

# Our Shared Past in the Mediterranean



A World History Curriculum Project for Educators



presented by Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies, George Mason University

## MODULE 3: Becoming Global and Staying Local: The Mediterranean from 300-1500 CE





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## MODULE 3: Becoming Global and Staying Local: The Mediterranean from 300 -1500 CE

Tom Verde

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**The British Council and The  
Social Science Research Council**



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## Foreword from the Directors: A Statement of Purpose

Why the Mediterranean? What does a body of water have to teach us about a common human heritage? The teaching resources that collectively comprise “Our Shared Past in the Mediterranean” share a common focus on the idea of World History as a distinctive paradigm for learning about the past and understanding the present. By studying the people, events, and processes that have defined the evolution of human history in a particular region, or, in this case, a space that connects multiple world regions, we learn much more than just isolated facts about culture and society in specific locales. We rather come to understand how broader global forces, trends, and currents of change manifest themselves in particular historical and geographical experiences.

While the Mediterranean features heavily in many conventional tellings of “Western civilization,” it tends to be figured as a zone in which precursor civilizations are born, die, and subsequently become reanimated by the cultural inheritors of a uniquely European legacy. Monotheistic religions appear, fall into conflict, and those fault lines seemingly persist. What tends to be left out of this standard narrative for any number of reasons, not least of which is the fact that the historical reality is much messier and more complex than textbooks like, is the idea that the Mediterranean has always been in contact with—shaping and being in turn shaped by—world historical forces. Easy categories and supposedly distinctive civilizational and religious identities—e.g. traditional, modern, Islamic, Christian, Middle Eastern, European—turn out to resist the roles we commonly assign them in the making of the present.

The team that produced “Our Shared Past in the Mediterranean” has achieved the rather remarkable feat of recognizing and taking on board this complexity while rendering it in a form that is accessible and legible to a broad learning audience. The complexities of world history are not simply narrated on top of standard paradigms. Rather, students are invited to discover the diverse and multifaceted social realities that comprise Mediterranean histories through research and critical thinking exercises framed around questions already familiar to them in their own daily lives. Among the authors and scholar consultants that produced this material are to be found historians, yes, but also social scientists and pedagogical experts. This multidisciplinary team worked together to identify key themes and approaches that were integrated across the full set of modules—ensuring a high level of continuity and cohesiveness across the various periods of history covered here.

We strongly encourage you to read the project’s introductory essay, by Edmund Burke III, who explains extremely eloquently just what is at stake in grounding our teaching in the world history approach. At a time when the worldwide interconnectedness that define what we call globalization seems to be at historically unprecedented levels, it is vitally important for our students to understand that world historical forces have actually been with us for a long time. In light of the ongoing process of European integration, regional migration dynamics, and the dramatic Arab Revolutions of 2011, no world space is better than the Mediterranean for understanding how our shared past shapes all manner of shared futures.

## About the Funders and Our Shared Past

Our Shared Past is a collaborative grants program to encourage new approaches to world history curriculum and curricular content design in Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and North America. Our Shared Past is premised on the notion that many of the categories used to frame and teach world history—civilizations, nations, religions, and regions—occlude as much as they reveal. Although there have been successful attempts at incorporating recent historical scholarship in world history writing, the core of world history instruction continues to be shaped by civilizational, national, and regional narratives that emphasize discrete civilizations and traditions frequently set at odds with one another at the expense of historical and material connections.

Our Shared Past seeks to promote the development of international scholarly communities committed to analyzing history curriculum and reframing the teaching of world history through the identification of new scholarship and the development of new curricular content that illustrate shared cultural, economic, military, religious, social, and scientific networks and practices as well as shared global norms and values that inform world history and society. The project encourages both the synthesis of existing scholarship on these topics and the exploration of concrete ways that this reframing can be successfully introduced into teaching curriculum in European, Middle Eastern, North African, or North American contexts.

**The British Council** is the United Kingdom’s international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. The British Council works in over 100 countries, creating international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and building trust between them worldwide. It was founded in 1934 and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1940 as a public corporation, charity, to promote cultural relationships and understanding of different cultures, to encourage cultural, scientific, technological and other educational cooperation between the UK and other countries, and otherwise promote the advancement of education.

**The Social Science Research Council (SSRC)** is an independent, international, nonprofit organization founded in 1923. It fosters innovative research, nurtures new generations of social scientists, deepens how inquiry is practiced within and across disciplines, and mobilizes necessary knowledge on important public issues. The SSRC pursues its mission by working with practitioners, policymakers, and academic researchers in the social sciences, related professions, and the humanities and natural sciences. With partners around the world, SSRC builds interdisciplinary and international networks, links research to practice and policy, strengthens individual and institutional capacities for learning, and enhances public access to information.

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**Jonathan Even-Zohar** Jonathan Even-Zohar has a degree in History from Leiden University in World Historical Perspectives in History Textbooks and Curricula, with an honorary Crayenborgh-degree in Islam and Europe. He is Director at EUROCLIO – European Association of History Educators, an organisation with a mission to promote History



Education so that it contributes to peace, stability and democracy. He has managed History Education Innovation Projects in Bulgaria, Cyprus and the former Yugoslavia including many visits to these countries. He also organises international conferences, seminars, workshops, exchanges, and study visits. Within these projects, many aspects of publishing, curriculum development, political influence and general attitudes towards History Education are developed. Currently he is manager of the EUROCLIO Programmes: History that Connects, How to teach sensitive and controversial history in the countries of former Yugoslavia and the EUROCLIO International Training Programme.

**Craig Perrier** Craig Perrier is the High School Social Studies Specialist for Fairfax County Public Schools. Previously, he worked as PK-12 Social Studies Coordinator for the Department of Defense Dependent Schools and was a secondary social studies teacher for 12 years at schools in Brazil and Massachusetts. Perrier is an online adjunct professor in history for Northeastern University, Southern New Hampshire University, and Northern Virginia Community College. He has been an instructional designer and curriculum writer for various organizations including IREX, the Institute of International Education, and the State Department's Office of the Historian. He maintains a blog "The Global, History Educator" discussing content, technology, instruction, and professional development.

**Barbara Petzen** is director of Middle East Connections, a not-for-profit initiative specializing in professional development and curriculum on the Middle East and Islam, global education, and study tours to the Middle East. She is also executive director of OneBlue, a nonprofit organization dedicated to conflict resolution and education, and president of the Middle East Outreach Council, a national consortium of educators furthering understanding about the Middle East. She was education director at the Middle East Policy Council, where she created a comprehensive resource for educators seeking balanced and innovative materials for teaching about the Middle East at TeachMideast.org. She served as outreach coordinator at the Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies, starting just before September 11, 2001. She taught courses on Middle Eastern history, Islam and women's studies at Dalhousie University and St. Mary's University in Nova Scotia, Canada, and served as tutor and teaching assistant at Harvard University, where she may at some point complete her doctoral dissertation in Middle Eastern history on European governesses in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt. She earned her B.A. in International Politics and Middle Eastern Studies at Columbia College and a second Honours B.A. as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University in Oriental Studies. Her academic interests include Ottoman and Middle Eastern history, the history and present concerns of women in the Middle East and Muslim communities, the role of Islam in Middle Eastern and other societies, relations and perceptions between Muslim societies and the West, and the necessity for globalizing K-12 education in the United States.

**Joan Brodsky Schur** is a curriculum developer, author, workshop presenter and teacher, with over thirty years of experience in the classroom. She has presented workshops for teachers for the National Council for the Social Studies, Asia Society, the National Archives, Yale University (Programs in International Educational Resources), Georgetown University, the Scarsdale Teachers Institute, and the Bank Street College of Education division of Continuing Professional Studies, for which she leads Cultural Explorations in Morocco: Implications for Educators in Multicultural Settings. Her lesson plans appear on the Websites of PBS, the National Archives, *The Islam Project*, and *The Indian Ocean in World History*. She has served as a member of the Advisory Group for PBS *TeacherSource*, the advisory committee for WNET's *Access Islam* Website, and as a board member of the Middle

East Outreach Council. Her books include *In a New Land: An Anthology of Immigrant Literature* (McGraw-Hill, 1994), *Immigrants in America: The Arab Americans* (Lucent, 2004), *Coming to America: The Arabs* (Greenhaven, 2005), *Eyewitness to the Past: Strategies for Teaching American History in Grades 5-12* (Stenhouse, 2007), *Advocating for Abolition* (Interact Publishers, 2011) and *20th Century World Activators* (Interact Publishers, 2013). She currently serves as Social Studies Consultant to the City and Country School in New York City. She received her B.A. and M.A.T. degrees from New York University.

**Tom Verde** Tom Verde is an award-winning journalist and book author who specializes in Islam, Middle Eastern and Mediterranean studies, early Christian history, comparative religion, food history, and travel. Formerly on the faculty of Ethics, Philosophy and Religion at King's Academy in Jordan, he has lived and traveled widely in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe and written extensively on religion, culture, the environment for major national and international publications, such as *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *Biblical Archeology*, and is a regular contributor to *Saudi Aramco World* magazine. Verde has also been a frequent contributor to broadcast networks, including NPR, Public Radio International and the BBC.

## Why the Mediterranean in a World Historical perspective? by Edmund Burke, III

The *Our Shared Past in the Mediterranean* curriculum includes six modules aimed at providing students with an historical understanding of the Mediterranean as a zone of interaction and global change. Grounded in state of the art historical understandings, it provides full lesson plans, including maps, illustrations and suggested student activities. Keyed to world historical developments, it encourages students to see beyond the civilizational binaries that have hitherto clouded our understanding of the region. By linking the histories of the Mediterranean region into a single if complex historical narrative, *Our Shared Past in the Mediterranean* encourages students to perceive the deeper structural roots of global change from the classical era to the present.

Where is the Mediterranean? Its northern rim extends from Spain to the Balkans and Turkey while its eastern and southern limits include the Middle East and Arab North Africa. Depending upon the interests of the historian, however, a bigger or smaller Mediterranean configuration may be proposed. Because the modern Mediterranean is not included in most history curricula, students lack the ability to understand its history. This is a huge problem in this post 9/11 world, since in the absence of a global perspective, events appear to come out of nowhere. As a consequence, this crucially important world region remains misunderstood, and civilizational explanations have tended to supplant more grounded world historical understandings.

The world historical approach is only one of the note-worthy features of *Our Shared Past in the Mediterranean*. The curriculum provides a series of historically grounded lessons that enable students to understand the sequences of change by which the Mediterranean region was transformed as a whole. By following the lessons in the six modules, students acquire an understanding of the region's path to modernity and why it differed from that of northwestern Europe. In the process, they learn to distinguish the main types of change (ecological, economic, political and cultural) that affected Mediterranean societies since 1492. The curriculum also allows students to comprehend how these changes affected both Mediterranean elites and ordinary people in similar ways regardless of cultural background. The emphasis on patterned responses to global changes constitutes a major distinguishing feature of this curriculum.

A brief summary of the modules reveals the distinctive features of this approach:

**Module One** provides an innovative approach to the deep past of the region, keyed to the eco-historical forces that have shaped its successive transformations since the dawn of civilization. It emphasizes the role of the environment and the hand of man in the shaping and reshaping of the region over the human past.

**Module Two** examines the classical Mediterranean from an unusual vantage point: the empire of Carthage. It also examines technology and inventions, economic exchange, cultural innovation, power and authority, and spiritual life across the Mediterranean region in the formative period 5000-1000 BCE.

**Module Three** covers the period 300 – 1500 CE. Among other topics, it emphasizes the transformation of Mediterranean cities, migrations within and beyond the region, and

Mediterranean trade in the medieval period. The increasingly global yet intensely local character of Mediterranean trade is emphasized. From the silk roads to the spice trade to the trans-Saharan gold trade to the Arabian coffee trade, the Mediterranean has been deeply enmeshed in trade that spans Afroeurasia. This module also provides lessons that survey religious tolerance and intolerance in an increasingly diverse Mediterranean society. The result is more complex understandings of how cultural difference worked locally and across the region.

What I call “the Liberal Project” is an unstable, always contingent and conflictive phenomenon which nonetheless when viewed from the perspective of world history can be seen to assume particular patterns. It is the particular phase of the global development project.

**Module Four** surveys the rise of the Hapsburg and Ottoman empires in the post-1500 CE period, and links this development to long term waves of global change in the early modern period. The same module contains important lessons on the political and cultural transformations of the region, and how they affected different groups, together with lessons on slavery within the region.

The long nineteenth century (1750-1919) constitutes the subject of **Module Five**. As old empires crumbled across the region, new economic, political and cultural forms struggled to be born. Economically, the Mediterranean path to industrialization was rendered more difficult by the absence of significant deposits of coal within the region. The construction of the Suez Canal on the other hand renewed the place of the region in the global system of trade and commerce. Politically, the example of France, and French military, political and economic models were widely influential within the region from Italy and Spain to the Ottoman empire and North Africa. The nineteenth century Ottoman reform process known as the Tanzimat thus paralleled the introduction of French reforms in Spain and Italy. The module explores the impact of these changes in the Ottoman province of Tunisia. The onset of colonialism in the Mediterranean and human migration are studied as regional examples of global processes of change.

**Module Six** explores the period from 1914 to the present, with emphasis on the post-1945 period in the Mediterranean. It shows how the changes that have affected the region are manifestations of larger global patterns of change. For instance, the cases provided in this module link the end of colonialism, the rise of petroleum as a leading global energy source, and the dissemination of large-scale engineering projects such as the construction of the Aswan High Dam and other major water projects to global patterns of change. Overall students come away from Module Six with an increased understanding both of the specificity of local change, and the ways it echoes broader global patterns.

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## Teachers' Introduction to Module 3

This period covers a long and important period in Mediterranean history. Three important processes occur during this period: the transition from decentralized universal empires, legitimized by Christianity and then Islam, to centralized states that were often dominated by military elites; the impact of demographic changes resulting from large-scale migrations toward and across the Mediterranean basin, as well as the catastrophic effect on Mediterranean societies resulting from the plague and small ice age; and the establishment of trade networks that connected the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, and laid the foundation thereafter for the exploration of the Atlantic Ocean.

At the outset of this period, Christianity is adopted by the Roman empire. In so doing the Roman empire hopes to absorb the opposition to its civic culture created by monotheisms like Christianity, but in doing so, the empire itself splits into two political units (the western Roman and Eastern Byzantine empires) and encounters further popular opposition, in the form of “heresies” and breakaway churches, as it attempts to establish a standard faith. In almost a repetition of this phenomenon, when Islam arrives on the scene in the 7th century, it likewise legitimizes a new universal empire which inherits Roman territories around the Mediterranean as well as former possessions of the Persian Sassanian empire east into Asia. The Islamic empires of the Umayyads, Abbasids and Fatimids further enable the intellectual exchanges historians have associated with Hellenism, and develop the exchange of scientific ideas between China, India, and Europe through its territories, resulting in what world historians such as Marshall Hodgson have referred to as the internationalization of science.

In addition to creating a space for scientific and intellectual exchange that flowed through the Mediterranean, these empires also supported trade that extended from east to west from China to Europe, and south to north from Africa to the Middle East and Europe. It was Mediterranean societies in this period that organized the receipt and exchange of goods through the trade networks that connected them to the Indian Ocean sea trade, as well as Silk Road land trade. The trade networks that evolved in this period moreover, laid the foundation for global trade networks in the subsequent period, when the Atlantic Ocean became another link in a world-wide exchange of goods and people.

Alongside the exchange of ideas, and goods, the Mediterranean also witnessed the migrations of people from far removed hinterlands to its shores. Conquerors of earlier periods such as the Romans, and others like the Arabs were followed in migrations west of Turks, north of Africans, and south of Germanic peoples, in search of livelihood, trade and lands to conquer. The resulting cosmopolitan nature of Mediterranean societies were reflected in the fluid identities, occupations and preoccupations of its inhabitants, that belie the notion that the Mediterranean became a barrier between east and west, north and south.

Toward the end of this period, the catastrophic appearance of cycles of plague and the consequences of small ice ages in the northern European reaches, resulted in a reorganization of societies and polities featuring military led centralized states. These states subsequently developed into the more rigidly defined and competitive polities of the early modern era, that more often than not regarded the Mediterranean as a space for competition rather than cooperation.

Nevertheless, local communities' interactions, cosmopolitan pursuits and outlook, and economic ties endured. This module will also examine these local realities, if only because they help to illustrate if not occasionally challenge, the macro-processes noted above. The lesson plans will help students to investigate what has changed and what has not, and how the global and the local were experienced by Mediterranean societies in this period.

## **Additional Note to the Teacher: Qantara, Mediterranean Heritage Online Resource**

For an overview of the period's cultural, political, and artistic history, the website *Qantara: Mediterranean Heritage* ([http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show\\_thesaurus.php?th=themes](http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show_thesaurus.php?th=themes)) offers a very useful introduction and study tool for this module. The "History and Territories" page has a series of maps of political territories from 750 to 1700 CE at [http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show\\_carte.php?carte=carte-01](http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show_carte.php?carte=carte-01). Other themes and topics include the spread of knowledge, artistic techniques, and many others. The site can be viewed in English, French, and Spanish.

## **Correlation to Historical Thinking and Knowledge Standards**

- The student will gain:
- Ability to make comparisons and connections
- Ability to work with different types of historical sources (visual, written)
- Analyze cause and effect relationships and multiple causation, including the importance of the individual, the influence of ideas, and the role of chance.
- Appreciation of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity
- Interrogate of those documents
- Awareness, tolerance and respect for points of view deriving from other national or cultural backgrounds
- Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions.
- Develop literacy skills that let them read effectively
- Draw upon data in historical maps.
- Evaluate the implementation of a decision.
- Evidence historical perspectives.
- Identify the author or source of the historical document or narrative.
- Identify the central question(s) the historical narrative addresses.
- Intercultural understanding.
- Knowledge of positive experiences of living together
- Multiperspectivity
- Read historical narratives imaginatively.
- Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage.
- Solidarity between people
- Utilize visual and mathematical data presented in charts, tables, pie and bar graphs, flow charts, Venn diagrams, and other graphic organizers.

## Summary of Module 3

The lessons in this module introduce students to the writings of several key historical figures from the time period and provide alternatives to stereotypical characterizations about the role and importance of women, interfaith relations, the state of learning in medieval times, and the surprising modernity of business practices and cross-cultural trade. The lessons feature study of religion, cities, business, and literacy. Selections from medieval and modern historians in addition to images, a power point, and film clips provide context for exploring medieval Mediterranean cities and how they developed, how books were produced, literacy among women and children, how business was conducted along the varied trade routes, and commonalities and levels of interaction among followers of the three major faiths in the region: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

## Historical Sources in Module 3: “How Do We Know What We Know?”

Each module features historical sources that are characteristic for that era and the types of questions historians and geographers ask about that time. They are also dependent on the technologies that existed in a given era. The kinds of available sources have of course changed historical interpretations. For example, before the recent studies of DNA in human populations by the Genographic Project, ideas about migration and settlement in the world were limited, often relying upon ideas about race differences. More recently, ideas about the early modern era have changed with the opening of Ottoman archives on diplomacy, economics, and court records. For the medieval period, paintings tell about material culture, and in the nineteenth century we have photographs, while the twentieth century brought moving pictures, audio recordings, and electronic data. Students should think about how the kinds of historical sources determine the perspective of “history from above”—such as royal tombs and chronicles—or “history from below”—such as artifacts and dwellings of ordinary people. The following list highlights some of the types of historical sources featured in each of the six modules.

### Module 3 Featured Source Types

- Medieval Geographers & cartographers
- Travel accounts
- Chronicles & histories
- Art objects (architecture, painting, book illustration)
- Early printed materials, text, woodcuts, engravings

As teachers use these modules, they can draw attention to the changing types and amount of historical sources to which we have access for constructing our views of the past. This source material is growing with new discoveries, and is also being enhanced by new techniques of analysis, and of course new interpretations. World historians are also drawing upon historical narratives from the vast secondary literature in history and other fields to synthesize work done in disparate disciplines. Creative teachers can integrate “how we know what we know” into their lesson construction and assessment tasks.

The consulting scholars and curriculum developers hope that teachers and their students will enjoy and benefit from this module on the Mediterranean in World History.



## Module 3 Lessons

### Topic 1: Populations Patterns and Migration: Why Do People Leave Home?

#### Lesson 3.1: What Does It Take to Make a City?

##### Grade Level or Course Type Lesson Overview

This lesson will ask students to compare and contrast many of the common elements of cities in modern times, and those of the Mediterranean—or within its sphere of influence—during the module timeframe. After brainstorming and listing physical elements of modern cities, students read selections from primary source descriptions of medieval Mediterranean cities and discuss similarities and differences.

##### Lesson Objectives

The student will:

- Identify the common features of medieval Mediterranean cities
- Distinguish unique characteristics of various cities in the lesson
- Locate important Mediterranean cities on a map
- Design an imaginary medieval Mediterranean city (optional)

##### Grade Level or Course Type

World History, World Geography, secondary grades

##### Time

One or two 45-50 minute class periods.

##### Materials Needed:

- Student Handout 3.1.1, “Introduction to Mediterranean Cities”
- Student Handout 3.1.2, “Selections from Chapter 4 of *The Muqqadimah: An Introduction to History* by Ibn Khaldun.”
- Student Handout 3.1.3, “A most exact description of the Cite of Fez” by Leo Africanus
- Student Handout 3.1.4, “Genoa”
- Student Handout 3.1.5, Julia Clancy-Smith “The Times of Ibn Khaldun” (optional reading)
- Exercise 3.1.1 on page 2, Student Handout 3.1.1-“Design Your Own Medieval Mediterranean City”
- Notepaper, drawing paper, butcher paper or electronic drawing media.

##### Procedure/Activities

1. Distribute “Student Introduction to Cities” (Student Handout 3.1.1). After students have read the handout, ask them to identify some essential characteristics of modern cities.

Questions might include:

- How large is a city in area and population?
- How diverse or cosmopolitan is a city?
- What sort of commercial activity takes place there?



- In what kind of neighborhoods or quarters do people live in a city—in enclaves or mixed together? Why do people congregate in certain areas, and how do such places develop over time?
- Where do they congregate publicly in the city and why?
- What other activities take place in cities?
- How are cities provisioned with food and other supplies? Are they produced in the city's immediate hinterlands, or must they be brought into the city from farther away? What groups of people supply the city and how?
- What evidence of government structures are found in cities? How are capital cities governed apart from national or imperial governance?
- Who maintains social order? Are there local as well as city-wide institutions, or formal and informal structures?

Record student responses on the board and/or have the students record their answers in a notebook.

2. Have students read Student Handout 3.1.2 and ask them to identify the differences and similarities between modern cities and those described by Ibn Khaldun.

3. Have students read Student Handout 3.1.3, and ask them to identify some of the most striking details about medieval Fez described in the text (i.e. what surprised them? what did they recognize? what was unusual?) (Ask for at least 3-4 examples) Ask them to compare this description with Ibn Khaldun's generic description of North African cities. Focus on common elements.

4. Have students read Student Handout 3.1.4, "Genoa." Discuss ways in which Genoa is similar to/different from Fez and Ibn Khaldun's generic city. Ask students to determine what the main focus of the Genoese economy was, and how this activity shaped the city. Use the map to investigate connections between Genoa and other places in the Mediterranean region, both on land and sea.

5. **Extension:** (optional) For more on Ibn Khaldun, distribute the chapter "The Times of Ibn Khaldun" by Julia Clancy-Smith.

6. **Assessment (Optional Project):** Have the students, individually or in groups, design their own centrally planned medieval cities, based on the features of cities described in the readings, and the instructions and questions on page 2 of Student Handout 3.1.1. Historically, leaders often established capital cities in their chosen locations, and designed them from scratch. Ask the students to begin by thinking about location—will it be on the coast? on a river? in the mountains? They must include a plan for access to drinking water, food supplies, and activities that would provide a basis for economic activity. Ask them to include resources the city will have and how they obtain them (trade, manufacture, etc.). Will their city's layout be round? square? rectangular? How will the city be defended, and what kind of weapons and siege strategies will it likely encounter? Part of the activity is determining what factors to bear in mind based on their study of historical cities in this lesson.

## Lesson 3.2: Populations on the Move

### Lesson Overview

Using modern scholarship and period accounts and literary sources, this lesson traces the Norman migrations south (Sicily) and Arab migrations from east to west (the Hilali migrations). Exploring what motivates people to move in recent history and long ago, the readings on migration during the period trace two important medieval migrations in the Western Mediterranean—the Hilali and Norman invasions.

### Grade Level or Course Type

World History, World Geography, secondary grades

### Lesson Objectives

- Students will trace the Hilali and Norman invasions on maps of the Mediterranean region and analyze the epic poems of Bani Hilal for the causes of migration and the self-image of the Bani Hilal themselves.
- They will hypothesize the probable causes of these migrations and describe their impacts on the regions to which they migrated, as well as on the migrants.
- Students will analyze Ibn Khaldun’s writings on the Hilali migrations and contrast them with historians’ assessment of the phenomenon.
- They will compare literary sources on the Norman invasion of Sicily such as Ibn Jubayr.
- Students will identify ways in which these migrations added to the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Mediterranean, and compare them to earlier and later examples (Phoenicians, Romans Vandals, Arabs, and later European colonialism).
- Students will relate migration to the multi-cultural/multi-national flavor of the Mediterranean during the period, further analyzing the question of what makes a city, i.e. population movement.

### Grade Level or Course Type

World History, World Geography, secondary grades

### Time

45-55 minutes, or one class period

### Materials Needed

Student Handout 3.2.1

### Procedure/Activities

1. Using modern scholarship and period accounts, this lesson will chart the Norman migrations south (Sicily) and Arab migrations east to west (the Hilali migrations). After asking what motivates people to move in recent history, handout the readings on migration during the period from the McEvedy *Atlas of Medieval History*, then readings on the Hilali migrations and the evolution of Norman Sicily after the Norman invasions.
2. Introduce the lesson by asking students to think about what makes people migrate from one place to another. Why do people relocate to other towns, cities, and even countries? What is in it for them, and what does it mean to the people whose lands they come

inhabit? Have them think about their own community/country today and discuss who the immigrant populations are and why they settled there.

3. Next, have students think about and jot down some keywords on what happens in places where immigrants settle. Are they always welcomed? Do they try and blend in, or do they set up neighborhoods or towns reflective of their own culture? Or is it a little of both? Compare military and other types of migrations.
4. After discussing factors influencing migration and its host societies, assign the readings in the lesson that chronicle the movement of Arab Bedouin (nomadic) people across North Africa during the mid-11<sup>th</sup> to the mid-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the Norman invasion of Sicily at about the same time.
5. Assign the readings and map in Handout 3.2.1 on migration, and have students individually or in pairs answer the questions to think about after the readings. Among the issues raised in the readings are attitudes about the invaders, their impact on the receiving communities, as well as ways in which people mixed and influenced each other in the destination society, for example, how Norman (i.e. northern European) and Arab cultures mingled on the island of Sicily under Norman leadership.
6. VIDEO: The video “Forms and Motifs” from the website *Qantara, Mediterranean Heritage* at [http://www.qantaramed.org/qantara4/public/show\\_document.php?do\\_id=1176&lang=en](http://www.qantaramed.org/qantara4/public/show_document.php?do_id=1176&lang=en) helps to show how contact between cultures helped to introduce various artistic and architectural concepts and elements from one culture to another. Ask the students to research and identify various Oriental motifs in Western art from the time frame 300 – 1500 CE.

## Topic 2: Trade: What Does It Take to Run a Business?

### Lesson 3.3: Trade Routes: Goods and Ideas in Motion

#### Lesson Overview

This lesson identifies for students the expanding trading networks across the Mediterranean during this period, highlighting their importance as centers of material as well as intellectual and technological exchange.

#### Grade Level or Course Type Lesson Objectives

- Students will examine maps showing trade routes and major trading cities during the module timeframe, making connections between sources and markets.
- They will also identify commodities traded and associate some of them with locations on the trade routes
- They will explore modern economic concepts such as trade deficits and supply/demand and relate them to the medieval Mediterranean flow of trade goods.
- They will analyze primary source accounts of trade during the period and characterize the variety of goods being traded and the multi-cultural/multi-national dimensions of trade in the region.

#### Grade Level or Course Type

World History, World Geography, secondary grades

### **Time**

Lesson will take two to four 45-50 minute class periods.

