08-13 Lecture: Medieval History, Rulership, and Global Power Dynamics

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Medieval History   Rulership and Legitimacy   Comparative Civilizations

Theme

Takeaways

1. The Post-Roman World Order
2. The Concept of Medievalism and its Myths
3. Linearity in Medieval Rulership
4. The Emergence of Royal Power and Politics
5. The Role of Charismatic Leadership in the Medieval Period
6. Legitimization of Authority through Divine Right and Personal Charisma
7. Visionary Leadership in Medieval Times
8. Leadership Emergence in Times of Crisis
9. The Influence of Dynasties on Leadership
10. The Tabula Rogeriana as a reflection of 12th-century knowledge and economic power.

Highlights

- "History does interplay with the sense of what we consider nation building and identity building."

- "Winners don't write history, historians write history, recorders write history, people with pens write history, and sometimes they don't always agree with the state or the power, the incumbent, or even the opposition to their views."-- the lecturer

- "Having a government does not always mean you are in power. And the same goes for vice versa."-- the lecturer

- `"As for me, I agree with the adage that royal purple is the noblest shroud."-- Theodora 《Nika riot of 532》`
- `"It is impossible for a person having been born into this world not to die, but for one who has reigned it is intolerable to be a fugitive."-- Theodora 《Nika riot of 532》`
- `"war is very costly and often in the long run, it's bad for economic restructuring and political stability also."`
- `"the tyranny of a construct"-- Elizabeth Brown 《an article by elizabeth uh brown》`
- `"The sky is high in the emperor is far away."-- 《the lecture on the political structure of the Sinosphere》`

Chapters & Topics

The Post-Roman World Order

> After the fall of the Roman Empire, the world entered a period of significant transformation. Western Europe fragmented into numerous small, diverging states, such as the Western Frankish Kingdom (present-day France and Germany), the Umayyad Emirate in the Iberian Peninsula, and various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in the English isles. In contrast, other regions exhibited more stability and centralization. The Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine Empire) survived with its capital in Constantinople. The establishment of Islamic Caliphates created a powerful force across the Middle East and North Africa. In Asia, China was unified and stable under the Tang Dynasty, and India also had a relatively stable landscape. This period also saw the emergence of early states in the Americas and Africa, demonstrating co-evolution and parallel trajectories across the globe.

- **Keypoints**
  - Western Europe fragmented into small, diverging states.
  - The Byzantine Empire survived in the East.
  - The emergence of Islam established multiple caliphates.
  - China experienced a centralized and stable landscape under the Tang Dynasty.
  - By the 10th and 11th centuries, present-day states like the German Holy Roman Empire, France, and England began to emerge.
  - The fall of the Tang Dynasty led to fragmentation in Asia, followed by the rise of the Song Dynasty and then the Mongolian invasion in the 1300s.

The Concept of Medievalism and its Myths

> The term 'medievalism' was constructed by later historians to describe the period between the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the Renaissance. It has often

> been pejoratively associated with concepts like 'feudalism' and the 'Dark Ages'. The interpretation of the medieval period is shaped by contemporary intellectual fashions and social needs rather than being a pure reflection of the society and conditions of the time. Different historical schools define it differently: the English school associates it with the rise of English nationality (e.g., the King Arthur myth); the European school sees it as a transition between antiquity and modernity; and U.S.-based historians have often been influenced by a sense of nostalgia and cultural history of their origins.

- **Keypoints**
  - The term 'medieval' is a later construct, not from the period itself.
  - The period is often wrongly associated with backwardness, ignorance, and brutality (the "Dark Ages").
  - The English school of history links "medieval" to the formation of English national identity.
  - The European school views it as a major transition period.
  - U.S. historians' views were influenced by nostalgia for their European origins.
  - Many popular ideas about the Middle Ages are myths popularized in the 19th century or later.
  - The biggest myth may be that the 1,000-year period was a single, cohesive era.
- **Examples**
  > A video clip shown during the lecture debunked several common myths about the Middle Ages. These include the ideas that medieval people believed the Earth was flat, they ate rotten meat covered with spices, they were unhygienic and never bathed, and that torture devices like the Iron Maiden were common. The clip explained the origins of these myths, often from 19th-century historians or later misinterpretations.

  - The idea of a flat Earth was a 19th-century invention; medieval scholars knew the Earth was a sphere.
  - Spices were more expensive than meat, so those who could afford spices could also afford fresh meat. Preservation methods like salt curing were used.
  - Public bathhouses were common, and people used soaps and practiced dental hygiene.
  - The Iron Maiden was a fabrication from a later period, and other supposed torture devices were either not for torture or from a different era.
  - Chastity belts were likely a jest from a 15th-century engineer, later mistaken for reality.

Linearity in Medieval Rulership

In the chaotic world after the fall of Rome, new rulers needed to establish legitimacy. This led to the concept of linearity in medieval rulership, the idea that the progression of power, authority, and governance should follow a predictable, structured path. To achieve this, emerging barbarian kingdoms, like the Franks, appealed to the legacy of the Roman Empire, positioning themselves as successors to gain the trust of the populace and ensure stability. This involved establishing clear rules of succession and a centralized authority structure.

