

# EUROPE (A.D. 800–1800)

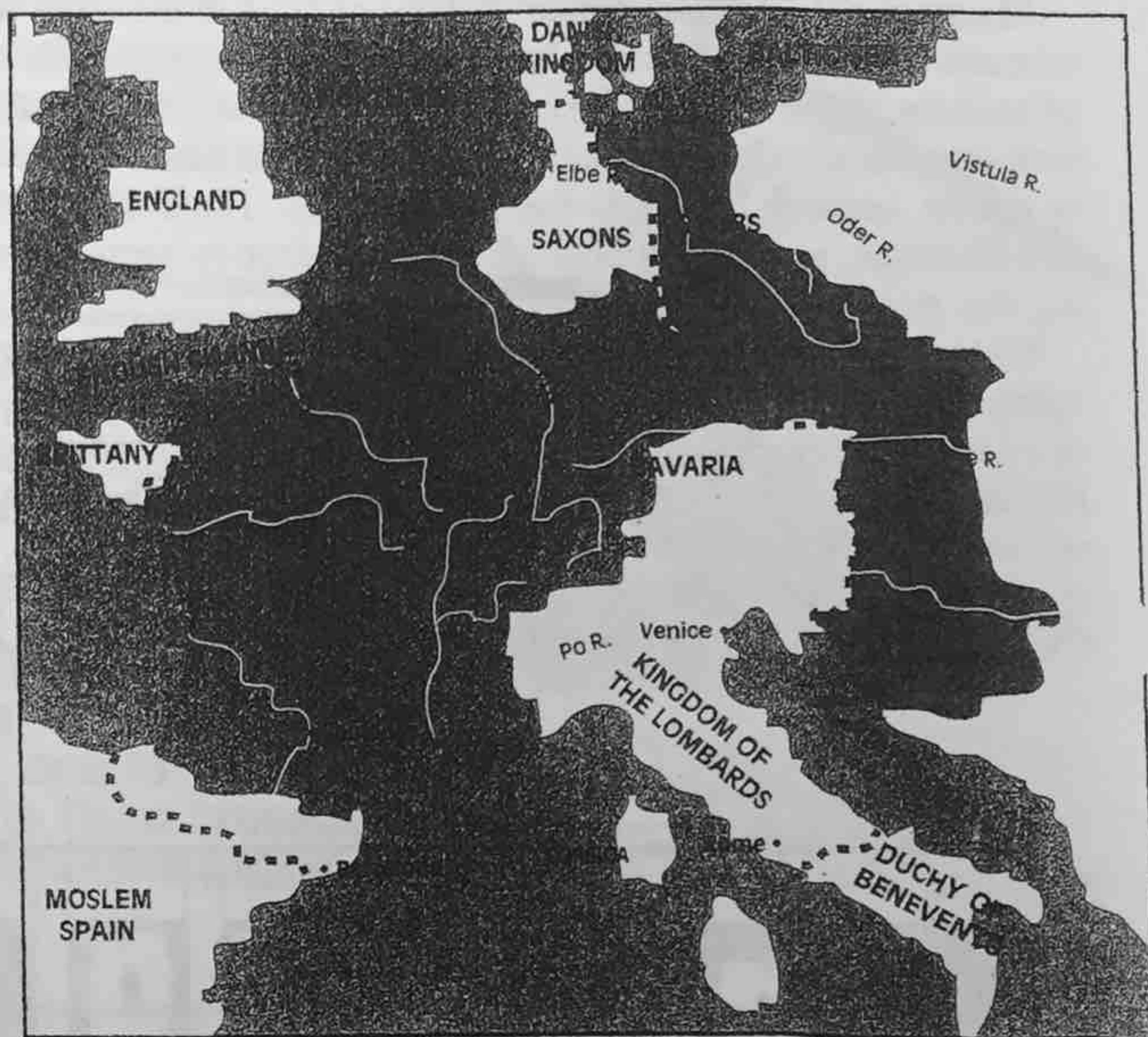
## The Making of Modern Europe

The era of European history from about A.D. 500 to 1500 is known as the Middle Ages, or the *medieval period*, because the word *medieval* is Latin for “of the middle ages.” The era began at the end of the Roman Empire and continued until the modern nations of France and England were established.