### **Materials Needed**

- Student Handout 3.2.1, Introduction to Trade Routes: Goods and Ideas in Motion
- Student Handout 3.2.2, “The West-East Trade Deficit: Who Controlled the Flow of Goods and Cash”
- Student Handout 3.2.3, “Towns and Trade Route Maps”

### **Procedure/Activities**

1. Distribute Student Handout 3.2.1, “Introduction to Trade Routes: Goods and Ideas in Motion.” Have the students read the handout, then ask them to consider and identify commodities and consumer goods in modern times.
2. Have the students read Student Handout 3.2.2, “The West-East Trade Deficit: Who Controlled the Flow of Goods and Cash. ” and ask them to identify the aspects of medieval and modern market forces that are common. Then have them continue to read the selections in the handout, which detail who was involved in trading, and what specific goods were traded.
3. Prepare and distribute or display Student Handout 3.2.3 on – Towns and Trade Route Maps during various time periods, and have students complete the activities associated with each map, either in class or as homework, individually or in groups.

## **Topic 3: Ideas in Motion**

### **Lesson 3.4: What Does It Take to Make a Book?**

#### **Lesson Overview**

This lesson identifies for students how the introduction of paper impacted the Mediterranean and the central role of books and writing in its culture. It also covers the way in which books were used in schools and how pupils learned, including children and women.

#### **Lesson Objectives**

- Students will be able to describe the advantages of paper over other writing materials and explain its significance in terms of broadening literacy
- They will identify the purposes of literacy during the medieval period and the social classes who enjoyed access to literacy and books.
- They will analyze visual representations of books and reading to draw conclusions about the social context of reading

#### **Grade Level**

World History, World Geography, secondary grades

### **Time**

Lesson will take 1-2 class periods, depending on the use of optional readings.

### **Materials Needed**

- PowerPoint Presentation 3.4, “What Does It Take to Make a Book?”

- Student Handout 3.4.1 – Literacy
- Student Handout 3.4.2 – Optional readings 1-3

### Procedure/Activities

1. Students will view a PowerPoint presentation that includes videos on the making of books, and read texts concerning literacy during the medieval period
2. Show PPT, “What Does It Take to Make a Book?” or have students view it on their own in a flipped classroom model. Discuss how books were made, the importance of paper, and how books were used, during the era. In what ways was this technology different from what came before it in terms of cost, durability, wide dissemination of ideas (e.g. scrolls on parchment, papyrus and hard writing materials)
3. Distribute or project Student Handouts 3.3.1-3.3.2 and have students read and reflect on the questions at the end of each segment. In addition, students should closely view the images to discover clues about the social context of reading and books.
4. Optional reading: Jonathan Bloom, “Revolution by the Ream: A History of Paper,” *Saudi Aramco World* magazine, May/June 1999 at <http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/199903/revolution.by.the.ream-a.history.of.paper.htm>.

## Topic 5: What Does Religion Have to Do With It?

### Lesson 3.5: Houses of Worship and Places of Veneration

#### Lesson Overview

This lesson explores modes of worship and religious tolerance during the medieval era. Students explore the role of religion in the Mediterranean during the period and analyze evidence of religious tolerance and shared artistic development throughout the region.

#### Lesson Objectives

- Students will describe common elements between physical spaces of worship among Christians and Muslims
- They will identify sites that were used in common by worshippers of different faiths
- They will describe shared religious practices and concepts such as prayer and pilgrimage to holy sites across traditions

#### Grade Level

World History, World Geography, secondary grades

#### Time

Lesson takes one 45-50 minute class period, longer if additional research is assigned.

#### Materials Needed

- Student Handout 3.5.1 – Religious Tolerance and Houses of Worship



### Procedure/Activities

1. Distribute or project Student Handout 3.5.1, “Religious Tolerance and Houses of Worship” on an LCD projector or Smartboard. Have the students read the handout text and consider the questions at the bottom of the handout.
2. If time permits, students may research further examples of shared religious spaces, practices such as pilgrimage, fasting, prayer and architectural commonalities. For example, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem also contains Byzantine mosaics that express Muslim views of Jesus. Stained glass windows such as those built into the cathedrals of Chartres and Notre Dame have roots in Byzantine and Syrian glass staining traditions, and owe much to the geometric tessellations of Islamic art. (See <http://islamicpain.tv/Arts-and-Science/The-Culture-of-Al-Andalus/Glass.htm>)

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## Module 3 Student Handouts by Lesson #

## Introduction to Mediterranean Cities



Attributed to Workshop of Master LCz (German, active 1480 - 1505) *View of a Walled City in River Landscape*, about 1485 (Source: The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles at <http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?artobj=273>)

Cities have long been places where people gather to exchange ideas, to buy and sell things (everything from food and household items to luxury goods), and to seek protection from enemies, invaders and sometimes diseases. Cities are also often home to major institutions (royal palaces and administrative offices, religious institutions, courts, banks), seats of learning (schools, universities, libraries), as well as centers of entertainment, such as theaters. Some of the many cities throughout the Mediterranean, or within its vast sphere of influence, like Marseille or Beirut, date as far back in history as Stone Age (Paleolithic) times. Others, such as Alexandria or Carthage (modern Tunis), rose to prominence during the classical period. Still others (Genoa, Granada, Fez, etc.) did not emerge as major players in the history of the Mediterranean until the era historians call (for want of a better term) the “Middle Ages,” which roughly coincides with the timeframe covered in this lesson (500-1500 CE).

Think about modern cities (your own, or one near you) and then read about Mediterranean cities in the past. It may strike you that, as the saying goes, there is “nothing new under the sun” – especially when it shines on the Mediterranean Sea!

*Next page, Design your own city...*

### **Optional Exercise 3.1.1 “Design Your Own Medieval Mediterranean City”**

In this exercise, you will design your own medieval, Mediterranean city. Based on the features of cities described in the readings, draw sketches and take notes on your city, positioning it somewhere in the Mediterranean region.

- Begin by thinking about where your city will be located: on the coast? on a river? in the mountains?
- Are there any legends or heroic stories about the founding of your city?
- Include what resources the city will have and how the inhabitants obtain them (trade, manufacturing, etc.).
- Will your city be round, square, or rectangular? Or will your city have developed routes over time rather than having a designed shape?
- What agricultural resources will feed the city, and will they come from nearby or far away? What determines how the city is supplied?
- Who will make up the population or human resources of the city? How did they arrive there, and when? What languages do the residents speak, and what languages do they use for business?
- Who are the elites, and who does the city’s work? Where do these groups live? Who governs the city, and what buildings do they require?
- What important cultural institutions does your city proudly feature?

Draw or diagram your city in the form of a blueprint, a birds-eye-view, or draw several street views in different parts of the city, showing what shops, homes, and institutions you wish to include. While your city is imaginary, it must have authentic elements, such as those you read about in the handouts. So no fantasy features! When you are done, explain and defend your choices and design.



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Attributed to Workshop of Master LCz (German, active 1480 - 1505) *View of a Walled City in River Landscape*, about 1485 (Source: The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles at <http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?artobj=273>)

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## **Ibn Khaldun Writes About Cities: Excerpts from Chapter 4 of *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History***

(**Note:** The headings in italics are Ibn Khaldun’s own titles for sections of the chapter. The photograph shows Ibn Khaldun’s birth home in Tunis, (Source: Wikimedia Commons at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dar\\_Ibn\\_Khaldoun.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dar_Ibn_Khaldoun.jpg)) Text source: Rozenthal, Franz, tr. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. (Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 263, 267, 273-277.

**Now that you have considered the common elements of modern cities, let’s consider what cities were like in the Mediterranean during the late classical and medieval periods.**

Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), a philosopher and scholar who was born in Tunis, wrote about cities in North Africa and the Islamic world as a contemporary who traveled widely.

Ibn Khaldun is considered one of the first modern historians, because he took a critical look at the events of his day and the past and tried to make sense of them, instead of simply



recording what happened. The following passages are from his great work, “The Muqaddimah,” an Arabic word which means “introduction.” So, you might think of “The Muqaddimah” as something like a textbook, entitled “An Introduction to History.” In these selections from Chapter 4, entitled (in part) “Countries and cities, and all other forms of sedentary civilization,” Ibn Khaldun describes how and why towns and cities are created. As you read the selections, make notes or highlight passages that reflect similarities with your own list of what makes a modern city. Also highlight what is different. Think about what the challenges and requirements were for a city during Ibn Khaldun’s time in comparison with today.

### ***Ibn Khaldun Selection 1: Dynasties are prior to towns and cities. Towns and cities are secondary (products) of royal authority.***

[T]owns and cities with their monuments, vast constructions, and large buildings, are set up for the masses and not for the few. Therefore, united effort and much co-operation are needed for them . . . As a matter of fact, (human beings) must be forced and driven to (build cities). The stick of royal authority is what compels them, or they may be stimulated by promise of reward and compensation. (Such

reward) amounts to so large a sum that only royal authority and a dynasty can pay for it. Thus, dynasties and royal authority are absolutely necessary for the building of cities and the planning of towns.

Things to think about:

- What does Ibn Khaldun believe is necessary for the creation of a city?
- What do you think Ibn Khaldun means by “the stick of royal authority?”
- What is “the stick of royal authority” in modern cities?

***Ibn Khaldun Selection 2: Requirements, for the planning of towns and the consequences of neglecting those requirements.***

Towns are dwelling places that nations use when they have reached the desired goal of luxury and of the things that go with it. Then, they prefer tranquility and quiet and turn to using houses to dwell in.

The purpose of (building towns) is to have places for dwelling and shelter. Therefore, it is necessary in this connection to see to it that harmful things are kept away from the towns by protecting them . . .

In connection with the protection of towns against harmful things, one should see to it that all the houses of the town are situated inside a protective wall. Furthermore, the town should be situated in an inaccessible place, either upon a rugged hill or surrounded by the sea or by a river, so that it can be reached only by crossing some sort of bridge. In that way, it will be difficult for an enemy to take the town, and its inaccessibility and fortress (character) will be increased many times.

In connection with the protection of towns against harm that might arise from atmospheric phenomena, one should see to it that the air where the town is (to be situated) is good, in order to be safe from illness. When the air is stagnant and bad, or close to corrupt waters or putrid pools or swamps, it is speedily affected by putrescence as the result of being near these things, and it is unavoidable that (all) living beings who are there will speedily be affected by illness.

Things to think about:

- Why do cities need protection, and from what or whom? What does Ibn Khaldun say they have that other people want?
- Who provides cities with protection?
- What are the best geographic locations for cities, according to Ibn Khaldun? Name some, and some reasons for choosing one location over another.

**Ibn Khaldun Selection 3: *With regard to the amount of prosperity and business activity (in them), cities and towns differ in accordance with the different size of their civilization (population).***

The reason for this is that . . . the individual human being cannot by himself obtain all the necessities of life. All human beings must co-operate to that end in their civilization. But what is obtained through the co-operation of a group of human beings satisfies the need of a number many times greater (than themselves). For instance, no one, by himself, can obtain the share of the wheat he needs for food. But when six or ten persons, including a smith and a carpenter to make the tools, and others who are in charge of the oxen, the plowing of the soil, the harvesting of the ripe grain, and all the other agricultural activities, undertake to obtain their food and work toward that purpose either separately or collectively and thus obtain through their labor a certain amount of food, (that amount) will be food for a number of people many times their own. The combined labor produces more than the needs and necessities of the workers.

If the labor of the inhabitants of a town or city is distributed in accordance with the necessities and needs of those inhabitants, a minimum of that labor will suffice. The labor (available) is more than is needed. Consequently, it is spent to provide the conditions and customs of luxury and to satisfy the needs of the inhabitants of other cities. They import (the things they need) from (people who have a surplus) through exchange or purchase. Thus, the (people who have a surplus) get a good deal of wealth . . .

The prosperity and wealth they enjoy leads them to luxury and the things that go with it, such as splendid houses and clothes, fine vessels and utensils, and the use of servants and mounts. All these (things) involve activities that require [that] skillful people must be chosen to do them and be in charge of them. As a consequence, industry and the crafts thrive. The income and the expenditure of the city increase. Affluence comes to those who work and produce these things by their labor.

When civilization (population) increases, the (available) labor again increases. In turn, luxury again increases in correspondence with the increasing profit, and the customs and needs of luxury increase. Crafts are created to obtain (luxury products). The value realized from them increases, and, as a result, profits are again multiplied in the town. Production there is thriving even more than before. And so it goes with the second and third increase. All the additional labor serves luxury and wealth, in contrast to the original labor that served (the necessities of) life. The city that is superior to another in one (aspect of) civilization (that is, in population), becomes superior to it also by its increased profit and prosperity and by its customs of luxury which are not found in the other city. The more numerous and the more abundant the civilization (population) in a city, the more luxurious is the life of its inhabitants in comparison with that (of the inhabitants) of a lesser city.

**Things to think about:**

- One of the reasons Ibn Khaldun is regarded as one the first modern historians is because he analyzed history and attempted to explain why and how society

developed. Identify ways in which he does this in the preceding section on how cities become wealthy.

- What does Ibn Khaldun say residents of cities do with their money, once they have grown wealthy?
- Name ways in which people in modern cities do the same with their money.
- Now, when reading the next section, pay close attention to how prices and wages are affected by the relative wealth of people in cities.

#### **Ibn Khaldun Selection 4: *Prices in towns***

All markets cater to the needs of people. Some of these needs are necessities, foodstuffs, for instance, such as wheat and barley; corresponding foods, such as beans, chick-peas, peas, and other edible grains; and wholesome foods such as onions, garlic, and the like. Other things are conveniences or luxuries, such as seasonings, fruits, clothes, utensils . . . all the crafts, and buildings. When a city is highly developed and has many inhabitants, the prices of necessary foodstuffs and corresponding items are low, and the prices for luxuries, such as seasonings, fruits, and the things that go with them, are high. When the inhabitants of a city are few and its civilization weak, the opposite is the case.

The reason for this is that the different kinds of grains belong among the necessary foodstuffs. The demand for them, therefore, is very large. Nobody would neglect (to provide for) his own food or that of his establishment for a month or a year. Thus, the procurement of (grain) concerns the entire population of a city, or the largest part of them, both in the city itself and in its environs. This is inevitable. Everybody who procures food for himself has a great surplus beyond his own and his family's needs. This surplus is able to satisfy the needs of many of the inhabitants of that particular city. No doubt, then, the inhabitants of a city have more food than they need. Consequently, the price of food is low, as a rule, except when misfortunes occur due to celestial conditions that may affect (the supply of) food in certain years. If people did not have to store food against such possible mishaps, it could be given away entirely gratis, since it would be plentiful because of the large civilization (population of the city).

All other conveniences, such as seasonings, fruits, and whatever else belongs to them, are not matters of general concern. Their procurement does not engage the labor of all the inhabitants of a city or the largest part of them. Then, when a city has a highly developed, abundant civilization and is full of luxuries, there is a very large demand for those conveniences and for having as many of them as a person can expect in view of his situation. This results in a very great shortage of such things. Many will bid for them, but they will be in short supply. They will be needed for many purposes, and prosperous people used to luxuries will pay exorbitant prices for them, because they need them more than others. Thus, as one can see, prices come to be high.

Crafts and labor also are expensive in cities with an abundant civilization. There are three reasons for this. First, there is much need (of them), because of the place luxury occupies in the city on account of the (city's) large civilization. Second, industrial workers place a high value on their services and employment, (for they do not have to work) since life is easy in a town because of the abundance of food there. Third, the number of people with money to waste is great, and these people have many needs for which they have to employ the services of others and have to use many workers and their skills. Therefore, they pay more for (the services of) workers than their labor is (ordinarily considered) worth, because there is competition for (their services) and the wish to have exclusive use of them. Thus, workers, craftsmen, and professional people become arrogant, their labor becomes expensive, and the expenditures of the inhabitants of the city for these things increase.

Things to think about:

- Ibn Khaldun makes distinctions here between “conveniences” and “luxuries.” What do you suppose he meant?
- Why were grains considered the “most necessary foodstuffs?” Are these distinctions still valid today?
- What does Ibn Khaldun say about the demand for goods and prices? How about the demand for services?
- Now think about the reading as a whole. Could Ibn Khaldun’s description of what makes a city be true today in any way? How?



## Leo Africanus: “A most exact description of the Citie of Fez” by Leo Africanus

**Source:** “Observations of Africa, taken out of John Leo his nine Bookes, translated by Master Pory, and the most remarkable things hither transcribed. And scanned from *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, vol. V.” at

<http://www.iras.ucalgary.ca/~volk/sylvia/Leo.htm>

The painting is “Portrait of a Humanist” by Sebastiano del Piombo, painted in Rome around 1520 and believed by some to be Leo

Africanus. (Image Source: National Gallery of Art, Washington DC. at <http://www.nga.gov/collection/gallery/gg22/gg22-46137.html>)

Leo Africanus (Leo “the African”) was born al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Fasi in Granada, Spain in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century (probably 1494). He was, at various times, a diplomat, judge, hospital administrator, geographer, teacher, political prisoner and international celebrity. He is best known for his book, *The History and Description of Africa and of the Notable Things Therein Contained* which is a description of North Africa and the African interior at the time he lived. Here he describes, in great detail, the city of Fez in northern Morocco. Fez was an important trading city that rose to prominence in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century under the Muslim rulers known as the Almoravids.



Fez was situated near an ancient Roman city and enjoyed abundant water resources. Nonetheless, like most medieval cities, it relied on the agrarian hinterlands for many resources, such as food, workers, and raw materials. It was located at the confluence of three, intersecting trade routes: Atlantic/West African; Trans-Saharan; Mediterranean/North African. Also, caravans of Moroccan and West African Muslims often used Fez as a staging post for the religious pilgrimage to the holy cities of the East (Mecca, Jerusalem). Thus, even though it was inland and surrounded by mountains, it was nonetheless a sort of Mediterranean “port” city, in that it was linked to the Mediterranean by trade and traffic.

At its height, around 1090 CE, the Almoravid Empire stretched from Ghana in West Africa, across Morocco and the Mediterranean to southern Spain. Leo’s description of Fez dates to some 500 years later, when the city was ruled by another dynastic family known as the Wattasids (1472-1554). By this time, Fez had absorbed many Muslim and Jewish families who fled Spain during the “Reconquista” or “reconquest” under the Spanish, Christian monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella.

**Note to Student Readers:** *The spellings in these selections are in the English of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The words might look strange and unfamiliar, but if you look closely you should be able to recognize the modern English equivalent of each word, hidden, as it were, inside the old spelling. If you can’t understand a word by reading it, trying sounding it out in your head. You may suddenly recognize it! “Citie,” for instance is “city.”*



**Leo Africanus Selection 1: *Leo describes the houses and public water system of the city***

A World it is to see, how large, how populous, how well fortified and walled this Citie is. The most part thereof standeth upon great and little Hills: neither is there any plaine ground but onely in the midst of the Citie. The River entreth the Towne in two places, for it is divided into a double branch, one whereof runneth by new Fez, that is, by the South-side of the Towne, and another commeth in at the West-side. And so almost infinitely dispersing it selfe into the Citie, it is derived by certaine conduits and chanelles unto every Temple, Colledge, Inne, Hospitall, and almost to every private house. Unto the Temples are certaine square conduits adjoynd, having Cels and Receptacles round about them; each one of which hath a [faucet], whereby water is conveyed through the wall into a Trough of Marble. From whence flowing into the Sinkes and Gutters, it carryeth away all the filth of the Citie into the River . . . [Most] of the houses are built of fine bricke and stones curiously painted. Likewise their bay-windowes and portals are made of partie-coloured bricke . . . The Roofes of their Houses they adorne with Gold, Azure, and other excellent Colours, which Roofes are made of wood, and plaine on the top, to the end that in Summer-time Carpets may be spred upon them, for here they use to lodge by reason of the exceeding heate of that Countrey. Some houses are of two and some of three Stories high, whereunto they make fine staires, by which they passe from one roome to another under the same rooffe: for the middle part of the house is alwayes open or uncovered, having some Chambers built on the one side, and some on the other. The Chamber doores are very high and wide: which in rich mens houses are framed of excellent and carved wood . . . All the portals of their houses are supported with bricke Pillars finely playstered over, except some which stand upon Pillars of Marble. The Beames and Transomes upholding their Chambers are most curiously painted and carved. To some houses likewise belong certaine square Cisternes . . . built of bricke trimly playstered over. Along the sides of these Cisternes are certaine [faucets], which convay the water into Marble Troughs, as I have seene in many places of Europe. When the foresaid Conduits are full of water, that which floweth over, runneth by certaine secret pipes and conveyances into the Cisternes: and that which overfloweth the Cisternes, is carryed likewise by other passages into the common Sinkes and Gutters, and so into the River. The said Cisternes are alwayes kept sweete and cleane, neyther are they covered but onely in Summertime, when Men, Women, and Children bathe themselves therein.

**Things to think about:**

- Does Fez sound like an attractive city? Why?
- Think back on what Ibn Khaldun wrote about how a city stays healthy. Does Fez meet that requirement? How?
- What does Leo's description of the houses in Fez say about its residents?
- Most people in modern communities now take it for granted that we live in buildings with running water and drains that take away our waste water. Why do you think Leo spent so much time describing the "cisternes" and water system of Fez?

**Leo Africanus Selection 2: *Leo describes the Colleges of Fez***

Moreover, in the Citle of Fez are two most stately Colledges, of which [various] roomes are adorned with curious painting; all their beames are carved, their wals consisting both of Marble and Freestone. Some Colledges [here] contayne an hundred studies, some more, and some fewer, all which were built by divers Kings of the Marin Family . . . In many places you may find certaine Verses, which declare what yeare the Colledge was built in, together with many Epigrams in the Founders commendation. The Letters of which Verses are very great and black, so that they may be read a farre off. This Colledge gates are of Brasse most curiously carved, and so are the doores artificially made of wood. In the Chappell of this Colledge standeth a certaine Pulpit mounted nine stayres high, which staires are of Ivorie and Ebonie . . . The other Colledges of Fez are somewhat like unto this, having every one Readers and Professors, some of which read in the forenoone, and some in the afternoons.

In times past the Students of those Colledges had their apparell and [meals] allowed them for seven yeares, but now they have nothing [provided for them] but their Chamber. . .

**Things to think about:**

- What do the colleges that Leo describes have in common with the houses?
- Identify some of the building material used in the colleges, and the homes, in Fez. What does it say about the importance of the buildings?
- Do we find similar inscriptions to what Leo describes written on college campus buildings today?

**Leo Africanus Selection 3: *Leo describes the public hospitals of Fez, their services and patients***

Many Hospitals there are in Fez, no whit inferiour, either for building or beauties unto the foresaid Colledges. For in them whatsoever strangers came to the Citie were entertayned at the common charge for three dayes together. There are likewise as faire and as stately Hospitals in the Suburbes . . .

The poore indeed and impotent people of the Citie are at this day relieved; but no strangers are entertayned, save only learned men or Gentlemen. Howbeit there is another Hospitall for the reliefe of sicke and diseased strangers, who have their dyet onely allowed them, but no Physician or Medicine: certaine women there are which attend upon them, till they recover their former health, or dye. In this Hospitall likewise there is a place for [frantic] or distracted persons, where they are bound in strong Iron Chaines; whereof the part next unto their walkes is strengthened with mightie beames of Wood and Iron. The Governour of [the hospital], when he bringeth them any sustenance, hath a Whip of purpose to chastise those that offer to bite, strike, or play any mad part.

**Things to think about:**

- Who does Leo say can stay in Fez's hospitals? For how long?
- Are there hospitals for rich and poor?

- Who do you suppose Leo meant by “[frantic] or distracted persons?” How are they treated?

#### **Leo Africanus Selection 4: *Leo describes the public baths of Fez***

In this Citie are more then an hundred [bath houses] . . . stately built; which though they bee not of equall bignesse, yet are they all of one fashion. Each [bath house] hath foure Halls, without which are certaine Galleries in an higher place, with five or sixe staires to ascend unto them: here men put off their apparell, and hence they goe naked into the Bath. In the midst they alwaies keepe a Cisterne full of water. First therefore, they that meane to bathe themselves, must passe through a cold Hall, where they use to temper hot water and cold together, then they goe into a roome somewhat hotter, where the servants clense and wash them; and last of all, they proceede into a third Hot-house, where they sweate as much as they thinke good. The fire that heateth their water is made of nought else but beasts dung: for which purpose many boyes are set on worke to run up and downe to Stables, and thence to carrie all the dung, and to lay it on heapes without the Towne-walles; which being parched in the Sunne for two or three moneths together, they use for fuell. Likewise, the women have their Stoves apart from the men. And yet some Hot-houses serve both for men and women, but at sundrie times, namely, for men from the third to the fourteenth houre of the day, and the residue for women. While women are bathing themselves, they hang out a rope at the first entrance of the house, which is a signe for men, that they may then proceede no farther. Neither may husbands here be permitted to speake with their owne wives; so great a regard they have of their honestie. Here men and women both, after they have done bathing, use to banquet and make merrie with pleasant Musicke and singing. Young [boys] enter the Bath starke naked without any shame, but men cover their privities with a linnen cloth. The richer sort will not enter the common Bath, but that which is adorned and finely set forth, and which serveth for Noble-men and Gentle-men. When any one is to be bathed, they lay him along upon the ground, anointing him with a certaine oyntment, and with certaine instruments doing away his filth. The richer sort have a Carpet to lie on, their head lying on a wooden Cushion, covered with the same Carpet. Likewise, here are many Barbers . . . which attend to doe their office. The most part of these Baths pertaine to the Temples and Colledges, yeelding unto them a great summe of money for yearely rent: for some give an hundred, some an hundred and fiftle Duckats a yeare.

#### Things to think about:

- Cleanliness was important to the people of Fez during Leo’s time, for many different reasons. First of all, North Africa is a very hot climate, and so keeping clean and cool was important. Secondly, doctors and other people who helped the sick understood that sanitation was important to ward off disease and infection. Lastly, there were religious reasons for staying clean: in Islam, washing before prayers is a matter of ritual, because it is considered irreverent to pray in a state of uncleanness. The public baths were not for washing before prayers (there are special fountains outside mosques for that), but the idea of staying clean was important to Muslims at all times.
- What does this reading about baths tell you about how the people of Fez regarded cleanliness?

- What fuel do they use to heat the baths, and why do you suppose that is?
- Just as there are baths for the public and very fancy baths for the rich, are there such institutions today? Do they, for instance, sound like private clubs vs. public recreational facilities? Do these kind of divisions exist in modern society?

### **Leo Africanus Selection 5: *Leo describes the inns of Fez***

In this Citie are almost two hundred Innes, the greatest whereof are in the principall part of the Citie neere unto the chiefe Temple. Every of these Innes are three stories high, and containe an hundred and twenty, or [more] Chambers apiece. Likewise, each one hath a Fountaine, together with Sinks and Water-pipes, which make avoidance of all the filth. Never, to my remembrance, did I see greater building, except it were the Spanish Colledge at Bologna, or the Pallace of the Cardinall di San Giorgio at Rome; of which Innes all the Chamber doores have Walkes or Galleries before them. And albeit the Innes of this Citie are very faire and large, yet they affoord most beggerly entertainment to strangers; for there are neither Beds nor Couches for a man to lie upon, unlesse it be a course Blanket and a Mat. And if you will have any victuals, you must goe to the Shambles [i.e. the maze-like, commercial center of town] your selfe, and buy such meate for your Host to [cook] . . . In these Innes certaine poore Widdowes of Fez, which have neither wealth nor friends to succour them, are relieved: sometimes one, and sometimes two of them together are allowed a Chamber; for which courtesie they play both the Chamberlaines and Cookes of the Inne . . .

#### Things to think about:

- Fez was a busy city for trade and commerce. Do you suppose that is why it had so many inns? (The “inns” that Leo refers to are probably “funduqs.” These were storehouses where foreign merchants could keep their goods. It was also a place for them to stay, so funduqs were rather like warehouses, business hotels, and embassies combined. Some offered many of the comforts of home, including churches for Christians in Muslim lands. There were restrictions, however, on how long visiting merchants could stay in the funduq, and what kind of rights they had to compete with local, native merchants.)
- Do these inns sound very comfortable? What does Leo say about their comfort?