- **Keypoints**
  - New rulers sought legitimacy by claiming to be successors of the Roman Empire.
  - This created a sense of stability and continuity for the conquered populace.
  - It led to the establishment of the idea of centralized authority.
  - Rules of succession were established, such as firstborn sons inheriting the throne.
  - Christianity was often used to legitimize a ruler's lineage, as seen with the Merovingian dynasties.

The Emergence of Royal Power and Politics

The political landscape of the medieval period was defined by the dynamic between centralizing royal power and the power of local lords. When barbarian kings conquered territories, they would grant estates to their generals and loyal local overlords. Over time, these lords gained significant power, creating a conflict with the monarch who sought to consolidate power and territories under direct royal control. This struggle shaped the development of royal politics and legal systems.

- **Keypoints**
  - Kings granted estates to lords, who then became powerful figures.
  - A conflict emerged between centralizing royal power and decentralizing the power of the lords.
  - This period saw the development of royal charters and royal laws.
  - The concept of common law began to form, centralizing legal authority.
  - This dynamic eventually led to significant legal developments like the Magna Carta.
- **Examples**

  The disputes between the English crown and the lords over power and authority were a central theme in medieval English history, which eventually culminated in the Norman Conquest of England in 1066.
  The Capetian kings in France were particularly successful in expanding the power and authority of the kingship, consolidating the kingdom of Francia.

The Role of Charismatic Leadership in the Medieval Period

> In a fragmented world with low literacy rates, personal charisma became a crucial tool for leadership. Medieval leaders could not rely on mass media; instead, they used their personality, magnetism, and perceived extraordinary qualities to legitimize their power and unite people. This charismatic leadership was essential for conveying messages, inspiring loyalty, and governing effectively across diverse cultures and large landscapes.

- **Keypoints**
  - Charismatic leadership is based on the perceived extraordinary qualities and personal magnetism of an individual.
  - It was used to legitimize authority, often through claims of divine right.
  - Visionary leaders articulate a clear and compelling vision that offers solutions to problems.
  - Leaders can use emotional appeal to unite and mobilize people, fostering loyalty and commitment (e.g., chivalry).
  - Charismatic leaders often emerge during times of crisis, transition, and fragmentation.
  - Demonstrating personal sacrifice for the greater good was a key aspect of this leadership style.
  - A connection to a powerful dynasty was often a foundational element of their legitimacy.
- **Examples**
  > Leaders used personal magnetism and claims of divine right to legitimize their authority. Examples include: Louis IX of France (Saint Louis), who used his Christian devotion to gain sainthood and political power; Empress Wu Zetian of China, who used a specific branch of Buddhism to justify her rule as a female emperor; Fatima al-Fihri; Empress Suiko of Japan; Razia Sultana of the Delhi Sultanate; and Tribhuwana Wijayatunggadewi of Srivijaya.
  > Visionary leaders could articulate a compelling vision for the future to solve present challenges. Examples include: Joan of Arc, whose visionary leadership inspired French troops; Richard the Lionheart; and King Ramkhamhaeng of Sukhothai, who inscribed his vision of a prosperous country with free trade on stone monuments.
  > Leaders who emerged during times of crisis, transition, or fragmentation often demonstrated a willingness to make personal sacrifices for the greater good, fostering immense loyalty. They often had a strong dynastic influence.
  > Examples include: King Alfred the Great of Wessex, who defended his kingdom against Viking invasions; Empress Theodora of the Byzantine Empire; Salah ad-Din (Saladin), who battled the Crusader states; Genghis Khan, who unified the Mongol tribes; and Amina of Zazzau.

Tabula Rogeriana

> A world map created in the early 12th century by Muhammad al-Sharif al-Idrisi. It was commissioned by the Norman king of Sicily, Roger II, in 1138. The map is oriented with the South at the top and shows the world from Spain to Korea. It details mountains, lakes, rivers, towns, roads, and distances, reflecting the knowledge and economic power of the Islamic world at the time, which had access to Central Asian trade routes.

The Difference Between Power and Government

> The lecture distinguishes between power and government. Power is conceived as personal or charismatic, the ability to coerce and mobilize change at whim. Government is an impersonal system aimed at public ends, where the system can function regardless of the individual in charge. Having a government does not necessarily mean being in power, and vice versa.

- **Examples**
  > The Mongolian Empire under Genghis Khan was held together by his personal power, but it crumbled after his death because it lacked a system of governance.
  > The Han Dynasty is an example of governance, where the system continued to function and solve problems like floods, regardless of who the emperor was.

Latinized Concepts of Power Legitimacy

> After the fall of the Roman Empire, concepts of legitimacy in Western Europe were heavily tied to the legacy of Rome. These include Translatio Imperii (transfer of imperial authority), Translatio Studii (transfer of knowledge and culture), and Auctoritas (moral and legal authority). These concepts were used by rulers in states like the Holy Roman Empire, France, and England to legitimize their rule by claiming succession to the Roman Empire. This legitimacy was heavily dependent on the approval of the Roman Catholic Church.

