I. The Byzantine Empire, 600-1200

A. An Empire Beleaguered

1. Following the Sasanids, the Muslim Arabs took the wealthy provinces of Syria, Egypt, and Tunisia from the Byzantine Empire and converted their people to Islam. These losses permanently reduced the power of the Byzantine Empire.

2. On the religious and political fronts, the Byzantine Empire experienced declining relations with the popes and princes of Western Europe and the formal schism between the Latin and Orthodox churches in 1054.

B. Society and Urban Life

1. The Byzantine Empire experienced a decline of urbanism similar to that seen in the west, but it was not as severe. One result was the loss of the middle class, so that Byzantine society was characterized by a tremendous gap between the wealth of the aristocrats and the poverty of the peasants.

2. In the Byzantine period, the family became more rigid; women were confined to their houses and wore veils if they went out. However, Byzantine women ruled alongside their husband between 1028 and 1056, and women did not take refuge in nunneries.

3. The Byzantine emperors intervened in the economy by setting prices, controlling the provision of grain to the capital, and monopolizing trade on certain good. As a result, Constantinople was well supplied, but the cities and rural areas of the rest of the empire lagged behind in terms of wealth and technology.
4. Gradually, Western Europeans began to view the Byzantine Empire as a crumbling power. For their part, Byzantines thought that westerners were uncouth barbarians.

C. The Cultural Achievements

1. Legal scholars put together a collection of Roman Laws and edicts under the title *Body of Civil Law*. This compilation became the basis of Western European civil law.

2. Byzantine architects developed the technique of making domed buildings. The Italian Renaissance architects adopted the dome in the 15th and 16th centuries.

3. In the 9th century, the Byzantine missionaries Cyril and Methodius preached to the Slavs of Moravia and taught their followers to write in the Cyrillic script.

II. Early Medieval Europe, 600-1000

A. A Time of Insecurity

1. In the 5th century, the Roman Empire broke down. Europe was politically fragmented, with Germanic kings ruling a number of dissimilar kingdoms.

2. Western Europe continued to suffer invasions because Muslim Arabs and Berbers took the Iberian Peninsula and pushed into France.

3. In the 8th century, the Carolingians united various Frankish kingdoms into a larger empire. At its height, under Charlemagne, the empire included Gaul and parts of Germany and Italy. The empire was subdivided by Charlemagne’s grandsons and never united again.
4. Vikings attacked England, France, and Spain in the late 8th and 9th centuries.

Vikings also settled Iceland and Normandy, from which the Norman William the Conquerer invaded England in 1066.

B. A Self-Sufficient Economy

1. The fall of the Roman Empire was accompanied by an economic transformation that included de-urbanization and a decline in trade. Without the domination of Rome and its great tradition, regional elites became more self-sufficient and local small traditions flourished.

2. The medieval diet in the north was based on beer, lard or butter, and bread. In the south, the staples were wheat, wine, and olive oil.

3. Self-sufficient farming estates called manors were the primary centers of agricultural production. Manors grew from the need for self-sufficiency and self-defense.

4. The lord of a manor had almost unlimited power over his agricultural workers—the serfs. The conditions of agricultural workers varied because the tradition of a free peasantry survived in some areas.

C. Early Medieval Society in the West

1. During the early medieval period, a class of nobles emerged and developed into mounted knights. Landholding and military service became almost inseperable. The complex network of relationships between landholding and the obligation to provide military service to a lord is often referred to as feudalism.
2. The need for military security led to a new military technology, including the stirrup, bigger horses, and the armor and weapons of the knight. This equipment was expensive, and knights therefore needed land to support themselves.

3. Kings and nobles granted land (a fief) to a man in return for a promise to supply military service. By the 10th century, these fiefs had become hereditary.

4. Kings were weak because they depended on their vassals - who might very well hold fiefs from and be obliged to more than one lord. Vassals held most of a king’s realm, and most of the vassals granted substantial parts of lands to their vassals.

5. Kings and nobles had limited ability to administer and tax their realms. Their power was further limited by their inability to tax the vast landholding of the Church. For most medieval people the lord’s manor was the government.

6. Noble women were pawns in marriage politics. Women could own land, however, and non-noble women worked alongside the men.

III. The Western Church

A. Politics and the Church

1. The popes sought to combine their religious power with their political power by forging alliances with kings and finally by choosing (in 962) to crown a German king as Holy Roman Empire. The Holy Roman Empire was in fact no more than a loose coalition of German princes.

2. Even within the Holy Roman Empire, secular rulers argued that they should have the power to appoint bishops who held land fief. Popes disagreed, which
led to a conflict known as the investiture controversy. This issue was resolved through compromise in 1122. In England, conflict between secular power and the power of the church broke out when Henry II tried to bring the church under his control as part of a general effort to strengthen his power vis-à-vis the regional nobility.

3. Western Europe was heir to three legal traditions: Germanic Feudal law, canon (church law), and Roman law. The presence of conflicting legal theories and legal jurisdictions was a significant characteristic of Western Europe.

B. Monasticism

1. Christian Monasticism developed in Egypt in the 4th century on the basis of previous religious practices such as celibacy, devotion to prayer, and isolation from society.

2. In Western Europe, Benedict of Nursia (480-547) organized monasteries and supplied them with a set of written rules that governed all aspects of ritual and of everyday life.