### **Leo Africanus Selection 6: *Leo describes the shops, markets, and businesses of Fez***

**Note:** *This selection is long and very detailed, but worth reading, to get a very good sense of what commercial activity was like during Leo’s time. As you read, pay close attention to how many goods and services are available, and consider how many are still available in modern cities. Also, try and imagine all the activity going on at once; how noisy, colorful, and/or aromatic do you think the markets of Fez were?*

In this Citie are Mills in foure hundred places at least. And every of these places containeth five or sixe Mills; so that there are some thousands of Mills in the whole City. Every Mill standeth in a large roome upon some strong pillar or post, whereunto many Country-people use to resort. All the said Mills pertaine either to the Temples or Colledges.

Each trade or occupation hath a peculiar place allotted thereto, the principall whereof are next unto the great Temple: for there first you may behold to the number of fourescore Notaries or Scriveners shops, whereof some joyne upon the Temple, and the residue stand over against them: every of which Shops hath alwaies two Notaries. Then Westward there are about thirtie Stationers or Booke-sellers. The Shoo-merchants which buy Shooes and Buskins [boots] of the Shoo-makers, and sell them againe to the Citizens, inhabite on the Southside of the Temple: and next unto them, such as make Shooes for children onely, their Shops being about fiftie. On the East-side dwell those that sell vessels, and other commodities made of brasse. Over against the great Gate of the said Temple stands the fruit-market, containing fiftie Shops, where no kind of fruit is wanting. Next unto them stand the Waxe-merchants, very ingenious and cunning workmen, and much to be admired. Here are Merchants factors [agents] likewise, though they bee but few.

Then followes the Herbe-market, wherein the Pome-citrons, and divers kinds of greene Boughes and Herbes doe represent the sweete and flourishing Spring, and in this Market are about twenty Tavernes: for they which drinke Wine, will shrowd themselves under the shadie and pleasant Boughes. Next unto them stand the Milke-sellers: I thinke there passeth scarce one day over their heads, wherein they [sell] not five-and twentie tunnes of Milke. Next unto these are such as sell Cotton, and they have about thirtie shops: then follow those that sell Hempe, Ropes, Halters, and such other hempen commodities. Then come you to the Girdlers, and such as make Pantofles [leather slippers], and Leatherbridles embrodered with silke: next their shops adjoyne that make Sword-scabberds, and Caparisons for Horses.

Immediately after dwell those that sell Salt and Lime; and upon them border an hundred Shops of Potters, who frame al kind of earthen vessels adorned with divers colours. Then come you to the Sadlers Shops: and next of all to the streete of Porters, who (as I suppose) are above three hundred: these Porters have a Consull or Governour, who every weeke allotteth unto part of them some set businesse. The gaine which redoundeth thereof, they put into a Coffe, dividing it at the weekes end among them, which have wrought the same weeke. Strange it is to consider how exceedingly these Porters love one another: for when any of them deceaseth, the whole company maintaineth his widow and fatherlesse children at their common charge, till either she die, or marrieth a new Husband. The children they carefully bring up, till they have attained to some good Art or occupation.

Next unto the Porters companie dwell the chiefe Cookes and Victuallers. Here also stands a certaine square house covered with Reed, wherein Pease and Turnip-rootes are to bee sold, which are so greatly esteemed of in Fez, that none may buy them of the country people at the first hand, but such as are appointed, who are bound to pay toll & tribute unto the Customers: and scarcely one day passeth, wherein more then five hundred sacks of Pease and Turnips are not sold.

On the Northside of the Temple is a place whither all kind of Hearbs are brought to make Sallets withall: for which purpose there is fortie Shops appointed. Next whereunto is the place of Smoke, so called, by reason of continuall smoke: here are certaine Fritters or Cakes fried in Oyle, like unto such as are called at Rome, Pan Melato. They roste their flesh not upon a spit, but in an Oven: for making two Ovens one over another for the same purpose, in the lower they kindle a fire, putting the flesh into the upper Oven when it is well het; you

would not beleieve how finely their meat is thus rosted; for it cannot be spoiled either by smoke or too much heate: for they are all night roasting it by a gentle fire, and in the morning they set it to sale. The foresaid Steakes and Fritters they sell unto the Citizens in so great abundance, that they daily take for them moe then two hundred Ducats; for there are fiteene Shops which sell nothing else. Likewise here are sold certaine Fishes and flesh fried, and a kind of excellent savorie bread, tasting somewhat like a Fritter; which being baked with Butter, they never eate but with Butter and Honie. Here also are the feete of certaine beasts sodden, wherewith the Husbandmen [day laborers] betimes in the morning breake their fast, and then hie them to their labour. Next unto these are such as sell Oyle, Salt, Butter, Cheese, Olives, Pome-citrons and Capers: their shops are full of fine earthen vessels, which are of much greater value then the things contained in them.

Then follow the Shambles, consisting of about forty Shops, wherein the Butchers cut their flesh a pieces, and sell it by weight. They kill no beasts within the Shambles, for there is a place allotted for this purpose neere unto the River, where having once dressed their flesh, they send it to the Shambles by certaine servants appointed for that end. But before any Butcher dare sell his flesh unto the Citizens, he must carrie it to the Governour of the Shambles, who so soone as he seeth the flesh, he sets downe in a piece of paper the price thereof, which they shew together with their meate unto the people; neither may they in any case exceed the said price.

Next unto the Shambles, standeth the Market where course cloathes are sold, which containeth at least an hundred Shops: the said cloth is delivered unto certaine Criers (which are about threescore in number) who carrying the cloth from Shop to Shop, tell the price thereof. Then follow their Shops that scowre and sell Armour, Swords, Javelings, and such like warlike instruments. Next unto them stand the Fishmongers, who sell most excellent and great Fish. Next unto the Fishmongers dwel such as make of a certaine hard Reed, Coopes and Cages for Fowles; their Shops being about fortie in number: for each of the Citizens useth to bring up great store of Hennes and Capons. And that their houses may not be defiled with Hennesdung, they keepe them continually in Coopes and Cages.

Then follow their Shops that sell liquide Sope [soap]. Next of all are certaine of their Shops that sell Meale, albeit they are diversly dispersed throughout the whole Citie. Next unto them are such as sell Seede-graine and Seede-pulse. Then are there tenne Shops of them that sell Straw. Next them is the Market where Thread and Hempe is to be sold, and where Hempe useth to bee kempt: which place is built after the fashion of great Houses, with foure Galleries, or spare-rooms round about it : in the first whereof they sell Linnen-cloth, and weigh Hempe: in two other sit a great many women, having abundance of sale-thread, which is there sold by the Criers.

Let us now come to the West part, which stretcheth from the Temple to that Gate that leadeth to Mecnase [a city to the southwest of Fez]. Next unto the Smokie place before mentioned, their habitations directly stand, that make Leather-tankards to draw water out of Wells, of whom there are some foureteene Shops. Unto these adjoyne such as make Wicker-vessels, and other, to lay up Meale and Corne in : and these enjoy about thirty Shops. Next them are one hundred and fifty Shops of Taylors. And next the Taylors are those that make Leather-shields, such as I have often seene brought into Europe. Then follow twenty Shops of Landresses or Washers, being people of a base condition; to whom



the Citizens that have not Maids of their owne, carry their Shirts and other foule linnen, which after few dayes are restored unto them so cleane and white, as it is wonderfull. These Landresses have divers Shops adjoyning together in the same place: but here and there throughout the Citie are above two hundred Families of such persons. Next unto the Landresses are those that make Trees for Saddles [saddle horns]; who dwell likewise in great numbers Eastward right in the way to the Colledge founded by King Abuhinan. Upon these adjoyne about fortie shops of such as worke Stirrops, Spurres, and Bridles, so artificially, as I thinke the like are not to be seene in Europe. Next standeth their streete, that first rudely make the said Stirrops, Bridles and Spurres. From thenc you may goe into the streete of Sadlers, which cover the Saddles before mentioned threefold with most excellent Leather : the best Leather they lay uppermost, and the worst beneath, and that with notable Workmanship, as may bee seene in most places of Italy: and of them there are moe then an hundred Shops. Then follow their long Shops that make Pikes and Launces. Next standeth a Rocke or Mount, having two Walkes thereupon; the one whereof leadeth to the East-gate, and the other to one of the Kings Palaces, where the Kings Sisters, or some other of his Kindred are usually kept. But this is by the way to be noted, that all the foresaid Shops, or Market, begin at the great Temple.

The Burse [marketplace] you may well call a Citie, which being walled round about) hath twelve Gates, and before every gate an Iron-chaine, to keepe Horses and Carts from comming in. The said Burse is divided into twelve severall Wards or parts: two whereof are allotted unto such Shoo-makers as make Shooes onely for Noblemen and Gentlemen, and two also to Silke-merchants) or Haberdashers, that sell Ribands, Garters, Scarfes and such other like ornaments; and of these there are about fiftie Shops. Others there are that sell Silke onely for the embrodering of Shirts, Cushions, and other such furniture made of Cloth, possessing almost as many Shops as the former. Then follow those that make Womens Girdles of course Wooll (which some make of Silke) but very grossely, for I thinke they are moe then two fingers thicke, so that they may serve almost for Cables to a Ship. Next unto these Girdlers are such as sell Woollen and Linnen-cloth brought out of Europe : which have also Silke-stuffes, Caps, and other like commodities to sell. Having passed these, you come to them that sell Mats, Mattrasses, Cushions, and other things made of Leather. Next adjoyneth the Customers Office ; for their Cloth is sent about by certaine Criers to be sold, who before they can passe, must goe to the Customers to have the said Cloth sealed) and to pay Toll unto the Customers. Criers here are to the number of sixtie, which for the crying of every Cloth have one Liardo allowed them. Next of all dwell the Taylors, and that in three severall streetes. Then come you to the Linnendrapers, which sell Smocks and other apparell for women: and these are accounted the richest Merchants in all Fez, for their wares are the most Gainefull of all others. Next unto these are certaine Woollen garments to be sold, made of such Cloth as is brought thither out of Europe. Every afternoons Cloth is sold in this place by the Criers, which is lawfull for any man to doe, when necessary occasion urgeth him. Last of all is that place where they use to sell wrought Shirts, Towels, and other embrodered works; as also where Carpets, Beds, and Blankets are to be sold.

Next unto the said Burse, on the Northside, in a streight lane, stand an hundred and fifty Grocers and Apothecaries Shops, which are fortified on both sides with two strong Gates. These Shops are garded in the night season by certaine hired and armed Watchmen, which keep their station with Lanthornes and Mastives. The said Apothecaries can make neither



Sirrups, Oyntments, nor Electuaries: but such things are made at home by the Physicians, and are of them to be bought. The Physicians houses adjoyne for the most part unto the Apothecaries: howbeit, very few of the people know either the Physician, or the use of his Physick. The Shops here are so artificially built and adorned, that the like (I thinke) are no where else to be found. Being in Tauris, a Citie of Persia, I remember that I saw divers stately Shops curiously built under certaine Galleries, but very darke, so that (in my judgement) they be far inferiour unto the Shops of Fez. Next the Apothecaries are certaine Artificers that makes Combes of Boxe and other wood. Eastward of the Apothecaries dwell the Needle-makers, possessing to the number of fifty shops.

Then follow those that turne Ivory, and such other matter, who (because their craft is practised by some other Artizans) are but few in number. Unto the Turners adjoyne certaine that sell Meale, Sope, and Broomes: who dwelling next unto the Thread-market before mentioned, are scarce twenty shops in all: for the residue are dispersed in other place; of the City, as we will hereafter declare. Amongst the Cotten-merchants are certaine that sell ornaments for Tents and Beds. Next of all stand the Fowlers, who, though they be but few, yet are they stored with all kind of choice and dainty Fowles: whereupon the place is called the Fowlers market. Then come you to their shops that sell Cords and Ropes of Hempte: and then to such as make high Coorke-slippers for Noblemen and Gentlemen to walk the streets in, when it is foule weather: these Corke-slippers are finely trimmed with much silke, and most excellent upper leathers, so that the cheapest will cost a Ducat, yea some there are of ten Ducats, & some of five and twenty Ducats price. Such slippers as are accounted most fine and costly are made of blacke and white Mulberie-tree, of blacke Walnut-tree, and of the jujuba tree, albeit the Corke-slippers are the most durable and strong.

Unto these adjoyne ten shops of Spanish Moores, which make Crosse-bowes: as also those that make Broomes of a certaine wilde Palme-tree, such as are dayly brought out of Sicilie to Rome. These Broomes they carry about the City in a great basket, either selling them, or exchange, them for Bran, Ashes, or old Shooes: the Bran they sell againe to Shepherds, the Ashes to such as white Thread, and old Shooes to Coblers. Next unto them are Smithes that make Nailles; & Coopers which make certain great vessels in forme of a bucket, having Corne-measures to sell also: which measures, when the Officer, appointed for the same purpose, hath made triall of he is to receive a farthing a-peece for his fee. Then follow the Wooll-chapmen, who having bought wooll of the Butchers, put it foorth unto others to be scowred and washed: the Sheepe-skinnes they themselves dresse: but as for Oxe-hides they belong to another occupation, and are tanned in another place. Unto these adjoyne such a make certaine Langols or Withs, which the Africans put upon their horses feet.

Next of all are the Brasiers: the such as make Weights and Measures; and those likewise that make instruments to carde Wooll or Flaxe. At length you descend into a long street, where men of divers occupations dwell together, some of which doe polish and enamell Stirops, Spurres, and other such commodities, as they receive from the Smithes roughly and rudely hammered. Next whom dwell certaine Cart-wrights, Plowwrights, Mill-wrights, and of other like occupations. Diers have their aboad by the Rivers side, and have each of them a most cleere Fountaine or Cisterne to wash their Silke-stuffes in. Over against the Diers dwell makers of Bulwarkes or Trenches, in a very large place, which being planted with

shady Mulberrie-trees is exceeding pleasant in the Summer time. Next them are a company of Farriers, that shooe Mules and Horses: and then those that make the Iron-worke of Crosse-bowes. Then follow Smithes that make Horse-shooes; and last of all, those that white Linnen-cloth: and here the west part of the City endeth, which in times past (as is aforesaid) was a City by it selfe, and was built after the City on the East side of the River.

Things to think about:

- Now that you have made it through this section, describe what you think Fez may have looked and sounded like.
- If you were to go shopping in Fez during Leo's time, what do you think you would buy?
- What does the availability of all these goods indicate about Fez? Is it a rich city? A poor one?
- What does Leo have to say about women?
- What goods and stores did you recognize that still exist today, in one form or another?

**Leo Africanus Selection 7: *Leo describes what people wear and the current fashions***

The Citizens of Fez goe very civilly and decently attyred, in the Spring time wearing Garments made of outlandish cloth: over their Shirts they weare a jacket or Cassock [a long, shirt-like robe, buttoned in front] beeing narrow and halfe-sleeved, whereupon they weare a certayne wide Garment, close before on the brest. Their Caps are thinne and single, like unto the Nightcaps used in Italle, saving that they cover not their eares: these Caps are covered with a certayne Skarfe, which beeing twice wreathed about their head and beard, hangeth by a knot. They weare neither Hose nor Breeches, but in the Spring time when they ride a Journey, they put on Boots: many of the poorer sort have onely their Cassocke, and a Mantle over that called, Barnussi, and a most course Cap. The Doctors and ancient Gentlemen weare a certayne Garment with wide sleeves somewhat like to the Gentlemen of Venice. The common sort of people are for the most part clad in a kind of course white cloth. The women are not altogether unseemely apparelled, but in Summer time they weare nothing save their Smockes onely. In Winter they weare such a wide sleeved Garment, being close at the brest, as that of the men before mentioned. When they goe abroad, they put on certayne long Breeches, wherewith their lerges are all covered, having also, after the fashion of Syria, a Veile hanging downe from their heads, which covereth their whole bodies. On their faces likewise they weare a Maske with two little holes, onely for their eyes to peepe out at. Their eares they adorne with golden Eare-rings, and with most precious jewels: the meaner sort weare Eare-rings of Silver and gilt only. Upon their armes the Ladies and Gentlewomen weare Golden Braclets, and the residue Silver, as likewise Gold or Silver-rings upon their legs, according to each ones estate and abilitie.

Things to think about:

- If you had to draw a picture of how people dressed in Fez during Leo's time, do you think you could do it, based on his description?
- What fashion items do you recognize?

- How did women's clothing set them apart?
- Do you think people in Morocco still dress this way today?

### **Leo Africanus Selection 8: *Leo describes what people eat and how they eat it***

Let us now speake somewhat of their victuals and manner of eating. The common sort set on the pot with fresh meate twice every weeke: but the Gentlemen and richer sort every day, and as often as they list. They take three meales a day: their Break-fast consisteth of certaine Fruits and Bread, or else of a kind of liquid Pap [mush] made like unto Frumentie [porridge]: in Winter they sup off the Broth of salt flesh thicken'd with course meale. To dinner they have Flesh, Sallets, Cheese, and Olives: but in Summer they have greater cheere. Their Supper is easie of digestion, consisting of Bread, Melons, Grapes, or Milke: but in Winter they have sodden flesh, together with a kind of meate [food] called Cuscusu, which being made of a lumpe of Dow is set first upon the fire in certaine Vessels full of holes, and afterward is tempered with Butter and Pottage. Some also use often to have Rostemeat.

And thus you see after what sort both the Gentlemen and common people lead their lives: albeit the Noblemen fare somewhat more daintily: but if you compare them with the Noblemen and Gentlemen of Europe, they may seeme to be miserable and base fellowes; not for any want or scarcitie of victuals, but for want of good manners and cleanlinesse. The Table whereat they sit is low, uncovered, and filthy: seates they have none but the bare ground, neyther Knives or Spooones but only their ten talons. The said Cuscusu is set before them all in one only Platter, whereout as well Gentlemen as others take it not with Spooones, but with their Clawes five. The meate and pottage is put all in one Dish ; out of which every one raketh with his greasie fists what hee thinkes good : you shall never see knife upon the Table, but they teare and greedily devoure their meate like hungry Dogges. Neyther doth any of them desire to drinke before he hath well stuffed his panch ; and then will he sup off a cup of cold water as bigge as a Milkebowle. The Doctors indeed are somewhat more orderly at meales: but, to tell you the very truth, in all Italie there is no Gentleman so meane, which for fine Dyet and stately Furniture excelleth not the greatest Potentates and Lords of all Africa.

#### Things to think about:

- Many health experts advocate "the Mediterranean diet," which emphasizes the use of fresh, seasonal ingredients, and healthful oils (like olive oil) and whole grains. Is that what Leo is describing here? What ingredients do you find in the Mediterranean diet that Leo mentions? (See OSPM Module 2, Lesson 2.1)
- What would you chose to eat from the food and dishes Leo describes?
- What Leo called "Cuscusu" we today call couscous. It is still a very popular food in Morocco and North Africa, as well as southern Italy. Why do you think that is?

## The City of Genoa

One of the most important, and busy, cities of the Mediterranean during the Middle Ages and on into the Renaissance was Genoa, in northern Italy. Like Fez, it too relied on the agrarian hinterlands for many resources, such as food, workers, and raw materials. The current capital of the Italian province of Liguria, Genoa has long been a center of trade and travel, due to its natural harbor and strategic position, about mid-way between the western and eastern Mediterranean. That made it an important port, not only for trade, but as an embarkation point for Europeans wanting to sail to North Africa and the Holy Land, be they peaceful pilgrims or warring Crusaders. Like other Italian cities during this time (Venice, Florence, Pisa, etc.), Genoa was a republic (also called a “city-state”) meaning it was self-governing, even though it was nominally part of the Holy Roman Empire.

**Historian Steven A. Epstein has written about Genoa during the Middle Ages. Read what he has to say about Genoese culture:**

“Genoese culture was mercantile, its richest citizens were merchants, and the business of the city was trade. In what ways did these facts shape the cultural life of Genoa? Thousands of men had seen the rest of the world, and if there is any truth to the notion that travel broadens the mind, the Genoese should have been a most broad-minded people. By the 1280s and 1290s hundreds of merchants, sailors, and soldiers had visited places as diverse as Bruges, Southampton, Safi, Caffa, and Alexandria. This collective travel taught the Genoese about languages and the different customs of people in matters of dress and food. In this light Genoese culture was always practical and eclectic; its people needed to know how to get on in commerce, and they adopted bits of foreign practices that seemed sensible and rewarding. The rich had the most choices and the ability to benefit from the varieties of knowledge and experience the world offered, but even ordinary people acquired a taste for certain spices, cotton shirts, paper, citrus fruits, raisins, and other exotic items of other people’s material culture. Commerce also fostered the profession of notary, and several hundred of these skilled, secular masters of Latin and the law constituted an educated class that in part served the commune and the church but whose primary purpose was to produce contracts and records vital to the functioning of the economy and society. Notaries read and collected books in Latin and Genoese. Apart from their professional activities, they were, along with the members of the cathedral chapter, its school, and the Franciscan and especially the Dominican convents, the ones most likely to influence the urban literary culture. This culture, from its beginnings back in Caffaro’s time, had a practical cast; it compiled histories, legal documents, dictionaries, trade manuals, comprehensive collections of saints’ lives, and other useful types of information. International commerce rewarded people who could plan ahead and who knew the world. Genoese culture applied the lessons of an orderly rationality to aspects of the world that could also benefit from some predictability and common sense.”

**Source:** Epstein, Steven A. *Genoa & the Genoese, 958-1528*. (University of North Carolina Press, 1996).



Now examine the image below, which shows Genoa in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Based on the reading, can you identify what features appear most important?



A woodcut of Genoa, Italy in 1493 from Hartmann Schedel's "Nuremberg Chronicle," fol. lviii *verso* (Source: Nuremberg Chronicle, Morse Library, Benoit College at <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=nur&cc=nur&idno=nur.001.0002&page=root&talign=nur.001.0004&frm=frameset&seq=160>)

### Illustration of the City of Genoa

Genoa is represented by a special, colored woodcut in the Nuremberg Chronicle, an early illustrated printed book that appeared in 1493, which summarized world history and the history of some important cities in the West, written in Latin by Hartmann Schedel (to learn more about this book, go to <http://www.beloit.edu/nuremberg/index.htm>). The city of Genoa is depicted as situated on the Gulf of Genoa, or old Ligurian Sea. True to topographical conditions, the artist has left only a small space of level ground along the

shore, from which the city has been obliged to climb the lower hills of the Ligurian Alps. The original nucleus of the town is that portion which lies to the east of the port in the neighborhood of the old pier (Molo Vecchio). In addition to the fortifications, the main architectural features of the city are its medieval palaces and churches. To indicate the maritime nature of the town, a sailing vessel with a full complement of oarsmen is entering or leaving the harbor. A number of wharves projecting into the harbor are another characteristic. The flag of Genoa floats over several structures.

**Here is the description of Genoa from the Nuremberg Chronicle:**

“Genoa (Genua), mistress and queen of the Ligurians, and also called Janua, is a very renowned city in Italy, situated on the shores of the Ligurian Gulf . . . Genoa was well favored by its natural position and its wealth in shipping. Charlemagne and his son Pepin, a king of Italy, and their Frankish successors, ruled this and other Italian cities with great righteousness and goodness, appointing dukes (called counts) to administer their affairs. Genoa was also a market for this entire region; and it prospered so tremendously that by reason of its attainment of great power and strength in ships, and its tall buildings and various adornments, it now excels all other Italian maritime cities except Venice. Genoa became so proficient in naval warfare that for many years it ruled the seas and protected them against murderous pirates. But after the time of Charlemagne the city suffered under such gross tyranny that it was obliged to invoke foreign masters; while on account of internal dissension it lost its maritime power. Both East and West were so astounded by its frequent transformations, that Genoa remained helpless and without counsel or advice; and the power which she had exercised far and wide became exhausted. It lost the city of Pera\*, near Constantinople; also Mytiline\*\*, Famagusta, capital of the island of Cyprus; the island of Chios, and other Greek islands and places that she had captured from the Turks and other peoples, or had compelled to pay tribute.”

*\*A suburb of Constantinople, north of the Golden Horn; what used to be known after the conquest of the city by the Ottoman Turks as the Christian part of the city.*

*\*\*The name given to the ancient island of Lesbos by Greek writers, from its chief city of that name. It is the largest and most important island in the Aegean Sea along the coast of Asia Minor.*

**Now read this description of Genoa, written in the 12th century by Benjamin of Tudela, a Jew from Spain who traveled widely throughout the Mediterranean, eastern Europe and the Middle East.** (Source: Marcus Nathan Adler, tr. *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela* [London: Philipp Feldheim Inc., 1907], p. 7.)

“From Marseilles one can take ship and in four days reach Genoa, which is also upon the sea. Here live two Jews, R. Samuel, son of Salim, and his brother, from the city of Ceuta, both of them good men. The city is surrounded by a wall, and the inhabitants are not governed by any king, but by judges whom they appoint at their pleasure. Each householder has a tower to his house, and at times of strife they fight from the tops of the towers with each other. They have command of the sea. They build ships which they call galleys, and make predatory attacks upon [Christians and Muslims alike] and the land of Greece as far as

Sicily, and they bring back to Genoa spoils from all these places. They are constantly at war with the men of Pisa. Between them and the Pisans there is a distance of two days' journey."

Questions to Think About:

- What is striking about Benjamin's description? Reexamine the pictures, and see if his description makes sense.
- Why do you think he made special mention of the "two Jews" living in Genoa?

**Now view the map on the next page.** Although the key is written in Italian, you can see the routes that point to Genoa's connections, influence, and economic power throughout the Mediterranean and beyond. Does the magnitude of this influence surprise you, considering that Genoa was only one city? Can you think of any modern world powers that share this sort of influence in today's world?



**Optional Reading: Excerpt from Julia Clancy-Smith “The Times of Ibn Khaldun,” Chapter 2, *A History of North Africa From Carthage to the Arab Spring*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.**

*This chapter uses Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), the great North African historian and statesman, as an entry point for a discussion of the Mediterranean world on the eve of the early modern era and as an epilogue to previous epochs.*

In 1374, a scholar and statesman originally from Tunis began composing his *Kitab al-'Ibar* or universal history, completing his introduction, the Muqaddimah, in 1377. In his lengthy prologue, Ibn Khaldun stated that: "History is a discipline that has a great number of approaches ... in matter of fact, history is information about human social organization which itself is identical with world civilization." Ibn Khaldun understood world civilization as representing something far beyond North Africa or the by then immensely diverse and far-flung cultural-religious communities of Islam. The ancient Greeks, the Indian civilizations, Christianity, etc., all figured in his universal—one is tempted to say—world history. The Tunisian scholar is a good place to begin to examine the Maghrib's central place in the Islamic ecumene [region inhabited by Muslims] and Afro-Eurasia.

Ibn Khaldun's life spanned a number of critical junctures in the histories of Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Mediterranean. His was the world of the post-Mongol conquests, of the aftermath of the Crusades, and of the incipient Ottoman Empire. Both of his parents and many of his teachers succumbed to the Black Death as it swept through Tunis moving from Asia to the Middle East and Europe in the middle of the 14th century. But plague would strike again and again--between 1348 and 1517, the Black Death reappeared fifty times in Southwest Asia and other parts of Asia. Ibn Khaldun could not have foreseen, of course, what lay ahead.

Less than a century after his death, a New World was discovered which had profound influences upon the Maghrib. Nor could he have anticipated that Andalusia would be lost forever to the Spanish or that the Ottoman Turks would create an empire two and one half times larger than that of Rome, incorporating most of the Maghrib, much of eastern Europe, and Southwest Asia into its dominion. In part, Ottoman successes were the direct product off the 15th and 16th century-gunpowder revolutions. These revolutions allowed North African rulers as well as the Ottomans to stabilize the frontiers between nomadic peoples and urban life and civilization based largely upon agriculture. And the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed great movements of peoples across the globe.

Ibn Khaldun's ancestors had fled Andalusia for Tunis just prior to 1248 as their native city, Sevilla, fell to the reconquists. But the ancestors of his ancestors had migrated from the Yemen to Iberia sometime after the 7th-century Arab-Muslim conquests. By the time that Ibn Khaldun died in Cairo in 1406, Spanish thrusts ever deeper into Andalusia provoked mass movements of peoples out of Iberia from the 13<sup>th</sup> through 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, particularly to Morocco. The Nasrid Dynasty of Grenada (1237 - 1492) and southern Spain, where Ibn Khaldun resided for a period, reached the period of its greatest brilliance in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, only to begin to decline

around 1400. It survived economically by exporting sugar and silks to the Maghrib, by paying tribute to the rulers of Castile, and by being beholden to as well as wary of the Marinid rulers of Morocco. Granada was also the last refuge for Spanish Jews and Muslims forced to emigrate out of Christian-held lands. During the centuries of the reconquista, large numbers of Spanish Jewish refugees fled eastwards to Muslim lands; some arrived in Salonika, where they were given a monopoly over the manufacture of wool cloth by the Ottoman sultan; this further strengthened the Ottoman's links to Europe and to the western end of the Mediterranean Basin. Later between 1609 and 1614, perhaps as many as half a million souls entered North Africa from Spain, one of the largest such movements of peoples between Europe and North Africa until the 19th century.