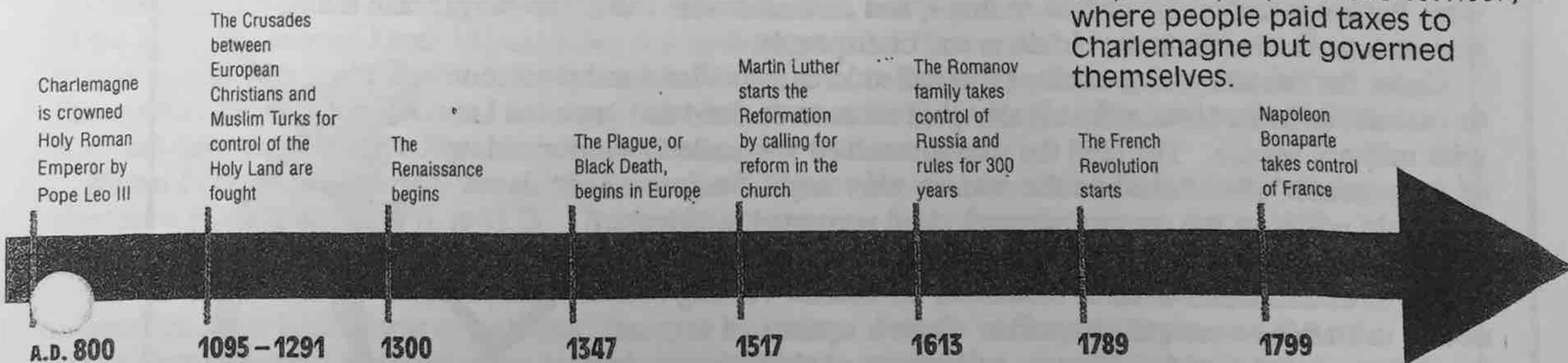
### Charlemagne's Medieval Empire

Charlemagne was the outstanding ruler in medieval Europe for 46 years, from 768 to 814. A great warrior who extended his kingdom over most of western Europe, by 800, Charlemagne controlled the largest expanse in Europe since the Roman Empire. His aim was not just to rule, but to spread Christianity. *Pope Leo III* was so thankful that he crowned Charlemagne the *Holy Roman Emperor*; his empire would be called the *Holy Roman Empire*.

During his reign, Charlemagne's empire became the most orderly and unified in Europe. He set up a central government and divided his vast holdings into provinces ruled by nobles who reported to him. He built impressive monuments, theaters, and a forum. Charlemagne placed great importance on education and established schools all over his empire.



Holy Roman Empire, about 800  
In green is the territory Charlemagne took over in 768. In dark yellow is the territory he conquered and made part of his empire. In purple is the territory where people paid taxes to Charlemagne but governed themselves.





# William the Conqueror

In 1066, England was invaded by the Normans from France at the Battle of Hastings. William, duke of Normandy, wanted to defeat the English king *Harold*. After a long battle, Harold was killed and William succeeded him, becoming known as *William the Conqueror*. He was crowned on Christmas Day, 1066. William established a stable government and was responsible for the start of feudalism in England.

## The Age of Faith

The Middle Ages is often called the Age of Faith because the church in Rome was more powerful than any government. Most people in Europe were Christians, and religion was the center of life and learning.

Many people dedicated their lives to service in the church. Men became priests and women became nuns. Some became *monks*, religious men who lived in groups outside of society in the countryside or desert. *St. Benedict* of Nursia was one of the most well-known monks. He started a *monastery* (a place where monks live), and his order, or group, became known as the Benedictines. The Benedictines built schools, churches, and libraries, and fed the poor. Their organization grew throughout the world by stressing the need to serve others.

Eventually, the Christian church divided. For many years differences had been developing between the eastern and western halves of the church. One of the main differences between the two was over who should head the church. In the East, the Byzantine emperor ruled both church and state. In the West, the pope ruled the church while kings and queens ruled the various countries. Finally, in 1054, the two churches split. In the East, the Christian church became known as the *Eastern Orthodox Church*. In the West, it became known as the *Roman Catholic Church*.

