

# The Hundred Years War and The Black Plague

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# The Continuation

- We began this unit by discussing feudalism and the way the Duke of Normandy, William the Conqueror, deployed this mode of governance after his conquest of England in 1066.
- Until 1453, the British nobility held lands in England and France. In 1066, William the Conqueror had a dual role. He was the Emperor of England and a Duke of the French crown. The Hundred Years War was the continuation of some four hundred years of an effort by the British nobility to hold on to those titles. They failed to arrest or resist the growth of a state that the French royal house constructed at the cost of feudal lords, including the Duke of Normandy.


# The Challenge and Change

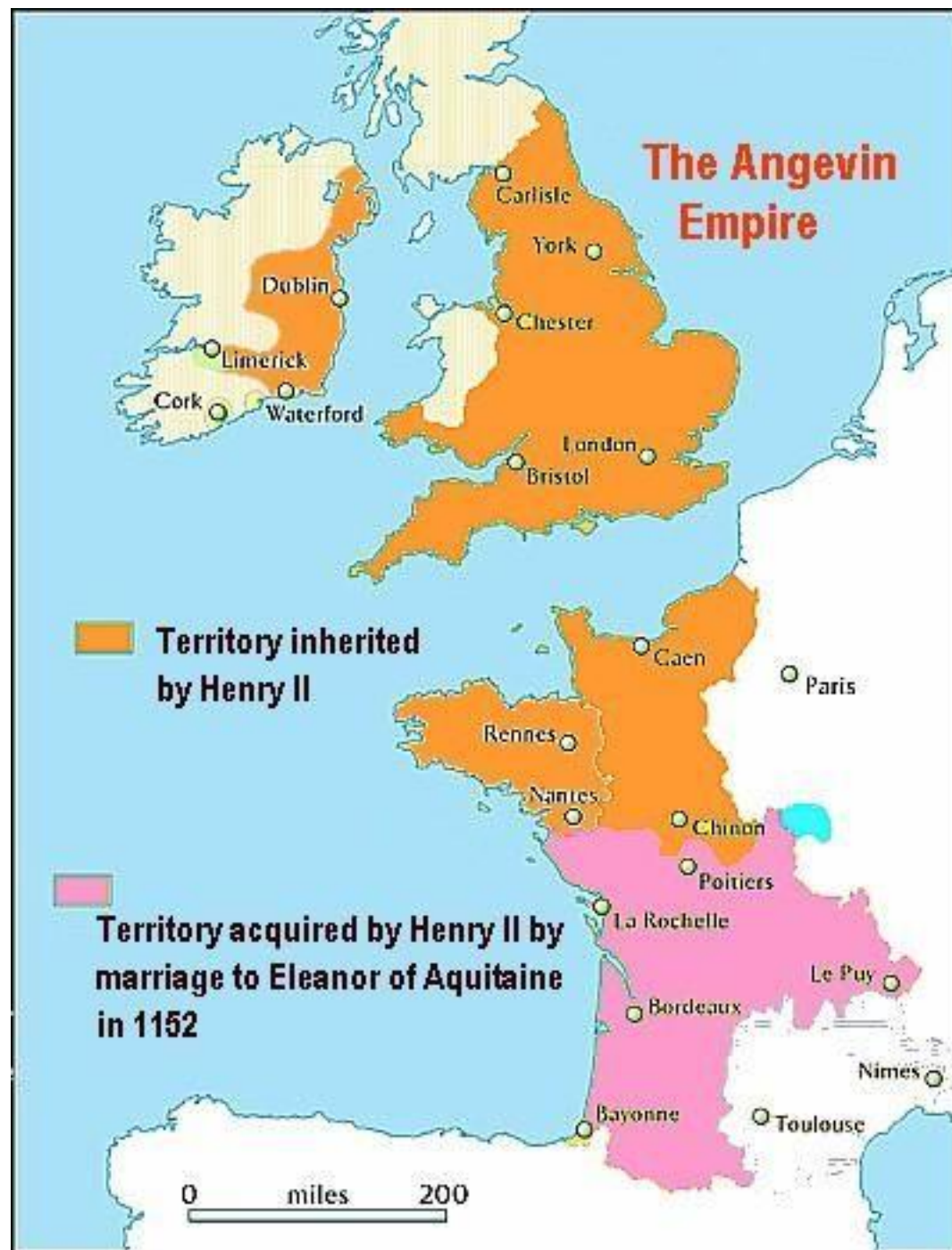
- On both sides, the struggle over French titles was a test of nobility and their loyalty to the crown. During the specific period of the hundred years' war, the nobility and the rulers also adjusted to the emerging realities of the post-Black Death world. The Black Plague occurred amid this war and affected the state, warfare, and the economy. It marked demographic and economic changes in society and tested their resilience as people faced the ravages of the pandemic and recurring famines.

