INTRODUCTION

While other parts of the world were experiencing unprecedented prosperity during the postclassical era, Europe's economy underwent a sharp constriction with the fall of the Roman empire. Long-distance trade did not entirely disappear, significant developments took place in agricultural production, and there were brief periods of government consolidation; nevertheless, early medieval Europe was a world dominated by rural self-sufficiency and political decentralization. In spite of its seeming "backwardness" compared to the other great empires of the postclassical world, Europe was laying the foundation for the development of the powerful society that would emerge during the high middle ages. That foundation rested on

- Hard-won political order, restored out of disruption caused by the fall of the Roman empire, centuries of destructive invasions, and dramatic depopulation. This order was based on a highly decentralized but flexible system that vested political, military, and judicial authority in local and regional rulers.

- A long, slow process of economic recovery based first on increased agricultural production within the rural manorial system to be followed by gradually increasing trade, industry, and commerce and the eventual reurbanization of Europe.

- The cultural unity provided by the Christian church based in Rome. During this period Roman Christianity provided the impetus for cultural continuity and unity in western Europe. The office of the papacy and the monastic movement were two powerful institutions that helped to preserve Roman traditions and develop and consolidate a uniquely European culture.

OUTLINE

I. The quest for political order
   A. Germanic successor states
      1. Germanic kingdoms: Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Lombards, Burgundians, Angles/Saxons
      2. The Franks: center of gravity shifted from Italy to northern lands
   B. The Franks and the temporary revival of empire
      1. Clovis
         a) Led the Franks and wiped out the last vestiges of Roman authority in Gaul
         b) Military campaigns against other Germanic peoples
      2. Clovis's conversion
         a) Many other Germanic peoples converted to Arian Christianity
         b) The Franks converted to Roman Christianity
c) Alliance with the Roman church greatly strengthened the Franks

3. The Carolingians
   a) Carolingians, an aristocratic clan, asserted authority in the early eighth century
   b) Charles Martel’s son claimed the throne for himself, 751

4. Charlemagne (reigned 768–814 C.E.)
   a) Grandson of Charles Martel, founder of Carolingian empire
   b) Control extended to northeast Spain, Bavaria, North Italy

5. Administration
   a) Capital city at Aachen (in modern Germany)
   b) Relied on aristocratic deputies, known as counts
   c) Used missi dominici to oversee local authorities

6. Charlemagne as emperor
   a) Pope Leo III proclaimed Charlemagne emperor, 800
   b) The coronation strained relations with Byzantine emperors

C. Decline and dissolution of the Carolingian empire

1. Louis the Pious (reigned 814–840)
   a) Charlemagne’s only surviving son; lost control of the counts
   b) His three sons divided the empire into three kingdoms, 843

2. Invasions
   a) Muslims raided south, seized Sicily and parts of northern Italy and southern France
   b) Magyars invaded from the east
   c) Vikings invaded from the north

3. Norse expansion; Scandinavian homelands were Norway, Denmark, and Sweden
   a) Motives: population pressure, resisting Christian missionaries
   b) Most were merchants and migrants
   c) Some mounted raids in many European regions from Russia to Spain
   d) Outstanding seafarers; even established a colony in Canada about 1000
   e) Fleets could go to interior regions via rivers, attacking towns and villages

D. The establishment of regional authorities

1. In England small kingdoms merged into a larger realm against Scandinavian raids
   a) King Alfred (reigned 871–899) expanded to the north
   b) Alfred’s successors controlled all England about the mid-tenth century