# The Feudal System

*Feudalism* was a system of government and a way of life that restored order in Europe after the fall of Rome. At that time, there were no formal countries but hundreds of *fiefdoms*. People who were given land were expected to be loyal to the landowner. In return, they were protected against invaders. There were three classes of people during that time. The *nobles* were the kings and lords; priests, bishops, and cardinals were called the *clergy*; and the *peasants* worked as farmers, builders, and craftspeople.

Under the feudal system, nobles (also called lords) gave land and protection to *vassals*, or lesser lords, who usually paid taxes to the lord and provided him with military service. The land the vassal received was called a *manor*. Many of the peasants who worked on the manors were *serfs*. Serfs were not slaves but could not leave the manor unless the lord permitted it. Most of the work done on a noble's large estate was done by serfs.

The lords and ladies lived in castles on the estates. Young nobles in training were called *squires*. Once a squire had learned the skills and duties of a nobleman, he became a soldier for the lord. These soldiers were called *knights*.





# The Crusades

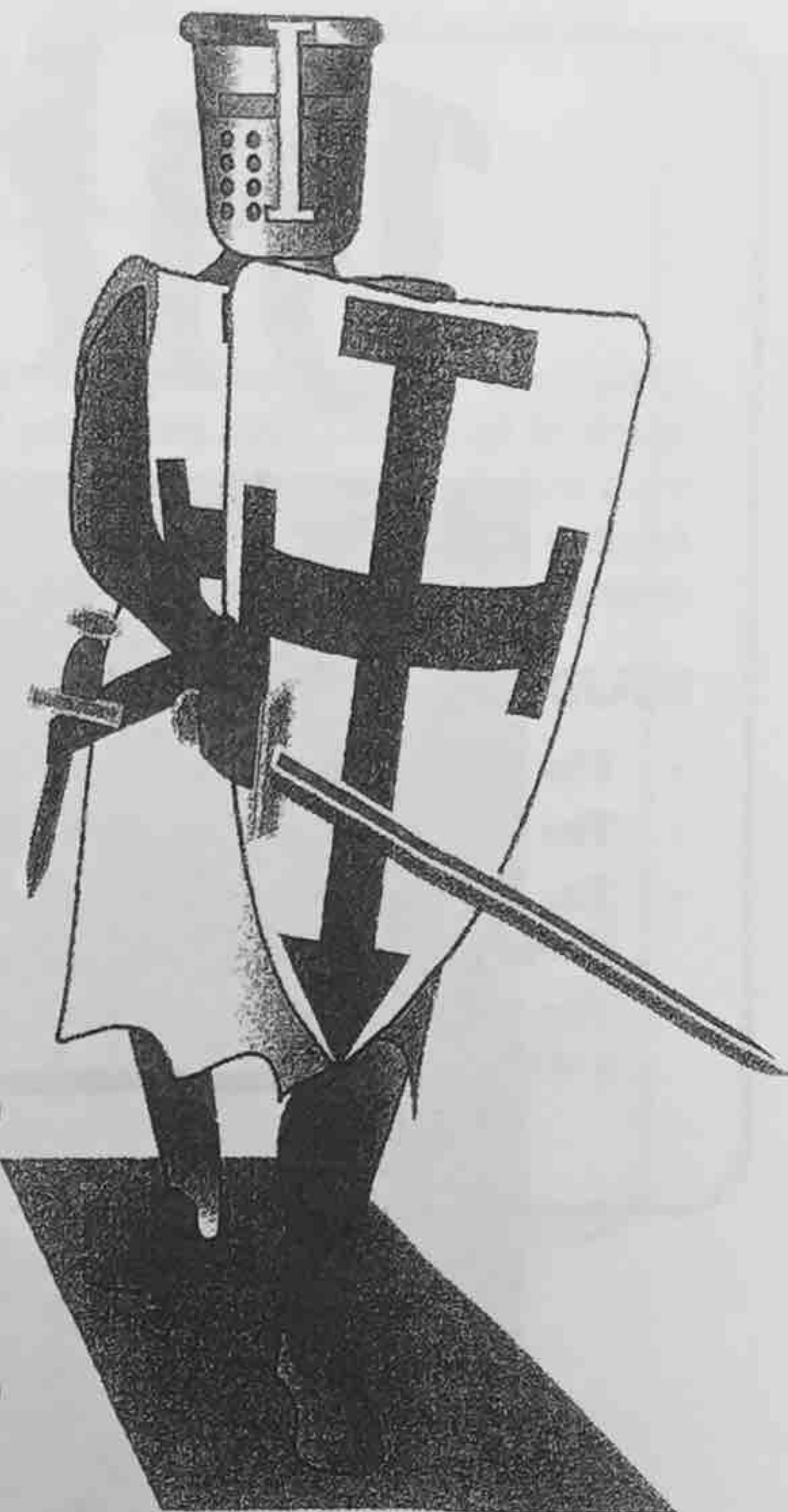
The Crusades were a series of religious wars that took place from 1095 to 1291. The purpose of the Crusades was for the European Christians to defeat the Muslim Turks for control of the Holy Land—that part of the Middle East where Jesus had lived, especially the city of Jerusalem. It had been taken by the Seljuk Turks in 1085. When the Seljuks next planned to invade Constantinople, the Byzantines asked for help. **Pope Urban II** organized the Crusades to recapture the Holy Land, but, even after almost 200 years and several major Crusades, the Christians still did not succeed.