# The Norman/Angevin Dynasty (1066-1216): The Angevin Empire

- The Angevin Empire is the name historians used for the Norman/British nobility's French possessions.
- This dual role of the Norman/British monarchy generated rivalry between the dynasties in which the French finally had the upper hand.




  
 The Angevin (Plantagenet) possessions in France and England in XII century



# End of the Angevin Empire

- Philip II of France defeated Henry II's son, John, in the Anglo-French War (1213–1214). Besides Gascony in southern Aquitaine, John lost control of most of his continental possessions. This defeat also imposed the Magna Carta 1215 on him and a change in the ruling dynasty. This loss of French possessions also set the scene for further conflicts between England and France, leading up to the Hundred Years' War.
- By the Treaty of Paris of 1259, the King of England, however, continued to be the Duke of Aquitaine. For their French possessions, the Plantagenet royal house of England (1216-1485) owed feudal homage to the kings of France of the House of Capet.

# Anglicization

- Historian Chris Given-Wilson argues that the treaty of 1259 marked the beginning of “a truly English nobility” (Chris Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Later Middle Ages*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987).
- The process of anglicization, however, took a long time. French or Anglo-Norman remained their language. Although English became the language of legal proceedings in the parliament in 1362, it was towards the early fifteenth century that the nobility adopted English as their language.



# The Hundred Years War, 1377-1453

- The Hundred Years War began in 1337 during the reign of Edward III of England and Philip VI of France while England and France had been going through massive political and economic changes.
- The Hundred Years War mostly occurred in the late Middle Ages 1296-1417. Out of this, Edward reigned until 1377, when he died. His grandson Richard II then took the throne as Black Prince, his son, had died a year earlier. The war would intermittently continue until 1453.
- The war witnessed changing ideas about politics and government, including broad changes in the entire social order.

# Why?

- The twin objectives of the Hundred Years' War were to maintain the remaining English foothold in the Duchy of Aquitaine and to support the English kings' claims to the French throne through inheritance.
- The Royal House of France kept expanding its control and regained total control over its territory, except Calais, by 1453.

# Assertive Monarchies

- The monarchy had come to personify “national consciousness and diverging methods of governance” (Christopher Thomas Allmand, *The Hundred Years War, England and France at War c. 1300-c.1450*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- Allmand elaborates that the national consciousness in both France and England was enhanced because of “the breakdown of the historic feudal order” and its replacement by a “growing national characteristic which was the fundamental cause of the long conflict...”

# The Church

- On both sides, the monarchs preferred asserting their authority over different power centers. Making feudal lords, including the Duke of Aquitaine, pay homage was one manifestation of it. Defying the church was another example of this growing trend.
- In aligning with the chivalric order and the knights' melee or jousts, a plaisance or an outrance, Edward III had joined a burgeoning political change of his time, indicating the receding authority of the church and growing influence of princes and the sources of their power.

