

## **Lecture 5 (transcript)**

### **Europe and Asia in the Middle Ages**

In the whole world of 1000 CE the agrarian civilizations controlled less than 15 percent of the land now ruled by modern states. The barbarians (so-called by the urban elites) controlled most of the world's land. The barbarians consisted of foragers, pastoralists, horticulturalists, and small-scale farmers; they lived in the Amazon Basin, North America, western and central Africa, the steppes of central Eurasia, southeast Asia, and Melanesia, constituting a world of economic and cultural heterogeneity.

The Mongols, a nomadic people, lived in part of the high plains, or steppes, of central Asia, now Mongolia.

For the period 1210 to 1350, these people from the margins of urban empires managed to create their own empire which controlled all of Asia from Korea to Hungary, with the exception of India. Without a base of agriculture or urban life, Mongols established the largest continuous land empire in all of human history, lasting about 200 years.

### **Exchanges and trade**

During the five centuries from 1000 to 1500, the people of the core areas of Afro-Eurasia traded, interacted, invented technology, exchanged ideas, mobilized efforts, and managed to increase the power and wealth of their areas to unprecedented heights. The empire created by Genghis Khan imposed the peace that facilitated this exchange, until the empire broke up from internal disputes and the devastation of the Black Death. With trading routes across central Asia no longer secure, the people of southern Europe sought new ways to trade with the people of China. When they succeeded, a whole new chapter in world history began.

### **Diseases**

The plague called the Black Death spread out of China at an alarming rate. It reached the Tien Shan mountains in Kyrgyzstan by 1338 and the Black Sea by 1347 via the Silk Road. By 1348 it had entered Genoa by ship and ravaged the cities of Egypt, Europe, and Turkey. By 1350 it had crossed the North Atlantic to Iceland and Greenland. From 1300 until 1400, Europe lost at least 25 percent of its people.

What was this terrible disease? It became known as the Black Death, because after its victims oozed blood beneath their skin, the blood dried and looked black. Lumps the size of golf balls formed in the lymph nodes and burst open; from the Greek word buboes, for groin, came the medical term for the disease, bubonic plague. After several days of agonizing pain, the victim usually died. Sometimes the disease attacked the lungs rather than the lymph nodes, and the person drowned in bloody foam, infecting those around by coughing and sneezing. No one knew what caused this calamity, but people noticed that it seemed to follow the trade routes. In Europe, Christians blamed it on the Jews, who often worked in commerce and who originated, like the disease, in the east.

The spread of the Black Death meant the end of the Mongol empire. Trade, its lifeline, dwindled to a trickle. The complex system collapsed without the constant movement of people, goods, and information. Each branch of the Mongol ruling family had to fend for itself without contact with the others.

Not until 1894 did scientists understand the true cause of the Black Death and the methods of its transmission. The bacteria that cause the plague, probably originating in the Gobi Desert, live in fleas, which live on rodents. The disease likely travelled on rats in shipments of food. The bacteria then found fecund environments in densely inhabited cities and ships, where rat populations had lived so long in close proximity with humans that no one suspected them as sources of the disease. Today groups of rodents around the world still host fleas carrying the plague bacillus, but antibiotics prevent massive outbreaks of the disease.

### **Dar al-Islam**

Some historians maintain that Islam, not China, served as the world's most creative and dynamic civilization from 1000 to 1500 CE, carrying innovations from one society to another, and that an impartial observer in 1500 might well have predicted that Islam would soon become the world's dominant faith. These assessments stem from the fundamental fact on that the world of Islam almost doubled in size between 1000 and 1500.

The blaze of Islamic culture produced beautiful public buildings, the Taj Mahal, exquisite illustrated manuscripts, and poets like Omar Khayyam (d. 1131), Rumi (d. 1273), and Hafez (d. 1389). It also produced an observatory at Maragha, near the capital Tabriz (now in northwest Iran) and a mathematician, Nasir al-Din Tusi, who used the observatory to propose the idea of small circles rotating within large circles that led Copernicus to his insight that the planets circled the sun. Nasir al-Din Tusi also laid the foundations for complex algebra and trigonometry. (Muslims knew of the Indian numerical system, which included the use of zero, by the seventh century CE.

