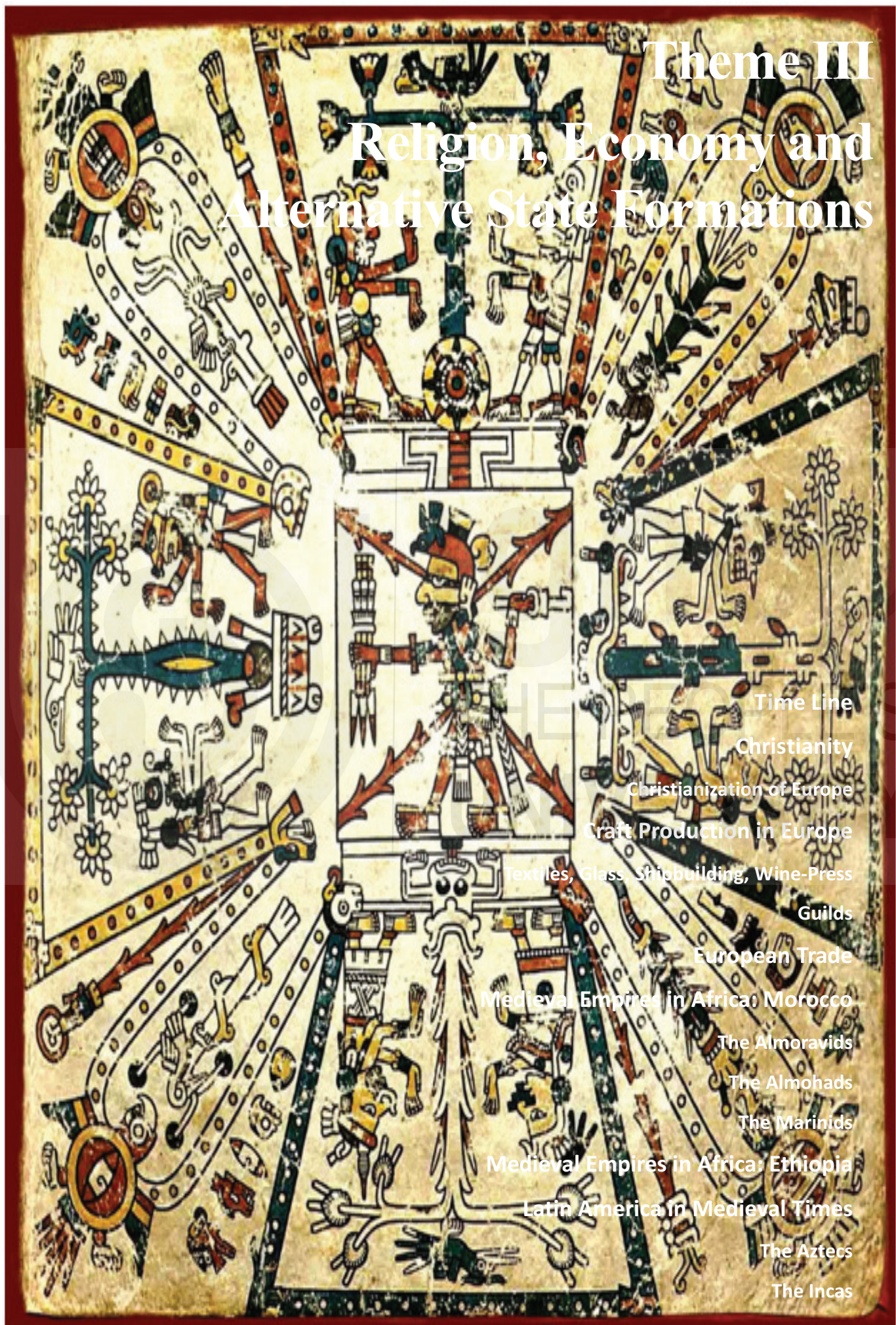


Theme III Religion, Economy and Alternative State Formations



- Time Line
- Christianity
- Christianization of Europe
- Craft Production in Europe
- Textiles, Glass, Shipbuilding, Wine-Press
- Guilds
- European Trade
- Medieval Empires in Africa: Morocco
- The Almoravids
- The Almohads
- The Marinids
- Medieval Empires in Africa: Ethiopia
- Latin America in Medieval Times
- The Aztecs
- The Incas



ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Photograph: Codex Fejérváry-Mayor; Author Unknown

Aztec cosmological drawing with the god Xiuhtecuhtli, the lord of fire in the center and the four corners of the cosmos marked by four trees with associated birds, deities and calendar names, and each direction marked by a dismembered limb of the god Tezcatlipoca

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7e/Xiuhtecuhtli_1.jpg

UNIT 7 RELIGION AND CULTURE IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE*

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Christianity and the Christianization of Europe
- 7.3 Christians' Relations with Non-Christians
- 7.4 The Clergy, Moral Instruction and Formal Education
- 7.5 Criticism of the Clergy and Social Teachings of the Medieval Church
- 7.6 Summary
- 7.7 Keywords
- 7.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 7.9 Suggested Readings
- 7.10 Instructional Video Recommendations

7.0 OBJECTIVES

A previous Unit (**Unit 3, BHIC-104**) on religion in the Roman empire showed how Christianity at the close of antiquity and the beginning of the Middle Ages, was part of the state power structure. Christian churches, monasteries and church-administered establishments amassed land and controlled large numbers of labourers on the church estates across the former Roman realm. In addition to grants of land, churchmen received donations of wealth from royal coffers, from the nobility and from other members of society. This was only one aspect of the complex process of Christianization of European societies. As we shall see, the general social and cultural pattern of medieval Europe became Christian, even for the minority populations of Europe that were not Christian. Culture means a society's values, shared beliefs and traditions, as well as specific arts, languages, and so forth. An account of medieval European culture should therefore examine the whole pattern of medieval life and the ways that Christianity aided social integration and made possible the distinctive feudal structure of social control. Although Europe was never a single political unit during the medieval period and was an assemblage of societies, it is possible to make useful generalizations about religion in relation to 'European society' and 'European culture'. After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- understand Christianization as a socio-cultural process in medieval Europe,
- comprehend relations between 'majority' and 'minority' religious identity groups in parts of Europe,
- perceive the role of the clergy in Christian Europe before *c.* 1500, especially in knowledge formation, education and social care functions, and

* Prof. Denys P. Leighton, School of Liberal Studies, Ambedkar University, Delhi

- list some of the reasons for cooperation and conflict between clergy and common people over medieval social life and institutions.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

By the eleventh century CE ‘Europe’ was synonymous with ‘Christendom’, the realm of Christianity, despite the rootedness of Christian worship practices in several parts of Asia and Africa. At that point in time Christendom was a conception more familiar to most people of medieval Europe than the concept of Europe itself (Where, after all did the borders of ‘Europe’ begin and end?). The identification of Europe with Christendom became even closer over the 12th and 13th centuries, when successive popes authorized Crusades.

Crusades were military expeditions under ‘the sign of Christ’s cross’ that were carried against infidels and heretics in the ‘Holy Lands’ (Jerusalem and surrounding places) as well as within Europe. Crusades were aggressive attempts of European nobles to increase their power and wealth under the guise of religious duty, but it was with the Pope’s authorization that these ferocious campaigns were launched (For more information on Crusades, refer to Instructional Video Recommendations).

The domain of the Pope, the Papacy, expanded outward from Rome during the Middle Ages as a vast empire of properties and territorial-legal jurisdictions. Civil rule in Europe depended for its legitimacy on the Christian churches and Papal consent. At the same time, popes and their subordinates were dependent on royal support and favour. The Christian New Testament stated (in Luke 22:38) that temporal authority (in social and political relations) and spiritual authority are represented by two swords and *both* swords are held by the prince or emperor. Breaches between civil leaders and the sanctioning Christian authorities were serious political crises wherever they occurred in medieval Europe. Christian theologians and lawyers developed theories of holy war and debated circumstances justifying violence, whether against non-Christians or fellow Christians.

Christianization of society was more than a process of people coming to worship the Christian deity (in the three-fold form of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) in similar ways. Christianity determined social values and norms of a diversity of peoples distributed over many hundreds of separate states and territories in Europe. When we observe today magnificent medieval church architecture and appreciate the murals, paintings and statues of religious subjects that adorned European palaces as well as churches, it is tempting to conclude that European culture exemplified the devotion to Christ and the saints that the Church taught as the duty of every Christian. Much of the art of medieval Europe was in the churches, and the churches were open to the common people.

Historian Henry Adams (1838-1918) in *The Education of Henry Adams* (Chapter 25: ‘The Dynamo and the Virgin’) compared medieval Europeans’ veneration of the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus Christ, to modern peoples’ obsession with technology (for example, the dynamo, used to generate electricity), scientific progress and economic production. Adams wanted to show that medieval European men and women were convinced of the power of the Virgin Mary and did not dispute the importance of the rituals, cathedrals and other trappings of the Church – just as modern people are convinced of the importance and ultimate meaning of technology and economic accomplishment. However, many other scholars have challenged the impression that medieval Europeans were more religious and more Christian

than their Roman predecessors or than their successors after 1600 CE. The next sections of this Unit shall show how Christianity influenced medieval European social interactions, and how Christian ideas and values as well as anxieties about Christian practices were expressed in European culture and society. The Unit will also show how relations between Christians and other religious communities played out in the sphere of culture.

7.2 CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF EUROPE

Christianity, whether Roman Catholicism or the Orthodox Christianity upheld by the Eastern Roman or Byzantine empire (and represented by a Patriarch), was by the eighth century CE the official religion of most territories of southern, western and central Europe. Soon after that it spread into parts of Russia and Ukraine, and much of south-eastern Europe that was inhabited by Greek-speaking and Slavic people and was by then already home to Orthodox Christianity. Relations between Catholic and Orthodox branches of Christianity had deteriorated for several centuries before ending in a ‘Great Schism’ (split) in the late eleventh century CE. Christian missionaries of the early medieval period worked to spread their faith among the people as emissaries of the Pope (or the Orthodox Patriarch), or of the bishops theoretically subordinate to the Pope (or the Patriarch).

Conversion would not have progressed across medieval Europe without the support of the civil rulers. It was usually a political leader’s acceptance of Christianity that led to the conversion of the whole population. Legends around missionaries such as Patrick in Ireland (St. Patrick, ‘the Apostle of the Irish’) and Beuno in Wales and Brittany, as well as historical records like the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* by the monk Venerable Bede (c. 672-735 CE), are filled with stories about missionaries’ intense conviction, their patience in adversity and the miraculous events surrounding their lives. Many of the early Christian saints were missionaries who experienced martyrdom at the hands of infidels. These kinds of legends and documents reveal something about persuasion and perceptions of advantage in adopting Christianity. In the mid-ninth century CE, Boris, *khan* of the Bulgars, received Orthodox Christian and Roman Catholic missionaries but ultimately chose to align his state with Orthodox Christianity. Vladimir ‘the Great’, Slavic prince of Novgorod and eventually grand prince of Kiev in the late tenth century CE, allied with the Byzantine empire by marrying a daughter of the Byzantine emperor, and he accepted Orthodox Christianity in the bargain. Vladimir’s political alliance with the Byzantines thus began the Christianization of Russia, after several less successful missionary drives.

Christianization was a gradual process of transformation of society and culture and it continued long after the nominal conversion of a population to the Christian faith. When Christian proselytizers had the support of a ruler, Christianization carried with it the spoken or unspoken threat of violence to those who resisted conversion or who continued their pagan ways. Christian authorities were not content with the mere co-existence of their faith with non-Christian practice; they sought to establish the *societas fidei* (Latin: society of one faith). This meant complete dominance of Christianity over the people and condemnation of other faiths. The legal-political systems of the European lands upheld the Christian teachings and values, sometimes very harshly and deliberately against pagan or ‘infidel’ practices. Marriages among

rich as well as among poor Europeans were solemnized by priests. A marriage not recognized by the Church would cause problems in matters of control of property and inheritance of social and political status.

Christianization cannot be understood simply as a result of the already existing power of the Church. It happened because it fulfilled or at least promised to serve social needs of the various populations of Europe. The Church provided not only sacraments by which infants, children and adults were blessed or ‘absolved’ of sin but rituals to protect crops and herds from harm, and to thank God for the recovery of people from illness. That so many written prayers of thanks for the recovery or rescue of kings survive from medieval Europe indicates something about the interdependence of Church and royalty. People not only attended masses (ceremonies) in church and received sacraments from the **clergy**; they also worshipped at the shrines of saints and called upon saints for protection and assistance.

The most important saint for all Christians was Mary, mother of Christ, but people in all of Europe’s Christian regions came to recognize several dozen saints. Saints were associated with protection from specific illnesses and misfortunes, or they were recognized as sponsors or patrons of certain professions (or of towns or countries). For example, St. Hubert was the patron of hunters, St. Christopher was the protector of travellers, and St. Nicholas became Russia’s (national) patron saint¹. Pilgrimages to graves of saints or other holy sites became an established practice of Christians at all levels of society. Tales (‘lives’) of the saints became the most widely known form of literature in early medieval Europe, probably more familiar to most people before the 15th and 16th centuries than the Bible itself. The general level of European literacy was low, and the Bible was more often read out by clergy in church services than read by people as a book, while saints’ tales circulated not only in written form but as oral legends.



Figure 7.1: Jan Hus and the Council of Constance

Credit: Karl Friedrich Lessing (1808-1880); Stadel Museum

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/25/Hus_%28Lessing_1842%29.jpg

¹ Nicholas also became the patron saint of children, and in the late Middle Ages he was associated with secret gifts to children on St. Nicholas Day, in December.



Figure 7.2: Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont

Credit: Jean Colombe, Bibliotheque nationale de France

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Clermont#/media/File:Passages_d'outremer_Fr5594,_fol._19r,_Concile_de_Clermont.jpg

To discipline those people who fell into ‘error’, the medieval Church had several means at its disposal, including religious courts, tribunals, commissions and acts of prohibition (for instance, preventing scholars from teaching or writing). Councils of principal clergy occurred from time to time since the earliest Christian centuries to handle widespread disagreement among the Christian authorities themselves. A great council at Constance² occurred in the early fifteenth century following decades of disruption when there were competing popes at Rome and Avignon. Religious dissenters or deviants and indeed anyone who opposed the Church’s teachings or pronouncements could be punished or executed, with the ultimate penalty being excommunication. By being placed outside (‘ex’) the community of true Christians, and denied the sacraments, excommunicated persons faced the threat of eternal damnation (their souls would not go to heaven). St. Peter, the first bishop of Rome, was represented in Christian iconography – religious art and symbolism – as holding the keys to the gate of heaven. The threat of excommunication persuaded the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV to defer to Pope Gregory VII during the 11th century ‘Investiture Controversy’ over the question of whether kings or instead the Pope should appoint bishops.

Through heresy trials – inquiries about renunciation or contradiction of approved Church teachings – the Church’s place in the social order was reaffirmed, whether or not the accused were condemned as heretics. The aforementioned Crusades complicated

² The Council of Constance was held between 1414 and 1418 in the Bishopric of Constance. The main purpose of the Council was to end the Papal schism. It was attended by 29 cardinals, 100 ‘learned doctors of law and divinity’, 134 abbots, and 183 bishops and archbishops. It facilitated the execution of Jan Hus (a Czech theologian, philosopher, master, dean and rector of the Charles University of Prague who became a Church reformer).

relations between Christians and Muslims for many centuries after the first of these violent campaigns was launched in 1095 CE by Pope Urban II. Yet Crusades were not narrowly anti-Islamic activities; they were directed too against pagans within Europe (such as the ‘Northern Crusade’ in the region around the Baltic Sea) and to eliminate Christian sects, such as the Cathars and the Waldensians in southwestern Europe, that the Papacy had deemed heretical. Jan Hus (1369-1415), a theologian and university professor and rector in Prague, was tried and executed for heresy, and several crusades were then launched in Bohemia (central Europe) until 1436 to subdue the Hussites. Medieval Europeans dreaded censure of the clergy. The reason was that they actually believed that the Pope could bind or loose the gates of heaven. Another reason could be because they feared loss of recognition in society that occurred with the religious authorities’ disapproval. It is difficult to conclude which of these created more fear. What is more certain is that the Church held power to influence individuals’ reputations among their fellow men and women — as people worthy of respect or, in contrast, people to be avoided or ignored.

While the region recognized today as Europe became Christian, Christian culture mixed with and often built upon pagan and non-Christian practices. **Unit 3** has shown how Jewish, Greek and Eastern ideas and practices helped form Roman and Orthodox Christianity. Pagan, ‘barbarian’ influences on the formation of ‘Christian’ Europe are much evident. One of the use of fir trees and branches in the celebration of Christmas in Germanic and northern Europe, is an adoption of a pagan tradition of decorating their homes with the branches of this tree. It was a medieval practice that has spread to Christian communities world-wide in modern times. Some pagan holy men and women, or even deities, were still recognized in popular faith practice across Europe and were occasionally re-named as Christian saints. Some Christian saints became associated with particular qualities or ‘powers’ of banned pagan deities or holy people. For example, Walburga or Walpurga, who was born in England in the eighth century CE and went missionizing in what is now Germany, may have been recognized as a Christian saint as a surrogate for the Grain Mother (a Germanic goddess, analogous to the Roman goddess Ceres). The earliest illustrations and statues of St. Walpurga show her holding stalks of grain, and this among other evidence indicates that German peasants came to regard her as the special saint for flourishing and ripening of grain.

By creating saints in ways that gave them connections to local values (and pagan practices), the Church was able to acquire tighter grip over the population it was Christianizing. Another strategy was to revise pagan festivals and incorporate them into the calendar of Christian holidays and ritual observances. When Christian authorities created a holiday – for example, a saint’s day – to coincide with a pagan festival, they imagined that the counter-attraction would result in the pagan practices being ignored and eventually forgotten, and this is in fact what often happened. In the medieval popular imagination, the cults of saints filled in for the holy men and women who had



Figure 7.3: Saint Walpurga
Credit: Master of Messkirch
(1500-1543); Philadelphia
Museum of Art
Source: [https://
commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:Heilige_Walpurga.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Heilige_Walpurga.jpg)

been important in pagan Europe. Moreover, while it was the Church that created saints through formal processes (called beatification and canonization), this was done to some extent in response to popular habits of piety and veneration. Lay people as much as clergy had power in establishing and preserving the cults of saints. It is significant that, as late as the 16th century, Frederick III ('The Wise'), Duke and Elector of Saxony (in Germany), had a reliquary – a private museum – containing about 19,000 relics (holy objects) associated with Christian saints. Canterbury in England hosted several shrines of saints and Santiago de Compostela in Iberia was a centre of veneration of St. James, the first of Christ's apostles to be martyred. These were among the popular pilgrimage sites of medieval Europe and even relatively poor people visited them to acquire holiness.



Figure 7.4: Canterbury Cathedral
Credit: Hans Musil

Source:https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Canterbury_Cathedral_-_Portal_Nave_Cross-spire.jpeg



Figure 7.5: Santiago de Compostela Cathedral

Credit: stephenD

Source:[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santiago_de_Compostela_Cathedral#/media/File:Catedral_de_Santiago_de_Compostela_agosto_2018_\(cropped\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santiago_de_Compostela_Cathedral#/media/File:Catedral_de_Santiago_de_Compostela_agosto_2018_(cropped).jpg)

Christianity was consolidated throughout Europe between c. 600 and 1000 CE as tribal societies in several regions coalesced in wider kingdoms. Pagan masculine ideals, including the pre-Christian Roman gender models, glorified the politically active men. In contrast, early Christian teachings promoted the contemplative (thoughtful) and ascetic (frugal and unsensual) life. Withdrawal from the affairs of a sinful world was a powerful ideal in the world of late antiquity, as can be seen from the historical evidence of religious hermits and mendicants (women as well as men). Masculinity in European pagan societies was highly sociable and martial. Men were expected to participate in assemblies and contests called by their chieftains or kings; they had to be skilled in weaponry and to demonstrate their courage in battle. We find evidence of conflict between Christian and pagan values in several parts of early Christian Europe. For example, **feudal** lords in 7th-8th century France criticized bishops, priest and monks as effeminate, weak and devious. Clerical celibacy and the belief that people could remain spiritually pure by being unmarried and unhampered by familial obligations were contrary to ideals of masculinity *and* femininity in most pre-Christian European societies.

This clash of values aside, Christianity did a great deal to shape feudal relationships across Europe. Loyalty of the feudal vassal (who held land) to his lord (who granted the land) was the keystone value of feudal relations, and Christianity helped make this an iron-clad and reciprocal duty. The code of **chivalry**³ that regulated life in the noble

³ The Code of Chivalry or Chivalric Code is an informal code of conduct that was developed between 1170 and 1220 but was never expressed in a single document. It arose in medieval Europe with its roots in the idealization of cavalryman of the Roman Empire.

courts throughout much of Europe from the eleventh century CE demanded fidelity to the 'true faith', mercy and charity towards the less powerful members of society, a strict sense of honour in personal relations and generally upholding 'good' as defined by Christian authorities. Churchmen in medieval Europe congratulated themselves for taming Europe's barbarian chieftains and their farmer-warrior followers, bringing, they said, Godly order and Christian peace as well as a stable system of agrarian relations. It must also be recognized that the Christian establishment provided care for the poor and the sick through hospitals, alms-houses (living places for the physically disabled poor and aged people without relatives) and through other forms of charity — charity being one of the core Christian duties exercised by clergy and common people alike.

7.3 CHRISTIANS' RELATIONS WITH NON-CHRISTIANS

Exceptions to the pattern of dominance by the Church before the late Middle Ages were north-eastern Europe (parts of Scandinavia and the Baltic region) and Iberia (Spain and Portugal). Until about 1100 CE Christianity had only a very weak hold in Scandinavia and Baltic Europe, where German and Polish Christian knights waged the 'Northern Crusade'⁴ for about a century. The more significant example of resistance to Christianization – perhaps better described as a different pattern of Christianization – was Iberia until 1492, where several states were ruled for many centuries by Muslim kings and emirs subordinate to the Umayyad, Abbasid, Almoravid and Almohad caliphates based in Damascus, Baghdad and Morocco (Africa). 'Moors' (Spanish: *moros*) moved into Iberia from North Africa in the seventh century and mixed with the local populations that were partly Christianized during the late Roman period. In the region called al-Andalus, which included the Emirate (and later Caliphate) of Córdoba, Christianity legally co-existed with Islam and Judaism. In Islamic law, Jews and Christians are 'people of the book'. Muslims regard the Jewish Old Testament and the Christian New Testament as true but incomplete revelations leading up to the Prophet Mohammed; and Jews and Christians should therefore be permitted to follow their own community laws to the extent that there is no disrespect for the *sharia* (system of Islamic law) or Islamic religious authorities such as the caliph. Non-Muslims in Islamic states of Iberia paid a *Jizya* (special tax). The city of Córdoba was the jewel of Moorish Spain, having several impressive libraries and witnessing regular interaction among Muslim, Jewish and Christian scholars. When Córdoba was re-conquered by Christians in the thirteenth century, the grand mosque was re-consecrated and re-modelled as the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption. The Córdoba mosque-cathedral contains architectural features and symbols found throughout north Africa and the Middle East as well as Christian symbols and motifs. Sicily and other Mediterranean islands as well were ruled for periods by Arabs and other Muslims, though the majority populations remained Christian and continued to practice their faith. When Norman (Scandinavian-French) adventurers conquered Sicily in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, just as they conquered England in 1066 CE, they tolerated Islam to a greater extent than was the case in other parts of Christian Europe.

⁴ The Northern Crusades or Baltic Crusades were religious wars undertaken by Catholic Christian military orders and kingdoms, primarily against the pagan Baltic, Finnic and West Slavic people around the southern and eastern shores of the Baltic Sea.



Figure 7.6: Mosque of Cordoba
Credit: James (Jim) Gordon
Source: Wikimedia Commons

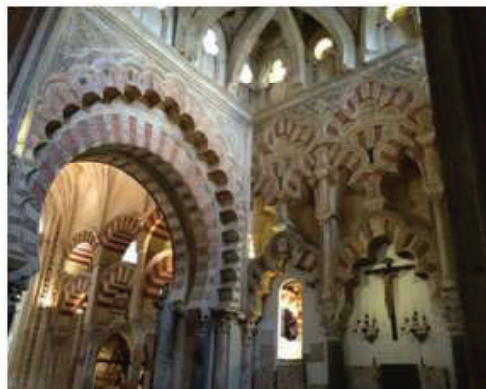


Figure 7.7: Mosque-Cathedral of Cordoba
Credit: kerberosmansour
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Judaism was tolerated in some European states beyond Iberia with restrictions and monitoring by Christian authorities. According to Christian theology, Jews as a *gens* ('nation') were the murderers of Christ, and Christian teachings identified the complete conversion of the Jews as a major spiritual goal. Yet, with exception of the Italian lands, where Roman law was more deeply rooted than other parts of Europe, legal practices of medieval Europe did not clearly recognize collective or community rights of Jews to govern themselves within the officially Christian society. Instead, the Jews were usually recognized under law as special individual subjects of the king or queen, who could withdraw protection and favour. As already mentioned, Jews in Iberia had enjoyed toleration until the *Reconquista* (re-conquest of the Moorish states by Catholic princes). When the re-conquest was completed in 1492, Jews as well as Muslims had to convert to Christianity or suffer expulsion from the territory.

In spite of what could be called institutional anti-Semitism, Jewish-Christian relations in medieval Europe were not always bad, particularly in parts of Italy and the Netherlands. While Jews in Europe during this period were usually banned from positions of higher civil administration, and were not allowed to own land, their religious leaders entered into dialogues with authorities, including Christian clergy, about matters of religion, law and administration. While living in *ghettos* (walled colonies in towns separating Jews from Christians), Jews were yet not culturally or intellectually isolated from Christian society. Jews spoke languages that were mixtures of Hebrew and vernacular languages of Europe. *Ladino*, or Judaeo-Spanish, is one of these mixed languages that was used for centuries throughout most of the Mediterranean region. Many Jews, whether in Spain, Greece or German states, were multi-lingual. Learned Jews were proficient not only in Hebrew but in Latin and there were Jewish scholars of Roman law. Europe's Jews were well aware of Christian rituals and social norms, even if they were stigmatized by the majority community.

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) How did the institution of Christian sainthood aid the transition from pagan to Christian Europe?

