

# MEDIEVAL HISTORY

## **Course description:**

This course on medieval history covers the general aspects of European history from the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the 5<sup>th</sup> century to the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

## **About the Professor**

Mustafa Soykut is professor of early modern history at the Department of History of Middle East Technical University, Ankara. He has studied in Trieste and University of Bologna in Italy and received his PhD from Hamburg University in Germany. He received a number of scholarships in Italy and Germany and awards including the Distinguished Young Scholar Award of the Turkish Academy of Sciences for his research on Italy and the Ottomans. Professor Soykut also lectures on the culture and history of religion of the Indian sub-continent.

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Unit I: The Beginnings; Fall of Rome and the Birth of Europe

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## **General Instructions:**

First unit: 4 weeks

Second unit: 4 weeks

Third unit: 3 weeks

Fourth unit: 3 weeks

The course is divided into four units as above with corresponding durations. The first unit concentrates on the fall of Western Roman Empire and a general overview of its aftermath. The second unit is on the Carolingian Empire, Western and Central Europe with its economy, warfare and feudalism. The third unit is a close-up on Central and Eastern Europe including Russia to be followed by the fourth unit on the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) and medieval Islam.

The students must write four short essays for each chapter (1200-1500 words) and a final essay of aprox. 5000 words. The textbooks for each chapter are obligatory readings and at least two books from the reading list in each chapter must be read and at least one should be incorporated into the theme of the short essay for each chapter.

The final essay can choose any theme covered by in any chapter of the course and in addition to the textbooks and reading lists, it must have an additional reference section at the end of the essay of the books and articles used for the final essay.

Technical Instructions for the Short Essays and the Final Essay:

The text must be submitted in a word document written in Times New Roman 12, 1,5 space and 1 inch margin on the right and left of the page. It must use the humanities citation footnote format (not the social sciences format bracket within the text). The sources must be cited by using the Chicago Manual of Style

(see <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>)

The quotations from the sources used in the essays cannot exceed 5% of the total text. Any quotation exceeding 4 lines should be "indented" in the body of the text.

The universally accepted ethical rules on plagiarism apply.

## **Unit I: The Beginnings; Fall of Rome and the Birth of Europe**

### **Overview**

Today, what we call as the early medieval ages saw the fall of the Roman Empire which was a Mediterranean centered Empire and the rise of the so called Barbaric Kingdoms which would later on evolve into what we know as Europe. This era also saw the widespread diffusion of Christianity which would become one of the main constituents of this new European identity. The Germanic tribes that lived within the and without the borders of the Roman Empire would also become the founding element in this new Europe. Of course, all these events cannot be explained only by examining Rome and excluding the other factors such as the arrival of the Huns from the Asian steps to the Russian steppes and causing the *Völkerwanderung* and pushing other Germanic and Slavic tribes westwards and southwards. The arrival of these Asiatic tribes have long been associated only with the weakening and the collapse of Rome and the replacement of the Germanic tribes into the Roman territories in most of the historiography, but their influence on the Slavic peoples both in terms of cultural exchange and political structure have long been underestimated. Although Russia and Eastern Europe have long been considered as a periphery or even outside of Europe, an understanding of this region's history is necessary in viewing the large picture. In Western Europe which is considered to be the core of the European continent in the dominant historiography however, the early medieval era saw the amalgam of Roman, Celtic, Germanic, and Christian cultures and institutions which gave this part of Europe its distinctive characteristics such as feudalism, the church and the medieval cities or Burgs. This unit takes a glimpse at these developments and the birth of what we call Europe today after the collapse of the Roman Empire rather than seeking a Europe in the ancient Mediterranean or Nordic cultures as the Enlightenment and Romantic philosophers did some two centuries ago.

