



The Influence Of Civilization On The Political And Economic Life Of Western European Countries

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ABSTRACT

The European continent went through difficult historical circumstances in the early centuries AD. While civilization was flourishing in Rome, the period known as the “Great Migration of Peoples” took place. In the 4th–6th centuries, Germanic tribes living in the regions neighbouring Rome contributed to the destruction of ancient civilization. The Visigoths initially carried out invasions into the territories of the Roman Empire. Later, the Vandals destroyed everything they encountered during their aggressive campaigns. The term “vandalism,” which originated from this period, refers to acts of destruction. After the fall of the Roman Empire, a number of Germanic states emerged in its place. The transition to feudalism in Western Europe took place through the synthesis of Roman and barbarian societies.

Keywords:

Western Europe, Otto I, Charlemagne, civilization, Rome, Visigoths, Christianity, feudalism, Church, Vandals, Germans, Papal States, Augustine

Western European civilization is a complex phenomenon that emerged from a historical process in which numerous states developed in close political and economic interdependence. [3, 6]

Efforts to unite Europe began in the 8th–9th centuries. Charlemagne (768–814) succeeded in uniting a large part of the continent. Many historians regard this process as the revival of the Roman Empire. The states of Charlemagne and Otto I are also considered foundations of the emerging Western European civilization. [3, 5] Of course, this civilization was also shaped by the influence of the Catholic Church. However, its principal foundations remained the heritage of antiquity and the traditions of the Germanic world. [5, 6]

In 313, Christianity was granted legal status in the Roman Empire through the Edict of Milan. In the early 6th century, the first monasteries emerged. The monastery founded by Saint Benedict at Monte Cassino became an important centre of education for a long time. [4, 5]

After Rome was captured by the Visigoths, Augustine of Hippo wrote his work *The City of God*, in which he discussed the power of the Church. Thus, the idea of theocracy, or rule by religious authorities, developed. [5, 6]

In the 8th century, the Papal States emerged, and the popes received large amounts of land and privileges from kings. The Papal States gradually developed into a centralized state. Later, the Catholic Church became increasingly feudalized and accumulated wealth through the sale of indulgences. [3, 5] The power of the popes reached its peak during the 11th–13th centuries. Between 1096 and 1270, the Church organized the Crusades, which had various religious, political, and economic motives, including the pursuit of wealth and territory. [5, 6]

However, the political power of the Church did not remain dominant forever. From the 14th century onward, centralized states began to emerge in Europe, and the Papal States entered a period of decline. [3, 6] Many researchers debate where to draw the boundary between

the Middle Ages and the modern era. Some argue that the English Bourgeois Revolution marked the beginning of modern history. In fact, however, the decline of the Middle Ages had already begun. [3, 6]

As early as the 15th century, the Great Geographical Discoveries expanded the horizons of Western Europe. People's worldviews changed, and interest in scientific knowledge increased. The 15th century marked a period of significant changes in Europe's relations with other peoples. [1, 3]

The development of trade led to an increased demand for metals. As a result, efforts began to find new trade routes. The Portuguese and Spanish were the first to undertake these expeditions. These discoveries led to the emergence of an ocean-based, global civilization. [3, 6] Furthermore, contact with the New World contributed to the expansion of scientific knowledge. Prominent scholars such as Nicolaus Copernicus, Giordano Bruno, Galileo Galilei, René Descartes, Blaise Pascal, and Francis Bacon emerged during this period and contributed to the development of science and human understanding. [3, 6]

At the same time, the internal and external life of cities continued to change. Manufactories became increasingly widespread in urban areas. There were two main forms of manufacture: centralized and decentralized. In addition, new social classes began to emerge, including the new nobility and the working class. [3, 5]

In the 15th and 16th centuries, the Renaissance and the Reformation radically transformed the spiritual and intellectual life of Western Europe. The Reformation began in Germany under the leadership of Martin Luther. In his "95 Theses," he criticized the abuses of the Catholic Church and the papacy. The movement subsequently spread widely, leading to the emergence of Protestantism. [3, 6]

The Renaissance began in Italy and developed significantly during the 15th and 16th centuries. In painting, artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michelangelo sought to portray the spiritual lives and inner worlds of human beings. In literature, writers such as William Shakespeare and Miguel de Cervantes helped usher in a new era through their works. [3, 6]. In general, the Reformation and the Great

Geographical Discoveries helped usher in modern history and the development of Western civilization. New forms of production relations emerged, and European countries gradually moved towards capitalist development. The Industrial Revolution took place, while advances in science and technology helped pave the way for the United States to become a leading power on the world stage. [3, 6]

During the period of industrialization, Western culture flourished. The concepts of a technetronic society and an information society emerged, and the term "mass culture" came into widespread use. These ideas and concepts have become prominent features of contemporary Western civilization. [2, 6]

Capitalist relations, which began to develop under feudalism, laid the foundations for the Renaissance movement in Western Europe. In cultural history, this movement is known as the Renaissance. It first began in Italy in the 14th century and soon spread to the other countries of Europe. [3, 6]

The emergence of new forms of production, the transition to manufacturing, the Great Geographical Discoveries, the development of worldwide trade, and the triumph of absolutism all contributed to major social changes. Feudal fragmentation gradually came to an end, and national states emerged. The German Peasants' War and popular uprisings also brought about significant changes in social life and people's understanding of society. [1, 3, 6]

In the Middle Ages, universities were generally established at the initiative of scholars and enjoyed the right to self-government. University rectors were elected by their colleagues, academic communities organized their own daily activities, and they firmly defended their rights and privileges. [5, 6]

The Church, which had established control over education, attempted to bring universities under its authority as soon as they emerged. It offered them various privileges and financial support while also establishing its own universities. In this way, the Church sought to bring all universities under its influence. In the 16th century, the University of Paris served as an important model for this purpose and became an example for other Catholic

universities. Gradually, the Church assumed leadership of these institutions, and the faculty of theology became the most important faculty in church-controlled universities. [3, 5, 6]

Conclusion

In conclusion, the formation and development of Western European civilization was a complex historical process influenced by political, economic, religious, and cultural transformations. The heritage of the Roman Empire, the influence of Christianity, and the development of medieval states played an important role in shaping European society. The Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Great Geographical Discoveries contributed significantly to the expansion of scientific knowledge, cultural development, and changes in human worldviews. Furthermore, the emergence of capitalist relations, the growth of manufacturing, and the Industrial Revolution accelerated economic and social progress. The development of universities, education, and scientific thought also strengthened the intellectual foundations of Western civilization. Overall, these historical processes laid the foundations of modern Western European civilization and influenced the political, economic, and cultural development of the world.

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