By 1400 another constellation of changes—agrarian and technological—had been completed in the region stretching from Andalusia to India. New crops, or ennobled types of old crops, were grown from Spain to India and new techniques of cultivating both old and new crops had been introduced. These profound transformations were initiated shortly before the Arab-Muslim conquests of the 7<sup>th</sup> and early 8<sup>th</sup> centuries and were largely completed by the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Middle Eastern and North African-Spanish geographers, authors of farming manuals, and scholars working in the natural sciences wrote from the 10<sup>th</sup> century on of tremendous changes already underway in the countryside.<sup>i</sup> In 1400, a writer by the name of Ansari stated that in the immediate vicinity of a small town on the North African coast, 65 kinds of grapes, 36 kinds of pears, and 28 types of figs were cultivated. Also by about 1400, coffee was making its way up from the Yemen, coming into general use in the lands of Islam by the mid-fifteenth century before being introduced to Europe by Levantine merchants in France two centuries later. Finally, the Mediterranean sugar industry had migrated slowly from east to West, experiencing a last burst of activity in places like Cyprus and then Morocco.

Therefore another dimension of Ibn Khaldun's world has to do with the astounding diffusion of agriculture and agrarian technologies in which North Africa played a pivotal role as disseminator. The trans-continental agricultural exchanges triggered by the voyages to the New World were largely the product of another, much earlier green revolution which spanned three continents and was completed just prior to the Columbian exchanges. This agrarian revolution was nurtured, if not necessarily set in motion by, the creation of the Islamic ecumene. With the spread of Islam to Persia and India in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the movement of crops from East to West gained momentum. This was in part a consequence of the fall of the Sassanian empire where such items as sugar cane had been cultivated before Islam, and of the conquest of the new province of Sind gained in 711 and which introduced the Muslims to a part of India where most of the new crops were already known. To a large degree, the peasantry the Maghrib and Mediterranean world continued the grain-centered agriculture of ancient times until very recently.

A vast array of new crops, and with them novel techniques, had been introduced into this region from the Indo-Persian world in the early Middle Ages. These were predominately cash crops (sugar, cotton, indigo) and fruits (citrus,

mulberries). They spread rapidly throughout the expanding Islamic world, although their progress was much retarded in non-Islamic Mediterranean lands, such as southern Italy, France, and Christian Spain. As with Muslim science, medicine, and philosophy, Andalusia, and to a lesser extent, Sicily, were the main conduits from the Islamic world into Europe. In al-Andalus, sugar cane, as was true of newly introduced crops, was first acclimatized in royal gardens of the Umayyads in Cordoba and in the 11th century in Toledo. Andalusian agronomists paid particular attention to the water requirements of each new species; sugar cane was watered every four to eight days. By the 13<sup>th</sup> century, sugar appears on export lists from Andalusia to Christian Spain.

Thus, between about 700 A.D. and 1492, the range and variety of useful plants cultivated in the Old World's interconnecting zone had increased astronomically. In part, the explanation for this expansion lay in the Arab-Muslim conquests beginning in 632 AD and enduring until about 732 and in the construction of the Abbasid common market after 750. The conquests reoriented trade across the southern shores of the Mediterranean, creating commercial/communicative axes for the first time in history stretching from Iberia and Morocco's Atlantic coast to Transoxania and the Indian Ocean by about 1,000. Under the Abbasid empire the Indo-Persian world was collapsed with the Mediterranean and Greco-Roman heritage. From about 750 to 1000, Baghdad sat at the center of, and dominated, converging trade networks spanning the Afro-Eurasian interconnecting zones: the Indian Ocean-East African system; and Persian Gulf, Red Sea, and Mediterranean complexes.

In large measure, these trans-Afro-Asian axes were the work of commercial diasporas. Communities of merchants -- Arab, Armenian or Persian, Muslim or Jewish, from Middle East/North Africa -- fanned out during the Pax Islamica and later in the aftermath of the Pax Mongolica, joining together even more tightly the Indian Ocean with the Mediterranean world. Thus were the origins of the large, prosperous Tunisian merchant community resident in India in the late 15th century. When Vasco de Gama finally reached Calicut in the Indian state of Gujarat in 1498, an individual from de Gama's landing party was greeted in one of the Italian dialects--Genoese--as well as in Castilian by two Tunisian merchants. "May the Devil take thee!! What brings you hither?" exclaimed the Tunisians, astonished--and perhaps dismayed--to see their neighbors from just across the Mediterranean this far from home and trading in territory that had long been their commercial bailiwick.

Soon after the Tunisian historian's death in 1406, the Portuguese began tentatively exploring the African coast south of Morocco, drawn by the lure of gold and sugar and impelled by crusading fervor to outflank the expanding Islamic world. The logical progress of the Christians' southward sweep across the Iberian Peninsula might have impelled their war machine across the narrow strait; instead Castile followed the example of Portugal and to head off their Portuguese rivals launched a pre-emptive strike against Grand Canaria. At the same time, sugar cane was planted in the newly discovered islands of Madeira and the Canaries, the

stepping stones of the Atlantic Mediterranean. This westward expansion of sugar cane was directly tied to the Moroccan sugar industry as well as to the availability of labor in the Eastern Mediterranean world. Until 1453, Black Sea ports furnished most of the Slavic slaves captured by Venetian and Genoese slavers; these enslaved groups supplied the labor for the Mediterranean Basin. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 made it more difficult for Christian ships to reach slave ports on the Black Sea. Other sources of servile labor were sought in Africa for the emerging Mediterranean sugar industry and incipient plantation complex.<sup>ii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Andrew M. Watson, *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World: The Diffusion of Crops and Farming Techniques, 700-1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and his "A Medieval Green Revolution: New Crops and Farming Techniques in the Early Islamic World," in *The Islamic Middle East, 700-1900: Studies in Economic and Social History*, ed. A.L. Udovitch (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1981), 29-58.

<sup>ii</sup> Works consulted: Richard Fletcher, *Moorish Spain*.  
Emilio Garcia Gomez, *Poems of Arab Andalusia*.  
Salma Jayyusi, ed., *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*.  
Jerrilynn Dodds, ed., *Al-Andalus: the Art of Islamic Spain*.  
Thomas Glick, ed., *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain*.  
Amin Tibi, trans., *Memoirs of the Last Zirid Amir of Granada*.  
Oleg Grabar, *The Alhambra*.  
Robert Burns, *The Crusader Kingdom of Valencia*.

## People on the Move: Hilali and Norman Invasions in the Mediterranean, 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E.



Yahyâ ibn Mahmûd al-Wâsitî, Bibliotecque Nationale, Paris via Wikimedia Commons

Why do people relocate to other towns, cities, and even countries? What is in it for them, and what does it mean to the people whose lands they come inhabit? Think about your own community/country today and discuss who the immigrant populations are and why they settled there. Next, think about what happens in places where immigrants settle. Are they always welcome? Do they try and blend in, or do they set up neighborhoods or towns reflective of their own culture? Or is it a little of both? Settle on several key motivations for why people relocate, then do the readings in the lesson that chronicle the movement of Arab Bedouin (nomadic) people across North Africa during the mid-11<sup>th</sup> to the mid-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the Norman invasion of Sicily at about the same time.

### Reading #1: The Sirat Bani Hilal: The Epic Poem of the Bani Hilal tribe

(This text is adapted from the *Sirat Bani Hilal Digital Archive*, University of California, Santa Barbara, and appears here with permission. English translation and introductory material by Dwight F. Reynolds, abridged. Downloaded from the University of California, Santa Barbara, Sirat Bani Hilal Archive website: <http://www.siratbanihilal.ucsb.edu>.)



## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Bani Hilal Bedouin tribe originally lived in the Najd region of the Arabian Peninsula, but in the 10th century CE they migrated first to Egypt and then onward across North Africa as far as eastern Morocco. For about one century (mid-11th to mid-12th centuries) they were the dominant political and military force in what are now Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. They were eventually subdued, however, by the Moroccan Almohad dynasty in major battles fought in 1153 and 1160, and the Hilali tribal confederation thereafter disintegrated.

There are historical references to surviving remnants of the tribe in later centuries, as well as modern communities who claim descent from the Bani Hilal currently located in Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, and Chad, and this geographic dispersion may be part of the reason that the tale of the Bani Hilal has become so well known throughout the Arab world.

Poetry of the Bani Hilal tribe was first set down in writing by Ibn Khaldūn (died 1406) in his *Muqaddima* (Prolegomena), and by the 18<sup>th</sup> century thousands of pages of Arabic manuscript indicate that the tradition had expanded enormously and that the various fragments of poetry and narrative material had been worked into one coherent epic narrative. Ethnographic evidence indicates that the history of the Bani Hilal tribe was recounted throughout the Arab world until the 20th century in a variety of forms: epic poem, oral folktales, popular written versions (“chapbooks”) read aloud by professional storytellers in cafés, and even in riddles, proverbs, and jokes. The epic poem itself, the most highly crafted of these forms, however, was of more limited distribution and by the late 20th century was found only in Egypt as a sung, versified tradition.

## THE STORY OF THE EPIC

The epic as it is sung in Northern Egypt is built upon the basic historical facts about the Bani Hilal tribe: their migration westwards from the Arabian Peninsula, their conquest of North Africa, and their eventual destruction. It has been greatly embellished, however, with stories of love, battles, rivalry, treachery, and even magic, over centuries of oral transmission. Some episodes are reminiscent of tales from the *1001 Nights*, other consist of little more than lengthy battle scenes strung together, while others have convoluted psychological dramas at their core.

The cataclysmic event that shapes the larger narrative of the epic is a seven-year drought in the Arabian Peninsula during which “neither drop of rain or dew did fall,” forcing the Bani Hilal to seek a new homeland and pasturage for their livestock. A reconnaissance team consisting of the hero Abū Zayd and his three nephews are sent out to find the tribe a new home. This cycle of tales is referred to as *al-Riyāda* (The Reconnaissance). They travel through many countries including Iraq, Ethiopia, Cyprus, Palestine, and Egypt before eventually arriving at “Tunis the Verdant” which they decide would be a perfect home for the tribe. Through various misadventures Abū Zayd is forced to return to the Bani Hilal alone, without his nephews. There he convinces the tribe that they must travel to Tunisia to



find a new home and to rescue the three nephews who are being held prisoner there.

The tribe sets out on the great “Westward Journey” [Ar. *al-Taghrība*] which takes them on a long, circuitous route to Tunisia. Each stop along the way becomes a full episode in the epic. Finally they arrive in Tunisia, but the city of Tunis is fortified and is held by a fearsome, villainous warrior by the name of al-Zanāṭī Khalīfa. The siege of Tunis, the rescue of the nephews, and the deaths of several of the central figures during the prolonged war form another cycle of tales. In the end, however, the Bani Hilal do indeed conquer Tunis and take it as their new home.

Watch this video about the epic poem:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69kHXDwMVoE>

## Reading #2: Ibn Khaldun on the Hilali Migrations

Read what Ibn Khaldun had to say about the Bani Hilal, whom he calls “the Arabs,” meaning Arab Bedouins, as opposed to urban Arabs (recalling that Ibn Khaldun is writing in Arabic language. How do his opinions of them differ from their own image of themselves? Why do you suppose that is the case?

From Ibn Khaldun, (Franz Rosenthal, translator) *The Muqqadimah: An Introduction to History*. Chapter II, sections 24-26.

### 24. *Arabs can gain control only over flat territory.*

This is because, on account of their savage nature, (the Arabs) are people who plunder and cause damage. They plunder whatever they are able to lay their hands on without having to fight or to expose themselves to danger. They then retreat to their pastures in the desert. They do not attack or fight except in self-defense. Every stronghold or (locality) that seems difficult (to attack), they bypass in favor of some less difficult (enterprise). They do not attack it. Tribes that are protected against (the Arabs) by inaccessible mountains are safe from their mischief and destructiveness. The Arabs would not cross hills or undergo hardship and danger in order to get to them.

Flat territory, on the other hand, falls victim to their looting and prey to their appetite whenever they (have the opportunity of) gaining power over it, when there is no militia, or when the dynasty is weak. Then they raid, plunder, and attack that territory repeatedly, because it is easily (accessible) to them. Eventually, its inhabitants succumb utterly to the Arabs and then they are pushed around by them in accordance with changes of control and shifts in leadership. Eventually, their civilization is wiped out. God has power over His creatures.

### Questions to think about:

- What is Ibn Khaldun’s attitude towards “Arabs” or “Bedouins”?
- Do you think he is being fair?
- In this selection, does he regard them as having any culture? What does he think is necessary to having culture or “civilization”?

### 25. *Places that succumb to the Arabs are quickly ruined.*

“The reason for this is that (the Arabs) are a savage nation, fully accustomed to savagery and the things that cause it. Savagery has become their character and nature. They enjoy it, because it means freedom from authority and no subservience to leadership. Such a natural disposition is the negation and antithesis of civilization. All the customary activities of the

Arabs lead to travel and movement. This is the antithesis [opposite] and negation of stationariness [being settled], which produces civilization. For instance, the Arabs need stones to set them up as supports for their cooking pots. So, they take them from buildings which they tear down to get the stones, and use them for that purpose. Wood, too, is needed by them for props for their tents and for use as tent poles for their dwellings. So, they tear down roofs to get the wood for that purpose. The very nature of their existence is the negation of building, which is the basis of civilization. This is the case with them quite generally.

Furthermore, it is their nature to plunder whatever other people possess. Their sustenance lies wherever the shadow of their lances falls. They recognize no limit in taking the possessions of other people. Whenever their eyes fall upon some property, furnishings, or utensils, they take it. When they acquire superiority and royal authority, they have complete power to plunder (as they please). There no longer exists any political (power) to protect property, and civilization is ruined.

Furthermore, since they use force to make craftsmen and professional workers do their work, they do not see any value in it and do not pay them for it. Now, as we shall mention, labor is the real basis of profit. When labor is not appreciated and is done for nothing, the hope for profit vanishes, and no (productive) work is done. The sedentary population disperses, and civilization decays.

Furthermore, (the Arabs) are not concerned with laws. (They are not concerned) to deter people from misdeeds or to protect some against the others. They care only for the property that they might take away from people through looting and imposts. When they have obtained that, they have no interest in anything further, such as taking care of (people), looking after their interests, or forcing them not to commit misdeeds. They often level fines on property, because they want to get some advantage, some tax, or profit out of it. This is their custom. It does not help to prevent misdeeds or to deter those who undertake to commit (misdeeds). On the contrary, it increases (misdeeds), because as compared to getting what one wants, the (possible financial) loss (through fines) is insignificant.

Under the rule of (the Arabs), the subjects live as in a state of anarchy, without law. Anarchy destroys mankind and ruins civilization, since, as we have stated, the existence of royal authority is a natural quality of man. It alone guarantees their existence and social organization. That was mentioned above at the beginning of the chapter.

Furthermore, (every Arab) is eager to be the leader. Scarcely a one of them would cede his power to another, even to his father, his brother, or the eldest (most important) member of his family. That happens only in rare cases and under pressure of considerations of decency. There are numerous authorities and amirs among them. The subjects have to obey many masters in connection with the control of taxation and law. Civilization, thus, decays and is wiped out . . .

It is noteworthy how civilization always collapsed in places the Arabs took over and conquered, and how such settlements were depopulated and the (very) earth there turned into something that was no (longer) earth. The Yemen where (the Arabs) live is in ruins, except for a few cities. Persian civilization in the Arab 'Iraq is likewise completely ruined.

The same applies to contemporary Syria. When the Banu Hilal and the Banu Sulaym pushed through (from their homeland) to Ifrigiyah and the Maghrib in (the beginning of) the fifth [eleventh] century and struggled there for three hundred and fifty years, they attached themselves to (the country), and the flat territory in (the Maghrib) was completely ruined. Formerly, the whole region between the Sudan and the Mediterranean had been settled. This (fact) is attested by the relics of civilization there, such as monuments, architectural sculpture, and the visible remains of villages and hamlets.

Questions to think about:

- What does Ibn Khaldun have to say about Arab influence on civilization?
- Do you believe what he has to say about the nature of Arab people?
- Why do you think he regards Arabs in this way?

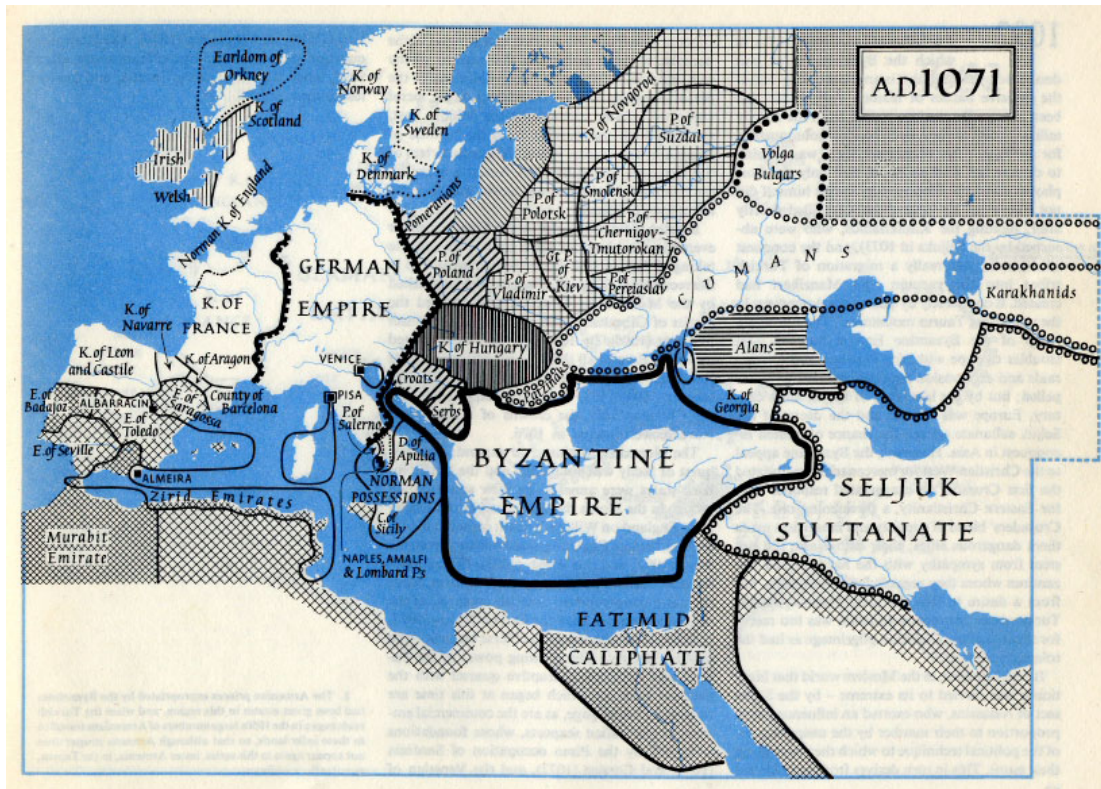
*26. Arabs can obtain royal authority only by making use of some religious coloring, such as prophecy, or sainthood, or some great religious event in general.*

The reason for this is that because of their savagery, the Arabs are the least willing of nations to subordinate themselves to each other, as they are rude, proud, ambitious, and eager to be the leader. Their individual aspirations rarely coincide. But when there is religion (among them) through prophecy or sainthood, then they have some restraining influence in themselves. The qualities of haughtiness and jealousy leave them. It is, then, easy for them to subordinate themselves and to unite (as a social organization). This is achieved by the common religion they now have. It causes rudeness and pride to disappear and exercises a restraining influence on their mutual envy and jealousy. When there is a prophet or saint among them, who calls upon them to fulfill the commands of God and rids them of blameworthy qualities and causes them to adopt praiseworthy ones, and who has them concentrate all their strength in order to make the truth prevail, they become fully united (as a social organization) and obtain superiority and royal authority. Besides, no people are as quick (as the Arabs) to accept (religious) truth and right guidance, because their natures have been preserved free from distorted habits and uncontaminated by base character qualities. The only (difficulty) lies in the quality of savagery, which, however, is easily taken care of and which is ready to admit good (qualities), as it has remained in its first natural state and remote from the ugly customs and bad habits that leave their impress upon the soul. "Every infant is born in the natural state," as is stated in the tradition that was quoted above.

Final questions to think about:

- How do settled, urban people sometimes regard immigrants from rural regions?
- Reflect on Ibn Khaldun's assessment and on the selection from the Sirat Bani Hilal.
- Which do you think is more accurate? Why?

**Map & Background Reading:** from Colin McEvedy, *The New Penguin Atlas of Medieval History*. Consult the map and the reading.



Text from Colin McEvedy, *The Penguin Atlas of Medieval History* (Penguin, 1992), map from <http://www.maproom.org/s/mcevedy/>

The middle decades of the eleventh century saw major upheavals in the Muslim world. Everywhere people were on the move: Berbers in the Sahara, Arabs on the North African littoral and, most important of all, Turks in the east. The Turks belonged to the Nine Tribes of western Turkestan (the Toghuz Oghuz, or Ghuzz for short). For their migration they divided into two streams, one moving westward into Russia, one south-west into Iran. The groups that invaded Russia became known as Cumans; by and large they stayed within the steppe zone, and their political impact was correspondingly limited. The influx into Iran spilled over much of the Near East: politically it is memorable because it created the Seljuk Sultanate, the first in the sequence of nomad empires that were to dominate the region for the remainder of the medieval period . . .

The Arab movement was on a smaller scale, involving only two tribes, the Beni Sulaym and the Beni Hilal. The official story has the Fatimids [rulers of Egypt] pulling the strings. In the late tenth century they had forcibly transferred the Sulaym and Hilali from Arabia, where they had been making a nuisance of themselves, to Upper Egypt. In the mid eleventh century they put these unruly clients to use, dispatching them westward against the [rival]



Zirids of Kairouan. The provocation was said to be a declaration by the Zirid Emir that he no longer considered himself either a vassal of the Fatimid Caliph or - and this was the real insult - a member of the Shia faith (1049). Whatever the merit of this explanation - and the movement has a surging quality which makes it difficult to believe it could be controlled so precisely - the result was a migration that gave the Libyan provinces of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania a predominantly Arab population, and the Zirids an unpleasant surprise. Defeated in the field, the Zirids retreated to the coast, where the old Fatimid capital of Mahdiya proved a safe haven. The Hammadids of Qalat, who had initially welcomed the Hilali, were subsequently forced to make a similar retreat, from Qalat to Bougie.

The last of these migratory movements is the most exotic. Deep in the Sahara lived the Sanhaja, Berbers of a sterner cast from their brethren in the Maghreb. Proud, fearless and inured to privation, these 'men of the veil' - the ancestors of today's Tuareg - were recent converts to Islam. Their particular inspiration was a puritanical monastic community, a *ribot*, established on an island site somewhere in the Sahel. Its graduates were known as al-Murabitun, 'Men of the *Ribot*', a term traditionally anglicized as Almoravids. The Almoravids proved doughty soldiers. In 1056 they seized control of the Sijilmasa oasis on the southern side of the Atlas, and in 1060 they established an armed camp at Marrakesh, which became the base for further advances. Over the next ten years they conquered all Morocco, a country to which they had given both a new capital and, Marrakesh and Morocco being variants of the same word, the name by which it has been known ever since.

In Christendom, these same decades belonged to the Normans. The blend of Viking and Frank in the Duchy of Normandy produced men of extraordinary vigour, valiant in the field and tenacious in the counting house . . . Facing limited prospects at home, they journeyed to Italy, where the constant skirmishing between Lombard and Byzantine offered enterprising mercenaries the chance to make their fortunes. In 1040 [Normans] seized the castle of Melfi in the no man's land between the two; twenty years later . . . Robert Guiscard ('Robert the Cunning') began the reduction of the Byzantine province. By 1071 Robert had mastered the area, which was subsequently known as the Duchy of Apulia; he also won a foothold in Sicily and pressed hard on the Lombard principality of Salerno. Gaeta and the principality of Capua had meanwhile fallen to another Norman adventurer.

#### Questions to Think About:

- Does the reading offer any new insights into the Arab migrations across North Africa during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries?
- View the map. How was the political shape Mediterranean changing at the time of these migrations? What effect do you think these changes had on the various cultures in the region?
- Do you think it was possible for cultures to co-exist?



**Reading #3: Alexander of Telese, “The Deeds Done by King Roger of Sicily”**

(Source: Loud, Graham A., [translation and introduction] “The Deeds Done by King Roger of Sicily Alexander of Telese” at [http://www.medievalsicily.com/Docs/03\\_Norman\\_Conquest/Alexander%20of%20Telese.pdf](http://www.medievalsicily.com/Docs/03_Norman_Conquest/Alexander%20of%20Telese.pdf)

Image: Mosaic showing Roger II being crowned by Christ, in La Martorana, Palermo, Sicily, photo by Matthias Süßen at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Martorana\\_RogerII2008.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Martorana_RogerII2008.jpg))

**Introduction:**

Alexander of Telese was an Italian abbot and historian who lived during mid-12<sup>th</sup> century. His most famous work is “The Deeds Done by King Roger of Sicily,” a biography of the Norman king of Sicily, Roger II, who reigned as Duke of Sicily from 1105 to 1130, and then as king (an office he created) thereafter until his death in 1154. Under Roger, the Kingdom of Sicily was both multi-ethnic and religiously tolerant. Byzantine Greeks, native Jews, Muslim Arabs, Normans, Lombards (northern Italians) and indigenous Sicilian peoples all lived there in relative harmony. Alexander’s biography of Roger was commissioned by Roger’s half-sister, Matilda, a noblewoman. Thus, it is sympathetic to Roger, and not very critical of him. Yet, the descriptions of Norman Sicily and his court can be relied upon to be fairly accurate. The beginning of the selection describes how Roger was persuaded by his nobles to ascend to the throne, and then goes on to describe his coronation.

**Excerpt from Book II**

“... Duke Roger, and particularly his uncle Count Henry by whom he was loved more than anyone, began very frequently to suggest to him the plan that he, who with the help of God ruled so many provinces, Sicily, Calabria, Apulia and other regions stretching almost to Rome, ought not to have just the ducal title but ought to be distinguished by the honour of kingship. They added that the centre and capital of this kingdom ought to be Palermo, the chief city of Sicily, which once, in ancient times, was believed to have had kings [who ruled] over this province; but now, many years later, was by God's secret judgement without them.

After turning over in his own mind their well-intentioned and praiseworthy suggestion, he wanted to have sure and certain counsel. He journeyed back to Salerno, and just outside it he convoked some learned Churchmen and most competent persons, as well as certain princes, counts, barons and others whom he thought trustworthy to examine this secret and unlooked for matter. Examining the issue carefully they unanimously, as if with one voice, praised [this proposal] and conceded, decided and insisted with mighty prayers that Duke Roger ought to be promoted at Palermo, the chief city of Sicily, to the royal dignity

since he held not only Sicily, his hereditary patrimony, but also Calabria, Apulia and other lands - not just obtained by military prowess, but which had devolved to him by right of his close relationship to the preceding dukes. For it was certain that kingship had once existed in that city, governing all Sicily; it seemed to have been in abeyance for a long time, but now it was right and proper that the crown should be placed on Roger's head and that this kingdom should not only be restored but should be spread wide to include those other regions where he was now recognised as ruler.

Once the Duke had taken counsel with them and been strengthened by their sincere approval he went back to Sicily, ordering that all the men of dignity, power and honour from his lands and provinces should gather together at Palermo for his coronation, which would take place on Christmas Day. At the constituted day all they and a numberless populace both great and small flocked together. All were once again solemnly asked the same question and answered in the same way as above; to the glory of God and the advantage of his Church all in the royal city of Palermo approved the promotion to the Kingship for him to whom so much power had been given by God and who had already greatly extended the lands of his family, that he might exercise it to punish the evil and to preserve justice.

