

## Middle Ages: Formation of European Civilization

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Received date: October 08, 2024; Accepted date: October 30, 2024; Published date: November 15, 2024

Citation: M. Sh. Fayzulloeva, (2024), Middle Ages: Formation of European Civilization, *Journal of Clinical Otorhinolaryngology*, 6(6); DOI:10.31579/2692-9562/133

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### Abstract

The article deals with the middle civilization of Europe. Including important socio-political processes, economic, social and cultural development of a number of European countries during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, which played a special role in the further development of culture and civilization of the world.

**Keywords:** europe; feudal; society; states; towns; production

### Introduction

The era of the Middle Ages lasted 1200 years (from end V cent. till half of XVII cent.), during which a feudal system developed in Europe. The term "Middle Ages" was first used by Italian humanists in the 15th century for determine period between classical antiquity and their time. The epoch of the Middle Ages is important for Western European civilization; in this era Christian religion spiritually united the people of Europe; the church became the supporter of royal power, was formed a new direction Protestantism in Christianity; was taking shape an urban culture; were formed the first parliaments and the principle of separation of power; there was an industrial revolution and a transition to an industrial society. Medieval society can be divided into three stages:

1. early Middle Ages (V-X centuries) the process of forming the structures of feudal society;
2. the classical Middle Ages (XI-XV centuries) the time of maximum development of medieval feudal institutions;
3. late Middle Ages (XV-XVII centuries) beginning to form a new capitalist society.

The medieval society of Western Europe was agrarian. Labor in agriculture, as well as in other branches of production, was physical. The main part of the population of Western Europe lived outside the towns. If towns were very important for ancient Europe, then in medieval Europe, especially in the first seven centuries, the role of towns was insignificant. Industry during this period existed in the form of handicrafts and manufactory.

The era of the Middle Ages is characterized by a strong character of the church and a high degree of idealization of society. If in the ancient world every people had their own religion, but in medieval Europe there was one religion - Christianity for all people. But in the Middle Ages, the Inquisition (court religious) was barrier for development of science.

The Middle Ages is the time of the formation of national states in the form of absolute monarchies. Populations consisted of three class: aristocrats, clergy and the worker people (small farmers, craftsman, and traders).

**Vassal system.** The head of feudal state was king. The king could be a vassal of another king or the pope. On the second step of the feudal system were the vassals of the king - large feudal lords (dukes, graph, bishops, abbats).

**Morals and customs.** Medieval society was often cruel. The usual thing was the killing. Criminals were killed or forgiven completely. The idea that criminals can be re-educated was not allowed. Executions have always been organized as a spectacle for the public, and for awful (terrible) crimes, were invented painful punishments. For many ordinary people, executions served as enjoyment. Other manners of a medieval community of Western Europe were hot blood, greed, vindictiveness. Sobbing (noisy crying) were considered honorable and beautiful, and elevating everyone - both children and adults, and men and women.

### Early Middle Ages (V - X centuries)

In the 4th century BC on the land of the Germanic tribes was the primitive society. During the 1st century (4-5), Germanic tribes' attacked and settled in the Western Roman Empire: Vest Goths in Spain; Vandals in North Africa; Oust Goths in Italy; Franks in Gaul; Anglo-Saxons in Britain. Most of the oppressed people of the Rome empire welcomed the Germans as their savior. But the ancient and beautiful town of Rome was destroyed by the Germans. After the German conquest, slavery form was destroyed in the Western Roman Empire.

After the collapse of the Western Roman Empire (476), Gaul (northern Italy) was declared independent province. But in 486 the Germanic tribes of the Franks, led by Clovis, conquered Gaul and defeated the army of the Roman emperor. In Gaul, the Frankish aristocracy became large landowners. Clovis became king of the Franks and inherited his power. He ruled with the help of a military force. Clovis appointed governors to each province, who was

called a "graph". Clovis published laws that protected the interests of the upper classes. After the conquest of Gaul the Franks accepted Christianity. Because Clovis and the nobility understood that the Christian religion called for honest work and patience, and that was to the king's benefits (advantage). Therefore, Clovis and the aristocracy accepted converted to Christianity, forcing all the Franks to follow it. The Christian Church also supported Clovis. He gave gifts to the church. The head of the regional church was called "father". The European Church was headed by the Pope.

