THE GREAT COURSES®

Topic
History

Subtopic
Medieval History

Years That Changed History: 1215

Course Guidebook

Professor Dorsey Armstrong
Purdue University

Published by
THE GREAT COURSES

Corporate Headquarters

4840 Westfields Boulevard | Suite 500 | Chantilly, Virginia | 20151-2299

[PHONE] 1.800.832.2412 | [FAX] 703.378.3819 | [WEB] www.thegreatcourses.com

Dorsey Armstrong, PhD

Professor of English
and Medieval Literature

Purdue University

Dorsey Armstrong is a Professor of English and Medieval Literature at Purdue University, where she is also the head of the English Department. She received her AB in English and Creative Writing from Stanford University and her PhD in Medieval Literature from Duke University. She also has taught at Centenary College of Louisiana and at California State University, Long Beach.

Professor Armstrong's research interests include medieval women writers, late-medieval print culture, and the Arthurian legend, on which she has published extensively. She is the author of *Sir Thomas Malory's* Morte Darthur*: A New Modern English Translation Based on the Winchester Manuscript*; *Gender and the Chivalric Community in Malory's* Morte d'Arthur; and *Mapping Malory: Regional Identities and National Geographies in* Le Morte Darthur (coauthored with Kenneth Hodges). She is also the editor in chief of the academic journal *Arthuriana*, which publishes cutting-edge research on the legend of King Arthur, from its medieval origins to its modern enactments.

Professor Armstrong is a recipient of the Charles B. Murphy Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award, Purdue's top undergraduate teaching honor.

Professor Armstrong's other Great Courses include *The Black Death: The World's Most Devastating Plague*; *Turning Points in Medieval History*; *The Medieval World*; *Analysis and Critique: How to Engage and Write about Anything*; *Great Minds of the Medieval World*; and *King Arthur: History and Legend*. ■

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

GUIDES

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

NAVIGATION TIP

To go back to the page you came from, press Alt + ← on a PC or ⌘ + ← on a Mac. On a tablet, use the bookmarks panel.

Years that Changed History: 1215

The year 1215 stands as a watershed moment in world history. In just 12 short months, the world witnessed the signing of the Magna Carta, the issuance of the transformative canons of the fourth Lateran Council, and the conquest of China by the Mongols, among many other momentous events. This lecture series explores the major events of this tumultuous year. You will learn the background, context, and aftereffects of a series of major events, including the rise of Genghis Khan, the persecution of the Cathars, the crisis moments in the enterprise of the Crusades, and the rise of the samurai warrior class in Japan.

Shortly before the turn of the first millennium, the medieval European world experienced a period of climate change, marked by significant warming. While this period—known as the Little Optimum or Medieval Warm Period—would primarily affect European society, the social and political changes that it created would impact the Middle East, Asia, and the world beyond. As the population began to grow, resources became scarce, and those in power sought to maintain their control over land, money, and status.

By 1215, the situation was approaching a crisis point. Unrest and persecution led to rebellions like the one that resulted in the creation of the Magna Carta. The church sought to maintain its control over the Christian population by issuing broad-sweeping and restrictive guidelines during the meeting of the fourth Lateran Council. Non-Christians found themselves under increasing threat of violence by crusaders in the Holy Land, while even certain Christian denominations—like the Orthodox population of Constantinople—suffered marginalization, persecution, and attack. A radical new form of monasticism—the mendicant orders, most famously established by Saint Francis of Assisi—sought to bring reform of the Roman church from within.

As we explore the cause and effect of these shifts in political and religious life in the medieval European world, we will pause to examine how these changes affected the status of women, Jews, and other groups. We will also spend some time with the most important literary works of the period, examining how vastly different types of writing—including the romances of the Arthurian legend, guides for religious life, and the Norse and Icelandic sagas—reflect the huge variety of belief, interest, and experience in the medieval world.

To the east, the milder climate positively affected life on the steppes of Mongolia, allowing the various tribes there to enjoy a period of relative prosperity. It is this situation that arguably led to the rise of Genghis Khan, who united the disparate tribes of the steppes, incorporated the technology and knowledge of all the peoples he captured into his own culture, and created the greatest empire ever to exist in the history of the world.

It was arguably the end of the Little Optimum that contributed to a halt in Mongolian westward expansion: The harsher climate caused the Mongolian forces to retreat to their homeland. Turning their attention farther east, the Mongols made an attempt to bring Japan within its orbit with two failed invasions. It was the rise of the Japanese warrior class known as the samurai, who were coming into full power right around 1215, that contributed directly to the defeat of the Mongols.

In 1215, the Muslim world was nearing the end of what scholars have come to call the golden age of Islam. Far from the military conflicts of the crusades, Muslim philosophers, scientists, poets, and other scholars had been making huge strides and discoveries in the fields of astronomy, medicine, mathematics, philosophy, and more. Around 1215, however, Muslim communities from Egypt to Syria to Spain found themselves under greater pressure and threat than ever before. We will explore the great contributions of Muslim scholars to various fields of study, and examine how and why one of the most advanced, wealthy, and cosmopolitan societies of the Middle Ages began to transform and, in some cases, collapse right around 1215.

While the majority of this course focuses on events in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, we will also travel to other areas of the globe, checking in with the Native American Pueblo peoples in North America and the Incan and Mayan empires in South America. We will also travel to the continent of Africa, where in 1215, three great civilizations were either at or coming into the height of their power and status. The ruling factions of Mali, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe would stabilize and transform the regions in which they arose. ■

LECTURE 1

The World before 1215

This lecture series on the year 1215 will travel around the globe, touching on theological disputes, family strife, the rise and fall of empires, new inventions, and more. To set the stage, this opening lecture provides background on the specific calendar year the course talks about, what the world was like before 1215, and the momentous changes the world's climate underwent.

The Year 1215

The year 1215 is calculated based on the conventions of the Gregorian calendar, which was introduced in the European world by the pope at the end of the 16th century. Today, it is the most widely used international calendar.

This way of keeping track of time replaced the Julian calendar, which had been introduced in the 1st century BCE by the Roman Empire. Because of a miscalculation in that calendar, the seasons had fallen out of sync with the actual calendar.

When 1215 happened, it was happening according to the Julian calendar. The differences between the two are such that when it was decided to accept the Gregorian calendar, the date of October 4, 1582, was followed the next day by October 15th, 1582.

This can prove to be a headache for historians. For precision, historians need to be sure the date they are looking at is rendered either in OS (old system) or NS (new system). Then, historians have to try and adjust from one to the other. Another added point of confusion is that not everyone celebrated the New Year at the same time, even if they followed the Western calendar.

While this course talks about the year 1215 in the Gregorian calendar, many of the peoples discussed in this course did not use that calendar. For example, in the Islamic world, it was actually 611 or 612, depending on the part of the year.

Finally, timekeeping was different throughout the Americas and Africa, with each region or kingdom or people measuring time in different ways. The takeaway point is this: By picking the year 1215 to investigate, this course is starting from a position that takes the Gregorian calendar as its foundation and the conventions of the Western world as a starting point.

Because so much happened around the world in 1215, it is useful to take a snapshot of the people, events, and movements that were occurring roughly equivalent with the early 13th century. Such a view shows us both how different things were back then and how, in some cases, some things are still the same.

Before 1215

Around the year 1000, the world's climate started to change. This would eventually lead, indirectly, to several of the events discussed in this lecture series.

Over a period of about 300 years or so, the climate became warmer on average by a couple of degrees. This might not sound significant, but a change of just a degree or two can precipitate other changes that dramatically impact society. These can then create a cascade effect, with other changes following quickly behind.

Technically speaking, this change probably began in the mid-10th century and ended sometime in the 14th century. It is known as the Little Optimum or Medieval Warm Period. Its effect was most strongly felt in the 11th and 12th centuries, the exact period of time leading up to the year 1215.

In the year 1000, medieval Europe was a mostly rural, agrarian society. The vast majority of the people living in the medieval world at the turn of the first millennium were dependent in some way on subsistence farming, and this meant that the margin between bounty and starvation was painfully thin. If one year a frost came late, or the rains were unexpectedly heavy, or the summer was too cool or too hot, then the crops failed and people didn't eat.

The population of Europe was somewhere around 35 million or so.

Most people lived in small hamlets surrounded by agricultural fields, on the margins of which were thousands and thousands of acres of forest.

Three hundred years later, the population would have reached around 80 million. Cities like London, Paris, and Rome were booming in terms of trade, the forests had diminished significantly, and a large portion of the population made a living at various trades, many of which had nothing to do with subsistence farming.

The Warming's Effects

The warming was devastating in some places, like the Sahara in Africa and the southern portions of North America and parts of South America. However, in medieval Europe and the far north of the Americas, it was an incredible blessing.

Suddenly, the growing season was longer, more temperate, and crops failed less often than they had previously. Generally speaking, there was not only enough food to go around, but also some left over.

Subsistence farmers were better nourished. Those for whom they worked—usually a lord on whose manor they lived—were wealthier in cash because they could trade the surplus for goods and money. Trade increased.

With better nutrition, more children lived through the dangerous periods of infancy and childhood, surviving to become adults who, in turn, reproduced. The cycle repeated, and the population began to grow.

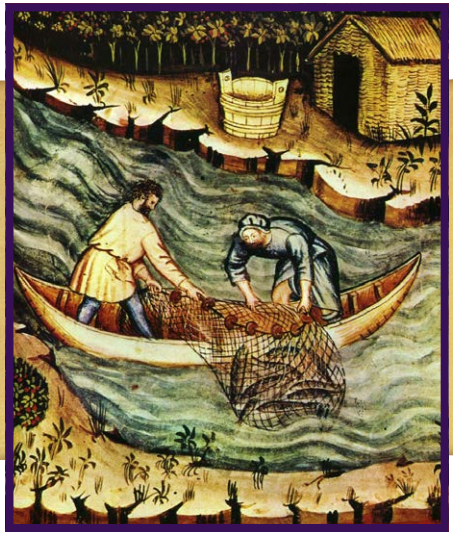
Starting in the 11th century, people began claiming more land that was, to this point, uninhabited or unclaimed. Many pieces of land that were open but had previously been unavailable for farming suddenly became the catalyst for creative solutions to agricultural problems.

Once all the available land had been claimed, the population turned its eyes to the forests. Through a process known as assarting, medieval peasants began to bring forestland under the plow, which was both difficult and time consuming.

A Move to the Cities

With less forest available, rulers tightened controls over it even more, and this created a larger class of truly destitute people. In the past, beggars might have managed to eke out an existence in their home communities as beggars. They supplied the opportunity for people to demonstrate Christian

The change in climate apparently led to a huge increase in fish populations, particularly herring and cod. In places where fishing yields had been moderate at best, suddenly there were large schools of fish ready to be netted, packed in barrels of brine, and transported and sold throughout the medieval world.



charity, and they could also rely on help from local parish churches.

However, with the surplus food supply, there now existed another place beggars could go: the city. This was a place for great opportunity for many, but it also had its negatives, as the poor were now cut loose from the social networks in smaller hamlets of which they had been an intrinsic part for so long.

Like a boulder rolling downhill, the changes in the medieval European world due to increased crop production began to build faster and faster. Cities were soon places of possibility for prosperity, where merchants could make money and rise to an economic status that had only been available to nobles before this. Still, if urban centers attracted those who were rising in society, it also attracted those who were at the bottom of the order.

Shipbuilding and Navigation

The period leading up to 1215 heralded significant advances in shipbuilding and navigation. Some people adventuring on the high seas at this time were looking for fish; plenty of others were looking for land.

With warmer temperatures, scientists have described how on occasion the sea would have experienced a phenomenon whereby the waters became very still and glassy—in other words, great for sailing. Medieval seafarers now felt inclined to venture further than they had before.

One of these was a man called Erik Thorvaldsson, known today by the name of Erik the Red. Erik and a group of followers traveled west at the end of the 10th century. They established the first European settlement in Greenland.

Erik's son, Leif Eriksson, journeyed to North America sometime around the year 1000. He established a settlement in what is today Newfoundland. For a time, regular trade and travel existed between North America and Iceland.

The World at Large

The years before 1215 produced a situation in the 13th century in which the needs of the population outstripped the ability of the land to sustain that population. This resulted in people trying to maintain control over the resources that were available to them. Certain groups on the margins of societies—such as lepers, homosexuals, heretics, pagans, Jews, and women—were stripped of their rights and properties. There was now more in the way of resources for those who were in the mainstream of the medieval world.

While the Little Optimum was producing generally improved living and crop-production conditions for those in medieval Europe and those to the north and west of this area, in other parts of the world, it was having a disastrous effect. Portions of the American southwest, for example, underwent severe drought conditions.

Just to the east of the medieval world, on the Eurasian steppes, a group of nomadic peoples known as the Mongols were finding their ages-old way of life threatened by the change in climate. Unable to rely on the patterns of seasonal migration that had long sustained them, they turned their eyes toward the west.

This climate change and period of necessity and crisis was occurring at exactly the moment that Mongol leader Genghis Khan came into power. At its height, his empire was largest single political entity ever to exist on the planet earth.

Around the middle of the 13th century, his heirs continued to push west, into modern day Russia, Poland, and Hungary. However, then the climate began to change again. Rains returned to the steppes, and life in the ancestral homeland of the Mongols became easier. Anthropologist Brian Fagan contends that this is what saved Europe from further incursions from the Mongols.

The weather started to change at exactly the moment when Genghis Khan's grandson, Batu Khan, was deciding whether he would keep moving west or reestablish himself on the Eurasian steppes. He chose the latter, and the stream of history chose to flow into one riverbed rather than another.

SUGGESTED READING

Fagan, *The Great Warming.*

Wieck, *The Medieval Calendar.*

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What years in history—other than 1215—might be ripe for this kind of analysis: a short span of time in which so many important things happened that they dramatically affected the whole world?

2. Do you see any similarities with the present day in terms of how natural phenomena directly impact social, political, and cultural elements of society?

LECTURE 2

The Magna Carta: Patching Up a Squabble

This lecture focuses on the European medieval world in 1215. In particular, it looks at the state of the world at the time of the creation of the Magna Carta. This is the first of three lectures on the subject, as the Magna Carta is an immensely important document—though its monumental nature took time to be revealed.

Background on England

What we think of as England today looked very different in the 12th and 13th centuries, especially at the end of the 1100s. In 1066, William the Conqueror had sailed across the English Channel, made good his claim to the English throne by defeating Harold Godwinson's army at the Battle of Hastings, and almost overnight completely dissolved and recreated the upper class of society in England.

Anglo-Saxon lords either died, had their lands seized, or entered monasteries. William gave all of those lands and titles to his loyal followers from Normandy. The upper class of English society was now, for all intents and purposes, French. They wrote and spoke a language that we today call Anglo-Norman.

England was now not only most of the isle of Britain; it was also a large chunk of what we think of today as France. The Normans had themselves been vassals of the French king, but suddenly, all this territory claimed by the

The Magna Carta's importance was not apparent from the start. When King John of England affixed his seal to the charter in June 1215 at a field called Runnymede just outside London, just about the only people who cared what was happening were King John and the 25 aggrieved English noblemen who had essentially forced him to accept their demands.

Normans arguably made them much more powerful and wealthy than the French crown, even though technically speaking, a duke—like William of Normandy—could not, by definition, be more powerful than the lord to whom he owed obeisance.

This was going to become a sticking point later on: Was the King of England a vassal of the king of France? How could it be that one king should do homage to another for lands and titles? This conundrum would play an important role in the events leading up to June 1215.

Early on, Henry II's son John had the nickname Lackland because it seemed there would be no holdings left for him to take over. This turned out to be ironic.

The Angevin Empire

William the Conqueror's heirs continued to increase their territorial holdings, with the greatest expansion of lands coming under the rule of King Henry II. This Henry was the son of William the Conqueror's granddaughter Matilda. In 1152, he married Eleanor of Aquitaine, heiress to the great continental duchy of Aquitaine in what is today France. Aquitaine was a huge territory, which greatly expanded England's power, wealth, and status when Eleanor brought it with her by marriage to Henry.

Prior to marrying Henry, Eleanor had been married to the French king Louis VII. Although their marriage had produced two daughters, it was apparently not a happy one, and eventually it was annulled, leaving Eleanor free to remarry. Henry became king of England two years after they married, and he proceeded to try to both shore up and expand his territorial holdings.

The name that we give to this territory today is the Angevin empire. At its height, it included England, Ireland, Brittany, Normandy, Aquitaine, Anjou, Gascony, Poitou, Nantes, and more.

The holdings were so large that Henry planned to divide it up into chunks for his sons. The first one died in infancy. To the second son, also named Henry, would go England, Normandy, and some other territories across the channel. Richard, the third son, was going to get Aquitaine. Geoffrey, the fourth son, was married off to the heiress of Brittany so he was taken care of.

However, the fifth son, John, looked to be out of luck. It did not seem there would be much to inherit or any politically advantageous marriages left to be made. This may be one reason why Henry II wanted to add Ireland to his holdings: He could give it to John.

Alliances and Developments

Henry II's son Henry, frustrated that he had nothing to do during his actual lifetime, rebelled against his father; later, he died of dysentery while engaged in a campaign in France. With his death, Richard was now going to inherit not only Aquitaine, but also essentially the rest of the Angevin empire.

Richard also at one point rebelled against his father. He formed an alliance with King Philip II of France who was the son of his mother's ex-husband. Additionally, Eleanor herself was put under house arrest for a time by her husband, Henry II, for conspiring with their sons against him.

Finally, Richard became the king of everything that was the Angevin empire. However, Richard was not as interested in being king—and in particular, not as interested in producing an heir—as he was in fighting and crusading. When Richard died in 1199 with no legitimate heirs, John became king.

John as King

John apparently was plagued by a combination of bad luck and abysmal military strategy; almost as soon as he became king, everything that had made the English crown such a force and a power began to disintegrate. In a series of very expensive continental conflicts early in his reign—France and England were always fighting over something—he lost almost all of the English lands across the channel.

At the same time that he was fighting in France, he was also waging wars in Ireland, Wales and Scotland. The royal treasury was stretched thin, a situation that led him to levy increasingly burdensome taxes on the people of England.

Added to the monetary woes was the fact that John placed England in a position of spiritual crisis, which did not help his popularity. At this time, England was Catholic. When John came to the throne in 1199, Pope Innocent III had just been raised to the papacy; the pope would be both enemy and ally to John in the years ahead.

Matters became ugly in 1205, when the archbishop of Canterbury died. John quickly got into a conflict with the monks at Canterbury and the pope as to who had the final say on the appointment of the archbishop—a struggle over rights of the crown versus rights of the church.

The pope's choice was Cardinal Stephen Langton, and the monks confirmed him as archbishop in 1206; the pope consecrated him in 1207. In response, John refused to let Langton enter England and kicked all the monks out of Canterbury.

The Pope's answer to this temper tantrum was to put all of England under interdict; from 1208–1213, church bells did not ring in England. Mass was not celebrated. People who died could not be buried in holy ground. In retaliation for this, John seized the lands and revenues of the church in England for himself, which in turn resulted in his excommunication by the pope. In 1213, John accepted Langton as archbishop and brought back and compensated the Canterbury clergy he had exiled.

Pope Innocent III

The Pope as Overlord

The most dramatic development to come out of this situation was that in order to get back in the pope's good graces, John had to accept the pope's overlordship. In other words, he turned over what was left of the great Angevin empire—by this point, essentially just Ireland and England, plus a few territories across the channel—to the papacy. For an annual payment to Rome, he remained king. In essence, he became a feudal vassal of the pope.

The immediate effect of this was that the French king Philip Augustus, who had been ready to invade England, reconsidered—he did not want to make an enemy of the pope—and the pope became one of John's biggest supporters, a relationship John exploited immediately after he was forced to accept the Magna Carta.

The Empire Declines More

In 1214, John lost even more of the English lands in France. By the end of that year, the Angevin empire over which he had ruled was reduced to just Poitou and Gascony on the continent.

His attempts to defend these lands had led to ever greater increases in taxes and abuses of royal power, which provoked a group of barons to demand that John affirm the laws of the Anglo-Saxon king Edward the Confessor and reissue the charter of liberties that Henry I had issued at his coronation. John refused, and the barons petitioned the pope, as feudal overlord of England, but he was slow to make any decisive move.

On May 5, 1215, after several attempts to arrange a meeting with John, a group of barons

renounced their allegiance to the throne, in effect declaring civil war. There were some attempts to capture royal castles and heated negotiations between people like Stephen Langton, who was in favor of reform, and staunch Royalist supporter William Marshall, the 1st earl of Pembroke.

The Negotiations

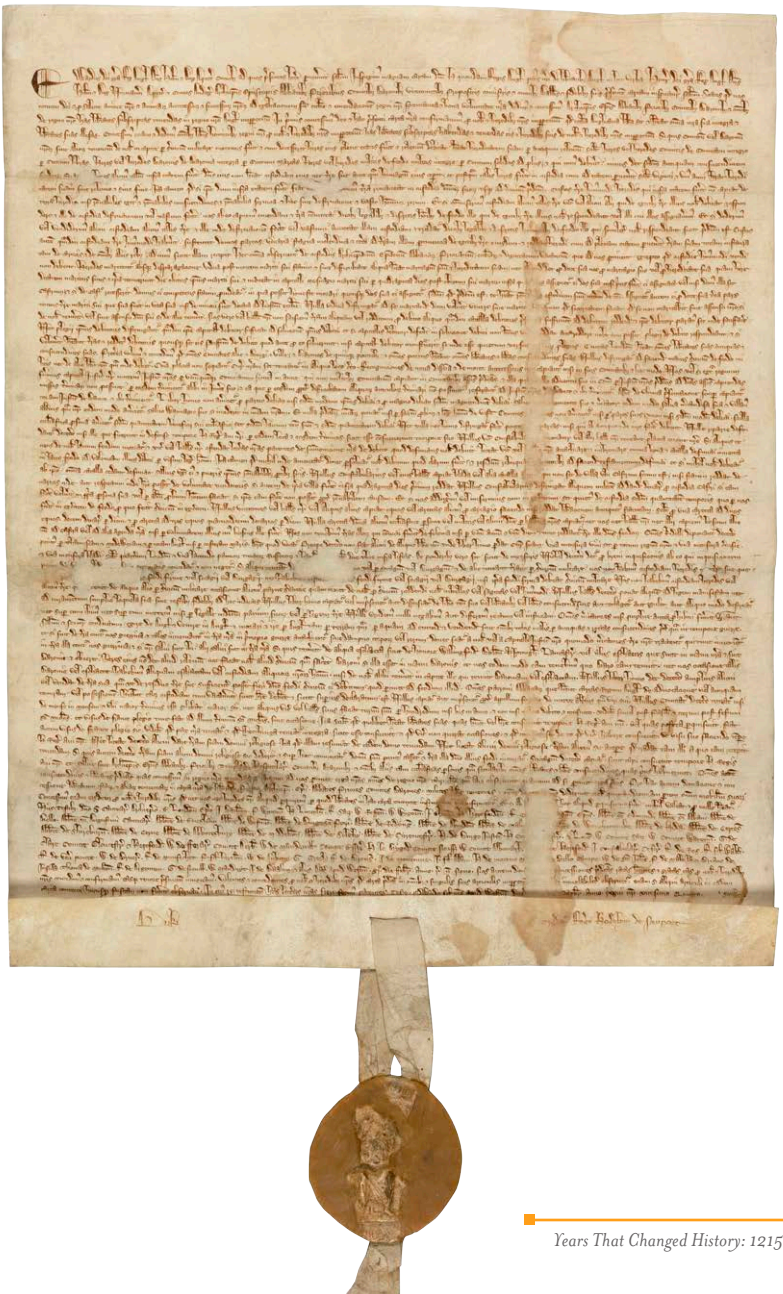
The document under discussion by the barons provides a more specific idea as to what the barons were so upset about. Here are a few highlights:

- Clause 2 of the Magna Carta establishes amounts that the regent was allowed to tax his subjects on specific occasions. John had been trying to up what is essentially a death tax. For example, he required nobleman Roger de Lacy to pay £4,500 to succeed to his father's lands, a huge sum of money.

- Clauses 3–6 deal with minor heirs. John was selling rights of wardship over young, orphaned heirs and heiresses to the highest bidder, people who often ruined the inheritance for the ward by exploiting the estates for their own gain, failing to maintain them, or both. Also, the king had the right to give heirs in marriage, again to the highest bidder and often against the wishes of the immediate family.

- Clauses 7–8 deal with widows. John was also arranging marriages for widows who might have come into profitable estates; very often, these arranged marriages went against the will of the widows.

- Clause 12 deals with the issue of scutage—that is, what feudal tenants owed the king instead of military service. Instead of days of service, cash was preferred, but there was no hard and fast rule about when such a tax could be levied.



Finally, on June 10, 1215, the disgruntled barons met with John's representatives at Runnymede, where they held negotiations that resulted in a document called the Articles of the Barons, which contained 49 articles. This was probably the rough draft of the Magna Carta.

On June 15, 1215, John sealed the document we now call Magna Carta. This document contained 63 clauses. On June 19, the barons renewed their allegiance to him.

After the Charter

It seems John never intended to adhere to the articles in the charter. On August 24, 1215, at a request from John, the pope declared the Magna Carta to be unlawful, unjust, base, and shameful. The reasoning was that when John agreed to accept the articles in 1215, he certainly did not do so willingly. Immediately upon giving his formal agreement, he appealed to the pope to declare the document null and void, unenforceable and without significance.

Within a few months of this, England became embroiled in a civil war much worse than the one the Magna Carta had been designed to try and avert. Archbishop Langton had the royal castle of Rochester in his keeping, and John demanded he surrender it. Langton refused, and it was handed over to the rebel barons. John besieged the castle for seven weeks until it was recaptured, but there would be a series of rebellions throughout England in the months after this.

Some of the rebel barons went to Louis, son of French king Philip Augustus, and offered him the throne. Philip thought that this was not a good idea, but Louis went across the channel. By the summer of 1216, two-thirds of the barons had gone over to Louis's side, recognizing him as king.

Shortly after this, though, disputes flared up between Louis's French company and the native English rebels. The French cause lost most of its support.

John went on the offensive, trying to quash various pockets of rebellion throughout the country, but the last few months of his reign were dismal. He contracted dysentery and died in mid-October, and was buried in Worcester Cathedral.

SUGGESTED READING

Breay, *The Magna Carta*.

Danziger and Gillingham, *1215*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How might English history—and the history of the world—have been different if one of Henry II's older sons had inherited the throne of England instead of John?

2. Did religion play an important role in the dissatisfaction of John's barons, or do you think their grievances were mainly economic?

LECTURE 3

What's Really in the Magna Carta?

This lecture focuses on the contents of the Magna Carta. The events that precipitated the drafting of the Magna Carta had little to do with protecting the rights of the common man. In 1215, it was 25 angry barons who drafted the document that has become known to many as the foundation of our modern justice system. The barons were fed up with the ineptitude of King John, his religious disputes, his conflicts with France, and his attempt to fund multiple wars simultaneously by constantly levying taxes on his nobles.

Sealing the Document

On June 15, 1215, at the field of Runnymede outside London, the 25 barons met with John and entered into negotiations that later were written down. John would later attach his royal seal to the document.

While John could read, it is not clear if he could write—those two skills were learned separately, if at all, in the Middle Ages. Therefore, John did not sign anything. Rather, he attached his royal seal, which was pressed into a beeswax mixture that was then attached to the document.

Four days later, on June 19, the barons renewed their oaths of allegiance to John, and copies of the Magna Carta were distributed to various places throughout England.

This document was written in Latin, not English. In 1215, Latin was the language of government, bureaucracy and the learned elite. All church officials throughout the medieval world knew Latin.

Contents of the Document

Just 10 weeks after the charter went into effect, John persuaded the pope to declare it null and void. In its final form, this document contained 63 clauses. Some took issue with how John was trying to manipulate the remarriage of widows and the control of minor heirs to great estates to his own advantage. Also touched on was the matter of scutage, which was the money that the king was entitled to demand from his nobles when he needed it to fund important endeavors.

Clauses 38, 39, and 40 of the document are particularly notable. Read from a modern vantage point, these three clauses seem to articulate the right to trial by jury, the right to due process, and proper legal procedure, and many have read it that way.

However, at the time, it meant that none of John's nobles should have to put up with his bad decisions unless a group of them got together and agreed to it—just as a group of 25 of them had gotten together to issue the king their ultimatum. The supposed power of these clauses is further diluted because they are not at the beginning or climax of the document.