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) Briefly describe the ways in which the medieval Church tried to ensure the population's obedience to Christian rules and values.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 3) Give a brief account of the relations between Christians and non-Christians in parts of medieval Europe.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

7.4 THE CLERGY, MORAL INSTRUCTION AND FORMAL EDUCATION

Before the 'Protestant Reformation' (For further details see **Unit 3; BHIC-108**) – upheavals against the Papal establishment in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – all the people who belonged to the religious vocation (the clergy or clerics) were appointed indirectly by the Pope, and clerics were organized into official church organizations. In Orthodox Christian lands, religious functionaries were similarly part of a chain of command headed by the Patriarch in Constantinople. The Englishman John of Salisbury (?1115-1180), who could be called a political theorist, divided society into three 'orders' of men and women: those who *prayed*, those who *fought* and those who *worked*. The vast majority of the workers were cultivators of the land who made up 70 - 90% of the populations of different European territories during the Middle Ages. The nobility, whose role was to fight the king's battles and protect the rest of society, was numerically the smallest order of society, never constituting more than one percent of the population of most medieval European states. The first of the three **orders of society** mentioned by John of Salisbury, those who prayed, was of course the clergy. In some European states as many as ten to fifteen per cent of the population were clergy or served as lay members of church organizations (were recognized as assistants to the clergy). In royal councils and in other bodies where formal political deliberations or negotiations occurred, the interests of the kingdom were usually represented in terms of the three orders. The three orders of society collectively held different sets of privileges and liberties in relation to the ruler and to each other; this was about balance of interests, not about equality of rights, since the orders of society were imagined as complementary to rather than as equal to each other. At any rate, the clergy's responsibility for the 'care of souls' extended to care of bodies. While Christian theology emphasized that pain, suffering and poverty were the inescapable conditions of human life and were reminders of the human race's fall from grace (when Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden rebelled against the protective love that God showed them),

the Church also championed charity and compassion. Therefore, throughout medieval Europe the Church was the main corporate agency for delivery of social care services.

The clerical order or clergy was collectively charged above all with the spiritual salvation of the society's members. The priests and bishops taught and preached the Holy Scriptures to the population at large, whether peasants and artisans, merchants or dukes and kings, and they performed sacraments, masses and other rituals. Monks and nuns were the clergy who vowed to live under a particular *regula* ('rule', code of discipline), such as that of Saint Gregory, St. Francis, St. Dominic or St. Benedict. Though better fed, clothed and housed than many peasants and labourers, the monks and nuns were nevertheless pledged to asceticism and simplicity ('poverty, chastity and obedience'), so that they would devote their attention to God. Devotion to God meant spreading or preserving Christian teachings, so in addition to orders of friars who spread the Gospel (the Christian message) among the people, communities of monks and nuns kept libraries (or scriptoria) of cherished scripts. Monastic scribes made copies of manuscripts, some of them dating to Greco-Roman times, so that correct knowledge of the world and human society was preserved. The clergy was by definition Europe's literate class – the word 'clerk' is an alternate form of 'cleric' – during a period when literacy was uncommon even among members of the lesser nobility. The extent of the clergy's learning varied widely, from the minimally literate parish priests who could read the Bible and say prayers in Latin, to highly learned teachers and researchers who had thorough knowledge of Latin and Greek. Some clerics and church-educated scholars, such as Roger Bacon, Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas, also read Hebrew, Arabic or both.

Most institutions of formal learning in medieval Europe were run by the clergy, from simple parish schools (for children), to cathedral schools, to the universities of Bologna, Paris, Oxford, Cambridge, Valladolid and other places that emerged beginning in the late eleventh century CE. A university was initially a self-constituting association (*universitas*) of 'masters and scholars'. Many universities grew into corporations that received charters or licenses from the Papacy or civil rulers. Universities taught philosophy (at the core of which was the *trivium* of grammar, logic and rhetoric), mathematics, astronomy and music, as well as some natural science and also the professional subjects such as theology and law (and, in some places, medicine). Latin and to a certain extent Greek were the official media of instruction in these institutions; and for a long time most instructional texts were circulated only in Latin. To be without Latin – or, in Orthodox Christian lands, Greek – was to be uneducated. The highest university degrees, doctorates, were awarded in theology and law, but law included canon (or church) law as well as civil law. Even doctors of medicine were respectful of Church teachings about the human body and about the relationship of body to soul. Many approved texts studied in medieval universities were authored by the Church Fathers, men who helped codify Christian theology and church practice between the first and eighth centuries.

Church knowledge, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, was heavily influenced by thinkers and writers of Greco-Roman antiquity such as Aristotle and Plato. Among ancient Roman writers, Virgil and Cicero especially were studied and appreciated in the Middle Ages for their fine Latin style in writing. Few medieval scholars dared contradict or outright reject the claims and ideas of these approved ancient writers (whether Christian or pagan). The medieval philosopher Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who was canonized (proclaimed) as a saint by the Catholic church, wrote commentaries on both Aristotle's and Plato's works and he drew heavily from their philosophical ideas in forming a Christian philosophical tradition called Scholasticism. Some philosophers of the immediate post-medieval era went so far as to argue that the reliance

of Aquinas and other medieval philosophers on Aristotle amounted to mental slavery. According to Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and some others associated with the 'Scientific Revolution' in Europe, medieval reverence for Classical thought had prevented Europeans from moving forward and innovating, particularly in science.

Almost all members of the cathedral schools and universities, including those who stayed on in the university to become masters (who tutored and lectured students), professors, deans and rectors, were either ordained (appointed) clerics or laymen who sought employment in the growing bureaucracies of Church and state. Princes and kings staffed their chanceries, archives and offices of state with clerics or with men trained by the clerics; clergy were essential to civil as well as ecclesiastical administration. Boys of different social classes (even the peasantry) entered the universities as young as fourteen or fifteen but typically at age eighteen or nineteen. Those who completed the degree *Magister Artium* (M.A.) had a license to teach others in any other university. In terms of recognition of educational credentials, medieval European universities were international and cosmopolitan. It was common for 'lovers of knowledge' to migrate from one university to another, even across territories.

A second point is that girls and women were largely excluded from European formal higher education. There are no records of female university scholars in Europe until the seventeenth century. The 'educated' women of medieval Europe were therefore usually members of the nobility who benefited from private tutoring and who were sometimes very accomplished, entering into oral or written debates with male scholars. Christine de Pizan (1364- c. 1430), daughter of an Italian astrologer to the King of France, was one such woman, as was Anna Komnene (1083-1153, daughter of Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnenos), renowned in her time as a physician and historian. Other learned European women were nuns and abbesses (heads of nunneries/monasteries for females). For example, the abbess Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) was proclaimed *magistra* by the nuns under her charge. She contributed to theology and medical science. Her *Ordo Virtutum*, a cycle of sixty-nine musical poems, is an important surviving example of medieval European music. Herrad of Landsberg (c. 1130-1195) too was an abbess and she authored an illustrated encyclopaedia (compendium of useful knowledge) titled *Hortus deliciarum* ('Garden of Earthly Delights'). Significantly, both Hildegard and Herrad were born into the nobility. Had they not become nuns, 'brides of Christ' instead of noble wives and mothers, it is doubtful that these women would have been allowed to be scholars and contribute to knowledge production.

7.5 CRITICISM OF CLERGY AND SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH

This Unit has emphasized the social and cultural power of the Church in medieval Europe, but it is important to recognize that the authority of the Christian clergy was negotiated and *contested*. A society's culture is not a perfect mirror image of what dominant people and institutions want that culture to look like. Rather, the culture is like a cracked or distorting mirror of values of the dominant and the subordinate social groups alike. Criticism of the clergy by both elite and common Europeans was a visible part of medieval European culture. This can be seen in satirical stories (especially *The Decameron*) penned by the Italian Giovanni Boccaccio and the *Canterbury Tales* of Englishman Geoffrey Chaucer, in songs of university students and in poetry of wandering scholars and minstrels. An important cycle of songs and poems surviving from medieval times, the *Carmina Burana* (songs from Benediktbeuern, a German monastery), reveals the complex relationship between European clergy and laity and the tensions around

clerical values. Folklore and tales express medieval popular (peasant) beliefs about the greedy or lazy clergy.

The phenomenon of the *Goliard* poets (12th-14th centuries CE)

Goliards were students at cathedral schools and universities who expected (or were expected by their families) to become priests or to obtain even higher clerical office, but who often lacked motivation or lost respect for actual clergy. *Goliards* mocked the clergy and tried to be as un-holy as possible; their songs focused on eating, drinking and gambling.

Those who became clerical assistants and trainees performed pseudo-Christian ceremonies and conducted 'Feasts of Fools'. Rectors of the University of Paris in the thirteenth century were among the authorities who found *Goliard* behaviour threatening and subversive.

The scandalous behaviour of *Goliards* and the mocking sayings of peasant lore were mostly in fun and probably never posed a serious threat to the power of the Church.

Jan Hus, John Wycliffe and others cast doubt on the sacramental power of the priesthood and the authority of the Pope during the 14th and 15th centuries, and some of these critics organized rebellions against the Church, but for every proclaimed Hussite or Wycliffite there were thousands of Christians whose respect for the clergy and its roles was not undermined by their recognition of some 'bad' priests.

Historians continue to disagree about the relation of medieval anti-clericalism to the upheaval of the Protestant Reformation, beginning with Martin Luther's initial criticism (1517-1521) of 'abuses' by the Church establishment, that flared into civil war in several parts of Europe. Historians ask whether anti-clericalism actually increased during the late medieval centuries (c. 1300-1600) and whether protests against clergy reveal structural changes within the 'society of orders' related to the emergence of new kinds of 'people with money' in the towns, the *bourgeoisie*.

Clearly, 'intellectual' activity in medieval Europe was not actually a monopoly of the Church. The cultural phenomenon known as the Renaissance (Italian: *Renascimento*, 'rebirth') between 1300 and 1600 has been interpreted by many historians as a movement of mental liberation from Church teachings and values. There was supposedly a new human-centred outlook, although many Renaissance humanists took pains to show their piety and respect for the Church. Some humanists were Churchmen themselves, or they were patronized by the Church. One book from the Renaissance period, Giovanni Villani's *Florentine Chronicle* (written in the fourteenth century), indicates that in Florence (Italy) in the 1330's, as many as 35-40 % of male children were being educated in primary schools and that much of this schooling was outside the direct administration of the clergy. The students were mostly boys and young men who went to work in the accounting sections of companies and banks, who wrote or made copies of business letters and who did the 'clerical' work in municipal government as well as in the Church administration.

Another notable change in European society and culture in the later medieval centuries was connected to laicization, meaning the process by which functions performed by religious authorities are transferred to non-religious (lay) persons. From the very first centuries of Christianity, the Church allowed lay people certain roles (such as property management) in its own administration and upkeep; it encouraged the faith of lay Christians by engaging them in activities that the Church guided. The Church increasingly shared some social welfare functions with laity in the later medieval centuries. Köln

(Cologne) in Germany, with about 30,000 inhabitants in the year 1500, was a religious centre, having 19 churches, 100 chapels, 22 monasteries and 12 religious hostels. Three to four thousand people in Köln at this time were clerics, but even ‘religious’ institutions such as hostels, hospitals and shrines were being run by associations (‘brotherhoods’ and ‘sisterhoods’) staffed by lay people. Some historians have argued that greater participation by laity in various social welfare institutions across Europe does not necessarily prove that social welfare was being secularized or taken over by non-Church elements. Rather, it is argued, laicization of institutions shows that a sense of Christian social responsibility (charity, care of the sick, etc.) was increasingly being seen as everyone’s business in a Christian society. In the end, it is impossible to understand medieval European culture without examining the ways that Christianity formed the whole outlook of medieval people and how the people (whether clergy or laity) negotiated their relation to the Church.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Briefly describe functions of the Christian clergy in medieval society.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 2) In what ways were women excluded from and in what ways did they participate in the production of formal knowledge (‘high learning’) in medieval Europe?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 3) Describe examples of anti-clericalism in medieval Europe before the Protestant reformation.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 4) *Laicization* of medieval European Christianity meant some adjustment in relations between clergy and laity and the social roles played by them. Explain this changing relationship in the context of medieval Europe.

.....
.....

7.6 SUMMARY

The institutional power of the Church at the end of Roman antiquity spread throughout European lands with the process of Christianization, but this does not mean that the ‘civil power’ was in practice subordinate to ‘spiritual authority’. Neither did the Church simply impose Christian values on pagan societies. Worship styles and habits of pagan Europe were carried over into Christian practice, if not so much into Christian theology (the formal theory of the religion). Heresy trials and crusades were among the punitive measures taken by the Church to influence European social practice, while the observance of holidays and festivals, the maintenance of holy shrines, the institutions of ‘pastoral care’ and the formal education system were among the more constructive means of Christianization. The policy of a ‘society of one faith’ could not completely marginalize non-Christian elements in Europe, though the Spanish Catholic *Reconquista* illustrates how non-Christians who refused to convert could be expelled and almost eliminated. The Church along with monarchy was a pillar of the European ‘feudal’ order for several centuries after the Middle Ages. Christianity was omnipresent in the sphere of European culture, whether of the elite or of the common people.

7.7 KEYWORDS

- Clergy/clerics/Church** : Clergy are people formally accepted by a religious organization or sect for religious duties. In Roman Catholicism and some other Christian sects, the clergy or clerics are ordained; those selected as priests go through a ritual of ordination by higher clergy (for instance, a bishop or metropolitan) and are then authorized to perform sacraments (rituals). Church (with capital ‘C’) refers not to a religious building but rather to a whole institutional form or set up of Christianity – its personnel, laws, rules, administration, theology, property, etc.
- Chivalry** : deriving from a medieval French word for mounted warrior and referring to the status, obligation or fee owed by a knight, and by extension to the conduct expected of such a person by those connected to him. Knightly virtues of honour, obedience, reverence and love were the key values of chivalry.
- Christianization** : refers to how people adopt Christian teachings and the officially sanctioned forms of worship and also means the larger processes by which the religion impacts social practices and cultural forms.
- Feudal/feudalism** : ‘feudal’ derives from the medieval Latin word

feodum, meaning simply an estate in land, and feudalism refers to a common customary form of property and land control in Europe. The three key elements of the feudal system were the lord, the vassal, and the *fief* (a plot of land). A lord was a noble who held land; a vassal was a person who was granted possession of the land by the lord. In exchange for the use of the *fief* and the protection of the lord, the vassal would provide some sort of service to the lord, such as labour. The obligations and corresponding rights between lord and vassal in relation to the *fief* form the basis of the feudal relationship.

Goliard

: originally referring to a member of the clergy writing satirical Latin poetry during the 12th and 13th centuries; it later meant a wandering poet-singer, not necessarily a clergyman. The name *Goliard* may refer to the giant Goliath in the Bible, slain by the hero-king David, or it may be a corruption of the French word *gaillard* ('gay or jolly fellow'). In a letter to Pope Innocent II, the French abbot Bernard of Clairvaux referred to the controversial Paris scholar Pierre Abelard, who had been condemned as a heretic, as Goliath. All of these references suggest that, to the Church, *Goliard* meant someone monstrous, undisciplined and heretical.

Laity

: those who recognize the Church as worshippers and adherents but who are not members of the Church by vocation. They are not ordained and have no sacramental authority.

Orders of society/ society of orders

: a model of social organization in which each member of society is identified with a group that composes the society, and the group ('order') is recognized in the law and/or the system of political representation. The 'order' (sometimes also called the 'estate') is generally identified by its social or occupational function. The three-part society of orders discussed by John of Salisbury can be found in the French political system until 1789. Until 1789 a political body called the *États généraux* ('States-General') contained delegates from the First, Second and Third Estates: Catholic clergy, nobility, commoners.

7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Section 7.2
- 2) See Section 7.2
- 3) See Section 7.3

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Section 7.4
- 2) See Section 7.4
- 3) See Section 7.5
- 4) See Section 7.5

7.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

Blockmans, Wim and Peter Hoppenbrouwers, (2018) *Introduction to Medieval Europe, 300-1550*, 3rd edition (Abingdon and New York: Routledge).

Brown, Peter, (1996) *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000* (Oxford: Blackwell).

Cipolla, Carlo, (1993) *Before the Industrial Revolution. European Society and Economy, 1000-1700*, 3rd edition (London: Routledge).

Lansing, Carol and Edward D. English, eds., (2013) *A Wiley-Blackwell Companion to the Medieval World* (Chichester: Wiley and Sons).

Smith, Julia M. H., (2005) *Europe After Rome: A New Cultural History, 500-1000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

7.10 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

Episode 1: Holy Land | Crusades | BBC Documentary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOyswuA8wEs>

First Crusade Part 1 of 2 | Epic History TV

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydVFqpbIIwA>

UNIT 8 GROWTH OF CRAFT PRODUCTION IN EUROPE*

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Context and Underlying Factors
- 8.3 Nature of Craft Production
 - 8.3.1 Textiles
 - 8.3.2 Mining and Metallurgy
 - 8.3.3 Glass Industry
 - 8.3.4 Ship Building
 - 8.3.5 Wine Making
- 8.4 Organization of Production: Guilds
- 8.5 Composition and Condition of Artisans
- 8.6 Summary
- 8.7 Keywords
- 8.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 8.9 Suggested Readings
- 8.10 Instructional Video Recommendations

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you shall be able to:

- understand the development of various crafts in medieval Europe and Asia,
- analyze the factors that propelled this development,
- examine the processes of production of some select crafts that emerged during this period,
- evaluate the organization of production and conditions of artisans in order to understand changes, if any, in their socio-economic status, and
- explain the structures of existing relations of production and processes of social differentiation.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In **Unit 9** you will be introduced to the changing pattern of trade and commerce in Europe that not only linked various parts of Europe but also exhibited complexities of relations between Asia and Europe. The aim of this Unit is to unfold the context in which craft production flourished in medieval Europe. A focus on the geography of Europe and propelling factors will familiarize you with the changes that took place over a period of time and across regions. The available historical evidences reflect upon the

several crafts that were in vogue. However, there were some crafts that came to demarcate specific areas and went on to transform the economic and organizational structures of production. An attempt will be made here to illustrate these aspects through case studies of craft production in textiles, glass, metallurgy, ship building and wine making.

The growth of various manufacturing units was as much rooted in available resources as in the usage of techniques, human resources and organizational skills to increase production. This Unit will provide details on these aspects through an analysis of the processes of production, organizational structures, policies and role of **Guilds** that were set-up in various parts of Europe.

8.2 CONTEXT AND UNDERLYING FACTORS

Medieval Europe was not a monolith. Between 7th and late 15th centuries it underwent multiple changes. From these changes one can identify the factors that provided the basis for craft production. On the basis of geographical features variegated regions could be identified within Europe. Europe had arable land in plenty along with natural resources like coal, iron and water. Being located in the middle of the land hemisphere, it is surrounded by water on three sides and had connectivity by sea with other parts of the world. However, climatic conditions varied in different regions. The main source of income was agriculture but its production was not same in all parts of Europe. For instance, Italy had scattered areas of fertile land and **Low Countries** had identical vegetation pattern.

The Political and economic organization of Europe has been described by historians as being defined by feudalism. However, its coercive mechanism defining and shaping rights and status of individuals connected with it were not identical everywhere. Land and available resources were the main source of income and trading activities were part of it. By the eleventh century, demographic changes were paralleled by growth of urban areas, stratification of society and changes in political and religious structures.

Carlo M. Cipolla in his analysis has explored factors of productions based on input in Europe during Medieval times. He has listed labour, capital and natural resources under it. During the period under study demographic patterns were bound to affect availability of labour. The growth in population from eleventh century meant that on the one hand there was demand for more commodities and on the other hand, labour was also available. In rural areas both skilled and unskilled labour was available and more women were employed as labour.

Alongside the growth of urban centres, existence of available rich class of consumers, capital and incentive for concentration of skilled artisans in production units was assured. It was more than evident in Italy where city-states became centres of Renaissance. Alfred Von Martin observed that bourgeoisie residing in city-states possessed wealth and intellect. John Schofield on the basis of archaeological evidences has shown that London was the centre for multiple craft activities. A donative inscription of Edward III dated 1364 mentioned the existence of twenty-seven crafts. These included brewers, drapers, dyers, fullers, gold smiths and iron mongers among others (Schofield, 1987:115). In Germany, rulers initiated establishment of town. Monastic burgs also developed around towns and in the country districts.

These urban centres became the hub of transactions facilitated by markets. Both traders and craftsmen were given privileges by local authorities for the growth of trade. Between the accession of Otto the Great to the death of Otto III (931-1002) twenty-nine new markets were set up in Germany through grants of privileges.

According to Carlo M. Cipolla, physical capital was represented in the production of goods which were either stored for future consumption or used for further production. Fixed capital was evident in the form of mills. The investment of money in construction of such units was made possible by dominant individuals representing political, religious and economic powers. The establishment of absolute monarchies in Spain, France and England in the fifteenth centuries created conditions for the sale of increased production and for safety of economic activities. The process was also facilitated by technological developments from sixth century. Water Mills and Wind Mills were used for increasing production. According to Marc Bloch, evidences pertaining to the use of water mills dates back to the third century but it was its extensive use in the medieval Europe that led to specialization of skill among artisans.

Europe was rich in natural resources. The expansion of agriculture was dependent on available labour and arable land. There was extensive use of land for rearing of sheep in all parts of Europe. The availability of wool provided an incentive to the textile industry. It was evident in the case of Spain, England, Italy and Low Countries. Initially, England exported wool. Water resources were also important in this trading activity. In England river Thames was the lifeline of trade and commerce. Inter-regional connections were made during the 'Age of Discovery'. Europe was also rich in mineral resources. However its use through mining was dependent on the usage of technology and skills.

8.3 NATURE OF CRAFT PRODUCTION

It is a historical fact that during medieval times in Europe there was growth of many crafts that utilized local and inter-local resources. There was use of multiple tools and technologies to refine and increase production. Many crafts flourished and continued to operate in rural areas, but by and large there was concentration of craft work in urban centres. In the following Sub-sections an attempt has been made to provide case studies of few crafts in order to reflect upon these changes over time and space.

8.3.1 Textiles

Cloth making in Europe can be traced back from the days of Roman Empire. In fact, every sheep rearing land produced cloth. Textile in Europe meant mainly woollen cloths which were required due to the weather condition. Every region had distinct features. For instance, Renaissance Italy developed skills in the field of dyeing and had an expertise in finishing of clothes. There was also setting up of large-scale woollen industry in southern Italy using local wool. In Low Countries, initially textiles were produced from the native raw material. This raw material was sourced from pastures of Artois, French Flanders and Hainault where sheep were reared. For dyeing, madder was obtained from France. Imported wool from England was also utilized in this textile industry.

In his study of woollen cloth industry of England, Lipson has made four observations:

- Raw material was raised at home.
- It was the most widespread of English manufactures as every town, village and hamlet was involved in it. Weaving was the main household occupation having bearing on the entire community.
- It was the first industry to be regulated by the state.
- Its history was connected with various stages of growth exhibiting domestic system, guild system and factory system.

It also remains a fact that textile industry had its low and high phases. There was decline in the twelfth century and growth of Flemish cloth industry was restricted by emergent English industry.

The Stages of Textile Manufacturing

- **Sorting** – The work commenced with carding of collected wool. It could be undertaken by unskilled workers as collected wool was beaten and washed.
- **Spinning** – The work in this stage was mostly done by women. It entailed carding of small staple through use of short metal hook attached in wooden instruments. Long staple wool was spun with the help of long metal teeth attached in wooden instruments. The wool was then oiled and spun into yarn. For this old distaff and spindle was used. The use of spinning wheel facilitated the process of spinning.
- **Weaving** – It was warpers who prepared the yarn for weaving. The threads of required number were sorted. These were wound onto the **Bobbin** for insertion in the shuttle with the help of **Spoolers**. Generally, warp thread and woof thread were spun separately. For production of broad cloth, loom was used. Work was undertaken by men who while sitting side by side would use double loom. There was also use of horizontal loom. For the weaving of narrow cloth, single loom was used.
- **Fulling** – Fulling was a difficult work mostly done in towns having easy access to water bodies. At this stage, cloth as trampled in **Trough**. The cloths thus washed were hung on a tenter, upright wooden frame for drying. Multiple clothes thus hung were fastened with tenterhooks. In Italy it emerged as main occupation for imported unfinished fabric of North. The process has been vividly described in the frescos of the house of Vettii and on the walls of a Fullonica. In the twelfth century fulling mills were invented in England and France. Instead of human labour water power was used. Under the new tilt hammer system, a revolving drum was attached to the spindle of a water wheel. When it moved then two wooden hammers were raised and dropped on the cloth. There was requirement of only one person to watch the process.
- **Finishing Process** – Fine quality of cloth was obtained through raising and shearing. While cloth was damp, teasels set in row on a wooden frame were used for raising the **Nap**. After drying of cloth, shearing was done. The use of shear grinder ensured the fine surface of cloth. The process was repeated several times to get smooth cloth. Thereafter, it was brushed, pressed and folded.
- **Dyeing** – It could be undertaken at any stage of production. It was much valued for determining the price and quality of product. The northwest region produced all kinds of dyes. Wood and madder were local products. Mediterranean region supplied bright red, kermes and alum (which was needed for fixing the dyes). The Tropical regions yielded red basil. Wood was used to produce black colour. Potash was imported from north Germany and the Baltic region. Its use was mandatory under existing regulations.

Dyeing was a skilled work as the worker needed to be familiar with properties of material to be used by him. He also needed to be familiar with quality and quantity of wool, dyes and mordents. He also needed to have knowledge about alum, setting of wool and treatment to be given to different qualities of wool. There were two crafts of dyeing. One specialized in wool and other in red and other clothes. The work was done with the help of large circular vats. The cloth was turned over with the help of poles by workers. Italians developed an expertise in this work.

8.3.2 Mining and Metallurgy

Medieval Europe was rich in mineral resources. Precious metals like gold and silver along with iron lay deposited in several parts of Europe. The tendency was to use and exhaust minerals existing near the surface. In the whole production process agriculture was valued and there was little interest in mining. In fact, except for mining of iron, a decline in mining of other metals was seen after the third century. The change was seen from tenth century onwards when minerals were mined for political, military, economic and cultural reasons. The rulers and nobles encouraged miners to search and mine mineral resources as they claimed share in the find. Otto the Great gave monetary concessions for mining activities.

The demand for iron grew over the period of time as it was required for manufacturing of tools, weapons, ships and gothic buildings. It led to inter-regional transactions. Miners moved from place to place and wherever iron was mined, small forges were set up. This trend was seen in France. It required little capital. Once natural resources like wood needed for charcoal were exhausted, miners moved to another place.

Coal digging in France, England, Scotland and Low Countries was evident during the thirteenth century. Miners would dig shallow pits to get coal. While quarrying was widespread, another method was also used. A kind of cave widened at the bottom having base a few feet below the surface was dug-up.

Shaft mining was practiced in Central Europe for obtaining silver in the thirteenth century. The normal procedure in silver bearing ore comprised puncturing of slopping field with dozens of pits. For draining of water primitive methods were used. Generally, water was taken out manually in leather buckets. Sometimes trenches were dug-up from the bottom of shaft having an opening in the valley. In the fourteenth century Bohemia long **Adits** were used. For pumping of water, machines driven by horses were also tried.

New methods were devised for smelting of ores and refining of metals. Manual labour was employed for washing, breaking and crushing of unrefined metal. Smelters used a variety of hearths, pots, ovens and furnaces for treating ores. Open hearths requiring little capital were in use. Thus the refining of ore having silver went through the process of washing, breaking, crushing and smelting. It was followed by the process of oxidation in cupelling hearth in order to remove lead. With the help of bellows, silver was further refined. During the thirteenth century, water driven wheels were set up at the silver mines of Trent for moving hammers and bellows.