# The Church

- For two centuries, the tournaments had attracted the Papal attention. They had been subjected to prohibitions while many knights had been excommunicated and denied church funerals (Juliet Barker, *The Tournament in England 1100-1400*, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008)).
- Chivalric order in England had defied the third Lateran Council 1179 and subsequent reinforcement of the ban on tournaments. British Clergy adjusted its role to accommodate the power and prestige of the institution. The chivalric order joined the monarchy there in an ongoing power struggle. Like monarchs, Barker adds, the knights persisted in expanding their freedom of action. The king advanced their cause, when not opposing it, by licensing the events, participating in them, and providing resources in kind or financial allocations.

# The Church

- The French were ahead of their English counterparts in terms of asserting royal authority. Beginning with Edward's maternal grandfather, the Capetian, Philip the Fair (IV) 1285-1314, France had defied the Papal Bulls to tax ecclesiastical lands and make church officials subject to the King's law. **This trend reflected the development of radical political ideas about where legitimate authority lies** besides engaging in an intense spiritual debate about human salvation. Monarchical power had seen an upswing in the late Middle Ages.
- The thirteenth century witnessed the consolidation of French territorial sovereignty to the extent, that "Any **pretensions to independent ecclesiastical jurisdiction within the kingdom had come to be seen as unacceptable if the king's sovereignty were seen to be thereby infringed**" (Joseph Canning, *Ideas of Power in the Late Middle Ages, 1296-1417*, (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

# Tax Universally

- A major debate that Canning deliberates upon is over the powers of a sovereign emperor like Philip IV of France to tax universally and administer justice within his domain.
- In a manifestation of his authority, Philip IV decided to tax clergy in violation of the decisions taken by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215.
- Pope Boniface VIII opposed his writ and in a Papal Bull issued in April 1296 forbade secular rulers to tax the clergy and the clergy to pay such taxes without the permission of the apostolic see. As Philip IV held his ground, the papacy exempted him from the enforcement of this Bull in 1297.

# The Royal Justice

- In another manifestation of rising monarchical authority, Philip IV put on trial and imprisoned Bishop Bernard Saisset in 1301 in violation of the established privilege of clergy to be tried solely by ecclesiastical courts under canon law.
- Philip IV had thus violated the papal authority a second time. Boniface VIII counterattacked in 1301 with a Papal Bull—*Ausculata Fili*—Listen Son—to affirm that the king was subject to the pope in both temporal and spiritual matters. He reinforced it further in November 1302 with another bull *Unam Sanctum* (One Holy) stipulating, “...the secular power was derived from and exercised at the command of the priesthood.”
- In retaliation, Canning recounts, Philip IV resorted to the use of force in 1303 at Anagni, the residence of the Pope, near Rome. Pope Boniface VIII died a few weeks later. In 1306, Pope Clement V backed down giving temporal power a free hand in France.



# The Church and the Monarchs

- Following papal reforms of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the church had evolved into a legal and governmental institution in which the pope asserted “plenitude of power.” The term had been initially used by Leo I 440-61 and again in the decretals of Innocent III.
- The debate about the Papal authority that ensued divided scholars, pro and con the Pope or the Monarchs. The ecclesiastic camp advocated the “hierocratic interpretation,” which pointed to the aggrandized role of the pope. The Royalists preferred a dualist model that tracked temporal and spiritual power as being both derived from God but as existing in parallel. The “spiritual power” had no right to interfere in the exercise of a secular ruler’s power.

# The Church and the Monarchs

- Marsilius de Padua (1270/90-1342) conceived a form of government in which the Papal claim to jurisdiction would be excluded. He viewed government in purely human and this-worldly terms. While he did not exclude God, he visualized that God “remained in the background as the remote cause (*causa remota*) of political societies and the government set-up exercised by the human will...” (Canning).

# The Church and the Monarchs

- Dante Alighieri, the poet of *Divina Comedia*, was another great name in the monarchical camp. In the spring of 1317, Dante authored “*De Monarchia*.” Answering the question as to where legitimate authority lies, Dante rejected the claim of the papacy to jurisdiction and superiority over the emperor.
- Dante extended his reasoning beyond the Christian era and postulated that Rome was a perfect monarchy at the time of Christ’s birth because “...for the atonement to be valid, Christ had to be condemned and punished by legitimate, universal authority, namely the Emperor Tiberius” (Canning, p.68).
- The princes had found grounds to govern independently of the Church.

