

children's illustrated encyclopedia

The Middle Ages



 Orpheus

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THE ARAB WORLD

IN ABOUT 570 the Prophet Muhammad was born in the city of Makkah in Arabia. He was orphaned as a young boy. When he was about 12 years old, the Prophet Muhammad began work as a trader for his uncle and soon became known for his honesty. He married the widow of a wealthy merchant and became a successful



businessman. When he was about 40, the Prophet Muhammad began to go to the mountains outside Makkah to be by himself and think. It was here that the angel Gabriel came to him with a message from Allah (God). Gabriel told him that people should worship one God, Allah, and only Allah. The Prophet Muhammad began to preach Gabriel's message to the people of Makkah. The appearances of Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad marked the beginning of the Islamic faith. Followers became known as Muslims. Muslims believe that there is only one God, Allah, and that the Prophet Muhammad was the last messenger (prophet) of Allah. They believe that the messages given to the Prophet Muhammad by Gabriel were the words of Allah. These were eventually brought together to form the holy book of Islam, the *Qu'ran*.

Arab warriors attack on horseback, armed with spears, bows and arrows, and swords. The Arabs bred highly prized horses for use in battle. They also used camels to cross dry and inhospitable desert regions where horses would not survive.

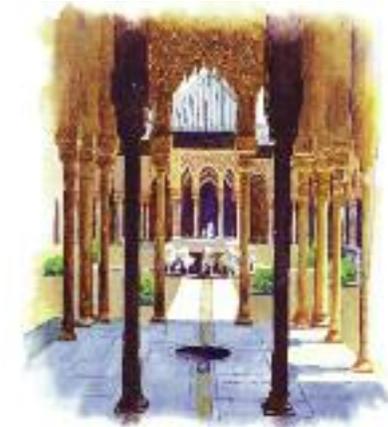
By the early 14th century, gunpowder was being imported from China, and the Arabs quickly learned how to make it for themselves. At first they used it to fire arrows from simple guns. More complicated guns and cannons soon became an important part of warfare in the Arab world.

THE SPREAD OF ISLAM

By the time of the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632, the Islamic faith was already spreading throughout Arabia. Within 25 years, Arab armies had taken control of parts of the mighty Byzantine (see page 7) and Sassanian empires, including what is now Syria, Iraq, Iran and Egypt. Islam quickly spread to these lands.

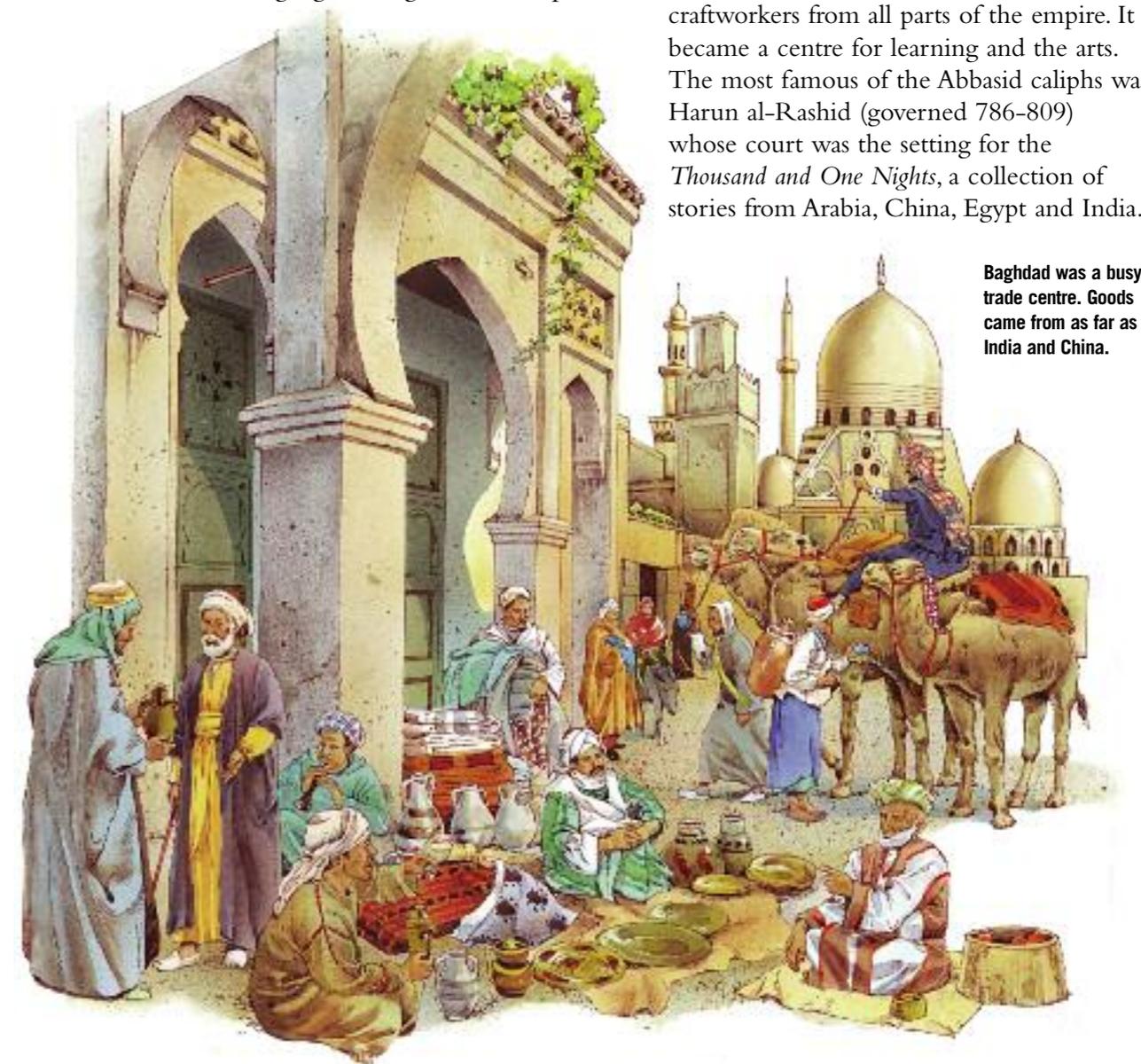
UMAYYADS AND ABBASIDS

Muslims across the expanding Islamic Empire were united by their faith, their belief in Allah and their respect for the *Qu'ran*. The leader of the Islamic community was known as the caliph (meaning "successor"). In 661 the first caliph of the Umayyad clan came to power as leader of the Islamic world. The Umayyad dynasty held on to power until 750, when the Abbasids seized control. Under the Umayyads, the Islamic faith reached as far west as Spain, and deep into Central Asia in the east. Arabic was made the official language throughout the empire.



The Alhambra Palace in Granada, Spain was built by the Moors, the Muslims who ruled part of Spain from the 700s to 1492. The Alhambra gets its name from the Arabic word for "red", because of the red brick used to build the outer walls.

The Abbasids built a fabulous new city to be the administrative centre of their empire. Founded in 762, Baghdad (in present-day Iraq), attracted scholars, artists and craftworkers from all parts of the empire. It became a centre for learning and the arts. The most famous of the Abbasid caliphs was Harun al-Rashid (governed 786-809) whose court was the setting for the *Thousand and One Nights*, a collection of stories from Arabia, China, Egypt and India.



Baghdad was a busy trade centre. Goods came from as far as India and China.

THE BARBARIANS

THE WORD “barbarian” originally came from the ancient Greeks, who used it to describe anyone who spoke a language they could not understand—a foreigner. The Romans applied the word to the peoples outside their vast empire—for example, the Huns, Goths and Vandals. It was these “barbarians” who finally brought an end to the Roman Empire.

ATTACKS ON ROME

The Goths and Vandals were Germanic tribes who came originally from southern Scandinavia. The Huns originated from Central Asia. Some time after 370 the Huns attacked eastern Europe, threatening the Goths, who moved westwards and southwards. Under their leader Attila, the Huns went on to attack Gaul (France), a land controlled by Rome, although they were defeated following the death of Attila in 453. Meanwhile, the Goths invaded Italy itself, looting Rome in 410.

The Vandals moved across Gaul and Spain to invade northern Africa in 429. They took



In 800 Charlemagne was crowned emperor of the lands he ruled over, now known as the Holy Roman Empire.

over the Roman provinces there and established a kingdom. From this base they sacked Rome in 455.

The Franks were another Germanic people. Under their leader, Clovis, they took over Gaul in the early 6th century. Clovis was the first Germanic ruler to adopt Christianity. Another famous Frankish king, Charlemagne, ruled from 768 to 814, and built up a massive empire (see map above).



King Alaric leads his Gothic army into Rome in 410.

BYZANTIUM

WHILE THE western half of the Roman Empire collapsed, overrun by Germanic tribes, the eastern half continued to flourish. In 330 the Roman emperor Constantine I had founded a new capital at Byzantium, a city-port on the European side of the Bosphorus. This capital was named Constantinople, and it became the flourishing centre of the eastern half of the Roman Empire, which was known as the Byzantine Empire. Under the influence of Constantine and his son Theodosius I, Christianity was the official religion of the Byzantine Empire and Constantinople the Christian capital of the East.

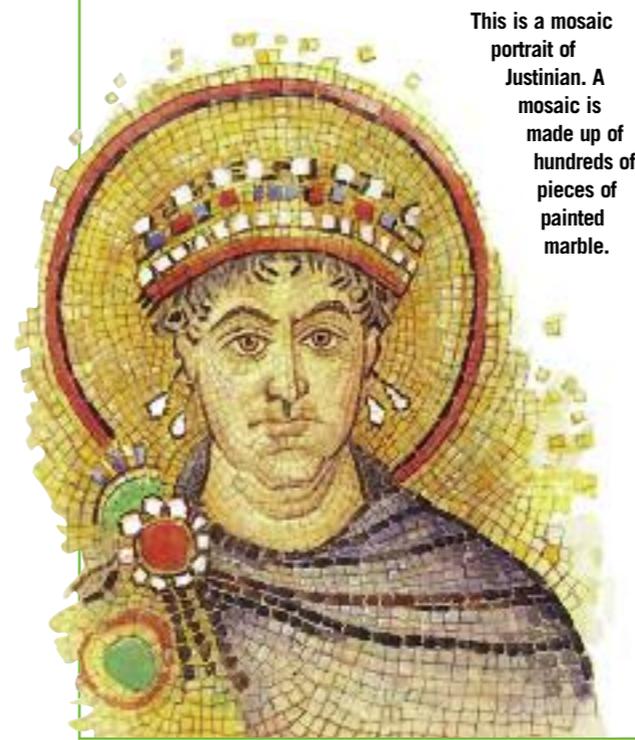
JUSTINIAN

The greatest of the emperors that ruled the Byzantine Empire was Justinian (reigned 527–65). Under Justinian, the Byzantine Empire expanded to its greatest size. The Byzantine armies, under their commander Belisarius, reconquered much of the land lost from the Roman Empire in North Africa, Greece, Turkey, Italy and parts of

Spain. Justinian is remembered for his legal and administrative skills. He tried to stamp out injustice and corruption in his empire, issuing a code of laws that has since been used to form the basis for legal systems in many countries. It was also during Justinian’s reign that the Byzantines built the magnificent church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, with its massive dome, beautiful wall paintings and golden, glittering mosaics.



During Byzantine times, hundreds of caves and churches were carved out of strange rock formations found in Cappadocia, Turkey. They still exist today.



This is a mosaic portrait of Justinian. A mosaic is made up of hundreds of pieces of painted marble.

INVASION AND CONQUEST

The conquests of Justinian’s reign used up nearly all the empire’s funds, and even before the emperor’s death, barbarian tribes were reconquering parts of the empire in the west. After 565 the Byzantine Empire was never as powerful again. A new enemy appeared in the 7th century as Arab armies began to invade after the death of Muhammad in 632 (see page 4). The Arabs quickly took control of the empire’s territories in the Middle East. The Byzantine Empire flourished once more in the late 9th century under the rule of Basil I. But, after the 11th century the empire was weakened by further invasions, and it finally came to an end when Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453.

CHINA

THE HAN dynasty ruled China for about 400 years, until the defeat of the last Han emperor in AD 220. During this time, the empire had expanded into Central Asia, and trade had flourished along the Silk Road linking China with the West. But the end of the Han dynasty brought confusion to China, as nomads attacked from the north and the country split into three kingdoms. China was reunited again by the brief rule of the Sui dynasty (581–618).



During the Yuan (Mongol) dynasty, European interest in China increased as reports of the riches that lay in the East were brought back by travellers and traders. One of these travellers was Marco Polo, who set off from Venice in 1271 when he was 17 years old. He journeyed with his father, Niccolo, and uncle, Matteo, across Asia. He travelled widely in China from 1275 to 1292, visiting the palace of the great Mongol emperor, Kublai Khan (see pages 14–15) in 1274. On his return home he wrote an account of his amazing experiences—although almost no-one believed him.

