The European History

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**Abstract**

The history of Europe is traditionally divided into several distinct periods: some of them include: Old Stone Age, Neolithic Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Ancient History, Medieval Ages and industrial ages. Each of these periods contributed to the development of the European society and civilization and so have their imprint on the modern Europe. In this essay, I will be discussing these periods, their characteristics, the changes that happened in the society, and the effects that were made.

**Introduction**

The cultures of Europe are rich and diverse, with a history that dates back over the millennia. It should be mentioned that the history of Europe started long before the antiquity and it experienced a great number of changes that affected the political, cultural, and social processes of the continent. These changes include understanding the different epochs that have characterized Europe as a continent, which had different characteristics in terms of technology, economy, society, and governance. This essay is intended to analyze the major historical eras of Europe starting from the prehistoric period to the Industrial Revolution in order to present the contemporary Europe and to identify the process of European formation.

**Prehistoric Europe**

Just in the recent years, changes have occurred in the study of European prehistory through the increasing archeological discovery rate, improved dating methods and scientific analysis of archeological material, new archeological objectives and frameworks for interpretation. While previous scholarship was largely centered on the identification and documentation of artifacts, the chief objective is now to understand prehistoric societies and account for their transformation. Until the fifth century of the Christian era, Europe and its peoples had no writing, no personalities, no history. This means that its history is in large measure the history of the plain man—the food seeker, the tiller as against the warrior. The presence of privileged elites and material opulence is not entirely absent, though. It is also noteworthy that the skills and the experience of prehistoric Europeans were used in the creation of stunning pieces of jewelry, delicate fabrics, sophisticated tools, and finely crafted weapons.

While there are no palaces that have enticed the excavators in other countries, there are no monuments in the whole world that are similar to Europe’s massive megalithic tombs and great stone circles. While people’s identity remains concealed, and most of their personal matters undisclosed, the advancements in technology make it possible to document and uncover aspects of their life story with unparalleled precision. Handbook to Life in Prehistoric Europe is a compilation of the findings of contemporary archaeology and other relevant studies that have been published in recent years.

Bruce Trigger, in his book notes that despite the clear differences and conflicts, both in terms of paradigm within the field, that American archaeologists have had since the appearance of the New Archaeology, share several fundamental assumptions. The first of these is that archaeology, with the great time depth of its data base, is uniquely qualified among the social sciences to study change It has been obvious since early in the history of modern archaeological science that change, rather than constancy has been the rule in the history of humankind. And even if one wishes to focus on continuity across time, it is this change that we need to explain. Therefore, the study of social change or evolution has to be one of the most significant goals of archaeology as a discipline.

A sharp separation between European evolutionary and historical approaches to the past, and embracing the notion of social fields in the macro historicist analysis of the archaeological data. This means that the unit of analysis is not an archaeology culture or civilization, but social groups intermeshed with other groups in web like interactions through which technologies are passed from one group to another and transformed by other groups that are caught in the same processes. These interconnections can be followed archaeologically in the best way possible by charting out the diffusion of technologies and the patterns of subsistence.

Other macro historical views of the past, for example the world systems approach, tend to impose unrealistic expectations on the archaeological evidence and are often employed in an ahistorical manner. Prehistory reveals that groups are getting more and more involved in social fields that are, in the end, integrated. Finally, I stress on the historically oriented perspective on the past as global one where all nations are equally participating and gaining from their interactions with their neighbor.

**Classical antiquity period**

” What is ‘Classical ‘About Classical Antiquity?” James Porter puts this question forward in the introduction of his book titled Classical Traditions of Greece and Rome. There is no unequivocal answer to this question, and this is hardly surprising: the notion of the ‘classical’ inevitably involves an evaluation of an era and its material. Thus, the term can have different meaning at different times when it is defined. It was not only since the Humanism in the fifteenth-and sixteenth-century Europe and the canonisation of the “classical authors” which occurred in this period that the “classical” has become the object of the discussion; it is possible to suggest that, the discussion on the “classical” began in Greek and Roman Antiquity already. The first evidence for the word classicus dates from the second century CE: The Roman author Aulus Gellius quotes his friend and the orator Marcus Cornelius Fronto, who regards an author as a scripter classicus or a “first-class” or “reliable” model of correct linguistic usage. But this in no way secured the meaning of the word once and for all; classicus is not recorded as being used again in this sense until a letter written by Beatus Rhenanus.