### **The fall of Rome**

By the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, the Roman Empire was at a decline not only economically but also militarily and politically. A new religion called Christianity was added

to the religions of Rome, the military structure that made Rome an empire was beginning to crumble and the economy was already shifting from the urban centers to the rural areas. Three main developments that continued over centuries and contributed to the collapse of the Roman Empire must be borne in mind when examining the late Roman and Early Medieval eras. The first of these is the continuous immigration of the tribes in Europe towards the Roman territories. This would not have been a major concern for the empire since similar if not as large scale immigrations had always taken place in the Empire if it were not for the economic, social, cultural and political differentiation of the eastern and the western parts of the empire beginning to accelerate and eventually resulting in the political separation of the empire that accelerated the fall of the western half of the empire and weakened the eastern half which would later on lose much of its eastern territories to the rising power of an Islamic empire in the east. The third and perhaps one of the most fundamental developments to take place was the Christianization of the pagan societies in Europe and the strengthening of the Christian church. The first two of these fastened the collapse of the Western Roman Empire while the third one helped to preserve some of the Roman heritage and helped the newly emerging barbaric kingdoms to institutionalize.

## **Migrations**

Especially in western part of the Roman Empire, certain features such as the shift from cities to the rural areas were already beginning to appear. Some of the rich romans were already beginning to concentrate their wealth and power on the villas in the rural areas and agricultural production was beginning to replace commercial income as a source of wealth. Therefore, the barbaric tribes only accelerated this process. The use of slaves on land were beginning to become more and more uneconomic in these emerging villas and rural farms, so, the owners of land were beginning to free their slaves and rent their land to these ex-slaves which became a kind of a prototype for the medieval land system for the peasants. Certain rich people were also beginning to exempt their lands from taxation by using their political influence, and the poor landowners who were born free citizens began to enslave themselves to these local magnates who could protect them from higher taxes by renting them their own land back at a more reasonable price. These magnates were also beginning to gather their own military power for the protection of their rights, lands and protégé peasants. The Catholic Church was also beginning to take a shape which would continue in the middle ages as it got stronger in terms of wealth and political power. In the end it would prove to be the most durable institution descending from the Roman times.

In the eastern parts of Europe on the other hand, nomadic tribes from Asia such as the Huns, Bulgars and Avars were living side by side with the expanding Slavic tribes while the Germanic tribes such as the Goths, Alans and Vandals were moving westward to establish their own kingdoms in the remains of the Western part of the Roman Empire. British Isles also fell victim to the barbaric invasions and the territory that has become England was invaded by the Angles, Saxons and Jutes from Denmark and Northern Germany. This process all began when a federation of Hun tribes began marching westward from their homeland in central Asia. They were a loosely united federation of tribes from different ethnic groups gathered around a leader. These nomadic movements were becoming more regular by the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The Romans always had interaction with the Germanic tribes beyond their borders and this interaction was not limited to war. By the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Romans had armies recruited from Germanic soldiers, and commanded by tribal leaders fighting against other tribes to defend the Roman Empire in the West. A very good example of these tribes were the Franks who were hired by the Romans and who fought against Attila's Federation with the Romans and later on established the Frankish Kingdom within the ex-Roman territories. After Attila became the leader of the Huns, the Huns emerged as a strong opponent in the East European steppes; not only causing the

other tribes to move westwards and southwards toward Roman territories, but the Huns began directly threatening the Eastern and Western parts of the Roman Empire itself. Although both parts of the Empire survived the attacks by the time of Atilla's unexpected death, the Western Roman Empire was left paralyzed and vulnerable to attacks. The Goths, the Vandals, the Lombards and other tribes settled in the Roman territories in the western half of the Empire and began to establish dukedoms and Kingdoms.

## **Gaul**

The Roman Gaul was invaded or rather taken over by the Franks from the Romans. They were paid soldiers during the Roman times and as the Empire collapsed, they found themselves to be the only military power capable of defending and governing these territories. They pushed the Visigoths from Southern Gaul towards the Iberian Peninsula and united the Gaul province of Rome under the leadership of Clovis whose reign continued for 30 years between 481 to his death in 511. He is considered to be the founder of the Merovingian dynasty. And he converted to Christianity which allowed him to rule the strong Catholic Church and the Gallo-Roman subjects more easily. This marked a change from tribal to monarchical rule. The Franks were a Germanic people but as they moved southward they got in touch with more Gallo-Roman population who were a majority in the kingdom and an amalgam of Frankish and Gallo-Roman law and institutions began to merge. Although the Germanic tradition of dividing the Kingdom among the sons of the late king was applied, the kingdom did not collapse or divide, and was sometimes ruled by multiple kings, and was sometimes united under a single kingdom.