Non-Latinized Concepts of Power Legitimacy

> Frameworks for power and legitimacy that emerged outside of the European context. The lecture highlights three:

- **Keypoints**
  - Tianming (Mandate of Heaven): In the Sinosphere, this concept provided a framework for the transfer of authority. Heaven grants a ruler a mandate to govern based on virtue, which can be withdrawn if the ruler becomes unjust or ineffective.
  - Chakravartin (Universal Ruler): An ideal, ethical, and just ruler who governs the entire world, a concept found in the South Asian subcontinent (Hindu and Buddhist kings).

- Caliphate: In the Muslim community, the Caliph's authority was granted by a council of elders, with legitimacy drawn from their relationship to the Prophet Muhammad.

The Cost of Power Maintenance: Cooperation vs. Coercion

> Based on a 2014 paper, this theory posits that states maintain control through a balance of cooperation and coercion. Both strategies are costly and drain tax revenues, which in turn reduces the state's power and authority. Cooperation involves making concessions and giving gifts to local governors in a decentralized system. Coercion involves using military force to suppress dissent. The high cost of both can weaken the central authority.

The Byzantine Empire: The 'Inconvenient' Eastern Roman Empire

> The lecture highlights the Eastern Roman Empire, which modern historians call the Byzantine Empire, as an 'inconvenient state in history.' While most history books state the Roman Empire fell in the 5th century CE, the Eastern part, with its capital in Constantinople (founded in 330 CE), continued for another 11 centuries. They considered themselves Romans and maintained continuity with the classical Roman Empire, possessing technological, artistic, and legal advantages over their neighbors.

- **Examples**
    > The Byzantine Empire had significant cultural and architectural achievements. Visitors were amazed by the imperial palace's mechanical golden lions and birds. Architects built magnificent churches, most notably the Hagia Sophia, whose dome was said to be 'hanging on a chain from heaven.'

The Origin of the term "Byzantine Empire"

> The term "Byzantine Empire" was a later invention by Western European scholars during the Renaissance. It was created to draw a clear line between the classical, Latin-speaking, pagan Roman Empire and the medieval, Greek-speaking, Christian Roman Empire that continued in the East. The inhabitants themselves continued to identify as Romans long after the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

- **Keypoints**
    - The term was first used about 100 years after the Byzantine Empire had fallen.
    - For Western Europeans, the Renaissance was about reconnecting with classical antiquity, and the existence of a continuous Roman Empire in the East complicated this narrative.
    - Many Greek-speaking inhabitants of the eastern Mediterranean continued to call themselves Romans until the early 21st century.

- The creation of the term "Byzantine" was a historical construct for the convenience of Western European writers.

The Great Schism and Religious Authority in the Byzantine Empire

> A major fragmentation occurred between the Eastern and Western churches, laying the foundation for the cultural and moral divide between Eastern and Western Europe. In the Byzantine East, a practice known as Caesaropapism was common, where the emperor also served as the head of the religion. This contrasted sharply with the West, where the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church was seen as the supreme authority. The Eastern church had no concept of a single supreme pope, instead decentralizing power among a council of patriarchs.

- **Keypoints**
  - The Great Schism was a philosophical split over the definition of Christianity as a state religion.
  - This division influenced the cultural fabric of regions like the Balkan states, Romania, and Russia.
  - The Eastern church rejected the absolute authority of the Roman Catholic Pope.
  - This religious schism was a contributing factor to the Crusaders attacking Constantinople.
  - Early Christian debates, such as the iconoclasm controversy where Emperor Constantine forced the destruction of icons, were also significant.

Empress Theodora and the Role of Women

> The Byzantine Empire was relatively egalitarian in its structure, inheriting the Roman tradition where very well-educated or empowered women could hold authority and the right to rule. Empress Theodora, wife of Emperor Justinian, is a prominent example. Despite her humble origins as an alleged former sex worker and courtesan, she was very well-educated and proved to be a powerful and charismatic leader, particularly during the Nika riot of 532. Her story is primarily known through the writings of Procopius, who hated her intensely.

- **Keypoints**
  - Theodora came from a different line of Christianity than Justinian, which was not approved of by the ruling group at court.
  - The historian Procopius, who documented their reign, hated Theodora and used strong language to describe her, yet his texts survived, proving that the 'winner' of history is not always the one who writes it.
  - Theodora's thoughts were incorporated into Justinian's Body of Civil Law, particularly influencing laws on women's rights.

- **Examples**

  > During the Nika riot of 532, a huge mob was attacking the citadel in Constantinople. All the lords, including Emperor Justinian, wanted to flee. Theodora stepped up and delivered a powerful speech, stating, 'the present occasion is too serious to allow me to follow convention that a woman should not speak in a man's council.' She argued that flight was not the right course and famously concluded, 'As for me, I agree with the adage that royal purple is the noblest shroud.'

  - Her speech shamed the council of men and inspired them to stay and fight.
  - They successfully quelled the riot, and the event solidified Theodora's reputation for charismatic leadership and courage.