The Magna Carta also spends focus on merchants moving in and out of the country, discussion of who has the right to do what in the forest, not allowing women to bring criminal charges against anyone, how and if the crusading movement should continue.

Other points include what to do about Welsh trouble in the west and the Scots in the north, and removing from office anyone related to or a friend of Gerard of Athée, who apparently was not very popular. There are also several mentions of Jews, an indicator of the rise of the persecuting society.

Scutage in Detail

Clause 12 deals with scutage—what feudal tenants owed the king instead of military service. In particular, the Magna Carta states,

> *No "scutage" or "aid" may be levied in our kingdom without its general consent, unless it is for the ransom of our person, to make our eldest son a knight, and (once) to marry our eldest daughter. For these purposes only a reasonable "aid" may be levied.*

In a feudal society, when a knight became a vassal of the king, he pledged to be ready to serve a certain number of days of military service if the king needed it. This could get tricky if, for example, weather prevented vassals from sailing off to fight for a few weeks. Those weeks spent waiting counted toward the days of military service.

By the 13th century, very often instead of days of service, cash payment was preferred. This way the king could pay mercenaries—who were often better fighters than

his vassals who spent most of their days overseeing their estates—and he had more control over how long they would serve him.

Before the Magna Carta, there was no hard and fast rule about when scutages or aids could be levied. John levied 11 in his 17 years on the throne; his father had demanded only 8 in 34 years. This is why the barons decided to put some limits on when and for what John could levy these aids.

Welsh Relations

Some of the Magna Carta's clauses deal with specific political crises in play at that very moment. Clauses 56–59 deal with some problematic issues relating to Wales and Scotland. The document spells out when a Welsh person or an English person should be subject to either English law, Welsh law, or the law of the Marches.

The Marches are the lands between England and Wales, and nobles known as the Marcher lords held the territories. Marcher law was its own entity—different from English and Welsh law, but bearing affinities with each in some areas.

The Marcher lords were, to a certain extent, independent of both England and Wales. This was a situation that lasted until the 16th century, when the last of the Marcher holdings passed into the hands of the crown. It is not until this point, really, that we can begin to speak of a pervasive English common law, which supposedly originated several centuries before in Magna Carta.

Another interesting note is that Clause 58 states:

> *We will at once return the son of Llywelyn, all Welsh hostages, and the carters delivered to us as security for the peace.*

John had been working to add Wales, finally, to England. To further this, he had married his illegitimate daughter, Joanna or Joan, to Llewelyn the Great, who was a prince of North Wales. Joan would act as an important

negotiator between her father and husband, and later, her husband and half-brother, Henry III.

Despite Joan's best efforts, tensions remained high between Wales and England. In order to secure a peace, Llewelyn had sent his illegitimate son, Gruffydd, to England in 1211, where he would live under a form of house arrest. Llewelyn then allied himself with the 25 barons who forced John to accept the Magna Carta. Because he did so, the freeing of his son would be one of the conditions of that document.

King John signing the Magna Carta

Relations with Scotland

John was not only holding Welsh hostages. He had been having some trouble with Scotland. Clause 59 reads,

> *With regard to the return of the sisters and hostages of Alexander, King of Scotland, his liberties and his rights, we will treat him in the same way as our other barons of England ...*

Like Wales, Scotland had long been at odds with the English crown over its independence and rights. In 1174, after a defeat in battle, the king of Scotland agreed that he would hold his territories as fiefs of the English crown and pledged as much to Henry II. Richard I, John's brother and Henry's son, had essentially sold back the right of Scottish sovereignty in 1190, when he needed to raise money to crusade.

When John came to the throne, he insisted that the Scots do homage to the English crown again, and a fierce and often violent debate ensued. As with Wales, John insisted on hostages to secure the peace.

King William of Scotland reluctantly sent his daughters Margaret and Isabel to become wards of John, with the understanding that John could marry them off—and that presumably, one of those marriages would be to John's son, a union that would unite these two regions of Britain. However, when the barons began to push back against John, Alexander, the new King of Scotland, allied with the 25 and included the demand that his sisters be returned to him.

Other Clauses

Toward the end of the document, there is a long explanation of the need for there to always be 25 barons who will make sure the king obeys and enforces Magna Carta, what to do if there is disagreement among the barons, and what the process should be for replacement should one of their number die.

VAGUENESS AND SPECIFICITY

The Magna Carta can be specific at some times and vague at others. Clause 13, for example, states, "the city of London shall enjoy all its ancient liberties and free customs, both by land and by water. We also will and grant that all other cities, boroughs, towns, and ports shall enjoy all their liberties and free customs." Nowhere does it specify what these "ancient liberties and free customs" might be or who determines and enforces them. By contrast, matters of inheritance are spelled out down to the shilling.

Clause 61 concludes with:

> *The twenty-five barons shall swear to obey all the above articles faithfully, and shall cause them to be obeyed by others to the best of their power.*

Amidst the clauses that arguably gave rise to great advances in human rights, or that simply provide a fascinating window onto what quotidian medieval society was like, there are clauses that give one pause. Clauses 10 and 11, for example, specifically address what happens in cases when Christians who owe money to Jews die before the debt is repaid.

The Magna Carta states that if this should happen, no interest need ever be paid on the loan, and in some cases, the loan simply disappears. This is just a small glimpse of the concern with the status and roles played by the Jews in medieval society that would resurface repeatedly in the decades to follow. This issue is one that would be addressed by several of the canons of another big event in 1215, the meeting of the fourth Lateran Council.

SUGGESTED READING

Holt, *Magna Carta*.

Vincent, *Magna Carta*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Which clause or clauses of the Magna Carta give you the strongest glimpse into what daily life was like in medieval England?

2. Which clause or clauses are the most surprising or unexpected?

LECTURE 4

The Magna Carta's Legacy

The Magna Carta is revered today, though it could easily have become a footnote to history. It was in existence for 10 weeks before King John called on the pope to declare it null and void. Within a few months of this, England became embroiled in a civil war much worse than the one the Magna Carta had been designed to avert.

Violent Disputes

Archbishop Langton—the man that John had been forced to accept as archbishop of Canterbury—had the royal castle of Rochester in his keeping, and John demanded he surrender it. Langton refused and handed it over to the rebel barons.

Archbishop Langton

John besieged the castle for seven weeks until he recaptured it, but this was just the beginning of John's troubles. There would be a series of rebellions throughout England in the months after this. Matters became so dire that some of the rebel barons went to Louis, son of French king Philip Augustus, and offered him the English throne.

Philip thought that this was not such a good idea. Louis, however, ignored his father's advice and went across the channel. By the summer of 1216, two-thirds of the barons had gone over to Louis's side and were recognizing him as king.

John went on the offensive, trying to quash various pockets of rebellion throughout the country.

The last few months of his reign were absolutely dismal—he contracted dysentery but persisted in ordering the royal household move about the country in pursuit of rebels. Wherever he went, so did the whole royal treasury, which in retrospect was a bad idea.

Several cartloads of treasure were lost in the crossing of the marshy wetlands known as the Wash, which is in the region of East Anglia. In one moment, almost all of the crown's portable wealth tipped over and disappeared into the river. Shortly thereafter, in mid-October of 1216, John died of dysentery.

After John

After John's death, it would not have been at all surprising if the Magna Carta had simply been forgotten. John left behind a nine-year-old heir, Henry III, who was obviously too young to rule. William Marshal was appointed as his regent.

William sought to save the throne for young Henry by making a very shrewd move: reaffirming the articles of the Magna Carta. In 1216, William made a point of reissuing the charter in the name of Henry. While he kept the bulk of the document intact, he carefully and cleverly amended certain clauses in order to appeal the greatest population of nobles he could. He needed to keep those loyal to the crown happy, and he needed to persuade those who were disgruntled to come back into the English fold.

Later on, Henry III would reissue the charter under his own authority, and later kings would follow suit. Over time, it was customary for the full text of the Magna Carta to be reissued every year, and eventually, it was a law that the document be read in its entirety, in public, at least twice a year.

In a world with a literacy rate hovering somewhere between 10 and 20 percent, oral readings of the Magna Carta were hugely important. Without this, there would be no way for the average person to even know what the document contained.

An Evolving Document

When William Marshal moderated the document to appeal both to rebel and loyalist barons, support for the young King Henry III increased. In 1225, Henry III reissued the charter under his own power as a response to a grant of taxation he had asked for and received. This was when the Magna Carta began to evolve into the human-rights manifesto it is regarded as today. The sovereign was acknowledging that his powers had limits, and he was acknowledging also in whose powers those limits resided.

In 1297, Edward I, Henry III's son, had the Magna Carta copied into the first statute roll. From this point on, it was read aloud twice yearly in county courts and cathedrals. By 1341, members of Parliament had to swear to uphold its strictures.

In the mid-14th century, the clause on "lawful judgment of equals" became "trial by equals," which eventually evolved into what we know today as trial by jury. The Magna Carta had become part of the fabric of English bureaucracy.

However, it was still very much a document that was concerned with the powers held by the sovereign and how those powers affected those directly below the king. There was little or no application of the clauses of the Magna Carta to the majority of the population.

Expanding Reach

It was in the 17th century that English lawyers started to argue that the Magna Carta, in fact, stated fundamental issues of law. Furthermore, they argued that these issues of law reached throughout all of society. This newfound urgency was a reaction to the Stuart kings James I and Charles I.

Both of these kings believed that they ruled by divine right; thus, they had no need to acknowledge the Magna Carta, nor did they need

to obey its clauses, because being a divinely ordained king trumps everything else. Edward Coke, who was then the lord chief justice, insisted the king was subject to the Magna Carta.

Additionally, over the centuries, Parliament accrued more and more power. In the 18th century, when political activists began to fear that Parliament was becoming too powerful, many cited the Magna Carta as limiting Parliament's powers, just as a few centuries before, the Magna Carta was drafted to limit the powers of the king.

From the 18th century on, the significance of the document continued to grow. When settlers crossed the Atlantic and established colonies in North America, they brought with them knowledge of Magna Carta. Indeed, William Penn wrote an essay on the Magna Carta and discussed how it influenced him as he went about drafting the laws that would govern Pennsylvania. Additionally, a number of scholars of the United States' Declaration of Independence have noted how this declaration contains within it echoes of the Magna Carta.

The Magna Carta's Legacy

After 1215, every time someone pointed to the values described in the Magna Carta as an inspiration, the significance of the moment of the initial agreement was enlarged and enhanced, until eventually the barons at Runnymede had become mythologized as freedom fighters yearning to break free from the yoke of the crown.

However, they wanted no such thing—they wanted their king to rule properly and to stop taxing them excessively. Striking a blow for human rights was not on their minds. In fact, some of them would have been horrified at the idea that anything in the document suggested that an earl might have something in common with a blacksmith or a knight with a farmer.

Still, the Magna Carta inspired British activists, American settlers, French rebels, and many, many more. In 1948, the United Nations

adopted a Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which contains echoes of the Magna Carta.

Surprisingly, in present-day England, only three clauses of the original 63 found in the Magna Carta remain law. These include Clause 1, which affirmed the independence of the church in England and the freedoms it should enjoy. Clause 13 also remains, even though it is as vague as ever in asserting that the city of London should enjoy "all its ancient rights and privileges."

Most famously and maybe most reassuringly, however, is the fact that Clause 39 remains law to this day:

> *No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgment of his equals or by the law of the land.*

SUGGESTED READING

Holt, *Magna Carta*.

Turner, *Magna Carta*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How might the history of the United States have been different if William Marshal had not reissued the Magna Carta under the name of King Henry III? Would the values enshrined therein have been forgotten, or do you think they would have reemerged in some fashion on their own later on in the historical record?

2. What moment seems the key tipping point at which the Magna Carta became a text that conveyed rights and powers rather than limiting them?

LECTURE 5

What Inspired the Fourth Lateran Council?

The fourth Lateran Council was a monumental event. The changes effected by this meeting and the canons that were issued from it were so profound that today it is difficult to imagine a Catholic Church before 1215. However, this lecture tries to do just that by providing background on church councils and looking at what inspired the fourth Lateran Council.

Background on Church Councils

For the first couple of centuries of its existence, Christianity was regarded as a radical branch of Judaism, especially by the Roman Empire. In the decades immediately following Jesus's crucifixion, his followers engaged in a whole range of practices to honor and revere their leader, but there was no central church as such for quite a while.

Eventually, however, a sense that there should be some uniformity began to emerge. While it sprang ultimately from the practices of Judaism, it also sought to create new, distinct, and what its adherents thought were more correct practices.

In order to work toward a uniform belief system, believers were going to have to get the leaders of the organization to hash out details and make decisions about what was orthodox and what was not. For example, a heresy did not become a heresy until an official church council declared that it was.

Additionally, a church council would not have bothered to call out a thing as a heresy unless there were a lot of people who believed in it, were engaging in practices that were demonstrative of this belief, and needed to be corrected.

The Council of Nicaea

A notably heresy, Arianism, was a belief that had been popularized in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries by the Egyptian religious figure Arius. The belief held that Jesus was subordinate to God the Father in the trinity. One of the first and greatest Christian councils, the Council of Nicaea, took up this concern and others in the year 325.

It was at this meeting that the concept of the triune God—three persons in one—was hashed out, with the council affirming as

orthodox belief that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were coeternal and equal.

When the Council of Nicaea did this, they not only declared Arianism a heresy, but they also denounced another popular belief held by some members of the early church, who were known as Adoptionists. The Adoptionists believed that Jesus was definitely a man, but at some point, God had adopted the human Jesus as his son because he was so perfectly sinless and devoted to God. With this adoption, Jesus became divine. The Council of Nicaea rejected this belief.

The council was not the first official church meeting to denounce this belief. That had already happened repeatedly at the three Synods of Antioch, which occurred between 264 and 269. Synods tend to be more local than councils.

While a synod debates matters of theology and makes recommendations, what emerges from a synod does not become canon law unless an ecumenical council—such as the Council of Nicaea or the fourth Lateran Council—says so. Councils are larger in scope than synods, dealing not only with a multitude of issues, but also theoretically involving all church leaders and officials.

Other Matters at the Council of Nicaea

Among other matters, the Council of Nicaea also had a debate about how to calculate when Easter should be celebrated. They decided that the Christian church should no longer rely on the Jewish calendar for calculating the celebration—as they had been, up to this time—and that Easter needed to happen after the spring equinox. It would take several more centuries to figure out exactly how to calculate the date for Easter, and it was a topic that would be revisited on numerous occasions at later councils.

The Council of Nicaea also established the Nicene Creed, which is considered the declaration and definition of Christian faith. Most importantly, they promulgated 20 new laws, which they called canons. Now there was a base or foundation of rules, and these would be added to, edited, or deleted by later councils. Going forward, the Council of Nicaea would be recognized as the first ecumenical council of the church. The Roman Catholic Church as it exists today recognizes 21 ecumenical councils throughout its history.

EASTER TODAY

Today, Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full Moon after the spring equinox. If there is a full Moon the day before the equinox, Easter can be quite delayed, but if there is a full Moon the day after the equinox, then Easter is the very next week. This is why the date of Easter celebration is always moving around.

The Lateran Councils

Starting in the 12th century, with the first Lateran Council in 1123, the Catholic Church began to really hash out matters of doctrine and faith about once a generation or every other generation. In part, this was due to an event that took place in 1054—the Great Schism.

The Great Schism involved two branches of Christianity in what used to be the capitals of the western and eastern halves of

the Roman Empire. The eastern branch, led by the patriarch of Constantinople, said that it was the superior branch because in their view, the eastern half of the Roman Empire was still intact and functioning, unlike the collapsed west. The west said that Rome was the center of Christianity.

It looked like the breach between the two branches was widening. In the west, church leaders worked to establish, maintain, and affirm the true identity of the church, and it did so primarily in these ecumenical councils.

The First Lateran Council

When the first Lateran Council met in 1123, its primary concern was with affirming the Concordat of Worms, which had taken place just one year before. Worms is a city in what is today Germany, and the word *Concordat* here means "an agreement."

The agreement had to do with a lengthy, ongoing debate known as the Investiture Controversy. There had long been tension between the church and the nobility—particularly royalty and the Holy Roman emperors.

The Investiture Controversy was about the powers of church and state: Did kings and emperors get to appoint bishops and church officials, or was that the business of the pope? At the Concordat of Worms, Holy Roman Emperor Henry V and Pope Calixtus II reached an agreement that basically said that the pope was God's representative on earth. The agreement limited the extent to which the state—particularly kings and emperors—could be involved in church business, although it didn't exclude their influence altogether.

There were several other canons that emerged from the first Lateran Council, especially concerning clerical celibacy and marriage between relatives. Some of these would be revisited, clarified, and emphatically reaffirmed in the fourth Lateran Council.

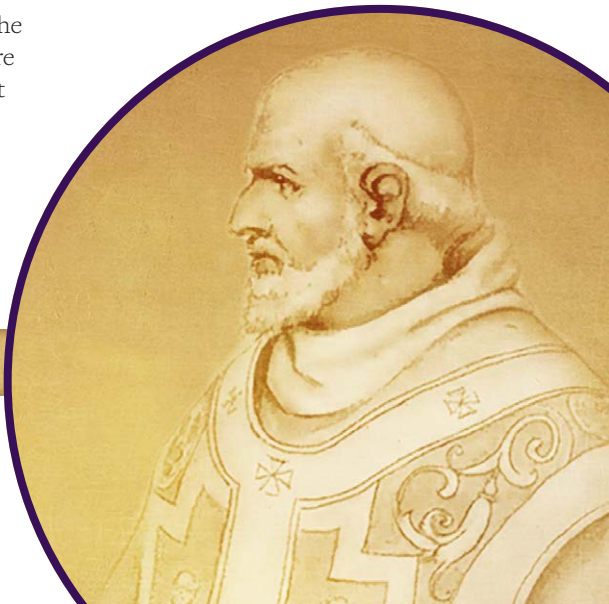
The Second Lateran Council

The second Lateran Council took place relatively soon, in April of 1139. Its immediate cause was to deal with a papal schism. When Pope Honorius II died in 1130, there was a conflict concerning who should be the next pope.

The majority of the College of Cardinals had elected Anacletus II as pope, but a rival faction had elected Innocent II. Anacletus took up his office in Rome, while Innocent went to Pisa where he called a council to affirm his status as the rightful Pope.

Anacletus died in 1138, and Innocent II was essentially recognized by everyone as the rightful pope. However, there remained the matter of what to do about the bishops and other church leaders that Anacletus had consecrated while he held the office and believed himself to be the legitimate pope.

The second Lateran Council held that none of these consecrations were legitimate, and further, the council excommunicated King Roger II of Sicily, who was considered to have been "schismatically sympathetic." Other canons were also passed, including some that had already been affirmed in the first Lateran Council.



Pope Innocent II

The Third Lateran Council

There was a significant gap of time between the second and third Lateran councils, the latter of which was held in 1179. Once again, the main subject under discussion was a papal schism.

In 1159, two rival popes had been elected after the death of Pope Adrian IV. Proving that the first Lateran Council's canons concerning rights of investiture hadn't had the desired impact, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I got involved and declared war on the southern Italian city-states.

Then, one of the rival popes died. In his place, various factions elected two more rival popes. The major task of this council was to clear up all the trouble of the recent schism, which it did. It also issued a canon declaring that in the future, the pope could only be elected by a two-thirds vote of the College of Cardinals.

The council also condemned a heresy: Catharism. (The Cathars are discussed in more detail in LECTURE 15.)

Other canons from the third Lateran Council involved matters of payment to priests for blessing marriages, what was to be done about taking care of lepers, and issuing a ruling that Jews and Muslims could not have Christians as servants.

The Fourth Lateran Council

The fourth Lateran Council was called in 1213, but it was scheduled to take place in 1215. This meant that anyone who was in any way connected with the church had plenty of time to make arrangements to be present. Its attendance numbers were huge: Among those at the council were 71 patriarchs and

high-ranking bishops, 412 regular bishops, and over 900 abbots and priors. There were also dozens—if not hundreds—of individuals representing secular rulers who had an interest in the proceedings.

The matters discussed and decided at the fourth Lateran Council carried more weight and had a much greater impact than arguably any ecumenical council up to this point—with the exception of the first council, at Nicaea. The fourth Lateran Council took up matters of doctrine—like transubstantiation—and it was concerned also with matters of secular rule.

The council took lands away from some nobles and awarded them to others, which resulted in several episodes of violence between the representatives of the various nobles whose lands were in dispute. This council would also concern itself intensely with the Crusades. In related matters, it issued rulings on the status of Jews and Muslims, the repercussions of which would arguably be felt down to the present day.

All of these issues came to a head at this particular moment for a reason. Medieval Europe in 1215 was a dramatically more crowded place than it had been in 1015. Between the years 1000 and 1300, the population of Europe doubled. Some estimates place the population in the year 1000 at 50 million and the population in 1300 at 85 million, while others say the jump was closer to 75 million to 150 million.

In the year 1000, with plenty of land and titles to go around, people weren't too concerned about sharing. Two centuries later, with resources dwindling, those who had power wanted to hold on to it, and they did that in part by marginalizing whomever they could.

Some measure of power and status enjoyed by women diminished. Non-Christians were subject to more and more persecution and restrictions in terms of their professions and ability to own land. Heretics like the Cathars suddenly became targets; anyone not in the mainstream was pushed as far out as possible so that those who were could maintain their power and position.

SUGGESTED READING

Lynch, *The Medieval Church*.

Rosenwein, *A Short History of the Middle Ages*.

Shinners, ed., *Medieval Popular Religion, 1000–1500*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What was the most interesting thing about the development of Christianity from its origins up to 1215 that you learned in this lecture? Why?

2. How might Christianity have developed differently if certain heresies (such as Arianism, Adoptionism, Pelagianism, and Catharism) had not been labeled unorthodox?

LECTURE 6

Canons for Christian Practice and Belief

The fourth Lateran Council had a far-ranging impact on all people in the medieval world—even those who were not Christian—and thus, it marked a dramatic shift in the way things happened in the religious realm, from the pope on down to the lowliest parish priest and his flock. This lecture walks through some of the specific canons and explores what the council was trying to address.

Heresies and Monastic Orders

One of the first tasks of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 was to officially recondemn any previously identified heresies in no uncertain terms. It also sought to curb what had become, relatively speaking, an explosion of the founding of new monastic orders.

Benedictine Monasticism had, since the early centuries of the church, been the dominant form of monastic living, but over time, some members of the order came to regard Benedictine monasticism as a little too cushy and worldly. Part of this was because Benedictine monasteries were often deeply intertwined with the secular communities alongside which they resided.

Reform orders came into being—the Cistercians in 1098, the Franciscans in 1209, and the Dominicans at almost the same moment as the fourth Lateran Council itself. The council sought to establish rules for the formation of these orders and curb the explosion of "unlicensed" religious figures.

The Friars and the Dominicans made it through the council. Unlike other kinds of monasticism in which monks and nuns swore stability of place and resided in a monastery or abbey, the Friars and Dominicans were mendicant orders. Mendicant monks went out into the world with the clothes on their backs and a begging bowl, relying on the kindness of strangers for all their needs.

The Schism of 1054

Another matter that needed addressing was the Schism of 1054 between the Latin Church in the west and the Orthodox Church in the east. The fight here was about who was really the leader of the Christian church: the pope in Rome or the patriarch of Constantinople.

By 1215, the beliefs and practices of the two churches had drifted further and further apart, and it was clear that the formerly unified branches of Christianity were now anything but. The fourth Lateran Council simultaneously tried to heal this breach while still affirming the primacy of the papacy in Rome.

The schism of 1054 is discussed at length in *Turning Points in Medieval History*, which is available at www.thegreatcourses.com.

The Population at Large

The majority of the population of the medieval world was directly impacted by the new rules, but perhaps no one was affected as much as the parish priest. A typical parish priest, unlike higher-ranking church officials, was much more connected with his immediate community. Not only did he perform Mass several times a week, but he also administered the sacraments of baptism, confession, communion, last rites, and burial. Additionally, he gave comfort to the sick, blessed marriages, and did much more.

One way the council supported and enhanced the parish priest's position was by making it clear that attending Mass on a regular basis was an absolute must. Another requirement issued by the fourth Lateran Council was that people needed to take communion and make confession at least once a year.

Transubstantiation

Another council canon dealt with the doctrine of transubstantiation. According to this doctrine, at the moment that the priest consecrates the bread and wine, they are transformed into his actual body and blood. Although the bread might still look like bread and the wine looks like wine, they were in fact the flesh and blood of the savior.

While this doctrine made many people uncomfortable, the fourth Lateran Council was absolutely clear on this issue. If you were a Christian, this is what you believed; if you openly stated opposition or disbelief of the doctrine of transubstantiation, you risked being branded a heretic, the punishment for which could be severe and could include execution.

Marriage

The fourth Lateran Council was important also because it added a sacrament to those already on the books: marriage. Before the year 1215, marriage was not a Christian sacrament. It was, more than anything else, an economic arrangement between families.

The fourth Lateran Council affirmed that all that was necessary to contract a valid marriage was the stated consent of both parties. However, it also decreed that any disputes involving a marriage were to be the business of the church.

Parish priests were supposed to be apprised of a couple's intent to wed and then attempt to ensure that there were no impediments to the marriage. In some cases, this would mean trying to ascertain if either party had been married before, perhaps in another town. This also meant dealing with consanguinity, or the matter of a couple being too closely related to legally marry one another.

The council made additional decrees concerning marriage. Even while acknowledging that a marriage was valid if the two people involved agreed to it—no need, officially, for a priest or other witnesses—it also sought to discourage so-called secret marriages and specifically declared the offspring of such unions to be illegitimate and excluded from any inheritance. A secret marriage meant that two people had pledged to be husband and wife to one another but had not told anyone else.

Priests themselves were forbidden from marrying. While it had always been the case that celibacy was greatly admired, it was never so emphatically articulated as a condition of entering the priesthood until 1215. That was when the injunctions against priestly marriage articulated almost a century earlier at the second Lateran Council in 1139 were firmly enshrined as canon law.

Poverty

The ideals of poverty were affirmed again and again in the canons of the fourth Lateran Council. Several of the clauses specifically forbade the passing on of wealth from a religious person to any family members and likewise forbade anyone in an official religious position from practicing a secular trade by which they could make additional income.

By the same token, however, several of the canons attempted to provide an education and living for those too poor to afford it. Canon 11 states that every cathedral church should specifically provide for a master whose duty it should be to

> *instruct for nothing the clerks of that church and other poor scholars, thus ... opening up the path of knowledge to those who are learning.*

With its emphasis on the ideal of poverty and desire to spread knowledge, the fourth Lateran Council theoretically made it possible for even the lowliest peasant to become a scholar, a teacher, and a man of God, serving as monk or priest. Although this had earlier been an ideal, the canons issued in 1215 clearly wanted to establish this more firmly.

The emphasis on access to learning and knowledge for poor religious clerks suggests that the fourth Lateran Council is a much more important step toward human rights than the Magna Carta was when it was first drafted.

SUGGESTED READING

Danziger and Gillingham, *1215*.

Geary, *Readings in Medieval History, Volume II*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What does it suggest about the church's power that several canons of the fourth Lateran Council had already been decided upon at earlier councils?

2. Which canon of the ones discussed in this lecture seems to have had the greatest potential to affect medieval society as a whole?

LECTURE 7

The Canons of Persecution

The fourth Lateran Council canons directed specifically at non-Christians (particularly Muslims and Jews) meant that literally every person in the medieval world was addressed or encompassed in the pronouncements of the council. The first part of this lecture looks at canons that proscribe and prescribe behaviors, the second part focuses on the canons of persecution, and the third part focuses on the crusading-oriented Canon 71.

Proscribing and Prescribing Behaviors

Many of the Fourth Lateran Council's concerns were with proscribing behavior—that is, what religious leaders and followers cannot and should not do. They also focused on prescribing beliefs and orthodoxy—in other words, telling people what they should do.

One of those that prescribes behavior is Canon 11, which directs the officials of each cathedral to establish an educational system that would benefit those who could not afford to pay for an education. This canon gestures toward inclusion and assistance.

One that proscribes behavior is Canon 62, which deals with the matter of relics. A relic is a holy object usually associated with a saint or with Christ himself. At the time of the council, the European world was experiencing a huge influx of so-called relics that supposedly had been taken from the city of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in 1204.

Canon 62 notes,

> *because some put up saints' relics for sale and display them indiscriminately, the Christian religion is very often disparaged. So, in order that it may not be disparaged in future, we ordain by the present decree that ancient relics from now on are not to be shown outside the reliquary or put up for sale.*

However, this canon did not have much of an impact on the practice it was meant to eradicate.

