

## Overview

# The ancient to the modern world

The period of time between about 590 CE and 1500 CE marks the end of the ancient world and the beginning of the modern world. Historians refer to this period of human history as the medieval period. Across Europe it was a time of great change. New societies and civilisations grew out of the ruins of ancient civilisations. Different ideas developed and ways of thinking about the world were challenged. It was also a time during which a deadly plague spread across the world killing millions and bringing about huge changes.

Towards the end of the period, a range of new inventions developed along with new ideas about art, politics, literature, religion and science.



## chapter 8

### 8A

Where and when did civilisations in medieval world?

### 8B

What were the key features of societies in medieval world?

**Source 1** One of the most important changes across medieval Europe was the spread of religious beliefs. In Europe, Christianity became a central part of life. This enormous stained glass window in the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris was built at the height of the medieval period in Europe.



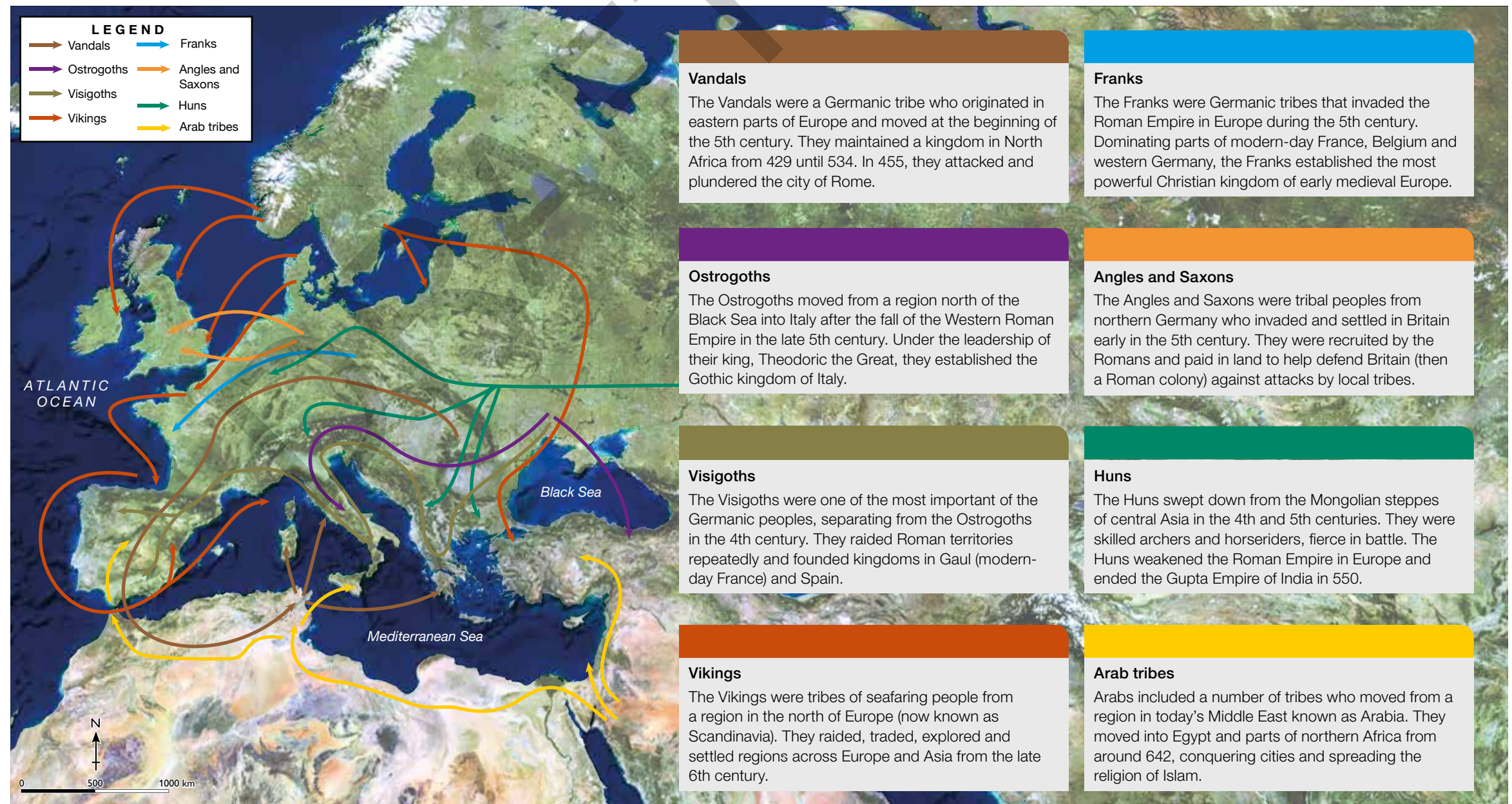
# 8.1 The birth of the modern world

The civilisations and events you will be learning about this year took place over a period of time starting around 650 CE and ending in 1750 CE. This period marks the end of the ancient world and the beginning of the modern world – it was a time of enormous change around the globe.

During ancient times, much of Europe was under the control of powerful empires. Over time, many of these ancient empires collapsed; some due to the pressures and costs of wars, others due to corrupt governments or migration. The fall of these powerful empires left room for different groups of people to move into their territories looking for new regions to settle and riches to plunder (steal). In order to gain new territories, these tribal groups often competed with one another, causing conflict and huge changes. Some new societies and civilisations were founded peacefully by local tribes, while others were founded through bloody battles by foreign tribes expanding their territory and power through fierce combat.

All over the world, different groups of people were on the move. At the start of the period, much of this movement took place across Europe. This was a direct result of the collapse of the Roman Empire. Tribes that had helped to end Roman control moved and settled across territories the Romans had once controlled. This started a period of time in Europe known as the medieval period.

Some of these tribes were the Vandals, the Ostrogoths, the Visigoths, the Vikings, the Franks, and the Angles and Saxons. The Romans referred to these tribal people as **barbarians**. A Latin word meaning ‘outside our borders’. Romans used it to describe uncivilised people. Other groups, such as the Huns, migrated from further east in Asia, and Arab tribes migrated from the Middle East. Source O.1 shows the movement of many different tribal groups across Europe (and parts of Africa and Asia) during the 4th and 5th centuries. This movement had a huge impact on the ways in which new societies formed and developed there.





## 8.2 Where did civilisations rise and fall?

The period of time between about 650 CE and 1750 CE marked the end of the ancient world and the beginning of the modern world. It was a time of great change. New societies and civilisations were founded and new religions spread. Different ideas developed and ways of thinking about the world were challenged. A range of new inventions developed along with new ideas about art, politics, literature, religion and science.