Justinian's Codification of Roman Law

> Emperor Justinian initiated a series of comprehensive reforms, the most significant being the codification of Roman law. He established a legal framework that would influence both civil and canon law across the European landscape and the Islamic world. This was achieved by arranging old, confusing Roman laws into a structured 'codex' with distinct categories.

- **Keypoints**
  - The new legal system was separated into codex categories, making legal execution and reforms easier.
  - Key categories included criminal justice law, marriage law, property rights, slavery, and women's rights, the last of which was influenced by Empress Theodora.
  - This codification, known as the Corpus Juris Civilis, became the backbone for all civil law systems that are still in use today.
  - The reform also strengthened the relationship between church and state by promoting religious unity.

Religious Policy and Debates under Justinian

> Justinian and Theodora were staunch Orthodox Christian rulers who promoted religious unity, which involved the persecution of non-Christians such as Jews, pagans, and polytheists. They also attempted to reconcile the major Christian factions of the time: the Monophysites, who believed Jesus had a single divine nature, and the Chalcedonians, who believed Jesus was both divine and human.

- **Keypoints**
  - The promotion of a unified Christianity led to the suppression of other religions. For instance, Buddhism disappeared from Roman-controlled parts of Egypt during the Byzantine period.

- The marriage between Justinian (representing one Christian faction) and Theodora (representing another) was an attempt to reconcile these groups.
- The attempt to merge the two schools of Christianity backfired, triggering a rebellion and helping to set the ground for the Great Schism.
- This conflict led to the Roman Catholic Church officially breaking away from the Byzantine version of Christianity, paving the way for the separate Eastern Orthodox Church.

Medieval Legal Concepts of Sovereignty

Medieval rulers drew upon Roman legal traditions to justify their power and sovereignty. Three key concepts were central to their understanding of governance.

- **Keypoints**
  - Imperium and Potestas: 'Imperium' is the supreme authority to govern, legislate, and command, embodied by written law like Justinian's code. 'Potestas' is the legal power or authority to enforce it.
  - Plenitudo Potestatis: This refers to the 'fullness of power' and the separation of this secular power from the classical ethical or papal authority.
  - Dominus Mundi: Meaning 'Lord of the world,' this is the idea that God granted land and authority to a ruler, giving them imperial sovereignty. This led to 'de facto' (in fact) versus 'de jure' (in law) debates about the true extent of a ruler's power.

Charlemagne and the Foundation of the Holy Roman Empire

Charlemagne, also known as Charles the Great, was a Frankish king who established a vast empire that included modern-day France, Germany, Italy, and beyond. To legitimize his rule, he was crowned Emperor by Pope Leo III on Christmas Day in 800 CE. This event founded the Holy Roman Empire and created a new model for European power, distinct from the Byzantine Empire.

- **Keypoints**
  - By having the Pope crown him, Charlemagne borrowed the church's authority to legitimize his new empire, setting a precedent that European states required the Pope's blessing for authority.
  - He championed the revival of learning and culture, promoting Latin as the language of sophistication in opposition to the Greek-speaking Byzantine world.
  - This act created an institutional and cultural disconnect between the Western and Eastern European landscapes.
  - His consolidation of Western Europe earned him the title "the father of Europe".
  - He delegated governance to local lords in exchange for military service, paving the way for the system of fiefs and vassals.

The Normans and their Impact on Europe

> The Normans were descendants of Vikings who settled in Normandy, France, in 911. They adapted to local life, adopting Christianity and the French language, but maintained the warrior spirit of their ancestors. Their ambition led them to launch conquests across Europe and the Mediterranean.

- **Keypoints**
  - The Normans were central to the First Crusade (1095-99).
  - They are credited with making the first recorded heavy cavalry charge with couched lances, a devastating tactic that became standard in medieval warfare.
  - By the end of the 12th century, they had expanded into Wales, Scotland, and Ireland.
- **Examples**

  > In 1066, William, the Duke of Normandy, disputed the claim of the new English king, Harold Godwinson. He sailed with 7,000 infantry and knights across the English Channel and defeated Harold's army at the Battle of Hastings. The victory is immortalized in the 70-meter-long Bayeux Tapestry.

  - William consolidated his power through a massive castle-building campaign and a comprehensive land survey known as the Doomsday Book.
  - Norman French became the language of the royal court, and its eventual merger with the commoners' Anglo-Saxon language formed the basis of modern English.

  > Independent groups of Norman knights traveled to the Mediterranean, where they became highly-prized mercenaries. They secured lands throughout southern Italy, eventually merging them to form the Kingdom of Sicily in 1130.

  - Under Roger II, the kingdom became a beacon of multicultural tolerance, where Muslim Arab poets, Byzantine Greek sailors, and Latin architects served together in the royal court.
  - Arabic, Latin, Greek, and Norman French were all official languages.
  - The kingdom produced the 'Book of Roger,' which contained the most accurate maps of the known world for 300 years.

European Urban Revival and Population Growth

> Following the consolidation of territory by Charlemagne, the economy of Europe began to revive. Cities and towns started to emerge, leading to a significant increase in urban populations, which doubled or tripled in some areas between the 1100s and 1200s. This growth put pressure on resources.