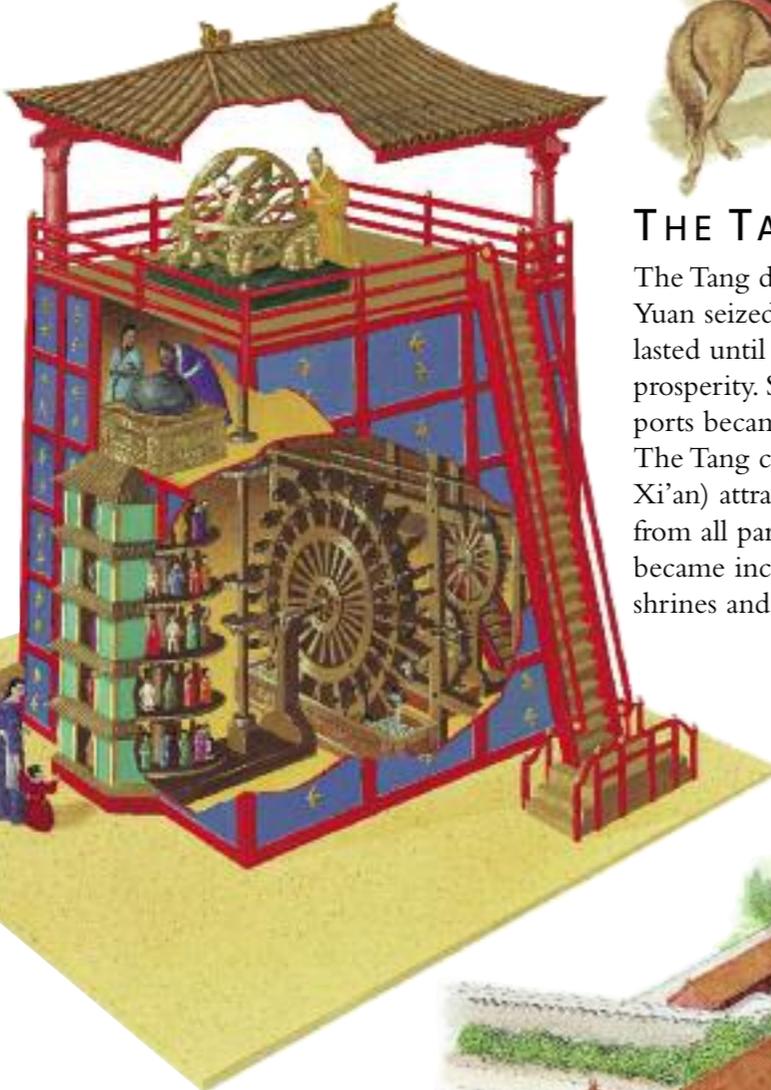
THE TANG DYNASTY

The Tang dynasty came to power when Li Yuan seized power in 618. This dynasty lasted until 907 and it was a time of great prosperity. Sea trade flourished, and many ports became bustling centres of commerce. The Tang capital Chang'an (present-day Xi'an) attracted scholars, artists and poets from all parts of Asia. The Buddhist religion became increasingly important, and many shrines and temples were built.

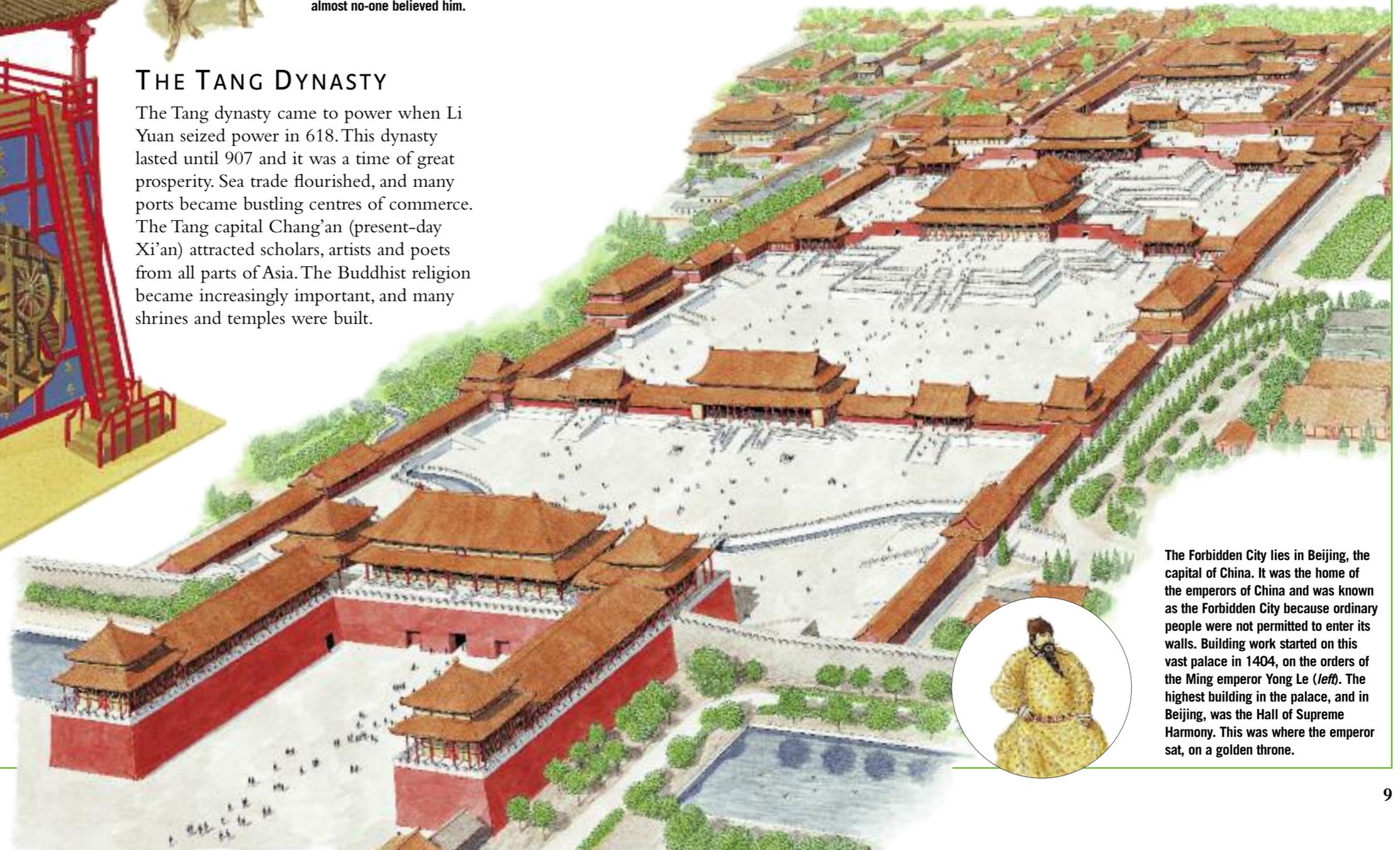
LATER DYNASTIES

After a period of civil war, the Song dynasty began in 960. Once again, this was a time of peace and prosperity in China, which was probably the wealthiest country in the world during the 11th and 12th centuries. An improved type of rice meant that food production increased, and the population of China topped 100 million. However, there was the constant threat from nomadic tribes to the north, and, during the 1200s, the Mongols swept into China (see pages 14–15). Under their leader, Kublai Khan, they established the Mongol, or Yuan, dynasty.

Kublai Khan established a new capital at Beijing and improved the road system in his new empire. But the Mongols ruled harshly and, after Kublai Khan's death, rebellions eventually drove the Mongols out of China. In 1368 the Ming emperors took control. The Ming tried to keep foreign influences out of China, severely restricting the activities of European merchants in their country. However, the Ming were overpowered in 1644 by more foreigners—the Manchus from Manchuria. They established the Qing dynasty and quickly adopted Chinese ways of life and culture. They ruled until 1912.



The Song dynasty was a period of great inventiveness in Chinese history. This mechanical water clock was built in 1029 by Su Song, and it ran for nearly 50 years. Other inventions included gunpowder and movable type, used for printing.



The Forbidden City lies in Beijing, the capital of China. It was the home of the emperors of China and was known as the Forbidden City because ordinary people were not permitted to enter its walls. Building work started on this vast palace in 1404, on the orders of the Ming emperor Yong Le (left). The highest building in the palace, and in Beijing, was the Hall of Supreme Harmony. This was where the emperor sat, on a golden throne.



MAYA AND AZTECS

BOOTH THE Maya and the Aztecs had powerful civilizations in Central America. The Maya inhabited the Yucatán Peninsula (*see map below*), and their civilization reached the height of its power from the 3rd to the 10th centuries AD. The Aztec's mighty empire lay in what is now Mexico. It was based around the capital city, Tenochtitlán (on the site of present-day Mexico City). The Aztecs flourished for about 100 years, from the 1400s to 1521.

Both the Maya and Aztecs held power in Central America. The Maya civilization covered a region that lies in present-day Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. The Aztec civilization lay farther west. The Incas had a vast empire in South America that stretched more than 2000 km down the Pacific coast. They held power in the 14th and 15th centuries (*see page 29*).



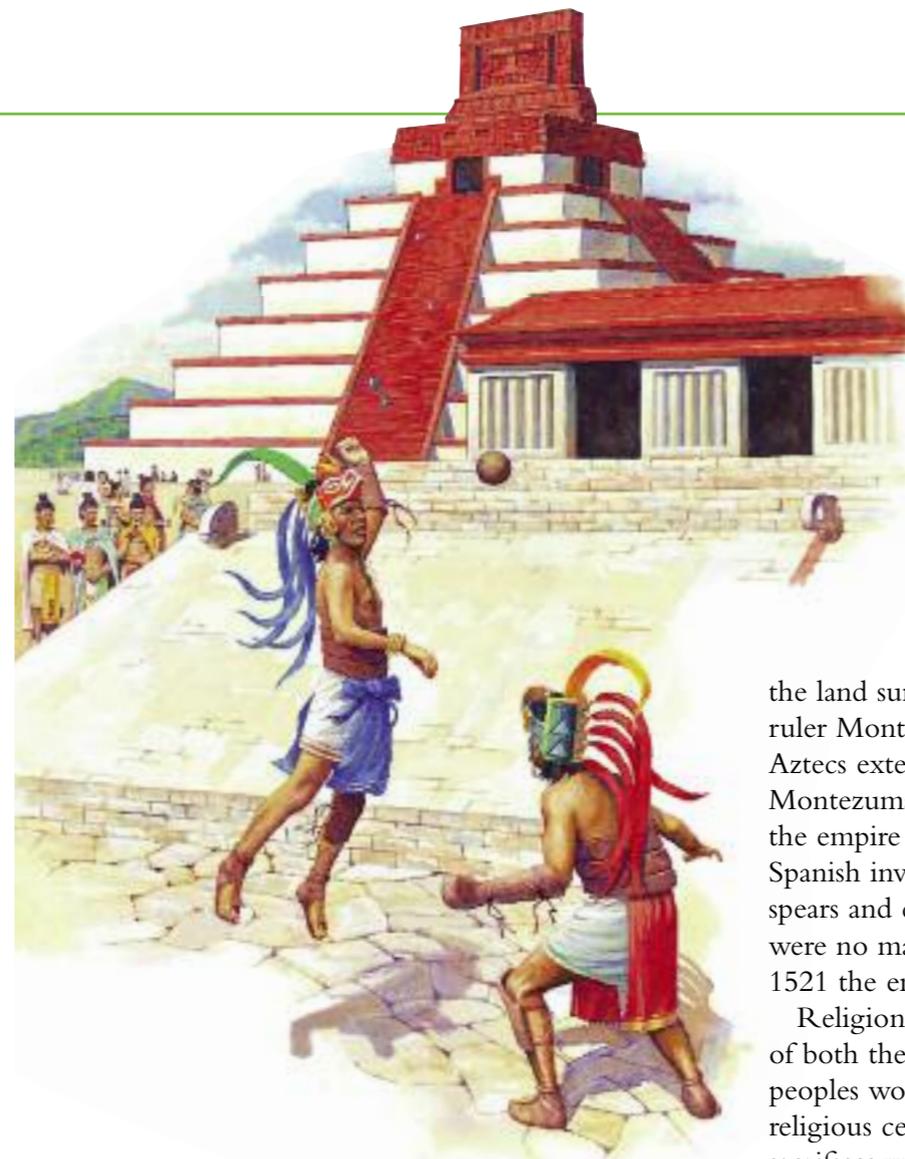
An Aztec jaguar knight wore the skins, head, jaws and teeth of a jaguar. These jaguar knights were the finest Aztec warriors and they were highly respected.

other peoples in Central America. Goods for trade included jaguar skins, jade, salt and cacao beans. The Maya transported goods by river and sea, or overland by foot.

