Westerners had first been exposed during the Crusades (1095–1291). Starting in 1247, when he was about thirty-six years old, he became interested in alchemy and other "secret"

forms of learning, which he believed would contribute to religious belief.

Many within the Catholic Church, on the other hand, feared that the increase of knowledge in science would damage people's belief in God, and this—combined with the fact that Bacon had a rather disagreeable personality—often got him into trouble. Nonetheless, in 1266 Pope Clement IV took an interest in Bacon's work, and asked for a full report. The result of this request was Bacon's writing of several important works, which unfortunately arrived after the pope's death in November 1266.

Nonetheless, these books have proven highly valuable to scientific knowledge, though not so much for the information they contained as for the principles they outlined. In particular, Bacon helped shape the idea of experimental science, or the gathering and testing of new information.

Roger Bacon. *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

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Mohammed I Askia

Born c. 1442
Died 1538

Songhai emperor

Mohammed I Askia ruled Songhai, perhaps the most powerful empire of premodern Africa, at its height. Under his reign, the Songhai controlled a vast area in the continent's western corner, ranging from the dry sands of the Sahara to the dense rain forests of modern-day Nigeria. A devout Muslim, he united much of his land under the faith, and ruled a well-administered empire. In spite of all his achievements, however, he was doomed to die in humiliation, and the empire did not long outlast him.

"This king makes war only upon neighboring enemies and upon those who do not want to pay him tribute. When he has gained a victory, he has all of them—even the children—sold in the market at Timbuktu."

Leo Africanus, describing Mohammed I Askia

The Songhai

Though he ruled by the name Mohammed I Askia (ahs-KEE-uh), the latter being the title of the dynasty or royal house he established, he was born Muhammed Ture ibn Abi Bakr (TOOR-ay eeb'n ah-BEE BAHK'r) in about 1442. By that time, Europe was coming out of the Middle Ages, but the modern era would not come to Africa for a few more years—and when it did, it would come in the form of slave-traders dealing in human lives.

The West Africa of Mohammed's time already knew slavery, and in fact his conquests would bring many new slaves and forced laborers into his empire. This enslavement of Africans by other Africans, of course, lacked the racial overtones that would taint slavery under the Europeans; but there was a distinctly *tribal* and national character to African-upon-African slavery. In West Africa, tribe and nation meant everything, a fact that made the achievements of the Songhai (SAWNG-hy) in building a broad multi-national empire all the more impressive.

The Songhai Empire was centered on the town of Gao (GOW), which lay along a bend in the Niger (NY-jur) River. Gao had existed since about 1000, and the Songhai nation that grew up around it eventually became a part of the empire of Mali. The latter declined, however, after the time of its greatest ruler, **Mansa Musa** (see entry). By the mid-1400s, Songhai had its turn at leadership, and its ruler—a ruthless emperor named Sonni Ali (SAW-nee; ruled c. 1464–92)—was determined to make it an even greater power than Mali had been.

Lieutenant to Sonni Ali

Mohammed belonged to the Soninke (saw-NINg-kay) people, a tribe within the larger empire of the Songhai. He came from a long line of military figures who had seen service in the cavalry of the Songhai armies, and his early education probably combined military and religious studies.

At that time, the influence of Islam had spread throughout the region, and Mohammed's family were Muslims. But not everyone accepted Islam: Sonni Ali, for one, scorned what he saw as a foreign religion. Therefore Mohammed must have kept his beliefs a secret to some degree, because he rose through the ranks to become a trusted lieutenant serving directly under the emperor himself.

The growing empire

Mohammed no doubt participated in Sonni Ali's project of empire-building, because throughout his career, Sonni Ali remained active in the expansion of his realms. To his west

was the slowly crumbling empire of Mali, and Sonni Ali took advantage of its situation by sending in his troops and conquering its lands, including the famous city of Timbuktu, in 1468.

The conquest of Mali made the Songhai Empire—which, like other great kingdoms of medieval Africa, possessed enormous wealth in gold—even wealthier. Yet it faced grave dangers on all sides as well: to the north, nomads from the Sahara Desert threatened to invade, and to the south, chieftains of the Mossi people tried to resist Songhai rule.

Sonni Ali had a policy of severe cruelty in dealing with enemies, and this engendered resentment in surrounding lands. His hatred of Islam further made him enemies to the west, especially in regions where the people were more closely related ethnically to North Africans than to sub-Saharan groups such as the Songhai.

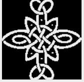
Taking power

In 1492, before he had reached all his goals of conquest, Sonni Ali died. Powerful men might have wanted to revolt against him, but no one had dared while the powerful ruler Ali was alive; now Mohammed, for one, saw his chance. In April 1493, he joined forces with dissatisfied Muslim leaders and seized the throne from Sonni Ali's son, who he sent into exile. He then established the Askia dynasty, and set about consolidating his rule.

To ensure that no one challenged his claim on power, Mohammed used exile and even execution to remove members of earlier Songhai ruling families. He used a "carrot-and-stick" approach, applying the "stick" (punishment) to potential rivals for power, and the "carrot" (reward) to Muslim leaders whose favor he wanted to ensure. In the case of the Muslims, who were mostly spiritual and intellectual rather than political leaders, he spent a great deal of money building mosques, or temples, and doing other deeds to win their support.

Strengthening Islamic ties

Mohammed's interest in Islam was not purely that of a believer: he also recognized that the faith, with its simple



Charles the Bold

Duke Charles the Bold (1433–1477) lived at roughly the same time as Mohammed I Askia, though for less than half as long. Both men ruled lands at the height of their power, and both had great ambitions. Both were destined to see those ambitions thwarted, and both died in disgrace.

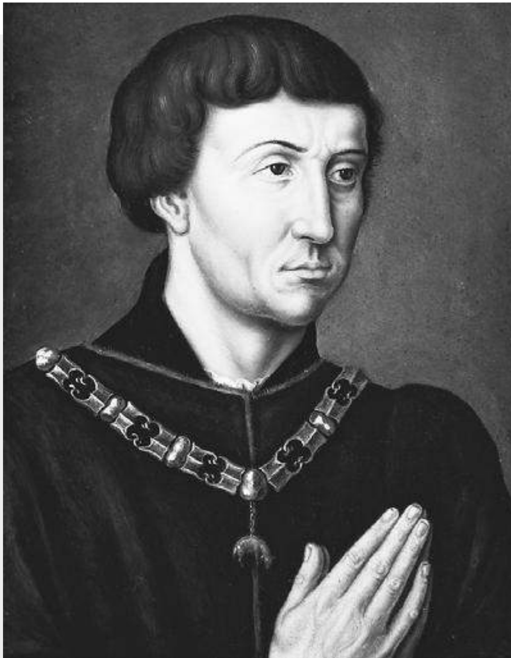
Burgundy comprised what is now the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and parts of northern France and Belgium. Though it took its name from the Burgundians, a tribe that had conquered the area nearly a thousand years before, its identity as a region went back to the Treaty of Verdun in 843. The latter had divided lands belonging to Charlemagne among three grandsons. One received what became known as the East Frankish Empire, roughly the same as Germany; another took the West Frankish Empire, including most of France; and the third, Lothar, got a strip of land running from the modern-day Netherlands to northern Italy. Though the two Frankish empires survived for some time, the "middle kingdom" of Lotharingia quickly dissolved. It was Charles's dream to rebuild Lotharingia (loh-thar-IN-jee-uh), with Burgundy as its leading power.

Charles's father, Philip the Good, had been an exceedingly popular leader. Charles, however, was moody and egotistical, with a fatal habit of refusing to listen to good advice. On the other hand, he gathered around himself a court noted throughout Europe for its artistic refinement, and he is famous for the financial support he gave to a number of the greatest painters, historians, and musicians of the day.

But politics and war remained the central preoccupations of Charles's short career. During the 1460s, he struggled with Louis XI, king of France, waging an on-again, off-again war. Late in the decade, he tried to forge an alliance with Holy

message and its tightly organized belief system, could be a strong unifying factor in West Africa's world of many gods and many religions. Furthermore, he appreciated the fact that by aligning himself with the Islamic world, he was tapping into a vast civilization stretching from Morocco to western India. What most impressed him was the commercial network of the Muslim world: his empire might possess gold, but without the horses and other goods it could purchase from the other side of the Sahara, his wealth was worthless.

Just as Mansa Musa had done about 175 years before, Mohammed in late 1496 went on a *hajj,* or pilgrimage to



Charles the Bold. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Roman emperor Frederick III, but the emperor politely shunned his advances.

Determined to build his greater Burgundian state between France and Germany, Charles moved his forces into Alsace (al-SAS) and Lorraine, regions on the border between France and Germany. This frightened the Swiss, whose lands adjoined the area. Louis took advantage of these fears to form an alliance with Switzerland, Austria, and several other local powers against Burgundy.

The two sides met in a series of battles, culminating at Nancy (nahn-SEE) on January 5, 1477. In the Battle of Nancy, Charles was thrown from his horse, and it was several days before gravediggers found his body. Because he had been stripped of his jewels, weapons, and even his clothes, it took some time to identify the corpse as that of Charles the Bold.

After Charles's death, Burgundy was incorporated into France, which by then had become the dominant power on the European continent. One outgrowth of Charles's wars was growing dissatisfaction in the Netherlands, which would declare its independence during the 1600s.

Mecca, as is required of all Muslims who can afford to do so. Highly conscious of the strong impression the Malian emperor had made before him, in particular by spending lavish amounts of gold in Egypt, he made an effort to surpass what Mansa had done. Giving alms to the poor was, like the pilgrimage to Mecca, a duty of all Muslims, and Mohammed was exceedingly generous in his gifts to the poor of Cairo, Egypt's capital city. He also paid to establish and maintain a hostel, a place where pilgrims from West Africa could stay on future pilgrimages.

Again like Mansa Musa, Mohammed attracted considerable attention in the east, where the caliph or ruler of Egypt

gave him the title “Caliph of the Blacks.” On his return trip, he brought with him a great number of scholars and other esteemed figures from the Arab world, drawn by curiosity and the commanding presence of the African king. These learned men strengthened the already healthy intellectual community of Timbuktu. Around the same time, Djenné (jen-AY), a town on the Niger floodplain to the west, also emerged as a major cultural center.

Widening his kingdoms

The fact that Mohammed stayed away on his hajj for almost two years indicates that he held a firm grip on power. Upon his return, he further strengthened that power with wars of conquest—conflicts which, in the atmosphere of spiritual fervor generated by his trip to Mecca, took on the aspect of *jihad* or holy war for Islam.

Mohammed’s armies marched against Mossi tribes to the south, in what is now Burkina Faso. They also moved northward, capturing most of the important Saharan oases and salt mines—the equivalent of islands in a sea of sand—up to the edges of what is now Algeria and Libya. To the east, they conquered powerful Hausa (HOW-suh) city-states in the region of modern-day Nigeria.

Not surprisingly, given his background—not to mention the geographical demands of his large realm, which required mobility—Mohammed’s army relied heavily on its cavalry. But his military, perhaps the first standing, or full-time, force in African history, also possessed something unknown in Africa before: a navy, made up of boats that patrolled the Niger.

Glory and exile

Mohammed’s Songhai Empire was probably the largest political unit in premodern African history. It possessed a vast military and civilian labor force made up partly of captured peoples, and in later years this force included brigades of slaves detailed to specific jobs such as producing weapons or armor, or fishing to feed the court.

Despite the strength of his empire, Mohammed himself lost his grip on power in 1528. By then he was an old man, more than eighty years of age—exceptionally old for that era—and blind. His son Musa overthrew him, and exiled him to an island in the Niger. Nine years later, another son brought him back from exile to Gao, where he died at about the age of ninety-six.

The Askia dynasty continued to flourish for about a quarter-century after Mohammed's death, and carried on a trading relationship with the distant Ottoman Empire. But changes were coming, particularly with the expansion of European slave-trading activity on the coasts to the south and west. None of Mohammed's successors proved as successful a ruler as he, and religious conflict between Muslim and traditionalist groups further weakened Askia power. In 1561, invaders from Morocco destroyed the Songhai Empire.

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Montezuma I

Born 1398
Died 1469

Aztec emperor

Because the United States borders on Mexico and Americans are relatively familiar with its culture, the name of the Aztec emperor Montezuma is practically a household word. However, that name is typically used in reference to Montezuma II, who ruled from 1502 to 1520 and whose reign was cut short by the arrival of the Spaniards under Hernán Cortés. But before Montezuma II, there were two centuries of Aztec rulers—including the first Montezuma, whose reign ended when Montezuma II was just two years old.

"Rulers of many peoples eat the bread of sorrow."

Attributed to Montezuma I

Whereas Montezuma II lived to see defeat at the hands of the invaders, predecessors such as Montezuma I lived and died in a prosperous, powerful empire. The reign of Montezuma I saw its share of troubles, but until the Europeans came, no force was great enough to dislodge the mighty Aztecs.

The Aztecs

The people known as the Aztecs arrived in central Mexico in about 1250. According to later legends, their priests had been told by the gods that they should claim a

spot on the marshy western edge of Lake Texcoco (tays-KOH-koh), today the site of Mexico's capital, Mexico City. Even the name "Mexico" comes from the Aztecs, who called themselves "Mexica" (may-SHEE-kah).

Because of the cruel defeat they later suffered at the hands of the Europeans, it is easy for modern people to believe that the Aztecs themselves were gentle, peace-loving people. Nothing could be further from the truth: in fact, if they had possessed the same level of military technology as the Spaniards, it might well have been the Aztecs who emerged victorious. They were a proud, fierce people whose religion was based on human sacrifice and who exerted their influence through conquests so cruel that their enemies later welcomed the arrival of the Europeans.

But it all started with the tiny settlement on Lake Texcoco, which by 1325 had grown into a great city named Tenochtitlán (tay-nawch-teet-LAHN). The latter would grow in wealth, largely through conquest of neighboring peoples. Military victory also brought in new victims for sacrifice to Aztec gods such as Huitzilopochtli (hwit-zil-oh-POHCH-t'lee) and Quetzalcóatl (kwet-zuhl-KWAH-tuhl). The Aztecs did not only sacrifice enemies, however: Aztec warriors considered it an honor to be chosen as a sacrifice to the gods. Given this fact, it not hard to imagine how formidable Aztec troops were in battle.

"He Who Grows Angry from within His Stomach"

Rulers such as Montezuma I (sometimes rendered as Moctezuma) came from the Aztec nobility, but they also had to be elected. Upon assuming the throne, they were given titles that signified their power: "Prince of the House," "Butcher of Men," "He Who Claws Shedding Blood," and "Lord of the House of Darkness." Montezuma's own name meant "He Who Grows Angry from within His Stomach."

Born in 1398, Montezuma took the throne in 1440, when he was forty-two years old. By that time, the Aztecs had long since set themselves apart from the local tribes, establishing an empire and forming an alliance with two neighboring city-states. Within this triple alliance, however, it was clear that the Aztecs held the true power, and under Mon-

tezuma's rule, the empire would expand greatly.

Modern-day Mexico City is built on the site where the Aztecs established their first settlement. By 1325 this settlement had grown to be the great city Tenochtitlán. *Reproduced by permission of AP/Wide World Photos.*

Wars and disasters

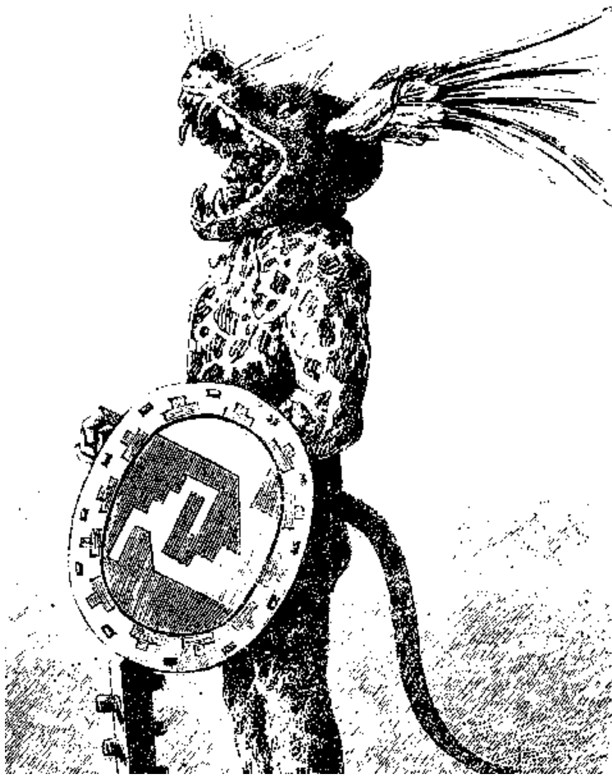
Montezuma began by consolidating the gains of his predecessor, Itzcoatl (eest-KWAH-tul; ruled 1427–40), the first to establish full Aztec control over the Valley of Mexico. In 1445, Montezuma led the Aztecs in their conquest of Oaxaca (wah-HAHK-uh), a state that had existed for centuries.

Montezuma's reign was fraught with natural disasters. In 1446, an attack of locusts, a grasshopper-like pest, destroyed most of the crops in the Valley of Mexico. Three years later, Tenochtitlán was flooded. Then in 1450, the region experienced the first of four years of bad harvests caused by drought and early frost.

The famine was so bad, it was said, that people sold themselves into slavery for a few ears of corn. When the cycle of bad harvests ended in 1454, the Aztecs took what they believed was the obvious lesson: the gods had been unhappy because they had not sacrificed enough victims. Therefore the pace of human sacrifices increased dramatically.

From sea to sea

From the Zapotec (zuh-POH-tek), founders of Oaxaca, the Aztecs had adopted a dual calendar system, with one calendar based on the 365-day year, and another on a 260-day religious cycle. Once every fifty-two years, the first days of both matched up, and that was a day of celebration for the renewal of the Earth. The year 1455 marked the beginning of a new cycle, and thus despite the misfortunes they had suffered, the Aztecs took heart at what they considered a good sign from heaven.



In 1458, Montezuma led a new series of conquests, expanding the boundaries of the empire so that his people could call themselves "Neighbors of the Sea of the Sky." This referred to their control over lands between the Valley of Mexico and what is today known as the Gulf of Mexico. It is believed that under Montezuma's reign, Aztec territories extended from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific.

Doubts about the value of power

Montezuma's court was plagued with the same sorts of intrigues that affected his counterparts in Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia. His half-brother Tlacaelel (t'lah-chay-LEL) may have opposed him for leadership in his early years, though some historians believe he was given an opportunity to take the throne and simply declined. In any case, he was happy to hold power from the sidelines, and after Montezuma's death in 1469, he took control over the empire.

This Aztec warrior sports a feathered lion's head and a tail. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Despite his quest for authority over many lands, Montezuma himself seems to have had doubts about the value of power. Aztec records quote him as saying, "Rulers of many peoples eat the bread of sorrow," and he encouraged his children to seek careers in the trades and crafts, far from the headaches of rulership. Yet after the death of Tlacaelel in 1469, Montezuma's son Axayacatl (ah-say-KAH-tul) took the throne. Just fifty years later, under the reign of Montezuma's namesake Montezuma II, the splendid Aztec Empire came to an end.

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This painting by the great Mexican painter Diego Rivera (1886–1957) shows the fall of the Aztec Empire to the Europeans. The breakdown of the empire took place under the leadership of Montezuma's namesake, Montezuma II, in 1520. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

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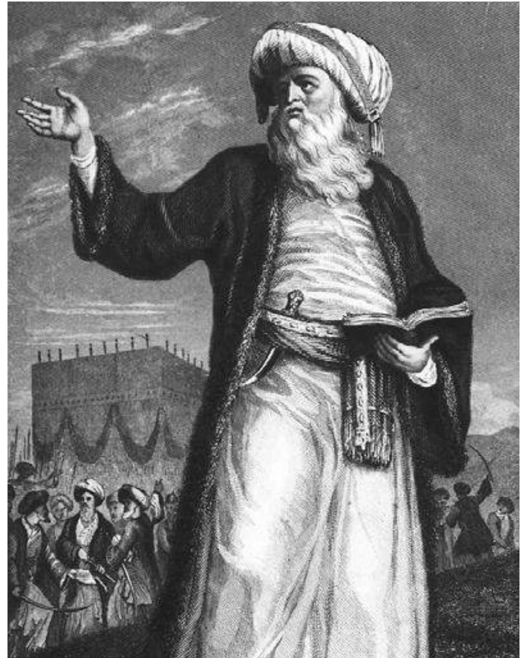
Muhammad

Born c. 570
Died 632

Arab prophet, founder of Islam



Only a handful of people have influenced history as much as the prophet Muhammad. Most of these people were religious teachers such as Jesus Christ, or conquerors such as Alexander the Great. Muhammad, however, was both a religious teacher and a conqueror.

He is often regarded as the founder of Islam, or the Muslim religion, and as the author of its holy book, the Koran. Muslims, however, regard Muhammad as the last in a long line of prophets who brought the truth of Allah, or God, and in their view he did not write the Koran; rather, he received it from Allah. His role as a conqueror is more clear: under his leadership, the Muslim Arabs established the foundations of an empire that would soon rule much of the world.

"There was such sweetness in his visage [appearance] that no one, once in his presence, could leave him. If I hungered, a single look at the Prophet's face dispelled the hunger. Before him all forgot their griefs and pains."

Ali, son-in-law of Muhammad and fourth caliph

The world of Muhammad

At the time of Muhammad's birth, few would have suspected that Arabia would soon become the focal point of a great religion and empire. The hot, dry, Arabian Peninsula, an

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

area about half the size of the United States, offered little to attract outsiders; it was simply a place for goods, carried by camels on caravans, to pass through on their way between Africa, Europe, and Asia.

Arabia was a tribal society, divided between the nomadic Bedouins (BED-oo-unz) of the desert and the settled peoples of the coastal areas. A dominant cultural center was Mecca, located halfway down the coast of the Red Sea that separated Arabia from Africa. Among Mecca's attractions was a shrine called the Kaaba (kuh-BAH), a cube-shaped building that housed a meteorite. The latter, according to the traditions of the Arabs, had been hurled to Earth by a god known as Allah. In addition to Allah were some 300 other gods and goddesses, whose statues filled the Kaaba; yet Allah was supreme, like the God worshiped by Jews and Christians.

The leading tribe of Mecca was called the Quraish (koo-RESH), and it was into this tribe that Muhammad was born. His father Abdullah ("servant of Allah") died a few weeks before Muhammad was born, and his mother Amina died when he was six. Muhammad lived with his grandfather until the latter died when the boy was eight. Thereafter he lived with the family of his uncle Abu Talib, leader of the Hashim clan.

Khadijah

When he was about twenty-five years old, Muhammad went to work for a wealthy widow named Khadijah (kah-DEE-zhah). He soon gained her trust, and she authorized him to act as her representative in a merchant business that took him to Syria. There Muhammad undoubtedly gained exposure to various ideas and traditions, including Judaism and Christianity.

Though Khadijah was nearly fifteen years his senior, Muhammad so impressed her that she proposed marriage. They married, and she bore him many children, of which only four daughters survived. Soon Muhammad was so wealthy that he could afford to take his cousin Ali, son of Abu Talib, into his household. Later Ali would marry Muhammad's daughter Fatima (FAT-uh-muh, "shining one"), the only one of his daughters to bear him grandchildren.

An ancient handwritten copy of the Koran, the holy book of Islam. Muslims believe the Koran was received by the prophet Muhammad directly from Allah. *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

His first revelation

For many years, Muhammad lived the ordinary life of a prosperous merchant; but as he neared the age of forty, he became drawn to Mount Hira outside Mecca, where he spent time meditating. According to Islamic tradition, it was there that the angel Gabriel—mentioned in the Bible—appeared to him one day holding a cloth on which something was written, and demanded of him, "Recite!"

Muhammad asked "What shall I recite?" and Gabriel covered his face with the cloth, so that Muhammad thought he would suffocate. They went through this three times, until finally Gabriel began dictating words to him. This was the first of some 650 revelations, or visions, in which he received the text of the Koran or Quran (kü-RAHN), Islam's holy book.

Naturally, Muhammad doubted what had happened to him, but when he told Khadijah about his experience, she assured him that his revelation must have truly been from God.

Thus she became the first convert to the Muslim (MUZ-lim) or Islamic (iz-LAHM-ik) faith. (The word *Islam* in Arabic means "submission to God," and *Muslim* "one who submits to God.")

The growth of Islam

Muhammad's next convert was Ali, followed by a former slave who Muhammad had adopted. The first convert from outside Muhammad's household was Abu Bakr (ah-BOO BAHK-ur), whose daughter Aisha (ah-EE-shah) Muhammad would marry many years later.

The "new" religion—Muslims believe that the truths of Islam are eternal, and existed long before they were revealed to Muhammad—had much in common with Judaism and Christianity. It placed great importance on figures from the Old Testament such as Abraham, father of the Jews, and even on Jesus Christ. But it taught, in the words by which Muslims are called to prayer five times a day throughout the world, that "there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet."

This faith had an important social message as well as a religious one: in place of the traditional clan loyalties of the Arab world, it taught that all men are one in the eyes of Allah. This was not a message welcomed by the leaders of Mecca, who saw in it a threat to their power. Soon Muhammad and his followers would face off against the Meccan leaders.

In 619, Khadijah died. Muhammad later took a total of eleven wives and concubines—in some cases to strengthen political ties, in other instances to provide for the widows of followers who had died in battle—but none of them ever assumed the importance of his first love. Around this time, he had a miraculous experience, the only miracle associated with Muhammad other than the revelation of the Koran. It was said that he traveled in a single night from Mecca to Jerusalem, holy city of the Old Testament, and from there ascended into heaven and met with the prophets of old; then he returned to Mecca, all in a single night.

The *hegira*

By 622, relations between the Muslims and the leaders of Mecca had deteriorated badly. Meanwhile the people of

Yathrib (YAH-thrub), an oasis some two hundred miles to the north, invited Muhammad to come lead them. Muhammad sent most of his followers ahead, then escaped from Mecca himself, and arrived in Yathrib on September 24, 622. Henceforth Yathrib would be known as Medina (muh-DEEN-uh; "The City"). Muslims call Muhammad's flight from Mecca the *hegira* (heh-JY-ruh), and date their calendar from this event, just as Christians date theirs from the birth of Christ.

Over the coming years, Muhammad led his followers on several raids against trading caravans from Mecca, and this eventually led to outright warfare between Mecca and Medina. The two forces clashed at the wells of Badr (BAHDr), and though the Muslims were outnumbered three to one, they scored a significant victory. Meanwhile in Medina, Muhammad found himself in conflict with members of the Jewish community, who disputed his claim to have received a true revelation from God. In time Muhammad would become hostile toward certain Jewish groups, though not to Jews as a whole.

In March of 625, Muhammad's army suffered a defeat at the hands of the forces from Mecca, and the Meccan leaders began to grow confident. Two years later, in March of 627, they approached Medina with a large army, but Muhammad's forces dug a trench around part of the city and held off the invasion. Fearing Jewish traitors in the city, Muhammad dealt harshly with some Jews, but allowed those who offered no opposition to continue living among the Muslims and practicing their religion as before.

Conquering Mecca

Another year passed, and in March of 628, Muhammad led a large group to Mecca, not for the purposes of an invasion but to make a pilgrimage, or a visit for religious purposes. They did not gain entrance to the city, but they stayed and negotiated a truce whereby the two sides agreed to maintain peace for ten years.

Soon, however, allies of Mecca broke the truce by attacking the Muslims, and in January of 630, Muhammad set out from Medina with a large army. A number of Mecca's leaders came out to meet him, and pledged their loyalty,

Aerial view of the Great Mosque in Mecca, the holy city of Islam. The shrine called the Kaaba is in the courtyard of the Great Mosque. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

whereupon he promised that he would not harm anyone who did not oppose him.

True to his word, upon entering the city he killed only his true enemies, and ordered the destruction of the idols—the statues of the gods—in the Kaaba. Thenceforth Mecca would be the holy city of Islam, so revered that Muslims consider it a sacred duty to visit the city at least once in their lifetimes if they can afford to do so; but Muhammad himself continued to live in Medina.

Muhammad's legacy

Throughout the years of his exile, Muhammad had acted as unofficial leader of Medina, advising those who held political power. An important aspect of Islam was the fact that it addressed not just spiritual matters, but everyday issues, and this, combined with followers' intense devotion to

their faith, ensured that the Muslims would bring many lands under their control.

In his last two years, Muhammad concerned himself with subduing nearby communities. He spent much of his time with Aisha, some forty-four years his junior, who became his most important wife after Khadijah. In March of 632, he made a final pilgrimage to Mecca, then returned to Medina in ailing health. On June 8, he died with his head on the lap of Aisha.

There was only one prophet of Islam, and no one could take Muhammad's place after his death; still, the Muslims needed a caliph (KAL-uf), a spiritual and political leader. Muhammad had no son, and in Arab society, it was unthinkable that a woman should lead; therefore the first four caliphs were men connected to the prophet through his wives. The first caliph was Abu Bakr, followed by the father of another wife; then Uthman (üth-MAHN), who married one of Muhammad's childless daughters; and fourth was Ali.

When Muhammad died, the Muslims held only the western portion of Arabia; less than 30 years later, the caliphate stretched from Libya far in the west to Bactria or Afghanistan in the east, and from the Caspian Sea in the north to the Nile River in the south. But there were also divisions within the ranks, particularly between Aisha on one side, and Ali and Fatima on the other. This would ultimately lead to a split between the majority *Sunni* (SOO-nee) Muslims and the *Shi'ite* (SHEE-ight) Muslims, who claimed that Ali was the only rightful caliph. Nonetheless, Islam spread throughout the known world, and today claims more than 1.14 billion followers—more than any religion other than Christianity.

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Murasaki Shikibu

Born c. 978
Died 1026

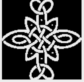
Japanese author

The writing of novels, extended works of fiction written in prose rather than poetry, is a relatively recent development: Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1353; see box), which is considered by some to be one of the first "novels," was not really a novel but a collection of short tales. Among the earliest works typically recognized as novels were *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by François Rabelais of France (c. 1495–1553), *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes of Spain (1547–1616), and *Pilgrim's Progess* by John Bunyan of England (1628–1688). Yet many centuries before these men, the first novel in history made its appearance. Its author was not a European—nor was she a man.

She was Murasaki Shikibu, author of the *Tale of Genji.* Much about her life is a mystery: historians do not even know her real name. But perhaps the key to her deepest thoughts lies in a character from her strangely engaging tale. That character is not Genji, the lusty hero, but his favorite among his many ladies: a sensitive, gentle soul named Murasaki.

"The priest began to tell stories about the uncertainty of this life and the retributions of the life to come. Genji was appalled to think how heavy his own sins had already been.... But immediately his thoughts strayed to the lovely face which he had seen that afternoon; and longing to know more of her he asked, 'Who lives with you here?'"

Tale of Genji



Giovanni Boccaccio

Prior to the late Middle Ages, writers of tales—for instance, the ancient Greek poet Homer in the *Iliad*—tended to write in verses, whereas later authors would use the prose narrative format familiar to all readers of novels today. In this regard and many others, the work of Giovanni Boccaccio (boh-KAHT-choh; 1313–1375) is significant. His early writing used verse forms, as had the work of his distinguished predecessors **Dante** (see entry) and Petrarch; later, the *Decameron,* by far his most well-known piece, used prose narrative in the form of 100 short tales.

Boccaccio was the illegitimate son of a merchant who legally adopted him and took over his care when he was seven years old. From age fourteen, he lived with his father in Naples, a sunny port city in the south of Italy that to Boccaccio's mind seemed to throb with a spirit of adventure. His father intended him to study banking, but Boccaccio had other interests in mind: one was writing, and another was the opposite sex. As Dante had Beatrice and Petrarch had Laura—in both cases, women the poets hardly knew, but worshiped from afar—Boccaccio had Fiammetta, who in reality may have been the daughter of the king of Naples. It is also possible that Boccaccio, unlike the other two poets, had a genuine relationship with the object of his desire; but it is difficult to separate truth from Boccaccio's romantic tales.

By his early twenties, Boccaccio had already demonstrated great talent as a storyteller. He was only twenty-seven in 1340, when he left Naples for Florence, farther up the Italian peninsula, but he had already completed three extended tales in verse. At first he was not happy in Florence, but as he produced book after book, he established himself as the leading author of his time.

The city of Florence, like much of Europe, was devastated by the Plague, or Black Death (1347–51), which wiped out a huge portion of the population—including Boccaccio's father and stepmother. As painful as the Plague was for him, however, it also resulted in the writing of the *Decameron* (1353). In the latter, a group of seven young women and three young men escaping the Plague flee the city and

The meaning of her name

In early medieval Japan, surnames or family names were uncommon, and often a daughter was identified by the title of her father or another powerful man in her life. *Shikibu* was the title of Murasaki's father, who served in the court of the Japanese emperor. This would be equivalent to a girl being called "doctor" or "lawyer." As for *Murasaki,* which means

Giovanni Boccaccio. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

amuse themselves by telling 100 tales, mostly about love. What sets the *Decameron* apart from much of the literature that preceded it is its natural, everyday tone, which would later have a profound influence on **Geoffrey Chaucer** (see entry on English Scholars, Thinkers, and Writers).

Boccaccio himself seems to have considered the *Decameron* a work of little significance when compared to his many other writings both before and after the 1350s. It appears, however, that Boccaccio sometimes showed poor judgment and had trouble estimating the proper worth of something. He was not always wise in his choice of friends, for instance: he remained impressed with Niccolò Acciaiuoli (aht-chy-WOH-lee), who he had known from his early days in Naples, despite the fact that Acciaiuoli often let him down. The two often quarreled, yet Boccaccio remained dedicated to Acciaiuoli.

Boccaccio also had at least one falling-out with Petrarch, who he first met in September 1350; ultimately, however, the two giants of Italian literature patched up their differences. From the early 1360s, Boccaccio lived quietly in his hometown, Certaldo, where he devoted his time to friends, politics, and literature. Having produced numerous works other than the *Decameron,* including a biography of Dante, Boccaccio died four days before Christmas in 1375.

"purple," this was a complex pun of a type familiar in China and Japan, which at that time bore a heavy Chinese influence.

Purple is one of the colors of the wisteria flower, whose symbol in the Chinese system of writing made up the first syllable of the name Fujiwara ("wisteria plain.") Fujiwara was the name of the most powerful family in Japan, which

since the mid-600s had been the real power behind the imperial throne. Through marriage and other alliances, the Fujiwara—more of an extended clan than a mere family—had made their influence felt far and wide. Murasaki's father, Fujiwara no Tametoki (tahm-uh-TOH-kee) belonged to a minor branch of the powerful clan, and his position as a low-ranking official reflected that fact. Therefore by giving his daughter a name that suggested that of the Fujiwara, Murasaki's father was establishing a subtle link between her and the great family tradition that preceded her.

Early literary talent

The father's rank was low in a relative sense, of course: he was still a part of the imperial court in the capital city of Heian (hay-YAHN; now Kyoto), which gave its name to the period in Japanese history from 794 to 1185. The upper classes of Japan during this time put a high emphasis on cultural refinement, which they equated with a knowledge of Chinese ways. Thus the father, following in the footsteps of his own father and grandfather, built a reputation for himself with his mastery of Chinese philosophy and literature.

Murasaki, too, had a great knowledge of, and appreciation for, the Chinese classics. This knowledge was unusual at a time when girls were expected to learn arts such as embroidery while the men busied themselves with more mentally challenging pursuits. As a matter of fact, Murasaki proved to be better at writing in Chinese than her brother, and she and her father developed a special bond over this shared love. Often she would quote to him from the Chinese histories, or compose poetry in imitation of one Chinese master or another.

The *Tale of Genji*

In 996, when she was about eighteen years old, Murasaki's father took a post as governor of a distant province, and Murasaki went with him. Two years later, however, she returned to Kyoto to marry a man of the Fujiwara clan who was nearly as old as her father. Fujiwara no Nobutaka already had children by other women, and was known as a demanding man, but their marriage seems to have been a

happy one. In 999, she gave birth to a daughter, Kenshi, who later grew up to be a poet herself. Soon after the birth of Kenshi, Murasaki's husband died in an epidemic.

No doubt to comfort herself in the face of her loss, Murasaki now returned to her early love of writing. In about 1002, she began work on a story concerning the adventures of a hero named Genji ("the shining one"). This was the beginning of what became *Genji monogatari,* or the *Tale of Genji,* which she completed some two years later.

Murasaki's Genji is the son of an emperor and one of the emperor's lesser wives, and the book is simply the tale of his romantic experiences. From a Western perspective, it does not have a hair-raising plot: Japanese art forms tend to be more subdued than their Western counterparts, and likewise Japanese stage plays seem almost plotless to someone accustomed to the work of William Shakespeare or other European writers.

Yet the *Tale of Genji* is filled with an enormous sense of the deeper meaning in life, and raises questions concerning what is permanent and what is only a part of the passing moment. Though it is a seemingly lighthearted tale of a handsome young man's adventures in love, its bubbly surface conceals much deeper anxieties that plague Genji—anxieties that grow as the story moves toward its conclusion.

The real Murasaki

A thousand years after Murasaki, writers considered themselves clever if they managed to work in some reference to themselves in a story. (For instance, the twentieth-century British humorist P. G. Wodehouse had a character in a story suggest that the only writers worth reading were Leo Tolstoy, author of *War and Peace,* and P. G. Wodehouse.) Readers delighted in such instances of self-reference, just as movie fans have studied the films of Alfred Hitchcock for the director's trademark appearances as a background figure—a man passing by on the street, for instance—in his own films.

In fact this use of self-reference is an old technique, perhaps first pioneered in Murasaki's use of the character "Murasaki" in the *Tale of Genji.* Murasaki is a comforting presence, a gentle and sensitive figure who offers peace to the

restless Genji. Perhaps this was a revelation of Murasaki's inner self; certainly her diary and autobiographical writings, composed after she joined the imperial court in 1005 as a companion to the emperor's young wife, reveal little about her real feelings.

In the Japanese culture of the Middle Ages, it was considered inappropriate for anyone to share their innermost thoughts with others, and this was doubly so for a woman of the upper classes. But Murasaki seems to have been even more reserved than most, because in her diary she remarked that other women of the palace resented her distant manner. She confessed through words delivered from Genji's mouth that she wrote because she "was moved by things, both good and bad," and wanted to "make [them] known to other people—even to those of later generations."

Little is known about who Murasaki was in life, and still less is known about how her life ended. It is possible that she left the court to become a Buddhist nun, and spent her final years in quiet contemplation. Some records indicate that she died in her thirties, others in her late forties. She is believed to be buried in Kyoto, but historians are unsure of her grave site's exact location.

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Osman I

Born 1259
Died 1326

Turkish warlord, founder of Ottoman Empire

Today Istanbul is a magnificent city that serves as a crossroads between worlds: Europe, of which it is geographically a part, and the Asian mainland of Turkey just a few miles distant, to which it is culturally tied by nearly six centuries of history. Once, however, Istanbul was Constantinople, capital of the Byzantine Empire, and its fall to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 was regarded as a crisis for the Christian nations of Europe.

The fall of Constantinople was one of the events that heralded the end of the Middle Ages, but it had been foreseen nearly two centuries before—according to legend, at least—in a dream by Osman I, founder of the Ottoman Empire. It is no wonder that such a leader, who founded one of the world's longest-lasting empires, would inspire many legends; however, the reality of Osman's life was remarkable enough.

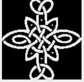
"That city [Constantinople], placed at the juncture of two seas and two continents, seemed like a diamond set between two sapphires and two emeralds, to form the most precious stone in a ring of universal empire. Othman [Osman] thought that he was in the act of placing that visioned ring on his finger, when he awoke."

Edward S. Creasy, History of the Ottoman Turks

Portrait.

Roots of the Turks

Until the eleventh century, Asia Minor, or Anatolia, site of modern-day Turkey, was primarily inhabited by peo-



Balkan Heroes

The Balkan Peninsula, the southeastern corner of the European continent, is at the crossroads of many worlds: Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox, Christian and Muslim, European and Asian, Western and Eastern. Not surprisingly, then, it has been the site of numerous conflicts.

In the twentieth century, World War I began in what is now Bosnia, and World War II saw heavy fighting throughout the area. The postwar years were a time of intense hatred and suppressed conflict in the Communist nations of the Balkans, and the years since the fall of Communism have produced ethnic wars involving Serbia and its neighbors. The Middle Ages were no different, with wars involving the Ottoman Turks and other forces. Along with its wars, however, the era also produced a number of heroes.

One of the earliest was Boris I (ruled 852–89), the Bulgarian ruler who converted his nation to Christianity. Though there were Catholic missionaries in the area, Boris accepted the Greek Orthodox faith, and modeled many aspects of his realm on the Byzantine, or Eastern Roman, Empire. He even adopted the ancient Roman title of "caesar," or *czar* (ZAR). Boris in fact became so interested in Christianity that he abdicated, or resigned from the throne, and spent most of his last eight years in a monastery. Bulgaria flourished under his successors, briefly becoming a power that overshadowed both the Byzantines and the Russians in the 900s.

Far to the other side of the Balkan Peninsula was Croatia, whose first king was Tomislav in the tenth century. Long before, under the rule of **Charlemagne** (see entry), Croatia had accepted Roman Catholicism rather than Greek Orthodoxy. Tomislav, however, faced an enemy that accepted no form of Christianity: the Magyars, destined to found the nation of Hungary. In fighting back the pagan invaders, Tomislav added considerable territory, and united Croatia for the first time.

To the south of Croatia was Bosnia, where even today, people use the expression "to talk of Ban Kulin," meaning "to speak of better times." This is a reference to Kulin (ruled c. 1180–c. 1204), a *ban,* or local ruler. Despite the fact that Hungary then controlled the area, Ban Kulin helped the tiny nation achieve a measure of independence. A Catholic, he revolted against Rome by becoming a Bogromil, a member

ples with close cultural ties to the Greeks. As for the Turks, who eventually gave the land its name, they came from a broad stretch of Central Asia outside the Chinese borders, from whence they began moving westward in the 500s.

of a Bulgarian sect that asserted God had two sons, Christ and Satan. In 1203, the pope forced Ban Kulin to renounce the Bogromil faith.

Ultimately most Bosnians would become Muslims, since their country, along with much of the Balkan Peninsula, would be annexed to the Ottoman Empire. Before it fell to the Ottomans, however, neighboring Serbia experienced a flowering under a series of kings named Stephen. The greatest of these was Stephen Dusan (dü-SHAHN; 1308–1355), who seized the throne from his father in 1331. He went on to conquer a number of lands from the Byzantines, and in 1346 had himself crowned emperor of the Serbs, Greeks, Bulgars, and Albanians. Four years later, he conquered Bosnia, and was marching on Constantinople in 1355 when he died.

Serbia's dreams would be dashed in a battle at Kosovo—ironically, the site of a modern-day conflict involving Serbia and Albania—in 1389. At Kosovo Field, known as "the field of the black birds," the Ottomans dealt the Serbs under Prince Lazar (1329–1389) a humiliating defeat, and soon afterward added Serbia and Bulgaria to their empires.

Fifty years later, Kosovo was the site of another battle between Ottoman forces and an Eastern European hero, Hungary's János Hunyadi (YAH-nos HOON-yahd-ee; c. 1407–1456). Trained as a knight, Hunyadi scored early victories against the Turks in the 1430s, and even drove the Ottomans out of Serbia, Bosnia, Albania, and Bulgaria. This put the Hungarians in a position to influence the region, but with Hunyadi's defeat by the Turks at Kosovo, those hopes came to an end.

Hunyadi was almost the exact contemporary of Albania's Skanderbeg (1405–1468). The name, given to him by the Turks, is a version of Alexander, and calls to mind Alexander the Great; his real name was George Kastrioti (kahs-tree-OHT-ee). Brought up as a Muslim among the Turks, in his late thirties he became a Christian, abandoning the Turks and supporting the cause of his own people. His defeat of Ottoman forces under the sultan Murad II in 1450 made Skanderbeg a hero throughout Europe; but soon after his death in 1468, Albania became a part of the Ottoman Empire.

Turks settled in various places, but perhaps no group was as notable as the Seljuks, a dynasty founded by Toghril Beg (see box in Shotoku Taishi entry). They defeated the Byzantines at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, putting that

empire's fortunes in a downward spiral from which it would not recover. They also laid claim to Anatolia, which would remain in Turkish hands from then on.

A world of fading empires

Osman (AWS-mahn), who came from the Ghazi (GAHZ-ee) tribe of Turks, was born in 1259. Legend has it that his grandfather led the Ghazis out of northeastern Iran. After the grandfather's death along the way westward, Osman's father Ertogrul (urt-oh-GRÜL) replaced him.

By then the Mongols were on the move, and Ertogrul supported the Seljuks against these invaders. This might have seemed like an obvious choice since the Ghazis and Seljuks were related, but the Seljuks were nonetheless grateful and rewarded Ertogrul for his support by granting him lands in northeastern Anatolia.

Though the Mongols' realms were still growing at that time, the Ghazis were surrounded by fading empires. At one time, the Muslim world had been ruled by the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad, but its power had been broken by the Seljuks in 1258. Now the power of the Seljuks, too, was in decline. To the west was the Byzantine Empire, whose people adhered to the Greek Orthodox form of Christianity. The Ghazis, on the other hand, were Muslims, and like the Abbasids and the Seljuks before them, they viewed any conflict with the Byzantines as a "holy war" on behalf of their religion. Thus Osman would feel justified in later building his empire at the expense of the Byzantines.

Osman's dream

One of the most powerful legends of Osman's early life concerned a dream in which he saw himself taking the Byzantine capital at Constantinople. That literal dream, and the figurative dream of empire that it spawned, was closely tied with a love affair.

As a youth, Osman reportedly fell in love with Malkhatun (mahl-hkhah-TOON), whose name means "treasure of a woman." He asked her to marry him, but her father,

a respected Muslim holy man, refused—no doubt because Osman was a rough chieftain and warlord. Years passed, during which time Osman asked again and again for the hand of Malkhatun, only to be refused each time. Finally he had come to accept the fact that they would never marry; then one night, he had a dream.

In his dream, he was sleeping alongside a friend when a full moon arose from his friend's chest, then floated over to Osman and sank into his own chest. The moon symbolized Malkhatun, and its joining of his chest was their marital union. Then out of Osman's chest grew a great tree, which rose to shadow the entire world. A wind began to blow all the trees' leaves toward Constantinople, which came to resemble a ring. Osman was just about to put the ring on his finger when he awoke.

It is not hard to believe that Osman had this dream of empire; much more difficult to believe is the story that upon hearing of the dream, Malkhatun's father changed his mind and allowed the marriage. Probably the whole tale was created long after Osman's time; whatever the case, he did go on to marry Malkhatun and to found a great empire.

The conquest of Bursa

Out of respect for his Seljuk hosts, Osman's father had not tried to expand his territories. But times were changing: the Mongols had destroyed the Seljuks' power, and when Osman became chieftain in 1288, he set about acquiring new lands. From 1299, when he refused to pay tribute or tax money to the Mongol ruler, he symbolically created his own state, which would form the nucleus of the realm named after him: the Ottoman Empire.

During the period from 1300 to 1308, Osman fought a number of engagements, successively taking pieces of Anatolia from the Byzantines. Finally he reached the city of Bursa, only seventy miles from Constantinople across the Sea of Marmara. Osman would never live to see the conquest of Constantinople, however: his last eighteen years would be caught up in a struggle to take Bursa.

The conquest of the city looked easier than it was. From 1308 Osman's troops controlled almost all areas around

it, but it took them another thirteen years to seal off Bursa's port at Mudanya (moo-DAHN-yah). The Byzantines proved stubborn adversaries, and even after the taking of Mudanya, the Turks had to maintain a five-year-long siege against Bursa before the city finally yielded in 1326.

Six centuries of empire

As a major commercial center, Bursa was a huge gain to the Ottoman Turks. Osman himself, however, did not live to enjoy the triumph: when he learned about the city's capture from his son Orkhan (ruled 1326–62), he was on his deathbed. Giving Orkhan some final advice about treating all his subjects equally and fairly, Osman died at the age of sixty-seven.

The empire grew quickly under Osman's successors, and it rapidly acquired much of the Balkan Peninsula on Europe's southeastern tip. Given the weakness of the Byzantines, then, it is surprising that more than 125 years passed between the death of Osman and the taking of Constantinople. However, the Byzantines were fierce in holding on to what remained of their empire, and the invasion of Anatolia by **Tamerlane** (see entry) in about 1400 slowed the Ottoman advance.

By the mid-1400s, however, the Ottomans had won the prize dreamt of long before by Osman. The empire kept growing until 1683, by which time it dominated a huge portion of southeastern Europe, all of the Middle East and North Africa, and much of what is now southern Russia. Thereafter it went into a long decline, just like the Byzantine Empire had long before. It came to an official end only in 1922.

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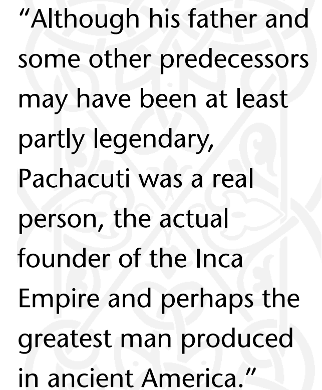
Pachacutec Inca Yupanqui

Died 1471

Inca emperor

Pachacutec Inca Yupanqui, sometimes referred to as Pachacuti, was not the first emperor of the Inca people in South America, but he was the first one whose existence is firmly established in history. More important, he was the greatest of the Inca rulers, an empire builder who began with a kingdom of perhaps twenty-five square miles and shaped it into a vast realm. He initiated a system of roads and a highly organized government that ruled its people efficiently and—by the standards of premodern America—with justice.

The achievements of Pachacutec were all the more remarkable in light of the fact that he was not his father's chosen successor, and that severe technological and administrative limitations faced the Incas. Not only did they lack the use of the wheel or of most pack animals, a handicap in their high mountain environment, but unlike the Aztecs or Maya, they did not even have a written language.



"Although his father and some other predecessors may have been at least partly legendary, Pachacuti was a real person, the actual founder of the Inca Empire and perhaps the greatest man produced in ancient America."

Jonathan Norton Leonard, Ancient America

Roots of the Inca people

Though the term *Inca* is used to describe an entire na-

tion, it was actually the name for its rulers. Thus the full name of their greatest emperor was Pachacutec Inca Yupanqui (pah-chah-KOO-tek ING-kuh yoo-PAHNG-kee). As for the Inca people, they emerged as a civilization in about 1100, when they established a capital named Cuzco (KOOZ-koh), or "navel of the world."

Perhaps because of the challenges imposed by the high Andes (AN-deez) Mountains where they lived in Peru, the Incas were not quick to begin building an empire. Only in the mid-1400s, during the reign of the semi-legendary Viracocha (veer-ah-KOH-kah)—whose name was taken from that of the Incas' principal deity, or god—did they begin to expand, and then only to an area about twenty-five miles around Cuzco.

Not the favorite son

Pachacutec was the son of Viracocha, but he was not his first or favorite son; still, his name meant "he who transforms the Earth," and he was destined to fulfill its promise. Due to the lack of written records, little is known about Pachacutec's life in general, much less his early life. Even the date of his birth is unknown.

At some point in the 1430s, the Incas were attacked by a neighboring tribe, and both Viracocha and his designated heir fled Cuzco for the safety of the mountains. Pachacutec, however, held his ground, and marshaled his army to drive back the invaders. With victory secured, he took the throne in 1438. That year is the beginning of Inca history, inasmuch as events after that point can be dated with relative certainty.

Building an empire

The Inca had no knowledge of other civilizations, even the Maya and Aztec, let alone those of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Nonetheless, Pachacutec's early career was much like that of **Genghis Khan** (see entry): first he rallied his supporters to deal with an outside threat, then he kept marching and built an empire.

Pachacutec set about strengthening his hold on the region around Cuzco, then his troops swept down the moun-

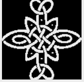
Inca warriors, from an ancient Peruvian painting. Pachacutec became the greatest Inca ruler by conquering his enemies and building a great empire. *Reproduced by permission of the New York Public Library Picture Collection.*

tains into a valley along the mighty Amazon River. They next marched northward along the highlands, conquering tribes as they went, before turning south to win the area around Lake Titicaca high in the Andes.

There was a purpose in Pachacutec's actions. He was not simply fighting battles; he was building a strong and unified empire. Wherever possible, he and his advisors won over neighboring tribes through diplomacy, or the art of negotiation. If other groups failed to listen to reason, however, they faced the wrath of the great Inca army, for which there was no equal in the region. Most tribes wisely agreed to bloodless conquest by the Incas.

Uniting the people

It was one thing to build an empire, and quite another to hold it together—something the descendants of Genghis



Jayavarman VII

The name Pachacutec is hardly a household word for most Westerners, even in America, though it deserves to be—and much the same can be said of Cambodia's Jayavarman VII (c. 1120–c. 1219). Just as Pachacutec built, but did not establish, the Inca Empire, so Jayavarman took the already established Khmer (k'MEER) or Angkor (AHNG-kohr) Empire to a much greater level than before. Not only was he—again like Pachacutec—an empire-builder in the sense that he conquered other lands, he too built in the literal sense. As Pachacutec rebuilt Cuzco after its destruction by enemies, Jayavarman built up two of the world's most extraordinary monuments, the temple cities of Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom (TOHM).

The Khmers, as the Cambodians of medieval times were known, had long been in contact with India, and had adopted the Hindu religion from the latter. The first powerful Khmer king, Jayavarman II (ruled c. 790–850), founder of the empire, established Hinduism as the state religion. Some time after 900, the Khmers carved Angkor Thom out of the jungle. Angkor Thom covered some five square miles, and included a moat, high walls, temples, palaces, and a tower, all carved in detail with images of Hindu gods.

Suryavarman II (ruled 1113–50) began the building of Angkor Wat, which is the more famous—though actually the smaller—of the two temple cities. He also conquered a number of surrounding kingdoms, but after his death the empire went into a period of decline when it was ruled first by the father and then the brother of Jayavarman VII.

Little is known about Jayavarman's early life, though it is clear he grew up as a member of the royal family in Angkor. His first wife was a devout Buddhist who strongly influenced him, but given the many similarities between Buddhism and

Khan, for instance, failed to do. Given their lack of a written language, it was all the more important for Pachacutec to impose a single spoken language on the people he conquered as a way of knitting them together. Soon the Incas' language, Quechua (KECH-oo-ah), became the region's lingua franca, a common language for people whose native languages differed.

To reduce threats from potentially hostile groups, Pachacutec sometimes ordered tribes to relocate. Thus he separated them from their homelands, where they might develop a base of support for future resistance. In line with his pol-

Hinduism—including its belief in reincarnation, or the cycle of repeated death and rebirth—this did not bring him into conflict with the established religion. After the death of his first wife, he married her sister, also a strong Buddhist.

Meanwhile, the empire weakened under his brother's rule, and the Champas in what is now Vietnam took the opportunity to invade. They even occupied Angkor Wat until Jayavarman VII drove them out in 1181. After achieving victory, he was crowned emperor at the age of sixty-one.

Jayavarman would live for thirty more years, during which time he expanded the empire into parts of what is now Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia, and Burma. Despite these conquests, however, he devoted most of his attention to extensive programs of building and rebuilding. Much of the glory of Angkor Thom and Angkor Wat are a result of his efforts to expand and beautify those cities; in addition, he built a large network of highways complete with rest houses, as well as some one hundred hospitals.

The pace of Jayavarman's building projects was extremely quick, and in some cases the workmanship shows this fact. It is likely that he felt a sense of urgency due to his advanced age. It is also possible that he suffered from leprosy, a dreaded disease involving gradual wasting of muscles, deformity, and paralysis, which was relatively common until modern times. Whatever the case, he lived to the age of ninety-one.