- **Keypoints**
  - After Charlemagne, European cities and economies started to revive.

- Urban populations doubled and tripled in some places between the 1100s and 1200s.
  - This population growth led to increased pressure on resources.
- **Examples**
  > Cities like Palermo, connected to the Islamic world, grew to have large populations, with Palermo reaching about 350,000 people.

Impact of Climate Change on Agriculture and Warfare

> Climate shifts significantly impacted medieval Europe. A "medieval warm period" from the 1100s to 1200s was favorable for cultivating grains and crops. However, this was followed by a "Little Ice Age" in the early 1400s, which made it impossible to grow crops in the north. This environmental change triggered widespread warfare as people sought more arable land.

- **Keypoints**
  - The medieval warm period (1100s-1200s) was good for agriculture.
  - The Little Ice Age (early 1400s) caused crop failures in the north.
  - This climate shift led to increased warfare over resources and land.
  - Between 1550 and 1600, there were 71 wars driven by principal European powers.

Financing Medieval Warfare and the Rise of Sovereign Debt

> Medieval kings and lords constantly engaged in warfare, but they lacked significant financial power. Pre-modern states were characterized by low taxation rates to prevent rebellions. To finance large campaigns like the Crusades, kings had to borrow money heavily, as warfare was primarily conducted by expensive, independent mercenaries. This led to the concept of sovereign debt, where the state itself owed money to banks, guilds, and wealthy individuals.

- **Keypoints**
  - Pre-modern states had low taxation rates to avoid upsetting the populace and lords.
  - Warfare was primarily conducted by paid mercenaries, who were costly and not loyal to a single kingdom.
  - Kings borrowed money from banks (e.g., Italian banks), guilds, and private individuals to finance wars.
  - This practice led to the emergence of sovereign debt, where the state itself is in debt.
  - Sovereign debt across Europe rose dramatically by the mid-14th century.
- **Explanation**
  Kings kept taxation low to maintain the loyalty of their lords and people. However,

constant warfare, fought by paid mercenaries rather than standing armies, was extremely expensive. Mercenaries were independent and would work for whoever paid them best. To fund these wars, kings and emperors borrowed vast sums of money, leading to the rise of sovereign debt across Europe, which became particularly severe in England by the mid-14th century.

The Magna Carta (1215)

> The Magna Carta is a foundational document for modern democracy, establishing that everyone, including the king, is subject to the law. It was created as a social contract to prevent the king from arbitrarily taxing the nobility.

- **Keypoints**
  - The Magna Carta was forced on King John of England in 1215 by his angry lords.
  - It was a direct result of the king's need to pay for sovereign debt by heavily taxing the nobility.
  - It established the principle that the king is not above the law.
  - It is considered a foundation of modern democracy.
  - The idea was not entirely new and had precedents in other parts of Europe.
  - It influenced later figures like Edward Coke, Thomas Jefferson (in the American constitution), and Eleanor Roosevelt (in the UN Declaration of Human Rights).
- **Explanation**
  The Norman kings of England, particularly King John, were in a dire financial situation due to the immense cost of wars and crusades (like Richard Lionheart's campaign). To cover these sovereign debts, King John imposed heavy taxes on his lords and barons. The angry nobility rebelled and in 1215, forced King John to sign the Magna Carta. This document limited his power, ensuring he could not levy taxes without the consent of the lords. While it initially protected the aristocracy, its principles were later expanded.
- **Examples**
  > King John of England, facing empty coffers after expensive wars, imposed heavy taxes on his barons and aristocracy, seized their land, and held their sons for ransom. This led to a rebellion by the lords.

  - The barons and aristocracy became angry with King John for his arbitrary and excessive taxation.
  - They forced him to seal the Magna Carta in 1215.
  - The document established that the king must be subject to the law and guaranteed rights, such as protection from illegal taxation.

The Black Death and the Transformation of European Economy

> The Mongolian invasion of Asia and expansion into Europe brought not only warfare technology but also the Black Death. The Mongols used biological warfare by tossing infected bodies into besieged cities, leading to a devastating plague in Europe. This event dramatically transformed European society, which was already strained by heavy taxation and economic stagnation.

- **Keypoints**
    - The Mongolian horde used biological weapons, spreading disease by tossing sick, dead bodies into barricaded cities.
    - The Black Death arrived in a congested, heavily taxed Europe with a stagnant economy.
    - Cities highly connected to the Silk Road, which was affected by the Mongolian invasion, experienced a huge spike in Black Death permeation.
    - A massive population decline led to a labor shortage in European cities.
    - This shortage prompted a move towards wage investment into machineries and science to replace abundant labor.
    - Guilds became the central block for driving European technology, learning from Greek, Roman, and Arab science.
- **Explanation**
  The plague caused a massive population decline in densely populated urban centers that relied on labor. This labor shortage led to a surge in wages and the movement of rural populations to cities. To cope with the lack of abundant labor, there was a significant shift towards investment in science and machinery to increase production. Guilds of artisans and merchants became the driving force behind this technological innovation, drawing knowledge from Greek, Roman, and Arab science to improve industries like wool, wheat, dairy processing, and construction.