## **Spain**

The Visigoths who were pushed by the Franks continued their rule in the south, the Iberian Peninsula; they had conquered the other Germanic tribes who resettled there before them during the turmoil of the collapse of the Roman Empire after being invited by the Romans as an aid against the Suevi, Vandal and Alan invaders. They also converted to Christianity, yet the Catholic and the Arian churches were in a competition in the peninsula for a while. The Visigoths were Arians when they came to the Iberian Peninsula. They remained Arians while their Roman subjects were Catholics. This continued until the renunciation of Arianism by Raccared in favor of Catholicism in 587 CE. They also lifted the legal separation between the Romans and the Goths and united the law. This kingdom continued its existence until the Arab conquests of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The Visigoths were also an essential element in the formation of a Christian Spain in the northern parts of the peninsula in terms of law, culture and institutions. Like in Francia, they created a culture and a society which is a mixture of the Gallo-Roman and Germanic cultures. This unification was further strengthened after the conversion of the Goths to Catholicism like the Gallo-Roman majority.

## **Italy**

Italy on the other hand was sacked many times by different tribal groups and was eventually settled by the Lombards. The Lombards were originally from the North, probably Southern Scandinavia or Northern Germany of today. But they settled around Austria of today and after defeating the Gepid tribes they marched to Italy ousting the Ostrogoths who had established a kingdom there before them but were weakened as a result of their wars with the East Roman Empire. They conquered Italy in a relatively short time. The Lombards were organized in Dukedoms and their kingdom was not a central one like the Roman Empire or even the Frank kingdom. They had an effect on Italy like the Visigoths of Spain. They adapted to the culture and living style of the Romans, yet they remained pagans or Arians and they sometimes converted to Orthodoxy. Their kingdom survived until the

conquest of Charlemagne who came to Italy to intervene the struggle between the Pope and the Lombard king.

In Eastern Europe, the Avars, another nomadic people from central Asia settled in what would later become Hungary while Slavic tribes were settling in other areas of Eastern Europe and the Balkans. These peoples managed to establish short-lived kingdoms but in most cases they were loosely united federations. The Baltic region and Scandinavia were also in a similar position during the early medieval era.

#### Textbook:

Collins, R. *Early Medieval Europe, 300-1000, Second Edition*. Palgrave Macmillan, 1999. (Whole Book)

#### Readings:

(Choose one of the books and analyze it for your paper)

Heather, P. *Empires and Barbarians: The Fall of Rome and the Birth of Europe: The Fall of Rome and the Birth of Europe*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2010. (Whole Book)

Noble, T.F.X. *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*. Taylor & Francis Group, 2006. (Whole Book)

## **UNIT II: Western Europe**

### **Overview**

This unit examines the developments in Western Europe during the high and late middle ages. The economic growth of Europe as well as the development of institutions and government organizations will be taken into consideration. The change in the society, the emergence of the three estates, emergence of a fully developed feudalism, and a strong church will be examined. Also, the expansion of this new Europe through Christianity as well as war and trade is another significant feature of the era examined in this unit. While the Crusades were expanding towards the East, the Hansaetic league was establishing posts on the Baltic coast and Scandinavia was being Christianized by the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The rise of the Church, the development of city economies and the rise of feudal system were the determining characteristics of this era.

### **Charlemagne and the Frank Empire:**

By the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the power of the Merovingians were beginning to fade and the real power was gathering at the hands of strong magnates, especially the mayors of Neustria. Until Charles Martel who not only made the Merovingian kings apparent puppets by appointing them, the mayors of Neustria were rulers behind the curtains. But Charles Martel changed this by appointing kings and after he died, his sons became new kings and Charles Martel thus gave his name to the new Carolingian dynasty. Another important event during his reign was the victory against the Muslim Arabs in Poitiers. With this victory, Charles Martel became one of the legendary leaders of Christian Europe. His son continued to reign, but this time as kings rather than mayors or regents. The Frank kingdom continued to expand towards the East where there were some Germanic tribes such as the Saxons, Frisians and Alans who were in some cases never conquered before by even the Romans like the Saxons. Pepin had to fight these tribes many times, but it was his son Charles who was to be named Charlemagne posthumously who brought the vast lands in

Germany, Northern Italy, Austria, Czech Republic and some parts of eastern Europe under either direct rule or suzerainty of the Frank kingdom. Pope also declared him the western emperor, and from then on Frank Kingdom assumedly became the inheritor of Western Rome.

