

# UNIT 4

## The Middle Ages and Early Modern World, C. 500 to 1750s.

### Introduction

This unit explores significant themes in world history during the Middle Ages and early modern period, structured into seven sections: the Middle Ages in Europe, the Middle Ages in Asia, the Development of Early Capitalism, the Age of Exploration, the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Industrial Revolution. The key points and arguments are supported with examples and images to enhance understanding and make learning engaging. The unit concludes with a summary and review questions to help assess your understanding.

#### 4.1.1 Dark Age

The "Dark Age," from 500 AD to 1000 AD, was a period of decline in Western Europe. Following the fall of the Western Roman Empire, Europe experienced internal decay and external invasions by various tribes, including the Anglo-Saxons, Franks, Huns, and Magyars. This led to a decline in Greco-Roman civilization, with rural societies replacing urban ones. Feudalism emerged as the dominant socio-economic and political system, marked by the construction of churches, castles, and the practice of chivalry by knights. Despite frequent conflicts and instability, stability began to return around 1000 AD.

#### 4.1.2 Feudal Society

During the medieval period (500-1500 AD), feudalism became the primary socio-political system in Europe. The feudal hierarchy included kings, nobles, knights, and clergy. Feudalism revolved around the exchange of land (fiefs) for services. Lords granted fiefs to vassals, who then provided military and other services. The manor was the basic unit of feudal society, where lords exercised control over peasants. The Church played a significant role in both religious and cultural life.

#### 4.1.3 Byzantine Empire

The Byzantine Empire, or East Roman Empire, continued after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, with its capital at Constantinople (modern Istanbul). The official language was Greek, and the Orthodox Church was separate from the Roman Catholic Church. The Empire thrived under Emperor Justinian but faced challenges from the Seljuk Turks and Crusades. The Battle of Manzikert in 1071 marked a significant loss, and by 1453, the Empire fell to the Ottoman Turks.

## **4.2 The Middle Ages in Asia**

### **4.2.1 The Rise and Expansion of Islam**

Islam began in the early 7th century AD in Mecca with the teachings of Prophet Mohammed. Facing persecution, Mohammed and his followers migrated to Medina in 622 AD, marking the start of the Islamic calendar. After Mohammed's death, the Arab Caliphates (Umayyad and Abbasid) expanded the Muslim empire across North Africa, Spain, and Central Asia. The expansion was furthered by the Seljuk and Ottoman Turks.

### **4.2.2 The Expansion of the Ottoman Empire**

The Seljuk Turks began occupying Palestine and Asia Minor in the 11th century, later succeeded by the Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman Empire, founded by Osman I, expanded significantly, capturing territories such as Constantinople in 1453 (renamed Istanbul) and parts of Syria and Egypt. The empire's expansion in Europe was halted in 1571 after a defeat at the Battle of Lepanto.

### **4.2.3 Dynastic Cycle in China**

China's history is marked by a "dynastic cycle," where new dynasties would initially be strong and effective but later become corrupt and lose their "mandate of Heaven." This cycle led to the rise and fall of dynasties from the Qin to the Qing. The last Qing dynasty was overthrown by a revolution in 1911/1912.

## **Development of Early Capitalism**

Early capitalism emerged as trade revived in Europe following the fall of the Roman Empire. Merchants began buying raw materials, manufacturing goods, and selling them, leading to increased production and economic growth. Challenges included transport difficulties, insecurity, and heavy tolls. The age of exploration, driven by European interest and advancements in navigation, facilitated global trade and accelerated the development of capitalism.

## **The Age of Exploration**

The 15th and 16th centuries saw European explorations aimed at bypassing Ottoman blockades and discovering new trade routes. Key figures included Vasco da Gama, who found a sea route to India, and Christopher Columbus, who reached the Americas in 1492. These explorations led to the establishment of colonies and significant economic gains for European powers.

## Renaissance

The Renaissance, meaning "rebirth," was a cultural movement from the 14th to the 17th century, beginning in Italy and spreading across Europe. It emphasized the study of classical antiquity, individualism, and the use of vernacular languages. Notable figures include Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Galileo Galilei. The Renaissance significantly influenced modern culture and science, shifting focus from religious to humanistic and scientific inquiry.

Causes of the Reformation			
Social	Political	Economic	Religious
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Renaissance values of humanism and secularism led people to question the church.</li><li>• The printing press helped to spread ideas critical of the church.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Powerful monarchs challenged the church as the supreme power Europe.</li><li>• Many leaders viewed the pope as a foreign ruler and challenged his authority.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• European princes and kings were jealous of the church's wealth.</li><li>• Merchants and others resented having to pay taxes to the church.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some church leaders had become corrupt.</li><li>• Many people found church practices such as the sale of indulgences unacceptable.</li></ul>

## Reformation

The Reformation, starting in 1517 with Martin Luther, challenged the Catholic Church and led to the rise of Protestantism. Key reformers included John Calvin and Henry VIII. The Reformation resulted in the creation of various Protestant churches and prompted the Catholic Counter-Reformation, which sought to address criticisms and reaffirm Catholic doctrine.

## Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution, beginning in Great Britain in the 1780s, marked a shift from handcraft-based economies to machine-based manufacturing. Innovations included the steam engine, which powered factories, transportation, and railways. The revolution spread to other European countries and the United States, leading to significant economic and industrial growth.

## Unit Summary

The Dark Ages transitioned into feudal society in Europe, characterized by feudalism and the dominance of the Catholic Church. The Byzantine Empire and the Ottoman Turks played significant roles in the region. The rise of Islam expanded into a major empire, while China experienced a dynastic cycle. The Middle Ages saw the revival of trade, the Renaissance's cultural resurgence, and the Reformation's religious upheavals. The Age of Exploration and Industrial Revolution further transformed global trade and industrial practices.