The Germans lived with their families in the villages of the Roman Empire. Germans learned from the Romans - farming, gardening, and animal breeding, and so on. Each family had their own land and the harvest belonged to them, but the land did not belong fully to the family. The land belonged fully to German leaders and aristocracy. In the Frankish state there were large landowners - feudal lords. Peasants, who could not return their debts to the feudal lords in time, became vassal (subordinate). So, in the 6th-9th centuries in the Frankish state there were two classes - feudal lords and serfs (workers). After the Germans settled in Rome, they moved from the primitive society to slavery society, and there was a private property and inequality between them.

**The Empire of Carly Great.** The Frankish state was ruled by Carly Great in 768 - 814 years. He was a skilled and a brave warrior. He invaded neighboring countries 50 times: he fought with Arabs in Spain, subjugated the Saxon tribes living on the banks of the Rhine and Elbe, and introduced Christianity. As a result of the successful conquests of the leader of the Franks, Charles the Great, was created - the Frankish state in 800 years. Charles conquered Rome and proclaimed him emperor. The Frankish state was territorially equal to the former Roman Empire. After Carly the Great's death, his three grandchildren signed an agreement in Verdun, which divided the territory of the Frankish state into three large states - France, Germany, and Italy. In the 9th and 10th centuries, the feudal system was restored in Western Europe, where all lands and power were in the hands of feudal lords, which exploited the peasants. Peasants worked on feudal land and paid tax. The feudal farms were livelihood farms; all the necessities of life were produced within them. But by the 11th century, the tools of labor and commerce had developed very slowly.

The feudal lords lived in castles, and the cavalryman was called a "knight" who dressed in iron clothes and fought. Only feudal lords could be knights. Each knight had his own coat of arms and slogan. The knights held military competitions among themselves, which they called "tournaments". In the 9th and 11th centuries, titles or ranks of kings, dukes, counts, barons, and knights appeared.

### Classical Middle Ages (XI-XV centuries)

In the classical Middle Ages, the process of formation of feudal relations is completed, and feudal society reaches its highest flourishing. By the X-XI centuries, Western Europe was in feudal non-unity or fragmentation. The most important factor in the creation of a united Europe was Christianity, which spread in all European countries and became the state religion. Christianity determined the cultural life of early medieval Europe, influencing the quality of education and upbringing. Religion writer compiled religious books in parchment papers. Clergymen with their eloquence, oratory, greatly influenced public moods.

The luxurious churches of San Chappelle in Paris (XV century) and Saint Peter's in Rome (XVI century) were built. The buildings of cathedral were square and oval, they were decorated with monuments, illustrations and colored geometric ornaments. The Byzantine Empire became the continuation of ancient culture. In the Middle Ages, temples, royal palaces, towns with walls and minarets were built.

During this period, the level of economic development was the highest in Italy. Here the towns - Venice, Genoa, Florence, Milan, and they were a center of crafts and trade. At this time, nation-states - England, France, Germany and other begin to form and become centralized states. Almost all countries of Western Europe during this period went through bloody wars. An example is the War of the Scarlet and White Roses in England in the 15th century. As a result of this war, England loss of much population.

The classical Middle Ages is also a time of peasant uprisings, unrest. An example is the revolt led by Wat Tyler and John Ball in England in 1381. The uprising began as a mass protest of peasants against the tax. But the uprising was brutally suppressed. However, in the following century, in the 15th century, many uprisings received their answers. For example, almost all the peasants really became personally free and their taxes were no longer as heavy as before.

