CRISES AND RECOVERY IN AFRO-EURASIA, 1300–1500
Collapse and Consolidation

• The Black Death, a disease that stemmed from a combination of bubonic, pneumonic, and septicemic strains, was the most significant historical development of the fourteenth century
Explanations for the Spread of the Black Death

• Explanations include those related to climate change
  o The “Little Ice Age” of harsh winters and rainy summers led to famine in Europe (1315–1322)
  o A reduced growing season and ruined harvests; malnourished populations were more vulnerable to disease
Climate Change and the Black Death

- The borderlands of the Asian steppe became dryer, rodents moved out of their customary habitat, and pastoral (nomadic) people moved closer to settled agricultural communities.
- Increased human contact led to increased transmission of plague bacilli.
Additional Factors Contributing to Spread of Black Death

- The expansion of trading networks throughout Afro-Eurasia
- Populations with no immunity
  - Led to spread throughout China, the Muslim world, and Europe
The Spread of the Black Death
Impact of the Black Death on China

- Population decline
- Political instability as Mongol dynasty’s claim to “a mandate from heaven” was shattered
- Rise of resistance to Mongol authority
  - Banditry
  - Dissident religious sects
    - Red Turban Movement
Impact of the Black Death on the Islamic World

• Population decline in major cities, such as Baghdad, and parts of Egypt, Syria, and Cyprus
  ○ Up to 1,000 deaths per day recorded in Tunisia
  ○ The plague killed animals
  ○ Ruling groups (dynasties and tribes) were weakened
  ○ There was a general sense of desolation
Impact of the Black Death on Europe

• Population decline
  ○ Nearly two-thirds perished between 1346 and 1353
  ○ Nearly 50 percent perished over the course of the fourteenth century

• Social disorder

• Increased hostility toward Jews

• Loss of faith in established forms of political and religious authority
Broad Trends Connected to the Black Death

• General trends
  o Vicious cycle of death
  o People fled cities, seeking refuge in the countryside
  o Food shortages led to rising prices, hoarding, work stoppages, and general unrest
  o The collapse of the Mongol Empire led to the emergence of new states and new forms of political and religious authority
State Systems Recover and Rebuild

• Rebuilding states
  ○ The basis for political legitimacy and power was the dynasty, the hereditary ruling family passing power from generation to generation
    ▪ Power derived from the divine: the “mandate of heaven” or “divine right”
    ▪ Clear rules of succession
    ▪ Dynasties consolidated or extended power through conquest, alliance, or laws and punishment
Islamic Dynasties

- The Black Death and Mongol invasions brought an end to the old political order for the Abbasid Empire and its capital, Baghdad, and led to the emergence of three new Islamic states.
The Mongol Legacy

• The Mongol legacy and the rise of new Islamic dynasties
  ○ The Mongol dynasty, with its small population, assimilated into the cultures of the conquered, adopting their language and converting to Islam
  ○ The Mongols had two components to their rule
  ○ The aftermath of Mongol rule and the Black Death created power shifts that led to the emergence of a new Islamic world
The Emergence of Three New Empires

- Three Islamic empires emerged, expanding an Arabic-dominated Islamic world to include the Turkish- and Persian-speaking populations
  - Ottoman
  - Safavid
  - Mughal
Rise of the Ottoman Empire

• Seljuk Turk warrior nomads transformed themselves into the rulers of a highly bureaucratic empire

• Under Osman (r. 1299–1326), the Turks consolidated their power by attracting artisans, merchants, bureaucrats, and clerics
Ottomans and the Conquest of Constantinople

• The most spectacular triumph of Mehmed the Conqueror (r. 1451–1481) was the 1453 conquest of Constantinople, the capital of the Roman/Byzantine Empire, which he renamed Istanbul.

• The fall had positive cultural benefits for western Europe, as Christian refugees took classical texts to western Europe, stimulating a European renaissance.

