Ch. 20 – Western Europe during the High Middle Ages

**Introduction.** Europeans during the high middle ages built a vibrant and prosperous society. Rising from the foundations laid during the early middle ages – lord-retainer relationships, agricultural innovation, and then Roman Catholic Church—Europe emerged from its long period of relative political instability and economic and intellectual stagnation. The hallmarks of high medieval European culture included

- The consolidation and expansion of regional states. These powerful states sometimes were organized by local rulers and based on lord-retainer relationships, as seen in France. Other times, they were supported or encouraged by the Roman church, like the Holy Roman Empire.
- Economic revitalization. With renewed agricultural surplus, the population expanded and Europe began to re-urbanise. Cities grew, and with them grew business, industry, trade, and educational institutions. Long-distance trade networks reappeared, esp. in the Mediterranean and Baltic and North Sea regions.
- Continued presence of the Roman Catholic Christianity in virtually all aspects of high medieval life. Though both traditional church institutions and the mass appeal of popular religious practices, church institutions and the mass appeal of popular religious practices, the church prospered during this period. The Roman church’s influence was felt in education, philosophy, literature, conquest, and travel.

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I. **The establishment of regional states**
   A. The Holy Roman Empire
      1. Otto I
         a. Otto of Saxony rose in northern Germany by the mid-tenth century
         b. Pope John XII proclaimed him emperor in 962: birth of Holy Roman Empire
      2. Investiture contest
         a. Formerly, important church officials were appointed by imperial authorities
         b. Pope Gregory VII ordered an end to the practice
         c. Emperor Henry IV was excommunicated because of his disobedience
      3. Frederick Barbarossa
         a. Sought to absorb Lombardy in north Italy
         b. Papal coalition forced Barbarossa to relinquish his rights in Lombardy
   B. Regional monarchies in France and England
      1. Capetian France: Hugh Capet founded dynasty from 987, lasted three centuries
      2. The Normans were descendents of Vikings in Normandy, France
         a. Duke William of Normandy invaded England in 1066
         b. Introduced Norman style of political administration to England
   C. Regional states in Italy and Iberia
      1. Popes ruled a good-sized territory in central Italy
      2. Prosperous northern Italian city-states: Florence, Bologna, Genoa, Milan, Venice
      3. Normans conquered southern Italy, brought Roman Catholic Christianity
      4. Christian and Muslim states in Iberia
         a. Muslim conquerors ruled most of the peninsula, eighth to the eleventh centuries
         b. Christian kingdoms took the peninsula (except Granada) by late thirteenth century
II. Economic growth and social development
   A. Growth of the agricultural economy
      1. Expansion of arable land
         a. Population pressure by the late tenth century
         b. Serfs and monks began to clear forests and swamps
         c. Lords encouraged such efforts for high taxes
      2. Improved agricultural techniques
         a. Crop rotation methods
         b. Cultivation of beans increased and enriched the land
         c. More domestic animals also enriched the land
         d. Books and treatises on household economy and agricultural methods
      3. New tools and technology
         a. Extensive use of watermills and heavy plows
         b. Use of horseshoe and horse collar increased land under cultivation
      4. New food supplies
         a. Before 1000, European diet was mostly grains
         b. After 1000, more meat, dairy products, fish, vegetables, legumes
         c. Spain, Italy, Mediterranean got new foods through Islamic world
      5. Population growth: from 29 million to 79 million between 800 C.E. and 1300 C.E.
   B. The revival of towns and trade
      1. Urbanization: peasants and serfs flocked to cities and towns
      2. Textile production, especially in north Italy and Flanders
      3. Mediterranean trade: Italian merchants dominated and established colonies
      4. The Hanseatic League—an association of trading cities
         a. Hansa dominated trade of northern Europe
         b. Major European rivers linked Hansa to the Mediterranean
      5. Improved business techniques
         a. Bankers issued letters of credit to merchants
         b. Commercial partnerships for limiting risks of commercial investment
   C. Social changes
      1. The three estates
         a. "Those who pray"—clergy of Roman Catholic church, the spiritual estate
         b. "Those who fight"—feudal nobles, the military estate
         c. "Those who work"—mostly peasants and serfs
      2. Chivalry
         a. Widely recognized code of ethics and behavior for feudal nobles
         b. Church officials directed chivalry toward Christian faith and piety
      3. Troubadours
         a. Aristocratic women promoted chivalric values by patronizing troubadours
         b. Troubadours drew inspiration from the love poetry of Muslim Spain
      4. Eleanor of Aquitaine was most celebrated woman of her day
         a. Supported troubadours, promoted good manners, refinement, and romantic love
         b. Code of chivalry and romantic poetry softened manners of rough warriors
      5. Independent cities: urban populations increasingly resisted demands of feudal nobles
      6. Guilds
         a. Regulated production and sale of goods
         b. Established standards of quality for manufactured goods
         c. Determined prices and regulated entry of new workers
         d. Social significance: friendship, mutual support, built halls
      7. Urban women: most guilds admitted women, and women also had own guilds
   III. European Christianity during the high middle ages
      A. Schools, universities, and scholastic theology
         1. Cathedral schools
a. Bishops and archbishops in France and northern Italy organized schools
b. Cathedral schools had formal curricula, concentrated on liberal arts
c. Some offered advance instruction in law, medicine, and theology

