Chapter 10
Christian Europe Emerges
300-1200
The Byzantine Empire, 300–1200
Church and State

- While Roman rule and the traditions of Rome died in the west, they were preserved in the Byzantine Empire and in its capital, Constantinople.
- While the popes in Rome were independent of secular power, the Byzantine emperor appointed the patriarch of Constantinople and intervened in doctrinal disputes.
- Religious differences and doctrinal disputes permeated the Byzantine Empire; nonetheless, polytheism was quickly eliminated.
While the unity of political and religious power prevented the Byzantine Empire from breaking up, the Byzantines did face serious foreign threats.

The Goths and Huns on the northern frontier were not difficult to deal with, but on the east the Sassanids harassed the Byzantine Empire for almost three hundred years.
Following the Sasanids, the Muslim Arabs took the wealthy provinces of Syria, Egypt, and Tunisia from the Byzantine Empire and converted their people to Islam.

These losses permanently reduced the power of the Byzantine Empire.
On the religious and political fronts, the Byzantine Empire experienced declining relations with the popes and princes of Western Europe and the formal schism between the Latin and Orthodox Churches in 1054.
Society and Urban Life

- The Byzantine Empire experienced a decline of urbanism similar to that seen in the west, but not as severe.
- One result was the loss of the middle class so that Byzantine society was characterized by a tremendous gap between the wealth of the aristocrats and the poverty of the peasants.
In the Byzantine period the family became more rigid; women were confined to their houses and wore veils if they went out.

However, Byzantine women ruled alongside their husbands between 1028 and 1056, and women did not take refuge in nunneries.
The Byzantine emperors intervened in the economy by setting prices, controlling provision of grain to the capital, and monopolizing trade on certain goods.

As a result, Constantinople was well supplied, but the cities and rural areas of the rest of the empire lagged behind in terms of wealth and technology.
Gradually, Western Europeans began to view the Byzantine Empire as a crumbling power.

For their part, Byzantines thought that westerners were uncouth barbarians.
Cultural Achievements

- Legal scholars put together a collection of Roman laws and edicts under the title *Body of Civil Law or what is called the Justinian Code*.
- This compilation became the basis of Western European civil law.
- Byzantine architects developed the technique of making domed buildings.
- The Italian Renaissance architects adopted the dome in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.
In the ninth century the Byzantine missionaries Cyril and Methodius preached to the Slavs of Moravia and taught their followers to write in the Cyrillic script.
Early Medieval Europe,
600–1000

From Roman Empire to Germanic Kingdoms
Time of Insecurity

- Roman Empire breaks down
- Western Europe continued to suffer invasions
- Muslim Arabs and Berbers took the Iberian Peninsula and pushed into France
Carolingians

- Family of Rulers
- In the eighth century the Carolingians united various Frankish kingdoms into a larger empire
- At its height, under Charlemagne, the empire included Gaul and parts of Germany and Italy
- The empire was subdivided by Charlemagne's grandsons and never united again.
Vikings

- Vikings attacked England, France, and Spain in the late eighth and ninth centuries.
- Vikings also settled Iceland and Normandy, from which the Norman William the Conqueror invaded England in 1066.
Viking Invasions
A Self-Sufficient Economy

- The fall of the Roman Empire was accompanied by an economic transformation that included de-urbanization and a decline in trade.
- Roman Governors throughout Europe were replaced by Germanic territorial Lords.
- Without the domination of Rome and its “Great Tradition,” regional elites became more self-sufficient and local “small traditions” flourished.
The medieval diet in the north was based on beer, lard or butter, and bread.

In the south, the staples were wheat, wine, and olive oil.
Medieval Manor

- Self-sufficient farming estates called manors were the primary centers of agricultural production
- Manors grew from the need for self-sufficiency and self-defense
- The lord of a manor had almost unlimited power over his agricultural workers—the serfs
- The conditions of agricultural workers varied, as the tradition of a free peasantry survived in some areas
Medieval Manor
Early Medieval Society in the West

- During the early medieval period a class of nobles emerged and developed into mounted knights
- Landholding and military service became almost inseparable
- The complex network of relationships between landholding and the obligation to provide military service to a lord is often referred to as “feudalism.”
The Feudal System

DOWN
- Land
- Protection

UP
- Labor
- Food
- Aide—Military / Tax

The Feudal System

- Kings
- Lords/Nobles
- Lesser Lords
- Knights
- Peasants/Surfs
Knights
Land for military service