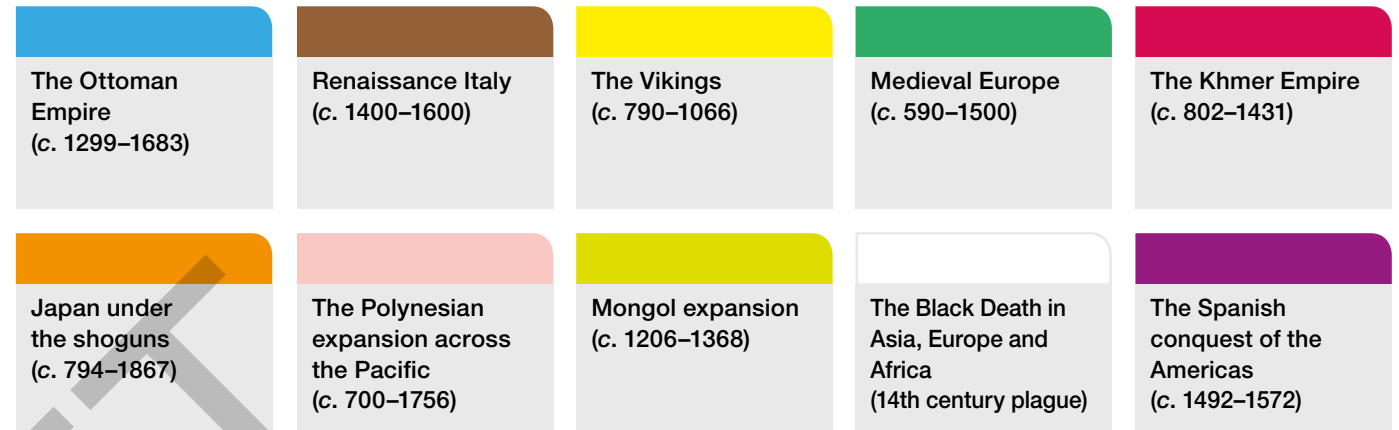
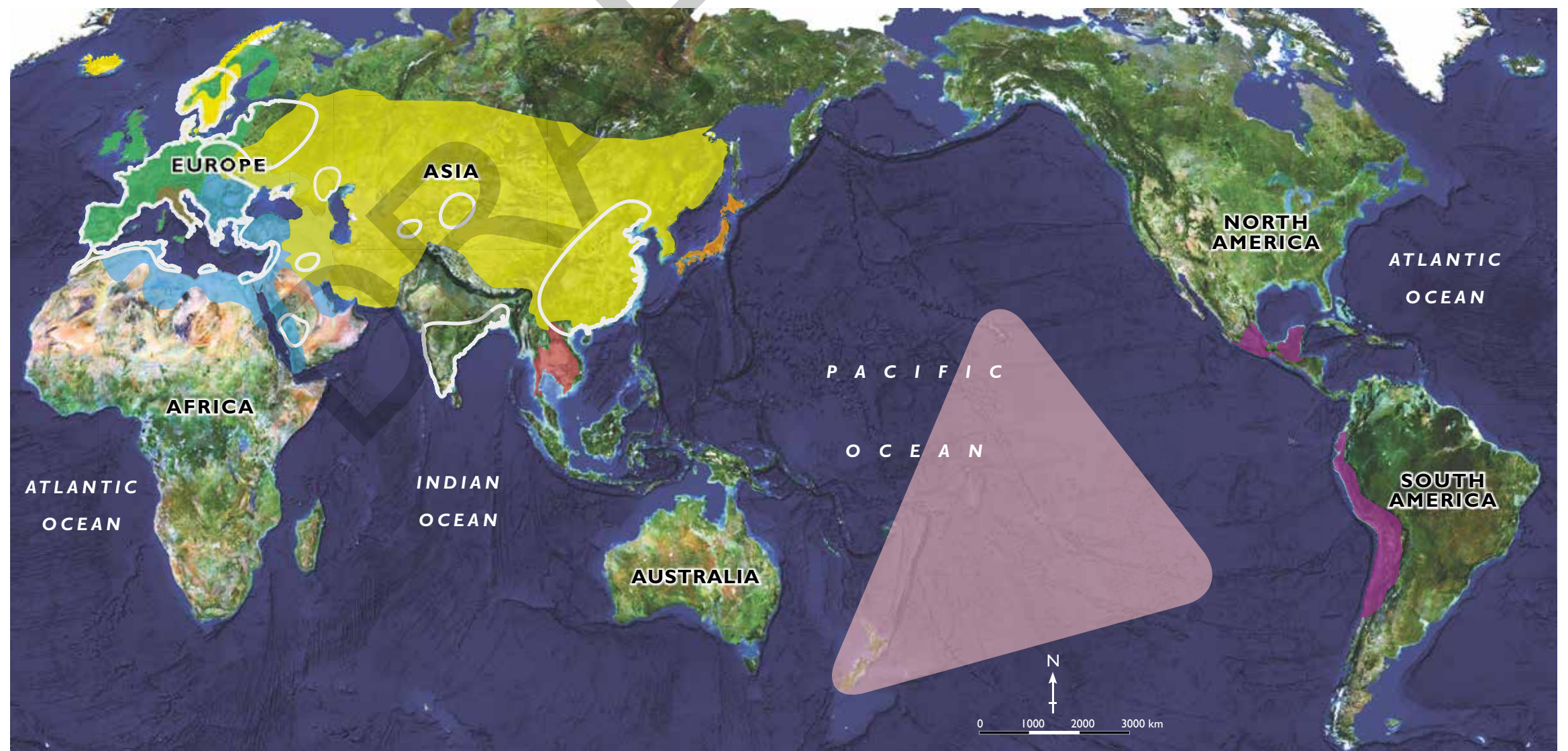
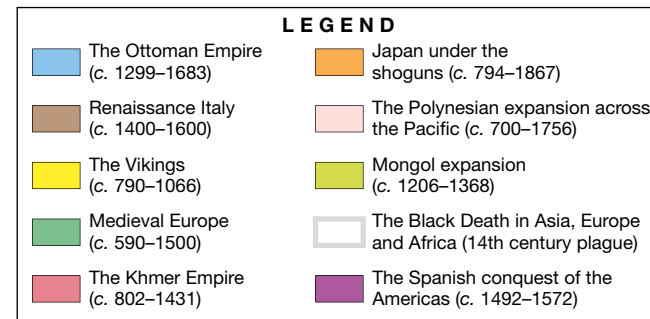
New societies took shape in Europe, while long-established societies, such as those in China and India, changed enormously. Some changes were driven by the spread of religions and by shifting economic and social values. Others were the direct result of migration, battles for power, and the spread of a disease known as the Black Death.

The more powerful societies of this period competed to increase their wealth, power and territory, causing many violent conflicts. Some also chose to explore the seas in search of new lands and riches.

This year you will be studying a number of these civilisations and events in detail. To fully appreciate and understand each of these civilisations, it helps to first look at some of the factors that were common to all of them and how their development was linked.

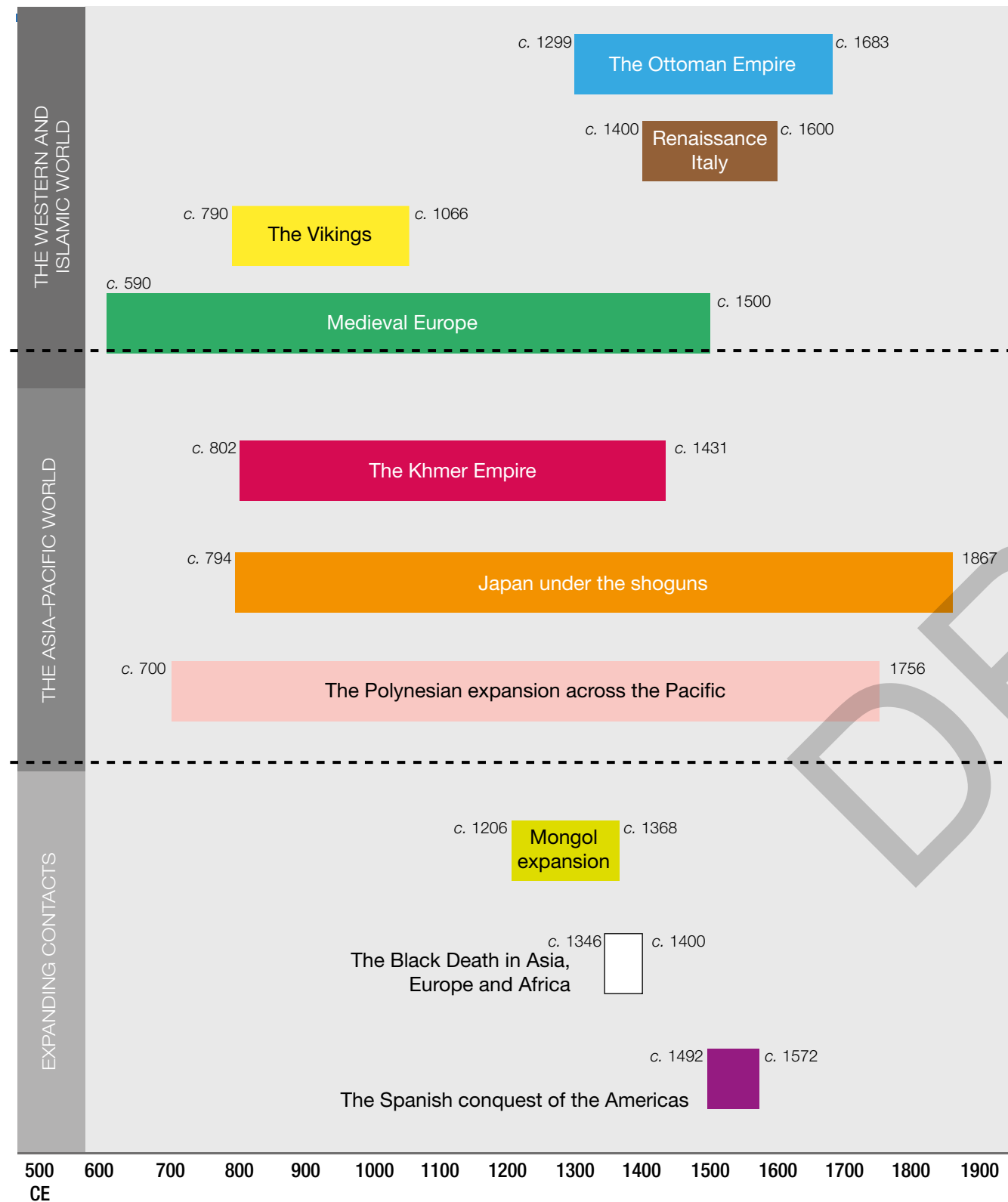
Source O.2 shows the location and size of the civilisations you will be learning about this year. It also shows areas that were affected by the spread of a deadly plague known as the Black Death. Note the dates for each civilisation as you are looking at the map – not all of them existed simultaneously. The timeline in this overview (Source O.3) also shows the dates for each of the civilisations and provides some key information about each of them.