When he died, Jayavarman left behind considerable physical evidence that he had once ruled a great and mighty empire—an empire that, like the Incas', was doomed to be overtaken by outside invaders, in this case from Thailand. In 1431, about the time Pachacutec was beginning his career, the Thais completed their conquest of the Angkor Empire.

icy of not making Inca rule too harsh on the conquered peoples, however, Pachacutec's government pursued its relocation policy with care, for instance not moving people from the lowlands to the high mountains where the thin air and cold climate might cause deaths.

A highly organized state

Roads were another key element of Pachacutec's program to solidify his empire. Under his reign, the Incas con-

structed some 2,500 miles of stone roads, many of them across high mountain passes and others through steaming swamps. Though they were extremely well built, with tightly fitted stones, these were not roads as Europeans would understand them: most were only about three feet wide, which was sufficient to accommodate travelers on foot or load-bearing llamas (YAHM-uz). The latter, a relative of the camel, constituted the Incas' principal form of pack animal, though llamas could not carry anything like the weight supported by camels.

Along with the roads, the Incas built way stations placed at intervals equal to a day's travel, so that travelers could rest and obtain supplies. Trained runners traversed the road system, keeping the emperor abreast of events throughout his empire. Compared to the slow postal system of Europe (which, like that of the Inca Empire, was only for the use of the government, not ordinary citizens), the Incas' messenger service was extraordinarily fast and efficient. Thanks to the relay runners, who could transport a message at the rate of 140 miles a day, Pachacutec's army was never caught unawares by rebellions on their borders. In addition, the emperor kept troops stationed throughout the empire, ready to go into action whenever the alert was sounded.

It is hard to understand how the Incas managed to achieve their mighty feats of organization, given their lack of a written language. In order to run a government, it is necessary to keep records, particularly of inventory or supplies. In place of written records, the Incas under Pachacutec used an ingenious system of strings in varying lengths and colors, with which they recorded numerical information. For mathematical calculations, they made use of the abacus, an early form of calculator that used movable beads strung along parallel wires within a frame.

Turning over leadership to Topa

After years of administering his empire, Pachacutec turned over the reins of leadership to his son Topa. He continued to be actively involved in governmental affairs, however, particularly a program to rebuild Cuzco from the devastation of earlier attacks. He created a plan for the city and

initiated vast building projects, including a huge central plaza surrounded by temples.

Topa, who ruled from 1471 to 1493, built on the gains made by his father, and his son Huayna Capac (WY-nuh KAH-pahk; ruled 1493–1525) controlled the empire at its height. By then the Incas held an area equal to that of the U.S. Eastern Seaboard, the coastal states from Maine to Florida. Under their rule were some 16 million people—an impressive number compared, for instance, to the population of England at the time, which was just 5 million.

The empire would not last long beyond Huayna Capac's time, and the arrival of Spanish explorers in 1533 signaled the beginning of a swift and merciless end to the Inca Empire. While it stood, however, it was one of the medieval world's most efficient, well-organized governments, and for this Pachacutec—whom many historians consider among the greatest rulers of all time—deserves much of the credit.

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St. Patrick

Born c. 396
Died c. 459

Roman-Irish saint

Patron saint of Ireland, St. Patrick remains one of the Middle Ages' most well-known saints, thanks in large part to the wild celebrations on his festival day on March 17. Wherever there are sons and daughters of Ireland—as in America, a country with far more people of Irish heritage than Ireland itself—there is plenty of merry-making on St. Patrick's Day.

Yet it might astound many to learn, first of all, that Patrick was not Irish; rather, he was a missionary, a religious teacher sent to people in a foreign land, from Roman-controlled Britain. Nor was he a particularly jolly figure, despite all the fun associated with his day. Furthermore, many of the feats attributed to him—for instance, driving all the snakes out of Ireland—are the product of medieval legend-making, not fact.

"Many tried to prevent this mission [to Ireland], and talked among themselves behind my back and said: 'Why is this fellow walking into danger among enemies who do not know God?'"

St. Patrick's Confessions

Sold into slavery

Patrick, or Patricius, was the son of Calpurnius, a minor Roman nobleman in Britain. Rome had controlled that island, whose people were of Celtic origin, for about four cen-

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

turies when Patrick was born. He lived at a time before the Roman Catholic Church had declared that its priests could not marry, and in fact his grandfather was a priest. Patrick's family were Christians, but as a boy he did not care much about religious matters, preferring to devote himself to pleasure. Then his life changed completely.

At the age of sixteen, Patrick was kidnapped by pirates, who carried him across the sea to the neighboring island of Ireland. There he was sold into slavery and forced to tend sheep. In his loneliness, he turned to prayer, and later wrote in his *Confessions:* "The love of God came to me more and more, and my faith was strengthened. My spirit was moved so that in a single day I would say as many as a hundred prayers, and almost as many in the night."

It was Patrick's belief that he had been enslaved as punishment from God. This was a common Christian idea, reflecting concepts from the Bible—for instance, the enslavement of the Israelites by the Babylonians, which the Hebrew prophets explained was a consequence of forsaking God. And just as he believed that God had caused his enslavement, Patrick at age twenty-two believed that God had called on him to escape from slavery.

Escape and return to Britain

In Patrick's *Confessions,* one of the few reliable sources about his life, he reported that one night he had a dream in which he was told to escape and return home. He crossed many miles to get to the Irish coast, he wrote, and there talked his way on to a ship bound for Britain. After three days of sailing, the ship landed, and the travelers journeyed for twenty-eight days through "wilderness" without finding any food.

Though the *Confessions* contains far fewer stories of miraculous occurrences than do later chronicles of Patrick's life, in some cases it is difficult to make sense of claims he made in the book. An example of this is the part about wandering for four weeks. Both Britain and France (Gaul at that time) are too small to contain a wilderness big enough—even in the early 400s—that people could be lost in it for a month.

In any case, Patrick was finally reunited with his family, and would probably have never left them had it not been for another dream. In this second vision, he said, he was told by a man to go to Ireland and convert the Irish to Christianity. It is possible Patrick's story of his life was influenced by passages from the Bible. The Old Testament tells how the children of Israel under Moses' leadership wandered for forty years in a tiny desert between modern-day Egypt and Israel, and the New Testament contains an account of the Apostle Paul being visited in a dream by a man from Greece who asked him to teach the Greeks about Christianity.

Priest and missionary

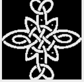
Feeling that he had heard from God, Patrick began preparing for the priesthood. He may have studied under Germain, a celebrated French saint, in the town of Auxerre (oh-SUR). He then asked church leaders to authorize his going to Ireland as a missionary, and at first they were skeptical—in part, he later wrote, because he was not very well educated, despite his noble birth.

Patrick finally gained permission to go to Ireland as the church's representative. Contrary to popular belief, he was not the first missionary sent to the Irish. A few years earlier, in 431, a missionary named Palladius had gone there, but his success had been limited.

Ireland at that time was dominated by pagan religions that worshiped many gods, most of them associated with natural forces. In fact the word *paganus* in Latin means "countryside-dweller," a reflection of the fact that at that time, Christianity's strongest influence was in large cities such as Rome. Ireland was mostly countryside, and Patrick was one of the first missionaries anywhere in the Christian world to preach mainly to country people.

Challenges in Ireland

Perhaps taking his cue from the Apostle Paul, who had lived about four centuries earlier, Patrick never spoke out actively against slavery, despite the fact that he had been a



A Gallery of Saints

The Middle Ages, as well as the late ancient period, produced literally thousands of figures who later became recognized as saints, Christians so devout that they served as a model to others. There were Roman Catholic saints such as **Bernard of Clairvaux** or **Joan of Arc**, and there were Eastern Orthodox saints such as **Cyril and Methodius;** then there were figures such as **Augustine** who were revered throughout the Christian world (see entries).

Some saints are particularly well known, primarily through popular legends that have little to do with the actual people themselves. Such is the case with St. Valentine, whose feast day on February 14 is even more well known than Patrick's on March 17. Perhaps these two events became so popular because they break up the dreariness of wintertime; in any case, the romantic associations of Valentine's Day have as little to do with the real St. Valentine as the feasting and drinking on St. Patrick's Day have to do with that saint.

There were at least three St. Valentines, one of whom lived in North Africa. Of this one little is known, but slightly more information is available about the other two, one of whom was a priest in Rome, the other a bishop in another part of Italy (they may, in fact, have been a single person). Both—like their namesake in Africa—were martyred, or killed for their faith. The Roman priest seems to have died in 270, during persecutions under Emperor Claudius II. All three Valentines had feast days on February 14, when it was said that birds begin to pair off. There was also a pagan Roman custom associated with mid-February, whereby young men would draw the names of girls and pair up with them.

Then there is the saint associated with the most popular holiday of all: St. Nicholas, who as Santa Claus became a symbol of Christmas. In fact St. Nicholas was a bishop in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) during the late third century and early fourth century. The only possible link with Santa Claus is the fact that he was renowned for doing good deeds, and that he became a patron saint of children.

slave. He saw his mission as primarily a spiritual rather than a political one. Nonetheless, he expressed concern for the slaves who converted to Christianity, because he knew that they were far more vulnerable to persecution for their faith.

Many Irish leaders at that time were hostile to the new faith, and at one point Patrick and others with him were seized and imprisoned by a group of local kings. They were released two weeks later, but some time afterward, Patrick

St. George slaying a dragon. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

These characteristics led people in Western Europe to give gifts in his name at Christmastime, and eventually he was linked with a pagan figure from Scandinavia known as "Sint Klaes." During the nineteenth century, the Santa Claus legend began to take hold in America, where it bore almost no relation to the original St. Nicholas.

St. Nicholas also became one of the patron saints of Russia, along with St. Andrew. One version of the Russian flag used the cross of St. Andrew, a white X on a navy-blue field. This was also used by Scotland, which likewise claimed Andrew as a patron saint. Neighboring England's patron saint was George, and when these two countries were united as Great Britain in the early 1700s, the two saints' crosses helped form that nation's flag, the Union Jack.

The "real" St. George, like St. Nicholas, lived during the persecutions under Diocletian, the last Roman emperor before Constantine converted to Christianity in 312. It was said that George was a soldier beloved by Diocletian, but when he proudly announced the fact that he was a Christian, the emperor had him tortured and beheaded. Pictures of St. George typically show him in a classic medieval scene, as a knight slaying a dragon to rescue a lady. In Christian symbolism, however, this image has spiritual rather than romantic meaning: the dragon represents wickedness, and the lady stands for truth or the church.

managed to enrage the king of Tara. Patrick compared Tara, an Irish city, to Babylon, which was both the city where the Israelites were held captive for many years, and also a symbol of wickedness.

Tara had a pagan spring festival inaugurated each year by the king's lighting of a bonfire. However, one year the Christian holiday of Easter, commemorating Christ's death and resurrection, fell at the same time, and Patrick lit an East-

er bonfire just before the king was supposed to light his. The king and his magicians, a later biographer wrote, went to attack Patrick, but the lead magician was suddenly pulled up into the air, then tossed to his death.

This miraculous and no doubt fictitious occurrence failed to stir the magicians, so Patrick engaged in a contest of miraculous powers with another magician. He triumphed, and the king of Tara made a half-hearted conversion to Christianity. The conversion became more sincere after the magician challenged one of Patrick's converts to another test, and failed miserably: according to this legend, both men were shut up in a house that was burned to the ground, and the Christian survived while the magician burned to death.

Patrick's writings

Whatever the truth of these stories, it appears certain that Patrick himself was subjected to a number of personal attacks. At some point in his youth, he confessed a past sin to a friend. It is not known what the sin was, but when the friend later had a falling-out with Patrick, he told a number of people about it, and this caused them to doubt Patrick's ability to lead Christians.

He wrote his *Confessions* in response to these accusations, and to claims that he had gotten rich as a minister of God. With regard to the latter complaints, Patrick admitted that wealthy people had tried to give him jewelry and other gifts, but he had refused them.

Patrick's other important writing was the *Epistle* (or letter), in which he responded to a British chieftain named Coroticus, who had killed some recent converts to Christianity, and sold others into slavery. The *Epistle* is a strong attack on Coroticus, who appears to have accepted Christianity earlier, though without much sincerity.

Mythology and fact

Little is known about how or when Patrick died, though it appears to have been in the mid-400s. In the period after his death, all sorts of amazing stories began to circu-

late about him. The story about Patrick driving all the snakes out of Ireland was probably invented as a way of explaining why Ireland has no native snakes—one of the few places in the world where this is true. Another legend associates him with the four-leaf clover, a symbol of Ireland, which he supposedly used as an illustration to explain to a pagan king about salvation in Christ.

Perhaps the most ironic aspect of the Patrick myth is the fact that Patrick, a figure revealed in his *Confessions* as an extremely serious, sober-minded, and humorless man whose concern was almost entirely for matters of the spirit, would be associated with a day known for feasting and drinking. But Patrick *did* convert the Irish, and the fact that Ireland remains one of the most staunchly Catholic countries on Earth is in part a tribute to him.

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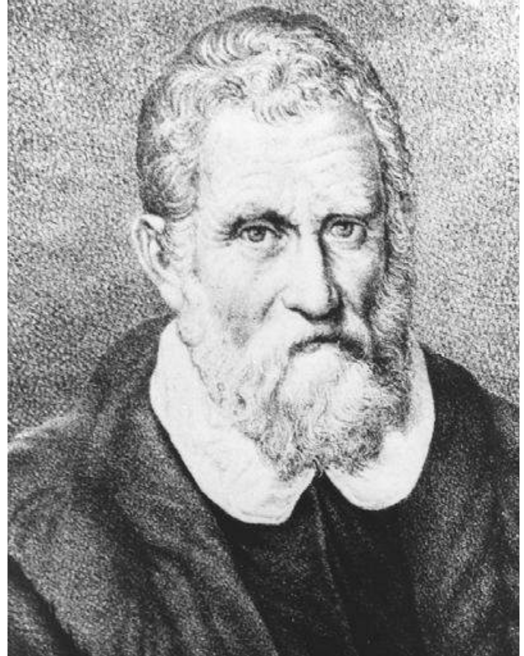
Marco Polo

Born 1254
Died 1324

Italian explorer



"I have not told half of what I saw."

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

The journeys of Marco Polo were as remarkable in the Middle Ages as travel to another planet would be in modern times, and the information he brought back to Europe greatly expanded human knowledge. But his stories about faraway lands sounded so outrageous, and involved so many big numbers, that his neighbors nicknamed him "Marco Millions."

Setting out from his hometown of Venice, Italy, with his father and uncle in 1271, Marco was only seventeen years old when he began his travels. It would be twenty-four years before he returned to Europe, and during that time he would see half the known world. He would also have a series of amazing adventures, and would become personally acquainted with one of the medieval world's most remarkable rulers, **Kublai Khan** (see entry).

Venice and Cathay

In Marco Polo's time Venice was a powerful city-state, home to merchants and voyagers such as his father, Nicolo, and uncle, Maffeo. When Marco was six, Nicolo and Maffeo

left Venice for Cathay (kah-THY), the name by which many Europeans knew China. At that time, China was under the control of the Mongols, nomadic warriors from Central Asia who conquered much of the world in the early 1200s.

Nicolo and Maffeo did not return for nine years, and during that time, Marco's mother died. When the two brothers came back to Venice in 1269, they came with a request from Kublai Khan (KOOB-luh; 1215–1294; ruled 1260–1294), the Mongol ruler of China, to the pope, head of the Catholic Church. The Great Khan, who respected all religions, wanted the pope to send a vial of holy oil, as well as a hundred religious teachers for his people. The Polos could not immediately obtain either, however, since the old pope had died and a new one had not yet been elected. An election could take months, and Nicolo and Maffeo were eager to begin their trip; therefore they set out for Cathay in 1271, taking seventeen-year-old Marco with them.

The adventure begins

They reached the city of Acre (AHK-ruh), an important church center in what is now Israel. There they met Tebaldo Visconti, a priest and representative of the Vatican—the pope's headquarters in Rome—who gave them letters for the Khan. From Acre they headed north to Cilicia (suh-LISH-uh), a region in southeastern Asia Minor, where they received word that a new pope had been elected: Tebaldo himself, who became Gregory X (ruled 1271–76). Therefore they returned to Acre, where Gregory blessed a vial of oil for the Khan.

As for teachers, however, Gregory could only spare two monks—and in the end, those two turned back when they realized how dangerous the trip to Cathay would be. But the Polos themselves were finally on their way, and they headed to Ormuz (ohr-MOOZ), a major seaport in Persia. The boats they saw there did not look particularly sturdy, however; therefore they decided to strike out for China over land.

A perilous journey

Today one can fly from Venice to Beijing, the Chinese capital—which under the reign of the Khans was called Khan-

Fourteenth-century painting of Marco Polo entering Beijing. *Reproduced by permission of the Granger Collection Ltd.*

balik (kahn-bah-LEEK)—in a few hours; Marco's journey, by contrast, took more than three years. He spent more than a year of that time in the mountains of Afghanistan, stricken with an unknown illness. Perhaps it was during this time that his father and uncle taught him the language of the Mongols, which they had mastered on their earlier trip. Marco also learned Farsi, or Persian, a common tongue for travelers and tradesmen in the East.

Finally, however, the Polos were able to resume their journey eastward, which took them across the Pamir (puh-MEER) range between Afghanistan and China. The Pamirs are among the world's highest mountains, and the journey—during which Marco saw an animal that came to be called the "Marco Polo sheep"—was a difficult one.

Coming down off the mountains, the travelers entered China itself, and for a long way, the going was relatively easy. Then they came to the Gobi Desert, which is nearly

the size of Alaska. It took the Polos thirty days of hard traveling to cross this extremely inhospitable region, even though they did so at its narrowest part. At night, the desert winds became so fierce they played tricks on the journeyers' minds, and Marco later reported hearing voices calling to him in the chilly darkness.

In the court of the Great Khan

Having crossed the Gobi, the Polos found themselves in the heart of China. They followed the Yellow River, one of that country's great waterways, until they met representatives of the Great Khan who led them to Shang-tu (shahng-DOO). The latter, known to Europeans by the name Xanadu (ZAN-uh-doo), was the Khan's summer residence, some three hundred miles north of Beijing.

Though he must have seen China's Great Wall, Marco never recorded the event. Yet there was much to impress him when he and his father and uncle arrived at the court of the Great Khan in May 1275. Kublai Khan, Marco later wrote, "is the greatest Lord that is now in the world or ever has been."

Marco found the court at Shang-tu splendid, but not as luxurious as the Khan's palace in Beijing. There, he reported, the Khan's four wives were attended by some forty thousand servants, and Marco himself dined at a banquet where some six thousand guests were served all manner of delicacies.

As it turned out, Kublai was as impressed with Marco as Marco was with him. While his father and uncle became involved in several successful business ventures, Marco spent most of his time at court. During the corruption trial of an official, he testified regarding the man's dishonest actions, thus showing his loyalty to the Khan. The latter therefore appointed him to a series of offices which, over the next years, would vastly extend the scope of Marco's already extraordinary travels.

Visions of the East

The Khan first sent Marco to the province of Yunnan (yoo-NAHN), wedged between Tibet and Southeast Asia at China's southwestern fringe. Marco thus became the first Eu-

ropean to see Tibet, one of the world's most remote and exotic lands. For three years beginning in 1282, he served as governor of Yangchow (yahng-ZHOH), a city along the Grand Canal of the Yangtze River (YAHNG-say) in east central China.

In the latter part of his governorship, Marco received orders to travel even farther: to India. On his way there, he visited a number of lands in southeast Asia: Champa, a kingdom in what is now central Vietnam; Thailand; Melaka, now part of Malaysia; and the island of Sumatra in modern Indonesia.

Crossing the enormous Bay of Bengal, Marco's boat touched land in the Andaman Islands, a part of India so remote that its people had never been exposed either to Hinduism or Buddhism, the country's two principal religions. The ship then sailed southward, to the island of Ceylon (seh-LAHN), the modern nation of Sri Lanka.

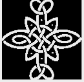
The way back

Marco probably arrived back in Beijing in 1287, when he was thirty-three years old. His aging father and uncle were ready to return home, but the Khan wanted them to stay; two years later, however, in 1289, Kublai allowed the three Europeans to accompany a Mongol princess to Persia, where she would marry the Mongol khan of that land. Various difficulties delayed their departure for some time, but finally in January 1292 the princess and the Polos, along with some six hundred passengers and crew on fourteen ships, set sail.

It was another long trip, taking nearly two years, during which time most of the passengers and crew died. Arriving in Ormuz, the Polos learned that Kublai was dead. It must have been with some sadness that they headed northward across land to the city of Trabzon (trab-ZAHN) on the Black Sea. From Trabzon they sailed to Constantinople, and on to Venice, and by the time they reached home in 1295, they had been gone nearly a quarter-century.

A teller of tall tales

But Marco's adventures were not over. Venice had gone to war with Genoa, another leading Italian city, and he



Ibn Battuta

His full name was Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Lawati at-Tanji ibn Battuta; fortunately for non-Arabic speakers, however, he is known to history simply as Ibn Battuta (IB'n bah-TOO-tah; 1304–c. 1368). In spite of the fact that Marco Polo is much more well known outside the Arab world, in fact Ibn Battuta traveled much more widely. Over the space of twenty-nine years from 1325 to 1354, he covered some seventy-five thousand miles, three times the distance around Earth at the Equator—a particularly impressive feat at a time when the average person had seldom traveled more than a few miles from home.

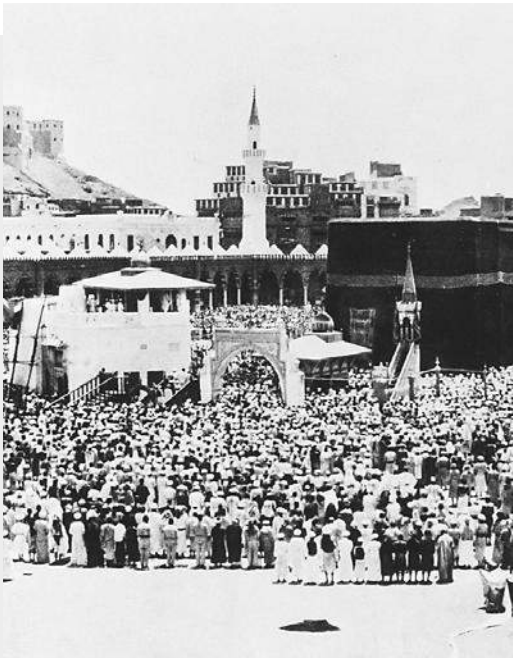
Ibn Battuta was born into a wealthy family in the Moroccan city of Tangier (tan-JEER). He originally planned to study law, and when he went away on his first long journey at the age of twenty-one, he did so with the intention of later settling down. Like most people in Tangier, Ibn Battuta was a devout Muslim, or follower of the Islamic religion established by **Muhammad** (see entry), and he planned to serve as an Islamic religious judge. His first trip, in fact, was a pilgrimage to the Muslim holy city of Mecca in what is now Saudi Arabia. This type of pilgrimage, called a *hajj* (HAHZH), is sacred to Islam, and all Muslims are encouraged to do it at least once. By the time of his death, Ibn Battuta had made the hajj a total of four times.

After his first hajj (1325–27), Ibn Battuta made a side trip into Persia. He returned to Mecca, thus completing a second hajj, then sailed along the east African coast to the trading city of Kilwa in the far south before returning to Mecca yet again in 1330. But he was just getting started: over the next three years, he journeyed through Turkey, the Byzantine Empire, and southern Russia, at that time part of the Mongol lands. He then passed through Afghanistan and other parts of Central Asia before entering India from the north.

Eventually Ibn Battuta wound up in the court of the ruthless sultan Muham-

became captain of a warship. In 1298, he was captured and thrown in a Genoese prison, where he met a writer named Rustichello (rus-ti-CHEL-oh).

Marco told Rustichello about his travels, and Rustichello began writing a book that would become known in English as *The Book of Ser Marco Polo the Venetian Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East,* or *The Description of the World.* The book would later be recognized as the basis for scientific geography, and greatly expanded Europeans' under-



Muslims gather to worship in the Great Mosque in Mecca. All Muslims are encouraged to make a pilgrimage to Mecca (a *hajj*) at least once; Ibn Battuta did it four times. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

mad ibn Tughluq (tug-LUK; ruled 1325–51; see box in Ala-ud-din Muhammad Khalji entry) in the great Indian city of Delhi (DEL-ee). Despite Tughluq's bloodthirsty reputation, Ibn Battuta managed to remain in his service as a judge for eight years. Tughluq sent him on an official visit to the Mongol emperor of China, a later successor to Kublai Khan, but Ibn Battuta was shipwrecked, and never returned to Tughluq's court.

During the next few years, Ibn Battuta visited Ceylon, Southeast Asia, and China—possibly even as far north as the capital at Beijing. He then made the long journey home, stopping in Mecca a fourth time; but he quickly headed out again, this time to Muslim Spain and then south, across the Sahara into the splendid African empire of Mali.

Ibn Battuta stopped traveling in 1354, after which he sat down to write the record of his journeys in a volume translated as *The Travels of Ibn Battuta.* Along with all the other activity that filled his life, Ibn Battuta had many wives and children, and died when he was more than sixty years old.

standing of the world. Prior to Marco's mention of the Pamirs, for instance, no one in Europe had ever heard of those mountains. He was also the first European to describe places such as Tibet and Burma, lands that would not be visited again by people from the West until the 1800s.

Marco introduced Europeans to a wealth of new ideas, from paper money to playing cards. In addition, his book excited the interest of future explorers, among them Portugal's Prince **Henry the Navigator** (1394–1460; see entry), who vir-

tually launched the Age of Exploration when he ordered a number of Portuguese voyages around the coast of Africa. The record of the Polos' difficult journey also affected a young sailor from Genoa named Christopher Columbus, who in 1492 set out to reach Cathay by sailing west—and instead discovered the New World.

Modern scholars believe Marco's reports to be amazingly accurate, though many of his neighbors had a hard time believing his tall tales. Later he married, had three daughters, and became a modestly successful merchant, but his reputation followed him to his death at age seventy. Relatives tried to get him to renounce what they thought were lies about deserts full of whispering voices and banquets with six thousand guests, but he refused; on his deathbed he announced, "I have not told half of what I saw."

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Rabia al-Adawiyya

Born c. 717
Died 801

Arab mystic

A mystic is someone who seeks direct contact with God through meditation or special insight. Mystics believe this is possible—indeed, *only* possible—outside the context of formal religion. But this unorthodox approach does not mean that mystics expect a "shortcut," as the life and teachings of an extraordinary woman named Rabia al-Adawiyya illustrate.

Founder of the Sufis, a sect of Islamic mystics, Rabia was sold into slavery; she gained her freedom, according to some legends, because her master was awed by a miraculous light shining above her head. She devoted her life to a quest for direct contact with Allah, or God.

"O God, if I worship Thee in fear of Hell, burn me in Hell; and if I worship Thee in hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise; but if I worship Thee for Thine own sake, withhold not Thine everlasting beauty."

Prayer attributed to Rabia

Sufi mysticism

The Middle Ages was a time when mysticism proliferated in lands influenced by the great religions of the Middle East: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Some of these mystics would be judged insane if they lived in modern times; others were fanatics of one kind or another who used mysticism as a

mask for darker urges within themselves. Then there were the genuine seekers, among them Rabia al-Adawiyya (rah-BEE-ah al-ah-dah-WEE-ah).

Rabia is generally credited as the founder of the Sufis, whose name comes from a word meaning "wool." They reacted to the political turmoil of their times, an age when the Abbasid caliphate was extending its power throughout the Muslim world, by retreating to an inner search for God. A principal belief of the Sufis was that one should not worship Allah out of fear of Hell, or hope of Heaven; rather, love for God should be an end in itself.

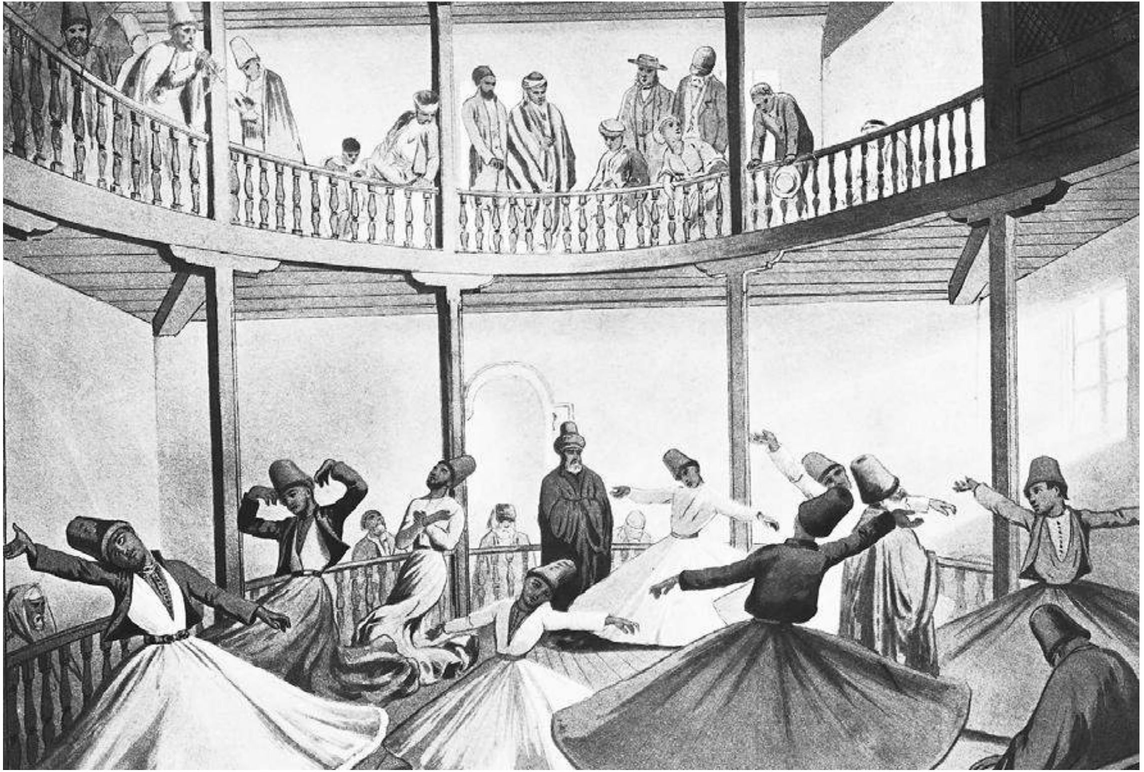
The daughter of Ismail

The details of Rabia's life are sketchy, though it appears she was born in about 717. Her mother and her father, Ismail (EES-my-el), a holy man committed to a life of poverty, lived on the edge of the desert near the town of Basra in what is now Iraq. They had four daughters, each of whom they named Rabia, with an additional name to distinguish them; the famous Rabia was the fourth.

The "facts" of Rabia's biography are generally no more than legends, an example of which is a story surrounding her birth. Due to their poverty, the parents had no oil in their house on the night she was born, which meant that they could not anoint (pour oil on) the navel of their newborn child, as was the custom. Ismail refused to beg from his neighbors, and this caused his wife to weep. Upset, the father knelt in the darkness and fell asleep, whereupon he had a dream in which the prophet **Muhammad** (see entry) told him: "Do not be sad. The girl child who has just been born is a queen amongst women." He was told that his faith would be rewarded, and soon afterward, the governor of the region gave him money for the raising of his daughter.

Sold into slavery

When Rabia was about eleven years old, Ismail died, and the mother, hoping to find a better life for her children, took them to Basra. On the way, however, bandits attacked



The Whirling Dervishes represent a branch of the Sufis, Islamic mystics whose founder was Rabia al-Adawiyya. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

them, killing the mother and kidnapping the girls. Rabia, along with her sisters, was sold into slavery.

Eventually she wound up in Baghdad, a great city of the Islamic world that is today the capital of Iraq. There a man bought her, and proceeded to exploit her talents. Not only was she beautiful—she would receive many proposals of marriage in her life, each of which she refused—but she was a talented singer. Therefore he put her to work entertaining people, and he lived well off the money she earned.

The song changes

It was said that during this time, Rabia became affected by the world around her, and adopted loose ways. Then one day when she was about thirty-six, she was singing before a wedding party when suddenly, the song inside of her

changed. Instead of singing to the wedding guests, she found herself singing to Allah.

From then on, she refused to sing for anyone but God, and this angered her master. He began to abuse her, but still she refused to resume her old life. At this point the legends about Rabia differ. Some say that her master was overwhelmed by a light shining above her head, which illuminated his whole house, and therefore he freed her. Others maintain that he grew so frustrated with her that he sold her at a market, where a holy man bought her.

Only one love

Whatever the case, it was said that the holy man took her to his home and treated her with kindness. He did not expect her to be his slave, he explained, but if she would be his wife, he would marry her. She thanked him, but said that she had no desire to marry anyone.

Legends maintain that Rabia soon came in contact with Hasan al-Basri (bahs-REE; 642–728), a noted Islamic leader. This is difficult to accommodate with the few known facts about her, since when Hasan died she would have only been thirty-seven, and tales of their conversations suggest that they knew each other for a long time. Regardless of the details, the distinguished Hasan came into her life, and like the holy man before him, asked her to marry him. Again she refused him, explaining that her only love was Allah.

A woman in a world of men

Another story about Rabia and Hasan is that one day when she was sitting by a lake, he spread his prayer mat on the surface of the water, where it floated miraculously. She had a prayer mat too, as did all Muslims, for the purpose of praying toward the holy city of Mecca five times a day, and she caused her mat to rise into the air with her on it. Then she told Hasan that "the real business is outside these tricks. One must apply oneself to the real business."

The "real business" was a quest for the direct knowledge of God, and it is a testament to Rabia's reputation that

Julian of Norwich

In the Islamic world of the Middle Ages, it was highly unusual that a woman would become an influential religious leader, as Rabia al-Adawiyya did. It was hardly less remarkable, in that day and age, that a woman in England would become respected as a mystic visionary; but that was the case with Julian of Norwich (1342–c. 1420), author of the first writings in English by a woman.

Julian is a man's name; as for the real name of "Julian of Norwich," which came from the fact that she lived in a cell attached to the Church of St. Julian in Norwich, England, it will probably never be known. She was an anchorite, a term for a type of nun or monk who lives completely alone.

It was said that when she was about thirty, Julian very nearly died, and indeed a priest was prepared to administer the last rites to her. On her deathbed, she looked up at a crucifix, a cross bearing a representation of the dying Jesus, and suddenly the cross began to glow. Julian was revived, and lived another four decades.

During that time, she underwent a great deal of physical hardship, as befit her chosen life of self-denial. She wrote down her revelations, or "showings," which were much more optimistic than those of most medieval mystics. Typically mystics tended to write about hellfire and judgment, but Julian's most famous statement was "All shall be well." In the twentieth century, the highly acclaimed poet T. S. Eliot adapted this line in one of his poems.

legends of her—whether or not they were true—depict her as giving religious teaching to the esteemed Hasan. Women were second-class citizens in most parts of the medieval world, and this was certainly true in Islam. Thus it was later said of Rabia, "When a woman walks in the ways of Allah like a man she cannot be called a woman." Other admirers compared her to the Virgin Mary, mother of Christ.

Rabia's teachings

Rabia was speaking of both men and women when she said that there were three kinds of men: one who uses his hands to gain wealth in this world, one who uses his hands to pray for rewards in the afterlife, and one who allows his

hands to be tied by God—to serve without expecting anything in return.

This was the essence of the Sufi teaching, which she expressed in a famous prayer quoted in a variety of forms. One version was: "O God, if I worship You for fear of Hell, burn me in Hell, and if I worship You in hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise. But if I worship You for Your own sake, grudge me not Your everlasting beauty." Another time, she explained that both fire, or Hell, and the Garden, or Heaven, were "veils" that kept the seeker from a true knowledge of God.

A life of self-denial

In line with her belief that the seeker should not expect anything in return, Rabia, like many other mystics, lived a life of self-denial. She would often fast, or go without food, for long periods of time, and she lived in poverty. She welcomed misfortune, she said, because it was no better than blessings: all things were from Allah, and therefore they were good.

One legend told that while making the pilgrimage to Mecca, an act to which Muslims were called, her donkey died in the middle of the desert. The people on the caravan she was with offered to help her, but she refused, saying she would stay in the desert and trust in Allah. It was said that after she nearly died, she prayed to God, and he restored the donkey's life.

A woman of faith

Whatever the truth of the many legends ascribed to her, there is no doubt that Rabia was a woman of powerful faith, and that her influence spread far beyond her lifetime. The Sufis remained an influential sect throughout the Middle Ages, and continue to flourish today.

From the few remaining details of her life, it appears that Rabia left Baghdad at some point and settled in Basra again. She lived there for many years, then journeyed to Jerusalem, another holy city in the Muslim world. She died and was buried there.

Joachim of Fiore

Few medieval mystics influenced modern thinking as much as Joachim of Fiore (y'wah-KEEM, FYOHR-ay; c. 1130–c. 1202), an Italian monk of the Cistercian (sis-TUR-shun) order. In 1185, he began writing a commentary on the biblical book of Revelation, which describes the end of the world. To do his writing, he had separated himself even from other monks, but he soon attracted followers, and in 1196 they were recognized as a Cistercian order known as the Florensians.

Late in life, Joachim began to believe that he had been given special insights on history, and began writing these down just before his death in 1202. Though his ideas were radical, and would lead to a number of interpretations that later troubled church leaders, they received the approval of Pope Innocent III.

Joachim's ideas were based on the Christian concept of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Later followers interpreted his view of history to suggest that there were three ages, each consisting of forty-two generations. They were living, they believed, in the Age of the Son, and in about 1260, the world would enter the Age of the Spirit, when love and freedom would reign.

No serious student of the Middle Ages would accept the idea that love and freedom became universal at any point during that era, or at any time since. However, the idea of three ages seeped into the popular consciousness, and is the source of the prevailing notion of three historical ages: ancient, medieval, and modern.

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Richard I

Born 1157
Died 1199

English king

Richard I, better known as Richard the Lionheart or Richard the Lion-Hearted, was one of the Middle Ages' most celebrated and romantic figures. He was immortalized in the tales of Robin Hood and in countless legends, and centuries later in the novel *Ivanhoe* by Sir Walter Scott. Yet when one studies his actual career and character, it is hard to understand why.

Richard deserves a place among England's worst kings, though perhaps he cannot be judged in those terms since he spent all but six months of his ten-year reign away from England. In fact he cared much for France, his homeland, and for his wars in faraway places, most notably the Third Crusade (1189–92). Despite the fact that he was a sometimes talented military leader—one of his few actual merits—the crusade was a disaster, and for Richard it ended with his being kidnapped by a noble he had insulted. He allowed the English people to pay his ransom, a sum that has been estimated as the equivalent of $100 billion in today's dollars.

"I am born of a rank which recognizes no superior but God."

Statement by Richard to Emperor Henry VI, while awaiting his ransom by the English people

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Family feud

Richard was the son of Henry II and **Eleanor of Aquitaine** (see entry), both of whom were French by birth, and throughout his lifetime he remained more emotionally attached to France than to England. Not only did he hold the title "duke of Aquitaine" (Aquitaine was a region in France), but his first language was French, and some historians maintain that he despised his adopted country, England—the country he hoped one day to rule.

Richard was one of four brothers, all of whom fought constantly with one another; thus when his younger brother John (see box in Eleanor of Aquitaine entry) later seized the throne in Richard's absence, he was only carrying on a family tradition. Richard's fortunes were helped by the death of his two older brothers, Henry and Geoffrey, and this left him with only one other significant male rival: his father.

In his early twenties, Richard allied himself with a contemporary, Philip II Augustus of France (ruled 1179–1223) against Henry. By the time he was thirty-two, in 1189, Richard had his father on the run, and chased him across France. Forcing his father to surrender, he demanded that the latter declare him his rightful heir, and when Henry died a few weeks later, Richard mourned little. (It should be noted that Henry was no saint: in 1170, he had ordered the murder of **Thomas à Becket**, Archbishop of Canterbury [see English Scholars, Thinkers, and Writers entry], and had treated Eleanor so badly that she became his sworn enemy.)

Setting off for the crusade

More than ninety years before, armies from Western Europe had subdued parts of the Holy Land in the Middle East, declaring that the birthplace of Christ had finally been placed under Christian rule. In fact Jesus, with his message of love and compassion, would hardly have recognized his alleged followers' "Christian" behavior, which included looting and murder. In the years since, European gains in the Holy Land had slowly melted in the face of a growing Muslim resistance, and in Richard's time the Saracens (as Europeans scornfully called Muslims) had an especially formidable leader in **Saladin** (see entry). The latter had scored a particu-

larly humiliating victory against the crusaders in 1188, and this sparked the Third Crusade.

From the moment he heard about the crusade, Richard wanted to take part; but as with many another crusader, he was motivated more by worldly aims than by spiritual ones. Richard was a gifted if sometimes reckless warrior, and he longed for the glory of battle. Therefore he began setting his affairs in order, preparing to leave. He placed John in charge during his absence, and began raising money wherever he could find it. Richard's upkeep would prove costly for the English people, particularly the country's sole ethnic minority, the Jews. The latter were taxed heavily by Richard, and it was an ill omen for his reign that his coronation on September 3, 1189 sparked a wave of anti-Semitic riots that lasted for half a year.

Finally Richard was prepared to leave for the crusade, in which he would be joined by Philip and the Holy Roman Emperor **Frederick I Barbarossa** (see Holy Roman Emperors entry). The latter drowned on his way to the Holy Land, however, and Duke Leopold of Austria—a man who was destined to figure heavily in Richard's future—took his place.

The journey to Acre

Philip arrived in Palestine ahead of Richard, who had taken a couple of detours on his way. Traveling by sea, he stopped in Sicily to visit the king there, an unwise move that angered Barbarossa's successor, Henry VI, a foe of Sicily; and he also managed to get married. His bride was Berengaria (bayr-un-GAR-ee-uh), daughter of the king of Navarre (nuh-VAHR) in Spain, and this too was an unwise political move. Richard had promised Philip that he would marry a French princess, and Philip rightly saw that intended marriage—kings in the Middle Ages usually married for power, not love—as a means of strengthening his power base.

Richard also took time to fight a war on the island of Cyprus, but finally he arrived in Palestine—just in time to catch a case of malaria that rendered him too sick for battle. Philip was in the middle of a siege, or a sustained assault, on the city of Acre (AHK-ruh), and Richard had to be carried to the siege on a litter, a decorated contraption resembling a stretcher.

By mid-1191, Richard had recovered from his illness sufficiently to lead the troops, and he was rightly given much of the credit when the city fell to the crusaders on July 12. But now it was Philip's turn to get sick, or at least that was what he claimed. He made a hasty retreat to France, where he spread rumors that Richard was living a life of ease in the Holy Land. Worse, he began plotting with John to help the latter take the English throne.

Richard and Saladin

Richard, meanwhile, created more troubles for himself when he insulted Leopold of Austria. In his view, the latter was a mere duke, and not qualified to place his standard, or royal flag, alongside that of a king; therefore Richard ordered that Leopold's standard be flung down into the mud. He would later regret his haughty action, but in the meantime he faced another formidable enemy: Saladin.

Many legends would later circulate concerning these two great leaders, though in fact they never actually met. They fought several battles, and at the city of Arsuf Richard scored a brilliant victory against Saladin's much larger force. He also displayed his ruthlessness in killing Muslim prisoners, reasoning that since they were "infidels" or ungodly people in his view, the same rules did not apply to them as to Christians.

Richard's war in Palestine was as much a matter of negotiation as it was of battle. His dealings were with Saladin's brother Saphadin (sah-fah-DEEN), to whom he took a liking. At one point he even suggested that his sister Joan marry Saphadin, a highly unorthodox move since she was a Christian and he a Muslim. But neither was willing to convert, so the idea was dropped.

A hasty retreat

Like many another crusader, Richard hoped to attack the holy city of Jerusalem, but as he prepared for his assault, he met with a number of problems. His most trusted lieutenant, Conrad of Montferrat (mawn-fay-RAHt), was killed by the Assassins, a fanatical sect of Islamic terrorists. Then an

Errol Flynn as Robin Hood in the 1938 film *The Adventures of Robin Hood.* The Robin Hood tales painted a picture of Richard I as noble and valiant—quite different from reality. *Reproduced by permission of the Kobal Collection.*

epidemic spread among his men, who were not accustomed to the climate in Palestine; and finally, he learned about Philip and John's plot against him. He gave up his plans for the attack, and began preparing to return home.

The Third Crusade had ended in disaster, and Richard, who had managed to make even more enemies among his allies than among the Muslims, needed to make a

hasty retreat. He paid a group of pirates from Romania to smuggle him out, but on the way they were shipwrecked on the Adriatic Sea, which lies between Italy and the Balkan Peninsula. In Vienna, Austria, he became aware that his old foe Duke Leopold was in pursuit, but by then it was too late: Leopold's soldiers had captured him.

Kidnap and ransom

Leopold turned Richard over to Henry VI, the emperor, who had him imprisoned. His kidnappers sent word to England demanding a ransom of 100,000 marks (the German currency) and 200 hostages. If the estimate of $100 billion is to be believed, this would be the equivalent of a foreign power kidnapping the U.S. president and demanding to receive more than half of all the income tax paid by corporations to the federal government, or more than a third of the total defense budget, in the late twentieth century—an almost inconceivable sum.

Richard, however, seems to have never been in doubt that his subjects would pay the ransom, which of course meant raising their already high taxes. "I am born of a rank which recognizes no superior but God," he told the emperor. Meanwhile John tried to seize the throne, but Eleanor prevented him; and Richard, who had made friends with the emperor, ensured that Henry would give no aid to John. Henry was so taken with Richard, in fact, that after receiving the first installment of the ransom money, he released him.

An expensive ruler

One reason for his early release was the fact that Henry knew Richard would make war on the French, enemies of the Holy Roman Empire—and this is in fact what Richard spent the six remaining years of his life doing. He built a huge network of castles across England and France, and when he had trouble raising a fighting force among the knights of England, he employed mercenaries (soldiers who will fight for whoever pays them) to help him.

All of these measures proved extraordinarily costly, and placed additional burdens on his people. Normally the

English king received 30,000 pounds (the English unit of money) in a year—but Richard spent 49,000 pounds one year just on building castles. Richard placed ever-increasing demands for money on England, and these only stopped when he died from a battle wound that developed gangrene.

The legend and the reality

Handsome and dashing, Richard was in some ways ideally suited to become a figure of legend, as he did. But his character could not be more different from that of the noble, valiant knight that the legends made him. It was particularly ironic that he was linked with Robin Hood, the fictional robber who took from the rich and gave to the poor.

Actually, Robin Hood may not have been so fictional: a headstone on the grave of Robert, Earl of Huntington (died 1247), proclaims that he was the "real" Robin Hood. But this Robin Hood was as different from his legend as Richard was from his: Robert stole from both the rich and the poor, and gave to himself.

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Saladin

Born 1138
Died 1193

Kurdish-Egyptian sultan and warrior

Assessing the career of Saladin more than eight centuries after his death, French historian René Grousset echoed a sentiment often expressed in Saladin's own lifetime. In Grousset's opinion, the Muslim leader's devotion to God—without the extremism that sometimes goes with such faith—expressed the virtues of generosity and kindness prized by the Europeans who fought against him in the Third Crusade (1189–92).

Thus Saladin won as many admirers among the "Franks," as the Muslims disdainfully called the European invaders, as he did from people on his own side. Indeed, Saladin came much closer to the ideals of knighthood than most crusaders—including **Richard I** (see entry), with whom he was often associated in later legends.

"It is equally true that his generosity, his piety, devoid of fanaticism, that flower of liberality and courtesy which had been the model of our old chroniclers, won him no less popularity in Frankish Syria than in the lands of Islam."

René Grousset

Arabs, Turks, and Kurds

The center of the Islamic world was and is the Arab lands of the Middle East. Yet when the Western Europeans launched the Crusades (1095–1291), an effort to take control

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

of Palestine from the Muslims, leadership over the region had passed from the Arabs to the Seljuk Turks. By the time of Saladin (SAL-uh-din), however, there was a power vacuum in the Muslim world, and this in part made his rise possible.

Born Salah ud-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub, Saladin—the latter is the name by which the crusaders knew him—was neither an Arab nor a Turk, but a Kurd. Ethnically related to Iranians, the Kurds had no national government of their own, but inhabited a region in the area where the borders of modern-day Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria join. Saladin himself was born in what is now Iraq, but spent much of his youth in Damascus, Syria.

Meets Nur ad-Din

Damascus was one of the principal culture centers of the Muslim world, and it was there that Saladin's father, Ayyub, served as an official. As a youth, Saladin took advantage of the educational opportunities in the great city, and at one point seemed destined to become a scholar of religion and the law. But he was brought up to be a warrior and a leader, and ultimately events would point him in that direction.

At the age of fourteen, Saladin traveled to Aleppo, a major Syrian city, to live with his uncle, Shirkuh (sheer-KOO). Shirkuh held a senior command under Nur ad-Din (noor ed-DEEN; 1118–1174), sultan or king of Syria, who had played a decisive role in defeating the Europeans in the Second Crusade (1147–49). By the age of eighteen, Saladin was working under Shirkuh, but he soon attracted the notice of Nur ad-Din, who took the young man into his trusted inner circle.

Founds Ayyubid dynasty

From 1164 to 1169, when Saladin was in his mid- to late twenties, Egypt was in a state of civil war. The country had long been ruled by a group called the Fatimids (FAT-uh-midz), but as their dynasty had declined, Muslim leaders such as Nur ad-Din sought to extend their control to Egypt. Saladin accompanied the sultan on the Egyptian campaign, gaining valuable experience there.

In 1171, Saladin led Nur ad-Din's forces to victory in Egypt, abolishing the Fatimids and establishing his own Ayyubid (uh-YÜ-bid) dynasty, named after his father. This put him at odds with Nur ad-Din, and the two might have had a serious clash, but in 1174 Saladin's whole world changed. That year marked the death of three men: Nur ad-Din, Shirkuh, and Amalric (uh-MAL-rik; ruled 1163–74), the king of European-controlled Jerusalem.

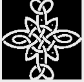
Facing Muslim foes

In his latter days, Shirkuh had served as vizier (viz-EER), or administrator, of Syria, and Saladin now took over this important post. This put him in a very powerful position: by conquering the Fatimids, he controlled not only Egypt—one of the key centers of the Islamic world—but Libya and the western and southern portions of the Arabian Peninsula.

His role in Syria was a more touchy matter, since the country remained under the official control of the caliph, or leader of the Arab Muslims, in Iraq. The once-powerful Abbasid (uh-BAHS-id) caliphate, however, was past its prime, and the caliph rightly regarded Saladin as a threat. Because he lacked real control over his declining empire, however, the caliph was forced to recognize Saladin's power in the region.

The caliph was not Saladin's only foe on the Muslim side. A mysterious group had been formed in Iran in 1090, and their name would eventually enter the languages of Europe as a term for a type of terrorist who kills political leaders: the Assassins. Due to disagreements with Saladin's interpretation of the Islamic faith, the Assassins tried on two occasions, in 1174 and 1175, to take his life.

Saladin survived the attacks, however, and went on to further establish his role as leader by marrying Nur ad-Din's widow, Ismat (ees-MAHT). She remained his favorite wife. Returning to Egypt, he enjoyed a short period of peace, in which the Egyptian economy flourished, and he established several Muslim colleges. By 1177, however, he was on the warpath, beginning a series of engagements that would occupy most of his remaining years.



Leaders of the First Crusade

Saladin was undoubtedly one of the most colorful figures of the Crusades, but many of the most significant European leaders were the knights who fought in the First Crusade (1095–99) forty years before his birth. Among these were the Normans Bohemond I (BOH-ay-maw; c. 1050–1111) and his nephew Tancred (c. 1078–1112).

Son of Robert Guiscard (gee-SKARD), who with his brother Roger controlled much of Italy in the eleventh century, Bohemond had first distinguished himself by helping his father take Rome from Emperor **Henry IV** (see dual entry on Gregory VII and Henry IV) in 1094. Much of what is known about him comes from **Anna Comnena** (see Historians entry), and it is not a pretty sight: in Anna's estimation, Bohemond was greedy and uncouth, interested in nothing but his own advancement. In 1098 he led the crusaders in the capture of Antioch in Syria, and went on to become its ruler, but in the following year he was captured by the Turks while trying to take another city. Released in 1103, he spent his latter years in an unsuccessful campaign against the Byzantines.

After fighting alongside his uncle at Antioch and other cities, Tancred became leader of a succession of cities in the Holy Land. Like many of the victorious crusaders, he amassed a fortune, and also spent his latter days fighting against his fellow Christians, the Byzantines. Historians of the medieval era often portrayed him as a gallant knight, but the facts do not match this idealized image: Tancred's July 1099 assault on Jerusalem was almost unbelievably brutal. He and his troops slaughtered thousands of Muslims, even going so far as to break into mosques and murder the worshipers there.

Another romanticized figure was Godfrey of Bouillon (boo-YAWn; c. 1060–1100), a French nobleman. In 1099, he gained the title "protector of the Holy Sepulchre" (SEP-ul-kur, the place where Christ had supposedly been laid to rest after his crucifixion), and defended the crusaders' gains against an invading force

First moves against the crusaders

A Turkish victory over the Byzantine Empire in 1176 removed a powerful potential adversary from the field, and Saladin resolved that it was time to remove the crusaders—who controlled most of the coastal areas of what is now Israel and Lebanon—for good. After a series of victories, he agreed to a truce with the crusaders in 1179.

Godfrey of Bouillon has been idealized as the perfect Christian knight. *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

from Egypt. It is possible that legends about him—particularly his portrayal as a sincere believer in the stated purpose of the Crusades as a "holy war"—were accurate. In any case, the fact that he was handsome and dashing and died young helped spawn stories about Godfrey as a perfect Christian knight.

Godfrey's brother Baldwin (c. 1058–1118) was certainly not an example of high character. In 1098, he established the first crusader state by double-crossing a fellow Christian, the Armenian prince Thoros, and taking control of his lands. After the death of Godfrey, he set about establishing control over as much of the Holy Land as possible, and this put him into conflict with another Christian, his fellow crusader Tancred. Having earlier married an Armenian princess to secure his control over Thoros's realm, he later left her for a Sicilian countess; but since he had not gotten a divorce from the first wife, his second marriage was annulled, or declared illegal. He died on a raiding expedition into Egypt.

By contrast to most of the knights of the First Crusade, Raymond IV (1042–1105), count of Toulouse (tuh-LOOS) in France, won the admiration of the Byzantines. Anna Comnena wrote that her father, the emperor, even treated Raymond like a son. Raymond also fought against Bohemond, and founded the crusader state of Tripoli in Lebanon.

No doubt he was hoping to buy time for an even more forceful attack; in 1183, however, Muslim forces in several key Syrian cities revolted against him, and this diverted Saladin's attention for some time. Also, in 1185 he contracted a disease (the nature of the illness is not known) that would continue to weaken him for the rest of his life. Yet in 1187, he scored one of the greatest victories of his career.

Victory at Hittin

The site of the battle was Hittin or Hattin, and the leader of the opposing force was a flamboyant knight named Reynaud de Chatillon (ray-NOH duh SHAH-tee-yawn) who had been attacking Saladin's supply caravans. Reynaud was even threatening the Muslim holy city of Mecca, and Saladin's response was to bring an army of more than twenty-five thousand men to Hittin.