In the countryside, most Maya people were farmers. One of the most important crops was maize which was used to make a type of flat bread, called *tortilla*, and an alcoholic drink called *balche*.

The Maya became very advanced in branches of astronomy and mathematics. Maya priests used this knowledge to draw up a calendar. The Maya also developed a writing system that used many different symbols. They kept records on large stone monuments known as *stelae*.

The Maya civilization came to an end when Spanish conquerors invaded in the 1500s. Descendants of the Maya continue to live in the region, speaking Maya languages.



Both the Aztecs and the Maya built their temples in the shape of stepped pyramids, some as high as 45 m. Many of these temples were used to sacrifice human victims. Captives were led to the altars at the top of a temple and killed in a bloodthirsty ritual.

Ball games were very popular. In this Aztec game, two players tried to knock a ball through a ring. They were allowed to use only their forearms, hips and thighs to touch the ball. It was serious sport—members of the losing team were often sacrificed to the gods.

the land surrounding the city. Under their ruler Montezuma I (ruled 1440–68), the Aztecs extended their empire. When Montezuma II became emperor in 1502, the empire was at its height. Then, in 1519, Spanish invaders attacked the Aztecs. The spears and clubs of the fierce Aztec warriors were no match for Spanish guns and by 1521 the empire was defeated.

Religion was very important in the lives of both the Maya and the Aztecs. Both peoples worshipped many gods. They held religious ceremonies at which human sacrifices were made to ensure plentiful harvests and good fortune.

THE AZTECS

The centre of the Aztec civilization was Tenochtitlán, the capital. Founded in 1325, the city covered about 15 square kilometres and was built on an island in Lake Texcoco. By the 1400s, the Aztecs controlled much of

Today, only ruins remain of the great Maya city of Chichén Itzá. The city grew to become one of the most powerful Maya centres between 900 and 1200.



THE VIKINGS

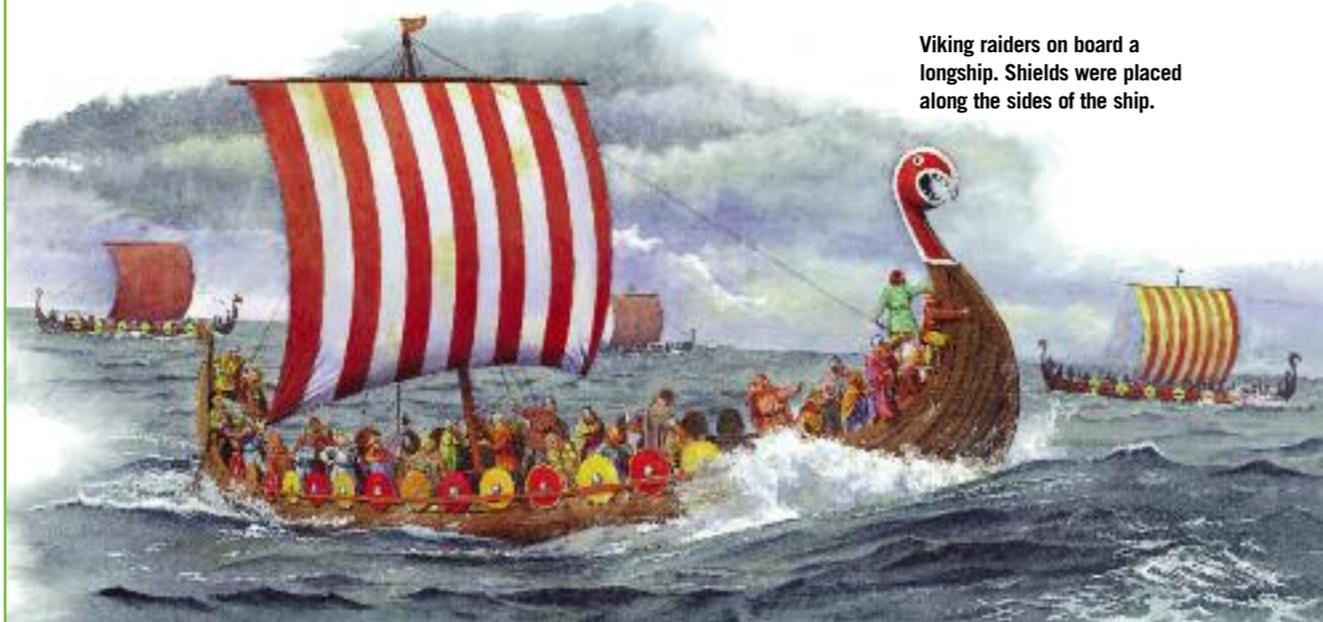
THE VIKINGS were seafaring peoples who came from the Scandinavian countries of northern Europe (modern-day Denmark, Norway and Sweden). Between about 750 and 1100 the Vikings raided and looted many parts of Europe. They were also colonizers, founding settlements in many regions including Iceland and Greenland. Viking ships even sailed as far west as North America. Five hundred years before Christopher Columbus made his historic voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, a Viking named Leif Ericsson landed on the coast of North America, probably in Newfoundland. He was the first European to set foot on North American soil. Ericsson established a settlement, but it was abandoned after a few years.

Along the Atlantic coastline of Scandinavia the sea cuts into the shoreline, creating deep inlets, and it is thought that the name Viking comes from the word *vik* meaning “inlet”. The Vikings were also known as Norsemen (or Northmen) by the peoples who feared their raids. As well as being fearsome warriors, the Vikings were great traders, sailing as far south as the Mediterranean Sea to exchange farm products and furs for weapons and luxury items such as gold, silver and silk.



VIKING RAIDERS

The Vikings carried out raids across much of Europe, from England to Italy, Russia to Spain. But what made the Vikings sail across the seas to attack towns and villages? One reason was a large increase in population in the Viking’s homelands which led to overcrowding and a shortage of farmland. Many Vikings decided to leave Scandinavia to look for new land elsewhere—even if they had to fight for it. Another reason was that the Vikings were naturally adventurous, and many young warriors saw raiding as a way of gaining wealth and honour. They favoured surprise attacks, and they looted everything from cattle and horses to valuable objects stolen from churches and monasteries. They showed little mercy to the terrified populations and what they did not steal, they usually burned.



Viking raiders on board a longship. Shields were placed along the sides of the ship.

HOME LIFE

Most Vikings were farmers. In forested Scandinavia they lived in timber houses, but in places where wood was scarce they used stone instead. They grew crops such as barley, oats and rye and kept cattle, goats, sheep and pigs. Some Vikings worked as fishermen, catching freshwater and sea fish as well as hunting for whales. Salt was a vital commodity, usually bought from travelling merchants. It was used to preserve fish and meat for the long winters.

The clothes of the Vikings were simple and practical, made from woollen or linen



This noble Viking warrior has two weapons—a sword and a spear. He is also carrying a wooden shield for protection. His helmet is made from iron and he wears a ring-mail tunic around his body. Only wealthy Viking leaders wore such metal armour.

A Viking fortress (below) was protected by circular embankments of wood and soil. There were four entrances to the fort.



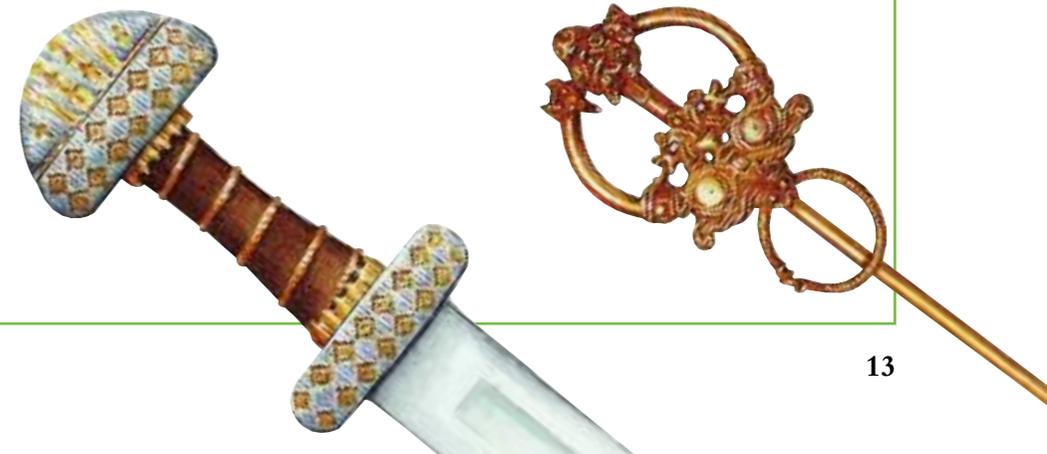
VIKING SHIPS

The Vikings were some of the most skilful boatbuilders and sailors of their time. Their ships, known as longships or dragon ships, were sleek and fast. A longship was built from wood and had a keel—a strip of wood that ran the length of the ship and cut into the water, helping to reduce the rolling motion. It was powered by a square-shaped sail or, if there was no wind, by oarsmen. The front end was often carved into an ornamental shape, such as a dragon’s head.

cloth. Men wore trousers and a long-sleeved shirt, women wore loose-fitting dresses. Both men and women wore leather shoes.

The Vikings had a system of writing, called runes. However, Viking history was not written but passed down the generations by word of mouth in verse stories called sagas. The Vikings were also skilful woodcarvers and metalworkers. They decorated their ships and houses with intricate carvings, and wore beautiful jewellery, much of it made from silver.

The Vikings fought with axes, spears, swords and bows and arrows. Highly prized by Viking warriors, swords (right) often had highly decorated handles. The blades were made of iron or steel. Ormate brooches (far right) were often worn in cloaks.



THE MONGOLS

THE MONGOLS were a nomadic people who lived on the steppes of Central Asia, from the Ural Mountains to the Gobi Desert. They moved from place to place with their herds of sheep, goats and cattle and they were skilful and daring on horseback. The Mongol peoples lived in tents made from felt, called *yurts*. Besides providing good protection, they were also easy to take down and put up again.

GENGHIS KHAN

The Mongols were fierce warriors, and members of one tribe often raided another tribe to accumulate wealth and prestige. However, in about 1200, a Mongol leader named Temüjin rose to power and brought all the Mongol tribes under his control.

Temüjin became known as Genghis Khan. Under his rule the Mongols attacked northern China as well as the lands that lay to the west. The Mongol armies rampaged across Russia and came within reach of Constantinople (see page 7). Everywhere they went, the Mongols inspired terror, as they looted, destroyed and slaughtered without mercy.

KUBLAI KHAN

When Genghis Khan died in China in 1227 the empire passed to his four sons. One, Ögödei, dominated the rest and continued his father's campaigns in Europe. Ögödei was killed in 1241 and, after much feuding, a grandson of Genghis Khan, Kublai Khan, eventually achieved power in 1264. He was determined to conquer all of China, and he finally succeeded in 1279.

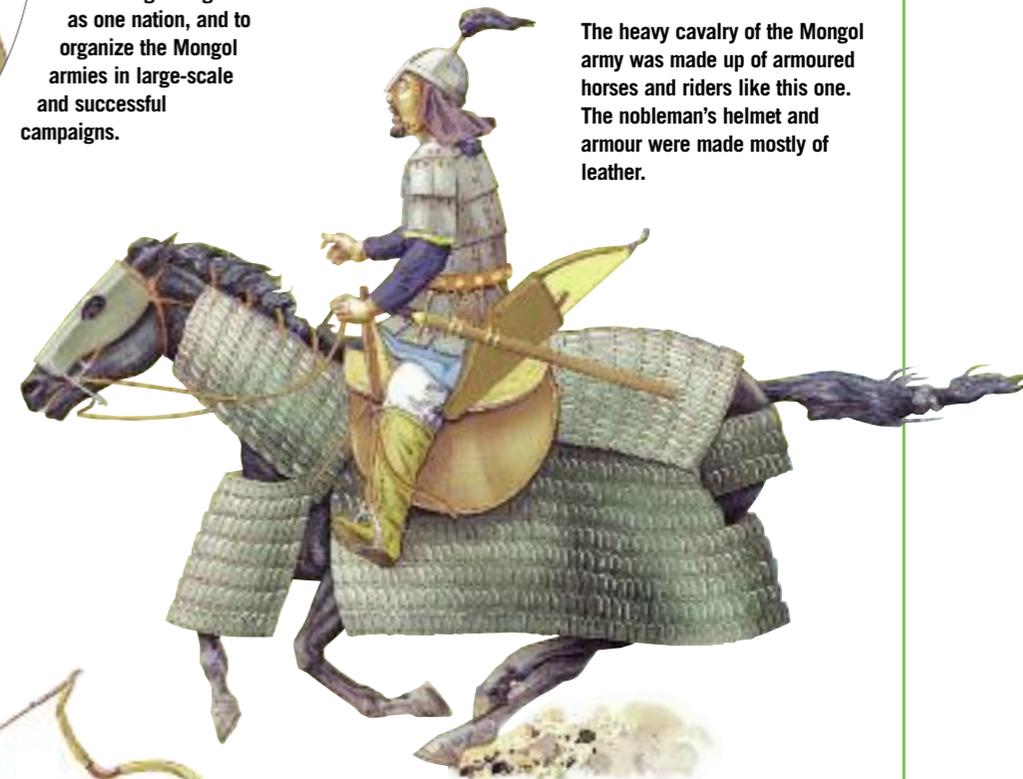


Genghis Khan was born in either 1162 or 1167. His early life was one of poverty, existing on roots, nuts and berries. We know about his life from the Mongol chronicle, the *Secret History of the Mongols* which was written in about 1240. He was the first leader to bring the Mongols together as one nation, and to organize the Mongol armies in large-scale and successful campaigns.