## Significant Early Crusades

**1** **The First Crusade (1095–1099).** It took the first army of European knights two years to reach Turkey, where they defeated the Turkish army, despite being outnumbered. Later, the knights captured Jerusalem. The Crusaders set up small kingdoms around the cities of Jerusalem, Edessa, Antioch, and Tripoli.

**2** **The Second Crusade (1147–1149).** The Seljuk Turks recaptured the city of Edessa in 1144. This started a new Crusade that was joined by King Louis VII and his wife, Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine of France (see box).

**3** **The Third Crusade (1189–1192).** The Third Crusade was caused by the capture of Jerusalem by the Muslim leader Saladin in 1187. This Crusade was led by three kings: Frederick I of Germany, Philip II of France, and Richard I of England (Richard the Lion-Hearted). The Third Crusade ended when Richard and Saladin agreed to make peace for five years.



Crusaders were the knights of Europe. They dressed in the armor and chain mail typical of medieval European times.

## Eleanor of Aquitaine and Richard the Lion-Hearted

*Eleanor of Aquitaine* was one of the first women to challenge the church and her two husbands for equality. Eleanor was born wealthy and had a good education. Her father, *Duke William of Aquitaine*, raised her to rule his land in central and southwestern France. When he died, many men wanted to marry her for control of the land. She married *Louis VII* of France and became queen of France. But Louis would not allow her to rule equally with him despite the fact that she had brought more territory to the kingdom than he had, so Eleanor had the church dissolve her marriage. She then married King *Henry II* of England and had five sons and three daughters, but Henry would not share power with her either.

*Richard I (the Lion-Hearted)* was the favorite son of Eleanor. He and two of his brothers had plotted to overthrow their father, Henry II, in 1173. The plan failed, and their father forgave them, so that in 1189, Richard became king of England. He was very popular, but spent much of his ten-year reign fighting in the Crusades. He received the name Richard the Lion-Hearted because he was such a brave and able knight.

Legend has it that Richard was so well liked that even his enemy, *Saladin* of Constantinople, said that if he were to lose Jerusalem, he would rather lose it to Richard than to anyone else. During Richard's time away at the Crusades, Eleanor ruled in his place. She governed well, was just, and established some rights for women.