Recognizing that in the dry countryside of the Middle East, control of the water supply was the key to victory, Saladin cut the crusaders off from all sources of water. The parched European force camped on the night of July 3, 1187, and all night long Saladin's troops beat war drums and chanted to frighten their enemies.

At dawn, the crusaders found themselves facing the Muslims in the east, and thus the light of the Sun made it hard to see them; furthermore, its rays beating down on their chain-mail armor only added to the Europeans' heat exhaustion. Saladin dealt the crusaders a devastating defeat, killing many—including Reynaud, who was executed—and capturing many others, who were then sold into slavery.

The Second Crusade begins

Despite his harsh treatment of the Christians at Hittin, Saladin was generally far more humane in his treatment of the enemy than the crusaders themselves were. Stories of his kindness abounded: for instance, when his troops captured a Christian baby, he saw to it that the infant was returned to its mother. He had even been kind to one of the crusaders' leaders, King Guy (GEE) of Jerusalem, who he had allowed to go free after capturing him in battle.

Saladin would live to regret this last decision, when Guy launched a siege, or attack, on a Muslim fortress at Acre (AHK-ruh) in what is now Israel. This would in turn spark the Second Crusade, which brought a whole new set of armies into battle under the command of Richard I and King Philip of France.

The greatest setback of Saladin's career was the surrender of Acre after a two-year siege in July 1191. Richard massa-

cred the city's defenders in retaliation for Hittin, then set his eyes on Jerusalem. The result was a fifteen-month conflict between the two leaders, both legendary figures whose battles would inspire many famous tales.

After his death Saladin came to be admired and respected by his own people as well as his enemies.

Fighting Richard

Though Richard never made it to Jerusalem, he gave Saladin fierce competition. Saladin defeated the Christian forces near Arsuf (ar-SOOF) on September 7, 1191, but in the skirmishes that followed, he discovered that few Muslim forces were willing to face the formidable Richard in battle. In the end, he kept Richard away from Jerusalem using the same strategy that had won him victory at Hittin: control of the water supply.

The last battle between Saladin's and Richard's forces occurred at the city of Jaffa in July 1192. Saladin took the city, but Richard swiftly captured it from him, and in the end they signed a truce on September 2. Despite the stories and illustrations depicting the two men in direct combat, Saladin and Richard never met. All of their contact was through Saladin's brother al-Adil (ah-DEEL), who was destined to compete with Saladin's sons to succeed him.

Saladin's last days

Exhausted by war and his illness, Saladin spent his last winter in Damascus. He had not designated a successor, in part because he considered his second son a more capable leader than his eldest, who would normally have taken his place. He died on March 4, 1193, and immediately thereafter, a civil war broke out between the sons and al-Adil, who emerged victorious in 1201.

Buried in Damascus, Saladin was not immediately recognized as a hero in the Muslim world. In part this was because of the caliphs and others jealous of his position, but in time he would gain wide respect in the lands he had defended. Ironically, his greatest admirers in the time immediately following his death were his former enemies in Europe.

So great was the Europeans' respect for their Muslim foe that some of them suspected he was secretly a Christian. Later **Dante** (see entry), in his *Inferno,* would picture Saladin spending eternity in a place set aside for godly non-Christians.

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Shotoku Taishi

Born 573
Died 621

Japanese prince and regent

"The emperor of the country where the sun rises addresses a letter to the emperor of the country where the sun sets."

Opening lines of first Japanese diplomatic message to China, c. 607

Portrait: Shotoku Taishi (center).

Like **Clovis** in France (see entry) and Toghril Beg in Turkey (see box), the Japanese prince Shotoku Taishi (shoh-TOH-koo ty-EE-shee) can rightly be called "the father of his country." As regent or advisor to the empress, he held the true political power in Japan, and exercised it to initiate a series of reforms that affected virtually every aspect of Japanese life.

In the realm of law and government, Shotoku is credited as the author of the "Seventeen-Article Constitution," a document that provided the governing principles of Japanese society. These principles were a combination of Japan's native Shinto religion and two belief systems, Buddhism and Confucianism, imported from China. The widespread acceptance of those "foreign" ideas, and their incorporation into Japanese culture, can largely be attributed to Shotoku, who remains one of Japan's most highly esteemed historical figures.

Buddhism and other Chinese influences

Japan had been inhabited for thousands of years before it emerged as a unified nation under the leadership of

the Yamato (yuh-MAH-toh; "imperial") family during the Kofun period (250–552). The country's actual written history began, however, in 405, when the Japanese adopted the Chinese written language, which they would use for many centuries before developing a version more suited to the Japanese spoken language.

The influence of China, a much older and at that time more advanced civilization, was strong from the beginning. So, too, was the influence of Korea, which in addition to its own traditions had incorporated many aspects of Chinese civilization. One of these was the religion of Buddhism, which first arrived in Japan when the king of Korea sent a set of Buddhist scrolls and an image of the Buddha to the Japanese imperial court in 552.

The Buddha, or Siddhartha Gautama (si-DAR-tuh GOW-tuh-muh), had originated the religion in India more than a thousand years earlier; but as it made its way northward and eastward, the form of Buddhism had changed considerably to accommodate the new lands where it was received. Nonetheless, many in the Japanese ruling classes reacted against the new religion, which they considered a threat to the traditional Japanese faith of Shinto. Prince Shotoku Taishi, a powerful member of the imperial court, would exert the deciding influence, however, helping to incorporate Buddhism into the Japanese way of life.

Regent to the empress

As is the case with many leaders who seem larger than life in retrospect, Shotoku's biography is filled with stories that can only be described as legends. For instance, the *Nihon shoki,* Japan's first important work of history, reports that his mother gave birth to him without labor pains. This story was probably adapted from tales concerning the Buddha's birth; and as with the Buddha, it was said that the young prince—whose name was originally Umayado—could speak from birth.

It is known that Shotoku was the son of the emperor Tachibana and the princess Anahobe (ah-nah-HOH-bee), but other than that, few facts about his early life are clear. The first relatively certain date in Shotoku's personal history was

593. The year before, the emperor Sushun had been murdered by a member of the powerful Soga clan, and in 593 he was replaced by the empress Suiko (soo-EE-koh; ruled 593–628), Shotoku's aunt.

The Japanese emperors and empresses possessed plenty of outward symbols of power, as the splendor of their courts illustrated; but there have been very few imperial leaders in Japanese history who possessed *actual* power. The real influence lay in the position of regent, a person who rules in place of the emperor, and Shotoku's career began when his aunt bestowed on him this distinguished office.

Toghril Beg

Toghril Beg (tawg-REEL; c. 990–1063) founded the Seljuk dynasty, the first Turkish ruling house to conquer the land today known as Turkey. Until Toghril's time, the region was known as Anatolia, and was part of the Byzantine Empire.

The term "Turk" describes a number of related peoples who came from a region in Central Asia to the north and west of China. They began moving westward in the 500s, and by the 900s the Seljuks—named after Toghril's grandfather—had emerged as a particularly powerful Turkish nation.

In 1040, Toghril helped his brother conquer what is now Afghanistan, but he kept moving westward into Anatolia. By 1040, he had conquered large areas of what is now Turkey—much to the chagrin of the Byzantines, who hoped to drive them out.

But the Seljuks were there to stay, and by 1060 Toghril had assumed leadership over most of the Muslim world. Seljuk power declined in the 1200s, and the Seljuks were later replaced by the long-lasting Ottoman Empire.

Shotoku's reforms

Among the many reforms initiated by Shotoku was the elevation of the emperor to the role of a god, or *kami;* but again, this was only symbolic, rather than real, power. His association of divine and imperial roles was but one of the many ideas Shotoku borrowed from China, in the process adapting them to Japan's own culture.

Shotoku extended the influence both of Buddhism and of Confucianism. The latter was the system of thought developed by the Chinese scholar Confucius (551–479 B.C.), who emphasized social harmony and respect for authorities. Out of the Confucian system in China had grown an extensive civil service—that is, a network of government officials—and Shotoku adopted these concepts as well.

In 604, Shotoku established his "Seventeen-Article Constitution." A constitution is a written document containing the laws of a nation, and is typically divided into articles,

or individual statements of principle. Shotoku's constitution, however, is quite different from those used by nations such as the United States in modern times.

Though the constitution had the force of law, its text reads more like a set of guidelines as to how the people should live their lives. The opening statement, which embodied Confucian principles, set the tone: "Harmony is to be valued, and an avoidance of wanton opposition to be honored." The constitution also condemned vices such as gluttony, envy, and flattery.

Land of the Rising Sun

It is fitting that as father of his country, Shotoku would be credited with coining the phrase by which Japan is known throughout the world: "Land of the Rising Sun." A form of that expression appeared in the opening lines of a diplomatic letter sent to China, apparently under Shotoku's authorship, in about 607. Later the Chinese would call the country to the east *Jihpen,* meaning "origins of the sun."

That diplomatic letter served as an introduction for a group of diplomats sent from Japan to China. This mission was a symbol that Japan had arrived, and that it was prepared to initiate contact with the most powerful and influential land in all of East Asia. Many Japanese would remain wary of Chinese ways, however, fearful that these would dilute traditional Japanese beliefs; but Shotoku was not one of the fearful ones.

Leaving his mark

Shotoku, who built many Buddhist temples—including one at Horyuji (HOHR-yoo-jee), built in 607, that is the world's oldest wooden structure—left his mark both literally and figuratively on Japan. Symbolic of the strong impression made by the seventh-century prince is the fact that in modern times his face appears on the widely circulated 10,000-yen note (equivalent to about $75 today).

As with the beginning of his life, little is known about the end. In his last years, he was working on a national history, which may have provided an early source for the *Nihon shoki.*

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T'ai Tsung

Born 599
Died 649

Chinese emperor, co-founder of the T'ang dynasty

Along with his father, T'ai Tsung is credited as the co-founder of the T'ang dynasty (618–907), one of China's greatest ruling houses. The T'ang were noted for the fairness of their government, which contrasted with the more authoritarian region of the preceding Sui dynasty. Under T'ang rule, China's borders reached their greatest extent in history up to that time, and approached the Confucian model of peace and harmony that the Chinese had long prized.

"If I diminish expenses, lighten the taxes, employ only honest officials, so that the people have clothing enough, that will do more to abolish robbery than the employment of the severest punishments."

Statement to his ministers

The founding of the T'ang dynasty

Chinese emperors are known by a title assigned only after their death; thus during his lifetime, T'ai Tsung (dy-DZAWNG) was known as Li Shih-min (ZHUR-min). His father, Li Yüan (yee-WAHN; 565–635) would reign from 618 to 626 as the first T'ang (TAHNG) emperor, Kao Tsu (gow-DZÜ).

Ten years before the birth of T'ai Tsung, Yang Chien (also known by his reign title, **Wen Ti**; see entry) ended centuries of chaos in China by founding the Sui (SWEE) dynasty, in which Li Yüan served as an official. The Li family, like

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Granger Collection Ltd.*

many Chinese, embraced the principles of Confucianism, a belief system with roots in ancient times that stressed respect for persons in authority. In spite of this, Li Yüan and his sons would lead a revolt against the rule of Yang Chien's son Yang Ti (DEE), who ruled from 604 to 618.

A military governor assigned to protect China's borders against the Turks in the north, Li Yüan formed an alliance with these one-time enemies and marched on the Sui capital at Ch'ang-an, known today as Xian (shee-AHN), in 617. He proclaimed a new dynasty, and became ruler in the following year. By then he was in his early fifties, and he designated his eldest son Li Chien-ch'eng as his heir. His second son, however, had other plans.

Sculpture of military officials from the time of the T'ang dynasty. Under T'ai Tsung's rule and throughout the T'ang dynasty, the arts flourished in China.
Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.

T'ai Tsung establishes his rule

That second son was T'ai Tsung, who in 624 led a brilliant operation against another Turkish group—the eastern Turks, not the allies who had helped them come to power. T'ai Tsung next turned on his brothers, arranging an ambush in which both Li Chien-ch'eng and a younger brother, Li Yüan-chi, were killed.

It appears that the father made little effort to stop T'ai Tsung's rise to power, and soon the father became the next target. In 626, T'ai Tsung forced him to abdicate, or step down from the throne, and the reign of T'ai Tsung began in January of the following year. Li Yüan or Kao Tsu lived eight more years, but he no longer held power.

An efficient civil service

Despite the treachery that brought him to power—and in spite of his personality, which was haughty and quick

to anger—T'ai Tsung proved a just and fair ruler. His father had already instituted a series of reforms and continued others from the Sui era, and T'ai Tsung greatly expanded the scope of those reforms.

A cornerstone of Sui and T'ang rule was its three-part administrative system, with the government divided into branches for making, reviewing, and carrying out policy. T'ai Tsung allowed the review board and policy-making branches to give input on his decisions and make suggestions, an unusual step in a country where emperors enjoyed near-absolute power.

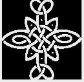
In line with his Confucian upbringing, which placed a strong emphasis on the role of civil servants or government workers, T'ai Tsung made sure to surround himself with highly capable men. He even hired officials who had served his former rivals, and took steps to ensure that advancement was on the basis of merit and ability, not family relations or social standing.

As a consequence, the T'ang government was one of the most efficient the world has ever known. T'ai Tsung placed monitoring stations along the highways and waterways of the empire, and there officials oversaw taxation, reviewed local grievances, policed commercial activities, and even provided accommodations for travelers.

A flourishing empire

Aware that the people of China had long suffered under oppressive government, T'ai Tsung made land reforms, redistributing property to reflect changes in the size of peasant families. In some areas he reduced taxes, and though taxes on farmers remained high, the peasants began to feel a sense of ownership over their lands, since T'ai Tsung's reforms had seen to it that their property could no longer be seized by feudal lords.

As a result of these reforms, the economy of T'ang China thrived, and economic exchanges with other lands increased. Technology flourished as well, as the Chinese made improvements in printing and paper production. The T'ang government also greatly extended the canal network put in place by the Sui, thus aiding the transport of goods from north to south in a land where most major rivers flowed eastward.



Two Other Dynasties, Two Other Families

A dynasty is a group of people, usually but not always a family, which maintains power over a period of time, and China's history before the twentieth century is divided according to dynasty. During the Middle Ages, the country had five notable dynasties: the Sui (589–618), founded by Wen Ti; the T'ang (618–907), of which T'ai Tsung was a co-founder; the Sung (SOONG; 960–1279); the Mongol-dominated Yüan (1264–1368), founded by **Kublai Khan** (see entry); and the Ming (1368–1644).

In most cases a single family maintained power throughout a given dynasty—yet the name of the ruling house was seldom the same as that of the family: for example, the controlling family of the Sung dynasty was named Chao (ZHOW). The founder, born Chao K'uang-yin (KWAHNG-yin; 927–976), was a military leader whose troops declared him emperor in 960.

Like many dynasties before, the Sung were faced constantly with enemies at their borders. For the most part they dealt with this problem by paying tribute, or money, to hostile forces. This tribute proved costly, and the powerful minister Wang An-shih (1021–1086) put in place a set of reforms to deal with the economic problems caused by the situation.

Wang An-shih arranged loans to farmers, established pay for government labor (which had been infrequent before his time), and reorganized the system of property taxes to make them more fair. This put him on a collision course with another key official, **Ssu-ma Kuang** (see Historians entry), who favored the old way of doing things. The two men remained in conflict for much of their lives, and represented two opposing forces in Chinese government.

Thanks in large part to Wang An-shih, the Sung developed a government at least as efficient as that of the T'ang, but unwise foreign policy decisions forced the tenth Sung emperor, Chao Kou (1107–1187) to move the capital to southern China in 1127. This latter phase of the

Having built his power through the military, as ruler T'ai Tsung established a reputation as a scholar and a patron of the arts and sciences. During his reign and afterward, the arts flourished, and the T'ang dynasty became memorable for the many painters, poets, and philosophers it produced. It also marked a high point in historical scholarship, and T'ai Tsung encouraged the writing of several histories chronicling dynasties up to his own time.

Sung dynasty is known as the Southern Sung, and despite the problems with which China was faced, it saw a great flowering in culture and the arts. Ultimately, however, the Sung would succumb to Mongol invasion, which brought an end to the reign of the eighteenth Sung emperor, Chao Ping (1271–1279), an eight-year-old boy killed by the Mongols.

The Yüan dynasty marked the first time China had been ruled by foreigners, and the Chinese chafed under Mongol rule, biding their time until a strong enough leader rose to overthrow them. That leader was Chu Yüan-chang (ZHÜ yü-AHN-zhang; 1328–1398), an extraordinary man: born a peasant, he became a Buddhist monk before joining a rebel army and ultimately establishing a dynasty that would rule for more than 250 years.

Few of his descendants, however, were his equal—except Chu Ti, better known by his reign title of Yung-lo (1360–1424). Yung-lo sent a series of naval expeditions under the command of Cheng Ho (see box in Henry the Navigator entry) to lands as far away as East Africa, and in 1421 moved the capital from Nanjing (nahn-ZHEENG) in the interior to Beijing (bay-ZHEENG) on the coast. At Beijing, which remains the Chinese capital today, he built a palace five miles in circumference, containing some 2,000 rooms where more than 10,000 servants attended the imperial family. This palace came to be known as the "Forbidden City," meaning that only the emperor and the people directly around him were allowed to enter.

Built to illustrate the boundless extent of Ming power, the Forbidden City became—aside from the Great Wall—the best-known symbol of China in the eyes of the world. However, the costs associated with its construction, as well as other ambitious projects under Yung-lo's reign, weakened the Ming dynasty. Like the T'ang and Sung before it, and indeed like most dynasties in Chinese history, the Ming's brief days of glory would be followed by a long period of decline.

Expansion of China's boundaries

Whereas China had often been cut off to outside influences, under T'ai Tsung's rule a number of foreigners settled within the empire. They brought with them new religions, some of which were previously unknown in China. Buddhism, introduced from India centuries before, was allowed to spread. Likewise the Chinese were exposed to faiths of even

The imperial palace known as the Forbidden City was built during the Ming dynasty, almost 800 years after T'ai Tsung's death. *Reproduced by permission of Susan D. Rock.*

more distant origin: Islam, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Nestorian Christianity, and even Judaism.

Foreign settlement went hand-in-hand with expansion of China's boundaries. On the one hand, T'ai Tsung centralized the government, meaning that he brought as much power under his control as possible. But by filling key government positions with men from various places around the empire, he ensured stability among the various peoples under Chinese rule. This in turn gave him a free hand to undertake several successful military operations against enemies on the borders.

In 630 T'ai Tsung drove out the eastern Turks, against whom he had earlier distinguished himself in battle. He then turned against a western group of Turks, some of his father's former allies, forcing them westward toward Persia and thus opening up the Silk Road, an important trade route. At the empire's southern borders, he defeated the Tibetans in battle,

Emperor Tenchi and Fujiwara Kamatari

To a lesser extent than China, which influenced it greatly during the early medieval period, Japan was prone to occasional revolts that brought sweeping changes in its power structure. One such revolt occurred in 645, led by Crown Prince Nakano Oe (OH-ee; 626–671) and an influential aristocrat named Nakatomi Kamatari (614–669).

At that time, the Soga clan dominated Japanese affairs, but their power had declined after the time of Prince **Shotoku Taishi** (see entry). Less than a quarter-century after Shotoku's death, the two men saw their opportunity, and conspired to murder the leader of the Sogas. They did not take power immediately, however: only in 662 did Nakano Oe assume the throne as Emperor Tenchi.

His co-conspirator also gained a new name in the course of the revolt: by decree of Emperor Tenchi, Kamatari's family became known as Fujiwara. The real power in Japan usually resided in important figures behind the throne, and for many centuries thereafter, the Fujiwara family would control Japan.

Under Fujiwara Kamatari, as he became known, the imperial government put in place the Taika Reforms (TY-kah). Modeled on the policies of T'ai Tsung and other leaders of T'ang China, the Taika Reforms strengthened the power of the central government and established a system of provincial administrators who answered to the capital. The Fujiwara clan would maintain power for several centuries, until the beginning of the Kamakura period (1185–1333).

then formed an alliance by arranging marriages between Tibetan and T'ang leaders.

The decline of T'ai Tsung and his empire

An operation against Korea in 644 proved less successful, and in coming years T'ai Tsung's successors would try again and again—with varying degrees of success—to subdue Korea. The successes of the T'ang dynasty, however, would continue through the reign of many emperors, including China's sole female ruler, **Wu Ze-tian** (see entry).

Under Wu Ze-tian's grandson, Hsüan Tsung (shwee-AHND-zoong; ruled 712–56), the T'ang dynasty would reach

its height, but then it began a slow decline. The causes of this decline included forces from outside—the defeat of the T'ang by Arab armies at Talas in Central Asia—and inside. Most notable among the latter were the palace intrigues and revolts associated with Hsüan Tsung's concubine, Yang Kuei-fei (see box in Irene of Athens entry), and her lover An Lu-shan.

T'ai Tsung's own life would mirror that of the dynasty he founded: in his later years he, like the empire, went into a state of decline. Having spent most of his rule as a careful money manager, in his late forties he became absorbed in the pleasures of imperial life, building palaces and lavishing funds on his wives and even his horses and dogs. Likewise he went against his earlier policy of listening to wise counselors, and often ignored the advice of his trusted government ministers. During the failed campaign against Korea, he contracted a disease, and began to wither away, dying in May 649.

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Tamerlane

Born 1336
Died 1405

Mongol-Turkic conqueror

Though not related to **Genghis Khan** (see entry), Tamerlane came from similar Central Asian roots and saw himself as a successor to the great conqueror. He set out to build an empire of his own, ravaging an area from modern-day Turkey to India, and from Russia to Syria. Along the way, he left a trail of death and mayhem, and though he made significant cultural contributions in his capital at Samarkand, these were outweighed by the misfortunes he dealt his own fellow Mongols and Muslims.

"Timur ... aspired to rival Chinghis [Genghis Khan]. In the extent of his conquests and the ferocity of his behavior, he did; he may even have been as great a leader of men. None the less, he lacked the statesmanship of his predecessors."

J. M. Roberts, The Age of Diverging Traditions

Mongols and Turks

Tamerlane is actually the name by which he became known to Europeans, who were largely spared the force of his wrath. Actually, his name was Timur (tee-MOOR), and an injury earned him the nickname Timur Lenk or "Timur the Lame," which became Tamerlane in European versions of his story.

He grew up in the region of the Chagatai khanate (chah-guh-TY KAHN-et), which included modern-day Uzbek-

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

istan and other former Soviet republics in Central Asia. A century before his time, Genghis Khan had conquered the territory, which was named after one of his sons.

Tamerlane, who was born in 1336 near the city of Samarkand (sah-mur-KAHND) in what is now Uzbekistan, descended from the same Mongol stock as Genghis, though they were not related. His lineage was also partly Turkic, reflecting the heritage of other nomadic peoples who had swept over the region in centuries past. As a Muslim, he was thus related by both blood and religion to the Turks of the Ottoman Empire, who would later become some of his many victims.

Winning control of Chagatai

In his early career, Tamerlane developed a reputation as a petty warlord and marauder, and gathered around him a following of loyal men. Beginning in 1361, when he was twenty-five years old, he set out to take advantage of the Mongols' fading control over Chagatai and make himself ruler. At first unsuccessful, he did become recognized as emir (eh-MEER), a Muslim title for a political and military leader, over his own Barlas tribe.

In 1364, Tamerlane allied himself with a neighboring emir, Husayn, and the two set out to win control of the khanate. To seal their alliance, he married one of Husayn's sisters; but soon after the two men conquered Chagatai late in 1364, a power struggle ensued, with Husayn challenging Tamerlane's claims on leadership.

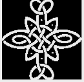
During his military campaigns in this phase, Tamerlane sustained injuries to his right shoulder, hand, and thigh, which resulted in his nickname of "Timur the Lame." It is hard to imagine that anyone dared call him this to his face, because he had already established a reputation as a merciless warlord.

In 1370, Tamerlane killed off Husayn and took four of his wives. One of these was the daughter of a former Chagatai khan, and by marrying her he could finally claim a link to the great Genghis. Thereafter he used the title Kurgan (koor-GAHN), meaning "son-in-law" of the Khan.

Building Samarkand and his empire

Tamerlane did not necessarily care for the trappings of power, as long as he had the real thing, and therefore he continued to rule as emir while a puppet leader held the title of khan. Secure in his control over the khanate, he set about turning Samarkand into a glorious capital, building palaces and forts. He also supported the arts in his city, which became a cultural center for the region; but Tamerlane, who was most interested in the art of war, did not stay around to enjoy his city's cultural offerings.

In the 1380s, he set out to conquer neighboring lands, including what is now Afghanistan, much of Persia (modern Iran), Azerbaijan, and Kurdistan, a mountainous region that runs from Turkey to Iran in the north. He was methodical in building his empire: in each new region, he would demand that the local rulers submit, and if they refused, he would deal them such a severe blow that they eventually relented.



Vlad Tepes

Depending on what side one happened to be on, Tamerlane was either a great hero or a criminal and a murderer. To an even greater extent, this was true of Vlad Tepes (VLAHD TSEH-pesh; c. 1431–1476), sometimes known as Vlad the Impaler. Vlad was the prince of Walachia (wuh-LAYK-ee-uh) in what is now Romania, and his father was a man so cruel he was nicknamed "the Devil," or Vlad Dracul (drah-KOOL). Together the two formed the basis for the Dracula legend, popularized by Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula,* and by countless movies.

Caught in the middle of a struggle between Hungarian and Turkish forces, Vlad Tepes at first aligned himself with the Turks before changing sides to support the Hungarians in 1456. His actions over the next six years earned him a reputation as a dedicated freedom fighter in some quarters; more people, however, chose to view him as what in modern times would be called a homicidal maniac.

Declaring war on the Germans, also a force in the region, Vlad set out on a campaign of wholesale slaughter in which thousands of men, women, and children in the region of Transylvania died. Vlad's chosen instruments of murder were long stakes with which he and his soldiers skewered, or impaled, the bodies of their victims; hence his nickname.

By 1462, his own nobles had had enough of Vlad, and they deposed him. He escaped to Hungary, where his former allies—no doubt afraid of what he might do to *them*—placed him under house arrest. He lived that way for twelve years; then he returned to Walachia, only to be killed shortly afterward in battle. After his death, legends of his cruelty circulated, and as the tale changed hands, newer and more ghastly dimensions were added, including tales that Vlad drank blood. In time the myth would obscure the reality of Vlad's actual career, which was gruesome enough.

The Golden Horde

Tamerlane's goal seems to have been to plunge into Anatolia (now Turkey), but in the mid-1380s he was diverted by affairs to the north. One of his former associates had gained control of the Golden Horde, as the vast Mongol lands in Russia were called. He then began threatening Tamerlane's newly acquired lands in Iran and the Caucasus (a region to the south of Russia, including Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia).

Forced to return to his home base to defend it, in 1390 Tamerlane defeated his enemies in the Golden Horde.

This would lead to their permanent weakening, and a century later, the Russians would destroy the last remnants of their former rulers' empire. As for Tamerlane, in 1392 he began a new phase of conquest known as the Five Years' Campaign, in which he subdued virtually all of Iran.

Wide-ranging campaigns

One reason why Tamerlane's conquests did not last far beyond his lifetime was the fact that he seldom stayed in one place long enough to consolidate his rule. He would rush into an area, savage it, and then plunge off in a completely different direction, almost literally to the other end of the known world.

In 1398 he advanced on India, burning and looting the city of Delhi, but a year later he was in Syria, fighting against the Turkish Mamluks (mam-LOOKZ) and Ottomans. The Mamluks controlled Egypt, and the more powerful Ottomans held a large empire centered on Turkey. In 1402, he did battle with forces commanded by the Ottoman sultan Bajazed (by-yuh-ZEED). Tamerlane captured Bajazed and held him for ransom, but the ruler was so humiliated that he committed suicide.

Rather than stay in Turkey and win more territory, Tamerlane headed east again to Samarkand in 1404. He rested up for a few months, then in the fall moved out again, this time with an even more ambitious plan in mind: the conquest of China. On the way, however, he became ill, and died in February 1405 at the age of sixty-nine.

As could have been predicted, the aftermath of Tamerlane's rule saw the loss of many territories by his successors. Nonetheless, years later, a descendant named Babur (BAH-boor, "Lion"; 1483–1530) would establish a long-lasting dynasty in India.

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Thomas Aquinas

Born c. 1225
Died 1274

Italian philosopher and theologian

"Human salvation demands the divine disclosure of truths surpassing reason."

Summa theologica

The writings of Thomas Aquinas represented the pinnacle of the medieval school of thought known as Scholasticism. The latter, which had its roots in the work of **Abelard** (see entry) and others, attempted to bring together Christian faith, classical learning, and knowledge of the world. Thomas Aquinas wrote his *Summa theologica* to address new ideas that seemed to threaten the stability of Christian faith. As an inheritor of the Scholastic tradition, Thomas and his work can be seen on the one hand as the culmination of many centuries of thinking. Yet other ways of looking at the world were also emerging in Thomas's time and afterward, and thus his adherence to the Scholastic line can also be viewed as a defense of an old way of life against change.

The influence of Frederick II

Born of nobility in the Italian town of Aquino—hence his name, Aquinas (uh-KWYN-us)—Thomas was the youngest son of a count who descended from the Normans. His father had once fought in the armies of Emperor **Frederick II** (see

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Holy Roman Emperors entry), who like many another Holy Roman emperor was in conflict with the reigning pope. Hoping to ensure their good standing with the church, his parents placed the five-year-old Thomas in the Benedictine monastery at Monte Cassino, founded by St. Benedict (see box in Innocent III entry).

Things did not quite work out as planned: the emperor's conflict with the pope led to the latter excommunicating Frederick, or expelling him from the church, in 1239, when Thomas was fourteen. As a result, Frederick threatened Monte Cassino, and Thomas had to change schools. He moved to Naples in southern Italy, where he enrolled in what was to become that city's university.

The university system of Europe was in its earliest days at that time, and a number of new ideas were in the air. Most of these "new" concepts were actually old ones, inherited from the ancient Greeks and translated by Arab thinkers such as **Averroës** (see entry). The latter's writings had a great impact on the school at Naples, not only because it was relatively close to the Arab world, but also because Frederick (who had founded the school in 1224) encouraged the introduction of Islamic as well as Christian ideas there.

Albertus Magnus and the bellowing ox

Though he had been trained as a Benedictine, Thomas found himself drawn by the order founded by St. Dominic (see box in St. Francis of Assisi entry). In 1244, he joined the Dominicans against the protests of his mother, now a widow, and his brothers. The following year found him studying with the Dominicans at the University of Paris, where he came under the influence of Albertus Magnus (c. 1200–1280).

The latter, whose name means "Albert the Great," was considered the greatest scholar of his time, though he has been overshadowed by Thomas, his more famous pupil. Albert made a prophecy about Thomas, who had received the nickname "the dumb ox" from his classmates. Obviously it was an uncomplimentary expression; however, it referred not to Thomas's intellect—which was clearly superior to that of most—but to his physical body, which was tall, fat, and slow.

Albert, however, remarked that the bellow of this ox would be heard around the world.

Begins his life's work

Thomas studied with Albert at the latter's home in Cologne, now a city in western Germany, from 1248 to 1252; then he returned to Paris to earn his degree in theology, or the study of questions relating to God and religion. Like graduate students now, Thomas served as a teacher of undergraduates while earning his own graduate degree; then in 1256, he obtained his license to teach theology as a full-time instructor at the university.

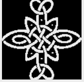
As an undergraduate, Thomas had written a commentary of a kind typical among the works of university students at that time. Next he produced the *Summa contra gentiles* (c. 1258–64), a book designed to aid Dominican missionaries in Spain and North Africa who got into religious arguments with Jews and Muslims, or with Christians who had adopted heretical ideas (ideas contrary to church teachings).

In 1261, Thomas moved to Rome to serve as a lecturer at the papal court, and while there, he began writing his most important work, *Summa theologica* (c. 1265–73). Part one, completed during this time, concerned the existence and attributes, or characteristics, of God. He then returned to Paris, just in time to become involved in a brewing controversy.

Caught in a controversy

The influence of Averroës had become widespread among scholars and students at the University of Paris. The Arab philosopher held the viewpoint that one can use both reason and faith without the two contradicting one another. This could also be interpreted to mean that reason sometimes takes greater importance than religious faith—an idea the church considered dangerous.

Thomas argued against one of the leading promoters of Averroës's ideas, but Thomas too came under suspicion because in his writing he reflected the influence of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle. (At that time, church authorities were still skeptical of philosophical ideas that came from the



Some Notable Thinkers and Scholars of the Middle Ages

The pages of medieval history are filled with a number of scholars and thinkers who are noteworthy, even if not well known. An example is Dionysius Exiguus (dy-oh-NISH-us ek-SIJ-yoo-uhs; c. 500–c. 560), a Byzantine monk and scholar from what is now Russia. Though his name is not exactly a household word, perhaps it should be: Dionysius originated the system of dating events from the birth of Christ. Because he miscalculated the date of Christ's birth in relation to the founding of Rome, his system resulted in error, illustrated by the fact that Christ himself was probably born in 6 B.C. Also, Dionysius lacked the concept of zero, meaning that in his system, the next year after 1 B.C. was A.D. 1. For this reason, as a number of commentators noted in 1999 and years following, the third millennium began not on January 1, 2000, but on January 1, 2001.

Another fascinating figure was Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636), a Spanish priest who wrote a number of encyclopedic works. Isidore was considered one of the most learned men of his time, and the fact that his writings are filled with myths and superstitions says a great deal about the poor quality of learning in the early Middle Ages.

Soon after Isidore's time, Spain was overrun by Muslims, and this ironically made it a center for Jewish culture and scholarship. Among the important Jewish intellectual figures produced by Muslim Spain was Hisdai ibn Shaprut (kis-DY ib'n shahp-RÜT; c. 915–c. 975), court physician to Caliph Abd ar-Rahman III, whose support of scholarship helped initiate a golden age of Hebrew learning in Spain. One of the beneficiaries of his efforts was Samuel ha-Nagid (hah-NAH-geed; 993–c. 1055), who also held an important position in the Muslim government. Samuel produced a commentary on the Talmud, or Jewish scriptures, that continued to be influential for many years. Shlomo Yitzhaqi (sh'loh-MOH yits-HAHK-y; 1040–1105) also wrote

ancient Greeks, since they were pagans and not Christians.) Thomas did indeed maintain that reason can aid the believer in discovering certain truths about God, an idea he put to use in several proofs of God's existence; but at all times Thomas saw reason as secondary to faith.

Completion of the *Summa theologica*

By 1271 or 1272, Thomas had completed the second portion of his *Summa theologica,* concerning questions of hap-

commentaries on the Talmud. Better known by the nickname Rashi (RAH-shee), this French rabbi was one of the few notable Jewish figures in Christian Europe.

As Europe emerged from the Dark Ages into the gradual rebirth of learning that attended the eleventh century, it produced a number of figures who contributed to literature, philosophy, and the arts. One of these was a woman, Hrotsvitha von Gandersheim (raws-VEE-tah; GAHN-durs-hym; c. 935–1000). Regarded as the first woman to write poetry in German, she helped revive the art of drama, which had been dormant for many years due to its association with pagan Rome. She wrote six comedies based on the work of the ancient Roman playwright Terence, but embodying Christian ideas.

Another notable scholar was a pope, Sylvester II (945–1003; ruled 999–1003), born in France with the name Gerbert. Formerly a teacher, he studied mathematics and the natural sciences, and wrote a number of works, including textbooks and two books on mathematics. He also influenced young **Otto III** (see Holy Roman Emperors entry) in his dreams of a unified empire.

Among the areas that Gerbert promoted was music, which would be heavily affected by the work of Guido of Arezzo (GWEE-doh; ar-RED-zoh; c. 991–1050). Guido developed the rudiments of the system of musical notation in use today, particularly the four-line staff.

This list of notable scholars began with a Byzantine writer, and ends with one: Michael Psellus (SEL-us; 1018–c. 1078). An important official in the empire's government, he also served as professor of philosophy in Constantinople. Michael was widely known for his encyclopedic knowledge and his promotion of classical studies, particularly those involving the ancient philosopher Plato. His most well known work was the *Chronographia,* a history of the Byzantine Empire from 976 to 1078.

piness, sin, law, and grace. Though he may have moved slowly, he was a man of boundless energy who, it was said, employed as many as four secretaries at a time so that he could dictate to them. The completed *Summa theologica,* the greatest of his books, though only one of several, ran to about two million words—the equivalent of about 8,000 double-spaced, typewritten sheets.

Having returned to Naples in 1272 to set up a Dominican study house attached to the university there, Thomas went to work on the third part of the *Summa,* this

one concerning the identity of Christ and the meaning of his work. On December 6, 1273, his own work suddenly stopped, and he explained to others that everything he had done seemed meaningless. Whether he suffered a physical breakdown, experienced a spiritual insight, or simply ran out of ideas is not known.

His health failing, Thomas in 1274 set out to attend a church council in France. He was struck on the head by a branch falling from a tree over the road, and may have suffered a concussion. He stopped at a castle belonging to his niece to recover, and soon afterward was taken to a monastery, where he died on March 7, 1274.

Doctor of the Church

It is ironic that Thomas would later be regarded as a symbol of Catholic rigidity. At the time of his death, his work was under question by the church, which took issue with his attempts to reconcile reason and faith. Four decades later, however, inquiries were under way to canonize him, or declare him a saint. He was canonized in 1323, and in 1567 named a Doctor of the Church, or one of the leading church fathers.

As for the viewpoint that Thomas represented an attempt to hold on the past, this idea fails to take into account the actual conditions of his time. Though forces were at work that would ultimately challenge the absolute power of the church—forces that included the rise of nation-states, international trade, and a growing attitude of scientific curiosity—the church was still very much in control, and it still tended to regard new ideas as heresy. Thus Thomas was very much on the cutting edge when he asserted that it was possible to use reason and still remain firm in dedication to God. Throughout his career, he walked a fine line, and he managed to do so without losing his integrity either as a man of faith or as a thinker.

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Wen Ti

Born 541
Died 604

Chinese emperor,
founder of Sui dynasty

Founder of the short-lived Sui dynasty, Wen Ti (or Yang Chien, as he was born) is little known outside of China, but he was a highly important figure in that nation's history. He reunified the empire after three centuries of chaos, establishing a strong central government and a set of reforms that paved the way for the T'ang dynasty of **T'ai Tsung** (see entry). Wen Ti was also a ruthless figure, a man who did not shrink back from killing his own grandson, and as a leader he was equally severe.

Seizing power over the Chou

In many ways, China can be compared to the Roman Empire. As Rome had flourished under strong rulers during ancient times, China reached a height of unity and order under the Han (HAHN) dynasty, established in 207 B.C. But whereas Rome began a long, slow decline in the third century A.D., China entered a period of outright disorder or anarchy following the downfall of the Han in 220.

The man who brought an end to this chaos with the establishment of the Sui dynasty (SWEE) was Yang Chien

(YAHNG jee-AHN), who would be remembered by his reign title of Wen Ti (wun-DEE). He grew up in Chou (ZHOH), one of the many states competing to control northern China. The Chou rulers were not Chinese; they came from the many groups of Turkish and Mongolian peoples who had long threatened China's borders.

Wen Ti's family had served the Chou for many years, and at age sixteen he was married into the Dugu clan, rulers of Chou. He later married off his eldest daughter to the Chou ruler in 578, but soon he turned against his former allies. In 580, his son-in-law died, and Wen Ti took advantage of the situation to seize power. Establishing a pattern that would characterize his later career, Wen Ti executed fifty-nine members of the ruling family, including his own grandson, a potential rival for the Chou throne.

Emperor of China

In 581, Wen Ti declared himself emperor of the Sui dynasty, but the beginning of the Sui period in Chinese history is usually dated at 589. In the intervening years, he defeated the most prominent of the various states vying for power, and made himself ruler of all China.

Haughty and ill-disposed toward criticism, Wen Ti was a severe leader who would send spies to bribe allies, then arrange the murder of those who accepted the bribes. In one of the greatest undertakings of his reign, the building of the Grand Canal, he made use of millions of slave laborers, and the project took an incalculable toll in human lives.

But the Grand Canal, an eleven-hundred-mile waterway that linked the Yellow River in the north with the Yangtze (YAHNG-say) in the south, was crucial to the development of China. In a vast empire where transportation was often difficult and where major rivers flow east and west, the Grand Canal provided an important link that stimulated commerce. Later emperors would continue to make improvements on the canal, which, like the Great Wall of China, was a symbol of the nation's immensity and power.

Wen Ti's reforms

Despite his bad temper and ruthless ways, Wen Ti was a shrewd administrator who ended Chinese disunity by bringing the nation under his centralized control. Whereas the Western Roman Empire had dissolved into many states, he took steps to ensure this did not happen in China, bringing local leaders into his government and thus under his sway.

Wen Ti also caused a revival of China's age-old civil service system—that is, its efficient network of government officials. The latter was built on the principles of Confucius (551–479 B.C.), a philosopher who taught principles of social harmony and respect for persons in authority.

In line with Confucian beliefs, Wen Ti restored an old form of land redistribution called the "equal-field" system: he took power from local landlords, increasing his standing among China's many peasants by parcelling out land to them. T'ai Tsung and the other T'ang rulers would later adopt and expand the equal-field system.

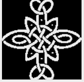
Foreign wars

China had always been faced by challenges at its borders, particularly in the north, where the Turks dominated. With regard to the Turks, Wen Ti had a stroke of good fortune: the two most powerful Turkish tribes fell into conflict soon after he took power, and he was able to successfully play each side against the other.

He was not so successful in Korea, a land the Han dynasty had formerly controlled. Wen Ti would be the first of many leaders who tried and failed to bring the neighboring country back under Chinese rule. In all, he and his son, Yang Ti (YAHNG), launched three campaigns against Korea, and each failed.

Yang Ti and the end of the dynasty

The costs of the Korean campaigns, both in terms of money and manpower, eroded Wen Ti's standing with his people. Problems at home did not become unmanageable, however, until the reign of Yang Ti, who assumed the throne



People Who Took Power from Outside

In 1388, a Korean general named Yi Song-gye (sawng-GYAY) staged an armed revolt and seized control of his country, establishing a dynasty that would last until 1910. He was just one of many figures who, like Wen Ti, came from outside the centers of power and assumed control. Other outsiders were not as successful.

T'ang dynasty China endured two major revolts, the first led by An Lu-shan (ahn loo-SHAHN; 703–757). Despite his "foreign" heritage—he was born of mixed Turkish and Iranian descent—the young general rose through the ranks, and became a favorite of T'ang emperor Hsüan Tsung (shwee-AHND-zoong; ruled 712–56). He also became a favorite, and perhaps a lover, of the emperor's beloved concubine Yang Kuei-fei (see box in Irene of Athens entry). Taking advantage of weakened T'ang power following a defeat by Arab forces in 751, An Lu-shan led a rebellion in 755, and declared himself emperor of the "Great Yen" dynasty. In the end, he was betrayed by his son, who had him murdered. Some 130 years later, a salt smuggler named Huang Ch'ao (hwahng CHOW) formed a rebel band and captured several key cities. He, too, declared a new dynasty, the Ta Ch'i, but in 883 he was captured and executed. His revolt hastened the downfall of the T'ang in 907.

The Crusades (1095–1291) produced their own varieties of "outsider" movements, among them the Peasants' Crusade of 1096–97. Its leaders were two Frenchmen, a monk named Peter the Hermit (c. 1050–1105) and a "knight" who called himself Gautier Sans Avoir (GOH-tee-ay SAWNZ a-VWAH, "Walter the Penniless"). They led mobs of poor people on crusades to the Holy Land before the official troops of the First Crusade even left Europe. The peasants were no match for the Turkish troops they faced in Anatolia, and most of them (Gautier included) died in the fighting. Peter, who happened to be away in Constantinople, lived to join in the conquest of Jerusalem, and spent his last years quietly as a monk in Belgium.

Around the same time as the Peasants' Crusade, a more sinister force

after Wen Ti's death in 604. (Some historians believe Yang Ti poisoned his sixty-three-year-old father.)

Yang Ti mirrored his father in his efforts to expand the country's network of canals, and in his successful military campaigns in Vietnam and Central Asia. But by the time he launched a new military operation against the Koreans in 612, unrest at home was growing. Six years later, in 618, Yang

was forming on the Muslim side. These were the Assassins, founded in 1090 by a radical Iranian religious leader named Hasan-e Sabbah (khah-SAHN-uh shuh-BAH; died 1124). Hasan and his followers seized a mountain fortress and there trained killers to eliminate leaders they hated—both Muslims and Christians. Crusaders later brought the word "assassin" home with them, and eventually it became a term for a politically motivated murderer.

By the mid-1300s, the Crusades had ended in failure, and Europe was consumed by the Black Death, or Plague, which in four years killed more Europeans—around thirty million—than all medieval wars combined. The Plague had many side effects, including a decrease in the work force, and as a result, peasants and the working class began demanding higher wages. The rich responded by using their political power to force a freeze on pay increases, and by 1381 the poor in England revolted. They chose Wat Tyler, who may have gotten his name because he made tiles, as their leader, and he presented a set of demands to King Richard II. Richard was willing to take the peasants and workers seriously, but he was only fourteen years old, and his advisors prevailed. Wat Tyler was murdered on June 15, 1381, by government forces.

In the year the Plague began, 1347, Cola di Rienzo (RYENT-soh; 1313–1354) overthrew the government in Rome and announced that he would restore the glory of Rome's former days. He even gave himself the ancient Roman title of tribune, but he ruled as harshly as a bad Roman emperor, and was expelled in 1348. Six years later, he returned to power, but was soon murdered in a riot. His story inspired nineteenth-century German composer Richard Wagner (REE-kard VAHG-nur) to write an opera about him. Later, dictator Adolf Hitler would say that he conceived his life's mission—ultimately, the founding of the Nazi state and killing of six million Jews—during a performance of Wagner's *Rienzi.*

Ti was assassinated, and the T'ang dynasty replaced the Sui after just twenty-nine years.

Ch'in and Sui

Wen Ti has often been compared to Ch'in Shih Huang Ti (shee-HWAHNG-tee; 259–210 B.C.). The latter was China's

first emperor and the builder of the Great Wall. His impact on the nation can be judged by the fact that the name "China" is taken from that of his dynasty, the Ch'in (221–207 B.C.).

Both Wen Ti and Shih Huang Ti were ruthless men who overcame many competitors to place the nation under their sole rule. Both instigated vast public works projects, and both gave the nation much-needed unity—though at the cost of enormous suffering. Due to the cruelty of their leaders, both the Sui and Ch'in dynasties would end quickly, in both cases with the overthrow of the founder's son. But both also made possible the achievements of later dynasties, the Han and T'ang, respectively.

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William the Conqueror

Born c. 1027
Died 1087

Norman king of England

William I, better known as William the Conqueror, was an illegitimate child who grew up to become one of the most powerful men in Western Europe. In 1066, he launched an invasion of England and gained control after defeating King Harold at the Battle of Hastings.

The victory of William and the Normans forever changed the character of England. He instituted new laws and greatly increased the power of English kings over noblemen. He also initiated a new line of English royalty, and even today the British royal house is distantly related to William. But the greatest mark on history left by William came with the influence of the Normans on aspects of English life ranging from architecture to language.

"He was great in body and strong, tall in stature but not ungainly."

The monk of Caen

William's beginnings

The ancestors of William's father, Duke Robert I of Normandy, were Vikings or "Northmen"; hence the name they took on when they settled in France: Normans.

Portrait: *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

William's mother, Herleve (ur-LEV), was French, the daughter of a tanner. As their name implied, tanners were responsible for tanning cowhides, work which usually involved treating the leather with cow's urine. It was not a very pleasant background, but the fact that William was illegitimate (i.e., his parents were not married) was far more unpleasant in the eyes of his neighbors. It would be years before he gained full acceptance within the community.

Duke Robert and Herleve had another child, a girl named Adelaide, and later Robert arranged for Herleve to marry a powerful nobleman, with whom she had two sons, Odo and Robert. These two half-brothers of William would later play an important role in his career. Duke Robert went on to marry the sister of Canute, Danish king of England (ruled 1016–35), but the marriage did not produce any children. In 1035, he went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and before leaving he convinced the nobles within the duchy (an area ruled by a duke) of Normandy to recognize William as his legitimate heir.

As it turned out, Duke Robert died on the return trip. William was only seven or eight at the time, and the next years were difficult ones as he attempted to maintain control over Normandy. Both men appointed to act as his guardians and advisors were killed, but by the age of fifteen William, recently knighted, had emerged as a powerful force in his own right.

Securing his power

William survived a rebellion in 1046, when he was about nineteen, and proved his abilities as a leader; therefore King Henry I of France asked for his help in a 1051 campaign. According to the feudal system, William's people owed him their loyalty in exchange for his protection, and likewise William owed the king his loyalty in exchange for Henry's protection. William won the king's favor by serving him well, but their relations would sour later, when William's power threatened to overshadow that of the king.

William assisted Henry in subduing Geoffrey Martel, count of Anjou (ahn-ZHOO), and conducted a successful

siege, or attack, on a city controlled by Geoffrey. The people of the city taunted William by hanging out hides from the town walls bearing the insult “Hides for the tanner!” Angered, William destroyed the city and executed many of its citizens. Geoffrey fled for his life.

Recognizing that his illegitimacy would be a continuing source of challenges to his authority, William made up his mind to marry well. After years of careful negotiations, in 1052 or 1053 he married Matilda of Flanders. Despite the fact that the marriage had complex but highly significant political reasons behind it, it appears that it was a happy one. They must have made a strange-looking couple, since William was a large man and Matilda stood only four feet tall, but together they had four sons and five or six daughters.

Eyes on England

By the early 1060s, a number of things were falling into line for William. In 1060, both King Henry and Geoffrey of Anjou died, removing two possible opponents. At the same time, William enjoyed good relations with the powerful Catholic Church, which gave its blessing to his next project—the most important one of his life.

For a long time, it had appeared that England was up for grabs, as the power of its Anglo-Saxon kings began to fade. The Normans had first established a foothold there in 1002, when Emma of Normandy married King Ethelred the Unready. Their half-Norman son Edward the Confessor became king in 1042, and when he died in early January 1066, many Normans took this as a sign that the time had come to place their claim on the throne of England.

However, the Godwinesons, a powerful Anglo-Saxon family, believed themselves to be the rightful rulers. The witan, England’s ruling council, declared Harold Godwineson (c. 1022–1066) king, but Harold would rule for less than a year.

The Norman Invasion

Harold knew that the Normans were coming, but when the invasion had not occurred by the early fall of 1066,

he sent his army home. Then he learned that another Harold, king of Norway, was attempting to invade from the north. On September 25, the two armies met at Stamford Bridge in Yorkshire, and though the English won, the battle exhausted them. Taking advantage of this opportunity, William landed his army in southern England on September 28, and the next day took the town of Hastings.

The English and Normans fought at Hastings on October 14, and though Harold's army put up a good fight, it was no match for the seven thousand Norman warriors. Harold himself died in battle, and now England belonged to William, who received the English crown on Christmas Day.

Norman rule in England

As he had done earlier in Normandy, William spent the coming years securing his power, and in so doing he faced a number of foes—including his son Robert and his brother Odo. Robert had a powerful ally in King Philip I of France, who hoped to gain control of Normandy, and though William gained the victory over all his foes (he sent Robert away, and had Odo imprisoned), the conflicts forced him to devote much of his reign to warfare.

William also instituted a number of reforms designed to strengthen his hold on the throne. Going against the principles of feudalism, which spread power among many nobles, he concentrated as much wealth and authority as he could in the hands of the king. As part of this process, in 1082 he ordered an intensive study of the lands and properties in England, the *Domesday Book*.

Meanwhile, the most lasting effects of the Norman invasion began to work their way into English culture. Norman architecture would prove highly influential on English buildings for centuries to come, but even more important was the Norman effect on the English language. The French-speaking Normans brought a whole new vocabulary to England, whose language was closely related to German. As a result, English today has an amazing array of words, some derived from French and Latin, others from German.

A scene from the Bayeux Tapestry depicting the English fleeing the Battle of Hastings. William's Norman army was victorious, and William became the king of England. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

A sad death

In spite of his greatness as a leader, William's latter years were sad ones. He grew extraordinarily fat, so much so that on a military campaign in the summer of 1087, he injured his stomach on his pommel, or saddlehorn. The wound led to an illness from which he would not recover.

Matilda had died in 1083, and when William died on September 9, 1087, he was alone. He had exiled Robert, his eldest son, for his rebellion. William Rufus, his second son and designated heir, was also away, protecting the throne against any challenges from others. (As William II, he would reign from 1087 to 1100.) Finally, William's last surviving son, Henry, destined to reign as Henry I (ruled 1100–35), was busy supervising the collection of his inheritance money.

The aftermath of William's death was as pathetic as the circumstances surrounding it. His body had become so bloated that the pallbearers had a hard time fitting it into the

tomb, and in the struggle to wedge it in, the corpse burst open. The smell of William's decomposing body filled the church, an inglorious end to an otherwise glorious career.

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Wu Ze-tian

Born 625
Died 705

Chinese empress

In China as in many other countries, women have exerted an influence over the government without actually holding office. Usually they have been wives or lovers of men in power, and often they have held greater authority than their men. But in nearly four thousand years of Chinese history, only one woman has ever officially ruled China: Wu Ze-tian. During her reign, she proved herself the equal of any man—both in ability and in ruthlessness.

"A sage mother will befall and her imperium [empire] will be prosperous forever."

"Prophecy" concerning Wu Ze-tian's rule

Friends in high places

She is sometimes known as Wu Chao (ZHOW), the name she would take when she assumed the Chinese throne, but she was born Wu Ze-tian or Wu Tse-t'ien (zeh-CHEE-en). Her father, Wu Shi-huo (zhee-WOH), was a wealthy businessman in southeastern China in 617 when he received an important request from Li Yüan (yee-WAHN), then the military commander of the region. At that time, the harsh Sui (SWEE) dynasty ruled China, but Li Yüan had plans for its overthrow, and he needed Wu Shi-huo's help.

In the following year, Li Yüan and his son Li Shih-min (ZHUR-min) took power with the assistance of Wu Shi-huo and others, establishing the T'ang (TAHNG) dynasty. The new emperor rewarded his ally by giving him an important position in the government, and by offering him the cousin of the last Sui emperor, Lady Yang, as his wife. The couple had three daughters, of whom Wu Ze-tian was the second.

Wu Ze-tian was a beautiful young woman, and when Li Shih-min (who had become emperor) heard about her, he arranged for the fourteen-year-old girl to come to the palace. In China, rulers were assigned titles after their death; Li Shih-min is better known to history as **T'ai Tsung** (dy-DZAWNG; see entry), the greatest ruler of T'ang China. Twenty-six years older than Wu Ze-tian, he made her his concubine, a woman whose role toward her "husband" is like that of a wife, but without the social and legal status of a wife.

Jockeying for power

T'ai Tsung became ill in 649, and died later that year. His son and designated successor, Li Chih or Kao Tsung (gow-DZÜNG; ruled 649–83) soon took the throne. As a symbol of mourning, Wu Ze-tian shaved her head and entered a Buddhist temple as a nun; yet she had already attracted the attention of Kao Tsung. He married, but soon afterward, he visited the temple where Wu Ze-tian was living, and asked her to come back to the palace.

Back at the court in 651, twenty-eight-year-old Wu Ze-tian began to exhibit the cleverness and cunning that would make her the most powerful woman in China. She worked to create a friendly relationship with the empress while building a network of spies. The fact that the emperor was madly in love with her, and that the empress had been unable to produce a child, worked in her favor; then in 654, Wu Ze-tian herself presented the emperor with a daughter.