When therefore the Duke had been led to the archiepiscopal church in royal manner and had there through unction [anointing] with the Holy Oil assumed the royal dignity, one cannot write down nor indeed even imagine quite how glorious he was, how regal in his dignity, how splendid in his richly-adorned apparel. For it seemed to the onlookers that all the riches and honours of this world were present. The whole city was decorated in a stupendous manner, and nowhere was there anything but rejoicing and light.

The royal palace was on its interior walls gloriously draped throughout. The pavement was bestrewed with multi-coloured carpets and showed a flowing softness to the feet of those who trod there. When the King went to the church for the ceremony he was surrounded by dignitaries, and the huge number of horses which accompanied them had saddles and bridles decorated with gold and silver.

Large amounts of the choicest food and drink were served to the diners at the royal table, and nothing was served except in dishes or cups of gold or silver. There was no servant there who did not wear a silk tunic - the very waiters were clad in silk clothes! What more is there to say? The glory and wealth of the royal abode was so spectacular that it caused great wonder and deep stupefaction - so great indeed that it instilled not a little fear in all those who had come from so far away. For many saw there more things even than they had heard rumoured of previously."



The Coronation Mantle of Roger II of Sicily, made in the Palermo Royal workshop, 1133/34 CE of silk dyed red with kermes insects, embroidered in gold and silk, pearls, with gold cloisonné enamel and precious stone clasps (Source: photo by Gryffindor, 1988 at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Weltliche\\_Schatzkammer\\_Wienc.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Weltliche_Schatzkammer_Wienc.jpg))

*Now that you have read a European Christian's description of Norman Sicily, consider a Muslim's perspective – that of historian Ibn Jubayr of Spain, who traveled to Sicily during the reign of William II of Sicily (1166-1189), grandson of Roger II. Begin with an introductory reading on Ibn Jubayr.*

### **Background on Ibn Jubayr, by Vincenzo Salerno**

Some of the most important descriptions of Norman Sicily (1071-1200) come to us from Arab and Muslim sources. These are especially important in their objectivity because, unlike visitors from northern (Christian) Europe, those from Muslim regions brought to their observations a somewhat more sophisticated point of reference. They weren't easily impressed by the more superficial aspects of a wealthy kingdom. Most of the greatest literary and scientific achievements of the Middle Ages emanated first from the East (the Byzantine Empire) and subsequently from Arab influences. Sicily was fortunate to be touched by both of these flourishing cultures. Idrisi is the best known of the Arab geographer-poets to have visited Sicily, but another is equally distinguished.

Abu Hussain Muhammed ibn Ahmad ibn Jubayr (or Jubair) al-Kenani was born around 1145 in Valencia, then a thriving region of "Moorish" Spain, and by 1182 was high secretary for the Emir of Granada. The following year Ibn Jubayr left for a Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca. His travels took him across the Mediterranean, reaching Alexandria in Spring 1183. En route back to Spain, in January 1185, he reached Sicily. He described the volcanic Aeolian Islands:



"At the close of night a red flame appeared, throwing up tongues into the air. It was the celebrated volcano (Stromboli). We were told that a fiery blast of great violence bursts out from holes in the two mountains and makes the fire. Often a great stone is cast up and thrown into the air by the force of the blast and prevented thereby from falling and settling at the bottom. This is one of the most remarkable of stories, and it is true. As for the great mountain in the island, known as the Jabal al-Nar (Mountain of Fire), it also presents a singular feature in that some years a fire pours from it in the manner of the 'bursting of the dam.' It passes nothing it does not burn until, coming to the sea, it rides out on its surface and then subsides beneath it. Let us praise the Author of all things for His marvellous creations. There is no God but He."

### **His description of Palermo is a vivid one:**

"It is the metropolis of the islands, combining the benefits of wealth and splendour, and having all that you could wish of beauty, real or apparent, and all the needs of subsistence, mature and fresh. It is an ancient and elegant city, magnificent and gracious, and seductive to look upon. Proudly set between its open spaces and plains filled with gardens, with broad roads and streets, it dazzles the eyes with its perfection. It is a wonderful place, built in the Cordoba style, entirely from cut stone known as kadhan (limestone). A river splits the town, and four springs gush in its suburbs... The king roams through the gardens and courts for amusement and pleasure... The Christian women of this city follow the fashion of Muslim women, are fluent of speech, wrap their cloaks about them, and are veiled."

He also described the Martorana church, and specifically its bell tower (higher then than now), shown here with the church of San Cataldo, and the city of Messina as predominantly Greek Orthodox (rather than Catholic or Muslim). Ibn Jubayr recorded the story of the words of King William II to his subjects following an earthquake in 1169: "Let each of you pray to the God he adores; he who has faith in his God will feel peace in his heart."

Yet the subtle storm of religious intolerance was gathering force even in the days of Ibn Jubayr's visit, and by the time of the Vespers uprising a century later the Muslims of Sicily had converted to Christianity (usually Catholicism) or departed the island.

Ibn Jubayr's record is useful for establishing the continuity of the Palermitan cultural atmosphere over the centuries. It is, in effect, a link in a chain. Writing in 972, the geographer Ibn Haukal (actually a merchant from Baghdad with a penchant for writing) described an Arab-Byzantine Sicily in the time long before . . . Ibn Jubayr, and a Bal'harm (Palermo) just as prosperous as in the time of Jubayr a century later. Ibn Jubayr also visited Jerusalem and other places, and wrote about these. He died in Alexandria in 1217.

*Now read Ibn Jubayr's description of Norman Sicily. As you are reading, consider Ibn Jubayr's attitude towards the Normans: does he regard them as civilized? How does he characterize the cities which they took over by conquest from the Muslim rulers of the past?*

### **Reading #4: The Travels of Ibn Jubayr**

*Recollections of the city of Messina in the island of Sicily, May God restore it (to the Muslims)*

This city is the mart of the merchant infidels, the focus of ships from the world over, and

thronging always with companies of travelers by reason of the lowness of prices. But it is cheerless because of the unbelief, no Muslim being settled there. Teeming with worshippers of the Cross, it chokes its inhabitants, and constricts them almost to strangling. It is full of smells and filth; and churlish too, for the stranger will find there no courtesy. Its markets are animated and teeming, and it has ample commodities to ensure a luxurious life. Your days and nights in this town you will pass in full security, even though your countenance, your manners [lit. 'hand'] and your tongue are strange.

Messina leans against the mountains, the lower slopes of which adjoin the intrenchments of the town. To its south is the sea, and its harbour is the most remarkable of maritime ports, since large ships can come into it from the seas until they almost touch it. Between them and the shore is thrown a plank over which men come and go and porters take up the baggage; thus no boats are needed for loading and unloading save for ships anchored far out.

You will observe ships ranged along the quay like horses lined at their pickets or in their stables. This is all because of the great depth here of the sea which forms the strait, some three miles wide, that separates the island from the continent . . .

The prosperity of the island surpasses description. It is enough to say that it is a daughter of Spain in the extent of its cultivation, in the luxuriance of its harvests, and in its well-being, having an abundance of varied produce, and fruits of every kind and species.

But it is filled with the worshippers of the Cross, who promenade in its upper districts and live at ease in its sheltered parts. The Muslims live beside them with their property and farms. The Christians treat these Muslims well and 'have taken them to themselves as friends' [Koran XX, 41], but impose on them a tax to be paid twice yearly, thus taking from them the amplitude of living they had been wont to earn from that land. May Almighty and Glorious God mend their lot, and in His goodness, make a happy recompense their heritage.

The mountains are covered with plantations bearing apples, chestnuts and hazelnuts, pears, and other kinds of fruits. There are, in Messina, no Muslims save a small number of craftsmen, so the Muslim stranger there will feel lonely.

The finest town all Sicily and the seat of its sovereign, is known to the Muslims as al-Madinah, and to the Christians as Palermo. It has Muslim citizens who possess mosques, and their own markets, in the many suburbs. The rest of the Muslims live in the farms (of the island) and in all its villages and towns, such as Syracuse and others. Al-Madinah al-Kabirah [the great City' - Palermo], the residence of their King, William, is however the biggest and most populous . . .

. . . King William, is admirable for his just conduct, and the use he makes of the industry of the Muslims, and for choosing eunuch pages who all, or nearly all, concealing their faith, yet hold firm to the Muslim divine law. He has much confidence in Muslims, relying on them for his affairs, and the most important matters, even the supervisor of his kitchen being a Muslim; and he keeps a band of black Muslim slaves commanded by a leader chosen from amongst them. His ministers and chamberlains he appoints from his pages, of whom he has a great number and who are his public officials and are described as his courtiers. In them shines the splendour of his realm for the magnificent clothing and fiery horses they display; and there is none of them but has his retinue, his servants, and his followers.

This King possesses splendid palaces and elegant gardens, particularly in the capital of his kingdom, al-Madinah. In Messina he has a palace, white *like* a dove, which overlooks the shore. *He* has about him a great number of youths and handmaidens, and no Christian King is more given up to the delights of the realm, or more comfort and luxury-loving. William is engrossed in the pleasures of his land, the arrangement of its laws, the laying down of procedure, the allocation of the functions of his chief officials, the enlargement of the splendour of the realm, and the display of his pomp, in a manner that resembles the Muslim Kings. His kingdom is very large. *He* pays much attention to his (Muslim) physicians and astrologers, and also takes great care of them. He will even, when told that a physician or astrologer is passing through his land, order his detainment, and then provide him with means of living so that he will forget his native land. May God in His favour preserve the Muslims from this seduction. The King's age is about thirty years. May God protect the Muslims from his hostility and the extension of his power.

One of the remarkable things told of him is that he reads and writes Arabic. We also learnt from one of his personal servants that his '*alamah* is: 'Praise be to God. It is proper to praise Him.' His father's '*alamah* was: 'Praise be to God-in thanks for His beneficence.' [An '*alamah*, or 'sign', was the technical term for a kind of motto which Muslim princes used on official documents. This is a further indication of the degree to which the Norman kings of Sicily adopted Muslim practice. The '*alamah* of King William I, indeed, was in fact similar to that of the Fatimid Caliph of Egypt. The handmaidens . . . in his palace are all Muslims. One of the strangest things told us by this servant, Yahya ibn Fityan, the Embroiderer, who embroidered in gold the King's clothes, was that the Frankish [European] Christian women who came to his palace became Muslims, converted by these handmaidens. All this they kept secret from their King. Of the good works of these handmaidens there are astonishing stories.

It was told to us that when a terrifying earthquake shook the island this polytheist [a Muslim would *deem* William to be so, since he accepted the dogma of the Trinity] in alarm ranged round his palace, and heard nothing but cries to God and His Prophet from his women and pages. At sight of him, they were overcome with confusion, but he said to them: 'Let each invoke the God he worships, and those that have faith shall be comforted' . . .

*Recollections of al-Majinah [Palermo], the capital of Sicily*

It is the metropolis of these islands, combining the benefits of wealth and splendour, and having all that you could wish of beauty, real or apparent, and all the needs of subsistence, mature and fresh. It is an ancient and elegant city, magnificent and gracious, and seductive to look upon. Proudly set between its open spaces and plains filled with gardens, with broad roads and avenues, it dazzles the eyes with its perfection. It is a wonderful place, built in the Cordova style, entirely from cut stone known as *kadhan* [a soft limestone]. A river splits the town, and four springs gush in its suburbs. The King, to whom it is his world, has embellished it to perfection and taken it as the capital of his Frankish Kingdom - may God destroy it.

The King's palaces are disposed around the higher parts, like pearls encircling a woman's full throat. The King roams through the gardens and courts for amusement and pleasure. How many - may they not long be his - palaces, constructions, watch-towers, and



belvederes he has, how many fine monasteries whose monks he has put in comfort by grants of large fiefs, and how many churches with crosses of gold and silver! May it be that God will soon repair the times for this island, making it again a home of the faith, and by his power delivering it from fear to security. For He can perform what He desires.

The Muslims of this city preserve the remaining evidence of the faith. They keep in repair the greater number of their mosques, and come to prayers at the call of the muezzin. In their own suburbs they live apart from the Christians. The markets are full of them, and they are the merchants of the place. They do not congregate for the Friday service, since the *khutbah* [sermon] is forbidden. On feast-days (only may) they recite it with intercessions for the 'Abbasid Caliphs. They have a qadi [judge] to whom they refer their lawsuits, and a cathedral mosque where, in this holy month, they assemble under its lamps. The ordinary mosques are countless, and most of them are used as schools for Koran teachers. But in general these Muslims do not mix with their brethren under infidel patronage, and enjoy no security for their goods, their women, or their children. May God, by His favour, amend their lot with His beneficence.

One point of resemblance between this town and Cordova- for one thing always resembles another in some direction is its having in the middle of the new city an old one known as the Qasr al-Qadim [the old Castle] just as there is in Cordova - God protect it. In this old castle are mansions like lofty castles with towers hidden in the skies, bewildering the sight with their splendour.

One of the most remarkable works of the infidels that we saw was the church known as the Church of the Antiochian. We examined it on the Day of the Nativity [Christmas Day], which with them is a great festival; and a multitude of men and women-had come to it. Of the buildings we saw, the spectacle of one must fail of description, for it is beyond dispute the most wonderful edifice in the world. The inner walls are all embellished with gold. There are slabs of coloured marble, the like of which we had never seen, inlaid throughout with gold mosaic and surrounded by branches (formed from) green mosaic. In its upper parts are well-placed windows of gilded glass which steal all looks by the brilliance of their rays, and bewitch the soul. God protect us (from their allurements). We learnt that its founder, after whom it was named, spent hundred-weights of gold on it. He had been vizier to the grandfather of this polytheist King. This church has a belfry supported by columns of coloured marble. It was raised cupola over cupola, each with its separate columns, and is therefore known as the Columned Belfry, and is one of the most wonderful constructions to be seen. May God, in His kindness and benevolence, soon exalt it with the *adhan* [call to prayers, i.e. make it a Muslim mosque].

The Christian women of this city follow the fashion of Muslim women, are fluent of speech, wrap their cloaks about them, and are veiled. They go forth on this Feast Day dressed in robes of gold-embroidered silk, wrapped in elegant cloaks, concealed by coloured veils, and shod with gilt slippers. Thus they parade to their churches, or (rather) their dens [a play on the words *kana'is*, 'churches', and *kunus*, 'dens'], bearing all the adornments of Muslim women, including jewellery, henna [dyed designs] on the fingers, and perfumes . . .

Seven days we spent in this city, living in a hostel used by Muslims. We left it on the morning of Friday the 22nd of this holy month and the 28th of December, bound for

Trapani [Sicily], where there are two ships, one waiting to sail to Andalusia [southern Spain] and the other to Ceuta. We had sailed to Alexandria in this, and both were carrying pilgrims and Muslim merchants.

Through a line of continuous villages and farms we trended, observing land, both tilled and sown, such as we had never seen before for goodness, fertility, and amplitude. We compared it to the 'qanbaniyah' [Latin, *campania*, 'countryside', a relic of the Roman occupation] of Cordova, but this soil is choicer and more fertile . . .

*Recollections of the town of Atrabanish [Trapani] in the island of Sicily.*

May God restore it (to the Muslims).

Trapani is a small city enclosed by walls, and white as a dove. It possesses an excellent harbour, most suited for shipping, and is therefore much used by the Rum [Byzantines], particularly those who sail to the Barr al-'Adwah [the coast of Africa]. Between it and Tunis is only a day and a night's journey, and the voyage is never stayed, winter or summer, save when the wind is unfavourable. Otherwise, the crossing by that course is very short.

Trapani is furnished with markets and baths and all the commodities needed in a town. But it lies in the throat of the sea, which encompasses it on three sides. It is joined to the land by only a narrow strip, and the yawning sea waits to engulf the rest. Its people indeed say that the sea will assuredly swallow it. May the end of its days be remitted. But the future is veiled from all save God Most High.

The low prices, resulting from the wide cultivation, make life easy and comfortable in this town, where the Muslims and the Christians have each their mosque, and their churches. Near to its eastern corner and inclining to the north, is a great mountain of immense height. At its summit is an isolated crag, on which is a Rumi [Byzantine] stronghold connected to the mountain by a bridge. Near to it on the mountain the Rum have a large town, the women of which are said to be the fairest of all the island. God grant that they be made captives of the Muslims. On the mountain are vineyards and cornfields, and we learnt that it has some four hundred springs: It is called Jabal Hamid.

[Mount St. Julian], and its ascent is quite easy on one side, its people saying that through it Sicily may be conquered. God grant that it be. But in no case will they allow a Muslim to ascend to it, and for this reason they have prepared this strong fortress should they apprehend aught, they would collect their women inside it and cut the bridge, leaving a great ditch between them and those on the heights of the adjacent mountain.

It is a strange fact that this town, should have all these springs, as described, while Trapani, lying in the plain, should have no water save in a well at some distance from it, and in the not deeply sunk wells of its houses where it is brackish and cannot be swallowed.

At Trapani we found the two ships waiting to sail to the west. We hope, if God wills, to embark on the one bound for Spain . . .

(Source: R.J.C. Broadhurst, translator, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*. New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2001.)

## Module 3 Student Handouts by Lesson #

## Introduction to Trade Routes: Goods and Ideas in Motion



*Spices in a market in the Mediterranean region* (Image Source: photograph by Tom Verde)

Look around your house, your school, your neighborhood, and its stores. Where do the things there come from? Are they made in your home town, city, state, or country or are they imported?

Virtually no society on earth can be entirely self-sufficient and so people engage in trade to one degree or another in order to enjoy everything from basic necessities (food, shelter, clothing) to luxury items (electronics, jewelry, etc.).

The medieval Mediterranean was no different, and in fact it was a busy center of trade in the world at the time. As an inland sea, the Mediterranean mirrored other bodies of water criss-crossed by trade routes, such as the South China Sea, the Bay of Bengal, and the Arabian Sea. The eastern shore of the Atlantic was also becoming more active in trade during this period. Many luxury goods (including some we now take for granted, like sugar) traveled west over land and sea from China, India, the eastern Mediterranean and North Africa. In exchange, Europe sent mostly raw materials – wood, fur, precious metals – and received manufactured goods from the east. Even at times of tension between the east and the west (e.g. the Crusades), merchants managed to carry on with their business, in spite of differences in politics, religion, language and law.

Trade also aided in the transmission of knowledge among societies. Arabic numerals spread through trade. Algebra, trigonometry, and astronomy were related to navigation and mapmaking. Medicine, botany, and surgery spread through the mingling of people in port cities, who often traded in books. Traders were witnesses and carriers of new technologies such as irrigation systems, water wheels and other forms of hydraulic power, and the use of paper. Religions also spread through trade, as merchants grew accustomed to trading with people of other faiths, using their languages and legal systems, such as the use of shari'ah law in Islam, which found its way into commercial law in Europe and elsewhere.

In this lesson, you'll read documents and examine maps that show the development of trade routes throughout the Mediterranean over the course of nearly a thousand years, and be asked to identify where various goods came from, where they went, and who traded them. In the process, you will discover how the Mediterranean became one of the world's commercial super-highways!

**Now take a look at this inventory of imports, likely compiled in the 9<sup>th</sup> century by a famous writer from Baghdad, Al-Jahiz. Try circling items which you recognize, either**

**from history, or from the store shelves of today. See how many places mentioned in the document you can locate on a map.**

From Abū 'Uthman 'Amr ibn Baḥr al-Kinānī (born in Basra, Iraq, 781-868 CE) *The Investigation of Commerce* in Robert S. Lopez and Irving W. Raymond, translators. *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World: Illustrative Documents* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

[Iraq, mid-ninth century]

#### IMPORTS OF IRAQ

From India are imported tigers, 40 panthers, elephants, panther skins, rubies, white sandal, ebony, and coconuts.

From China are imported silk stuffs, silk, chinaware, paper, ink, peacocks, racing horses, saddles, felts, cinnamon, Greek unblended rhubarb. [Also] are imported utensils of gold and silver, *qaysarani* dinars of pure gold [a type of coin], drugs, brocades, racing horses, female slaves, knickknacks with human figures . . . hydraulic engineers, expert agronomists, marble workers, and eunuchs.

From Arabia: Arab horses, ostriches, pedigreed she-camels, *qan* wood [a type of wood used to make bows] and tanned skins.

From Barbary and the borders of Maghrib: panthers, *salam* leaves [used to tan leather] felts, and black hawks.

From Yemen: collyrium [eye-wash], tanned skins, giraffes, cuirasses [armor breastplate], colored gems, incense, *khitr* leaves, and curcuma [these last two also used in tanning leather].

From Egypt: trotting donkeys, suits of fine cloth, papyrus, balsam, and- from its mines- topazes of superior quality.

From the land of the Khazars: slaves of both sexes, coats of mail, helmets, and camails of [chain] mail [armor covering the neck].

From the land of Khwarizm: musk; ermine, marten, miniver, and fox furs; and very sweet sugar cane.

From Samarkand: paper.

From Balkh and its region: sweet grapes and . . . truffles.

From Bushanj: candied capers.

From Merv: zither players, valuable zithers, carpets, and Merv suits.

From Gurgan: grapes of various sorts, pheasants, excellent pomegranate grains, cloaks of soft wool, excellent raw silk.

From Amid: brocaded suits, scarfs, fine curtains, and woolen veils for the head.

From Damawand: arrow heads.

From Rayy: prunes, mercury, woolen cloaks, weapons, fine suits, combs, 'royal' bonnets, . . . linen cloth, and pomegranates.

From Ispahan: refined and raw honey, quinces, China pears, apples, salt, saffron, soda, white-lead, antimony sulphide, beds of several decks, extra fine suits, and fruit syrups.

From Qumis: axes, saddle felts, parasols, and woolen veils for the head.

From Kirman: indigo and cumin.

From Ghur: cuirasses and psyllium.

From Barda'a: fast mules.

From Nisibin: lead.

From Fars: . . . linen suits, rose water, water-lily ointment, jasmine ointment, and syrups.

From Fasa: pistachios, various sorts of fruit, rare fruit, and glass ware.

From Oman and the seacoast: pearls.

From Ahwaz and the surrounding region: sugar and silk brocades ...

castanets, dancing girls . . . extract of grapes, various sorts of dates, and sugar candy.

From Sus: citrons, violet ointment, basil, horsecloth, and packsaddles.

From Mosul: curtains, striped cloth, francolins [a bird], and quail.

From Hulwan: pomegranates, figs, and vinegar sauces.

From Armenia and Azerbaijan: felts . . . packsaddles, carpets, fine mats, cordons for drawers, and wool.



Keeping track of all this merchandise was no easy task. Merchants often sold all different kinds of goods, from perfumes, to cloth, to medicines, to jewelry and glass. In fact, a merchant's shop – though much smaller – was almost like the “big box” stores of today, where you can buy anything from food, to clothing, to sporting goods.



*Remains of the medieval Funduq Nejjarine in Fez.*

Nik Wheeler/ Saudi Aramco World/SAWDIA

Another business institution during this era, which bears similarities to business enterprises of today, was something called a “funduq.” These were storehouses where foreign merchants could keep their goods. It was also a place for them to stay, so funduqs were rather like warehouses, business hotels, and embassies combined. Some offered many of the comforts of home, including churches for Christians in Muslim lands. There were restrictions, however, on how long visiting merchants could stay in the funduq, and what kind of rights they had to compete with local, native merchants. Plus, by containing foreign merchants in a single location, local governments could keep a watchful eye on them.

### **Final Thoughts For Lesson**

Now think about goods and basic necessities you and your family purchase.

- Do many of your goods and necessities come from a foreign source? What is made in your country that others outside its borders desire?
- Do trade deficits still exist today? (Extra exercise: have students research with what trading countries their own country has a trading deficit.)
- Are any of the goods similar to those traded in the Mediterranean during the medieval period time? Are the goods necessities or luxuries?
- Do any of the nations in the geographic scope of the lesson still retain trading power over another?)

## The West-East Trade Deficit: Who Controlled the Flow of Goods and Cash



Anonymous Venetian painting, *The Reception of the Ambassadors in Damascus*, 1511. (Source: Louvre Museum, Paris, Inventory # 100 at [http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show\\_document.php?do\\_id=1156&lang=en](http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show_document.php?do_id=1156&lang=en))

As far back as Roman times, and earlier, the peoples of western Europe coveted the goods and treasures of the East. This gave traders from the East a distinct advantage. In the following excerpt from an essay entitled “The Levant Trade in the Middle Ages,” historian John Day discusses how the merchants and trading empires of the eastern Mediterranean maintained this advantage over the traders of western Europe for several centuries, quite simply because they had more goods that Europe wanted than Europe had to offer in return. In economic terms, this is called a “trade deficit.” This means that the value of goods exchanged by one partner is greater than the value of what the other partner trades in return. The difference has to be made up either by increasing the quantity of goods on the other side, or paying the difference in hard cash, also called currency, or specie (precious metal). Whether the first or the second option is possible depends in turn on another basic principle of business—supply and demand. If the trader on the surplus side can’t find enough customers to buy a greater quantity of the less valuable good, then the trader will refuse to sell the more valuable good without receiving the balance in value in cold cash.

### READING:

For a general picture of the balance of payments between Europe and the East, historians examine various elements concerning monetary movements, the merchandise trade, and commercial practices characteristic of that trade. [T]he movement of capital [gold and silver bullion and coins] —speculative movements apart—was always from West to East, proof that the Levant [eastern Mediterranean] trade in the Middle Ages was a deficit trade. [European] merchants regularly imported expensive luxuries from the East: spices, dyes, sugar, silks, pearls, precious stones. But medieval Europe also depended on that region for basic raw materials. Silk was imported from Persia, the shores of the Caspian, and China. Alum, used in dyeing as a mordant [a substance that makes dye permanent], prior to the

discovery of rich deposits at Tolfa in the Papal States in 1462, came from Anatolia, northern Syria, and upper Egypt; potash [a kind of salt], used in the glass and soap industries, from Syria. Syria, Cyprus, and Little Armenia produced the cotton for the manufacture of Lombard and south German fustians [linens]. This list of eastern imports is far from complete; it fails to include, among others, typical products of the Black Sea region: wheat, furs, skins, pitch, wax, sturgeon, and caviar.

In exchange, to the middle of the twelfth century—based on the commercial contracts of the Genoese notary Giovanni Scriba—exports to the Levant consisted almost exclusively of gold and silver in different forms (Muslim gold pieces, silver ingots, gold thread, and silverware). But toward the close of the century, the Genoese notaries' deeds begin to mention certain luxuries: fine woolen and linen cloth, northern furs, Mediterranean coral, and even a spice (saffron). The characteristic western exports, however, in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, were nonluxuries such as timber, metals, and foodstuffs (wine, olive oil, dried fruit, honey, cereals on occasion), which were sometimes transported on merchant galleys, a type of vessel ill-suited to bulk cargoes, for lack of more valuable merchandise.

Source: "The Levant Trade in the Middle Ages" by John Day, pp. 808-809

*The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, Angeliki E. Laiou, Ed., Dumbarton Oaks Studies no. 39 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002).

**Now let's take a closer look at who was doing the trading, and examine in greater detail, the goods they were trading. Read the following selection from *The Beauties of Commerce*, probably written in late 9<sup>th</sup> century, by Abu al-Fadl Ja'far ibn 'Ali, a prosperous merchant in Damascus, Syria. He describes the various types of merchants at the time. Do their activities and challenges sound anything like those of today? Think about it as you read.**

#### THE BEAUTIES OF COMMERCE

There are three kinds of merchants: he who travels, he who stocks, he who exports. Their trade is carried out in three ways: cash sale with a time limit for delivery, purchase on credit with payment by installments, and *muqarada* [a contract where an investor gives money to merchant in exchange for a share of the profits] . . .

. . . the cloth merchant must know the standards of the wares, the good and bad qualities, and the fraudulent practices which go with them. Likewise, the spice merchant must know the different drugs, remedies, potions, and perfumes, their good and bad sorts as well as the counterfeits. He must know what commodities are subject to rapid change and spoil and which ones are not, and what means ought to be used to preserve and to restore them, and lastly he also must understand the blends of . . . potions, of powders and drugs. The textile merchant must also understand the folding and display of the wares and what means are used to store them. But both the spice merchants and the cloth merchants belong to the class of merchants because they buy and sell and draw their profit therefrom, and so forth . . .