MONGOL RULE

Kublai Khan was a tolerant ruler. He permitted the existence of various religions in China, including Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. He organized food stores for times of famine, and he improved the road system so that trade could increase. He also tried to extend Mongol power to Japan, but his fleets were defeated in 1274 and 1281.

The heavy cavalry of the Mongol army was made up of armoured horses and riders like this one. The nobleman's helmet and armour were made mostly of leather.

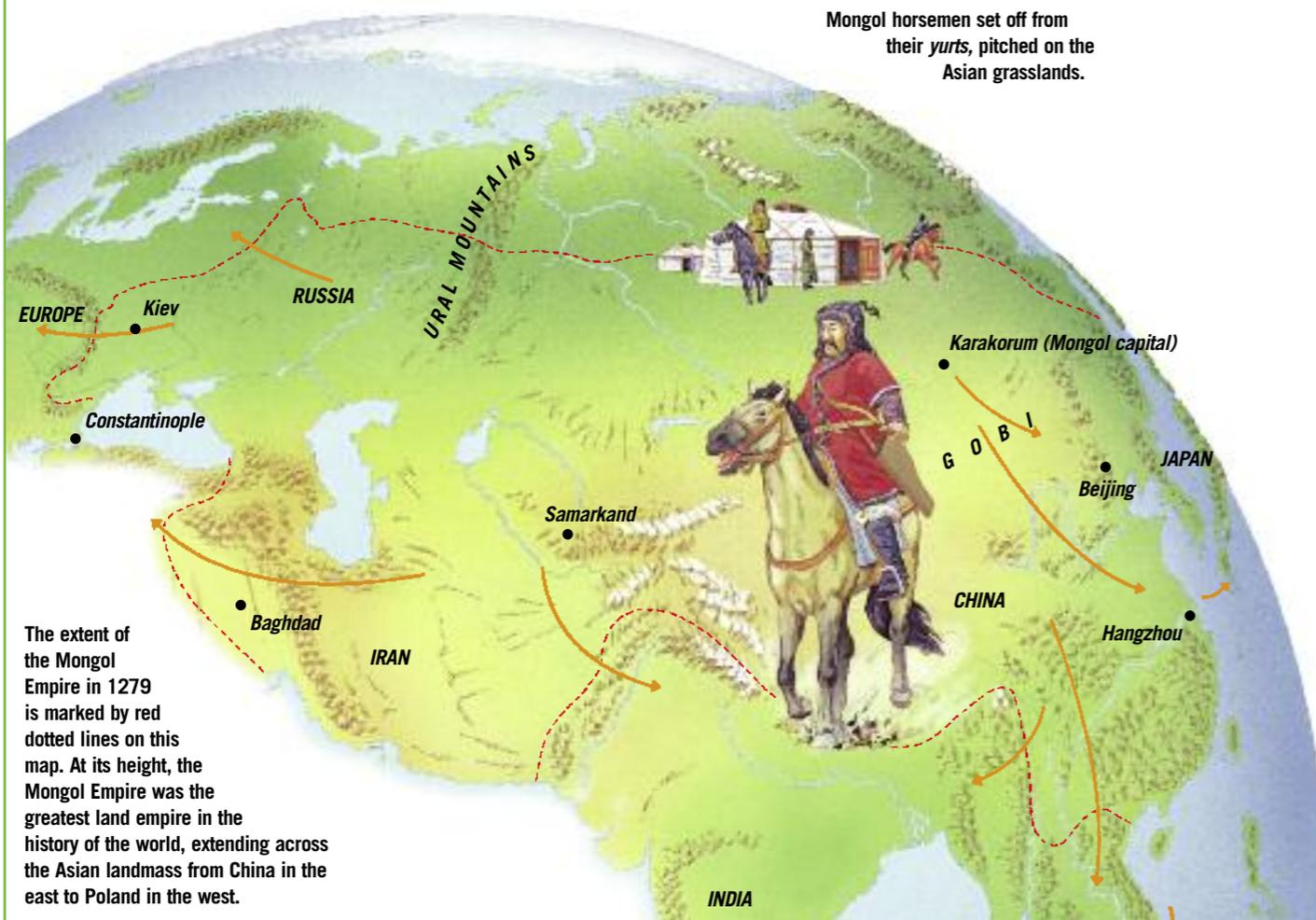


A Mongol archer prepares to loose a fatal arrow (below). Early in an attack, Mongol archers fired light arrows. When the enemy was at closer range, they used heavier, armour-piercing arrows. Every archer carried a bow and two quivers, containing about 30 arrows in total. Their short bows were specially designed to fire arrows with great power and accuracy.



THE END OF THE EMPIRE

After the death of Kublai Khan in 1294, his mighty empire began to decline. By 1368 the Chinese had overthrown their Mongol rulers. However, in the central Asian city of Samarkand, a descendant of Genghis Khan named Tamerlane (also Timur the Lame) seized the throne in 1369. He extended his power southwards and westwards, invading India in 1398. Tamerlane's troops sacked Delhi and killed most of its inhabitants. Nevertheless, after his death in 1405, Tamerlane's empire quickly fell apart. In 1526 one of Tamerlane's descendants became the first Great Mughal, ruler of the Mughal Empire in India.



Mongol horsemen set off from their *yurts*, pitched on the Asian grasslands.

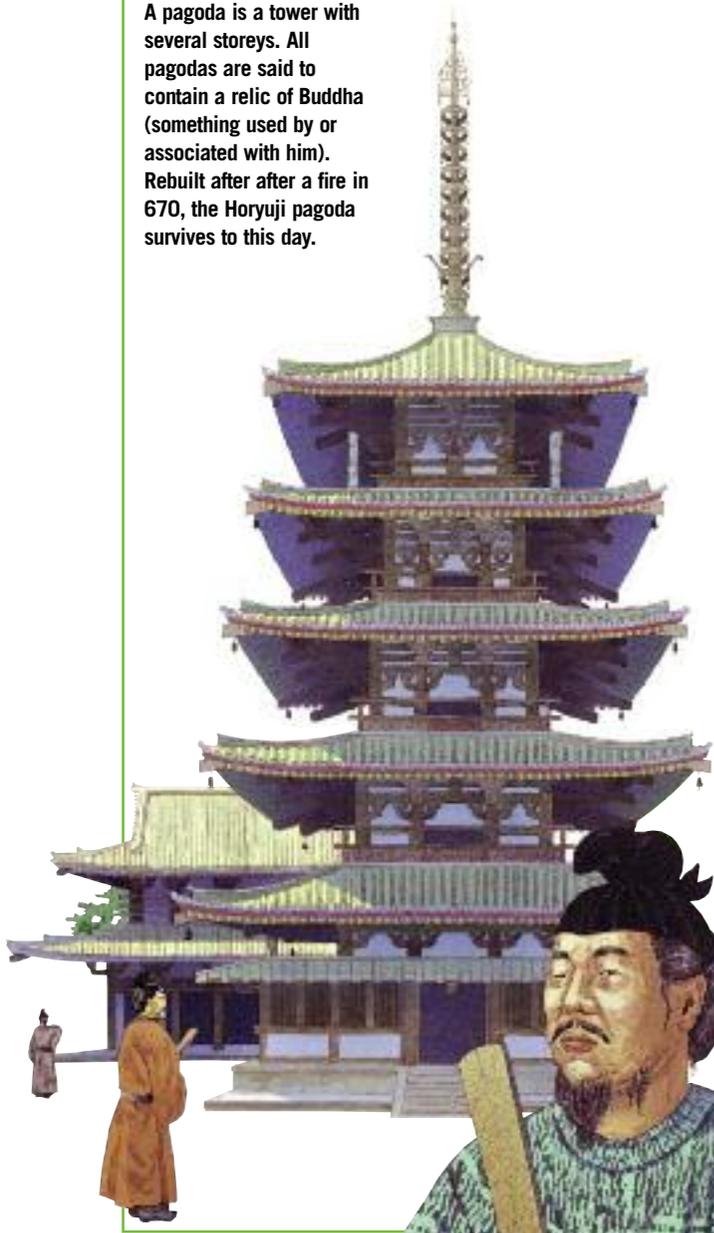
The extent of the Mongol Empire in 1279 is marked by red dotted lines on this map. At its height, the Mongol Empire was the greatest land empire in the history of the world, extending across the Asian landmass from China in the east to Poland in the west.

JAPAN

IN THE 5TH CENTURY, Japan was a remote land. Few people from the outside world ever visited this group of islands. But after about 550, Japan began to fall under the influence of its much larger neighbour, China. Buddhist monks from China persuaded the Japanese emperor to adopt Buddhism as the national religion. Scholars taught the Japanese to read and write Chinese.

Prince Shotoku (574-622) was an enthusiastic follower of Buddhism and

A pagoda is a tower with several storeys. All pagodas are said to contain a relic of Buddha (something used by or associated with him). Rebuilt after a fire in 670, the Horyuji pagoda survives to this day.



Samurai warriors wore armour made of metal plates. For weapons they used swords, lances and bows and arrows. The samurai's bow was taller than a man and fired arrows sharp enough to penetrate metal armour.

founded many temples in Japan. He also organized the system of government in Japan along Chinese lines, concentrating power on the emperor himself. By 800 the Japanese way of life was very similar to that of China.

In 858 a powerful man called Fujiwara Yoshifusa became regent for a nine-year-old emperor. He was supposed to rule Japan only while the emperor was a child, but he continued in power as a dictator even after the emperor became an adult. For many centuries after that, Japan was ruled by powerful military men. Wars broke out between rival clans bidding for power. The Fujiwara clan lost out to the Taira, who in turn were defeated by the Minamoto. Minamoto Yoritomo took on the title of shogun (great general) in 1192.

Prince Shotoku built the Horyuji, Japan's oldest surviving Buddhist monastery, between 601 and 607, at the city of Nara.

THE SAMURAI

During shogun rule, a powerful force in Japan were the samurai. These warrior knights enforced law and order in the land on behalf of local lords (*daimyo*) and were on hand to fight for the shogun if called upon. Samurai warriors followed a code of honour known as the *bushido*. The samurai were summoned to fight the Mongol armies that invaded Japan in 1274 (see page 15). The Mongol fleet was destroyed in a storm, but a new, even larger invasion was mounted in 1281. This time, a typhoon (hurricane) devastated the Mongol force and Japan was saved. The Japanese called these storms *kamikaze* ("divine winds").



The *daimyo*, together with his family and soldiers, lived in hilltop castles dominated by a building called a *tenshu*. This is Himeji Castle, known as the White Heron.

CIVIL WARS

Rivalry between clans continued, and some powerful *daimyo* became too powerful for the shogun to control. Wars frequently broke out between them from the 14th to 16th centuries, the fiercest being the Onin War, which lasted from 1467 to 1477. Eventually, unity was restored to the country and Toyotomi Hideyoshi became undisputed master of all Japan in 1591. The Tokugawa family took over in 1603. Nearly all trade and contact between Japan and foreign nations closed down for more than 200 years.

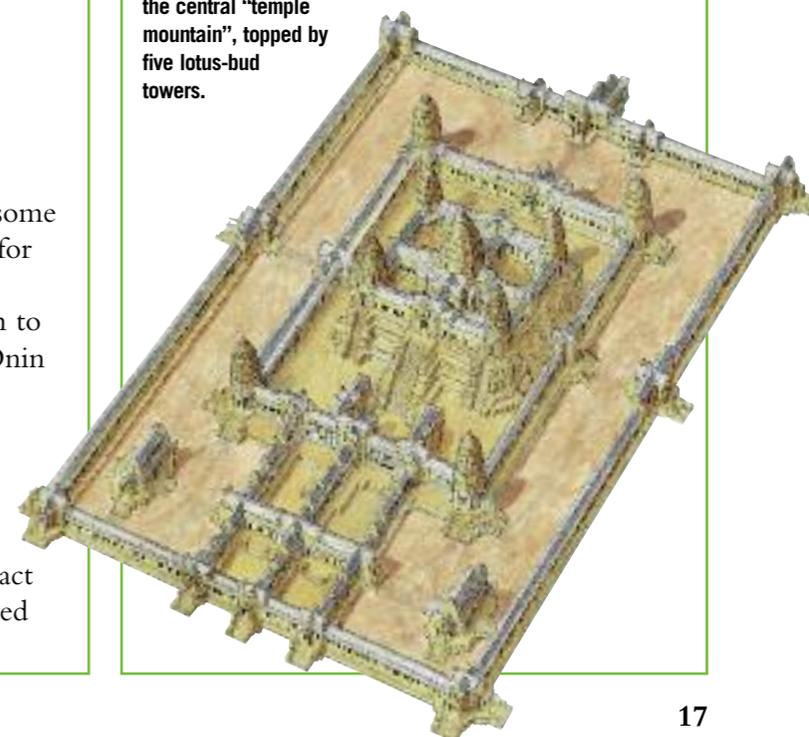
KHMER KINGDOM

CHINESE RULERS, or local leaders loyal to China, once governed South-east Asia. But from the 3rd century AD, traders and religious men from India introduced Hinduism and Buddhism to the local inhabitants. In Cambodia, Chinese rule was shaken off in the 9th century when the Khmer Kingdom was founded.