The Evolution of German Free Imperial Cities

> German cities evolved organically and were distinct from the structures in England or Spain. Stemming from the Frankish kingdoms and Charlemagne's effort to re-establish a sense of the Roman Empire, German cities in the Holy Roman Empire were unique. They started with a premise of Roman city councils and governance. Initially, there were two types: Free Cities and Imperial Cities. Over time, by the 15th century, these two forms merged and consolidated.

- **Keypoints**
    - German cities evolved from Frankish kingdoms and the Holy Roman Empire.
    - Charlemagne established cities with a sense of the Roman Empire, incorporating local councils, which differed from the centralized kingship model in England.

- The Holy Roman Empire had two sets of cities: Free Cities (without imperial presence) and Imperial Cities (where the emperor frequently visited).
- By the 15th century, these two forms merged into "Free Imperial Cities".
- These cities were powerful political entities that could wage war, make peace, and control their own trade.
- Cities formed leagues, such as the Hanseatic League, to defend their interests.

- **Examples**

  > The city of Nuremberg became the "free Imperial city of Nuremberg," representing the consolidation of the two types of cities. These cities had the power to wage war, make peace, and control their own trade with little outside interference.
  > Cities in the northern part of Germany formed the Hanseatic League to defend their collective interests. This league gave rise to a powerful commercial and political power belt in the north.

The Hundred Years' War (1337-1453)

> The Hundred Years' War, lasting from 1337 to 1453, was a series of conflicts between the Kingdom of France and the Kingdom of England. It was fought over English claims to French lands and control of the Flanders region. This war was significant as it was the first major conflict between newly centralized national monarchies and had profound, lasting impacts on both nations.

- **Keypoints**
  - The war was fought from 1337 to 1453 between England and France.
  - The main conflicts were between Philip VI of France and Edward III of England.
  - The war was fought over English titles to French land and control of Flanders.
  - By 1420, the Treaty of Troyes proclaimed English King Henry VI as the king of France, a claim the French did not recognize.
  - Joan of Arc was instrumental in uniting the French people and supporting Charles VII.
  - The war resulted in the permanent removal of England from French soil, with the exception of Calais.
  - A major outcome was the creation of national armies paid by the state, replacing hired mercenaries.
  - The war led to increased taxes to support the new state-funded armies.

- **Examples**

  > Amidst the chaos of the war and weak French leadership under Charles VI ("the Mad"), Joan of Arc, a young woman claiming to be a messenger of God, emerged. She played a pivotal role in reversing the course of the war by uniting the French people around their king and fostering a sense of national identity.

The Misconception of Feudalism

> The lecture argues that the commonly held concept of feudalism—a hierarchical
> system from king down to serfs—is a historical construct that bears little
> resemblance to the actual social and political organization of medieval Europe. This
> idea was developed by historians in the 18th and 19th centuries and became a
> buzzword for any oppressive or backward system, but it was not the dominant
> reality.

- **Keypoints**
  - Feudalism as a pan-political organization in medieval Europe is incorrect.
  - The traditional hierarchical model was a construct developed by historians in the 18th and 19th centuries.
  - The idea was borrowed from a limited source and misapplied to all of Europe.
  - Scholar Elizabeth Brown calls this "the tyranny of a construct".
  - Feudalism was not the dominant form of political organization; many different systems co-existed.
  - The system of serfs working land for a lord in return for protection was known as manorialism.
  - Social relations were actually based on fealty, homage, and investiture, which were essentially contracts.
  - A "fief" was not always land but could be any payment for services.
  - Medieval taxes were relatively low, between 5-10%, based on Roman traditions.
- **Explanation**
  The concept of feudalism was borrowed from a legal text of a small northern Italian city and was incorrectly applied to all of Europe by two Scottish lawyers. This created a "tyranny of a construct," as termed by scholar Elizabeth Brown, which warped the examination of medieval society. Actual social relations were more nuanced, based on contracts, fealty, homage, and investiture. The system of serfs working land for protection is more accurately called manorialism. Furthermore, taxes were not based on a coercive chain of extraction but were rooted in Roman traditions and were relatively low, ranging from 5-10%.

The Islamic Caliphate: An Inheritor of Rome

> The lecture presents the Islamic Caliphate as a direct institutional inheritor of the
> Roman system. The Caliphate, a system constructed after the death of Prophet
> Muhammad in 632, became the most powerful and advanced polity in Eurasia for a
> time. Its revival is a central project for some modern Islamic movements, who
> hearken back to a glorious past of intellectual and cultural achievement.

- **Keypoints**
  - The Caliphate is a system constructed after the death of Prophet Muhammad in 632.
  - It is considered a direct institutional inheritor of Roman systems.
  - At its peak, the Caliphate was a powerful and advanced polity, with large cities like Baghdad having a population of half a million.
  - It featured a standing army and a literate, bureaucratic order.
  - The Caliphate had great intellectual centers, or madrasas, from Samarkand and Baghdad to Fez and Cordoba.
  - The selection of a Caliph is done by votes and shared consensus, a tradition that has some parallels with the selection of patriarchs in Christianity.
  - Other methods of succession include designation by a previous ruler (Nas) or heredity.
  - The Caliphate's governance and legal systems also borrowed from Roman and Persian traditions.