2. Germany: after Carolingian empire, local lords took matters into their own hands
   a) King Otto I (reigned 936–973) defeated Magyars in 955
b) Imposed authority in Germany; led armies to support the papacy in Italy

c) Otto’s coronation by the pope in 962 made him the Holy Roman emperor

3. In France, counts and other local authorities became local lords

II. Early medieval society

A. Organizing a decentralized state

1. After Carolingian empire dissolved, local nobles built decentralized states

2. Lords and retainers
   a) Lord provided retainer with a grant known as a benefice (usually land, called fief)
   b) Enabled retainer to devote time and energy to serve the lord
   c) Provided resources to maintain horses and military equipment
   d) Retainers owed lord loyalty, obedience, respect, counsel, and military service
   e) Lord/retainer relationships became stronger; retainer status became hereditary

3. Potential for instability
   a) Multitiered network of lord-retainer relationships
   b) Sometimes conflicting loyalties led to instability
   c) But powerful states were built on foundation of lord-retainer relationships

B. Serfs and manors

1. Serfs
   a) Slaves and peasants took agricultural tasks and frequently intermarried
   b) Free peasants often turned themselves and their lands over to a lord for protection
   c) Serfs as an intermediate category emerged about the mid-seventh century

2. Serfs’ obligations
   a) Labor service and rents in kind
   b) Could not move to other lands without permission
   c) Once their obligations were fulfilled, serfs had right to work on land and pass it to heirs

3. Manors were a principal form of agricultural organization
   a) Large estates, controlled by the lord and his deputies
   b) Largely self-sufficient communities

C. The economy of early medieval Europe

1. Agricultural production suffered from repeated invasions

2. Heavy plows
   a) Appeared in the sixth century; could turn heavy northern soils
b) Became common from the eighth century; production increased
c) Cultivation of new lands; watermills; and rotating crops

3. Rural society—agricultural surplus not enough to support large cities
4. Mediterranean trade—Italian and Spanish merchants trade with Muslims
5. Norse merchant mariners in North and Baltic seas
   a) Followed routes of Vikings
   b) Traded actively with Byzantine and Abbasid empires
   c) Imported Abbasid silver used in European coinage
6. Population: 36 million in 200; down to 26 million in 600; back up to 36 million in 1000

III. The formation of Christian Europe

A. The politics of conversion
   1. The Franks and the Church
      a) Frankish rulers viewed themselves as protectors of the papacy
      b) Charlemagne also worked to spread Christianity in northern lands
   2. The spread of Christianity
      a) Charlemagne’s military campaigns forced the Saxons to accept Christianity
      b) Pagan ways did not disappear immediately
      c) By 1000 C.E., all western Europe had adopted Roman Christianity

B. The papacy
   1. Pope Gregory I (590–604 C.E.)
      a) Organized defense of Rome against Lombards’ menace
      b) Reasserted papal primacy over other bishops
      c) Strongly emphasized the sacrament of penance—confession and atonement
   2. The conversion of England—by 800, England in the Roman church

C. Monasticism
   1. Origin
      a) Devout Christians practiced asceticism in deserts of Egypt, second and third centuries
      b) Monastic lifestyle became popular when Christianity became legal, fourth century
   2. Monastic rules
      a) St. Benedict (480–547 C.E.) provided a set of regulations
      b) Virtues of Benedictine monks: poverty, chastity, and obedience
3. St. Scholastica (482–543 C.E.)
   a) St. Benedict’s sister, a nun
   b) Adapted the Rule, and provided guidance for religious life of women

4. The roles of monasteries
   a) Became dominant feature in social and cultural life of western Europe
   b) Accumulated large landholdings
   c) Organized much of the rural labor force for agricultural production
   d) Provided variety of social services: inns, shelters, orphanages, hospitals, schools
   e) Libraries and scriptoria became centers of learning

IDENTIFICATION: PEOPLE

What is the contribution of each of the following individuals to world history? Identification should include answers to the questions who, what, where, when, how, and why is this person important?

Clovis
Charles Martel
Charlemagne
Pope Leo III
Gregory of Tours
Louis the Pious
Alfred
Otto I
Pope Gregory I
St. Benedict of Nursia
St. Scholastica

IDENTIFICATION: TERMS/CONCEPTS

State in your own words what each of the following terms means and why it is significant to a study of world history. (Terms with an asterisk are defined in the glossary.)