The canons of the Fourth Lateran Council then move from concern over fake relics to moneymaking schemes hatched up by legitimately consecrated religious leaders. For example, Canon 66 notes

> *certain clerks exact and extort payments for funeral rites for the dead, the blessing of those being married, and the like, and if it happens that their greed is not satisfied they deceitfully set up false impediments.*

The canon goes on to sternly assert that such behavior is absolutely forbidden.

LENDING MONEY

The profession of moneylending was often associated with members of the Jewish community, and the church was very much concerned with this. Usury, or charging interest on a loan, was forbidden to Christians.

However, as the medieval world moved from a barter economy to a cash-based one, as it was doing in the 13th century, such loans were clearly necessary if the economy was going to grow. The medieval world got around this problem by allowing Jews to charge interest when they made loans, as technically it was not a sin for them to do this.

The Persecuting Canons

This lecture now turns to the final canons, known as the persecuting canons. In addition to addressing corruption among church officials and codifying matters of theology and doctrine, the fourth Lateran Council was also deeply involved with what has been called the "rise of persecuting society." Here, we can see the development of that persecution written down as canon law.

Particularly chilling is Canon 68, which expresses concern over the inability to distinguish Jews, Muslims, and Christians from one another. This canon arguably has the medieval forerunner of the armbands and badges Jews were required to wear in Nazi Germany.

Canons 69 and 70 continue in this vein. Canon 69 declares that Jews are forbidden to hold public office. This fact, in combination with the seizing of farmland that had previously been leased to or even owned by Jews, meant that the options for making a living were dramatically reduced for the Jewish population. They were pushed into holding some of the least desirable jobs in the society—among them, moneylending.

Canon 70 anticipates what might be the response of some Jews to the previous two canons—namely, a conversion to Christianity as a means of self-preservation. It is true that in some instances, particularly in England, some Jews chose to convert rather than die. Others actually did choose to die rather than convert. In some cases in which people did convert, these were only conversions on the surface—in private, many of these people observed the customs of their old faith.

Canon 70 advises priests to be on the lookout for converted Christians sliding back to their previous faith. It also suggests that it is better to stay a Jew with no knowledge of Christianity than it is to convert to Christianity but then choose to revert to the practices of one's earlier faith.

Background on Canon 71

Canon 71, the last and longest of all the canons of Lateran IV, deals with the matter of crusading. For background on the Crusades: In 1095, the pope called on Christians to take up the cross and go on a mission to the area we think of as the Middle East and recover the Holy Land for Christendom.

A huge number of people did, and in 1099, a large portion of the Levant was captured by crusading forces, including the city of

Jerusalem. Four crusader states were established: the kingdom of Jerusalem, the principality of Antioch, the county of Edessa, and the county of Tripoli.

Almost immediately, the peoples from whom these territories had been wrested fought back, which led to territorial losses and the calling of subsequent crusades. These had mixed success. The Second Crusade in 1147 was called in response to the loss of the county of Edessa.

The Third Crusade, which began in 1189, was in response to the rise to power of the great Saladin, who managed to unite many different factions against the Christian forces. While Christian forces recovered some territories, the Third Crusade was considered a failure because they did not retake the city of Jerusalem, which had been taken by Saladin in 1187.

The Fourth Crusade took place between 1202 and 1204, and its results caused the fourth Lateran Council to take the issue of crusading seriously. The crusaders never even made it to the Holy Land. Instead, they detoured to Constantinople. Once they were there, they decided that this was as good a place as any for crusading, since the Eastern and Western branches of the church had been drifting apart since the schism in 1054.

In the minds of the crusaders, these Eastern Christians weren't really Christians at all, but they were in a city with numerous beautiful churches filled with holy relics. The Western forces decided that these precious relics should be liberated from the heretics. If some other valuables found their way in the pockets and bags of crusading forces, the citizens of Constantinople deserved it, in the eyes of the crusaders.

Innocent III, who had called the crusade in the first place, was said to be filled with shame and rage when he heard what the forces had done. This was sure to widen the gulf between the divided churches and delay their reunification. As upset as he was, Innocent accepted into his keeping many of the relics that had been looted from Constantinople, and he seemed content with the idea that many sees and bishoprics that had been Eastern were now under Latin control.

The Contents of Canon 71

However, the pope was still focused on the ultimate goal—the Levant, or Holy Land, particularly Jerusalem. In 1215, the fourth Lateran Council concluded with a lengthy canon on the subject of crusading.

The pope was calling for a Fifth Crusade to set out in June 1217. Some forces had already set out on this mission as early as 1213, but Innocent and the council were striving to impose some kind of order on the crusading impulse which had swept through Europe over a hundred years earlier.

Canon 71 has much to say about how important it was for the priests and other holy men on the crusade to preach constantly to the troops and exhort them to exhibit proper behavior. The canon also includes a lengthy discussion of the economics of this endeavor and a breakdown of which parties should pay what part of crusading expenses, with Rome asserting that it would foot a full tenth of the bill.

Merchants and traders who do business with Saracens—as Muslims were known in the medieval world—are declared to be excommunicated. Additionally, traders and merchants are forbidden to take their ships and trade caravans through Saracen lands in case their goods should fall into Muslim hands.

Crusaders are also, interestingly, excused from paying interest on loans that have been made to them by Jews. Indeed, repayment of loans at all should be deferred until the crusaders in question have either returned from the Holy Land or been declared dead during the enterprise, at which time the Jewish money lenders may reckon up what they are owed and try to claim it from remaining property.

Innocent concludes by saying that all of those who go on the crusade or who support it financially from home are granted full remission of sins. In the medieval world of 1215, remission of sins and guaranteed entrance into heaven was valuable indeed.

SUGGESTED READING

Geary, *Readings in Medieval History*.

Lynch, *The Medieval Church*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Are you surprised by the juxtaposition of canons urging church officials to do good for their communities alongside those that restrict and regulate? How can you reconcile these two impulses?

2. What seems to be the dominant concern or worry that drove church officials to call the fourth Lateran Council?

LECTURE 8

Civilizations in the Americas in 1215

This lecture focuses on the accomplishments and status of a few groups of indigenous peoples of the Americas in the 13th century: the Pueblo peoples in North America and the Incan and Mayan empires in South America.

The Pueblo Peoples

While we can certainly identify a Pueblo culture, within that similarly structured society were multiple groups who spoke multiple languages. Among the Pueblo peoples in the southwestern portion of North America, there are three distinct language families, and many of these are further differentiated by different dialects.

THE HOPI

The Hopi are often considered Pueblo people. However, they are geographically distant from the other Pueblo peoples, the US government has a separate identity category for them, and they speak a language that is distinct from the three main Pueblo ones identified by linguists. All of this means that they are sometimes included as Pueblo and sometimes not.

Scholars of the Pueblo people today identify between 19 and 21 different pueblos, mostly located in the state of New Mexico. These are grouped into three general branches, identified as the Northern Pueblos, the Southern Pueblos, and the Western Pueblos.

The Ancestral Pueblo—the group around in 1215—were all multilingual. The Pueblos that spoke Keresan were able to communicate with the Pueblos where Tanoan was spoken, and all of these peoples could usually converse as well in the languages of the Zuni and the Hopi. There were also interactions between the Pueblos and the Apache, Navajo, Kiowa, and Comanche, all of whom had their own languages.

The key point here is that we need to understand the Ancestral Pueblo culture as broadly unified in terms of general social, political, and religious practices. However, it was also incredibly diverse when it came to their respective individual communities.

Pueblo Settlements

Archaeological and anthropological evidence suggests that the Pueblo peoples settled in what is often called the Four Corners area of the southwestern United States over 10,000 years ago. They more or less still live in the same geographical location in which the earliest European settlers encountered them.

By the 13th century, these peoples had been living in a fairly stable agricultural society for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Their society may have been an outgrowth or development of the earlier Mayan, Toltec, and Olmec civilizations. By 3400 BCE, they had domesticated avocados, chili peppers, and corn.

They were also hunters and gatherers in addition to being farmers. Their communities featured multistoried structures, usually made of adobe. The entrance to these structures was usually on the second level, which would be accessed by a ladder that could be pulled up once all members of a family or clan were home at night. This provided a level of protection against raiding parties.

Pueblo Society

The Pueblo peoples of 1215 were a preliterate people, preserving their history, stories, and laws by oral tradition. There is no word for *religion* among the Pueblo people because it permeated all aspects of their lives. There is a belief in a Great Being who guided the Pueblo peoples to their lands and gave them instructions on how to coexist with the natural landscape and become part of its ecology.

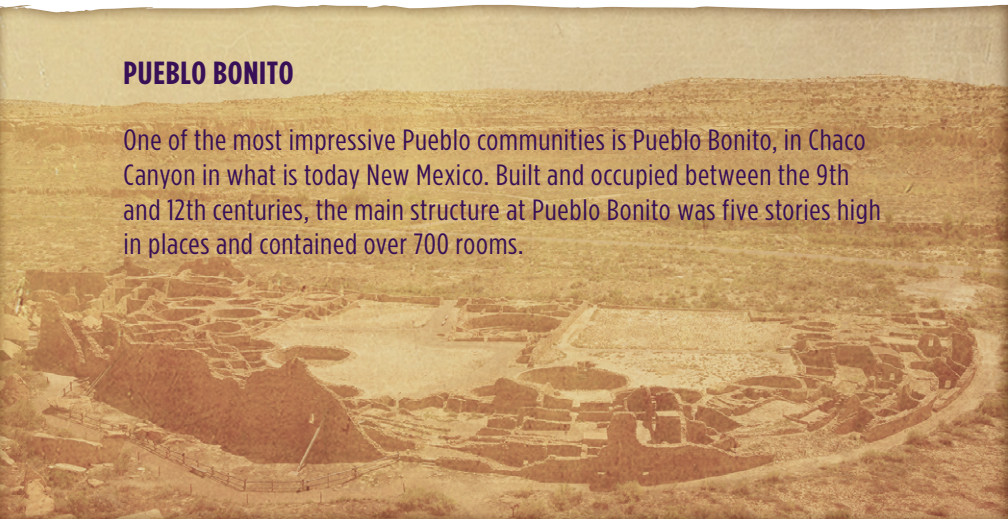
Planting, weeding, irrigating, and other agricultural practices were a group affair. Participation and assignments in these activities was based on the social structure of the individual pueblos. That structure for most Pueblos begins with the immediate family, of which the father is the head. However, archaeological evidence attests that membership in an extended family is usually determined by descent from a common female ancestor.

It was this extended family group that usually worked together on agricultural tasks, moving together from one field to another to plant, and weed, and water. In order to be considered a member of the tribe, one had to participate in these activities and do one's fair share.

In some Pueblos, there was an additional structural division known as the moiety. Members of

PUEBLO BONITO

One of the most impressive Pueblo communities is Pueblo Bonito, in Chaco Canyon in what is today New Mexico. Built and occupied between the 9th and 12th centuries, the main structure at Pueblo Bonito was five stories high in places and contained over 700 rooms.



the same clan or extended family could belong to different moieties. A moiety was a two-part division of the Pueblo, and inclusion in one moiety or another might be decided upon on the occasion of a marriage or because of deep ties of friendship.

Usually, rule over the Pueblo would happen in alternating turns between one moiety and another. One example of this from the 13th century is from the Turkey Creek Pueblo site in what is today Arizona. Here, it seems that two groups of people came together to form a single society.

An important location in Pueblo society is the kiva, a structure that was often completely or partially underground and was used for religious and political meetings. At Turkey Creek, the kiva seems to have marked a central meeting space.

The Incan Empire

It was right around the year 1215 that the people we have come to call the Inca established themselves in Cusco, which is in modern-day Peru. From this site, they would eventually come to control a huge geographic region that would make them the largest and most powerful empire to ever exist in the pre-Columbian Americas.

Like the Ancestral Pueblo peoples, the Inca were a preliterate people with no system of writing. They had no horses, large draft animals to help with agricultural labor, carts, wagons, or wheeled plows.

MACHU PICCHU

The Inca built the famous site of Machu Picchu, a UNESCO World Heritage Site located on a mountain ridge high above Cusco. Probably built as a royal palace in the 15th century, it appears to have been abandoned sometime in the 16th century during the time of the Spanish conquest, and it was not rediscovered until the early 20th century.

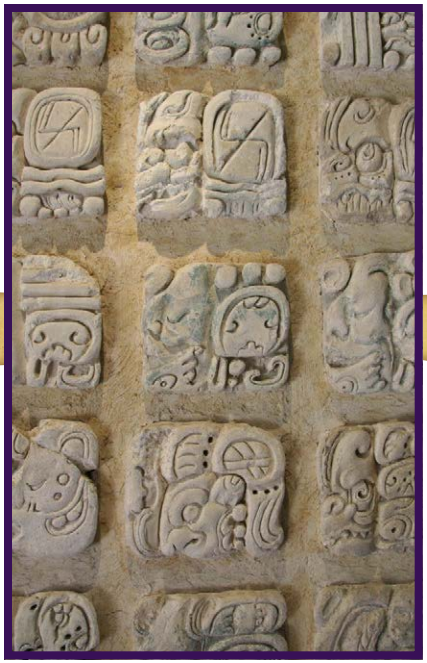
Yet they developed into one of the greatest civilizations the Americas had ever seen.

The Inca understood how to use aspects of the environment and the sun to their best advantage. Storage containers where food surplus was kept were placed at an altitude and positioned at such an angle that the foodstuff was maintained at a cool, consistent temperature.

The Incan arrival in Cusco in the early 13th century and their ability to capitalize on and manipulate the environment began the rise of the Incan empire. It maintained its power and prestige until the arrival of the Spanish.

The Mayan Empire

At the same time that the Incan empire was beginning its extraordinary period of growth and dominance around the year 1215, another well-known Meso-American society—the Maya—was well into decline from the apogee of its civilization.



Mayan Calendar

The Maya are famous for keeping long-count calendars, which count the number of days from a certain important historical event. They divide the years into epochs that begin and end in accordance with a certain tally of days and years.

Mayan knowledge of timekeeping, astronomy, and mathematics was truly complex. The Maya were one of a few groups of people who independently came up with the concept of zero, and they did it sometime around the 4th century CE. By contrast, most of European civilization didn't understand or make use of the concept of zero until the early 13th century.

Unlike the Pueblo or the Inca, the Maya had a system of writing and record keeping. The hieroglyphic script used by the Maya is the only known writing system to exist among all the civilizations of the early Americas.

Mayan Origins and Society

The origins of the Maya arguably go back at least to 800 BCE; over the centuries, they established a flourishing culture that reached its peak from approximately 250 to 900 CE. During the civilization's peak, there was an explosion of large-scale building and a growth in urban centers, a flourishing of the arts, and scholarly advances in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, and more.

Chichén Itzá, which is located on the Yucatán Peninsula, was one of the major cites of the Mayan civilization that remained occupied and thriving following the civilization's peak. Most of the rest of the Mayan empire suffered a decline between 900 and 1050. This was probably for a variety of reasons, including drought, overpopulation, and internecine warfare, or conflict between two or more cities.

By contrast, Chichén Itzá was in its ascendency, stepping in to assume rule where there was a vacuum of power and extending its authority. Its location made Chichén Itzá an ideal focal point for trade. Two of its most important trade goods were obsidian, which was obtained from central Mexico, and gold, which came from the southern part of Central America.

Like the Pueblo and the Inca, the Maya accomplished all this with the

equivalent of Stone Age tools, no wheels, and no large draft animals. By any measure, these civilizations were impressive.

However, there is one disturbing note: In both Incan and Mayan religious practices, human sacrifice played a major role. Perhaps even more horrifying, in many instances, child human sacrifice was considered the most efficacious. Other societies, such as the Aztecs, also made use of human sacrifice.

SUGGESTED READING

Jones, *The Complete Illustrated History of the Inca Empire*.

Page, *In the Hands of the Great Spirit*.

Phillips, *The Complete Illustrated History of the Aztec & Maya*.

Sando, *Pueblo Nations*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are the most interesting aspects of each of the three cultures of the Americas discussed in this lecture?

2. In what areas did the societies in the Americas arguably surpass 13th-century European culture, and in what ways did the European societies of the Middle Ages surpass those of the Americas?

LECTURE 9

Civilizations of Sub-Saharan Africa in 1215

This lecture gives a basic sense of what was happening in sub-Saharan Africa around 1215. For the sake of convenience, the continent of Africa is often divided into two unequal sections, one of which is North Africa and the other is sub-Saharan Africa. North Africa is a relatively thin fringe of land along the southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Just below it is the great Sahara Desert. South of that—and sometimes, partially overlapping with the Sahara itself—is sub-Saharan Africa.

Three civilizations are of note when it comes to sub-Saharan Africa in 1215:

- **THE MALI EMPIRE**, which was just emerging from a rather scattered, tribal system.
- **THE KINGDOM OF ZIMBABWE**, which in 1220 would develop out of the Mapungubwe culture.
- **THE ETHIOPIAN EMPIRE**, which was moving toward its greatest heights in the year 1215.

The Ethiopian Empire

Scholars generally agree that the Ethiopian empire came into existence around the year 1137. Like most civilizations, it was preceded by and grew out of an earlier society: the Aksumite empire. That society came into being all the way back in the 1st century CE, and it spanned roughly what is today northern Ethiopia and parts of Eritrea.

Aksum underwent an early conversion to Christianity in the 4th century CE. However, it was also the kingdom that accepted early Muslim refugees who were fleeing persecution in their homeland. It was a relatively stable, prosperous land until about the 10th century, when Aksum started to experience a serious decline. This was supposedly in part due to the conquest of that nation by a Jewish queen named Gudit.

This part of the story is murky and scholars aren't quite sure what happened, but they do know that two centuries later, a man named Mara Takla Haymanot supposedly both overthrew and married the last of Gudit's descendants. The kingdom of Ethiopia came into existence, with the Zagwe dynasty in control.

The ruler of the empire between 1200 and 1250, Emperor Lalibela, encouraged and promoted the construction of churches hewn out of rock and decorated with elaborate carvings. Additionally, the Ethiopian empire actively proselytized to non-Christian peoples, seeking to convert them to the faith.

At the same time that there was this very strident, visible affirmation of Christianity, the Ethiopian Empire in 1215 was experiencing an economic boom. This was primarily due to trade with the Muslim world, particularly the ruling Fatimids in Egypt.

The Mali Empire

The strongest and most important political state in the west of Africa during the 13th century was the Mali empire. One reason it became the most powerful of the ruling entities in western Africa is because of its geographical diversity. From the coast came trade, from the rainforests came natural resources like timber, and from the Wangara gold fields came gold. The floodplain of the Niger River meant that, agriculturally speaking, the empire had regular and reliable access to foodstuffs that was somewhat unusual for sub-Saharan Africa. There was also salt mining and overland trade.

While Mali was and has been a predominantly Muslim country, for a long time the Islamic faith and traditions coexisted alongside local, indigenous practices and beliefs, particularly those of the Mande people.

At its height, the Mali empire included within its borders the city of Timbuktu. This was a center of learning, even though it was not officially the capital. Timbuktu also served as an important repository for knowledge, situated as it was within a powerful empire that had established trading routes over land and sea.

TIMBUKTU AS A REPOSITORY OF LEARNING

Over the course of its existence, Timbuktu became a repository for hundreds of thousands of manuscripts, many of them housed in private libraries as well as public ones. As recently as 2010, it was estimated that there were 700,000 manuscripts in Timbuktu, but many of them have been destroyed—or hidden away, as some reports suggest—in the face of fighting among various terrorist and rebel groups in the last few years.

The Kingdom of Zimbabwe

At around the same time the Ethiopian empire in the northeast and the Mali empire in the west were controlling large territories, another entity was coming to power in the south of the continent. This was the kingdom of Zimbabwe. The kingdom was notable for having a capital, Great Zimbabwe, that contained the largest and most sophisticated stone structures in all of sub-Saharan Africa before the colonial and modern periods.

The kingdom of Zimbabwe didn't officially come into existence until 1220. However, in 1215, the foundations for what would be one of the most advanced civilizations ever to exist on the African continent were being laid.

Relevant to this kingdom's formation were the Mapungubwe people, who were living in southern Africa. These people were known for their ability in carving and building in stone, but they were not yet at the height of

their skills in the 11th century, which is when they headed north and settled on the Zimbabwe plateau.

The Mapungubwe appear to have been one of the first African societies that was clearly and rigidly divided in terms of a three-class structure, something that sounds very similar to the class structure of medieval Europe. They were first and foremost a society with an economy based on agriculture and animal husbandry, particularly cattle.

They eventually became more active traders, especially once they moved to the Zimbabwe plateau. There, they continued to enhance and refine their abilities as stone masons, and the cities there were divided into sections, based on class, that were clearly demarcated with stone walls and the like.

Once the Mapungubwe moved to the Zimbabwe plateau and set up their society there, they only increased their power and control over large portions of sub-Saharan Africa. The main way they increased and maintained this power was through the trade of ivory and gold.

Great Zimbabwe

In terms of tangible, long-lasting evidence of the kingdom of Zimbabwe's power, historians have the remains of what was the capital city of Great Zimbabwe. It covers over 1,800 acres. In some places the walls are as high as 36 feet, and some single walls run to well over 800 feet long. The structure was utterly unique in pre-colonial Africa.

Most scholars believe that the construction of Great Zimbabwe was conceived of and carried out by members of the native African Mapungubwe people. Starting in the early 13th century, they established dominance over a large part of the continent in a way that had never previously occurred.

By the 15th century, however, the capital of Great Zimbabwe was in decline, although the kingdom of Zimbabwe continued to exist. It seems that many of the gold mines near to the great city had

been tapped out, climate change may have made the maintenance of the all-precious cattle a difficult proposition, and a shift in demand for trade goods—in particular, salt—led the ruler of Great Zimbabwe to strike out and build a new capital around 1430.

Prince Nyatsimba Mutota headed north in search of salt, defeated the native peoples in the Dande region, and then set up a new capital in the city of Mutapa. This would come to be known as the kingdom of Mutapa, and Great Zimbabwe would eventually be abandoned.

SUGGESTED READING

Fage and Oliver, eds., *The Cambridge History of Africa*.

Ki-Zerbo, *UNESCO General History of Africa, Vol. IV*.

Pankhurst, *The Ethiopians*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What, if anything, do the three societies discussed in this lecture have in common with one another? What seem to be their greatest differences—both from each other and from the other societies explored so far in this course?

2. What broad conclusions could you make about the state of the world in 1215? Alternatively, is it impossible to make any such conclusions?

LECTURE 10

The Crusading Impulse

This lecture explores the background to the Crusades and the creation of the Crusader States. To illuminate what was happening in 1215, this lecture goes back to 1095 and the calling of the First Crusade by Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont.

Background on Jerusalem and the Christian World

For medieval Christians, Jerusalem was the center of the world. For hundreds of years, Christians had been making pilgrimages there. There was also a sizable Christian population living there.

By the end of the 11th century, Christians, Jews, and Muslims had been living in the Holy Land side by side and relatively peaceably for quite some time. However, in 1095, Pope Urban II called for a new kind of pilgrimage, one that would take back the Holy Land from Muslim control.

Urban's action was calling on western Christians to come to the aid of Christians in the Byzantine Empire, or what had formerly been the eastern half of the Roman Empire. The goal behind this move might have been to create some sort of reconciliation between the two halves of the former empire. In 1054, representatives of each branch of the faith had excommunicated one another, creating the Great Schism.

Additionally, as the Muslim world expanded from its origin point on the Arabian Peninsula at the beginning of the 7th century, its reach and influence moved from the Middle East through North Africa and into Spain in the early 8th century. In the 11th century, Pope Alexander II called for a retaking of these territories by Christian forces.

This was a mini-Crusade that anticipated the one Urban II called for in 1095, and which was known as the *reconquista* or "re-conquest" of Muslim Spain. When Alexander II turned the attempt to re-Christianize Spain into a holy war, he was also attempting to affirm and expand the power and authority of the papacy in Rome.

Byzantium, the eastern half of the former Roman Empire with its capital of Constantinople, had not declined in the way the western part had when the Roman Empire collapsed. The eastern half's emperor and the leader of the Eastern Orthodox Christian church had long considered themselves

the true heirs of Rome in both the secular and religious arenas.

In the middle of the 11th century, the borders of Byzantium started to be overrun by Turks, many of whom had converted to Islam in the 10th century. Their raids into the Christian territories of Byzantium were less about religious issues and more about the acquisition of territory and wealth.

Regardless, Christian territories were being lost. In what would seem to be the last straw, the Byzantine emperor himself was captured at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071. This led to an extraordinary appeal for help on the part of the eastern leaders to their Christian brethren in the west, or so Urban II characterized it when he preached the First Crusade at Clermont in France in 1095.

Many medieval maps are oriented with east at the top and Jerusalem at the center.

Urban II's Goals

When he called for the First Crusade, Urban II announced two goals. The first was to liberate Christians who were residing in those territories that had been conquered by invading Turks; the second was to free Jerusalem, the holiest of cities, from Muslim rule.

Only men who were of fighting age were officially allowed to go. It is estimated that the fighting force of the First Crusade numbered around 50,000. Most went off in 1098, with some groups leaving a little earlier and some a little later.

The Crusaders in Action

On July 15, 1099, the crusading armies took everyone by surprise and conquered Jerusalem. The crusaders then established four states in this land. They referred to the land as Outremer, a word that means something like "across the sea" or "over there."

The states were the county of Tripoli, the county of Edessa, the principality of Antioch, and the kingdom of Jerusalem. All four of these were ruled over by Europeans—albeit tenuously at times—until 1291.

It wasn't long after the First Crusade before many of the Crusader States, starting with Edessa, were retaken by local forces. New crusades needed to be declared with the goal of retaking these locations for Christendom.

Eventually, the crusaders discovered that they were going to have to adopt a policy of accommodation if the settlement in Outremer was going to survive in any form at all. In fact, many of their policies concerning Jews and Muslims were similar to those that had been in place when Jerusalem had been under the control of Muslim leaders.

The Knights Templar

Trade flourished between east and west, and there was a surge in the number of pilgrims making their way to Jerusalem. Such a long journey required a significant outlay of expenses and required also that pilgrims carry a significant amount of money with them.

This made them attractive targets for all manner of thieves and ruffians. The situation gave rise to the creation of an organization that has been the subject of much wildly imaginative discussion in books and movies in recent years: the Knights Templar.

A Templar was an utterly new kind of knight in that he was also a monk. It was one thing for the pope to send secular fighting men to defend and protect the church through force of arms; it was quite another for him to sanction an order of monks who were given license to act like knights.

The Knights Templar were initially founded around 1118 by a man named Hugh of Payns and eight companions. Their stated goal was to offer protection to pilgrims who were traveling to Jerusalem.

At the height of their existence, it is estimated that there were about 20,000 Templars divided roughly into three groups: the knights, responsible for overseeing the safety and security of pilgrims in the Holy Land; priests, who attended to the religious needs of the order; and commoners, who helped with the day-to-day running of the Templars' quite lucrative banking empire.

They soon amassed wealth and power on a massive scale, something that worried many rulers, particularly the king of France. This in turn led to their persecution and the eventual dissolution of their order in the 14th century, which meant that their property and money could be confiscated and enrich the coffers of others, particularly the French monarchy.

The Knights Hospitaller and the Teutonic Knights

The Templars were not the only new order of knights to be created as a direct result of the Crusades. Two others—the Knights Hospitaller and the Teutonic Knights—are worth mentioning.

The Knights Hospitaller were formed around the same time and out of the same impulse as that which led to the founding of the Knights Templar—namely, to offer assistance to pilgrims who had traveled to the Holy Land. While the Templars focused more on protecting pilgrims from theft or violence, the Hospitallers concentrated on caring for those who became ill while in Jerusalem.

The Teutonic Knights were established later than the Templars and the Hospitallers—closer to the end of the 12th century—but again, like the other two orders, the impetus for their existence came from a desire to help those in need. In this case, the Teutonic Knights set themselves the task of caring specifically for injured crusaders.

Decline of the Crusaders

The crusading kingdoms began their decline in 1144, when an Arab leader named Zengi retook Edessa. The Second Crusade was specifically preached in response to this, and one of its most vocal proponents was Bernard of Clairvaux, a Cistercian monk and abbot who had been a supporter of the Knights Templar.