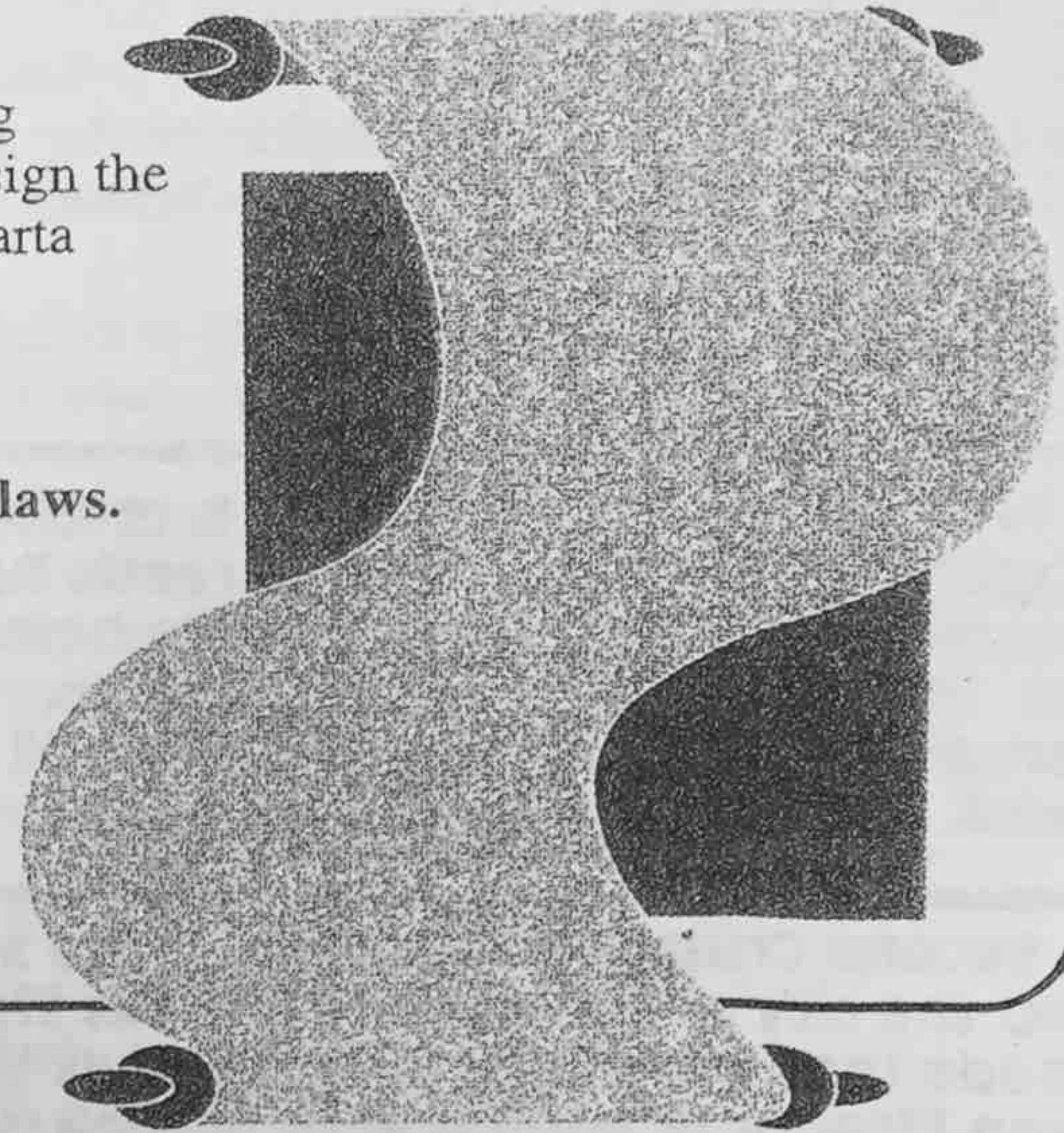


# The Magna Carta

King *John* was crowned king of England in 1199 after the death of Richard I. After increasing taxes and having a long feud with the pope, nobles and clergy forced King John to sign the *Magna Carta*, which means "great charter." The Magna Carta strongly limited the power of the king.

