

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL LIFE IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

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Abstract: The Early Middle Ages, spanning from the 5th to the 10th century, was a pivotal period in European history, marked by significant socio-economic and cultural transformations. Following the decline of the Roman Empire, the continent was plagued by invasions, fragmentation, and instability. However, amidst this turmoil, a new social, economic, and cultural landscape emerged, laying the foundations for the development of medieval society.

Keywords: Dark ages, Europe, social-economic life, culture, fertile lands, wars, formation new cultures.

Introduction: The Early Middle Ages, also known as the Dark Ages, refers to the period in European history from the end of the Roman Empire in the 5th century to the beginning of the High Middle Ages in the 11th century. This era is characterized by significant changes in socio-economic and cultural life, including the decline of centralized authority, the rise of feudalism, and the spread of Christianity. The collapse of the Roman Empire led to the disintegration of political and social structures, leading to a decentralized and fragmented society. The cultural life of the early Middle Ages saw the blending of Roman, Germanic, and Christian traditions, resulting in the formation of new cultural identities and practices. This period laid the foundation for the development of medieval Europe, shaping its social, economic, and cultural landscape for centuries to come.

Definition and Chronology

Defining the early Middle Ages is complex due to the diverse political and cultural landscapes of Europe during this time. Chronologically, it is situated between the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 AD and the beginning of the High Middle Ages around 1000 AD. The early Middle Ages saw the consolidation of new kingdoms and the establishment of feudal societies, with power being decentralized and fragmented. It was a period of great change and transformation, as Europe sought to redefine itself in the wake of the collapse of the Roman Empire. Understanding the definition and chronology of the early Middle Ages is crucial in comprehending the foundations of the socio-economic and cultural life that emerged during this formative period. The early Middle Ages, also known as the Dark Ages, is a period in European history that spans from the 5th to the 10th century. This era is characterized by the decline of the Roman Empire and the emergence of new political, economic, and social structures. The early Middle Ages were a time of transition, marked by the influence of Germanic tribes, the spread of Christianity, and the development of feudalism. This period is often associated with a lack of centralized authority, limited cultural achievements, and a focus on survival and basic needs.

Socio-economic life in the Early Middle Ages was characterized by the predominance of feudalism, a system in which lords granted land, known as fiefs, to vassals in exchange for loyalty, military service, and other forms of support. This hierarchical structure, with kings and nobles at the top and peasants and serfs at the bottom, became the backbone of medieval society. The lord-vassal relationship fostered a sense of obligation and reciprocity, as vassals were expected to provide military aid and assistance in times of need, while lords offered protection and patronage.

Agriculture formed the basis of the medieval economy, with the manor system emerging as the primary mode of production. Lords owned vast tracts of land, which were worked by peasants who received protection and security in exchange for a portion of their crops. This system of sharecropping, known as the "two-field system," involved the rotation of crops and allowed for increased agricultural productivity. The growth of trade and commerce was hindered by the lack of a standardized currency, inadequate transportation networks, and the fragmentation of territories. However, the rise of towns and cities, such as Paris, Cologne, and Venice, facilitated the exchange of goods and services, stimulating economic growth.

Cultural life in the Early Middle Ages was profoundly influenced by the Catholic Church, which became a dominant force in shaping the intellectual, artistic, and spiritual landscape of the period. Monasteries, as centers of learning and spirituality, played a crucial role in preserving classical knowledge and promoting education. The Church's emphasis on literacy and education contributed to the development of a written culture, as seen in the creation of intricate illuminated manuscripts and the transcription of classical texts.

The Church's influence extended beyond the realm of education, as it played a significant role in shaping the social and moral fabric of medieval society. The emphasis on charity, compassion, and morality helped to create a sense of community and social cohesion, as the Church provided a unifying force in a fragmented world. Moreover, the Church's patronage of the arts and architecture led to the creation of magnificent works of art, such as the mosaics of Ravenna and the architecture of Carolingian Renaissance. The Early Middle Ages also witnessed significant cultural exchanges between the Latin West and the Byzantine East, facilitated by the presence of trade routes and diplomatic contacts. The transmission of classical knowledge, particularly in the fields of philosophy, medicine, and astronomy, had a profound impact on the development of Western civilization. The works of Aristotle, Galen, and other ancient philosophers were reintroduced to Western Europe through the Islamic world, sparking an intellectual renaissance.