**Source O.2** This satellite image of Earth shows the location and size of key civilisations between 650 CE and 1750 CE when they were at their peak.





## 8.3 When did civilisations rise and fall?



**Source O.3** A timeline showing the rise and fall of civilisations and societies c. 650–1750 CE and key information about each

### The Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire was formed by Arab societies and grew out of the traditions of ancient Greece and the Middle East. The empire possessed great wealth and expanded into Europe, Africa and Asia.

### Renaissance Italy

The stability in Italy from 1400 to 1600 provided the right environment for a rebirth of the ideas and values from classical Rome and Greece. Renaissance is a French word meaning 'rebirth'. The arts and sciences flourished in Renaissance Italy.

### The Vikings

The Vikings were a people from Scandinavia who expanded their wealth by raiding neighbouring societies. They were skilled sailors and fearsome warriors. They settled or conquered territories stretching from modern-day Britain to the Ukraine.

### Medieval Europe

The medieval period in Europe lasted about 1000 years. An important feature of medieval Europe was a system for organising society known as feudalism. Along with the spread of Christianity, feudalism maintained stability across Europe for many centuries.

### The Khmer Empire

The Khmer Empire was settled in a region called Angkor in what is now Cambodia. The society was built around rice cultivation. It followed the Indian religions of Hinduism and Buddhism, and the Khmer people built many elaborate temples to honour their gods.

### Japan under the shoguns

In medieval Japan, the most powerful military leaders became known as shoguns. These shoguns ruled Japan for over 700 years. Although people worshipped their emperor as a god, the shogun held all the power.

### The Polynesian expansion across the Pacific

The Polynesians originated in modern-day Taiwan and navigated in canoes to settle thousands of islands scattered across the Pacific Ocean. They created many different societies on different islands.

### Mongol expansion

The Mongols were originally nomadic herders who followed seasonal food sources. They were skilled horsemen living in tribal groups who, around 1206, united to form a great army that conquered vast territories across much of Asia and eastern Europe.

### The Black Death in Asia, Europe and Africa

The Black Death was a devastating plague that killed large sections of the populations of Asia, Europe and Africa – up to 40 per cent of the population in some areas. The loss of life caused significant changes in devastated areas and went on to alter the course of history.

### The Spanish conquest of the Americas

As the medieval period was drawing to an end in Europe, the Spanish, spurred on by the prospect of gold and other riches, began a mission to conquer and plunder the civilisations of the Aztec and Inca in the Americas, with devastating effects.

## Check your learning O.1

### Remember and understand

- 1 Choose three of the tribal groups discussed in Source O.1. Describe who they were, where they migrated to and when.
- 2 Rank each of the civilisations shown in Source O.2 in order of their geographic size.

### Apply and analyse

- 3 Predict how the three largest civilisations shown in Source O.2 may have grown to become so powerful. What factors do you think might have allowed them to expand their territories?
- 4 Explain how the migration of different tribal groups (in Europe or Asia) contributed to the spread of ideas and religions around the world.

### Evaluate and create

- 5 Why do you think it might be important to learn about each of the civilisations or events shown in the timeline? Provide one reason for each topic.



## 8.4 What were the causes and effects of contact between societies in this period?



Source 0.4 A scene from the Bayeux Tapestry depicting the Battle of Hastings in 1066

Between 650 CE and 1750 CE, people from different societies around the world came into contact with each other for many different reasons. Some groups were forced to move because of natural disasters, changes in the weather, famine, war or for political reasons. This often pushed them into regions already claimed by other groups. Others chose to move in order to expand their territory or to seize land and resources controlled by rival groups. Regardless of the reasons, contact between different societies had both positive and negative effects. Two of the main causes for contact between societies during this period were conflicts (such as battles and wars) and increases in trade.

### Conflicts between societies

The transition from the ancient to the modern world was not peaceful – it was marked by frequent conflict, battles and wars. There were many different causes of these conflicts, including:

- a desire for power and control (either by an individual leader or entire group)
- a desire for land or territories occupied by rival groups
- a desire or need for resources owned or controlled by rival groups (such as water, farming land, gold, weapons and castles)
- a desire to convert (or kill) people with different religious or spiritual beliefs.

In some cases conflicts were the result of a single cause, but more often a combination of these causes

sparked them. Just as there were often many causes for these conflicts, there were also many effects, including:

- the death of large numbers of soldiers and ordinary people – often making up large sections of a group or society's population
- the destruction or erosion of entire cultures and civilisations
- large changes in the way societies were structured or functioned
- changes to the rulers (such as the king and royal family) or governments or groups or societies
- the introduction of new ideas, cultures and ways of doing things
- the spread of new ideas, technologies, belief systems and goods
- the spread of disease
- the development of new weapons, fighting techniques and defensive structures (such as castles and moats)
- destruction of the environment.

We will now look briefly at the causes and effects of four significant conflicts that took place in Europe, Asia and the Americas between 650 CE and 1750 CE. Although they took place in very different parts of the world, many of the causes for them, and the effects they had on people and places, are similar. As you read, think about the reasons why contact between different societies may have resulted in conflict and wars. Also think about the ways in which these conflicts changed the societies involved.

### The Battle of Hastings

The Battle of Hastings was fought in 1066 in England after the death of the English king, Edward the Confessor. Edward died without an heir to the throne, so a number of men believed they had the right to rule England. One contender, Harold Godwinson (the powerful Earl of Wessex), had himself crowned king almost immediately, but Edward's cousin William (Duke of Normandy – an area settled by Vikings in France) believed that he was the rightful king. Later that year, the Saxon army of Harold Godwinson and the Norman (Viking) army of William met in battle near the town of Hastings. After winning this battle, William was crowned king of England and became known as William the Conqueror. He introduced a number of Norman beliefs and traditions to England – the most important among these was the system of **feudalism**.



Feudalism changed the way society and laws in England and other societies across Europe were organised.

### The Crusades

The **Crusades** were a series of religious wars fought between Christians and Muslims at various times between 1096 and 1290 in a region of the world known as the **Holy Land** – now made up of countries such as Israel, Lebanon and Syria. The main aim of the First Crusade was to gain control over important religious sites in and around the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was an important religious city for Christians, Muslims and Jews at the time and continues to be to this day.