• Ottoman military expansion continued with the conquest of European cities in Greece, Bosnia, Italy, Hungary, Croatia, and Austria.
Ottoman Tools of Empire Building

• Ottoman expansion and stability
  ○ Under Suleiman (r. 1520–1566), Ottomans reached the height of their territorial expansion with 20 million to 30 million subjects
  ○ Ottoman dynastic power fused the secular with the sacred
    ▪ Sultans called themselves “shadow of God” on earth
    ▪ Sultans became defenders and protectors of the faith, constructing mosques and supporting Islamic schools
Ottoman Power and Governance

• Rise of the Ottoman Empire
  ○ Istanbul and the Topkapi Palace reflected the splendor, power, and wealth of the Ottoman Islamic Empire
    ▪ Suleiman built his crowning architectural achievement, the Suleymaniye Mosque, opposite the Hagia Sophia, the most sacred of Christian cathedrals
    ▪ Topkapi Palace was not only the command post of empire but also reflected Ottoman views of governance, religion, and family traditions
Diversity and Control in the Ottoman Empire

- Tolerance for diversity and bureaucratic control ensured that the Ottoman Empire endured into the twentieth century
  - While Turkish was the official language of administration, Ottomans promoted a flexible and tolerant language policy
  - Ottomans allowed for regional autonomy where local appointees could keep a portion of taxes for themselves
  - Ottomans created a corps of infantry soldiers and bureaucrats, called janissaries, who owed direct allegiance to the sultan
The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1566
The Safavid Empire in Iran

- In Persia, the Safavid Empire emerged from the Islamic Shia tradition, very different from Ottoman Sunni faith
  - Mongol conquest brought greater destruction to Persia, leaving the region more volatile and unstable
    - 1295: the khan, or ruler, declared Islam as the state religion
    - After Mongol decline, the region fell to the Sufi brotherhood, led by Safi al-Din (1252–1334), or Safavids, Turkish-speaking warriors who embraced Shiism
The Safavid Empire under Shah Ismail

- The Safavids created a single-mindedly religious state, with Shah Ismail (r. 1501–1524) as the most dynamic ruler
  - Ismail declared Shiism the official state religion; subjects were forced to choose between conversion and death
  - 1502: Ismail declared himself the first shah (Persian for king) of the Safavid Empire
  - Ismail revived the Persian notion that shahs are divinely chosen
  - Activist clergy viewed themselves as political and religious enforcers against heretical authority
The Safavids and Shiite Islam

• Because the Safavids did not tolerate diversity, they never created an expansive empire but succeeded in transforming Iran, the former Sunni territory, into a Shiite stronghold
The Safavid Empire, 1500–1722
The Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals

• The Delhi Sultanate and the early Mughal Empire
  ○ Mughals created a regime on the foundations of the Delhi Sultanate, which avoided Mongol conquest but had to face Tamerlane and his nomadic warriors
  ○ Rivalries, religious revival, and the first Mughal emperor
Collapse of the Delhi Sultanate

- The collapse of the Delhi Sultanate precipitated religious revivals:
  - Sufism in Bengal, a form of Islam
  - Bhakti Hinduism, also in Bengal
  - Sikhism in Punjab, a form of Islam founded by Nanak (1469–1539) in northern India
- The Punjab governor invited Turkish/Mongol Prince Babur (the “Tiger”), the great grandson of Timur, to India in 1526
  - Babur laid the foundation of the Mughal Empire, the third great Islamic dynasty
The Mughal Empire, 1530
Foundations of Legitimacy in Islamic Empires

• The three new Islamic empires established their legitimacy through military prowess and religious backing, and by building a loyal bureaucracy.

• This enabled them to claim vast domains that continued the movement of goods, ideas, merchants, and scholars beyond and across political boundaries.
Western Christendom

- The high Middle Ages (1100–1300) experienced growth in prosperity, population, and cultural achievements
  - Population growth pulled laborers from the countryside to cities
Significance of Local Communities in European Societies

- Most of Europe’s 80 million inhabitants stayed rooted to their local communities
- Growing prosperity allowed for a cultural flowering with advancements in the arts, technology, learning, architecture, and banking
Plague and Crisis in Europe

- Reactions, revolts, and religion
  - Climatic changes beginning around 1310 brought famine, causing millions to die of starvation
  - The plague in Europe
    - The plague killed nearly two-thirds of Europe’s population from 1346 to 1353
    - Cities were especially vulnerable, because they were overcrowded and unsanitary
    - By 1450, Europe’s population had fallen to one-quarter of its previous size
The Church’s Response to the Plague