### **Europe**

Europe in 1000 was a rural backwoods, thinly populated, with nine out of ten people living in the countryside. Europeans were called "Franks" by their Muslim and Byzantine neighbors, but called themselves "Latins," for their allegiance to Roman Catholicism and the Latin language used in its rituals.

During the period 1000 to 1500, learning expanded dramatically in Europe from the days when people lived with just the Bible and reminders of Roman achievements. In the eleventh century Latin Christians took Toledo, Spain, and Sicily back from the Muslims, and they regained southern Italy from the Byzantines. In doing so they acquired the manuscripts of Greek and Arabic monks. In the twelfth century papermaking arrived in Morocco and Spain, having spread from Baghdad to Egypt by 900. After 1200, new colleges arose in Europe that may have been patterned after the madrasas, the endowed places of study spreading in the Muslim world.

Before 1300, Europeans had created twenty universities; they added sixty new ones between 1300 and 1500. In all of them, Latin was used as the language of instruction. Sometimes students banded together to start a university; more often guilds of professors did.

After 1450 three improvements revolutionized printing, and hence learning: moveable metal type of individual letters, new ink suitable for paper, and a modified wooden screw press that pressed inked type onto paper.

Johannes Gutenberg printed his first Bible in 1454, a book whose beauty testified to his years of experimentation. By 1500 printing presses in Europe were printing annually 10 to 20 million volumes, both ancient texts and contemporary political and religious tracts, in more than a dozen languages.

### Travelers

Several interregional travelers from this period created important ties between distant societies or, through their writings, raised geographical and cultural awareness. In the early to mid-600s, the Chinese monk Xuanzang journeyed to India to learn more about Buddhism (inspired by similar travels made in the 300s C.E.). After visiting holy sites and libraries, Xuanzang returned with wagon loads of Buddhist art and artifacts, as well as hundreds of sacred texts in Sanskrit that he and his followers translated and distributed throughout China. By promoting greater understanding of South Asian sources, Xuanzang's efforts profoundly influenced Buddhist doctrine in East Asia. He left behind his own record of the journey, but even more famous is the epic novel written about him centuries later, during the Ming dynasty.

Wu Chengen's beloved *Journey to the West* features Xuanzang as a fictional character who travels to India in the company of the mischievous and magical Monkey King. Here, India's geography and culture are deliberately portrayed unrealistically, to heighten the sense of fantasy and exotic adventure.

One of the first Europeans to cross the breadth of Eurasia, the young merchant Marco Polo traveled from Venice to Asia along the Silk Road during the mid- to late 1200s. His journeys occupied nearly a quarter century, and if he is to be believed, he befriended Kublai Khan, the Mongol ruler of China. Although scholars today are not sure how far to trust his autobiography (*Books of the Marvels of the World*, better known as *The Travels of Marco Polo*), Marco Polo's writings played an enormous role in familiarizing medieval and Renaissance Europeans with the luxurious riches and cultural advancements of Asia—and in stoking the desire of Europeans to travel and trade there. Christopher Columbus was merely one of countless Europeans to read Marco Polo's descriptions of Asia with intense interest.

The great explorer of the Islamic world was Ibn Battuta of Morocco, who began a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1325 and, instead of returning, embarked on a journey lasting almost 30 years and covering over 70,000 miles. Not only did he visit most of Islamic Africa and the Middle East, he ventured throughout Central Asia, East Asia, and South Asia, going as far as the Indonesian islands. His *Travels* reveal the remarkable diversity of customs and cultural practices among Muslim communities, and Ibn Battuta was often

surprised, and sometimes shocked, by how different lifestyles could be among various peoples technically joined together by allegiance to a common faith.

After reestablishing authority over China, the Ming decided to refurbish their country's large navy. From 1405 to 1433 C.E., they sponsored seven massive naval expeditions, in order to reinforce Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean, impose imperial control over trade, and impress foreign peoples with the authority of the Ming dynasty.