### **Division of the Empire, The Viking Raids, Hungarians**

Although the first three kings of the Carolingians rule the kingdom as the single king of Franks sometimes thanks to the resignation of a brother and sometimes by being the only surviving son of the late king, there was no primogeniture rule among the Franks and after the son of Charlemagne, Louis the Pious, the empire was divided among his three sons as the Eastern kingdom which would later on become the Holy Roman Empire, the western kingdom which would become France and the middle kingdom which would first be divided again to three parts and later be absorbed by the other two and cease to exist. This division was officially sealed by the treaty of Verdun in 843. After the example of the sons of Louis the Pious, the parts of the kingdoms continued to divide more by each generation and as the Carolingian members became weaker as a result of land division and strife within the family, local magnates became stronger and more important and the path to political disunity which would be a common feature for much of the middle ages would be open.

As the Carolingian Empire was dissolving as a result of inheritance issues, other Germanic tribes were beginning to pillage the borders of the empire. These groups were commonly called as the Vikings and their homeland was Scandinavia. There are various theories as to why these peoples moved from their homelands such as population pressure, political developments within Scandinavia, or even a reaction to the forced Christianization process of the Germanic tribes which began in earnest with the campaigns of Charlemagne against the Saxons. These peoples had always been coming to the shores of Northern Europe and the Baltic as merchants or pirates, but their raids became more fierce and denser by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Whatever their reasons were, they caught Europe when it was unprepared and busy with internal strife. Their attacks continued well into the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but in time took the shape of permanent settlements in the Frankish territories as in Normandy, Flanders or England. They also contributed much to the formation of feudalism which emerged mainly as a military defensive system when the central Frank kingdom failed to help against the attacks of the Vikings. Until recently it was thought that the Vikings were only barbarians after looting and gaining wealth, but recent studies show that they had a developed culture and in fact they contributed much to the European society.

### **Feudalism**

All these events contributed to the rise of a new society after the collapse of the Roman empire. There were three estates now and the new society that emerged as a result of these developments would later be called as the feudal society by the historians. The simple question "What is Feudalism?" on the other hand, does not have a simple answer. There are many answers to the same question from the point of view of the answerer, a marxist historian and an annalist historian will have different answers on a wider geography, while more conservative historians will limit it to parts of Western Europe. But feudal institutions, law and organization within Europe or within the same country also displayed many dissimilarities, so a closer and a wider study of this phenomena needs to be done in order to fully understand the social, economic and political structure of Europe.

### **Economy**

Medieval economy was different from the Roman and early modern economies in many respects. It was a passage between the two but it had distinct characteristics as well. Through much of medieval era, wealth was measured by land rather than money.

Commerce was dangerous affairs given the endemic nature of wars, raiding and piracy. But even still, medieval Europe continued its ties with the east and the Italian city states with their navies were the pioneers of this trade. Europe did not have much to offer the East except for its bullion and other precious metals. This trade through the mediterranean and the Russian steppes did not diminish until the Atlantic states changed the trade routes. but the core of the European economy remained to be agriculture for a long time. Money economy did not emerge until the rise of cities as commercial centers and trade became more secure as the endemic wars and raiding became more scarce. While the mediterranean trade routes flourished with the Italian city states who began to emerge as maritime republics and centers of textiles and luxury goods such as glass producers, the Northern seas saw the Hansaetic league and denser trade, England and Flanders became textile centers selling wool and textiles produced from wool, the commercial fairs in France became centers for the merchants from all parts of Europe. As a result of these sea routes and land markets, Europe was integrated commercially, and goods such as grain from the Baltic, wool from England and Spain, textiles and spices and other goods from Italy were exchanged in all parts of Europe.