In the early Middle Ages, irrigation facilities were improved in the region and New-new land was developed. In the occupied lands, at the beginning of large irrigation structures, in the surroundings of central cities, on the borders of agricultural oases, mounds, castles and fortifications are raised. The four corners of the fortifications were raised high, and the wall and moors were provided with fortifications for firing from several rows of bows. The thick-defensive Noble strongholds were built by the sophisticated socio-economic and political life of the early Middle Ages, serving mainly as a defense facility against an attack by an external enemy, a place where a military garrison would gather, an administrative center, and a warehouse where food and weapons were stored. From the second half of the 6th century, the Union of Turkic tribes began to form in the territories of southern Siberia and northern Mongolia, that is, Altai. In the case of the Turkish Khaganate, which is important in the history of the statehood of our peoples, although only sources have survived to our days, some of them deny each other. These sources include the late 6th - century Byzantine historians Menander the protector, Feofan Vizantiysky, the historical works of the Syrian historian Ionna Ephesians, the epigraphic monuments-the Orkhan-Yenisei inscriptions, the "history of the House of Tan" of China. Besides him, references to Turkish khogany also appear in the works of the medieval authors at-Tabariy, Beruniy, Narshakhy. It is worth noting that the first mention of the Turkish term dates back to 542. Various sources refer to Turks by names such as "turk el", "turk", "turkash", "tukdus", "tu-kyu", "tuk-yut". The term "Turkish", which means strong, energetic like meanings, originally had a social meaning without having an ethnic character.

In the Turkish Khagan, the next person after the Khagan, the first official was the "Yabg'u" (Bahá'i), who was considered the chief knight. Yabgū, however, could not inherit the throne. The order of succession to the throne of the Turkish Khaganate was determined based on the system of division into uluses, typical for the structure of Turkish statehood. According to this system, the throne in most cases inherited not from father to son, but from brother to brother, and from Uncle to nephew. The heir to the throne was styled tegin (Prince). The princes ruled the Ulus given to them until their accession to the throne. The official overseeing the activities of the local governors of Central Asia was called "tudun", the overseer of the Khagan.

A special system of administrative and military-political management had been introduced in the Khaganate with the aim of uniting and governing the many tribes and elates of the Khaganate, collecting a certain amount of taxes and tributes from them in time. In the management of the state, the supreme ruler was assisted by his yakin relatives, first of all, members of the ruling dynasty, as well as the system of government established by them.

The foundation of the Turkish Khaganate state was formed by the people along with the land. In his time, the Turkic state, which developed independent and traditional forms of statehood in Central Asia, relied on certain social structures of the existing society and on the state-organized and controlled economic activities of the ancient Turks. The basis of this activity, according to historical literature, was nomadic cattle raising. The breed-tribal traditions were extremely strong in the cattle-raising Turks, and the basis of the tribe and Seed Communities was made up of large families. The nomadic herdsmen called the people's masses "budun" or "kora budun" by the Turks. Agriculture was also practiced in the Khaganate in large lands. Chinese sources indicate that, "although the Turks do not have permanent residence, but they each have a separated land". It is in such "isolated lands" that farmers have water sources as well as fertile lands that have used the opportunity to grow mainly grain crops.

The central system of government of the Turkish Khaganate is largely occupied by large political state events (maintaining state tranquility, expanding state borders, tax system, internal and foreign trade, diplomatic relations, etc.), giving a certain degree of freedom to the Bashkir system in the territories they conquered.

Furthermore, the Early Middle Ages saw the emergence of a distinct European identity, as the Latin language, Roman law, and Christian theology became the hallmarks of Western civilization. The rise of vernacular languages, such as Old English, Old French, and Old High German, marked the beginning of a process that would eventually give birth to modern European languages. The fusion of Germanic, Roman, and Christian elements gave rise to a unique cultural heritage, characterized by the coexistence of paganism and Christianity, feudalism and monarchy, and oral and written traditions.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, the socio-economic and cultural life of the Early Middle Ages was marked by significant transformations that shaped the course of European history. The emergence of feudalism, the manor system, and the Catholic Church as dominant institutions laid the foundations for the development of medieval society. The cultural exchanges between East and West, the transmission of classical knowledge, and the emergence of a distinct European identity all contributed to the creation of a unique cultural landscape. As the continent navigated the

challenges of the Early Middle Ages, the seeds were sown for the growth of a rich, complex, and dynamic civilization that would flourish in the centuries to come.

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