The building of a new capital city, called Angkor, which would grow into a vast complex of temples and houses for one million people, was begun in about 900. The temples, many of whose sandstone walls were covered by beautiful carvings of god-kings, dancers and animals, were surrounded by a network of dams and irrigation channels.

The Khmer Kingdom was finally overrun by armies of the neighbouring Thai kingdom in the mid-15th century. Angkor was abandoned to the jungle and not rediscovered until 1861 when a French naturalist, Albert Henri Mouhot, came across it by accident.

One of Angkor's many magnificent temples, called Angkor Wat, was built by King Suryavarman II (ruled 1113-50) as a palace and shrine to the god-king himself. A flight of steps leads up to the summit of the central "temple mountain", topped by five lotus-bud towers.



MEDIEVAL EUROPE

IN EUROPE, the period from about AD 500 to 1500 is known as the Middle Ages, or the medieval period. The Middle Ages began after the collapse of the Roman Empire (see page 6) and ended with the start of the Renaissance. The early part of this period was a time of invasions, including Viking raids (see pages 12-13) and the conquest of England by Duke William of Normandy in 1066. The later part saw frequent wars between the kingdoms that covered Europe, including the so-called Hundred Years' War fought between England and France (1337-1453).

THE FEUDAL SYSTEM

The feudal system, or feudalism, is the term used to describe a political and military system that developed in Europe during the Middle Ages. It had its roots with the Franks (see page 6) when Frankish warriors pledged loyalty to a ruler or lord in return for some sort of protection and reward. Feudalism spread across Europe between the 800s and 1200s. In return for military or other services, a lord would reward a loyal follower, known as a vassal. The reward was often in the form of land. The vassal was given the use of the land, although he did not own it. In return, he promised loyalty.

Noble vassals divided up the land given to them by their lord or king into manors (right). The land in each manor was worked by peasants. As well as labouring in their lord's fields, the peasants had small plots or strips of land on which to grow their own food. Some manors also had a windmill for grinding grain into flour.

Market day at a town in medieval Europe (below, left). Markets were very important in the Middle Ages. Farmers brought their produce to sell to the townspeople. Travelling merchants sold fine cloth to wealthy people. Jugglers entertained the crowds.



In the uncertain times experienced by people across Europe during the early Middle Ages, feudalism provided some kind of security and protection. But by the late 1200s, the system was beginning to fall apart. People began to make more use of money, preferring to pay rent for land than be bound by the feudal system. Lords, too, could pay for soldiers rather than reward them with land.

THE BLACK DEATH

The Black Death was a terrible disease that killed millions of people in Europe in the 1340s. The name might have come from the black spots that appeared on victims. The disease came from Asia in 1347 and spread across Europe in the following years. It was carried by fleas that lived on black rats—although no-one knew that at the time.

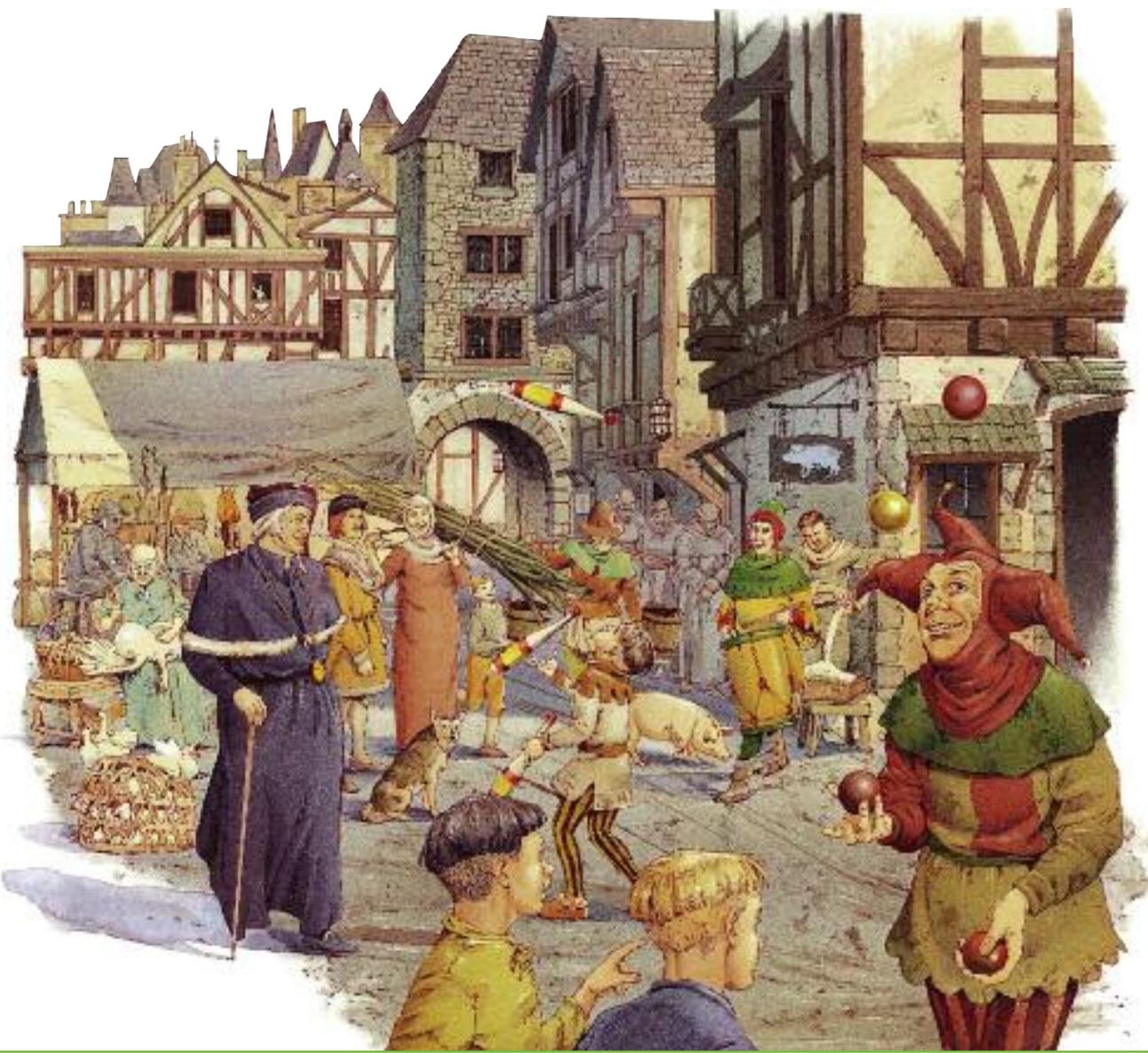
THE DOMESDAY BOOK

In early 1086 Duke William of Normandy ordered a survey of the whole of England. After his victory of 1066, he wanted information about his kingdom. The result was a place-by-place survey of the whole of England (except for London, Winchester, and parts of northern England), listing population, wealth and who owned what. It was later called the *Domesday Book*. Similar surveys were also made elsewhere in Europe from the 12th century onwards.

Such detailed work required people who could read and write, and it was during the Middle Ages that the earliest universities were founded in Europe—for example, in the Italian town of Bologna (1088).



No-one in the Middle Ages understood where the Black Death came from or how to treat it. Many people died within a day of catching the disease. The dead bodies were collected on carts. People fled from infected towns—spreading the disease as they went.



TRADE AND FAITH

BEFORE THE YEARS of plague (see page 19) and famine in the 1300s, medieval Europe was an increasingly wealthy place. Across Europe, land was drained and forests were cut down to bring more land under cultivation. In some places this process happened as villages expanded. In other places, fortresses were built as defence against invaders, or monasteries were founded in remote places, providing the starting-points for new settlements.

As the amount of food production increased so did the population. In 1000 it is estimated that the population of Europe was about 40 million. It rose dramatically to about 80 million in 1300, falling again in the 1300s as a result of plague and famine.

Any increase in wealth usually went to the lord of the manor, but life changed little for the peasants in the fields. They continued to live in cramped and disease-ridden conditions, with a monotonous diet of coarse bread, porridge and vegetables. They very rarely ate fish or meat—these were delicacies reserved for the table of the lord of the manor.



This is the Hölstentor Gate in the German town of Lübeck, one of the members of the Hanseatic League.

THE HANSEATIC LEAGUE

Towns were important centres of growth between 1000 and 1300 in Europe, particularly those on the great trading routes. In Germany, several towns joined together to form a trade alliance, known as the Hanseatic League. The towns of the League gained control of the trade in furs, fish and timber in northern Europe. Further south on the Mediterranean Sea, Italian cities such as Venice and Genoa became

centres for trade with Asia and North Africa. Many of these exotic wares—silks, spices and sugar—were then transported across the Alpine passes for sale in northern Europe. In the other direction, wool, iron and furs were taken southwards.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The Christian Church became very powerful during the Middle Ages in Europe. Christianity was an important part of everyday life for everyone—from peasant to lord. Many men and women chose to devote their lives to the Church by becoming monks or nuns. They lived in monasteries or nunneries and also worked in the fields or looked after the poor and the sick. They also spent much of their time in prayer and study, copying out texts and decorating them with beautiful pictures and letters, called illuminations. As a result, monasteries and nunneries became centres of scholarship across Europe.

Many magnificent cathedrals were built during the Middle Ages in Europe. The word “cathedral” comes from *cathedra*, meaning “bishop’s throne”. A cathedral was the building where the bishop’s throne was kept.

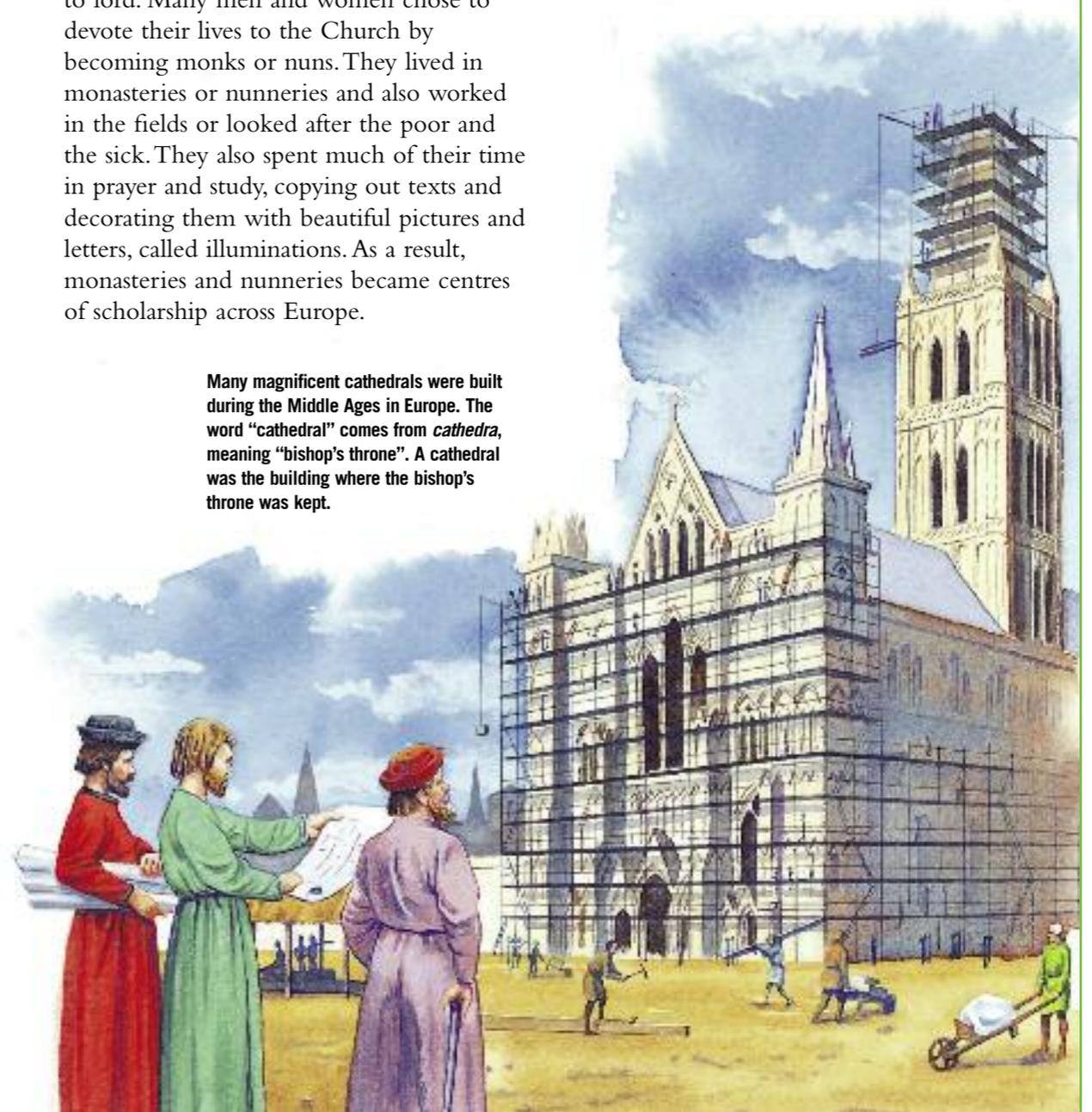
There were several orders (organizations) of monks and nuns. The earliest was started by St. Benedict of Nursia who founded the Benedictine order in the 500s. St. Benedict was the author of the *rule*—a set of guidelines for monastic life.