## **Warfare**

Medieval Europe saw the rise of two distinctive armies the latter of which would evolve into the modern army. The first one was the feudal army composed of levied soldiers who gave military service in return for lands or privileges given to them as fiefs. The hereditary military class evolved into aristocracy. Their main profession was military affairs, yet in time they also governed their fiefs since there was a shortage of educated personnel except for the church who could share the government with them. although the peasants were in majority in the medieval armies, the determining factor were the mounted knights until the arrival of new technologies such as the crossbow and firearms which made the heavily armored but slow knights ineffectual in battle at the later stages of medieval era. But the mounted knights continued their presence well into the early modern era. Two main and longlasting wars are the most well-known wars during the medieval era. The hundred year wars between England, France and their allies. these wars began as a result of the Plantagenet claim on the French throne and ended with the loss of French territories of the English crown. The second of these wars were the Crusades which were more widespread, longer lasting and covering larger areas. While the crusade against the Catharians was within France against other Christians, the reconquista in Spain and the Crusades to the Levant were against the Muslims. The Teutonic Crusades and the Ostendrang movement was mostly by undertaken by the German knights against the Polish and the Lithuanians in the Baltic region to Christianize the Pagans of the Baltic region. All these crusades had longlasting effects on Europe, especilly the Crusades to the Levant had some effects other than military conquest which did not last as long as the cultural and social interaction and influence from that region.

### Textbook:

Waley, D.P., and P. Denley. *Later Medieval Europe, 1250-1520*. Longman, 2001. (Whole Book)

### Readings:

(Choose one of the books and analyze it for your paper)

Batou, J., and H. Szlajfer. *Western Europe, Eastern Europe and World Development 13th-18th Centuries: Collection of Essays of Marian Malowist*. Haymarket Books, 2012. (pages:1-73)

- Duby, G., and A. Goldhammer. *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*. University of Chicago Press, 1982. (Whole book)
- Hunt, E.S., and J. Murray. *A History of Business in Medieval Europe, 1200-1550*. Cambridge University Press, 1999. (pages: 132-178)
- Pirenne, H. *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*. Taylor & Francis, 2006. (Whole Book)
- . *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade*. Princeton University Press, 1969. (Whole book)
- Winroth, A. *The Conversion of Scandinavia: Vikings, Merchants, and Missionaries in the Remaking of Northern Europe*. Yale University Press, 2012. (Chapters: The story of conversion -- Writing conversion -- The gift of Christianity -- Kings of god's grace -- Scandinavia in European history)

### **Unit III: Central and Eastern Europe**

#### **Overview**

This chapter examines the formation of states in Medieval Eastern Europe, mainly Poland, Lithuania, Hungary and Russia. Unlike the other kingdoms in western Europe, the formation of political entities in these kingdoms were late and the religious and social environment was different from the rest of Europe. While Lithuania and the Baltic regions stayed as pagans for a long time, Poland converted to Catholicism. Hungary on the other hand saw a competition between the Catholic and Orthodox churches, yet eventually Hungary also turned to Catholicism. Russia on the other hand was under the influence of the Orthodox church, and although Paganism survived for a while, the Russians converted to Orthodoxy like most of their Slavic cousins in the Balkans. However, when we are speaking about Russia, it is hard to speak of a political unity during the middle ages. Unlike Poland and Hungary, Russia was divided among principalities and the Mongols who came in the thirteenth century had a strong presence in the region both politically and culturally.

#### **Poland**

Poland was united by the Piast dynasty in the tenth century and became a kingdom more or less modelled on its western neighbor Germany. Mieszko I who united the country in the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century is considered to be the founder of the Piast dynasty and the first king of Poland. The Piast dynasty continued to expand the territories of the newly emerged Polish kingdom until the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Boleslaw III divided the country among his sons as the Germanic kings do in the west, and as a result of this, the duchies that emerged began to fight each other for supremacy until the arrival of the Mongols. At this stage, the Teutonic knights began to crusade for fighting against and converting the Pagan Prussians and other Baltic peoples. This caused a long series of battles between the Polish who were joined by the Lithuanians and the Teutonic order. The 13<sup>th</sup> century saw two important events for the Polish kingdom, the first and more lasting of these was the German and Jewish immigrations to Poland who would constitute important minorities for the country and help its urbanization and city life to develop along with trade and arts. The second development was the arrival of the Mongols. At the battle of Legnica in 1241 where the