The Chinese valued sons over daughters, and therefore the birth of a girl was not as great a cause for joy as that of a boy—but that hardly explains what Wu Ze-tian did next. Knowing that the emperor adored their daughter, Wu Ze-tian secretly strangled the baby girl; then her spies informed the

Fredegund

Though she never ruled her country as Wu Ze-tian did, the Frankish queen Fredegund (c. 550–597; ruled 561–584) exhibited some of the same ability to achieve and maintain power. Like Wu Zetian, she had nerves of steel, and rarely shied away from any act that she deemed necessary to further her own position.

Fredegund first came to the palace of Chilperic (KIL-pur-ik), grandson of **Clovis** (see entry), as a slave girl. Like Wu Ze-tian, however, her beauty soon won her the king's attention. In so doing, she displaced the queen, Audovera, who had borne Chilperic three sons, but Fredegund remained a concubine and not a full-fledged wife.

In 567, Chilperic took a second wife, Galswintha; but Galswintha was strangled in her bed soon after the wedding. It is not clear whether Fredegund arranged her murder, but in any case she now had no serious competition for the king's affection.

In the years that followed, Fredegund proved herself more vicious than Chilperic in dealing with his enemies, and she ordered numerous assassinations. Meanwhile, she tried to increase her own standing at court by producing a son and heir to her husband. At least then she would stand a chance that her offspring could become ruler while she wielded the real power behind the throne. Several efforts failed, however, and two of her boys died in childhood. But several of Audovera's sons died too, and Fredegund finally succeeded in murdering Audovera and the latter's last remaining son.

Fredegund left a trail of bodies behind her, a death toll that is too long to recount. One of her favorite tactics was to use one person to help her get rid of another, then murder her former ally as well. In fact she may have been responsible for her own husband's death—but not before she bore a son, Chlothar (KLOH-thar), who lived. Chlothar finally took power in 596, but Fredegund had little opportunity to enjoy her success: she died a year later.

emperor that the empress was responsible. This gave Kao Tsung an excuse to set the empress aside, and Wu Ze-tian took her place as his number-one wife. The former empress died soon afterward, most likely through the efforts of Wu Ze-tian.

Quarrels with her sons

Kao Tsung became increasingly ill, and as his power faded, that of Wu Ze-tian grew. She became involved in mak-

ing policy and proved herself an able leader, introducing a twelve-point program of reform that included reductions in the military, taxes, and forced labor; increases of salaries for government officials; and improvements in agricultural production. These measures won her a great deal of support.

In 674, Wu Ze-tian created the titles of Heavenly Emperor and Heavenly Empress for her husband and herself. By this point, she and the emperor had three sons, but the first one died mysteriously, probably murdered by his mother. Then in 680, the second son was charged with starting a rebellion, and he was sent away.

Three years later, Kao Tsung died, and the third son, Li Che, took the throne. He proved incapable as a ruler, and shortly afterward Wu Ze-tian replaced him with a fourth son, Li Tan. Her tampering had made Wu Ze-tian a number of enemies, and in 686 they launched an armed rebellion against her. She managed to put down this uprising, along with a second one several years later.

Sole ruler of China

With Li Tan still on the throne, Wu Ze-tian set about consolidating her power. This she did in part by giving help to poor people around the country and by punishing corrupt officials. She was further assisted by a couple of items that were mysteriously discovered around the same time. One was a white stone bearing the words "A sage mother will befall and her imperium will be prosperous forever." This, along with a Buddhist scripture that predicted the coming of a great female ruler, were interpreted as prophecies of Wu Ze-tian's reign. These "prophecies" certainly appeared at a convenient time for Wu Ze-tian, and it is likely she arranged to have them planted and discovered.

In 690, she received three petitions, one signed by more than sixty thousand people, asking her to take power. Using this as justification, she removed Li Tan from power, and declared the end of the T'ang dynasty. Wu Ze-tian, now sixty-six years old, assumed the throne under the Zhou (ZHOH) dynasty, though as it turned out, she would be the only ruler in this dynasty.

Over the fifteen years of her reign, Wu Ze-tian once again proved herself an able administrator. She promoted men of talent and honesty, and her troops won a number of victories. But in 705, when she was eighty-one years old, one of her officials led a rebellion against her, and Wu Ze-tian realized that she was too old to maintain power. When the official restored the throne to Li Che (who was then replaced in 710 by Li Tan), she put up no fight. She died in November 705.

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Reader's Guide

The Middle Ages was an era of great changes in civilization, a transition between ancient times and the modern world. Lasting roughly from A.D. 500 to 1500, the period saw the growth of the Roman Catholic Church in Western Europe and the spread of the Islamic faith in the Middle East. Around the world, empires—the Byzantine, Mongol, and Incan—rose and fell, and the first nation-states emerged in France, England, and Spain. Despite the beauty of illuminated manuscripts, soaring Gothic cathedrals, and the literary classics of Augustine and Dante, Europe's civilization lagged far behind that of the technologically advanced, administratively organized, and economically wealthy realms of the Arab world, West Africa, India, and China.

Middle Ages: Primary Sources offers nineteen full or excerpted documents written during the Middle Ages. Covering such topics as cultures in conflict; personal life; the relationship between the church and government; and the writing of history and fiction, the documents give a rich sense of life in the Middle Ages, as told by its participants. Entries include Marco Polo's description of his travels in China; an excerpt from *The Thousand and One Nights,* better known in the West

as *Arabian Nights;* and Japan's "Seventeen-Article Constitution," written by Prince Shotoku Taishi.

Format

Each of the four chapters of *Middle Ages: Primary Sources* begins with a historical overview, followed by several full or excerpted documents.

Each primary source document is accompanied by several sections of supporting information:

- **Introductory material** places the document and its author in a historical context
- **Things to remember** offers readers important background information about the featured text
- **What happened next** discusses the impact of the document on both the author and his or her audience
- **Did you know** provides interesting facts about each document and its author
- **For more information** presents sources for further reading on the authors and the documents

Additional features

Over thirty illustrations and several sidebar boxes exploring high-interest people and topics bring the text to life. Each excerpt is accompanied by a glossary running alongside the primary document that defines terms and ideas discussed within the document. The volume also contains a timeline of events, a general glossary, and an index offering easy access to the people, places, and subjects discussed throughout *Middle Ages: Primary Sources*.

Dedication

To Margaret, my mother; to Deidre, my wife; and to Tyler, my daughter.

Comments and suggestions

We welcome your comments on this work as well as your suggestions for topics to be featured in future editions of *Middle Ages: Primary Sources*. Please write: Editors, *Middle Ages: Primary Sources,* U•X•L, 27500 Drake Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535; call toll-free: 1-800-877-4253; fax: 248-699-8097; or send e-mail via www.galegroup.com.

Timeline of Events in the Middle Ages

135 Banished from Jerusalem by the Romans, Jews begin to spread throughout the Mediterranean region.

184 The Revolt of the Yellow Turbans, which will be suppressed five years later by General Ts'ao Ts'ao, signals the beginning of the end for China's Han dynasty.

220 The Han dynasty of China comes to an end, plunging the country into three centuries of turmoil. This begins with the period of the Three Kingdoms from 220 to 265. More than a thousand years later, **Lo Kuan-chung** will retell the story of this era in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

300s Buddhism, which originated in India, begins to take hold in China.

312 Roman emperor Constantine converts to Christianity. As a result, the empire that once persecuted Christians will embrace their religion and eventually will begin to persecute other religions.

410 Led by Alaric, the Visigoths sack Rome, dealing the Western Roman Empire a blow from which it will never recover.

413–425 Deeply affected—as are most Roman citizens—by the Visigoths' attack on Rome, **Augustine** writes *City of God,* one of the most important books of the Middle Ages.

Mid-400s Angles, Saxons, and Jutes from Scandinavia invade the former Roman colony of Britain.

451 Roman troops score their last important victory, against Attila's Huns in Gaul.

452 Leo I, the first significant bishop of Rome (in other words, pope), persuades Attila not to attack Rome itself: an early sign of the political authority that will be wielded by the church during the Middle Ages.

455 The Vandals sack Rome.

476 The German leader Odoacer removes Emperor Romulus Augustulus and crowns himself "king of Italy." This incident marks the end of the Western Roman Empire.

481 The Merovingian Age, named for the only powerful dynasty in Western Europe during the period, begins when Clovis takes the throne in France.

496 Clovis converts to Christianity, an action later documented by the historian **Gregory of Tours** in his *History of the Franks*. By establishing strong ties with the pope, Clovis forges a strong church-state relationship that will continue throughout the medieval period.

500 Date commonly cited as beginning of Middle Ages.

500–1000 Era in European history often referred to as the Dark Ages, or Early Middle Ages.

532 Thanks in large part to the counsel of his wife Theodora, Justinian—greatest of Byzantine emperors—takes a strong stand in the Nika Revolt, ensuring his continued power.

534–563 Belisarius and other generals under orders from Justinian recapture much of the Western Roman Empire, including parts of Italy, Spain, and North Africa. The

victories are costly, however, and soon after Justinian's death these lands will fall back into the hands of barbarian tribes such as the Vandals and Lombards.

535 Justinian establishes his legal code, a model for the laws in many Western nations today.

552 A collection of scriptures, sent as a gift from the court of the Paekche kingdom in Korea to Japan, helps introduce Buddhism to Japan.

c. 565 Greek historian **Procopius** dies. Procopius's scandalous and gossipy account of the rule of Justinian, *Secret History,* is not published until many centuries later.

589 More than three centuries of upheaval in China come to an end with the establishment of the Sui dynasty.

590 Pope Gregory I begins his fourteen-year reign. Also known as Gregory the Great, he ensures the survival of the church and becomes one of its greatest medieval leaders.

604 Prince **Shotoku Taishi** of Japan issues his "Seventeen-Article Constitution."

618 A revolt agasint the cruel Sui dynasty leads to the establishment of the highly powerful and efficient T'ang dynasty in China.

622 Muhammad and his followers escape the city of Mecca. This event, known as the *hegira,* marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar.

632–661 Following the death of Muhammad, the Arab Muslims are led by a series of four caliphs who greatly expand Muslim territories to include most of the Middle East.

661 The fifth caliph, Mu'awiya, founds the Umayyad caliphate, which will rule the Muslim world from Damascus, Syria, until 750.

732 A force led by Charles Martel repels Moorish invaders at Tours, halting Islam's advance into Western Europe.

750 A descendant of Muhammad's uncle Abbas begins killing off all the Umayyad leaders and establishes the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad, Iraq.

751 The Carolingian Age begins when Charles Martel's son Pepin III, with the support of the pope, removes the last Merovingian king from power.

751 Defeated by Arab armies at Talas, China's T'ang dynasty begins to decline. A revolt led by An Lu-shan in 755 adds to its troubles.

768 Reign of Charlemagne, greatest ruler of Western Europe during the Early Middle Ages, begins.

793 Viking raiders destroy the church at Lindisfarne off the coast of England. Lindisfarne was one of the places where civilized learning had weathered the darkest years of the Middle Ages. Thus begins two centuries of terror as more invaders pour out of Scandinavia and spread throughout Europe.

800s Feudalism takes shape in Western Europe.

800 Pope Leo III crowns Charlemagne "Emperor of All the Romans." This marks the beginning of the political alliance later to take shape under Otto the Great as the Holy Roman Empire.

820 A group of Vikings settles in northwestern France, where they will become known as Normans.

900s The 264 stories that make up *The Thousand and One Nights,* a collection of tales from Indian, Persian, and Arab sources, are first assembled.

907 China's T'ang dynasty comes to an end after almost three centuries of rule, and the empire enters a period of instability known as "Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms."

960 Beginning of the Sung dynasty in China.

962 Having conquered most of Central Europe, Otto the Great is crowned emperor in Rome, reviving Charlemagne's title. From this point on, most German kings are also crowned ruler of the Holy Roman Empire.

987 The last Carolingian ruler of France dies without an heir, and Hugh Capet takes the throne, establishing a dynasty that will last until 1328.

1000–1300 Era in European history often referred to as the High Middle Ages.

1000s Guilds, which had existed in ancient times but disappeared from Western Europe during the Early Middle Ages, come back into existence.

1002 In Japan, Murasaki Shikibu begins writing the *Tale of Genji,* the world's first novel. This romantic tale heavily influences another Japanese woman writer, **Lady Sarashina**, who reflects that influence in her autobiography, *The Diary of Lady Sarashina.*

1002 Ethelred the Unready of England marries Emma of Normandy, giving the Normans a foothold in Britain.

1025 Emperor Basil II dies, having taken the Byzantine Empire to its greatest height since Justinian five centuries earlier; however, it begins a rapid decline soon afterward.

1042 Edward the Confessor, son of Ethelred the Unready and Emma of Normandy, becomes English king. During his reign many Normans settle in England.

1054 After centuries of disagreement over numerous issues, the Greek Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church officially separate.

1060 Five years after Turks seize control of Baghdad from the declining Abbasid caliphate, their leader, Toghril Beg, declares himself sultan and thus establishes the Seljuk dynasty.

1066 William the Conqueror leads an invading force that defeats an Anglo-Saxon army at Hastings and wins control of England. The Norman invasion, which has its roots in King Ethelred's marriage to Emma of Normandy in 1002, is the most important event of medieval English history, greatly affecting the future of English culture and language. This event will be documented later by historian **William of Malmesbury** in his work *Gesta regum Anglorum.*

c. 1067 **Al-Bekri**, a Spanish Muslim, travels to the great empire of Ghana in West Africa, a trip he will later write about in *Al-Masalik wa 'l-Mamalik*.

1071 The Seljuk Turks defeat Byzantine forces at the Battle of Manzikert in Armenia. As a result, the Turks gain a

foothold in Asia Minor (today known as Turkey) and the Byzantine Empire begins a long, slow decline.

1075–77 Pope **Gregory VII** and Holy Roman Emperor **Henry IV** become embroiled in a church-state struggle called the Investiture Controversy, a debate over whether popes or emperors should have the right to appoint local bishops. Deserted by his supporters, Henry stands barefoot in the snow for three days outside the gates of a castle in Canossa, Italy, waiting to beg the pope's forgiveness.

1080 Invaders from Morocco destroy Ghana, the first significant kingdom in sub-Saharan Africa.

1084 Reversing the results of an earlier round in the Investiture Controversy, **Henry IV** takes Rome and forcibly removes **Gregory VII** from power. The pope dies soon afterward, broken and humiliated.

1084 Ssu-ma Kuang, an official in the Sung dynasty, completes his monumental history of China, *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government.*

1092 Following the death of their sultan Malik Shah, the Seljuk Turks begin to decline.

1094 Norman warrior Bohemond, son of Robert Guiscard, takes control of Rome from **Henry IV** and hands the city over to Pope Urban II. Fearing the Normans' power and aware that he owes them a great debt, Urban looks for something to divert their attention.

1095 Byzantine Emperor Alexis Comnenus asks Urban II for military assistance against the Turks. Urban preaches a sermon to raise support at the Council of Clermont in France, and in the resulting fervor the First Crusade begins. Among its leaders are Bohemond and his nephew Tancred.

1096–97 A pathetic sideshow called the Peasants' Crusade plays out before the real First Crusade gets underway. The peasants begin by robbing and killing thousands of Jews in Germany; then, led by Peter the Hermit, they march toward the Holy Land, wreaking havoc as they go. In Anatolia a local Turkish sultan leads them into a trap, and most of the peasants are killed.

1099 The First Crusade ends in victory for the Europeans as they conquer Jerusalem. It is a costly victory, however—one in which thousands of innocent Muslims, as well as many Europeans, have been brutally slaughtered—and it sows resentment between Muslims and Christians that remains strong today.

c. 1100–1300 Many of the aspects of life most commonly associated with the Middle Ages, including heraldry and chivalry, make their appearance in Western Europe during this period. Returning crusaders adapt the defensive architecture they observed in fortresses of the Holy Land, resulting in the familiar design of the medieval castle. This is also the era of romantic and heroic tales such as those of King Arthur.

1118 After being banished because of her part in a conspiracy against her brother, the Byzantine emperor, **Anna Comnena** begins writing the *Alexiad,* a history of Byzantium in the period 1069–1118.

1147–49 In the disastrous Second Crusade, armies from Europe are double-crossed by their crusader allies in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. They fail to recapture Edessa and suffer a heavy defeat at Damascus.

1159 Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa begins a quarter-century of fruitless, costly wars in which the Ghibellines and Guelphs—factions representing pro-imperial and pro-church forces, respectively—fight for control of northern Italy.

1165 A letter supposedly written by Prester John, a Christian monarch in the East, appears in Europe. Over the centuries that follow, Europeans will search in vain for Prester John, hoping for his aid in their war against Muslim forces.

c. 1175 **Usamah ibn Munqidh** writes his *Memoirs,* describing from a Muslim point of view the uneasy relationship between the Arabs of the Middle East and the Christian Europeans who occupied their lands as a result of the Crusades.

1182 France under Philip II Augustus becomes the first European country to expel all its Jews.

1187 Muslim armies under Saladin deal the crusaders a devastating blow at the Battle of Hittin in Palestine. Shortly afterward Saladin leads his armies in the reconquest of Jerusalem.

1189 In response to Saladin's victories, Europeans launch the Third Crusade.

1191 Led by Richard I of England and Philip II of France, crusaders take the city of Acre in Palestine.

1192 Richard I signs a treaty with Saladin, ending the Third Crusade.

1198 Pope Innocent III begins an eighteen-year reign that marks the high point of the church's power. Despite his great influence, however, when he calls for a new crusade to the Holy Land, he gets little response—a sign that the spirit behind the Crusades is dying.

1202 Four years after the initial plea from the pope, the Fourth Crusade begins. Instead of going to the Holy Land, however, the crusaders become involved in a power struggle for the Byzantine throne.

1204 Acting on orders from the powerful city-state of Venice, crusaders take Constantinople, forcing the Byzantines to retreat to Trebizond in Turkey. The Fourth Crusade ends with the establishment of the Latin Empire.

1206 Genghis Khan unites the Mongols for the first time in their history and soon afterward leads them to war against the Sung dynasty in China.

1208 Pope Innocent III launches the Albigensian Crusade against the Cathars, a heretical sect in southern France.

1215 English noblemen force King John to sign the Magna Carta, which grants much greater power to the nobility. Ultimately the agreement will lead to increased freedom for the people from the power of both king and nobles.

1217–21 In the Fifth Crusade, armies from England, Germany, Hungary, and Austria attempt unsuccessfully to conquer Egypt.

1227 Genghis Khan dies, having conquered much of China and Central Asia, thus laying the foundation for the largest empire in history.

1228–29 The Sixth Crusade, led by Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, results in a treaty that briefly restores Christian control of Jerusalem—and does so with a minimum of bloodshed.

1229 The brutal Albigensian Crusade ends. Not only are the Cathars destroyed, but so is much of the French nobility, thus greatly strengthening the power of the French king.

1231 Pope Gregory IX establishes the Inquisition, a court through which the church will investigate, try, and punish cases of heresy.

c. 1235 The empire of Mali, most powerful realm in sub-Saharan Africa at the time, takes shape under the leadership of Sundiata Keita.

1239–40 In the Seventh Crusade, Europeans make another failed attempt to retake the Holy Land.

1241 After six years of campaigns in which they sliced across Russia and Eastern Europe, a Mongol force is poised to take Vienna, Austria, and thus to swarm into Western Europe. But when their leader, Batu Khan, learns that the Great Khan Ogodai is dead, he rushes back to the Mongol capital at Karakorum to participate in choosing a successor.

1243 Back on the warpath, but this time in the Middle East, the Mongols defeat the last remnants of the Seljuk Turks.

1248–54 King Louis IX of France (St. Louis) leads the Eighth Crusade, this time against the Mamluks, former slave soldiers who control Egypt. The result is the same: yet another defeat for the Europeans.

1260 The Mamluks become the first force to defeat the Mongols, in a battle at Goliath Spring in Palestine.

1260 Kublai Khan, greatest Mongol leader after his grandfather Genghis Khan, is declared Great Khan, or leader of the Mongols.

1261 Led by Michael VIII Palaeologus, the Byzantines recapture Constantinople from the Latin Empire, and Byzantium enjoys one last gasp of power before it goes into terminal decline.

1270–72 In the Ninth Crusade, last of the numbered crusades, King Louis IX of France again leads the Europeans against the Mamluks, who defeat European forces yet again.

1271 **Marco Polo** embarks on his celebrated journey to the East, which lasts twenty-four years.

1279 Mongol forces under Kublai Khan win final victory over China's Sung dynasty. Thus begins the Yüan dynasty, the first time in Chinese history when the country has been ruled by foreigners.

1281 A Mongol force sent by Kublai Khan on a second attempt to take Japan—a first try, in 1274, also failed—is destroyed by a typhoon. The Japanese call it a "divine wind," or *kamikaze.*

1291 Mamluks conquer the last Christian stronghold at Acre, bringing to an end two centuries of crusades to conquer the Holy Land for Christendom.

1294 At the death of Kublai Khan, the Mongol realm is the largest empire in history, covering most of Asia and a large part of Europe. Actually it is four empires, including the Golden Horde in Russia; the Il-Khanate in the Middle East and Persia; Chagatai in Central Asia; and the Empire of the Great Khan, which includes China, Mongolia, and Korea. Within less than a century, however, this vast empire will have all but disappeared.

1300–1500 Era in European history often referred to as the Late Middle Ages.

1303 After years of conflict with Pope Boniface VIII, France's King Philip the Fair briefly has the pope arrested. This event and its aftermath marks the low point of the papacy during the Middle Ages.

1308 **Dante Alighieri** begins writing the *Divine Comedy,* which he will complete shortly before his death in 1321.

1309 Pope Clement V, an ally of Philip the Fair, moves the papal seat from Rome to Avignon in southern France.

1324 Mansa Musa, emperor of Mali, embarks on a pilgrimage to Mecca. After stopping in Cairo, Egypt, and spending so much gold that he affects the region's economy for years, he becomes famous throughout the Western world—the first sub-Saharan African ruler widely known among Europeans.

1337 England and France begin fighting what will become known as the Hundred Years' War, an on-again, off-again struggle to control parts of France.

1347–51 Europe experiences one of the worst disasters in human history, an epidemic called the Black Death. Sometimes called simply "the Plague," in four years the Black Death kills some thirty-five million people, or approximately one-third of the European population in 1300. The cause of the Plague can be traced to a bacteria carried by fleas, which in turn are borne by rats aboard ships arriving in Europe from Asia. Members of fanatical religious sects, however, claim that Jews started the epidemic by poisoning public water supplies. As a result of the anti-Semitic hysteria, many thousands of innocent people are murdered in addition to the millions dying from the Plague itself. Historian **Jacob von Königshofen** writes of one such massacre of Jews in the town of Strasbourg, a German-speaking city in what is now France.

1368 A group of Chinese rebels overthrows the Mongol Yüan dynasty and establishes the Ming dynasty, China's last native-born ruling house.

1378 The Catholic Church becomes embroiled in the Great Schism, which will last until 1417. During this time, there are rival popes in Rome and Avignon; and from 1409 to 1417, there is even a third pope in Pisa, Italy.

1386 Geoffrey Chaucer, heavily influenced by **Dante**, begins writing the *Canterbury Tales*.

1402 After conquering much of Iran and surrounding areas and then moving westward, Tamerlane defeats the Ottoman sultan Bajazed in battle. An unexpected re-

sult of their defeat is that the Ottomans, who seemed poised to take over much of Europe, go into a period of decline.

1404–05 **Christine de Pisan**, Europe's first female professional writer, publishes *The Book of the City of Ladies,* her most celebrated work.

1417 The Council of Constance ends the Great Schism, affirming that Rome is the seat of the church and that Pope Martin V is its sole leader. Unfortunately for the church, the Great Schism has weakened it at the very time that it faces its greatest challenge ever: a gathering movement that will come to be known as the Reformation.

1429 A tiny French army led by Joan of Arc forces the English to lift their siege on the town of Orléans, a victory that raises French spirits and makes it possible for France's king Charles VII to be crowned later that year. This marks a turning point in the Hundred Years' War.

1430–31 Captured by Burgundian forces, Joan of Arc is handed over to the English, who arrange her trial for witchcraft in a court of French priests. The trial, a mockery of justice, ends with Joan being burned at the stake.

1441 Fourteen black slaves are brought from Africa to Portugal, where they are presented to Prince Henry the Navigator. This is the beginning of the African slave trade, which isn't abolished until more than four centuries later.

1451 The recovery of the Ottoman Empire, which had suffered a half-century of decline, begins under Mehmet the Conqueror.

1453 Due in large part to the victories of Joan of Arc, which lifted French morale twenty-four years earlier, the Hundred Years' War ends with French victory.

1453 Turks under Mehmet the Conqueror march into Constantinople, bringing about the fall of the Byzantine Empire. Greece will remain part of the Ottoman Empire until 1829.

1455 Having developed a method of movable-type printing, Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz, Germany, prints his first book: a Bible. In the years to come, the invention of the printing press will prove to be one of the most important events in world history. By making possible the widespread distribution of books, it will lead to increased literacy, which in turn creates a more educated, skilled, and wealthy populace. It will also influence the spread of local languages, and thus of national independence movements, and also spurs on the gathering movement for religious reformation.

1464 In the last-ever crusade, Pope Pius II attempts to retake Turkish-held Constantinople for Christendom. However, he dies en route to Greece, bringing the crusading movement to an end.

1470 One of the first printed books to appear in England, *La Morte D'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory helps establish the now-familiar tales of Arthurian legend.

1472 Ivan the Great of Muscovy marries Zoë, niece of the last Byzantine emperor, and adopts the two-headed Byzantine eagle as the symbol of Russia, the "Third Rome" after Rome itself and Byzantium. His grandson, Ivan the Terrible, will in 1547 adopt the title *czar,* Russian for "caesar," title of Roman and Byzantine emperors for the past fifteen hundred years.

1492 Spain, united by the 1469 marriage of its two most powerful monarchs, Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, drives out the last of the Muslims and expels all Jews. A less significant event of 1492, from the Spanish perspective, is the launch of a naval expedition in search of a westward sea route to China. Its leader is an Italian sailor named Christopher Columbus, who has grown up heavily influenced by **Marco Polo**'s account of his travels.

1493 Mohammed I Askia takes the throne of Africa's Songhai Empire, which will reach its height under his leadership.

1500 Date commonly cited as the end of Middle Ages, and the beginning of the Renaissance.

1517 Exactly a century after the Council of Constance ended the Great Schism, a German monk named Martin Luther publicly posts ninety-five theses, or statements challenging the established teachings of Catholicism, on the door of a church in Germany. Over the next century numerous new Protestant religious denominations will be established.

1550 The publication of *Description of Africa* by **Leo Africanus** gives most Europeans their first glimpse of sub-Saharan Africa, and the fame of Timbuktu—a city of scholars who prize books more than gold—spreads.

1591 Songhai, the last of the great premodern empires in Africa's Sudan region, falls to invaders from Morocco.

Words to Know

A

Age of Exploration: The period from about 1450 to about 1750, when European explorers conducted their most significant voyages and travels around the world.

Alchemy: A semi-scientific discipline that holds that through the application of certain chemical processes, ordinary metals can be turned into gold.

Algebra: A type of mathematics used to determine the value of unknown quantities where these can be related to known numbers.

Allegory: A type of narrative, popular throughout the Middle Ages, in which characters represent ideas.

Anarchy: Breakdown of political order.

Ancestor: An earlier person in one's line of parentage, usually more distant in time than a grandparent.

Anti-Semitism: Hatred of, or discrimination against, Jews.

Antipope: A priest proclaimed pope by one group or another, but not officially recognized by the church.

Archaeology: The scientific study of past civilizations.

Archbishop: The leading bishop in an area or nation.

Aristocracy: The richest and most powerful members of society.

Ascetic: A person who renounces all earthly pleasures as part of his or her search for religious understanding.

Assassination: Killing, usually of an important leader, for political reasons.

Astronomy: The scientific study of the stars and other heavenly bodies, and his or her movement in the sky.

B

Barbarian: A negative term used to describe someone as uncivilized.

Bishop: A figure in the Christian church assigned to oversee priests and believers in a given city or region.

Bureaucracy: A network of officials who run a government.

C

Caliph: A successor to Muhammad as spiritual and political leader of Islam.

Caliphate: The domain ruled by a caliph.

Canonization: Formal declaration of a deceased person as a saint.

Cardinal: An office in the Catholic Church higher than that of bishop or archbishop; the seventy cardinals in the "College of Cardinals" participate in electing the pope.

Cavalry: Soldiers on horseback.

Chivalry: The system of medieval knighthood, particularly its code of honor with regard to women.

Christendom: The Christian world.

Church: The entire Christian church, or more specifically the Roman Catholic Church.

City-state: A city that is also a self-contained political unit, like a country.

Civil service: The administrators and officials who run a government.

Civilization: A group of people possessing most or all of the following: a settled way of life, agriculture, a written language, an organized government, and cities.

Classical: Referring to ancient Greece and Rome.

Clergy: The priesthood.

Clerical: Relating to priests.

Coat of arms: A heraldic emblem representing a family or nation.

Commoner: Someone who is not a member of a royal or noble class.

Communion: The Christian ceremony of commemorating the last supper of Jesus Christ.

Courtly love: An idealized form of romantic love, usually of a knight or poet for a noble lady.

D

Dark Ages: A negative term sometimes used to describe the Early Middle Ages, the period from the fall of Rome to about A.D. 1000 in Western Europe.

Deity: A god.

Dialect: A regional variation on a language.

Diplomacy: The use of skillful negotiations with leaders of other nations to influence events.

Duchy: An area ruled by a duke, the highest rank of European noble below a prince.

Dynasty: A group of people, often but not always a family, who continue to hold a position of power over a period of time.

E

Economy: The whole system of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services in a country.

Ecumenical: Across all faiths, or across all branches of the Christian Church.

Empire: A large political unit that unites many groups of people, often over a wide territory.

Epic: A long poem that recounts the adventures of a legendary hero.

Ethnic group: People who share a common racial, cultural, national, linguistic, or tribal origin.

Excommunicate: To banish someone from the church.

F

Famine: A food shortage caused by crop failures.

Fasting: Deliberately going without food, often but not always for religious reasons.

Feudalism: A form of political and economic organization in which peasants are subject to a noble who owns most or all of the land that they cultivate.

G

Geometry: A type of mathematics dealing with various shapes, their properties, and their measurements.

Guild: An association to promote, and set standards for, a particular profession or business.

H

Hajj: A pilgrimage to Mecca, which is expected of all Muslims who can afford to make it.

Heraldry: The practice of creating and studying coats of arms and other insignia.

Heresy: A belief that goes against established church teachings.

Holy Land: Palestine.

Horde: A division within the Mongol army; the term "hordes" was often used to describe the Mongol armies.

I

Icon: In the Christian church, an image of a saint.

Idol: A statue of a god that the god's followers worship.

Illumination: Decoration of a manuscript with elaborate designs.

Indo-European languages: The languages of Europe, India, Iran, and surrounding areas, which share common roots.

Indulgence: The granting of forgiveness of sins in exchange for an act of service for, or payment to, the church.

Infantry: Foot soldiers.

Infidel: An unbeliever.

Intellectual: A person whose profession or lifestyle centers around study and ideas.

Interest: In economics, a fee charged by a lender against a borrower—usually a percentage of the amount borrowed.

Investiture: The power of a feudal lord to grant lands or offices.

Islam: A religious faith that teaches submission to the one god Allah and his word as given through his prophet Muhammad in the Koran.

J

Jihad: Islamic "holy war" to defend or extend the faith.

K

Khan: A Central Asian chieftain.

Koran: The holy book of Islam.

L

Legal code: A system of laws.

Lingua franca: A common language.

M

Martyr: Someone who willingly dies for his or her faith.

Mass: A Catholic church service.

Medieval: Of or relating to the Middle Ages.

Middle Ages: Roughly the period from A.D. 500 to 1500.

Middle class: A group whose income level falls between that of the rich and the poor, or the rich and the working class; usually considered the backbone of a growing economy.

Millennium: A period of a thousand years.

Missionary: Someone who travels to other lands with the aim of converting others to his or her religion.

Monastery: A place in which monks live.

Monasticism: The tradition and practices of monks.

Monk: A man who leaves the outside world to take religious vows and live in a monastery, practicing a lifestyle of denying earthly pleasures.

Monotheism: Worship of one god.

Mosque: A Muslim temple.

Movable-type printing: An advanced printing process using pre-cast pieces of metal type.

Muezzin: A crier who calls worshipers to prayer five times a day in the Muslim world.

Mysticism: The belief that one can attain direct knowledge of God or ultimate reality through some form of meditation or special insight.

N

Nationalism: A sense of loyalty and devotion to one's nation.

Nation-state: A geographical area composed largely of a single nationality, in which a single national government clearly holds power.

New World: The Americas, or the Western Hemisphere.

Noble: A ruler within a kingdom who has an inherited title and lands, but who is less powerful than the king or queen; collectively, nobles are known as the *nobility.*

Nomadic: Wandering.

Novel: An extended, usually book-length, work of fiction.

Nun: The female equivalent of a monk, who lives in a nunnery, convent, or abbey.

O

Order: An organized religious community within the Catholic Church.

Ordination: Formal appointment as a priest or minister.

P

Pagan: Worshiping many gods.

Papacy: The office of the pope.

Papal: Referring to the pope.

Patriarch: A bishop in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Patron: A supporter, particularly of arts, education, or sciences. The term is often used to refer to a ruler or wealthy person who provides economic as well as personal support.

Peasant: A farmer who works a small plot of land.

Penance: An act ordered by the church to obtain forgiveness for sin.

Persecutions: In early church history, Roman punishment of Christians for their faith.

Philosophy: An area of study concerned with subjects including values, meaning, and the nature of reality.

Pilgrimage: A journey to a site of religious significance.

Plague: A disease that spreads quickly to a large population.

Polytheism: Worship of many gods.

Pope: The bishop of Rome, and therefore the head of the Catholic Church.

Principality: An area ruled by a prince, the highest-ranking form of noble below a king.

Prophet: Someone who receives communications directly from God and passes these on to others.

Prose: Written narrative, as opposed to poetry.

Purgatory: A place of punishment after death where, according to Roman Catholic beliefs, a person who has not been damned may work out his or her salvation and earn his or her way to heaven.

R

Rabbi: A Jewish teacher or religious leader.

Racism: The belief that race is the primary factor determining peoples' abilities and that one race is superior to another.

Reason: The use of the mind to figure things out; usually contrasted with emotion, intuition, or faith.

Reformation: A religious movement in the 1500s that ultimately led to the rejection of Roman Catholicism by various groups who adopted Protestant interpretations of Christianity.

Regent: Someone who governs a country when the monarch is too young, too old, or too sick to lead.

Relic: An object associated with the saints of the New Testament, or the martyrs of the early church.

Renaissance: A period of renewed interest in learning and the arts that began in Europe during the 1300s and continued to the 1600s.

Representational art: Artwork intended to show a specific subject, whether a human figure, landscape, still life, or a variation on these.

Ritual: A type of religious ceremony that is governed by very specific rules.

Rome: A term sometimes used to refer to the papacy.

S

Sack: To destroy, usually a city.

Saracen: A negative term used in medieval Europe to describe Muslims.

Scientific method: A means of drawing accurate conclusions by collecting information, studying data, and forming theories or hypotheses.

Scriptures: Holy texts.

Sect: A small group within a larger religion.

Secular: Of the world; typically used in contrast to "spiritual."

Semitic: A term describing a number of linguistic and cultural groups in the Middle East, including the modern-day Arabs and Israelis.

Serf: A peasant subject to a feudal system and possessing no land.

Siege: A sustained military attack against a city.

Simony: The practice of buying and selling church offices.

Sultan: A type of king in the Muslim world.

Sultanate: An area ruled by a Sultan.

Synagogue: A Jewish temple.

T

Technology: The application of knowledge to make the performance of physical and mental tasks easier.

Terrorism: Frightening (and usually harming) a group of people in order to achieve a specific political goal.

Theologian: Someone who analyzes religious faith.

Theology: The study of religious faith.

Trial by ordeal: A system of justice in which the accused (and sometimes the accuser as well) has to undergo various physical hardships in order to prove innocence.

Tribal: Describes a society, sometimes nomadic, in which members are organized by families and clans, not by region, and in which leadership comes from warrior-chieftains.

Tribute: Forced payments to a conqueror.

Trigonometry: The mathematical study of triangles, angles, arcs, and their properties and applications.

Trinity: The three persons of God according to Christianity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

U

Usury: Loaning money for a high rate of interest; during the Middle Ages, however, it meant simply loaning money for interest.

V

Vassal: A noble or king who is subject to a more powerful noble or king.

Vatican: The seat of the pope's power in Rome.

W

West: Generally, Western Europe and North America, or the countries influenced both by ancient Greece and ancient Rome.

Working class: A group between the middle class and the poor who typically earn a living with their hands.

Cultures in Conflict

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People often have a difficult time accepting other groups, and this was certainly the case in the medieval period, when nations clung fiercely to their religions and ways of life. The difficulties of travel also made it unlikely that people would come into regular contact with outsiders—except in the highly undesirable circumstance of an invasion or attack.

From the A.D. 300s, as the Western Roman Empire began to crumble, parts of Europe sustained waves of attacks by various invaders; however, the Eastern Roman Empire, better known as the Byzantine (BIZ-un-teen) Empire, continued to thrive in Greece. In 1071, however, the Byzantines suffered a stunning defeat by the Turks, a formerly nomadic or wandering tribe from Central Asia that had settled in Anatolia (modern-day Turkey). As a result, in 1095 the Byzantine emperor called for help from Western Europe.

East-West relations in Europe had long been strained, with the Byzantines regarding the Westerners as uncouth, and the Westerners viewing the Byzantines as arrogant or proud. The groups even adopted separate forms of Christianity: Roman Catholicism under the leadership of the pope in

the West, and Greek Orthodoxy in the East. The split became official in 1054—but now the Byzantines hoped to rally Christian support against the Turks, who were Muslims.

As it turned out, the Byzantines got more than they bargained for. The Byzantine princess **Anna Comnena** (kahm-NEE-nuh; c. 1083–1148) made this clear in her history of her father's reign, which portrayed the "Gauls"—a derisive or mocking nickname used for Western Europeans—as foolish, greedy thugs. Anna revealed a perhaps typical Byzantine viewpoint with her obvious contempt for the Westerners as inferiors of the Greeks.

Given the much more advanced civilization of the Byzantines, it is understandable that she would feel that way, especially because it soon became clear that the "Gauls" were more interested in helping themselves than in helping the Byzantines. Instead of saving the Byzantine Empire, the pope and other Western leaders launched the Crusades, a series of wars intended to seize the Holy Land, or Palestine, from the Muslims who controlled it.

In Palestine, the Westerners rubbed shoulders with Arabs such as **Usamah ibn Munqidh** (oo-SAH-muh EEB'n moon-KEED; 1095–1188), who, like their Byzantine counterparts, regarded the Western Europeans—he called them "Franks"—as inferiors. Likewise Usamah's belief in the superiority of his civilization is understandable: at a time when few Western Europeans could read and write, Muslim culture enjoyed tremendous advances in science, mathematics, and the arts.

The Muslims, for their part, were also experienced invaders of other lands: in 1080, just before the Crusades began, armies from Morocco wiped out the splendid West African empire of Ghana (GAHN-uh). Just a few years before, according to the Muslim traveler **Al-Bekri** (beh-KREE), Ghana had seemed secure in its wealth and power, but already the introduction of the Islamic or Muslim faith posed a challenge to the people's traditions. Farther south was Timbuktu, still a great center of learning when **Leo Africanus** (c. 1485–c. 1554) visited it in about 1526; but later wars between neighboring tribes would bring its glories to an end.

Leo's record of his travels provided Europeans with a rare glimpse of premodern Africa, and inspired fascination

with the exotic lands beyond the Sahara Desert. Similarly, **Marco Polo** (1254–1324) caused a great stir with his account of an even more distant place: China. Because of natural barriers separating them from the rest of the world, until the A.D. 100s the Chinese had assumed they were the only civilized people; the only other groups they knew of were "barbarian" tribes on their northern borders. By the time Marco visited in the late 1200s, the "barbarian" Mongols had conquered China, and his recollections carry hints of Chinese resentment toward the invaders.

Like the Crusades in the Holy Land, which ended in 1291, the Mongol conquests helped spur Europe into a new age of change and discovery. As the Roman Empire had once done, the empire of the Mongols united much of the world under one rule. The Mongols suppressed many tribes and rulers who might have threatened people traveling through their realms, and thus for the first time in centuries, travel between Europe and Asia was relatively safe and easy. But the opening up of the world also made possible an entirely new kind of invasion: one by bacteria or microscopic organism. Carried by fleas who lived in the fur of rats, the Black Death or Plague (1347–51) wiped out as much as forty-five percent of Europe. Many Europeans blamed Jews for causing the Black Death. A passage from the writings of **Jacob von Königshofen** on this subject provides a particularly unsettling example of cultures in conflict.

Anna Comnena

Excerpt from The Alexiad

Published in *The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Participants,* 1921

"Alexius was not yet, or very slightly, rested from his labors when he heard rumors of the arrival of innumerable Frankish armies."

The Byzantine (BIZ-un-teen) Empire—sometimes referred to as "Byzantium" (bi-ZAN-tee-um)—was a continuation of the ancient Roman Empire. In fact, the Byzantines referred to themselves as "Romans" rather than using the term Byzantine, which referred to the old name of their capital in Greece. In A.D. 330, the center of Byzantium had become Constantinople (kahn-stan-ti-NOH-pul), capital of the Eastern Roman Empire.

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476, Byzantium became more and more separated from Western Europe. This led to a division of faiths, with Western Europe adhering to Latin Christianity, or Roman Catholicism, and Eastern Europe accepting the Greek Orthodox Church. Many differences developed, with Catholics taking their leadership from the pope while members of the Orthodox Church increasingly charted a separate course. In 1054, the Latin and Greek churches officially separated.

Three years later, the Comnenus (kahm-NEEN-us) family assumed the Byzantine throne and established a dynasty, or royal line of succession, that would last for many centuries. But these were troubled times for the empire: in

Anna Comnena

Anna Comnena was the eldest daughter of Byzantine emperor Alexis I Comnenus. In 1097, when she was fourteen, she married thirty-year-old Nicephorus Bryennius (ny-SEF-ur-us bry-EN-ee-us; 1067–1137). Nicephorus was a historian and a learned man, and Anna, who received the best education available, would eventually become the world's first notable female historian.

Though the Byzantines had been ruled by females before, Anna knew that her chances of taking the throne were slim, particularly because she had a younger brother, John. Yet in 1118, when she was thirty-five, she made an unsuccessful bid to place Nicephorus on the throne. John defeated the plot and went on to rule as John II for the next twenty-five years, while Anna spent the rest of her life in a monastery, a secluded place for people who have taken religious vows.

There she wrote the *Alexiad,* a history of the period from 1069 to 1118—that is, from the time her uncle, Isaac Comnenus, established the dynasty to the end of her father's reign. The suffix *-ad* usually means that a work is the glorious tale of a nation, and certainly Anna's history provides an image of the Byzantine Empire under her family's rule as a highly civilized realm.

Anna Comnena. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

1071, the Byzantines suffered a crippling defeat by the Turks at the Battle of Manzikert in Armenia. Therefore in 1095, Emperor Alexis I Comnenus (ruled 1081–1118) asked Pope Urban II (ruled 1088–99) to send assistance in the form of troops.

Despite Alexis's request for help, divisions between Byzantines and Western Europeans remained severe. The Byzantines rightly viewed their own civilization as more advanced than that of the westerners, who they lumped together as "Latins," "Gauls," or "Franks." The last two were the

names of two tribes who had once controlled parts of the West, and the use of these terms implied that the Western Europeans were barbarians, or uncivilized. Indeed, the term "barbarian" was often used by the Byzantines and their ancient Greek ancestors to describe all non-Greeks.

The Byzantines did not simply look down on the "Franks"—they were also afraid of them, and with good reason. In 1081, a group of Normans—descendants of the Vikings who had earlier terrorized much of Europe—had tried to invade Byzantine territories. Leading the attack was Robert Guiscard (gee-SKARD; c. 1015–1085), aided by his son Bohemond I (BOH-ay-maw; c. 1050–1111). Thus Alexis became alarmed when he learned that huge numbers of Western Europeans were headed east—and that Bohemond was at the head of one army. Later, Alexis's daughter Anna Comnena (c. 1083–1148) would compose an official history of her father's reign, the *Alexiad* (uh-LEX-ee-ad). In it, she would write of events that occurred when she was in her early teens, when her father was faced with an unwelcome visit from Bohemond in 1096.

Things to remember while reading the excerpt from *The Alexiad*

- Like many Byzantines, Anna looked down on Western Europeans, whom she referred to by the uncomplimentary nickname of "Gauls." She also called them "Latins," which was not as negative. Ill-will was particularly strong against Bohemond and the Normans, who had tried to invade the Byzantine Empire just fifteen years before.
- Durazzo (dü-RAT-soh) was a city in what is now Albania, which the Normans attempted to take from the Byzantines in 1081. Larissa is an area in Greece, and Cosmidion was a Greek city.
- It was common in pre-modern times for kings and other leaders to employ food-tasters, men whose job it was to taste the king's food and drinks and thus ensure that these were not poisoned.
- Because of differences in language, Anna Comnena renders the name of her father as "Alexius" rather than Alexis, and that of Bohemond as "Bohemund."

Excerpt from The Alexiad

*... But when Bohemund had arrived ... with his companions, realizing both that he was not of noble birth, and that for lack of money he had not brought with him a large enough army, he hastened, with only ten Gauls, ahead of the other **counts** and arrived at Constantinople. He did this to win the favor of the Emperor for himself, and to conceal more safely the plans which he was concocting against him. Indeed, the Emperor, to whom the schemes of the man were known, for he had long since become acquainted with the hidden and **deceitful** dealings of this same Bohemund, took great pains to arrange it so that before the other counts should come he would speak with him alone. Thus having heard what Bohemund had to say, he hoped to persuade him to cross before the others came, lest, joined with them after their coming, he might **pervert** their minds.*

*When Bohemund had come to him, the Emperor greeted him with gladness and inquired anxiously about the journey and where he had left his companions. Bohemund responded to all these things as he thought best for his own interests, **affably** and in a friendly way, while the Emperor recalled in a familiar talk his bold undertakings long ago around Durazzo and Larissa and the hostilities between them at that time. Bohemund answered, "Then I confess I was your enemy, then I was hostile. But, behold, I now stand before you like a deserter to the ranks of the enemy! I am a friend of your Majesty." The Emperor proceeded to **scrutinize** the man, considering him cautiously and carefully and drawing out what was in his mind. As soon as he saw that Bohemund was ready to consent to swear an oath of **fealty** to him, he said, "You must be tired from the journey and should retire to rest. We will talk tomorrow about anything else."*

*So Bohemund departed ... to Cosmidion, where hospitality was found, a table richly laden.... Then the cooks came and showed him the uncooked flesh of animals and birds, saying: "We have prepared this food which you see on the table according to our skill and the custom of this region; but if, perchance, these please you less, here is food, still uncooked, which can be prepared just as you order." The Emperor, because of his almost incredible **tact** in handling men, had commanded that this be done and said by them. For, since he was especially expert in penetrating the secrets of minds and in discover-*

Counts: Relatively low-ranking noblemen.

Deceitful: Dishonest.

Pervert (v.): Corrupt.

Affably: In a cheerful manner.

Scrutinize: Study carefully.

Fealty: Loyalty.

Tact: Skill in knowing what to say and do so as to maintain good relations with other people.

*ing the **disposition** of a man, he very readily understood that Bohemund was of a **shrewd** and suspicious nature; and he foresaw what happened. For, lest Bohemund should conceive any suspicion against him, the Emperor had ordered that raw meats be placed before him, together with the cooked, thus easily removing suspicion. Neither did his conjecture fail, for the very shrewd Bohemund took the prepared food, without even touching it with the tips of his fingers, or tasting it, and immediately turned around, concealing, nevertheless, the suspicion which occurred to him by the following **ostentatious** show of **liberality**. For under the pretext of courtesy he distributed all the food to those standing around; in reality, if one understood rightly, he was dividing the cup of death among them. Nor did he conceal his cunning, so much did he hold his subjects in contempt; for he this day used the raw meat which had been offered to him and had it prepared by his own cooks after the manner of his country. On the next day he asked his men whether they were well. Upon their answering in the **affirmative**, that they were indeed very well, that not even one felt even the least indisposed, he **disclosed** his secret in his reply: "Remembering a war, once carried on by me against the Emperor, and that strife, I feared lest perchance he had intended to kill me by putting deadly poison in my food."*

*... After this, the Emperor saw to it that a room in the palace was so filled with a collection of riches of all kinds that the very floor was covered with costly **raiment**, and with gold and silver coins, and certain other less valuable things, so much so that one was not able even to walk there, so hindered was he by the abundance of these things. The Emperor ordered the guide suddenly and unexpectedly to open the doors, thus revealing all this to Bohemund. Amazed at the spectacle, Bohemund exclaimed: "If such riches were mine, long ago I would have been lord of many lands!" The guide answered, "And all these things the Emperor **bestows** upon you today as a gift." Most gladly Bohemund received them and with many gracious*

Alexis I Comnenus ruled the Byzantine Empire from 1081 to 1118. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

Disposition: Attitude.

Shrewd: Clever.

Ostentatious: Conspicuous, like a show-off.

Liberality: Generosity.

Affirmative: Positive—i.e., yes.

Disclosed: Revealed.

Raiment: Clothing.

Bestows: Gives.

Ignominy: Humiliating or disgraceful conduct.

Base (adj.): Low.

Surpassing: Above everyone or everything else.

Malice: Bad intentions.

Intrepidity: Fearlessness.

Inconstant: Unpredictable, changing.

Spurned: Rejected.

Pretext: A reason one claims for doing something, when in fact the real reason is secret—and usually less admirable.

Lord's Sepulchre: The place in Jerusalem where Jesus was said to have been buried.

*thanks he left, intending to return to his rest in the inn. But changing his mind when they were brought to him, he, who a little before had admired them, said: "Never can I let myself be treated with such **ignominy** by the Emperor. Go, take those things and carry them back to him who sent them." The Emperor, knowing the **base** fickleness of the Latins, quoted this common saying, "Let the evil return to its author." Bohemund having heard this, and seeing that the messengers were busily bringing these things back to him, decided anew about the goods which he had sent back with regret, and ... changed in a moment.... For he was quick, and a man of very dishonest disposition, as much **surpassing** in **malice** and **intrepidity** all the Latins who had crossed over as he was inferior to them in power and wealth. But even though he thus excelled all in great cunning, the **inconstant** character of the Latins was also in him. Verily, the riches which he **spurned** at first, he now gladly accepted. For when this man of evil design had left his country in which he possessed no wealth at all (under the **pretext**, indeed, of adoring at the **Lord's Sepulchre**, but in reality endeavoring to acquire for himself a kingdom), he found himself in need of much money, especially, indeed, if he was to seize the Roman power. In this he followed the advice of his father and, so to speak, was leaving no stone unturned.*

What happened next...

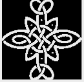
By the time of Bohemond's arrival in Constantinople, the original purpose of the expedition from the West had been lost; 1095 marked the beginning of the Crusades, a series of wars in which popes and rulers in Western Europe attempted to seize control of the Holy Land (Palestine) from the Muslim Turks. The First Crusade, which resulted in the capture of Jerusalem and other cities, would mark the high point of this effort.

Bohemond became ruler over one of those captured cities, Antioch, yet he did not stop when he was ahead. First he was captured by the Turks in a failed attack on another city in 1099, then in 1107 he launched an unsuccessful attack against his old foe Alexis. Alexis got the better of him, more through superior mental skill than through the use of his

Crusading peasants and troops. Alexis's enemy Bohemond fought in the First Crusade in between attempts to overthrow the Byzantine Empire. *Reproduced by permission of the New York Public Library Picture Collection.*

armies, and forced Bohemond to sign a treaty in which he recognized Alexis as the superior ruler.

The Crusades themselves, which continued until 1291, were a disaster for Byzantium. The Fourth Crusade (1202–04) ended with the capture of Constantinople by Western Europeans, and the establishment of the so-called Latin Empire. The Comnenus family went on to rule a breakaway



Bohemond

Bohemond I—his name can also be spelled "Bohemund," as Anna Comnena rendered it—was a member of a group called the Normans, descendants of the Vikings. He had grown up fighting in the army of his father Robert Guiscard (gee-SKARD; c. 1015–1085), who drove the forces of the Byzantine Empire from Italy and later conquered Sicily, a large island off the Italian coast. In 1081, Robert and Bohemond launched a series of unsuccessful campaigns against the Byzantines in southeastern Europe.

In 1096, Bohemond joined the First Crusade (1095–99), an effort to seize control of the Holy Land, or Palestine, from the Muslim Turks. In 1098 he led the crusaders in the capture of Antioch (AN-tee-ahk), a city on the border between Turkey and Syria, and went on to become ruler of Antioch. In the following year, however, he engaged in an unsuccessful attempt to take another Muslim-controlled city, and was captured by the Turks.

Released in 1103, Bohemond returned to Europe, where he tried to gather support for another campaign against the Byzantines. By now he was well into his fifties and unmarried, but in 1106, King Philip I of France gave him the hand of his daughter Constance—an important match for Bohemond. Confident in the support of his powerful father-in-law, he went on to make war against the Byzantines in 1107, but failed to gain victory.

Byzantine state called Trebizond, which lasted until 1461. In the meantime, the Byzantines recaptured Constantinople in 1261, but they had been so badly weakened that they were easily defeated by the Ottoman Turks in 1453. The Turks gave Constantinople its present name of Istanbul.

Did you know ...

- Anna Comnena wrote of one unnamed prince of the "Franks" who was so uncouth that he sat down on Emperor Alexis's throne. When one of his wiser comrades suggested he move, he said of Alexis, "This must be a rude fellow who would alone remain seated when so many brave warriors are standing up." Anna said that when he learned of this, Alexis "did not complain ... although he did not forget the matter."

- Despite his bad relations with most of the Western European leaders, Alexis took a deep and genuine liking to Raymond of Toulouse (tuh-LOOS; 1042–1105). The emperor took the young French count, destined for glory in the Crusades, under his wing and warned him to steer clear of Bohemond. Anna wrote of Raymond, "He was as far superior to all the Latins ... as the sun is above the other stars."

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Usamah ibn Munqidh

Excerpt from **The Memoirs of Usamah ibn Munqidh**

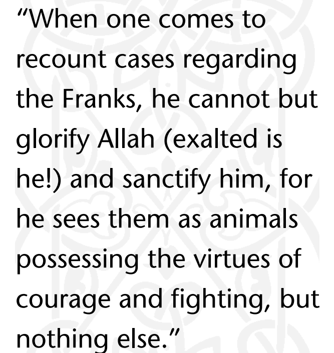
Published in *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades: Memoirs of Usamah ibn Munqidh,* 1987

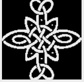
In 1095, armies from Western Europe marched on Palestine, intent on gaining control of the Holy Land—that is, the area where most of the events recorded in the Bible took place. Standing in their way were the Muslims who controlled the area. The Muslim or Islamic faith has much in common with Christianity and Judaism, including its respect for many of the people and places referred to in the Old and New testaments.

For centuries, Christians who wanted to visit the holy sites had done so without interference, but once the area came under the control of the Turks, a people who came ultimately from the grasslands of Central Asia, things began to change. Not only were the Turks less willing to allow Christian pilgrims to enter the Holy Land, but European leaders—including the pope, the leader of Roman Catholic Christianity—desired to gain control of Palestine for themselves.