The Rise and Dynasties of the Islamic Empire

> The Prophet Muhammad initiated a chain of events in the 7th century CE that led to the formation of the Islamic empire, uniting the people of the Arabian Peninsula. Following his death, a series of caliphates, including the first four caliphs, the Umayyad dynasty, and the Abbasid dynasty, expanded and governed the empire, each facing unique challenges and contributing to its legacy.

- **Keypoints**
  - The Prophet Muhammad united nomadic Bedouin tribes and city inhabitants, forming a political and religious alliance with Medina as its political center.
  - The first four caliphs, all from Muhammad's tribe, expanded the empire by conquering neighboring territories, including the Persian and Byzantine empires.
  - The Umayyad dynasty, from a rival clan, came to power after a civil war, made Damascus their capital, and extended the empire's reach from Spain to India.
  - The Umayyads stabilized the vast empire by appointing Muslim officials while allowing local customs and religions to continue, using Arabic as the administrative language.
  - The Abbasid family overthrew the Umayyads in 750 CE, claiming a more direct lineage to the prophet, and established a new capital in Baghdad.
  - Under Abbasid rule, the elite enjoyed a luxurious lifestyle due to extensive trade networks, which fostered significant artistic and scientific advancements.
  - The empire's unity eroded over time, with local leaders gaining power and refusing to pay taxes, leading to the fragmentation of the caliphate's power.

- The Mongol siege of Baghdad in 1258 CE effectively ended the era of a united Islamic empire.

The Mamluk System (Slave Soldiers)

> As the Islamic empire expanded, the ruling Arabs became a minority and developed a system of using 'slave soldiers' (Mamluks) to staff their military and bureaucracy. These soldiers were forcibly taken as young males from conquered territories, such as Armenia, Turkey, Sudan, and Central Asia, and trained to serve the state. This system eventually led to these non-Arab soldiers gaining immense power.

- **Keypoints**
    - The need for a larger military and bureaucracy in a vast empire led to the creation of the Mamluk system.
    - Slave soldiers were not traditional slaves; they were bound to the state but received payment, ranks, and titles.
    - Prized Mamluks were selected for important administrative roles, becoming viziers, generals, and eventually heads of state.
    - The reliance on Mamluks gave rise to powerful figures like Badi' al-Jamari, a Mamluk from Armenia.
    - Eventually, these Mamluk soldiers and their leaders grew powerful enough to overthrow the Arab rulers and establish their own dynasties, such as the Seljuq dynasty, while retaining the Islamic culture.

Islamic Rules of Conquest and Governance

> To manage the vast, multicultural territories they conquered, the early Islamic empire operated under specific rules of conquest and a unique system of governance. These principles were designed to ensure stability, continuity of resources, and a level of tolerance that facilitated the administration of diverse populations.

- **Keypoints**
    - Prophet Muhammad established four key rules for all Muslim military forces during conquest.
    - Rule 1: Arabs were forbidden from assuming ownership of conquered land.
    - Rule 2: Soldiers were to live in designated military camps and must be paid for their service.
    - Rule 3: The lives of farmers and peasants in the countryside must be preserved to ensure the continuity of the food supply.
    - Rule 4: There should be no forced conversions or missionary activities; conversions were often voluntary for local rulers to gain economic benefits.

- Islam is unique in that it merges civil law and legal authority (Shari'a) with religious doctrine, which includes the protection of property rights.

The Islamic Golden Age and Scholarly Advancements

> The wealth and stability of the Islamic Caliphate, particularly during the Abbasid era in Baghdad, provided patronage for a flourishing of intellectual and cultural activity. By bridging knowledge from Byzantine, Persian, Indian, and Arab cultures, this period saw significant advancements in science, medicine, philosophy, and technology.

- **Keypoints**
  - Extensive trade networks brought diverse people, products, and ideas to the capital, Baghdad.
  - The era saw the intermingling of different schools of knowledge, leading to major innovations.
  - Advancements were made in fields such as sociology, historiography, economics, surgery, political philosophy, robotics, and automation.
  - Algebra is a key mathematical invention from this period.
- **Examples**
  > He wrote early works on sociology, historiography, and modern-day economics, including how to manage economies, coffers, and businesses.
  > He laid the foundation for early Renaissance literature on surgery and surgical practices, drawing knowledge from India, China, and across the Islamic world.
  > A philosopher who had a profound influence on early European Christian thinkers, particularly in the areas of political thinking and debates on the identity of God.

Origin of the Sunni-Shia Split

> The divergence between Sunni and Shia Islam began as an economic and political dispute over the inheritance of Prophet Mohammed's property, specifically the largest oasis in Medina, known as Fadak.

- **Explanation**
  Fatima, Mohammed's daughter, and her husband Ali believed they had the right to inherit the oasis and the income generated from it. However, Abu Bakr and the council believed the property should be publicly owned and its benefits shared among the community that had participated in the conquest with Mohammed. This fundamental disagreement over inheritance and wealth distribution triggered the split between the two sects.