- The plague in Europe
  - Created lasting psychological, social, economic, and political changes
- The church, in response:
  - Struggled to reclaim its power as it faced challenges from officials and laity
  - Increased persecution of heretics, Jews, Muslims, homosexuals, prostitutes, and “witches”
  - Expanded its charity, giving alms to the poor
A Weakening Feudal Order

- Reactions, revolts, and religion
  - Large-scale peasant revolts
    - *Jacquerie* in 1358: French peasants revolted and went on a rampage against nobles and clergy
    - English Peasants’ Revolt in 1381: this started as a protest against tax increases and expanded to include freedom for serfs, higher farm worker wages, and lower rents
States and Societies Recover

- Europe’s rulers attempted to rebuild and consolidate their power
  - The most powerful ruling dynasty, the Habsburgs, provided emperors for the Holy Roman Empire from 1440 to 1806
  - Europe had no unifying language, as Latin lost ground to regional dialects
States Rebuild and Economies Recover

- Rulers faced obstacles from rivals with private armies, the clergy, and critics with access to the printing press.
- Europe’s political reorganization took the form of centralized national monarchies, or city-states, where the wealthy selected their leaders.
Europe, 1400–1500
Political Consolidation and Trade in Portugal

- Portugal is an example of how political stabilization and the revival of trade were intertwined
  - Western Europe followed the Portuguese example of creating national monarchies, while in northern Europe, the lack of access to trade networks added to political instabilities
Christianity and the Expansion of Portuguese Influence

• The Portuguese were devoted to fighting North African Muslim Moors
  ○ They seized the North African fortress at Ceuta, Morocco, allowing them access to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic without interference
  ○ They also defeated Castile (modern Spain)
  ○ Henry the Navigator conquered the Atlantic islands off of the North and West African coasts
Spanish Expansion and Reconquest

- Dynasty building and reconquest in Spain
  - Spain faced an arduous journey to state building because of rivalry among kingdoms and a lack of religious uniformity
  - The Union of Castile and Aragon, or the marriage of Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon in 1469
    - Wealthy and populated Castile united with Aragon, which had access to long-established Mediterranean trading networks
    - Muslim forces were pushed almost completely out of Iberia, the last strategic and symbolic victory coming with the fall of Granada in 1492
Militant Christianity and Maritime Exploration

• The Inquisition and westward exploration
  ○ In 1481, the Inquisition targeted *conversos*, or recently converted Jews and Muslims
  ○ After the fall of Granada in 1492, the monarchs ordered all Jews and some Moors, half a million people, out of Spain
  ○ Monarchs gave their royal support to a Genoese navigator, Christopher Columbus, who promised them unimaginable wealth
France and England

• French victory in the Hundred Years’ War (1337–1453) against the English started the process of consolidating French power under the House of Valois

• Joan of Arc, a peasant girl with divine visions, became a symbol of French patriotism and turned the tide of war for the French
  ○ Charles VII granted her an army of 7,000–8,000 men
  ○ Eventually, the English captured her, tried her for heresy, and burned her at the stake
The Rise of France and England

• In England, civil war between the houses of Lancaster and York in the War of the Roses led to the House of Tudor seizing the throne in 1485

• Small proved advantageous as Italian city-states developed banking techniques, merchants enjoyed their link to the eastern Mediterranean, and cultural achievements associated with the Renaissance began to take shape
The Renaissance and European Revival

- European identity and the Renaissance
  - Europe’s political and economic revival included the Renaissance, or the cultural achievements of the Italian city-states, France, the Low Countries, England, and the Holy Roman Empire, from 1430 to 1550
European Identity and the Renaissance

• The Italian Renaissance
  ○ The Renaissance was about the “rebirth” of or new exposure to ancient Greek and Roman knowledge to understand human experience (humanism)
  ○ Popes, Christian kings, and wealthy merchants funded much of the Renaissance
  ○ Renaissance artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Sandro Botticelli, and Michelangelo Buonarroti applied Greco-Roman techniques to Christian themes
The Spread of the Renaissance