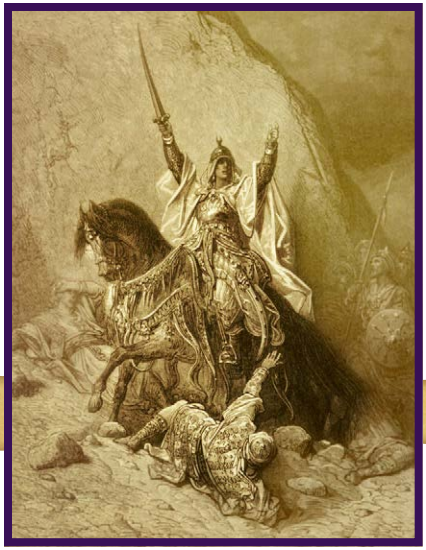
The leaders of the Second Crusade included both the king of France and the Holy Roman emperor. If their goal was to retake Edessa, they had a strange way of doing it: When their armies arrived in the Holy Land, the first place they headed was Damascus, which is not near Edessa.

The armies tried besieging the walls of Damascus, found that they weren't having any luck, and essentially turned around and headed home. After this, an Arab leader named Nureddin managed to unite Syria and take control of Egypt, a key strategic position for any force wishing to hold power in the Middle East.

Saladin

Nureddin was succeeded by one of the most remarkable figures in all medieval if not world history: the great Muslim leader Saladin. He unified the previously fractious Muslim armies.

In 1187 at the Battle of Hattin, Saladin defeated the Christian military forces at Jerusalem and managed to retake the city. However, though an effective warrior, Saladin also sought very often to avoid war and find a peaceful solution, showing great restraint on several occasions. After his capture of the city of Jerusalem, Saladin mercifully spared most of the Christian inhabitants of the city at a time when it would have been much more common to put them all to the sword.



Saladin

One of the most problematic of the crusader leaders was a man named Reynald of Châtillon, who constantly sought to foment discord with Muslim forces. This was much to the chagrin of many of the more prudent Christian leaders, particularly the young king Baldwin IV of Jerusalem, who tried heroically to achieve a lasting peace with his Muslim neighbors and foes. Reynald of Châtillon was famous for unprovoked attacks on unarmed Muslim pilgrims, among other things, so Saladin often found himself at war with him.

Conclusion

Saladin's capture of Jerusalem and subsequent victory at the Battle of Hattin reduced the Crusader States to just a few port cities and led directly to the calling of the Third Crusade. The participants included King Philip II of France, Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and King Richard the Lionheart of England.

This crusade, which could be said to cover the years 1187–1192, was beset by problems from the outset. The first blow was the loss of Emperor Barbarossa. Accounts differ, but most scholars agree that he had some medical emergency, such as a heart attack, while crossing a river in Anatolia. The loss of the emperor meant that Richard the Lionheart and Philip Augustus were now the two leaders of the expedition, and these two did not get along. After initially winning some battles, Philip decided to return home to France, leaving Richard to continue the fight for Outremer.

In 1192, a portion of the crusader forces—led by the French house of Lusignan—had moved onto the Isle of Cyprus, where they attempted to rule. This lasted some centuries, with the Lusignans and other western Christian crusading families desperately holding out hope that some future crusade would restore the Holy Land to Christianity. They finally gave up in 1489.

Innocent III, the pope who convened the fourth Lateran Council, would mark the start of his papacy by calling for the Fourth Crusade in the early years of the 13th century. That venture went terribly wrong, which led to the crusading pronouncement at the end of the fourth Lateran Council.

SUGGESTED READING

Riley-Smith, *The Crusades*.

Tyerman, *The Crusades*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What do you think was the most compelling reason for medieval people to volunteer to go crusading?

2. Is there anything comparable to crusading fervor—a widespread social impulse that lasted hundreds of years—in our modern society?

LECTURE 11

The Fourth Crusade and the Crusader States

This lecture covers the sack of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in 1204. It also examines the Albigensian Crusade that came in 1209 and the Children's Crusade that followed it in 1212—all manifestations of the crusading impulse that took hold of medieval Europe at the end of the 11th century.

The Fourth Crusade

The Fourth Crusade was called by Pope Innocent III in 1198 with the express purpose of retaking Jerusalem, which had been recaptured by Saladin in 1187. In January of 1203, a large contingent of crusading forces set off for the Holy Land.

On their way there, they encountered a situation that warranted their attention. There had been an incident in Constantinople regarding who was the legitimate emperor. Prince Alexios Angelos, son of the deposed emperor of Byzantium, approached the crusaders and asked them for their help in restoring his father to the throne.

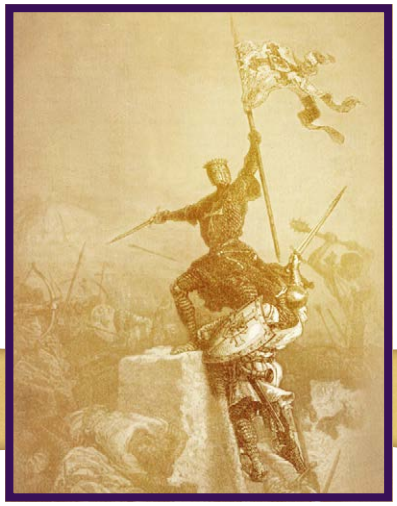
The deal they struck was that once the crusaders had done this, they would be paid handsomely from the very deep coffers of the eastern Emperor. At first, it seemed like the deal was going to work out. After a few battles just outside Constantinople, Alexios was crowned co-emperor, and he looked to make good on his promise to pay his crusading supporters handsomely.

However, a popular uprising of the people of the city of Constantinople stripped Alexios of his crown in January 1204, and he was murdered. This meant there was no money for the crusaders. The crusaders then seem to have decided that Byzantium was now a legitimate target, and they had every right to conquer and sack the city.

The Sack of Constantinople

We have several contemporary accounts of what happened just before Easter in 1204 in a city that was declared by many to be the wealthiest in the world at that time. The crusaders sound as if they were drunk with lust. For several days, they pillaged and looted the great city, defiling churches and people with equal zeal.

When it was clear that the city had fallen, the then-emperor and his family fled by boat, with many other citizens attempting to leave on foot, carrying what they could of their possessions or burying that which could not be carried. They were stopped by the crusaders, who had made themselves at home in the city.



Count Baldwin of Flanders storming the walls of Constantinople

The crusaders ate their food, drank their wine, slept in their beds, and raped women. They searched the carts of citizens fleeing the city, taking everything that was of any value. Some citizens decided a wiser course of action was to hide or bury their wealth, flee with nothing, and hope to return later and recover at least some of their goods.

The crusaders, however, were nothing if not thorough. They conducted a search of every potential hiding place that could be found, and were organized enough to have designated three churches in particular as storehouses for all their plunder.

Restoring Order

While the citizens of Constantinople were fleeing, the religious leaders of the western forces decided it was time to impose some order on matters. They convened a council to select a new emperor of Constantinople—an emperor who would be a Latin, not a Greek, and who would thus presumably help to establish the reunification of the long-lost Roman Empire.

Count Baldwin of Flanders was selected. His reign did not last long, and he died a scant two years later as a prisoner after marching to war to put down a rebellion against his reign.

Pope Innocent was furious when he heard the news of how the Crusaders had behaved. He famously issued a scathing critique of their behavior, and he went on to excommunicate many of those who had participated in the sack of Constantinople, particularly the Venetian contingent.

Shortly thereafter, however, he decided to un-excommunicate them, as long as they promised to continue on with the crusading efforts in the Holy Land. He also accepted the relics they brought him.

The pope seemed to think that in the long run, this situation could be for the best—now there were two centers of western Christian power. For a brief moment, it looked like the Roman Empire had been restored, but this time, the center of power would be in the west in Rome rather than the east.

The Albigensian Crusade

The glory that had been Byzantium had been ravaged and destroyed by the crusading forces. Just as had been the case with the capture of the Holy Land and the formation of the Crusader States, from almost the moment Byzantium had been declared as belonging to the west, attempts to reclaim it had begun.

Western forces were diluted. Some were called upon to defend the Levant against Muslim forces, and others were called upon to help defend the newly created Latin kingdom of Byzantium from falling back into eastern hands.

Additionally, back home in the medieval European west, crusading fervor had broken out in the form of the Albigensian Crusade. This was focused mostly on a heretical sect known as the Cathars who were primarily to be found in southern France.

The Cathars considered themselves Christians, but they were vehemently opposed to attaching any sort of significance to the crucifixion or the cross that had become the symbol of Christianity. Many in fact, denied that the crucifixion had even happened.

After a series of attempts to persuade local leaders to deal with the heresy, Pope Innocent III preached a crusade against the Cathars or Albigensians. In effect, this crusade pitted the north against the south of France, and nobles from the north were particularly eager to participate as the pope had decreed that the wealth and property of any Cathars was up for grabs.

The fighting that followed for the next 20 years or so was horrifically violent and seemingly arbitrary in its direction. Many non-Cathars were caught up in the frenzy of Albigensian persecution and lost their property and quite often their lives.

The Children's Crusade

The horrors of the Albigensian Crusade were echoed in the year 1212, when spontaneously, it appears, two separate groups of children rallied thousands of other children to their sides and set off to reclaim Jerusalem for Christendom. One group was led by a 10-year-old boy named Nicholas from the Rhineland, and the other was led by a 12-year-old boy from the Loire River valley named Stephen.

The sincerely held belief on the part of these children was that because they were innocents, they would have more success in retaking the Holy Land than would mature warriors, who had long lives of sinning behind them. While many of the participants of this endeavor were children, some scholars now believe that the number of children who participated has been largely exaggerated and that a good portion of those participating was actually made up of poor adults.

The estimates range from a group of 7,000 to 30,000 heading off to liberate the Holy Land. It seems fairly clear that none of them actually made it. Most of them turned around and headed home early in the journey; reportedly, some made it to Rome, where the pope released them from the vows they had sworn to take the cross—vows that were null and void anyway without papal sanction from the outset.

Some accounts tell of shiploads of young crusading pilgrims killed in shipwrecks, or of young girls being taken into brothels and boys sold into slavery by greedy merchants who had promised them passage across the Mediterranean.

The disastrous Children's Crusade of 1212 speaks both to the widespread crusading fervor that was sweeping through the medieval world and to the fact that that fervor was completely out of control. It could be found at the highest levels of church and government and could inspire those on the very lowest rungs of the social ladder.

The fourth Lateran Council was many ways a tipping or turning point. It both addressed these impulses and, in many instances, instead of curbing or controlling them, exacerbated them.

The Children's Crusade

SUGGESTED READING

Phillips, *The Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople.*

Rosenwein, *A Short History of the Middle Ages.*

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. The sack of Constantinople was famously a mission that went disastrously off-track. Are there other examples from history you can think of where intention and outcome were so radically different?

2. Given what you've learned so far in this course, does the crusading impulse in the early 13th century seem more a symptom or cause of the many social, religious, and political issues causing turmoil in the medieval European world?

LECTURE 12

The Fourth Lateran Council and the Jews

This lecture provides a brief overview of the Jewish experience in the medieval world leading up to the 13th century. The situation was bad, and it was getting even worse.

The Persecuting Society

Between the 11th and 13th centuries, medieval Europe saw the formation of what scholars have called the "formation of a persecuting society." Historian R. I. Moore first coined this phrase, and the point he makes is persuasive.

It can't be an accident, he states, that we suddenly see a series of violent outbursts toward certain marginalized social groups starting around the 11th century. Those groups included lepers, heretics, homosexuals, and Jews, among others. They were singled out for condemnation and were routinely and emphatically ostracized from the mainstream of society.

Moore's argument is these groups had nothing in common with one another, but their sudden and contemporaneous persecution was far from coincidental. This was a shift in larger social thinking that identified, defined, and persecuted them.

Jews before the Persecuting Society

For centuries after Europe became Christian, Jews were more or less accepted within the mainstream of medieval society based on the thinking of Saint Augustine. He had argued essentially that while they were not presently in the community of the saved, the possibility remained that someday they could be.

He went on to say that their main error lay in reading too literally: They did not recognize the allegorical prefiguration of the Old Testament in terms of the coming of Christ. But, he reasoned, perhaps they could be taught how to interpret correctly.

In the thinking of Augustine and other church fathers, the Jews also served an important function concerning the end of days. They were prophesied to accept conversion when the Messiah would come again.

During the early Middle Ages—before the year 1000—Jews worked in a variety of different occupations. Their households were scattered throughout the communities in which they resided, and they were generally accorded the right to practice their religion and to participate in civic life.

Changing Times

By the end of the 13th century, in both secular and religious law codes throughout Europe, the professions available to Jews were limited almost exclusively to those involving money lending or rent collecting. Their homes were all located in a designated part of the city—often surrounded by a wall or otherwise cut off from the rest of the community—and they were forbidden from participating in the political life of their societies. They had been ghettoized.

Some clues as to why this happened come from the eyewitness accounts of what happened in the Rhineland in 1096. When Pope Urban II called the First Crusade in 1095, people from all walks of life set off to recapture the Holy Land from the Muslim world.

Some of these groups set off by sea, but some traveled overland, heading through the Rhineland on their way to Jerusalem. As some of these groups were traveling, it seemed to occur to them that there were non-believers right in their own backyards.

The result was a series of massacres of Jewish communities committed by groups of crusading forces. In Mainz, Speyer, Cologne, Trier, Metz, Bamberg, Regensburg, Prague, and other cities, military forces stopped their trip eastward and engaged in acts of atrocity against the Jews living in these areas, threatening to kill them if they did not convert to Christianity.

In the wake of the calling of the First Crusade, a zeal for persecution seemed to possess many segments of the medieval Christian population. Jewish communities in the Rhineland and elsewhere suffered huge losses.

Societal Shifts

Jews moved from contributing and valued members of society to targets of persecution for identifiable reasons. Medieval society in the 11th and 12th centuries was changing in some fundamental ways. There was population growth, in part attributable the Medieval Warm Period.

The climate shift meant that more land came under the plow and crop survival was better, which meant the population increased. In turn, more land was needed to feed all these people, and any land that was still available was quickly snapped up.

There began to be a crisis concerning land. Any time it was possible to take land away from someone, it tended to happen. Land grabs also occurred when after the death of a landholder, the land was folded back into the manor estate rather than granting it to the dead man's heirs.

There are plenty of records of Jewish farmers who held lands of a lord and worked them, but on the death of the head of the household, the lord of the manor opted to take the lands back rather than grant them to the man's heirs. This pushed more and more Jews away from the countryside and into urban centers, where they tended to become merchants, traders, and involved with banking.

Over the course of the 12th century, their options for employment would become even more limited by law, and soon banking, money lending, or rent collection would be the only careers legally available to them. While there were always pockets of medieval society where Jewish society managed to flourish, this mentality of persecution was more or less the norm throughout most of the medieval world.

Leprosy

Another impactful event at this time was the widespread appearance of leprosy. This probably occurred because of increased contact among peoples who traded far and wide and the growth of urban centers, with their close quarters and generally poor hygiene.

Lepers were forbidden from inheriting or passing on land and wealth. They were also, because of fear of contagion, ostracized from mainstream society and required to live in leper communities. In many cases, it was just a small step to exclude other groups that made the mainstream of medieval society uncomfortable.

The University System

This time period also saw the rise of the university system. The great scholars or masters in that system were particularly interested in church history and theology, and many of them engaged in debates with the leading Jewish scholars of the day.

These debates, over the course of the 12th century, became more and more theologically critical. This went on until several scholars arrived at the conclusion that for all intents and purposes, the Jews living in medieval society were not practicing traditional Judaism in the way that Saint Augustine had understood it.

Economic Issues

A further element that ironically contributed to the Jews' outsider status was the fact that they seem to have been remarkably efficient, reliable, and good at whatever craft or trade they took up. In the case of banking, this would ultimately produce greater negative feeling toward them.

The origins of their position in the world of money ultimately arose because of a Christian injunction against the sin of usury. Today, the word *usury* is used to indicate the charging of excessive interest on a loan, but in the Middle Ages, it meant the charging of any interest at all.

Despite usury being a sin, medieval people still needed loans. The de facto solution the medieval world came up with was to allow Christians to obtain loans from Jews. This served both religious ideals and economic needs, but it also began to direct more and more Jews toward a profession with which many people had formed unpleasant associations.

Violence

As the 12th century progressed, negative attitudes toward Jews increased. As with the persecution of Jews in the Rhineland by the crusaders, violence would occasionally burst out in startling moments of horrifying brutality and then recede.

One such moment occurred in the town of York, England, in 1190. In the late 12th century, the area around York was moving away from a simple, agrarian, and rural economy, and more and more toward mercantilism and trade.

Plenty of merchants and nobles in York needed access to loans. The leaders of the community advocated for Jews—specifically moneylenders—to be moved in to help fuel the fires of the economic engine. This happened in the 1170s.

The next significant moment in this story occurred a decade or so later. Henry II had long been a protector of the Jews in England, and when he turned all his financial matters over to them near the end of his reign, it caused some resentment on the part of those who were ousted. When a delegation of Jews showed up to do homage at the coronation of Henry's son, Richard the Lionheart, in 1189, their presence in a group was mistaken—deliberately or not—as a threatening gesture.

It seems that some harsh words and taunting between the Jewish delegation and the guards outside the coronation was wildly misinterpreted, and soon, a full-scale riot erupted. In the aftermath, several Jews and Christians were killed. Furious, Richard ordered three of the Christian participants to be hanged as punishment, but this was not enough to stem the rising tide of animosity.

Jewish Expulsion

Many towns throughout England sought to expel their Jewish communities. One example from the year 1190 comes from Bury St. Edmunds. In the *Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds* by Jocelin of Brakelond, we are told that the abbot of the monastery there petitioned the king to be allowed to kick out the Jews.

While the Jews of Bury St. Edmunds were at least allowed to leave with some of their goods and the value of their property, the Jews of York did not fare as well. Almost as soon as King Richard departed England to go on crusade, large-scale violence erupted in communities with large populations of Jews, such as York.

Conclusion

In the early 13th century, hostile treatment of Jews throughout the medieval world increased. In many communities, they were now forbidden from owning land and ordered to reside in a designated region of the community. In some places, these Jewish quarters were actually sealed at night, so that the Jews were effectively imprisoned in their homes each evening.

This was also the time of other great persecuting movements. For example, this is when the sentiment that would eventually produce the Albigensian Crusade against the Cathars was first emerging. Additionally, leper hospitals were established, and the church attempted to define and quash what it deemed as deviant sexual behavior.

SUGGESTED READING

Bale, *Feeling Persecuted*.

Chazan, *Reassessing Jewish Life in Medieval Europe*.

Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Do you think the persecution of the Jews and other non-mainstream groups was a result of the specific social upheaval that was occurring prior to the 13th century, or does humanity repeat this pattern throughout history?

2. Which aspect of Jewish life prior to 1215—as recounted in this lecture—is the most interesting or surprising to you?

LECTURE 13

The Jews in 1215 and Beyond

This lecture explores the aftermath of 1215 and the fourth Lateran Council's insistence on the dominance of the Christianity—particularly Latin Christianity—in the medieval world. In the centuries that followed, there would be increasing persecution.

A Rising Tide of Persecution

The first three Lateran Councils all take place in the 12th century—in 1123, 1139, and 1179. One could argue that each of these was a progression toward a more authoritarian stance on the part of the church, which ultimately culminated in the fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

That year and after, things definitely start to change for the worse for the Jews, with institutional persecution trickling down to the masses. Urban legends or conspiracy theories start to proliferate in the 13th century, right around the time of the fourth Lateran Council.

The 13th century also saw the proliferation of blood libel accusations toward the Jews. These were claims that Jews engaged in mysterious rituals that required the blood of a Christian child to complete.

In 1255, the nasty rumors took a violent turn after the death of a little boy in England, Hugh of Lincoln. A local Jew was accused of the ritual murder and, under torture, he eventually confessed. Even though this was a false confession, it fueled anti-Semitic feeling.

Once again, economics played a role in this event. A few months before this occurrence, King Henry III of England had sold his rights to tax the Jews in England to his brother, Richard of Cornwall.

These taxation plans against Jews had sprung up all over Europe. They meant that the government had the right to levy a tax on Jewish communities whenever they felt the need. In a difficult position to start with, the Jews had no recourse—whenever a tax was levied, they had to pay it.

Henry decided that he regretted giving his brother the right to tax the Jews, so when he saw the chance to make a little additional money, he grabbed it. He proclaimed that if a Jew was found guilty of a crime, all their possessions reverted to the crown.

Hugh's death was deemed a Jewish conspiracy and resulted in the arrest of some 90 Jews, 18 of which were ultimately executed because they refused to throw

themselves on the mercy of the jury. All of their property was also confiscated.

This was the first time that a civil governing body—not a religious one—had handed down a conviction for ritual murder, but it certainly wouldn't be the last. This happened in part because of the solidification of bureaucracy that happened in the 12th century.

In turn, this gave the fourth Lateran Council significant authority. The council's pronouncements about Jews and other non-mainstream individuals and groups would have broad influence in the medieval world.

Scapegoating

While England was the first to officially expel Jews from its borders in 1290, several other countries followed suit. In 1306, Philip of France, in desperate need of cash, exiled the Jews of France and claimed all their property for the crown. In 1492, in what would be the first indicator of the coming Spanish Inquisition, the Jews were expelled from Spain.

All throughout the medieval world, from the 11th century on, Jewish communities were forced to obey stricter and stricter laws concerning where they lived, what they could do for living, and how they could practice their religion. The years from about 1100–1300 marked the clearest turning point for the fate of the Jews in the medieval world, and 1215 was the hinge of that turning point.

When the Black Death struck in the middle of the 14th century, once again Jews were a convenient scapegoat for a population desperately looking for someone to blame for the horrific event they were experiencing.

Some chronicles claim that in some places, the Jewish population seemed relatively unaffected compared to the mainstream population. For a long time, most scholars assumed this was a lie meant to bolster the accusations against the Jewish populations. But some other scholars have theorized that there may have been some truth to this claim, in at least a few communities.

For example, the Jewish population in many places was ghettoized—confined to a particular part of a town or community. Very often, there were actual physical boundaries or walls marking off the Jewish quarter from the rest of the city.

Another thing that might support this idea that the Jews suffered fewer losses from plague in some places has to do with a theory surrounding the ritual practices associated with the holy celebration of Passover. One of the rituals associated with Passover is ridding the home of any foodstuffs made of wheat, barley, rye, and oats. For the duration of the holiday, unleavened bread, or matzah, is consumed.

Removing foodstuffs made of cereal grains would diminish any rat problems. A lack of rats meant no fleas and no bubonic plague. Therefore, in some cases, it may actually have been the case that at least a few Jewish communities suffered fewer losses than the Christian towns to which they were connected. This contributed to building a situation ripe for a violent anti-Semitic response.

Jews during the Black Death

As they attempted to get to the root cause of what was causing the Black Death and their suspicions fell on the Jews of each community, many leaders took it upon themselves to round up some Jews, torture them, and then get a confession about what was happening and how they were going about it.

Pogroms against the Jews began and spread, mostly throughout the German-speaking lands—that is, from present-day Austria to the Netherlands. Pogroms also took place in France and Spain.

The leaders of many communities that had large populations of Jews, like the city of Strasbourg, requested—and received—information from numerous neighboring towns as to what they thought was best to do to handle what was quickly being considered a "Jewish problem" during outbreaks of plague. In the case of Strasbourg, each of these communal responses—with the exception of Cologne—included evidence from their own interrogations with Jews that had resulted in confessions of well poisoning.

Many wells were filled in, or had their bucket mechanisms destroyed, so that people couldn't drink from them. This apparently was not enough. Even though the plague had not yet reached Strasbourg, on February 14, 1349, all of the Jews of the community were rounded up and executed in a process that took almost a week.

Many of the leaders of Strasbourg had sought to protect the Jews in their community. The mayor and

several of the most prominent burghers of the town tried to enforce an order of protection for the Jewish population. These leaders came into conflict with some of the most powerful guild leaders of the community—in particular, the butchers' guild.

In the face of this opposition, most of the burghers gave up their leadership positions. For a time, the mayor, Peter Swarber, stood alone against them, but then he too was forced to resign his position. Almost immediately, a new council was selected, and the day after its members were sworn in, all the Jews in the community were rounded up and made ready for execution.

Some other Christian leaders tried to protect the Jewish communities in their areas as well. For example, Duke Albrecht of Austria had issued an order of protection when the pogroms started, but by 1349, the anti-Semitic hysteria had increased to such a degree that he withdrew his protection.

Cologne

Cologne was one of the few towns that seemed to have any idea that the so-called confessions from interrogations of supposed Jewish well poisoners were nonsense. Cologne held out for a long time as a place whose Jews were protected.

Because Cologne had been one of the more reasonable communities, many Jews had fled there in the face of persecution in their home cities and towns. This explosion in the Jewish population of Cologne eventually began to worry its Christian citizens. The more paranoid of them began to imagine that the Jews were gathering in a sizeable force in Cologne to better take over and defeat the Christians there.

The leaders of the Jewish community got wind of this growing dissatisfaction and began to take precautions. They started retreating within the ghetto and distributing weapons among the residents.

A small group of Christians acted as spies, pretending that they were on the side of the Jews and wanted to join their resistance against the Christians of Cologne. Once inside, they learned that the Jews were planning a raid on a particular quarter of Cologne on a particular day—most likely because they were running out of supplies and not because they had any desire to conquer Cologne.

The spies alerted the leaders outside the ghetto, and when the Jewish contingent made their move, they found an army waiting for them. The result was a pitched battle in the middle of a major city. Although many Christians died, it was the Jews who sustained the largest losses, with some reports saying that 25,000 were killed in the fighting.

The Jewish community of Cologne was a pillar of its economic structure. The desire to protect the Jews may, for many people, have had more to do with maintaining a stable social and economic order rather than making a stand against injustice.

Conclusion

The toll exacted on the medieval European Jewish world was the worst that it had ever been or would be until the Holocaust of the 20th century. It's estimated that in German-speaking countries alone, approximately 340 towns launched pogroms against their Jewish populations. Scholars estimate that 80 entire Jewish communities were wiped off the map completely.

Additionally, numerous anti-Semitic activities in France and Spain were also happening. But once the first wave of plague had receded, so too did the hysterical anti-Semitism.

Many of the Jewish citizens who had fled the pogroms—heading to places like Vienna—were invited to re-settle in their hometowns within a decade of the first wave of plague.

In late 1350, several chroniclers—and even Pope Clement VI—started to voice the observation that the Jews seemed to be dying in numbers as great as Christians. Even more to the point, the plague struck hardest in precisely those towns that had already expelled or executed all their Jews as a preventive measure. Strasbourg murdered its Jews in February 1349; in July, the plague struck there with great ferocity.

All of this together took the power out of the idea that Jews were somehow responsible for the Black Death, and indeed, on a few occasions during future outbreaks, Jewish and Christian leaders would join together to offer prayers for deliverance.

However, the conditions for Jewish persecution in the 14th century had been fostered in 1215 at the fourth Lateran Council. What happened in 1215 was the official

The Strasbourg Massacre

marginalization of a group that had been and was continuing to be critical to the development of the European economy.

Jews were essential to society even as they were relegated to its margins. One could make a somewhat similar claim about the peasant, laboring classes that produced the food and goods that made society function and fed it—they, too, were regarded as lower class, but essential for the social structure to function.

The difference is that because the peasant class made up a huge portion of medieval society—around 80–90 percent—and they were identified as Christians, there was no way to actually marginalize them. When the medieval world needed victims and scapegoats, the Jews, more than any other group, fit the bill.

SUGGESTED READING

Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society.*

Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence.*

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. If the fourth Lateran Council had treated the Jewish population more equitably, do you think that could have altered the course of history and prevented some of the more grievous later abuses against the Jewish population of medieval Europe?

2. What lessons can we learn from the marginalization and persecution of Jewish communities following the events of 1215?

LECTURE 14

Francis of Assisi and the Mendicant Orders

The fourth Lateran Council tried to curb the formation of new monastic orders—it wanted to keep a tight rein on the members of its flock. Almost immediately after this meeting, however, an exception to this rule was granted to a new monastic group: the Franciscans. This lecture looks at the Franciscans in particular and mendicant orders in general.

The Mendicant Orders

The Franciscans were part of a new world order of monks: the so-called mendicant orders. The ideal here was extreme poverty, and Saint Francis and his followers—and to a lesser degree, the Dominicans, already established—felt that in large measure the establishment of monastic houses was not the purest way to interpret the vow of poverty.