Before the First Crusade, European merchants and travellers to the Holy Land (including Jerusalem) were on good terms with the local Arabs. However, things changed when the Seljuk Turks, a militant Muslim group, took control of the city. They closed Jerusalem to Jewish and Christian pilgrims. This caused the Pope to call for Christian volunteers to form an army and recapture the city. The resulting conflicts caused a tremendous loss of life on both sides and sowed the seeds of religious tensions that continue to the present day in that part of the world. It also saw Christian Crusaders return to Europe with many new goods and ideas from the Holy Land that went on to change European society in many positive ways.

Source 0.5 An artist's impression of a battle from the First Crusade



## Mongol invasions of Japan

From the beginning of the 13th century, the size and power of the Mongol Empire grew dramatically. Having already conquered China and Korea, the Mongol leader Kublai Khan (grandson of Genghis Khan) planned an invasion of nearby Japan. Kublai Khan wanted to bring Japan under his control in order to expand his empire and increase his power. He was also eager to collect taxes from the Japanese people and plunder their treasures.

In 1274, a Mongol army totalling 40 000 men set sail from Korea in nearly 900 ships bound for Japan. Up until this time, battles between rival **clans** (groups) in Japan were common, but this was the first time the clans were forced to come together to fight a common enemy. The Mongol army far outnumbered the Japanese samurai, and used more superior fighting techniques and weapons. After only one day of fighting, the Japanese forces were no match for the Mongols. They had no choice but to take cover in a nearby fortress. That night, as the Mongol soldiers rested on their ships, a storm hit sinking around 200 ships and drowning about 13 000 men.

The remaining ships had no other choice but to return home defeated.

Seven years later in 1281, a second Mongol fleet returned. This fleet was much larger – about 4400 ships carrying approximately 140 000 soldiers – and was determined to finally conquer Japan. Once again though, as Mongol soldiers prepared to attack the Japanese, another massive typhoon hit. It wrecked the Mongol ships and stopped the Mongol invasion. Most of the Mongol soldiers drowned and any others that made it to land were hunted down and killed by the samurai.

As a result of the failed invasions there were many changes in Japan. The Japanese believed that their gods had sent the storms to preserve Japan from the Mongols, so Zen Buddhism became very popular. The Japanese called the two storms **kamikaze** (meaning 'divine wind'). Kublai Khan seemed to agree that Japan was protected by supernatural forces; he abandoned the idea of conquering the island nation.

**Source O.6** An artist's impression of Japanese troops repelling Mongol invaders in 1281. The storms responsible for Mongol losses became known as kamikaze in Japan, meaning 'divine wind'.



In addition to this, the samurai adopted different fighting styles and developed new weapons based on those they had seen the Mongols use.

## Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlán

Spanish exploration started early in the 15th century motivated by a desire for new territories, goods, wealth and trading partners. The Spanish were also motivated by the belief that it was their duty to convert the native peoples of these new lands to Christianity; they largely viewed these people as 'godless savages'.

Between 1492 and 1572, the Spanish focused their efforts on conquering and colonising new territories in the Americas. In 1519, after establishing a small settlement on the coast of what is now Mexico, a Spanish conquistador by the name of Hernán Cortés set out in search of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán. When he arrived there, he was welcomed by the leader of the Aztecs, Moctezuma II. Shortly thereafter, Cortés took Moctezuma II and other Aztec officials hostage. From this point onwards, the stability of the Aztec Empire came to an end.

Over the following years, there were a number of bloody battles and massacres. In 1521, Cortés returned for his final attack on the Aztec capital. By this time, a deadly disease known as smallpox (which the Spanish had brought with them to the Americas) had devastated the Aztec Empire, severely weakening its army. Cortés' troops barricaded the city for months to prevent supplies coming in and then attacked. The Aztecs were defeated and Spanish canons flattened their once great city.

As a result of the defeat, the Aztecs lost their land, independence and culture. The Spanish meanwhile gained access to vast supplies of gold and riches as well as new crops (such as tobacco and chillies) never before seen in the Western World.

**Source O.7** A late 17th-century painting by an unknown artist showing the Spanish troops led by Hernán Cortés invading and destroying the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán.





## Trade between societies

In addition to conflicts, trade was one of the main reasons why early societies came into contact with one another. Trade was not only a way of exchanging different goods; it also enabled different ideas, beliefs and aspects of culture to be shared and spread. As the territories controlled by civilisations grew, and empires were formed, trade became easier and more goods moved over larger distances. Access to minerals (such as gold) and other resources (such as water and fertile land) were some of the main reasons why empires expanded. Once an empire controlled large reserves of these resources, trade once again increased.

After the fall of the Roman Empire in Western Europe, trade decreased dramatically. Roman forces that had been responsible for enforcing the law were no longer around, so large parts of Western Europe became very dangerous. **Barbarian** raids meant travel and trade were difficult and risky – traders were often robbed or murdered for their goods.

In contrast, the Byzantine Empire in Eastern Europe and a number of Islamic empires across Arabia were flourishing. Muslim sea traders were pushing into the Indian Ocean and beyond. During the 6th century, they had trade contacts in the Indies (Indonesia and Malaysia). Some 100 years later, they were trading in China.

### Trading routes over land

From around 1000 CE barbarian raids across Western Europe had largely stopped and people began to feel safer. The population began to increase and towns began popping up across the continent. People were drawn to these towns because they provided job opportunities and services. Around this time, many roads were built and money also started to be used. As a result, trade increased dramatically. The **Silk Road**,



**Source O.8** An artist's impression showing the father and uncle of Italian explorer Marco Polo travelling across Asia on the Silk Road

a 6500-kilometre-long network of trade routes connecting Asia with Europe, became a vital trade route between East and West. During the 14th century, Mongol rulers protected the route and ensured safe passage for merchants, which greatly helped trade.

### Trading routes over sea

The use of boats had been a part of trade since the ancient civilisations of Egypt, Greece and Rome; however, the scale of sea trade increased dramatically at the beginning of the second millennium. By the 1200s, trading ports in modern-day Italy, such as Venice, Genoa and Florence, were becoming busy commercial centres. During the 15th and 16th centuries, emerging nations around the world also opened sea routes. All were eager to increase their trade and expand their territories. This meant finding new markets and faster ways to reach them. By this time, trade along the Silk Road was starting to prove slow and expensive, mainly because the power of the Mongol Empire had weakened and it could no longer protect travellers on the route.

Many European monarchs began to invest money in discovering unknown parts of the world, or in finding new trade routes across the oceans. Europeans were not the only sailors exploring distant parts of the world. The Arab traveller Ibn Batuta (1307–1377) travelled as widely as Marco Polo, and the Chinese sailor Zheng He (1371–1435) sailed west from China seven times, as far west as Africa and the Persian Gulf.



**Source O.9** An artist's impression of the types of European ships commonly used for trade throughout the 15th and 16th centuries. This image is based on a description by Marco Polo.



**Source O.10** An artist's impression of a European marketplace during late medieval times. Marketplaces were the result of new wealth, goods and prosperity brought about by trade.

## The effects of trade and new markets

Such a dramatic increase in trade had many effects on societies all over the world. European journeys of discovery changed their societies in countless ways. For example:

- Europeans began eating potatoes and tomatoes and chewing tobacco from the Americas. People in the Americas were introduced to lemons, sugar and wheat from Europe.
- Cities and towns in Europe expanded in size and wealth as metals, furs, silk, tea, timber and spices poured in from around the world.
- Some merchants became extremely wealthy. The Medici family, traders in Italy, became so powerful through trade that they dominated the way Florence was ruled. Many super-wealthy families became **patrons** of the arts, constructing public buildings and monuments, and funding artists, sculptors and writers.
- Traders brought back new goods, but also disease. During the 14th century, a devastating and deadly plague known as the Black Death spread across Europe, Asia and Africa. This plague was spread from Asia across to the West by traders moving along the Silk Road and related sea routes. Spanish explorers and traders also introduced devastating diseases such as smallpox and measles to the native populations of the Americas, killing many and weakening their armies.