# A Secular War

- A large segment of the Hundred Years War falls in Babylonian Captivity, the Avignon Papacy 1309-1376, and the Western Schism that followed 1378-1417.
- Pope Clement VI had attempted to mediate between the belligerents in 1344, but the conference failed to reconcile their differences. The prices settled their disputes on the battlefield.

# The Feudal Lords

- Consolidation of Royal power that began under the French dynasty of Capet, continued under the Valois dynasty, requiring dukes to abide by their sworn loyalty to the French crown and extend military assistance in times of need against an enemy of France, abide also by the decrees of the King's courts and above all of the Parlement de Paris, the Supreme Court and "the homage due from the great feudatories to their king should be 'liege'" (Allmand).
- Edward III knew this enhanced neighboring monarchy as the Duke-King, the Duke of Aquitaine. His father had met the liege by sending him as Prince Edward to pay homage to Gascony in September 1325.

# A Delinquent Feudal Lord

- By 1337, the French viewed Edward in violation of his liege to the throne because he had protected the rebellious Duke of Robert of Artois. Philip VI thus seized the Duchy of Aquitaine and deprived Duke Edward of his French holdings.
- Allmand views the French action as **“something remarkably ‘modern,’ the laying down of the foundations of a national state under one monarch whose territorial authority could only be exercised through annexation or conquest.”**
- Another reason identified by Allmand is the French desire to control their prosperous ports including Bordeaux and the trading of wine and woolen cloth.

# I am the King as well.

- In protest of perceived French injustice to Duke Edward, King Edward III of England sought to right a bigger wrong the French, he believed, had done to him in denying the French throne. He self-proclaimed himself King of France in the thirteenth year of his coronation as King of England.
- While the French had asserted that under Salic Law ascension to the throne through the female line was impossible, Edward III viewed it as the denial of his rightful inheritance through his mother. When his maternal uncle Charles IV died in 1328, he left no direct heir as king of France. Edward III appeared to have “indeed perhaps the best claim, to succeed him” (Allmand). Philip VI, the count of Valois, Edward III surmised, had usurped his throne.

# Two King Prisoners

- After the Black Prince routed the French at Poitiers in 1356, Edward's tournament in celebration included two imprisoned kings of Scotland and France as spectators. The French King had joined their ally Scotland to frustrate English campaigns against them but under Edward, the maneuver failed.



# The Treaty of Bretigny

- Getting back some of the land lost in the Treaty of 1259, boosted the morale of the nobility. Crecy and Poitiers were great victories. While the military campaign of 1360 turned out to be a failure, Edward achieved major gains at the Treaty of Bretigny. He retained lands ceded to him in 1358 with a ransom for the imprisoned king John reduced to three million golden crowns (Allmand).
- Edward also “agreed” to renounce his claim to the French crown. In turn, the French king abandoned his demand for sovereignty over the land ceded to England (Allmand). Edward won a larger Aquitaine for him to hold in sovereignty. This “perpetual liberty” removed the immediate threat of confiscation.

# Ending the War

- The campaign of 1360 was the last Edwardian foray into the French territory. He died in 1377. By then, the French had confiscated the Duchy of Aquitaine again and emerged as a stronger force to face the British. Edward's successors would intermittently continue the war until 1453 when it finally ended with the French gaining control over their territory.
- Calais remained a British possession until 1558.

# Ending the War

Joan of Arc was a unique and decisive participant in this war. She enabled the French to break the siege of Orléans in 1429 and crown the King at Reims. The coronation restored the French monarchy and empowered Charles VII to assert control over French territories.

In 1430, the Burgundians captured Joan of Arc and later handed her over to the English. A year later, the British tried and executed her.

The Church canonized her in May 1920.