In the succeeding century, three types of furnaces were used. These replaced the old bloomer forges. Among three most effective was 'Stuckofen'. It was widely used in Central Europe, eastern France and the Alpine districts. The height of this furnace was around ten feet. It consisted of a circular quadrangular shaft about two feet at the top and bottom of structure. In the middle, it measured five feet. This furnace increased the production. During this period more powerful drainage engines were made and better methods of ventilating underground passages were deployed. It was evident in Hungary and Saxony. The water from bottom of the deepest pit was pumped in three flights. Thereafter it was carried off down an adit. At each stage, a pump was set in motion by the rotation of a large horse driven wheel. For rotation of these wheels, animals were stationed along inclined shaft which sloped and twisted like screws.

The use of blast furnace increased the output of iron and bronze.

Bronze was a compound of tin and copper. For its preparation, moulds fixed or prepared in earth were used. The heated liquid was poured in these moulds. An identical method was used for casting iron. In furnace ore was kept for long period in contact with carbon at a very high temperature. It resulted in production of cast iron which was further subjected to treatment for decarburization. This was done through reheating under oxidizing condition. The finished product was useful for making of tools, weapons and armours.

8.3.3 Glass Industry

Glass is manufactured from melting and thereafter cooling of sand and wood. Europe had its knowledge since antiquity. Its use became widespread in the decoration of windows during the thirteenth century. It was the time when beautiful cathedrals were built in Italy, especially Rome. However, it became a widespread industry only in the

sixteenth century. The art of stained glass flourished between 1150 and 1500 CE. German Monk Teophilus in his text *On Diverse Arts* provided details on the making of stained glass. It entailed close study of glaziers and glass painters.

In the manufacturing stage when glass was still molten, certain powdered metals were added and liquid was flattened into sheet. For making of window, first the picture of proposed design was drawn on a board. Then various pieces of stained glass were assembled on the board. These were fitted into H-shaped strips of lead called cames. The panel was secured by placing each piece closely. Once the panel was ready it was inserted between each glass and lead cames for water proofing. The entire composition was stabilized with an iron frame and mounted on the window.

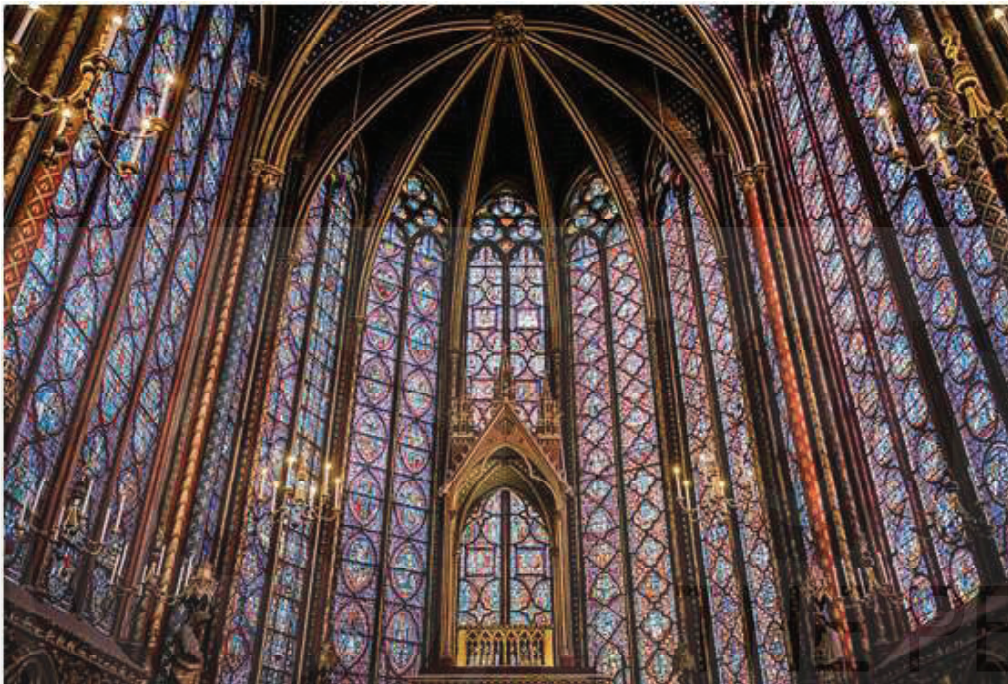


Figure 8.1: Sainte Chapelle Interior – Stained Glass

Credit: Oldmanisold

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Gothic_architecture#/media/File:Sainte_Chapelle_Interior_Stained_Glass.jpg

The centre of this industry was Venice. During the fifteenth century, Venetians produced glass of great clarity, glass of brilliant stones and twisted glass rods. Tank furnaces were used by the glass makers.

8.3.4 Ship Building

The ‘Age of Discovery’ marked by overseas voyages in the fifteenth century was facilitated by technological innovations in the making of ships. J.H. Parry in his analysis has underlined the role of navigational tools and newly built ships in this process. Francois Crouzet has observed that maritime Europe was created by exchange of technology between the regions of Mediterranean, Atlantic and Northern Seas.

During the tenth century, cog ships were used for coastal trade. The vessel was built from the keel up. The use of thick wooden skeleton kept the ship hull in place. It also resulted in existence of a large space for the storage of cargo. The hull was linked with overlapping planks. These were nailed to keep them in place. The bows and stern planks and long straight wooden beams were connected to the ship keel.

The mast was a single wooden log attached to the keel of the ship. Another horizontal wooden beam was set to hold the sail. It was attached to the main mast by ropes. The

sail was square piece. For keeping mast steady ropes were tied to the sides of the ship. Once the sail was down, it was connected to bowsprit, a long wooden pole. This kept the sail steady and the trapping of wind made the sail effective. The use of lateen sail (a triangular sail mounted on a ship) having eastern origin became widespread in the North. The Caravel building technique developed by the Portuguese in c. 1430 made it possible for ship builders to make bigger and lighter ships having two or three masts carrying lateen sail. Gradually cargo ships and naval vessels were developed. Ship builders used the method of 'frame first'. Under this method, frame for a ship was built first and then shell planks were fastened to it. They also experimented with the usage of more than one mast for the sails. In this way ships were developed to undertake long overseas journeys and became instrumental for the expansion of trade and for setting up of colonies. It also added to growing rivalries between powerful states.



Figure 8.2: Lateen-rigged caravel, the main vessel for the Portuguese long-distance explorations

Credit: Navy of Brazil

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caravel_Boa_Esperanca_Portugal.jpg

8.3.5 Wine Making

In the medieval Europe some agro-based production had a great commercial value and these were sold in the markets. One such product was wine which was produced by the fermentation of fruit juices, mainly grapes. Wine became one of the most traded commodities in medieval Europe. Wine was related to different aspects of the medieval life in Europe. For instance, it was required for religious ceremonies. The role of Church in developing vineyards was evident. Vine-culture was labour intensive and it improved the lot of small peasants connected with it.

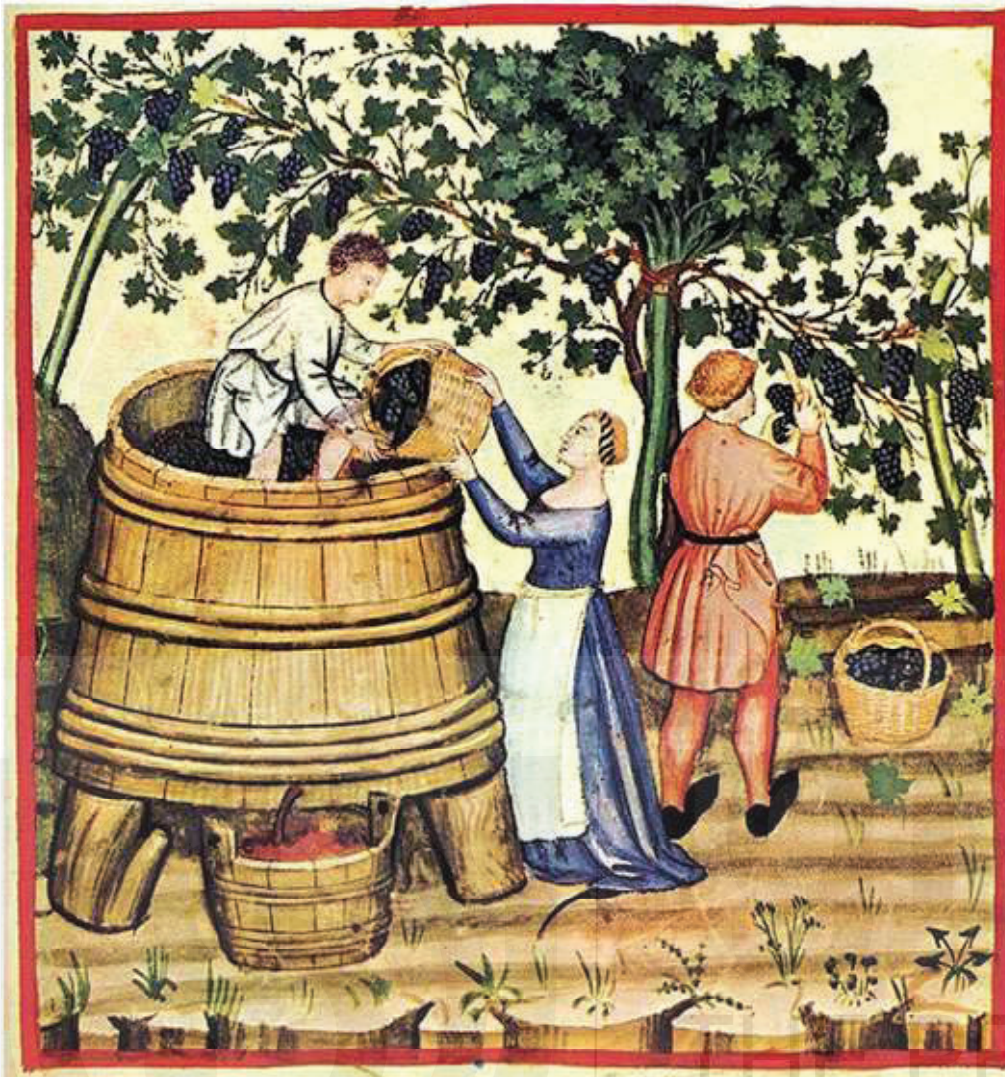


Figure 8.3: History of the Wine Press

Credit: Book Scan

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:29-autunno,Taccuino_Sanitatis,_Casnatense_4182..jpg

Vineyards were developed in Paris, Reims and Moselle areas of south western France, Flanders and England. The specialization in this industry started when Spain established its colonies in many parts of Africa.

Steps of Wine Making

- **Date of beginning** of the harvest was announced.
- **Picking** – This stage was decided by the colour of the wine, whether it was red or white (in modern parlance).
- **Collection of Grapes** – Grapes were collected in baskets and later in large vats and kept in some kind of shelter, usually near the vigneron's house.
- **Pressing** – In the first round of rough pressing, the grapes were pressed either from treading by workers or by using planks of wood. After pressing the juice was collected.
- **Pressing the Marc** – The leftover mass of squashed grapes or *marc* was pressed at least once more. The skill of the vigneron determined the taste and colour of the wine. By varying the number of pressings, he could increase the acidity of the wine and alter its taste and colour.
- **Fermentation of the wine** – Wine was kept in barrels for a number of days at a certain range of maintained temperature which should neither be too cold or hot. This was

determined as per the experience of the vigneron in those times when technology was not that developed in the wine industry. The second stage of pressing the wine by a winepress was not commonly used in the Bordelais under c. 1590. Wines produced in Northern Europe were usually white due to the range of temperature, especially in Moselle and Rhineland vineyards. Red wines were more complicated to produce. The basic difference between the production of white and red wine was that fermentation could take place for a longer duration in the making of white wine. Removing the stalks from the grapes before pressing them was another way of determining the type of wine produced. Medieval winegrowers did not store their produce for long. They wanted to market it as quickly as possible. Old wine was regarded with much suspicion in those days. Moreso, the storage difficulties were much more in those times. By the end of the fifteenth century, the cultivation of grapes and the making of wine emerged as an established commercial activity in many areas of Western Europe.

(Source: Rose, Susan. 2011, *The Wine Trade in Medieval Europe 1000-1500*, London and New York: Continuum: 33)

Check Your Progress-1

1) How did the use of water mills increase production?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2) What was the main feature of rural economy in medieval Europe?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3) Discuss the process of wine making in medieval Europe.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4) Describe the various stages connected with manufacturing of textiles in medieval Europe.

.....
.....
.....

.....
.....
5) What was the prominent method for mining in medieval Europe?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

8.4 ORGANIZATION OF PRODUCTION: GUILDS

The regulation of production for ensuring quality, quantity, required skills, working schedules and for elimination of competition, necessitated forming of specified organizations.

Christian fraternities had been in existence since the early days of Christianity and took care of spiritual and corporeal needs of the faithful. According to Lipson, it was ‘town economy’ that led to the formation of Guilds in many parts of Europe. The lead was taken by Merchant Guilds which enjoyed political power. This development was most evident in Italy. Gradually, Craft Guilds also came into existence. These were established through royal charters and developed close relationship with the local administration.

The main role of these organizations was to ensure that members of one particular craft were its constituent members. The manufacturing of goods and regulation of production was ensured through well defined mechanism of taking apprentices. Steps were also taken to eliminate internal competition and minimize litigation. At a time when religion was the guiding force, each guild also participated in charitable activities and also had patron saints.

The craft Guilds comprised three classes of members namely the Masters, the Journeymen and the Apprentices. It was the institution of apprenticeship that was the most distinct feature of craft Guilds. It was a medium to provide training to those who either worked with hands or mind. This practice existed in all parts of Europe having craft Guilds. In London, it appeared during the thirteenth century and spread to other towns. It was a mechanism to train craftsmen and became a monopoly of Guilds. In other words, those who wanted to be craftsmen had to undergo a certain tenure of apprenticeship. Under this system, the master who received an apprentice was required to train him and to take care of his boarding and lodging. Sometimes a small salary was also provided to the apprentice. The former was also responsible for the behaviour of apprentice and in case of any aberration could punish him. On his part apprentice had to show self-discipline, obedience and fidelity to his master. Lipson has rightly pointed out that the underlying aim of the craft Guilds was order rather than progress, and stability rather than expansion.

Each master was entitled to have a specific number of apprentices. The length of apprenticeship varied from small tenure to seven years. One could be initiated at the age of eleven. After the apprenticeship was over, the apprentice could be employed as workmen or journeyman. This stage of journeymen also lasted for few years. There was scope for further upward mobility provided one could prove his craftsmanship.

There were very few female Guilds. By and large these Guilds ensured that the quality product was sold to buyers. Steps were taken to ensure that surplus goods affecting prices and sale of commodities were not produced. These Guilds ensured care of members in distress and also helped the poor and old people by building institutions for them. They were also involved in religious and educational activities. For instance, one such guild, named Christi Cambridge, founded a college under its name. Over the period of time as markets expanded, and both local and international market created scope for more production, many craft Guilds were transformed into Livery companies in London.

In this way, along with changes in technology, organizations also emerged to regulate production and the craft Guilds played an important role. However, in case of fluctuation in demand or diluting of quality of product and the deliberate reduction in price efficacy of Guilds could be challenged. This happened in case of Italy during the sixteenth century.

8.5 COMPOSITION AND CONDITION OF ARTISANS

The above narration has only explored few crafts that were practiced in medieval Europe. There were other widespread activities in towns. For instance, there was expansion in the construction of buildings. Initially, mud was used as the main material of construction. However, it was replaced by use of stone later. Palaces, Churches and other buildings were built using stone. It meant that both unskilled and skilled workers were connected with it. Skilled masons were deployed for construction work. The artisans who were connected with the work of dyeing, fulling and spinning were valued. The miners were also respected. The place of shipbuilders in society was also well defined. The growth of trade and demand for more goods including luxurious items meant that skills required for making them were imparted in a well-defined way. In urban centres artisans themselves took the lead to organize themselves for getting their rights. The relationship with political authorities and powerful merchants who controlled markets and had money for investment was crucial in defining the status of artisans in urban areas. Women were generally employed in household based activities in rural areas, and in urban areas also they were mostly considered unskilled workers.

In the production activities it is evident that in the growth of craft production, artisans played the main role. These artisans were deployed in multiple crafts and worked at several stages connected with a particular craft. The knowledge required for different crafts varied and there were both skilled and unskilled artisans. On the basis of existing historical sources, an attempt can be made to understand the condition of artisans at general and specific levels.

In a significant work Jacques Le Goff had studied the relationship between mentalities and material culture in early modern Europe. According to him the tripartite western society consisted of 'men of prayer, men of war and men of labor: *laoratores*, *bellatores* and *laboratories*'. At a time when religious consciousness and institutions dominated, the first two groups were disdainful of the third group. However, in expanding urban economy, the role of artisans could also not be neglected. The Church also came to acknowledge it. The confessors' manuals from the twelfth century indicate that artisans were asking multiple questions about their work and the Church also acknowledged the ability of every profession to attain salvation.

Rodney Hilton has drawn attention towards another aspect of economy which had a bearing on the condition of artisans. According to him, capital was provided by merchants who also controlled markets. It meant that artisans were only paid wages and they could not share profits. This system of payment was evident in Italy. In fact, it was the

very nature of production that determined the status of artisans. In rural areas, **Household production** dominated. There were few artisans having landholdings. It facilitated commodity production. Under the **Putting out system** (POS) rural household was provided with raw material. It was in urban centres that manufacturing on large-scale was being undertaken for the markets. Those artisans who possessed tools could earn more. However, it was the merchants who provided raw material and controlled markets and in the process appropriated profits.

There were economic disparities. The condition of craftsmen like beaters, carders, combers and others who worked on the entrepreneurs' premises was worse. They were not organized and had no mechanism to defend themselves. For them, wages were also not standardized. In the cotton industry, piece-work rates were paid for weaving, fulling, tentering, shearing and dyeing.

It was difficult for artisans to ensure wage revision during the times of prosperity. The situation could be worse during the period of natural disasters and political unrest. Such times resulted in social crisis and unrest. For instance, when Florence was affected by Black Death causing a scarcity of labour in the thirteenth century then Guilds preempted the move by artisans demanding revision in wages. The disparity between the income of craftsmen and merchants resulted in widespread unrest. In 1280, it spread to Bruges, Ypress, Douai and Tournai. In the ensuing power struggle when the king of France tried to annex Flanders, it was defended by workers. The armed struggle was led by a weaver Pierre de Conine. Flanders was liberated. In 1378, workers in the woollen industry in Florence rose in revolt. The Ciompi revolt was joined by many other artisans like armoires, grocers, druggists, blacksmiths, furriers. However, it was brutally suppressed.

The status of miners and metallurgical workers was better. They were organized and enjoyed concessions from authorities. For instance, in Low Countries, as they added to the wealth of sovereign princes in the thirteenth century they were exempted from the payment of ordinary taxes. The working conditions were harsh. The midday break was also for a small span. The working hours in a week varied from forty-four hours to sixty hours.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Do you subscribe to the view that Guilds created conducive conditions for the growth of craft production in medieval Europe? Provide historical evidence to support your views.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) Briefly describe the condition of artisans in medieval Europe.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

8.6 SUMMARY

The foregoing narration in the Unit has provided details on the nature and mode of craft production in medieval Europe. The multiplicity of factors as outlined by Carlo M. Cipolla brings to focus the natural and human variables that became responsible for craft production in Europe. Various crafts entailing multiple processes, technologies and raw material came into existence. It has been highlighted by the way of discussing few prominent crafts during the course of the Unit. The most widespread craft was textile, having distinct features in different countries. It has been shown that while Europe had rich depositories of minerals but its production was constrained by prevailing attitudes and technologies. Focus has also been laid on shipbuilding, glass making and wine making which were specific to some regions. The nature of artisans at the level of skills, location and working conditions is indicative of the way in which they were part of the larger hierarchical society.

During the period under study the very nature of craft production was shaped by multiple institutional set ups. It was not possible to work independently for the market. Through a study of Guilds, the Unit has also unfolded the mechanism that went into the regulation of production and imparting of training. The varied composition of artisans at the level of society was closely linked with their economic status. The relationship between material culture and mentalities during medieval Europe meant that very few could hope to enhance their status. Those who wielded authority at the level of society and politics did not allow artisans to seek redressal. There were series of uprisings on many occasions but these were brutally crushed. Thus, the society was discriminatory and artisans had to work under suppressive conditions.

8.7 KEYWORDS

- Adit** : A horizontal passage leading into mine for the purpose of access or drainage.
- Bobbin** : A cylinder or cone holding thread or yarn. It was used in weaving.
- Guild** : Organizations of craftsmen that were formed to regulate production.
- Household production** : The production that was in the hands of artisans possessing raw material, tools and labour to manufacture goods. Other members of family also contributed in the process.
- Low countries** : Netherland (Holland), Belgium and Luxembourg
- Nap** : It refers to roughness of woven cloth before shearing.
- Putting out system (POS)** : It marked a distinct stage in the growth of manufacturing set up. The merchants provided the capital or raw material and tools to the artisans. The latter worked at their own place or a fixed place to produce commodities as per the directives of a merchant.

- Spooler** : A small cylindrical piece of wood or other material on which yarn is wound in spinning.
- Trough** : A long open container of channel for holding water.

8.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Section 8.2
- 2) See Section 8.2 and 8.3 (including all Sub-sections)
- 3) See Sub-section 8.3.3
- 4) See Sub-section 8.3.1. Refer to the Information Box given in the Sub-section.
- 5) See Sub-section 8.3.2

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Section 8.4
- 2) See Section 8.5

8.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

Cipolla, Carlo M., (1976) *Before the Industrial Revolution: European Society and Economy 1000-1700* (Britain: Mettuen & Co. Ltd.).

Crouzet, Francois, (2001) *A History of the European Economy 1000-2000* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press).

Gieyszton, Aleksander, (1987) 'Trade and Industry in Eastern Europe before 1200' in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, Vol II: Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages*, ed. Poston, M.M and Miller, Second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Goff, Jacques Le, (1980) *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, Translated by Arthur Gold Hammer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press).

Goff, Jacques Le, (1989) *Medieval Civilization 400-1500*. Translated by Julia Barrow (Basil Blackwell.)

Lipson, E., (1959) *The Growth of English Society: A Short Economic History*, Fourth edition, Reprint, 1964 (London: Adam and Charles Black).

Nef, John U., (1987) 'Mining and Metallurgy in Medieval Civilization' in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, Vol II: Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages*, ed. Poston, M.M and Miller, Second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Schofield, John, (1987) 'London 1100-1600: The Archaeology of a Capital City', in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, Vol II: Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages*, ed. M.M. Poston, and Edward Miller, Second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Thrupp, Sylvia L., (1965) 'The Gilds' in *The Cambridge Economic History of*

Europe, Vol. III: *Economic Organization and Policies in the Middle Ages*, ed. M.M. Poston, E.E. Rich and Edward Miller (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press).

PDF:

Professor Carr, Quartr.us, assessed on 4 May2018.

David Catright (24 August 2017). assessed on 3 May2018,Quara.

Zeppe, Giuseppe (2007) Science and technology of wine making, <https://www.dairy.science.in fo/index/124-the science and technology of wine making.html>. Assessed on 4 May 2018.

Metropolitan Museum of Art,Oct.2001,<https://www.metmuseum.org/article/medieval glass>.

8.10 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

The last velvet merchants of Venice | Eliot Stein, BBC Travel

<http://www.bbc.com/travel/gallery/20181113-the-last-velvet-merchant-of-venice>



ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 9 RISE OF TRADE AND COMMERCE IN ASIA AND EUROPE*

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Rise of Islam and the Oceanic Trade in Asia and Europe
- 9.3 Trade in Medieval Europe
- 9.4 Trading Communities
 - 9.4.1 Armenians
 - 9.4.2 Jews
 - 9.4.3 Karimi Merchants
 - 9.4.4 Some Other Merchant Groups of Asia and Europe
- 9.5 Trading Routes
- 9.6 Centres of Commercial Activity: Markets and Fairs
 - 9.6.1 Markets
 - 9.6.2 Fairs
- 9.7 Commercial Practices
 - 9.7.1 Credit and Moneylending
 - 9.7.2 Instruments of Exchange, Money Changing, Banking and Accounting
- 9.8 Summary
- 9.9 Keywords
- 9.10 Answers to Check your Progress Exercises
- 9.11 Suggested Readings
- 9.12 Instructional Video Recommendations

9.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit an attempt has been made to give you a brief account of the Oceanic Trade in the medieval world. Our discussion includes the period from around the seventh century to the fifteenth century, coinciding with the advent of Islam in Arabia to the end of Middle Ages. The advent of European Voyages of discovery and the economic transformation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries onwards have been discussed in our Course **BHIC-106, Units 4 and 5**.

After reading this Unit, you shall be able to:

- understand the nature of economy during the seventh to fifteenth centuries,
- analyze the developments that impacted the economy during this period,
- list the major trading communities,
- trace the important trade routes with markets and fairs, and
- learn the commercial practices in Asia and Europe.

* Prof. Sushil Chaudhury, Royal Historical Society, England and Dr. Amrit Kaur Basra, Delhi College of Arts and Commerce, University of Delhi, New Delhi. Adapted from **MHI-01, Block 7, Unit 24: Oceanic Trade; Unit 25: Business Communities; and Unit 26: Commercial Practices**.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

To begin with, we will make an analysis of the impact of the rise of Islam and its impact on oceanic trade not only in the Indian Ocean but also in the Mediterranean. During this period the Arabs dominated the oceanic trade which continued for more than three centuries. We will trace the trade of medieval Europe in the next Section, with an emphasis on the role of the Mediterranean in this trade. Here we will also focus on the commodities involved in the export and import trade of medieval Europe. India's maritime trade shall be discussed in **Unit 13, BHIC-107** and later developments in **Unit 8, BHIC-112**).

Advent of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean has been examined in a separate section. It shows that the Portuguese, though able to make minor changes in the Indian Ocean trade, ultimately failed to bring about any radical alteration in the structure, direction and organization of trade in this region. It appears that the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean, though spectacular and significant, had no dominating influence in the region.

This Unit shall provide an overview of commercial transactions during the middle Ages. Here we will acquaint you with the nature of trade in Asia, Africa, Europe and America; emergence of trading nexus through land and sea-routes, markets and fairs; role of merchants in expanding commerce and use of various business practices to facilitate commercial transactions.

By the beginning of the fifth century, Roman Empire was no longer a unified political entity. Its eastern provinces came to constitute the Byzantine Empire. Germanic tribes swayed the western provinces of the Roman Empire. The rulership of Charlemagne (771-814) extended over France, Central Europe, North Italy and a small portion of Spain.

The setting up of dynastic rule in the region followed the rise of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula, during the seventh century. There was spread of Islam in Byzantine, Africa and various parts of Asia. It left its mark on the politics of these regions. The period between tenth and thirteenth centuries in Asia was marked by many changes. The victory march of Mongols was paralleled by the emergence of Sung culture in China, the Koryo in Korea and the Heian in Japan. Thus, these varied political changes led to regional stability. The feudal polity also generated military conflicts. The starting of **crusades** in the eleventh century Europe was an attempt to check the spread of Islam. It opened the Mediterranean to western shipping. In all parts of the world, goods were traded but the pattern of trade and commodities involved were quite varied.