- The Renaissance spread due to increasing economic prosperity, the circulation of literature and art, and interstate rivalry
  - Some women were offered better access to education
  - The “republic of letters” was a network of elite, cosmopolitan scholars or correspondents interested in gaining knowledge, searching for patrons, or fleeing persecution
The Renaissance and Political Power in Europe

• Political power and Renaissance theories of war
  ○ A network of educated men and women acquired the means to challenge political, clerical, and aesthetic authority
  ○ Florentines pioneered a form of civic humanism under which all citizens were to devote themselves to ensuring liberty
  ○ Machiavelli wrote the most famous treatise on politics, *The Prince* (1513), which claims that political leadership is about mastering the amoral means of power and statecraft
Ming China

- Mongols and the Black Death led the way for the emergence of the Ming dynasty
  - Famine and the Black Death devastated China; some cities such as Bei Zhili (modern Hebei) experienced a death toll of 90 percent
  - Yuan Mongol rulers faced chaos and dissent
  - Zhu founded the Ming (“brilliant”) dynasty in 1368
Centralization under the Ming Dynasty

- China recovered under Ming rulers who faced the formidable challenges of rebuilding cities, restoring respect for rulers, and reconstructing the bureaucracy.
The Grandeur of Ming China

- Consolidation of imperial rule
  - Imperial grandeur and kinship
    - Emperor Zhu or Hongwu ("expansive and martial") built an extravagant capital in Nanjing
    - Emperor Yongle ("perpetual happiness") built an awe-inspiring capital in Beijing, with the Forbidden City, a walled imperial city with boulevards, courtyards, and palace
    - Marriage and kinship increased Ming power
Centralization and Bureaucracy in Ming China

• Building a bureaucracy
  ○ The Hongwu emperor first sought to rule through kinsmen but soon established a merit- and civil service exam-based imperial bureaucracy
  ○ Emperor Zhu Hongwu implemented a highly centralized imperial bureaucracy and administrative network
  ○ The Ming established the most highly centralized government of the period
Religion in Ming China

• Emperors used “community” gatherings of rituals to reinforce their image as mediator between the spiritual world of gods and worldly affairs of the empire
• Conflict between state-sanctioned cults and Buddhist monasteries showed the limits of Ming power
Rulership under the Ming Dynasty

- Religion played a smaller role in establishing the Ming dynasty than with Islamic empires
- The Ming created an elaborate system for classifying and controlling its subjects compared with other Afro-Asiatic empires
Repression and Terror as a Form of Rulership

- The Ming stymied threats with outright terror and repression
  - The empire remained under-governed because of the immense task of 10,000–15,000 officials to manage more than 200 million people
  - Emperor Hongwu’s legacy enabled other Ming successors to balance centralizing ambitions with local sources of power
Ming China, 1500s
Trade and Exploration in Ming China

- Political stability in the fourteenth century allowed merchants to revive China’s preeminence in long-distance trade
Chinese Maritime Trade and Exploration

- Overseas trade: success and suspicion
  - Chinese port cities flourished as entrepôts for global goods
  - Emperor Hongwu feared that contact with the outside world would undermine his rule
Imperial Support for Maritime Exploration in the Early Fifteenth Century

• Maritime exploration and aftermath
  ○ Emperor Yongle’s sponsorship of a series of expeditions in the early fifteenth century was an exception to Ming attitudes toward the outside world
  ○ From 1405 to 1433, Admiral Zheng He led seven expeditions in the Indian Ocean to establish trade and tributary relationships
Voyages of Zheng He, 1405–1433
Decline of Maritime Exploration

- Although exotic and glamorous goods delighted the court, they were not everyday commerce, and Ming rulers withdrew imperial support for expensive maritime trade.
  - Concerns about military threats from the north led to increased attention to overland ventures and defense.
Conclusion

• The Black Death and its devastation transformed the societies of Afro-Eurasia, leading to the emergence of new states and empires
• States legitimized rule with dynastic marriage, state religion, administrative bureaucracies, and commercial expansion
• European powers sought new avenues for trade, while Ottoman conquests blocked significant overland routes
• The Chinese decided to turn away from maritime exploration