The Franciscans sought to embrace true poverty and throw themselves on the mercy of the world, traveling through the countryside and, most importantly, preaching as they went. Additionally, they took it upon themselves to identify and root out heresy and anti-Christian sentiment.

Earlier monastic movements included the Benedictine and the Cistercian orders, which came out of the Benedictines as part of a reform order. Both the Benedictines and Cistercians embraced the ideal of poverty, but found it very difficult to remain poor in practice.

By 1215, the medieval world was ready for a new kind of monasticism. While it is safe

Although the existence of Christian monasteries and religious hermits is recorded in the 3rd century or even earlier, the man who should be considered the father of Western monasticism is a man called Benedict of Nursia, or Saint Benedict. He was born in the late 5th century.

to say that the Dominicans and Franciscans came into being as reform movements that sprang out of and responded to the ideas of Benedictine and Cistercian monasticism, it is also safe to say that these mendicant orders were radical departures from the monastic practices that had existed up until this time.

Causes of the Shift

Starting around the year 950, the medieval west experienced a climate shift known as the Little Optimum or Medieval Warm Period. One of the effects of this climate change was that with slightly warmer weather, growing seasons were longer and more reliable, which in turn led to a better food supply. That led to an increase in population and a land crunch.

Between the year 1000 and the year 1300, its estimated that the population of the medieval west doubled, from around 75 million people to 150 million people. It was a new kind of world, more crowded than before, and this situation may in part be what led to the creation of mendicant orders. They eschewed the traditional monastic vow promising stability of place.

In the minds of several people, the people in the world needed direct help from representatives of Christ. It would be much better, easier, and more effective for these agents of God to go out into the world rather than staying safely behind monastery walls, waiting for the world to come to them.

That line of thought led to the Franciscan order, which was founded by and named for Francis of Assisi, who was later made a saint. In 1209, he went to Rome and appealed to Pope Innocent III for permission to found a new religious order of wandering brothers who would preach Christian belief. After some persuading, the pope agreed. Francis and his brothers became members of what came to be called the Order of Friars Minor (and alternatively, the First Order).

Francis and His Followers

Francis and his followers went and begged for donations of building materials, and thus, they assisted with the restoration of several houses of religious worship. Francis made it a point to visit and preach to the lowest members of society, and he is on several occasions recorded as embracing lepers—an act that at first was incredibly difficult for him, because in his previous, secular life, he had found lepers exceedingly repulsive.

There are several legends about Francis's relationship with animals, and many of these are gathered in a collection of stories known as the *Little Flowers of Saint Francis*. Most of these legends became popular after his death, but there is plenty of evidence to suggest they were based on real events in Francis's life.

Francis's love for the natural world even extended beyond animals. In some of his sermons, he called upon the forces of nature, plants, trees, and the sun and moon to show honor to God.

Francis of Assisi

The symbol of the Franciscans' acceptance as a legitimate religious order was the act of tonsuring, which occurred once the pope gave approval. A tonsure is a kind of haircut in which the top of the head is shaved bare, but the hair below is left intact in sort of a crown that runs around the circumference of the head.

The Franciscan Lifestyle

The extreme poverty desired by Francis and embraced by the order became difficult to maintain once it became necessary to establish mother houses, or monastic lodgings that served as anchor points for the brothers in their wanderings. The idea of the mother house was a practical matter in part, as it was difficult to oversee an order that had no central base, and it was also a response to the general medieval concern about people wandering around.

These practical concerns are also what led Francis to write his own rule for the order. Francis first composed the *Regula primitiva*, or "primitive rule." This rule was based directly on key Bible passages and emphasizes humility and poverty. No complete versions of this rule survive, as not long after, Francis updated it with a new version known as the *Regula prima*, or "first rule."

The need for a new rule became clear when, in 1219, Francis traveled to the Holy Land in order to assist with the Fifth Crusade. He ended up in Egypt, where he was admitted into the presence of Sultan al-Kamil.

While Francis was away, the Order of Friars Minor exploded with new adherents. The *Regula primitiva*, which mostly advocated poverty and humility without any strict instructions for how to cope in specific circumstances, was insufficient to the task. Francis returned home and composed the *Regula prima*, which offered more guidance but never got the papal seal of approval.

Recognizing that there needed to be some sort of bureaucratic structure, Francis also appointed a vicar to help with the practical matters of the order. Unfortunately, two years later, that vicar died. Francis replaced him, and revised his rule yet again, producing the *Regula secunda*. This rule was submitted to the pope—Honorius III—who approved it with a papal bull, and it is the rule that the Franciscan order follows to this day.

This version contains specific guidance on things ranging from the wearing of shoes and riding on horseback, which was only to be done if necessary due to illness or similar circumstances. It also provides guidance on what kind of of alms can be accepted and to what regions the Franciscans should go to profess their faith. After the acceptance of this rule, Francis retired from the public sphere more and more.

The Second and Third Orders

Francis was also responsible for founding two additional religious orders. In 1212, a young woman from Assisi named Clare was so inspired by Francis's teachings on humility and poverty that she fled her well-to-do family and turned up at Francis's doorstep, asking to be admitted to the holy life.

Although her family reportedly wanted her back, her devotion was such that by 1216, Francis had established an abbey at San Damiano and installed her as abbess. Later, her mother and sisters would come to join her, as would other women. Like the First Order, this Second Order took as their highest objective a life of

poverty, and to this day they are often referred to as the Poor Clares.

Clearly, St. Francis' ideas about poverty and humility had struck a chord with the society of the medieval world around 1215; soon, there were a number of laypeople—merchants, laborers, farmers, artisans, and the like, plus people who were already married—who expressed a desire to join one of the first two orders. Given the nature of medieval society, however, it was not feasible to allow everyone who wanted to join a religious order with strict rules of observance.

Although there is some dispute as to whether Francis simply inspired the creation of the Third Order or was an active designer of it, we have evidence as early as 1221 that there was a rule established for people who wished to follow the Franciscan way of life as best they could. This rule emphasizes simplicity of dress, forbids the use of weapons, and contains directives on fasting and prayers.

In the 15th century, the Third Order was subdivided into the Third Regular Order (whose members had mostly withdrawn from secular life) and the Third Order Secular (whose adherents were otherwise living in society as contributing members in a variety of occupations).

Conclusion

The Franciscans truly revolutionized the concept of monastic service, expanding it to include the whole of society, especially those often considered outcasts. With the creation of the Third Order, Francis made, for the first time, a kind of monastic service and status available to those who would traditionally have been confined to the secular, active world and denied the opportunity to participate in a life of spirit, prayer, and service to God.

In 1224, near the end of his life, Francis experienced the blessing of the stigmata. He was officially canonized and made a saint in 1228—just two years after his death.

SUGGESTED READING

Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*.

Lawrence, *The Friars*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why do you think an exception was made for the establishment of the Franciscans and Dominicans when the fourth Lateran Council seemed generally so intent on curbing the rise of new orders? Was there something specific to these two groups that allowed them special dispensation?

2. What seems to be most strikingly different about the three orders of the Franciscans compared to what you know of traditional monasticism?

LECTURE 15

The Crusade against the Cathars

This lecture explores a version of Christianity that was even more revolutionary than the mendicant orders. This faith is known as Catharism or Albigensianism. Its existence was considered so threatening to the church in the early 13th century that the pope turned his attention away from the Crusades in the Holy Land and called for a Crusade at home to root out Catharism. This event, known as the Albigensian Crusade, generally pitted the north of France against the south. It resulted in thousands of lost lives, destroyed property, and a radical restructuring of southern French society.

Background on Catharism

Catharism first seems to have arisen in Germany, but it became most firmly established in the region of the south of France that is known as the Languedoc sometime around the 1150s or so. The Cathars were a group that believed in the idea that there were two forces at work in the world: one good, or God, and one evil, or the devil. These two forces worked to keep the world in a kind of balance.

Cathars believed that everything in the material world was bad. Goodness could only be found in heaven, with God. Part of the inspiration for the Cathar movement came from the same source which had inspired Saint Francis—namely, the fact that the church, which was supposed to embrace poverty and purity, had become, in the eyes of many, wealthy and corrupt.

Whereas St. Francis had attempted Christian reform by securing papal approval for his new, radical brand of mendicant monasticism, the Cathars were not trying to reform the church from within. Rather, they declared the church and all its officials to be from the devil.

Additionally, just as the church argued that the only way to heaven was through the guidance of the church, the Cathars argued that no one could get to heaven unless they ascended to a certain level within their church. Their church was known as the *Perfecti*, or the Perfects.

Women were considered equals with men in the Cathar belief system. They could rise to high levels of status within the church with no restrictions on their abilities to fully participate in the practices and rituals of the faith.

Conflict with the Church

One of the greatest faults of the Cathars in the eyes of the church was in terms of their beliefs surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Because of their belief that all things related to the flesh were evil, they held that Christ could not possibly have become incarnate. They believed instead that Christ had not actually become incarnate, but that his time as a man was some sort of hallucination or illusion. They also vehemently opposed attaching any sort of significance to the crucifixion or the cross that had become the symbol of Christianity.

The Cathars in France

Catharism reached its greatest strength in France in the Languedoc, right around the turn of the 12th to the 13th century. At the time, the south of France was very different from the north in terms of character.

In the year 1200, the south was a place where troubadours sang songs of courtly love, significant populations of Jews lived alongside Christians, and women were able to inherit and own property. It is no surprise then, that Catharism would be popular in this area, as the sexes in the Cathar faith were considered equals.

Around 1204, Pope Innocent III decided something serious had to happen to root Catharism out of the Languedoc. The pope sent three legates to go on a tour around the region, preaching against Cathars and attempting to persuade the locals to disavow the heresy. The men he picked were so universally disliked by all that this seemed to hurt, rather than help, the cause of the mainstream church.

The next tactic was to invite Cathar representatives to a theological debate. The Cathar leadership agreed, and 13 Cathars and 13 Catholics met at Carcassonne to engage in a public debate. The church had not counted on incredibly eloquent defenses from the Cathar representatives, which meant that the results of the debate were inconclusive.

The three legates went back to their first plan—traveling around the Languedoc and essentially haranguing locals to turn their backs on the heresy. It didn't work, and in 1206, they finally admitted defeat.

Count Raymond VI

Additionally, the church had tried repeatedly to get Count Raymond VI of Toulouse to do something, as he was the most powerful man in the region. However, even in the face of multiple excommunications, Raymond dragged his heels—although not a Cathar himself, he was in many ways sympathetic to their beliefs.

Finally, though, Raymond agreed to engage in formal negotiations with Peter of Castelnau, who had been one of the three papal legates roaming the Languedoc trying to convert people away from Catharism. Raymond, Peter, and their representatives met in January 1208. Things did not go well from the start, and negotiations broke down completely on January 14. Peter decided to return to Rome and report to the pope.

While waiting to board a boat to carry him across the Rhône River, eyewitness accounts report how a heavily cloaked rider on horseback

approached the papal legate, ran him through with a sword, and then rode away. While it's likely that the assassin had been acting on behalf of Raymond, who had at one point threatened Peter with bodily injury during their negotiations, it's also possible that someone else with a grudge against Peter had masterminded the killing.

It didn't help that Raymond expressed no remorse over Peter's death. This would prove to be a fatal move on Raymond's part, whether or not he had ordered the killing. His decision to shrug this off—just like he had earlier demands from church representatives—suggests that he believed the Languedoc was beyond the punitive reach of the church. This was a mistake.

On June 18 1209, the wrath of the church came down on Raymond of Toulouse. Unable to secure support from other nobles in the land, Raymond was forced to endure a public whipping in front of all of Toulouse. He was forced to swear allegiance to the church, to oust all the Jews who had been members of his community, and to agree that when it came to Cathars, it was the church, not Raymond, who got to decide who was a heretic or not.

The Crusade

Raymond also agreed to join—at least in name—the Crusade that Pope Innocent III preached against the Cathars. It was the first time a Crusade was called against a group that self-identified as a sect of Christianity in the European Christian homeland.

In effect, this crusade pitted the north of France against the south. Nobles from the north were particularly eager to participate as the pope had decreed that the wealth and property of any Cathars was up for grabs.

Additionally, the pope had offered the standard Crusade indulgence—that is, if one participated in the Crusade, one's sins were forgiven. If one died on Crusade, they went straight to heaven. There was another wrinkle: In order to receive the remission of sins, one only needed to participate for 40 days.

Attacks on Cities

On July 22, 1209, an army from the north that included a huge number of mercenaries descended on the southern French city of Béziers. This city was one of the first targeted because in 1205, when church representatives had shown up and asked the city leaders to identify and hand over any Cathars within the community, the officials of Béziers had simply refused to do so.

The fight was so vicious that several church officials attempted to distance themselves from the violence—if not the cause—by blaming most of the atrocities committed on the mercenaries in the army. Others within the church seemed to feel that the punishment was just.

Other cities were soon attacked in turn. The walled city of

Massacre at Béziers

Carcassonne held out longer than most until its water supply was cut off. Soon, disease was running rampant through the city. Raymond Roger Trencavel, lord of Carcassonne and neighboring lands, was able to negotiate a truce for his citizens. On August 15, 1209, they were allowed to leave the city with their lives—but nothing else. Raymond Roger himself was thrown in prison, where he died shortly thereafter, most likely of dysentery.

Simon de Montfort

After the fall of Carcassonne, the Pope's representative, Arnold Amaury, had to find someone new to take over Raymond Roger's lordship and continue to lead the Albigensian Crusade. He settled on Simon de Montfort, a nobleman with holdings in the north near Paris who had gone on the Fourth Crusade but had refused to sack Christian cities along the way.

In the instance of the Cathar heresy, Simon felt no need to restrain himself as he had during the Fourth Crusade. He considered Cathars to not be Christians at all, and thus, it was acceptable to use whatever means necessary to root out the heresy.

He started his campaign of brutality in 1210, when he captured the small town of Bram, said to be sympathetic to Cathars. Selecting 100 of Bram's captured men, he had their upper lips and noses cut off, then had them blinded—all except one man, who was left with just one eye. This was so he could lead the rest of his fellows on a forced march to the town of Cabaret as a warning to all those who might feel sympathetic to the Cathars.

From there, de Montfort and his crusaders besieged the town of Minerve. When the defeated Cathars refused to swear an oath of allegiance to Rome, de Montfort had them brought to the valley below the town, where he burned them alive en masse.

Simon continued to Lavaur, where he breached the walls with siege engines. In a shocking breach of military convention, de Montfort

ordered the immediate hanging of the 80 local knights who had been defending the walls of the city. Lady Geralda, sister to the lord of Lavaur and a woman noted for extreme kindness, was thrown down a well and stoned to death because she had offered refuge to Cathar believers fleeing from other southern French communities.

The Cathars and the Fourth Lateran Council

The terror and destruction of the Albigensian Crusade was on everyone's mind when the fourth Lateran Council met in 1215. Raymond VI of Toulouse was present, as were numerous other representatives of the Languedoc and the north of France.

It took awhile to get to a discussion of the Crusade—it was roughly a month into the meeting of the council before the subject was taken up—and the discussion did not begin well. Many non-Cathar southern French leaders were angry at those who had offered sympathy or shelter to Cathars, arguing that their acceptance of these heretics had brought the wrath of the church and the greed of the northern nobles down upon their communities.

Pope Innocent III had to excuse himself for a walk in the garden to think about the matter. When he returned, he ordered what seemed to be the final blow to Catharism and the Languedoc: Simon de Montfort, he declared, would hereafter be count of Toulouse and its surrounding lands. Raymond was out.

When word of this reached Toulouse, there was uproar and outright rebellion. De Montfort quashed it, and he left what he thought was a thoroughly cowed city behind as he moved on to search for more Cathar targets. In September 1217, Raymond reentered Toulouse, much to the joy of its inhabitants, who took courage and decided now was the time to fight back.

Conclusion

When de Montfort got the news, he hurried back to oversee the retaking of the city. During the fight, he was killed when a stone launched from a catapult within the city's walls crushed his head. By tradition, it was a catapult that had been operated by women and girls.

The Cathar persecution was far from over, however. Even with de Montfort dead and the pope himself passing away unexpectedly in 1216, there was still lingering hostility and a concern on the part of the French king—who was based in the north—that this situation be brought under control.

Between 1217 and 1225, Cathar leaders and southern nobles managed to reclaim many of the territories they had lost, but in 1226, King Louis VIII of France assembled the largest army ever arrayed against the Cathars in the town of Bourges. They marched south, and one by one, the old Cathar strongholds fell again, including Carcassonne, Marseilles, Avignon, and Toulouse.

Finally, in 1229, Raymond VII of Toulouse signed a treaty in which he agreed to take up arms against Cathars and return various properties to the church in exchange for remaining count of Toulouse. However, this agreement, known as the Treaty of Paris at Meaux, also stipulated that Raymond's daughter would be married to Alphonse, brother of the French king. From this point on, any claim to Toulouse would come through their line of descent.

While Catharism from this point on began a steady decline, a paranoia surrounding heretical movements began an exponential increase. Indeed, in about 1234, Pope Gregory IX would establish the Inquisition, which he based in the south of France and whose sole purpose was to find and root out heresy.

SUGGESTED READING

Barber, *The Cathars*.

Martin, *The Cathars*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What was it about Catharism that was so threatening to those in the upper echelons of power in the church?

2. How might the history of France been affected if Catharism had survived and flourished in the south?

LECTURE 16

Mongol Culture before Genghis Khan

The story of Mongol leader Genghis Khan is remarkable, and he reshaped the Asian world and lands beyond it in incredibly important ways. In order to set the stage for understanding his significance, this lecture covers some basic history of the Mongols.

Background on the Mongols

Generally speaking, the Mongols were a tribal, nomadic people living in the eastern part of Central Asia. The first known mention of the word *mongol* occurs in an 8th-century text from the Tang dynasty. It shows up again in the 11th century, and between then and the 13th century, seems to be used as a catchall term for various groups who had some similarities of linguistics, cultural practice, and tradition.

These groups, however, seem to have identified themselves first in terms of their specific tribe or along kinship lines, and they very often were at war with one another. It was not until Genghis Khan, in the 13th century, that there was a Mongolian unification.

The Mongols as a people seem to have originated in the area of modern Mongolia near Mount Burkhan and the Onon River. They were a nomadic people who claimed descent from the Huns. They had cultural and linguistic similarities with the Turks and the Tatars. They spoke a language once classified as Altaic, which scholars believe

had some relation to Japanese and Korean but none to Chinese, which is interesting because that is the region on which they arguably had the greatest impact.

Status was determined by a hierarchical kinship system, with lineage or descent from a particular person of great renown conferring status and determining which groups could intermarry with others. Lineages were referred to as *bones*, and those lineages that were very close to one another were known as *white bones*; there could be no intermarriage between these groups.

More distant kinship lineages were known as *black bones*, and intermarriage was permitted with these. However, every tribe or clan was related in some way to every other. The chief of every tribe had a certain number of closely related kinsmen within his tribe who were his particular companions; this sub-group within the tribe was known as the *ordu*, from whence we eventually get the word *horde*.

Because their social structure revolved around small groups of people who were closely related to one another, there was no real need for any kind of government bureaucracy. If a key matter needed to be resolved that had significance beyond a specific tribe or two, a leader or a pretender to the leadership position of khan would call a conference known as a *kuriltai*.

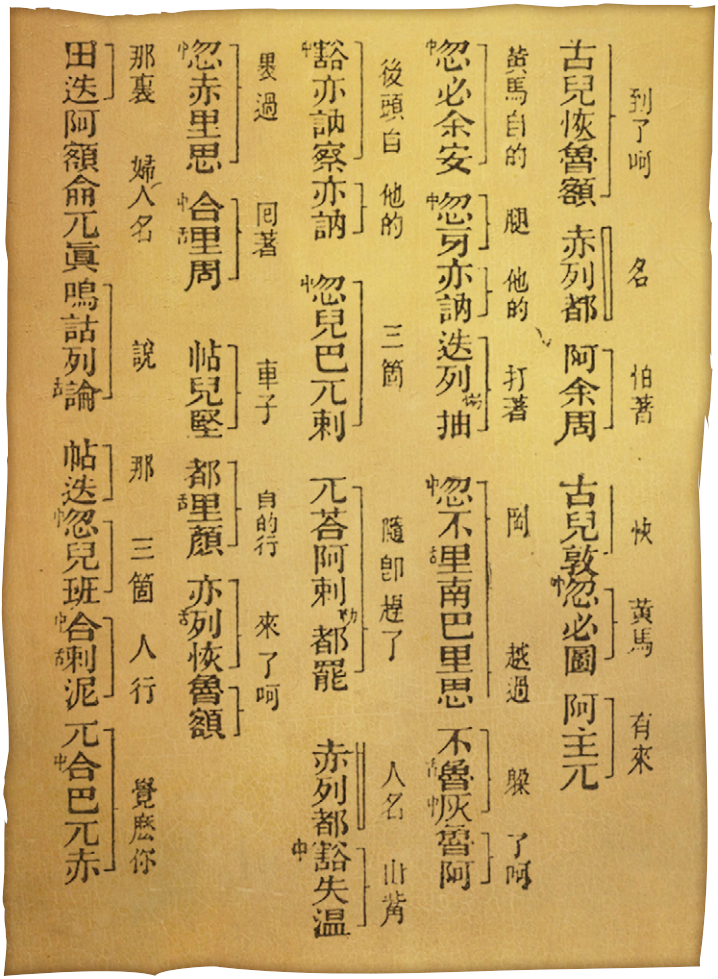
Otherwise, disputes were settled by fights or by marriages between groups, and alliances between groups often depended upon personal relationships. When one Mongol clan grew small and weak, it could be absorbed into a larger, more prosperous clan.

Secret History of the Mongols

The Mongols had no written language until quite late. There is, however, one text that could be considered a primary, Mongol source for the life of Genghis Khan. This is a work known as the *Secret History of the Mongols*.

It is the oldest surviving written text in the Mongolian language. It

makes sense that because Genghis Khan was the one who decided to introduce writing to his people, the first and most important Mongol text seems to have been composed shortly after his death. It is primarily concerned with an account of Genghis Khan's life, detailing his birth, childhood, and rise to power.



The Mongol Lifestyle

The Mongols were on the move frequently across the steppe lands in order to find good grazing for their horses. They lived in houses that were easily disassembled, transported, and reassembled. These structures, called *gers*—a type of yurt—consisted of a framework of wooden beams over which coverings made of felt were attached.

There was an opening at the top of this dome-like structure to let out smoke from a central hearth. A clan or tribe leader might have multiple wives, and in an ideal situation, each wife and her children would have their own *ger*.

Their diet consisted mostly of meat and milk from animals they hunted or herd animals that they transported with them. The Mongols referred to the most important of these as "the five snouts"—that is, camels, sheep, goats, yaks, and horses. Of these, the most important by far was the horse.

An established Mongol would have at least four or five personal horses, and there was careful attention given to rotating the horses for carrying the leader and carrying supplies. One or two traveled with no load at all. This would leave them fresh for battle, should one suddenly occur.

Mare's milk was an important source of sustenance, and in extreme cases, it is recorded that Mongols had become proficient at bloodletting from a horse—without killing it—so that they could retrieve nourishment. The blood from a horse could mean the difference between life and death for a tribe during times of privation, but always, every attempt would be made to preserve the life of the horse if possible.

When a great Mongol leader died, he was usually buried with his horse, which would be ceremonially slaughtered. Mongol children learned to ride at a very early age, and by the age of four, most could easily ride bareback. Once they were a bit older, they were generally able to stand on the back of a moving horse.

Mongol Fighting Abilities

Ability with a bow and arrow, spears, and rope was part of Mongol training. Because of the experience of practically growing up on horseback, a mounted Mongol army was a fearsome force.

They were not as skilled in close combat. However, they usually didn't need to be because their superior ability on horseback meant that they could strike, retreat, and strike again, or ride off to try and lure enemies into an ambush.

Mongol religious beliefs, as recorded at the time, were quite simple. Their nomadic life was not conducive to erecting shrines or carving statues. Their religious beliefs were deeply imbued with reverence for nature, and they seem to have believed in a supreme God whom they associated with the open sky.

Craftsmanship and Warfare

Because they were always on the move, the Mongols didn't have a tradition of craftspeople. From an early period, they did engage in trade with other peoples for necessities they could not procure on their own. Stirrups, in particular, were very important.

Even though they didn't have a stationary tradition of craft or artisanal work, many of the Mongols were quite skilled in building and engineering, especially when it came to weapons of war. Unlike European armies, Mongols didn't bring things like catapults or siege engines with them.

Instead, when they reached the site of a city they planned to attack, they would construct what they needed from the materials they found at hand. Once a siege or attack was over, they would leave these things behind. This improved their speed and flexibility.

Mongol Raids

Fighting was a way of life for the Mongols. While they certainly engaged in a fair amount of trade to procure what they needed, the other way to get necessities was to raid other tribes for goods, horses, wives, and supplies.

Raiding was such a part of life—almost following a seasonal pattern—that a protocol for behavior on the part of the tribe being attacked developed. If a Mongolian tribe attacked another, the men of the tribe would ride away as fast and as obviously as possible.

This was because when one tribe attacked another, they were usually not interested in destroying anything. They wanted to take horses, supplies, women, children, and food, and they wanted their targets to be in as good a condition as possible.

The only people who were likely to be in danger of being killed would be the mature men of the community. The elderly were, by custom, generally ignored and spared, as were the very young. Therefore, instead of forming some kind of defense in place, the men of the community would immediately jump on their horses and ride away.

There was a two-part logic to this. The first part was the hope that perhaps some of the attackers would give chase—these were, after all, the only people they really felt compelled to kill. It was hoped, and often proved to be the case, that once away from the tribe's campsite, a member of that tribe might be able to turn on and destroy his attacker in single combat.

By riding away, the men also seemed to paradoxically give their loved ones more protection. The attacking raiders, finding no one on defense, would usually happily depart with their spoils, harming almost no one or nothing. If the men of the tribe managed to escape, reconnoiter, and plan revenge, chances were good that in a few weeks' time, they could mount a raid and take back what had been stolen from them.

Clothing and Smell

Though they eschewed carrying many possessions for the sake of speed, the Mongols did value clothing because it was wealth that could be worn. Additionally, clothing would take on the smell of the person who wore it, and among the Mongols, smell was an important cultural element. Indeed, when two Mongols greeted each other, instead of grasping hands or embracing, they were much more likely to sniff one another.

We can see the importance of smell in the story of Genghis Khan's mother. This woman, Höelün, had been promised to a young man from another tribe. In Mongol tradition, when such an agreement was entered into, the potential bridegroom usually moved in with his prospective bride's family for a couple of years. There, he would labor at the instruction of his future father-in-law while getting to know his prospective bride.

When the time of service was up, he would leave and return to his own clan, bringing his new bride with him. According to the *Secret History of the Mongols*, Höelün and her new husband were traveling back to his people—he on a horse, she riding in a cart—when they were spotted by man named Yesugei, a leader of the Keraite tribe. Although Yesugei already had a wife, he decided he wanted a second one, and Höelün looked like a promising catch.

When Yesugei and his men descended upon the newly married couple, Höelün's husband tried to draw the men away by riding off as fast as he could. He circled the area repeatedly, trying to get Yesugei and his men to engage with him in combat on horseback, and leave Höelün to hopefully escape.

When it was clear it was not going to work, Höelün called her husband to her, took off her shirt, and gave it to him. She gave him the shirt so that he could carry at least the scent of her with him, and she ordered him to ride away so that he would not be killed.

Yesugei took his new prize back to where he was camped near the Onon River. Soon thereafter, Höelün was pregnant. Sometime in the year 1162, she gave birth to a son, whom Yesugei named Temüjin

after a Tatar chief he had recently defeated in battle.

When Temüjin was born, he reportedly came into the world with a large clot of blood clutched in his newborn hand. Höelün was unsure if this was the sign of a curse or prophetic of great things to come. As Temüjin grew up and eventually became Genghis Khan, those who interacted with him had good cause to wonder about this as well.

SUGGESTED READING

Rossabi, *The Mongols*.

Weatherford, *Genghis Khan and the Making of The Modern World*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What seems to be the most fascinating aspect of Mongol culture as discussed in this lecture?

2. Why do you think Mongols developed a style of resistance and fighting so different from those practiced in the medieval European world at the same time?

LECTURE 17

The Mongols and the Rise of Genghis Khan

The young Temüjin—later known as Genghis Khan—faced many challenges during his young life, but his ability to adapt allowed him to survive. As he grew up and grew in power, he made adaptations to the traditional way of Mongol life. He also adapted his military strategies throughout his life to incorporate what he could learn from his conquered enemies.