**Economy and agriculture.** The main branch of the economy of Western European countries during the classical Middle Ages, as before, was agriculture. The sowing lands were expanding, and developing production oil-making and wine-making. The rights of peasants to land were strengthened. They could freely inherit land, donate and sell it. The land market becomes wider.

**Medieval towns.** The most important characteristic of this period was the growth of towns. In the classical Middle Ages, old towns quickly grow and arise new towns - near castles, fortresses, monasteries, bridges. Middle towns had 4-6 thousand population. There were very large towns, such as Paris, Milan, Florence, where lived 80 thousand people. Towns arose on the lands of the king or large feudal lords and they brought income in the form of taxes from crafts and trade. The richest towns were London and Paris. In the 13th century there were 200 towns in England. However, life in medieval towns was difficult and dangerous. For example, an epidemics "black death" of the 13th century takes away much people.

**Medieval craft.** Craft were an important part of the urban population. From the 7th-13th centuries were growing urban craft. The craft becomes a respected occupation that brings a good income. In the XII century in Europe, were made mechanical watches, in the XIII century a large tower clock, in the XV century a pocket watch. Craftsmen united in workshops. There were hundreds of different workshops in towns. For example, in Paris there were more than 350 workshops.

In the end of the classical Middle Ages, appeared a new form of industrial production organization - manufactory. Manufactory significantly increased the productivity of labor, which, as before, remained physical. Hired workers worked at the manufactories of Western Europe.

**Trade and traders.** Important classes of the urban population were traders, who played a major role in domestic and foreign trade. They constantly traveled around the towns with products. Traders, as a rule, were literate and could speak the languages of the countries through which they travelled. Foreign trade during this period was more developed than domestic. The centers of foreign trade in Western Europe were the North, Baltic and Mediterranean Seas. From Western Europe exported wine, metal products, honey, building materials and fur. From East to West transported luxury products: colored fabrics, silk, precious stones, elephant bone, fruits, spices, carpets. Despite the existence of dangers on the roads, medieval society was very active mobile: there was an intensive demographic exchange between regions and countries, which contributed to the formation of a united Europe.

**Medieval universities.** The first universities in Western Europe appeared in the classical Middle Ages. At the end of the XII - beginning of the XIII centuries universities were opened in Paris, Oxford, Cambridge and other European towns. In the XIV-XV centuries at University of Paris a number of students was more than 30 thousand. In the XV century more than 60

universities were founded in Europe. The heads of universities called "the rector" and the head of the faculty called "dean". In the XI century was formed science - scholasticism and studied in universities. Most important feature its subject was limitless faith in the power of mind in the process of knowing the world.

Universities were a place for the exchange of culture between countries, and achievements immediately became known in European countries. For example, the "Decameron" of Italian writer Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) was quickly translated into all the languages of Europe, it was read and known everywhere. To the formation of Western European culture contributed typography (1453). Johannes Gutenberg (1398-1468), who lived in Germany, is considered the first printer. He invented the printing machine or press. Features of the historical development of the leading countries of Europe in the XIV-XV centuries Italy was the most educated and prosperous country in Europe. In the XIV-XV centuries France already had state taxes, a single monetary system, and a postal service. England has been the most successful in sphere of human rights and the protection of the individual. The king of England had no right without the consent of parliament to distribute new taxes and publish new laws.

### Late Middle Ages (XVI - early XVII centuries)

**Great geographical discoveries.** In the XV - early XVII centuries the economies of European countries are growing even more and capitalist relations are actively developing. It was connected with the Great geographical discoveries. Their reason was the search by Europeans for new sea ways to China and India. Great geographical discoveries became possible thanks to the success of shipbuilding. So, the Europeans learned to build caravels - high-speed ships capable of swim against the wind. Geographical knowledge, in the field of cartography, was also important. Sailors were looking for a way to the eastern countries.

