

Around 2000 BCE, people on horseback came from the area northeast of the Black Sea. The spread into Europe, especially into the populated south and west, and conquered many villages. Meanwhile, already in Europe moved south to the Greek Peninsula and developed a powerful civilization.

Then, in the 900's and 1000's, the Vikings needed more land to provide food for their growing population. They built shallow-hulled boats that could travel up rivers and set off from Scandinavia. They conquered much of England, as well, where a whole new civilization developed: Anglo-Saxons and Vikings combined. In France, people also travelled along the rivers and started trading with each other and building towns and increasing in population.

By 3500 BCE, Middle Eastern settlements were making weapons of bronze (copper and tin). And weapons increased people's ability to maintain and expand their power, so cities started to grow.

But then, in the 1300s, the climate changed: the weather became cooler and wetter. Floods damaged land. Crops did not grow so well and people died of hunger. And the technology that created vast trading systems throughout Europe also brought the plague, killing one quarter of the people

But then, in the 1100's, more people came south into Greece and took over. Many of the people who already lived there moved away. The newcomers started a new form of government: each city and surrounding area became its own independent state, a polis or city-state.

By 1200 BCE, people along the Mediterranean Sea had become skilled sailors. The warmer weather of the south and the opportunities to travel by sea led to much trade in goods and ideas.

By 9000 BCE in the Middle East, people had started to domesticate wild grains, sheep and goats and so were able to settle in areas with fertile soil and a reliable supply of water. Because they had organized themselves into larger groups, people were able to divide up the tasks of life – farming, cooking, sewing, potters, priests – and live in settlements together.

In the 1000's, people were also on the move due to their religious beliefs. Leaders wanted what is now called Israel to be part of the Christian world, so thousands of people set off to conquer what they called the Holy Land. Thousands of them died. But they also became aware of all the trading they could do with people from India and China. So spices and porcelain and silks became popular all across Europe. And the Europeans learned much about science and mathematics and poetry from the Muslims they encountered.

By 3000 BCE, the technology from the Middle East had expanded, and farming was common throughout Europe, except in the forested areas of the north. Villages were developing.

In the 400's to 300's BCE, the Greek city-states became very strong and were able to defeat new invaders who came from the east, from the Persian Empire. But then they kept fighting. In fact, they started fighting each other! And so they became weaker and weaker.

Meanwhile, the Romans were becoming stronger and had conquered much of the Italian peninsula by the 200s BCE. They learned many new ideas from the Greeks. But they also liked engineering: building roads and organizing cities. And so they started to expand their empire throughout Europe and into Britain.

But then during the 300's and 400's CE, invaders came from Mongolia in Asia. They were called Huns and came on horseback, attacking the Germanic peoples who fled. The Vandals fled to what we now call Spain. The Visigoths fled south and defeated Rome.

One Germanic group, the Franks, fled to what we now call France and created a strong culture in the 900's. Three Germanic tribes, the Angles, Jutes and Saxons, fled to Britain and pushed back the Britons, which is how we get the story of King Arthur.

One result of the plague was fewer workers. And so those who were left could demand better living and working conditions. Many of them moved to cities and started working as tradespeople. Feudalism was coming to an end.

In the 1000's, people were on the move again and new technology helped. William the Conqueror came with his horses and armoured soldiers from France and defeated King Harold in England. William brought a system of government that had been started by the Franks. This feudal system lasted for several hundred years.

The earliest people of our species lived in Africa. Being hunters and gatherers, they spread northwards into Asia and Europe.

Barbezat, Daniel, David Cast, Andreas Erhardt, Charles W. Ingrao, and George W. White. "Europe." *World Book Student*. World Book, 2014. Web. 31 Mar. 2014.