# The Commoners

- The war took a heavy toll on the commoners. During the raid on noncombatants, the antagonists believed that attacking taxpayers meant attacking a military resource.
- In 1355 Black Prince's chevauchee (military raid) devastated 18,000 square kilometers of territory.
- Green underlines that multiple attacks by mercenaries were another burden on the common man. They also had to contribute to meet the cost of the war. In Brittany, between the 1340s and 1350s, the commoners paid 80% of the cost of the garrisons.

# The Commoners

- People were also victims of sieges which blurred the line between combatants and noncombatants as they would have to pay ransoms in addition to suffering enormously.
- Revolts inspired a new sense of identity and political awareness in the lower classes. They believed the rulers had failed to protect noncombatants. Similarly, the 1450 Cade rebellion was provoked by the loss of Normandy.

# The Black Plague

- Black Death 1349-53 affected the period under review in multiple ways. Following the Black Death, England's population which had reached some five million by 1300, went down by half. The question remains who it hit the most. The serf farmers were the worst-hit segment of society in terms of lives lost. Ironically, however, the Black Death also resulted in the ultimate decline of serfdom. For the nobility, the impact was adjustable.

# Ending Serfdom

- Wilson says that the growth of serfdom in medieval England corresponded to the amount of land held in a demesne (p. 37). While life had been becoming harder for the peasantry in the thirteenth century because of rising inflation and rents, by the end of the century their plight became near continuous because of the kings' wars in Scotland and France. The serfdom declined during the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and fluctuated afterward, as reflected in the demands of the rebels of 1381. Wilson indicates that it did not vanish until late in the fifteenth century.
- In 1574, Elizabeth I freed the last of the serfs.

# The Black Plague Economy

- The Black Plague posed a major socioeconomic and environmental challenge to England as much as to other parts of Europe (John Aberth, *An Environmental History of the Middle Ages: The War of Nature*, (London, Routledge, 2011). England may have lost about one-third of her population in these critical years” (Allmand). While it reduced the manpower pool, it also triggered long-term socioeconomic changes. England responded by resorting to less labor-intensive economic products but struggled with the aftermath of the plague.



# Protecting Royal Interests

- In another sign of emerging state power, Edward III decided to weigh on the side of the lords facing drastic shortages of labor. The Statutes of Labourers 1351 fixed the wages of labor, restraining the employers who would have liked to pay more. The Statutes also required that the able-bodied men could not refuse to work. They had to face jail sentences if they were to escape labor.
- Edward III was able to resume his French campaigns, keeping the focus on enemy territory, booty, and victory. By 1355, the Black Prince mounted a chevauchee through France departing from Bordeaux and staged a major victory at Poitiers in 1356.

# Economic Change

- Green considered that the famine preceding the Black Death seems to have hit the nobility more than the Black Death itself (David Green, *The Hundred Years War: A People's History*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).
- Edward II's forces in Scotland felt the impact as purveyance reduced to minimal or nothing affecting the men and the cattle equally. The royal treasury paid some 28000 pounds to replace the horseshoes that were lost because of bad weather and poor nourishment.
- Wilson argues that at the peak period of the Black Death during the fourteenth century, the nobility benefited from changing patterns of economy. Wool-based production increased over time.

# Economic Change

- The Black Death 1348-49, Aberth tells us in *An Environmental History of the Middle Ages*, wiped out half of the population of Europe and the Middle East within a few years during the mid-fourteenth century (John Aberth, *An Environmental History of the Middle Ages: The Crucible of Nature*, (London: Routledge, 2013).
- It led to enormous technological and other societal changes. The pandemic necessitated drastic reconfigurations in human lifestyles, including the development and use of labor-saving devices, but it also created a “silver lining” of new opportunities, such as more land and greater surpluses available to peasant landholders that encouraged initiative.