. . . the rule of the operations of the merchant who stocks consists in buying the wares in the time of their season and whenever the importation is uninterrupted, the supply large, and the demand small . . . This type of merchant above all needs early information on the relative situation of wares in their places of origin and native lands, whether the quantity on hand is great or small, cheap or dear [expensive], whether business has prospered abundantly and is in a good state or whether it has turned out poorly and has deteriorated, whether the import routes are cut off or are safe. He must try to obtain the knowledge of all this through inquiries and precise questioning of the caravans ....

When the merchant who stocks has made up his mind and is resolved to buy a ware, for instance, at 200 dinars cash, he ought not to buy all at once but to divide the purchase into four different times separated by intervals of fifteen days, so that the entire purchase is concluded within two months, the reason being that the price of the purchased ware either ceaselessly rises and falls or else remains steady. Now if after the purchase of one part the price goes up, he knows that this promises him profit and makes gain possible; and he should be happy about it, if indeed he is a moderate man and values a profit made through foresighted consideration more highly than a dangerous speculation. If, however, the ware becomes cheaper, he can then be happy in two respects, first, because he has remained protected against the fall in price which would have hit him if he had purchased the whole

and, second, because he now has the opportunity to buy good wares cheaply. Should, however, the price remain unchanged at the same level, his eye is sharpened to seize the right moment for buying and stocking wares. But if he buys everything in great haste at one time, then something that he has not considered is sure to happen to him, and now he seeks to make up the loss. From this, then, arise the controversies and lawsuits which are so frequent in this profession . . .

The merchant who travels must, above all, pay attention to what kinds of wares he buys, and here he must exercise great caution. He also ought not to lull himself into the belief that his hopes must necessarily be fulfilled on arrival at the desired destination, because the journey may very easily be delayed or become impossible through some obstacle, perhaps because the route is dangerous or the winds unfavorable to a sea voyage, or because some unforeseen event takes place in the locality to which he wishes to travel. Such things may easily happen to a merchant. He must then sell the ware, for better or for worse, where he has bought it; and if he has not prepared himself in advance for such a contingency, he will suffer a great loss in its price ....

Further, it is worthy of note that he should carry with him a price list of all the wares of the locality to which he will return . . . When he wants to buy an article, he establishes by this record the difference in price of the ware in the two places, takes into account the provisions he will need up to the time of his return, adds to the price list a list of the different tolls in that country, and calculates the profit . . .

The merchant who arrives in a locality unknown to him must also carefully arrange in advance to secure a reliable representative, a safe lodging house, and whatever besides is necessary, so that he is not taken in by a slow payer or by a cheat . . .

Know, my brother-may God guide you-that the operations of the merchant who exports consist in employing in the locality to which he exports some one who takes care of the wares sent to him. The latter is then entrusted with selling the wares and with buying others in exchange, and he ought to be a trustworthy, reliable, and well-to-do man who has devoted himself fully to commerce and who is also well experienced in it. The goods are shipped to him, and the entire selling is placed in his hands. He receives a share of the gain of all that he buys or sells. If a ware is low in supply, he may stock it, if he thinks it wise. The wares which are sent him must correspondingly be bought with care and shipped prior to the time of the fair in the best quality and in the best condition possible. Therefore one must endeavor to buy the wares with the possibility of extending the term of payment, with easy conditions of payment, and with rights of option. If this is not possible with one ware, one should try to obtain it with another; for the profit, with the assistance of God, depends on suitable purchase.

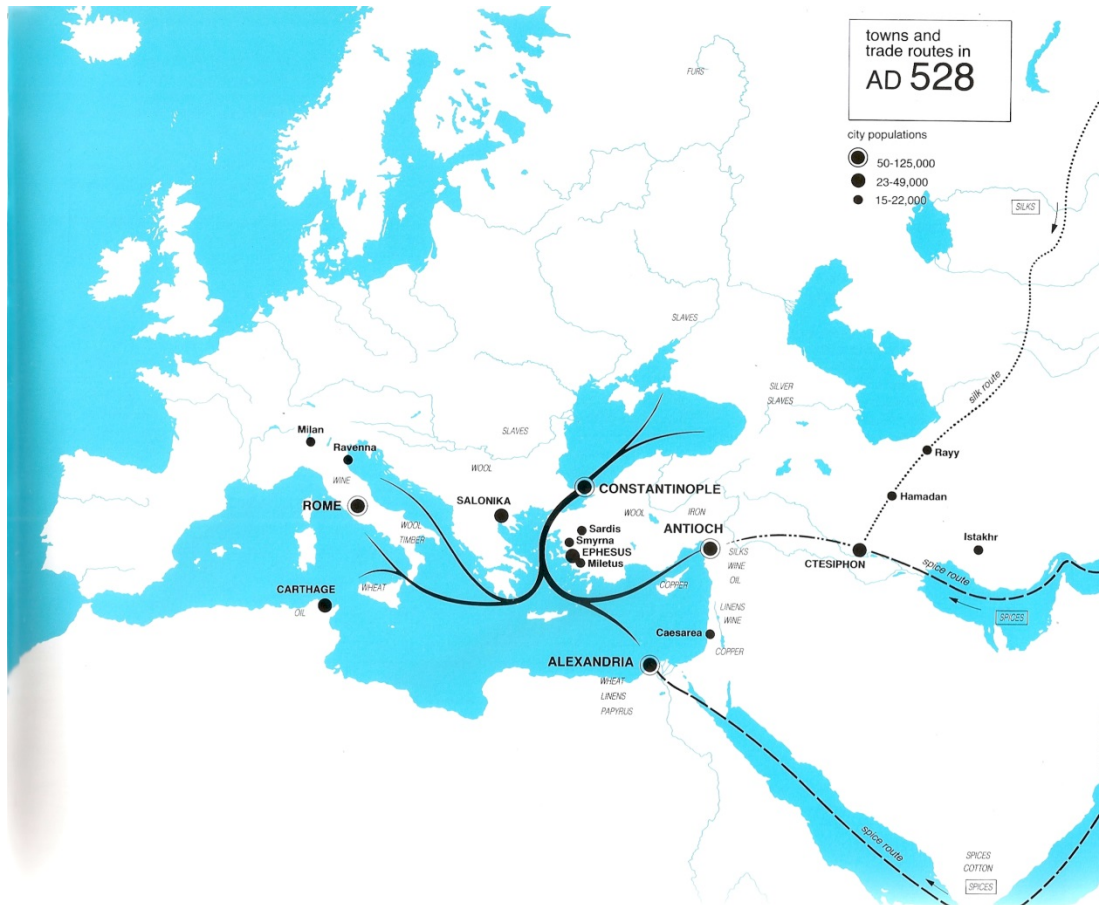
Lastly, one must send a ware only with reliable carriers who keep it under their protection until it is received by the appointed representative.

Source: Lopez, Robert S. & Raymond, Irving W., trs. *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World: Illustrative Documents* (Columbia University Press, 2001)



### Map: Towns and Trade Routes, 528 CE

Look the map below and identify at least five commodities (trade goods), their origins, and destinations, writing this information in the graph below. (Helpful hint: the trade goods written in squares come from places not shown on the map; but see if you can figure out what these places are.)



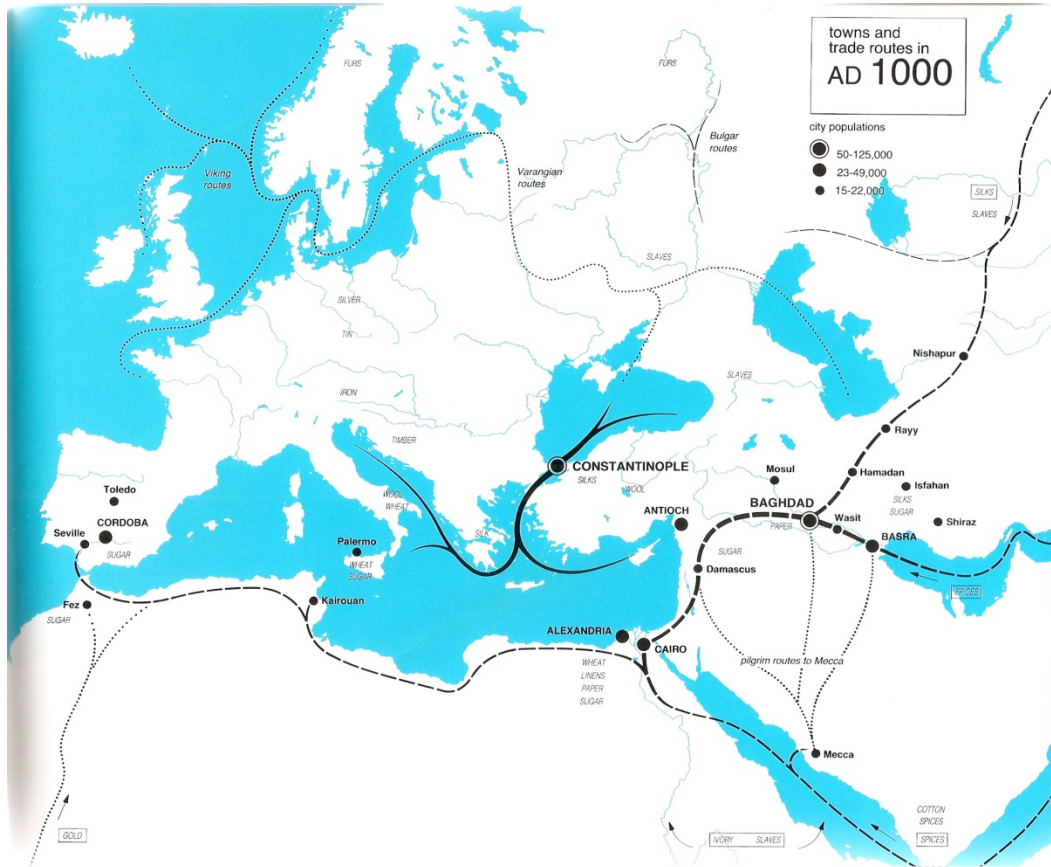
Commodity	Origin(s)	Destination(s)





### Map: Towns and Trade Routes, 1000 CE

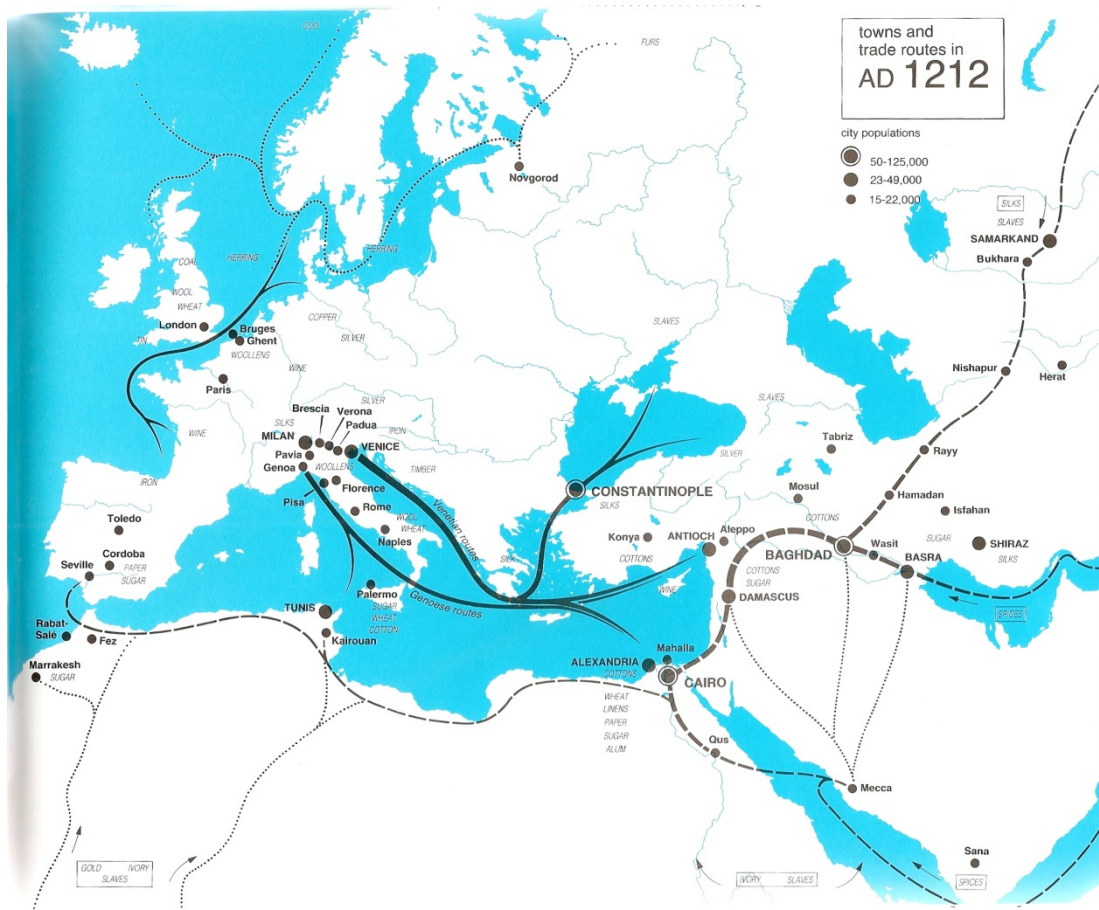
Look the map below and identify at least five commodities (trade goods), their origins, and destinations, writing this information in the graph below. Try and find new trade goods that were not on the last map, as well as new destinations. (Helpful hint: the trade goods written in squares come from places not shown on the map; but see if you can figure out what these places are.)



Commodity	Origin(s)	Destination(s)

### Map: Towns and Trade Routes, 1212 CE

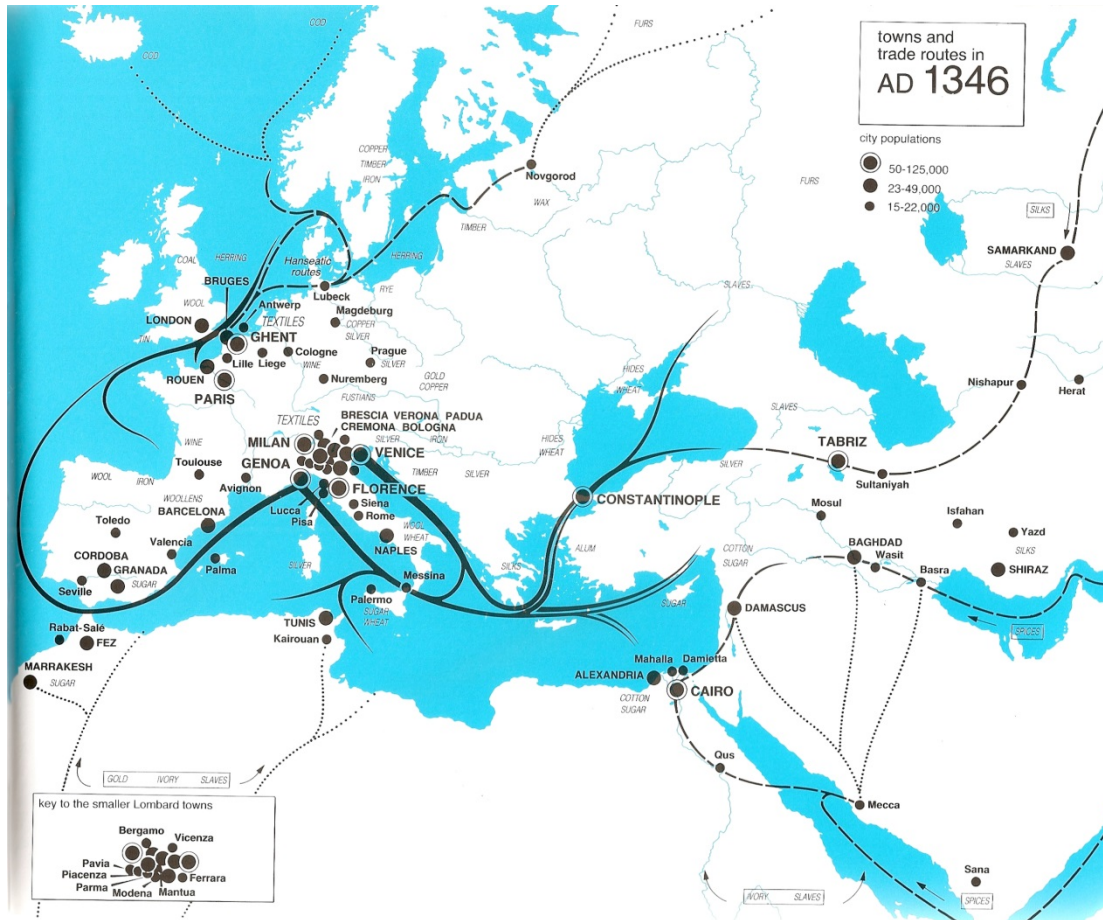
Look the map below and identify at least five trade goods, their origins, and destinations, writing this information in the graph below. Try and find new trade goods that were not on the last map, as well as new destinations. (Helpful hint: the trade goods written in squares come from places not shown on the map; but see if you can figure out what these places are.)



Commodity	Origin(s)	Destination(s)

### Map: Towns and Trade Routes, 1346 CE

Look the map below and identify at least five trade goods, their origins, and destinations, writing this information in the graph below. Try and find new trade goods that were not on the last map, as well as new destinations. (Helpful hint: the trade goods written in squares come from places not shown on the map; but see if you can figure out what these places are.)

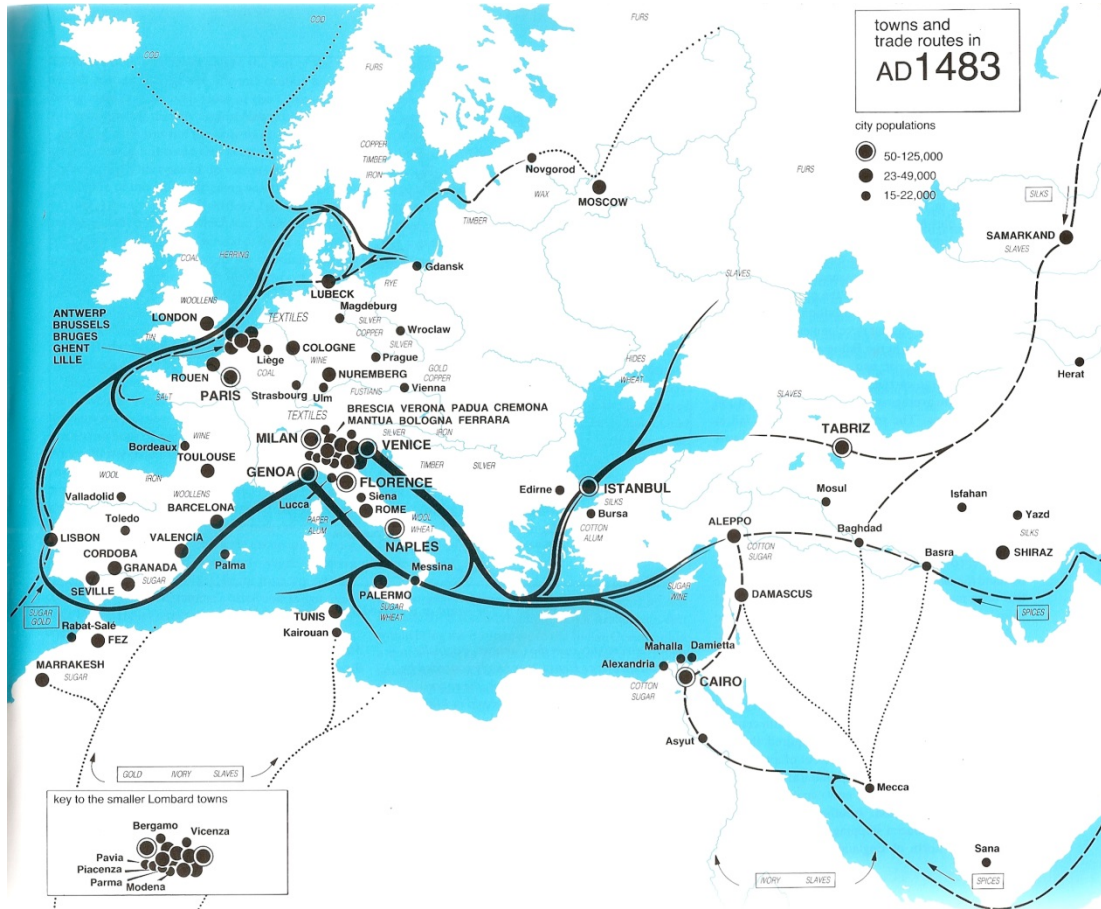


Commodity	Origin(s)	Destination(s)



### Map: Towns and Trade Routes, 1483 CE

Look the map below and identify at least five trade goods, their origins, and destinations, writing this information in the graph below. Try and find new trade goods that were not on the last map, as well as new destinations. (Helpful hint: the trade goods written in squares come from places not shown on the map; but see if you can figure out what these places are.)



Commodity	Origin(s)	Destination(s)

## Primary Source Images on Books and Literacy

Study the images on the following pages to explore the place of books and literacy in European society in the late medieval period. Observe who is reading, how reading is valued, and what purposes literacy served.



Lieven van Lathem, illuminator (Flemish, about 1430 - 1493, active 1454 - 1493)  
David Aubert, scribe (Flemish, active 1453 - 1479) *Romance of Gillion de Trazegnies*,  
after 1464. (Source: The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. 111)



The Moneylender and his Wife. Quentin Matsys, 1514 (Source: Louvre Museum, Paris)





La Virtù della Grammatica (The Virtue of Grammar). Attributed to Gentile de Fabriano, beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. (Source: Palazzo Trinci, Sala delle Arti Liberali e dei Pianeti)

### Childhood Learning

In many families, children would not be taught how to read as they are today. However, in merchant families during the 14<sup>th</sup> century in western Europe, it was important to know how to both read and write, in order to do business. When merchant husbands traveled, their wives and families would often be left in charge of the bookkeeping, as in the picture here. Thus, both children and women would have at least a functional level of literacy.

Parents taught children letters by carving them onto apples and giving the child the apple as a reward for recognizing the letters. Just as they do today, children would learn how to read by sounding out words on the page, often with the help of their fingers or a pointer, as you can see in this 15<sup>th</sup> century Italian image of a mother teaching a child to read. Note the way she holds his wrist and guides his hand across the page. In his hand, he holds a “stylus,” which is a little pointer (sort of like a cursor on a computer screen) that helped readers keep track of their place on the page. (In Jewish worship to this day, Jews use a hand-shaped pointer called a “yad,” which is Hebrew for “hand,” to read from the Torah.)

© Victoria and Albert Museum, London

In wealthier families, letters were also engraved on common household items, like the 14<sup>th</sup> century pewter cup you see here. In this way, children would be exposed to letters and writing at an early age.



The rich could afford private tutors for their children, but schools were commonly associated with religious institutions such as a monastery, a mosque, or a synagogue. Some children would stay on at the institution and advance to become members of the clergy



themselves. Much of what children read was from holy scripture: the Christian Bible, the Hebrew Bible (the Torah), and the Qur'an, Islam's holy book. Each would be written in the respective religious language of their cultures: Latin for western Europe, Hebrew for Jews, and Arabic for Muslims. However, it was also not uncommon to find copies of the same works written in all three languages.

© Koninklijke Bibliotheek *National Library of the Netherlands*  
The Hague KB 78 D 38 I & II. Bible, ca 1430. Maitre Alexandre. Détail f. 1 r.



Just as today, students had to study a wide range of subjects. In fact, the divisions of curricula into separate subjects was formally established during this period of history. In a work entitled the *Cure of Sick Souls*, written around 1180, Jewish scholar Joseph ben Judah ibn Akin, listed the various subjects necessary for the general education of an adult Jewish person living in Muslim Spain at the time. Ibn Akin's checklist of subjects include many that are familiar, and some that may surprise you:

- ✓ Reading and Writing
- ✓ Torah, Mishnah [religious texts], and Hebrew Grammar
- ✓ Poetry
- ✓ Talmud [Jewish law]
- ✓ Philosophic Observations on Religion
- ✓ Philosophic Studies
- ✓ Logic



- ✓ Mathematics, Arithmetic
- ✓ Geometry
- ✓ Optics
- ✓ Astronomy
- ✓ Music
- ✓ Mechanics
- ✓ Natural Sciences, Medicine
- ✓ Metaphysics [philosophical study of the nature of “being”]

Things to Think About:

- Which subjects do you recognize, and which seem unfamiliar?
- Which subjects would you most like to include in your own curriculum at your school? Why?

As today, children were expected to work hard and excel at their studies. Unlike today, however, it was permissible to hit students who did not do their work or misbehaved. This is amusingly illustrated in this detail from the pages of a 13<sup>th</sup> century French illuminated manuscript entitled *L'Historie du Graal* (“The History of the Grail”) in which monkeys are depicted in a classroom. Despite, or because of this widespread practice, the *Sefer Hasidim* (“Book of the Pious”), written by the German Jewish mystic, Judah He-Hasid of Regensburg during the late-12<sup>th</sup>/early-13<sup>th</sup> century offers this advice to educators: “The teacher who is angry with his student must not hit him with [a book], nor should the student ward off blows with a book unless the blows are very dangerous.” It is unclear if He-Hasid is more concerned with the well-being and safety of the student or the book!



(Source: Bibliotecque Nationale, Paris at gallica.bnf.fr.)

Things to think about:

- What sort of books were being read during this time period by children in Europe?
- What was the language of many of these books? Why do you think that is?
- What do you think is unusual about the way children learned to read? Also note what methods are the same as today.
- How did teachers treat children during these times? Do you think teachers can behave the same way today?

**Women and Reading**

Girls as well as boys learned to read. In this drawing, girls are learning their letters from a wooden tablet (left) and a psalter (a prayer book). Literacy was relatively rare, however, for both genders, and until books became more common and widely available, literacy was limited in the subjects available to readers.



Krumauer Bilder Codex. Vienna. Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek, M.S. 370. fol. 131r.

In adulthood, Christian women in western Europe read to entertain themselves, just like today, or for religious purposes (for example they would spend time reading prayer books). Women read in the home, often in a cozy corner of the house, usually by the fire, as in this painting of Saint Barbara reading by the hearth.



The painting at left is Santa Barbara Reading, Master of Flemalle (Robert Campin), 1438. (Source: Prado Museum, Madrid)

Below, a woman reads by the fire. Notice the special book-holder on the wall.

(Source: detail from G. Boccaccio, *Le livre des cleres et noble femmes*, Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, MS Fr. 599, fol. 22r. at gallica.bnf.fr.)



Other images show women reading from special stands designed to hold books and for writing. They also depict women, busily and intensely studying, reading, and writing – all indications that during this period many European women, of noble birth at least, had access to education and were quite literate, studying religious and philosophical texts, as well as poetry and tales of romance.





(Source of both images: Bibliotecque Nationale, Paris at gallica.bnf.fr)

One famous female writer during this period was a woman named Christine de Pizan, who lived from 1364 to around 1430.



The image at left is from a compendium of Christine de Pizan's works commissioned in 1413, produced by her scriptorium in Paris. (Source: The British Library Board. Harley 4431, f.259v.)

Like J.K. Rowling, author of the *Harry Potter* books, Christine was a single mother with three children to care for who earned a living by writing. A group of aristocrats were patrons of her writing. Living in what is France today, she composed long poetic works known as "courtly poetry." She also wrote books that examined and defended the roles of women at a time when men dominated society. Some scholars consider her an early feminist writer. The image above is evidence of the respect she earned for her writings, where she is shown either lecturing or formally debating with other male scholars—a rare illustration of intellectual gender equality during that time.

Things to Think About:

- What opportunities were available for women to become educated during the medieval period discussed? What class of women would have been most likely to be literate?
- Where did women read? Why?



**Optional Reading 1: Jonathan Bloom, "Revolution by the Ream: A History of Paper," *Saudi Aramco World*, May/June 1999 (Vol. 50, no. 3)**

"Paper, one of the most ubiquitous materials in modern life, was invented in China more than 2000 years ago. Nearly a millennium passed, however, before Europeans first used it, and they only began to manufacture it in the 11th and 12th centuries, after Muslims had established the first paper mills in Spain. The German Ulman Stromer, who had seen paper mills in Italy, built the first one north of the Alps at Nuremberg in the late 14th century.