The mariner Zheng He led these expeditions. His first trip alone involved 28,000 troops. Zheng He sailed to Southeast Asia, India, the Persian Gulf, Arabia, and East Africa. Zheng He dispensed and received gifts throughout these travels. However, Confucian officials convinced the Chinese emperor that the voyages were too expensive and unprofitable, especially because of renewed concern over the northern Mongol border. Thus, in 1433 C.E., the voyages ended, Zheng He's records were destroyed, and the ships were allowed to rot.

### **Migrations**

Large-scale migrations regularly took place, especially in Afro-Eurasia. They were often caused by environmental factors, such as climate change, the vanishing of food supplies, or overpopulation. In turn, they had their own effects on the environment.

A prominent series of migrations affected Europe, as waves of Asiatic and Germanic peoples continued to move into the region from the east and the north, just as during the Roman era. In the 400s CE, migrations of Germanic peoples perished the Roman Empire and ended the classical period in Europe starting, at the same time, the Middle Ages period.

The military threat posed by these invaders forced European states to centralize politically during the medieval era, but they also affected the continent ethnically by settling down, founding their own states, and blending with existing European populations. Among the most influential of these migrating peoples in Europe were the Vikings and the farming Slavs (Antes and Sclaveni) in the first millennium AD.

The Vikings, or Normans, pirating people, established their presence in the British Isles (finally in 1066), northwestern France and Scandinavia (Swiss, Dane, Norway), Island, Sicily, South Italy, Greenland and even reached Newfoundland in 1000 AD.

The Slavs founded their first states, such as the Great Moravia, Bulgaria (with the help of the Turkic Bulgars) and Kyivan Rus (maybe, with the help of Vikings, called Varangians or the Rus by the Slavs and Byzantine people in the Chronicles).

All of these nomadic peoples finally converted to Christianity. Later on, the Normans became Catholics while the Slavs turned Orthodox, like the Byzantine Empire.

Farther to the east, the migration of Mongol and Turkic horse pastoralists (Seljuk Turks (the 11th – 12th centuries attacks on Byzantine) and Ottoman Turks (who settled in Asia Minor and founded their own state under Osman I (1280–1326)) were among the most known Turks) had a similar impact on the Middle East, Central Asia, and East Asia.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the farming Bantu peoples continued their continent-wide movements.

The 3,000-year Polynesian migrations, which had already been underway for some time, populated a 20,000-mile expanse of the Pacific. The original Polynesians were root farmers, growing taro and sweet potatoes and supplementing their diet with pigs, chickens, and fish. They carried these foods—as well as the coconut palm—across the Pacific, bringing them to places as diverse as Hawaii and New Zealand (home to the Maori, the largest surviving Polynesian subculture). Unfortunately, the Polynesians badly deforested some of the places they settled—most notably Easter Island, whose civilization was destroyed by environmental stress and tribal war by the 1500s c.e.

Certain trade routes opened or widened because migratory or nomadic peoples traveling upon them adapted to challenging environments. The establishment of trans-Saharan caravan routes depended upon the camel-herding expertise of Arabs and Berbers in the Middle East and North Africa.

Religions

## Buddhism

Along the Silk Road, Buddhism traveled to Central Asia and adapted into variants which included polytheism. In Tibet, it became popular as it combined shamanism and the importance of rituals. In East Asia, monks, merchants, and missionaries adapted Buddhism to the political ideas of Confucianism by including Daoist ideas, an emphasis on family, and ancestor worship.

## Christianity

Like Buddhism, Christianity emerged as a missionary religion. When the Western Roman Empire was declining, missionary efforts turned toward Northern Europe. There were local distinctions which gradually emerged between Western and Eastern Christianity. In 1054, Christianity, finally, split into the Western Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Church.

The Western Church and the pope sponsored missionary campaigns aimed at converting the Germanic people. The Eastern Orthodox Church also spread Christianity to Eastern Europe and Rus.

Syncretism aided the spread of Christianity. Pagan heroes or holy figures, such as the saints, were seen as mediators between God and his people. Polytheistic holidays were incorporated into Christianity, and Christians placed Christmas on the same day as the pagan winter solstice celebration.

In Asia, Nestorian Christianity— the belief that Jesus existed as two distinct entities, mortal man and divine figure— spread to Mesopotamia and Persia, where Islamic conquerors allowed Christians to practice their religion. Merchants also spread Nestorian Christianity as far as India and China, but they received little or no support from local rulers.