The period 1000-1300 was marked by an expansion of commerce in Europe. In the assessment of Carlo M. Cipolla, this period was one of great expansion, saw urbanization, demographic growth, and usage of new technologies and monetization of economy. The Italian merchants rose as intermediaries in developing trade between the East and the West. The rise of Venice during tenth century indicated that it served as border market between the Byzantine East, the Muslim South and Catholic West. The growth of Genoa, Pisa, Piacenza, Siena, Florence and Milan in the coming years was due to the spread of trading network. During the period from 14th to 17th centuries European participation in maritime trade increased. A large number of ports and commercial centres developed in the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean. Portuguese emerged as the main trading nation and started dominating trading activities. Large trading companies were established in England, Holland and France.

Here we shall also discuss some of the major business communities in the medieval world. These trading communities in different parts of the Eurasian continuum were the main vehicles through whom the trade of the medieval period was conducted. During this period the trading activities got a big boost with the development in shipping and

trade across continents. We notice that apart from individual merchants large trading companies were established to handle growing volumes of commodities and requirement of finances. In spite of these developments the trading world of the medieval period was dominated by numerous business communities, both small and large, in different countries. It is not possible to make a detailed analysis of all of them within a limited space, we intend to take up an in-depth study of the major business communities who were actively engaged in trading in the medieval world. Among the major merchant communities in Eurasian continuum we will discuss the Armenians, the Jews, the Karimis, and the Arabs.

9.2 RISE OF ISLAM AND THE OCEANIC TRADE IN ASIA AND EUROPE

In the medieval world, the rise of Islam was one of the most important developments that had a great impact on oceanic trade. For many centuries, Arab and Muslim merchants played an important role in the development of the vast commercial network. In fact, well before the arrival of the Europeans, the coastal regions of the Indian Ocean between east Africa and the China Sea constituted a zone of intense commercial exchanges, mainly controlled by Muslim seamen and merchants. From the middle of the 7th century to the end of the 15th, the general direction and structure of the Indian Ocean trade are remarkably clear. There was a long line of trans-continental traffic, going all the way from south China to the eastern Mediterranean. The second typology of Indian Ocean trade incorporated shorter voyages and distances.

It seems that up to the beginning of the 10th century or even later, Arab ships and merchants had sailed all the way to China and back, calling at the intermediate ports. As a matter of fact, the commercial expansion of Muslim merchants and traders across the Indian Ocean to South Asia and China, Arab achievements made it possible to unite the two arteries of long-distance trade known in antiquity between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean¹. The twin channels of the trans-continental trade of Asia constituted of the seaborne traffic through the Red Sea and the combined sea, river, and overland journey across the Persian Gulf, Iraq and the Syrian Desert. Both these were brought under the political control of single authorities, at first that of the Umayyad Caliphs and later that of the Abbasids. Even the Mediterranean, divided as it was between a Christian north and a Muslim south, eventually recovered much of its economic unity through the activity of merchants and traders.



Map 9.1: Italy to India Route

Credit: Morn

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Italy_to_India_Route.svg

¹ The Trading World of Asia and Arabs have been discussed later in this Course in **Unit 16**.

The medieval trade of Asia was founded on four great products of eastern civilization – silk, porcelain, sandalwood and black pepper which were exchanged for incense, thorough bred horses, ivory, cotton textiles, and metal goods. So far as the trade with China is concerned, the Persian Gulf ships were already sailing to Canton in the late 7th and early 8th centuries to buy, among other things, the silk textiles of China. The lands of the Arabs were regarded in China as the greatest store of precious and varied goods. Java and Sumatra came next. The two areas formed the ancient crossroads of inter-continental trade. As a source of gem stones, pearls, incense, perfume, sandalwood and spices, the three regions – southern Arabia, the Persian Gulf and southeast Asia – remained for more than a millennium the cornerstones of pre-modern long-distance exchange in luxury objects.

After the Mongol conquest of China in 1280, the empire's maritime connections seem to have been strengthened rather than weakened. As we know from Marco Polo (1298) and Ibn Battuta (d. 1377), the two city ports of Hangchow and Zaiton flourished during the period. Zaiton was crowded with ocean-going ships. For every ship laden with pepper which might be sent for trans-shipment to Alexandria and the Christian lands, one hundred came to Zaiton. When Ibn Battuta visited the city in CE 1343-1344, it seemed to him to be the greatest port in the world, its commercial traffic exceeding that of Alexandria, and Quilon and Calicut on the Malabar Coast.

However, there occurred important changes in the direction of Indian Ocean trade from the end of the 10th century to the middle of the 15th. The decline of the Abbasid Caliphate and the rise of the Fatimids in Egypt shifted the routing of long-distance trade away from Baghdad and Damascus to Aden and Fustat. In India, the Turkish Sultans of Delhi conquered Gujarat in CE 1303-1304, and its maritime towns were now within the reach of Islamic social and political influence. At about the same time, the trading ports and coastal kingdoms of the Indonesian **archipelago** began to accept the Islamic faith and the process of conversion continued for the next three centuries.

These new developments in the Indian Ocean ran parallel to the developments taking place in the Christian half of the Mediterranean. The expulsion of the Moorish rulers from Spain and the rise of Venice and Genoa to commercial supremacy signified the symbolic beginnings of a re-alignment in the structure of world economy. At the same time, the shifting of the seat of power by the Fatimids to old Cairo, the economic importance of Alexandria as the terminus of trans-continental trade became even greater. Under the Ayyubid rulers of Egypt (1170-1260), followed by the Mamluks (1260-1517), the strong economic position of Cairo was maintained with intensive development of the Red Sea ports.

However, in China, the economic policies of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) produced contradictory effects on maritime trade. The third Ming emperor, Yung-lo (1402-24), tried a new experiment in China's economic relations with the trading nations of the Indian Ocean. It took the form of a hugely ambitious series of seaborne expeditions between 1404 and 1433 but these were finally abandoned in 1433 and the future Ming emperors were determined to close China's sea-coasts to foreign visitors. They placed an embargo on the trade of Chinese merchants to overseas destinations. Ming overseas commerce, however, continued in several forms, especially through smuggling voyages to the Philippines, Tong king and Malacca.

9.3 TRADE IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

The spread of Islam into the basin of the Mediterranean in the 7th century closed that sea to the Christians of the West but not to all the Christians. The south Italian towns

such as Naples and Bari in the east continued to recognize the Emperor at Constantinople, and so also did Venice, which at the head of the Adriatic, never had anything seriously to fear from the **Saracen** expansion. Venice, already a great maritime power, by 1100, established her hegemony on the whole of the east coast of that sea, which she considered her domain and which remained hers for centuries. In fact, continental Europe witnessed two great commercial movements which appeared on its borders in the early medieval period, the one in the western Mediterranean and the Adriatic, the other in the Baltic and the North Sea. The latter was dominated by the Scandinavians whose maritime exploits were not directed only to the west. While the Danes and the Norwegians threw themselves on the Carolingian Empire, England, Scotland and Ireland, and their neighbours, the Swedes, turned to Russia. Another important development was the end of Mediterranean domination by Muslims after the Crusades. Now the whole of the Mediterranean was reopened to western navigation. The most lasting and essential result of the Crusades was to give the Italian towns, and in a lesser degree, those of Provence and Catalonia, the mastery of the Mediterranean.

The trade of northern Europe was not greatly concerned with oriental and Mediterranean commodities. At various times, between the 6th and the 10th centuries, traders and warriors brought goods from the extreme north of Europe to Byzantium and reimported Byzantine goods into northern Europe. In later centuries, Italian merchants frequently sailed into the harbors of England and Flanders, bringing with them all the infinite variety of Levantine and oriental products. Still more regularly Italian merchants and the men of the North, Germans, Flemings, English and French, mingled in the great international marts of Central and Northern Europe. Different centres rose to prominence throughout the medieval period: Champagne during the 12th and 13th centuries, in Bruges in the 14th and the early 15th centuries, Genoa, Antwerp in the 15th century. These merchants from all over Europe exchanged the Italian and Italian-borne products for other goods.

The main currents of trade across northern Europe and between northern Europe and other countries flowed with products of northern hemisphere, cruder, bulkier and altogether more indispensable than the luxuries and the fineries. Even in the South, food-stuffs or raw materials also entered into the trade of the Mediterranean region. What gave the southern trade its peculiar character was not the trade in the bulky essentials, but those luxury trades which were associated with it. By contrast, the trade of northern Europe was almost exclusively devoted to the necessities of life.

Medieval commerce developed in Europe because of the impetus generated by long-distance trade. Spices were the first objects of this trade. They created the wealth of not only Venice but of all the great ports of the western Mediterranean. Syria, to which quantities were brought by caravans coming from Arabia, India and Southeast Asia, was the principal destination of European ships. However, from the beginning of the 13th century, imports into Europe consisted of rice, oranges, apricots, figs, raisins, perfumes, **medicaments** and dye stuffs. To these was added cotton also. Raw silk was also imported from the end of the 12th century. In return for all these imports, the Italians supplied the ports of the Levant with timber and arms, Venice, for at least a certain time, with slaves. But woollen goods soon became the chief export, at first **fustians** woven in Italy, then, from the second half of the 12th century, cloths from Flanders and northern France. English shipping, however, did not advance with her wool exports. These were carried chiefly by continental ships and by the 13th century had become almost the monopoly of the Teutonic Hans. Thus, if we consider the articles which fed the international or oceanic trade in the middle ages, it will be apparent that industrial products were fewer by far than agricultural and food commodities – spices, wine, corn, salt, fish and wools. Only cloth, first of the **Low Countries** and later that of Florence, gave rise to a large export trade.

9.4 TRADING COMMUNITIES

The growth of trade and business transaction gave rise to host of commercial activities and persons associated with it. Merchants and merchant communities were central to all these activities. Apart from buying and selling commodities they also acted as moneylenders, financiers, moneychangers, brokers, bankers, commercial agents etc. Most of the time the big merchants performed many of these functions simultaneously. While a few restricted themselves to their specialized area only, the specialization of this sort emerged gradually towards the later medieval period only. The transactions at the local level were directly in the hands of producers. Thus, monks, fishermen, peasants and landlords acted as 'part-time merchant'. However, as trade grew in volume, it came under the control of enterprising merchants.

9.4.1 Armenians

The observation of the Court of Directors of the English East India Company in 1699 about the Armenians that 'most certainly they are the most ancient merchants of the world' was perhaps no exaggeration. Indeed, from the earliest times to the end of the pre-modern era, the Armenian merchant communities engaged themselves in international and inter-continental trade in the Eurasian continuum. They ventured out of the homeland (Armenia) to different parts of Asia and Europe, and settled themselves not only in important cities, ports and trade marts but also in remote production centres far away from their own country. And thus they created the infrastructure for an efficient and successful long-distance trade and a commercial network with strong link with their main centre at New Julfa. This 'trading diaspora' of the Armenians was a unique feature of the trading world, especially of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Armenian Trading Network

The emergence of Armenian trading network and diaspora in the seventeenth century was to some extent helped by the historical developments of the preceding century when old Armenia fell a victim to Perso-Ottoman rivalry. In the early seventeenth century, the Persian emperor, Shah Abbas I, forcibly moved the professional Armenian merchants and artisans, and settled them in the new township of New Julfa in the suburb of Isfahan. The emperor's main objective was to utilize the services and expertise of the Armenian entrepreneurs in transforming his newly founded capital city of Isfahan into a major trade centre. The latter did not disappoint him. As they had the necessary capital and commercial network in Asia and Europe, the Armenians were able to develop 'Persia's foreign trade in raw silk, create new markets and products and expand the scope of trade routes'. And they ceaselessly contributed to Persia's economic prosperity under the succeeding Shahs until the invasion of Persia by the Afghans in 1722 which dealt a severe blow to the Armenians of New Julfa, and after which many of the prominent Armenian merchants migrated to other countries.

The Armenian networks extended over vast geographical areas stretching from Bengal to Delhi-Agra, and even to Surat or from Surat to the Red Sea and Persian Gulf ports. It is more or less well known now that the Armenians played a significant role in the commercial and economic life of India. Though it is not possible to indicate as to when the Armenians established their trading networks in India, it can be reasonably assumed that they began their trading activities in India long before the arrival of the Europeans. As an important trading group, their presence was a common feature in all the prominent centres of trade and manufacture, cities and ports. But what was most striking about them was that if there was any possibility of profit in trade, they would even go to remote places and deal in any commodity, unlike many other trading groups.

Needless to say, there were many important Armenian merchants and traders in the flourishing Armenian settlement of Saidabad (a suburb of the capital Murshidabad), Hughli, Calcutta, Kasimbazar, Dhaka and Patna with their own localities and churches. They were also to be found in large numbers in Agra, Delhi, Benaras, Surat, Madras, Masulipatnam, and other important cities and ports in India. What is significant to note here is that the Armenians in Bengal/India were not dissociated from their mainstream in New Julfa. There are several instances that the Armenians in Bengal were in touch with New Julfa and there was regular traffic between Bengal and New Julfa, which only reiterates that cultural and ethnic ties were extremely important in the entrepreneurial networks built by the Armenians.

Success of Armenians

The Armenians often acted as a group rather than individual entrepreneurs because of the pride they took in their identity. That they had one language, one culture and one religion was the most crucial factor, which helped them in developing and extending their networks. The crucial question that remains to be answered, however, is what were the reasons for the fabulous success of the Armenian merchants *vis-à-vis* even the advanced organizational form of the European joint stock companies.

In all probability, the Armenians succeeded because they were able to create networks of trust, shared information and mutual support based upon the fact that they were a distinctive ethnic and religious minority. There is no doubt that some of the other diaspora people like the Jews had all these characteristics but perhaps the Armenians were ahead of the others in these respects and hence their success was more spectacular than that of the others.

However, the Armenian commercial system, based as it was on close family ties, was not something extraordinary. The well-known Italian merchant families are a European example of the same family system. This was a common trading pattern in the early modern period. The Indians, especially the Marwaris and Gujaratis as also the Parsis in India, had the same system of operations. And all of them were quite successful in their enterprises. In fact, one of the main factors that contributed to the fabulous success of the Armenians was their will to better their situation in exile, which gave them their knowledge of languages and customs of other social groups. Their flexibility was an asset. An ability to measure the risks of overland trade and a readiness to vary the size of commercial transactions were the special service which the Armenians brought to the trading world of the Middle East, India and even Europe, and this was one of the secrets of their tremendous success.

9.4.2 Jews

The role played by the Jewish business communities in the field of international trade and finance was almost as important as the one played by the Armenians. In the early centuries of Islamic history, Jewish communities could be found in almost every city and the Jews participated in trade ventures far beyond the frontiers of the Islamic state. Everywhere from North Africa and Egypt to Persia and Khorasan and in India, as far as Malabar, the Jewish communities had originated in antiquity. In fact, on the eve of the Muslim conquests, the Jews of Iraq or Babylonia, appear to have been particularly numerous and here they were second in number only to the Nestorian Christians. In effect, when Baghdad became the capital of Islam and trade surged in the eighth and ninth centuries, the Jews there took an active part in it. In the ninth century, the Indian trade became the backbone of the international economy. This contributed to a tremendous upsurge of internal commerce and subsequently a shift towards a unified bimetallic currency system which encompassed the eastern and western Caliphate.

At this point, the central and hegemonic position of the Babylonian Jewry gave them a headstart not only in the long-distance trade with India but in the organization of finance and also state finance generally. In Baghdad and Isfahan, great finance and banking institutions arose with important and pivotal Jewish connections. Indeed, corporate international finance as it has come to be known today with a clear Jewish preponderance appears to date back to the Abbasid Caliphate of the late ninth and early tenth centuries. During this period, Jewish bankers loomed large in the entourage of the rulers, lending money to the government and consolidating the finance of the state, at the same time becoming involved in the fiscal system and in tax farming. Jewish bankers probably gained control of the Abbasid money market during the early tenth century and became instrumental in the development of sophisticated financial techniques such as the use of bills of exchange (*suftaja*) and cheques (*saak*). The same bankers also operated as traders (*tujjar*) or as financiers of other Jewish as well as Muslim traders. We find them supplying funds for African slave trade, equipping caravans to Central Asia and China, and organizing maritime expeditions in both the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean.

In Iraq and Persia, the Jews appear to have surpassed the Muslims in importance in the institutions of finance and credit. In Egypt, both the Jews and Christians played roles in the economic and administrative spheres which were out of proportion to their numbers. By the tenth century, Egypt (with North Africa) began to seek an outlet for its increasing strength, and the Fatimids took over an important part of the India trade from their rivals in Iraq. The result was a vast migration of Jews to Cairo. Abbasids began to lose more and more power in the east and in the west from the late tenth century, especially after the Seljuq invasion, and the beginning of the Crusades (1096) and Baghdad declined. This affected trade also and even a larger portion of the India trade was redirected to Egypt. Simultaneously, the volume of transferred goods expanded steadily. In Egypt, the Jews again obtained a disproportionate share in this trade in the eleventh and twelfth centuries when it became one of their main pursuits.

The chance discovery of a large number of papers (Genizah documents) belonging to the Jewish community of North Africa who traded extensively in the eastern Mediterranean in the tenth and eleventh centuries is of great help in reconstructing the trading activities of the community. The geographical dimensions of long-distance trade are clearly visible in the correspondence of these Cairo Genizah merchants.

The members of the community had presence in towns as far apart as Qayrawan in Tunisia, Alexandria and Fustat in Egypt, and Aden at the entrance of the Red Sea. This facilitated the sale of goods by friends and associates resident there on behalf of the distant owners. The Genizah documents reveal that these Jewish merchants were held together in a mutual bond of personal friendship, complete trust and financial interest. In a community of such close-knit ties, the sanction against a defaulting member was the loss of his credit and reputation; a man who was not worthy of trust would quickly exhaust his goodwill.

Moreover, the Genizah documents bring to light in vivid detail the actual conditions under which a community of Mediterranean merchants organized their international business life from North Africa to India. The most interesting revelation of these documents is the activity of Jewish traders from Tunisia, Andalusia, and even Sicily in the trans-oceanic trade. A great number of them were closely involved with western India, moving constantly between the Malabar ports, Aden, and Fustat. The extent to which the Fatimid connections with North Africa had encouraged these merchants to engage in extended

commercial transactions is amply clear from the Genizah documents. But it is also true that the shipment of goods from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean West did not take place on the basis of direct connections. The commercial dealings of the Genizah merchants between India and the Maghreb relied on intermediaries.

Infact, Jewish trading stations, linked to Egypt and the Red Sea, can be located in over twenty different places on the west coast of India to the south of Broach, and further in Indonesia. But they were no longer as dominant as in the previous period, and the India trade of the tenth to twelfth centuries was carried out and financed to a far greater degree by Muslims based in the Mediterranean area. Still, Cairo became an increasingly important centre of Jewish mercantile and financial activity. Egypt became the new intermediary between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. In the eleventh century, therefore, merchants from Iraq and Persia were found settling in the Mediterranean area but not vice versa. From 1050 onwards, a large number of Jews began to emigrate from Baghdad to Spain. The Mediterranean in the eleventh century was still, despite Italian encroachments, largely in Islamic hands and Arab-speaking Jews participated in the Mediterranean trade as well.

At the time of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, a considerable proportion of Spanish Jewry converted at least nominally to Christianity. Hence, as nominal Christians, they had much more freedom than before. Meanwhile, the bulk of those Jews who left Spain in 1492 migrated either to the Ottoman seaports or else to Portugal (where they were forcibly baptized in 1497). There were the two most decisively situated locations from which to respond to the new commercial opportunities and take part in the reshaping of the world's trade routes. Thus nearly all the Jews and **crypto-Jews** in the three key maritime and commercial cross-roads of the early sixteenth century were either connected to Christianity or relocated to Turkish ports. Now they were in a position to participate in long-distance trade and manage it successfully in a new context of freedom.

9.4.3 Karimi Merchants

If the Cairo Genizah papers richly illuminate the multi-faced life of one community of long-distance traders in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, they also cast some light on a baffling economic organization known as the 'Karim'. The Karimi merchants of the Red Sea are mentioned in the Egyptian sources as being actively concerned with the spice trade of the Indian Ocean. However, the word 'Karim' also occurs frequently in the Genizah papers in the context of the India trade. It has been argued most convincingly by S. D. Goitein on the basis of materials in those papers that in the twelfth century, the 'Karim' was neither a guild of merchants nor a particular branch of international trade but some sort of annual convoy or a sea-borne caravan. Though Goitein provides no explanation for this, we can only speculate as to why there should have been such an organization at this time in the history of Indian Ocean trade. There is no doubt that the total volume of Euro-Asian trade had become very considerable between CE 1000 and 1300. This would have made the ships and cargo of individual merchants trading by sea to India very vulnerable to pirates and political taxation. A convoy system organized by wealthy merchants may have been in a position to buy protection from the political rulers of the Middle East and to organize better protection against attacks by the pirates of the Indian Ocean. There is evidence to suggest that Karimi merchants organized their trade from port at Quresia al-Qadim on the Red Sea Coast of Egypt. This trade was frequent with Yemen, South Arabia and India. They dealt in pepper, spices, wheat, rice, sugar, silk and textiles.

9.4.4 Some Other Merchant Groups of Asia and Europe

The brisk trading activities of the medieval world brought into prominence a number of merchant groups and communities other than Armenians and Jews.

Sogdian merchants were one of the dominant groups in the trade of early medieval period. They were people of Iranian origin and inhabitants of Central Asia (more precisely the present regions of Uzbekistan and Western Tajakistan). They were highly skilled in crafts, as interpreters, horse breeders and craftsmen. Sogdians were among the first translators of Buddhist texts into Chinese. They generally followed Zoroastrian beliefs system. Their presence in China is recorded before the beginning of the Christian era. Their colonies were spread in West parts of Central Asia, China, even Ceylon and other places on the maritime trade route between India and China.

Sogdians completely dominated the Silk Road one of the important trade route spacing around 7000 kilometers which developed from China right across Asia to the eastern Roman Empire to the shore of Mediterranean. The Sogdian language was the most spoken language on the route. The trade on the route declined by the end of 9th century and was abandoned by the 14th century. The Sogdian dominance was most evident from 4th to 9th century CE. The silk from China was the most important trading commodity traded by Sogdians. The other items of trade by Sogdians were linen, pepper, silver and musk.

The Chinese merchants got involved in the maritime trade in a big way from 10th century onwards. Their knowledge of geography, astronomy, invention of compass and technology of shipbuilding gave them an edge. However, the government in China exercised a lot of control over overseas trade closely monitoring all imports and exports. Song dynasty (960-1279) encouraged trading activities. Their trade relations were with Champa, Khmer empire, port cities of Sumatra and Malay Peninsula. In late 13th century Marco Polo had all praise for Chinese ships. Ibn Battuta (*Travels in Asia and Africa 1325-1354*) describes their ships in details and says, 'There are no people in the World wealthier than the Chinese'. It was, however, during the Ming period (1336-1644) that the big boost was given to Chinese traders. In 1405 Ming emperors founded marine expedition for business as well as collecting tribute. The ships were loaded with silk and porcelain. They visited ports around Indian Ocean. Here Arab and African merchants exchanged spices, ivory, medicines, wood and pearls. Cheng Ho or Zheng He (1371-1433) led the expedition with a fleet of more than 300 ships with around 27800 sailors and soldiers. In all from 1405 to 1433 Cheng Ho made seven such expeditions covering around 50000 kilometers and touched 37 countries through South East Asia, Arabia and Africa. These expeditions helped in forging trading links over a vast region. Such expeditions were in a way an attempt to keep the trade out of private hands. The Chinese government gave freedom to private merchants from China for trading in 16th century only.

In medieval India the trading activities were very well developed and large scale trade was carried both inland and overseas. Highly specialized business communities had emerged. There were different groups of merchants dealing in specific commodities and regions. Baniyas, Bohras and Parsees in Gujarat; Hindu and Jain Marwaris in Rajasthan; Khattris in Punjab and North India; Chettis and Komatis on the east coast; Muslim merchants, probably of foreign origin in Gujarat, Deccan and Bengal were a few such important groups.

The Venetian merchants were also one of the important groups involved in overseas

trade. They had their trading ventures from 12th century in Egypt but from 13th century onwards they started penetrating into Muslim territories in a big way. The Ayyubid rulers of Egypt granted them trade privileges in Egypt and Syria. Though there was a break in between because of the prohibition on trade with Egypt by the Church (in the wake of Crusades). The Mamluks who replaced Fatimids in the middle of the 13th century granted fresh privileges. In the 14th century the Venetians developed trade with Cyprus, Armenia, Persia and Black Sea region. (In the second half of 14th century the trade got set back with renewed Crusade by the king of Cyprus). The Venetian trade was restricted to the coastal areas from where the Jewish and Muslim traders carried it over land to interior area.

Check Your Progress-1

1) How did rise of Islam affect the oceanic trade till the 10th century?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2) What was the pattern of European trade between the 11th to 15th centuries?

.....
.....
.....
.....

3) Give a brief account of the trading network of Armenian merchants. Elaborate the trading practices that accounted for their success.

.....
.....
.....
.....

4) In what ways did the Jews dominate the business activities in the medieval world?

.....
.....
.....
.....

5) Write a short note on Karimi merchants.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

9.5 TRADING ROUTES

The flow of goods within regions and to outside areas rested on the extension and use of trading routes. During the middle ages, land and water routes were used. Robert Lopez has highlighted the role of Arab merchants in forging widespread trading links. The trade of central Asia extensively used land routes. The caravan routes linked the Mediterranean world with India, Iran and China. The Muslim traders had trading posts in Sind and Gujarat. In the tenth century, they had an important colony at Saymur, not far from Mumbai.

The travellers on their way to India used the Red Sea ports of Jor and Jidda and Ubullah in the Persian Gulf. As the Chinese vessels did not venture as far as Basra, there was emergence of Siraf as an important port of trade. It became the nodal point of trade between Yemen and the Red Sea. The town of Muscat and the coastal parts of Oman also played an important role in the traffic.

During the ninth century, actions of the Chinese authorities resulted in concentration of trade in Malacca. During Late T'ang and Sung period, eastern and Southern coasts of China were used for foreign trade. In the Late T'ang period, bulk of foreign trade flowed through Canton (Guangzhou). Under the Southern Sung, Chuan-Chou situated near the great tea and porcelain-producing areas in Fukien became the leading port. Korea also had trading links with Japan.

Central Africa had indirect contact with the Indian Ocean before 1100. The 'Age of Discovery' resulted in the forging of more trading links between Africa, Asia, America and Europe. The Mediterranean, Baltic, Atlantic, Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea were extensively used for international trade. Contrary to the Pirenne's thesis, several studies have shown that Arab expansion did not affect Mediterranean shipping.

Pierre Chaunu has listed four major routes, which were used by Italian merchants since Eleventh century across the Mediterranean. There were two overland caravan routes connected with trade in silk and Chinese curios. The first route stretched from China to the Black sea, along the steppes of Southern Siberia. The second route passed through the Turkistan desert and connected Iran. From Iran, this land route was linked to the head of the Persian Gulf. Thus the land and sea routes were inter-connected. The other two sea-routes mentioned by Pierre Chaunu were from the Indian Ocean. One such sea-route from India passed through Malacca and the East Indies. It converged at the Persian Gulf. For reaching the ports of Palestine and Syria, travellers using the above-mentioned sea-route, had to commute through the desert. The sea-route from the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba or Suez considerably reduced the land journey to Alexandria.



