

**THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST
TRANSCRIPT**

**EPISODE 91:
TRADERS AND TRAITORS**

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Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 91: Traders and Traitors. In this episode, we’re going to continue our look at what happened when East met West in the 11th and 12th centuries. Many histories of this period tend to treat these events as a clash of civilizations – exemplified by the Crusades. But that was just one part of a larger story. While Muslims and Christians were trading blows in the Near East, they were also trading goods throughout the Mediterranean and southern Europe. That meant that products from the Near East were starting to flow into Western Europe. And the words for those products were starting to pass into French and English. So while the two sides were making war – they were also making money. And no group combined those two goals better than the order of knights known as the ‘Knights Templar.’ They were holy Crusaders – and they were also Medieval bankers. So this time we’ll explore the interaction of faith and money – Crusaders and traders – and loyalty versus treason.

But before we begin, let me remind you that the website for the podcast is historyofenglishpodcast.com. And you can sign up to support the podcast at [Patreon.com](https://www.patreon.com/historyofenglishpodcast). Just go to historyofenglishpodcast.com and link from there.

Before I begin, I should note that this episode is much longer than normal. I had a lot that I wanted to discuss, and much of this story is linked together with some common themes. So rather than breaking it into two separate episodes, I am presenting it as one long episode. So this is basically two episodes in one. Since it is a little longer than normal, I have included a little break in the middle. That way, if you prefer to break it into two parts, just wait for the little intermission.

So with that, let’s turn to this episode, and let’s look at the interaction of East and West in the Middle Ages. Last time, we looked at the rise of Arab science and medicine – and we saw how some of those ideas were starting to pass into Western Europe around the current point in our overall story of English. This time, I want to focus more closely on what happened when those two worlds collided. This is the story of trading and Crusading.

The story begins in the eastern portion of the Muslim world in the 10th century. As we know, a Muslim political elite had conquered most of the what we know today as the Middle East, as well as North Africa and much of modern-day Spain and Portugal. In the years that followed, those regions were increasingly unified by a common religion and a common language. But they became divided by politics. The Abbasid Caliphate started to fracture as various local rulers emerged in different parts of the Muslim world.

By the late 900s, a new group was entering the picture – and they were coming in from the east – specifically from the Eurasian steppe region. They were a group of Turkish tribes called the Seljuks. They were really the first in a series of nomadic people from the steppe region that swept into the Middle East and eastern Europe. They were followed a couple of centuries later by the Mongols from the same general region.

But these Turkish tribes came in first, and around the year 970, they were entering the eastern part of the Abbasid Caliphate. They had a fierce warrior culture. And they soon moved into Persia. There, they were influenced by the local culture, and they fully embraced Islam.

They soon carved out their own empire and continued to expand westward. They then swept down into modern-day Iraq and captured Baghdad in the year 1055. Then they moved northward in the Caucasus region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. There they captured Armenia and Georgia in the year 1064. They were now sitting on the border of the Byzantine Empire – which was the Christian empire centered in Constantinople. Remember that this was the old Eastern Roman Empire that was now known as the Byzantine Empire. And the Byzantine Empire included much of modern-day Greece and Turkey. But Turkey wasn't called "Turkey" yet. It was Anatolia or Asia Minor. And the Seljuks were now sitting right on the eastern border of that region.

In the year 1068, they invaded Anatolia. And three years later, they defeated the Byzantine forces at a major battle. That gave the Seljuk Turks control of Anatolia. And that was really the beginning of modern-day Turkey.

The Seljuks actually encouraged Turkish settlement of the region to provide a stronger defense against the Byzantine Empire. Over time, this region became known as the land of the Turks – or *Turkey*. Now, let me digress here for a moment and mention a few things about this region. A couple of centuries later, as Seljuk power declined, Anatolia broke into several independent regions. One of those regions was led by a Turkish tribal leader named Osman. And in the years that followed, Osman's successors conquered all of Anatolia and they became known as the *Ottomans* based on the founder's name – Osman. The Ottomans then conquered Constantinople in 1453, and that brought an end to the Byzantine Empire. The Ottomans ruled the region all the way through World War I – when the empire finally came to an end. At that point, the region became known as Turkey, but the term *Turkey* had actually been around for several centuries prior to that.

I mention this because a lot of products from the Ottoman Empire made their way to Europe over time. And it was common to refer to those products by reference to the region. So, for example, in the 1800s, a common type of footstool became popular in Europe and North America. And it was called an *ottoman* because of its origin in this region. Interestingly, the word *sofa* also came from Turkish, but it was originally an Arabic word – *suffah*. And it came into English in the 1600s.

And speaking of ottomans and sofas, I should also mention that the word *mattress* has its origins in the Near East. It began as the Arabic word – *al-matrah* – which meant 'a cushion.' It was common in the Arab world for people to sleep on cushions that were placed on the floor. And it was during the Crusades that Westerners picked up this word, and it passed through French into English in the 1200s. So the words *ottoman*, *sofa* and *mattress* all have their origin in the Near East.

As I noted, the region of Anatolia was also known as *Turkey*. In fact, Geoffrey Chaucer used the name *Turkey* in an English text in the 1300s, and that is the first known use of the name *Turkey* in English. It became commonplace to refer to products from that region with the prefix *Turkey*. So you could have a 'Turkey chair' or a 'Turkey cushion.' And there was a particular type of gem from there called a 'Turkey stone.' The term 'Turkey stone' was a translation of a French term. In French,

a ‘stone’ was a *Pierre*. And a ‘stone from Turkey’ was a ‘*Pierre turqueise*.’ That name was later shortened to just *Turquoise*. So *Turquoise* is based on the French word for ‘Turkish.’