The cultural revolution begun by Johann Gutenberg's printing press in 15th-century Mainz could not have taken place without paper mills like Stromer's, for even the earliest printing presses produced books at many times the speed of hand copyists, and had to be fed with reams and reams of paper. Our demand for paper has never been satisfied since, for we constantly develop new uses for this versatile material and new sources for the fiber from which it is made. Even today, despite the computer's promise to provide us with "paperless offices," we all use more paper than ever before, not only for communication, but also for wrapping, filtering, construction and hundreds of other purposes.

How did paper get from China to Europe? Soon after its invention, Chinese merchants and missionaries transmitted paper, and knowledge of papermaking, to neighboring lands such as Japan, Korea, and Central Asia. It was there that Muslims first encountered it in the eighth century. Islamic civilization spread knowledge of paper and papermaking to Iraq, Syria, Egypt, North Africa and, finally, Spain. This pivotal role is evident in the way we still count paper in units—today they are units of 500 sheets—called reams. That word came into English via the Old French *rayme* from Spanish *resma*, which in turn comes from the Arabic *rizmah*, meaning a bale or bundle.

Most accounts of the history of paper focus either on its origins in China or its development in Europe, and simply ignore the centuries when knowledge of paper and papermaking spread throughout the Islamic lands. Some of this neglect is due to the difficulty of studying Islamic paper, since Islamic papers, unlike later European papers, do not have watermarks (see sidebar, p. 30) and are consequently very difficult to localize and date. Nevertheless, the diffusion of paper and papermaking skill in the Islamic world in the period between the eighth and the 14th centuries wrought enormous changes in such diverse realms as literature, mathematics, commerce and the arts, just as printing with moveable type spurred a conceptual revolution whose effects are still being felt today.

Europeans long debated the origins of paper. Until relatively recently, most people thought that paper derived from papyrus (see sidebar, p. 32) or that Europeans or Arabs had invented it. Indeed, the word *paper*, attested in English since the 14th century, does derive, via Old French and Spanish, from the Latin word *papyrus*.

Medieval Muslims, on the other hand, knew that paper came from China. As early as the 11th century, the Arab historian 'Abd al-Malik al-Tha'alibi, enumerating the specialties of different lands in his *Book of Curious and Entertaining Information*, says that "paper is among the specialties of Samarkand, and it looks better and is more supple, more easily handled, and more convenient for writing than papyrus and parchment," the two major writing materials known in antiquity. According to al-Tha'alibi, Chinese prisoners captured by the Arab commander Ziyad ibn Salih introduced papermaking to Samarkand after the

battle of Talas in 751. (See *Aramco World*, September/October 1982.) "Then paper was manufactured on a wide scale and passed into general use, until it became an important export commodity for the people of Samarkand," al-Tha'alibi wrote. "Its value was universally recognized and people everywhere used it."

Whether or not one takes al-Tha'alibi's account at face value, paper was undoubtedly introduced to the Middle East through Central Asia. Specimens of very old paper have been discovered at various sites in eastern Central Asia, where the extreme dryness of the climate helped preserve them. In 1900, a Chinese Buddhist monk accidentally discovered more than 30,000 paper scrolls in a cave at Dunhuang, in China's Gansu province. As the cave was first used in 366 and was sealed in the 10th century, the papers—comprising Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian texts, government documents, business contracts, calendars, and miscellaneous exercises written in Chinese, Sanskrit, Soghdian, Iranian, Uighur and Tibetan—must date from this six-century period. In 1907, the British explorer Sir Aurel Stein discovered a group of Soghdian paper documents in a ruined watchtower between Dunhuang and Loulan, farther west. They comprised five almost complete letters and several fragments. The letters, dating from between the fourth and sixth centuries, were found in a refuse heap, and probably represent the contents of a lost or abandoned mailbag. One of the letters was wrapped in silk and enclosed in a qparse cloth envelope addressed to Samarkand, which lay about 2000 miles farther west. The find shows that paper was used by Silk Road merchants throughout the oasis cities of Central Asia even before the coming of Islam.

In 1933, Soviet scholars found several paper documents among 76 Soghdian, Arabic and Chinese texts discovered at Mount Mug, the mountain stronghold, near Pendzhikent in Tajikistan, where Devastich, lord of Panch, had attempted to escape from the Arab invaders in 722-723, some three decades before the battle of Talas. Pendzhikent, just east of Samarkand, is only 500 kilometers (300 mi) from Talas.

This Central Asian diffusion route is confirmed by the first Arabic word for paper, *kaghad*, and by the Turkish word, *kâğıt*, used to this day. Both derive from Soghdian and Uighur words, which themselves derive from the Chinese word *gu-zhi*, "paper made from paper-mulberry bark." *Qirtas*, another early Arabic word for paper, was borrowed from the Greek *chartes* and initially referred to papyrus, papyrus rolls and parchment. *Qirtas* appears in this sense in the Qur'an (Sura 6, "Cattle," verses 7 and 91) with reference to writings on separate sheets. Perhaps the most common Arabic word for paper—and the one in use today—came to be *waraq*, literally meaning "foliage" or "leaves," probably as a short form of the expression *waraq qirtas*, "a leaf of paper." Other words derived from *waraq* are *waraqa* ("a sheet of paper"), *warraq* ("stationer," "papermaker," "paper merchant" and, by extension, "copyist") and *wiraaqa* ("papermaking"), as well as many compound expressions referring to paper money, lottery tickets, commercial papers, banknotes and such.

By the reign of the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid (786-809), enough paper was available in Baghdad for bureaucrats to use it for record-keeping instead of papyrus and parchment. According to the great 14th-century North African historian and philosopher Ibn Khaldun, the vizier al-Fadl ibn Yahya introduced the manufacture of paper to Baghdad when parchment was in short supply and he needed more writing materials. The vizier, whose

family came from Balkh, now in northern Afghanistan, was probably familiar with paper from his youth. "Thus," Ibn Khaldun writes, "paper came to be used for government documents and diplomas. Afterward, people used paper in sheets for government and scholarly writings, and the manufacture [of paper] reached a considerable degree of excellence." Ibn Khaldun did not mention one of the greatest advantages of paper: Since it absorbed ink, writing could not easily be erased from it, as it could from papyrus and parchment. Documents written on paper were therefore more secure from forgery.

Papermaking and stationery were soon significant businesses in Baghdad. Ahmad ibn Abi Tahir (819-893), the teacher, writer, and paper dealer, was established at the Suq al-Warraqn (the Stationers' Market), a street which was lined with more than 100 paper- and booksellers' shops. Stationers in Abbasid Baghdad must have functioned somewhat like private research libraries, for the ninth-century polymath al-Jahiz is said to have rented stationers' shops by the day in order to read the books they kept in stock. Another famous stationer was Abu'l-Faraj Muhammad ibn Ishaq (d. 995), known also as Ibn Abi Ya'qub al-Nadim al-Warraq ("the Stationer"). He used his extensive professional knowledge to compile the *Fihrist*, an encyclopaedia which remains a mine of information about medieval books and writing.

The new availability of paper in the ninth century spurred an extraordinary burst of literary creativity in virtually all subjects, from theology to the natural sciences and belles-lettres. Religious scholars collected and codified the traditions (*hadith*) of the Prophet, which had been preserved orally following his death in 632, and committed them to ink and paper. New types of literature, such as cookbooks and the tales we know as *The Thousand and One Nights*, were copied on paper for sale to interested readers. Although earlier caliphs had maintained libraries, it was Harun's son and successor al-Ma'mun (813-833) who enlarged the caliphal library, which came to be known as the *bayt al-hikmah*, or "house of knowledge." (See *Saudi Aramco World*, May/June 1982, March/April 1987.) Scholars and copyists translated Greek texts, written on parchment and papyrus, into Arabic, transcribing them onto sheets of paper which were then bound into books.

The new availability of paper also encouraged new approaches to old subjects. At the same time that paper was being disseminated across the Islamic lands, the Hindu system of reckoning with decimal place-value numerals—what we call "Arabic numerals"—was spreading westward from India. Before the Hindu system was introduced, people in the Islamic lands, as elsewhere, did their calculations mentally and recorded intermediate results either on a dust-board—which could be repeatedly erased as they performed successive additions or subtractions—or by the position of their fingers ("finger-reckoning"). The first manual of Hindu reckoning in Arabic was written by Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi (ca. 825), whose name has given us our word *algorithm*, meaning the sequence of steps followed to solve a type of problem. According to al-Khwarizmi's treatise, the fundamental arithmetic operations are performed by placing the numbers one above the other; the process begins on the left. Numbers are erased and shifted, clearly implying that the operations were still meant to be performed on a dust-board. A century later, however, the mathematician Abu al-Hasan Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Uqlidisi ("the Euclidian") altered the Indian scheme of calculation in his mathematical treatise, composed at Damascus in 952-953, to suit the use of ink and paper. Although al-Uqlidisi's scheme

allowed neither shifting nor erasure of numbers—not possible on paper—it did permit far greater flexibility in calculation.

A Greek manuscript now in the Vatican library is believed to be the oldest surviving manuscript written on Arab paper. Consisting of a miscellaneous assemblage of the teachings of Christian church fathers, the manuscript was probably copied at Damascus in about 800, and shows that the use of paper was not limited to the Muslim bureaucracy in Baghdad. It was used also by Christians living under Muslim rule in Syria, a community instrumental in the great translation projects of the time.

Another early paper fragment shows that paper encouraged the copying and transmission of new types of literature. Discovered in Egypt, and now in the collection of the Oriental Institute in Chicago, it is a damaged, folded sheet of light brown paper made from linen fibers. It contains the title and the beginning of the text of the earliest known copy of *The Thousand and One Nights*, as well as several other phrases, texts and a drawing. The arrangement of the writing indicates that the original sheet once formed the first two pages of a manuscript. It had become waste paper by late 879, when a certain Ahmad ibn Mahfuz practiced writing out legal formulas in the margins of all four pages. Because writers in Egypt continued to use papyrus throughout the ninth century, the great Arabic scholar Nabia Abbott ascribed the fragment to Syria and the first quarter of the ninth century, about the same time and place as the Vatican manuscript.

The oldest surviving dated book copied in Arabic script on paper is generally believed to be a fragment of Abu 'Ubayd al-Qasim ibn Sallam's work on unusual terms in the traditions of the Prophet. Preserved in the Leiden University Library, and dated to November or December of 866, the manuscript is on dark brown, opaque, stiff paper; it is strong, of medium thickness, and has clearly undergone some polishing on both sides. Thus, we know that paper was used in the Islamic lands for Christian, secular, and theological manuscripts at least from the ninth century.

There seems, however, to have been some resistance to using this new material for transcribing the Qur'an, the most important and popular book in the Islamic lands, which was normally copied on leaves of parchment. Parchment is made from the wetted, goats; it is strong and durable, but expensive to make, for, in addition to the labor of preparing it, the animal must be killed to get its skin. Eventually paper triumphed as a writing material and, at the same time, the majestic Kufic scripts developed for writing on parchment gave way to angular "new style" and then more flowing, or cursive, styles of writing. In addition, the typical book format changed from horizontal to vertical. The oldest surviving dated Qur'an manuscript on paper was copied by the calligrapher 'Ali ibn Sadan al-Razi in 971-972. The remains of this four-volume, vertical-format manuscript are divided among Ardabil in Iran, the Istanbul University Library, and the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin. Another paper manuscript of the Qur'an, copied at Isfahan in 993, retains the large horizontal format of parchment manuscripts.

Perhaps the most famous early paper manuscript of the Qur'an is that copied in 1000-1001 by 'Ali ibn Hilal, known as Ibn al-Bawwab, who was then the leading calligrapher of Baghdad. It is a small volume containing 286 folios, each page bearing 15 lines of a rounded *nakshi* hand, the type of script that made Ibn al-Bawwab so famous. The absence of a

dedication, combined with the small size and single-volume format, suggest that Ibn al-Bawwab copied this manuscript not as a specific commission but in the hope of selling it on the market.

By the late 10th century, paper had entirely supplanted papyrus, which had been used uninterruptedly in Egypt for four millennia. Despite the introduction of parchment in Roman times, papyrus had retained its importance throughout Egypt's Greek, Roman and early Islamic periods for letters and documents, as well as for copying literary works. Surviving documents and Arabic sources indicate that papyrus was still made in Egypt during the early Islamic period for local and foreign consumers, such as local governors and the Byzantine and papal chanceries. But from the early ninth century, paper became increasingly important. Writing in 956, the historian al-Mas'udi indicated that papyrus manufacture was not completely defunct in Egypt, but the geographer Ibn Hawqal, who visited Egypt some 40 years later, made no reference to its use as a writing material. And by 985-986, according to the Palestinian geographer al-Muqaddasi, paper had become one of Egypt's major products. The Persian traveler Nasir-i Khusraw, who visited Cairo between 1035 and 1042, mentions that in the bazaars of Fustat (Old Cairo), the greengrocers, grocers and mercers provided free containers to hold or wrap the glassware, ceramics, and bundles of paper they sold. This suggests that paper had become relatively cheap, although it still wasn't so cheap that it was easily discarded. Used paper was saved so that the fiber could be recycled into new paper.

Like Central Asia's, the extremely dry climate of Egypt is ideal for preserving organic materials, and several great caches of ancient papyri and medieval papers were discovered there in the 19th century. In 1877 archaeologists found more than 100,000 papyrus and paper documents at Akhmim, Arsinoë, and Ashmunayn, including important historical and economic documents from the Islamic period. Most were acquired by Archduke Rainer of Austria in 1884 and formed the basis of the great Vienna Papyrus Collection at the Nationalbibliothek. At approximately the same time, workmen discovered some 300,000 more documents, dating mainly from the mid-10th to the mid-13th centuries, in a storeroom (known in Hebrew as a *geniza*) of the Palestinian Synagogue in Fustat. The *geniza* documents include trousseau lists, commercial documents and personal letters relating to the Jewish community; they had been placed in the storeroom in anticipation of proper disposal, but were forgotten for centuries. Mostly in Judeo-Arabic—colloquial Arabic written in Hebrew characters—they have become an essential source for reconstructing daily and economic life in the medieval Islamic lands, as well as for the history of spoken Arabic. They also show how paper had become an indispensable medium of communication in this commercial society, where bills of exchange, orders of payment, and similar documents, most of them written on paper, were regularly sent back and forth between trading communities located as far apart as Spain and India.

The Zirid prince al-Mu'izz ibn Badis, who ruled in what is now Tunisia and eastern Algeria from 1016 to 1062, included a brief account of medieval papermaking in his book, *Umdat al-Kuttab (The Support of Scribes)*, the only medieval work on the arts of the book to survive. However, the process of making paper from raw flax on a floating screen, as Ibn Badis described in detail, had been superseded for centuries throughout the Islamic lands, where papermakers had adopted more advanced techniques, using waste rags and old rope



as the primary source of fiber, and dipping the paper mould in a large vat of pulp suspended in water. It is possible that Ibn Badis's sources did not wish to share the real secrets of papermaking with him. The rest of his account refers to the sizing of paper with equal quantities of chalk and starch, or with rice starch, and dyeing paper different colors.

Oddly enough, the one manuscript known to have been copied and illuminated during Ibn Badis's lifetime is a copy of the Qur'an transcribed on parchment, not paper, in 1020. According to the Geniza documents, Tunisia and Sicily were great centers for leather production, and private letters and documents from that region were still written on parchment well into the 11th century. But papermaking nonetheless spread throughout North Africa and Spain. Fez was already an important papermaking center in the 11th century, with 400 paper mills reported by the end of the 12th century, and the first Spanish paper mill is documented at Jativa in 1056. Here too there seems to have been some reluctance to use paper for manuscripts of the Qur'an, even after it had become acceptable in the east. Paper manuscripts of the Qur'an began to appear in the western Islamic world in the 13th century, but parchment ones continued to be produced well into the 14th century.

Ibn Badis' description of colored papers is confirmed by North African documents surviving in European archives, where some are on papers varying in color from red or vermilion to purple or pale pink. These documents are known by the generic term *nasri*, after the Nasrid dynasty of southern Spain, which ruled from the Alhambra in Granada. (See *Aramco World*, March/April 1999.) Perhaps the most striking example is in the Aragonese archives, a blood-red paper made of linen and hemp. Its text is a furious letter written in 1418 by Muhammad VIII of Granada to Alfonso V, protesting that his representative at Alfonso's court had arrogated undue powers to himself; the vivid color may have been intentionally chosen to symbolize the wrath of the writer.

Paper began to be used in Italy at the very end of the 11th century, first in Sicily, where the Normans followed Arab custom, and then in the northern trading cities. In the first half of the 13th century some paper was briefly made near Genoa, probably following Spanish techniques, but the major center of Italian paper manufacture developed after 1276 at Fabriano, in central Italy. The Europeans' ability to harness water power to run paper mills made their product cheaper, if not initially better, than that available in North Africa and Egypt, and imported Italian paper soon began to supplant local production in North Africa and Spain. By the mid-14th century, North African chanceries had begun to use Western papers. A letter dated December 8, 1350 from the Sultan of Tunis to King Peter IV of Aragon-Catalonia is on paper bearing a griffin watermark, which shows that it had been exported from Italy. At much the same time, Egyptian papermakers also began to face serious competition. In addition to better-quality papers from Fabriano and Treviso, cheap papers "of the worst kind"—in the estimation of the 14th-century Egyptian writer al-Qalqashandi—were also imported. Although some paper continued to be made in Egypt until the 17th century, French and Italian papers were dominant in Egypt from the 16th century.

European papers also began to make their way east, although they faced stiffer competition from the local product there. A single-volume manuscript of the Qur'an in the Nour Collection, for example, was transcribed on Italian paper datable to the 1340's. Heavily

watermarked with a double-key design surmounted by a cross, the paper is almost identical to examples from Arezzo and Torcello near Venice. The European paper confirms that Genoese and Venetian merchants like Marco Polo had carried Italian goods, including paper, to Iraq and Iran, where they may have traded them for carpets, silks, and spices to bring home.

The appearance of European paper at this date in Iran and Iraq, in contrast to North Africa and Egypt, is all the more surprising because local production was then at its apogee. From the 13th century, the availability of large sheets of locally manufactured fine white paper in Iran had spurred a second revolution in the Islamic book, the effects of which would continue to be felt for another two centuries there and in Egypt, India and the Ottoman Empire. Before the 13th century, most books written on paper had usually been small, normally no bigger than a sheet of modern office paper, implying that the sheet of paper from which they had been made was about twice as large. A sheet of this size was made in a mould that could easily be held in the papermaker's hands. Larger sheets of paper were more difficult to make and consequently too expensive to use freely. Even when caliphs and sultans needed long scrolls for documents and decrees, they were made from smaller sheets pasted together.

From the 13th century, however, the size and quality of paper available in Iran for books and other uses increased dramatically, but the causes of these changes are not immediately apparent. One possibility is increased contact with China—where papermaking techniques had continued to develop—during the period when Mongol dynasties ruled China, Central Asia, Southern Russia, Iran, and much of the Middle East. (The Mongol rulers of Iran briefly, and disastrously, introduced printed paper currency there in 1294.) It is also possible that techniques for grinding and processing the pulp improved. Whatever the causes, the results of this change can be seen in the great number of large luxury volumes that have survived from this period.

As always, the Qur'an continued to be the most important and popular text, and famed calligraphers penned splendid large copies. Ahmad al-Suhrawardi, for example, completed transcribing a 30-volume copy of the Qur'an at Baghdad in 1307 (see p. 26). The pages measure 500 by 350 millimeters (19 11/16" x 13 3/4"), implying a sheet size of at least 500 by 700 millimeters (19 11/16" x 27 1/2"). The brilliant white paper was beautifully sized and polished so the calligrapher's pen was able to glide effortlessly over its smooth surface. Even larger is the dispersed 30-part manuscript of the Qur'an copied for the Mongol sultan Öljeitü between 1306 and 1309 and bequeathed to his mausoleum at Sultaniyya. The pages measure a whopping 720 by 500 millimeters (28 11/32" x 19 11/16"), implying that the sheets of paper from which the folios were made measured approximately 1100 millimeters (43 1/4") in their long dimension. The manuscript has only five lines of text per page, so the entire set of 30 volumes would have comprised over 2000 folios. Monumental calligraphy was indeed appropriate for a volume meant to be read publicly in a mosque.

Larger sheets of paper allowed larger and more monumental examples of the calligrapher's art, but they also allowed production of books with increased numbers of larger illustrations, and from the early 14th century the illustrated book became a major form of art in the Islamic world. In previous centuries several types of books had been illustrated

with relatively small drawings and paintings to clarify specific points in the text. Thus, books on astronomy would have been practically useless without small diagrams of the constellations, and books on pharmacology might have been dangerous without small illustrations of the useful plants the author discussed. In the 13th century, a few literary works began to be illustrated, but in the 14th century larger books, such as Rashid al-Din's *Compendium of Chronicles*—the first truly universal history of the world—and the great copy of the *Shahnamah* (*The Book of Kings*), the so-called Great Mongol *Shahnamah*, copied for the Ilkhanid rulers, were prepared with paintings as large as 250 millimeters (10") on a side. In contrast to earlier illustrations, these images do not simply illustrate the text but also elaborate on it in new and different ways, using complex and deep landscapes and facial expression and gesture to portray human emotions. (See *Aramco World*, July/August 1997.) Although such paintings are called "Persian miniatures" today, in their own time they must have seemed quite monumental. Persian painters did not continue to use these pictorial devices in later centuries, but the ideal of the luxury book copied on large sheets of exquisite paper lived on for generations.

The increased availability of paper from the 13th century also spurred another artistic revolution in the Islamic lands. Architects and artists began to take advantage of the medium to work out designs before the work of art was actually executed, and for transmitting designs from one place to another. The most obvious new role for paper was in architectural plans.

Builders in antiquity had, of course, sometimes used plans and drawings, and there are occasional references to plans in the first seven centuries of Islam, but most construction was based on empirical knowledge transmitted by the spoken word, by gesture, and by memory from one builder to another and from one site to another. From the 14th century, however, builders in the Islamic lands increasingly took advantage of plans and drawings to supplement their traditional skills. Within each cultural orbit, the result was an increased uniformity in architecture, as the new method of representing architecture allowed someone working in the capital to design a building for a provincial city he might never have visited. The clearest example of this new approach comes from the Ottoman Empire, where, after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the office of the chief court architect in Istanbul became responsible for designing buildings, bridges, and aqueducts for sites throughout the realm, to be constructed by local workmen. Ottoman architects were thereby able to achieve an impressive uniformity in their work, and the Ottoman presence in a particular region was immediately visible as hemispheric lead-covered domes and pencil-thin minarets defined the skyline.

The increased availability of paper in the Islamic lands also spurred a change in the other arts, such as metalwork, ceramics and particularly textiles, as artists increasingly created designs on paper that artisans applied to their work. In traditional craft practice throughout the first centuries of Islam, the artisan had also been the designer, working out the design of the finished piece from memory or creating it as he or she went along. A metalworker, for example, would draw out the design on a brass tray before scraping away parts to be inlaid. A potter might practice his decorating on the backs of tiles before beginning to decorate an important plate, but the design on the finished piece came out of his head. A weaver would pattern her carpet with designs she had learned as a child from

her mother, never with ones she had seen in a book.

Now the increased presence of designs on paper led some artisans to work in different ways: Potters learned their designs from pattern books and weavers learned to follow the encoded instructions in large cartoons or smaller graphs. Not only did this development signal a split in the traditional unity of artist and artisan, but it also meant that old and new designs were free to be attached to whatever medium the artisan chose: Similar designs, for example, might now appear on textiles, ceramics, metalwork and in book illumination.

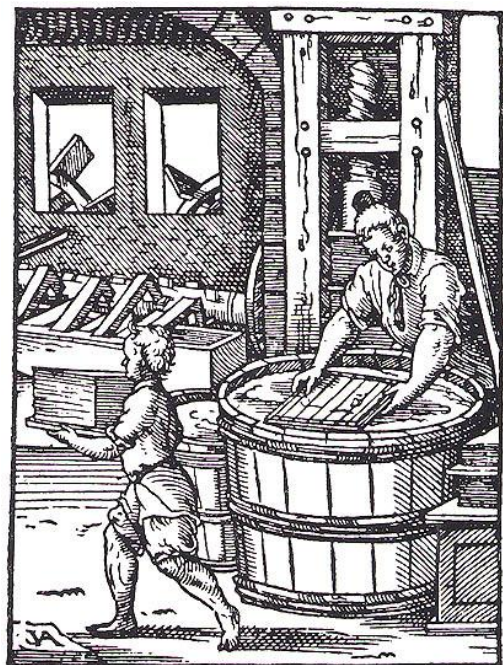
In both China and Europe, the start of paper manufacture was quickly followed by the development of printing, first with wooden blocks and then with moveable type. Block printing was also known in the Islamic lands, perhaps as early as 10th-century Egypt, where it was used for decorating textiles and producing inexpensive amulets, but it seems to have died out in the 14th century. Why was the idea of printing books or literary texts not seriously entertained in the Islamic lands until the 18th century? It was difficult to design a complete font of Arabic type, since some 600 sorts, or separate pieces of type, might be needed, as compared to 275 for a European language, including italics, points and figures. Furthermore, typeset Arabic would inevitably compare unfavorably with the fluid handwork of a calligrapher—indeed, it is still considered inferior today. Finally, traditional Islamic society accorded great respect to calligraphers and their work.

Thus printing came late to the Islamic lands. The first book printed in Arabic script was printed in Europe, and is believed to be the edition of the Qur'an that Paganino de' Paganini printed in Venice in 1538, of which a single copy was discovered in 1987. (See *Aramco World*, March/ April 1992.) Only in the 18th century were the first presses established, with European help, at Aleppo and Istanbul. Knowledge had thus come full circle: Having given paper to Europe, the Islamic lands learned printing from Europeans.

### Optional Reading 2: Paper in One Paragraph

The image is a woodcut of “The Papermaker,” from *The Little Book of Trades* by Jost Amman (Source: *Stände und Handwerker*, Frankfurt a.M. 1568 at <http://www.gewi.kfunigraz.ac.at/deuph/lehrveranst/bild4.html>, © Trustees of the British Museum)

Paper owes its distinctive strength and flexibility to the way the cellulose fibers it is made of are chemically and physically bound together in the papermaking process. In traditional papermaking, the cellulose fibers are extracted from plants, or from rags made from plant fibers, and then beaten in water to make the fibers swell and bond together into a pulp. This pulp is suspended in water, and a mat of it is then collected on a screen and drained. As the mat dries, the fibers physically intertwine and the microfibrils form physical and chemical links with each other. Paper sheets were at first formed with a





floating screen, a primitive type of mould made from a woven cloth stretched on a frame onto which the pulp was poured. The pulp remained on the screen until the sheet was dry. The two-piece mould, in which the screen could be separated from the frame and which was lowered vertically into the vat containing the macerated fibers and then raised horizontally, marked a major advance in paper-making. It allowed the just-formed sheet of paper to be removed from the mould while still moist. Other sheets could then be formed in the mould while the first sheet dried. Moulds were traditionally made of smooth bamboo or flax fibers (or, in Europe, of thin brass wire) held parallel by cross-ties of silk, flax, hair or wire. Whatever the materials, paper made with this type of screen generally displays a distinctive pattern of faint parallel lines called "laid lines," and European papermakers quickly discovered that they could weave designs into the screen which would leave faint "watermarks" in the finished paper.

### Papyrus in Two

The papyrus plant (*Cyperus papyrus*; its name is the ultimate source of our word *paper*) is a member of the sedge family which once grew throughout the uncultivated marshes of the Nile. In Egypt, the plant could grow to a height of five meters (16') and its stems reach a thickness of five centimeters (2"), but under less ideal conditions the plant yields only modest stems, so that the manufacture of papyrus was essentially an Egyptian industry. By the 19th century increased cultivation had destroyed the reed's native habitat, and it had died out in the Nile Valley, although it still flourished in the Sudan. The papyrus strain currently grown in Egypt was introduced in 1872 from the Jardin des Plantes in Paris.