Portuguese sailors in 1487 year discovered the peninsula of Good Hope - the southernmost point of the African continent. At the same time, the Italian Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) was also looking for a way to India, with four expeditions. In October 1492, the new continent was discovered by Columbus, then called America by the name of **Amerigo Vespucci** (1454-1512).

The sea way to India was first discovered by the Portuguese expedition leading by **Vasco da Gama** (1469-1524) in 1498 year.

The first trip around the world was made in 1519-1521, led by the Portuguese **Ferdinand Magellan** (1480-1521) and he determined that the Earth is round. From 256 people of Magellan's team, only 18 survived, and Magellan himself died in a fight with the local natives. Many expeditions of that time ended so sadly.

By the middle of the XVII century Europeans discovered Australia and New Zealand. As a result of the Great geographical discoveries, colonial empires begin to take shape, and from the newly discovered lands to Europe, were sent treasures, gold and silver. In the second half of the XVI-XVII centuries colonial conquests began by the British, Dutch and French.

**Trade.** Another important consequence of the Great geographical discoveries was the connection of world trade directions. Trade was the most important source for the formation of large private capital. Thanks to the development of trade at this time, there is a stronger connection between parts of the planet. For the first time in history, the foundations of the world market are beginning to take shape. In this epoch improved technology and technology of metallurgy industry. A new class - capitalists were emerging.

**Politics.** In the field of politics of the XV-XVII centuries also brought a lot of new things. State structures are noticeably strengthened. The foundations of new political ideas in Europe were determined by the Italian **Niccolò**

**Machiavelli** (1469-1527). He was a secretary in the Florentine Republic, and the author of the book "The Prince". Machiavelli believed that every nation has its own destiny, which cannot be avoided or changed.

**Reformation of the Church.** The ideas of the Renaissance and the Reformation had a strong influence on Europeans. In this direction, the Netherlands and England were in the lead, which supported the opinion about the originality (or uniqueness) of each person, the value of human life, freedom and dignity. In the middle of the XVI century the Reformation movements break the unity of Catholic Europe. Protestant ideas spread in many countries. The Pope has lost his global power in the ideological sphere.

The Renaissance (XIV-XVI cent.) became a new era in the development of a world culture. In this era, all branches of science were improved and human became its center. The main reason for Renaissance progression was establishment of new industrial relations. The center of Renaissance became Italy. A number of great thinkers lived in Italy at that time.

**Development of science.** European science is also developing, which greatly influenced not only European civilization, but also all of humanity. In the XVI-XVII centuries natural sciences like botany, zoology, biology, medicine is developing. During the Renaissance, natural sciences and materialistic philosophy also developed. During the Renaissance, were created best watches, invented a microscope, telescope, thermometer, barometer, hydrometer, compass, gunpowder, printing machine and began to produce paper. Mathematics was developing fast and invented in 1614 the first tables of logarithms. The architecture, sculpture, art, theater was also developed.

**Astronomy.** Ptolemy's wrong teaching (1st century BC) about movement of a star and a planet around the Earth (the church supported this teaching) was proved.

**Medicine.** Doctors determined blood circulation in human body, causes of appearance and medication of infectious sickness.

**Religion.** The holy book "Bible" has been translated from Latin into English, French and Germanic languages.

**Leonardo da Vinci** (1452-1519) is an Italian great artist sculptor, architect, engineer, botanist, mathematician, musician and writer. He tried to make better human work, labor and employment with the help of science. He made technical projects and painted many pictures. One of them is "Mona Lisa" - a picture of an urban woman and it is known all over the world.

**Evangelista Torricelli** (1608-1647) an Italian scientist, he studied atmospheric pressure and created a barometer.

**Blaise Pascal** (1623-1662) a French scientist discovered the law of pressure transmission in liquids and gases.

**Galileo Galilei** (1564-1642), a famous Italian physicist and astronomer; he made a major contribution to the development of physics, first created a telescope, which shows things 30 times increased. Galileo through telescope watched the stars and for the first time in the history of mankind saw a huge number of stars, mountains on the surface of the moon, spots on the sun. The Inquisition banned writing articles and spreading his thoughts to Galileo, but he did not change his scientific opinion.