There was also a particular type of bird that was imported into Europe from the region. The bird was called a *Turkey cock* or a *Turkey hen*. These types of birds actually came from Madagascar off the southeastern coast of Africa, but Europeans got them from Turkish traders. Over time, the birds were imported via a western route around the other side of the Mediterranean. They came in via north Africa – into Spain – and then up into Western Europe. So instead of coming into Europe through Turkey, they were now coming in through Spain. But then the Spaniards settled in North America and discovered a similar bird there. And those North American birds were brought back to Spain – and from there, they were sold throughout Western Europe. So these North American birds were being traded side-by-side with those birds called *Turkey cocks* or *Turkey hens*. And apparently, most Europeans thought the two birds were related because North American birds also started to be called *Turkey cocks* or *Turkey hens*. And over time, the name of those birds was shortened to just *turkey*. So the word *turkey* for a type of North American bird or fowl is actually derived from the name of the region of Turkey – which is named for the Turks who arrived there in the year 1068.

So let’s return to our story. At the same time that the Seljuk Turks were conquering Anatolia, they were also spreading south into Syria and Palestine. And they soon captured Jerusalem as well. Now obviously, Jerusalem was an important city because it was the home to holy sites for Christians, Jews and Muslims. And many European Christians made pilgrimages there. But when the Seljuk Turks took the city, they effectively closed it to Christians, and they actually persecuted Christians in the region. And that really set in motion the events that led to the Crusades.

But the Crusades didn’t happen immediately. In fact, it took about 20 years for the Crusades to get underway. In the meantime, the Seljuks had to deal with another threat. And that threat was an internal threat. Now you may know that there are two distinct sects or denominations of Islam – Sunni and Shia. And that division goes back to the some of the earliest days of Islam, and it involved a dispute concerning Mohammad’s proper successor. The details of that dispute are not really important to our story, but it is important to know that there was this basic division. And the Seljuks were Sunni Muslim.

But a rival Shia faction opposed the Seljuks, and they set up their base in the Persian mountains. They didn’t have enough soldiers to take on the Seljuks in a head-to-head confrontation, so they used a different tactic. Their members would secretly blend into Seljuk society, and without warning, they would attack and kill prominent Seljuk leaders. They targeted both political and religious leaders. The murders almost always took place in public, and it was usually a suicide mission because the killer was almost always struck down on the spot in retaliation.

Many people were fascinated by these killers because they carried out their mission with a calmness and serenity even though they were basically committing suicide in the process. It was a common belief that they smoked hashish to get high before carrying out the murders. Hashish is related to marijuana, and the word *hashish* is an Arabic word meaning ‘grass.’ So it is basically the same way that marijuana is known as *grass* or *weed* in English.

Since it was believed that these killers ate hashish, they were called *hashishiyyin* in Arabic which meant ‘hashish-eaters’ or ‘hashish-takers.’ A few years later, when the Crusades began, Western Europeans also encountered the *hashishiyyin*, and they were sometimes targeted by the *hashishiyyin*. And that name passed into French, but you might remember that French didn’t tend to pronounce the ‘h’ sound. Well, when those ‘h’s were removed from the word *hashishiyyin*, it became *assassin*. And the word *assassin* passed into English meaning someone who kills a prominent or well-known person. So *assassin* is ultimately an Arabic word, and it’s actually cognate with the word *hashish*.

So the Seljuk Turks had to deal with assassins, but about 20 years after taking control of Jerusalem, they had to deal with another threat – the Crusaders.

The Byzantine Emperor was so concerned with the Seljuk threat that he contacted the Pope, and he asked the Pope to make an appeal to Christians to come to the Holy Land and re-take Jerusalem. The Pope at the time was Pope Urban II, and he held a council at Clermont in southern France to try to gather support. The Pope pleaded with the leaders of Western Europe to send forces to Jerusalem to recover the city. And the First Crusade was launched the following year.

At Urban’s suggestion, the Crusaders wore a red cross on the front of their tunics. And that cross gave the movement its name. It was common for Christians to make the sign of the cross on their chest with their hand just as many still do today. And to make the sign of the cross was *croiser* in French. And since these soldiers wore a cross on their chest, the word *croiser* came to mean a war fought for a holy cause. And that produced the word *crusade*.

Of course, the word *crusade* has taken on a broader meaning over time. Today, it means any righteous cause. So a politician might lead a crusade against gambling, or a online activist might lead a crusade against cyber-bullying. But the origin of the word lies in this series of religious wars in the Middle Ages.

I should also mention that the related word *crucifix* also entered English around this time. It is attested in the early 1200s.

To the Crusaders, the Muslims who had taken control of the Holy Land were infidels – or non-believers. Old French actually had a word that literally meant ‘non-believer.’ It was *mescreant*. And that word passed into English as *miscreant*. And again, we still have that word today. It means a villain or depraved person. But its original use dates back to the Crusades, and it originally was a term for a Muslim or other non-Christian.

A short time after the Pope’s call to action, many nobles and knights from various parts of Europe led their forces to the Holy Land. The ultimate goal of the Crusaders was to capture and control the city of Jerusalem.

Given that goal, the First Crusade was considered a great success in the West because the Western forces were able re-take the city. They defeated the Seljuks and they took control of Jerusalem. The Crusaders then set up four separate Christian kingdoms in Palestine. The four states were the

Kingdom of Jerusalem, the County of Edessa, the County of Tripoli, and the Principality of Antioch. These are sometimes called the Crusader states. And the idea was that these would be permanent political entities governed by Western Christian leaders.