The photographs show the process of making papyrus from reed to finished sheet (Source: [http://www.egyptianshop.co.uk/page.php?xPage=pap\\_make.html](http://www.egyptianshop.co.uk/page.php?xPage=pap_make.html))

The first-century Roman writer Pliny the Elder described the manufacture of papyrus sheets in his *Natural History*, although his description is difficult to follow and has given rise to varied interpretations. Surviving papyri, however, give some indication of how sheets of writing material were prepared from the plant. (See *Aramco World*, July/August 1973.) The papyrus stems were cut into manageable lengths and the outer layer removed from the pith. The pith was then sliced or peeled into very thin strips, normally one to three centimeters wide ( $3/8''$ – $1\frac{1}{4}''$ ). The resulting strips could be used immediately or dried and stored, in which case the strips were soaked until the fibers loosened. In either case, the



strips were then laid parallel, one by one, on a smooth surface, just touching or slightly overlapping each other. Another similar layer, with its strips running at right angles to the first, was laid on top. Pressing or hammering brought the strips together, and the fibers of the two layers intertwined. The whole thus dried into a strong and flexible sheet. Papyrus sheets were pasted end to end with flour paste to form a roll, normally about 20 sheets long. The plant juices remaining in the sheet functioned as a natural sizing, barely allowing carbon ink to penetrate the surface, and erasures could thus be made by wiping or washing away the wet ink, or by using a stone eraser to abrade the dried surface.

### Optional Reading 3:

What kinds of materials were used to record documents? Parchment had become widespread in Byzantine North Africa, replacing papyrus, but it was an expensive medium and because of the cost—and its durability—sheets or scrolls were often scraped clean to recycle the parchment for a new use, thus erasing the past. The science of papermaking, and its movement from east to west across Afro-Eurasia, proved decisive, although its exact history in certain places and for specific time periods remains incomplete and thus contested. However, scholars agree that the Chinese discovered how to make paper when around 105 CE an official at the imperial court combined plant fibers with rags and hemp waste to fashion a sheet. Techniques of papermaking reached Samarkand, in Central Asia, in 751, which by then was under Islamic rule. Soon thereafter, paper may have been employed in Baghdad sometime after the reign of Hārūn ar-Rashīd, but was never available in sufficient quantities for widespread administrative purposes; yet knowledge of its utility soon spread across North Africa to Muslim Spain and into Europe. Paper production workshops appear to have been present by the late tenth century in cities in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. By 1054, such a workshop existed in Játiva in al-Andalus and another in Toledo by 1085. In eleventh-century Fes paper factories operated and paper-making spread from the western Maghrib and Spain to Italy; by the late fourteenth century, one of first permanent water-driven paper mills north of the Alps was established in Nuremberg. These earlier workshops drew upon manual or artisan labor. The earliest certain evidence to a water-powered paper mill dates to 1282 in the Spanish Kingdom of Aragon.[16] A decree by the Christian king Peter III addresses the establishment of a royal "molendinum", a proper hydraulic mill, in the paper manufacturing centre of Xàtiva.[16] The crown innovation appears to be resented by the local Muslim paper-making community; the document guarantees the Muslim subjects the right to continue their way of traditional papermaking by beating the pulp manually and grants them the right to be exempted from work in the new mill.

**Sources:**<sup>1</sup> Burns, Robert I. "Paper comes to the West, 800–1400," in Uta Lindgren, *Europäische Technik im Mittelalter. 800 bis 1400. Tradition und Innovation* (4th ed.). Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1996, pp. 413–422; and Geneviève Humbert, "Le manuscrit arabe et ses papiers," in *La Revue des mondes musulman et de la Méditerranée* 99-100 (2002): 55-77 ; and Wolfgang von Stromer, (1993), "Große Innovationen der Papierfabrikation in Spätmittelalter und Frühneuzeit", *Technikgeschichte* 60 (1): 1–6.

## Religious Tolerance and Houses of Worship

### Introduction:

Today, the sanctity of religion sets it apart from daily life. This is mostly due to one of western democracy's founding principles: the separation of church and state. Religious affiliation and beliefs have come to be viewed as a private, internal matters, while worship is usually conducted in public spaces—churches, mosques, temples, synagogues—where members of different faiths rarely mingle, unless it happens as part of a specific, interfaith program.

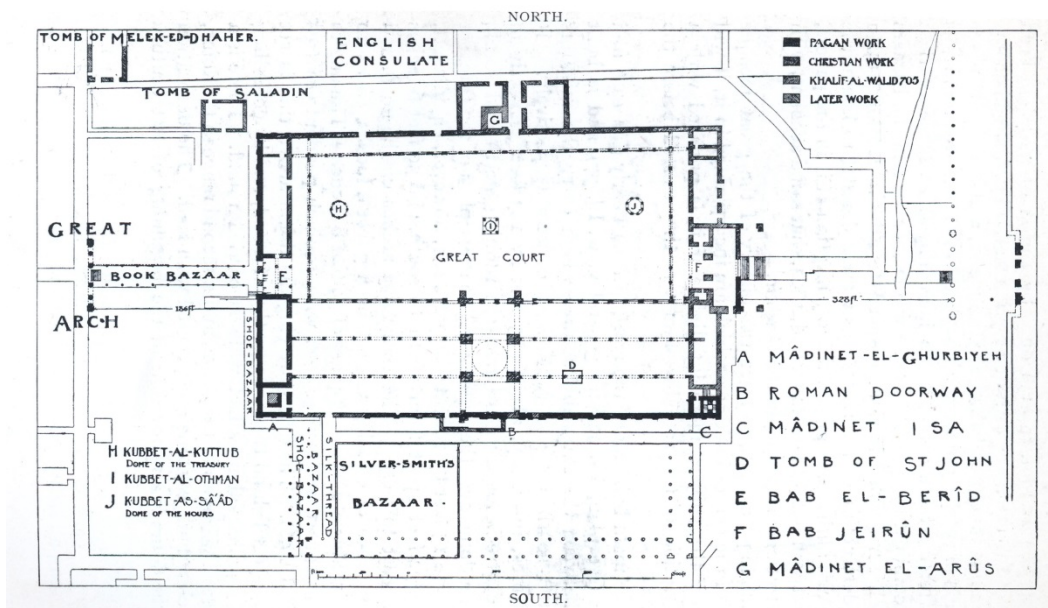
During the time period from 600-1500 CE, however, people throughout the Mediterranean were generally more open about religion. In fact, it played an important role in nearly everyone's life. Christian kings and emperors considered themselves divinely appointed, while the caliph's chief role was to lead the worldwide community of Muslims. When dangers such as crop failure or drought threatened, for example, people looked to religious leaders for help. Misfortunes such as war or invasion were often viewed as God's retribution for people's sins in having drifted too far from moral, pious behavior. Religious holidays governed the calendar year, while religious institutions such as mosques, synagogues, or churches were the focus of nearly every settlement. Religious institutions provided education, legal guidance, and spiritual comfort to the local community.

While it may seem odd today, a thousand years ago, it was not unknown for people of different faiths to worship in the same building. In Damascus, for example, Christians and Muslims worshipped in what is now known as the Great Mosque (or the Umayyad Mosque) after the Muslims conquered the city around the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. This holy site, in one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, had been a place of pagan worship during Roman times and before.

The image of the Damascus mosque floor plan below shows several stages in the building's development. Note the location of the tomb of John the Baptist, a Christian saint and a prophet in Islam (known as Yahya). Also note the minaret (tower) in the upper left hand corner, which is labeled "Madinet Isa" on the plan. "Isa" is the Islamic name for Jesus, who is also a prophet in Islam. According to local tradition, Jesus will descend to this tower at the end of the world.



Aerial view of the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus (Source: [http://reflectionseurope.com/gallery/Syria/reflectionseurope\\_com\\_Umayyad\\_Mosque\\_Damascus\\_Syria](http://reflectionseurope.com/gallery/Syria/reflectionseurope_com_Umayyad_Mosque_Damascus_Syria))



Floor plan of the Mosque of Damascus showing additions to the building over time (Source: Massachusetts Institute of Technology at <http://dome.mit.edu/handle/1721.3/45936>)



The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, one of the holiest sites for Christians, shares a courtyard with the Mosque of Omar, opposite.



Shrines like that of John the Baptist in the Great Mosque of Damascus (below) were common to Christians and Muslims who, along with Jews, shared reverence for many figures from the Hebrew Bible as well as some from the Christian Gospels (John the Baptist, Jesus, Mary).



Wikimedia Commons

Now look at the shrine below. Does it look like a Muslim or a Christian shrine? Where do you suppose it is found?



Photograph by Tom Verde

While this shrine may have elements that suggest an Islamic structure or Middle Eastern origins (for example, the domed roof), it is, in fact, a Christian shrine, dedicated to Santa Crescenzia in Trapani, Sicily. It incorporates various architectural elements from Arabic, Norman, and Gothic cultures, all of which blended here during the module time period.

In Egypt and other places around the Mediterranean where Christians, Jews and Muslims have lived in close proximity for centuries, folk practices in religion are often shared among the common people. With or without the approval of religious authorities, shrines of saints are visited by women to seek intercession against infertility, disease, and personal



problems. Amulets for protection of the believer share symbolism. One example is the Hand of Fatima amulet, called the Hamsa. Fatima was the beloved daughter of Prophet Muhammad and wife of Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Muhammad's nephew and the third caliph. The Hamsa or Hamesh was used as a protective amulet, or object worn on the body or placed on the house, place of business, or mode of transportation, by both Jews and Muslims. The name hamsa is derived from the Semitic root meaning "five," shared in both Hebrew and Arabic

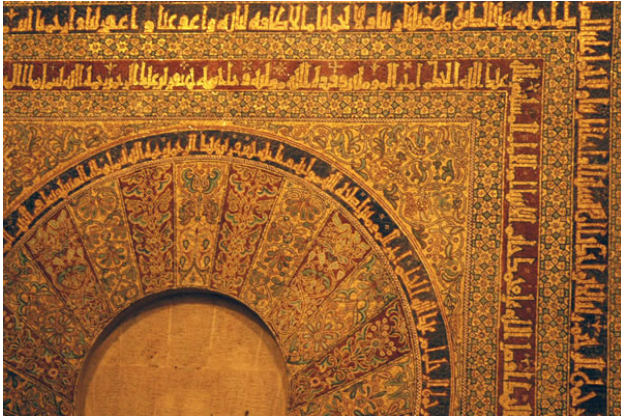


languages. In addition to the hand as an ancient symbol of protection, the Hand of Fatima often featured an eye symbol at its center. This may relate to the ancient Egyptian eye of Horus. The Hand of Fatima is also related to the five pillars of Islam. Jews attribute it to the hand of Miriam, the heroine of scripture.

(Image source: Symbol Dictionary: A Visual Glossary of Religious Symbols at <http://symboldictionary.net/?p=1949>)



The visual vocabulary of religious spaces was shared because of culture, taste, and technology. When the Umayyad rulers of Damascus and Cordoba wanted to embellish architectural features of the most important mosque in their capital city, they turned to Byzantine artisans to create mosaics like the prayer niche from the Great Mosque of Cordoba.



Other examples of religious architecture from Sicily and southern Italy appear to be Islamic or North African, but are in fact European Christian. After the conquest of Muslim cities, many Christian rulers built palaces and churches in the Islamic style of Andalusia, or Muslim Spain. Tilework, plaster carving, and inscriptions bear testimony to the shared vocabulary of religious architecture.



Detail from wall decoration, Monreale Cathedral, Sicily. (Source: Photograph by Tom Verde)



Cloister, Monreale Cathedral, Sicily.  
(Source: Photograph by Tom Verde)





The Cloister of Paradise, Amalfi Cathedral

Source: Photograph by Tom Verde

Jews were also a very visible and vibrant part of many Muslim communities throughout the Mediterranean, in the Iberian Peninsula, North Africa, and the eastern Mediterranean, where they were generally permitted to worship freely. Read the following selection from the Jewish Virtual Library on what life was like for many Jews living in Muslim cities and towns throughout the region.

Well before the advent of Islam the preference of religious and ethnic groups to live together in their own streets was commonly known in the Orient. These streets finally became distinct quarters. The quarters in which the majority of the population was Jewish were usually given the name of *ḥāratal-yahūd*, which literally translated from the Arabic means "Jewish Quarter," or simply *al-ḥāra*, as in Tunisia, Algeria, and Tripolitania. In Persia they were known as *maḥallat al-Yahūd*, in the Balkans as *maḥalla*, while in Yemen they were named *qā'at al-Yahūd*; the term *masbata* (namely, the place where those who observe the Sabbath live) was also employed. The Jews themselves sometimes called their quarters *shekhunat ha-Yehudim*, the Hebrew equivalent of the various above-mentioned names. Barring a few exceptions, the Jewish quarters of Muslim countries had nothing in common with the ghettos of Christian countries. These quarters were not surrounded by a wall and did not have a gate which was closed at night, on the Sabbath, or on the Festivals. When such a wall existed, it was often because the whole town was divided into several separate

quarters which were partitioned off from each other by a wall which contained one or two gates; the gates were closed from dusk to dawn for security reasons or upon the order of the police. In the Ottoman Empire the Jews were not compelled to live separately from the other inhabitants. The sole exception to this practice was in Yemen. Even when there were Jewish quarters, some Jewish families lived alone or in groups in the other quarters, dispersed among the Muslims. As early as the Middle Ages many Jews of Baghdad lived in houses situated beyond the two quarters of the town where most of them had their dwellings. During the 12<sup>th</sup> century most of the Jews of Fez lived in the north of the city, in a quarter which had been given to them when the town was founded at the beginning of the ninth century. There were, however, many others who lived in the center of the town, well inside the Muslim quarter. Those whose houses were directly adjacent to the Great Mosque were dispossessed when it was decided to enlarge the structure. They were indemnified for their losses and left the site. During the era of its splendor, Kairouan had a Jewish quarter, but it appears to have been a common occurrence for Jews to live outside this quarter. In Muslim Spain the Jews often lived among the other inhabitants. The fortified Jewish quarters did not become the general rule until the country was reconquered by the Christian Spaniards. During that period, however, there were also Muslims who lived in quarters with a Jewish majority. Muslims were never forbidden to live in the Jewish quarters. Any difficulties, rather, arose from rabbinic laws which disapproved of the sale or rental of dwellings in the Jewish street to a gentile and granted priority rights over these dwellings to any Jew from the neighborhood. On the other hand, private houses belonging to Jews and Christians were to be found in all the quarters of the town. For this reason the Muslim religious authorities would not allow these houses to be higher than the neighboring mosque or the houses of the "believers."

In Muslim countries, the Covenant of Omar did not stipulate the physical separation of the Jews from the "faithful" (the Muslims), neither in towns nor in villages. On the contrary, in order to propagate their religion, the early Muslim theologians recommended that the "unbelievers" (Jews and Christians) be encouraged to live in all the quarters of the large towns. They said that they would thus become acquainted with the religion of the Prophet Muhammad by observing the lives of its believers at every moment. There were only a few Muslim jurists of the later periods who advised that non-Muslims be confined to separate quarters. Until the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, however, the orthodox Muslim rulers or their representatives had never officially prescribed the establishment of special quarters for the members of other religions. It was only in Egypt, and then only for a short while at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, that the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākīm, who had suddenly become insane, confined all the Jews of Cairo to the Bāb-Zuwayla quarter. In the eastern part of the Muslim world, in the countries dominated by the Shi'ites (non-orthodox Muslims), the Jew were compelled to live in special quarters which resembled the European ghettos. In Persia, as in Afghanistan and the surrounding regions, the Jewish quarter was not only isolated behind a high wall but its inhabitants were also not authorized to own any shops beyond it. The Jews of Persia remained in their ghettos until recently, even though there was no law which forced them to do so.

In Morocco the term mellah, which designates the Jewish quarter, was originally the name of the site to the south of Fez-Jaïd on which the first special quarter for Jews in Morocco was actually established (probably in 1438). This mellah was and has since remained a special quarter surrounded by a wall and distinctly separated from the surrounding quarters. The segregation of all the Jews of Fez into its area was ordered. It was thus a ghetto, the first and, for a long time, the only one in Morocco. It was not until 1557 that a second ghetto was established in the country, in Marrakesh. Approximately 125 years later a third mellah was created in Meknès, and in 1808 four new ghettos were simultaneously erected in the principal ports of Morocco, in Tetuán, Salé, Rabat, and Mogador. The sharif granted the Jews of these towns one year in which they could sell their houses in the different quarters and build new ones in the mellah. The only exception made was for some 20 eminent families of Mogador, who continued to occupy their luxurious houses in the same residential quarter as that of the Muslim and Christian notables. In 1808 the Jews of Tetuán were compelled to move into a mellah because the sultan wished to erect a mosque in a street which was inhabited by them. At the same time, the sultan exploited the proximity of the Jewish houses to the mosque of Salé as a pretext to order the Jews of this town to live in a special quarter. The Jews of Morocco considered the creation of each mellah as a catastrophe; they therefore hastily abandoned it as soon as they had the means or the possibility. From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, only the poor Jews continued to live in the mellahs. The name mellah was at first given, after Fez, to the few ghettos mentioned above and then to a few other quarters in other towns which were inhabited by the Jewish masses. The mellah of Casablanca, for example, did not have the characteristics of a ghetto. The decline of Muslim power generally resulted in the impoverishment of the Jewish communities, whose quarters reflected this situation. These quarters were often overpopulated. These ghettos, however, always contained a few well-kept streets with very large and beautiful houses, the properties of wealthy citizens, as was the case in Fez and Marrakesh.

“Jewish Quarter” by David Corcos. Jewish Virtual Library  
([http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0011\\_0\\_10147.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0011_0_10147.html))

Even in the Zuwayla Quarter of Cairo, where Jews were segregated, there were legal protections for them. In an interesting case brought before a *qadi* (a Muslim judge) in 1038, a local Muslim, al-Burhani Ibrahim, tried to have an ancient synagogue -- known as the Synagogue of the Rabbanite Jews -- demolished, claiming it was new and built without permission. (al-Burhani’s motives are unknown, but it could have been that he wanted the land for himself.) The judge heard testimony from a prominent elder among the Jewish community, Abu Imran Moses b. Jacob b. Isaac al-Isra’ili, “the physician of His Majesty and Head of the Jewish community.”

The plaintiff against him . . . charged that the synagogue in question was modern and of recent construction and that the defendant had unrightful control over it. He demanded that it be removed from his control.

In response to questioning, the aforementioned Moses replied that the synagogue was of



ancient construction, that he exercised administrative control over it in accordance with Islamic law for a period of more than forty years, and that he had legal proof attesting to this.

Then our Lord the Chief Qadi . . . asked the plaintiff al-Burhani Ibrahim whether he had any proof to back up his accusation. He answered that he had no proof nor anything to support his contention. Next, the Chief Qadi . . . ordered the defendant Moses to produce the evidence he had which would substantiate his reply to the charges. He then produced the following witnesses: Baha' al-Din b. Qasim b. Muhanna', Isma'il b. Fakhr al-Din b. Abd al-Hadi, Ali b. Hamid b. Hasan, known as Suwayd, the honorable Hajj Khanab b. Nasir al-Din b. Mujahid, known by the name of his grandfather, Fakhr al-Din b. Ahmad Khalid, also known by the name of his grandfather, the Hajj Mansur b. Badr b. Nasir al-Din, known as "the Tall One," the eminent, honorable, and respected Shihab al-Din b. al-Zayni, Khidr b. Futayll, known by the name of his grandfather, the teacher Shahata b. Muhammad b. Ma'dhin, known by the name of his grandfather, the one who stands in need of exalted Allah, Sulayman b. Ayyub b. Muhammad, known by the name of his father, and the Hajj Ramadan b. Ali al-Sandabisi.

They testified before our Lord the Judge that they knew the synagogue known as the Synagogue of the Rabbanite Jews which stands at the head of the Zuwayla Quarter in a street known today as Darb al-Nabbadhin. It is situated in accordance with the four cardinal directions as follows: the southern side is adjacent to the house of the just Elder Abu Imran Moses, the northern side is adjacent to the house known as that of Jacob, father of the aforesaid Moses, the eastern side adjoins the street in which it is located, and this is the front of the building and its main entrance. The western side adjoins the house known as the property of Isaac, grandfather of Moses. They were completely familiar with this structure, its boundaries, and its rights, with a lawful awareness which precludes ignorance. They further testified that the aforementioned synagogue was of ancient construction and not recently built. In addition to this, they also testified unanimously and in a sound and consistent narrative that the synagogue in question was a valid pious foundation, considered to be from years gone by an inalienable pious foundation, authorized and verified as belonging to the Rabbanite Jews collectively and individually for their customary worship, and that it is under the supervision of whoever is Head of the Jewish communities. They also testified that the just Elder Abu Imran Moses, mentioned above, has been in control of said synagogue for a period of more than forty years prior to the present date, and that the synagogue's status as a pious foundation was ancient, going back more than two generations.

This was made known, and the witnesses testified to that effect under questioning by the judge. This was then affirmed . . . on the basis of the testimony cited above as a valid substantiation-decisive, credible, and sufficient.

[The judge] gave judgment in accordance with the facts and findings and made his decision compulsory. In all this, he rendered judgment after the contents of this document had been read out before him in the presence of the witnesses who have affixed their signatures to the bottom of this document, its contents having been verified, on this the 9th day of

Shaban 429 (17 May 1038).

*The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book*. Norman A. Stillman. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979)

**Things to Think About:**

- Based on the readings and the images, what can you conclude about the role of religion in Mediterranean cultures during the module period?
- How do these images differ from what you expected to see, and what was surprising?
- Is there greater, or less, acceptance and tolerance of other religions in today's culture?

# What Does It Take to Make a Book?



- Writing is thousands of years old (perhaps as early as 8000 BCE).
- Books are more recent (estimates of 1 century BCE)

# Scrolling (the old-fashioned way!)



- Writing in Mediterranean region was done on scrolls.
- Materials were:
- Papyrus (made from fibers of the papyrus plant, grown primarily in Egypt)
- Parchment (made from animal skins)



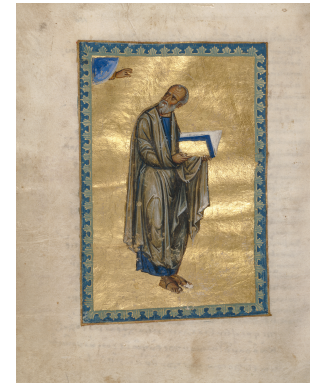
# The Torah

- The “Torah” (first five books of the Hebrew Bible) are written on a scroll, still used today in Jewish worship the world over.



# From scroll to book

- Early Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Christians, Muslims, and Jews began copying their holy books onto sheets of papyrus.
- Because papyrus was hard to get outside of Egypt, they also used parchment (also known as “vellum”).





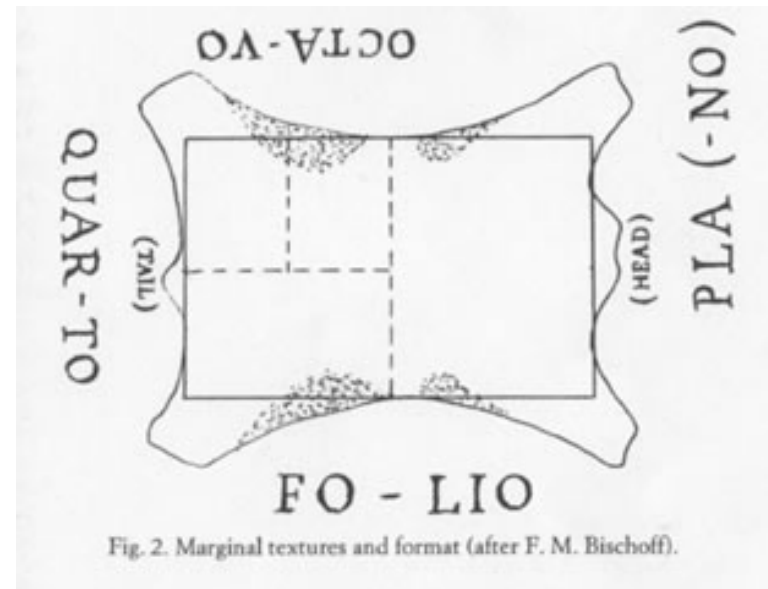
# Pergamon

(Modern Bergama, Turkey)



- Parchment was invented in eastern Mediterranean, in Pergamon, Turkey.
- It was perfected in 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, as alternative to papyrus.
- The word “parchment” comes from “Pergamon.”

# Making Parchment





# Illuminated Books

- By taking sheets of parchment, folding them, and sewing them together, they became a “codex.”
- Codex, from the Latin for book of laws – is from the same root as “code”
- Codices (plural) could be elaborate, expensive, and highly decorative.



# Making a book

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1aDHJu9J10o&list=PLA024C97274BEF01F>

# William of Gates



# Medieval Help Desk





# Paper

- [http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show\\_document.php?do\\_id=655&lang=en#](http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show_document.php?do_id=655&lang=en#)
- One of the most important developments in the history of literacy in the Mediterranean was the introduction of paper.
- Paper made its way from China, where it was invented, to Samarqand (perhaps by traveling Buddhist monks) and brought West, via Muslim trade routes (through Syria, Tunisia, etc.).
- Paper was made from flax or cotton fiber and/or rags

# Luxury import

- [http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show\\_document.php?do\\_id=655&lang=en#](http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show_document.php?do_id=655&lang=en#)
- Paper was an expensive import
- It was used in Muslim regions to make precious books such as the Holy Qur'an or Hadith (collections of sayings of Prophet Muhammad)
- Cost: during the 10<sup>th</sup> century, 125 sheets of paper sold for six and two-thirds dinars, enough to support a lower middle-class family for 3 months.
- Paper was therefore often recycled.

# The uses of paper

- [http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show\\_document.php?do\\_id=241](http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show_document.php?do_id=241)
- [http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show\\_document.php?do\\_id=271](http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show_document.php?do_id=271)
- Paper was used to make important scientific works.
  - Geographies
  - Medical books
  - Astronomical works
- Paper was also very useful in government, i.e. record-keeping, etc. Abbasid use of paper meant it spread across Muslim lands.
- In Bagdad and other cities, there were special markets for paper and writing supplies, called Suq al-Warraqin, like office supply superstores.



# Paper production centers

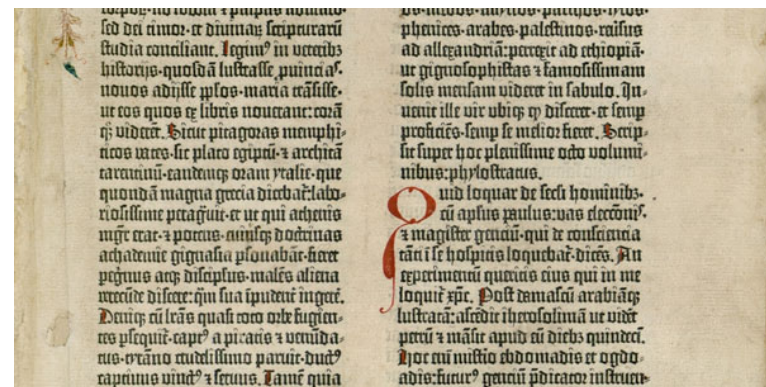


- Syria was a major center for paper production, using waterwheels for power. (The most delicate paper was waraq al-tayr ("bird paper"), thin, light paper used to send messages via carrier pigeon.)
- Fez (Morocco) was another important center; 14th century writer Ibn Abi Zar reported there were 471 papermills there. Paper was exported to Spain.
- The first European papermills were located in Spain during the 11th century. Shatiba (near Valencia) famed for quality of its paper.



# Gutenberg (1455)

- By the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, paper and book manufacturing spread to Europe via the Mediterranean (North Africa and Spain)
- The Gutenberg Bible was the first printed European book.



# Aldus Manutius

(Venice, 15<sup>th</sup> cent.)

- Aldus Manutius, 15<sup>th</sup> century Venetian printer, helped make books more widespread in Europe.
- His shop printed fashionably compact, affordable editions of classical writing (Greek, Roman literature)
- He also published Bibles, but not as cheaply. He felt that the Bible was too sacred to be printed as a cheap edition.



# Picture credits

- Master of Sir John Fastolf, MS 5, J. Paul Getty Museum
- "Boekrol Esther 18de eeuw uit een sefardische synagoge in Sevilla"
- Tom Verde
- Unknown, Byzantine, Constantinople, Turkey, 1133 MS. LUDWIG II 4, FOL. 106V
- Unknown, illuminator, Koran Page, 9th century, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. Ludwig X 1, fol. 8.verso
- Tom Verde
- ""de:""Eygentliche Beschreibung aller Stände auff Erden, hoher und nidriger, geistlicher und weltlicher, aller Künsten, Handwercken und Handeln ..." / from Jost Amman and Hans Sachs / Frankfurt am Main / 1568
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