Polish experienced a crushing defeat, many of the Polish dukes died and the country was pillaged. But it did not take long to revive for Poland and Hungary to overcome the effects of these invasions since they were not as devastating as in the other areas such as central Asia or parts of Russia. Poland was reunited after a while, and the Piast dynasty continued to rule until the death of Casimir the great without a male heir. As a result, the Polish aristocracy invited Louis, the King of Hungary who was also a Plantagenet. Thus, for a generation Poland and Hungary were united for the first time in their history. However, Louis also died without a male heir and his youngest daughter Jadwiga became the next ruler of Poland and the last Plantagenet to rule Poland. After her death, the Polish nobles this time invited the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Jogaila, who founded the Jagiellon dynasty which would continue to rule until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of this, the Polish kingdom and Lithuania were united and this new political entity became one of the largest and strongest powers in Europe. The kingdom expanded towards the Baltic, ousted the Teutonic knights and fought with Russian principalities over the vast Rus lands. Culture, commerce and other aspects of life developed rapidly during this era and Poland experienced its heyday during the late medieval ages.

## **Hungary**

The Hungarians were also a semi-nomadic people who had a similar life-style and traditions with the other Turkic tribes. During the early middle ages, they were further east, but later on they moved westwards and settled in the Carpathian basin. Before them, there were the Avars who were also of Central Asian origin in this area. But the Avars were defeated and weakened by the Franks by the time the Hungarians arrived the region. They settled and conquered the area quite easily and continued to expand and strengthen themselves. Hungary became a kingdom after the reign of Stephen I. The Hungarians converted to Catholicism during this stage and became an integral part of the Catholic Europe. But this process was slow and painful, and Hungary saw some Pagan revolts, in one of which the Catholic King was expelled from the country and all the clergy were killed by the Pagan rebels. Although they were initially a vassal of the Khazar Khanate when they first arrived in the Carpathian Basin, by the time Stephen was crowned as king, they were independent. But until the crowning of Stephen probably in 1000 CE, the Hungarians were a principality ruled by the Arpad dynasty some members of which still bore Turkic names. Whether the Hungarians are of Turkish origin or only adopted Turkic words, traditions and names is still debated. But by the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Hungarians were a new political entity in central Europe, and they remained as rivals to Poland and a power to be considered in Central Europe and the Balkans until the end of the middle ages.

## **Russia**

During the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the first Rus state was established by Rurik who was of Scandinavian origin. In fact, the Rus were the Scandinavian warriors, traders and adventurers who came to the area at the same time as the other Vikings were raiding western parts of Europe. In 862, Rurik, the leader of the Rus was elected as the Prince of Novogrod and his son Oleg moved southward and conquered Kiev and united the Eastern Slavs establishing the Kievan Rus. Although the ruling class were of Scandinavian origin, the population was mostly Slavic in this kingdom. They became strong in a short while and by the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Rus destroyed the Khazar Khanate and raided Persian and Byzantine territories. It became Orthodox Christian in time and the ruling Rurik dynasty also became Slavicized in time. The kingdom was one of the strongest kingdoms during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries but its strength waned as the kingdom was divided among the princes and political unity disintegrated. By the time the Mongols arrived, the country was not strong enough for a united defense and after the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the southern and central parts of Russia came under the control of the Golden Horde as the Kievan Rus was destroyed after the initial

battles with the Mongols. It was not until the 14<sup>th</sup> century that the Principality of Moscow which would eventually unite the Rus again and establish Russia that the Russians would have any political influence. For a while the Principality of Novogrod was strong, but even still they paid tribute to the Mongols. In 1380, in the battle of Kulikovo, the Principality of Moscow with its allied Principalities, defeated the Golden horde and established dominion over central and northern parts of Russia. By the time of Ivan III, Russia was united and they even claimed to become the third Rome after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and marriage of Ivan III to the niece of the last Byzantine emperor. Russia was important not only in terms of being a strong state, but it was also on the crossroads of trade routes. The silk road, the spice road and the fur road were passing through Russia in addition to the Levant, and much commerce was diverted to the Russian route in times of war in the Levant. Turkic and Mongolian peoples ruled the area for a long time and were in interaction with the Slavic peoples of the area. Their influence was large on the Russians.