For the next 50 years, these Crusader states actually thrived. Pilgrims started to return to the region in great numbers. And with a foothold in Near East, Westerners had direct access to Arab goods.

By this point, Christian forces had also reclaimed the northern third of Spain. So there was a lot of contact between Arab traders and European traders on both sides of the Mediterranean. The trading networks that ran through the Mediterranean also extended up into northern Europe – into the British Isles and Scandinavia. To the east, the networks extended to India and then on to China and the Far East. The networks even extended down into central Africa. As traders brought goods across Africa to the trading ports of the Mediterranean, they traveled in large groups for added protection and security. This type of merchant group was called a *caravan* from a Persian word meaning ‘desert travelers.’ The word was picked up by Crusaders and pilgrims in the Mediterranean used the term to refer to any group of people who traveled together. The word is found in the Romance languages from this point on, but it doesn’t appear in an English document until the late 1500s. I should also note that the modern word *van* – as in a ‘mini-van’ – is just a shortened version of the word *caravan*.

As always, the Middle East was the crossroads of the world, and most of those trading networks converged there. Those networks also allowed goods to move freely around the Mediterranean. And since much of Spain was still under Muslim control, a lot of products from the Near East were also sold and traded in Spain.

So Western Europeans were coming across those products at various places. The products were passing into markets in Spain and Italy and other parts of southern Europe. But more importantly, Europeans were encountering those products first-hand in the Near East thanks to the extensive pilgrimage that resumed after the First Crusade.

I should note that this general period saw the introduction of words like *pilgrim*, *pilgrimage* and *journey* to the English language. They’re recorded in some of the earliest Middle English texts. They’re all French words, and they replaced native Old English words. In Old English, an extended trip was an *sib-fær* – literally ‘a far trip.’ But now, it became a *journey*. By the way, an Arabic word for a journey was *safar*. And that word later entered English in the 1800s as *safari*. And during the Anglo-Saxon period, it was common for Anglo-Saxons to travel down to Rome to visit holy sites there. That was called a *sub-for* – literally a ‘southern journey.’ Now, that type of trip became known as a *pilgrimage*, and the travelers were called *pilgrims*.

As I noted, many of these pilgrims made the extended trip to Jerusalem, and there, they found holy sites. And they also found lots of local markets selling a variety of goods that catered to pilgrims. Some of those goods were produced locally and some were imported from the Far East and central Africa. Those markets were called *bazaars* from a Persian word meaning ‘a market.’ I should note that the word *bazaar* didn’t actually appear in an English document until the 1500s. But those bazaars provided various essentials to travelers like food and clothing.

They also provided exotic and unusual items that were difficult or impossible to find in the West. That included porcelain and special types of pottery, as well as soaps and perfumes. The markets also sold piece-goods, clothes, carpets, tapestries and cushions. And they offered lots of unusual foods and spices. Through this process, and through those extensive trading networks, many of those items were introduced to Western Europe.

Europeans were especially intrigued by the unique foods and spices that came from the East. Up to this point, the diet of Medieval Europe had been limited and somewhat monotonous. Europeans ate what was available locally, and they dried or preserved what they could for winter. But the pilgrims and Crusaders discovered lots of new foods in the markets of the Mediterranean. And they also discovered lots of spices that added flavor to otherwise bland and boring foods. That led to the development of a very lucrative spice trade.

Lots of words for herbs and spices entered early Middle English in the 1200s and 1300s. As English documents started to be produced again, many of them contained references to new herbs and spices. Most of those words came into English through French. In fact, the words *herb* and *spice* are both French words – and they both came into English in the 1200s. Being a French word, the word *herb* came in with a silent ‘H’ at the front. And it retained that silent ‘H’ until the 1800s. But around that time, speakers in Britain started to pronounce a lot of those ‘H’s. And it became /herb/ in Britain. But American English retained the original silent ‘H’ – and thus, the word is still pronounced a /erb/ in American English.

Believe it or not, the word *spice* is actually derived from the Latin word *species*. The word *species* meant a kind or sort or type of something. It’s also related to the word *spectate*. So it referred to the process by which someone would look at or observe a group of things – and would sort them out based on appearance. Each particular group was a *species*. Well, when traders and dealers sorted through various plants and herbs, they separated them into separate groups or species. And eventually, this produced the distinct word *spices* to refer to the various flavoring agents sold in those markets.

Now as traders sorted through herbs and spices, they also had to remove dirt and debris from the products. There was an Arabic word to describe this process of inspecting, sorting and sifting. It was *gharbala*. Some scholars think the Arabic word may have been based on an older Latin word. But either way, the word was picked up by European traders, and it produced the word *garble*. It originally referred to the process of sorting through a group of things and selecting certain individual pieces. In later English, it came to refer to the process of selectively picking out certain parts of a story to create a false impression. And that produced the modern sense of the word *garble* meaning ‘to mix up or distort.’ But ultimately *garble* comes from Arabic, and it originally had to do with the spice trade.

Now herbs and spices added flavor to foods, but they also had a sweet odor and smell. The Greek word *aroma* originally referred to spices that had a fragrant smell. And the word passed into English in the early 1200s, but it still meant a spice at that time. And in fact, the word *aroma* didn’t acquire its modern meaning as a smell or odor until the 1800s.

The word *balm* has a similar history. It is actually a Semitic word for a spice. The word was later applied to resins and oils that had a sweet and fragrant smell. And that was how the word *balm* passed into English in the early 1200s.