Thousands of monasteries, abbeys, churches and cathedrals were constructed across Europe during the Middle Ages. The largest took many years to complete. Some of the largest abbeys, for example Cluny in France, were like small, self-contained towns within their own walls.



People of the Middle Ages: (from left to right) a merchant, a lady of the royal court, a falconer, a friar and a peasant. Both the court lady and the merchant wear rich clothing while the peasant woman is much more simply dressed. The falconer would have worked at court, or for the lord of the manor. Falconry was very popular in Europe in the Middle Ages, and was known as the “sport of kings”. Falcons, hawks and

eagles were all trained to hunt. The falconer wore a heavy glove to protect his hand when the bird perched on it. The friar was a monk who did not live inside a monastery. Instead he travelled from place to place, preaching Christianity as he went. In medieval feudal society, the nobility held all the wealth and power. Below them came merchants and craftworkers. Peasants and servants were the poorest people.





Knights on horseback set off for battle during the Crusades.

KNIGHTS

WHEN DUKE William of Normandy invaded England in 1066 he brought with him mounted soldiers. They were called *knights* by the English, a word meaning “servant” or “retainer”. Under the feudal system, many of these soldiers became vassals (*see page 18*), and the word knight soon came to describe someone who served a king or lord as a mounted and armed soldier. Knights became a separate class of people, below the higher nobility in the feudal system, but above merchants and craftworkers. Knights were expected to follow a code of loyalty and honour and to protect the weak. This was known as the code of chivalry.

BECOMING A KNIGHT

Boys destined to become knights went through years of training. This was necessary to learn the fighting skills and the code of chivalrous behaviour expected of a knight. Young boys were sent as pages to live in a knight’s household. At the age of 15 or 16, a page became a squire, acting as the personal servant to a knight. A squire rode into battle with his master and learned how to fight. When this training was complete, the squire was ready to become a knight. This took place at a dubbing ceremony (*see opposite*).

A knight took various weapons into battle. His main weapon was his lance, a long pole used to unseat other riders. He also carried a sword, mace and battle-axe.

A knight dressed in full armour. This type of armour dates from the 15th century, when knights wore heavy suits made from metal plates weighing up to 25 kilos. Dressed in this armour, knights had to be lifted on to their horses with a crane. If they fell off they were helpless. Hidden by his armour, the only way to recognize a knight was by the coat of arms on his shield.



A squire becomes a knight in the dubbing ceremony. The squire kneels before his master, or the king, to receive a light tap on the shoulder with a sword, accompanied by the words “I dub you knight.”



In answer to the Pope’s call, Christians from all over Europe organized military expeditions called Crusades. There were eight Crusades in all (1096–1270). The aim of the Crusaders was to recapture the Holy Land, and to protect the Byzantine Empire (*see page 7*) from the Turks.

Everyone from kings to knights, nobles to peasants took part in the Crusades. In 1212 there was even a Children’s Crusade when thousands of boys and girls set off across Europe on the long trek south to the Mediterranean. Many of them perished.

The Crusaders failed to win back the Holy Land, and the Turks captured the Byzantine Empire in 1453. But trade and other contacts between Europe and Asia flourished as a result of the Crusades.

THE CRUSADES

In 1095 Pope Urban II, the leader of the Christian Church, called for European Christians to stop fighting among themselves and instead to recapture Palestine, the “Holy Land”. This region was important to Christians because it was where Jesus Christ had lived. In the 1000s it had been captured by the Turks, who made it difficult for Christians to visit holy sites and shrines. In 1095 the Turks had banned Christians from entering Jerusalem.



Two knights take part in a tournament, watched by a crowd of nobles. These knights are tilting. The purpose of tilting was to unseat the opposing knight from his horse. The knights charged at each other on horseback down narrow lanes, called lists. Although the knights were not trying to kill each other, the tilting competition was a test of bravery and skill, and sometimes resulted in serious injury.

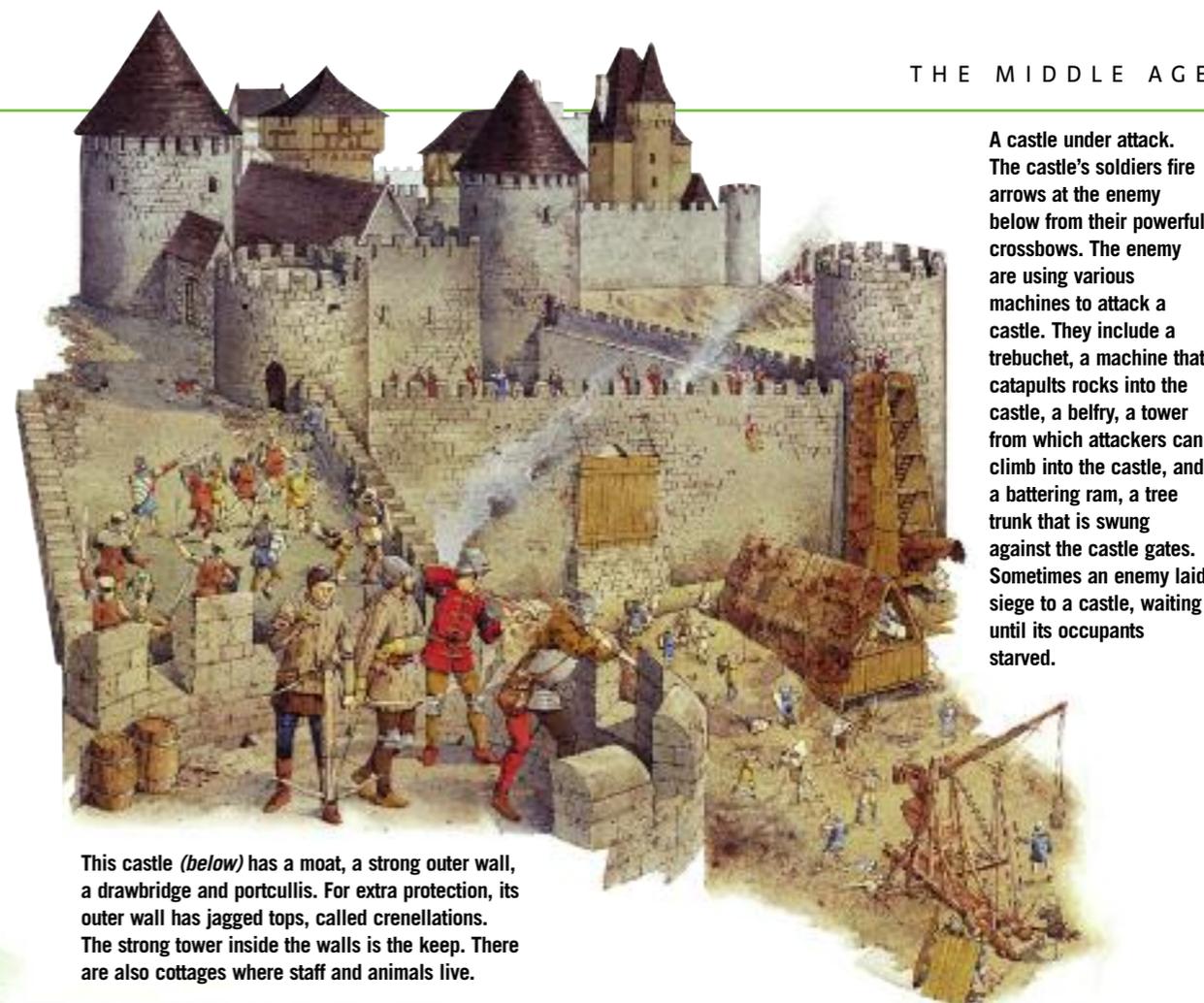
CASTLES

IN MEDIEVAL times, a castle was a fortified building that served as a home for the king or a lord. Many castles also had dungeons, an armoury (the place where weapons were kept) and a treasure house, as well as quarters for soldiers. Wars broke out frequently in medieval Europe, so it was important that a king or lord could protect himself, his family and followers. The castle became an important part of the feudal system (see pages 18-19).

Castles were often sited on hilltops to provide natural defences. The Norman invaders of England built castles with strong defensive walls and moats. Inside the walls was a central stronghold called a keep.

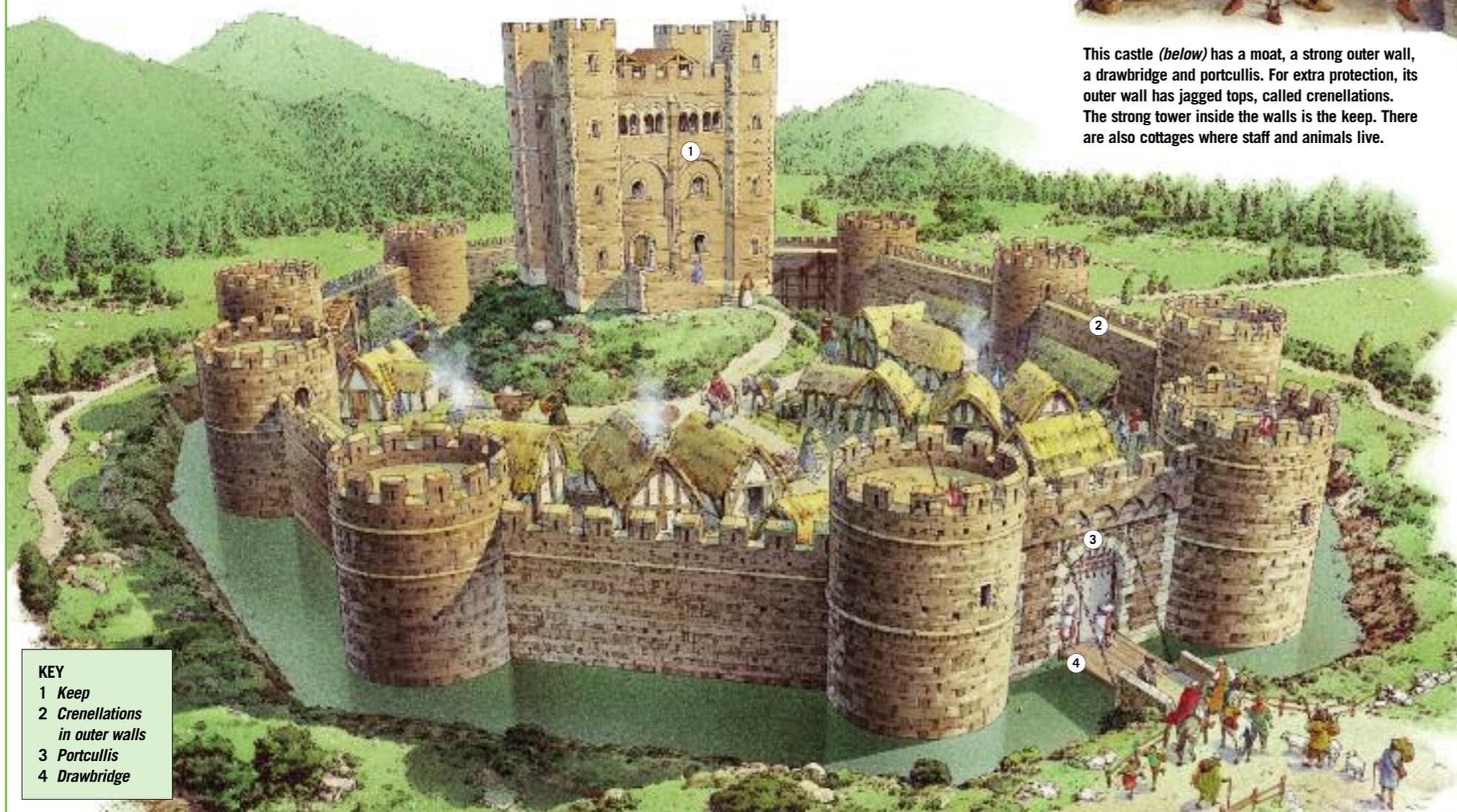
LIFE IN A CASTLE

The keep not only provided the strongest defensive position in times of attack, it was also where the lord, his family and followers lived. Inside was a great hall, where everyone ate. Servants carried food from the kitchens nearby. The hall was lit by candles and by torches made of wood and fat. Although there was a large fireplace for a fire to warm the hall, there was no glass in the windows, and most castles were cold and draughty places. At night the lord and lady would retire to their private apartment, known as a solar, but followers and servants simply rolled themselves in their cloaks and slept on the straw-covered floor, together with the castle's domestic animals.



