

Question : - How did patterns of civilization differ between the ancient and medieval worlds?

First let's restrict the subject to West of the Jordan River and north of Tripoli. In other words Northwest Europe and the Mediterranean littoral. Not because it's the center of the world, which it isn't, but because its been studied for a long time.

The Ancient World is a study of the birth of civilization followed by its collapse in 400–600 common era. The Medieval world is a study of a painful rise from Barbarism to around 1500 at which point it seriously and often destructively affected the rest of the world.

The ancient world used its store of surplus value to create the ideas and beliefs that affect us today. Unfortunately the process used was self defeating: more goods going to the powerful amid exploitation of everybody else. Eventually the cost of running an empire exceeded the returns from the empire, and the top heavy elite could no longer be supported by the starving poor and the resulting collapse led to anarchy and stagnation.

The triumph of Barbarism, the collapse of infrastructure, and the population decline created a perpetually depressed society. Somehow this vast pot of desuetude and despair began to change for the better. Medieval times were insanely creative especially in the area of production. The first improvements in productivity both agricultural and industrial simply took off. By the middle of the 11th century most economies in this area increased faster than at any time since the Neolithic Revolution. Slavery as an institution disappeared in The West and was replaced by capitalism, which institutionalised growth and development, along with a more sophisticated way of harnessing innovation.

What was the impact of the Portuguese arrival in India by way of circumventing Africa? On the one hand they were a scruffy lot: ignorant, violent, intolerant. On the otherhand every year the trading fleet disappeared into the unknown to be replaced by another fleet from the unknown. It must have been akin to flying saucers in 50's Science Fiction stories.

So the great difference in the patterns of development is that the ancient was linear: the armies got bigger, more land became available for food. The Medieval world had

more exponential growth. Somebody invented land management where you could get two crops in three years instead of one every two years. At the same time somebody else invented the horse collar which efficiently exploited horse power. The combined improvements resulted in more people who ate better.

So the Ancient world in this one corner of the world exhibited an incredible growth in scale and ideas. The Medieval World, which began as a stunted child of Antiquity, found different and better methods of growth.