Map 9.2: Silk Route in the 1st Century CE

Credits: Runehelmet, January, 2013

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ed/Transasia_trade_routes_1stC_CE_gr2.png

Since the eleventh century, Italian and other merchants trading to the south used several routes across England and France. Many routes linked Brabant to France. A network of routes across Northern France converged on Compiègne and Troyes.

During twelfth century, Hellweg bisecting northern Germany from Dortmund in Westphalia was the main link to the Slavonic East but in the coming century four trans-continental routes between Bruges and Baltic were developed. In Southeastern parts of England, it was cheap to use rivers for importing timber from the Baltic and Norway. The use of Dutch rivers and canals, stretching along the east to west resulted in emergence of Holland as a center of **entrepot** trade. Lubeck and Hamburg acted as the main reloading places for the goods of Bruges. In fact most of the great rivers of the Europe – the Rhine, the Weser, the Elbe in Germany, the Loire, the Rhonx, the Garonne in France carried heavy long-distance traffic. In England, the Thames, the Stour, the Avon, the Trent along with several other rivers were used for internal trade.

In Eastern Europe Volga route was extensively used. The trade between Russia and Byzantine was carried from the Baltic either via the Gulf of Finland or via the Gulf of Riga and the Dvina. From the latter goods were carried to the Dnieper and the Black Sea.

In the Ninth Century, Frisian Dorestad, the Danish Haithabu and the Swedish Birka were the main centre of Baltic trade. The link between the Baltic countries and the northwestern Russia was provided by the waterway, which spread, from the Baltic up to Neva into Lake Ladoga and the Volkhov to Novgorod.

The use of above mentioned sea-routes was dependent on the shipping industry. During the middle Ages, most merchant's ships were carvel built (with planks joined) and were light and fast. By 1277 Genoese Galleys began to sail via Cadiz and Seville to France, Flanders and England. In the Mediterranean, the Naves, the slow sailing ships carried the freight. These were low cost ships in comparison with galleys. They could carry more freight.

In China, several improvements were made. During the T'ang and Sung dynastic rule, stern rudder made their appearance. These were more than sixty meters in length, with flat bottoms and thin keel. These ships having three to a dozen masts were rigged with square sails. They could carry up to thousand persons. The use of marine compass also facilitated navigation. In Baghdad, pontoon bridges were used. These were linked at both ends by iron chains and were attached at each bank to firmly implanted posts. Thus, canals were put to use for local transport.

9.6 CENTRES OF COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY: MARKETS AND FAIRS

The Commercial transaction of commodities was carried through specific centres of exchange and trade. These can be traced in some form or the other to prehistoric times. We have references from ancient times from almost all cultures about the existence of periodic markets at local level. Some of these had specific commodities of trade while others had a range of them. With the development of settled societies regular and fixed centres for trading purposes also emerged side by side with periodic markets.

9.6.1 Markets

The growing commercial activities in the medieval period saw fast growth of markets and towns. Almost all the towns had a market and in case of bigger towns there were more than one market. All the big towns of Europe, London, Paris, Moscow, Barcelona, Venice, Madrid, Lisbon, Bavaria, Cologne, Lyons etc. had big markets often spreading with the growth of towns or in many cases growing markets were expanding the limits of towns. Markets in big towns specialized in certain commodities corn, fish, beef, cloths, livestock (generally on the outskirts), wine, cheese and butter, fruits and vegetables and so on. The regular fairs were in addition to these. The situation was not very different in other countries of Europe.

The craftsmen thronged to urban centres to sell their products (also see **Unit 8, BHIC-104**). The exchange of commodities can be illustrated from the example of Delhi in 14th century. The horses reached here from Khurasan via Multan. The city obtained grain from as far as Amroha (in U.P.), wines from Kol (Aligarh) and Meerut, betel leaf from Dhar in Malwa, ordinary cloth from Awadh (Ayodhya), muslin from Devagiri, striped cloth from Bengal and Brocade from as far as Tabriz in Iran (*The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. I, p. 84).

The Arab World was dotted with markets in all big towns. Towns like Aden, Jeddah, Istanbul, Hormuz, Baghdad, Mecca, Basra had markets which attracted traders from far off places. China was no exception having large markets, as almost all towns attracted traders from Central Asia, Africa and India. The special features of Chinese merchants were that they moved from one market to another with their goods. In Egypt Cairo had more than thirty markets. Even Latin America had their own markets, when the European colonizers arrived there in Mexico, Brazil and Argentina. These further grew in size and the commodities they traded in also increased after the arrival of colonizers.

9.6.2 Fairs

To begin with fairs were mainly related to religious and ritual festivals and celebrations. With the expansion of trading activities most of them became centres of commercial activities also. These fairs were of varying sizes attracting people of only particular region, across regions and across countries. The frequency of holding fairs was also not uniform. It could be monthly, once in a few months, twice a year or once a year. In

some cases, it could be even once in a few years. Many of these were held in particular seasons or time of the year. As far as the availability of items of trade are concerned, some fairs were known for specific commodities. The range of commodities in periodic markets and fairs was very wide. These included slaves, cattle of all sorts, grains, arms, craft products to precious or luxury goods.

As volume of trade grew and was connected with international trade, relationship between markets and fairs became more explicit. Initially fairs were connected with religious celebrations but gradually they became center of trade. The Lendit fair held in June at St. Denis in eleventh century was a religious fair. It was the abbey of St. Denis, which obtained sanction from the royalty to hold the fair. Between 1109 and 1112, Louis VI instituted another fair in the plains of St. Denis. After 1213, both fairs were merged into a single fair, 'The Lendit of the plain of St Denis'. In the eleventh century, Flanders fairs at Torhout became centre of intensive commercial and industrial activity.

It was the fairs of Champagne, which became foci of international trade. The information about these fairs is available from 1114 onwards. It was in the thirteenth century that they assumed the classic form. The six fairs were held in four towns of the countries of Champagne and Brie. The merchants of France, Italy, England, Germany, Switzerland and Savoy brought clothes, woollen, silk, leather, fur lines, spices, wax, sugar, grain, wine and horses for sale in the fairs. From 1250 onwards Genoa became the center of trade. The fairs of Troyes, Provins, Lagny and Bar-Sur-Aube also attracted merchants from distant places.

There are claims to the continuity of fairs for centuries. Lendit fair was traced to 9th century, Troyes fairs to Roman times and Lyons fair to 172 CE. 'In Europe Sully-sur-Loire near Orleans, Pontigny in Brittany, Saint-Claira and Beaumont de Laumagne each had eight fairs a year. Lectoure in the *generalite* of Montauban had nine; Auch eleven ...' (Braudel 1995, I: 82).

Many of the fairs were linked together and formed specific circuits with merchants moving from one to the other. India had its own fairs. Many of these were religious but trading went side by side. The biggest fair (Kumbh) was held once in 6 and 12 years in different religious cities. Mocha an important port attracted ships laden with commodities from India and other parts of Europe. Egypt, Syria and Arabia were famous for their fairs. The pilgrimage to Mecca was one of the big occasion for traders who reached here from far and wide with every conceivable commodity. Hormuz had her season of trade lasting 3-4 months and was like a fair. Alexandria had great trading activity for two months (September-October) during favourable season for ships to reach. In East Asia Bantam in Jawa was famous for its brisk trading markets and fair. Like India, China had its fairs associated with religious occasions. Here the state closely governed the markets and trade.

What is amazing about these fairs is sheer range of participation. Big merchants, middlemen, small shopkeepers, peddlers and common men they were all there. The transaction of highest order in wholesale trade to individual merchandise took place. Depending on the size and importance of each fair they attracted traders from the distant countries to the regions in the neighbourhood.

9.7 COMMERCIAL PRACTICES

The growth of trading activities and long distance trade over land and seas made the commercial transactions complex. The trading transitions entailed numerous risks. There was fear of sea-pirates and natural disasters at sea. The required capital was to be

generated for purchasing of goods. Money was needed for buying commodities in distant places and sale proceeds were also to be carried back. It was difficult to carry huge amount of gold currency to distant areas. As a result, a number of new commercial practices and institutions emerged to take care of the growing trade.

9.7.1 Credit and Moneylending

The system of Credit was widely prevalent in the trading activities. Even at the regional and local levels the wholesalers would give things on credit to retailers and latter in turn to the consumers. In small business the small traders, middlemen and suppliers were always at the brink. If the sum was not paid back it could ruin the creditor. The growth of trade necessitated the funding for large scale commercial transactions. To begin with this funding was provided by big merchants. In due course it emerged as a specialized activity with separate category of money lenders. However, most of big merchants continued to deal in providing money on credit. In case of India the nobles (high officers of the state) also lent money for trading. They dealt in big amounts and gave it to established merchants only. In many parts of Europe also the nobles were involved in providing funding for business.

The practice of granting maritime loan to a shipowner or a merchant was existing in Europe for a long time. Such loan was repaid only after the vessel or Cargo had arrived safely at agreed destination. The maritime loan was of great advantage. It offered credit and insurance to the borrower. But the rate of interest on it was very high. In around 1230, this loan was banned by the church. However, the practice continued by converting it into an exchange contract.

Pierre Chaunu has pointed out several devices used by Italian merchants for generating capital. There was use of *commenda*, a periodic partnership for one season. The evidences available from Venice of eleventh century indicate that *commenda* was a 'partnership' concluded between a financier and a merchant. While the former provided the capital, latter undertook journey for conducting trade. There also existed another type of partnership between merchants. It was called *colleganza*. Under this arrangement, one merchant provided only the capital, another merchant, while providing capital was also involved in trade. The massive collection of Genoese notarial documents indicates that the *commenda* declined in Genoa by the latter half of the thirteenth century. The *compagnia* or partnership replaced it. Initially such partnership brought together family members having capital but gradually these gave way to *corpidi:compagnia* or Capital of the society. These were open to individuals who wished to invest their capital for trading transactions.

The payment of debts was also an integral part of commercial transactions. Often merchants either did not carry cash or were short of resources to purchase commodities. They had to borrow and debts were cleared during the fairs. The available records show that at the fairs, payment was done on the last day. The transactions were recorded. These written writs guaranteed the clearance of debts by merchants who had borrowed money. In this way credit system developed. It was not dependent on the transportation of coins. Henry Pirenne has rightly observed that the fair acted as an embryonic clearing house for the European economy.

Beside currency, several methods were used to facilitate exchange. One such mechanism was the 'fair letter', appearing in the Netherlands. It recorded debt in the presence of several municipal magistrates. It was written in the form of a 'divide letter', two copies being written on the one sheet of Parchment. It was torn into two and was given to Magistrate and Creditor. The fitting together of these two portions authenticated the deed. Thus the 'fair-letter' carried with it the right to exact payment.

A certain interest was charged by the lenders from the debtor. In Europe the Christian Church had prohibited lending money at interest (usury). The church was of the opinion that the only way of making money should be through work and earning profits from money does not have religious sanction. Islam also prohibits charging interest. As a result until 13th century Jews were the main moneylenders. A lot of resentment against Jews and their persecution can be ascribed to their moneylending business. However, the ban by Church succeeded only partially and many Christian groups still followed moneylending and at times camouflaged and circumvented it in various ways (one of the ways was to consider that interest could be charged if lender was running a risk of losing). The instruments of exchange also helped in advancing money with commission built in and escaped the charge of usury.

The rate of interest was around 20% they could settle for upto 10%. In India the interest rates varied from region to region and could be from 9 to 18%. However, the interest rates depended on a number of factors and could be as high as 100%. The factors taken into account were the distance, reliability of the party raising loans, the bargaining capacity of debtor and risks involved in the trading commodity and place.

9.7.2 Instruments of Exchange, Money Changing, Banking and Accounting

The use of currency was integral to trading activities. Several methods were devised to issue required currency by the state in different parts of the world. During the T'ang and Sung period in China, apart from coins, paper money and paper credit was also used. As early as 811, the T'ang was issuing 'flying cash' to pay for goods acquired in distant areas. These money drafts were reimbursable at the capital. Under the Sung many such drafts were issued. These government money drafts were exchanged between merchants who wished to transfer credits. The private bankers also developed another type of paper money. They used certificates of deposit, which could be cashed for a three per cent service charge. Such certificates were circulated freely at face value. Those issued by the bankers of Chengtu in Szechwan were very famous. In 1204, when the government took them over, they became the world's first genuine paper money. These certificates were valid for a period of three years and entailed service charge of three per cent. In Tokugawa Japan, individual daimyo used rice and silver certificates as paper money within their domains. In India merchants used both currency and paper transactions like *Hundi*.

It is important to stress the basis of using currency as the medium of trading transactions during the middle ages. For an understanding of its use, one has to take into consideration, the unit of account and the medium of exchange. The money used in actual payment was first converted into the standard of value and large transactions were always paid by weight. It had direct bearing on the value of a system of coinage. The trading was conducted in different currencies like florins, guilders, ducats, pounds or any other. The specialist moneychangers used to assess the value of the coin by determining how much precious metal it contained. It may be noted that people accepting coins evaluated them not at their face value but according to their metal content. In such a situation coined money could not act as the comprehensive means of payment in the middle Ages. The crucial role of money changers contributed to their controlling large sums of money and effecting the transfer of funds and even extended time loans to merchants and bankers.

Because of varying currencies and their value, role of moneychangers became important. The practice of moneychanging was in vogue in the Western Europe during the ninth century. In the second half of the twelfth century moneychangers were active in Genoa.

They were known as *bancherii* (word was derived from the bench on which money lenders handled coins). These moneychangers exchanged coins and accepted deposits from their clients. They were paid small amount for safe keeping of money. These deposits were used for clearing debts in far away places. By the end of twelfth century. The **bill of exchange** also made its appearance. These bills were written by moneychangers and assured the payment abroad in foreign money to merchants. The payment was equivalent of the sum deposited by these merchants with moneychangers.

With the development of semi-permanent money markets, moneychangers started acting as bankers. They not only deposited money but also extended credit to customers and got involved in overseas trade. They formed partnerships, which made it possible to transfer funds even when debtors and creditors had accounts with different establishments. By the middle of fourteenth century non-negotiable bills and notes were widely used.

The institution of Banking on a full-scale with resident banking establishments came into existence in around 13th century. Italy took the lead and cities like Genoa, Lucca, Florence, Tuscany, Rome and Venice became the centres of banking activity. A large number of family firms established banks in Florence. By the last decade of 13th century Bardi and Peruzzi families of Florence established Banks in England also. Peruzzi had branches in Avignon, Bruges, Cyprus, London, Naples, Paris, Pisa, Rhodes, Sicily, Tunis and Venice. By one estimate by the year 1338 around 80 banking houses were operating in Florence with exchanges in every part of Europe. By the end of 14th and early 15th century a number of European cities had banks established by business houses. The Medici Bank of Italy was one of the most powerful banks of the 15th century. With its headquarter in Florence it established branches in Rome, Naples, Milan, Pisa, Venice, Geneva, Lyons, Avignon, Bruges, London and many other cities. They even became financial agents of the church, extended credit to kings and facilitated international trade in Europe. Banks participated in trade as well as making loans to traders. In fact in the early phase trading was more important than banking.

Another important institution that emerged in late medieval period was Exchange or Stock Exchange which was central to all trading activity. In 1681 it was described as ‘the meeting place of bankers, merchants and businessmen, exchange currency dealers and banker’s agents, broker and other persons’ (Samuel Ricard cf. Braudel 1995, I: 97).

The recording of commercial transactions was essential for regulating trade. In maritime trade, practice of venture accounting was in vogue in Europe.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Give a brief account of the significant trade routes in Asia and Europe during the medieval period.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2) Explain the various commercial practices adopted by merchants in medieval Asia and Europe.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3) How were fairs important for the trade during the period under discussion?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4) Write a short note on the growth of markets in the medieval period.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

9.8 SUMMARY

Oceanic Trade in the medieval world gave rise to large scale interaction between the Europe and Asia. The trading activities greatly influenced the society, economy and polity in the two regions. After the rise of Islam in Arabian peninsula for almost three hundred years the maritime trade was dominated by Arab seamen and merchants. This trade was mainly responsible for uniting the two arteries of long distance trade between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean.

In this Unit you have studied about major communities in medieval period who dominated the trading and business activities. We covered the social organization, business expertise and trading organizations of these business communities.

All the business communities and their diasporas whether the Armenians, Jews, Indians, Greeks, Arabs and the Chinese in the medieval world shared certain key features which explain why they succeeded in such remarkable ways in establishing enduring commercial networks over vast areas in the Eurasian continuum. A high degree of confidence, great trust among the members of the same community and the reduction in transaction costs through a scattered but well-knit international community which possessed a distinctive culture, religious tradition and communal institutions particular to itself was largely shared alike by all these business communities. At the same time there were certain dissimilarities in the trading networks of the various business communities. For example, while the Jewish people concentrated more on the maritime activities, the Armenians were involved mostly in overland trade.

9.9 KEYWORDS

Archipelago	: Many islands in the sea in a specific region or group of islands.
<i>Bancherii</i>	: A term used for money changers in Genoa.
<i>Commenda</i>	: It was a trading partnership between two individuals. Under it, one supplied the capital and another used the capital for trading transactions.
<i>Compagnia</i>	: A partnership of family members for generating capital.
<i>Corpidi Compagnia</i>	: These partnerships were formed by individuals having capital and were not based on family or kinship ties.
Crusade	: Military expeditions by the European Christian countries to recover the Holy land from the Muslims in middle ages.
Crypto Jews	: Those who had secret allegiance to Jews or Judaism.
Entrepot	: Commercial centre for import and export and collection and distribution.
Fustians	: Thick strong cotton cloth.
Low Countries	: Netherland (Holland), Belgium and Luxembourg.
Medicaments	: Substances used for medicinal purposes.
Saracen	: Arab or Muslims during the middle ages.
Bill of Exchange	: These were written deeds signed by moneychangers/moneylenders/merchants and their customer promising the payment of a sum of money to the bearer at a particular place.

9.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Section 9.2
- 2) See Section 9.3
- 3) See Sub-section 9.4.1
- 4) See Sub-section 9.4.2
- 5) See Sub-section 9.4.3

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Section 9.5

- 2) See Section 9.7
- 3) See Sub-section 9.6.2
- 4) See Sub-section 9.6.1

9.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

Braudel, Fernand, (1995) *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*, trs. From French by Sian Reynolds, in 2 volumes (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Chaudhuri, K. N., (1978) *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Chaudhury, Sushil and Morineau, Michel, (ed.) (1999) *Merchants, Companies and Trade: Europe and Asia in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Chaunu, Pierre, (1979) *European Expansion in the later Middle Ages. General Editor Richard Vaughan*, Vol. 10 (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company).

Cipolla, Carlo M., (1976) *Before the Industrial Revolution: European Society and Economy, 1000-1700* (Britain: Methuen & Co. Ltd.).

Das Gupta, Ashin, and Pearson, M. N., (ed.) (1987) *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press).

Das Gupta, Ashin, (1982) 'Indian Merchants and Trade in the Indian Ocean, c. 1500-1750', in Tapan Raychaudhury and Irfan Habib (ed.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press), Vol. I, pp. 407-33.

Das Gupta, Ashin, (2001) *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant, 1500-1800*, Collected Essays of Ashin Das Gupta (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).

9.12 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

Indian Ocean Trade

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/trade-networks-in-the-middle-ages-empires-routes.html>

Indian Ocean Trade: Route, Networks & History

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/indian-ocean-trade-route-network-history.html>

The Silk Road: Connecting the ancient world through trade

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vn3e37VWc0k>

UNIT 10 AFRICA*

Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Morocco: Medieval Empires
 - 10.2.1 Almoravids
 - 10.2.2 Almohads
 - 10.2.3 Marinids
- 10.3 Moroccan Economy, Society and Religion during the Medieval Times
- 10.4 Medieval Ethiopia
 - 10.4.1 The Ethiopian Dynasties
 - 10.4.2 Ethiopian Coptic Christianity
 - 10.4.3 Ethiopia: Land and Economy
- 10.5 Medieval Zimbabwe
 - 10.5.1 The Archaeological Site of Great Zimbabwe
 - 10.5.2 Socio-Economic Life
- 10.6 Summary
- 10.7 Keywords
- 10.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 10.9 Suggested Readings
- 10.10 Instructional Video Recommendations

10.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- learn about some of the surviving medieval civilizations/empires of Africa,
- comprehend the growth of Almoravid, Almohad, and Marinid empires in the **Maghrib** (Morocco),
- analyze the role of Islam in the formation of empires in the Maghrib,
- understand the role of trans-Mediterranean and trans-Saharan trade in the formation of empires in the Maghrib,
- know the geopolitical conditions that shaped the growth of empires/monarchies/chieftaincies in Ethiopia,
- construct the medieval history of Great Zimbabwe, and
- learn the myths current about Great Zimbabwe.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Africa is a vast and varied continent. It is quite difficult for any historian to precisely specify the medieval period in the History of Africa. It is also a daunting task to find out a few territories which can represent the entire continent. It is further difficult to confine medieval history of a territory in its modern national boundaries. National boundaries are modern and medieval (which is pre-modern) societies had their own territorial limits. The medieval were different from the modern boundaries. Yet modern nation states have searched for their medieval roots. And it has been an imprecise attempt. Continuing this practice we will attempt to have a feel of Medieval History of Africa in this Unit by a random selection of three regions of Africa. The three regions are Morocco, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe.

There are other three major regions – North Africa (Pharaonic Egypt), West Africa (Kawkaw, Malel [Mali], Ghana and Kanem), and South Africa (Bantu, Ngunis/Sans) – in present-day Africa. Keeping in view the limitations of the Course we are not going into details of these regions.

10.2 MOROCCO: MEDIEVAL EMPIRES

In the northwestern corner of Africa, Morocco, a modern nation state is largely known as a former French colony. The vast region commonly known as Maghrib, is divided into eastern and western Maghribs. Here our discussion would largely be confined to Western Maghrib and Sudan. Further down in its history, it was a land of a people called Berbers and it is so largely even today. History tells us that Berber was never a self-reference of the people of Maghrib or modern day Morocco-Algeria region. Berber was a name given to them by Greeks and Arabs. Berbers were Berber/Amazigh speaking 'tribes'. [Amazigh has about three variants or dialects namely: Riffian, Taleshit and Tamazight and these are spoken at different regions of the land of Berbers. Now it is said that this language (or languages) are spoken largely in rural areas and the official language of Morocco is Arabic.] The Berbers were not a homogenous community of one language, one religion, and one kind of economic activity. They had quite different topographies and were pursuing different productive activities. Some of the Berbers were nomads and some were sedentary agriculturists. Their settlements were found on both sides of the Atlas mountains and extended southwards to Sahara and eastwards to Tunisia and towards the shores of Atlantic on the west. They fought amongst themselves as well as had intermarriages amongst themselves. Their differences should not be over-emphasized as some historians maintain that they also had plenty of commonness amongst themselves. They were broadly divided into three sets as the Masmuda Berbers, Sanhaja Berbers (among more than 50 odd tribes of Sanhaja Berbers the three dominating tribes were Bani Gudala, Bani Lamtuna, Bani Massufa with strong and powerful chiefs) and the Zanata Berbers. The various Berber tribes had their own chiefs and governing principles. Further, the Berber territory also had travellers and settlers from other communities as Jews and Christians, Sudanese etc.

In the 7th century, Islam (along with *Quran* and Arabic) reached the Berber country. A process of Islamization/Arabization started since then. Some of the Berbers accepted Islam as their religion but continued following some of their indigenous practices. This was considered 'impure' Islam and by the 11th century, some Islamic scholars, jurists and zealots thought of purifying the Berber version of Islam. The lead in this was taken by one Ibn Yasin, who had been to Mecca on a pilgrimage and had learnt the nuances of what can be called the 'true' Islam. Some experts consider this as Islamic reform movement, while others as 'Holy' or 'Religious War' or *Jihad*. This was also the process

of establishment of rule of various Moroccan Berber dynasties as Almoravids (1056-1147), Almohads (1130-1269), and the Marinids (1196-1464) in the northwestern Africa. These empires extended from southern Morocco/Ghana to **Andalusia**. We shall see how the medieval empires of the Almoravids, the Almohads and the Marinids grew in the region and how the Moroccan society and economy developed under these regimes during the medieval times.

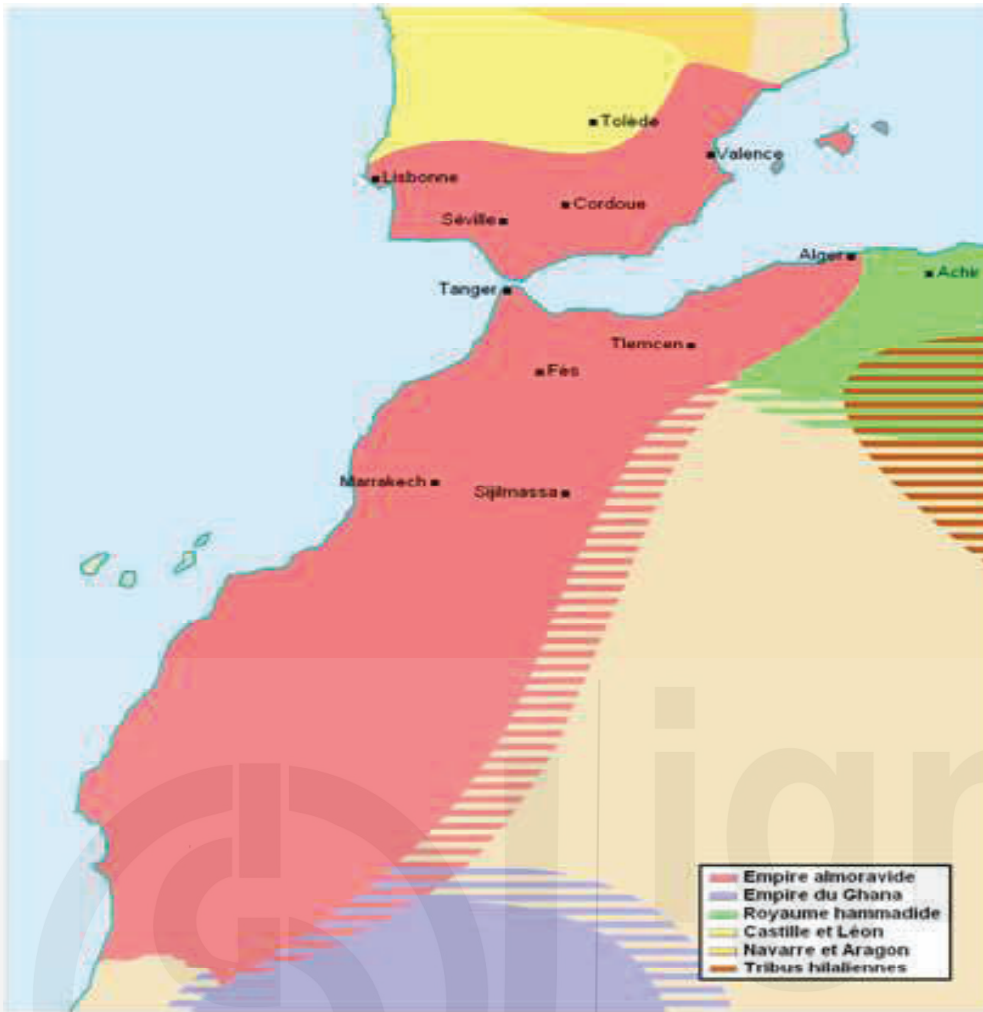
10.2.1 Almoravids

Ibn Yasin (d. 1059) was the one who established the Almoravid Empire in the eleventh century in the southwestern Sahara. He began with an objective and determination to purify Islam and to bring the Berber tribes away from their heretic or Kharijite¹ Islam and assemble them under one Arabized Empire. He was a Gazula Berber and under the instructions from one Abu went to preach Islam to the southern Sanhaja tribes. He was quite upset over the fact that the Muslims there were not following the ‘proper’ teachings of the Prophet or following the *sharia* — the Islamic law. He himself, it appears from sources, was puritanical and under the influence of the Maliki school of Islamic jurisprudence and a religious zealot. His initial attempt at purifying the existing Islam with the Gudala Berbers was not successful. His rigid interpretation and imposition of religious tenets and punitive measures only helped fan the flames of rebellion against him. The Gudalas not only opposed him but also attacked his house and he ran for his life and left the place.

