

Trade and Towns

Preview

- Main Idea / Reading Focus
- Growth of Trade
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- Growth of Towns and Cities
- Daily Life in Cities

Trade and Towns

Main Idea

Towns and cities grew during the high Middle Ages as the amount of trade increased between Europe and other continents.

Reading Focus

- Which cities saw the initial growth of trade in the Middle Ages?
- What led to the growth of towns and cities in the Middle Ages?
- What was daily life like in medieval cities?

Growth of Trade

Trade began to grow in Europe after the Crusades. Most of this trade was controlled by merchants from Italy and Northern Europe.

Italian Trade Cities

- Italians among earliest to build thriving trade
- Sailors set out to find valuable goods from distant lands
- Venetian sailors traveled to Byzantine Empire, Muslim lands
- Brought back silk and spices from China, India
- Loaded onto Venetian wagons

Selling Goods

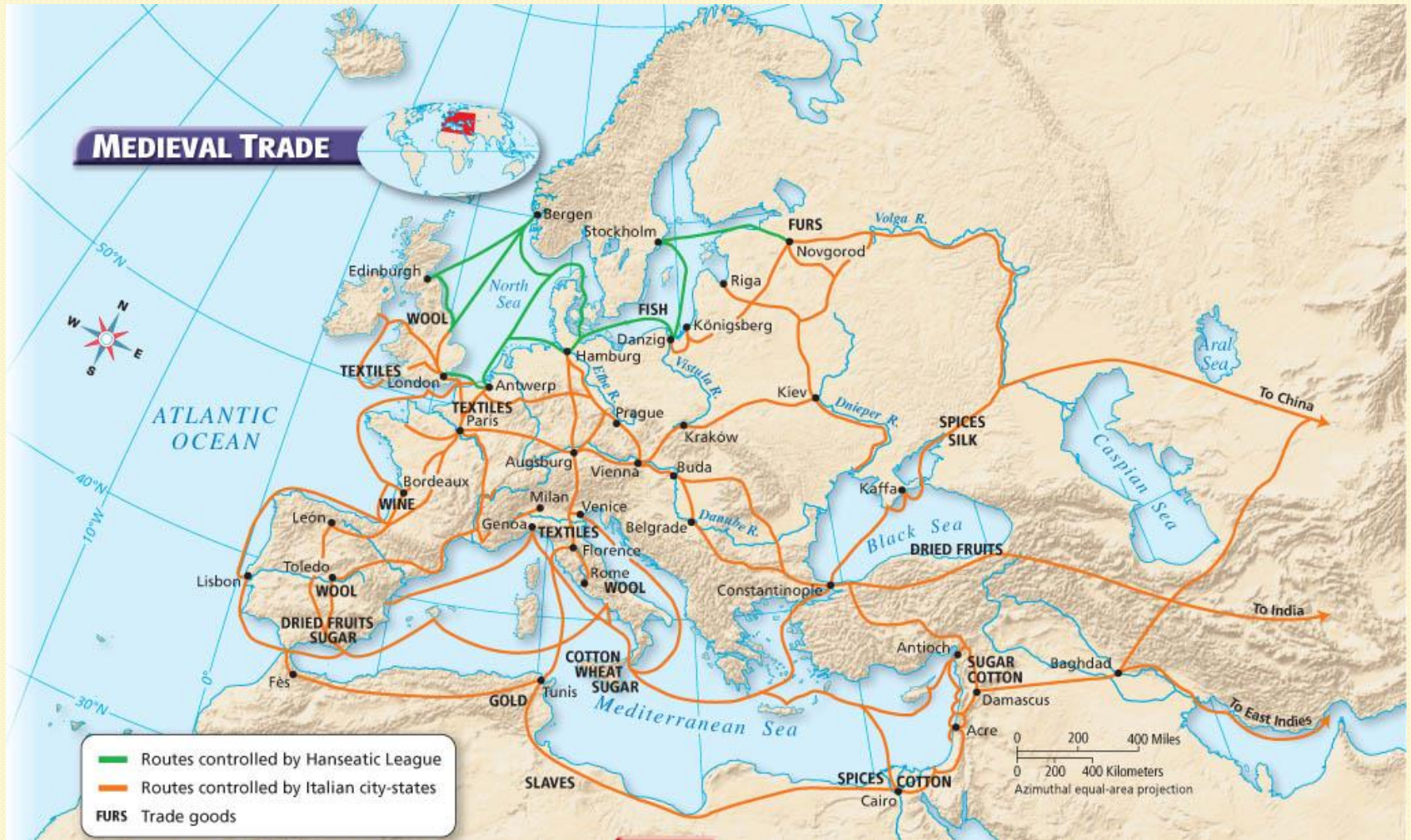
- Venetian merchants went north to sell imported goods
- Goods were expensive, very profitable
- Other Italian cities created trade routes
- Genoa, Florence, Pisa, Milan, all major trading cities
- Italians controlled almost all southern European trade