## 8.5 What key beliefs and values emerged and how did they influence societies?

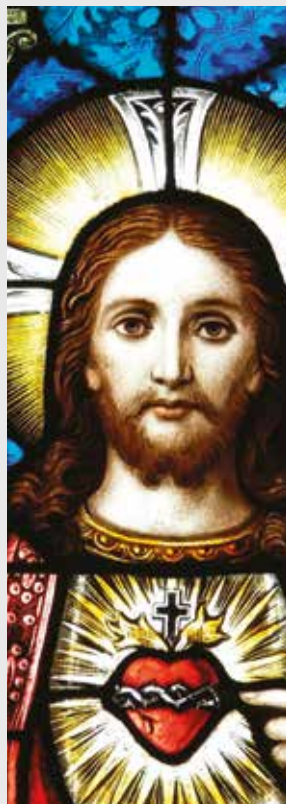
People's beliefs and values affect how they live and interact with others. Over the course of history, tensions have generally arisen when one group regards their own beliefs and values to be more 'correct' than those of others. Beliefs and values can be a strong force for change in society, for better or worse.

During the period from 650 CE to 1750 CE, many new ideas and attitudes emerged and belief systems

took hold that changed societies dramatically. For example, there were changes in the law, in the ways people dressed and behaved, and architecture. In this section we will look generally at a few belief systems and values that went on to influence the development of societies you will be learning about this year. More detail on how these beliefs and values affected each society is provided in Overviews 1, 2 and 3.

### Christianity

- Christianity is a religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, who his followers later called Jesus Christ. Christianity began at the start of the first millennium CE.
- The Bible is the most sacred of Christian texts.
- Christians attend church, baptise their children and hold religious festivals, including Christmas and Easter.
- As Christianity spread throughout the world, it influenced the history, culture and thinking of many Western civilisations. It was the primary religion across all of medieval Europe (including Spain and Italy). Over time, it also became the main religion of the Vikings and the Polynesian societies across the Pacific.
- There are approximately 2.1 billion followers of Christianity around the world today.



**Source O.11** Christianity is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ.

### Hinduism

- Hinduism grew out of the belief system of the earliest people of India. It traces its beginnings back 3500 years and is a complex combination of traditional practices, customs and values.
- Unlike Christianity and Islam, Hinduism has no official founder and no single holy text. It also has many gods. The three most important are Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver) and Shiva (the destroyer).
- People living in Hindu societies are organised according to a strict hierarchy known as a **caste system**, based on their importance and occupation.
- As Hinduism spread throughout the world, it influenced the history, culture and thinking of many civilisations across Asia and beyond. It was the primary religion of the Khmer Empire.
- There are approximately 900 million followers of Hinduism around the world today.

#### Source O.12

A three-faced statue representing the Hindu god Brahma, creator of the universe



### Islam

- Islam is a religion based on a belief in one God known to followers as Allah. Believers of Islam are known as Muslims. They believe that Allah created the universe and that humans must submit to his will.
- Islam was founded in the early 600s in the Middle East by the prophet Muhammad (who was Allah's messenger on Earth). Muhammad was a religious leader who was visited by Allah.
- The Qur'an is the most sacred holy text in Islam. Muslims believe that the content of the Qur'an is the word of Allah as told to Muhammad.
- Muslims attend a mosque and follow the Five Pillars of Islam (central beliefs and duties), including praying five times a day and fasting during the holy month of Ramadan.
- As Islam spread throughout the world, it influenced the history, culture and thinking of many civilisations across the Arabian Peninsula and beyond – from the western Mediterranean region to central Asia. It was the primary religion of the Ottoman Empire.
- There are approximately 1.3 billion followers of Islam around the world today.



**Source O.13** The Qur'an is the most sacred text in Islam. It is regarded as the word of Allah as told to the Prophet Muhammad. Its teachings have influenced many key aspects of Muslim societies, including the Ottoman Empire.

### Buddhism

- Buddhism is a religion based on the teachings of an Indian prince by the name of Siddharta Gautama who was born around 563 BCE. He later became known to his followers as Buddha.
- Buddhists believe that to end pain and suffering, a person must work towards spiritual enlightenment through cycles of reincarnation (rebirth). On reaching this state of enlightenment (known as Nirvana), a person is freed from all the bad things about being human.
- There are two main schools of Buddhism – Theravada Buddhism (the oldest and strictest school) and Mahayana Buddhism (the later school).
- As Buddhism spread throughout Asia, it influenced the history, culture and thinking of many civilisations, including Japan and the Khmer Empire.
- There are approximately 380 million followers of Buddhism around the world today.



**Source O.14** A bronze statue honouring Buddha near the city of Kamakura in Japan. Buddhism influenced many civilisations across Asia, including Japan and the Khmer Empire.



## Shinto

- Shinto is the belief system of the early Japanese people and is widely believed to be at least 2500 years old. It is centred on a belief in gods and sacred ancestor spirits known as *kami*. The name Shinto means 'way of the gods'.
- Like many ancient tribal belief systems, Shinto has no known founder and no sacred text similar to the Bible or the Qur'an. Instead, people make offerings to the gods whenever they want to at shrines built all over Japan.
- Shinto had an enormous impact on the people of Japan. It became a national value system and influenced people's behaviour in many ways.
- There are approximately 4 million followers of Shinto in Japan today; however, the number of people there following a combination of Shinto and Buddhism is around 100 million.

**Source O.15** The floating Otorii Gate in Miajima, Japan, marks the entrance to an important Shinto shrine. Shinto has played a central role in Japanese society since humans first settled there.



## Mongolian shamanism

- Mongolian shamanism is a loose set of religious beliefs practised in many tribal societies across ancient Mongolian lands in central Asia. A shaman is a messenger between the spirit world and the human world. Shamans could be men or women of any age – even young children. In many tribes they held a prominent place in society.
- Shamans were believed to be able to communicate with the spirit world, interpreting messages from dead ancestors, performing healing rituals and predicting the future. The practice usually involves entering a trance-like state. Black, white and yellow shamans represent different spirits – such as war and peace – and are thought to gain their power from different places.
- Mongolian shamanism is still practised to this day in some nomadic tribal groups in Mongolia.

**Source O.16** A white shaman, the shaman of peace, performing a healing ritual



## Aztec beliefs

- The Aztecs believed that nature and human activities on Earth were controlled by many different gods and spirits. Many of these gods were greatly feared by the Aztecs, so they made offerings to please them.
- In order to keep the sun shining and the earth fertile, most Aztec people performed blood-letting ceremonies in their homes. In addition to this, the Aztecs believed that it was necessary to perform public human sacrifices to the gods. Large tiered temples were built specifically for this purpose. The beating hearts of victims were cut out of their chests and their bodies were thrown down the steep stairs of the temple.
- Before the arrival of the Spanish, and the destruction of their civilisation, Aztec beliefs dominated every level of their society.

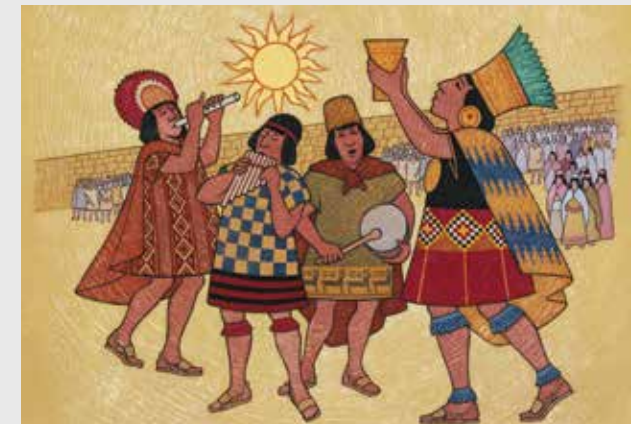
**Source O.17** An Aztec priest offering the beating heart of a human sacrifice to the sun god. Offerings to the gods were a central aspect of Aztec culture before the arrival of the Spanish.