2. Universities
   a. Student guilds and faculty guilds
   b. Large cathedral schools developed into universities

3. The influence of Aristotle
   a. Obtained Aristotle's works from Byzantine and Muslim philosophers
   b. Scholasticism: St. Thomas Aquinas harmonized reason with Christianity

B. Popular religion
1. Sacraments; the most popular was the Eucharist
2. Devotion to saints for help; Virgin Mary most popular (cathedrals)
3. Saints' relics were esteemed; pilgrimages (Rome, Compostela, Jerusalem)

C. Reform movements and popular heresies
1. Dominicans and Franciscans were urban-based mendicant orders
   a. Organized movements to champion spiritual over materialistic values
   b. Zealously combated heterodox movements
2. Popular heresy: the movements of Waldensians and Cathars (Albigensians)

IV. The Medieval Expansion of Europe
A. Atlantic and Baltic Colonization
1. Vinland
   a. Scandinavian seafarers turned to North Atlantic Ocean, ninth and tenth centuries
   b. Colonized Iceland and Greenland
   c. Leif Ericsson traveled to modern Newfoundland, called Vinland
2. Christianity in Scandinavia: Denmark and Norway (tenth century), then spread
3. Crusading orders and Baltic expansion
   a. Teutonic Knights most active in the Baltic region
   b. Baltic region was absorbed into Christian Europe from the late thirteenth century

B. The reconquest (for Christianity) of Sicily and Spain
1. Reconquest of south Italy by Norman Roger Guiscard, 1090
2. Roger (also Norman) conquers Sicily
3. The reconquista of Spain began in 1060s
   a. By 1150, took over half the peninsula
   b. By the thirteenth century, took almost all the peninsula except Granada

C. The crusades
1. Pope Urban II called Christian knights to take up arms and seize the holy land, 1095
   a. Peter the Hermit traveled in Europe and organized a ragtag army
   b. Campaign was a disaster for the crusaders
2. The first crusade
   a. French and Norman nobles organized military expedition, 1096
   b. Jerusalem fell to the crusaders, 1099; Muslims recaptured, 1187
3. Later crusades
   a. By the mid-thirteenth century, five major crusades had been launched
   b. The fourth crusade (1202-1204) conquered Constantinople
   c. The crusades failed to take over Palestine from the Muslims
4. Consequences of the crusades
   a. Crusaders established some states in Palestine and Syria
   b. Encouraged trade with Muslims; demands for luxury goods increased
   c. Muslim ideas filter to Europe: Aristotle, science, astronomy, numerals, paper