However, the concept of an ideal past is not based on the signifier; at the latest since the end of the fourth century BCE and with the founding of the libraries, of which the largest and most well-known was the great library of Alexandria, a literary canon resulted from the inclusion of some authors in registers and the exclusion of those that had no mercy with the librarians. This construction of an exemplary past continued in Atticism–which involved first-century Roman authors projecting their style of language backward onto that used in Athens in the fifth century BCE–in the literary and philosophical movements of a “Second Sophistic” (from the first century CE), and in “Neoplatonism” (from the third century CE).

While these various constructions of the past can be distinguished in Greek and Roman antiquity, “Classical Antiquity” in the current sense was constructed by–predominantly German–Altertumswissenschaft, which in the English-speaking academy has been translated as Classical Studies or simply Classics. The three essays included in the third part of this book are devoted to different aspects of these changes. In his contribution, the archaeologist Alain Schnapp broaches the topic of ruins, the main focus of work of his branch of science. But as a historian of archaeology, he is just as interested in how past and present societies use ruins, and which meanings.

To this day, the consequences of the past can still be felt. It is possible here to start with the concepts of direct succession and continuity to indicate that the modern Western culture is based, in effect, on the Greco-Roman civilization. The ruins of Greek and Roman civilizations stretch from Hadrian’s Wall to the east of Turkey; even the remains of today’s tourists. Classical renaissance and modern buildings also replicate the styles, decorations and monumental aspects of classical architecture; most of the state buildings of major cities in the world such as Washington, Pretoria, Paris, London, Berlin and so many others emulate imperial architecture although the selection of such a classing imperial style was a subject of intense debate. Greek and Roman buildings in terms of their form and size, and as signs of technological advancement and architectural accomplishments, even copied many of the great railway stations of Britain, the United States and the European continent such as the former Euston station in London, Leopoldo station in Florence, New York’s Pennsylvania station etc., (DeLaine 1999).

It is, therefore, taken for granted that the Roman capital script and an alphabet that is developed from the Roman script system is used (Bischoff 1990). Thus, numerous place names and urban areas have a continuous history even from the ancient period or, like Greek and Roman names, Ithaca and Syracuse in upstate New York, connected the new world to the ancient world. Today, many of the roads used in Britain like the A1 and A6 are still the same routes developed by the Romans. Other debts are the basic geometric, astronomical, algebraic, arithmetic, medical, and Aristotelian approaches to reasoning that form the foundations of today’s science. A powerful impact of Greek theories of music is found in the Western musical tradition, and an extensive linguistic and literary borrowing has significantly added to the sum total of European language and literature. Classicism and its impact on the art, literature and music of seventeenth-and eighteenth-century Europe.

**The middle ages**

It is the design of the present undertaking to present to the view of the reader, in a chain of historical essays, a general view of the leading events which can claim the attention of a philosophical enquirer during the portion of the annals of the world which is familiar to us under the name of the Middle Ages. Such an undertaking must necessarily fall under the class of historical abridgments: but there may be still discovered sufficiently to mark it from such as have been produced by the pen of the author. Vast tracts of time, prior to the twelfth century at least, may well be regarded as so uneventful in their history. Frequently, one sentence or paragraph adequately conveys the tone and character of generations and dynasties and the long line of little-known monarchs and even in the more pleasing and instructive parts of this middle period. It has been my objective to avoid the dry composition of annals; and, bearing in mind what spirit and freedom I was capable of, to confine myself to what seemed the leading facts, rather than the details of a picture; to exclude all occurrences which did not appear to me strictly connected with others, or capable of affording lessons.