## Inca beliefs

- Like the Aztecs, Inca beliefs were closely tied to nature. The *Sapa Inca* (great ruler) was believed to be a direct link to the Inca sun god known as Inti. The first Inca ruler was believed to be a god who was sent to Earth to teach humans how to farm, use weapons and worship.
- The Inca also made offerings to the gods; however, human sacrifices were extremely rare. They sacrificed animals instead. The *Sapa Inca* would also offer golden cups of maize (corn) beer, cocoa leaves and holy bread to the sun god.
- Before the arrival of the Spanish, and the destruction of their civilisation, Inca beliefs dominated every level of their society, from their daily life to architecture.

**Source O.18** A modern artist's impression of *Sapa Inca* (great ruler) making an offering of maize (corn) beer to the Inca sun god, Inti



## Check your learning O.2

### Remember and understand

- Describe some of the major effects that conflicts and wars had on societies between 650 CE and 1750 CE.
- Identify some of the causes and effects of trade between societies during this period.

### Apply and analyse

- Explain what caused societies in this period to seek contact with one another.
- Think about how war, trade and religion affect societies today. Compare the causes and effects of contact today with the causes and effects of contact between 650 CE and 1750 CE. Are there any similarities or differences?

### Evaluate and create

- Draw a three-circle Venn diagram to compare and contrast the ways in which war, trade and religion affected societies.
- Study the spread of religions across the world. Imagine you are a missionary for one of the religions or belief systems described. Write a short paragraph explaining why you want to spread your religion and justifying why your work will be effective. Think carefully about how it will affect the society you are proposing to convert.



## The Western and Islamic world

Depth study 1  
The Western and Islamic world

This depth study offers a choice of four options:

- The Ottoman Empire
- Renaissance Italy
- The Vikings
- Medieval Europe.

You are required to choose ONE of these civilisations and learn in detail about particular aspects of its development.

## 8.6 What key beliefs and values emerged and how did they influence societies?

Before beginning a detailed historical investigation of your chosen civilisation, it helps to look briefly at some of the key beliefs and values that influenced societies across the Western and Islamic world. In particular, it is useful to look at the types of belief systems and religions that were important to each one, as well as the systems of government, laws and social structures that influenced their development.

In Overview 1, you will be exploring the similarities and differences between civilisations across the Western and Islamic world, and making links between them. This will help you develop a more detailed understanding and appreciation of your chosen society.

### Belief systems and religions

Belief systems and religions were the foundations on which all societies across the Western and Islamic world were built. The principles underpinning these belief systems, and the religious teachings central to them, influenced almost every aspect of life.

Societies across medieval Europe provide some of the strongest examples of how key beliefs and religions influenced the development of societies. The clothes people wore, the foods they ate, the songs they sang and their understanding of the world were all influenced by their Christian beliefs. Christianity was based on the teachings of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Living according to the word of God ensured that a person's soul would go to heaven, whereas a life of sin would lead to an eternity in hell.

**Source O.19** Religion was central to the lives of people all across Europe during medieval times. It influenced what they wore, what they ate and their understanding of the world. Because very few people at the time could read, important stories and lessons from the Bible were told through stained glass windows in churches and cathedrals.



During the medieval period in western Europe, a branch of Christianity known as Catholicism was the only recognised religion. The Catholic Church, led by the Pope in Rome, played a dominant role in the lives of all people – from the richest to the poorest. It was not uncommon for people to pray up to five times a day, and everyone attended mass on Sunday to praise God. Churches, cathedrals, monasteries and nunneries were built across the landscape and played an important role in the community. They provided education, health care and spiritual guidance and support. Since most people could not read, their understanding of the world was shaped by the teachings of the Church.

Support for the Church was so strong that in 1096, at the request of the Pope, tens of thousands of people from across Europe volunteered to fight a series of religious wars known as the **Crusades**. The Crusades were fought between Christians and Muslims to gain control of key religious sites in a region known as the **Holy Land**. These wars went on to influence many aspects of European societies.

The traditional belief system of the Vikings was very different from the Christian beliefs dominant across medieval Europe. Instead of worshipping

one god, the Vikings worshipped many different gods and goddesses. Many of the Viking gods were responsible for different areas of daily life. There were gods that watched over the successful harvest of crops and others that looked after love, health, family and fertility. Others still were relied on for success in battle and wars. For example, the king of the Viking gods, Odin, was the god of magic, poetry and war. The traditional stories Vikings told about gods, giants and monsters are known as Viking (or Norse) mythology. Many of these stories tell of the creation of the world and were recorded in a collection of stories known as the Viking sagas. Viking mythology influenced many aspects of their society. For example, when a warrior was killed in battle he was believed to go to Valhalla – a grand hall in the Viking equivalent of heaven – where dead heroes feasted at long tables. Unlike Christians across medieval Europe, the Vikings did not really have a positive or negative view of the afterlife. Many believed that the dead travelled to a place called *Helheim*, which lay underground. Here their spirits continued to live in a kind of eternal sleep. Important and wealthy Vikings were often cremated (burned) and then buried in longships with items to accompany them into the afterlife, such as horses, clothing, weapons

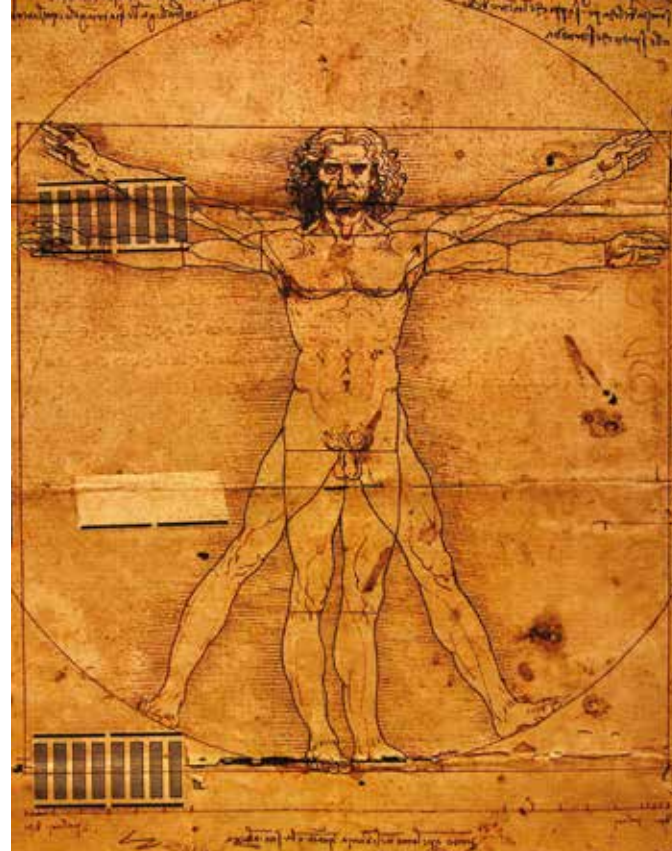


**Source O.20** An artist's impression of the chief Viking god, Odin (left), feasting with the spirits of Viking war heroes in Valhalla



and even servants. Towards the end of the Viking age, most people across the Viking homeland gave up their traditional beliefs and converted to Christianity. This was due to a number of factors, including the work of Christian missionaries and increased contact with Christian societies across Europe. Churches were built and Vikings abandoned more traditional customs (like cremation) in favour of Christian burials.

Almost 300 years after the end of the Viking age, another group of independent tribal communities – this time Turkish – were to join forces and create an empire. The Ottoman Empire, as it became known, was to last for a period of 400 years from 1300 to 1700. The empire began in Anatolia, now part of modern-day Turkey. Across the Ottoman Empire, the religion of Islam had significant influence on the lives of its followers. Muslims believe in one god, Allah, and his prophet Muhammad who brought Allah's message to the people. Muhammad's teachings were collected after his death and published in a book called the Qur'an. According to the Qur'an, Muslims across the Ottoman Empire were forbidden from drinking alcohol, were expected to fast (go without food) from dawn to dusk during the holy month of Ramadan, were expected to give a portion of their wealth to the poor, were to perform ritual prayers five times a day, and were forbidden to gamble or eat certain foods (such as pork). On holy days, Muslims were expected to gather at the mosque to worship Allah.