That was not all. The Muslims of Sijilmasa (a prosperous town and trading entrepot on the northern border of Sahara) invited Ibn Yasin to save them from the oppressions of the ruling tribal chief, the Maghrawa of Zanata. Without wasting time he came to their rescue and took control of the town and the trade center. The people (Bani Lamtunas) of the place not only helped him but accepted him as the ‘true’ Imam and mobilized all their resources behind him. And thereafter he targeted Awghust, another town and trade centre of great importance on southern Sahara. And from here he never had to look back as these two trade centres provided all the economic resources he needed to expand the Almoravid empire and spread ‘true’ Islam.

Finally, around the middle of the 11th century, the Almoravids established an empire over the entire territory which extended from northern Ghana in the south through Morocco (Maghrib) to Andalusia (southern Spain) in the north. Under Yusuf Ibn Tashfin Almoravid power reached at its peak and he is credited to have established Almoravid empire in the Maghrib and across the strait in southern Spain. With Sudanese and Christian captives from Spain he reorganized and built his army, thus changed the tribal character of the army to a ‘heterogeneous’ imperial forces. His period marked the beginning of the process of rupture from the Caliphate, though Yusuf continued to acknowledge Caliph’s suzerainty. The Caliph also acknowledged Ibn Tashfin’s power in the region: ‘I cannot live out of the desert, and I came [here] only to hand over the authority to you...’ (Levtzion 2008: 334). Sanhajias enjoyed special privileges and formed part of aristocracy. They were army commanders and governors in the provinces. Thus it was not only the religious ideology which helped establish the Almoravid Empire but other factors also contributed to the establishment and consolidation of their power.

¹ Kharijite (Arabic Khawarija, also known as al-Shurah) was one of the earliest Islamic sect. They opposed Ali and his act of arbitration with his rival Muawiyah. They believed any one, not just the Quraish could be made/become Imam, the leader of the community.



Map 10.1: The Almoravid Empire

Credit: Omar-Toons, February 2012

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cb/Empire_almoravide.PNG

10.2.2 Almohads

The growing dissatisfaction to Maliki policies of imposing ‘pure’ Islam along with the Sufi influence of both al-Ashari (d. 935) and al-Ghazali (1058-1111) which condemned *fuqahas* (jurists) for seeking ‘salvation through legalistic exercises’ eased the path of Almohads to overpower the Almoravids. By the mid-12th century a *Mahdi* of Almohad, named Ibn Tumart of Masmuda tribe of Anti-Atlas, sharing the Unitarian (the Muwahhidin) school of philosophy began another religio-political movement which formed the Almohad empire and expanded further than the Almoravids, into Maghrib and Ifriqya (modern Tunisia, western Libya and eastern Algeria) in the east. By 1125 he established himself in the Masmuda territory, with his headquarter at Tinnel. Ibn Tumart died in 1128. Ibn Tumart established a consultative assembly of fifty tribal representatives, thus accommodated and allowed each tribal group to maintain its identity. However, his own tribe Harga, along with his ten closest disciples of the Privy Council did enjoy precedence. He was succeeded by Abd al-Mumin, a Zanata from Tlemcen. He was the real founder of the dynasty. In 1145 he defeated the Christian mercenaries of the Almoravids and captured Tashfin b. Ali. He conquered the Almoravid capital, Marrakesh in 1146-47. Abd al-Mumin assumed the title of *amir al-muminin* (commander of the faithful, a prerogative of the Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad, a title which Almoravids avoided). Thus for ‘the first time that the ruler of Morocco came to be regarded as a caliph, a tradition which was seldom been abandoned since’ (Levtzion 2008: 342). Almoravids never expanded towards central Maghrib (Algeria). Abu al-

Mumin turned against Banu Hammad who ruled over central Maghrib and conquered Bougie, their capital in 1151/52. In 1152 he occupied Setif, followed by Mahdiya in 1160. Thus for the first time the entire Maghrib fell under the authority of Almohads. In 1184 Almohads succeeded in establishing their authority over Ifriqiya as well. Almohads also crossed the strait and occupied Spain and stopped the advancement of Christians. Thus the entire Maghrib, Ifriqiya and Spain were united under Almohad leadership. However, in turn it drained their resources. Abu Yaqub Yusuf (1163-1184) during his *jihad* battle in Spain died in 1184. Abu Yusuf Yaqub (1184-1199) defeated the Spanish Christian armies at Alarcos in 1195 and adopted the title al-Mansur. However, the defeat of Almohads in 1212 in the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa marked the decline of the Almohad power. 'The growing pressure of the Christians in Spain, revolts in Ifriqiya (increasing power of Arab Nomads [incorporated as *makhzin*] leading to clashes with Zanata and Turkoman) and the succession of weak caliphs disrupted the fragile structure of the Almohad empire' (Levtzion 2008: 344). In 1236 governor of Ifriqiya, Hafsid and in 1239 governor of Tlemcen, Yaghmorasan declared themselves independent from Almohads. In Spain also Christianity triumphed and all Muslim possessions were lost by 1276, even in Morocco after 1248 Banu Martin of Zanata was the virtual ruler and Almohad control was reduced to the capital Marrakesh when their last Caliph Idris al-Wathiq was murdered by a slave in 1269.

10.2.3 Marinids

In the mid-13th century, it were the Marinids who established themselves at Morocco, in Ifriqiya it were Hafsids who succeeded the Almohads, while at Tlemcen it were the Zayanids who held the power. The Marinids (c. 1250-c. 1465), who were Banu-Marin nomads of the sub-tribe of Zanata, and never knew sedentary life or agriculture but depended on cattle, camel, horses and slaves, came in conflict with the Almohads and conquered Marrakesh a prosperous town of Morocco. Then they moved on to build not only the new capital (New Fez) but also an empire which would rule the land for almost two centuries.

Following the death of Caliph Said, Banu Marin Berbers under the leadership of Abu Yahya occupied Fez, Taza, Mekens, Sale, and Rabat. Fez emerged as the chief centre of their activities. Abu Yahya died in 1258, and was succeeded by Abu Yaqub Yusuf (1258-1286), who consolidated his power and occupied Marrakesh in 1269 heralding the end of the Almohad empire. In 1299 Abu Yaqub Yusuf (1286-1307) occupied central Maghrib upto Algiers and besieged Tlemcen for long eight years. Abu Yaqub Yusuf was succeeded by his sons Abu Sabit and Abu Rabi during 1307-1310, and later by his brother Abu Said Usman (1310-1331). Abu Said had to face constant troubles from his son Abu Ali who was the governor of Sijilmasa. After Abu Said's death in 1331 his son Abul Hasan, the greatest of the Marinid Sultans, finally suppressed Abu Ali's resistance and established his authority at Sijilmasa. Marinids maintained cordial ties with Hafsids, even Abul Hasan married the Hafsid princess that further cemented the alliance. Abul Hasan conquered Tlemcen in 1337. After the death of Abu Bakr in 1346, the Hafsid Sultan, Abul Hasan occupied Ifriqiya, thus united the entire central and western Maghrib under one single authority. Like the Almohads they were also engaged in long drawn clashes in Spain that drained their resources and was the main reason of their downfall. They also faced severe resistance of the Arabs in Ifriqiya. While Hafsids avoided interference in Arab internal affairs, Abul Hasan's policy of direct control brought the Arabs in direct confrontation that ultimately in 1348 led to the defeat of Abul Hasan at the hands of the Arabs near Kairouan. In 1350 his son Abu Inan, who was governor of Tlemcen, rebelled against his father and declared

independence and Abul Hasan had to take refuge in the High Atlas mountains¹ where he died in 1351. Interestingly, Marinids could never ever establish their authority in the Atlas region. Largely Atlas, Rif and Jibal remained autonomous. Abu Inan like his father was an ambitious Sultan, assumed the title of *amir al-muminin* and reoccupied Tlemcen (1352) and central Maghrib, and conquered Bougie (1353). However, on account of growing Arab resistance in Ifriqiya he was forced to retreat and finally got murdered by one of his ministers. Then followed the long period of anarchy in the Marinid Sultanate till its fall in the fifteenth century. After Abu Inan as many as seventeen Sultans reigned between 1358-1465 CE. Effectively Marinid rule came to an end in 1420, though the Sultanate lingered as late as 1465 as tutelary Sultans of the Banu Wattas. The constant Christian pressure and the involvement of Maghrib Sultans in Andalusia remained the chief features of medieval Sultanates in the Maghrib. However, in 1415 occupation of Ceuta by the Portuguese marked another chapter that ‘inaugurated the Christian aggression on the African coasts’.

The Kubba/Koubba at Marrakesh, built in 1117 is the only surviving architecture of the Almoravids. The presence of drinking water facilities, shower, toilets connected through excellent drainage suggests that it was probably part of a larger mosque structure and used for ablution. The architectural statements of the Almohads were the Tinmallal Mosque in Morocco, the unfinished minaret of the Hasan mosque at Rabat. And these were unique features of their politics and religion. The Marinids were great builders. There survives a number of tombs, Arab baths, mosques and *madrasas*. The *madrasa* at Fez was built by Sultan Usman Abu Said (1310-1331).



Figure 10.1: The Almoravid Koubba

Credit: Kashmir, August 2005

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d1/C%C3%BApula_almor%C3%A1vide_%28Marrakech%29.jpg

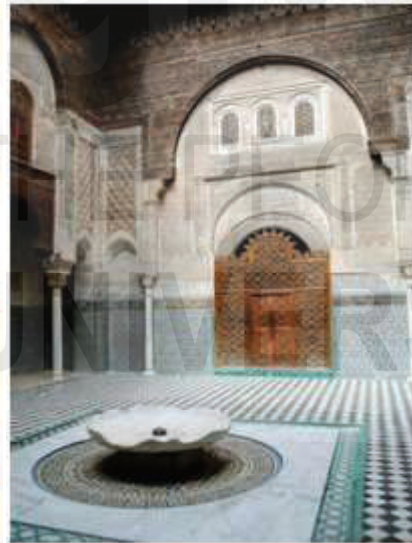


Figure 10.2: The Marinid Madrasa 1323-1325, Fez

Credit: just_a_cheeseburger, May 2012

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/09/Al-Attarine_Madrasa_%288753523807%29.jpg

Check Your Progress-1

1) Who were Almoravids? What was their religious ideology?

.....

.....

.....

¹ High Atlas mountain rises in the west in the Atlantic coast, and stretches along the Moroccan-Algerian border.

The traders were from various nationalities and each nationality had its own caravansarai (inn) known as *funduks*. There was considerable growth of urban centres under the Almoravids. The capital town of the Almoravids was Marrakesh, Nearby Awghmat developed as a flourishing commercial town. Al-Idrisi (1152-1157) praises its wealth greatly: 'no one was wealthier and in better condition [than those] under the rule of the Mulaththamun [the veiled people, the Almoravids]... Their slaves and agents go [to the Sudan] in caravans of seventy to a hundred camels, all loaded' (Levtzion 2008: 336). Another important trading entrepot was Sijilmasa. Fez was also a flourishing town. During these times the Jews and the Christians from Europe were also part of the elite high-ranking state officials in the medieval Moroccan Empires. Even Christians were employed as mercenaries. In the capital Marrakesh there existed a Christian ward and a Church. Particularly the Jews were also very successful traders. Their numbers in Morocco kept on increasing as they were persecuted by the Christians in Europe more and more. During the Marinid regimes there were anti-Jew pogroms² reported from Fez in particular. The Muslims from Andalusia who migrated to Morocco during this time were quite successful in elbowing out the local Muslims from the various offices of the state and joining the local elite. As a result of Almoravid expansion into Spain there were liberal cultural exchanges between the two. The Almoravids succeeded in establishing a symbiotic relationship between the Maghrib and the Andalusia. Spanish scholars and elites were inducted into the Almoravid bureaucracy. Building activities were largely done by Andalusian architects.

The control of the entire Maghrib and Spain put the Almohads in an advantageous position and contributed to much of their prosperity. Tripoli, Tunis and Bougie were prominent ports. Cities of Marrakesh and Fez became prosperous. A number of caravansarais were built at Marrakesh and Fez. However, Awghmat lost to Marrakesh which almost carried the major part of the trade with Sudan. Series of treaties in 1153, 1161, 1168, 1186 and 1211 ensured free access of the Italian merchants to the principal ports of the Maghrib on payments of tolls and duties. Merchants from Genoa, Pisa, Venice and Marseilles 'established their factories (*funduqs*) in the coastal towns of Tripoli to Ceuta on the Mediterranean, and as far as Massa on the Atlantic coast of Morocco' (Levtzion 2008: 347). However from thirteenth century onwards monopoly of Italian merchants got challenged by the Catalas (Spanish merchants). The Sus, Sijilmasa and Wargla were chief entrepots of trans-Saharan trade. Christian traders settled in the capital Marrakesh, lived in the same quarters where Christian mercenaries used to live, supplied wine to the militia. Jewish merchants served as middlemen in this trade. The most favoured items of exports from Europe to Maghrib were European cloth followed by grains, spices, precious stones, beads, perfumes. In return Europe received oriental wares, skins, leather goods, alum (dye) and wax. Under the Marinids importance of Awghmat declined and Tlemcen and Fez emerged as the most prominent entrepots to trade with Europe and western Sudan. Artisans of Fez produced excellent weaved cloth and the leather products to be exported to Europe, Orient and Sudan. Abu Yaqub Yusuf built a new town al-Mansura facing Tlemcen which soon emerged as prominent commercial hub, flocked with Jewish, Christian and Muslim merchants. Abul Hasan's conquest of Tlemcen first time brought the entire trans-Saharan trade's outlets (central and western Maghrib) under one single authority.

In spite of unification of vast tracts under Almoravids, individual tribes did maintain their distinct identities. Sanhajas even instructed their tribesmen not to imitate Almoravid's practice of *lithum* (veil).

The practice of slavery and racism was prevalent in the society despite the fact that

² An organized massacre of a particular ethnic group.

Islamic law never encouraged practice of racism. The slaves from Sudan were numerous in Morocco during Almohad period. The Berbers looked down upon the 'blacks' from south as non-martial, agricultural, non-tribal etc. They never used to intermarry with them and always held them in a subordinate position in society, though there were some exceptions to these. Slave-labour was used in domestic work and in agricultural production. Women slaves were also present throughout the period of medieval history of Morocco. By customary law Berbers were prevented from selling land and houses to **Haratins**. Haratins were 'blacks' or African slaves who had somehow obtained freedom from slavery. Haratins were excluded from owning land as land was the basis of social status. Historians have traced the origin of the racism and its equation to slavery to the medieval times of Morocco when tribes (Berber or otherwise) tried to maintain their (superior) status and purity by excluding conquered 'Blacks' who lived towards the south (Hamel 2013). Thus society was not free from dis-harmony and discrimination.

Religion

Almoravids were votaries of 'pure' Islam. Ibn Yasin implemented *Sharia* (Islamic law) strictly. Ibn Tashfin even abolished all illegal taxes not approved by the *Sharia*. He patronized and sought legal opinions and advice of *fuqaha* (jurists). They vehemently opposed sufism and burnt al-Ghazali's books. However, by 12th century there arose vigorous reactions to Almoravids, particularly under al-Ghazali's growing sufi influence, that led to the downfall of the Almoravids and *fuqahas* were condemned. In contrast to Almoravid philosophy Almohad ruler Ibn Tumart asserted upon the *ijtihad* (right of personal interpretation) of *Quran* and the Prophetic tradition. It encouraged the 'individual investigations' as against the 'monopoly' of jurisprudence of the Almoravids. They followed the Asharite³ and Zahirite⁴ philosophy. Unlike the Almoravids and Almohads, Marinids did not pursue any specific philosophy for legitimation. It were Hafsid who assumed the title of Caliph as 'true guardian of the Almohad doctrine' and initially Marinids paid nominal allegiance to the Hafsid Caliph. However, within thirty years once Marinids consolidated themselves the name of the Caliph was no longer recited in *khutba* (Friday sermons). Though, Almohads owed their existence to the sufi thought and the founding sufis lived during Almohads' time, it was only under the Marinids that the sufi orders (*silsilas*), particularly Qadiriya, took its shape. This Moroccan sufism became closer to 'cult of saints'. The sufi belief in 'supernatural power and a sacred emanation (*baraka*) which could be transferred by physical contact with the man or his grave' crystallized during the Marinid period. 'The saints absorbed pre-Islamic beliefs and customs. . . This new type of Berber Islam, with its more popular aspects, contributed to the Islamization of the countryside because the religious message reached the remotest Berber tribe of the mountains who had little to do with the more formal aspects of Islam in past centuries' (Levtzion 2008: 362). These sufi orders (*murabat/marabouts*) were answers to urban *makhzin* (elites) and were very much present at the very centre of every village life, playing the role of religious guides, often as arbiters. The Marinid Sultans were followers of this sufi mysticism. Sultan Abul Hasan at Tlemcen built a sanctuary of sufi saint Sidi Abu Madyan and Abu Inan built one such in honour of Sisi al-Halawi. However, in spite of Marinid inclination of sufi Islam, importance of *fuqaha* (jurists) continued. Marinids established a number of *madradas* where Maliki School of jurisprudence was taught. One such famous *madrada* was established at Fez. The Christian Reconquista of Spain was another chief feature of eleventh and twelfth centuries.

³ Asharite School was founded by Abu al-Hasan al-Ashari (d. 936). It is one of the orthodox school of Sunni Islam which opposed the Mutazili emphasis on reason.

⁴ Zahirite school of Islamic jurisprudence was founded by Dawud al-Zahiri in the ninth century. They believed in *zahir* (outward) meaning of *Quran* and *Hadis* and rejected deductions (*qiyas*).

Check Your Progress- 2

1) Briefly mention the economic structure of the medieval empires of the Maghrib.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2) State the important entrepots of the Maghrib and their importance.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3) List the major towns of the Magharib in the medieval period.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4) Trace the transition of medieval Maghrib from ‘pure’ Islam to sufi Islam.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

10.4 MEDIEVAL ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia, another modern nation of Africa is on the northeastern corner of Africa. Its medieval history is closely related to the rise of Islam like the medieval history of Morocco. But at the same time, unlike Moroccan medieval history it is not a history of Islamization or Arabization of Ethiopia, rather it was a history of resistance to such processes. The Ethiopians did that by rallying round the unique church they had – the Monophysite Coptic Church.

10.4.1 The Ethiopian Dynasties

The pre-medieval Aksumite kingdom of Ethiopia had accepted Coptic or Syrian Christianity as the state religion since the 4th century CE. They had built some of the most beautiful and grand churches of the entire Christian world. The decline of the Aksumite kingdom has been generally, though not universally, attributed to the rise of Islam and Arab states and the consequent loss of control of Aksumites over the Red Sea trade by the middle of the 8th century CE. Red Sea trade was a huge source of revenue for the Aksumite kingdom of Ethiopia as Red Sea was at the crossroads of the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean markets.

After the Aksumites the Zagwe dynasty ruled Ethiopia. With the advent of this new dynasty, the Zagwes, from the capital Axum in the north Ethiopia moved southwards towards Lasta province: Roha (present-day Lalibela) is the most referred capital. The Zagwe rulers continued the Aksumite tradition of church building and spreading Coptic Christianity amongst the tribes of southern Ethiopia. It is said that to prove themselves as ‘authentic’ descendants of Moses, the well-known Biblical figure, emperor Lalibela (1185-1225) specifically built 11 rock-hewn churches in his capital. In 1270, following the revolt of the Shewa, the Solomonic dynasty, a dynasty which claimed to have been descendants of King Solomon and Queen Sheba of the Bible, came to power. YekunoAmlak (1270-1285) was its first King. The rule of this dynasty reached its pinnacle during the regime of Emperor AmdaSiyon, who ruled between 1314-1344 CE. He not only faced rebellion from various quarters of his territory with firmness but also undertook a military campaign against Muslims and Egyptians forcing them to send a senior bishop for the church in Ethiopia. Perhaps during this time only the *KebrNagast* (*The glory of Kings*) was composed. The *KebrNagast* is a unique text. It is ‘a pastiche of legends conflated early in the fourteenth century by six Tigrayan scribes. Yishak, the chief compiler, claimed that he and his colleagues were merely translating an Arabic version of a Coptic work into Ge’ez. In fact, his team blended local and regional oral traditions and styles and substances derived from the Old and New Testaments, various apocryphal texts, Jewish and Islamic commentaries, and Patristic writings. The *KebrNagast*’s primary goal was to legitimize the ascendancy of Emperor YekunoAmlak and the “restored” Solomonic line’ (Marcus 2002).

During the rule of Dawit-I, who ruled from 1380 to 1412, the Ethiopian church itself plunged into an internal strife. It was a fight between two sets of clergy on ideological grounds. This led to persecution of one of the parties by the other which had a strong hold on the state. Despite his attempts Dawit-I could not bring the fight within the church to a close. But his successor Emperor, Zara Yakob (ruled between 1434 and 1468), who himself was trained in a monastery, could bring a reconciliation between the warring factions of the church in Ethiopia.

That was the time when the Muslims towards the east and southeast of the Ethiopian Christian kingdom were converting people to Islam and organizing small regional principalities. Ifat was one such principality and was the leading one amongst Harer, Afar and Somali. Their existence toward the east, controlling the Red Sea trade had been a constant source of tension and conflict. There were frequent raids and counter-raids between the Christian and Muslim rulers. But the Ethiopian Christian kingdom continued to withstand all that and dominate over the small Muslim principalities or shaikhdoms who were divided by language, culture and tradition. By the end of 15th century the Muslims of Ifat, Harer joined with Adal and made Adal a stronger Islamic power. By the middle of 16th century, one military leader from Adal, namely Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi (or Gran, the left-handed) posed a huge military challenge to the Christian emperor of Ethiopia. In 1529 he undertook a campaign. The ruler of Ethiopia

LebnaDengel, who ruled between 1508 and 1540, could not defend his empire and sought the help of the Christian ruler of Portugal. The help came during the time of Lebna's successor, Galawdewos (reign 1540-49). Galawdewos in 1543 not only defeated but also killed Gran and restored the supremacy of the Christian kingdom.

The conflicts between the two states, here, seem more of a clash between two religions or between the two leading religious communities. Nonetheless, both, the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia and the Arab-Islamic states were plural societies and were not homogenous religious communities. Ethiopia had multiple linguistic communities in it such as the Semitic (Ge'ez, Amharic and Agaw), Cushitic (Cush and Nilotic) and other tribal languages. The same was the situation of the religions too. There were tribal animistic religious practices as well as Christianity which was the state religion. There existed not only many religions but also syncretism, meaning there existed inter-relationships, influences and unclear boundaries between them (Braukamper 1992). Thus to say that conflict between the two powers was a conflict of two religions will be incorrect. Further, other than religion, there were other reasons behind the conflict, such as trade in gold, ivory, slave or even control of fertile lands, and so on.

10.4.2 Ethiopian Coptic Christianity

Despite there being multiple religions in medieval Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Coptic Christianity needs special consideration in the study of Ethiopian medieval history. It was not only the state church but also the organizer of the society and a substantial participant in Ethiopian medieval economy. There were thousands of churches in Ethiopia, hundreds of monasteries and there were thousands of priests and church officials. Kaleb, the Aksumite king (d. 540) who crossed the Red Sea to help the Christians who were persecuted by the Jewish ruler in the middle of 6th century CE, had given up the throne to become a Christian monk. There were frequent festivals and feasts organized by the church for the community.

From the 4th century we know the Aksumite kings became Christian and made the Christianity into a state religion. They belonged to Monophysite Coptic Church like the Syrians and Egyptians. This affiliation to Christianity continued with breaks during the medieval times in Ethiopia. Ethiopian Christianity was different from the Roman Catholicism. It had monastic and secular clergy. The monastic clergy learnt Ge'ez (the European equivalent of Latin) and had ascetic existence. The secular clergy used to marry and live among common Christians. And most importantly what made this church/Christianity different from other churches was the monophysite (*tawahdo*) doctrine, which pertained to the monotheism of the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, and had traces of Semitic religious practices.

The rock-hewn churches of the Aksumite and the Zagwe kings, particularly by king Lalibela (reign 1181-1221) are monuments of fame not only of grandeur and architecture but also of the times and the faith of people. A brief discussion on the rock-hewn churches will give you an idea about them. The rock-hewn churches are carved out of single rocks on the side of mountains. From Aksumite times such churches were being built in Ethiopia. But during the Zagwe times, King Lalibela got some of the best Rock-hewn Churches built. He was also known as the Saint King and had visited Jerusalem. It is said that eleven rock hewn churches of Lalibela were built as a replica of the Holy Land (Jerusalem). Carved from one single block of huge rock these were extremely beautiful. 'The roof was gabled or carved flat, cruciform or simple, invariably with an attractive cornice. Afterwards, the craftsmen set themselves to hollow the interior and to design extraordinary forms of architecture which could never have been accomplished by normal building processes and techniques. Some churches had three naves, others

five, with rows of impressive columns, capitals. Arches, windows, niches, colossal crosses and swastikas in bas-relief and haut-relief, decorative rock mouldings and friezes of geometrical shapes, apses and domes, all these and other features have truly rendered the Lalibela churches enduring monuments of Christian architecture in the heart of the African continent' (Tamene 1998: 87ñ104). There are also references, though unconfirmed, that skilled craftsmen hired for this work were brought from afar including India.



Figure 10.3: Rock-Hewn Church of St. George, Lalibela, Ethiopia

Credit: Bernard Gagnon, November, 2012

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0b/Bete_Giyorgis_03.jpg

There were thousands of churches. These churches can be divided into three major types. The most common church was the church of *venko* or *geter*. The second types of churches were *debr* churches and they were largely in urban centres and imperial towns which received much royal patronage. In these two types of churches the secular clergy (the *debtaras*) used to officiate as priests who were married men. They certainly were trained and ordained as priests and were at the same time dancers, singers, astrologers, amulet and herbal medicine-maker and scribes for the illiterate. The third type of churches were the *gedam*, which were either attached to monastery or independent, but the officiating priests were the monastic clergy (monks) who were celibate ascetics. The monks were leading a pious and arduous ascetic life. And all of them were trained in monastic order and were conversant with Ge'ez, the language of scriptures and rituals. Some monks were widower too. There were very few nuns, who were doing menial work in the churches. This church not only held the country together but it was also the pride of Ethiopia, the only country in Africa which could not be colonized by any European power.