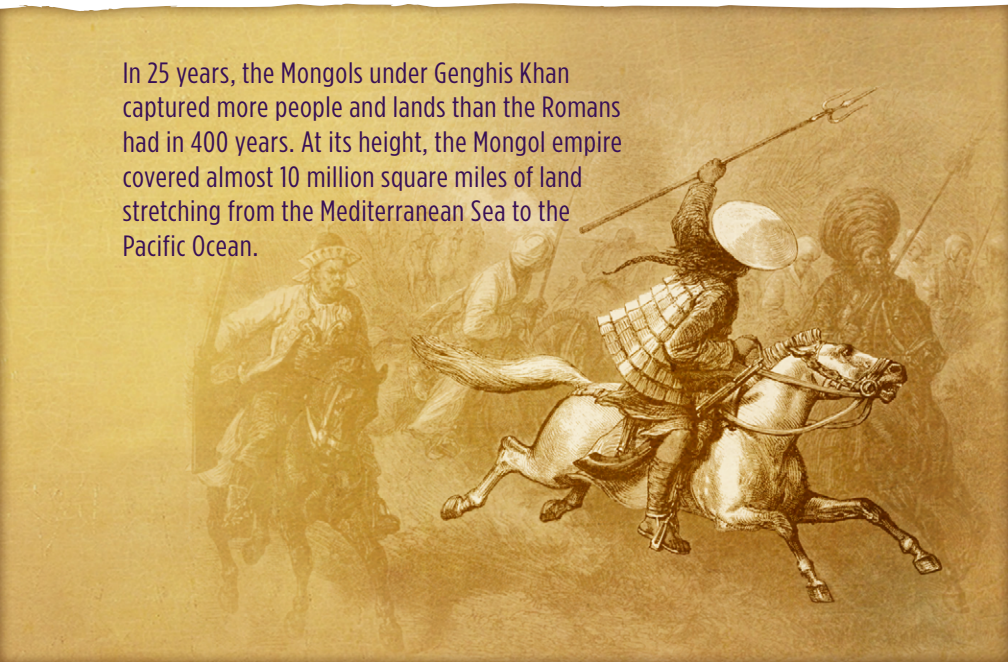
Temüjin's Early Life

Temüjin was born to a woman named Höelün, who had been kidnapped and became the second wife of Yesugei, a clan leader. It would not be long before Temüjin would start to display the characteristics that would lead to his ascendency to power and his unification of the Mongols, Tatars, and many others.

Young Temüjin lived with his father, mother, four full siblings, at least two-half siblings, and his father's first wife. When he was about nine years old, his father decided it was time to help him find a wife, and they set out together. According to the *Secret History of the Mongols*, they may actually have been heading back to the people of his mother, Höelün.

Before they got there, however, they stopped and camped awhile with the Khentii clan, which was part of the Onggirat tribe. In this clan was a family with a daughter named Börte. She was slightly older than Temüjin—a preferred situation in Mongol marriages—and although they were just children,

In 25 years, the Mongols under Genghis Khan captured more people and lands than the Romans had in 400 years. At its height, the Mongol empire covered almost 10 million square miles of land stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to the Pacific Ocean.



they got along so well that the fathers decided to betroth them to each other.

Yesugei left Temüjin with Börte's family and headed for home. It was presumed that the boy would serve the family a certain number of years as a laborer; in exchange, after a set period of time, he would marry Börte and take her back to his own tribe.

The plan went astray when, on the way home, Yesugei happened upon an encampment of Tatars holding a celebration. Although Yesugei had actually killed one of their leaders not so long ago, the desire to join the party was apparently overwhelming, and he joined in the festivities, trying to hide his identity.

He was recognized and poisoned, and he became mortally ill. He made his way back to his own people. As he lay dying, word was sent to Temüjin, who rode back home as fast as he could, but did not get there in time to say goodbye.

Concern for the rest of his family meant that Temüjin temporarily abandoned the plan to stay with Börte's family and remained with his own. The events that next occurred provide a fascinating window onto Mongol culture and how cruel it could be to a few in order to ensure the survival of the greatest number.

Mongol Clan Machinations

With Yesugei dead, his wives and children were now burdens on the rest of the clan. Although Yesugei had been leader of the Borijin clan, they had, as a group, been subordinate to and part of the Tayichud clan. Once the Borijin leader was gone, the Tayichud had no interest in supporting two wives and seven children.

Eventually, the clan left the women and children behind. Höelün, according to the *Secret History*, spent the next few years in a quest to feed her own family and that of Yesugei's first wife.

Höelün was in other ways very much a traditional Mongolian woman. Even though she had been an unwilling second wife, she was observant of the custom by which the eldest son of the first wife had the most power in the family once he came of age.

Yesugei's oldest son by his first wife was named Begter, and as he grew in age, he began to assert the rights of a clan chief. This included having first claim on any food that might appear, no matter who had done the collecting or the killing of that food.

This irritated Temüjin, and in one of the more remarkable incidents from his childhood, he and his younger full brother went off one day to put an end to what he saw as the injustice of this behavior. Begter was reportedly sitting out in a field by himself, and the brothers ambushed and killed him.

Höelün was reportedly furious about what had happened, but after a short while, Temüjin moved into the position of leader of the family. No one else—including another half-brother, who was younger—opposed him.

Temüjin Shackled

When word reached the Tayichud about Temüjin's killing of Begter, an act that was illegal by all Mongolian standards, members of that clan hunted down Temüjin and punished him by making him live among them as a prisoner. His head and hands were secured in a contraption like an oxen yoke almost constantly.

Every night, he was sent to the *ger* of a different low-caste family, who were charged with feeding him and watching over him for the night. One of these families apparently let him out of the yoke at night so he could sleep more easily.

One night, Temüjin saw his chance to escape and fled, his head and hands still locked inside the yoke. But then, while all the Tayichud were out looking for him, he doubled back and snuck into the *ger* of the family who had regularly taken him out of his yoke at night.

They released him, burned the yoke, and then hid him for a few days. Once the Tayichud had given up the hunt, the family supplied him with food and water and helped him escape back to his own people under cover of night.

The kindness shown to Temüjin by people who had no compelling reason to help him most likely made a strong impression on the teenager. It would affect and color many choices he made as a war leader and ruler later on.

Temüjin and Börte

Temüjin's ability to think outside the box of Mongolian custom was revealed when he returned to the family of Börte, his betrothed, at the age of 16. Börte had waited for him, and her family sent her off with Temüjin along with an expensive gift, as was customary among the Mongols. An expensive piece of clothing (in this case, a black sable fur) was among the most prized of gifts because it was so easily transported and incorporated into a nomadic way of life.

Traditionally, a son would bring such a gift home to his father. Temüjin didn't have a father any more, and he was acutely aware that his very existence was dependent upon people who had no kinship relation to him.

Having learned that lesson, he sought to capitalize on it, and he took Börte's gift to Ong Khan, the leader of the Keraite tribe. Ong Khan was apparently quite happy to receive the gift of the black sable; in return, he offered Temüjin a leadership position over a small group of his warriors. Temüjin politely declined, indicating that all he wanted was the goodwill and support of Ong Khan's family.

Temüjin Attacks

Temüjin lived quietly as leader of his own clan until his mother's people, the Merkid, decided it was time to take vengeance for the abduction of Höelün all those years ago. They attacked Temüjin's family, and as was the Mongolian custom during such raids, Temüjin and the other young men of the clan rode away on their horses.

This tactic existed so that the men of the clan might survive and plan a counter-raid, which they did. In order to succeed in this raid, Temüjin asked two people for help: Ong Khan, to whom he had given the black sable, and Jamuka. Both men agreed, and the raid was successful. The Merkid were defeated, Börte and Temüjin were reunited, and at first it seemed like Temüjin could go back to the peaceful life of a clan leader overseeing a small tribe.

However, Börte was pregnant. It seems she was not pregnant by Temüjin, but by the Merkid man to whom she had been given as a wife. When the child was born, Temüjin named him Jöchi, which means "guest."

For a time after this, Temüjin and Jamuka lived and ruled over their people together. For a while, Temüjin seemed content with

this, but over the course of about a year, something seems to have changed in their relationship. Near the end of Temüjin's 19th year, he and his wife, mother, family, and a small group of followers decided to split off from Jamuka's group; significantly, Jamuka let them go.

Temüjin as a Leader

From this date, in about 1182, Temüjin seems to have decided to establish himself as both a warrior and leader. For the next two decades, Jamuka and Temüjin would repeatedly lead raids on one another's groups and form and break alliances with whichever leader might afford them the most power and status. Each attracted to his orbits smaller Mongol clans seeking the protection of a powerful overlord.

Once he came to a significant level of power, Temüjin enhanced it and secured even greater loyalty from the Mongols by deliberately ignoring the traditional caste structure of his society. Instead of choosing leaders to serve under him who came from the highest ranking families most closely related to him, Temüjin mostly ignored the elites of his society and focused on lower-ranking and low-caste individuals who showed intelligence and ability.

As the years went by, Temüjin and Jamuka often found themselves at odds with one another and in a kind of competition for conquest of nearby peoples. Temüjin's strategy was twofold: First, when he conquered a tribe of Mongols, Tatars, or any of the other peoples living in the steppe lands, he usually executed their older, elite leaders.

At the same time, however, he had the children of that tribe adopted into his own. He had the women of rival tribes married off to his own people. He also offered some of the lower-ranking caste members of the conquered tribe positions within his own group. By contrast, Jamuka would humiliate those peoples he had conquered. This had the effect of turning many tribes away from an alliance with Jamuka but seeking out one with Temüjin.

Jamuka's Death

Temüjin's power continued to grow, and finally, in 1204, things came to head between him and Jamuka. Realizing that the end had come at last, Jamuka asked only that Temüjin kill him in an aristocratic fashion—no spilling of his blood, but rather, something like smothering—and stated that while he had not been a good friend in life, he would be a better one in death.

After Jamuka's death, Temüjin found himself the undisputed ruler of a huge stretch of land between the arctic tundra and the Gobi Desert, but he was not the ruler of this by name. In 1206, he called a *kuriltai* near the Onon River and the sacred mountain of Burkhan Khaldun in the hope of making his status official.

The Great Mongol Nation

The event lasted for days and drew Tatars, Mongols, and numerous other nomadic peoples. At this time, Temüjin decided to unite his people under a new name: Yeke Mongol Ulus, or the Great Mongol Nation. He did away with all inherited positions, declaring that these were now the property of this new nation to be given out or taken away as the leader saw fit.

He also renamed himself: Chinggis Khan. *Chin* in Mongolian means something like "strong," "unshakeable," or "universal," so "Chinggis Khan" means "Strong Ruler," "Unshakeable Leader," or "Universal Ruler." Eventually, that name became Genghis Khan, with the more familiar spelling.

By 1211, Genghis Khan's power had grown so that he was now ready to take on the greatest political enemy he had ever faced: the Jurchen Jin dynasty of China. For four years he advanced on the Northern Chinese territory controlled by the Jurchen, but they managed to hold him at bay. In 1215, however, Genghis Khan achieved a stunning victory and took the city of Zhongdu, which is modern-day Beijing.

SUGGESTED READING

McLynn, *Genghis Khan*.

Weatherford, *Genghis Khan and the Making of The Modern World*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Which customs of Mongolian social and political organization seem the most interesting or surprising? Which make the most sense given the conditions in which they lived?

2. Can you think of other examples of famous leaders from history who had experiences similar to those that shaped Temüjin into Genghis Khan, or does his biography seem unique?

LECTURE 18

The Battle of Beijing

This lecture examines how the code of Mongol law and practices put into place by Genghis Khan made it possible for him achieve what is arguably his greatest, most important victory in the year 1215 at the Battle of Beijing. This event was a turning point in world affairs, and its impact on the geopolitical landscape of Asia and the world beyond it is felt down to this very day.

Changes under Genghis Khan

Genghis Khan increased his wealth and power by instituting a change when it came to the traditional activity of raiding. Before he rose to power, it had been the case that when one tribe attacked another, usually the men of the tribe would ride away, trying to draw the attackers after them or give themselves a chance to reconnoiter and launch a counterattack.

Once the coast was clear, the attacking army would immediately start looting. More than once, they were dismounted, absorbed in finding all the plunder they could, when the men of the tribe returned in a counterattack. When this happened, there was both more death and greater destruction of valuable goods, animals, and potential wives and adopted children.

Genghis Khan declared that no looting could begin until a clear victory had been achieved, and then, all the goods had to be brought to a central location. Once everything was collected, Genghis Khan would distribute it equally among his followers. He took care to offer the share that would have gone to a fighter who had died to that man's widow and children. By doing this, he increased the loyalty among his men.

New Organization

He attracted a huge following, and it was clear that a new organizational scheme was going to be needed if he was going to properly manage all these warriors. He implemented a system based on groups of 10.

He combined 10 *arban* to make 1 *zagun* of 100 men. Ten *zagun* in turn made one *mingan* of 1,000 men, and 10 *mingan* equaled 1 *tumen* of 10,000 men. The leaders of each tumen were appointed by Genghis Khan and reported directly to him. It is worth noting that in a career that spanned over 50 years, not one of his generals or tumen leaders ever switched sides or left his service willingly.

The companies traveled in a concentric circle formation, with Genghis Khan at the center, the tumen leaders with their personal companies immediately radiating outward, and then so on, down to the lowest ranking arbans.

When they camped, they followed the same pattern, so that no matter where they were, Genghis Khan's men all knew exactly where to situate their *gers* in relationship to the other men in the army.

This strategy was highly efficient, and meant that the entire army could get themselves situated, fed, and to sleep in a relatively short period of time after a day of riding.

Communication, Swiftness, and Learning

Communications between one company or side of the encampment to the other had to be transmitted orally, and because of this, it was hugely important that a message be clearly understood and accurately conveyed. Given that the soldiers of the Great Mongol Nation were part of a mostly preliterate society, there would be no written text to which one might refer.

Instead, the warriors were all taught a certain number of songs and melodies. A new message would be crafted as a verse to a song already well known. The messenger, already familiar with the melody, would just need to spend a few moments committing the new verse to heart before riding off to deliver it.

Another thing that made Genghis Khan's military so dangerous was the swiftness with which they could cover lots of terrain. They were all riders, so there were no foot soldiers to slow them down. Nor was their pace tied to cumbersome supply wagons, as was the case in the medieval European world and in most of Asia and the Middle East.

The Mongols were also a fearsome army because with every enemy they conquered, they learned from that enemy's battle tactics and put them to good use. Larger weapons like siege engines would be constructed on the spot by Genghis Khan's group of engineers, recruited from foreign conquests specifically for their knowledge of such things.

The Great Mongol Nation and China

By 1210, all of these strategies and advances had worked so that Genghis Khan was the ruler of a huge swath of land. The Great Mongol Nation included several ethnic and cultural groups, and Genghis Khan also had formed alliances with the Uighur, whose territory was on the border with China.

To the east and south of the lands controlled by Genghis Khan was most of what is today China; in 1210, it was divided into three distinct entities which were often at war with one another. The Song dynasty controlled the lands south of the Yangtze River. The Tanguts were in control of northwestern territories, where they founded the Xia dynasty. In the middle were the Jurchen people, eventual founders of the Jin dynasty.

The Jin dynasty would become Genghis Khan's greatest enemy. It was the defeat of these people at the Battle of Beijing in 1215 that shaped not only the Mongol empire as it would exist in the decades to follow, but the entire rest of the world in the centuries to come.

Buildup to the Battle of Beijing

In 1210, the leader of the Jurchen died, and his son came to the throne. Believing that Genghis Khan should acknowledge their superiority, the new ruler sent an envoy to receive Genghis Khan's submission. Genghis Khan did not submit and set his sights on attacking and defeating the Jurchen.

He made alliances with the Tanguts and the Uighurs so that he wouldn't need to worry about fighting the peoples whose lands bordered his and the Jurchen territory.

Next, he sought to exploit the Jurchen's weaknesses. Among these weaknesses was the fact that not all of those peoples under the control of the Jurchen were happy to be there. One of these groups was the Khitan, a formerly autonomous group conquered by the Jurchen.

In 1211, Genghis Khan sent an envoy to them, announcing that he came as a liberator to restore to their royal family to power. Genghis Khan also tracked down a descendent of the Khitan royal family and declared him king—but a king who was also a vassal to Genghis Khan. This was better than what had been the case under the Jurchen, so the Khitan were now a part of the Great Mongol Nation.

The peoples under control of the Jurchen had established communities. If a Mongol military unit entered a village and looted and burned, the people living there did not have the skills or the resilience to simply move away a couple of miles and start over. For the Jurchen, such an event was physically and psychologically devastating.

Genghis Khan knew this, and deliberately sent his military to attack as many villages and communities outside the central cities of the Jurchen as they could. This created a flood of refugees who moved toward the center of Jurchen power, clogging the roads and straining the resources of those centers.

Whenever possible, Genghis Khan used propaganda to advance his cause. For example, he would happily accept into his company defectors from this enemy, provided that the only crime they had committed was switching from their original lord to Genghis Khan.

The word got out, and quite often, Genghis Khan's army was able to achieve a victory without striking a single blow. More than once, the group who had been the object of their military might was spared when the people welcomed Genghis Khan and offered their allegiance.

A Quick Victory

In 1214, after burning and looting his way across the Chinese countryside, Genghis Khan found himself before the walls of the great capital city of Zhongdu, which today is known as Beijing. The Jurchen leader, who styled himself the Golden Khan, sat on the throne, and he knew he was in trouble.

The Golden Khan's people were not happy at this point. They just wanted all this turmoil to stop, and many were willing to defect to the Mongols if their own leader couldn't guarantee some measure of peace and prosperity.

The Golden Khan offered Genghis Khan large amounts of treasure—jewels, silks, horses, and even one of his daughters as a wife—in order to head off a full-scale Mongol invasion. Most importantly, the Golden Khan affirmed that hereafter Genghis was the Great Khan, and he and his nation were a vassal state.

This satisfied Genghis Khan, and he immediately broke off his siege of the city, gathered his spoils, and headed back across the Gobi to the Mongolian homeland. Genghis Khan was perfectly happy to leave the day-to-day administration of these regions to their local rulers, provided they acknowledged Genghis Khan's overlordship, paid the required taxes, and offered service in the form of sending men to fight or serve as necessary.

However, once Genghis Khan and his men departed, the Golden Khan started to go back on what he had promised. He and some of his followers fled Beijing (or Zhongdu). They went south to Kaifeng, which they thought would be out of Genghis Khan's reach. They left behind a small military force to defend Zhongdu.

The Battle of Beijing

Genghis Khan turned around and headed back toward Beijing after hearing of the Golden Khan's treachery. In the end, the Battle of Beijing in 1215 was itself almost a nonevent.

In late May or early June 1215, the Mongols easily took Zhongdu; plenty of the Chinese, understanding what they were up against, chose to defect to the Mongolian side. Once the capture of the city was complete, Genghis Khan's forces set about looting.

With the capture of Zhongdu, Genghis Khan now had access to

trade routes and trade goods the likes of which were unimaginable for most of his people. An unending procession of pack animals carrying gold, silver, jewels, silks, brocades, metalwork, lacquered furniture, and more made their way from the Chinese border to inner Mongolia.

Once the Mongols got a taste for these luxuries, their appetite became insatiable. No more did they want the nomadic, bare-bones life of living on the steppe. This meant that Genghis Khan himself had to adapt to ruling over the Great Mongol Nation that was moving away from the identity that had helped it rise to power in the first place.

In the years following the Battle of Beijing, the Mongol way of life would change. Additionally, the lands over which the Mongols ruled would continue to increase until their domain became the largest contiguous land empire to ever exist on the planet earth. It stretched from the Pacific to the Mediterranean, all the way north to Moscow and south to beyond Baghdad.

SUGGESTED READING

McLynn, *Genghis Khan*.

Weatherford, *Genghis Khan and the Making of The Modern World*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Is there one thing in particular that made Genghis Khan's military strategy so effective, or is it the combination of novel and traditional strategies together that was behind his rise to power?

2. Mongol life after the Battle of Beijing began to change dramatically. Do you think this was a result of the spoils recovered from this particular battle, or was the transformation of Mongol society inevitable?

LECTURE 19

What Happened to the Mongols after 1215?

After the Battle of Beijing in 1215, wealth began flowing into the Mongol nation on an unprecedented scale. As has happened with almost every empire on earth from time immemorial, the people found that they liked this new way of living. They were willing to give up the lifestyle that had made them so successful and powerful so that they could relax and enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Changes in the Mongolian Style

Scholars have seen a clear shift in Genghis Khan's fighting strategy after the Battle of Beijing. No longer did he simply want the stuff of the other people—rather, he began to operate as someone who is interested not only in conquering, but maintaining long-term rule over those he had conquered.

Instead of simply moving from grassland to grassland and letting nature restore what had been depleted by a grazing herd, he now set out to carefully maintain grazing lands. He also set up granaries and other storehouses for agriculturally produced foodstuffs, and he then established a system of roads so those items could be transported more easily throughout Mongol territory.

When Genghis Khan died in 1227, his greatest legacy was perhaps the way he had managed to unify so many disparate groups of people. Uighurs, Huns, Turks, Arabs, Chinese, Indians, and more had been incorporated into his empire. No groups were considered of lower status than another.

His other legacy was a tradition of warfare and violence. This was inextricably bound up with the initial Mongol tradition of acquiring items by looting, but it had evolved by the end of Genghis Khan's life to a desire to conquer and rule.

After Genghis Khan

It was Genghis Khan's singular genius, charisma, talent, and flexibility that had made the Mongol nation what it was. But it was precisely his brilliant idea to reward loyalty, service, and ability—rather than kinship—that would ultimately prove to bring the Mongol nation to an end. By not clarifying what role his sons should play in the maintenance of his empire—or how his most trusted advisors who were not relatives should proceed—he created discord and unrest that would eventually lead to the empire's end.

Toward the end of his life, when he realized that the Mongols would want someone of his own blood to succeed him, Genghis Khan began trying to train these sons to be good leaders and fighters. Unfortunately, they didn't all get along.

His oldest son was Jöchi, but there was some question as to Jöchi's paternity, since Temüjin's beloved Börte had been abducted and held by the Merkid for some months before she could be rescued. She gave birth shortly after she returned home to her husband. Still Genghis Khan had raised him as his own.

The second son was Chagatai, who had a fractious relationship with his brother. Next was Ögödei, who was generally well liked. This might be because he was drunk much of the time, and by all accounts, was a happy, friendly drunk. The youngest was Tolui, who was reportedly reserved and quiet.

The Succession Plan

The Mongols abhorred discussion of death, but Genghis Khan broke with tradition and called a *kuriltai*, or council, in 1222 to settle the matter of succession. His plan was to divide his territory into four equal khanates—one for each of his sons—but one of them would be named the great khan, and would technically be the ruler over all the others.

Ögödei eventually became the great khan. He brought the Mongol empire to its greatest heights and also hastened its ultimate collapse.

Ögödei

One way that he did this was to, for the first time, set up a permanent city from which the Mongols would oversee their kingdom. This new capital was called Karakorum.

During Ögödei's reign and in the years immediately after, the Mongols conquered most of China north of the Yangtze River. They also added Korea, Tibet, Manchuria, and Iran to their holdings, and made Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia part of the empire.

Continued Expansion Attempts

The Mongols became interested in a new area to the west they had yet to conquer, and they began a three-year campaign across Russia and the Ukraine, eventually conquering Poland and Hungary. At the same time, there was still a part of Asia not yet under their control—ruled by the Sung dynasty—and they decided to fight on that front as well. Ögödei led the campaign in Asia, while Batu, son of Jöchi, led the campaign to the west.

In 1236, they headed out to conquer the area near the Volga River, where there were a series of loosely allied Russian city-states, ruled by a variety of princes. The Mongols' hit-and-run tactics made the alliances between the city-states moot, and the Mongols were successful.

Later, on December 6 in the year 1240, the Mongols captured the great city of Kiev. The conquest of the smaller city-states had been alarming, yes, but this was a whole different order of scary. After Kiev, the Mongols had successfully conquered Russia.

The Mongols continued on a tear through the Ukraine, Poland, and Hungary, which was particularly desirable because of its ample grasslands. Always ahead of them went a wave of refugees, fleeing in terror and bringing stories of a horrifying enemy.

European Panic

When word made it westward through Europe, all the way to Britain, people began to panic. They came up with theories as to who the Mongols were and what they wanted. One possible solution was that they were one of the lost tribes of Israel. Even more specifically, some believed that they belonged to the people ruled over by the three kings who had arrived to see the baby Jesus after he was born.

One of the reasons for this belief had to do with the activity of crusading. Once the crusaders had established strongholds in the Levant, they were doing a booming business transporting relics back to Europe.

Just before the Mongols had begun their European campaign, the supposed bones of the three wise men—Balthazar, Melchior, and Gaspar—had been found in the Holy Land. The bones were "liberated" by a group of German crusaders and then went to Constantinople before being transported back to the city of Cologne, where a fabulous reliquary was being built to house them.

When the Mongols made it to the doorstep of Vienna, German nobles began to panic that they were about to head toward Cologne to reclaim the bones of their supposed ancestors. A related theory held that the Mongols were related to the Jewish populations in Europe and were working in concert with them to try and destroy Christendom.

One person who was particularly panicked was a Polish duke named Henry II of Silesia, who held land on the German-Polish border. When he heard the Mongols were coming their way in April of 1241, he assembled a huge army of around 30,000 French, German, and Polish soldiers. He even conscripted a regiment of gold miners to fight.

His forces did not fare well against the Mongols. According to contemporary accounts, out of the 30,000 who had gathered to fight on Henry's side, 25,000 were slaughtered. The gold miners fared better, though. The Mongols didn't know how to mine, but they did know they held territory rich in various ores. They took the miners back with them to help them exploit their own natural resources.

Genghis Khan's Grandsons

Things did not look good for Europe, but toward the end of 1241, both Chagatai and Ögödei Khan died. Jöchi, Genghis Khan's eldest son, had died before his father had. Tolui, the youngest brother, had passed away in the 1230s.

This meant that Genghis Khan's grandsons were now the ones in charge of this massive empire. They were so busy squabbling amongst themselves that the Mongol conquest of Europe had ended by this point.

However, the Europeans didn't know that, and they were all still terrified that this army was going to keep making its way west. In 1246, Pope Innocent IV sent an envoy to the center of the Mongolian homeland, where that representative was received by Güyük Khan, one of Ögödei's sons.

The Mongols were given a document that set out the basic tenets of Christianity—which they all understood quite well, given that most of the Mongol leaders had either Christian mothers, Christian wives, or both. Then, the envoy read a letter from the pope, demanding to know how they presumed to attack Europe and its Christian nations. The envoy also informed the Mongols that the pope was God's representative on earth, and he was speaking to them on behalf of God.

Güyük responded to the pope by asking him how he presumed to know to whom God grants power or mercy. Additionally, Güyük pointed out, it appeared that God had given control of most of the known world to the Mongols, not the pope.

Indeed, Güyük continued, God had sent the Mongols to unite all the people of the world. He said that the pope and the princes of Europe should go to the Mongol capital of Karakorum to pay homage to their new overlord, the Mongol khan.

Conclusion

Although relations remained tense, that was the end of major interaction between Europe and the Mongols. However, the repercussions of Genghis Khan's reign would be felt throughout Asia, the Middle East, and Europe down through the centuries.

After Genghis Khan and his sons died, there were five grandsons left. Ögödei's son, Güyük, assumed the position of great khan, but more and more ruled over just the Mongolian homeland. Tolui, the youngest son of Genghis Khan, had four sons, three of whom arguably reshaped the Middle East.

Möngke took over the title of great khan from his cousin Güyük when the latter passed away, while his younger brothers Arik Böke and the famous Kublai were focused on Asia. Kublai's descendants eventually became the rulers of the Yuan dynasty in China.

Hülegü created his own khanate in Persia and Iraq. The descendants of Chagatai, Genghis Khan's second son, turned their attention south, toward India, and eventually established the Mogul empire.

Only Batu, son of Jöchi, maintained an interest in Europe. He maintained a headquarters primarily in Russia, and most importantly, entered into a lengthy and economically beneficial relationship with Italian merchants from Venice and Genoa who had established trading outposts on the Black Sea. Almost 100 years later, in 1346, this trade relationship between Mongols and Italians would provide the means by which the Black Death entered the European world and killed half the population.