**Source O.22** During the Renaissance period, the study of art, philosophy, science and music began to challenge the teachings and long-held authority of the Church. Leonardo da Vinci is perhaps the most famous thinker of the Renaissance. His paintings, scientific research and inventions have inspired generations. In this drawing of the Vitruvian Man, he examined the relationship between geometry and the human form.

On the doorstep of the Ottoman Empire, on a narrow strip of land known as the Italian Peninsula, was a collection of independent cities and surrounding areas, known as **city-states**. Although there were significant differences in the way each of these city-states was ruled, one characteristic common to all of them was a belief in a Christian god. Hundreds of years before the formation of these city-states, in 394 CE, Roman **emperor** Constantine had converted to Christianity and made it the official religion of all people living in the Roman Empire. This of course included all people living on the Italian Peninsula. From this time onwards, the Roman Catholic Church began to control every aspect of life in Italy, and the Pope – its spiritual leader – was based in Rome.

From around 1400 though, people in many different city-states began to question the authority of the Church. Although they were still very

**Source O.21** The Sultan Ahmed Mosque (also known as the Blue Mosque) in Istanbul, Turkey, was built during Ottoman rule. It is evidence of the importance of Islam to Ottoman society and remains one of the most important religious sites in Turkey today.

religious, people became more critical of the Church and began to question its values. Many became more interested in seeking the answers to spiritual questions through the study of art, philosophy, science and music. This period became known as the **Renaissance** – a French word meaning 'rebirth'. The Renaissance period across the Italian city-states led to a number of other movements such as **Humanism**, the **Scientific Revolution**, the **Enlightenment** and eventually the **Reformation**. Each of these movements changed and reduced the power and influence of the Church in their own ways.

## Governments, laws and social structures

Governments, laws and social structures were important in societies across the Western and Islamic world as they helped to create order, define the roles and responsibilities of citizens, and set out systems for reward and punishment. Over time, laws and teachings evolved and became more complex. In some societies, these laws were passed on by word of mouth, while in others they were written down. Often the line between religious beliefs and laws and government was not clearly defined. Governments and laws were not only influenced by religious beliefs and customs, but also influenced them.



During the medieval period in Europe, society was organised according to a system known as **feudalism**. Feudalism began in Europe around 900 and spread across Europe over the next 150 years. Under feudalism, society was organised according to a strict hierarchy (social structure). The king was the most important member of society. He owned all of the land in his **kingdom** and was believed to rule with the authority of God.

In order to run his kingdom effectively, a king granted land to the nobles directly below him, for which they provided him with military support and loyalty. These nobles, in turn, provided land to the **knights** below them for protection. These knights then provided land to the peasants below them to live on in return for taxes in the form of money or crops. The Catholic Church also had its own land and charged taxes (known as tithes) from peasant farmers who worked the land. The Church controlled about a third of the land across Europe and had its own courts and law.

In the early history of the Vikings, their society was made up of a number of independent tribal communities, led by a chieftain or king whose role was to protect people. Like many societies across medieval Europe, Viking tribal communities were organised according to a social hierarchy. Within each tribal community there were three social classes – **jarls** (noblemen), **karls** (farmers, merchants and craftsmen) and **thralls** (slaves, prisoners and criminals). In order to rule effectively, the chieftain or king depended on support from the **jarls**. Viking society was ruled over by local assemblies

**Source O.23** Societies across Europe during the medieval period were organised according to a system known as feudalism. The king was the most powerful member of society and stood at the top of the feudal hierarchy. At the bottom were peasants. This painting from the late 15th century shows peasants working the land outside a castle.





Source O.24 A 19th-century artist's impression of a Viking thing being held in Iceland

(similar to parliaments) known as *things*. Each *thing* met once a year to make new laws or change old laws, resolve disputes, and schedule marriages and divorces. Until the 12th century, Viking laws were not written down; instead they were recited by a law speaker at each *thing* so that all could hear. Unlike societies in medieval Europe, all Vikings were subject to the law – even the king.

Ottoman society was complex. At its largest, the Ottoman Empire expanded to cover dozens of provinces across Asia, Europe and northern Africa. At the absolute top of the Ottoman political system stood the sultan. The sultan could appoint or dismiss any official at his pleasure. Every decree or law came from him. In addition, the sultan was both supreme military commander and the religious leader, responsible only to God. Under the sultan was a complex and strictly defined group of officials and councils that carried out the administration and day-to-day running of the empire. Within the enormous territory of the Ottoman Empire lived many different groups of people, each with their own customs, beliefs and history – such as Christians and Jews. The empire was Islamic but promoted religious tolerance. To hold the empire together, the Ottomans developed unique social and political systems. The millet system, for example, enabled non-Muslim communities within the empire to govern themselves, collect their own taxes, own property and have their own courts to deal with small matters. Women had fewer rights than men. Nevertheless, they exerted strong influence over their families, and at various times the women of the sultan's harems had considerable political influence.



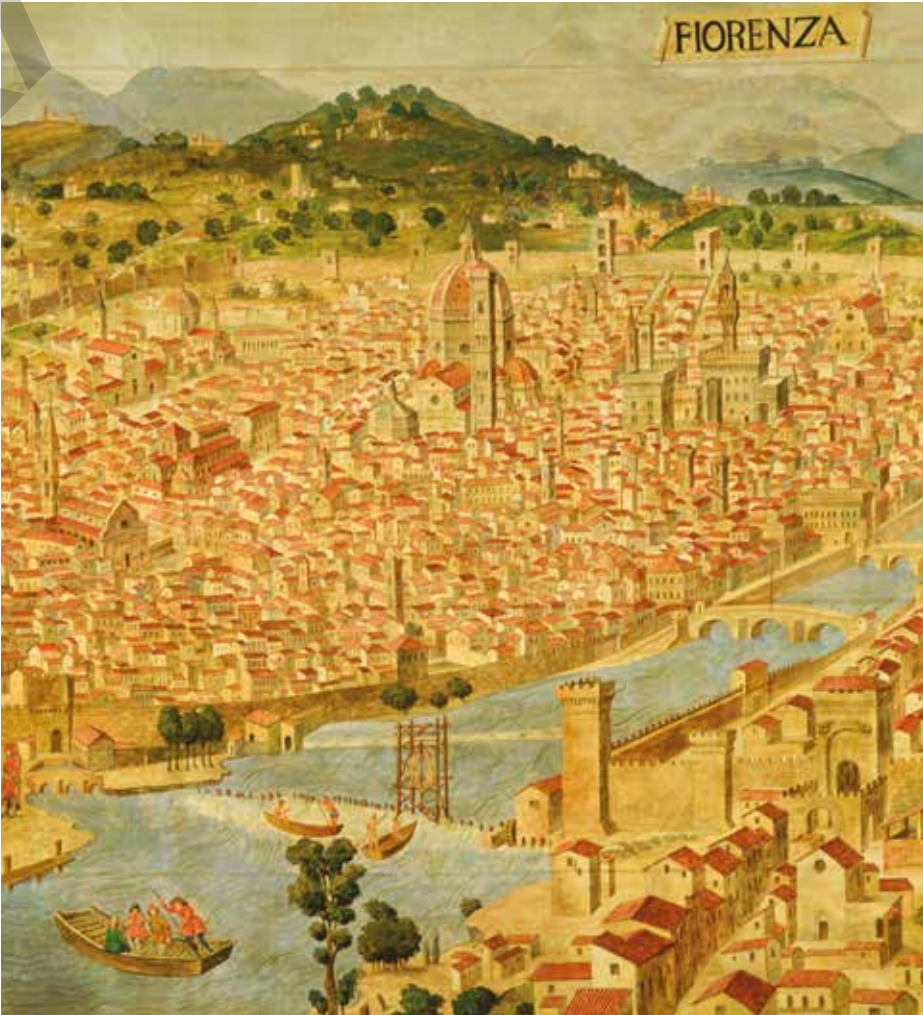
Source O.25 At the absolute top of the Ottoman political system was the sultan. Every decree or law came from him. This portrait shows Mehmed II (also known as Mehmed the Conqueror). He is most famous for capturing Constantinople in 1453, when he was only 21 years old. He renamed the city Istanbul and made it the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

Slavery was also an important feature of Ottoman society – one in five people in Istanbul were slaves.