# Economic Change

- Aberth joins the great famine of 1315-16 and the Black Death of 1348-49. According to him, medieval agriculture entered a prolonged period of contraction after the famine, when during the worst years of 1315-16 harvest yields declined by as much as 40-45 percent in the South and 72-89 percent in the North of England. Arable cultivation gave way to pasture farming, which required less labor and hands-on management. Villages shrank or were deserted of inhabitants, trends that were greatly accelerated by the far greater demographic crisis of the Black Death. Reports of cannibalism were recorded in England and other European countries.

# Economic Challenge

- Aberth reminds us that the 'Great Mortality' that first struck Europe in 1348 was undoubtedly the greatest natural catastrophe to occur perhaps throughout human history until then. In the immediate aftermath of the Black Death, properties lay vacant due to a lack of tenants available to pay their rents. Repeated plague kept the population growth throughout the fifteenth century flat. In England, 2000 villages were deserted while thousands more were depopulated and reduced in size. The animal murrains stalked the land: 5000 sheep died in one pasture. Livestock also suffered from a lack of herders, due to human mortality.

# Economic Challenge

- Champion lands suffered more than the woodland settlements. The woodland economy became more lucrative in the scarce labor market than the cultivated one. By the fifteenth century, the landlords resorted to evicting the remaining tenants to create enclosures that might put the land to more productive use, moving away from arable to a pastoral economy. Lands available concentrated into fewer of the yeoman or gentry class.

# Economic Challenge

- Aberth finds in the English manorial records that livestock farming, sheep, cow, and pig heads increased markedly after the Black Death, pasture being less labor-intensive than arable agriculture.
- Rising demand for meat also drove this trend. From rural to urban, the meat supply increased and commercialized. The proportion of working to non-working animals went through a radical change by the middle of the fifteenth century when it represented a 160 percent increase in non-working (i.e., meat, milk, wool-producing) livestock. Regional and international trade in meat and cattle also developed in this period. People housed animals separately from their residences. The fourteenth century saw the height of the wool trade.

# Economic Challenge

- Black Death, says Wilson, had hit the greater landlords less and more the smaller knights and esquires, the gentry, whom the greater landlords bought out reducing their status in the parliament and society. Post-plague, the gentry numbered between 2300 and 2500 families or about 0.1 percent of the country's reduced population.



# The Black Plague

- John Aberth writes that 1315-1322 was a period of great famine. 1347-1353 was the outbreak of the Black Death which reoccurred in 1360, 1363 and 1369 and in 1370 there was another famine in England then in 1374-1379 there was a fourth break of plague in England.
- The peasants' revolt was from 1381.

# Looking Forward

- The late medieval society, says Aberth, avoided its apocalypse because it was able to transcend its crises rather than simply being transformed by it.
- Western society, he adds, was confronted with the crises of epic disasters, yet somehow managed to cope in a world that seemed to be collapsing around them ... If we can understand how they acted out the paradox of despair and hope, perhaps we can understand how they found the courage to face the Four Horsemen of Apocalypse and, in so doing transcended the Middle Ages to fully emerge into the modern world. They continued, while facing challenges squarely, carrying on with their lives and proving remarkably resilient in the process.”

# Looking Forward

- In the epitaph to his book, Aberth concluded that medieval Europeans' firm belief in a life after death gave them the courage and confidence to master their fears, face up to their daunting challenges, and, above all, take advantage of new opportunities, economic or otherwise, that opened in the midst or aftermath of plagues, famines, and wars. In another paradox of the late medieval society, spiritual certainties made material gains possible. This was not a time of transition to something completely different, still less a decline or waning of a culture that had enabled Europeans to come to the very brink of the Apocalypse and then step back. This was transcendence.

# The Crusades

- We have seen the Black Plague transforming the land and labor equation of feudalism. The nobility moved away from labor-intensive agriculture to dairy and wool farming and adjusted to the decline of serfdom by renting out their lands. The Black Plague failed to break the forward march of the late Middle Ages.
- The Black Plague only marginally impacted the Hundred Years War which continued intermittently until 1453. The monarchs in the process sought to strengthen their hold over their territories, and power centers including clergy and feudal lords. We will continue this story some other time.
- In our next session, we will discuss The Crusades.