So words like *garble*, *aroma* and *balm* all originated with the Mediterranean spice trade.

As those herbs and spices made their way north through France and then to England, the names of those plants also made their way into French and English. Some of those spices were known by names that can be traced back to Arabic, Persian or Sanskrit. That included *saffron* and *sumac* which both appeared in English around the time of the Crusades. Both of those words are Arabic words. *Cinnamon* also came in around that time. It was another popular spice, and the word *cinnamon* can be traced back to a Phoenician word. So it also originated within the Semitic languages.

Now there were a few words for spices that are actually attested in Old English, so even though they were part of this lucrative spice trade, they had actually been around for a while in England. So for example, the word *cumin* is another Arabic word, and it was another very popular spice, but it had been around since Old English. In fact, it is one of the few Arabic words attested in Old English.

Old English also had the words *pepper* and *ginger*. *Pepper* had been introduced by Roman traders during the Proto-Germanic period. So it was part of the Anglo-Saxon language from the very beginning. The word came from Latin, but most scholars trace it back to Sanskrit.

Ginger has a similar history. The Anglo-Saxons had borrowed the word from Latin, but it also goes back to Sanskrit. But note that the modern form of the word is *ginger* – pronounced with soft ‘G’s – which is a French pronunciation. The Latin pronunciation would have used hard G’s. So that indicates that the word *ginger* was re-borrowed from French in early Middle English. And that was probably because ginger was a very popular spice in that new spice trade that followed the Crusades. And the French influence was so strong during that period that the French form of the word replaced the older form.

So *cumin*, *pepper* and *ginger* are very old words going back to Old English, but they ultimately came from either Sanskrit or Arabic.

Now all of those herbs and spices added flavor to foods, but the Europeans also discovered something else that added flavor. It specifically added a sweet flavor – and that was sugar. And *sugar* is another word that English borrowed from the East. It was originally a Sanskrit word – and it then passed into Persian – and was then borrowed into Arabic. The Arabic word was *sukkar*. And that Arabic word produced the modern word *sugar* in English. It also produced the word sugar in most other European languages as well.

Prior to the introduction of sugar, the only sweetener Europeans had was honey. So sugar was a very popular commodity.

There are a few reports of sugar in Europe prior to this point – in the early Middle Ages. But the sources suggest that it was quite rare, and it was mainly used as a medicine. It was often added to medical concoctions to make them sweeter and easier to drink. And in fact, Arabic gave us a specific word for a sugary drink – the word *syrup*. *Syrup* comes from the Arabic word *sharab* meaning ‘beverage or wine.’ That Arabic word also produced the word *sherbet* which originally meant a sweet drink made with sugar and fruit juice. And it produced the French word *sorbet* – which has also been borrowed into English. *Sherbet* and *sorbet* are more recent loanwords – both from around the year 1600. And the meaning of those words has shifted to more of a frozen desert. But as I noted, both of those words come from the same Arabic root word as *syrup* which entered English in the 1300s.

Another Arabic word for a sugary drink was *julab*, and that word entered English around the year 1400 as the word *julep*. Again, it initially referred to sweetened medicines, but it later acquired a more general sense as a sweet sugary drink. And we still have it in the name of certain cocktails like a mint julep.

Sugar was often sold in small cubes or lumps. In Sanskrit, the word *khanda* meant a piece or fragment of something. So those lumps of sugar were called *khanda sakara* which literally meant ‘fragment of sugar’ or ‘piece of sugar.’ That term passed through Persian into Arabic where the order of the two words was reversed, and it was rendered as *sukkar quandi*. By the late 1300s, that phrase has passed through French into English as *sugar candy*. So *sugar candy* meant a lump of sugar. Over time, the *sugar* part was dropped, and those lumps of sugar candy just became known as *candy*. But again, *candy* originally was a Sanskrit word that meant a fragment or piece of something.

By the way, some people think that the word *candy* is related to the word *cane* in sugar cane, but the two words are actually unrelated.

Now Western visitors to the Near East also discovered sugared almonds. Almonds were grown in the Near East, and when they were covered with sugar, they were a popular treat. Interestingly, the ‘A-L’ in *almond* appears to be based on a mistaken assumption that the word was an Arabic word.

It was originally a Greek word – *amygdalos*. Well, in early Spanish, the word appears as *almenra* with an initial ‘A-L’ at the front instead of an ‘A-M.’ The most common theory for the change in pronunciation at the front is that early Spanish speakers thought the word was Arabic since almonds were often sold by Arab traders. As we saw last time, the word *al* is the Arabic word for *the*, so it was very common at the front of Arabic nouns. So over time, some people pronounced the name of this nut with an initial ‘A-L’ as well. And that pronunciation passed into English as *almond*. I should note that the Modern French version of the word is *amande* without the ‘L.’ But in older French, both pronunciations existed.

Before I move on, I should mention something else about almonds. Their sweet-smelling oil was used as a perfume and a body moisturizer. Burnt almonds were also made into a powder that was used for make-up. It was a dark powder that was used to color the eyelids. The Arabic word for this type of powder was *koh’l*. The powder was formed by burning the almonds with other substances,

thereby converting them into a vapor. The vapor was then cooled which produced a fine powder. This process is called sublimation today. And during the 1600s, scientists used that Arabic term *koh'l* to refer to any substance obtained through that type of process. They sometimes added that Arabic word *al* to the front, and that produced the word *al-koh'l* – or *alcohol* as we know it today. It usually referred to a type of powder. So powdered sulfur was called ‘alcohol of sulfur.’ The term was later extended to mean any kind of refined substance including liquids. By the 1700s, people spoke of ‘alcohol of wine’ to mean wine that had been distilled. And it then acquired its modern sense as a specific type of liquid that has been distilled. So the word *alcohol* is an Arabic word, and it is based on a word that originally meant eye makeup. It also refers to a substance that was originally made from burnt almonds.