During the Renaissance period, the Italian Peninsula was divided into city-states, each with its own ruler and government. These city-states had formed over time as a result of marriages, political alliances and conflicts. As a result, each developed its own system of government – for example, some were ruled by kings, others were ruled as republics, and others were ruled by the Pope (who was the religious leader of the Roman Catholic Church). These city-states often changed borders and there were many changing political alliances between the Church, ruling families and merchants (who formed powerful organisations known as **guilds**).

Source O.26 City-states of the Italian Peninsula during the 15th century

| Name of city-state                   | Features   |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Kingdom of Naples                    | The only city-state to officially have a king  |
| The Papal States                     | Rome – governed by the Pope as head of the Roman Catholic Church   |
| Duchy of Milan                       | Ruled over by a duke   |
| Two republics:<br>Florence<br>Venice | Governed by elected representatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a council called the <i>signoria</i> in Florence</li><li>• a leader (elected for life) and a council in Venice.</li></ul> |



Wealthy citizens flaunted their money and power by becoming supporters, or 'patrons', of artists and intellectuals. Because of this support, thinkers and scholars were able to spend their days avoiding ordinary jobs, instead travelling around Italy, studying ancient ruins and rediscovering ancient Greek and Roman texts. Italian merchants and bankers brought back exotic goods from their travels, as well as ideas from ancient classical texts they found preserved in the great libraries of ancient cities such as Constantinople. When Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Empire in 1453, many of the Greek scholars fled and found safety in Italy. The ideals and values of ancient classical philosophers, politicians, poets and writers inspired and encouraged the thinkers of Renaissance Italy. Scholars studied and discussed these ideals and applied them to their own world, influencing governments, laws and social structures.

Source O.27 During the Renaissance period, the Italian Peninsula was divided into several city-states. This 15th-century artwork shows one of those city-states, Florence, at the height of the Renaissance.



## 8.7 Which significant people, groups and ideas from this period have influenced the world today?

Across all human civilisations regardless of their location, significant people, groups and ideas have influenced the way in which many people live. They may have changed the way people were governed, their beliefs and people's place within society. Many of these significant individuals and groups were

forward thinking. They were not afraid to explore new ideas and ways of doing things, and were willing to take on difficult challenges. Throughout the Western and Islamic world, significant people, groups and ideas brought about a wide range of changes that have helped shape the world today. Some of these individuals are explored in this section.

### Significant people

#### Medieval Europe: Charlemagne (740–814)

Charlemagne was born in 740 in the town of Herstal, in modern-day Belgium. He was the son of the Frankish king, Pepin the Short, and inherited the Frankish kingdom on his father's death. He has been called the greatest medieval king because he expanded his kingdom and it rose to dominate Western Europe. In 800 he was crowned Holy Roman Emperor by the Pope, confirming him as the most powerful king in the Christian world.

Charlemagne introduced many political and social reforms. He encouraged the arts and education, and funded great building programs. He also set up a monetary system to promote trade, built roads and bridges, and encouraged better farming methods. More than anything though, Charlemagne is remembered today for ensuring that Christianity and the Church would continue to play an important role in Western civilisation.

Charlemagne died in Germany in 814 of a lung infection after ruling for 47 years.



Source O.28 Charlemagne

#### The Vikings: Leif Ericson (970–1020)

Leif Ericson was born in 970 in Iceland. He was the second son of the Viking explorer Erik the Red. Leif was also an explorer. He is widely believed to be the first European to discover the North American continent. Archaeological evidence has shown that there was a Viking settlement founded by Leif Ericson in Newfoundland, Canada, 500 years before Christopher Columbus voyaged to the Americas.

Leif Ericson is considered significant today for his discoveries of unknown areas that later became known as the 'New World'. This encouraged other Vikings to also make the journey.

He is credited with spreading Christianity to Greenland.

Leif Ericson is believed to have died in 1020, probably in Greenland.



Source O.29 Leif Ericson

#### The Ottoman Empire: Suleiman the Magnificent (1494–1566)

Suleiman was born in the city of Trabzon, Turkey, in 1494. He was the tenth and longest-reigning sultan of the Ottoman Empire. In the West, he became known as 'Suleiman the Magnificent' because of his influence and authority – he ruled the Ottoman Empire at the height of its political and military power. In the East, he became known as 'The Lawgiver' because he completely restructured the Ottoman legal system. Many of these laws still form the foundation of Turkish law today.

Suleiman also promoted the growth of Islamic faith. His rule heralded a golden age of art, learning and building. Magnificent mosques, bridges and aqueducts remain to this day – the best known of which is the Süleymaniye Mosque. It is one of the most visited sights in the capital Istanbul today.

Suleiman died in 1566 at the age of 72 during a battle in Hungary.



Source O.30 Suleiman the Magnificent

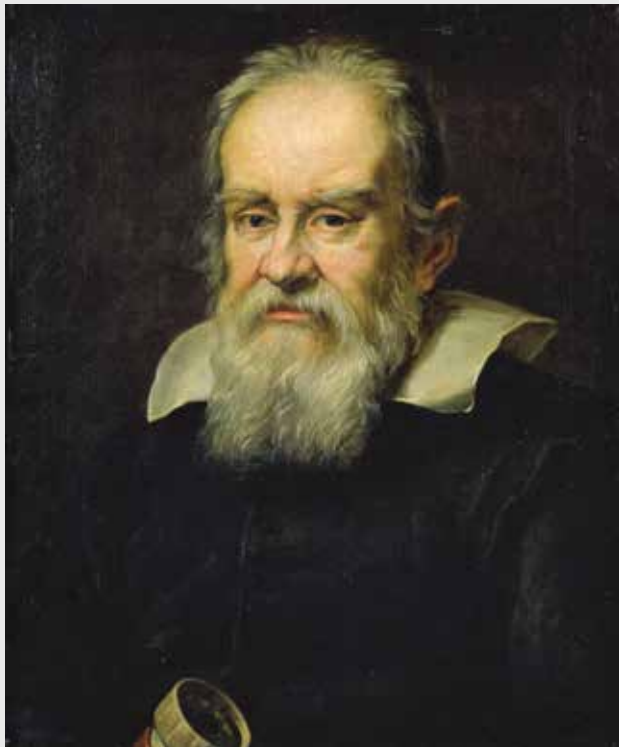


Renaissance Italy: Galileo Galilei (1564–1642)

Galileo Galilei was born in Pisa, Italy, in 1564. He began to study medicine at university but soon changed his focus to the study of science, philosophy and mathematics. Galileo made significant contributions to the study of physics, mathematics and astronomy. He invented the telescope and made many important observations about the planets. His ideas sparked an important movement in Italy known as the **Scientific Revolution**.

Galileo is considered significant today because many of our modern theories and understandings of the Earth and space are based on his work. Although condemned by the Church for his scientific theories, he was later acknowledged as a great thinker and scientific leader.

Galileo died in 1642 near Florence in Italy.



Source O.31 Galileo Galilei

text to come

Check your learning O.3

Remember and understand

- 1 Describe the role played by religion in each of the societies discussed in this overview.
- 2 Identify the changes that each of the significant individuals in this section introduced to their societies.

Apply and analyse

- 3 Select three ideas or events from the Western and Islamic world that continue to influence the world today. Explain who you think they are significant to and why.

- 4 Try to identify one or two characteristics that you think the significant individuals discussed in this section share.

Evaluate and create

- 5 Why do you think the beliefs and social structures of societies across the Western and Islamic world differed so greatly? What factors might have contributed to these differences?
- 6 Explain whether you believe religion helped or hindered the progress of these societies from ancient to modern times. Provide evidence from the text to support your view.