The First Crusade (1095–99) ended in success for the Europeans, with the capture of Jerusalem and the establishment of four European-controlled "crusader" states throughout the area of modern-day Israel, Lebanon, and Syria. Many

"When one comes to recount cases regarding the Franks, he cannot but glorify Allah (exalted is he!) and sanctify him, for he sees them as animals possessing the virtues of courage and fighting, but nothing else."





Usamah ibn Munqidh

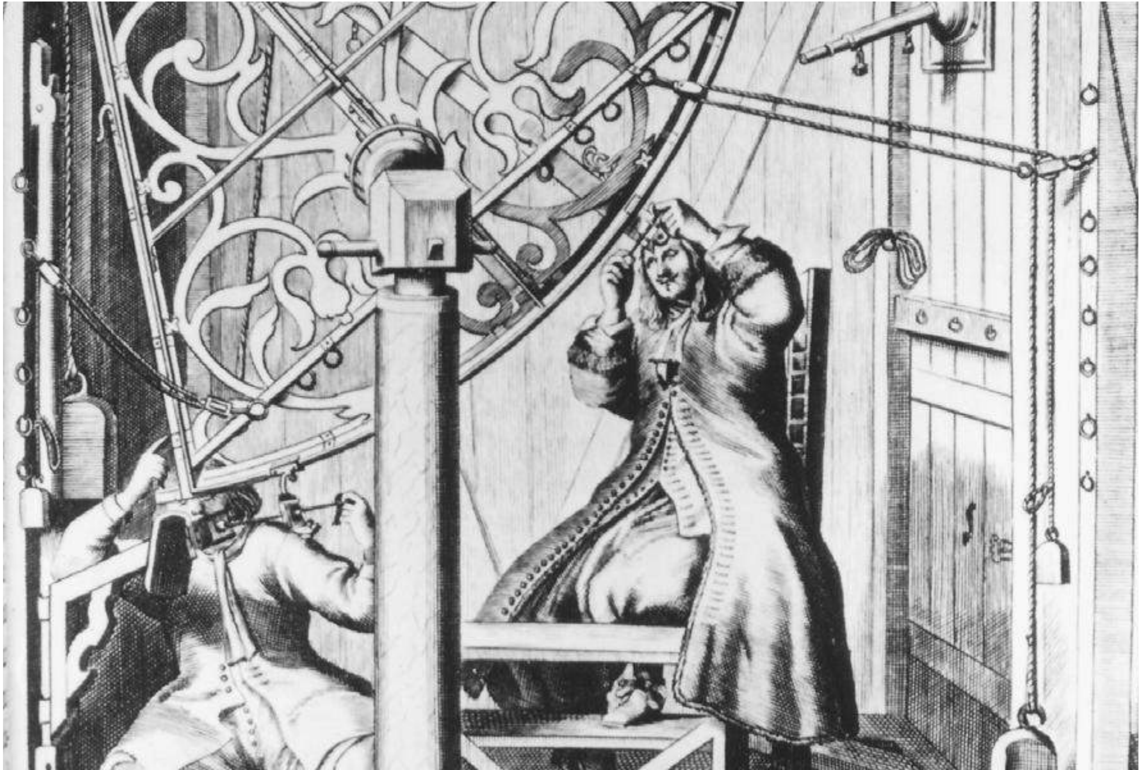
The story of the Crusades, the "holy wars" by which Western Europeans tried to gain control of Palestine, is usually told from the perspective of the European invaders. Thus the autobiography or life story written by Usamah ibn Munqidh, a Muslim defender, offers a fresh perspective.

Usamah served as a soldier and administrator under Nur ad-Din (NOOR ed-DEEN; 1118–1174), the sultan or ruler of Egypt and Syria. After living in Egypt for a time, he returned to his home in Palestine and asked the sultan for his permission to move his family back. Nur ad-Din agreed, and arranged a letter of safe passage, which should have guaranteed that the family's ship would face no danger from the European invaders. Indeed, Usamah recalled that "the Frankish king"—the leader of the Europeans in the region—had agreed to the safe passage. But when the ship neared its destination, a group of European pirates attacked the ship with the blessings of the "Frankish king."

The pirates robbed Usamah's family of almost everything. Later he wrote, "Compared with the safety of my sons, my brother, and our women, the loss of the rest meant little to me, except for my books. There had been 4,000 fine volumes on board, and their destruction has been a cruel loss to me for the rest of my life." Usamah had a long life in which to remember: at a time when the average life expectancy in Western Europe was no more than thirty years, he lived to the ripe old age of ninety-three. Despite his bad experiences with the "Franks," he developed many friendships with Europeans, as he recounted in his autobiography, written about 1175.

of the Muslims who lived in the region, who were Arab rather than Turkish, looked down on the Western Europeans and, like the Byzantines of Greece, referred to them as "Franks." Again like the Byzantines, the Arabs viewed the "Franks" from the perspective of their own highly developed civilization, which had yielded enormous progress in science, mathematics, and the arts over the preceding centuries.

The "Franks" may have been unwashed barbarians, or uncivilized people, in the view of the Arabs, but in the time of Usamah ibn Munqidh (oo-SAH-muh EEB'n moon-KEED; 1095–1188), it seemed that they were there to stay. By then, the principal Muslim force in the Middle East was no longer the Turks; rather, power had shifted to the Fatimid dynasty in



Egypt, under which Usamah served as a soldier and administrator. In his *Memoirs*, or life story, Usamah offered a fascinating portrait of the uneasy relationship between the Arabs and the Christians who had settled in Palestine.

Arab astronomers. Compared to Western Europe, Arab civilizations were very advanced in scientific fields in the Middle Ages. *Reproduced by permission of the New York Public Library Picture Collection.*

Things to remember while reading the excerpt from *The Memoirs of Usamah ibn Munqidh*

- Usamah's account presents a rare view of medieval medical practice—if such a term can be applied to the ghastly practices in Western Europe at the time. His story of the knight's leg and the insane woman's skull is not for the faint of heart, but it is probably all too accurate, and it illustrates the fact that European "doctors" often blamed diseases on spiritual rather than physical causes. To Usamah, these practices must have seemed particularly backward, because Arab doctors were among the most highly advanced in the medieval world.

- The reference to making the woman's "humor wet" implies the medieval belief in humors, or bodily fluids such as blood. It appears that Thabit (tah-BEET), the Christian physician referred to—who was probably not a "Frank" but someone from the Middle East—simply intended to get her circulation going, which was probably not a bad idea.
- In another passage, Usamah expressed amazement at the Europeans' relatively open-minded attitudes toward "their" women. In the Muslim world, a man was undisputed master in his house, and most Islamic men of wealth such as Usamah had more than one wife. Thus although attitudes toward women in medieval Europe would hardly be considered forward-thinking by modern standards, to Usamah they were amazing.
- Usamah's observations on the Europeans are colored by his obviously low view of them, which is particularly interesting because Europeans in later centuries would themselves view other peoples, including Arabs, as their inferiors. This attitude was not necessarily the same as hatred, however: Usamah compared the "Franks" to animals that could be either pleasant or unruly depending on how they were handled.
- Not all the place names in this passage are clear; however, it is known that "Sur" was Tyre (TIRE), an ancient city in what is now Lebanon; and that Nablus (NAH-blus) is in the modern nation of Jordan.

What happened next ...

The "Franks" may have thought they were in the Holy Land to stay, but events of later years would prove them wrong. In Usamah's lifetime, they had already lost ground, and though they enjoyed some success in the Third Crusade, which began the year after he died in 1188, this success was short-lived.

By the 1200s, the crusading spirit had begun to die out. The primary target of the Fourth Crusade (1202–04) turned out not to be the Muslims, but Christians in the Byzantine Empire. Later crusades involved a number of colorful figures, but the results were less and less impressive. In 1291, the last crusader stronghold in Acre (AHK-ruh) fell.

Did you know ...

- Although Crusades in the Holy Land came to an end in 1291, Europeans continued to wage "holy wars"—against Muslims and supposed enemies of the faith at home—up until 1464. The last crusade was an attempt to recapture the Byzantine Empire from the Turks, who had destroyed it eleven years before; ironically, the Western Europeans' Crusades had played a major role in weakening Byzantium and leaving it open to invasion.
- Though he maintained a generally low view of the "Franks," Usamah ibn Munqidh considered some of them friends, and even gave some of them his grudging respect—as his account of the European doctor's successful treatment of the knight Bernard illustrates. Elsewhere in his *Memoirs,* he reports on a generous European host who understood the ways of the Muslims enough to assure his guests that no pork (which is forbidden by the Islamic religion) was ever served at his table.

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Al-Bekri

Excerpt from Al-Masalik wa 'l-Mamalik

Published in *African Civilization Revisited,* 1991

Leo Africanus

Excerpt from Description of Africa

Published in *Readings about the World, Volume 2,* 1999

The Sahara Desert in Africa is larger than the continental United States. Not surprisingly, this most forbidding of all deserts ensured that the southern part of the African continent would be shut off from the northern part, where the people had much greater opportunities for communication with other lands. Some of the most notable civilizations of premodern Africa, however, arose on the edges of the Sahara.

Among these was Ghana (GAH-nuh), which reached its high point in the A.D. 1000s. Ghana became incredibly wealthy and powerful, largely on the strength of its enormous gold reserves. Another important center of civilization was the city of Timbuktu, which flourished under the empires of Mali (MAHL-ee) and Songhai (SAWNG-hy) during the 1300s and 1400s. So many scholars lived in Timbuktu that, according to Leo Africanus (c. 1485–c. 1554), books were the most highly prized items sold in the markets there.

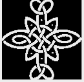
Yet despite Ghana's riches in gold, and the intellectual wealth of Timbuktu, both were in a highly fragile situation. From the description of Ghana written by al-Bekri (beh-KREE) in about 1067, it is hard to imagine that the splendid empire

"The king of Ghana can put two hundred thousand warriors in the field, more than forty thousand being armed with bow and arrow."

From Al-Masalik wa 'l-Mamalik

"Many hand-written books imported from Barbary are also sold [in the market at Timbuktu]. There is more profit made from this commerce than from all other merchandise."

From Description of Africa



Al-Bekri and Leo Africanus

Little is known about al-Bekri, except that he was a Muslim from Spain who visited West Africa in about 1067. The record of his travels, *Al-Masalik wa 'l-Mamalik,* has not even been translated into English; instead, the version included here comes from author Basil Davidson's English rendering of a passage from a French translation.

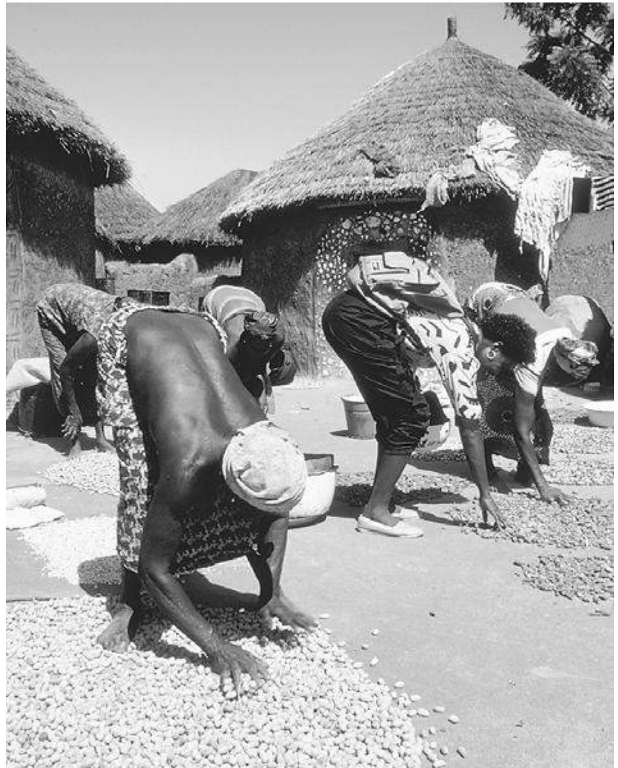
Leo Africanus is more well known. Like al-Bekri, he was a Muslim from Spain, but he came into the world just seven years before the Christian rulers Ferdinand and Isabella drove out all Muslims in 1492. Therefore he and his family fled to Morocco, where his uncle became an official in the Islamic government. Thus the young man had an opportunity to travel throughout northern Africa, but on one trip in 1517, when he was thirty-two years old, he was captured and enslaved by European pirates.

Up to this point, he had been known by an Arabic name, but when his reputation as an extremely learned slave gained him an introduction to Pope Leo X (ruled 1513–21), the pope took such a liking to him that he gave him his own name. Thus he became Leo Africanus, or Leo the African, and accepted Christianity. Under the pope's direction, he wrote *Description of Africa,* which for many years remained Europeans' primary source of knowledge on Africa.

would come to an end in just a few years; but behind the scenes, a clash of cultures was forming. The capital of Ghana, Kumbi-Saleh, had been formed from two towns about six miles apart. One town became a center for Islam, al-Bekri's own religion, whereas the other remained a stronghold of the native religion. Eventually the Muslim faith would win out, in the process destroying the power of the king, whose people had believed he was a god.

Timbuktu, on the other hand, was predominantly Muslim when Leo Africanus, another Islamic traveler, visited there. (His reference to the ruler's dislike for Jews, however, is not typical of medieval Islam: during the Middle Ages, Jews and Muslims typically got along well.) Yet Timbuktu faced other threats. One of these was the harsh surrounding environment, to which Leo referred in his account. Another was the near-constant state of warfare between various African peoples in the area. Though they were not necessari-

ly of different races, their cultures and ways of life were often in conflict, and eventually this struggle would bring an end to the glory of Timbuktu.



Fihini Village in modern-day Ghana. When al-Bekri visited Ghana in about 1067, the empire was extremely wealthy and powerful. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Things to remember while reading the excerpts from *Al-Masalik wa 'l-Mamalik* and *Description of Africa*

- Though the term "Negro" came to have a negative meaning in the late twentieth century, al-Bekri's use of it does not imply a racial judgment; rather, he used it as a simple descriptive term equivalent to the word "Caucasian" for white people.
- Both writers were born in Spain when it was under Islamic control, but Leo Africanus wrote his account for Europeans. Therefore he used units of measure such as the mile and the *ducat* (DUK-et), a type of money in Europe, whereas al-Bekri used Middle Eastern words: *dinar* (dee-NAHR) and *mitqal* (meet-KAHL) for units of money, and *vizier* (VIZ-ee-ur) for a type of government official.
- The two writers make a number of interesting observations about the economic systems of Ghana and Timbuktu. Salt was and is a highly valued item in the Sahara: even today, African merchants do a brisk business selling the mineral, which is necessary to human life but scarce in the region. Al-Bekri also noted that if the king of Ghana did not control the supply of gold, it would lose its worth, a fact that is true of any unit of value, whether it be gold, paper money, or another item. Leo Africanus, for his part, perhaps said a great deal when he wrote that "The inhabitants are very rich, especially the strangers who have settled in the country." This seems to imply that the people of Timbuktu

Port of Seville, Spain. Al-Bekri was a Spanish muslim who spent some part of his life in this Spanish city. *Reproduced by permission of the New York Public Library Picture Collection.*

were not becoming wealthy in as great numbers as the foreigners in their midst.

- Many of the names used by the two travelers are lost to history. The locations of Ghiaru and Tegaza are not clear. Nor is there much information about the architect named Granata, who must surely have been a prominent citizen of Timbuktu.

Excerpt from Al-Masalik wa 'l-Mamalik

The king of Ghana can put two hundred thousand warriors in the field, more than forty thousand being armed with bow and arrow....

When he gives ***audience*** *to his people, to listen to their complaints and set them to rights, he sits in a* ***pavilion*** *around which stand ten pages holding shields and gold-mounted swords: and on his right hand are the sons of the princes of his empire, splendidly clad and with gold plaited into their hair. The governor of the city is seated on the ground in front of the king, and all around him are his* ***vizirs*** *in the same position. The gate of the chamber is guarded by dogs of an excellent breed, who never leave the king's seat: they wear collars of gold and silver, ornamented with the same metals. The beginning of a royal audience is announced by the beating of a kind of drum which they call deba, made of a long piece of hollowed wood. The people gather when they hear this sound....*

The king exacts the right of one ***dinar*** *of gold on each donkey-load of salt that enters his country, and two dinars of gold on each load of salt that goes out. A load of copper carries a* ***duty*** *of five* ***mitqals*** *and a load of merchandise ten mitqals. The best gold in the country comes from Ghiaru, a town situated eighteen days' journey from the capital in a country that is densely populated by Negroes and covered with villages. All pieces of native gold found in the mines of the empire belong to the* ***sovereign****, although he lets the public have the gold dust that everybody knows about; without this precaution, gold would become so abundant as practically to lose its value....*

Excerpt from Description of Africa

The houses of Timbuktu are huts made of clay-covered ***wattles*** *with thatched roofs. In the center of the city is a temple built of stone and mortar, built by an architect named Granata, and in addition there is a large palace, constructed by the same architect, where the king lives. The shops of the* ***artisans****, the merchants, and especially weavers of cotton cloth are very numerous. Fabrics are also imported from Europe to Timbuktu, borne by* ***Berber*** *merchants.*

Audience: A ruler's formal review of his people's concerns.

Pavilion: A covered area open on the sides.

Vizirs (or viziers): High government officials in Middle Eastern and some African lands.

Dinar: A type of gold coin used in the Middle East and North Africa at one time.

Duty: Tax.

Mitqal: A unit of money in some Middle Eastern and African regions.

Sovereign: King.

Wattles: A group of poles woven together with reeds or branches to form a structure.

Artisans: Skilled workers who produce items according to their specialty.

Berber: A general term describing several groups of people in northwestern Africa.

The women of the city maintain the custom of veiling their faces, except for the slaves who sell all the foodstuffs. The inhabitants are very rich, especially the strangers who have settled in the country; so much so that the current king has given two of his daughters in marriage to two brothers, both businessmen, on account of their wealth. There are many wells containing ***sweet water*** *in Timbuktu.... Grain and animals are abundant, so that the consumption of milk and butter is considerable. But salt is in very short supply because it is carried here from Tegaza, some 500 miles from Timbuktu. I happened to be in this city at a time when a load of salt sold for eighty* ***ducats****. The king has a rich treasure of coins and gold ingots. One of these* ***ingots*** *weighs 970 pounds.*

The royal court is magnificent and very well organized. When the king goes from one city to another with the people of his court, he rides a camel and the horses are led by hand by servants. If fighting becomes necessary, the servants mount the camels and all the soldiers mount on horseback. When someone wishes to speak to the king, he must kneel before him and bow down; but this is only required of those who have never before spoken to the king, or of ambassadors [from other countries]. The king has about 3,000 horsemen and ***infinity*** *of foot-soldiers armed with bows ... which they use to shoot poisoned arrows. This king makes war only upon neighboring enemies and upon those who do not want to pay him* ***tribute****. When he has gained a victory, he has all of them—even the children—sold in the market at Timbuktu.*

Only small, poor horses are born in this country. The merchants use them for their voyages and the courtiers to move about the city. But the good horses come from ***Barbary****. They arrive in a caravan and, ten or twelve days later, they are led to the ruler, who takes as many as he likes and pays appropriately for them.*

The king is a declared enemy of the Jews. He will not allow any to live in the city. If he hears it said that a Berber merchant frequents them or does business with them, he ***confiscates*** *his goods. There are in Timbuktu numerous judges, teachers and priests, all properly appointed by the king. He greatly honors learning. Many handwritten books imported from Barbary are also sold. There is more profit made from this commerce than from all other merchandise.*

Instead of coined money, pure gold nuggets are used; and for small purchases, ***cowrie shells****, which have been carried from Persia, and of which 400 equal a ducat. Six and two-thirds of their ducats equal one Roman gold ounce.*

Sweet water: Drinkable water.

Ducats: A type of coin used in medieval and Renaissance Europe.

Ingots: Blocks of gold or other metals.

Infinity: Literally, an unlimited number; in this case, however, a very large number.

Tribute: Forced payments to a king or conqueror.

Barbary: A term used in premodern times to refer to the Mediterranean coast of North Africa.

Confiscates: Seizes.

Cowrie shells: Bright shells that come from a variety of ocean creatures, used as money in some countries before modern times.

Modern-day Timbuktu, in the nation of Mali, shows little sign of the wealth described by Leo Africanus from his visit to the empire of Mali in the sixteenth century. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

The people of Timbuktu are of a peaceful nature. They have a custom of almost continuously walking about the city in the evening (except for those that sell gold), between 10 P.M. and 1 A.M., playing musical instruments and dancing. The citizens have at their service many slaves, both men and women.

The city is very much endangered by fire. At the time when I was there on my second voyage, half the city burned in the space of five hours. But the wind was violent and the inhabitants of the other half of the city began to move their belongings for fear that the other half would burn.

There are no gardens or orchards in the area surrounding Timbuktu.

What happened next ...

In 1080, just thirteen years after al-Bekri's visit, Ghana suffered an invasion by Muslim conquerors from Morocco in the north. Despite its wealth and the apparent power of its king—power which had already been weakened by the people's acceptance of a religion from outside—the empire of Ghana quickly disappeared.

Within the next two centuries, a new empire arose in Mali, and from the 1200s, it came to dominate the region. Despite the strong leadership of several kings, however, Mali was also overtaken—this time by invaders from within the region. The new power, Songhai, oversaw Timbuktu at its height, a period that actually preceded the visit of Leo Africanus. Yet like the empire of Ghana five centuries before, Songhai fell to conquerors from Morocco in 1591.

Because of Leo Africanus, Timbuktu remained alive in the imagination of Europeans, yet it would be three centuries before another outsider visited the region and wrote about it, and in the meantime it suffered a series of wars and invasions. In 1828, a French explorer went to find the legendary city, and in its place he found a "mass of ill-looking houses built of earth." Eventually, the name "Timbuktu" became a synonym for a remote, forgotten place.

Did you know ...

- The emperor of Ghana was not the only ruler in the region noted for his great wealth in gold; another was Mansa Musa (ruled 1307–c. 1332), who reigned at the height of Mali's power and became the first African ruler to become widely known throughout Europe and the Middle East. He once made a visit to Egypt, where he spent so much that he actually caused an oversupply of gold (and resulting economic problems) in that country.

- Today there is an African country called Ghana, but it is actually located in an area to the south of the former empire by that name. The nation of Mauritania contains most of what was called Ghana in premodern times. There is also a country called Mali, but its boundaries are not the same as the lands once controlled by the empire

of Mali. The nation of Mali does, however, contain Timbuktu—or rather, Tombouctou (tohn-buk-TOO), a town of some 30,000 inhabitants.

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Marco Polo

***Excerpt from* The Book of Ser Marco Polo the Venetian Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East**

Published in 1903

The Mongols were a nomadic, or wandering, people who lived in Central Asia between China and what is now Russia—the area of modern-day Mongolia. For a brief period during the 1200s, this small nation of warriors controlled much of the known world, thanks to a series of conquests begun by Genghis Khan (JING-us KAHN; c. 1162–1227). Under his leadership and that of those who followed, the Mongols took control of an area that stretched from the Korean Peninsula to the outskirts of Vienna, Austria, a distance of about 4,500 miles.

After Genghis, the greatest Mongol khan, or ruler, was Kublai Khan (KOO-bluh; 1215–1294; ruled 1260–1294), who led the Mongols in the conquest of China. For centuries, the Chinese had regarded the Mongols and other nomadic tribes with distrust, and they regarded Kublai's victory over them in 1279 as a disaster. Yet the short-lived Mongol empire also had the effect of opening up trade routes, and as a result there was more contact between East and West than ever before.

This situation made possible one of the most celebrated journeys in history, by Marco Polo (1254–1324) and his father and uncle. Marco won such great favor with Kublai Khan

"I repeat that everything appertaining to this city is on so vast a scale, and the Great Kaan's yearly revenues therefrom are so immense, that it is not easy even to put it in writing, and it seems past belief to one who merely hears it told."

Marco Polo

In 1271, when he was seventeen years old, Marco Polo set out from his hometown of Venice, Italy, with his father and uncle. Today one can fly from Venice to China in just a few hours; but the Polos' journey—which took them through Persia, Afghanistan, northern India, and into China—lasted three years. Along the way, Marco learned several languages, skills that would help them when they got to their destination.

China at that time was under the control of the Mongols, a nomadic tribe from Central Asia, and the Mongol emperor Kublai Khan was perhaps the most powerful man on Earth. Marco became a minister in the Khan's government, which gave him the opportunity to travel throughout southeastern Asia in the coming years.

By 1287, however, when Marco was thirty-three years old, his aging father and uncle were ready to return home. It took some time to obtain the Khan's approval for them to leave, and the return journey by ship was every bit as difficult as the trip out had been; but finally, in 1295, they returned to Venice.

Marco Polo. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

In 1298, during a war with the rival Italian city of Genoa (JIN-oh-uh), Marco was captured and thrown into a Genoese prison. There he met a writer named Rustichello, to whom he told the story of his travels, and Rustichello began writing a book that would become known in English as *The Book of Ser Marco Polo.* The book would later be recognized as the basis for scientific geography, and greatly expanded Europeans' understanding of the world.

that the ruler made him a trusted official in his government, and as a result he had an opportunity to travel to lands that no European had ever seen. Marco marveled at the wonders of the Mongols' government, and at the highly advanced civilization of the Chinese they had conquered. Later, when he returned to his hometown of Venice, Italy, he recorded these

and other observations in a work the English title of which became *The Book of Ser Marco Polo the Venetian Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East.* (*Ser* is an abbreviation of the Italian term for "mister.")

Things to remember while reading the excerpt from *The Book of Ser Marco Polo the Venetian*

- The passage that follows contains Marco Polo's description of a city in eastern China that he called Kinsay (kin-SY), but which is known today as Hangzhou (hahng-ZHOH). That city had been the capital of China prior to the Mongol conquest. He also used the term Manzi (mahn-ZEE) to describe southern China, and Cathay (kah-THY) for China as a whole. As for the port he described at Ganfu (gahn-FOO), that city has since been covered by ocean. Marco's use of the term "Ocean Sea" reflects a pre-modern European belief that all the world's land was surrounded by a single body of water.

- When Marco referred to "miles," he was probably using a Chinese unit called a *li* (LEE), equal to about two-fifths of a mile. He also used an alternative spelling of *khan,* kaan. Other spellings in this document, such as *armour* or *honour,* however, are not necessarily Marco's but those of the translator, who was British. This also explains the use of the British term *burgess* for "citizen."

- Europeans during the Middle Ages did not bathe on a regular basis, thinking it was unhealthy to do so; but Marco could not help being impressed—understandably so—by the cleanliness of the Chinese. In the latter part of this passage, he reveals the ill-will of the Chinese toward their Mongol conquerors, who they regarded both as outsiders and as barbarians, or uncivilized people; yet to judge from this account at least, they did not seem to treat Marco with similar scorn.

- One fact that makes Marco's history of his journeys so entertaining is that he was more open-minded than most Europeans of his time; one would have to be to travel so far from home. Yet it was sometimes hard to keep his prejudices from showing through, as for instance when

he referred to the Chinese as idol-worshipers. In fact the people of China subscribed to a number of religions, few of which could be considered any more idolatrous than the worship of saints practiced by European Christians at the time.

Excerpt from The Book of Ser Marco Polo the Venetian Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East

You must know also that the city of Kinsay has some 3,000 baths, the water of which is supplied by springs. They are hot baths, and the people take great delight in them, frequenting them several times a month, for they are very cleanly in their persons. They are the finest and largest baths in the world; large enough for 100 persons to bathe together.

And the Ocean Sea comes within 25 miles of the city at a place called Ganfu, where there is a town and an excellent ***haven,*** *with a vast amount of shipping which is engaged in the traffic to and from India and other foreign parts, exporting and importing many kinds of wares, by which the city benefits. And a great river flows from the city of Kinsay to that sea-haven, by which vessels can come up to the city itself. This river extends also to other places further inland....*

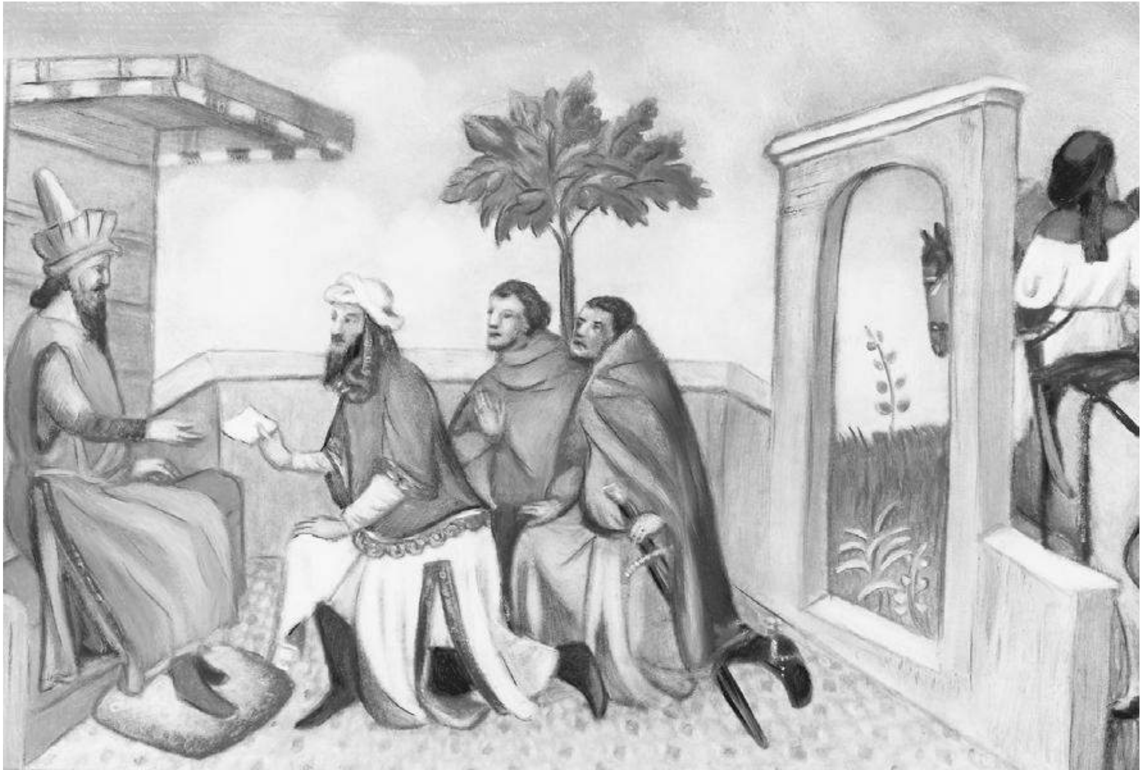
I repeat that everything ***appertaining*** *to this city is on so vast a scale, and the Great Kaan's yearly revenues therefrom are so immense, that it is not easy even to put it in writing, and it seems past belief to one who merely hears it told. But I will write it down for you.*

First, however, I must mention another thing. The people of this country have a custom, that as soon as a child is born they write down the day and hour and the planet and sign under which its birth has taken place; so that every one among them knows the day of his birth. And when any one intends a journey he goes to the ***astrologers*** *and gives the particulars of his nativity in order to learn whether he shall have good luck or no. Sometimes they will say no, and in that case the journey is put off till such day as the astrologer may recommend. These astrologers are very skillful at their business, and often their words come to pass, so the people have great faith in them.*

Haven: Harbor.

Appertaining: Pertaining, or with regard to.

Astrologers: People who study the stars and planets with the belief that their movement has an effect on personal events.



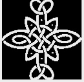
Marco Polo kneels before Kublai Khan. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

They burn the bodies of the dead. And when any one dies the friends and relations make a great mourning for the deceased, and clothe themselves in hempen garments, and follow the corpse playing on a variety of instruments and singing hymns to their idols. And when they come to the burning place, they take representations of things cut out of parchment, such as ***caparisoned*** *horses, male and female slaves, camels, armour, suits of cloth or gold (and money), in great quantities, and these things they put on the fire along with the corpse, so that they are all burnt with it. And they tell you that the dead man shall have all these slaves and animals of which the effigies are burnt, alive in flesh and blood, and the money in gold, at his disposal in the next world; and that the instruments which they have caused to be played at his funeral, and the idol hymns that have been chanted, shall also be produced again to welcome him in the next world; and that the idols themselves will come to do him honour....*

There is another thing I must tell you. It is the custom for every ***burgess*** *of this city, and in fact for every description of person in it,*

Caparisoned: Equipped with a decorative covering.

Burgess: Citizen.



Was Marco Polo Telling the Truth?

The journeys of Marco Polo were as remarkable in the Middle Ages as travel to another planet would be in modern times, and the information he brought back to Europe greatly expanded human knowledge. But his stories about faraway lands sounded so outrageous, and involved so many big numbers, that his neighbors nicknamed him "Marco Millions."

Some modern scholars have been similarly inclined to disbelieve Marco's tales. For instance, they point out that many of the words he used were in Farsi, the language of Persia, which would imply that he never actually went any farther east than modern-day Iran. But Farsi was the language of international trade at that time, much as English is today, so it is understandable that educated local people would have conversed with Marco in that language.

Harder to explain is the fact that Marco failed to mention either the Great Wall of China or the practice of foot-binding, or wrapping a young girl's feet in strips of cloth to prevent them from growing. This caused a grown woman to have tiny feet, something the Chinese at the time considered the height of beauty, but something a European would have found shocking. As for the Great Wall, his route should have taken him near it, and with its enormous size, it is hard to miss.

On the other hand, Marco certainly would have known about the Great Wall, which had been built in the 200s B.C. Therefore if he had been falsifying his account, he would have had every reason to mention it as a way of making his record seem more accurate. As for foot-binding, because this was a Chinese and not a Mongol practice—and because Marco was associated with the Mongols, who were foreigners in the view of the Chinese—perhaps he did not become intimately acquainted enough with the Chinese to learn about this practice.

to write over his door his own name, the name of his wife, and those of his children, his slaves, and all the ***inmates*** *of his house, and also the number of animals that he keeps. And if any one dies in the house then the name of that person is erased, and if any child is born its name is added. So in this way the* ***sovereign*** *is able to know exactly the population of the city. And this is the practice also throughout all Manzi and Cathay.*

And I must tell you that every ***hosteler*** *who keeps an hostel for travellers is bound to register their names and* ***surnames,*** *as well as the day and month of their arrival and departure. And thus the sov-*

Inmates: Inhabitants or residents.

Sovereign: Ruler.

Hosteler: Innkeeper or hotel manager.

Surnames: Family names—in European-influenced cultures, the last name, but in China the first name.

ereign hath the means of knowing, whenever it pleases him, who come and go throughout his dominions....

Other streets are occupied by the Physicians, and by the Astrologers, who are also teachers of reading and writing; and an infinity of other professions have their places round about those squares. In each of the squares there are two great palaces facing one another, in which are established the officers appointed by the King to decide differences arising between merchants, or other inhabitants of the quarter. It is the daily duty of these officers to see that the guards are at their posts on the neighbouring bridges, and to punish them at their ***discretion*** *if they are absent....*

The natives of the city are men of peaceful character, both from education and from the example of their kings, whose disposition was the same. They know nothing of handling arms, and keep none in their houses. You hear of no feuds or noisy quarrels or dissensions of any kind among them. Both in their commercial dealings and in their manufactures they are thoroughly honest and truthful, and there is such a degree of good will and neighbourly attachment among both men and women that you would take the people who live in the same street to be all one family.

And this familiar intimacy is free from all jealousy or suspicion of the conduct of their women. These they treat with the greatest respect, and a man who should presume to make loose proposals to a married woman would be regarded as an infamous rascal. They also treat the foreigners who visit them for the sake of trade with great ***cordiality,*** *and entertain them in the most winning manner, affording them every help and advice on their business. But on the other hand they hate to see soldiers, and not least those of the Great Kaan's garrisons, regarding them as the cause of their having lost their native kings and lords....*

Discretion: Judgment.

Cordiality: Courtesy.

What happened next ...

As it turned out, Marco Polo had seen China during the height of the Mongols' power. Already in 1274 and 1281, Kublai Khan had shown that his forces could be defeated when he launched two failed invasions of Japan; and in 1293

he suffered another defeat in trying to take the island of Java in what is now Indonesia. Kublai died in the following year, and the Mongol dynasty rapidly declined thereafter. In 1368, the Chinese overthrew it and established the Ming dynasty, which would rule until 1644.

Marco's account of his travels, which he began while in prison in 1298, became one of the most important works of geography ever written. It provided Europeans with their first exposure to many lands and peoples of the East, and increased their interest in learning more. As this interest grew, it led to expeditions and voyages of exploration that in turn advanced Europeans' knowledge even more. The Chinese, by contrast, had little interest in learning about people outside their realms. Though they sent ships to far-flung regions in the early 1400s, the purpose of these voyages was not exploration or even conquest; rather, it was to display Chinese achievements. While China turned inward, Europeans' thirst for knowledge ultimately gave them an advantage over the civilization that had created printing, firearms, and many other inventions that would change the world.

Kublai Khan was one of the most powerful men on Earth when Marco Polo traveled to China in the 1270s. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

One reader later inspired by Marco's account was a fellow Italian named Christopher Columbus (1451–1506). Coincidentally, Columbus came from Genoa, a rival city of Venice that had imprisoned Marco and thus indirectly influenced him to write about his travels. In 1492, as every student knows, Columbus set out to reach China by a sea route, but found the New World instead.

Did you know ...

- Marco Polo's book provided Europeans with their first knowledge of the Pamir (puh-MEER) range between

Afghanistan and China. The Pamirs are among the world's highest mountains, and while there, Marco saw an animal that was later named the "Marco Polo sheep" in his honor.

- During Marco's lifetime, Kublai Khan sent a journeyer westward: Rabban Bar Sauma (ruh-BAHN BAR sah-OO-muh; c. 1220–1294). Born in China, Bar Sauma was a Turkish monk of the Nestorian faith, a breakaway group of Christians. In Europe, he met with the pope, and the two joined in an unsuccessful attempt to raise a crusade or "holy war" against the Muslims in the Middle East.

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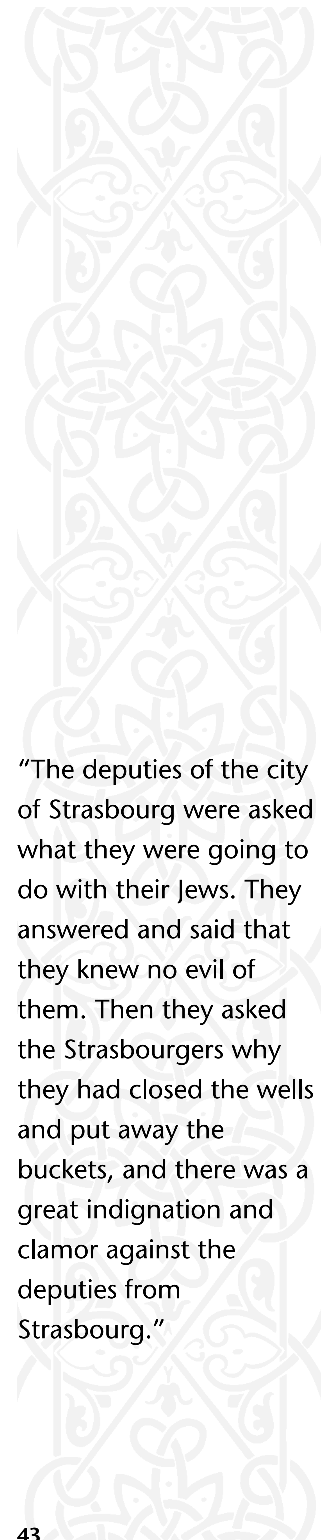
Jacob von Königshofen

"The Cremation of Strasbourg Jewry, St. Valentine's Day, February 14, 1349— About the Great Plague and the Burning of the Jews"

Published in *The Jew in the Medieval World,* 1938

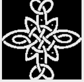


Between 1347 and 1351, Europe suffered one of the worst disasters of human history: the Black Death, sometimes known simply as the Plague. A disease carried by bacteria, or microscopic organisms, the Plague spread rapidly throughout the continent, killing between twenty-five and thirty-five million people out of a population estimated at 100 million. Victims usually died within four days of contracting the disease, but they were four days of horror. In the final hours, the victim turned purplish-black from lung failure; hence the name Black Death.

The medical causes of the Black Death are clear today, but medieval Europeans had no concept of bacteria. Instead, some blamed spiritual causes, while others found a different target: the Jews. For many years, a spirit of anti-Semitism (hatred of, or discrimination against, Jews) had been brewing in Europe, and many justified this hatred in religious terms, saying that the Jews had killed Christ.

As a result, Jews were forced into the fringes of society, and were only allowed to engage in certain jobs such as money-lending, which at that time was considered an evil

"The deputies of the city of Strasbourg were asked what they were going to do with their Jews. They answered and said that they knew no evil of them. Then they asked the Strasbourgers why they had closed the wells and put away the buckets, and there was a great indignation and clamor against the deputies from Strasbourg."



Jewish Sympathizers—A Rare Breed

Jacob von Königshofen is a little-known figure, but perhaps he should not be. He served as town historian for Strasbourg, a German-speaking city that is now just inside the French border, and he was a rare type in medieval Western Europe: a Christian who had sympathy for the Jews.

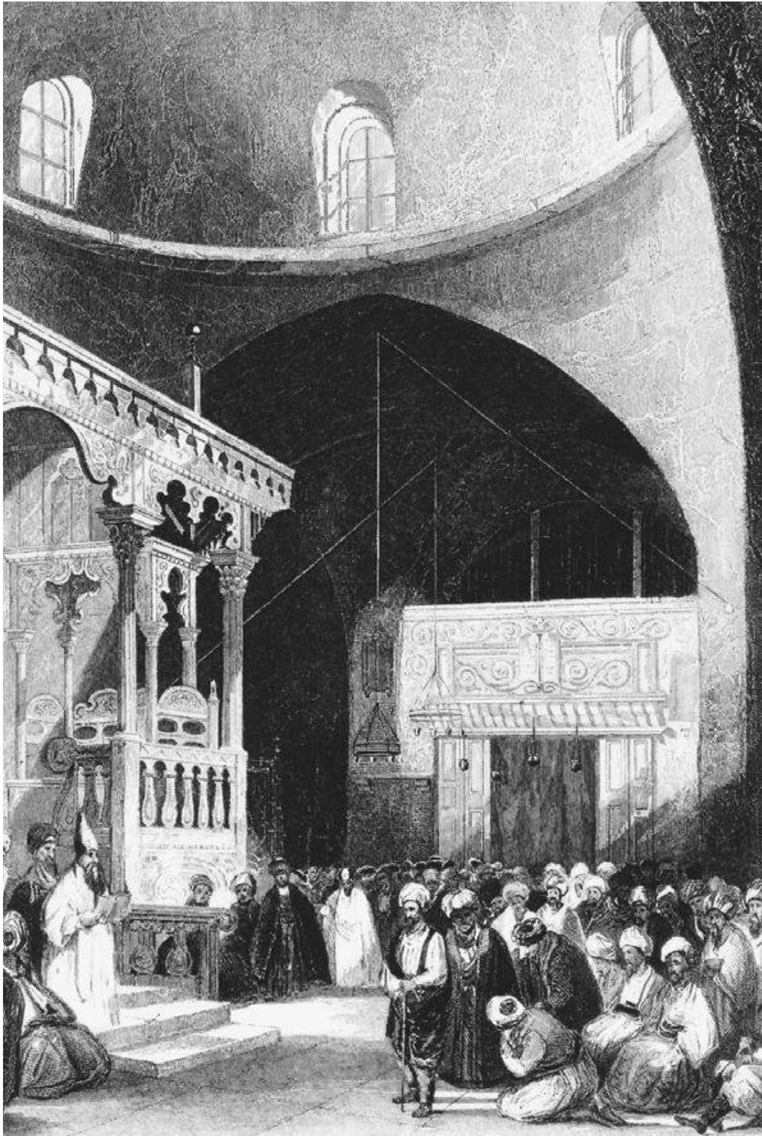
Jews were all too often the target of attacks from the 1000s onward, and this reached a new low during the Black Death, a massive outbreak of disease that killed between twenty-five and thirty-five million Europeans between 1347 and 1351. Desperate for someone to blame, many Europeans were all too willing to believe that Jews had poisoned wells, thus causing the disease.

From his account, it is clear that Königshofen considered the Jews victims, and not the cause of anyone's misfortune. This was a brave stance in a world where Jews were safe targets. Also brave were the city councilmen to whom he referred, men who stood up against the mobs calling for Jewish blood.

Finally, it is interesting to observe that Pope Clement VI (ruled 1342–52), along with other leaders of the Catholic Church, defended the Jews: some Church leaders have openly condemned people of the Jewish faith for what they believe to be the Jews' role in the death of Jesus Christ. In fact the Roman authorities of Palestine at the time of the crucifixion had much to do with Jesus' murder, and most Christians believe that all of humanity—not one group of people—was responsible for Christ's death. But most Christians in the Middle Ages did not believe this, or at least they were afraid to say so in the feverish climate of hatred directed against the Jewish people, and this makes the stance of Königshofen and the others all the more remarkable.

profession. This created a vicious cycle: their financial undertakings made many Jews wealthy, and Europeans increasingly came to despise them for their wealth as well.

Anti-Semitism first boiled over during the First Crusade (1095–99), when European armies seized Palestine—the Jews' original homeland—from the Muslims who controlled it. Many other Europeans, too poor to go away and fight, decided they could still wage war on people who had rejected Christ, so they launched a series of attacks on the Jews in Europe. Some 150 years later, the Black Death provided an excuse for a whole new wave of anti-Semitism.



A Jewish synagogue. The Black Death prompted intense hatred and persecution of Jews as many Europeans looked for someone to blame for the disease. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Things to remember while reading "The Cremation of Strasbourg Jewry, St. Valentine's Day, February 14, 1349"

- Jacob von Königshofen (KYOO-nigs-hahf-en; 1346–1420) served as town historian for Strasbourg (STRAHS-boorg), a German-speaking city in what is now France. Alsace (al-SAS), also mentioned in his account, is a region on the

border between France and Germany. His chronicle refers to a number of Swiss cities: Berne, Zofingen (TSOH-fing-en), and Basel (BAHL). These he calls "Imperial Cities" because they were part of the Holy Roman Empire, a collection of states based in what is now Germany. He also mentions the southern French cities of Marseilles (mar-SAY) and Avignon (AHV-in-yawn). Since 1309, the popes had ruled from the latter city rather than from their traditional seat in Rome.

- The term "Jewry" refers to Jews as a whole, and from his account, it is clear that Königshofen did not believe the accusations leveled against them. He even observed that many were killed simply for their money. When he wrote that some Jews had "admitted" to poisoning wells, he was referring to false "confessions" that had been extracted after hours of torture.
- The separation of Jews from Christians in medieval Europe continued after death; hence Königshofen referred to the Jews having their own cemetery. He also noted that some Jews escaped death by accepting baptism, a ritual that supposedly meant that they had converted to Christianity—though given the circumstances, it is hard to imagine that any of these conversions were genuine. It is interesting to note that the massacre described took place on the day honoring the patron saint of love, Valentine.
- There are several references to fire in Königshofen's report—in most cases, the fires in which Jews died. A well-known method of execution during the Middle Ages was burning at the stake, in which a victim was bound to a pole and heaped with branches around their feet; the branches were then set on fire, burning the victim alive. But Königshofen also noted that the pope kept a fire burning in a room, probably intending this as a way of disinfecting the air and thus keeping the Plague away from him.
- Königshofen describes a conference attended by the deputies or city councilmen of several cities, who met to decide the fate of Jews arrested in their various jurisdictions. The Strasbourg deputies, at least, were prepared to free those who had been arrested, and defiantly demanded to know why the citizens of their town had closed all wells—suggesting that they did not believe the popular

claim that the Plague had resulted from Jews' poisoning of the water supply. Unfortunately, it is clear from the text that the heroic Strasbourg deputies were overruled.

"The Cremation of Strasbourg Jewry St. Valentine's Day, February 14, 1349—About the Great Plague and the Burning of the Jews"

In the year 1349 there occurred the greatest ***epidemic*** *that ever happened. Death went from one end of the earth to the other, on that side and this side of the sea.... In some lands everyone died so that no one was left. Ships were also found on the sea laden with* ***wares****; the crew had all died and no one guided the ship. The Bishop of Marseilles and priests and monks and more than half of all the people there died with them. In other kingdoms and cities so many people perished that it would be horrible to describe. The pope at Avignon stopped all sessions of court, locked himself in a room, allowed no one to approach him and had a fire burning before him all the time. And from what this epidemic came, all wise teachers and physicians could only say that it was God's will. And as the* ***plague*** *was now here, so was it in other places, and lasted more than a whole year. This epidemic also came to Strasbourg in the summer of the above mentioned year, and it is estimated that about sixteen thousand people died.*

In the matter of this plague the Jews throughout the world were ***reviled*** *and accused in all lands of having caused it through the poison which they are said to have put into the water and the wells—that is what they were accused of—and for this reason the Jews were burnt all the way from the Mediterranean into Germany, but not in Avignon, for the pope protected them there.*

Nevertheless they tortured a number of Jews in Berne and Zofingen who then admitted that they had put poison into many wells, and they also found the poison in the wells. Thereupon they burnt the Jews in many towns and wrote of this affair to Strasbourg, Freiburg, and Basel in order that they too should burn their Jews. But the leaders in these three cities in whose hands the government lay did not believe that anything ought to be done to the Jews. However

Epidemic: A widespread disease.

Wares: Cargo.

Plague: A disease or other bad thing that spreads among a group of people.

Reviled: Despised.

in Basel the citizens marched to the city-hall and compelled the council to take an oath that they would burn the Jews, and that they would allow no Jew to enter the city for the next two hundred years. Thereupon the Jews were arrested in all these places and a conference was arranged to meet [in] ... Alsace, February 8, 1349. The ***Bishop*** *of Strasbourg, all the* ***feudal lords*** *of Alsace, and representatives of the three above mentioned cities came there. The* ***deputies*** *of the city of Strasbourg were asked what they were going to do with their Jews. They answered and said that they knew no evil of them. Then they [the deputies] asked the Strasbourgers why they had closed the wells and put away the buckets, and there was a great* ***indignation*** *and* ***clamor*** *against the deputies from Strasbourg. So finally the Bishop and the lords and the Imperial Cities agreed to do away with the Jews. The result was that they were burnt in many cities, and wherever they were expelled they were caught by the peasants and stabbed to death or drowned....*

The Jews Are Burnt

On Saturday—that was St. Valentine's Day—they burnt the Jews on a wooden platform in their cemetery. There were about two thousand people of them. Those who wanted to ***baptize*** *themselves were spared. Many small children were taken out of the fire and baptized against the will of their fathers and mothers. And everything that was owed to the Jews was cancelled, and the Jews had to surrender all pledges and notes that they had taken for debts. The council, however, took the cash that the Jews possessed and divided it among the working-men* ***proportionately.*** *The money was indeed the thing that killed the Jews. If they had been poor and if the feudal lords had not been in debt to them, they would not have been burnt. After this wealth was divided among the artisans some gave their share to the Cathedral or to the Church on the advice of their confessors.*

Thus were the Jews burnt at Strasbourg, and in the same year in all the cities of the Rhine, whether Free Cities or Imperial Cities or cities belonging to the lords. In some towns they burnt the Jews after a trial, in others, without a trial. In some cities the Jews themselves set fire to their houses and ***cremated*** *themselves.*

Bishop: A figure in the Christian church assigned to oversee priests and believers in a given city or region.

Feudal lords: Nobility or large landowners.

Deputies: City councilmen.

Indignation: Irritation or anger.

Clamor: Loud noise.

Baptize: Lowered into water as a symbol of death and rebirth; considered by some to be a necessary part of conversion to Christianity.

Proportionately: Evenly.

Cremated: Burned completely.

The protective clothing of a physician treating people with the Plague. The Plague, or Black Death, killed between twenty-five and thirty-five million people in Europe in the mid-1300s. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

What happened next...

Königshofen wrote, "It was decided in Strasbourg that no Jew should enter the city for a hundred years, but before twenty years had passed, the council and magistrates agreed that they ought to admit the Jews again into the city for twenty years. And so the Jews came back again to Strasbourg in the year 1368...."

Jewish life in Germany, however, did not fully recover until three centuries later, in the 1600s. Then, three centuries after that, European Jews suffered the worst wave of anti-Semitic murders in history, under the Nazi government of Adolf Hitler: during the years from 1933 to 1945, some six million Jews were killed by the Nazis.

Europe's recovery from the Black Death was much quicker than that of the Jewish population, though still quite painful. The disease had left so many people dead that the population did not return to its earlier levels until about 1500, and the economic loss that resulted from the deaths brought on more hardship and unrest.

Did you know ...

- The Strasbourg town councilmen who stood up against the mob calling for Jewish blood were removed from office on February 9 and 10, 1349. A new city council agreed to the demands of their citizens, and began arresting Jews on February 13, the day before the massacre described by Königshofen.
- If a tragedy on the scale of the Black Death occurred in America today, it would be the same as if all the people in the six most populous states—California, New York, Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Illinois—died over a four-year period.
- The Black Death, combined with the struggle between forces who wanted the popes to rule from Rome and those who favored Avignon, helped bring about a massive loss of faith in the Catholic Church. This in turn paved the way for the Reformation (ref-ur-MAY-shun), the religious revolt that began in the 1300s that later created the Protestant branch of Christianity.

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Personal Life

2

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People in the modern West—that is, Europe and the countries influenced by European civilization—tend to hold certain views on human personality and feelings. Typically, Westerners place a high emphasis on the individual: each person is unique and special, they would say, with a right to choose their own destiny. Yet as obvious as this viewpoint might seem to most Americans, it is far from universal. In many parts of the world today, people hold a strikingly different view of the individual: in several non-Western societies, submission to parents, teachers, and rulers is encouraged while self-interest or individual expression is discouraged. Nor has the West always been so oriented toward the self or the individual; these concepts have only come to the forefront of Western thinking in recent centuries.

In part for this reason, the *Confessions* of **Augustine** (aw-GUS-tin; 354–430) is considered one of the greatest works of Western literature. Here, in a work so old it almost qualifies as ancient rather than medieval, is a view of the self—including inner struggles of right and wrong within the soul—familiar to modern readers. This is all the more remarkable when

one considers the few deeply personal writings that preceded it, and the even fewer ones that followed it for a thousand years. Outside of certain passages in the Bible, it is hard to find ancient literature that asks probing personal questions, or that expresses feelings from the bottom of the heart; nor would such intensely introspective (inward-looking) literature appear again until the 1500s or later.

The diary of **Lady Sarashina** (1009–1059), for instance, while clearly quite personal, is far outside the Western idea of self-analysis. Her expressions of her own feelings are muted, meaning that she does not state them plainly, but instead discusses a fleeting romance of her younger years in language that requires one to read between the lines. In fact this represents an attitude still common in Japan and other lands of East Asia, where people consider it rude to speak bluntly and directly. But, looking deeply into Lady Sarashina's recollections, one can find a tale of romance and unfulfilled longing.

King Shahriyar (SHAR-ee-yar) had to deal with difficulties in his love life, but the presentation of his story in ***The Thousand and One Nights*** could hardly be classified as a heartfelt tale of personal pain. That is not its purpose; rather, the story of King Shahriyar—how he came to distrust all women, and therefore decreed that he would sleep with a new wife each night, and have her beheaded the next morning—merely serves as a "frame" for some of the most exciting adventure tales of all time.