So we’ve seen that Westerners were discovering herbs and spices and sweeteners and new types of nuts. They were also discovering lots of other foods in the Near East. During the period of the Crusades, the word *olive* entered the English language. The word *oil* also entered English during that period. In its original sense, the word *oil* literally meant the oil derived from olives, so it meant ‘olive oil.’ In fact, the words *olive* and *oil* are actually derived from the same Greek root word.

The words *fig*, *date*, *raisin* and *grape* all appear in English for the first time during this period. *Fig* and *date* may have Semitic origins, but the precise origin is unclear beyond Greek. *Raisin* comes from Latin, but again, its history is unclear beyond that. Of course, raisins are dried grapes, and *grape* also came in around this time from French. *Grape* may have Germanic origins, but again, the etymology is uncertain beyond French.

Now you may be surprised that *grape* was a relatively new word in English given that England had wine – and the word *wine* – for many centuries before that. But the Anglo-Saxons tended to speak very literally, and they called a grape a *winberige* – literally a ‘wine berry.’ But now, the word *grape* came in.

A new type of fruit came in from Persia as well. In Greek, the fruit was called a *Persikon malon* – literally a ‘Persian melon’ or ‘Persian apple.’ That term passed through Latin, and by the time of Medieval Latin, the *malon* part had been dropped, and it was simply *pesca*. It then passed through French into English as *peach* in the 1300s. So the word *peach* is derived from the word *Persian*. And again, it originally meant a Persian melon or Persian apple.

Europeans also discovered citrus fruits in the Mediterranean. Oranges, lemons and limes made their way to Western Europe. The word *orange* comes from Sanskrit, and it first appears in English in the 1300s. *Lemon* appears around the same time. *Lime* comes in a couple of centuries later. Now lemons and limes are similar fruits, and they have similar-sounding names, so it is probably no surprise that they both come from the same Persian root word – which was *limun*.

I should also note that English started to get new words for various types of onions. The Old English words for an onion were based on very early borrowings from Latin. That included the Old English word *cipe*. A more colloquial term for an onion in Latin was a *unio* which was really a variation of the word *union* – meaning a vegetable with many separate layers that were united into one. That term was borrowed by the Anglo-Saxon as a *ynne-leac* – literally a ‘union leek.’ But now, English

borrowed that Latin word again, this time via French. And the word *unio* came in this second time as *onion*. So *onion* is really just a variation of the word *union*.

In the 1300s, English also borrowed the word *scallion*. The word scallion is actually based on the name of a seaport near Jerusalem where the vegetable was once produced or sold. The name of the seaport is Ashkelon, and it lies just west of Jerusalem. The 'A' was dropped from the front of the name, and that produced the word *scallion*. By the way, the word *shallot* is also derived from the same name, and it was borrowed during the 1600s.

So we've looked at herbs and spices, and sugar and fruits and vegetables. I should also note that rice and cotton also made their way to southern Europe around this time as well. The Arabs had adopted those crops from India, and rice has its ultimate origins in eastern Asia. Those crops were then transported to Spain after the Muslim conquest there. And from Spain, rice and cotton were transported north into France and England. So Western Europeans started to become familiar with rice as a food and cotton as a fabric. The word *rice* is a Sanskrit word and it first appears in English in the early 1200s.

The word *cotton* comes from an Arabic word – *qutn*. And that word passed into the English around the year 1400. The Arabs had developed a sophisticated cotton industry because cotton fabric was light and comfortable, and it was used for clothing, as well as things like sheets, tablecloths, towels and rugs. As Europeans discovered the benefits of cotton, it soon became a popular alternative to wool.

So from all of those words that were entering English in the 1200s and 1300s, we can see how those trading networks were changing the diet and lifestyle of Western Europe. And again, the Crusaders and pilgrims and Western traders were an important link in that chain. The Christian conquest of Jerusalem gave Europeans a foothold in the eastern Mediterranean. And the Muslim conquest of Spain gave Muslims a foothold in southwestern Europe. And places like Sicily in the Mediterranean were home to a variety of peoples from all over meeting and mixing and trading with each other. So the entire Mediterranean region was exploding with activity.

Europeans came to the Mediterranean from all over Western Europe speaking a variety of European languages. But Arabs referred to all those Europeans as simply the *Franks* regardless of background. And I mention that because many scholars consider that generic use of the word *Franks* to be the origin of the term *lingua franca* to mean a common shared language. As the various European and Muslim traders encountered each other, they communicated in a shared trading language that blended elements of southern French and Italian and Arabic. It was really a trading vernacular that was used around the Mediterranean. Since it was commonly used by Western Europeans – or 'Franks' – that common vernacular became known as the *lingua franca*. Of course, today it refers to any common language or vernacular.

So following the First Crusade, when several Christian Crusader states were established in the Holy Land, a lot of travelers and traders made their way to the region. As they traveled, they needed security and protection. I noted earlier, that Arab trader often traveled in groups called *caravans*. And they did that for security and protection. Well, Christian pilgrims and traders needed similar

protection. So during the period, several Christian military orders were formally established to help provide that protection. Last time, I talked about the Hospitallers which had been around for a while, but they were formally recognized as a Christian military order shortly after the First Crusade.