**Nicolaus Copernicus** (1473-1543) a polish scientist, author of the famous work "On the circulation of the space spheres", in which he scientifically proved that the Earth is not an immobile center of the world. Earth and other planets moves around the Sun. Copernican invention was a big revolution in science and hit the church hard.

The views of Copernicus were developed by the German astronomer **Johannes Kepler** (1571-1630), who formulated the laws of planetary motion.

**Giordano Bruno** (1548-1600) is an orator, thinker, hero of science, talented Italian writer. He continued the astronomical teachings of Copernicus and confirmed that the Cosmos is endless, the Earth or the Sun are not the center of the Cosmos. There are stars in the Cosmos that are larger than the Sun and there are planets around them. Bruno has traveled to Europe for 16 years. After returning to Italy, the Inquisition tried and kept him in prison for 7 years. Then they set him on fire alive. Now in Rome, in the place where the thinker was killed, there is a monument for him.

By the end of the late Middle Ages, groups of scientists were created in Europe, there collectively, jointly discussing experiments, methods, tasks, and results. On the basis of scientific groups in the middle of the XVII century national academies of sciences are formed the first of them arose in England and France.

During the Renaissance, the literature, art, theater, architecture, sculpture also developed.

**Michelangelo** (XV-XVI) is an Italian sculptor, artist, architect, poet and military engineer. He created a sculpture of a boy - "David" in the center of the city of Florence, Italy.

**Rafael** (XV-XVI) is an Italian famous artist. He painted pictures in which he reflected the inner world of humanity. One of them is the Sistine Madonna (Сикстинская Мадонна).

The works of these painters' amaze art fans with their beauty till now. In this era there lived a number of humanist writers who in their books criticized the feudal system and dreamed about a right, democratic society.

**Thomas More** (XV-XVI) is an English writer. He wrote the book "Utopia" (from Latin word - "dream place") and in it he tells about the best social form.

**Francois Rabelais** (XV-XVI) is a French writer, teacher, doctor and linguist. In his book "Gargantuan and Pantagruel" he criticizes the feudal system, people of high social position, lords and their wars and conflicts. The church angered the writer, and he died in distress, but he did not change his opinion.

**William Shakespeare** (XVI-XVII) is a great English poet, actor, founder of London Globus Theater. Shakespeare has written over 37 tragedies, comedies and dramas. In his works "Hamlet", "Othello", "King Lear", "Romeo Juliet" he tells about tragic love, friendship, good nature and others.

Karl Marx called Shakespeare one of the great geniuses who was given to the world.

**Miguel Cervantes** (XVI-XVII) is a Spanish writer, humanist who spent a hard life. He is the author of the novel "Don Quixote". The writer in his book fought against anger and wrong.

Conclusion. Thus, in the late Middle Ages in Europe, inequality was manifested in the levels of economic and political development of countries. The Netherlands, England and France are developing at a faster tempo. Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany are staying behind. However, the development of European countries was still common to all countries. In the XI-XV centuries in Europe was the process of formation of centralized states - England, France, Portugal, Spain, Holland. Capitalist relations are emerging and establishing in Europe. During the Renaissance was form a new worldview based on humanism. Now a specific person was placed at the center of the world, and not the church. Humanists were against the traditional medieval ideology. In the late Middle Ages, the most important idea of the West took shape: an active relation to life, the wish to learn world with the mind, intellect and to transform the world in the interests of man. During this epoch, was destroyed a feudal form and capitalist relations come up in society. All the achievements of spiritual life directed to improving human life. The humanism of the ancient world was established in the XIV-XVI century. Therefore, this period of Europe was called the Renaissance, which started in Italy and spread throughout Europe. The medieval and Renaissance civilization became the foundation for the further progress of European countries.

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DOI:10.31579/2692-9562/133

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