## MAJOR POINTS OF THE MAGNA CARTA

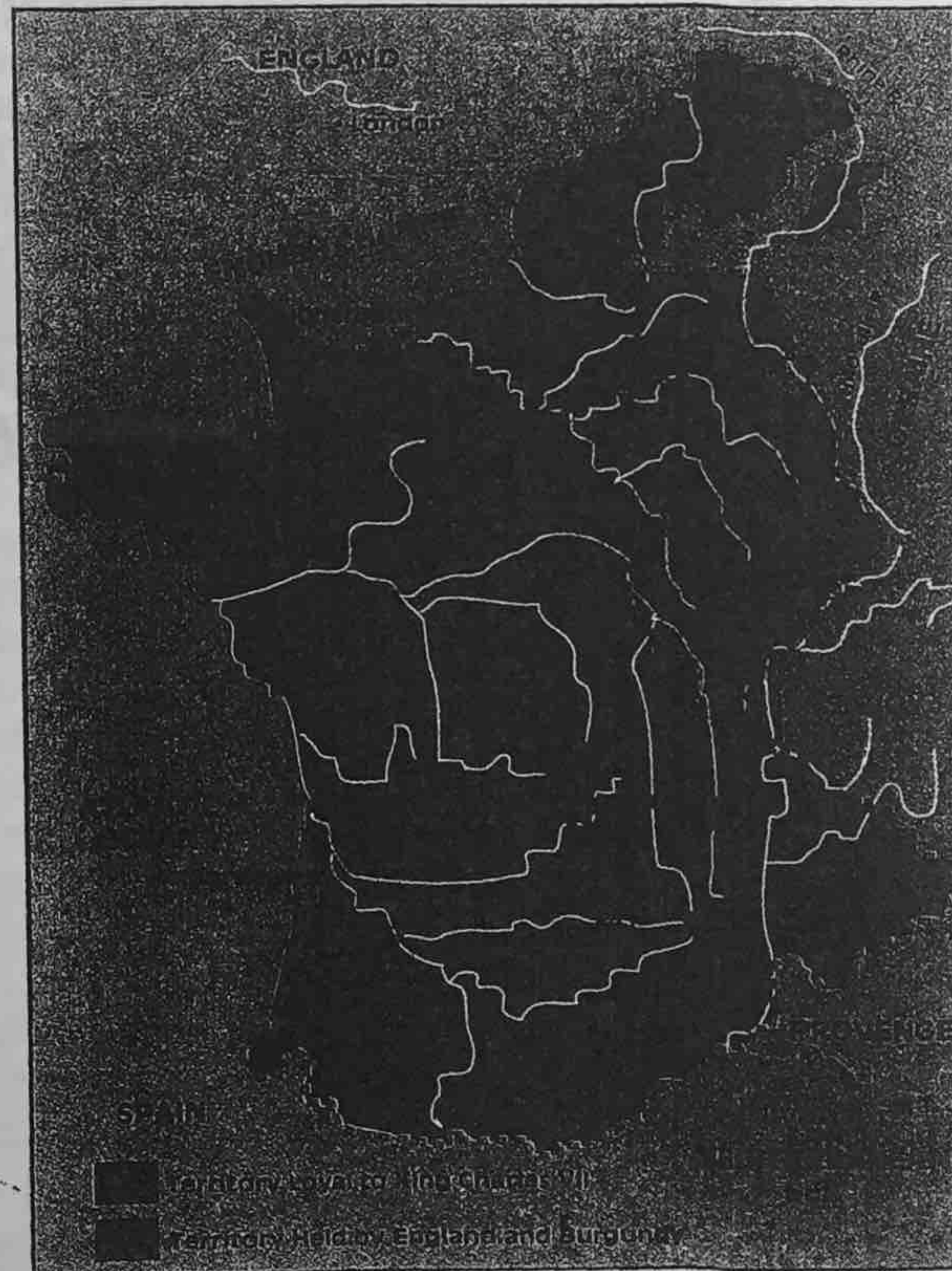
- The king is the absolute ruler but he has to obey the laws.
- The king cannot limit the freedom of the church.
- The king cannot tax land without a meeting of the Great Council, the leading 25 landowners.
- The king cannot put any free person in jail without a trial.



## The Hundred Years' War (1337 – 1453)

The Norman kings of England were the feudal lords over large sections of French territory. The French rulers wanted to reign over their land. The French became angry when King *Edward III* of England claimed to also be king of France. The French invaded English-held territory and an on-again, off-again war began between England and France; it lasted for over a hundred years. This struggle became known as the Hundred Years' War.

The Hundred Years' War did not end until 1453, when the French drove the English from the city of Bordeaux, France. England would no longer be a power on the continent of Europe.