10.4.3 Ethiopia: Land and Economy

The economy and power in medieval Ethiopia were based largely on land. Despite views to the contrary that the state used to run on revenues from trade or rather

international trade during the medieval times, historians are now converging on this point that surplus was largely generated from land. Ownership of land was individual/private as well as collective in Ethiopia.

Land Tenure

Rist was the primary land tenure in most of Ethiopia as there were regional variations too. It was a hereditary land use right with obligations to the state and superiors. Peasants known as *gabbars* were holding *rist* tenurial rights. The primary *rist*-holder or *gabbar* could pass on this right to his children without discriminating between sons or daughters. In exceptional cases, as in the case of sedition, a *gabbar* could be deprived of his *rist* right. This *rist* right could not be transferred/sold to anybody outside the family or clan and therefore, the fear of dispossession was practically absent there. There were some minorities as Muslims or cobblers and tanners who did not have any *rist* right.

The other major land right was conferred by the state on Churches/Monasteries and other collectives and individuals which was known as the *gult*. It was a service tenure granted in lieu of salary for specific services. A beneficiary of this grant was known as *gultana*. A *gultana* could cultivate the land himself or could parcel it out as *rist* to *gabbar* to cultivate and share a part of the produce. A *gult* right was not always on land. It could be over a market, over a water-body or may be on pastures. Some historians are of the opinion that *gult* rights led to creation of tenant farming or simply landless labourers, particularly towards the south which was conquered from the 13th century onwards. Here the *gabbar* was supposed to provide labour services periodically, customary gifts to the *gult* holder besides the share of produce or tribute. In fact, *gult* holder was not the only superior of the *gabbar* here. The *gabbar* had to satisfy almost all subordinate officials of the *gult* holder such as the revenue collector, the judge, the priest of the church etc. At places even the entire family of the *gabbar* was required to work for the *gult* holder.

Whether medieval Ethiopia was feudal or not has also been addressed by historians and there is a large degree of agreement that peasants in Ethiopia were not serfs as in medieval Europe. They did enjoy a relative degree of freedom of movement. Whatever that may be, the *gabbars* were producing the much needed surplus to run the state and society. The Emperor, his entourage, and armed men used to move around the country when on military campaign. They also used to move around to enforce the laws and supervise the running of the administration. (This was the reason why historians have talked of roving capitals in Ethiopia). During all these movements, the *gabbar* was the primary worker, producer and camp-follower.

There were a large number of pastoral communities in Ethiopia. Even now we have indigenous pastoralists in the lowland of northeastern, eastern and southern regions of Ethiopia. Their livelihood was based on rearing of domesticated animals. For which they made the best use of pastures and water bodies seasonally available within their limited natural environments. Some of them practiced a little agriculture also with animal-herding. They have communal ownership as well as rights of use over pastures and agricultural land. These communities and their productive practices are under threat of extinction as Ethiopia modernizes.

There was presence of crafts production in the society to a limited extent. Crafts-men and crafts-women were part of the peasant society. Long distance and overseas trade (mostly of ivory, gold, and slaves) was also a substantial part of the economy but these were fluctuating in nature as the trade routes were not always in control of the Ethiopian state. Therefore, it is opined that the Ethiopian literati and nobility were never exclusively

dependent on trade for its fortunes but certainly lived a relatively comfortable life appropriating peasant surplus.

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) List major Ethiopian dynasties of the medieval period.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 2) Write five lines on Ethiopian Coptic Church.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 3) Analyze the presence of different types of land tenures in medieval Ethiopia.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

10.5 MEDIEVAL ZIMBABWE

The hallmark of medieval Zimbabwe is the remains of Great Zimbabwe, a city that appears to have been inhabited continuously from *c.* 11th century to *c.* 1600 CE. However, it reached its peak during *c.* 1300-1450 CE.

10.5.1 The Archaeological Site of Great Zimbabwe

The medieval history of Zimbabwe centers on the Great Zimbabwe, which was a huge stone-built complex about 20 kilometres southeast of the modern town of Masvingo in Zimbabwe. At its peak the stone-built complex used to extend over more than 70 hectares of land. It is said that the building of Great Zimbabwe stone city complex started in the early 12th century and continued till 1450s. The decline of this city appears to have occurred around the 1600 CE. And now we are only left with the archeological remains of Great Zimbabwe. This fortified urban centre was placed between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers in southern Africa.

From 1550s Europeans had witnessed the ruins of Great Zimbabwe. And in 1609, the Portuguese historian Joao de Santos created the myth of this land being that of Queen of Sheeba (mentioned in the Holy Bible) who went to see King Solomon. This myth

lasted for many years. And even in the 20th century, colonial masters and the local governments stoutly denied that this dry stone town complex was of indigenous origin and design. The Portuguese traders have mentioned that it was called Symbaoe (the court house) by the indigenous communities. Karl Mauch, the German geologist, in 1871 tried to verify the myth by saying that the Great Zimbabwe was Ophir, the biblical seat of Solomon and Sheeba. Many treasure-hunters went there and started digging various parts of the site in search of gold and precious wealth and damaged the site for any scientific archeological study limiting our knowledge of the Great Zimbabwe. As colonialism advanced into Africa so was their myth-making. Sponsored by Cecil Rhodes South African Company, one Brent and following him Mr. Hall manufactured and perpetuated a myth that the Great Zimbabwe stone architecture are contribution of either the Phoenicians or the Egyptians who sometimes in the history of Africa had colonized Zimbabwe and that it could never be built by the ‘uncivilized’ African people. Anybody who contested that and said it was the making of the indigenous people and their civilization was opposed. But in 1905, archeologist David Randall MacIver and in 1929 Gertrude Caton-Thomson stated categorically that Great Zimbabwe was built and used by African people. The Karangas built the stone edifices and Shonas who are the majority community in present day Zimbabwe are considered to be the descendants of the Karangas.



Figure 10.4: Aerial View of Great Zimbabwe

Credit: Janice Bell, July, 2015

Source: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/dd/Great-zim-aerial-looking-West.JPG>

Now hardly any stone houses are available on the site. All that is there are stone walls as high as 11 meters winding across the plateau. Archeologists have divided the Great Zimbabwe city site into three convenient divisions: 1. the Hill, (with its Western Enclosure and Eastern Enclosure), 2. the Great Enclosure and 3. The Valley. The Hill site was on the top over-looking the other two enclosures and the valley below. Initially it was suggested that the top or the Hill site was the place of administration and royal office. But that has been disputed and many other probable uses of the site have been suggested as the residence of Spiritual Leaders, pre-marital (training) residence etc. There is no evidence of any roofs but enclosures and passages do survive. Within the enclosed spaces there probably used to be mud-houses with thatched roofs. The mud houses

were built from the local mud with gravel known as Dhaka/Daga. Walls of the Western enclosure have turrets at intervals. There are stone pillars with birds carved on the top end which may have signified individual royal figures. The western enclosure could be the house for the King and his family members or other chiefs and dignitaries. The Eastern Enclosure could be a religious or sacred place for rituals as lot of carved figures of birds had been found here. Beside this there are plenty of other archeological artifacts as glass-beads, layers of Dhaka/Daga floors, broken pottery had been found.

The Great Enclosure is the largest archeological remain of Great Zimbabwe. It is approximately a 250 meters long dry stone wall enclosure with 10-12 meter high wall. The walls could be as thick as 5-6 meters at the bottom. There were narrow passages in between the walls leading to the famous conical tower of the enclosure. The enclosure has been identified variously by different researchers as a temple, a house for the many wives of the king, a private residential area for elites of the state, and even a training center for the unmarried youths. In the absence of documentary and other sources except archaeological, there appears to be no clarity about the purpose of such a huge building or enclosure.

Beyond the enclosures was the valley where the primary producers such as cattle-breeders and peasants stayed in thatched huts. They also cultivated the land there as well as provided the necessary labour for the trade, of which their city was a part. There are also a few smaller remnants of stone enclosures and edifices in the valley.

These dry stone masonry, dry as no mortar was used, is said to have been built in at least three phases. During the earliest phase of construction, the stones were not of smooth edge. The middle phase stones were trimmed and there were ornamental designs on the walls. And in the third phase there had been only chaotic compilation of rocks and no finesse in the construction.

The Decline

When, why and how the civilization collapsed and the Great Zimbabwe was abandoned is not known clearly. Again historians, scientists and archeologist keep guessing about the probable reason for this. Some of them are of the opinion that the Great Zimbabwe collapsed by 1400 and some others say by 1500. Some specialists are of the opinion that there were conflicts over succession therefore the empire collapsed. There are others who say that the Little Ice Age had set in around 1300. This led to cattle disease and other related problems therefore the Shonas left the Great Zimbabwe. According to one belief the gradual degradation of the environment around Great Zimbabwe also contributed to the decline. The collapse of gold trade may also have contributed as by 1500 Sultanate of Kilwa had also collapsed, adversely affecting trade-networks. It could possibly be that all these factors contributed to the decline of the Great Zimbabwe. Whatever the factor may be, there is substantial evidence that the Khami state (to the west) and the Mutapa civilization (to the north) came up with the migrants from Great Zimbabwe in the 15th century CE.

10.5.2 Socio-Economic Life

The archeological artifacts which throw some light on the social life of the Great Zimbabwe are many, namely broken pottery, pieces of animal bones, and fragments of tools they used. Cattle bones have been found only in the enclosure area which possibly means that the elite living in the enclosures could afford to eat beef whereas it was not accessible to the poor sections of the society. Or again possibly, cattle-ownership was a status symbol which was denied to the poorer people. From the archaeological evidences it can be inferred that the Shona used iron, copper, gold and most certainly

knew about its mining and metallurgy. The Shonas used iron tools and gongs. Remnants of copper and gold wire jewellery have also been found. But the Karangas and their descendants, the Shonas, were largely cattle breeders. That may have helped them move away from subsistence farming towards transportation, trade and mining. We do find evidence that they were engaged in the long-distance trade of these metals through the port city of Sofala and further north of the port and the city of Kilwa on the east coast of Africa. The inhabitants of the Great Zimbabwe not only exported gold, copper, iron and ivory but also seem to have imported Chinese porcelain, Asian glass-beads and Persian bowls.

Check Your Progress-4

- 1) Discuss the spatial characteristics of Great Zimbabwe.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 2) What light did the artifacts of Great Zimbabwe throw on the socio-economic life of that period?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 3) Why was the Great Zimbabwe declined/abandoned?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

10.6 SUMMARY

The Unit focuses on three major regions of Africa – the Maghrib (Morocco-Algiers), Ethiopia and Zimbabwe. One finds that the concept of medieval is quite different in the context of all the three African medieval civilizations/empires. The Maghrib saw the intervention of Islam that resulted in the formation of three major empires – the Almoravids, the Almohads and the Marinids. Here sufism also played an important role in the change of new dynastic controls in the region and Maghrib could really be termed as one of the earliest centres of sufi activities where the famous sufi saint al-Ghazali lived. In Ethiopia it was the Christianity that played an important role in the formation and consolidation of the medieval empires in the region. In contrast to Maghrib and

Ethiopia, Zimbabwe's story is quite different. Our data and information on this great medieval Zimbabwe rests solely on archaeological finds. In the absence of any written records the civilization has often been viewed as the biblical seat of Solomon and Sheeba.

10.7 KEYWORDS

Andalusia	: Spain
Fez	: A city in northern Morocco
Fundukes	: Caravansarai
Haratins	: Morocco African slaves who obtained freedom from slavery
Maghreb	: Morocco-Algiers

10.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Sub-section 10.2.1
- 2) See Sub-sections 10.2.1 and 10.2.2
- 3) See Sub-section 10.2.3

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Section 10.3
- 2) See Section 10.3
- 3) See Section 10.3
- 4) See Section 10.3

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) See Sub-section 10.4.1
- 2) See Sub-section 10.4.2
- 3) See Sub-section 10.4.3

Check Your Progress-4

- 1) See Sub-section 10.5.1
- 2) See Sub-section 10.5.2
- 3) See Sub-section 10.5.1

10.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

Braukamper, Ulrich, (1992) 'Aspects of Religious Syncretism in Southern Ethiopia', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. XXII, No. 3.

Hamel, Chouki El, (2013) *Black Morocco; A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* (New York: Cambridge University Press).

Henze, Paul B., (2000) *Layers of Time; A History of Ethiopia* (London: C. Hurst & Co.).

Levtzion, Nehemia, (2008) 'The Western Maghrib and Sudan' in *The Cambridge History of Africa*, Vol. 3, *From c. 1050 to c. 1600*, 6th Print (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Marcus, Harold G., (2002) *A History of Ethiopia* (California: University of California Press).

Niane, D.T., (ed) (1998) *UNESCO General History of Africa*, Volume IV *Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century* (California: James Currey).

Tamrat, Tadesse, (2008) 'Ethiopia, the Red Sea and the Horn' in *The Cambridge History of Africa*, Vol. 3, *From c. 1050 to c. 1600*, 6th Print (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Tamene, Getnet (1998) 'Features of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Clergy' *Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1.

10.10 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

The Almoravid Empire (In Our Time)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNlc5QSJInY>

The Almoravids and Almohads: The Amazigh Berber Empire

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qLf-riMnkQ>

Marinid dynasty

<https://youtu.be/pIpHyqLwJQw>

Great Zimbabwe - African Medieval city (Zimbabwe)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uX0VNtaCcMk>

Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela, Ethiopia

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNab_2rWhhQ

UNIT 11 LATIN AMERICA*

Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 The Aztecs
 - 11.2.1 Polity
 - 11.2.2 Society
 - 11.2.3 Economy
 - 11.2.4 The Codices
 - 11.2.5 Religious Beliefs
- 11.3 The Incas
 - 11.3.1 Inca State and the Empire
 - 11.3.2 Society and Economy
 - 11.3.3 Water Management System
 - 11.3.4 Inca Architecture
- 11.4 Summary
- 11.5 Keywords
- 11.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 11.7 Suggested Readings
- 11.8 Instructional Video Recommendations

11.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

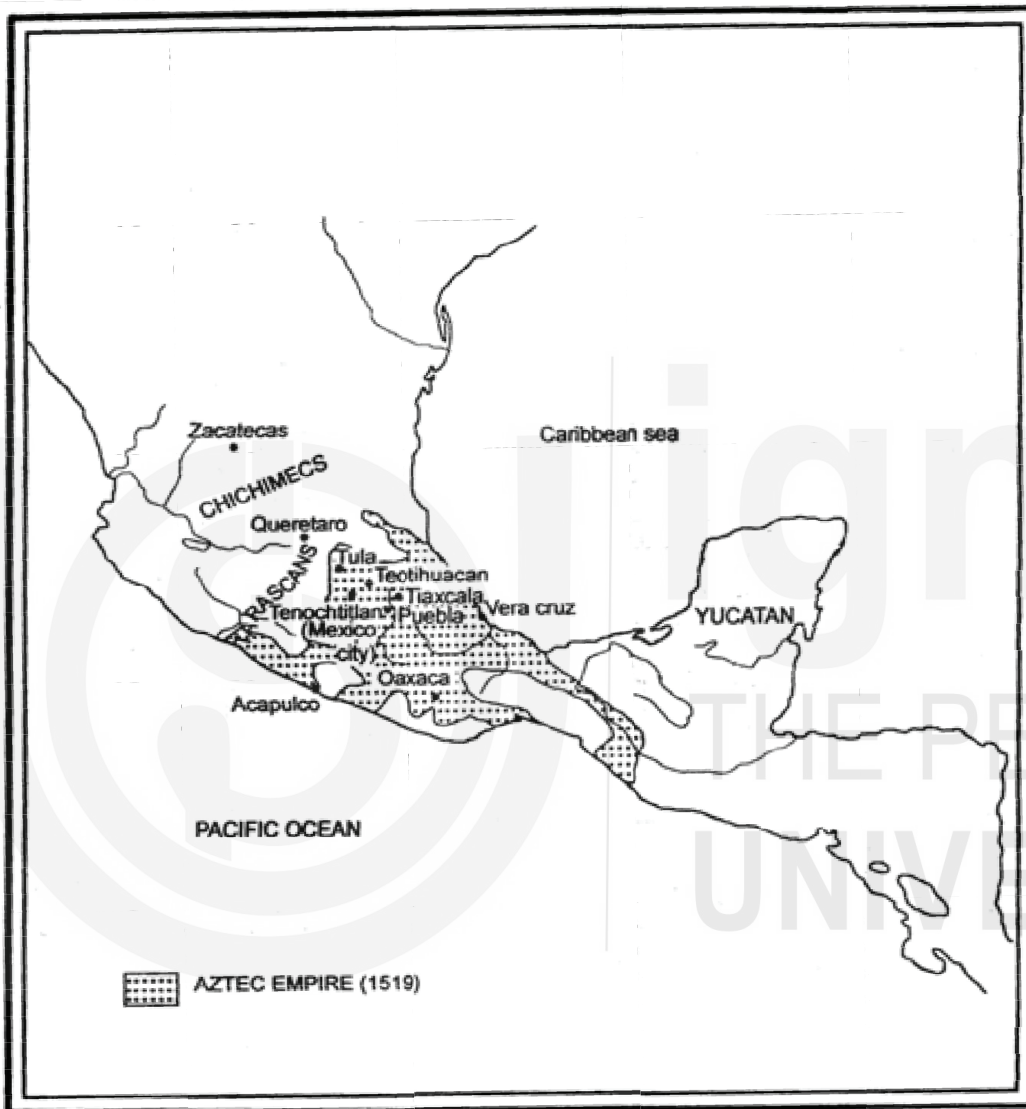
- understand the social characteristics of the Latin American Civilizations,
- construct the concept of medieval in the context of Latin America,
- learn the hierarchical socio-economic structures of the Aztecs of Mesoamerica,
- comprehend the importance of the Aztec codices,
- underline the features of Inca state structures,
- analyze the water management system of the Incas, and
- know the architectural characteristics of the Aztec and the Inca Civilizations.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

The medieval time in Latin American history is not precisely defined. Most specialists refer to the pre-colonial times as the medieval in Latin America's history. We too will do the same here. And we shall discuss about the Aztecs from Mesoamerica and the Incas from the central Andes of South America to understand some aspects of the Latin American medieval history.

11.2 THE AZTECS

The Aztecs came to the Mexico basin during the 12th and 13th centuries and had developed one of the complex society and culture. With a series of rulers, temples for Gods and one of the most populated capitals namely Tenochtitlan, the Aztecs always demand an attention in every discussion of Latin American history. Their self-reference was Mexicas. They continued to rule and dominate over a large part of Mesoamerica till the advent of the Spanish colonizers in the early part of the 16th century.



Map 11.1: The Aztec Empire

Source: After IGNOU Course MHI-01: *Ancient and Medieval Societies*, Block 4, Unit 14, p.8.

11.2.1 Polity

The Aztecs actually came from the north and lived under the hegemony and domination of the Tecpanecs for a long time around the region of present-day Mexico City since probably the 14th century. It was toward the early 15th century that the Aztecs or Mexicas became an autonomous chiefdom. Some of their chiefs were – Itzcoatl (1426-40), Moteuczoma Ilhuicamina, ‘The Elder’ (1440-69), Axayacatl (1469-81), Tizoc (1481-5), Ahuitzotl (1486-1502) and Moteuczoma II (1502-20). These chiefs further extended the Aztec hegemony and domination over the Totonacas, Mixtecs, Zapotecs clans or tribes. Aztecs collected tribute from all these tribes and placed the deities of these tribes in the temple of Huitzlopochtli (the Aztec deity in Tenochtitlan). These tribes were also asked to supply humans for sacrifice from time to time by the Aztec

tax-collectors. The tax that the subordinated tribes paid the Aztecs were in kind such as maize, fish, gold, jade, turquoise, birds, animals. Also they used to contribute by feeding Aztec garrisons, and provided land to Aztec nobles or officials. To run the Empire they built roads, canals, stone house of huge proportions and gigantic 'temples' for their deities. The Aztecs also depended on agriculture and trade with distant lands.

The Aztec chief (Huey Tlatoani), whom the initial colonial historiographers had painted as a king, possibly was not a king. Later researches have provided evidences and have suggested that the earlier commentators uncritically imposed the European categories and concepts on the Aztecs history and society. According to them the Aztec chief was not a King and that the chief was 'elected' to the office. It was not a hereditary office. The Aztec society was differentiated and there were the identifiable *pipiltin* (nobility/elite) and *macehualtin* (commoner/plebian). The *pipiltin* were divided according to ranks, titles and positions they held. These different *pipiltins* after many discussions and deliberations 'elected' the chief. The chief was powerful. The chief was commander of the army, the chief priest of the chief deity, the final judge and also the administrative head. Yet it is difficult to say that he was an 'absolute despot' as the medieval kings of Europe.

The Aztec King used to govern with the assistance from a few councils and each of the councils had one chief or two chiefs. There were the war council, festivities or ritual council for various celebrations, and the treasury council. The king or Aztec chief used to govern by consulting these councils. The chiefs of these councils were from the members of the *pipiltin* or the elite only.

There were towns which were surrounded by a number of villages away from the capital city of Tenochtitlan. A few of these towns with the surrounding villages constituted the chiefdoms or provinces of the Aztec kingdom. These were governed by chiefs either appointed from amongst the members of the *pipiltins* of the capital or Aztecs or a conquered chief who had accepted the rule of the Aztecs. These chiefs were supposed to organize the production and collection of tribute for the Aztecs at Tenochtitlan. This was largely organized through the control over the various *calpullis* or clans.

11.2.2 Society

It was a hierarchical society. There was nobility who were distinctly visible in terms of the clothes they wore, the places they occupied in public and religious rituals, the houses where they dwelt, and the jobs they performed in the running of the government and society. The nobles stayed in urban centers and their quarters were right next to the main temple in the heart of Tenochtitlan. Their houses were quite large and works of stone-masonry. During the reign of Axayacatl, when the Spaniards came to Tenochtitlan, the entire Spanish army of 400 soldiers could be housed in the palace of the ruler. The nobility was numerically a small part of the society. There was another section of the society which constituted of merchants, warriors and priests. The children of the *pipiltin* or the elites were eligible to attend *calmecac* or 'schools'. They were for some years trained in royal mannerism, religious rituals and hymns, reading the calendar, skills of war etc. After training they were given the responsibilities of royal offices.

There were the others also in that society who were the commoners. In the usual narratives of rituals, the commoners had negligible role than the nobility. Therefore it is difficult to know about them in any detail. The commoners were the peasants, carpenters, stone-cutters, miners, feather-workers, copper-workers, gold-workers and lapidaries. Though they were skilled and could produce sufficiently for the entire society, they sometimes faced challenges. Particularly the peasants who used to depend on rains/

monsoon in the wet season had harrowing times during droughts. During famines and droughts poor people even used to sell their children into slavery. During the drought of 1450, the reign of the first Moteuczoma (ruler), there are reports that poor Aztecs sold themselves to Totonacs (indigenous inhabitants of Mexico) at the rate of 400 cob¹ of maize for young woman and 500 cobs for a working male.

The ownership of land under the Aztec rule is rather complex and unclear. There were temple land, palace land, the king's land, the *calipulli/calpulli* or the clan land and so on. But it is generally held that the land was 'owned' by the *calipulli/calpulli*. In fact, it is also inferred that only the *pipiltin* (ruling elite/nobility) 'owned' land as private property. But a variant of this conclusion is that it was only 'owned' because of the highest positions/offices certain member of the *pipiltin* held. Officially, when a *pipiltin* was not holding any official position or got evicted from the office he was to lose control over the land. But some of the *pipiltin* families continued to hold offices over generations as well as the land assigned to that office as private property. The land they possessed, they either got it cultivated by peasants or by *mayeque*. *Mayeque* could be servants, labourers or even slaves. However, the slaves (*tlacotin*) in Mesoamerica were different from the slaves we read about in the history of Greece or Rome. These slaves were able to buy their freedom as well as ran the risk of being the potential victims of religious human sacrifice. The debts, punishment, failure to pay taxes or war prisoners were major factors behind slavery. Aztec slavery was not determined by birth. Even children of a slave were not considered slaves. Thus slavery was not hereditary. People often sold themselves to slavery under duress. In 1450s great famine Aztecs sold themselves to the people of the Gulf Coast.

The *pochtecas* were the merchants and possibly divided into various sections depending on the merchandise they dealt with. As for example there were slave merchants, the corn merchants, metal merchants, animal merchants etc. The chocolate and cocoa merchants were looked upon as 'slightly' privileged as chocolate and cocoa were 'exclusive' items of nobility's consumption. Some merchants specialized in trading slaves. The merchants were commoners yet were invited and consulted by the treasury council of the King. Thus they must have enjoyed some of the privileges of the *pipiltin* or the nobility. Their travels to far away lands made them polyglots. And they were also the providers of information of the outside world to the Aztecs. The merchants were part and parcel of the management of market places. They too acted as 'bankers' to other merchants by providing loans.

11.2.3 Economy

The most significant feature of the Aztecs society to the invading Spaniards in the 16th century was the most primary act of agricultural production by the Aztecs. There were the gardens inside lakes (or as the Spaniards called them – the floating gardens) or the *chinampas*. *Chinampas* were strips of mud 10-25 feet wide and 200-300 feet long inside swamps. On these raised strips of mud the Aztecs used to grow amaranth, beans, corn, squash, and varieties of flowers and so on. They constantly added mud from the floor of the swamps to maintain the strips and thus added to the fertility of the land. On these pieces of strips the farmers had built their bamboo and wooden houses to live. The state used to collect revenue from the *chinampas* in the form of products as well as cloths which women used to weave. The ownership of *chinampas* was collective. Clans (*calipulli/calpulli*) used to own the *chinampas* and the farmers used to have only user-rights over this. In case of failure to use or cultivate a certain strip, farmers

¹ The central cylindrical woody part of the maize ear to which the corns/grains are attached. At that time it was the unit of measurement.

used to get warnings against neglect and were often evicted. The strip after eviction was given to someone else. With the increase in the numbers of members in the family, the land was generally circulated within the clan and the clan used to allot more land or strips outside the family only if the clan (*calipulli/calpulli*) had more land. Beside the *chinampas* agriculture the Aztecs also involved in terraced cultivation on mountain slopes and raised various crops. The Aztec diet included dogs, deer, fish, rats, iguanas, turkey and snakes, besides the agricultural produce.

Other economic activities were mining of silver, gold, tin, copper etc. These metals were fashioned into articles of use from hand axes to ornaments. There were skilled craftsmen who were experts in their craft. The clans or *calipulli/calpulli* of these craftsmen did not own any land. Therefore, some specialists conclude that *calipulli/calpulli* was not a clan but a trade. But in all likelihood, *calipulli/calpullis* were blood-based endogamous and professional groups.