Islamic Governance, Law, and Social Welfare

> Early Islamic caliphates established sophisticated systems of governance, law, and social welfare, drawing some inspiration from Roman traditions. Rulers were considered responsible to the public and could be held accountable.

- **Keypoints**
  - Rulers had a responsibility to provide public services like education, public baths, and granaries.
  - Unjust or ineffective Caliphs could be impeached and removed by the 'Majlis al-Shurah', the consultative council.
  - The Sharia law is generated from a mixture of the Quran and the Hadith.
  - Judges, or 'Qadis', were forbidden from discriminating on the basis of religion, race, color, or kinship.
  - A central treasury system, the 'Beit al-Magh', was established to manage revenue, spending, and accounting.
  - Welfare programs were introduced, using 'zakat' taxes to provide for the poor, elderly, widows, and disabled.
  - The government maintained stockpiles of food in every region for emergencies like disasters or famines.
  - Welfare programs also extended to the unemployed, and retirement pensions were provided.

Women's Rights and Roles in Early Islam

> Contrary to later European laws, early Islamic law provided women with significant rights regarding property, inheritance, and professional life, partly influenced by the example of Muhammad's first wife, a successful merchant.

- **Keypoints**
  - Inheritance law allowed both men and women to inherit and hold property equally.
  - Women were permitted to practice law and operate their own businesses.
  - While female rulers were not common, women played a significant role in early politics.
  - Divorce and widowhood were common, and many women had two to four husbands over their lifetime during the early caliphate phase.

Slavery and Bondage in Roman and Islamic History

> The lecture discusses the nature of slavery in the late Roman and early Islamic empires, highlighting key legal reforms and the ultimate failure of plantation-style slavery in the Abbasid Caliphate.

- **Keypoints**

- The late Roman Empire made killing a slave a criminal offense, which Constantine later classified as homicide.
- Reforms banned forced gladiatorial combat and forced prostitution.
- Constantine's 'manumissio in ecclesia' reform (306-337) allowed slaves to gain freedom by converting to Christianity.
- Laws were in place to protect slave families and prevent wrongful enslavement through witnessed contracts.
- The Abbasid Empire's attempt to use 'Zanj' (Black African) slaves for sugar plantation labor in the 9th century lasted only 30-40 years.
- This attempt ended in the Zanj Rebellion, a brutal uprising that contributed to the fragmentation of the Abbasid Empire.

Political and Social Structure of the Sinosphere

> The political structure of the Chinese Sinosphere is defined by a series of long-standing paradoxes related to its centralized system.

- **Keypoints**
  - Centralized Bureaucracy, Decentralized Governance: Expressed by the saying 'The sky is high and the emperor is far away,' local governments often exercise significant autonomy from central policies.
  - Informal Networks and Corruption: Alongside the formal bureaucracy, powerful informal networks based on lineage and guilds (like 'guanxi') often act as rule-makers where formal rules are absent.
  - Imperial Ownership, Private Contracting: While the emperor technically owned all land, it was privately contracted, creating a relational property rights system that was neither purely individual nor purely collective.

Chinese Worldview: 'Tianxia' and the Tributary System

> Imperial China's worldview was based on the concept of 'Tianxia' ('all under heaven'), which positioned China at the center of a civilized world ('Hua Xia') surrounded by peripheral 'barbarian' states. This relationship was managed through a unique tributary system.

- **Keypoints**
  - The term 'Hua Xia' was used to distinguish the culturally advanced people of the Central Plains from those on the periphery.
  - The tributary system was a diplomatic and political framework where neighboring states would bring goods and commodities to China.
  - In return, China would pay back with a greater value of goods (often silver), creating a trade deficit for itself to 'save face' and maintain influence.

- China also provided military assistance and protection for trade networks to states within the tributary system.
- This system spread Chinese influence through diplomacy and cultural goods like silk and porcelain, rather than direct territorial expansion (with the Mongols being a notable exception).

The Song Dynasty and the 'First Industrial Revolution'

> The lecture, referencing Ken Pomerant's work, posits that the world's first industrial revolution occurred not in 18th-century Europe, but during the Song Dynasty in China (as well as in parts of the Abbasid Empire).

- **Keypoints**
  - Key characteristics included technological inventiveness and massive industrial iron production.
  - The era saw large-scale urbanization, with cities housing millions of residents.
  - Widespread commercialization occurred, including the introduction of paper money.
  - A sophisticated civil bureaucracy was established, with a national civil service examination system.
  - The development of printing led to a widespread reading public.

Assignments & Suggestions

- The lecturer will upload the PDF of the slides to the system for students to access later.
- The lecturer shared a fun clip for students to watch.
- Check in for attendance during the 10-minute break.
- If you are having difficulties logging in or checking into the course view system, send your first and last name to the lecturer to be manually added.
- Read the article by Elizabeth Brown, who calls feudalism 'the tyranny of a construct'.
- Brush up on the 1000 year old tradition.