- The need for military security led to new military technology including the stirrup, bigger horses, and the armor and weapons of the knight
- This equipment was expensive, and knights therefore needed land in order to support themselves
- Kings and nobles granted land (a fief) to a man in return for a promise to supply military service (or knighthood)
By the tenth century, these fiefs had become hereditary.
King’s dependence on vassals

- Kings were weak because they depended on their vassals
- Vassals may have land from another lord and also be loyal to another lord
- The upper vassals would control most of the king’s realm
- The upper vassals would grant substantial parts of their land to the lower vassals
Noble Woman

- They were pawns in marriage politics
- Noblewomen became enmeshed in this tangle of obligations as heiresses and as candidates for marriage.
- A man who married the widow or daughter of a lord with no sons could gain control of that lord’s property.
- Marriage alliances affected entire kingdoms.
- Noble daughters and sons had little say in marriage matters
- issues of land, power, and military service took precedence.
- Noblemen guarded the women in their families as closely as their other valuables.
Women could own land.

A noblewoman sometimes administered her husband’s estates when he was away at war.

Non-noble women usually worked alongside their men.

Performing agricultural tasks such as raking and stacking hay, shearing sheep, and picking vegetables.
Politics and the Church

- The Popes in the Catholic church combining political power and religious power
- They would form alliances with kings.
- The Popes would choose one person as the “Holy Roman Emperor” (Charlemagne) in 962
- The Holy Roman Empire was in fact no more than a loose coalition of German princes.
Western Europe was heir to three legal traditions:

- Germanic feudal law,
- Canon (church law),
- Roman law.

The presence of conflicting legal theories and legal jurisdictions was a significant characteristic of Western Europe.
Kievan Russia, 900–1200 The Rise of the Kievan State

- Russia includes territory from the Black and Caspian Seas in the south to the Baltic and White Seas in the north.
- In its early history, Russia was inhabited by a number of peoples of different language and ethnic groups whose territory shifted from century to century.
- What emerged was a general pattern of Slavs in the east, Finns in the north, and Turkic tribes in the south.
Forest dwellers, steppe nomads, and farmers in the various ecological zones traded with each other.

Long-distance caravan trade linked Russia to the Silk Road.

Varangians (relatives of Vikings) were active traders on the rivers.

Khazar Turks built a trading kingdom at the mouth of the Volga.
The Rus were societies of western Slav farmers ruled by Varangian nobles. Their most important cities were Kiev and Novgorod, both centers of trade.
Vladimir I

- In 980 Vladimir I became Grand Prince of Kiev
- He chose Orthodox Christianity as the religion of his state and imitated the culture of the Byzantine Empire
- He built churches
- Adopting the Cyrillic alphabet
- Oriented his trade toward the Byzantines
- Internal political struggles and conflict with external foes led to a decline of Kievan Russia after 1100
Western Europe Revives, 1000–1200
The Role of Technology

- Western Europe’s population and agricultural production increased in the period from 1000–1200.
- This fed a resurgence of trade and enabled kings to strengthen their control.
- Historians attribute the revival to new technologies and to the appearance of self-governing cities.
Historians agree that technology played a significant role in European population growth from 1000–1200.

Among the technological innovations associated with this population growth are the heavy moldboard plow, the horse collar, and the breast-strap harness.
Cities and the Rebirth of Trade

- Independent, self-governing cities emerged first in Italy and Flanders.
- They relied on manufacturing and trade for their income, and they had legal independence so that their laws could favor manufacturing and trade.
- In Italy, Venice emerged as a dominant sea power, trading in Muslim ports for spices and other goods.
In Flanders, cities like Ghent imported wool from England and wove it into cloth for export.

The recovery of trade was accompanied by an increase in the use of high-value gold and silver coins, which had been rarely used in early medieval Europe.

During the mid-twelfth century Europeans began minting first silver and then gold coins.
The Crusades, 1095–1204

- The Crusades were a series of Christian military campaigns against Muslims in the eastern Mediterranean between 1100 and 1200.

- Factors causing the Crusades included religious zeal, knights’ willingness to engage in church-sanctioned warfare, a desire for land on the part of younger sons of the European nobility, and an interest in trade.
The tradition of pilgrimages, Muslim control of Christian religious sites, and the Byzantine Empire’s requests for help against the Muslims combined to make the Holy Land the focus of the Crusades.

In 1095 Pope Urban II initiated the First Crusade when he called upon the Europeans to stop fighting each other and fight the Muslims instead.
The Impact of the Crusades

- The Crusades had a limited impact on the Muslim world.
- More significant was that the Crusaders ended Europe’s intellectual isolation when Arabic and Greek manuscripts gave Europeans their first access to the work of the ancient Greek philosophers.
- The Crusades had a significant impact on the lifestyle of European elites.