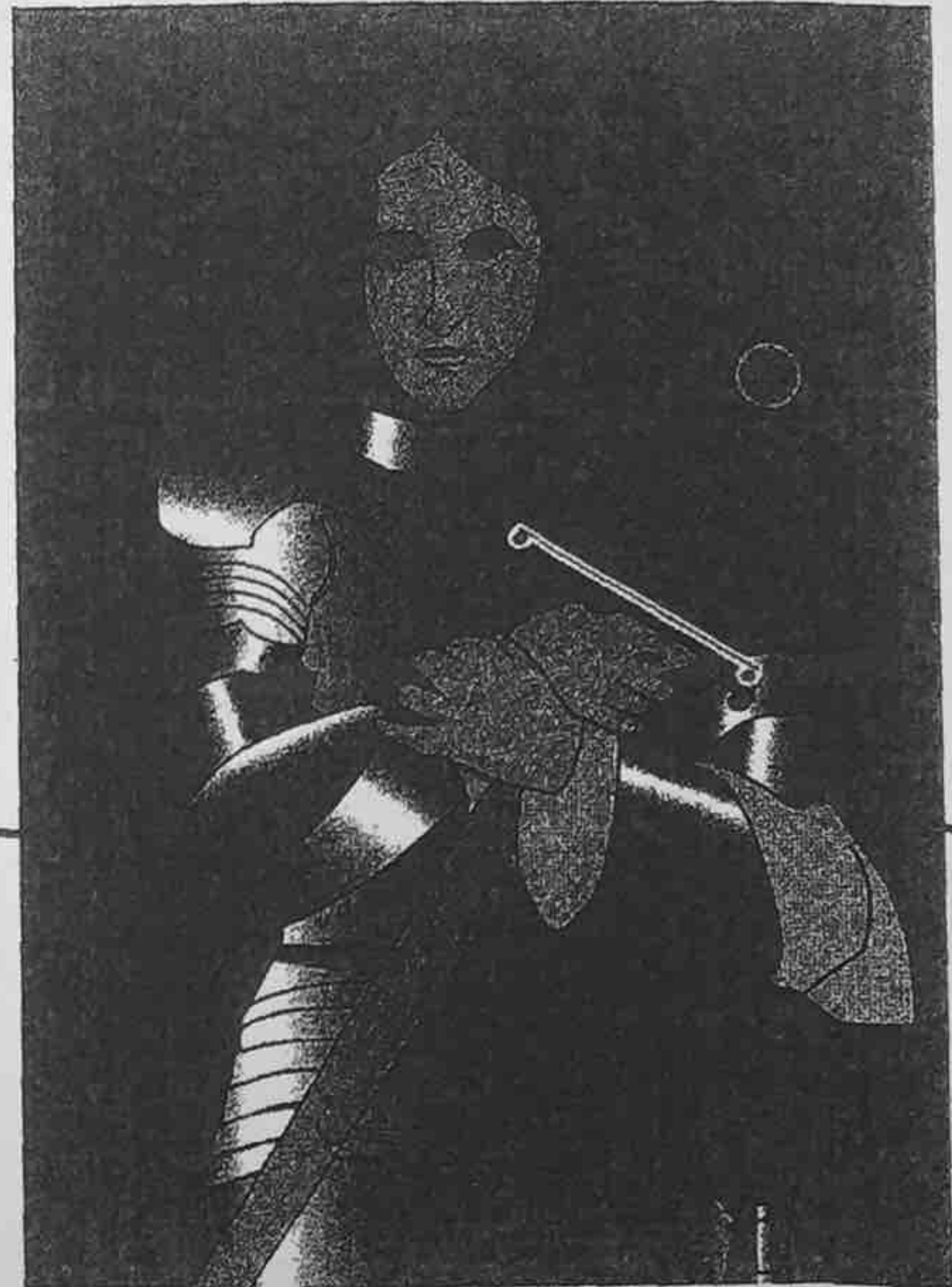


France, about 1400



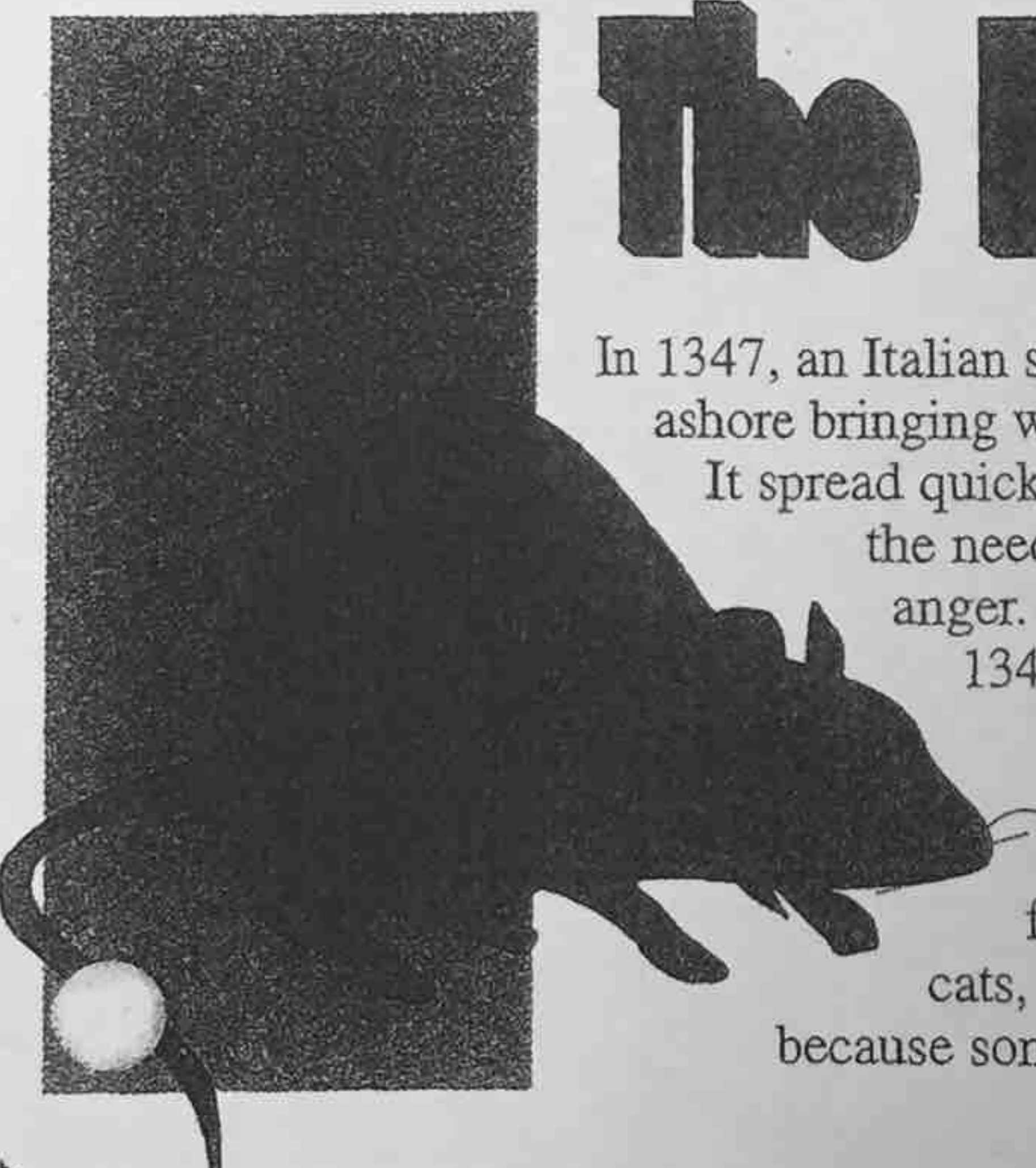
# Joan of Arc

A young girl named *Joan of Arc*, from the French region of Lorraine, led several major battles during the Hundred Years' War. She was only 16 when she convinced Prince Charles of France, later King *Charles VII*, to let her build an army. Joan's clear, direct leadership inspired enthusiasm and resulted in many victories, including the important *Battle of Orléans*. Joan became a heroine, but she was later captured by the English, sentenced to death by a church court for witchcraft and heresy, and burned at the stake. Centuries later, the Catholic church named her a saint.



Joan of Arc

## The Black Death



In 1347, an Italian ship returned from the east to Messina, Italy. Sailors came ashore bringing with them a terrible disease known as the *Plague* or Black Death. It spread quickly across Europe because people knew little about medicine or the need to be clean. Many thought the Plague was caused by God's anger. About one person in every three died from the Plague between 1347 and 1351. In Paris alone, it is estimated that 50,000 people died.

It was hundreds of years before anyone discovered the cause of the Black Death. It was a germ that came from fleas that lived on rats. The rats could have been controlled by cats, but at that time cats had been slaughtered in great numbers because some people believed they were the agents of the devil.