Each of Genghis Khan's four sons was married to a Christian woman. One scholar has gone so far as to say that of all the empires ever to exist on earth, the Mongolian one was the most religiously tolerant—a fact that seems somewhat at odds with their rather brutal and spare way of life.

SUGGESTED READING

McLynn, *Genghis Khan*.

Weatherford, *Genghis Khan and the Making of The Modern World*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Infighting between Genghis Khan's descendants eventually contributed to the fracturing of his empire. Can you think of any empire or political entity that has successfully negotiated this kind of transition throughout world history, or does it seem that large empires will always eventually collapse into smaller, more manageable nation-states?

2. What do you think was Genghis Khan's greatest legacy?

LECTURE 20

The Status of Women in 1215

This lecture tackles the subject of what the world was like for women in 1215. In particular, it looks at women in the medieval European world and the Mongolian empire under Genghis Khan. Each of these groups presents a mirror image of the other. In the medieval European world before 1215, women arguably had more power and status than they did after 1215. Roughly the opposite seems to be true in the Mongol Empire: Before Genghis Khan's rise to power, Mongol women were mostly commodities to be traded, sold, or captured.

Women in Genghis Khan's Empire

Temüjin, the man who would grow up to become Genghis Khan, had a mother who had been stolen by his father away from her rightful husband. Temüjin himself had had to rescue his beloved wife Börte from an enemy group that had kidnapped her.

After Genghis Khan's rise to power, women were able to attain higher status and more power in the Mongolian world than ever before. During his life and after his death, it was his wives, daughters, and daughters-in-law—more so than his sons—who maintained the status and integrity of his empire for so long.

At the moment when Genghis Khan had consolidated his power and was deciding to begin his conquest of the known world, he had to figure out who would rule over the territories he had already successfully claimed. He did not name his sons or many of his trusted allies.

Instead, to his beloved first wife Börte, he gave the Tatar region around the Kherlen River. His second wife Khulan was given control of the Khentii mountain region, which included the holy mountain of Burkhan Khaldun.

His wife Yesui got the Tuul River and the territories that had belonged to Genghis Khan's onetime friend, mentor, and ally, Ong Khan. Yesugun, who was Yesui's sister and Genghis Khan's fourth wife, was given control over the Khangai mountain range.

In the medieval European world, royal women might be married off to an enemy group, in order to—supposedly—create peace between warring peoples. When it came to his daughters, Genghis Khan did the opposite: He married his daughters to the sons of his most trusted allies.

ERASED FROM HISTORY

Some around the turn of the 13th century to the 14th, an attempt was made to erase the important role played by Mongolian queens during this period. Most evidence of Genghis Khan's life comes from a text known as the *Secret History of the Mongols.* The key event of Genghis Khan's life that it records is the *kuriltai* he called in 1206, when he established what he called the Great Mongol Nation.

The *Secret History* records the speeches he made at that event and the rules he made law. One of these was that no longer would women be bought, sold, traded, or bartered for. He also dispensed gifts and territories to his followers and sons. However, at exactly the moment where he turns his attention to his daughters, saying, "Let us reward our female offspring," the text that follows has been deliberately cut out of the manuscript.

After Genghis Khan

This level of respect for women in Mongol society was not to last. It continued for a time after Genghis Khan's death, but two generations later, the women and their accomplishments were literally being erased from the historical accounts of the period.

By 1368, there was no longer a true, unified Mongol empire. Concomitantly, the status of women in that society declined. They might have ruled over the day-to-day workings of the household, but they would never again wield such power as political figures in their own right.

Women in Medieval Europe

In medieval Europe before 1215, there were quite a few women, comparatively speaking, who were powerful and in control of their own lives. They ruled over territories, spoke authoritatively on religious matters, and were well educated. However, around 1215, a clamping down on women in positions of authority began. This new situation remained a reality for most of the 13th century and well into the 14th century.

The pendulum started to swing back the other way in the wake of one of the greatest disasters the world has ever known: the Black Death. Around 1347 or 1348, a virulent form of plague swept from Asia into Europe, where it killed off up to half of the population according to some estimates.

In the face of this demographic disaster, many of the basic structures of social order were compromised. Women could, did, and often had to take on greater responsibilities for themselves, their families, and their communities to continue to exist.

Hildegard of Bingen

Next, this lecture turns to three examples of pre-13th-century women from three different spheres of life: Hildegard of Bingen, a nun, abbess, and now saint and doctor of the church; Héloïse, who received an incredible education; and Eleanor of Aquitaine, who was queen first of France and then of England.

Hildegard was born to a relatively well-off German family in the year 1098, and from the moment of her birth, she was apparently a sickly child, prone to fits that some modern scholars have diagnosed as epilepsy. When she was eight years old, the family sent her to the church at Disibodenberg, where she would enter religious life and study under an anchoress named Jutta.

She was known to experience blinding headaches, during which periods she saw amazing visions. During the early years of her adulthood, she wrote many letters to ecclesiastical authorities, expressing a concern about her visions and an anxious desire to know if these were in fact from God.

Once she received official sanction from the archbishop of Mainz, Bernard of Clairvaux, and then Pope Eugenius III himself, she began writing down her visions and offering interpretations. She also wrote letters to secular and church officials admonishing and reprimanding them for certain actions she deemed unworthy of men of God.

Eventually, she was invited to come and preach to other monasteries and convents, and she traveled throughout Germany on what were essentially four different preaching tours. This was quite the groundbreaking activity.

Hildegard died in 1179, right before the rise of the persecuting society, which arguably culminated in events like the fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Hildegard was possible before 1215, but no one like her would be possible for some centuries after it.

Hildegard of Bingen

Héloïse

Roughly contemporaneous with Hildegard was the remarkable French woman named Héloïse. When Héloïse was a young girl living in a convent, she got an education the likes of which one might not expect for a medieval woman. She could read and write in several languages and had received training in several academic disciplines. It is likely that other women received similar training.

When she was sent to live with her uncle Fulbert in Paris, he thought it was a good idea to continue her education. He arranged for the greatest living scholar of the day, Peter Abelard to be her tutor. Abelard also agreed, and he found her intellect and intelligence on par with his own. (Today, the pair is known for their ill-fated love affair.)

Thanks to all this schooling, Héloïse knew Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, among other languages. She was skilled at academic debate, had an excellent mathematical and scientific education, and was trained to be a skilled physician.

Héloïse

After Abelard's castration, she and he each became leaders of religious houses. When she died in 1164, the world she left was becoming more rigid, controlling, and exclusionary. If she had been born a half-century later, it's possible that she might not have been able to receive the education or attain the status that she did.

Eleanor of Aquitaine

Eleanor of Aquitaine was born around 1122 in the southern region of France known as the Occitan. She was the heiress to its duchy. The king of France was eager to secure a marriage between Eleanor and his son so that Aquitaine could become a part of France and enlarge that country.

Her marriage to Louis VII of France seemed to go well at first. She bore him two children. Though they were both girls, this wasn't a worry, because it proved she was fertile, and there was likely to be a son in the future.

However, Eleanor became unhappy with the marriage, procured an annulment from the pope, and then married Henry of England. She took Aquitaine with her. France was seriously diminished, and the power of England greatly enlarged.

Although she bore Henry several children, including at least four sons, Eleanor believed she should be seated right next to Henry in terms of power. On many occasions, she would travel across the channel to Aquitaine in order to see how things were going in "her" territory.

When she felt that Henry was not dealing fairly with their sons in terms of inheritances, she backed them in a revolt against their father, which led to Henry putting her under house arrest from 1173–1189. From her confinement she played every political angle she could, with a network of spies and loyal followers who brought her information and carried out her orders. When Henry died in 1189, their son Richard the Lionheart released her from her confinement.

For the rest of her life, she remained busy with political affairs, taking control whenever she could. She died in 1204. The existence

of female figure like Eleanor of Aquitaine would only have been possible in the 12th century.

In the 11th century, the medieval world was just finally emerging from a difficult social, economic, and political period and starting to experience a population increase and more stable food supply. In the 13th century, that population boom created both a crisis and increased restrictions on any group that could be considered marginal, including women.

Women, Marriage, and the Fourth Lateran Council

One way the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 functionally took power away from women was by making marriage one of the sacraments of the church. Before 1215, marriage was primarily an economic arrangement between families.

Once marriage officially became a church sacrament, it was more fully under the jurisdiction of religious officials. As marriage and the family were one of the fundamental cornerstones of medieval society, it would make sense that those who held religious office thought it reasonable if marriage and its attendant issues were to come under ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

The family could be a complicated institution. No matter the social status of the parties involved, theoretically, a woman was usually considered legally subject to her father and then her husband. There were many laws in place to protect the property of the wife and mother and of the offspring of the marriage.

This was in part because of the high mortality rates in the medieval period. Remarriage and blended families were more the norm than the exception. However, after 1215 and until the middle of the 14th century, the rights of women in the family were kept more firmly under the control of male relatives and authorities.

SUGGESTED READING

Amt, *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe.*

Weatherford, *The Secret History of the Mongol Queens.*

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Given everything else you know about Genghis Khan, do you find it surprising that women seem to have enjoyed relative autonomy, power, and respect during his reign?

2. Of the three European women discussed in this lecture, which one seems the most remarkable or interesting? Why?

LECTURE 21

Literary Trends in the Early 13th Century

This lecture focuses on the genres of religious writing, Scandinavian sagas, and Arthurian romance. These were three of the most interesting genres to gain widespread popularity in the early 13th century.

Religious Writing

Religious writing developed in new, significant, and surprising ways right around 1215, especially in light of the canons of the fourth Lateran Council and the ways in which certain groups were being marginalized. Other groups, contradictorily, seemed to seek prestige and honor by deliberately marginalizing themselves.

The most obvious example of groups marginalizing themselves comes from of the orders of friars, particularly Franciscans and Dominicans, who sought to establish a new kind of monasticism. There were also women who similarly sought to place themselves in a marginal religious space, away from the community of the convent. These women were known as anchoresses.

Many of them lived in very small cells, which were usually attached to the parish church. The parish priest was in charge of overseeing the spiritual lives of these women, who dedicated themselves to performing the critical work of prayer to save humankind. As such, there was an increase in the production of rules for anchoresses in the early 13th century.

These guides might be read aloud to the women by the priests and confessors. If the women were literate, it would be considered proper for them to read these works themselves and meditate upon the information there as a form of prayer.

One of the best examples is the *Ancrene Wisse*, or *Guide for Anchoresses*. This text is highly self-conscious of its goals and its organization, being arranged in nine parts, including an introduction.

The first and last of these deal with the outer rule, or directives concerning the physical surroundings and body of the anchoress. As the work moves toward the center, it moves through various layers of the inner rule, until at the heart of the work is a treatise on the soul itself.

The author of this work—who was most likely a man—was well versed in the most important theological debates of the day and was familiar

with the most important works of the church fathers. These writings provide a window into 13th-century spirituality and dictates regarding behavior.

Worried that the outside world will be too much of a temptation, the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* admonishes his anchoresses to "love your windows as little as you possibly can" and to "not talk with anyone through the church window, but hold it in honor because of the holy sacrament you see through it." Interestingly, the women for whom this text was originally written seem to have lived a life not quite as ascetic as some anchoresses, as there are references to serving women and guidelines as to how often one should speak to them in order to have their needs attended to.

Scandinavian Sagas

While this kind of religious writing and thinking was gaining widespread popularity in western Medieval Europe, a completely different type of literature was blossoming into existence in Scandinavia: the Norse and Icelandic sagas. The arrival of Christianity to the Scandinavian lands made the populace literate and thus able to write these amazing texts. However, people were mostly concerned about recording the myths, historical events, and stories of a pagan, pre-Christian past.

For some reason, starting in the 8th century, the people of Scandinavia—the Swedes, Danes, and Norse—started to move out from their home bases and became what we today think of as Vikings. They were skilled sea travelers and raiders.

They terrorized the British Isles and the coast of France, and then traveled inland up rivers throughout Europe. They were a preliterate culture with a religious system based on the pantheon of Norse gods: Odin, Thor, Loki, and so on.

According to tradition, in the year 874, the king of Norway exiled a man named Ingolfr Arnarson and his war band. They knew of the

existence of Iceland, which was basically an uninhabited island at this time. Ingolfr and his followers decided to set up a new society there. They stopped by Dublin—which was a booming slave market at the time—picked up some women, and headed to Iceland.

They were eventually joined by other groups of Norse people who had been in conflict with the king of Norway, and soon, there was a society tenaciously clinging to existence on this remote island. Iceland does not feature much sunlight, and in the days before electricity, plenty of hours were spent telling stories in the dark.

There is also clear evidence that people had committed to memory important historical events and family lineages going back several generations. As this body of stories developed, it became both a way of recording history and establishing the place of Iceland in Scandinavian society.

Special attention was paid not only to the myths that were held in common in Norse society, but also relationships between political entities. There is also careful cataloging of feuds between families over the course of several generations, and particular attention is paid to the landscape

SNORRI STURLUSON

One of Iceland's most famous and important writers was a man named Snorri Sturluson. Sturluson's works include the *Prose Edda*, which seems partly a compilation from earlier sources and partly Sturluson's original writing. The *Prose Edda* includes the origin stories of the Norse gods, a discourse on the importance and nature of poetry, and rules for writing poetry.

He also wrote the *Heimskringla*, a collection of sagas about the Norse kings that stretches back into the realm of myth, and *Egil's Saga*, which is the story of five generations of an Icelandic family.

and the various farms occupied by particular families.

In the year 1215, the body of saga literature was about preserving memories of the past. Today, these texts are still known, valued, and in many cases, committed to memory by proud Icelanders and Norse people.

Medieval Romance

This lecture now turns to the medieval romance genre. Some key components of this genre include:

1. It is fictional.
2. It is primarily concerned with upper-class characters.
3. It is concerned with the activities of chivalry, meaning the deeds of knights on horseback.
4. Romantic love plays a key role, as does magic of some sort.
5. It is written in a vernacular language (not Latin).

The most important is the romance literature that focuses on the legend of King Arthur. The historical Arthur—if he ever existed—was a 5th-century person. His story didn't become really popular until around 1136, when a cleric named Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote a chronicle entitled the *History of the Kings of Britain* in Latin.

Around 1155, inspired by Geoffrey, a writer named Wace composed a text known as the *Brut* in the vernacular language of Anglo-Norman. It is Wace who gives us the first mention of the Round Table.

He in turn inspired a writer named Layamon, who wrote his story of Arthur and gave it to the world for the first time in English, sometime around the turn of the 12th century into the 13th century. While these followers of Geoffrey were writing in the vernacular, their style was somewhere between chronicle and romance, although in spots it seems to be drifting toward the latter.

Also in the late 12th century, shortly after Geoffrey's text appeared, a French writer named Chrétien de Troyes produced a series of Arthurian romances. It is Chrétien who gives us the character of Lancelot, who appears in the story of *Lancelot, the Knight of the Cart* as a fully formed, heroic knight.

The Vulgate Cycle

Right around the year 1215, the Arthurian romance exploded in popularity. French writers took bits and pieces of the legend and used them as scaffolding on which to erect more and more fully developed, elaborate stories associated with King Arthur and his court.

This body of work, composed roughly between the years of 1215 and 1235, is generally known as the Vulgate cycle. *Vulgate* here refers to the fact that these texts were written in a vulgar, or vernacular, language instead of Latin. Unlike the works of Wace, these vernacular texts were written in prose rather than verse.

The Vulgate cycle is a massive collection of texts, many of them written by different authors, and many of which tell the same story or versions of the same story. Some texts composed by different authors overlap in the events that they describe.

The Vulgate cycle gives the first mention of the famous sword in the stone. The great city of Camelot, from which Arthur ruled his kingdom, is first mentioned in Chrétien de Troyes's story of Lancelot. The Vulgate cycle makes this Arthur's base of operations and the center of the Arthurian community.

The villainous character of Mordred, who had long been characterized as Arthur's nephew who seeks to usurp his uncle's throne, gets an upgrade in term of villainy when the Vulgate cycle takes up his case. It is the 13th-century tradition of Arthurian romance that makes Mordred not only Arthur's nephew, but also his incestuously conceived son.

Additionally, the story of Lancelot and Guinevere did not become fully developed until after 1215.

As it came into being around 1215, Arthurian romance was demonstrating many of the hallmarks of romance generally as it came to be written throughout the medieval world. There was an increased interest in texts that dealt with romantic love and with the world of magic and sorcery, and there was a burgeoning upper class that was eager to hear stories that glorified their own social caste.

SUGGESTED READING

Lacy and Wilhelm, *The Romance of Arthur*.

Sturlusson, *Prose Edda*.

Watson, ed., *Anchoritic Spirituality*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Does the diversity of popular kinds of writing in the 13th century surprise you? Why or why not?

2. If you had to pick one of the genres described in today's lecture to spend a week reading, which one would you pick and why?

LECTURE 22

The Islamic World in 1215

By 1215, it seemed that western Christendom was involved in continuous military conflict with the Islamic world. However, there were also positive contacts between the two groups: Thanks to the Islamic world, the medieval European world made vast leaps forward in science, mathematics, architecture, medicine, the arts, and more.

Development of the Islamic World

Islam began on the Arabian Peninsula in the early 7th century. The prophet Muhammad was born in the area around Mecca in the second half of the 6th century, sometime around 570. He was orphaned while quite young, and he was taken in and raised by an uncle who was an important leader of the one of the most powerful tribes in Mecca, the Quraysh.

Around the year 610, Muhammad reported being visited by the angel Gabriel, who gave him messages that he then passed along to others of his community. By far the most important of these was that there was only one God—Allah—and that he alone should be worshipped. These messages continued throughout Muhammad's life, and when written down they became the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam.

In the first stages of the development of the Muslim faith, tribal leaders around Mecca found this new religion threatening. The pressure from Meccan tribal leaders became so intense that in 622 Muhammad fled from Mecca to the city of Medina, where he had many followers and where he was soon established as both a religious and secular leader.

Muhammad and his followers formed the *ummah*, or the community of the faithful. This community, after Muhammad's death, felt called upon to expand the Islamic world. In the 7th century they took over much of Persia and then conquered the once-great cities of the Byzantine Empire, including Alexandria, Antioch, Carthage, and Damascus.

In the 8th and 9th centuries, many cities on the Mediterranean that had once been strongly Christian converted to Islam. Although communities of Christians and Jews, as well as other faiths, remain in the regions of North Africa and the Middle East to this day, it is also clear that the conversion of these regions was lasting and profound, as those same areas are considered the center of the Islamic world today.

In the year 711, most of what we think of as modern-day Spain started to be conquered by Muslim leaders. The Iberian Peninsula would remain predominantly Muslim until well beyond the year 1215. Christian and

Jewish populations were generally allowed to remain.

Around the mid-8th century, Muslim communities from the Middle East to North Africa to the Iberian Peninsula truly began to flourish, particularly in the areas of education, literature, medicine, science, and mathematics.

Baghdad, Cairo, and Cordoba

All was not well in the Islamic world, despite its many successes. Muhammad was succeeded by leaders known as caliphs, who did not necessarily come from the most powerful tribes, but rather were drawn from Muhammad's closest circle of friends and confidantes. Soon, the young faith would be divided between leaders of two rival factions. In particular, the views espoused by different sons-in-law of Muhammad came to define competing visions of Islam.

One branch of Islam came to be called Fatimids, who were most frequently associated with the Shiite Islamic tradition; factions of the group known as the Umayyads in a later incarnation became known as Sunni Muslims. It is the Umayyads who pushed west and conquered Spain.

Their position in the Muslim heartland was usurped by the Abbasids, who moved the center of the Islamic world to Iraq and founded the city of Baghdad. This, more than anything else, helped the Islamic world to flourish.

In Baghdad, Cairo, and other centers of the Muslim world, Islamic scholars established a *dar al-hikmah*, or "house of wisdom." This was essentially a forerunner to the modern university—it was part library, part translation center, and part school. The first of these was established in Baghdad in the 9th century.

Apart from Baghdad and Cairo, the other great center of Muslim scholarship was thousands of miles away, on the Iberian Peninsula in what is modern-day Spain. Here, the great city of Cordoba would become another shining star in the orbit of the golden age of Islam.

Averroës

Copies of many of the texts that were translated in the house of wisdom in Baghdad eventually made their way to Muslim Spain, or Al-Andalus. This area was where the great Muslim scholar Averroës, also known as Ibn Rushd, made one of the most important contributions to medieval philosophy.

His work was made possible in part by the study of an earlier Muslim scholar, known as Avicenna, who lived in the late 10th and early 11th centuries. Avicenna is perhaps most famous for his treatises on medicine and the body.

Averroës was the bridge between the worlds of ancient philosophy and medieval philosophy. The most important philosopher for both these realms was the great Aristotle, student of Plato. Over the centuries, the texts of Aristotle's work found in European libraries and monasteries had become corrupted. Averroës changed all that with his commentaries on Aristotle.

Averroës took great pains to compare multiple translated versions of the texts under discussion. He often explained that he had to make a choice in selecting which version was more authoritative; even better, he often explained what factors led him to that choice.

He also corrected mistranslations from Greek into Arabic. In sum, Averroës gave to the medieval world the purest version of Aristotle that had been in broad circulation since the end of the antique world.

Trade and Numbers

In the year 1215, trade was booming throughout Europe into Africa and the Middle East. A center of this trading and banking explosion was the Italian Peninsula.

A factor that helped integrate the European world into larger trade networks was the introduction of Arabic numerals in the year 1202 by a man named Leonardo Pisano. He wrote a text called the *Liber abaci* that explained the Arabic numeral system.

While a young man, Leonardo traveled with his father to the North African city of Bugia, where it seems likely that Leonardo learned to read and speak Arabic. Thus, a whole new world of mathematical learning was opened to him.

He was certainly not the first European to come in contact with Hindu-Arabic numerals, but he was the first to recognize what impact it could have on the larger world that was still using Roman numerals and a cumbersome system of tables and counters or markers to calculate complex sums. The use of Arabic numerals opened up not only the use of the numerals 1–9, but more importantly, the use of 0, which did not exist with Roman numerals.

Islamic Fractures and Successes

Leading up to 1215, however, Islamic power and territory began to fracture in ways that presaged its eventual partial collapse and transformation into a more ascetic religion later on. Different factions of Islam had been at odds with each other almost since the death of Muhammad, but starting in the 10th century, these factional disagreements became entrenched and political.

In the 11th century, the Islamic world began to consolidate power in various nodes throughout the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and on the Iberian Peninsula. It would be more correct to say that there were many Islamic worlds rather than to speak of a single Islamic world.

At the end of the 12th century, in the Crusader States, an Islamic reconquest was occurring under the leadership of the Kurdish Sunni Muslim named Saladin. In 1187, at the Battle of Hattin, Saladin soundly defeated the Christian forces and retook Jerusalem. By 1215, roughly 20 years after Saladin's death, Muslim leaders were steadily regaining control of the Levant, and Christian forces began to withdraw.

In Iraq, Iran, and Anatolia in the 11th and 12th centuries, a faction known as the Seljuks came to power, claiming among other places the glorious city of Baghdad. Under the Seljuks, a power struggle over the proper teachings and interpretations of Islamic scripture became more fraught. Meanwhile, other centers of Islamic power began to come into existence in Africa.

While new centers of Muslim power and influence were gaining ground in Africa and the Middle East, on the European continent, the Muslim presence was all but wiped out. In Spain, or Al-Andalus, the ruling Islamic caliphate, known as the Almohads, had been pushed farther and farther south. They were decisively defeated by Christian forces at the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in the year 1212.

In 1258, Hülegü Khan, Genghis Khan's grandson, sacked Baghdad. Many scholars agree that this marks the definitive end of the Islamic golden age.

Conclusion

The year 1215 presented a somewhat contradictory picture of the Islamic world emerging. They were enjoying the fruits of centuries of innovation in science, philosophy, mathematics, architecture, and medicine. At the same time, they were dealing with increasingly serious factionalism and outside threats.

By the 12th century, Muslim scholars were working on what would become trigonometry and the beginnings of calculus. In the field of medicine, the medieval European world once again had Islamic scholars to thank. In the houses of wisdom and various other centers of learning, the ancient Greek texts of physicians like Galen were studied and translated. Encyclopedias of medical knowledge were created, copied, and circulated. Pioneers in surgical procedures, Muslim medical experts are credited with the first surgical treatments of breast cancer and performance of a thyroidectomy.

All of this incredible knowledge that was at their fingertips began to be ignored or eschewed starting in the 12th century. At this time, in many—but not all—of the political and cultural centers of Islam, there started to be an increased emphasis on religion and theology. Schools began to emphasize religious study more than scientific or philosophical academic pursuits.

By the year 1215, the various Muslim communities were linked to one another through a vast and impressive trade network that extended all the way from Europe into China. This was also the way that ideas and theories circulated, as did this new emphasis on religious study.

Much of this reaction was coming out of Asia, where the Mongol leader Genghis Khan was gaining power. In 1206, he was named supreme leader of the Mongol people, and began his to build his empire.

Genghis Khan's rise to power began to hasten a transformation that had already hesitantly begun some years before. In 1215, it wasn't necessarily clear whether the Islamic world would refocus their attention to intellectual and scientific pursuits or if a new religious emphasis would direct them away from scientific inquiry and philosophical study.

SUGGESTED READING

Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*.

Iqbal, *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Golden Age of Science and Civilization in Islam*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Of all the contributions to learning, science, and medicine that were the products of the Golden Age of Islam, which seems most significant?

2. How is your view of Mongol society changed, enhanced, or negatively affected by the story of the sack of Baghdad?

LECTURE 23

Japan and Samurai Culture

This lecture focuses on a society that was impacted in numerous ways by the Mongols: Japan. There, fascinating events were happening around 1215.

Feudal Societies

In terms of social structure, starting in the 11th and 12th centuries, medieval European and medieval Japanese societies become predominantly feudal. Essentially, feudalism is a hierarchical social structure based on bonds of loyalty, protection, and service between one stratum and another, and it takes the form of a pyramid.

A king in medieval Europe would have barons just below him in rank. Those barons would swear to be the king's vassals. This meant that they owed the king allegiance, a certain number of days of military service, and/or taxes. In return, the king promised them his protection and would grant them titles, lands, and status. The barons would, in turn, have vassals below them, who would swear fealty and allegiance. This continued down to the base of the pyramid, where there were serfs bound to the service of a particular lord. The serfs lived on the lord's manor and worked his fields.

Something similar existed in Japan. In this case, however, the noble caste was made up of the samurai. Like knights in the feudal system in Europe, their allegiance was primarily in terms of military service to the lord above them. They, in turn, had status, power, and command over lesser warriors in the classes below them.

Internal Forces

Starting in the 1180s or so, Japan entered a period that saw changes occur that made it a recognizably feudal society. These changes seem to have arisen from internal forces. The power of what had been the civil servants of Japan—a class whose members were often referred to as *shoen*—was being challenged by the rise of a military class.

The major conflicts at this time were between rival families, some of which challenged each other and some of which challenged the

authority of the emperor. The major conflict was between the Taira clan and the Minamoto clan, and the period properly began in 1185, when the first shogun in Japan's history came to power.

Minamoto no Yoritomo

His name was Minamoto no Yoritomo, and he ruled from the area known as Kamakura. The Kamakura period lasted from 1185 until 1333.

In the year 1215—which lies near the middle of this period—many of the things that this particular era would become known for were becoming prominent facets of society. This time saw the rise of the samurai, advances in military technology, the development of a land-based economy, an increase in the practice of Buddhism, and the production of certain literary texts.

Just like in medieval Europe, women in 1215 seemed to be suffering a decline in status. Additionally, during the Kamakura period, women authored fewer texts.

The Heian Period

Before 1185, the Heian period was happening in Japan. During this time, power was held by the emperor and his civil servants, who were appointed. There was a warrior class that would eventually evolve into the samurai, but they were regarded as ranking below the

emperor and the civil servants of the empire.

In the lead-up to what became known as the Gempei War in 1185, the samurai had held positions of service to the emperor. He would send them to out to various provinces as *toryo*, or magistrates. These terms were supposed to last for four years, after which the representative would return to the capital.

However, throughout the late 11th and 12th centuries, these magistrates started to ignore the end date of their terms. The toryo thought it would make much more sense for this simply to become a hereditary position, which they could pass on to their own children.

At first, the emperors didn't put up much objection. However, by the end of the Heian period—the later part of the 12th century—these clans had amassed a significant amount of power on their own. Soon, they were involved in fighting each other for control over various regions and provinces.

Rise of the Samurai

The three major powers were the Fujiwara, the Minamoto, and the Taira clans. In 1185, the Taira and Minamoto fought a decisive naval battle at Dannoura, in the Shimonoseki Strait between Honshu and Kyushu.