Audiences around the world have long enjoyed the yarns contained in *The Thousand and One Nights,* sometimes known as *The Arabian Nights*—among them "Ala-ed-Din [Aladdin] and the Wonderful Lamp," "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," and "Sinbad the Sailor." Almost as famous, however, is the "frame story" which provides a context for all the other tales. This is the saga of Shahrazad (SHAR-uh-zahd), or Sheherezade, the young bride who outwitted Shahriyar by telling him an enthralling tale each night, and saving the end for the following evening—at which time she would begin a new story as soon as she had finished the one before. Thus she saved her own life and that of other women, and won Shahriyar's love in the process.

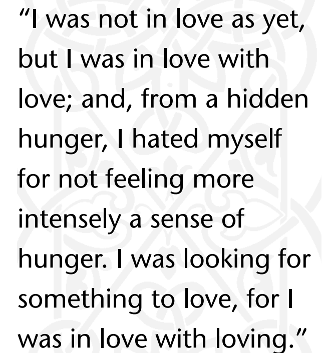
Though *The Thousand and One Nights* offers a number of insights on male-female relations in the Muslim world, it

is still pure fantasy. By contrast, the advice to women offered in the writings of **Christine de Pisan** (pee-ZAHN; 1364–c. 1430) and ***The Goodman of Paris***—written by an anonymous Paris merchant in the 1390s—is quite practical and down-to-earth. Christine, the most well known female author of medieval times, wrote from the viewpoint of a woman, and offered women guidelines on how to manage their homes; the author of *The Goodman,* by contrast, wanted his wife to submit to his authority while performing her wifely duties. Along with the excerpts that precede them, these two writings present a varied look at personal life—and particularly the relations of men and women—during the Middle Ages.

Augustine

Excerpt from the Confessions

Published in *Confessions and Enchiridion,* 1955



"I was not in love as yet, but I was in love with love; and, from a hidden hunger, I hated myself for not feeling more intensely a sense of hunger. I was looking for something to love, for I was in love with loving."

Perhaps no figure in medieval Christianity was as admired and influential as Augustine (aw-GUS-tin; 354–430). Yet he was a man not only of the Middle Ages, but also of ancient times: he grew up in a world still dominated by the Western Roman Empire, but lived to see the beginning of its end. In this confused, changing environment, Augustine's writings presented an all-embracing view of Christian faith as the one solid rock in a sea of uncertainty.

Augustine grew up in North Africa, which was then part of the Roman Empire, and studied in Carthage. The latter city, located in what is now Tunisia, was a great center of learning—but it was also, as he made clear in his *Confessions,* a place where a young man could get into a great deal of mischief. While there, Augustine became involved in a number of sexual relationships, one of which resulted in the birth of a son; spent time with a gang of troublemakers called the "wreckers"; and flirted with a faith called Manichaeism (man-uh-KEE-izm), which the Church later declared a heresy (HAIR-uh-see), or a belief that goes against established teachings. But it was also in Carthage that Augustine was first set

Augustine

One of the most significant figures in the early history of the Church, Augustine or Aurelius Augustinus—who became recognized as St. Augustine after his death—helped bridge the period from ancient to medieval times. He grew up in a world heavily influenced by the Roman Empire, but the power of Rome had begun to fade in his time, and Augustine promoted Christian faith as a more stable foundation than any earthly kingdom.

Augustine was born in Tagaste (tuh-GAS-tee) in North Africa, and grew up studying traditional Roman subjects such as rhetoric (RET-ur-ik), or the art of speaking and writing. At home, his parents were divided on the subject of his religion: his father, Patricius, worshiped the old Roman gods, whereas his mother, Monica (later St. Monica) was a devout Christian. As Augustine later recalled in the *Confessions,* Monica prayed for him often during his wayward youth.

In his teens, he went away to school in Carthage, the greatest center of learning in the area. There he became involved with a woman, and fathered a son out of wedlock. He also flirted with Manichaeism (man-uh-KEE-izm), a religion against which he would argue passionately after he became a Christian. After his schooling in Carthage, Augustine became a teacher in that city and Tagaste, but he was frustrated with discipline problems in the schools, so he decided to move to Rome.

Augustine. *Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.*

Augustine arrived in Rome in 383, at the age of twenty-nine, and later moved to the north Italian town of Milan (mee-LAHN). There Monica joined him following the death of Patricius, who apparently converted to Christianity on his deathbed. Also in Milan, he came under the influence of Ambrose (St. Ambrose; 339–397), another important figure in the early Church. In July 386, Augustine converted to Christianity, and was baptized the following Easter.

Monica's happiness over her son's conversion was short-lived: as they were preparing to return to Tagaste in 391, she fell ill and died. So Augustine went back alone, to become first a priest and then, in 396, a bishop. In this capacity he acted as spiritual leader over the Christians at Hippo, a city in what is now Algeria, for the rest of his life.

on the path that led to his acceptance of Christianity more than ten years later.

Augustine went on to become one of the greatest defenders of the Christian faith, and after his death he was honored as a saint and early father of the Church. Yet in his *Confessions,* he laid bare his soul, showing the depths of his inner confusion and the many wrong things he had done in his youth. The book is addressed to God, and is one of the most deeply personal works ever written. In fact, it could be properly called the first real autobiography, or personal history, because it is not nearly as concerned with outside events as it is with the inner life of Augustine himself.

Things to remember while reading the excerpt from the *Confessions*

- As Augustine notes in the passage that follows, he became "a master in the School of Rhetoric" (RET-uh-rik)—that is, the art of writing and speaking. The first paragraph is among the most widely admired parts of the *Confessions,* and indeed of medieval literature, displaying as it does a finely tuned sense of balance: not only are his words well chosen, but his placement of them results in a finely crafted piece of literature. His love of rhetoric and learning, in fact, helped put him on the path to God: in the writings of Cicero (106–43 B.C.), a Roman orator or speaker, Augustine first discovered a hunger for higher things. The work to which he refers, the *Hortensius,* has been lost to history, and in fact most knowledge of it comes from Augustine's writings.

- Many young people can relate to Augustine's experience of having been "in love with love." In fact, much of what happened to him in Carthage sounds like a tale of troubled youth today: sexual experimentation, unwanted pregnancy, even a brief involvement with a street gang of sorts. The latter were the "wreckers," a group of young student hoodlums, but Augustine never became fully a part of the gang: compared to them, he says, he was "relatively sedate" or calm.

- The *Confessions* is addressed to God; hence Augustine's use of the second person (e.g., "you"), though in his case

he uses the older *thou*. The passage is also filled with a clear sense of evil's existence: he refers, for instance, to his "obedience of devils, to whom I made offerings of my wicked deeds"—meaning that by committing sinful acts, he was serving the devil.

- At the time of the events described in this passage, Augustine was nineteen, and his father had died just two years before. This meant that his family's financial situation was shaky, and therefore he had to study "not to sharpen my tongue," but so that he could get a job. This passage is the only place in the *Confessions* where he even mentions the death of his father; by contrast, his mother was a major influence on him throughout his life. As Augustine makes clear throughout the book, in place of an earthly father he found God, the heavenly father.

Excerpt from the Confessions

Chapter I

*1. I came to Carthage, where a **caldron** of unholy loves was seething and bubbling all around me. I was not in love as yet, but I was in love with love; and, from a hidden hunger, I hated myself for not feeling more intensely a sense of hunger. I was looking for something to love, for I was in love with loving, and I hated security and a smooth way, free from snares. Within me I had a **dearth** of that inner food which is thyself, my God—although that dearth caused me no hunger. And I remained without any appetite for **incorruptible food**—not because I was already filled with it, but because the emptier I became the more I **loathed** it. Because of this my soul was unhealthy; and, full of sores, it **exuded itself forth**, itching to be scratched by scraping on the **things of the senses**. Yet, had these things no soul, they would certainly not inspire our love.*

To love and to be loved was sweet to me, and all the more when I gained the enjoyment of the body of the person I loved. Thus I pol-

Caldron (usually *cauldron*): A large pot.

Dearth: Lack.

Incorruptible food: Augustine is referring to spiritual, as opposed to physical, nourishment.

Loathed: Despised.

Exuded itself forth: Spread itself around.

Things of the senses: Things that provide physical or mental pleasure.

*luted the spring of friendship with the filth of **concupiscence** and I dimmed its **luster** with the slime of lust. Yet, foul and unclean as I was, I still craved, in excessive vanity, to be thought elegant and **urbane.** And I did fall **precipitately** into the love I was longing for. My God, my mercy, with how much bitterness didst thou, out of thy infinite goodness, flavor that sweetness for me! For I was not only beloved but also I secretly reached the climax of enjoyment; and yet **I was joyfully bound with troublesome tics**, so that I could be **scourged** with the burning iron rods of jealousy, suspicion, fear, anger, and strife....*

Chapter III

*5. And still thy faithful mercy hovered over me from afar. In what **unseemly iniquities** did I wear myself out, following a **sacrilegious** curiosity, which, having deserted thee, then began to drag me down into the treacherous **abyss**, into the **beguiling** obedience of devils, to whom I made offerings of my wicked deeds. And still in all this thou didst not fail to scourge me. I dared, even while thy solemn **rites** were being celebrated inside the walls of thy church, to desire and to plan a project which merited death as its fruit. For this thou didst chastise me with **grievous** punishments, but nothing in comparison with my fault, O thou my greatest mercy, my God, my refuge from those terrible dangers in which I wandered **with stiff neck, receding** farther from thee, loving my own ways and not thine—loving a **vagrant** liberty!*

*6. Those studies I was then pursuing, generally accounted as respectable, were aimed at distinction in the courts of law—to excel in which, the more crafty I was, the more I should be praised. Such is the blindness of men that they even glory in their blindness. And by this time I had become a master in the School of **Rhetoric**, and I rejoiced proudly in this honor and became inflated with arrogance. Still I was relatively **sedate**, O Lord, as thou knowest, and had no share in the wreckings of "The Wreckers" (for this stupid and **diabolical** name was regarded as the very badge of gallantry) among whom I lived with a sort of ashamed embarrassment that I was not even as they were. But I lived with them, and at times I was delighted with their friendship, even when I abhorred their acts (that is, their "wrecking") in which they insolently attacked the modesty of strangers, tormenting them by uncalled-for jeers, gratifying their mischievous mirth....*

Concupiscence: Sexual desire.

Luster (or *lustre*): Glow.

Urbane: Sophisticated or worldly.

Precipitately: Steeply.

I was joyfully bound with troublesome tics: In other words, "I enjoyed causing myself emotional pain."

Scourged: Whipped.

Unseemly: Improper.

Iniquities: Sins.

Sacrilegious: Displaying a strong lack of respect for God.

Abyss: A bottomless pit, like hell.

Beguiling: Misleading.

Rites: Religious ceremonies.

Grievous: Painful.

With stiff neck: Stubbornly.

Receding: Moving away.

Vagrant (adj.): Wandering or wayward.

Rhetoric: The art of writing and speaking.

Sedate: Calm.

Diabolical: Devilish.

Chapter IV

*7. Among such as these, in that unstable period of my life, I studied the books of **eloquence,** for it was in eloquence that I was eager to be **eminent,** though from a **reprehensible** and **vainglorious** motive, and a delight in human vanity. In the ordinary course of study I came upon a certain book of Cicero's, whose language almost all admire, though not his heart. This particular book of his contains an **exhortation** to **philosophy** and was called* Hortensius. *Now it was this book which quite definitely changed my whole attitude and turned my prayers toward thee, O Lord, and gave me new hope and new desires. Suddenly every vain hope became worthless to me, and with an incredible warmth of heart I yearned for an immortality of wisdom and began now to arise that I might return to thee. It was not to sharpen my tongue further that I made use of that book. I was now nineteen; my father had been dead two years, and my mother was providing the money for my study of rhetoric. What won me in it [the* Hortensius*] was **not its style but its substance.***

*8. How **ardent** was I then, my God, how ardent to fly from earthly things to thee! Nor did I know how thou wast even then dealing with me. For with thee is wisdom. In Greek the love of wisdom is called "philosophy," and it was with this love that that book inflamed me....*

Eloquence: Ability to speak well.

Eminent: Great and honored.

Reprehensible: Not to be admired.

Vainglorious: Proud or haughty.

Exhortation: An appeal, or a call to action.

Philosophy: An area of study concerned with reaching a general understanding of human values and reality.

Not its style but its substance: Not the words or the way they were presented, but their meaning.

Ardent: Eager.

What happened next ...

Augustine went on to become perhaps the greatest of the early Church fathers, men who established the foundations of medieval Christianity. During the last thirty-four years of his life, while serving as Bishop of Hippo, Augustine wrote hundreds of works, of which the *Confessions* and *City of God* (*De civitate*) are the most important.

The latter was a response to the sacking, or destruction, of Rome by an invading tribe called the Visigoths in 410. Whereas many Romans claimed that this misfortune had happened because they had rejected their old gods and embraced Christianity, Augustine argued that God was punishing them for exactly the opposite reason: because they had worshiped

their idols for so long before embracing the true faith. Augustine died as his own adopted city of Hippo was being attacked by another tribe, the Vandals.

A mosaic of Augustine (left); he lived to become a devout and influential Christian, but in his *Confessions* he describes his youthful doubt and confusion. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Did you know ...

- The city of Carthage that Augustine knew had been built on the site of another Carthage, destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. Founded by Phoenician (foh-NEE-shun) colonists in the 800s B.C., Carthage had been an extremely powerful city-state, and had vied with Rome itself for control of the western Mediterranean. The two cities fought a series of conflicts called the Punic (PYOO-nik) Wars, of which the most notable figure was Hannibal (247–183 B.C.), a general from Carthage who conducted a brilliant military campaign in Italy. When the Romans destroyed Carthage at the end of the Third Punic War, they sowed salt in the ground so that nothing would grow there; but 102 years later, in 44 B.C., Julius Caesar (100–44 B.C.) established the new city of Carthage.
- The oldest city in North America was named after Augustine: St. Augustine, Florida, founded by a Spanish explorer in 1565. The pronunciation of the names is different, however: Whereas Augustine's name is pronounced "aw-GUS-tin," St. Augustine is pronounced "AW-gus-teen."
- There is another extremely well known autobiography called the *Confessions,* this one by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (ZHAHN ZHAHK roo-SOH; 1712–1778). A French philosopher and author who had a tremendous impact on the French Revolution of 1789, Rousseau deliberately chose the title as a reference to Augustine's earlier work. He, too, talked about the reckless misadventures of his youth—but whereas Augustine was sorry for the things he had done, Rousseau seems to have taken pride in his youthful excesses.

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Lady Sarashina

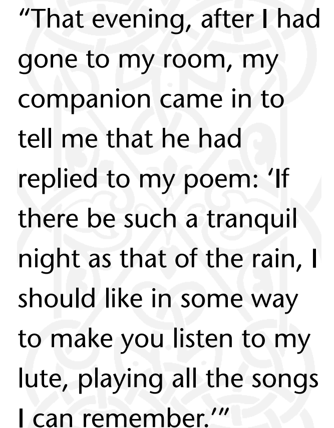
Excerpt from **The Diary of Lady Sarashina**

Published in *Diaries of Court Ladies of Old Japan,* 1920

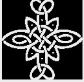
During the Heian period (hay-YAHN; 794–1185) of medieval Japan, when the capital was at Heian, or Kyoto, life in the Japanese imperial court began to turn inward. Nobles tended to look down on people outside the capital; hence Lady Sarashina (1009–1059) was embarrassed by the fact that she had lived in the country for part of her childhood, writing in her diary that "I am ashamed to think that inhabitants of the Royal City will think me an uncultured girl."

During this time, the division between city and country became so severe that the rural provinces functioned almost as separate countries. This period saw the rise of a feudal system much like that of medieval Europe, with landowners controlling peasant farmers through the military power of their knights or samurai. As with Europe in feudal times, there was a strongly romantic flavor to the world of samurai and noble ladies, an atmosphere reflected in many poems and other works of art.

Though men held most of the power, women enjoyed a lively cultural life of their own. The Heian period saw the writing of the world's first novel, the *Tale of Genji* by Lady



"That evening, after I had gone to my room, my companion came in to tell me that he had replied to my poem: 'If there be such a tranquil night as that of the rain, I should like in some way to make you listen to my lute, playing all the songs I can remember.'"



Lady Sarashina

Lady Sarashina was born in Kyoto, then the Japanese capital, but when she was nine years old her father became governor of a distant province. As a young girl, she became fascinated by romance novels, particularly the *Tale of Genji* by Lady Murasaki (c. 978–c. 1026). A novel is an extended work of fiction, and the *Tale of Genji* is generally regarded as the first of its kind. But Lady Sarashina seemed to later regret her interest in such stories: romantic tales, she suggested in her diary, did not prepare a woman for real life—and her own experiences appeared to bear this out.

When she was thirteen, her family returned to the capital, and later she became a lady-in-waiting, or attendant, to the princess Sadako. Sadako married a later emperor, and as the fortunes of the princess improved, so did those of Lady Sarashina. Yet when Sadako died in 1039, the emperor took a new wife, and Sarashina—who by then had become lady-in-waiting to Sadako's daughter—found herself outside the inner circle.

It was during this time, when she was in her early thirties, that she met, and had a brief romance with, the unnamed man described in the excerpt from her diaries. Later in her diary, she refers to a husband, but never indicates when she was married: apparently the husband came from a lower social rank than herself, and was such an embarrassment that she chose not to dwell on it. The end of her diary indicates that her later years were not happy: "My people went to live elsewhere and I remained alone in my solitary home. I was tired of meditation and sent a poem to one who had not called on me for a long time [a friend who was a nun]: 'Weeds grow before my gate / And my sleeves are wet with dew, / No one calls on me, / My tears are solitary—alas!'"

Murasaki (c. 978–c. 1026). Lady Sarashina was heavily influenced by Lady Murasaki's story, as she confessed in her diary. It is not a diary in the Western sense, a day-by-day account of events: rather, it is a life story. Through their autobiographical writings, Japanese women—Lady Sarashina was one of several whose diaries have survived—found a rare opportunity to express their deepest feelings.

Things to remember while reading the excerpt from *The Diary of Lady Sarashina*

- The leadership of Heian Japan tried to separate themselves from everything that was not Japanese, but educat-

ed members of the court still took much of their cultural guidance from China's T'ang dynasty (TAHNG; 618–907). At the same time, however, the Japanese developed a number of artistic forms uniquely their own, among these a style of poetry noted for its subtlety, or delicate understatement. In order to fit in socially, a person of the upper classes had to display a keen knowledge of native poetic styles. Thus Lady Sarashina and the unnamed man spoke mainly of poetry, and addressed each other in poetic lines.

An illustration from Lady Murasaki's novel, the *Tale of Genji.* In her diary, Lady Sarashina admits to being heavily influenced by Lady Murasaki. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

- Whereas many Americans are inclined to say exactly what they mean, this is not the case in most Asian societies—including that of medieval Japan. Therefore, to get the full meaning of Lady Sarashina's reflections on her brief love affair, one has to read between the lines. The man and Sarashina speak of love in a highly indirect fashion, and this was doubly so for Sarashina, as a woman: instead, she uses poetry to say things she cannot say directly.

- The events described in this passage took place over a two-year period that began when Lady Sarashina was thirty-three and serving as a lady-in-waiting, or attendant, at the royal court. Though thirty-three was a rather advanced age for a woman in those times to have been unmarried, as a lady of the court all of her attention was focused on the princess. Court ladies had little privacy, since they had to sleep near the royal person they attended; therefore it would have been difficult to maintain a marriage in such circumstances.

- The passage is peppered with references to Japanese culture, including traditions associated with the religions of Buddhism and Shinto, which in medieval times were

practiced together. Thus there is mention of *sutras* (SOOT-ruz), or Buddhist sayings, and of the Shinto shrine at Ise (EE-say). Emperor Enyu, mentioned by Lady Sarashina's friend, reigned from 970 to 984.

Excerpt from The Diary of Lady Sarashina

... On a very dark night in the beginning of the ***Gods-absent month,*** *when sweet-voiced reciters were to read* ***sutras*** *throughout the night, another lady and I went out towards the entrance door of the* ***Audience Room*** *to listen to it, and after talking fell asleep, listening, leaning, ... when I noticed a gentleman had come to be received in audience by the Princess.*

"It is awkward to run away to our apartment [to escape him]. We will remain here. Let it be as it will." So said my companion and I sat beside her listening.

He spoke gently and quietly. There was nothing about him to be regretted. "Who is the other lady?" he asked of my friend. He said nothing rude or ***amorous*** *like other men, but talked delicately of the sad, sweet things of the world, and many a phrase of his with a strange power* ***enticed*** *me into conversation. He wondered that there should have been in the Court one who was a stranger to him, and did not seem inclined to go away soon.*

There was no starlight, and a gentle shower fell in the darkness; how lovely was its sound on the leaves! "The more deeply beautiful is the night," he said; "the full moonlight would be too dazzling." ***Discoursing*** *about the beauties of Spring and Autumn he continued: "Although every hour has its charm, pretty is the spring haze; then the sky being tranquil and overcast, the face of the moon is not too bright; it seems to be floating on a distant river. At such a time the calm spring melody of the* ***lute*** *is* ***exquisite.***

"In Autumn, on the other hand, the moon is very bright; though there are mists trailing over the horizon we can see things as clearly as if they were at hand. The sound of wind, the voices of insects, all sweet things seem to melt together. When at such a time we listen to the autumnal music of the ***koto*** *we forget the Spring—we think that is best—*

Gods-absent month: October.

Sutras: Sayings based on the teachings of Buddhism.

Audience room: A place where a royal person receives visitors.

Amorous: Sexual.

Enticed: Attracted.

Discoursing: Talking.

Lute: A stringed instrument.

Exquisite: Nearly perfect.

Koto: A harp-like stringed instrument.

"But the winter sky frozen all over magnificently cold! The snow covering the earth and its light mingling with the moonshine! Then the notes of the ***hitchiriki*** *vibrate on the air and we forget Spring and Autumn." And he asked us, "Which captivates your fancy? On which stays your mind?"*

My companion answered in favour of Autumn and I, not being willing to imitate her, said:

> *Pale green night and flowers all melting into one in the soft haze—*
> *Everywhere the moon, glimmering in the Spring night.*

So I replied. And he, after repeating my poem to himself over and over, said: "Then you give up Autumn? After this, as long as I live, such a spring night shall be for me a memento of your personality." The person who favoured Autumn said, "Others seem to give their hearts to Spring, and I shall be alone gazing at the autumn moon."

He was deeply interested, and being uncertain in thought said: "Even the poets of the T'ang Empire could not decide which to praise most, Spring or Autumn. Your decisions make me think that there must be some personal reasons ***when our inclination is touched or charmed.*** *Our souls are* ***imbued*** *with the colours of the sky, moon, or flowers of that moment. I desire much to know how you came to know the charms of Spring and Autumn. The moon of a winter night is given as an* ***instance*** *of dreariness, and as it is very cold I had never seen it intentionally. When I went down to Ise to be present as the messenger of the King at the ceremony of installing the virgin in charge of the* ***shrine,*** *I wanted to come back in the early dawn, so went to take leave of the Princess in a moon-bright night after many days' snow, half shrinking to think of my journey.*

"Her residence was an other-worldly place ***awful*** *even to the imagination, but she called me into an adequate apartment. There were persons [there] who had come down in the reign of the Emperor Enyu. Their aspect was very holy, ancient, and mystical. They told of the things of long ago with tears. They brought out a well-tuned four-stringed lute. The music* ***did not seem to be anything happening in this world;*** *I regretted that day should even dawn, and was touched so deeply that I had almost forgotten about returning to the Capital. Ever since then the snowy nights of winter recall that scene, and I without fail gaze at the*

Hitchiriki: A reed pipe.

When our inclination is touched or charmed: In other words, when something appeals to us especially.

Imbued: Filled.

Instance: Example.

Shrine: A holy place for believers in a religion.

Awful: Awe-inspiring.

Did not seem to be anything happening in this world: In other words, it seemed like something from another world.

moon even though hugging the fire. You will surely understand me, and hereafter every dark night with gentle rain will touch my heart; I feel this has not been inferior to the snowy night at the palace of the Ise virgin."

With these words he departed and I thought he could not have known who I was.

In the Eighth month of the next year we went again to the Imperial Palace, and there was in the Court an entertainment throughout the night. I did not know that he was present at it, and I passed that night in my own room. When I looked out [in the early morning] opening the sliding doors on the corridor I saw the morning moon very faint and beautiful. I heard footsteps and people approached—some reciting sutras. One of them came to the entrance, and addressed me. I replied, and he, suddenly remembering, exclaimed, "That night of softly falling rain I do not forget, even for a moment! I yearn for it." As chance did not permit me many words I said:

What intensity of memory clings to your heart?
That gentle shower fell on the leaves
Only for a moment.

I had scarcely said so when people came up and I stole back without his answer.

That evening, after I had gone to my room, my companion came in to tell me that he had replied to my poem: "If there be such a tranquil night as that of the rain, I should like in some way to make you listen to my lute, playing all the songs I can remember."

I wanted to hear it, and waited for the fit occasion, but there was none, ever.

In the next year one tranquil evening I heard that he had come into the Princess's Palace, so I crept out of my chamber with my companion, but there were many people waiting within and without the Palace, and I turned back. He must have been of the same mind with me. He had come because it was so still a night, and he returned because it was noisy.

I yearn for a tranquil moment
To be out upon the sea of harmony,
In that enchanted boat.
Oh, boatman, do you know my heart?

Only for a moment: The unspoken idea here is that for a moment, their hearts were as one.

So I composed that poem—and there is nothing more to tell. His personality was very excellent and he was not an ordinary man, but time passed, and ***neither called to the other....***

Neither called to the other: In other words, "we never met again."

What happened next ...

As Lady Sarashina indicated, the romance went no further. Apparently she later married and had children with a man for whom she did not feel nearly as great an attraction as she had for the stranger at the palace. She spent her final years away from the capital, and apparently died unhappy.

The Heian period lasted long after her death in 1059, and though it was a time of great cultural advancement in Japan, it was also a troubled era characterized by near-constant warfare. Even greater confusion followed, as a series of *shoguns* or military dictators took power after 1185. Japan did not become fully unified until 1573.

Did you know ...

- Later Europeans would claim credit for developing the novel as a literary form, and would attribute its creation to male authors of the Renaissance, but in fact the world's first novel was the *Tale of Genji,* written by Lady Murasaki between 1001 and 1015. It tells the story of a character named Prince Genji with astounding subtlety and complexity of plot, and the romantic elements of the story had a great influence on young women such as Lady Sarashina. The *Tale of Genji* is still widely read today.
- Samurai, which appeared in Japan during the Heian period, were the equivalent of European knights: instead of fighting in mass military formations, they were heavily armed individual warriors. Their armor was made of bamboo and not metal, however, and they placed a greater emphasis on the sword than knights did. In Europe, lances and crossbows made it possible to fight at a greater distance, but

combat in Japan was face-to-face, and swords were so sharp they could slice a man's body in half with a single stroke.

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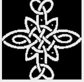
The Thousand and One Nights

Excerpt from The Thousand and One Nights
Published in *Stories from the Thousand and One Nights: The Arabian Night's Entertainments,* 1937

The Thousand and One Nights, better known in the West as *The Arabian Nights,* almost needs no introduction. There is hardly a person alive who has not been enthralled by one of its tales, particularly the three most famous: "Ala-ed-Din [Aladdin] and the Wonderful Lamp," "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," and "Sinbad the Sailor." Out of the hundreds of other tales that form the book, perhaps the most well known is the "frame story"—that is, the story that provided a larger context or meaning for all the tales.

"The King, hearing these words, and being restless, was pleased with the idea of listening to the story; and thus, on the first night of the thousand and one, Shahrazad commenced her recitations."

It seems that a certain king came to distrust all women after he discovered that his wife had been unfaithful to him. He therefore resolved to sleep with a different wife every night, then have her beheaded in the morning. But one wife, Shahrazad (SHAR-uh-zahd) or Sheherazade (shuh-HAIR-uh-zahd), outsmarted him. On her first night with him, she began telling a tale, but when dawn came she was not finished. The king was intrigued, and therefore he kept her alive until the next night—when she would do the same thing again. She kept this up over the course of more than three years, during which time she produced three male heirs, and at the end of



The Thousand and One Nights

Better known in the West as *The Arabian Nights,* the collection of tales known as *The Thousand and One Nights* delighted audiences in the Middle East for centuries before Europeans discovered them. The tales had no single author or source; rather, they were collected from Persian, Indian, and Arabian stories that had been passed down orally for generations.

The first collected version of 264 tales appeared in Persia (modern Iran) during the A.D. 900s. By that time, the "frame story" concerning Shahrazad (SHAR-uh-zahd)—a version of which is excerpted here—had been added to provide a larger context or meaning for all the tales. Over time, new stories were added, and by about 1450 the tales had assumed more or less their present form.

1,001 nights, the king gave up on his original plan and let her live.

From the standpoint of personal and individual life, the frame story is interesting for what it reveals about men and women. In almost any culture, it is a man's ultimate humiliation to discover that his wife has been cheating on him, but the Muslim world of the Middle East was (and is) even more male-dominated than most societies; thus the king's humiliation at discovering his first wife's unfaithfulness was all the worse. And given the striking imbalance of male and female power that prevailed in that place and time, Shahrazad's calm wisdom is all the more impressive.

Things to remember while reading the excerpt from *The Thousand and One Nights*

- Though the sources of *The Thousand and One Nights* include tales from Persia (modern-day Iran), India, and Arabia, the tale of Shahrazad is almost certainly Persian. One way scholars know this is through the names, which are drawn from Farsi, the Persian language. Shahriyar (SHAR-ee-yar), the name of the king, means "friend of the city"; and his brother's name, Shah-Zeman, means "king of the age." Samarkand (sah-mur-KAHND) is an ancient city on the Old Silk Road, a trade route that connected Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East. Today it is part of Uzbekistan, a nation in Central Asia.

- The following passage has been significantly condensed; the original is four times as long, containing lengthy descriptions of Shahriyar's wealth, the Wezir's (or government official's) trip to see Shah-Zeman, and other details not important to the larger story. After Shahriyar returns

from his hunting trip and discovers that his wife has been cheating, he and Shah-Zeman travel far away and meet a woman who also cheats on her "man"—only this man is a genie. After this, they return, and Shahriyar kills his wife. Also, before Shahrazad's father allows her to marry Shahriyar, he tells a lengthy story that has also been omitted.

- Despite the collection's reputation as tales for children, *The Thousand and One Nights* contains a number of stories that should be labeled "Parental Discretion Advised." The following passage hints at a number of sexual details that are presented more openly in other tales from the collection.
- Modern readers may find racist overtones in the fact that when the wives of both Shah-Zeman and Shahriyar cheat on their husbands, it is with black slaves. There was an unquestionable tension between the Muslim peoples of the Middle East and African slaves, who they called "Zanj," and this probably influenced the depiction in this story. However, if a person chose only to read things that agreed with the prevailing morality of their own time, many valuable books from the past would be off-limits. Also, it is always worthwhile to be reminded that Europeans and their descendants in America are not the only people who have been guilty of racism.

An illustration from "Sinbad the Sailor," one of many famous tales from *The Thousand and One Nights,* also known as *The Arabian Nights.* *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Excerpt from The Thousand and One Nights

... It is related (but God alone is all-knowing, as well as all-wise, and almighty, and all-bountiful), that there was, in ancient times, a

*King of the countries of India and China, possessing numerous troops, and guards, and servants, and domestic dependents.... He was called King Shahriyar: his younger brother was named Shah-Zeman, and was King of Samarkand. The administration of their governments was conducted with **rectitude**, each of them ruling over his subjects with justice during a period of twenty years with the utmost enjoyment and happiness. After this period, the elder King felt a strong desire to see his brother, and ordered his **Wezir** to **repair** to him and bring him....*

*[Having been thus summoned by his brother, Shah-Zeman] ... sent forth his tents and camels and mules and servants and guards, appointed his Wezir to be governor of the country during his absence, and set out towards his brother's **dominions.** At midnight, however, he remembered that he had left in his palace an article which he should have brought with him; and having returned to the palace to fetch it, he there beheld his wife sleeping in his bed, and attended by a male negro slave, who had fallen asleep by her side.*

*On beholding this scene, the world became black before his eyes; and he said within himself, If this is the case when I have not departed from the city, what will be the conduct of this vile woman while I am **sojourning** with my brother? He then drew this sword, and slew them both in the bed: after which he immediately returned, gave orders for departure, and journeyed to his brother's capital.*

*Shahriyar, rejoicing at the tidings of his approach, went forth to meet him, **saluted him,** and welcomed him with the utmost delight. He then ordered that the city should be decorated on the occasion, and sat down to entertain his brother with cheerful conversation: but the mind of King Shah-Zeman was distracted by reflections upon the conduct of his wife.... His brother observed his altered condition, and, imagining that it was occasioned by his absence from his dominions, **abstained** from troubling him or asking respecting the cause, until after the lapse of some days.... Shahriyar then said, I wish that thou wouldest go out with me on a hunting excursion; perhaps thy mind might so be diverted. But he declined; and Shahriyar went alone to the **chase.***

Now there were some windows in the King's palace commanding a view of his garden; and while his brother was looking out from one of these, a door of the palace was opened, and there came forth from it twenty females and twenty male black slaves; and the King's wife, who was distinguished by extraordinary beauty and elegance, accompanied them to a fountain, where they all disrobed them-

Rectitude: Rightness or justice.

Wezir (or vizier): A high governmental official.

Repair: Go.

Dominions: Lands.

Sojourning: Staying.

Saluted him: Waved to him.

Abstain: To force oneself not to do something.

Chase: Hunt.

selves, and sat down together. The King's wife then called out, O Mes'ud! and immediately a black slave came to her, and embraced her; she doing the like....

*When his brother returned from his excursion, and they had saluted each other.... [Shah-Zeman] repeated to him all that he had seen. I would see this, said Shahriyar, with my own eye. Then, said Shah-Zeman, **give out** that thou art going again to the chase, and conceal thyself here with me, and thou shalt witness this conduct, and **obtain ocular proof** of it.*

Shahriyar, upon this, immediately announced that it was his intention to make another excursion. The troops went out of the city with the tents, and the King followed them; and after he had reposed awhile in the camp, he said to his servants, Let no one come in to me. And he disguised himself, and returned to his brother in the palace, and sat in one of the windows overlooking the garden; and when he had been there a short time, the women and their mistress entered the garden with the black slaves, and did as his brother had described, continuing so until the hour of the afternoon-prayer.

*... Shahriyar caused his wife to be beheaded, and in like manner the women and black slaves; and thenceforth he made it his regular custom, every time that he took a virgin to his bed, to kill her at the expiration of the night. Thus he continued to do during a period of three years; and the people raised an outcry against him, and fled with their daughters, and there remained not a virgin in the city of a sufficient age for marriage. Such was the case when the King ordered the Wezir to bring him a virgin according to his custom; and the Wezir went forth and searched, and found none; and he went back to his house enraged and **vexed,** fearing what the King might do to him.*

Now the Wezir had two daughters; the elder of whom was named Shahrazad; and the younger, Dunyzad. The former had read various books of histories, and the lives of preceding kings, and stories of past generations: it is asserted that she had collected together a thousand books of histories, relating to preceding generations and kings, and works of the poets: and she said to her father on this occasion, Why do I see thee thus changed, and oppressed with solicitude and sorrows? It has been said by one of the poets:

Tell him who is oppressed with anxiety, that anxiety will not last:
As happiness passeth away, so passeth away anxiety.

When the Wezir heard these words from his daughter, he related to her all that had happened to him with regard to the King:

Give out: Spread the word.

Obtain ocular proof: In other words, "see it with your own eyes."

Vexed: Worried.

Shahrazad's life depended on the intriguing tales she told to her husband, King Shahriyar, over the course of a thousand and one nights. *Reproduced by permission of the Granger Collection Ltd.*

upon which she said, By Allah, O my father, give me in marriage to this King: either I shall die, and be a ransom for one of the daughters of the Muslims, or I shall live, and be the cause of their deliverance from him. ***I conjure thee by Allah****, exclaimed he, that thou expose not thyself to such peril. But she said, It must be so....*

... Now she had given directions to her younger sister saying to her, When I have gone to the King, I will send to request thee to come; and when thou comest to me, and seest a convenient time, do thou say to me, O my sister, relate to me some strange story to ***beguile our waking hour.*** *And I will relate to thee a story that shall, if it be the will of God, be the means of procuring deliverance.*

Her father, the Wezir, then took her to the King, who, when he saw him, was rejoiced, and said, Hast thou brought me what I desired? He answered Yes. When the King, therefore, introduced himself to her, she wept; and he said to her, What aileth thee? She answered, O King, I have a young sister, and I wish to take leave of her. So the King sent to her; and she [Dunyzad] came to her sister, and em-

I conjure thee by Allah: In other words, "I command you in God's name."

Beguile our waking hour: In other words, "to pass the time."

braced her, and sat near the foot of the bed; and after she had waited for a proper opportunity, she said, By Allah! O my sister, relate to us a story to beguile the waking hour of our night. Most willingly, answered Shahrazad, if this virtuous King permit me. And the King, hearing these words, and being restless, was pleased with the idea of listening to the story; and thus, on the first night of the thousand and one, Shahrazad commenced her recitations.

The Thousand and One Nights on Film

More than a hundred movies about *The Thousand and One Nights,* or one of its tales, have been filmed over the years—including a version of *Ali Baba* released in 1907. One of the most well known ones among modern audiences, of course, is Disney's *Aladdin* (1992), but that is only one of some fifty movies concerning "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp." Half as many more films concern "Sinbad the Sailor," and an equal number focus on "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves."

A sampling of titles illustrates the wide appeal of *The Thousand and One Nights: Ali-Baba und die 40 Räuber* (Germany, 1922); *Popeye the Sailor Meets Ali Baba's Forty Thieves* (United States, 1937); *Sinbad contro i sette saraceni* (*Sinbad Against the Seven Saracens,* Italy, 1964); *Senya ichiya monogatari* (*One Thousand and One Arabian Nights,* Japan, 1969); *Priklyucheniya Ali-Baby i soroka razboynikov* (*Adventures of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves,* Soviet Union, 1979); and *Scooby Doo in Arabian Nights* (United States, 1994).

What happened next ...

Shahrazad, as the story eventually reveals, outwitted Shahriyar, stringing him along for more than three years. By then she had given him three sons, and the king, who had come to love her deeply, abandoned his earlier plan to kill off his wives.

The first translation of *The Thousand and One Nights* into a European language appeared in the early 1700s, thanks to the French scholar Antoine Galland (an-TWAHN guh-LAWn; 1646–1715). Galland added several stories he had collected from other Middle Eastern sources—stories not found in the original versions of *The Thousand and One Nights.* Among these are two of the most famous: "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" and "Ala-ed-Din [Aladdin] and the Wonderful Lamp."

The Thousand and One Nights has added immeasurably to the shared culture of the world, providing people in the Middle East, Europe, and other places with a common set of stories and symbols. Because of these stories' popularity, half the world knows about genies, magic carpets and lamps, and the phrase "open sesame." The stories have also greatly ex-

panded awareness of Middle Eastern culture, and of the Islamic religion, among peoples of other cultures.

Did you know ...

- One of the most beloved pieces of music in the world is *Sheherazade* (1888), a suite, or series of pieces, by the Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (NEE-koh-ly RIM-skee KOHR-suh-kawf; 1844–1908). Various sections of the suite provide musical representations of different stories, such as that of Sinbad. Throughout, a gentle violin indicates the voice of Shahrazad, telling her tales.

- Use of frame stories goes back all the way to the *Metamorphosis* by the Roman poet Ovid (AH-vid; 43 B.C.–A.D. 17). In medieval times, it made notable appearances not only in *The Thousand and One Nights,* but in the *Decameron* of Boccaccio (boh-KAHT-choh; 1313–1375) and the *Canterbury Tales* of Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1342–1400). In modern times, frames have been used in works such as "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" by Mark Twain (1835–1910) or the movies *The Princess Bride* (1987) and *Fried Green Tomatoes* (1991). In these modern works, the frame wraps only one story, not many; and in the last example, the characters in the frame story continue to develop along with those in the "main" tale.

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Christine de Pisan

***Excerpt from* The Treasure of the City of Ladies**
Published in 1985

The Goodman of Paris

***Excerpt from* The Goodman of Paris**
Published in 1928

In the 1300s and 1400s, as Europe passed from the Middle Ages into the beginnings of the Renaissance (RIN-uh-sah-nts), trade was increasing, cities were growing, and a new middle and working class appeared. Both groups, an essential part of a growing economy, fell between the rich and the poor: the middle class were typically owners of small businesses, and the working class were less educated (and usually less wealthy) people who worked with their hands.

As contact between various classes increased, so did awareness of social rank and the need for rules governing such contact. This was particularly important with regard to relationships between men and women. Here class barriers were not so important as were traditional male and female roles, though it appears that the author of *The Goodman of Paris* had married a woman of a higher class. This, along with the fact that she was a teenager and he was clearly a man much older, indicates that he may have felt a need to keep her under control, as the excerpt from his instructions to her suggests. (The term "goodman" was a medieval word meaning "master of the house"; as for the author of *The*

"And besides encouraging the others, the wife herself should be involved in the work to the extent that she knows all about it, so that she may know how to oversee his workers if her husband is absent, and to reprove them if they do not do well."

From The Treasure of the City of Ladies

"I have often wondered how I might find a simple general introduction to teach you.... [M]e-seems that ... it can be accomplished in this way, namely in a general instruction that I will write for you."

From The Goodman of Paris

Christine de Pisan (kneeling) offers a manuscript to Isabel of Bavaria, Queen of France. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Goodman of Paris, he was an anonymous Paris merchant of the 1390s.)

Christine de Pisan (pee-ZAHN; sometimes spelled Pizan; 1364–c. 1430), perhaps the most well known female author of medieval times, offered a different view of marital relations in a passage called "Of the Wives of Artisans and How They Ought to Conduct Themselves," from *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*.

Christine de Pisan

The trials of single motherhood, making a living in a male-dominated world, trying to raise a family on the income of a working mom—these all sound like problems specific to many modern women, but in fact they characterized the career of Christine de Pisan.

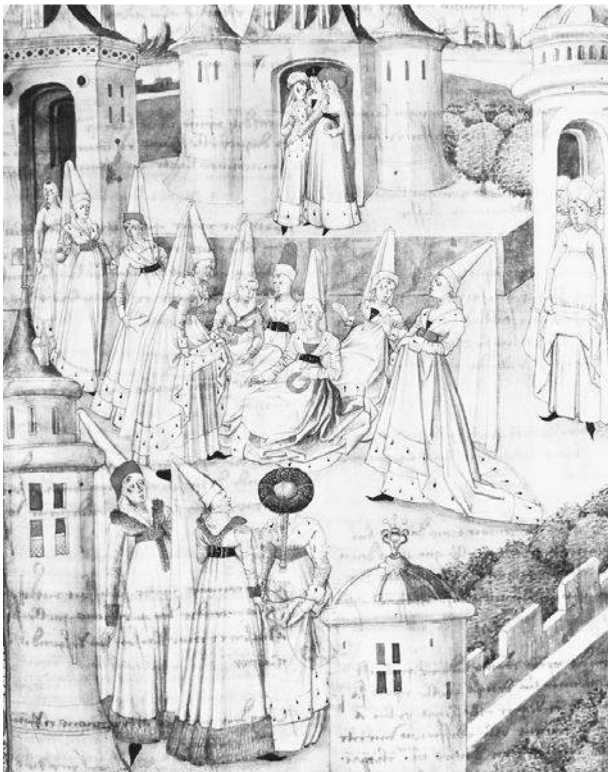
Born in the Italian city of Venice, Christine was raised in the court of France's King Charles V (ruled 1364–80), for whom her father worked as court astrologer. When she was fifteen, she married the king's secretary, Étienne du Castel (ay-tee-AN). By the time Christine was twenty-five years old, however, she had lost not only her husband, but her father and her king. Not only that, but she had three children to raise.

Christine continued to serve in the French court, which was her "day job," but she also began to write poems and other works for patrons, or wealthy supporters. She went on to become perhaps the best-known female writer of the Middle Ages, and in her work she defended the status of women against many outspoken male critics. Among her notable writings were *The Book of the Three Virtues,* also known as *The Treasure of the City of Ladies;* an autobiography called *The Vision of Christine;* and a poem celebrating another notable woman of fifteenth-century France, Joan of Arc.

She depicted a situation in which neither age nor class separated a husband and wife, and she took for granted the fact that the power in the home resided in the hands of the woman. Perhaps this was the secret view of the Goodman, which would further explain his need to control his young wife.

Things to remember while reading the excerpts from *The Treasure of the City of Ladies* and *The Goodman of Paris*

- Both passages illustrate a high awareness of social class or rank. The author of *The Goodman of Paris,* for instance, takes note of the fact that his young wife came from a higher class than he; no doubt her family had fallen on hard times, and she was forced to marry him for financial support. Similarly, Christine de Pisan specifically addresses the wives of artisans, skilled workers who might be part of either the middle or the working class.



Fifteenth-century manuscript illustration from Christine de Pisan's *The City of Ladies,* a work that was followed by *The Treasure of the City of Ladies.* *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

- These two writings appeared within a few years of one another, around the end of the 1300s and the beginning of the 1400s. Both suggest the changing economic climate of the times, as Western Europe began to prosper and new classes—primarily the middle class and the working class—began to divide the very rich from the very poor. The Goodman of Paris appears to have been a moderately wealthy merchant, and though the artisans' wives addressed by Christine de Pisan were certainly not rich, the fact that their husbands employed other workers implies that they were not poor either.
- The Goodman's reference to his young bride as "sister" is simply a term of affection. As for her marriage at age fifteen to a man who was clearly many years older than she, this was nothing unusual during the Middle Ages.

Excerpt from The Treasure of the City of Ladies

Now it is time for us to speak of the station in life of women married to ***artisans*** *who live in cities and fine towns, like Paris, and elsewhere.... All wives of artisans should be very* ***painstaking*** *and diligent if they wish to have the necessities of life. They should encourage their husbands or their workmen to get to work early in the morning and work until late, for mark our words, there is no trade so good that if you neglect your work you will not have difficulty putting bread on the table. And besides encouraging the others, the wife herself should be involved in the work to the extent that she knows all about it, so that she may know how to oversee his work-*

Artisans: Skilled workers who produce items according to their specialty.

Painstaking: Careful.

ers if her husband is absent, and to ***reprove*** *them if they do not do well. She ought to oversee them to keep them from idleness, for through careless workers the master is sometimes ruined. And when customers come to her husband and try to drive a hard bargain, she ought to warn him* ***solicitously*** *to take care that he does not make a bad deal. She should advise him to be* ***chary*** *of* ***giving too much credit*** *if he does not know precisely where and to whom it is going, for in this way many come to poverty, although sometimes the greed to earn more or to accept a tempting proposition makes them do it.*

In addition, she ought to keep her husband's love as much as she can, ***to this end:*** *that he will stay at home more willingly and that he may not have any reason to join the foolish crowds of other young men in* ***taverns*** *and indulge in unnecessary and extravagant expense, as many tradesmen do, especially in Paris. By treating him kindly she should protect him as well as she can from this. It is said that three things drive a man from his home: a quarrelsome wife, a smoking fireplace and a leaking roof. She too ought to stay at home gladly and not go every day* ***traipsing hither and yon*** *gossiping with the neighbours and visiting her chums to find out what everyone is doing. This is done by* ***slovenly*** *housewives roaming about the town in groups. Nor should she go off on these* ***pilgrimages*** *got up for no good reason and involving a lot of needless expense. Furthermore, she ought to remind her husband that they should live so* ***frugally*** *that their expenditure does not exceed their income, so that at the end of the year they do not find themselves in debt.*

Excerpt from The Goodman of Paris

DEAR SISTER,

You being the age of fifteen years and in the week that you and I were wed, did pray me to be ***indulgent*** *to your youth and to your* ***small and ignorant service,*** *until you had seen and learned more; to this end you promised me to give all heed and to set all care and diligence to keep my peace and my love, as you spoke full wisely, and as I well believe,* ***with other wisdom than your own, beseeching*** *me humbly in our bed, as I remember, for the love of God not to correct you harshly before strangers nor before our own folk, but rather each night, or from day to day, in our chamber, to remind you of the* ***unseemly*** *or foolish things done in the day or days past, and* ***chastise*** *you, if it pleased me, and then you would* ***strive*** *to* ***amend*** *yourself according to my teaching and correction, and to serve my will in all things, as you said.... [Y]our youth excuses your* ***unwisdom*** *and*

Reprove: Rebuke or correct.

Solicitously: With great concern.

Chary: Cautious.

Giving too much credit: In other words, allowing too many customers to buy items on credit (i.e., with promises to pay later).

To this end: With this purpose in mind.

Taverns: Bars.

Traipsing: Walking.

Hither and yon: Here and there.

Slovenly: Careless, untidy.

Pilgrimage: A journey to a sacred place or shrine; this was a popular practice in the Middle Ages.

Frugally: Inexpensively.

Indulgent: Forgiving, patient.

Small and ignorant service: Limited experience.

With other wisdom than your own: In other words, on the basis of wisdom she had been taught, not simply things she already knew.

Beseeching: Begging.

Unseemly: Inappropriate or improper.

Chastise: Rebuke or correct.

Strive: Make an effort.

Amend: Change.

Unwisdom: Lack of wisdom.

will still excuse you in all things as long as all you do is with good intent and not displeasing to me. And know that I am pleased rather than displeased that you tend rose-trees, and care for violets ... and dance, and sing: nor would I have you cease to do so among our friends and equals, and it is but good and seemly so to pass the time of your youth, so long as you neither seek nor try to go to the feasts and dances of lords of too high rank, for that does not become you, nor does it sort with ***your estate*** *nor mine.... For although I know well that you are of gentler birth than I,* ***natheless*** *that would not protect you, for by God, the women of your* ***lineage*** *be good enough to correct you harshly themselves, if I did not, and they learnt of your error from me or from another source; but in you I have no fear, I have confidence in your good intent.... And for your honour and love, and* ***not for my service*** *(for to me belongs but the common service, or less), since I had pity and loving compassion on you who for long have had neither father nor mother, nor any of your* ***kinswoman*** *near you to whom you might turn for counsel in your private needs, save me alone, for whom you were brought from your* ***kin*** *and the country of your birth, I have often wondered how I might find a simple general introduction to teach you.... And lastly,* ***me-seems*** *that if your love is as it has appeared in your good words, it can be accomplished in this way, namely in a general instruction that I will write for you ... in three sections containing nineteen principal articles....*

Your estate: In other words, "your place in life."

Natheless: Nevertheless.

Lineage: Ancestry.

Not for my service: In other words, "Not so that you can be a better wife for me."

Kinswoman: A female relative, including a mother, grandmother, or sister.

Kin: Relatives.

Me-seems: "It seems to me."

What happened next ...

As the 1400s progressed, the economic and social changes mirrored in the writings of Christine de Pisan and the anonymous *Goodman of Paris* began to accelerate. Prior to the expansion of Europe's economy, which started after the Crusades began opening international trade in about 1100, there had been only two classes in European society: the very rich and the very poor. Now there was a growing array of classes, which presented new challenges for society as a whole.

Among these challenges was the fact that the status of women in the higher classes tended to improve much faster than that of women in the lower classes. For instance, a beggar in London or Paris might be considered the lowest of the

low, yet if he had a wife, there was always someone even lower than he. By contrast, the wife of a wealthy merchant might be expected to submit to her husband, but she in turn had full power to command servants and other workers—male as well as female.

It is not surprising, then, that Christine de Pisan herself came from a high social class. One would be hard-pressed to come up with the name of a poor woman from the Middle Ages, except perhaps the peasant girl Joan of Arc—who was an exceptional person by any standard. Poor women were typically too busy just making a living, and that, combined with the fact that few poor people of either sex could read and write, meant that few ever gained distinction. Only in the late 1800s, as a rising tide of social consciousness turned more attention toward neglected groups, did society begin to lend an ear to its poor, and to women of all classes.

Courtesy Books

Courtesy books, which appeared in medieval Europe from the 1100s onward, may well have been the world's first self-help literature. These were manuals that taught people how to behave politely—a rare skill at a time when most Europeans were unclean and uncouth.

Some courtesy books taught pages, young boys in training for knighthood, how to behave like little men rather than boys; and others provided squires, teenagers who hoped to become knights, with instruction on manly virtues such as bravery. Knights also had their courtesy books, such as *Book of the Order of Chivalry* by Ramon Llull (LYOOL; c. 1235–1316) of Spain. In addition, there were courtesy books for women, and for various groups in society such as merchants or skilled workers.

Did you know ...

- The first sentence from *The Goodman of Paris* excerpt is a run-on, and consists of 166 words.
- A man once complained to Christine de Pisan that because there were so few educated women, educated women were unappealing—implying that because he had far fewer chances of meeting one who was educated, he might as well concentrate on the ones who were not. Christine retorted that she found ignorant men even less appealing—precisely because there were so many of them.
- *The Goodman of Paris* offers a wealth of insight concerning the medieval mind, providing information, for instance, on how to protect oneself against witchcraft. Its author

also presented his wife with a dozen ways to get rid of flies.

- A saying quoted by Christine de Pisan was apparently quite popular at the time: in a later passage from *The Goodman of Paris,* its author counsels his wife to "remember the rustic [old] proverb, which saith that there be three things which drive the goodman from home, to wit a leaking roof, a smoky chimney and a scolding woman."

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Church and State

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"Church and state" is another term for "religion and government." Both are powerful and influential forces that sometimes find themselves in conflict, a conflict that still concerns people today. For instance, many Christians in America believe that public schools should hold prayer each morning, whereas a wide array of people in groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) oppose this on the grounds that it goes against "the separation of church and state." This expression refers to the fact that in America, no religious body is allowed to dominate the government. Though they do not agree on what "separation of church and state" means, most Americans agree with the basic principle. This was not the case in the Middle Ages, a time when people had no concept of separation between religion and government.

The relationship between the Catholic Church and the governments of medieval Western Europe became so strong, in fact, that it was hard to imagine a time when the two were not linked. Certainly there had been a connection between government and religion of some kind since history began, but only with the emperor Constantine (KAHN-stun-

teen; ruled 306–37) in 312 did Rome abandon its old gods in favor of Christianity.

After the Western Roman Empire fell in 476, the popes—spiritual and political leaders of the Catholic Church—needed to make an alliance with one of the kings from among the "barbarian" or uncivilized tribes that had taken Rome's place. But most of these barbarian kings had embraced a form of Christianity called Arianism, which the Catholic Church had declared a heresy (HAIR-uh-see), or something that goes against established Church teaching.

Thus the conversion of Clovis (ruled 481–511), king of a tribe called the Franks, to mainstream Christianity was a particularly significant event. As **Gregory of Tours** (TOOR; 538–594) wrote in his *History of the Franks,* Clovis had married a Christian wife, but had long rejected her religion until the day when he found himself losing a battle with a rival tribe. Clovis called on the Christian God's help, Gregory wrote, and won the battle, whereupon he and his people converted to Christianity. The Franks, who gave their name to the nation of France, went on to become the dominant power in Europe.

In 800, a pope crowned the Frankish king Charlemagne (SHAHR-luh-main; ruled 768–814) as "Emperor of the Romans," thus in effect creating a new Roman Empire linked to the Catholic Church. The Holy Roman Empire, as it came to be known, was never more than a collection of smaller states within what is now Germany and surrounding countries, but it was a powerful idea, and eventually the Holy Roman emperors came to see themselves as figures on a par with the popes.