A short time later, in the year 1119, another military order was established. A French knight named Hugues de Payens approached the man who had been appointed as the King of Jerusalem, and he proposed the creation of a new military order to help protect pilgrims. The king agreed and granted the order a headquarters in a wing of the royal palace on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The Temple Mount was located above what was believed to be the ruins of the Temple of Solomon. So the Crusaders referred to the building as the Temple of Solomon. And this new military order became known as the Military Order of the Knights of the Temple of Solomon, but that long name was soon shortened to simply ‘the Templars.’

That meant that the Templars and the Hospitallers were really the closest thing the Crusaders had to a standing army in the Crusader states. But those two military orders had other missions as well. As I noted last time, the Hospitallers also provided comfort and care to pilgrims at their hospice. And the Templars also developed an alternate mission over time. Their alternate mission had to do with money and finance. In fact, the Templars created the first major banking institution in Western Europe.

The Templars were founded in poverty, but that changed very quickly. They were tremendous fund raisers, and they appealed to everyone in Europe to make donations to support their cause in the Holy Land. And the money started to roll in.

In an earlier episode of the podcast, when we were going through the Peterborough Chronicle, I mentioned a passage where Hugh de Payens – the Templars founder – traveled to England to solicit donations. It was such a big event at the time that the Chronicle made mention of it. Here is an extended part of that passage from the year 1128:

This same year came from Jerusalem Hugh of the Temple to the king in Normandy; and the king received him with much honor, and gave him rich presents in gold and in silver.

Des ilces geares com fram Ierusalem Hugo of þe temple to ðone kyng on Normandig. 7 se kyng him underfeng mid micel wurðscipe. 7 micle gersumes him geaf on gold 7 on silure.

And afterwards he sent him into England; and there he was received by all good men, who all gave him presents, and in Scotland also, and by him they sent to Jerusalem much wealth in gold and in silver.

7 siððon he sende him to Englalande. 7 þær he wæs underfangen of ealle gode men. 7 ealle him geauen gersume on Scotlande ealswa. 7 be him senden to Ierusalem micel eahte mid ealle on gold 7 on silure.

Now I wanted to make note of that passage again because it points to a very important development – the tremendous acquisition of wealth by the Templars. Donations rolled in – as did a stream of new recruits. The Templars not only acquired a lot of money, they also were given castles and land in the Crusader states.

Having acquired so much wealth, they then started to make loans. Initially, the loans were intended to help finance the travel of pilgrims and Crusaders. The first record of a Templar loan occurred in the year 1135. The loan was made to a couple to help them pay for their pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In exchange, the Templars received the couple's property and held it until the loan was repaid. In the meantime, the Templars received the income and revenue generated by the property. The Church rules at the time prevented lenders from charging interest, but the Templars discovered this convenient loophole. It wasn't interest – it was rent.

The Templars were soon making large loans to various kings and governments. They were also exempt from taxes and tithes. So they were receiving regular donations, and they were receiving the income from their properties – including the ones they were holding as collateral for loans. And they didn't have to pay taxes to the government or tithes to the Church. That's a good deal if you can find it. It made the Templars one of the richest organizations in Europe – probably the richest. And they soon had branches throughout Europe.

Over time, their financial transactions became more sophisticated. Traveling with large sums of money over long distances was risky. So a knight in England could go to a Templar house in London and deposit money or take out a loan there. He then received a letter in return that stated the amount on deposit. The knight could take that letter with him and redeem it at any other Templar house. So when he arrived in Jerusalem, he could receive the money in the form of gold coins whenever he needed it. Of course, the Templars took a fee for the transaction. But in that sense, they were operating very much like a modern bank. And that letter was the Medieval equivalent of the modern checkbook.

And speaking of checks, I should note that the word *check* entered English around this time, and it also has its origins in the Near East. I've actually covered this etymology before, so I won't go through it all again. But I wanted to mention it here as a reminder.

Back in Episode 73, I talked about *chess* and *checks* and *checkers* and the English office of the *Exchequer*. And you might remember that all of those words came from the game of chess, and specifically, the term *checkmate* – which derived from the Persian phrase "Shah Mat" meaning "the king is helpless." The sense of the word *check* as a bank check is a relatively modern development, but again, it ultimately goes back to this same root. And I wanted to make that point because that means that the word *check* is ultimately based on a Persian word – the word *Shah*. And it also a good reminder that the game of chess, which originated in India, was also spreading into Western Europe during the Crusades. So it wasn't just herbs and spices and fruits that were being carried north and west. It was also cultural items like games.

I mentioned in that earlier episode that the word *check* was also used for the name of a game that was similar to chess called *checkers*. That's the common name in the US. It's also known as

draughts in the UK. Well, I should mention here that checkers or draughts was once a completely different game called *alquerque* (AL-ker-kee). That's an Arabic word, and the game itself was very popular in the Arab world. It used a different type of game board, but it basically had all the same rules of checkers. Each player started with a certain number pieces and moved them in diagonal lines – jumping over the other player's pieces and capturing them. The first player to capture all of the opponent's pieces won. Well, European Crusaders and pilgrims discovered this game in the Near East. And around the time of the First Crusade, an innovative Frenchman thought of playing the game on a chess board. And that was really the innovation that led to checkers or drafts.