The key to the victory here was Minamoto's samurai warriors. Once this fight was over, the balance of power had shifted in Japan. The bureaucrats who served the emperor had been the top members of society. Now, however, it was the warrior class who held the most power.

At the end of the 12th century, the Kamakara shogunate was established by Minamoto no Yoritomo. When Minamoto no Yoritomo died in 1199, it looked for a time that this new governmental entity might end before it had ever really had a chance to begin. It survived for another 135 years in part due to the efforts of the first shogun's widow, Masako of the Hojo clan.

Her son with Yoritomo, Yoriie, was named the second shogun, but a regency council was set up to assist him with rule. Although the official regent was a member of Masako's clan named Tokimasa, the real power behind the throne was Masako herself.

Yoriie chafed at the restrictions placed on him by the regency council, and he was soon involved in a plot involving having his wife's family wrest power away from that of his mother. It was Masako who uncovered the plot and turned her own son in to Tokimasa.

Power Struggles Continue

Tokimasa spared Yoriie's life but executed his coconspirators and sent Yoriie into exile, where he was assassinated in 1204, probably on orders of Tokimasa. In the meantime, Masako installed a second son, Sanetomo, as the third Kamakara shogun.

It seems that Tokimasa had come to believe that he was the most powerful man in Kamakara. He didn't want to serve as a puppet regent for yet another son of Minamoto. Masako caught on to this, and with the help of her brother, ordered Tokimasa into exile as a monk.

This period came to be called the Hojo regency, and it was during this time that the power of the shogun and the samurai eclipsed that of the emperor. Masako and Sanetomo sought to make this situation permanent by asking the emperor, Go-Toba, if Sanetomo could

adopt one of the imperial sons to be his heir.

The emperor refused this request in 1218, but it looked as if this would not be any sort of hindrance on the power maintained by the Kamakara shogunate. However, in 1219, a son of Yoriie, the second shogun who had been exiled by his mother, killed his uncle Sanetomo as an act of revenge. This nephew of Sanetomo was in turn killed himself, which meant that the Minamoto line was now extinct.

Masako and her kinsmen cleverly decided to strengthen their position by naming as the fourth shogun a baby from a different clan, the Fujiwara. This brought the Kamakara shogunate into alliance with this other family, but it allowed Masako and her family to maintain control as the new shogun was an infant.

The emperor decided that now was the perfect time to try and regain his power. In 1221, he ordered his servants to overthrow the Kamakara shogun. The attempt at reclaiming power failed, and in the end, this led to the Kamakara shogunate having even more power than they had before.

At this point, the emperor truly was simply a figurehead. The power of Japan lay in the military class, the samurai, who were at the apex of their strength right around 1215.

BUDDHISM

Buddhism was introduced to Japan from both China and Korea centuries earlier, but around 1215, there was a transformation in traditional forms of Buddhism practiced in the country—called *kyu Bukkyo*, or old Buddhism. There was also the arrival of at least six new forms of Buddhism, which came to be called shin *Bukkyo*, or new Buddhism. Some of these were brought by Buddhist monks moving east and away from Mongol power.

This status was underscored and reinforced in 1225, when the third Hojo regent—acting under the direction of Masako—created a council of state that gave the military leaders of Japan the ability to rule over various regions of the country. In 1232, this was followed by the creation of the first military law code, the Goseibai Shikimoku.

The Mongols and Japan

The year 1215 was right around the time Mongol leader Genghis Khan was establishing the largest contiguous land empire the world would ever see. After his death, his sons and grandsons would each control various portions. It was under one of these grandsons—the infamous Kublai Khan—that the Mongol empire would reach its apogee.

Kublai Khan was certainly ambitious, and like his grandfather, he turned his attention to lands yet to be conquered. One of these was Japan. The Mongols had already made incursions into Korea. The good diplomatic relationship between Japan and Korea—not to mention the exchange of Buddhist religious ideas that was occurring between these two nations—meant that the Japanese had some idea of the kind of threat the Mongols posed. However, given that theirs was now a society ruled by a military elite, they had confidence that they could defeat any attempted invasion.

In 1274, Kublai Khan made his first attempt at invading Japan. In the first eight hours of the conflict, the samurai proved their worth, as they gave the Khan's army more losses than he had experienced in any of his campaigns in China or Korea. Seeing a storm approaching, Kublai Khan decided to pull his forces back out to sea, rather than being trapped on land between a storm and the samurai.

During the typhoon that followed, the khan lost up to a third of his forces, and he was compelled to retreat. He tried again to attack in 1281. Once again, after making landfall, engaging the samurai, and taking some losses while making some gains, yet another storm appeared on the horizon.

Kublai Khan took as many of his ships out to sea as he could, and a large number of them were destroyed in the ensuing storm.

Additionally, on this occasion, some of the Mongol forces were trapped onshore and easily picked off by the samurai.

Fall of the Kamakara Shogunate

While the Kamakara shogunate's existence was in large measure responsible for the defeat of the Mongols, the stresses caused by the defense the samurai mounted would contribute to instability and the shogunate's eventual collapse. While the defense was a success, there was no material gain from it to offset the expenses. There was soon increasing dissatisfaction among the samurai, which led to infighting.

In 1331, the emperor Go-Daigo thought the time was right to try and reclaim imperial power from the Kamakara shogunate. His attempt was unsuccessful, and he was exiled to the Oki Islands. But events had been set in motion—a minor warlord saw an opportunity to advance his own cause, and went to the emperor's rescue.

Fearing that their power was being undermined, the Kamakara sent forces to Kyoto with the intent to capture it once and for all. However, once the Kamakara leader Takauji got there, he decided that perhaps the Kamakara shogunate was nearing its end.

Instead of taking Kyoto for Kamakara, he declared himself loyal to the emperor. Simultaneously, another group of pro-imperial forces decided that with so many Kamakara warriors in Kyoto, perhaps now was the time to try and take Kamakara itself.

They did so in 1333. When it became clear that they were defeated, the last of the samurai—all 870 of them—retreated to the main temple and committed suicide by setting it on fire and locking themselves inside. The golden age of the samurai had come to an end, although this warrior class would officially remain in existence in one form or another up until 1877.

SUGGESTED READING

Mason and Caiger, *A History of Japan*.

Walker, *A Concise History of Japan*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why do you think medieval Japanese social structures were in so many ways similar to medieval European ones?

2. What is the most interesting aspect of Japanese society in the 13th century?

LECTURE 24

The World after 1215

This concluding lecture focuses on where specific societies stood in 1215 and where those societies were headed. It also looks at how the Black Death reset and transformed many societal structures.

The Mayan, Incan, and Pueblo Peoples

The Mayan empire was starting to contract in 1215, with power gradually retreating to the great city of Chichén Itzá on the Yucatan Peninsula. Still, Mayan culture managed to continue and in some places thrive until the early 16th century. At that point, contact with Spanish explorers effectively sent the Mayan culture to its end.

By contrast with the Maya, who were already beginning to decline in 1215, the Inca civilization was just getting started. In the three centuries that followed, they expanded their territory, built important sites like Machu Picchu, and made significant advances in agricultural techniques.

When the Spanish arrived around 1526, they discovered a thriving empire, but one that was enduring a dispute between two sons of the late emperor. By 1572, the last Inca stronghold was captured. The last emperor, Tüpac Amaru, was captured and executed, and the Incan empire was no more.

Spanish conquest of Mexico

Although Pueblo society was arguably also negatively affected by the arrival of the Spanish, the Pueblo peoples felt that they were incorporating and accommodating Spanish culture within their own, rather than thinking that Spain had conquered them.

In 1680, the Pueblo Revolt became the first successful Native American revolt against the Spanish, and the European contingent was pushed out of Pueblo territories for over a decade. Since that time, Pueblo culture has maintained much of its heritage and cultural identity, while incorporating European traditions—particularly Roman Catholicism—into their culture in a syncretic way.

African Societies

In Africa, the kingdoms of Ethiopia, Mali, and Zimbabwe met different fates after 1215. The kingdom of Ethiopia is known for its very early conversion to Christianity, its acceptance of Muslim refugees, and its booming trade in gold, frankincense, and slaves.

In 1215, the Ethiopian kingdom was nearing the height of its power and status. Then, in 1270, the ruling Zagwe dynasty was overthrown by a group of Abyssinians, claiming descent from the Aksumites, who were the rulers of what would become Ethiopia before the Zagwe came to power in 1137. These Abyssinians also claimed descent from the biblical King Solomon, and so they called their dynasty the Solomonic. With only occasional interruptions, this dynasty would remain in power until the 20th century.

The kingdom of Mali, which formally came into existence right around 1230, was founded by followers of Islam. When it was at its apogee, the Mali empire covered over 500,000 square miles, stretching from the coast of the Atlantic eastward to Lake Chad. It included portions of the modern states of Niger, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Mauritania, Gambia, Guinea, and of course, the modern nation of Mali. It would continue

to grow and expand its power and influence until well into the 16th century, at which time the empire began to be weakened by attacks and conquests from neighboring countries.

Similarly, the kingdom of Zimbabwe remained relatively stable for the two centuries or so after 1215. This nation arose out of the earlier Mapungubwe society, which was known for its artistic expression, especially in stonework. At its height, Zimbabwe was an important trading hub, and it lasted as an important political entity well into the 15th century.

The Black Death and the Mongols

The Mongol world experienced a major upheaval in the middle of the 14th century that would fundamentally change their societies: the Black Death, which originated in China near the middle of the 14th century.

This disease famously infected the Mongols who were attacking Kaffa, an Italian trading post on the Black Sea, in 1347. The Italian merchants who fled the attack brought the plague back with them, and from there it spread throughout the European world, killing up to half the population in just a decade.

By the time of Kublai Khan's death in 1294, the Mongol empire had fractured into at least four different khanates. In the southwest there was the Il-khanate, ruled over by Genghis Khan's grandson Hülegü Khan.

This khanate maintained trade relations with the other khanates and the Yuan dynasty in particular, but the Buddhism practiced by the rulers was at odds with the Islamic faith that most of the peoples living in this area followed. At the end of the 13th century, the ruler of this khanate converted to Islam.

This political entity collapsed in the 1330s, when several outbreaks of plague ravaged the territory. Both the ruler at the time—Abu Sa'id—and all his sons were killed by the plague. For a time, this territory was in chaos; when the plague finally

receded, the old order was long gone and would not be restored.

Kublai Khan's own khanate was the Yuan dynasty in China. In 1304, the other three khanates proclaimed the sovereignty of this khanate over all the others, but this attempt at unification would not last long. The Il-khanate, the Chagatai khanate, and the khanate of the Golden Horde would be afflicted by plague, famine, drought, and other maladies.

The Yuan dynasty endured as the final incarnation of the Great Mongol Nation until 1368, when the leaders were ousted and replaced by the Ming dynasty. At this time, many of Kublai Khan's descendants retreated to the Mongolian homeland.

The European World after 1215

In the European world, things did not improve after 1215. Resources became scarcer, which meant that those in power worked harder to maintain control over those that remained. The persecuting mentality became more prominent.

The Cathars were hunted down and slaughtered by the agents of the pope during the Albigensian Crusade. Out of the terrors of the Albigensian Crusade, a new form of oppression came into being: the Inquisition.

In 1229, it was made a permanent institution, with an especially strong presence in the Languedoc, in the south of France. The point of the Inquisition was to investigate people and groups whose beliefs and practices might have been out of the mainstream of orthodox Christianity. Pope Gregory IX opted to put members of the newly created mendicant orders—the Dominicans and the Franciscans—in charge of the Inquisition process.

The process of the Inquisition was overseen by a figure known as the grand inquisitor. The most notorious of these was the Dominican Tomás de Torquemada, who has come down through history from 15th-century Spain as

renowned for his cruelty to those he investigated, his strong anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim beliefs, and the number of people he executed for heresy. Some scholars put the number of those put to death on Torquemada's orders as high as 2,000.

The Societal Structure and the Black Death

After 1215, Europe saw increasing famine and illness, a more rigidly stratified society, and a lack of social mobility. Life was generally more miserable, except for the nobility and the clergy, who made up about 10 percent of the population.

They were at the top of the structure of what has come to be called the three orders or three estates of medieval society: those who fought (about 5 percent) and those who prayed (another 5 percent). The other 90 percent made up those who worked. According to the theory behind the three estates model, people were supposed to stay in their assigned lane, the better to allow society to function and give everyone a good shot at getting into heaven.

Archaeologists who have studied 13th- and 14th-century European grave sites all report a steady decline in the general health of the population in the period right after 1215. People were poorly nourished and smaller than their ancestors of just a few generations earlier, and living conditions—especially in newly thriving urban centers—were crowded and unsanitary.

In response to the Black Death, many people turned to religion more fervently. Other people believed God had abandoned humanity and gave themselves up to hedonistic pleasures before the end came.

This is one reason why, when the Black Death swept across the continent between roughly 1346 and 1353 in its first virulent wave, the death toll was so staggeringly high. Up to 50 percent of the population succumbed to plague.

Fallout of the Black Death

One cannot overstate the impact of the plague on much of the known world at this time. Starting in China, it caused huge losses in Asia, from whence it entered the Islamic world along the Silk Road and other trade routes. The golden age of Islam had effectively come to an end with Hülegü Khan's sack of Baghdad in 1258. The appearance of the Black Death was just an extra nail in the coffin.

From then on—with the exception of Muslim Spain—the practices of Islam in what we now think of as the Middle East became more ascetic. They showed a greater emphasis on faith and a turn away from pleasure or the pure pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake. The Mongols, too, were in large measure undone by the ravages of the disease, as their social and political structures went through a period of upheaval.

However, for most of those who managed to survive, life after the plague was better than life before. There were suddenly more resources available. Social mobility was possible in a way that it hadn't been before, with peasants working their way up to merchant and sometimes gentry status within a few generations. Women had more autonomy in many places, and for everyone, there was more of everything to go around.

This state of affairs would remain the case well into the 17th century. That was when the population started to rebound to something like what it was in the late 13th and early 14th centuries.

SUGGESTED READING

Benedictow, *The Black Death, 1346–1353*.

Rosenwein, *A Short History of the Middle Ages*.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Which event or trend of the year 1215 was the most interesting to you? Which one was the least interesting? Why?

2. If you could travel back in time to 1215 to any place on earth, to which society would you like to go? Why?

Bibliography

Allen, S. J., and Emilie Amt. *The Crusades: A Reader.* Toronto: Broadview Press, 2003. Primary sources of crusading-focused or crusading-inspired texts ranging from the works of Augustine through the high medieval crusading period and beyond. Includes helpful contextualization and short historical explanations for each text.

Amt, Emilie. *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe: A Source Book*. New York: Routledge, 2010. Excellent collection of primary source texts that provide a window onto women's lives in the premodern world. Includes examples from multiple spheres—secular, religious, courtly, noble, and so on.

Bale, Anthony. *Feeling Persecuted: Christians, Jews and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages*. London: Reaktion Books, 2010. A comprehensive look at how fears of violence enacted by and directed toward Jews in the Middle Ages were represented in a variety of media, including paintings, manuscript illuminations, drama, philosophy, theology, and literature.

Baquedano, Elizabeth, and Barry Clarke. *Aztec, Inca, and Maya*. DK Eyewitness Books. Although aimed at children between the ages of 8–12, the comprehensive nature of this book, its lavish illustrations, and the inclusion of a CD and wall chart make this a great place to start for anyone unfamiliar with these pre-Columbian cultures.

Barber, Malcolm. *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages*. Harlow: Longman, 2000. A thoughtful and scholarly analysis of the Albigensian heresy from one of today's most respected historians.

Benedictow, Ole J. *The Black Death, 1346–1353: The Complete History.* Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004. Magisterial, comprehensive, and exhaustive, this book includes colorized maps showing the progression of the plague and explores all aspects of its transmission, impact, epidemiology, and more.

Berkey, Jonathan P. *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600–1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Carefully written and thoroughly researched study of the development of the Muslim world.

Breay, Claire. *The Magna Carta: Manuscripts and Myths*. London: The British Library, 2002. Clear, concise, and accurate, there is no better short, accessible introduction to the events of 1215 at Runnymede.

Burge, James. *Heloise & Abelard: A New Biography*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2003. A fascinating read that takes into consideration new correspondence recently discovered and only lately attributed to these two great minds of the medieval world. Enhances and expands our understanding of high medieval intellectual and religious culture.

Cantor, Norman. *The Civilization of the Middle Ages: A Completely Revised and Expanded Edition Of Medieval History. New* York: Harper Perennial, 1993. Revises and updates this earlier work on the subject; a great general introduction to the topic.

Chazan, Robert. *Reassessing Jewish Life in Medieval Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. A careful reassessment of primary and secondary sources concerning Judaism that argues Jewish culture and communities in the Middle Ages found novel ways to adapt and survive persecution.

Cohen, Jeremy. *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982. One of the first scholarly works to explicitly connect the development of new monastic orders like the Franciscans with an increase in anti-Semitism in the medieval world. Sheds significant light on both phenomena.

Danziger, Danny, and John Gillingham. *1215: The Year of Magna Carta*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003. Places the Magna Carta in its larger historical context. An entertaining, engaging read.

Fagan, Brian. *The Great Warming: Climate Change and the Rise and Fall of Civilizations*. Bloomsbury Press, 2009. Fascinating examination of how climate change affected change around the world between the 10th and 14th centuries.

Fage, J. D., and Roland Oliver, eds. *The Cambridge History of Africa*. 8 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977. More than 40 years after its publication, this eight-volume collection remains one of the best sources for information on African history.

Flanagan, Sabina. *Hildegard of Bingen, 1098–1179: A Visionary Life*. London and New York: Routledge, 1989. A short, accessible, yet scholarly introduction to the life, thought, and writings of this amazing woman. Contains reproductions of the drawings of some of her visions.

Geary, Patrick. *Readings in Medieval History*. 2 vols. 4th ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010. Fascinating collection of key primary documents from the medieval period, each succinctly and thoroughly contextualized with an introduction and explanation of historical context.

Holt, James C. *Magna Carta*. 3rd ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015. Long considered the classic study on the document itself, its origins, and its impact.

Iqbal, Gabriel. *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Golden Age of Science and Civilization in Islam: The Origins and Sustainable Ethical Applications of Practical Empirical Experimental Scientific Method*. Createspace, 2015. The greatest strength of this book is the amazing variety of illustrations. Accessible as both a straight-through read or as a tome to be thumbed through and dipped into.

Jones, David M. *The Complete Illustrated History of the Inca Empire: A comprehensive encyclopedia of the Incas and other ancient peoples of South America*. Lorenz Books, 2012. With over 1,000 photographs, this text is a sumptuous introduction to one of the greatest civilizations ever to exist.

Ki-Zerbo, Joseph. *UNESCO General History of Africa, Vol. IV, Abridged Edition: Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. Part of a comprehensive series on African history; excellent background and overview of the subject.

Lacy, Norris. J. and James. J. Wilhelm. *The Romance of Arthur: An Anthology of Medieval Texts in Translation*. New York: Routledge, 2013. The standard anthology for all college courses on the Arthurian tradition; covers medieval to modern and representative texts from all the major literary traditions (including English, French, German, Latin, and so on).

Lambert, Malcolm. *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. The indispensable resource for anyone interested in heretical movements of the Middle Ages.

Lawrence, C. H. *The Friars: The Impact of the Mendicant Orders on Medieval Society*. I. B. Tauris, 2013. Careful and thoughtful study of the development of the orders of friars and their interactions with multiple aspects of medieval society.

Linehan, Peter, and Janet L. Nelson, eds. *The Medieval World*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. A thematically organized collection of essays by some of the top scholars in the field dealing with the topics of identity, power, social structures, and groups. Nicely accompanied by maps and illustrations.

Lynch, Joseph. *The Medieval Church: A Brief History*. Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education, Ltd., 1992. A good introduction to a complex subject.

Man, John. *Kublai Khan: The Mongol King Who Remade China*. London: Bantam Books, 2007. The definitive biography of Genghis Khan's grandson. Makes a complex subject accessible to the modern reader.

Marcus, Jacob Rader. *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Sourcebook, 315–1791*. Revised by Marc Saperstein. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1999. Stunningly comprehensive collection of primary documents concerned with all things Jewish in Europe from the 4th century to the 18th century.

Martin, Sean. *The Cathars: Their History and Beliefs Revealed*. New York: Shelter Harbor, 2016. An excellent intro to the topic for younger historians; chapters are short. The book is full of photos of the key locales of Cathar country, and there are illustrations from the medieval period.

Mason, R. H. P., and J. C. Caiger. *A History of Japan: Revised Edition*. Readable and detailed account of Japanese history extending back into prehistoric times; excellent explanation of changing social structures, with an accessible writing style.

McLaughlin, Mary Martin, and Bonnie Wheeler, ed. and trans. *The Letters of Heloise and Abelard: A Translation of Their Collected Correspondence and Related Writings*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, Dec. 2009. Accessible and very readable translations of the most important primary texts related to the lives of Abelard and Heloise; accompanied by very helpful editorial notes.

McLynn, Frank. *Genghis Khan: His Conquests, His Empire, His Legacy*. DaCapo Press, 2016. Exhaustive and comprehensive study of Genghis Khan and Mongolian history and culture. Contains lots of illustrations, maps, and other visual aids.

Moore, R. I. *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250*. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1987. A rigorously researched work on heresy and persecution in the High Middle Ages.

Newman, Barbara. *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and Her World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. The definitive biography of this remarkable woman. Contains reproductions of some of Hildegard's drawings of her visions.

Nirenberg, David. *Communities of Violence: The Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. Focusing mostly on Spain and southern France, this book examines the rise of persecution of minority groups in the 14th century, with some attention to the origins of persecution in the 13th century and before.

Page, Jack. *In the Hands of the Great Spirit: The 20,000-Year History of American Indians*. Free Press, 2004. At once both thorough and readable, offers a judicious account of 20,000 years of history in one volume. A must-own for anyone who wishes to understand the history of Indigenous American peoples.

Pankhurst, Richard. *The Ethiopians: A History*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001. Accessible overview of the history of Ethiopian society from its origins down to the present day. A good introduction to the subject, but does not have the depth that serious historians might desire.

Phillips, Charles. *The Complete Illustrated History of the Aztec & Maya: The Definitive Chronicle of the Ancient Peoples of Central America and Mexico Including the Aztec, Maya, Olmec, Mixtec, Toltec & Zapotec*. Helmes House, 2015. Lavish illustrations and comprehensive text broken down in to manageable sections and chapters make this a great introduction to the topic.

Phillips, Jonathan. *The Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople*. The definitive account of this watershed event by the most important Crusades scholar of our time.

Reynolds, Philip L. *How Marriage Became One of the Sacraments: The Sacramental Theology of Marriage from its Medieval Origins to the Council of Trent*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. While focused primarily on the sacrament of marriage, this book provides excellent background and context on religious and ecumenical councils of the medieval period.

Riley-Smith, Jonathan. *The Crusades: A History*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005. The definitive history by the leading authority on the topic.

Rosenwein, Barbara H. *A Short History of the Middle Ages*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014. Now in its 4th edition, this is considered by many scholars to be the best introductory textbook for college students engaging the medieval period. Contains dozens of full-color plates with comprehensive maps, genealogies, and images of art and architecture from the period. An essential part of any medieval enthusiast's collection.

Rossabi, Morris. *The Mongols: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Part of Oxford's exemplary Very Short Introduction series, this covers all the basics about the rise of Genghis Khan and the Mongol nation in several short chapters.

Sando, Joe. *Pueblo Nations: Eight Centuries of Pueblo Indian History*. Clearlight Publishing, 1992. A stunning achievement that brings Pueblo history and culture into clearer focus; draws interesting connections between Pueblo societies today and key historical events.

Shinners, John, ed. *Medieval Popular Religion, 1000–1500: A Reader*. 2nd ed. Toronto: Broadview Press, 2007. Excellent and extensive collection of primary sources related to medieval religiosity. Selections range from orthodox, church-sanctioned decrees, to popular writings about saints and relics, to first-person accounts of religious experiences and beyond.

Sturlusson, Snorri. *Prose Edda*. Ed. and trans. Jesse L. Byock. New York: Penguin, 2006. The place to begin for those interested in the Old Norse literary tradition.

Sumption, Jonathan. *The Albigensian Crusade*. Faber and Faber, 2000. Written by a historian for the non-historian reader, does an excellent job explaining the unique culture of the 12th- and 13th-century realm known as the Languedoc and the horrors its population endured during the persecution of the Cathars.

Tolan, John Victor, ed. *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*. New York: Routledge, 2000. Collection of 15 essays that explores and complexifies the fascinating and often nuanced relationship of Christians and Muslims in the medieval period.

Turner, Ralph. *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2011. Meticulously researched biography that has become the standard account of the life and times of this most remarkable woman.

———. *Magna Carta: Through the Ages*. New York: Routledge, 2003. Offers a thorough analysis of how this document went from being of little import to the foundation of many modern democracies and republics.

Tyerman, Christopher, *The Crusades: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. A good overview of the crusading impulse; assumes some prior knowledge of the subject.

Vincent, Nicholas. *Magna Carta: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Part of the excellent Very Short Introduction series from Oxford. Contains the most important and relevant historical information concerning this document from its creation to its later incarnations.

Walker, Brett L. *A Concise History of Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. Manages to cover the history of Japan all the way from the prehistoric period to the post–World War II era. A reliable, well-research introduction to the study of Japan and its people.

Watson, Nicholas, ed. *Anchoritic Spirituality:* Ancrene Wisse *and Associated Works*. Nicholas. Paulist Press, 1991. Excellent and varied collection of primary texts that show the range of the anchoritic experience.

Weatherford, Jack. *Genghis Khan and the Making of The Modern World*. New York: Broadway Books, 2005. Somewhere between history, novel, and travelogue, this fascinating account of Temüjin's transformation into Genghis Khan makes for thrilling reading.

———. *The Secret History of the Mongol Queens: How the Daughters of Genghis Khan Rescued His Empire*. New York: Broadway Books, 2010. Restores Genghis Khan's female relatives to their rightful place in history.

Wheeler, Bonnie, ed. *Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman*. New York: St. Martin's, 2000. A collection of important articles that deal with the myriad fascinating aspects of this remarkable woman's life.

Wheeler, Bonnie, and John Carmi Parsons, eds. *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. A collection of scholarly essays that explores Eleanor's unique position in the medieval world as both a woman and an heiress to one of the largest territories in the west, arguing that her unusual situation placed her in a position that transcended traditional categories of gender even as, in some respects, she adhered to and exceeded them.

Wieck, Roger S. *The Medieval Calendar: Locating Time in the Middle Ages*. Scala Arts, 2017. Gorgeously illustrated volume walks the reader through the ways in which time was measured in medieval European society.

Image Credits

6: Sailko/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain; 8: DcoetzeeBot/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain; 13: traveler1116/Getty Images; 14: New York Public Library; 17: ZU_09/Getty Images; 20: J.delanoy/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain; 27: © 2019 Clipart.com; 31: Ealdgyth/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 3.0; 41: archive.org; 46: © 2019 Clipart.com; 48: © 2019 Clipart.com; 53: Whitemay/DigitalVision Vectors/Getty Images; 61: Ferenc Cegledi/Getty Images; 62: kojihirano/Getty Images; 64: Leeuwtje/E+/Getty Images; 70: UNESCO World Heritage Site, CC BY-SA 3.0 IGO; 75: Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain; 79: duncan1890/DigitalVision Vectors/Getty images; 84: duncan1890/DigitalVision Vectors/Getty Images; 87: duncan1890/DigitalVision Vectors/Getty Images; 93: duncan1890/DigitalVision Vectors/Getty Images; 100: Janz/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain; 105: Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire of Strasbourg; 108: ZU_09/Getty Images; 110: duncan1890/Getty Images; 111: whitemay/Getty Images; 117: New York Public Library; 120: British Library/flickr/Public Domain; 126: ilbusca/Getty Images; 128: Yaan/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain; 135: ilbusca/DigitalVision Vectors/Getty Images; 139: Sergio Momo/Dorling Kindersley RF/Getty Images; 149: Bahatur/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain; 153: HuangdiOfSongChina/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain; 163: Wellcome Library, London/CC BY 4.0; 164: Photos.com/Getty Images; 165: New York Public Library; 178: Monfredo de Monte Imperiali/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain; 185: Ismoon/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain; 187: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division/LC-DIG-jpd-01046; 193: duncan1890/Getty Images