Franks
Aachen

*Missi dominici*

Magyars*

Vikings

Holy Roman Empire

Lords

Retainers

Benefice*

Manor

Serf*

Fief*

Heavy plow

Papacy

Monasticism

Benedict’s Rule

**STUDY QUESTIONS**

1. What is the significance of Clovis’s conversion to Christianity?

2. What were the contributions of Charlemagne’s reign, and why did it ultimately fail to last very long?

3. Who were the Vikings? What were the motivations behind their behavior? What were their accomplishments? How did they disrupt European society?

4. What were the obligations of lords toward their retainers and the retainers toward their lords? Why was this arrangement often unstable?

5. What role did the serfs play in early medieval Europe? What was life like on the manor?

6. What was the significance of the invention of the heavy plow for European economy?

7. Although trade constricted in the early middle ages, where and how was it still going on?
8. What was the role of the pope in the early middle ages? How did his role evolve over this period of time?

9. How did monasticism develop in early medieval Europe?

10. What was the significance of the monasteries to the European society and economy?

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

1. What were the advantages and disadvantages of the highly decentralized political system that developed in Europe during this period?

2. The economy of Europe underwent sharp constriction after the fall of the Roman empire. What was the nature of that constriction? Where and how was the economy still functioning? What were the impediments to economic development?

3. What was the role of Roman Christianity in early medieval Europe? How did it shape the society? What were its principal channels of influence?

MATCHING

Match these figures with the statements that follow.

A. Clovis
B. Benedict
C. Alfred
D. Abu al-Abbas
E. Leo III
F. Gregory the Great
G. Otto I
H. Charlemagne

1. ___ King who defeated the Magyars, ending their threat to Europe.

2. ___ Led forces to eliminate the vestiges of Roman authority in Gaul.

3. ___ Pope who crowned an emperor on Christmas Day, 800.

4. ___ Albino elephant that was gift from Abbasid emperor.

5. ___ Built a navy and constructed fortresses to protect his people from the Vikings.

6. ___ Wrote a set of guidelines for monastic life.

7. ___ Mobilized local resources and organized defense of Rome against the Lombards.

8. ___ Consolidated the largest empire of early medieval Europe.
SEQUENCING

Place the following clusters of events in chronological order. Consider carefully how one event leads to another, and try to determine the internal logic of each sequence.

A.

___ Charles Martel defeats the Muslims at the Battle of Tours.
___ Charlemagne is crowned emperor by the pope on Christmas day.
___ Carolingian empire is divided into three parts.
___ Clovis converts to Christianity.
___ Louis the Pious loses control of the nobility.
___ Odoacer deposes the last of the western Roman emperors.

B.

___ Food crops from the Islamic world spread to the Mediterranean through trade.
___ The heavy plow is invented to better work the heavy soils of northern Europe.
___ Monasteries take responsibility for clearing large tracts of land for agriculture.
___ A series of invasions disrupts the economy of Europe, and cities go into decline.
___ The population of Europe finally surpasses that of the year 200, before the fall of Rome.

QUOTATIONS

For each of the following quotes, identify the speaker, if known, or the point of view. What is the significance of each passage?

1. “And the king was the first to ask to be baptized by the bishop. . . . And his army more than 3,000 were baptized.”

2. “For our women’s work they are to give at the proper time, as has been ordered, the materials, that is the linen, wool, woad, vermilion, madder, wool-combs . . . and the other objects which are necessary.”
2. On the outline map of Europe below, draw the invasions of the Muslims, the Vikings, and the Magyars in different colored pencils. Where were these groups from? What regions did they invade? What were the effects of these invasions?

1. Draw a graph charting the rise and fall of the European population from the data given to you on page 449 in the textbook. If it continues to grow at the same rate, what would you expect the population to be in 1200? 1400?