(Леонардо Пізанський (Фібоначчі) – італійський математик XIII ст. Fibonacci, Leonardo Bonacci, Leonardo of Pisa, Leonardo Bigollo Pisano)

## **Islam**

Islam spread through three main avenues: military conquest, trade, and missionary activity.

Born in 570 C.E. in Mecca, Muhammad later married a merchant widow named Khadija (Хадіджа).

Together, they traveled on caravans and met Jews, Zoroastrians, and Christians.

Muslims believe that the angel Gabriel revealed to Muhammad that he had been selected to be God's messenger.

Muhammad believed and preached that all people were to submit to one all-powerful, all-knowing God: Allah.

All would face a final day of judgment; those who had submitted to God would go to a heavenly paradise, and those who had not would go to a fiery hell.

He also taught that he was the last of a long line of prophets from the Jewish and Christian scriptures that included Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus.

Muhammad's message was not met with enthusiasm in Mecca;

He and his followers migrated to Medina in 622 C.E., on a journey known as the Hegira (or Hijrah).

Muhammad's message proved popular in Medina, where he was viewed as a prophet and a political leader.

In 630 C.E., after further organizing his new religion, he and his followers returned to Mecca, capturing the city.

1. After his death, Muhammad's revelations [a surprising and previously unknown fact that has been disclosed to others одкровення] were written down by his followers in the Quran, which is believed to be the actual words of God as revealed to Muhammad.

2. The word Islam means "submission to Allah."

a. Five Pillars of Islam

1. Islam is based on five duties— called pillars— that define the faith:

1.1. Statement of faith: "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah."

1.2. Pray five times a day facing Mecca.

1.3. Give alms (charity) to the poor.

1.4. Fast during the holy month of Ramadan.

1.5. Make a pilgrimage, or hajj (хадж), to Mecca during one's lifetime, if able.

2. Islam is a universal religion that promises salvation to all who believe and follow its principles.

3. Islam appealed to women because

3.1. the Quran afforded women equal status to men before God,

3.2. outlawed female infanticide,

3.3. permitted wives to keep their dowries.

4. However,

4.1. the Quran also allowed inheritance to be restricted to male offspring.

- 4.2. It also restricted women's social experiences in order to protect the legitimacy of offspring.
  5. In general, though, Islam appealed to the poor and powerless, and it fostered a strong sense of brotherhood.
- b. Political Development
1. By the time of Muhammad's death in 632 C.E., much of Arabia was under Islamic control.
  2. However, Muhammad did not designate a successor, and Muslim followers disagreed over who Muhammad's successor should be.
    - 2.1. One group, the Shi'a, believed that the Muslim leader should be a descendant of Muhammad.
    - 2.2. The other group, the Sunni, believed that the wisest member of the strongest tribe should succeed Muhammad.
  3. Although Muhammad's father-in-law Abu Bakr was chosen to be the first caliph, and he served as the political and religious leader of the Arab Empire, the split between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims led to religious and political divisions in the Muslim world that endure today.

### **The wars between Christians and Muslims**

The struggle with Islam was to continue vigorously until the fifteenth century. It was given unity and fervour by Christianity, Christianity, the deepest source of European self-consciousness. Similar fervour came to be generated among Muslims, at times proclaimed as a Jihad or Holy War, but its effects seemed less far-reaching and profound than among Europeans whom religion bound together in a great moral and spiritual enterprise.

The Normans, always great predators, were in the vanguard, taking south Italy and Sicily from the Arabs, a task effectively complete by 1100.

The other great struggle in Europe against Islam was the epic of Spanish history, the Reconquest, whose climax came in 1492 when Granada, the last Muslim capital of Spain, fell to the armies of the Catholic Monarchs.

### **Crusades**

Great enterprises in Syria and Palestine are remembered as 'the Crusades'.