But as the modes of government, and constitutional laws which prevailed in various countries of Europe, and especially in England, have appeared to me to have been less fully described in former works of this kind than military or civil affairs, which are however more worthy of attention, I have endeavoured to represent them faithfully. Tried in such a balance, they would be eminently defective. The shortness of this work in comparison with the subjects it treats of, and the fact that it has more of the nature of political treatise than of history, must necessarily prevent that detail of events and of persons on which the beauty and utility of a regular history so much rest. I can hardly presume that it will be found perfectly clear to those who are not possessed of any historical knowledge of the period to which it refers; although, indeed, I have had, historically speaking, no other assumption than the general history of England, and have tried to abstain from employing those national allusions which put more into the reader’s possession than the writer intends to place there. However, the plan which I have proposed has occasionally required me to indicate in advance the name and the fact which are to have a more fixed position in a later portion of the work. This arrangement is probably different from that of any former historical retrospect.

**The modern era**

Clark postulates that European economy went through a ‘‘general crisis” in the seventeenth century, the phase of the general transition from a feudal to a capitalist economy There has been the period 1300 or so when something began to go wrong with European feudal society 1 there have been several occasions parts of Europe tremble on the brink of capitalism. It is like a flavour of the ‘burger’ and ‘industrial’ revolution about 14th century Tuscany and Flanders or early 16th century Germany. However, it is only from the middle of the I7th century that this taste becomes more than a spice to an essentially medieval or feudal meal. The earlier urban societies never quite pulled off the revolutions that they promised. This, however, did not happen, and since the early 18th century, ‘bourgeois’ society continued to progress with little obstructions. The crisis of the I7th century is therefore distinguished from its predecessors by the fact that it entailed as radical a resolution of the problems which had earlier been in the way of the ascendancy of capitalist system as the latter would allow.

Here I would like to present some arguments concerning the existence of a general crisis, which is still an issue among some scholars, and indicate its possible cause. In a subsequent article, I plan to describe some of the changes it caused and how they were addressed. There is a very high likelihood that a lot of historical research is going to be devoted to this topic and time in the coming years. Yes, recently historians in various countries have tentatively pointed to something like that a general check to economic development, or a general crisis with which this paper is concerned.

When it came to European population density and overseas settlements in the 1700s, Europe was a rural continent with a sparse population, while by the present time, it has become an urbanized continent with a high population density. European population rose to the level it was in the early fourteenth century after which it began to grow at a faster rate in mid eighteenth century possibly due to decreasing mortality and changing marriage age. What is still ambiguous, for instance, are the causes of population density and the social significance of urbanization. In more detail, how exactly was human migration at the center of this shift from rural to urban society, and how were these movements enacted? The answers to these questions are basic to the historian’s perception of Europe’s past and, in fact, history’s perception of the modern world.

The answers to the questions of migration and urbanization and the social problems as a result of this shift were given by the social observers of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who attributed all the social ills of the society to migration from the idyllic rural countryside to the hostile concrete jungles of the city and the inhuman world of factories. They saw a rise in the overall amount of migration; hence these critics of urbanization presumed that more people were being affected by the repercussions of residential relocation. In this perspective, migration was a permanent process through which the depopulating and physically declining city was sustained at the expense of stripping the rural migrants of their strength to leave them as mere shadows of their former selves. Within this context, full of modern concerns, governmental agencies persisted in accumulating descriptive data that would be useful for scholars.

**Conclusion**

Europeans have experienced historical transformation with social, political, economical and cultural factors as the main causes. Right from the earlier civilizations that were present in the continent, the early farming societies of Old Stone Age Europe to the present day post-industrial societies, Europe has undergone a change process that has not only altered the culture of the region but the global culture as well. Each period of the European history can be said to have made some input in one way or the other, whether in the form of a political system, art or technology. Familiarizing with these developments helps to get a better understanding of the role Europe played in shaping the modern world.

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