3. Monasteries served a number of functions. They were centers of literacy and learning and refuges for wifows and other vulnerable women. They also functioned as inns and orphanages and managed their own estates of agricultural land.

4. It was difficult for the Catholic hierarchy to exercise oversight over the monasteries. In the 11th century, a reform movement developed within the monastic establishment when the abbey of Cluny worked to improve the administration and discipline of monasteries.
IV. Kievan Russia, 900-1200

A. The Rise of the Kievan State

1. Russia includes territory from the Black and Caspian Seas in the south to the Baltic and White Seas in the north. The territory includes a series of ecological zones running from east to west and is crossed by several navigable rivers.

2. In its early history, Russia was inhabited by a number of peoples of different language and ethnic groups whose territory shifted from century to century. What emerged was a general pattern of Slavs in the east, Finns in the north, and Turkic tribes in the south.

3. Forest dwellers, steppe nomads, and farmers in the various ecological zones traded with each other. Long-distance caravan trade linked Russia to the Silk Road, while Varangians (relatives of Vikings) were active traders on the rivers, and the Khazar Turks built a trading kingdom at the mouth of the Volga.

4. The Rus were societies of western Slav farmers ruled by Varangian nobles. Their most important cities were Kiev and Novgorod, both centers of trade.

5. In 980, Vladimir I became Grand Prince of Kiev. He chose Orthodox Christianity as the religion of his state and imitated the culture of the Byzantine Empire, building churches, adopting the Cyrillic alphabet, and orienting his trade toward the Byzantines.

6. Internal political struggles and conflict with external foes led to a decline of Kievan Russia after 1100.

B. Society and Culture
CHAPTER 9: Christian Societies Emerge in Europe, 600-1200

1. Kievan Russia had poor agricultural land, a short growing season, and primitive farming technology. Food production was low, and the political power of the Kievan state relied more on trade than it did on landholding.

2. The major cities of Kiev and Novgorod had populations of 30,000 to 50,000 - much smaller than Constantinople or large Muslim cities. Kiev, Novgorod, and other much smaller urban areas were centers for craftspeople and artisans, whose social status was higher than that of peasants.

3. Christianity spread slowly in the Kievan state. Pagan customs and polygamy persisted until as late as the 12th century. In the 12th century, Christianity triumphed and the church became more powerful, with some clergy functioning as tax collectors for the state.

V. Western Europe Revives, 1000-1200

A. The Role of Technology

1. Western Europe’s population and agricultural production increased in the period from 1000-1200, feeding a resurgence of trade and enabling kings to strengthen their control. Historians attributed the revival to new technologies and to the appearance of self-governing cities.

2. Historians agree that technology played a significant role in European population growth from 1000-1200. Among the technological innovations associated with this population growth are the heave moldboard plow, the horse collar, and the breast-strap harness.

3. Historians are not sure whether the horse collar and breast-strap harness were disseminated to Europe from Central Asia or from Tunisia and Libya, nor is it
precisely clear when and why European farmers began using teams of horses rather than the slower and weaker oxen to plow the heavy soils of northern Europe.

B. Cities and the Rebirth of the Trade

1. Independent, self-governing cities emerged first in Italy and Flanders. They relied on manufacturing and trade for their income, and they had legal independence so that their laws could favor manufacturing and trade.

2. In Italy, Venice emerged as a dominant sea power, trading in Muslim ports for spices and other goods. In Flanders, cities like Ghent imported wool from England and wove it into cloth for export.

3. The recovery of trade was accompanied by an increase in the use of high-value gold and silver coins, which had been rarely used in early medieval Europe. During the mid-12th century, Europeans began minting first silver and then gold coins.

VI. The Crusades, 1095-1204

A. The Roots of the Crusades

1. The Crusades were a series of Christian military campaigns against Muslims in the eastern Mediterranean between 1100 and 1200. Factors causing the Crusades included religious zeal, knights’ willingness to engage in church-sanctioned warfare, a desire for land on the part of younger sons of the European nobility, and an interest in trade.

2. The tradition of pilgrimages, Muslim control of Christian religious sites, and the Byzantine Empire’s requests for help against the Muslims combined to make
the Holy Land the focus of the Crusades. In 1095, Pope Urban II initiated the First Crusade when he called upon the Europeans to stop fighting each other and fight the Muslims instead.

B. The Impact of the Crusades

1. The Crusades had a limited impact on the Muslim world. More significant was that the Crusaders ended Europe’s intellectual isolation when Arabic and Greek manuscripts gave Europeans their first access to the work of the ancient Greek philosophers.

2. The Crusades had a significant impact on the lifestyle of European elites.

VII. Comparative Perspectives

A. Church Differences Between Western Europe and Byzantium

1. Church leaders developed different theological viewpoints and customs.

2. Western church leaders wrote their treatises in Latin; eastern church leaders wrote in Greek.

3. The eastern church was influenced by Arab conquests of the 7th century; the western church was not. Arabian conquests separated the two churches through an interruption in communication, leading to more distinctions in their development.

B. Political and Economic Distinctions Between Western Europe and Byzantium

1. Initially, the Byzantine Empire, following Roman political and legal heritage that had mostly faded in the west, enjoyed more economic prosperity and sophistication in the arts and culture than the west.
2. Christianity became embedded in Byzantine society before it did in the western church.

3. The Byzantine Empire did not witness the improved military techniques, new agricultural technologies, population growth, and trade of Western Europe, leading to its decline in prosperity and cultural innovation in comparison to the west.