The essential of the crusade was the authorization by the pope that those taking part in it would be entitled to 'indulgences', allowing them remissions of the time to be spent after death in purgatory and, sometimes, the status of martyr if they died while actually on crusade. On this basis, crusades were still being launched as late as the fifteenth century, often against targets far different from the ambition to do great deeds in the Holy Land which had fired the first crusaders – against Moors in Spain, pagan Slavs in the Baltic lands, Christian heretics in France, and even against Christian monarchs who had incurred the



wrath of the pope. As shaping forces, though, the first four crusades were incomparably the most important.

The earliest and most successful was launched in 1096. Within three years the crusaders recaptured Jerusalem, where they celebrated the triumph of the Gospel of Peace by an appalling massacre of their prisoners, women and children included.

The second crusade (1147–9), in contrast, began with a successful massacre (of Jews in the Rhineland), but thereafter, though the presence of an emperor and a king of France gave it greater importance than its predecessor, it was a disaster (though it had a by-product of some importance when an English fleet took Lisbon from the Arabs and it passed into the hands of the king of Portugal).

### **Then in 1187 Saladin recaptured Jerusalem for Islam.**

The third crusade which followed (1189–92) was socially the most spectacular. A German emperor (who drowned in the course of it) and the kings of England and France all took part. They quarrelled and the crusaders failed to recover Jerusalem.

No great monarch answered Pope Innocent III's appeal to go on the next crusade, though many land-hungry magnates did; the Venetians financed the expedition, which left in 1202. It was at once diverted by interference in the dynastic troubles of Byzantium, which suited the Venetians who helped to recapture Constantinople for a deposed emperor.

There followed the terrible sack of the city in 1204 and that was the end of the fourth crusade, whose monument was the establishment of a 'Latin Empire' at Constantinople, which survived there only for half a century.

Several more crusades set out in the thirteenth century, but though they helped to put off a little longer the dangers which faced Byzantium, the last Christian stronghold in Palestine, Acre, fell to the Muslims in 1281 and thereafter crusading to the Holy Land was dead as an independent force.

Religious impulse could still move men, but the first four crusades had too often shown the unpleasant face of greed. They were the first examples of European overseas imperialism, both in their characteristic mixture of noble and ignoble aims and in their abortive settler colonialism.

### **Long-term effects of the crusades**

Though the quest for the Holy Land was a failure, it led to great economic developments in Europe; it encouraged trade with Muslim merchants and increased the European demand for Asian goods. As a

result, Italian merchants from cities such as Venice and Genoa greatly profited, and Europe was reintroduced to the goods, technology, and culture of the other regions.

Wherever they encountered Islam, whether in the crusading lands, Sicily or Spain, western Europeans found things to admire. Sometimes they took up luxuries not to be found at home: silk clothes, the use of perfumes and new dishes. One habit acquired by some crusaders was that of taking more frequent baths. This may have been unfortunate, for it added the taint of religious infidelity to a habit already discouraged in Europe, where bath-houses were associated with sexual licence. Cleanliness had not yet achieved its later quasi-automatic association with godliness.

### **Military orders**

One institution crystallizing the militant Christianity of the high Middle Ages was the military order of knighthood. It brought together soldiers who professed vows as members of a religious order and of an accepted discipline to fight for the faith. Some of these orders became very rich, owning endowments in many countries.

The Knights of St John of Jerusalem (who are still in existence) were to be for centuries in the forefront of the battle against Islam.

The Knights Templar rose to such great power and prosperity that they were destroyed by a French king who feared them, and the Spanish military orders of Calatrava and Santiago were in the forefront of the Reconquest.

Another military order operated in the north, the Teutonic Knights, the warrior monks who were the spearhead of Germanic penetration of the Baltic and Slav lands. There, too, missionary zeal combined with greed and the stimulus of poverty to change both the map and the culture of a whole region.

They attacked not only pagans and Orthodox but also Catholic states like Poland and GDL.

German expansion eastwards comprised a huge folk-movement, a centuries-long tide of men and women clearing forest, planting homesteads and villages, founding towns, building fortresses to protect them and monasteries and churches to serve them.

While the great expansion of the German east between 1100 and 1400 made a new economic, cultural and ethnic map, it also raised yet another barrier to the union of the two Christian traditions. Papal supremacy in the west made the Catholicism of the late medieval period more uncompromising and more unacceptable than ever to Orthodoxy.