A castle under attack. The castle's soldiers fire arrows at the enemy below from their powerful crossbows. The enemy are using various machines to attack a castle. They include a trebuchet, a machine that catapults rocks into the castle, a belfry, a tower from which attackers can climb into the castle, and a battering ram, a tree trunk that is swung against the castle gates. Sometimes an enemy laid siege to a castle, waiting until its occupants starved.

This castle (below) has a moat, a strong outer wall, a drawbridge and portcullis. For extra protection, its outer wall has jagged tops, called crenellations. The strong tower inside the walls is the keep. There are also cottages where staff and animals live.



KEY
 1 **Keep**
 2 **Crenellations**
 in outer walls
 3 **Portcullis**
 4 **Drawbridge**

ATTACKING A CASTLE

The outer wall of a castle was often surrounded by a water-filled moat. A drawbridge across the moat could be pulled up if the castle was attacked. The main entrance was also protected by a portcullis (an iron grating). The outer walls were usually topped with crenellations, allowing defenders to fire arrows while remaining under cover. There were also narrow slits in the walls through which archers fired.

CRUSADER CASTLES

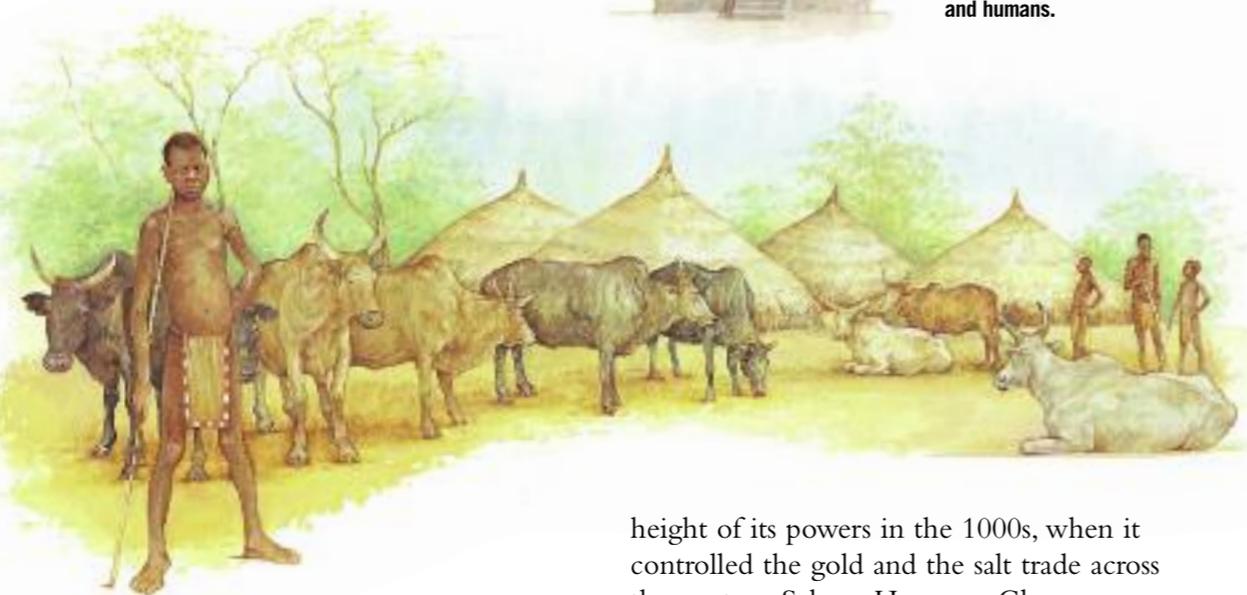
The Crusaders built castles in the Holy Land to defend land that they managed to take from the Turks (see pages 22-23). The design of these castles copied ideas from Byzantine fortresses, with additional defensive walls within the main wall. The best-known Crusader castle is Krak des Chevaliers, in present-day Syria. It was built by the Knights of St. John in the 1100s.

AFRICA

AFRICA was home to a wide variety of peoples and cultures, including civilizations to rival anything known in Medieval Europe. However, knowledge of much of African history is sketchy because of the scarcity of any written records. Much of what we do know comes from archaeological records—the physical remains, such as ruins, of ancient peoples.

THE BANTU MIGRATIONS

Bantu is the name given to a group of languages spoken by people from the Niger and Congo regions of West Africa. Some time during the first century BC, these peoples began to spread out to the south and east. They took with them knowledge about growing crops and working iron.



THE SPREAD OF ISLAM

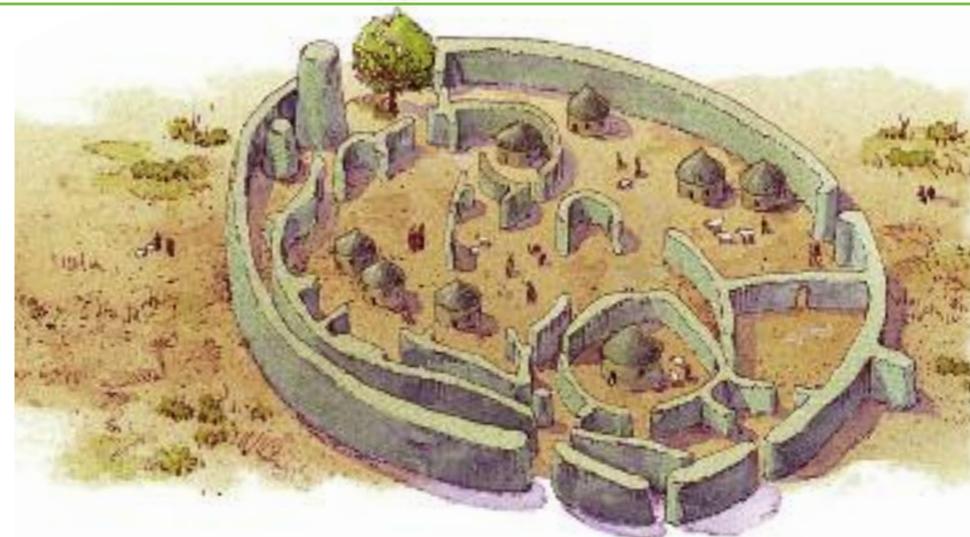
Within only a century of the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 (see pages 4-5), Islam had taken a firm hold in northern Africa. The Islamic faith travelled south the vast Sahara with traders, who made the hazardous journey through the desert in camel caravans. They traded with the ancient Kingdom of Ghana (in present-day Mali and Mauritania). Ghana reached the



This tall, thin monument is known as a *stela*. It is one of the stelae erected in Aksum in north-east Africa during the time of the Kingdom of Aksum (AD 100-700). The stelae were placed to mark the tombs of the rulers of Aksum. They were carved to look like tall, thin multi-storey houses. The tallest, now fallen down, was 33 m high.

A Bantu herdsman with his cattle. In some parts of tropical Africa it was impossible to keep herds of cattle because of the presence of a blood-sucking insect called the tsetse fly. This fly passed on a disease called “sleeping sickness” which killed both cattle and humans.

height of its powers in the 1000s, when it controlled the gold and the salt trade across the western Sahara. However, Ghana declined as the state of Mali became increasingly powerful and took over the control of trans-Saharan trade. The rulers of Mali were mostly Muslim, the most famous being Mansa Musa, who in 1324-25 went on a lavish pilgrimage to the Muslim holy city, Makkah (see page 4). As he travelled with 60,000 followers, Mansa Musa gave away vast quantities of gold. His fame spread as far away as Europe.



Great Zimbabwe was the capital of a large state that thrived in south-eastern Africa between 1300 and 1450. Great Zimbabwe grew powerful through trade, acting as the “middleman” between the gold-producing states to the west and the Swahili traders on the eastern coast. The Shona people of Great Zimbabwe were also cattle-herders, and they sited their capital in an area with plentiful grazing. The word *zimbabwe* comes from Shona words meaning “stone buildings”. The walls of Great Zimbabwe were skilfully made and in some places are almost a metre thick.

WEST AFRICAN STATES

Further to the south of Ghana and Mali lay other powerful states. They included Benin, Dahomey, Asante and the Hausa city-states. Although influenced by Muslim ideas from the north, the rulers of these states continued to practise traditional religions. Some of the states became rich from gold production, for example, Asante. Many of them traded gold and ivory with Europeans after the first Portuguese ships appeared along the coast of West Africa in the 1400s. In the 1500s, the terrible trade in slaves started, when African captives were taken across the Atlantic Ocean to work in the Americas.

EAST AFRICA

Trade in East Africa was already well-established when Muslim Arabs began to settle along the coast some time around the 1000s. Trading centres such as Kilwa,

African kings ruled over thriving kingdoms at a time when European peoples were suffering the effects of plague and war in the later Middle Ages. Their capital cities were protected by immense walls. Their lands were ruled with the help of powerful armies and by making alliances with local leaders.



Mogadishu and Zanzibar developed and prospered, with goods coming from as far afield as China. People spoke Swahili, and their culture became a blend of black African and Islamic traditions.

Many other kingdoms flourished in the grasslands and forests of central and south Africa, especially in places with fertile soils, and sources of salt and metals nearby.

The mosque at Jenne in Mali was built during the 14th century. It is made from clay on a timber structure. Jenne was an important city because it lay on one of the major long-distance trade routes across the Sahara.

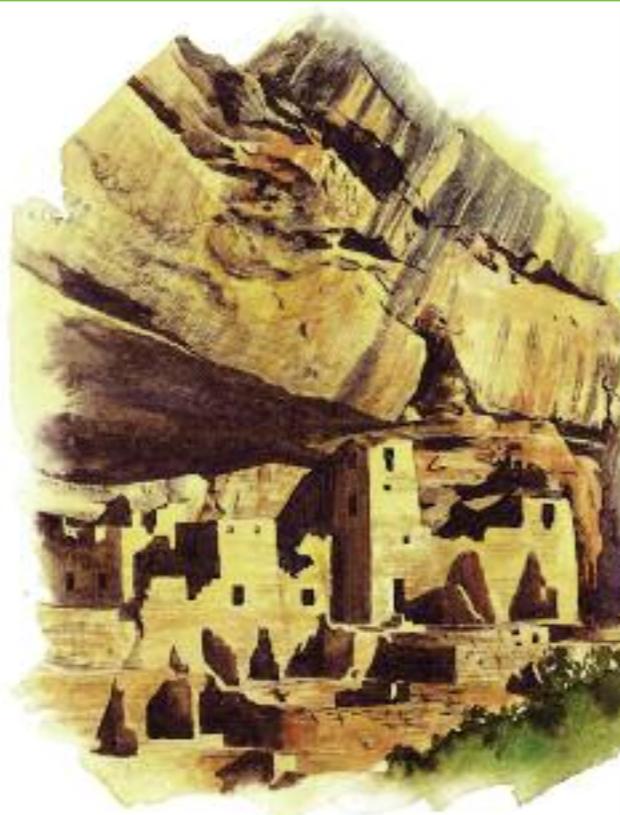


NORTH AMERICA

BEFORE the arrival of European settlers in the 1500s, North America was home to millions of people known as Native Americans (or American Indians). The first Native Americans arrived in North America thousands of years ago, and developed an extraordinary variety of life styles and cultures as they spread across the continent.

NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES

Native Americans lived in groups, called tribes. At the time of the arrival of Europeans there were about 300 different tribes, each with its own form of government, language, religious beliefs and culture. The way of life of a tribe depended largely on the environment in which they lived. The Inuit of the frozen Arctic hunted seals for food. They used the sealskins to make shelters, boats and clothing. But in the hot, dry south-west region of North America, the Pueblo peoples built houses

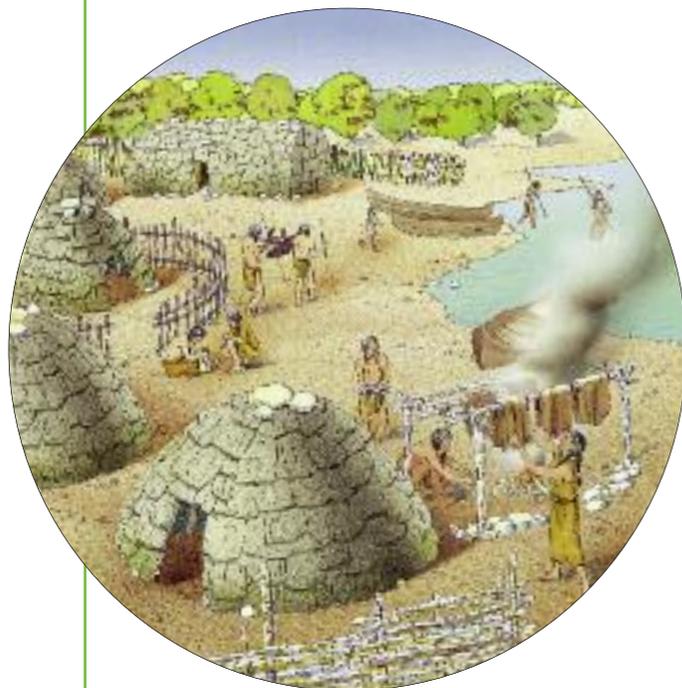


The ruins of the Cliff Palace in Mesa Verde, Colorado. This structure was built by the Anasazi people of the southwest.

from dried mud, called adobe. Water was scarce, so they developed special techniques often tapping water supplies deep beneath the ground.

DAILY LIFE

Wherever a tribe lived, daily life centred around providing the necessities of life—food and shelter. The main crops grown by Native Americans included maize, squashes and beans. Many tribes lived by hunting animals such as buffalo and game, or by gathering berries, roots and other wild plants. Shelters varied widely from tribe to tribe. Nomadic tribes built movable shelters. Great Plains tribes, for example, lived in tipis, cone-shaped tents made from buffalo skin stretched over a wooden frame. Religion played an important part in the life of all Native Americans. They believed in a powerful spirit world which influenced the lives of all humans.



A Native American settlement on the northeast coast of North America. This is a village of the Algonquin people who built dome-shaped shelters out of birch bark. The peoples of the northeast also used birch bark to make elegant canoes.

SOUTH AMERICA

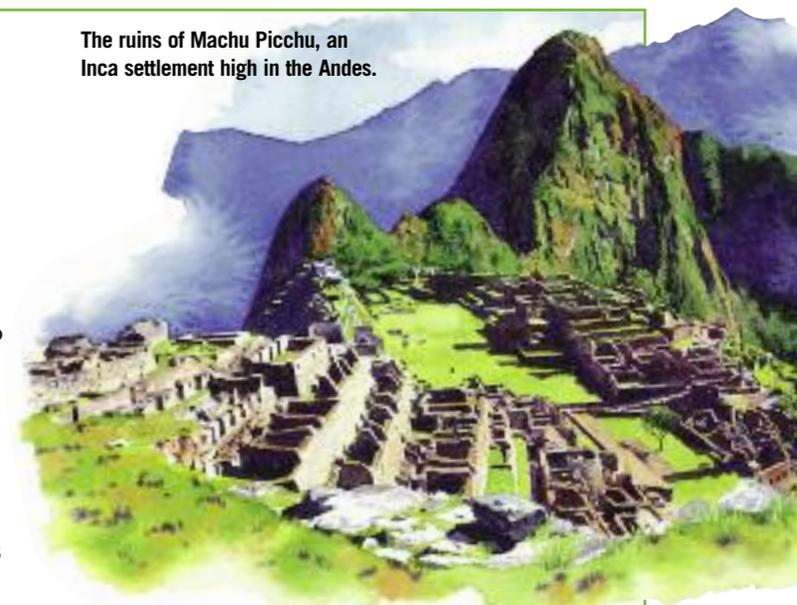
MANY CIVILIZATIONS flourished in the Andes region of South America before the arrival of Europeans in the 1500s. The best-known is the huge empire of the Incas, which was at its height in the late 1400s and early 1500s. But other societies, for example the Huari, Tiahuanaco and Chimu, also controlled large areas of this mountainous region at various times.

Further east, across the Andes Mountains, lay the vast basin of the River Amazon, covered in tropical rainforest. This hot and humid region was home to numerous tribes of Native Americans. Many used a form of agriculture known as slash-and-burn, in which a small area of rainforest was cleared in order to grow crops. When the soil was exhausted, people moved on to a new plot, leaving the old clearing to be taken over once again by the forest.

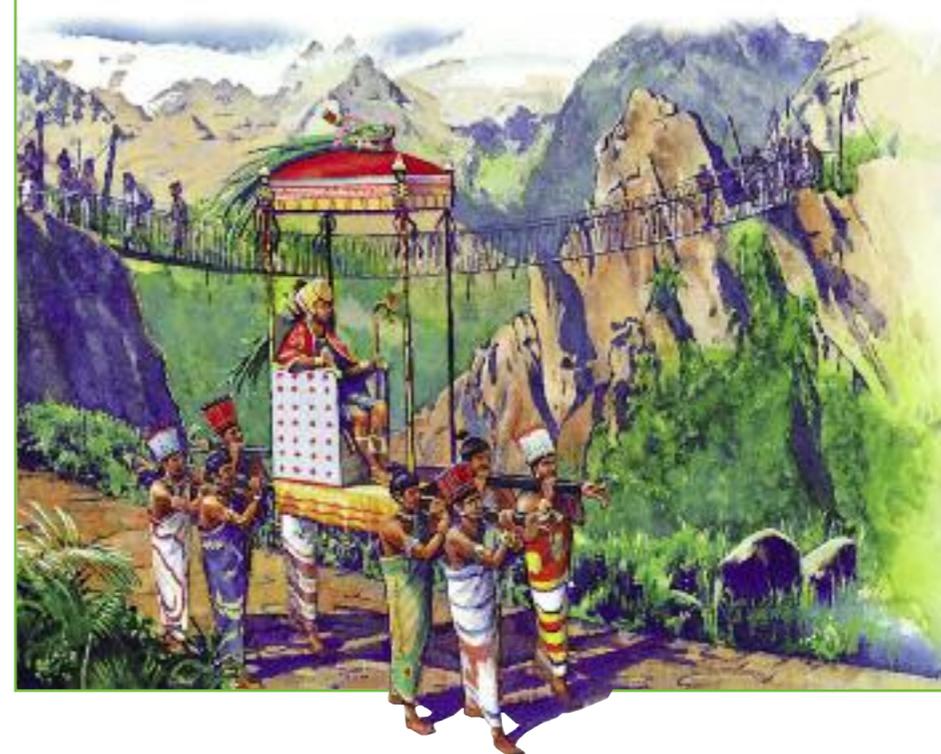
ANDES EMPIRES

The civilization of Tiahuanaco was based near Lake Titicaca, high in the mountains of present-day Peru and Bolivia. It was at its most powerful between AD 500 and 1000. The Huari was at its height around AD 800.

The ruins of Machu Picchu, an Inca settlement high in the Andes.



It was based further north than Tiahuanaco, and it seems that the two peoples were rivals. The Chimu ran their empire from their capital at Chan Chan, on the north coast of Peru. However, the Chimu were conquered by the Incas in the 1470s. The Incas ruled from their capital, Cuzco, high in the Andes Mountains. They built up a vast empire by conquest, and then set up an efficient form of government to rule their subject peoples. They built a network of roads, and introduced a system of taxes to pay for the running of the empire.



An Inca procession winds its way along a road high in the Andes Mountains. The Incas were great builders. They constructed a network of roads that crisscrossed their mountainous empire, building rope suspension bridges where necessary. The emperor, known as the Sapa Inca, and other important officials were carried from place to place in litters. Other people walked. Important messages were carried by teams of runners, each one running a distance of 2 km before passing the message on.

TIMELINE

c.300 Rise of Mayan civilization in Central America.

410 Goths loot Rome.

429 Vandals invade northern Africa.

449 Angles, Saxons and Jutes begin conquest of Britain.

455 Vandals sack Rome.

480 Gupta Empire in India overthrown.

486 Frankish kingdom founded by Clovis.

c.500-1000 Civilization of Tiahuanaco in Andes Mountains of South America.

527-65 Justinian rules over Byzantine Empire.

532-63 Construction of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.

552 Buddhism introduced into Japan.

c.570 Birth of the Prophet Muhammad.

581-618 Sui dynasty rules in China.

c.600-900 Huari civilization in South America.

618-907 Tang dynasty rules in China.

632 Death of the Prophet Muhammad.

c.632-700 Arab armies spread Islam throughout North Africa.

642 Arab armies defeat Sassanian Empire.

661-750 Umayyad dynasty holds power in the Islamic world.

c.700 Start of Pueblo period in northwest America.

711 Muslim armies conquer part of Spain.

718 Arab siege of Constantinople repulsed.

732 Muslim armies defeated at Battle of Poitiers.

750-1055 Abbasid dynasty holds power in the Islamic world.

c.750 Vikings begin raiding voyages in Europe.

768-814 Reign of Frankish leader, Charlemagne.

800 Charlemagne crowned emperor in Rome of Holy Roman Empire.

c.800 Height of Huari Empire in South America.

c.800 Rise of Kingdom of Ghana in West Africa.

802 Khmer Kingdom founded in Cambodia.

c.850 First buildings constructed at Great Zimbabwe in southern Africa.

862 Novgorod founded by Vikings.

c.900 Construction starts on city of Angkor in Khmer Kingdom.

960-1279 Song dynasty rules in China.

c.982 Viking Erik the Red explores Greenland coast.

969 Fatimids conquer Egypt and found Cairo.

c.1000 Viking Leif Eriksson sails to Vinland in North America.

c.1000-1476 Chimu civilization in South America.

1004-13 Viking settlement established in Newfoundland, North America (possibly known as Vinland).

1014 Vikings defeated at Battle of Clontarf in Ireland.

1066 Duke William of Normandy conquers England.

1086 Compilation of the *Domesday Book* in England.

1095 Turks ban Christians from entering Jerusalem, and Pope Urban II calls on Christians to recapture the "Holy Land".

1096-1272 Period of the Crusades.

1099 Knights of First Crusade capture Jerusalem.

1147-49 Second Crusade.

1171 Muslim leader, Saladin defeats Fatimids and conquers Egypt.

1187 Saladin, defeats Crusaders and recaptures Jerusalem.

1189-92 Third Crusade ends in failure.

1192-1333 Kamakura shogunate in Japan.

1202-04 Fourth Crusade.

1206 Founding of Sultanate of Delhi.

1212 Children's Crusade.

1215 Mongols capture Beijing in China.

1215 King John of England signs Magna Carta.

1217-22 Fifth Crusade.

1223 Mongols attack Russia.

1227 Death of Mongol leader Genghis Khan.

1228-29 Sixth Crusade.

1237 Russia becomes part of the Mongol Empire.

1248-54 Seventh Crusade.

1270-72 Eighth Crusade.

1271-92 Marco Polo travels across Asia and the Far East.

1274 Mongol fleet defeated by Japan.

1279 Kublai Khan conquers China.

1281 Mongol fleet again defeated by Japan.

1294 Death of Mongol leader Kublai Khan.

1322-5 Mansa Musa makes a lavish pilgrimage across Africa to Makkah.

1337-1453 Hundred Years' War fought between England and France.

1338-1573 Muromachi period in Japan; rule of Ashikaga shoguns.

1347 Black Death arrives in Europe, killing millions of people.

1386-1644 Ming dynasty rules in China.

1398 Tamerlane's troops attack Delhi, India.

c.1400-1521 Period of the Aztec Empire in Mexico and Central America.

1402 Tamerlane defeats Ottomans at Battle of Ankara.

1405 Death of Tamerlane.

1405-33 Zheng He, Chinese explorer, makes seven voyages.

1415 Battle of Agincourt between France and England.

1424-34 Prince Henry of Portugal, "Henry the Navigator" sends expeditions to explore the African coastline.

1428-30 Joan of Arc leads French armies against England.

c.1438-1572 Inca Empire established in Peru, South America.

c.1450-1600 Period in Western Europe known as the Renaissance.

1453 Constantinople falls to Turkish armies. End of the Byzantine Empire.

1453 England loses all territories in France except Calais.

1455-85 Wars of the Roses in England.

1487-8 Bartholomeu Dias sails around the Cape of Good Hope.

1492 Christopher Columbus sails across the Atlantic Ocean and explores the Caribbean islands.

1498 Vasco da Gama reaches India.

1519-22 Ferdinand Magellan's fleet circumnavigates the world.

1521 Aztec Empire defeated by Spanish conquistadors.

1532 Francisco Pizarro begins conquest of Inca Empire in South America.

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