The two forces vied for leadership of Western Europe, and this struggle came to a head in a conflict between **Emperor Henry IV** (ruled 1056–1106) and **Pope Gregory VII** (ruled 1073–1085). When Gregory ordered Henry to stop appointing bishops, church leaders with authority over the priests and believers in a given region, Henry responded with an angry letter in which he denounced Gregory as a "false monk." Gregory in turn issued orders to Henry's subjects that they were no longer required to obey him.

In the struggle between Henry and Gregory, neither man came out the winner, though in the end it appeared that

the Church had triumphed over the state. In 1095, Pope Urban II (ruled 1088–99) launched the first of many crusades, wars intended to win back control of the Holy Land or Palestine from the Muslims who controlled it. Two centuries later, however, in the time of **Dante Alighieri** (DAHN-tay al-eeg-YEER-ee; 1265–1321), the enthusiasm that fueled the Crusades had been spent. Much of Dante's *Divine Comedy,* a classic of world literature, was concerned with corruption among the religious leadership of his time, which saw a shift in power away from the Church and toward the political leaders of Europe.

So far the relationship between Church and state has been discussed purely in terms of the West, or cultures influenced by ancient Greece and Rome. But the relationship of religion and politics was no less powerful in the East, as illustrated by the "Seventeen-Article Constitution" of Japan by **Shotoku Taishi** (shoh-TOH-koo ty-EE-shee; 573–621). In Japan, of course, Christianity was not even a factor—but the belief systems of Buddhism and Confucianism, both imported from China, along with Japan's native Shinto religion, were.

The Japanese constitution represents a level of agreement between religion and politics that would have been practically impossible in the West, where even in the Middle Ages people felt much more free to hold their own opinions. This harmony was possible precisely because there was even less separation of church and state in Japan than there was in medieval Europe.

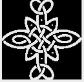
Gregory of Tours

Excerpt from **History of the Franks**
Published in *Readings in European History,* 1905

> "And seizing his ax, he cast it on the ground. And when the soldier had bent a little to pick it up the king raised his hands and crushed his head with his own ax. 'Thus,' he said, 'didst thou to the vase at Soissons.'"

When one studies the relationship between medieval European kingdoms and the Catholic Church, it is hard to imagine a time when the kings of Western Europe were not Christians, or at least not Catholic. But before the time of Clovis (c. 466–511; ruled 481–511), tribal kings accepted a number of different faiths. Hence Clovis's conversion to Christianity in 496, an event recorded by Gregory of Tours (TOOR; 538–594) in his *History of the Franks,* was an event of key importance.

In Clovis's time, the Western Roman Empire lay in ruins, and a variety of invading tribes ruled most of Western Europe. Among these tribes were the Franks, Clovis's people, who eventually gave their name to the region they occupied: France. They were far from the most powerful among the tribes of Europe, which included the Visigoths who controlled Spain, or the Ostrogoths in control of Italy. Many of these groups had converted to Christianity, but to a form of the Christian faith that had been declared *heresy* (HAIR-uh-see)—that is, a doctrine that went against the Christian faith—by the pope, leader of the Catholic Church. This



Gregory of Tours

Gregory of Tours was among the most important historians of the early medieval period in Western Europe. Born Georgius Florentius (JOHR-jus flohr-EN-shus), he lived most of his life in what is now France. During Gregory's time, the Franks—who later gave their name to the entire country—controlled the region, and by then they had converted to Christianity. Gregory's *History of the Franks* records how this conversion came about, in the time of Clovis (ruled 481–511), the first important Frankish king.

Gregory became bishop, or the leading church official, for the city of Tours in 573. For many years, he was involved in a dispute with Clovis's grandson Chilperic (KIL-pur-ik; ruled 561–84), a harsh king whose reign was characterized by war, high taxes, and conflict with the clergy, or priests. Comparing him not only to one of the cruelest emperors of ancient Rome, but also to the king who had tried to kill the baby Jesus, Gregory called Chilperic "the Nero and Herod of our time."

In addition to *History of the Franks,* Gregory wrote a book on the lives of the saints, and one on famous miracles—both popular topics for medieval historians. After his death, he was canonized, or named as a saint.

heresy was called Arianism, and it taught that Christ was not God, but simply another one of God's creations.

The Franks, meanwhile, had not converted to Christianity; instead, they remained *pagan,* worshiping a variety of gods, most of whom represented forces of nature. In addition to their traditional deities or gods, they had also adopted Roman deities, such as Jupiter and Venus. But in most other regards they remained thoroughly un-Roman; thus they, along with a number of other tribes, were regarded as barbarians, or uncivilized. Gregory's account of what Clovis did to a rebellious soldier in Soissons (swah-SAWn), a town in northern France, illustrates their uncivilized behavior.

About seven years after the incident at Soissons, in 493, Clovis married Clotilde (kluh-TIL-duh; sometimes spelled Clotilda; c. 470–545), a princess from eastern France. Her people, the Burgundians, were Christians, and Clotilde herself was a devout Christian. As Gregory recounted, she continually urged her husband to accept the new faith, but he refused—until the time came when he needed God's bless-

ing in a battle against a group of tribes called the Alemanni (al-uh-MAHN-ee).

Things to remember while reading the excerpt from *History of the Franks*

- The two events described by Gregory of Tours took place about ten years apart: the incident of the vase at Soissons in 486, and Clovis's conversion in 496. In the meantime, Clovis married Clotilde, a Christian princess who soon gave him a son. Despite the fact that he had rejected Christianity himself, Clovis allowed her to have the infant baptized in a Christian church—and when the boy died, the king took this as a bad sign from the gods. They had another son, Chlodomir (KLOH-doh-mur), and again Clotilde arranged to have him baptized. This son, too, fell ill, and Clovis told her that Chlodomir would die as well; but according to Gregory, "his mother prayed, and by God's will the child recovered." Soon after the recovery of Chlodomir, Clovis converted to Christianity.

- Based on Gregory's account, it appears that long before his conversion, Clovis respected Christian leaders. Thus he sent back word to the bishop who requested that he return his vase that "... I will do what the bishop desires." This respect may have been the result of his wife's influence; on the other hand, "barbarian" kings were often noted for the admiration they had for religious figures—regardless of the religion.

- The priest who formally led Clovis to accept Christianity was Remigius (ruh-MEE-gee-us), bishop or leading church official for the town of Reims (RAM; also Rheims), which is in northern France.

- Christian baptism symbolizes Christ's death and rebirth: by being immersed in water and rising again, a believer symbolically ends one life and begins another. It is an important sacrament, or religious ceremony, though in Clovis's case the event became a particularly large celebration: he was king, and as a result of his conversion, his kingdom was converting as well. Though Gregory, using language taken from the Bible, wrote that "the power of

God went before" Clovis, who gained his subject's support for the conversion to Christianity, it is doubtful his subjects had much choice in the matter. Clovis was a powerful and severe man—the same king who had earlier crushed a rebellious soldier's head.

Excerpt from History of the Franks

*... At this time [A.D. 486] the army of Clovis **pillaged** many churches, for he was still sunk in the errors of **idolatry.** The soldiers had **borne** away from a church, with all the other ornaments of the holy ministry, a vase of marvelous size and beauty. The **bishop** of this church sent messengers to the king, begging that if the church might not recover any other of the holy **vessels,** at least this one might be restored. The king, bearing these things, replied to the messenger: "Follow thou us to Soissons, for there all things that have been acquired are to be divided. If the **lot** shall give me this vase, I will do what the bishop desires."*

*When he had reached Soissons, and all the **booty** had been placed in the midst of the army, the king pointed to this vase, and said: "I ask you, O most **valiant** warriors, not to refuse to me the vase in addition to my rightful part." Those of **discerning** mind among his men answered, "O glorious king, all things which we see are thine, and we ourselves are subject to thy power; now do what seems pleasing to thee, for none is strong enough to resist thee." When they had thus spoken one of the soldiers, **impetuous,** envious, and vain, raised his battle-axe **aloft** and crushed the vase with it, crying, "Thou shalt receive nothing of this unless a **just** lot give it to thee." At this all were **stupefied.***

*The king bore his injury with the calmness of patience, and when he had received the crushed vase he gave it to the bishop's messenger, but he **cherished a hidden wound** in his **breast.** When a year had passed he ordered the whole army to come fully equipped to the **Campus Martius** and **show their arms in brilliant array.** But when he had reviewed them all he came to the breaker of the vase, and said to him, "No one bears his arms so clumsily as thou; for neither thy spear, nor thy sword, nor thy ax is ready for use." And seizing his ax, he cast it on the ground. And*

Pillaged: Looted or robbed.

Idolatry: Worshiping a statue of a god; Gregory was referring to Clovis's belief in the old pagan gods.

Borne: Carried.

Bishop: A figure in the Christian church assigned to oversee priests and believers in a given city or region.

Vessels: Vases.

Lot: Lottery or drawing.

Booty: Loot or spoils of war.

Valiant: Brave.

Discerning: Wise or thoughtful.

Impetuous: Overly quick to take action.

Aloft: Into the air.

Just: Fair.

Stupefied: Speechless with amazement.

Cherished a hidden wound: In other words, held a grudge.

Breast: Heart.

Campus Martius: Military base.

Show their arms in brilliant array: In other words, the army was to appear dressed for battle, with all their weapons in order, for a review by the king.

when the soldier had bent a little to pick it up the king raised his hands and crushed his head with his own ax. "Thus," he said, "didst thou to the vase at Soissons."

... The queen unceasingly urged the king to acknowledge the true God, and forsake idols. But he could not ***in any wise*** *be brought to believe until a war broke out with the Alemanni. Then he was by necessity compelled to confess what he had before willfully denied.*

It happened that the two armies were in battle and there was great slaughter. Clovis' army was near to utter destruction. He saw the danger; his heart was stirred; he was moved to tears, and he raised his eyes to heaven, saying, "Jesus Christ, whom Clotilde declares to be the son of the living God, who it is said givest aid to the oppressed and victory to those who put their hope in thee, I beseech the glory of thy aid. If thou shalt grant me victory over these enemies and I test that power which people ***consecrated*** *to thy name say they have proved concerning thee, I will believe in thee and be* ***baptized*** *in thy name. For I have called upon my gods, but, as I have proved, they are far removed from my aid. So I believe that they have no power, for they do not* ***succor*** *those who serve them. Now I call upon thee, and I long to believe in thee—all the more that [I] may escape my enemies."*

When he had said these things, the Alemanni turned their backs and began to flee. When they saw that their king was killed, they submitted to the sway of Clovis, saying: "We wish that no more people should perish. Now we are thine." When the king had forbidden further war, and praised his soldiers, he told the queen how he had won the victory by calling on the name of Christ.

Then the queen sent to the blessed Remigius, bishop of the city of Rheims, praying him to bring to the king the gospel of salvation. The priest, little by little and secretly, led him to believe in the true

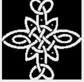
A medieval manuscript illustration of the baptism of Clovis. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

In any wise: By any means.

Consecrated: Committed.

Baptized: Lowered into water as a symbol of death and rebirth.

Succor: Aid.



Clotilde

The story of Clovis's conversion is not merely a tale of men; behind the scenes was a woman, his wife Clotilde, or Clotilda. She was a princess of the Burgundians, a group who settled in eastern France and gave their name to that region. Unlike the early Franks, the Burgundians accepted Christianity, and Clotilde's father Chilperic arranged to have her educated in the Christian faith.

In 493, when she was twenty-three years old, Clotilde married the Frankish king Clovis, who was not a Christian. She continually urged him to convert, and finally, in 496, Clovis accepted the new religion. Along with him, his armies and his subjects converted as well; thus Clotilde may be considered the woman who brought Christianity to France.

After Clovis died in 511, Clotilde retired to a monastery, a secluded place for people who have taken religious vows. There she spent the remaining thirty-four years of her life, dying at age seventy-five—an impressive achievement at a time when people seldom expected to live past the age of thirty.

Mortal: Subject to death, or capable of dying; the opposite of mortal is immortal.

Font: A large vessel in which people are baptized.

Embroidered hangings: Sewn banners and tapestries, or brightly colored cloths often depicting various scenes.

Adorned: Decorated.

Balsam: An oily substance with a sweet smell.

Omnipotent: All-powerful.

Trinity: The three persons of the Christian God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Anointed: To have oil poured on one's head as a symbol of commitment to Christ.

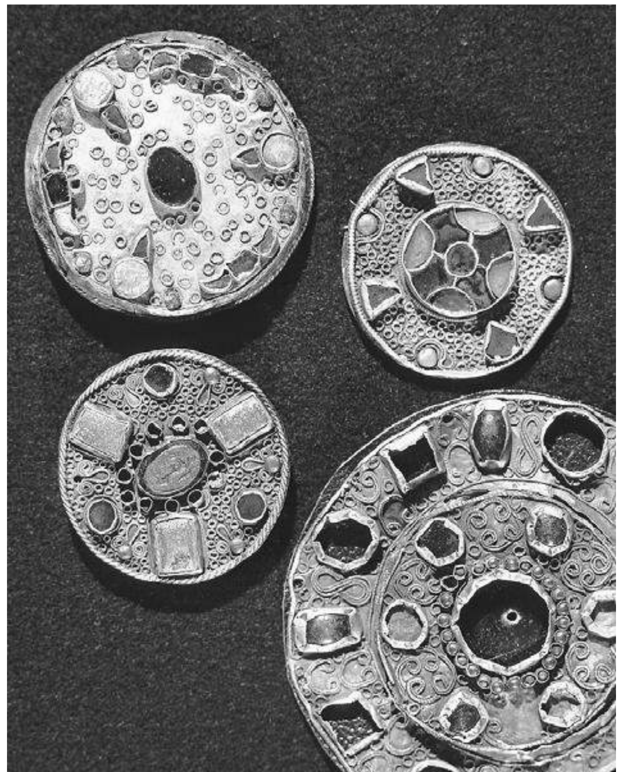
God, maker of heaven and earth, and to forsake idols, which could not help him nor anybody else.

But the king said: "Willingly will I hear thee, O father; but one thing is in the way—that the people who follow me are not content to leave their gods. I will go and speak to them according to thy word."

When be came among them, the power of God went before him, and before he had spoken all the people cried out together: "We cast off ***mortal*** *gods, O righteous king, and we are ready to follow the God whom Remigius tells us is immortal."*

These things were told to the bishop. He was filled with joy, and ordered the ***font*** *to be prepared. The streets were shaded with* ***embroidered hangings;*** *the churches were* ***adorned*** *with white tapestries, the baptistery was set in order, the odor of* ***balsam*** *spread around, candles gleamed, and all the temple of the baptistery was filled with divine odor.... Then the king confessed the God* ***omnipotent*** *in the* ***Trinity,*** *and was baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and was* ***anointed*** *with the sa-*

*cred **chrism** with the sign of the cross of Christ. Of his army there were baptized more than three thousand.*



Jewelry from the time of the Merovingian Age (481–751); Clovis ruled at the beginning of this dynasty. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

What happened next ...

Perhaps Clovis converted to Christianity because of his victory over the Alemanni, perhaps due to the influence of his wife—or perhaps because he recognized the political advantages that would come from conversion. His adoption of mainstream Christianity, as opposed to the Arian heresy, meant that Clovis was the only tribal king to receive the blessing of the Church, which would prove a powerful ally in times to come. As to whether his adoption of the Christian faith actually made the harsh Clovis a gentler man, not even Gregory of Tours could supply much evidence to suggest that it had.

Clovis belonged to the Merovingian (mair-oh-VIN-jee-un) dynasty or ruling house, and his reign marked the beginning of what historians refer to as the Merovingian Age (481–751). A series of military victories won Clovis control over a region larger than modern-day France, but his conquests did not outlast him by very long. At his death, he divided his lands between his sons (Chlodomir among them), and in the years that followed, the kingdom began to fall apart as his various descendants fought for control. Eventually power fell into the hands of palace officials called majordomos ("mayors of the palace"), of whom the most notable was Charles Martel (c. 688–741). Charles's son Pepin III (c. 714–768) founded the Carolingian dynasty (kayr-uh-LINJ-ee-un), destined to produce one of the medieval period's greatest rulers, Charlemagne (SHAHR-luh-main; 742–814; ruled 768–814).

Chrism: Special oil used in churches for events such as baptism.

The strong relationship between Church and state established by Clovis was a lasting one. In 800, the pope would crown Charlemagne "Emperor of the Romans," and eventually this title would come to symbolize leadership over much of Europe in the form of the Holy Roman Empire.

Did you know ...

- Long after her death, a number of romantic legends concerning Clotilde, the queen who brought Christianity to France, spread throughout Western Europe.
- The most popular name among French kings was Louis (LOO-ee), a form of Clovis and thus a tribute to the fifth-century king who virtually established the nation of France. In 1789, some 1,400 years after Clovis, Louis XVI was overthrown by the French Revolution, but from 1814 to 1824, his brother reigned as Louis XVIII.
- Not all Frankish names are as well remembered as that of Clovis: names such as Clotilde, Chlodomir, and Chilperic sound unattractive to most modern people. Chilperic was the name not only of Clotilde's father, but of Clovis's and Clotilde's grandson. Comprising a list of further unusual names: Chilperic's wives and lovers included Fredegund and Galswintha. Chilperic married Galswintha because he was jealous of his brother, who had married her sister Brunhilda.

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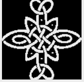
Shotoku Taishi

"Seventeen-Article Constitution"
Published in *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from Earliest Times to A.D. 697,* 1896

Though Japan had been inhabited for thousands of years, it first emerged as a unified nation under the leadership of the Yamato (yuh-MAH-toh; "imperial") family in the Kofun period (koh-FUN; 250–552). It is likely that these early Japanese were heavily influenced by visitors from China, and from the 300s onward, the country welcomed a steady stream of Chinese and Korean immigrants.

During the Asuka period (552–645), the royal court in Korea introduced the leaders of Japan to a new religion, Buddhism (BÜD-izm). This sparked a conflict among the Japanese ruling classes, many of whom still embraced Japan's traditional religion, Shinto ("way of the gods"). Leading the movement for the acceptance of Buddhism was the Soga clan, whose most powerful member was Prince Shotoku Taishi (shoh-TOH-koo ty-EE-shee; 573–621).

"Sincerely reverence the three treasures. The three treasures: the Buddha, the Law, and the Priesthood, are the ... supreme objects of faith in all countries. What man in what age can fail to reverence this law?"



Prince Shotoku

Shotoku Taishi was among the most important figures in early Japanese history. In fact, it was he who gave the country its name; and his "Seventeen-Article Constitution," adopted in 604, gave a formal structure to the Japanese imperial government. Shotoku also helped establish the principles of Buddhism and Confucianism in Japan, and along with Japan's native Shinto religion, these continued to govern Japanese society through the twentieth century.

Because of his legendary status, it is hard to separate fact from myth concerning Shotoku's early life. Apparently he was born in the city of Asuka, then Japan's capital, but little else is known about his career until his early twenties. Shotoku belonged to the highly influential Soga family, who were the real power behind the Japanese emperors, and in 593 his aunt assumed the throne as the empress Suiko (soo-EE-koh; ruled 592–628). Shotoku became her regent, meaning that he ruled the country on her behalf.

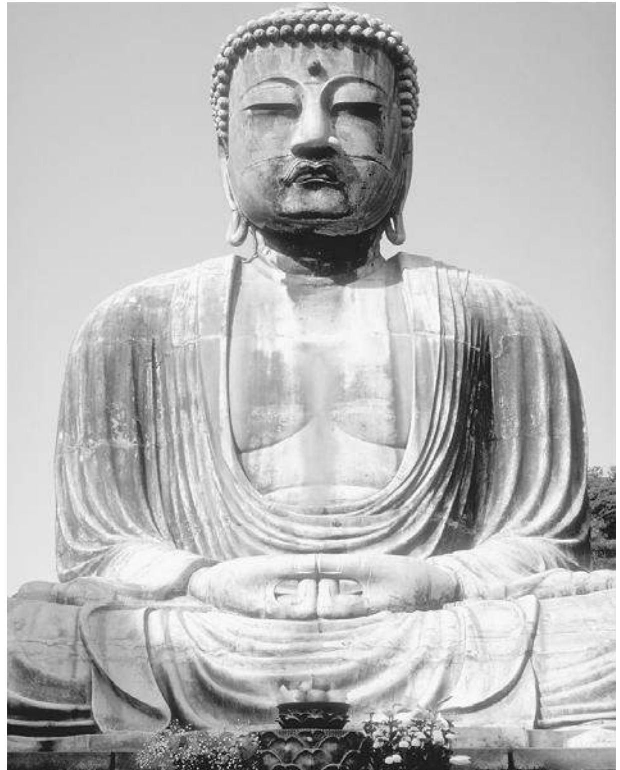
During the next three decades, Shotoku engaged in a number of significant undertakings. Not only did he help to solidify the influence of Buddhism in Japanese society, he built a number of temples around the country, along with an extensive system of highways. In addition to his constitution, he introduced a new system of twelve court ranks based on another belief system which, like Buddhism, had been imported from China: Confucianism. He also instituted reforms in areas such as social welfare (caring for the poor) and land reclamation, the raising of land formerly covered by water. After his death, Japanese Buddhists began to view him as a Buddhist saint.

In 604, Shotoku issued his "Seventeen-Article Constitution." The document gave the central government enormous powers, and encouraged citizens to know their place in society. In addition to a number of clearly expressed Buddhist principles, the constitution also reflected the influence of Confucianism (kun-FYOO-shun-izm), another way of thought that had been introduced from mainland Asia.

Things to remember while reading the "Seventeen-Article Constitution"

- A constitution is a written document containing the laws of a nation, and is typically divided into articles, or indi-

vidual statements of principle. For instance, the U.S. Constitution, adopted in 1787, has seven articles, addressing matters such as the roles of the president, Congress, and judges.



A statue of Buddha. Shotoku Taishi's "Seventeen-Article Constitution" expresses several principles of Buddhism. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

- Shotoku's constitution reflects a number of belief systems, most notably Buddhism and Confucianism. In Article 2, for instance, he mentions "the three treasures: the Buddha, the Law, and the Priesthood"—three key elements of the Buddhist faith. Buddhism originated in India with Siddhartha Gautama (si-DAR-tuh GOW-tuh-muh; c. 563–c. 483 B.C.), the Buddha or "enlightened one," who taught that the key to enlightenment or heightened understanding was to forsake one's personal desires. Later the religion spread to China and the rest of East Asia, where it took hold to a greater extent than it had in India.

- Another strong element in the constitution is Confucianism, based on the teachings of Confucius (551–479 B.C.). A belief system that stresses on social order and fulfilling one's mission in society, Confucianism had long held sway in China, and would continue to do so until the beginning of the twentieth century. An example of Confucianism in Shotoku's constitution is the statement in Article 1: "But when those above are harmonious and those below are friendly, and there is concord in the discussion of business, right views of things spontaneously gain acceptance." What this means, in other words, is that everyone should fulfill their role and work in agreement with one another.

- Also notable in the constitution are certain Chinese ideas. Among these is the comparison of the king to Heaven, and the people to Earth, in Article 3. The Chinese believed

that the power of their emperors came from the "Mandate of Heaven," meaning the favor of the gods, and the Japanese also adopted this belief regarding their own leaders.

"Seventeen-Article Constitution"

*1. **Harmony** is to be valued, and an avoidance of **wanton** opposition to be honored. All men are influenced by **class-feelings,** and there are few who are intelligent. Hence there are some who disobey their lords and fathers, or who maintain **feuds** with the neighboring villages. But when those above are harmonious and those below are friendly, and there is **concord** in the discussion of business, right views of things **spontaneously** gain acceptance. Then what is there which cannot be accomplished!*

*2. Sincerely **reverence** the three treasures. The three treasures: the Buddha, the Law, and the Priesthood, are the ... supreme objects of faith in all countries. What man in what age can fail to reverence this law? Few men are utterly bad. They may be taught to follow it. But if they do not go to the three treasures, how shall their crookedness be made straight?*

*3. When you receive the Imperial commands, fail not **scrupulously** to obey them. The lord is Heaven, the **vassal** is Earth. Heaven overspreads, and Earth upbears. When this is so, the four seasons follow their due course, and the powers of Nature **obtain their efficacy.** If the Earth attempted to overspread, Heaven would simply fall in ruin. Therefore is it that when the lord speaks, the vassal listens; when the superior acts, the inferior yields **compliance.** Consequently when you receive the Imperial commands, fail not to carry them out scrupulously. Let there be a want of care in this matter, and ruin is the natural consequence.*

*4. The **Ministers and functionaries** should make **decorous** behavior their leading principle, for the leading principle of the government of the people consists in decorous behavior. If the superiors do not behave with **decorum,** the inferiors are disorderly: if inferiors are **wanting in** proper behavior, there must necessarily be offenses. Therefore it is that when lord and vassal behave with **propriety,** the distinc-*

Harmony: Agreement.

Wanton: Unjustified and cruel.

Class-feelings: Awareness of one's place in society, along with a desire to get ahead.

Feuds: Conflicts.

Concord: Unity.

Spontaneously: Automatically.

Reverence: Honor.

Scrupulously: Righteously.

Vassal: Someone who is subject to a lord or king.

Obtain their efficacy: Function at their best.

Compliance: Agreement.

Ministers and functionaries: Respectively, higher and lower government officials.

Decorous: Proper.

Decorum: Appropriateness.

Wanting in: Lacking.

Propriety: Correctness.

tions of rank are not confused: when the people behave with propriety, the Government of the ***Commonwealth*** *proceeds of itself....*

6. ***Chastise*** *that which is evil and encourage that which is good. This was the excellent rule of* ***antiquity.*** *Conceal not, therefore, the good qualities of others, and fail not to correct that which is wrong when you see it. Flatterers and* ***deceivers*** *are a sharp weapon for the overthrow of* ***the State,*** *and a pointed sword for the destruction of the people.* ***Sycophants*** *are also fond, when they meet, of speaking at length to their superiors on the errors of their inferiors; to their inferiors, they* ***censure*** *the faults of their superiors. Men of this kind are all wanting in* ***fidelity*** *to their lord, and in* ***benevolence*** *toward the people. From such an origin great civil disturbances arise.*

7. Let every man have his own charge, and let not the ***spheres of duty*** *be confused. When wise men are entrusted with office, the sound of praise arises. If* ***unprincipled*** *men hold office, disasters and* ***tumults*** *are multiplied. In this world, few are born with knowledge: wisdom is the product of* ***earnest*** *meditation. In all things, whether great or small, find the right man, and they [the people] will surely be well managed: on all occasions, be they urgent or the reverse, meet but with a wise man, and they will of themselves be* ***amenable.*** *In this way will the State be lasting and the Temples of the Earth and of Grain will be free from danger. Therefore did the wise* ***sovereigns*** *of antiquity seek the man to fill the office, and not the office for the sake of the man....*

10. Let us cease from wrath, and refrain from angry looks. Nor let us be resentful when others differ from us. For all men have hearts, and each heart has its own leanings. Their right is our wrong, and our right is their wrong. We are not unquestionably ***sages,*** *nor are they unquestionably fools. Both of us are simply ordinary men. How can any one lay down a rule by which to distinguish right from wrong? For we are all, one with another, wise and foolish, like a ring which has no end. Therefore, although others give way to anger, let us on the contrary dread our own faults, and though we alone may be in the right, let us follow the multitude and act like men....*

11. Give clear appreciation to merit and ***demerit,*** *and deal out to each its sure reward or punishment. In these days, reward does not attend upon merit, nor punishment upon crime. You high functionaries who have charge of public affairs, let it be your task to make clear rewards and punishments....*

Commonwealth: A nation or state.

Chastise: Rebuke or scold.

Antiquity: Ancient or earlier times.

Deceivers: Liars.

The State: The government.

Sycophants: Self-serving flatterers.

Censure: Condemn.

Fidelity: Loyalty.

Benevolence: Good will.

Spheres of duty: Areas of authority.

Unprincipled: Dishonest.

Tumults: Troubles.

Earnest: Sincere and serious.

Amenable: Agreeable.

Sovereigns: Kings and other leaders.

Sages: Wise men.

Demerit: Something lacking in merit, or worth.

15. To turn away from that which is private, and to set our faces toward that which is public—this is the path of a Minister. Now if a man is influenced by private motives, he will assuredly feel resentments, and if he is influenced by resentful feelings, he will assuredly fail to act harmoniously with others. If he fails to act harmoniously with others, he will assuredly sacrifice the public interests to his private feelings. When resentment arises, it interferes with order, and is ***subversive of*** *law....*

16. Let the people be employed [in labor on public works projects] at seasonable times. This is an ancient and excellent rule. Let them be employed, therefore, in the winter months, when they are at leisure [when there are no crops to plant or harvest]. But from Spring to Autumn, when they are engaged in agriculture or with the mulberry trees, the people should not be so employed. For if they do not attend to agriculture, what will they have to eat? If they do not attend the mulberry trees, what will they do for clothing?

17. Decisions on important matters should not be made by one person alone.... They should be discussed with many. But small matters are of less consequence. It is unnecessary to consult a number of people. It is only in the case of the discussion of weighty affairs, when there is a suspicion that they may ***miscarry,*** *that one should arrange matters in* ***concert*** *with others, so as to arrive at the right conclusion.*

Subversive of: Having a weakening effect on.

Miscarry: Go wrong.

Concert (adj.): Agreement.

What happened next ...

The power of the Soga clan weakened after the death of Shotoku in 622, and in 645 Crown Prince Nakano Oe (OH-ee; 626–671) and Nakatomi Kamatari (614–669) joined forces to overthrow the government. Later the prince became the Emperor Tenchi, and Kamatari's family became known as Fujiwara, a clan that would later dominate the imperial family.

During the Hakuh period (645–710), the Japanese fully accepted an idea already evident in the Seventeen-Article Constitution: that the emperor was a god. This concept would continue to hold sway, even though the emperors themselves did not always possess real political power. Tenchi

was a strong leader, introducing a number of reforms modeled on those of China's T'ang dynasty (DAHNG; 618–907), but later emperors tended to be dominated by powerful families such as the Fujiwara.

During the Heian period (hay-YAHN; 794–1185), the Japanese imperial court became increasingly separated from the countryside. Rural areas of Japan functioned as independent kingdoms, further weakening the power of the emperors. Years of civil war and conflict followed, and it would be many centuries before the emperors again asserted their power.

Did you know ...

- Shotoku gave Japan its name, Nippon or Nihon. In 607, he sent a group of officials to China, and they came bearing a message which began "The emperor of the country where the sun rises addresses a letter to the emperor of the country where the sun sets." The Chinese began to call the country to the east *Jihpen,* meaning "origins of the sun." Later the Italian traveler Marco Polo, who visited China in the 1200s, brought this name back with him to Europe, where it became "Japan."
- Among the many buildings erected under Shotoku's leadership was a Buddhist temple at Horyuji (HOHR-yoo-jee), built in 607. It is the world's oldest wooden structure.
- The writings of Shotoku may have formed the basis for the *Nihon shoki,* Japan's first book of history, the various stories and legends of which were compiled in 720.

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Emperor Henry IV

"Letter to Gregory VII," January 24, 1076
Published in *Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages,* 1910

Pope Gregory VII

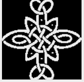
"First Deposition and Banning of Henry IV," February 22, 1076
Published in *Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages,* 1910

During the early part of the Middle Ages, popes—that is, the spiritual and political leaders of the Catholic Church—enjoyed good relations with kings in Western Europe. This had been the case since the time of Clovis, king of the Franks, and the strong relationship became stronger in 800, when Pope Leo III crowned the Frankish king Charlemagne (SHAHR-luh-main; ruled 768–814) as "Emperor of the Romans."

That title suggested that the Western Roman Empire, which had died out in 476, would gain a new life through the combined powers of Church and state. This new Roman Empire, however, remained a vaguely defined political unit. Eventually it was called the Holy Roman Empire, and as such it brought together a number of smaller states within what is now Germany and surrounding countries. Holy Roman emperors, however, always had to struggle to maintain their power, facing conflict on the one hand from various princes and dukes within their kingdoms, and on the other hand from the popes in Rome.

"Henry, king not through usurpation but through the holy ordination of God, to Hildebrand [Gregory], at present not pope but false monk."

From "Letter to Gregory VII"



Henry IV

Henry IV (1050–1106) became king of Germany in 1056, when he was only six years old. Traditionally, kings of Germany also became Holy Roman Emperor, and thus Henry's reign as emperor dates from 1056 as well, but he was not crowned until 1084. Until he came of age, Henry's mother Agnes ruled in his place as regent; by 1066, however, sixteen-year-old Henry was in charge.

Henry's reign was marked by struggle, first with nobles—rulers within his kingdom who had inherited title and lands, but held less power than the king—from the German region of Saxony. From 1073 to 1088, he fought a long war with the Saxon nobles, but in the midst of this he became caught up in a conflict with an even more powerful figure: the pope.

The years from 1076 to 1084 were hard ones for Henry. First he was excommunicated, or removed from the Church, by Pope Gregory VII. Then, in 1077, he was allowed to return to the Church, but three years later he was defeated in war by the Duke of Swabia, a region in Germany. Gregory excommunicated him again in 1080, but in 1084 Henry had Gregory removed from power.

Eventually Henry had to face more conflict, this time from within his own family. In 1093, his sons rebelled against him, and in 1105 one of them had him imprisoned. Henry escaped, but died soon afterward.

The conflict with the papacy (PAY-puh-see), or the office of the pope, was particularly significant, because both popes and emperors claimed to be the leaders of Western Europe. During the latter part of the 1000s, this struggle came to a head in the Investiture Controversy. "Controversy" is another term for conflict, and "investiture" referred to the power of Holy Roman emperors to invest or appoint local church leaders. Chief among these church leaders were bishops, who had authority over all the priests and believers in a given city or region.

On December 8, 1075, Pope Gregory VII (ruled 1073–85), also known as Hildebrand, sent orders to Emperor Henry IV (ruled 1056–1106) that he should stop appointing bishops. Henry responded with a blistering letter, and Gregory in turn issued an order telling Henry's subjects that they were no longer required to obey him.

Things to remember while reading the "Letter to Gregory VII" and the "First Deposition and Banning of Henry IV"

- Both Henry's letter to Gregory, and Gregory's orders deposing Henry (that is, removing him from power) rely heavily on claims to rightful spiritual authority, and both men used passages from the Bible to back up their claims. Henry referred to the Old Testament practice of anointing, whereby a prophet of God poured oil over the head of someone God had chosen to be leader. Several passages in the Bible contain warnings to "touch not God's anointed." In the New Testament, both Jesus and the Apostle Paul commanded believers to submit to the authority of lawfully chosen kings, and though as Henry noted, a number of early Church leaders had said that Christians were not required to follow ungodly leaders, he claimed that he was not one of these.

- In his orders condemning Henry, Gregory addressed St. Peter, or the Apostle Peter, who, according to Catholic tradition, was the first pope. Thus Gregory was in effect embracing what he believed was an unbroken line of authority that went back more than 1,000 years. This belief was based on a statement of Christ in the New Testament Book of Matthew, Chapter 16: speaking to Peter, whose name means "rock" in Greek, Jesus said that "upon this rock I will build my church." In the same passage, Christ also said that "whatsoever is bound on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatsoever is loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven," also interpreted by Catholics as a command giving authority to Peter and those who followed him.

- Henry mentioned two figures from the earlier history of the Church. Julian the Apostate (ruled 361–63) was a Roman emperor who rejected Christianity and tried to return Romans to the worship of their old gods such as Jupiter—hence the title of Apostate (uh-PAHS-tayt), meaning "betrayer." St. Gregory was Pope Gregory I, or Gregory the Great (ruled 590–604), one of the most admired leaders of the early Church. The statement quoted by Gregory can be interpreted to mean that when a ruler gains too much power, he is filled with pride and does not submit to God's authority—as Henry claimed the current Pope Gregory was doing.

- Henry used the "royal we": instead of referring to himself in the first-person singular (*I, me, mine*), he spoke of himself in the plural. This was a tradition among kings and other people in authority, whose use of the plural meant that they saw themselves as representing their entire kingdom. When Henry wrote that he was "unworthy to be among the anointed," this was merely an attempt to appear modest: if he had really considered himself unworthy, he would not have challenged Gregory's authority.

"Letter to Gregory VII," January 24, 1076

*Henry, king not through **usurpation** but through the holy **ordination** of God, to Hildebrand, at present not pope but false monk.*

*Such greeting as this hast thou merited through thy disturbances, inasmuch as there is no **grade** in the church which thou hast **omitted** to make a partaker not of honour but of confusion, not of **benediction** but of **malediction.** For, to mention few and **especial** cases out of many, not only hast thou not feared to lay hands upon the rulers of the holy church, the anointed of the Lord—the **archbishops,** namely, bishops and priests—but thou hast **trodden** them under foot like slaves ignorant of what their master is doing. Thou hast won favour from the common herd by crushing them; thou hast looked upon all of them as knowing nothing, upon thy sole self, moreover, as knowing all things. This knowledge, however, thou hast used not for **edification** but for destruction; so that with reason we believe that St. Gregory, whose name thou has usurped for thyself, was prophesying concerning thee when he said: "The pride of him who is in power increases the more, the greater the number of those subject to him; and he thinks that he himself can do more than all." And we, indeed, have endured all this, being eager to guard the honour of the **apostolic see;** thou, however, has understood our humility to be fear, and hast not, accordingly, **shunned** to rise up against the royal power conferred upon us by God, daring to threaten to **divest** us of it. As if we had received our kingdom from thee! As if the kingdom and the empire were in thine and not in God's hand! And this although our Lord Jesus Christ did call us to the kingdom, did not, however, call thee to the priesthood. For thou*

Usurpation: The act of seizing power unlawfully.

Ordination: The act of being lawfully placed in a position or office.

Grade: Office or position.

Omitted: In this context, failed.

Benediction: Blessing.

Malediction: A curse.

Especial: Specific.

Archbishops: The leading bishops (figures in the Christian church assigned to oversee priests and believers) in an area or nation.

Trodden: Trampled.

Edification: Building up.

Apostolic see: The papacy, or office of the pope.

Shunned: In this context, failed.

Divest: Remove.

*has ascended by the following steps. By **wiles,** namely, which the profession of monk abhors, thou has achieved money; by money, favour; by the sword, **the throne of peace.** And from the throne of peace thou hast disturbed peace, inasmuch as thou hast armed subjects against those in authority over them; inasmuch as thou, who wert not **called,** hast taught that our bishops called of God are to be despised; inasmuch as thou hast usurped for **laymen** and the ministry over their priests, allowing them to **depose** or condemn those whom they themselves had received as teachers from the hand of God through the laying on of hands of the bishops. On me also who, although unworthy to be among **the anointed,** have nevertheless been anointed to the kingdom, thou hast lain thy hand; me who as the tradition of the **holy Fathers** teaches, declaring that I am not to be deposed for any crime unless, which God forbid, I should have strayed from the faith—am subject to the judgment of God alone. For the wisdom of the holy fathers committed even Julian the **apostate** not to themselves, but to God alone, to be judged and to be deposed. For himself the true pope, Peter, also exclaims: "Fear God, honour the king." But thou who does not fear God, dost dishonour in me his appointed one. Wherefore St. Paul, **when he has not spared an angel of Heaven if he shall have preached otherwise,** has not excepted thee also who dost teach otherwise upon earth. For he says: "If any one, either I or an angel from Heaven, should preach a gospel other than that which has been preached to you, he shall be **damned.**" Thou, therefore, damned by this curse and by the judgment of all our bishops and by our own, [should] descend and **relinquish** the apostolic chair which thou has usurped. Let another **ascend** the throne of St. Peter, who shall not practise violence under the cloak of religion, but shall teach the sound doctrine of St. Peter. I Henry, king by the grace of God, do say unto thee, together with all our bishops: Descend, descend, to be damned throughout the ages.*

"First Deposition and Banning of Henry IV," February 22, 1076

*O St. Peter, chief of the **apostles,** incline to us, I beg, thy holy ears, and hear me thy servant whom thou has nourished from infancy, and whom, until this day, thou hast freed from the hand of the wicked, who have hated and do hate me for my faithfulness to thee. Thou, and **my mistress the mother of God,** and thy brother St. Paul are witnesses for me among all the saints that thy holy Roman church **drew me to its helm against my will;** that I had no thought*

Wiles: Tricks.

The throne of peace: The papacy.

Called: In other words, ordained or placed in office by proper authority.

Laymen: Ordinary believers, as opposed to priests and others within the Church itself.

Depose: Remove.

The anointed: Those chosen by God to fill a position of leadership.

Holy Fathers: Early Church leaders.

Apostate: Betrayer.

When he has not spared an angel of Heaven if he shall have preached otherwise: In other words, whose preaching has taken account of all special circumstances.

Damned: Condemned to hell.

Relinquish: Give up.

Ascend: Rise to.

Apostles: Religious figures sent out to teach, preach, and perform miracles.

My mistress the mother of God: The Virgin Mary.

Drew me to its helm against my will: In other words, "I became pope not because I wanted to, but because it was required of me."

of ascending thy chair through force, and that I would rather have ended my life as a ***pilgrim*** *than, by* ***secular*** *means, to have seized thy throne for the sake of earthly glory. And therefore I believe it to be through thy grace and not through my own deeds that it has pleased and does please thee that the Christian people, who have been especially committed to thee, should obey me. And especially to me, as thy representative and by thy favour, has the power been granted by God of binding and loosing in Heaven and on earth. On the strength of this belief therefore, for the honour and security of thy church, in the name of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I withdraw, through thy power and authority, from Henry the king, son of Henry the emperor, who has risen against thy church with unheard of* ***insolence****, the rule over the whole kingdom of the Germans and over Italy. And I* ***absolve*** *all Christians from the bonds of the oath which they have made or shall make to him; and I forbid any one to serve him as king. For it is fitting that he who* ***strives*** *to lessen the honour of thy church should himself lose the honour which belongs to him. And since he has* ***scorned*** *to obey as a Christian, and has not returned to God whom he had deserted—holding* ***intercourse*** *with* ***the excommunicated;*** *practising* ***manifold iniquities; spurning*** *my commands which, as thou dost bear witness, I issued to him for his own salvation; separating himself from thy church and striving to rend it—I bind him in thy stead with the chain of the* ***anathema.*** *And, leaning on thee, I so bind him that the people may know and have proof that thou art Peter, and above thy rock the Son of the living God hath built His church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*

Pilgrim: Someone who journeys to holy places.

Secular: Nonspiritual.

Insolence: Impudence or rudeness.

Absolve: Excuse.

Strives: Works.

Scorned: Refused.

Intercourse: Communication.

The excommunicated: People who have been forced to leave the Church.

Manifold: Many.

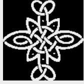
Iniquities: Sins.

Spurning: Rejecting.

Anathema: Someone or something that is cursed and rejected.

What happened next ...

After Gregory excommunicated him, or removed him from the Church, Henry lost the support of his nobles. Therefore in January 1077, in a symbolic act of humility and submission, he appeared at the castle of Canossa (kuh-NAH-suh) in northern Italy, where the pope was staying, and waited barefoot outside in the snow for hours until the pope forgave him. By then Henry was caught up in a war with the Duke of Swabia, a region in Germany, and Gregory tried to help the



Pope Gregory VII

Pope Gregory VII (c. 1020–1085) was born with the name Hildebrand, and thus he was sometimes referred to as Gregory VII Hildebrand. He spent his early career as a monk, a figure within the Church who forsakes the world in order to pursue a life of prayer and meditation. Soon, however, he became involved in Church leadership, serving first as chaplain to Pope Gregory VI from 1045 to 1047.

When Gregory VI was removed from power on charges of simony (accepting money to appoint people to offices within the Church) and sent away to Germany, Hildebrand went with him. In 1049, however, he returned to Rome to serve as advisor to Pope Leo IX, and during the next quarter-century he served in a number of important functions. Finally, in 1075 he was elected pope himself.

Seeking to assert the authority of the popes over political leaders, Gregory quickly issued an order against lay investiture (appointment of Church officials by laymen, or people who were not priests or Church leaders themselves). This aroused the anger of Emperor Henry IV, and the next decade was marked by an on-again, off-again struggle with Henry. Finally, in 1084, Henry removed Gregory from power. Gregory died a year later, but because the man who replaced him was judged an antipope (a false claimant to the title of pope), official Church history holds that Gregory remained rightful pope until his death.

Pope Gregory VII. *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

two settle the dispute; but in 1080, the same year that the Duke of Swabia defeated Henry, Gregory again excommunicated the emperor.

Four years later, in 1084, Henry marched his troops into Rome and removed Gregory from power, replacing him with Clement III (c. 1025–1100), who was later judged by Church authorities as an antipope, or unlawful claimant on

Henry IV kneels before Matilda of Tuscany. Matilda was a powerful supporter of Henry's opponent, Pope Gregory VII. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

the title of pope. Gregory died a year later, in exile under the protection of the Guiscard (gee-SKARD) family who controlled Sicily. Henry lived another twenty years, but he suffered a sad fate similar to that of Gregory: in 1105, one of his sons had him dethroned and imprisoned, and though he escaped, he died soon afterward.

Meanwhile the world moved on. A new pope, Urban II (ruled 1088–99), had inherited Gregory's enthusiasm for papal authority. He would launch the First Crusade (1095–99), a war to recapture the Holy Land, or Palestine, from the Muslims who controlled it. In so doing, he would greatly build up the power of the popes. For the next three centuries, the papacy would be the center of political authority in Western Europe.

Did you know ...

- When Henry went to visit Gregory in the castle at Canossa and beg his forgiveness, he was dressed in a plain woolen shirt with bare feet as a symbol of his submission to the pope. Gregory made him wait outside in the snow—it was January—for three days. Later, the expression "going to Canossa" came to symbolize an act of humility before a leader.
- One of Gregory's most powerful supporters, and indeed one of the most significant female leaders of medieval Western Europe, was the princess Matilda of Tuscany (1046–1115), owner of the castle at Canossa. She waged a number of wars against Henry between 1080 and 1106.
- England had its own version of the Investiture Controversy, involving King William II (ruled 1087–1100) and Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1034–1109), one of the most important thinkers in medieval Europe. Later Anselm set-

tled his differences with William's younger brother Henry I (ruled 1100–1135).

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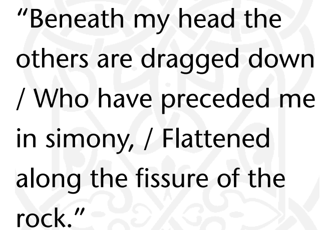
Dante Alighieri

Excerpt from the Divine Comedy

Published in *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri,* 1906

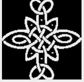
The poet Dante Alighieri (DAHN-tay al-eeg-YEER-ee; 1265–1321), usually referred to simply as Dante, is considered one of the greatest writers of all time—on a par with figures such as the Greek poet Homer (700s B.C.) or the English playwright and poet William Shakespeare (1564–1616). By far the most widely admired of Dante's works is the *Divine Comedy,* which is not a comedy in the traditional sense: here the term refers to the fact that the story, told in a series of 100 "chapters" called cantos, has a happy ending.



"Beneath my head the others are dragged down / Who have preceded me in simony, / Flattened along the fissure of the rock."

The term "divine" is a reference to God, an abiding presence in the narrative as the poet journeys into the depths of the Inferno or Hell, guided by the departed soul of the Roman poet Virgil (70–19 B.C.; sometimes rendered as Vergil or Virgilius). Later, Dante describes a journey into Purgatory, a place of punishment for people working out their salvation and earning their way into Heaven or Paradise. A journey through Heaven constitutes the final section of the *Divine Comedy.*

This vast work is so complex and rich in detail that it is hard to do it justice in just a few words (see box, "The *Di-*



The *Divine Comedy*

Considered one of the world's great literary works, Dante's *Divine Comedy* is a long poem describing the author's journey into Hell, or the Inferno; then through the center of the Earth to Purgatory, a place of punishment for people working out their salvation; and finally, through the planets and stars into Heaven or Paradise.

Dante places the events of the *Divine Comedy* at Easter Weekend 1300, when he was—as he wrote in the open lines of Canto I—"in the middle of the journey of our life" (in other words, thirty-five years old). But the *Divine Comedy* is not meant to be understood as a literal story; rather, it is an allegory, or symbolic tale. Nor is it a comedy as that word is normally used: rather, the term "comedy" refers to the fact that after passing through great misfortune, the author is given a glimpse of the Heaven that awaits believers.

The *Divine Comedy* consists of 100 cantos, or chapters, which are in turn composed of verses. After an introductory canto in which Dante describes how he entered Hell through a darkened forest, each section comprises thirty-three cantos. In each place, Dante travels with a guide: in the Inferno, the Roman poet Virgil (70–19 B.C.), and in Purgatory and Paradise, his beloved Beatrice. The book is densely packed with references to people and events in Europe from ancient times through the early 1300s, and in order to enjoy it fully, a modern reader must consult extensive reference notes. It is a rewarding exercise, however, and anyone who reads the entire *Divine Comedy* comes away with an encyclopedic knowledge of the medieval world. Those fortunate enough to read it in Italian also have an opportunity to enjoy Dante's simple but beautiful language in the original.

vine Comedy"). The passage that follows is drawn from Canto XIX of the Inferno, where Dante witnesses the punishment of popes and other Church leaders guilty of simony—the buying and selling of offices within the Church. Their punishment is particularly gruesome: they have been shoved headfirst, one on top of another, into a bottomless hole in the ground. The newest arrival must suffer the burning of his feet; but when another simoniac (someone who practices simony) dies, the earlier ones will be pushed farther down, deeper into the earth. As Dante notes, this was like the means used to execute hired killers, who were placed headfirst in a pit, then covered with dirt until they suffocated.

A scene of Hell from Dante's *Divine Comedy;* Satan watches from the background with his wings outspread. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Things to remember while reading the excerpt from the *Divine Comedy*

- The *Divine Comedy* is an example of allegory, a style of writing popular throughout the Middle Ages. In allegory, characters and events are meant to be understood as symbols: obviously Dante did not actually journey into Hell, but used it as a symbolic setting in which to address a number of earthly problems. In this passage, the issue addressed is simony, the buying and selling of church offices.

- The simoniac with whom Dante talks in this passage is supposed to be Pope Nicholas III (ruled 1277–80), who came from the Orsini family—a clan known as "the cubs of the she-bear." Later, Dante mentions Nicholas's "intrigue against Charles." This is a reference to Charles of Anjou (ahn-ZHOO), a leader against whom Nicholas supposedly joined in a conspiracy.

- Nicholas mistakes Dante for Pope Boniface VIII (BAHN-i-fus; ruled 1294–1303); but the events of the *Divine Comedy* were supposed to take place in 1300, three years before Boniface's death. After Boniface, Nicholas predicts, will come an even worse offender. This was a reference to Pope Clement V (ruled 1305–1314), who in 1309 moved his headquarters from Rome to Avignon (AV-in-yawn) in southern France as a symbol of his submission to the king of France. This in turn sparked one of the greatest crises in the history of the Catholic Church. Nicholas compares Clement to Jason, a high priest of Jerusalem during the 100s B.C. After bribing the local ruler in order to become high priest, Jason tried to force the Jews to adopt the Greek religion. These events are recorded in the Book of Maccabees (MAK-uh-beez), which appears in some Catholic versions of the Bible.

- Angered by the simoniacs, Dante asks if Jesus charged St. Peter money before he gave the famous disciple a symbolic set of keys to unlock the gates of heaven (Gospel of Matthew, chapter 16, verse 19). This was particularly significant because the popes viewed themselves as successors to Peter, and thus as holders of those keys as well. Judas Iscariot had been the disciples' treasurer, but after he betrayed Jesus and committed suicide, Matthew took his place—but again, as Dante notes, none of the other disciples tried to obtain silver and gold from him.

- Later, Dante refers to another disciple by title rather than name: "The Evangelist." An evangelist is someone who preaches the Christian gospel; however, "The Evangelist" refers to John, disciple of Jesus and author of the Book of Revelation. This section of the Bible describes the end of the world, and among other events it depicts is an unholy alliance between a wicked woman—"she who sitteth upon many waters"—with the kings of the world. Early Church leaders compared the wicked woman to Rome before that city accepted Christianity, but Dante used her as a symbol for the corrupted Church. He also mentioned a beast with seven heads and ten horns, described in Revelation.

- In the final lines of this passage, Dante referred to Constantine (KAHN-stun-teen; ruled 306–337), the first Roman emperor to accept Christianity. This led to the Christianization of Rome, but in the belief of Dante and

many others, it also corrupted the Church by giving it political power. His mention of the "marriage dower"—that is, a dowry or the wealth a bride brings to her marriage—referred to the New Testament idea of the Church ("mother" in this verse) as the bride of Christ. Dante and other people in medieval times believed that Constantine had formally granted political power to the Church in a document known as the Donation of Constantine, which was later proven to be a forgery, or falsified document.

Excerpt from The Divine Comedy

... I saw upon the sides and on the bottom
*The **livid** stone with **perforations** filled,*
All of one size, and every one was round....

*Out of the mouth of each one there **protruded***
*The feet of a **transgressor**, and the legs*
Up to the calf, the rest within remained.

In all of them the soles were both on fire;
Wherefore the joints so violently quivered,
*They would have **snapped asunder withes and bands.***

*Even as the flame of **unctuous** things is **wont***
To move upon the outer surface only,
So likewise was it there from heel to point....

*"**Whoe'er** thou art, that standest upside down,*
*O **doleful** soul, implanted like a stake,"*
*To say began I, "if thou **canst**, speak out."*

*I stood even as the **friar** who is **confessing***
*The false assassin, who, when he is **fixed,***
***Recalls him**, so that death may be delayed.*

*And he cried out: "**Dost thou** stand there already,*
Dost thou stand there already, Boniface?
By many years the record lied to me.

*Art thou so early **satiate** with that wealth,*
For which thou didst not fear to take by fraud
***The beautiful Lady**, and then work her **woe**?"*

Livid: Red.

Perforations: Holes.

Protruded: Stuck out.

Transgressor: Offender or sinner.

Snapped asunder: Broken.

Withes and bands: Strong ropes.

Unctuous: Oily.

Wont: Inclined.

Whoe'er: Whoever.

Doleful: Miserable.

Canst: Can.

Friar: A preacher and teacher, as opposed to a priest, in the Catholic Church.

Confessing: Receiving confession from.

Fixed: Placed in the ground.

Recalls him: Asks him to come back.

Dost thou ...?: Do you?

Satiate: Satisfied.

The beautiful Lady: The Church.

Woe: Misfortune.

Such I became, as people are who stand,
Not comprehending what is answered them,
*As if **bemocked,** and know not how to answer.*

Then said Virgilius: "Say to him straightway,
'I am not he, I am not he thou thinkest.'"
*And I replied **as was imposed on me.***

***Whereat** the spirit writhed with both his feet,*
*Then, sighing, with a voice of **lamentation***
Said to me: "Then what wantest thou of me?

If who I am thou carest so much to know,
That thou on that account hast crossed the bank,
*Know that **I vested was with the great mantle;***

And truly was I son of the She-bear,
So eager to advance the cubs, that wealth
Above, and here myself, I pocketed.

Beneath my head the others are dragged down
*Who have preceded me in **simony,***
*Flattened along the **fissure** of the rock.*

Below there I shall likewise fall, whenever
That one shall come who I believed thou wast,
What time the sudden question I proposed.

But longer I my feet already toast,
And here have been in this way upside down,
Than he will planted stay with reddened feet;

For after him shall come of fouler deed
From tow'rds the west a Pastor without law,
Such as befits to cover him and me.

New Jason will he be, of whom we read
*In Maccabees; and as his king was **pliant,***
So he who governs France shall be to this one."