#### Textbook:

Sedlar, J.W. *East Central Europe in the Middle Ages, 1000-1500*. University of Washington Press, 1994. (whole book)

#### Readings:

(Choose one of the selective books and analyze it for your paper)

Batou, J., and H. Szilajfer. *Western Europe, Eastern Europe and World Development 13th-18th Centuries: Collection of Essays of Marian Malowist*. Haymarket Books, 2012. (Chapters: 3, 4, 8, 9)

Brennan, T.M. *War, Religion, and Politics in the Medieval Baltic: Relations between the Papacy and the Teutonic Order During the Great Schism, 1378- 1418*. University of Kansas, History, 1993. (Whole book selective)

Curta, F., and R. Kovalev. *The Other Europe in the Middle Ages: Avars, Bulgars, Khazars, and*

*Cumans*. Brill, 2008. (Whole book, selective)

Jackson, P. *The Mongols and the West, 1221-1410*. Pearson Longman, 2005. (Chapters: 3-6)

Macháček, J. *The Rise of Medieval Towns and States in East Central Europe: Early Medieval Centres as Social and Economic Systems*. Brill, 2010. (Whole book, selective)

Martin, J. *Medieval Russia, 980-1584*. Cambridge University Press, 2007. (Whole book, selective)

### **Unit IV: Byzantium and the Rise of Islam**

From a historiographical point of view, in the Age of Enlightenment and especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the glorious adjective "Roman" was striped off from the Eastern Roman Empire and the new name "Byzantium" was given to the so-called "caesaro-papist" empire, a name never used by the Eastern Romans themselves. In fact, the Byzantine emperors gave themselves the title βασιλεύς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ Ῥωμαίων (emperor and autocrat of the Romans).

After the fourth century A.D., with Roman state patronage under Emperor Constantine, Christianity was transformed from a persecuted religion into a religion which started to

persecute its former persecutors. Constantine was the founder of New Rome, Constantinople, which subsequently turned into a world metropolis in the following centuries, its identity strictly connected to the Christian faith. The Eastern Roman emperors with their capital in Constantinople, later called Byzantium by the West, actually never called themselves Byzantines, but rather referred to themselves simply as Roman Emperors. Constantine's most important legacy as far as Christianity was concerned was the Council of Nicaea convened in 325, which established the dogma of much of what we know today as western Christianity. Various Christian traditions in the eastern and western part of empire were declared as heresy and the Roman State declared the accepted version of Christianity for the coming millennia. Naturally, there was dissidence from within the Roman State among the populace as well as the holders of power. Julian the Apostate (331/2-363) was one of these examples.

The advent of Islam in the seventh century and the expansion of the Islamic Empire from its original homeland in Arabia to vast lands throughout the Mediterranean as far as the Iberian Peninsula enabled the crystallisation of the Western European civilisation in an *universitas christiana* from the early Middle Ages onwards. Although Byzantium faced the same Islamic expansion, the power of the Byzantine state was not concentrated in the hands of the church but rather that of the emperor. Byzantium managed to continue many state and military institutions of Rome centuries after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. In the Middle Ages Constantinople continued to be the largest metropolis in Europe and the Middle East. The economy of the empire still remained largely based on trade as opposed to the feudal structure of Western Europe. Its head, the emperor, remained the supreme temporal and religious authority. Most of the clashes between the temporal and the religious figureheads, which occurred in Europe between the popes and the emperors were largely unknown Byzantium. The perceived "caesaro-papism" of Byzantines by Western European standards insured the subordination of the Byzantine Church to the emperor.

The identification of Islam as the anti-thesis of Christendom and European civilisation was already present before the Fall of Constantinople thanks to the rapid expansion of the Muslims within a century of the birth of the last Abrahamic religion. The Arabs had conquered by the eighth century Spain, North Africa and the Middle East, which were Christian lands until a century before. Coincidentally, in 1071 when the Seljukides opened the gates of Anatolia to the Turks by the victory at the battle of Manzikert against the Byzantine Empire, the following year the Normans had conquered Palermo from the Arabs, the last bastion of Muslim Sicily. Therefore, the Normans ended two hundred years of Muslim rule in Sicily, which had started by the landing of the Arabs on Mazara del Vallo in 827, followed by the fall of the fortress of Siracusa in 878 and accomplished by the fall of the last Byzantine fortress of Rometta in 965. Although it took a few centuries more for Christians in 1492 to completely cast away the Muslim Arab presence in Europe with the *reconquista* of Spain. With the final passage of the banners of Islam from the hands of the Arabs to the Turks in 1453, the fall of the last Christian imperial capital in the Levant and the fall of the millennium-old Eastern Roman Empire, the Muslim presence in Europe was to remain until the present day as an inseparable part of European reality.

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