Hanseatic League

- Italians dominated trade in south
- **Hanseatic League** actively traded in northern Europe
- Northern German towns, worked together to promote, protect trade
- Controlled most trade between Europe, Russia, Baltic region

Trade Fairs and Markets

- Merchants needed to get goods to customers, traveled long distances to visit trade fairs
- Trade fairs held in towns, drew huge crowds, buyers and sellers met there
- Great variety of goods offered, rare fabrics, aromatic spices, animals



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Times and Locations

- Trade fairs usually held once a year, specific locations
- Some trade fairs lasted for months
- Schedule staggered so merchants could travel from one to another
- Some merchants spent most of time on road

Market

- Trade fairs not attended by average person
- Generally places for sales between merchants
- For everyday needs, people visited local markets
- Local markets sold locally-produced goods

Money and Credit

Money

- Trade encouraged use of money, had not been common in Europe for years
- Previously workers paid with goods
- Cities began minting coins, workers began demanding coins for payment

Credit

- Some merchants allowed customers to buy goods on **credit**
- In return for goods, customer signed document stating when, how payment would be made

Banks

- Use of money, credit led to creation of Europe's first banks
- People could deposit money for safekeeping, request loans
- Most money-lenders were Jews, barred from many other occupations

Summarize

How did trade grow and develop in the Middle Ages?

Answer(s): Italian merchants traded around Mediterranean; Hanseatic League promoted trade; trade fairs brought together buyers and sellers; increased use of currency and credit

Growth of Towns and Cities

- Thriving trade, increase in use of money helped lead to expansion, growth
- Hoping to make money, many peasants left farms and villages for cities, towns

Growth of Towns and Cities

New Technologies

- New advances of farm technology also helped
- Heavy plow increased amount of crops grown on land; water mill, windmill, used power of nature to grind wheat into flour
- Improved technologies meant fewer people needed to farm
- Enabled more people to move to cities, build life there

Free Towns

- Merchants moved into medieval towns to conduct trade
- Did not want to pay high taxes to local lords in those towns
- King allowed charters for new towns run by merchants, taxes paid only to king
- Paris, London, and Rome grew quickly and began to be referred to as cities

Growth of Towns and Cities

Guilds

- Increase in populations caused craftspeople to organize to protect interests
- Created trade organizations called **guilds**; members had same occupation
- Primary function to restrict competition; set standards, prices for products

Training

- Guilds also trained children in their crafts
- **Apprentices** worked learning the basic skills of the craft from one master
- **Journeyman** traveled to different workshops, learning from many masters

Restrictions

- Difficult for journeymen to become masters, due to guild restrictions
- Most guilds open only to men
- Some industries like textiles accepted women members

Identify Cause and Effect

Why did towns grow in the Middle Ages?

Answer(s): technology reduced need for farm workers, people moved to towns; towns grew under merchant leadership

Daily Life in Cities

According to today's standards, the cities that grew up in Europe and the Middle Ages were small and crowded. At times, life in these cities could be very unpleasant.

Streets

- Were narrow, winding
- Shops, houses lined both sides
- High buildings blocked sunlight
- Crowded with people, animals
- Sanitation bad

Fire and Crime

- Made medieval cities dangerous
- Air hazy with smoke from cooking, tanneries
- Most buildings made of wood, straw roofs
- Violence common

Some Benefits

- Churches, eating halls, markets
- Guilds provided plays, public entertainment, and festivals
- Sports common
- Guilds competed against each other

Daily Life in Cities

- Growth of cities brought about greater familiarity with world
- Cities allowed for spread of arts, new ideas

Describe

What was life like in a medieval town?

Answer(s): narrow winding streets; trash and waste in the street; smelly and smoky; lots of animals; places for people to socialize; plays and festivals; sports