

PART III
Chapter 9

MEDIEVAL CULTURES
Medieval Europe: Culture and the Cathedral

1. The continuity of the Byzantine Empire ensured a high degree of preservation of antique culture within its dominion.
2. When Islam conquered portions of the Byzantine Empire, they readily incorporated Greco-Roman culture into their own, along with elements of the advanced Persian culture.
3. In the West, the heritage of antiquity survived only in elementary forms.
4. Only in the year 1000 did Western Europe begin to make serious efforts to catch up, and the effort took 350 years.

I. Medieval Revivals

A. Economic Revival

1. The development of the castle provided security that helped foster economic development.
2. Technology gains in agricultural led to greater productivity and a population boom.
3. Towns grew and the percentage of people working in agriculture declined.
4. Silver mining helped develop international markets.

B. Religious Revival

1. Interest in religion increased during this time.
2. The pope challenged the authority of secular powers in church matters and asserted the authority of the papacy as well as the authority and independence of local priests and bishops.
3. The pope's initiative contributed to the breakup of the church—"The Schism of 1054."

C. Political Revival

1. The new prosperity and trade led to greater political integration.
2. Monarchs asserted their power on local nobility and government became more centralized.
3. The monarchies were constrained by the need for tax money, which by tradition required consultation with local leaders.
4. The monarchies were also diverting loyalty from the papacy to themselves.
5. During these times, the papacy remained the most important political force in Europe.

D. Intellectual Revival

1. The intellectual revival's first step involved ordering knowledge in an effort to control experience.
2. Aristotle's elementary steps of logic in about 1000 A.D. was the first step.

3. Logic helped the Europeans give order to what was its confused jumble of accumulated knowledge.
4. Cathedrals (located in towns) became centers of learning.
5. Philosophy caused some tension between faith and reason.
6. The scholastic Christians had an affinity for Stoicism and Platonism.

E. Crusades

1. The Crusades began in 1095 and continued sporadically into the sixteenth century.
2. The motivations were initially religious zeal, but economic and political motives quickly became the predominate impetus.
3. The Crusaders held deep prejudice against the East but were strongly influenced by the more advanced societies they encountered.
4. The Crusades were a political and military failure but the West gained from this extended encounter with Eastern civilization nonetheless.

F. Contact with Asia

1. The West tried to convert the Great Khan of the Mongols with the idea of forging an alliance against the Islamic world.
2. The Great Khan did not convert but the attempt led to more exchanges and commercial ties between the two regions.
3. By 1300 commercial trade brought Asian luxury items to Europe.
4. Marco Polo spent over two decades in China (1271–1295) and wrote an account of his travels called *The Book of Marvels*.

II. Medieval Art and the Church: The Gothic Cathedral

1. Art, like scholarship, was centered in the court, the monastery, and the cathedral.
2. The visual arts and architecture were viewed as ways to enhance and explain Christian doctrine.
3. Both monarchs and clergy understood the value of beauty and wealth in holding and wielding power.
4. The collective knowledge and experience of medieval pilgrimages and the Crusades helped inspire and inform the development of Gothic architecture.

A. Pilgrimages

1. Pilgrimages were viewed as a way to help ensure salvation for Catholic laity.
2. Rome, the Holy Land, and the shrines of particular saints were popular destinations for pilgrims.
3. Worshippers from France and Germany would travel to Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain, to the shrine of Saint James.
4. Pilgrims walked 15–20 miles per day.
5. Monasteries and churches along the route provided accommodations.

B. Effect of the Crusades

1. The Crusades expanded the Christian world's knowledge of art, building techniques, and architecture.
2. These building forms and methods influenced the development of the Gothic style.

C. The Rise of Gothic Architecture

1. Fantastic amounts of time, energy, and money went into the construction of large Gothic churches in relatively small communities.
2. All strata of society took part in the construction.
3. The churches represented a vital aspect of the communities' spiritual life.
4. The term Gothic was coined in the Renaissance and was a derogatory term until the eighteenth century.

D. Suger and Saint Denis

1. Suger, a monk, became abbot of Saint Denis in 1120 and was responsible for the design and construction of the Abbey Church, Saint Denis.
2. Descriptions of churches seen by Crusaders were one influence, as was Suger's own ideas derived from his scholastic theology.
3. Suger believed the contemplation of the beautiful was a path to transcendence and intimations of the divine.
4. Suger wanted to fill the church with light.
5. Suger's vision, combined with the technical skill and innovation of his builders, produced a number of important changes in church design.

E. The Cathedral at Chartres

1. Its chief relic, the tunic of the Virgin, made Chartres the center of veneration in Western Europe.
2. A fire destroyed the basilica at Chartres in 1194.
3. The new church was occupied in 1220 and dedicated in 1260, an amazing feat for the scale of the project and the existing technology.
4. The architectural innovations of Suger at Saint Denis were incorporated into the new Cathedral.
5. The achievement of Chartres was made possible by Roman vaulting and the pointed arches of Muslim architecture.

F. The Sculptural Program at Chartres

1. The representations depicted in the thousands of sculptures represent the medieval meaning of the Gospels and of Christian faith in visual form.
2. The exterior sculptures were planned as the entry to the Court of Heaven and depict Mary and her Son, Jesus.
3. Medieval people saw their church as an intrinsic part of their world.

III. Music and Drama in the Cathedral

1. The combined visual arts of the Cathedral exemplified the medieval belief that spiritual truths could be captured through physical sensuous beauty.
2. This same principle seems to underlie the service of the mass and the music developed for it.
3. In the Gothic period, individual singers were used along with choruses and many-voiced (polyphonic) music for the mass came into being.
4. The communities seemed to have encouraged more elaborate musical forms, out of which came a type of drama called the *liturgical drama*.
5. It is ironic that, after centuries of hostility, it was the church itself that revived drama as an art form.

A. The Play of David

1. Created in the twelfth century, *The Play of David* is a good surviving example of medieval liturgical drama.
2. "The Play of David" was written in Latin for the French cathedral of Beauvais.
3. "The Play of David" is a retelling of the Old Testament legend concerning Daniel's salvation from the Lion's Den.
4. The music and spoken parts of "The Play of David" are performed softly.
5. Like Greek drama, medieval musical drama influenced modern drama, musical theater, and opera.