Another game that Western knights supposedly discovered or invented while on Crusade was a dice game called *hazard*. It was basically the original form of the game we know today as *craps*. The origin of the name *hazard* is not entirely clear, but many scholars trace it back to Arabic. One theory says that it is based on an old Arabic word for a die called *az-zahr*, but that word is not very well attested in Arabic. Last time, I introduced you to Elias Belhadden of the History of Islam Podcast, and he also expressed some scepticism about that etymology. Here are his thoughts:

An alternate etymology that links the word *hazard* with the Crusades comes from a contemporary writer named William of Tyre who wrote in the 1100s that the word *hazard* was derived from the name of a castle in Palestine called *Asart*, and that the dice game was played by Crusaders during a protracted siege of the castle. And after that siege, the Crusaders started to refer to the game as *hazard* based on the name of that castle.

Whatever the ultimate source, it seems clear that the game was known as *hazard* during the Crusades. Of course, hazard was a game of chance – with an opportunity to either win or lose. That risk of loss ultimately influenced the development of the word in English. And today, the word *hazard* means a specific risk or peril. But it originally referred to a game of dice.

Now that more general sense of the word *hazard* as a 'risk or peril' is important to our story because trips to the Holy Land were always hazardous – filled with lots of risk and peril. Bandits and robbers lurked around every corner. And sickness and disease were common threats. These were the risks that the Templars and Hospitallers tried to manage while defending the Crusader states at the same time. And for several decades, they managed those risks very well.

But in the 1140s, their hold on the region started to slip. Remember that four separate Christian Crusader states had been established after the first Crusade. The northernmost Crusader state was the County of Edessa located around the modern border between Syria and Turkey. In the year 1144, the region was recaptured by the Turks. It was the first significant loss for the Crusaders.

The loss of Edessa led to the Second Crusade in the mid-1100s. That was the Crusade where Eleanor of Aquitaine accompanied her first husband – the French king Louis VII. They traveled together and argued the whole time. The Western forces were able to capture some territory in Spain and northern

Egypt, but they suffered a massive defeat in the Holy Land. Edessa was permanently lost, so the Second Crusade was considered a major failure. However, the Christian forces held on to the other three Crusader states including the main prize – Jerusalem.

So for the next 30 or 40 years, Western pilgrims and traders continued to travel to the Holy Land – and they continued to enjoy the protection provided by the Templars and the Hospitallers. And the Templars continued to acquire wealth and make loans.

Then in the 1170s, a new force started to take shape in the East. That force was a man named Saladin. Saladin was a warlord from Mesopotamia who became the ruler of Syria and gradually expanded his realm throughout much of the Middle East. He united the Muslims throughout the region and he posed the greatest threat to the Christian Crusader states. He was a Sunni Muslim, so he was an enemy of the Shi'a Assassins who I mentioned earlier. Around the year 1175, he actually survived two murder attempts by the Assassins. One attacker got so close that he slashed Saladin's cheek and pierced his leather chest armor. But he was not deterred. He eventually conquered Iraq and Egypt, and that gave him control of all the regions surrounding the Crusader states. He then moved against Jerusalem. In the year 1187, he captured the city, and Jerusalem slipped from the grasp of the Christians, and it returned to Muslim control for the first time in nearly a century.

As we know, Jerusalem was always the main prize. And the loss of Jerusalem was a devastating blow to Christians in Europe. So in response to that loss, European forces started to make plans for a Third Crusade to try to recover the city from Saladin's forces.

And that brings us back up to the current point in our overall story of English with the reign of Richard the Lionheart. Richard became king of England and ruler of the Angevin Empire two years after the fall of Jerusalem. When Richard became king, preparations were already underway for the Third Crusade. So let's take a quick break here to catch our breath. When we come back, I'll explore the events of the Third Crusade and the early reign of Richard the Lionheart.

[BREAK]

When Jerusalem fell to Saladin's forces in 1187, it was considered a major defeat throughout Western Europe. For the first time in nearly a century, the all-important city had slipped from Christian control. The loss of the city meant that a new Crusade would have to be launched to drive out Saladin's forces and reclaim the city.

This Third Crusade was unique in that all three of the major rulers of Western Europe decided to combine their forces for the mission. Richard – the new king of England – controlled much of the British Isles and western France. He joined with Philip II, the French king who controlled the rest of France. And they were joined by the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, who controlled much of central Europe.

The Third Crusade was going to be VERY expensive, so a great deal of time was spent raising money for the venture. After arriving in England to be crowned as the new king, Richard set about selling as much as he could to fund his portion of the Crusade. He sold titles and castles and lands

throughout England. He basically sold the office of sheriff in the various counties to the highest bidder. When some of his advisors objected, Richard supposedly replied that he would sell the city of London itself if he could find a buyer.

Richard's desire for money also led to a renewed independence for Scotland. A few years earlier, Richard's father, Henry II, had defeated the Scots in that rebellion of 1173. Afterwards, Henry essentially controlled Scotland. But now, his son Richard needed money for the Crusade. So in exchange for 10,000 marks, Richard returned the Scottish castles that had been seized earlier, and he recognized Scotland's independence.

Richard knew that the Crusade would take many months – maybe years. And he also knew that his younger brother John might cause problems while he was away. So he awarded young John with several earldoms in the West Country. And John was allowed to keep the revenues from those counties. John was also given numerous castles in the Midlands. So John was left with a lot of land, but no official power.

I should also note that Richard and John's mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, was freed from house arrest after Richard became king. You might recall, that Henry had her locked up when she joined in that earlier rebellion against him. But when Henry died, she was quickly freed and she became a major player behind the scenes going forward.

Given that Richard was going to be away from England for a long time, he needed someone to run the country in his absence. So he turned to a close friend named William Longchamp. Longchamp was a Norman, and he was brought over from Normandy and designated a bishop, as well as the Chief justice official and the Chancellor of England. So Longchamp was designated as a church official and the leading government official in Richard's absence. But Longchamp was not popular in England, and that created lots of problems after Richard left for the Crusades. But more on that later.