There were market places in urban centers and the rural markets used to be held in an interval of a week or five days. But the biggest market at the central plaza of the capital was a daily market place. Exchange was largely through barter or units of hours of work. But the Aztecs also used cocoa-beans, cotton cloaks, copper blades, small folded mantles, and quills filled with gold dust as standard units of value or money – in other words a kind of currency. And just about every article, beginning from slaves, prostitutes, singers to edible dogs, stone, metal, vegetables, for sale were available as commodity and services in the market. In the market of the capital there were judges to control the interactions of sellers-buyers and there was a superintendent who used to collect a toll from each seller. People from faraway places also used to bring their merchandise to the Aztec markets. Market places were not only for exchange of commodities but also places to meet and socialize.

Neither the Aztecs nor any other tribe of Mesoamerica ever domesticated any other animal apart from the dog. Consequently they did not have any draught animal and they did not use the wheel. The commoners not only produced goods for the elites in the society but also carried loads of goods on their shoulders for trade and tribute.

11.2.4 The Codices

A unique feature of the Aztec culture was the codices (singular: codex). Codices can be said to be pictographic texts. There were a set of scribes who used to ‘paint’ these texts. The early European colonizers did not understand the text and said that the Aztecs were a non-literate people. They did not have scripts or texts. But that was not entirely correct. It is just that their concept of alphabets and scripts were different from others and was unique, not found anywhere else.

The ‘writers’ or makers of the codices were known as *tlacuiloques* or scribes. And there were the scholars or wise men known as *tlamatinime* who used to own and read those texts. Most of the *tlacuiloques* were plebian craftsmen only and not women. But there were some *pipiltin* (nobles) also amongst them. At times both *tlacuiloques* and *talmatinime* was the same person. In the codices the Aztec had written annals or chronicles by the day, histories of wars or major events, genealogies of kings and nobles, rituals and religious events, accounts of agricultural production and revenue, also laws and calendars.



Figure 11.1: Codex Vaticanus B

Credit: Unknown; file originally uploaded to the Polish-language Wikipedia by Adamt; Unknown date

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/76/Codex_Vaticanus_B.jpg

These painted texts were of paper or hide or woven cloth which could be painted either on one side or both. These books sometimes had wooden covers to keep the paper or hide or cloth either folded properly or flat. Possibly these wooden covers were ornamented too. Out of these various kinds of pages the most time consuming and labour intensive was the hide (leather pages) and these were folded and called screenfolds.

11.2.5 Religious Beliefs

The Aztecs borrowed the religious ideas largely from the two major traditions, one from their predecessors Teotihuacan and Tula and the other from their Aztlan migrants who brought their own gods with them. There were two chief Gods of the Aztecs, the Tlaloc (rain and fertility God) which was the storm God of the Teotihuacan and the other was the Huitzilopochtli associated with warfare and sacrifices. Atop the Templo Mayor pyramid temples dedicated to Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli are situated. Cities and *calipulli/calpulli* worshipped distinct deities. Huitzilopochtli was God of the Mexican people. Similarly distinct occupational groups had their own deities: Tezcatlipoca was patron of the kings, Quetzalcoatl of priests, Teteoinnan of midwives, and Xipe Totec of goldsmiths (Smith 2012: 204). They believed that Ometeotl, the highest God in male (Ometecuhtli) and female (Omecihuatl) forms produced four sons — Tezcatlipoca, Xipe Totec, Quetzalcoatl, and Huitzilopochtli of which the last two are credited to have created the earth, other gods and the people.



Figure 11.2: A drawing of Tezcatlipoca, one of the deities described in the Codex Borgia
Credit: Unknown, Pre-Columbian

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/67/Black_Tezcatlipoca.jpg

The key to Aztec religion was the human sacrifice and bloodletting/autosacrifice. Aztecs believed that god themselves had sacrificed for the benefit of mankind therefore humans should reciprocate by offering human blood and life. Apart from performing daily rituals, priests also ‘offered their own blood by autosacrifice’ as a result often their bodies were ‘scarred and mutilated from constant bloodletting’. They also believed in several distinct afterworlds which were to be determined by the manner of one’s death e.g. ‘Soldier who died in battle and sacrificial victims went to an eastern solar realm to accompany the sun during its rise to zenith. Women who died in child birth went to a western solar realm where they accompanied the sun during its setting’ (Smith 2012: 212). There appears to be a distinction between the burials of the commoners’ and those of the elites (kings and nobles). The latter were more ‘elaborate and richer’. The presence of burials within the house suggests that Aztecs considered dead as very much part of the family.

In the temples there existed hierarchy of priests. There were little priests (*tlamacazton*) who were trained in priesthood lores for a year and performed daily duties. Full priests were *tlamacazqui*. The highest priests *tlenamacac* performed the highest ritual — the human sacrifice. There were female priests as well (*cihuatlamacazqui*). However, female priests served for short periods usually they left the priesthood after marriage. Priests were the literate class and involved in learning and education.

However, ‘Aztec politics and religion were closely entwined. Kings ruled with the blessings of the gods, and the priests and temples were under the protection of the state. Human sacrifices were carried out in the service of politics... [to demonstrate] the awesome power of the gods and the state... Witnessing the gruesome deaths of not only enemy soldiers but also local slaves... made most people think twice before engaging in any form of resistance against their king or local people’ (Smith 2012: 225).

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Who were Aztecs? What was their political structure?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2) Comment on the hierarchical social set up of the Aztecs.

.....
.....
.....
.....

3) State briefly the economic activities of the Aztecs.

.....
.....
.....
.....

4) What were codices? What type of information one can obtain from them?

.....
.....
.....
.....

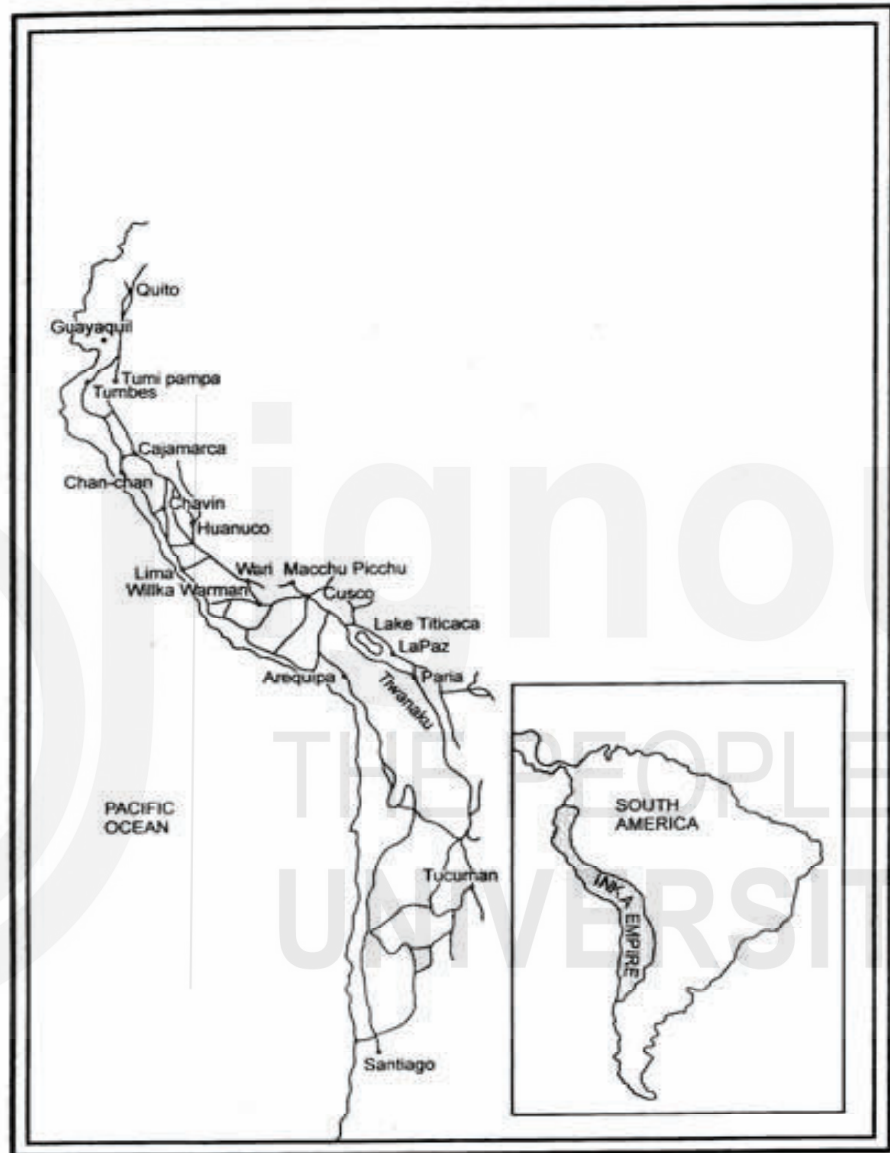
5) Write five lines on the Aztec religion.

.....
.....
.....
.....

11.3 THE INCAS

In the central Andes of South America, there developed an empire which is known as the Inca or Inka empire or the territory of four regions Tawantinsuyu or Tahuantinsuyu.

It was of the 'Indians' (Indians here is the name given to the inhabitants of the New world by Christopher Columbus mistaking New World for Asia). It includes a large and diverse set of cultural groups as the Mayas and Aztecs of Mexico and Central America, the Carib of the Caribbean Islands, the Inca of Andes, the Araucanian of Chile, the Guarani of Paraguay and the Tupi of Brazil and the indigenous people of Andes. The empire flourished during the 12th to 16th century. It was in the late 16th century (1572) that the Spaniards conquered these empires and colonized them.



Map 11.2: The Inca Empire

Source: After IGNOU Course MHI-01: *Ancient and Medieval Societies*, Block 4, Unit 14, p.13.

11.3.1 Inca State and the Empire

The Inca Empire had its capital or seat of power at Cuzco/Cusco. It was a centralized empire and administrative system which developed during the 1000 to 1400 CE (called the Late Intermediate period by some specialists). The Quechua speaking Incas spread their hegemony by military conquest and re-conquests over powerful rival ethnic communities (*ayllus*) such as the Pinahua and Mohina of Lucre basin. Towards the north of Cuzco valley resided the Anta, Ayarmaca communities who had refused to accept the Inca hegemony even after many wars. But marriage alliances amongst the ruling elites of the Incas and these communities proved more successful in making them part of the Inca Empire. Towards the east, the ever-rebellious Pinahuas were not only defeated in armed conflict with the Incas, but were also evicted from their land to

remote low-lands. They were settled in these lands possibly with an alien governor over them and thus were made part of the Inca empire. Some other ethnic groups were given protection by the Incas against other rival groups and became willing members of the Inca Empire.

Inca empire building was not a linear process. The central authorities frequently faced rebellions and certain territories needed re-conquests. Even local or provincial governors had to be changed or subjugated. Almost every succession or change of Kings at Cuzco used to make entire edifice of the empire unstable. Competing communities and powerful groups of elites attempted to assassinate, dislodge contenders to the throne or even support some claims to the throne.

The Inca chiefs or Kings used to keep a number of wives as well as concubines. This is one of the reasons which frequently led to disputes of succession and even to fratricidal wars and conflicts. Kings' kinsmen were the royal elites who used to play decisive role in the selection of king's successor and they often used to engage in intrigues and conspiracies inside and outside the royal court. Though there seems to have been a discretionary power by the out-going/dying king to nominate his successor, it was largely decided by the power the inheritor wielded amongst the supporting elite, who were divided into various groups or *panacas*.

Conventional Inca Kings

ManqoQhapaq	Wiraqocha Inka
ZinchiRoq'a	PachakutiInkaYupanki
Lloq'eYupanki	ThupaInkaYupanki
MaytaQhapaq	WaynaQhapaq
QhapaqYupanki	Waskhar Inka
Inka Roq'a	Atawallpa
YawarWaqaq	

Source: After D'Altroy, Terence N., (2015) *The Incas* (Sussex: Wiley Blackwell), Second Edition, p. 6.

The Inca Kings were ruling with the help of a large army or armed people. They used to take out military campaigns against rebels within their empires as well as against new territories subjugating them and making them pay tribute. After crushing rebellions or subjugating new territories the kings planted their own loyal people as local governors. Local governors were mostly from the royal families though it was not always so. Provincial governors and *mitimaes*² were the peace-keepers.

Military campaigns were not the only method of conquering neighbours and expanding the Empire. It happened through a process of religious and ritual integration too. According to Irene Silverblatt (1987) the Incas of Cusco actually appropriated the local deities of the ethnic communities living on the margins of their Empire and thus appropriated their autonomy and made them part of the Empire. The Incas insisted on the worship of Sun God by other ethnic communities as well as gave the deities of those communities a place in Cusco near the shrine of Sun God and Incas themselves worshipped them. Thus they 'institutionalized the imperial religion' which was not only

² Mitimaes were the forced settlements of Inca communities into the recently conquered territories with an objective to settle in the newly conquered regions the Inca loyalists; along with them they also carried Inca culture.

the appropriation or co-option of others' religion into the imperial one but also appropriation of the sovereignty of those communities.

If we look at the way *theaclla* (chosen/venerated women) ritual was being performed, it will amply clarify the story of imperial religion. Young women were chosen by men supervisors of the Incas from amongst the families of the heads of various communities conquered by the Incas and brought to the capital Cusco. After elaborate rituals some of them used to be accepted as wives of Inca Kings, some were given away to other important functionaries of the state or relatives of Incas as wives/concubines, some others were put in state-run convents as the wives of Sun God and some others were sacrificed on certain occasions "for the ends of the state" either at Cusco or at other parts of the Empire. The act of being chosen by Inca royal family made the father of the young woman a proud subordinate of the Incas. And the ritual sacrifices of the 'chosen women' (burying them alive after drugging them) not only in Cusco but also at various other outposts of the Empire in the territories of other communities helped in the political integration of those lands into the larger Empire of the Incas as the partakers of the same religious rituals. Without any dispute this was an expansionist project achieved through kinship (by marrying women of other hostile or friendly communities and having royal offspring from them). According to Isabel Yaya (2012) this project achieved two things simultaneously one was political control over an ever increasing labour-force and the other was opening of its "most strategic positions of its prestige hierarchy to contenders" of offspring of women of non-Inca origin.

Warachiku was another royal ritual which was celebrated at large scale and was a month-long event. *Warachiku* meant that 'donning of the lion-cloth/breeches'. This was a rite of passage of young men of royal family of Cusco into adulthood. From the many conflicting accounts of this ritual a general picture emerges that can be summarized as follows. During this ritual the members of the non-Inca *ayllus* (community) had to leave the city. The novices undergoing the ritual had to tonsure their heads and pierce their ear-lobes. Then they had to visit various *wakas* (shrines, which could be simply be a rock or a mountain) of 'provincial deities beginning with the principal deities of the Incas in a procession of members of royal family and officials of the state. Selected young maidens used to be part of the procession carrying *chicha* (a beverage) for the novices. Visits to different shrines or *wakas* were punctuated by different physical trials of the novices. The physical trial which included fasting, racing up and down some hills, being slapped by elders, some dances actually wounded the novices and covered them with blood. The novices were rechristened during this ritual. The ritual used to end in Cusco when the novices received the lion-cloth (*wara*) ceremonially after obeisance to the Inca King and the Sun God in Cusco. The visit of the novices included not only the sites of religious importance but also places of importance on the major water courses and irrigation networks. Its significance as the ritual which has some relation with water gets further underlined as this used to happen in the month of December or the beginning of the year which is the month of heavy rain in the Andes.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Explain the processes through which the Inca polity expanded and got consolidated.

.....
.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2) Who were the ‘chosen women’? In what ways did the ‘chosen women’ contribute to the consolidation of Inca polity?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3) What was *warachiku* custom of the Incas? Mention its significance.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

11.3.2 Society and Economy

Inca society has been reported to be kin based. The Empire apparently was the largest and was comprised of kin only. It had many layers of hierarchies. The different kin based communities or *Ayllus* were constantly in tension amongst themselves despite the hegemony of the Incas. Incas used force or wars to quell rebellions and extract tribute from those communities. As already stated the use of rituals was also a strategy of governance and rule.

The Incas had two calendars one for the day and another for the night. They performed their rituals according to these two calendars. The day-calendar largely guided the rituals for agricultural activities as sowing, harvesting and rituals invoking rain etc. It was a solar calendar. But the night-calendar was a Lunar calendar largely guiding the rituals of royal activities as ancestor worship, rites of passage etc.

Living on the steep peaks of the Andes, levelled fields were hardly available to the Incas. Thus, scarcity of flat lands, difficult climatic conditions and above all high altitude led the Incas to develop ingenious system of terraced farming across the land of the empire.



Figure 11.3: Terraced Farming, Machu Picchu

Credit: Martin St-Amant – Wikipedia – CC-BY-SA-3.0; June 2009

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/01/80_-_Machu_Picchu_-_Jun_2009_-_edit.2.jpg

For agriculture they used unique human-powered foot plough, *chakitaqlla*. They also possessed an excellent storage system (*qullaqas*).



Figure 11.4: Use of Chakitaqlla (Andean foot plough)

Credit: Drawing by Felipe GuamanPoma de Ayala: El primer nuevacorónica y buengobierno (1615/1616)

Source: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e1/Trabajo-inca8.jpg>

Agricultural productions included maize, corn, cotton etc. Potato and Quinoa were unique to Incas. And the state tribute or tax was paid by produce. Among the domesticated animals camelids, llamas and alpacas were unique to Incas. All subjects also had to work for the state. The public works were largely done through this kind of labour known as *Mitima*. *Mitima* labour was used to build the network of roads connecting all places of the empire. Even the various rituals and irrigation system was maintained by *mitima*.

The Incas did not use the wheel and their language did not have scripts nor did they write or kept the documents. The former could be due to the Andean topography which discouraged the use of wheel. The absence of written language was compensated by the presence of *quipu*. It was an excellent way of keeping records of various data. It was a method of knotting strings in a systematic way. There were a special class of people or scribes called the *quipocamayay*s who prepared the *quipus* or knotted-strings. This way they kept detailed records of agricultural yields and storage capacity in different parts of the Empire. They also had information regarding the number of able-bodied men of different *ayllus* ready for military service of the state or ready to build roads of the Empire or the canal system of the mines.

With the Spanish colonization the Inca state declined. Infact, the Spaniards exposed the Indians to European diseases such as typhus, measles and influenza which were not present in the Andes. These proved fatal and wiped out a large population of Indians during the 16th century.

Check Your Progress-3

1) What was the social structure of the Incas?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2) For what purposes Inca calendars were used?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3) Write five lines on Inca economy.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

11.3.3 Water Management System

The Inca architecture also seems to have given sufficient importance to water, its distribution and management. Whether it is in Machu Picchu (the largest Incan archeological site) or in Cusco (their capital), the built-structures to channelize water for different purposes or for different sets of people is amazing. At Tiplon, an Inca royal agricultural estate 20 km. east of Cusco the remains of an elaborate water-works are found. A spring was harnessed by stone conduits, canals, and hydraulic drop structures to irrigate terraced agriculture in Tiplon. Beside, water was channelized to a bath in the elite enclave before being allowed to flow down for the use of others. The site of Pisac near the river Urubamaba to the northwest of Cusco also had long winding canals lined with stones. Its construction is attributed to Panachuti, the son of Inca King Wiracocha in the mid-15th century. This canal used to connect the pre-Inca funerary site as well as terraced agricultural lands and residential areas with pools. Chinchero, another site of the Incas close to Cusco had both surface and subterranean ducts as water courses and is said to have been constructed by the 3rd quarter of the 15th century. Quispiguanca, another site close to Cusco and patronized by the last Inca rulers who engaged with the Spanish colonizers namely Huayna Capac during the 16th century had canal built. But more than that, this site boasted of artificial lakes and water reservoirs. This makes some historians think that perhaps at that point of time the control and distribution of flowing water had lost its political significance which had the relation of the Inca ruler to their subjects. The water-works for agriculture and for non-agricultural purposes exhibit some utilitarian consideration, rough stone masonry being its hall mark.

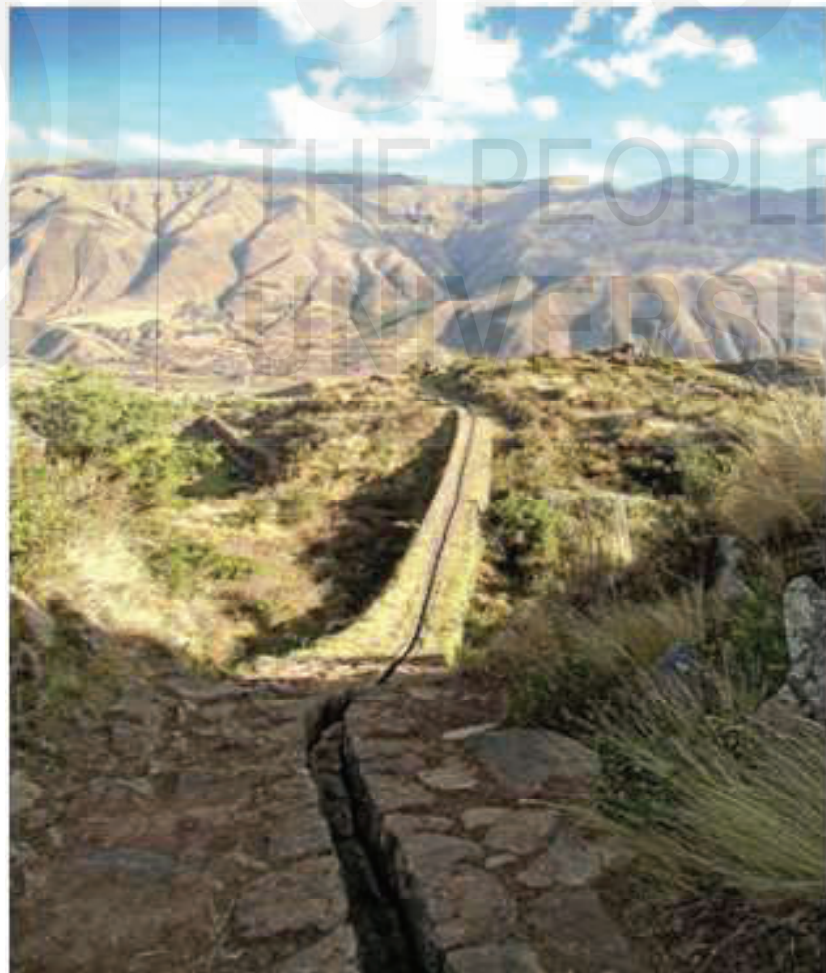


Figure 11.4: Incan Aqueduct, Tiplon, Cusco

Credit: Rainbowasi from Lima, Peru June 2014

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8f/Incan_aqueduct_at_Tiplon._Cusco%2C_Peru.jpg

11.3.4 Inca Architecture

At Ollantaytambo, Callachaca, Calca — various archeological sites of the Incan history — various kinds of buildings were found which were commissioned by the Incas. Most of the Inca kings had a palace in the capital Cusco as well as a country estate. Machu Picchu, the royal estate is one of the finest surviving site reflecting on Inca architecture. They also built excellent networks of roads. The Inca masonry were of cellular polygonal (use of small stones) and ashlar polygonal (use of large stones), encased coursed (stone blocks not aligned) and sedimentary coursed (stones laid in horizontal rows [ashlar]) masonry. Incas largely used field stones (semi worked stone blocks), dirt mortar and adobe (made of earth and organic material). Most common structure of the Incas was *kancha* which was a rectangular enclosure usually in a symmetrical sequence of three around a central courtyard.



Figure 11.5: Walls of the Sacsayhuaman Ruin at Cusco (Ashlar Polygonal Masonry)

Credit: Transferred from en.wikipedia to Commons by Jalo using CommonsHelper
Author: Bcasterline at English Wikipedia, 18 March 2006

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a8/Walls_at_Sacsayhuaman.jpg

These pieces of architecture were mostly commemorative in nature. These were either to remember the victory in a war or to celebrate succession or even some mummified ancestor. But there was a fine separation between the public buildings for administrative purposes and the private dwellings of the Inca kings. The stone masonry works at the archeological sites are phenomenal. The terraces built to hold levelled patches of land for agriculture do not exhibit much finesse and aesthetics. But the large royal palaces/residences, the sacred shrines definitely exhibit a finesse which is both ideological and utilitarian. Undoubtedly, these labour-intensive works are more refined, with finely-dressed pieces of stones, joined at finely carved and perfect angles, with niches, doorways and windows, and many polygonal structures and even at times (as in the neighborhood of Chinchero) with coloured stones.

Check Your Progress-4

- 1) Write a note on the canal network of the Incas.

.....

- 2) What were the characteristics of Inca architecture?

11.4 SUMMARY

The Unit focuses on the formation of Aztec and Inca state structures. While the hierarchical structures of the Aztecs were class based, the Inca society and the state were largely extension of the kin based structures. Aztec agriculture was primarily gardens inside the lakes; while Incas essentially depended upon the terraced farming. The Aztecs was a literate society in the sense that their texts could be coded, in contrast Incas, did not have a written script except their knots (*quipu*). It is difficult to know the detailed history of the civilization due to lack of the contemporary documents. Nonetheless they produced amazing water management system as well as some exclusive crops which were to change the food habits across the globe (potato, tomato).

11.5 KEYWORDS

<i>Chinampas</i>	: Gardens inside the lakes
<i>Quipu</i>	: Inca writing knots
<i>Tlacotin</i>	: Slaves in Mesoamerica

11.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Sub-section 11.2.1
- 2) See Sub-section 11.2.2
- 3) See Sub-section 11.2.3
- 4) See Sub-section 11.2.4
- 5) See Sub-section 11.2.5

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Sub-section 11.3.1
- 2) See Sub-section 11.3.1
- 3) See Sub-section 11.3.1

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) See Sub-section 11.3.2
- 2) See Sub-section 11.3.2
- 3) See Sub-section 11.3.2

Check Your Progress-4

- 1) See Sub-section 11.3.3
- 2) See Sub-section 11.3.4

11.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

Bethell, Leslie, (ed.) (1984) *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, Volume I, *Colonial Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Carrasco, David and Scott Sessions, (1998) *Daily Life of the A̱ztecs: People of the Sun and Earth* (Westport: Greenwood Press).

D'Altroy, Terence N., (2015) *The Incas* (Sussex: Wiley Blackwell), Second Edition.

Gamboa, Pedro Sarmiento de, (2007) *The History of the Incas*, translated and edited by Bauer, Brian S. and Vania Smith (Texas: University of Texas Press).

Niles, Susan A., (1999) *The Shape of Inca History: Narrative and Architecture in an Andean Empire* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press).

Silverblatt, Irene, (1987) *Moon Sun and Witches: Gender Ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Peru* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Smith, Michael E., (2012) *The Aztecs* (Sussex: Wiley Blackwell), Third Edition.

Yaya, Isabel, (2012) *The Two Faces of Inca History: Dualism in the Narratives and Cosmology of Ancient Cuzco* (Leiden: Brill).

11.8 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

The Aztec Empire

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6RbaAURCqI>

Tenochtitlan -The Venice of Mesoamerica (Aztec History)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmHVqb6t__8

The Secrets of the Incas (in 2 parts)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRSTy9ir6zs>

History of the Inca Empire

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYYfg2tph3w>