I do not know if I were here too bold,
*That him I answered only in this **metre:***
*"I **pray** thee tell me now how great a treasure*

Our Lord demanded of Saint Peter first,
Before he put the keys into his keeping?
Truly he nothing asked but 'Follow me.'

Nor Peter nor the rest asked of Matthias
*Silver or gold, when he by **lot** was chosen*

Bemocked: Mocked.

As was imposed on me: In other words, "As I had been told to do."

Whereat: At that point.

Lamentation: Loud mourning.

I vested was with the great mantle: In other words, "I was pope"; the mantle, a type of cloak or coat, is a symbol of authority.

Simony: The practice of buying and selling church offices.

Fissure: Opening.

Pliant: Easily manipulated or swayed.

Metre (or meter): A line of poetry.

Pray: Ask.

Lot: Lottery.

Valiant: Brave.

Reverence: Respect.

Superlative: Above all others.

Gladsome: Cheerful.

Unto the place the guilty soul had lost.

Therefore stay here, for thou art justly punished,
And keep safe guard o'er the ill-gotten money,
Which caused thee to be ***valiant*** *against Charles.*

And were it not that still forbids it me
The ***reverence*** *for the keys* ***superlative***
Thou hadst in keeping in the ***gladsome*** *life,*

I would make use of words more ***grievous*** *still;*
Because your ***avarice afflicts*** *the world,*
Trampling the good and lifting the ***depraved.***

The Evangelist you Pastors had in mind,
When she who sitteth upon many waters
To fornicate with kings by him was seen;

The same who with the seven heads was born,
And power and strength from the ten horns received,
So long as virtue to her spouse was pleasing.

Ye have made yourselves a god of gold and silver;
And from the ***idolater*** *how differ ye,*
Save that he one, and ye a hundred worship?

Ah, Constantine! of how much ill was mother,
Not thy conversion, but that marriage ***dower***
Which the first wealthy Father took from thee!"

And while I sang to him such notes as these,
Either ***that*** *anger or that conscience stung him,*
He struggled violently with both his feet....

A manuscript page from Dante's *Divine Comedy* showing Dante and Virgil in Hell, encountering "souls being devoured by their own remorse." *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

Grievous: Wounding.

Avarice: Greed.

Afflicts: Causes suffering to.

Depraved: Wicked or sinful.

Idolater: Someone who worships a statue of a god.

Dower: Dowry, or the wealth a bride brings to a marriage.

That: Because.

What happened next ...

Dante was not the only person angered by simony, or by the removal of the papal seat from Rome to Avignon. The Italian poet Petrarch (PEE-trark; 1304–1374), one of Dante's many admirers, called the Avignon papacy the "Babylonian Captivity," referring to the period in the Old Testament when the people of Israel were carried off to slavery in Babylon. Worse was to follow, as the Church became embroiled in the Great Schism (SKIZ-um; 1378–1417). During the Great Schism, there were not two but *three* rival popes: one in Rome, one in Avignon, and one in the Italian city of Pisa.

Infighting among Catholics weakened the Church, and made it vulnerable to the early stirrings of the Reformation (ref-ur-MAY-shun), an effort to reform the Christian religion. One of the most prominent leaders of the Reformation was the German preacher Martin Luther (1483–1546), who became outraged at a practice not unlike simony: the sale of indulgences, whereby popes and priests were charging believers money in exchange for forgiveness from God. Like Dante's work, the Reformation—which gained strength because of corruption in the Catholic Church—helped pave the way for massive changes in European life at the end of the Middle Ages and beginning of the Renaissance.

Did you know ...

- The term *simony* refers to the magician Simon Magus, mentioned in the New Testament Book of Acts. Simon tried to pay the apostles Peter and John in order to gain the Holy Spirit's power to heal the sick and the lame, and Peter cursed him for behaving as though holy powers could be bought and sold.
- The nineteenth-century poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882)—who was actually born with the name Dante—modeled much of his work after that of Dante Alighieri.
- One of the most famous quotes from the *Divine Comedy* is the phrase that appeared on the gates of Hell, sometimes translated as "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here."

Dante

By writing primarily in Italian, Dante Alighieri—usually referred to simply as Dante—helped usher in an era of increased literary activity throughout Western Europe. After Dante, writers were much more likely to compose in their native languages, rather than in Latin. The latter had remained the language of educated men throughout the Middle Ages, despite the fact that there was no longer an active community of Latin-speakers. Thus it was a "dead language," and Dante's use of Italian brought a refreshing new energy to literature, which in turn helped lay the groundwork for the period of renewed interest in learning known as the Renaissance (RIN-uh-sahnts; c. 1300–c. 1600).

Dante grew up in the city of Florence, which would become home to a number of influential writers and painters. After studying at several great universities, he became involved in complex political struggles that consumed Italy for many years. When in 1302 a rival group triumphed, he was exiled from (forced to leave) Florence with his wife Gemma Donati, who he had married in 1297. He would spend the remaining twenty-nine years of his life in a variety of cities throughout Italy.

In 1293, Dante had completed his first great work, *La vita nuova* (VEE-tuh NWOH-vuh; "New Life"), a collection of love poems to a woman he barely knew. This was Beatrice Portinari (1266–1290), whom Dante had first met at the age of eight. He had loved her from that time, though perhaps "admired" is a better word: Dante and Beatrice were never lovers, nor was Dante's affection for her that of a lover. Rather, he saw her as a sort of guiding spirit, an image of purity who inspired his work.

La vita nuova honored Beatrice after her death, and later she would figure in one of the world's greatest literary masterpieces: the *Divine Comedy,* which Dante began writing in 1308 and completed just before his death in 1321. He also wrote a number of other works, including poetry and nonfiction.

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Historians of the medieval period had quite different standards for evaluating truth and falsehood than do historical writers today. In the modern world, scholars attempt to approach historical information scientifically, sifting through the raw materials of history—that is, the records kept by people of another time—and attempting to form a picture of that era. Of course a modern historian's picture is colored by his or her unique perspective, but at least modern writers of history generally agree that as much as possible, they should set aside their own views and seek the truth from facts.

In the Middle Ages, however, historical writers lacked such standards. They were more apt, for instance, to attribute events to the work of God or gods rather than to conditions such as weather or economics, whose causes and effects can be more clearly understood. Furthermore, it was not at all unusual for a historian to report something that he (virtually all medieval historians of any culture were men) had heard, without making much of an effort to find out whether it was true or not.

Certainly medieval historians were not entirely to blame for this approach. There were no computers for con-

ducting research, and indeed books themselves were hard to come by: in the days before the printing press, books had to be painstakingly written out by hand, and they were closely guarded like the treasures they were. Nor was it easy for a historian to travel and conduct interviews. Furthermore, historians, like everyone else, are a product of their times, and tend to accept the prevailing views. In the Middle Ages, people in general were much more likely to seek spiritual answers to questions than to look for scientific explanations, and few historians thought differently.

These facts, however, do not fully explain the approach taken by **Procopius** (proh-KOH-pee-us; died c. 565) in his *Secret History.* A citizen of the Byzantine (BIZ-un-teen) Empire, which grew out of the Eastern Roman Empire in Greece, Procopius lived during the reign of the emperor Justinian (ruled 527–65). Many historians today regard Justinian as perhaps the greatest of Byzantine rulers, but one would not know it from the *Secret History,* which portrays him as a murderer and a thief. Even worse was Procopius's depiction of the empress Theodora (c. 500–548), Justinian's wife, whose sex life he described in terms that would make many a modern reader blush.

On the one hand, the *Secret History* is a genuine historical work; on the other hand, it is more like the tabloid newspapers of today that cover the deeds and misdeeds of Hollywood stars. Procopius had written other, more respectable, historical works, but in the *Secret History* he seemed to be saying what he really thought of the empire's royal couple. This bad feeling resulted from deep-seated political differences, but Procopius made little effort to hold his views in check. However, when he wrote that Justinian and Theodora were fiends (demons) in human form, he was not—by the standards of his time—making an outlandish claim. From the perspective of the Middle Ages, demons were a part of everyday life, and it was not farfetched to believe that one could assume the form of an emperor.

The role of magic and the supernatural was no less prominent in East Asia than in Europe, as an excerpt from *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* by **Lo Kuan-chung** (GWAHN-zhoong; c. 1330–c. 1400) illustrates. Describing events that took place more than a thousand years before, Lo Kuan-

chung portrayed a period of great upheaval in Chinese history, when the country was torn apart by war. Yet in his version, the Three Kingdoms period of the A.D. 200s became a highly romantic, adventurous time.

Romance of the Three Kingdoms is of great value to historians, but it is not really historical writing: rather, it is a novel, an extended work of fiction. Thus although his book fell into the category known as historical fiction, Lo Kuan-chung was not subject to the same sort of restrictions that govern (or should govern) the work of true historians. He was free to take liberty with the truth if it suited him, and readers of his book did not have to worry that he would allow the facts to interfere with a good story.

William of Malmesbury (MAWMS-bur-ee; c. 1090–c. 1143), in contrast to both Procopius and Lo Kuan-chung, was doing work similar to that of a modern historian. In an excerpt from *Gesta regum Anglorum,* his chronicle of England's kings, he discusses the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, when invaders led by William the Conqueror (c. 1028–1087) from Normandy in France seized the English throne.

This event was one of the most important in the history of the English-speaking world, and Malmesbury wrote about the subject with the kind of serious, thoughtful approach that it deserved. Instead of blaming supernatural forces, or other causes that could not be explained, he looked for an explanation of the Norman victory in the events that preceded the invasion. Not only had the defenders of England been ill-prepared for their actual battle with the Normans, he indicated, but in fact all of England had grown soft from years of excessive luxury. Other historians might disagree with this analysis, but at least it was an idea that could be argued, rather than being a mere matter of belief that could not be disproved.

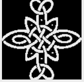
Procopius

***Excerpt from* Secret History**
Published in *Secret History,* 1927

"To me, and many others of us, these two seemed not to be human beings, but veritable demons, and what the poets call vampires: who laid their heads together to see how they could most easily and quickly destroy the race and deeds of men."

The writings of the Greek historian Procopius (proh-KOH-pee-us; died c. 565), including *History in Eight Books* and *On Buildings,* have certainly inspired much admiration from scholars of the medieval world. Yet these works, respectable as they are, are not nearly as entertaining—nor do they receive as much attention today—as a gossipy, scandalous book called *Secret History,* which Procopius never intended to publish. Chock-full of tall tales, and so slanted with the writer's own opinions that it barely qualifies as a serious historical work, *Secret History* is nonetheless more intriguing than the hottest soap opera on television.

In Procopius's time, the Byzantine (BIZ-un-teen) Empire, which grew out of the Eastern Roman Empire in Greece, was ruled by the emperor Justinian (483–565; ruled 527–565). Justinian, often considered the greatest Byzantine emperor, set out to reconquer lands that had once belonged to the Western Roman Empire, and in this undertaking he relied on his brilliant general Belisarius (c. 505–565). Procopius, who served as Belisarius's advisor, wrote an account of these wars in his *History in Eight Books,* which presented Justinian and



Procopius

One of the most noted historians of the Byzantine Empire, Procopius came from the region of Caesarea (se-suh-REE-uh) in what is now Israel. He spent his early career as advisor to one of the empire's greatest generals, Belisarius (bel-i-SAHR-ee-us; c. 505–565), serving alongside him in a series of military expeditions from 527 to 531, and again from 536 to 540. During this time, the Byzantines waged war with the Persians in what is now Iran; with the Goths in Italy; and with the Vandals—who, like the Goths, were a barbarian tribe that had helped bring down the Western Roman Empire—in North Africa.

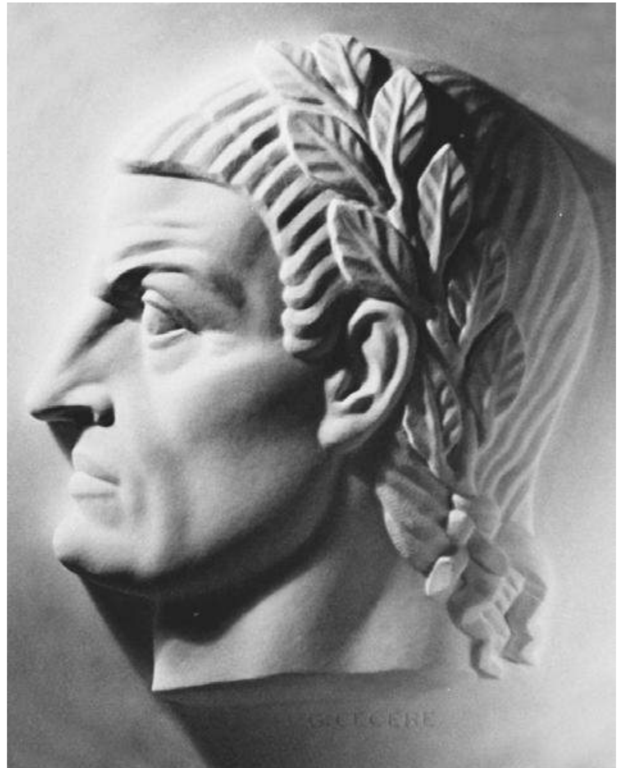
Out of this experience came *History in Eight Books,* a highly acclaimed book. In it, he lavished praise on Justinian (ruled 527–65), the emperor who had ordered Belisarius's conquests. He also wrote *On Buildings,* a six-volume work concerning buildings erected under the reign of Justinian—and again, the book was full of nothing but kind words for the man whom historians consider the greatest of Byzantine emperors.

Privately, however, Procopius held deep grudges against Justinian, Justinian's wife Theodora (c. 500–548), and others in the imperial court. These grudges found expression in *Secret History,* which, as its name implies, was something Procopius wrote without the intention of ever publishing it. Indeed, it was not published until centuries after his death; if it had appeared in Procopius's own lifetime, Justinian would certainly have had Procopius imprisoned or even executed for writing it.

Belisarius as great leaders. Their portrayal in *Secret History,* however, was quite different.

Secret History depicts Belisarius as a fool whose wife cheated on him constantly; as for Justinian, Procopius made him out to be a sort of gangster who helped himself to other people's wealth and killed anyone who got in his way. Even worse was Procopius's depiction of Justinian's wife, Theodora (c. 500–548), who he portrayed as a lustful, scheming woman. Chapter titles from *Secret History* say it all: "How Justinian Killed a Trillion People"; "How Justinian Created a New Law Permitting Him to Marry a Courtesan" (or prostitute—referring to Theodora); and the title of the chapter from which the following excerpt is drawn, "Proving That Justinian and Theodora Were Actually Fiends [demons] in Human Form."

Things to remember while reading the excerpt from *Secret History*



Emperor Justinian. In spite of Procopius's low opinion of him, Justinian is regarded by many historians as the greatest ruler of the Byzantine Empire.
Reproduced by permission of the Library of Congress.

- Procopius intended his *Secret History*—published centuries after his death—only for close friends who shared his views; had the book seen the light of day during Procopius's lifetime, Justinian would certainly have had its author imprisoned or executed. As it is, the book is damaging to Procopius's enduring reputation as a serious historian, since his observations were motivated not by a quest for truth, but by personal grudges.
- The roots of Procopius's conflict with the emperor and empress lay in a larger struggle between two groups that dominated Byzantine life, the Greens and the Blues, named for the colors of their respective horse-racing teams. The specific political differences between the two groups hardly matter in the context of the *Secret History:* what matters is that Procopius was a Green, and Theodora supported the Blues. As emperor, Justinian had to appear to be above the Blue-Green conflict, but it is easy to guess that his sympathies lay with his wife.
- Procopius's claim that Justinian and Theodora were actually demons in human form was not as far-fetched—from the perspective of his time and place, that is—as it might seem. To the medieval mind, supernatural forces were as real and ever-present as the Sun and Moon; therefore it would not have seemed at all unbelievable to Procopius's readers, for instance, that Justinian's father was a demon, who left "evidence of his presence perceptibly where man consorts with woman." (In other words, the demon left some sort of physical evidence that he had engaged in sexual intercourse with Justinian's mother.)

- The emperor Justin (ruled 518–27) was Justinian's uncle, under whom Justinian served as an administrator. As for Hecebolus (hek-EB-uh-lus), he was one of Theodora's lovers from her days as an actress. When he became governor of a Byzantine province, Procopius reported in another chapter of the *Secret History,* Theodora followed him there, but later Hecebolus left her with no money.

Excerpt from Secret History

... [T]o me, and many others of us, these two [Justinian and Theodora] seemed not to be human beings, but ***veritable*** *demons, and what the poets call vampires: who laid their heads together to see how they could most easily and quickly destroy the race and deeds of men; and assuming human bodies, became* ***man-demons,*** *and so* ***convulsed*** *the world. And one could find evidence of this in many things, but especially in the superhuman power with which they worked their will.*

For when one examines closely, there is a clear difference between what is human and what is ***supernatural.*** *There have been many enough men, during the whole course of history, who by chance or by nature have inspired great fear, ruining cities or countries or whatever else fell into their power; but to destroy all men and bring* ***calamity*** *on the whole inhabited earth remained for these two to accomplish, whom* ***Fate*** *aided in their schemes of corrupting all mankind. For by earthquakes,* ***pestilences,*** *and floods of river waters at this time came further ruin, as I shall presently show. Thus not by human, but by some other kind of power they accomplished their dreadful designs.*

And they say his mother said to some of her intimates once that not of Sabbatius her husband, nor of any man was Justinian a son. For when she was about to conceive, there visited a demon, invisible but giving evidence of his presence ***perceptibly*** *where man* ***consorts*** *with woman, after which he vanished utterly as in a dream.*

And some of those who have been with Justinian at the palace late at night, men who were pure of spirit, have thought they saw a strange ***demoniac*** *form taking his place. One man said that the*

Veritable: True.

Man-demons: Demons in human form.

Convulsed: Troubled or disrupted.

Supernatural: Something beyond the natural world; can refer either to God and angels, or to the devil and demons.

Calamity: Destruction.

Fate: Destiny. Greek writers often viewed Fate as an actual force with a personality; hence the capitalization.

Pestilences: Diseases.

Perceptibly: Visibly.

Consorts (v.): Associates.

Demoniac: One possessed by a demon.

Emperor suddenly rose from his throne and walked about, and indeed he was never ***wont*** *to remain sitting for long, and immediately Justinian's head vanished, while the rest of his body seemed to* ***ebb and flow; whereat*** *the* ***beholder*** *stood* ***aghast*** *and fearful, wondering if his eyes were deceiving him. But presently he perceived the vanished head filling out and joining the body again as strangely as it had left it.*

Another said he stood beside the Emperor as he sat, and of a sudden the face changed into a shapeless mass of flesh, with neither eyebrows nor eyes in their proper places, nor any other distinguishing feature; and after a time the natural appearance of his ***countenance*** *returned. I write these instances not as one who saw them myself, but heard them from men who were positive they had seen these strange occurrences at the time.*

They also say that a certain ***monk,*** *very dear to God, at the* ***instance*** *of those who dwelt with him in the desert went to Constantinople to beg for mercy to his neighbors who had been outraged beyond endurance. And when he arrived there, he* ***forthwith*** *secured an* ***audience*** *with the Emperor; but just as he was about to enter his* ***apartment,*** *he stopped short as his feet were on the threshold, and suddenly stepped backward. Whereupon the* ***eunuch*** *escorting him, and others who were present,* ***importuned*** *him to go ahead. But he answered not a word; and like a man who has had a* ***stroke*** *staggered back to his lodging. And when some followed to ask why he acted thus, they say he distinctly declared he saw the King of the Devils sitting on the throne in the palace, and he did not care to meet or ask any favor of him.*

Indeed, how was this man likely to be anything but an evil spirit, who never knew honest ***satiety*** *of drink or food or sleep, but only tasting at random from the meals that were set before him, roamed the palace at* ***unseemly*** *hours of the night, and was possessed by the* ***quenchless*** *lust of a demon?*

Furthermore some of Theodora's lovers, while she was on the stage, say that at night a demon would sometimes descend upon them and drive them from the room, so that it might spend the night with her. And there was a certain dancer named Macedonia, who belonged to the Blue party in Antioch, who came to possess much influence. For she used to write letters to Justinian while Justin was still Emperor, and so ***made away with*** *whatever notable men in the East she had a grudge against, and had their property confiscated.*

Wont: Inclined.

Ebb and flow: In this context, "appear and disappear."

Whereat: At which point.

Beholder: Someone seeing something.

Aghast: Amazed.

Countenance: Face.

Monk: A religious figure who pursues a life of prayer and meditation.

Instance: Request.

Forthwith: Immediately.

Audience: Meeting.

Apartment: Room or chamber.

Eunuch: A man who has been castrated, thus making him incapable of sex or sexual desire; kings often employed eunuchs on the belief that they could trust them around their wives.

Importuned: Urged.

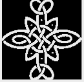
Stroke: A sudden brain-seizure that renders the victim incapable of movement or speech.

Satiety: Satisfaction.

Unseemly: Inappropriate or improper.

Quenchless: Unsatisfiable.

Made away with: Got rid of.



Justinian and Theodora

One would not know it from Procopius's *Secret History,* but many historians of the Byzantine Empire view Justinian (483–565; ruled 527–565) as its greatest ruler. Justinian laid the foundations for modern law with his legal code, or system of laws, completed in 535; and under his rule, Byzantine arts flourished.

Even Procopius had to admit that Justinian built a number of great structures, none more notable than the church known as the Hagia (HAH-jah) Sophia. An architectural achievement as impressive today as it was some 1,500 years ago, the Hagia Sophia dominates the skyline of Istanbul, Turkey, which in medieval times was the Byzantine capital of Constantinople (kahn-stan-ti-NOH-pul). Also during Justinian's time, the Byzantine art of mosaics (moh-ZAY-iks)—colored bits of glass or tile arranged to form a picture—reached a high point. The most famous Byzantine mosaics are those depicting Justinian and his wife Theodora, which can be found in Italy's Church of San Vitale.

The Byzantine presence in Italy was an outgrowth of the most visible, yet least enduring, achievement of Justinian's era. Hoping to reclaim the Western Roman Empire, which had fallen to invading tribes in 476, Justinian sent his general Belisarius (c. 500–565) on three military campaigns that won back North Africa in 534, Italy in 540, and southern Spain in 550. These were

Cast down: Depressed.

The leader of a chorus of coins: In other words, wealthy.

Share the couch of: Engage in marital relations with.

Contrive: Plan.

Mistress: Female head of a household.

This Macedonia, they say, greeted Theodora at the time of her arrival from Egypt and Libya; and when she saw her badly worried and ***cast down*** *at the ill treatment she had received from Hecebolus and at the loss of her money during this adventure, she tried to encourage Theodora by reminding her of the laws of chance, by which she was likely again to be* ***the leader of a chorus of coins****. Then, they say, Theodora used to relate how on that very night a dream came to her, bidding her take no thought of money, for when she should come to Constantinople, she should* ***share the couch of*** *the King of the Devils, and that she should* ***contrive*** *to become his wedded wife and thereafter be the* ***mistress*** *of all the money in the world. And that this is what happened is the opinion of most people.*

costly victories, however, and except for a few parts of Sicily and southern Italy, the Byzantines did not hold on to their conquests past Justinian's lifetime.

As for Theodora (c. 500–548), she had been an actress before she married Justinian—and in those days, actresses were looked upon as little better than prostitutes, and in fact many actresses were prostitutes. It is doubtful, however, that her morals were nearly as loose as Procopius portrays them in his X-rated account from the *Secret History,* "How Theodora, Most Depraved of All Courtesans, Won His Love." In any case, after Theodora married Justinian and became empress, she proved herself a great help to her husband—and a leader in her own right.

When the citizens of Constantinople revolted against Justinian in 532, the emperor was slow to act, and considered fleeing the palace. Theodora, however, stirred him to action when she said, "For my own part, I hold to the old saying that the imperial purple makes the best burial sheet"—in other words, it is better to die defending the throne than to run away. Thus Justinian maintained power, and went on to the many achievements that marked his reign. When Theodora died in 548, Justinian was heartbroken.

What happened next ...

The Byzantine Empire reached a high point under Justinian, but it began to decline within his lifetime. A plague or disease reached the empire in 541, and did not end until the mid-700s, by which time it had killed millions of people. Aside from everything else, this meant that the empire's tax revenues decreased dramatically, leaving it unable to pay for its armies. A number of neighboring peoples revolted, further weakening Byzantine power.

Procopius mentioned a number of places within the Byzantine Empire: Egypt; the neighboring land of Libya; Antioch (AN-tee-ahk), a city on what is now the border between Syria and Turkey; and the desert beyond. All these lands—along with a great portion of what Justinian had won back from barbarian tribes in Europe—would be lost during the

A famous mosaic from the Church of San Vitale showing Theodora and her attendants. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

600s. A new and powerful empire was on the rise, with its roots among the Muslims of Arabia.

The Byzantine Empire seemed doomed, but it managed to hold on, driving back the Arabs who attacked Constantinople in 718. Over the centuries that followed, it won back territories in southeastern Europe, though it never regained the lands it had lost in the Middle East. The empire reached a second high point in 1025, but its defeat by the Turks at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 signaled the beginnings of a long decline that would bring the Byzantine Empire to an end in 1453.

Did you know ...

- Procopius did not give the *Secret History* its title. When it was first published in the 900s, it was called *Anekdota,* meaning unpublished. The present title only appeared in modern times.

- In 1992, novelist Donna Tartt published a best-selling murder mystery about a group of college students majoring in ancient Greek studies. Its title was *The Secret History.*

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William of Malmesbury

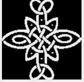
Excerpt from **Gesta regum Anglorum**

Published in *Readings in European History,* 1904

"This was a fatal day to England, and melancholy havoc was wrought in our dear country during the change of its lords."

In 793, a terrifying force swept out of northern Europe: a group of invaders known as Vikings, Northmen, or Norsemen. Whatever their name, they spread death and destruction throughout the continent for the next two centuries. By the late 900s, however, Vikings had settled in various areas, including a region in the north of France. This area, settled in 911, came to be known as Normandy. Like their forefathers the Vikings, the Normans—their name was a version of "Northmen"—were a restless people, eager for conquest. Early in the eleventh century, a new opportunity appeared for them when Emma, daughter of Duke Richard I of Normandy, married Ethelred the Unready (ruled 978–1016), king of England.

Ethelred was a descendant of invaders from Germany who in the 400s had taken Britain from the Celts, who had controlled the island for a thousand years. Unable to defend themselves after soldiers from the declining Roman Empire departed in 410, the Britons (as the British Celts were called) had actually invited the German tribes—known as the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes—to help them defend their island. But the Germans conquered it instead, and as a result the land took their



William of Malmesbury

Like many scholars of medieval Europe, William of Malmesbury was a monk in the Catholic Church. His name is taken from the town in southern England where he lived most of his life.

Malmesbury's first notable work of history was *Gesta regum Anglorum* (c. 1125), an account of England's kings modeled on the writings of the noted English historian Bede (BEED; c. 672–735). He followed this with *Gesta pontificum Anglorum* (c. 1126), and *Historia novella,* which covered events in England up to 1142.

name. The main part of Britain came to be known as England after the Angles, and to this day people of English descent are known as Anglo-Saxons.

By 1042, when Ethelred's and Emma's son Edward the Confessor became king, the stage was being set for another takeover, this time by the Normans. Edward, who died in 1066, placed a great deal of trust in Norman advisors; meanwhile, more and more settlers came from Normandy to England. After 1053, the most influential figure in Edward's court was his son Harold (c. 1022–1066), who assumed the throne after his father's death. Harold reigned for less than a year: on October 14, 1066, he died in a battle against an invading Norman force, led by a duke named William (c. 1028–1087)—better known as William the Conqueror. The two armies met on a beach near the town of Hastings, and the victory of the Normans would become one of the most important events in the history of the English-speaking world.

Things to remember while reading the excerpt from *Gesta regum Anglorum*

- The following account comes from the historian William of Malmesbury (MAWMS-bur-ee; c. 1090–c. 1143). His *Gesta regum Anglorum*—like most educated Western Europeans of the Middle Ages, Malmesbury wrote in Latin—is a chronicle of the kings of England, written in about 1125. By that time, Henry I, son of William the Conqueror, ruled England, and the authority of the Normans had been firmly established.
- Malmesbury portrayed both William and Harold as great and brave leaders; however, he was also clear that the English were not prepared for the invasion. In Malmesbury's view, they had grown soft while the Normans kept their

minds on their objective: victory. Describing the two armies' preparations for battle, Malmesbury noted that the Normans took communion, a Christian celebration commemorating Jesus' Last Supper before his crucifixion. He used this fact to point out that the Normans were preparing for the upcoming battle, while the English wasted their energies partying. Some medieval historians might have claimed that the Normans won because God was on their side; Malmesbury, by contrast, suggested that the Normans won because of their serious attitude. His discussion of the cause-and-effect relations governing the outcome of the battle reveals the mind of a serious historian.

- The *Song of Roland* (roh-LAHND) is a great tale, not so different from the stories of King Arthur, that concerns a battle in Spain that took place in 778. Roland was a fabled knight serving under Charlemagne (SHAHR-luh-main; ruled 768–814), emperor of what is now France and Germany, in his campaign to repel Muslim invaders. The actual conflict with the Muslims was uneventful; but as with the story of King Arthur, based on real events during the time of the German invasion of the 400s, later poets created an inspiring romantic tale out of these occurrences.

Excerpt from Gesta regum Anglorum

The courageous leaders mutually prepared for battle, each according to his national custom. The English, as we have heard, passed the night without sleep, in drinking and singing, and in the morning proceeded without delay against the enemy. All on foot, armed with battle-axes, and covering themselves in front ***by the juncture of their shields,*** *they formed an impenetrable body which would assuredly have secured their safety that day had not the Normans, by a* ***feigned flight, induced*** *them* ***to open their ranks,*** *which till that time, according to their custom, had been closely compacted. King Harold himself, on foot, stood with his brothers near the* ***standard*** *in order that, so long as all shared equal danger, none could think of retreating. This same standard William sent, after his*

By the juncture of their shields: In other words, by putting their square shields together to form a solid wall—a practice learned from the Romans.

Feigned flight: A pretended retreat or escape.

Induced: Encouraged.

To open their ranks: That is, to go from a tight to a loose military formation, making it easier to attack them.

Standard: A banner soldiers carried into war, which was highly important for its symbolic power.

Infantry: Foot soldiers.

Vanguard: Front or leading edge.

Cavalry: Soldiers on horseback.

Serene countenance: Brave appearance.

Arms: Weapons.

Hauberk: A covering of chain mail, a type of armor.

The hind part before: In other words, backwards.

Ardor: Enthusiasm.

Phalanx: A column of soldiers.

Fly: Flee.

Deceived by a stratagem: Tricked by a clever plan.

Eminence: A hill or high point.

To a man: In other words, they killed them all.

A short passage: A shortcut.

Trod: Trampled.

Hollow: A sunken area.

Melancholy havoc was wrought: In other words, terrible trouble was caused.

Usages: Practices.

Heathens: Godless people.

Rights: Laws.

By degrees: Gradually.

Relegated arms to a secondary place: In other words, made military matters less important.

Clergy: Priests.

victory, to the pope; it was sumptuously embroidered with gold and precious stones, and represented the figure of a man fighting.

*On the other hand, the Normans passed the whole night in confessing their sins, and received the communion of the Lord's body in the morning. Their **infantry,** with bows and arrows, formed the **vanguard,** while their **cavalry,** divided into wings, was placed in the rear. The duke [William], with **serene countenance,** declaring aloud that God would favor his as being the righteous side, called for his **arms;** and when, through the haste of his attendants, he had put on his **hauberk the hind part before,** he corrected the mistake with a laugh, saying "The power of my dukedom shall be turned into a kingdom." Then starting the Song of Roland, in order that the warlike example of that hero might stimulate the soldiers, and calling on God for assistance, the battle commenced on both sides, and was fought with great **ardor,** neither side giving ground during the greater part of the day.*

*Observing this, William gave a signal to his troops, that, feigning flight, they should withdraw from the field. By means of this device the solid **phalanx** of the English opened for the purpose of cutting down the fleeing enemy and thus brought upon itself swift destruction; for the Normans, facing about, attacked them, thus disordered, and compelled them to **fly.** In this manner, **deceived by a stratagem,** they met an honorable death in avenging their enemy; nor indeed were they at all without their own revenge, for, by frequently making a stand, they slaughtered their pursuers in heaps. Getting possession of an **eminence,** they drove back the Normans, who in the heat of pursuit were struggling up the slope, into the valley beneath, where, by hurling their javelins and rolling down stones on them as they stood below, the English easily destroyed them **to a man.** Besides, by **a short passage** with which they were acquainted, they avoided a deep ditch and **trod** underfoot such a multitude of their enemies in that place that the heaps of bodies made the **hollow** level with the plain. This alternating victory, first of one side and then of the other, continued so long as Harold lived to check the retreat; but when he fell, his brain pierced by an arrow, the flight of the English ceased not until night.*

*... This was a fatal day to England, and **melancholy havoc was wrought** in our dear country during the change of its lords. For it had long adopted the manners of the Angles, which had indeed altered with the times; for in the first years of their arrival they were barbarians in their look and manner, warlike in their **usages, heathens** in their **rights.** After embracing the faith of Christ, **by degrees***

and, in process of time, in consequence of the peace which they enjoyed, they ***relegated arms to a secondary place*** *and gave their whole attention to religion.*

... Nevertheless, the attention to literature and religion had gradually decreased for several years before the arrival of the Normans. The ***clergy,*** *contented with a little confused learning, could scarcely stammer out the words of the* ***sacraments;*** *and a person who understood grammar was an object of wonder and astonishment. The monks mocked the rule of their* ***order*** *by fine* ***vestments*** *and the use of every kind of food. The nobility, given up to* ***luxury and wantonness,*** *went not to church in the morning after the manner of Christians, but merely, in a careless manner, heard* ***matins*** *and* ***masses*** *from a hurrying priest in their* ***chambers,*** *amid the* ***blandishments*** *of their wives. The* ***commonalty,*** *left unprotected, became a prey to the most powerful, who amassed fortunes, either by seizing on their property or by selling their persons into foreign countries; although it is characteristic of this people to be more inclined to* ***reveling*** *than to the accumulation of wealth....*

Drinking in parties was a universal practice, in which occupation they passed entire nights as well as days. They consumed their whole substance in ***mean and despicable houses,*** *unlike the Normans and French, who live frugally in noble and splendid mansions.* ***The vices attendant on*** *drunkenness, which* ***enervate*** *the human mind, followed; hence it came about that when they* ***engaged*** *William, with more* ***rashness*** *and* ***precipitate*** *fury than military skill, they doomed themselves and their country to slavery by a single, and [at] that an easy, victory. For nothing is less effective than rashness; and what begins with violence quickly ceases or is repelled.*

What happened next ...

The Norman Conquest proved to be an event of enormous significance, with a vast impact on the law, culture, and especially the language of England. The Normans spoke French, and this added a Latin-based influence to the Germanic language of England. Thus today English has at its disposal a huge array of words, many rooted in Latin and others in German.

Sacraments: Special religious ceremonies, such as taking Communion or exchanging wedding vows.

Order: A group of monks.

Vestments: Clothing.

Luxury and wantonness: A life filled with excessive eating, drinking, and other worldly pleasures.

Matins: Morning prayer.

Masses: Catholic church services.

Chambers: Living quarters.

Blandishments: Things that distract a person by their attractiveness.

Commonalty: Common people.

Reveling: Partying.

Mean and despicable houses: In other words, taverns or bars known for drunkenness and the loose practices of the people who went there.

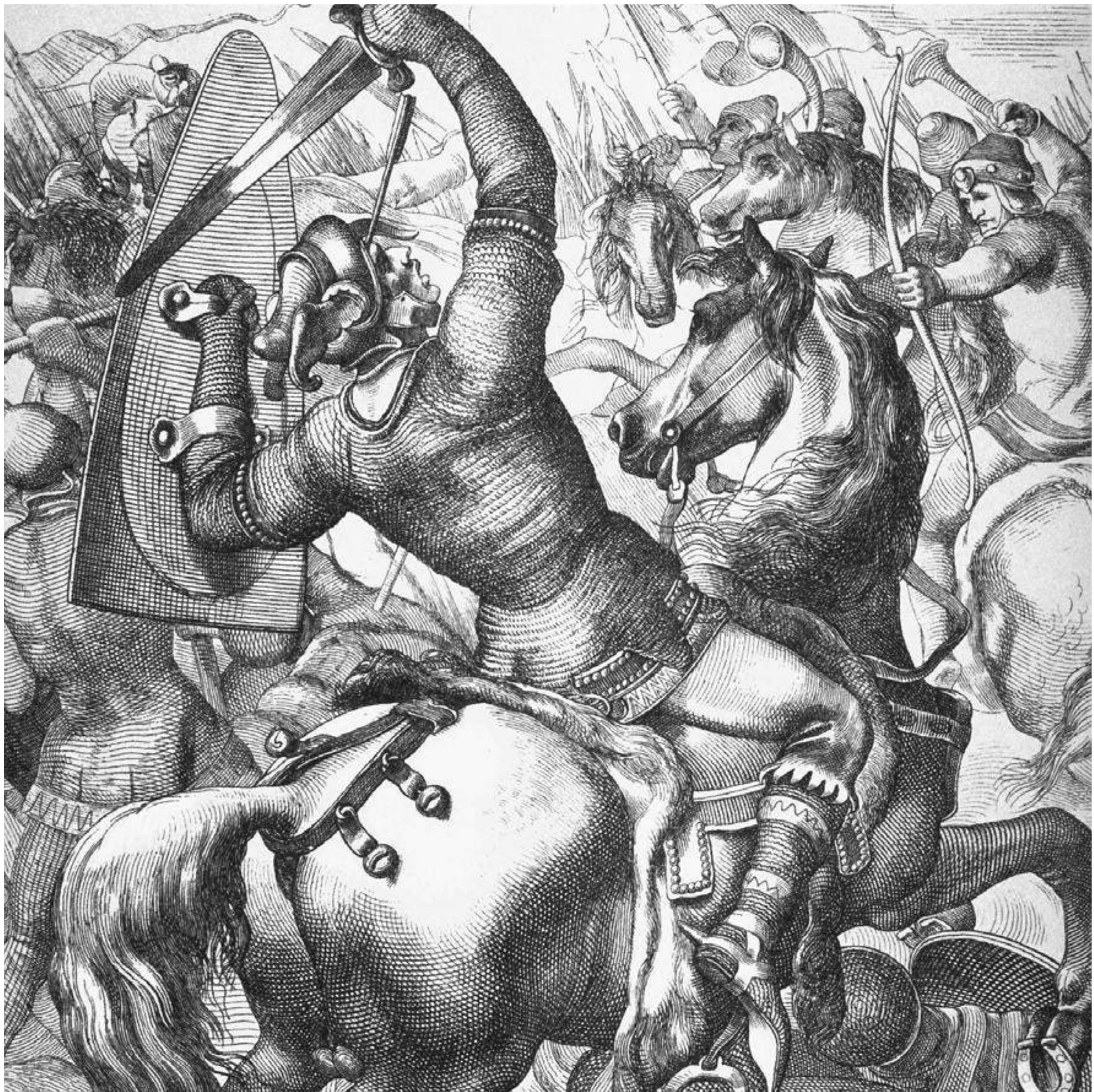
The vices attendant on: In other words, the bad things that went with.

Enervate: Reduce the moral and mental health.

Engaged: Started a conflict with.

Rashness: Hastiness.

Precipitate: Quick or hasty.



King Harold of England is hit during the Battle of Hastings. Historian William of Malmesbury explains that Harold's "brain [was] pierced by an arrow." *Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

In the short run, the invasion led to the crowning of William the Conqueror as William I, king of England. Kings of England after William also held the title "duke of Normandy"; and after 1154, an English king was also count or ruler of Anjou (ahn-ZHOO), a French province. Thus the English kings had their eye on France, just as the Normans had once had their eye on England, and this would lead to a series of conflicts between the English and the French. These ten-

The Norman Conquest and the English Language

English is the world's most widely spoken language, with 800 million speakers at the end of the twentieth century. Yet only 310 million of those people are native English-speakers, a fact that testifies to the broad reach of the language: people all over the world, even in places where English is not the native language, use English to communicate.

There are at least two reasons for this, one of which is the fact that Great Britain established a huge colonial empire during the 1700s and 1800s. This ensured that there would be native English-speakers in lands as far away from England as Australia and New Zealand, India and Pakistan, South Africa—and, of course, the United States.

The other reason behind the wide acceptance of English is its large vocabulary: the language includes more than 600,000 words, along with some 400,000 technical terms. Though the average English-speaker only uses about 60,000 words, it is clear that English offers a wide variety of ways to say things. And if a word does not exist in English, one can simply be borrowed from another language and included in the English vocabulary.

This tradition of borrowing words goes back to the Norman Conquest of 1066. Prior to that time, the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of Britain spoke what is now known as Old English, a language closely related to German. But the invading Normans brought the French language with them, and this gave English a whole new range of words. Historians date the development of Middle English, with its much richer vocabulary, from the Norman Conquest. Some 400 years later, the invention of the printing press brought about another great expansion in the language, as books and ideas were much more easily distributed; this in turn led to the development of English as it is spoken today.

sions would explode in the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453), and ill-will between Britain and France would continue into the modern era, until British forces defeated the French armies under Napoleon in 1815.

Did you know ...

- During World War II (1939–45), Normandy itself was the site of an invasion by a much larger force than the one the Normans had sent to England nine centuries before.

A scene from the Bayeux Tapestry showing an encounter between King Harold of England and William the Conqueror. *Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation.*

On "D-Day," June 6, 1944, American, British, and other Allied armies landed on the beaches of Normandy. This invasion of the European continent marked the beginning of the end for Nazi Germany.

- A 231-foot-long scroll called the Bayeux (bah-YOH) Tapestry, created during the Middle Ages, provides a visual record of the Norman Conquest.
- The present royal family of England can trace their ancestry back to William the Conqueror.

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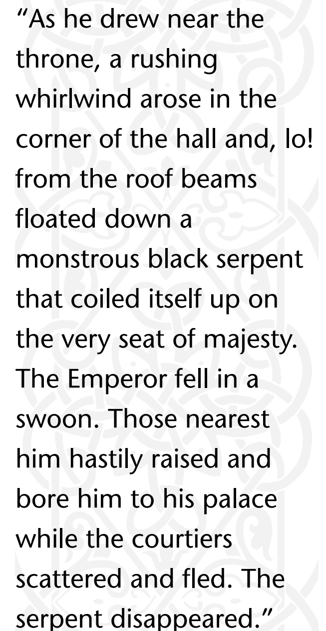
Lo Kuan-chung

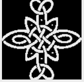
***Excerpt from* Romance of the Three Kingdoms**
Published in *San kuo, or Romance of the Three Kingdoms,* 1925

The people of China, particularly during the premodern era, tended to have a unique view of history. For many centuries during ancient times, the Chinese believed that theirs was the only civilization in the world. It is understandable why they thought this, because they had no contact with the cultures of India, far away across high mountains to the south; nor did they know of Greece or Rome. All around them, they saw only barbarians, or uncivilized people, threatening their borders. Therefore to the Chinese, China was the world.

Coupled with this idea was the notion that history—Chinese history, that is, which in the view of the Chinese was world history—ran in cycles of about three or four hundred years. A new dynasty, or ruling house, would establish power, and enjoy many years of peace and stability. But eventually, signs would appear that indicated that the rulers had lost the "Mandate of Heaven," or the favor of the gods. These signs took the form of natural disasters, along with diseases, and together they indicated that an age was about to end. Great misfortunes would follow, until a new dynasty arose that pos-



"As he drew near the throne, a rushing whirlwind arose in the corner of the hall and, lo! from the roof beams floated down a monstrous black serpent that coiled itself up on the very seat of majesty. The Emperor fell in a swoon. Those nearest him hastily raised and bore him to his palace while the courtiers scattered and fled. The serpent disappeared."



Lo Kuan-chung

Lo Kuan-chung was not the only author of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms.* The original text had been written in the period from A.D. 265 to 316 , not long after the events depicted in the book took place. A century after that, another writer revised the great story; but it was Lo—whose name is sometimes rendered as Luo Guanzhong—who wrote the full tale during the early years of China's Ming dynasty (1368–1644).

Another work partially attributed to Lo is *Shui-hu chuan* (SHWEE-hoo CHWAHN), or *Story of the Water Margin,* which like *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* was a tale drawn from Chinese history. It is not clear whether Lo cowrote that book with Shih Nai-an (SHEE NY-ahn), another writer of the era, or simply revised Shih's text.

sessed the Mandate of Heaven—and then the cycle would repeat itself.

Events seemed to prove this idea: for instance, the Han (HAHN) dynasty, the last before the beginning of the medieval period, lasted just over 400 years, from 207 B.C. to A.D. 220. The period that followed, which lasted until the establishment of the Sui (SWEE) dynasty in 589, was a time of civil war and upheaval; yet thanks to a book called *Romance of the Three Kingdoms,* it would also be remembered as an age of great glory and adventure.

Romance of the Three Kingdoms is a novel, or extended work of fiction, based on records kept at the time of the events it depicts. A thousand years later, these stories were compiled and rewritten by Lo Kuan-chung (GWAHN-zhoong; c. 1330–c. 1400) as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms.* The book is equivalent to works more well known in the West, such as the tales of King Arthur and his knights: in the case of such stories, writers took great liberty with historical facts in order to portray events of the past as glorious and romantic.

Things to remember while reading the excerpt from *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*

- The passage that follows, taken from the opening chapter of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms,* concerns events leading up to the revolt of the Yellow Turbans in A.D. 184. The Yellow Turbans were a splinter group who had adopted an extremist version of Taoism (DOW-izm). This philosophy was based on the teachings of Lao-tzu (low-DZÜ; c. 500s B.C.), who held that the key to peace was inner harmony and contact with nature. Taoism did not become established as a religion until the time of Chang Tao-ling

(chahng dow-LING), who supposedly lived for 122 years, from c. A.D. 34 to 156.

- Spellings of Chinese names vary, and though in the late twentieth century scholars adopted a new system, historians of premodern China tend to use the old-fashioned spellings. Thus in most historical texts, the name of the emperor Xian (ZHAHN; ruled 189–220) would be shown as Hsien (SHEN); however, this translation uses the new spellings.
- In China, a person's first name is their family name. Thus Zhang Jue (ZHAHNG ZHWAY) may have been a grandson of Chang Tao-ling, whose name would be spelled Zhang Daoling according to the new system. The "Book of Heaven" supposedly given to Zhang Jue by a mysterious hermit (someone who lives separate from other people) was probably the *Tao te Ching* (dow-day-KEENG) or *Way of Virtue,* a Taoist scripture.
- The city of Luoyang (lwoh-YAHNG), in east central China, served as capital to a number of dynasties. As such it contained the imperial palace, which included areas with grand-sounding names such as the Hall of Virtue and the Dragon Chamber. The dragon was a symbol of Chinese emperors. Imperial eras also received impressive names, such as "Radiant Harmony"; however, there was not necessarily a close relationship between the title and the actual character of the period. Thus the era of "Radiant Harmony," the beginning of the end of the later Han dynasty, was anything but radiant or harmonious.
- The following passage contains numerous references to magic and supernatural occurrences. Not only was Zhang Jue a sort of magician—something that had very little to do with the original teachings of Lao-tzu—but Emperor Ling also witnessed the sudden appearance of a serpent in his palace. It is not important whether such things were "real" or not; what is important is that the people believed that they were real. Much the same could be said about the natural disasters depicted, which the Chinese interpreted as a sign from heaven that the Han dynasty was about to fall. Modern people would probably say that the disasters were not a sign, but that they did hasten the dynasty's fall simply by causing problems in the empire;

however, it is important to view these events not through modern and Western eyes, but through the eyes of Lo Kuan-chung's readers.

Excerpt from Romance of the Three Kingdoms

... Han emperors continued their rule for another two hundred years till the days of Emperor Xian, which were doomed to see the beginning of the empire's division into three parts, known to history as The Three Kingdoms.

But the descent into misrule hastened in the reigns of the two predecessors of Emperor Xian—Emperors Huan and Ling—who sat in the ***Dragon Throne*** *about the middle of the second century.*

Emperor Huan paid no heed to the good people of his court, but gave his confidence to the Palace ***eunuchs.*** *He lived and died, leaving the* ***scepter*** *to Emperor Ling....*

It fell upon the day of full moon of the fourth month, the second year, in the era of Established Calm [A.D. 169], that Emperor Ling went ***in state*** *to the Hall of Virtue. As he drew near the throne, a rushing whirlwind arose in the corner of the hall and, lo! from the roof beams floated down a monstrous black serpent that coiled itself up on the very seat of majesty. The Emperor fell in a* ***swoon.*** *Those nearest him hastily raised and bore him to his palace while the* ***courtiers*** *scattered and fled. The serpent disappeared.*

But there followed a terrific tempest, thunder, hail, and torrents of rain, lasting till midnight and working ***havoc*** *on all sides. Two years later the earth quaked in Capital Luoyang, while along the coast a huge tidal wave rushed in which, in its* ***recoil,*** *swept away all the dwellers by the sea. Another evil* ***omen*** *was recorded ten years later, when the reign title was changed to* ***Radiant*** *Harmony [A.D. 179]: certain hens suddenly crowed. At the new moon of the sixth month,* ***a long wreath of murky cloud*** *wound its way into the Hall of Virtue, while in the following month a rainbow was seen in the Dragon Chamber. Away from the capital, a part of the Five Mountains collapsed, leaving a mighty* ***rift*** *in the* ***flank.***

Dragon Throne: The Chinese imperial throne.

Eunuchs: Men who have been castrated, thus making them incapable of sex or sexual desire; kings often employed eunuchs on the belief that they could trust them around their wives.

Scepter: A baton that symbolized royal authority.

In state: In full formal dignity; not casually, but officially.

Swoon: Faint.

Courtiers: Attendants of a royal person.

Havoc: Disorder or destruction.

Recoil: The act of pulling back.

Omen: A sign of something, usually bad, in the future.

Radiant: Shining.

A long wreath of murky cloud: A trail of smoke.

Rift: A hole or division.

Flank: Side.

*Such were some of various omens. Emperor Ling, greatly moved by these signs of the displeasure of Heaven, issued an **edict** asking his **ministers** for an explanation of the **calamities** and marvels. A court counselor ... replied bluntly: "Falling rainbows and changes of fowls' sexes are brought about by the interference of empresses and eunuchs in state affairs."*

*The Emperor read this **memorial** with deep sighs....*

*At this time in the county of Julu was a certain Zhang family.... The eldest Zhang Jue ... was **an unclassed graduate,** who devoted himself to medicine. One day, while culling **simples** in the woods, Zhang Jue met a **venerable** old gentleman with very bright, emerald eyes and fresh complexion, who walked with an oak-wood staff. The old man beckoned Zhang Jue into a cave and there gave him three volumes of the "Book of Heaven."*

"This book," said the old gentleman, "is the Way of Peace. With the aid of these volumes, you can convert the world and rescue humankind. But you must be single-minded, or, rest assured, you will greatly suffer."

*With a humble **obeisance,** Zhang Jue took the book and asked the name of his **benefactor.***

"I am Saint Hermit of the Southern Land," was the reply, as the old gentleman disappeared in thin air.

*Zhang Jue studied the wonderful book eagerly and strove day and night **to reduce its precepts to practice.** Before long, he could summon the winds and command the rain, and he became known as the **Mystic** of the Way of Peace.*

*In the first month of the first year of Central Stability [A.D. 184], there was a terrible **pestilence** that ran throughout the land, **whereupon** Zhang Jue distributed **charmed remedies** to the afflicted. The godly medicines brought big successes, and soon he gained the title of the Wise and Worthy Master. He began to have a following of **disciples** whom he **initiated into** the mysteries and sent **abroad** throughout all the land. They, like their master, could write charms and recite **formulas,** and their fame increased his following.*

*Zhang Jue began to organize his disciples. He established thirty-six **circuits,** the larger with ten thousand or more members, the smaller with about half that number. Each circuit had its chief who took the military title of General. They talked wildly of **the death of the blue heaven and the setting up of the golden one;** they said a*

Edict: Order.

Ministers: High government officials.

Calamities: Great misfortunes.

Memorial: A written record.

An unclassed graduate: Someone who is not formally educated.

Simples: Plants valued for their healing qualities.

Venerable: Distinguished.

Obeisance: Bow.

Benefactor: Someone who gives something.

To reduce its precepts to practice: To turn its guidelines into a plan of action.

Mystic: Someone who studies spiritual knowledge that is beyond everyday experience.

Pestilence: Disease.

Whereupon: At which point.

Charmed remedies: In other words, magic potions.

Disciples: Followers of a religious leader.

Initiated into: Revealed or explained something formerly secret.

Abroad: In this context, *abroad* means "to different places."

Formulas: Magic spells.

Circuits: Organizations.

The death of the blue heaven and the setting up of the golden one: In other words, the end of one era in Chinese history, and the beginning of another.

*new **cycle** was beginning and would bring universal good fortune to all members; and they persuaded people to chalk the symbols for the first year of the new cycle on the main door of their dwellings.*

*With the growth of the number of his supporters grew also the ambition of Zhang Jue. The Wise and Worthy Master dreamed of empire. One of his **partisans** ... was sent bearing gifts to gain the support of the eunuchs within the Palace. To his brothers Zhang Jue said, "For schemes like ours always the most difficult part is to gain the popular favor. But that is already ours. Such an opportunity must not pass."*

And they began to prepare....

Cycle: Age or era.

Partisans: Supporters.

What happened next ...

Zhang Jue led the revolt of the Yellow Turbans, so named because he and his followers wore headdresses of gold—a color reserved for the Chinese emperor. The revolt broke out in 184, and spread throughout China. In 189 a military leader named Ts'ao Ts'ao (DZOW-dzow; c. 150–230) suppressed the uprising. Ts'ao Ts'ao became the effective ruler of the Han dynasty, and in 220 he established a new dynasty called Wei (WAY).

The years from 221 to 265 became known as the time of the Three Kingdoms. The Wei dynasty ruled in the north, in areas once controlled by the Han dynasty; to the south was the kingdom of Wu, ruled by the Sun dynasty; and to the west was the third kingdom, Shu. This period might be compared to the Civil War in America (1861–65): both events represented painful times in the history of their respective nations, and they would be remembered with a great deal of emotion. In America, novels such as *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) by Stephen Crane and *Gone with the Wind* (1936) by Margaret Mitchell would keep the Civil War's memory alive, and Mitchell at least—like Lo Kuan-chung before her—portrayed the war as a romantic struggle. Crane and Mitchell, however, were depicting events of the recent past, whereas Lo Kuan-chung was writing about something that had happened a thousand years before his lifetime.

It is understandable why Lo Kuan-chung would have wanted to portray the Three Kingdoms era in glowing terms. Despite the problems caused by the near-constant warfare of the period, the era also saw great advances in Chinese learning and culture. Taoism and Buddhism took hold as new religions in the country; Chinese doctors made significant progress in the study of medicine; and during this time, kites, coal as a means of heat, and encyclopedias all made their first appearance in China. Stability returned in 581, as Yang Chien (YAHNG jee-AHN; ruled 581–604) seized the throne in one of the many small states that controlled China during the period; after eight years spent consolidating his power, he took the imperial throne and founded the Sui dynasty.

Did you know ...

- The American writer Pearl Buck (1892–1973), who lived in China for many years, translated the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* as *All Men Are Brothers* (1933). She also translated *Story of the Water Margin.*
- Mao Zedong (MOW zhay-DAWNG, 1893–1976), China's most important leader during the twentieth century, was an avid reader of medieval Chinese romances during his boyhood. Among his favorite books were *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Story of the Water Margin.*

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