Four months after arriving in England, Richard headed to France on his way to the Near East. There he met with King Philip of France. Philip and Richard had fought together and defeated Richard's father, Henry II. But it was an uneasy friendship. Philip's friendship with Richard was one of convenience. They both had a common enemy in Henry. Richard wanted to control his inheritance and Philip wanted to break-up the Angevin Empire. But now that Henry was dead, and Richard had stepped into his father's shoes, the friendship was strained. Richard wanted to maintain the Angevin Empire, but Philip still wanted to break it apart. In France, the two kings agreed that their forces would not attack each other's lands while they were away, and they further agreed to evenly split any wealth or property that they captured during the Crusade. They then headed to the French coast to sail to the Holy Land.

Meanwhile the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, headed out separately over land through southeastern Europe. But soon after crossing through the Byzantine Empire, Barbarossa drowned while crossing a river. With his death, his German forces split into three separate divisions, and most of them ended up returning home. So the Third Crusade got off to a bad start.

That left Richard and Philip as the leaders of the Third Crusade. And Richard soon made it clear that he considered himself first among equals. When Richard's troops landed on the island of Sicily, they got into a dispute with local traders and shopkeepers in the town of Messina. The needs of the soldiers exceeded the available supplies, and some of the local traders decided to jack up prices. Richard's soldiers thought they were being gouged, and clashes soon broke out between the Crusaders and the traders. The clashes spilled into the streets when locals got involved. And the dispute eventually turned into a full-scale battle. The local people were no match for Richard's forces, so Richard soon found himself in control of Sicily.

Philip had refused to support Richard's forces, and when Richard's forces completed their conquest, they refused to fly the French flag over the towers and walls of Messina. Philip considered that a slight against him since he and Richard had agreed to divide everything equally.

The conflict between the two kings was made even worse when Richard announced that he was backing out of a prior agreement to marry Philip's sister. Richard had been betrothed to her since they were children. It was a political marriage, as was common for the period. But Richard had secretly acquired a new fiancée, and now he told Philip that he was backing out of the planned marriage. Richard's announcement created a small diplomatic crisis because Philip considered it an insult. Philip soon left Richard behind and proceeded on to the Holy Land without him.

Richard's forces followed a few days later, but they ended up on the island of Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean when a couple of Richard's ships were wrecked off the coast. Once again, Richard's forces got into a fight with the locals, and the dispute turned into a full-scale conquest of the island. Richard ending up selling the island to the Templars, but he didn't split the money with Philip. Richard also married his new fiancée while in Cyprus. The new Queen of England was from Navarre in northern Spain. She was crowned as queen in Cyprus by a Norman bishop to an English king who only spent 6 months of his reign in England. So there wasn't really anything English about the new English queen.

Richard then proceeded on to the Holy Land, and he landed in the port city of Acre north of Jerusalem in June of 1191. Acre was the most important port city in the region, and most Westerners who made the trek to Jerusalem passed through that busy port. The ultimate success of this Crusade really depended on the recapture of Acre because the Crusaders needed that foothold in order to launch an attack on Jerusalem to the south. Acre had been under siege for nearly two years when Richard finally arrived.

About a month after Richard arrived, the Crusaders finally breached the city's defenses. It was a great victory for the Crusaders – one of the greatest victories in the Holy Land since the First Crusade almost a century earlier. And the victory helped to secure Richard's reputation as great warrior. But the victory came at a great cost.

First, there was a diplomatic incident involving Duke Leopold of Austria – an ally of Richard and Philip. Leopold had been involved in the siege of the city for several months before Richard and Philip got there. And after the victory, Leopold's forces tried to fly his banner from the local citadel. But Richard's men were offended by the banner, and they tore it down because Leopold wasn't a

king. He was expected to know his place, and that place was under Richard. Leopold was infuriated, and he and his forces soon left for home. That reduced the number of available Crusaders. Leopold also plotted revenge again Richard, and as we'll see next time, he got his revenge a few months later.

The other problem with the victory at Acre had to do with those trading networks. The Count of Flanders had been killed in the siege. And to understand why that was a problem, you have to know that Flanders was the leading center of wool and cloth production in Europe. All of those trading networks carried wool and fabrics from Flanders to the far corners of the known world. That meant that Flanders had become very wealthy, and the French king Philip had been trying to add it to his royal demesne for some time. With the Count's death, Philip saw his opportunity. Philip also had enough of Richard. So three weeks after the victory at Acre, Philip headed back to France. That left Richard as the clear leader of the Crusade. It also meant that Richard wasn't available to defend his territory in western France. So after Philip returned home to France, he started to stir up trouble. He encouraged Richard's nobles to rebel, and he encouraged Richard's brother John to lay claim to the English throne.

Meanwhile, Richard was back in Acre planning the next stage of the Crusade. His forces soon headed south to Jerusalem accompanied by the Templars and Hospitallers. It was a slow trek – made even slower due to muddy weather and extreme caution. As Richard approached the city a couple of months later, he was having a problem maintaining his supply lines back to Acre. And his men were also exhausted. He gradually realized that even if he took the city, he wouldn't be able to hold it. Many of his men would return home, and Saladin's forces would just come back in and re-take it. Richard simply didn't have enough men to hold the city. So he turned back in mid-January.

It was around this time that Richard got news about what was happening back home. Philip was menacing Normandy, and John was trying to seize control of England.

So far, I've spent a lot of time talking about traders – with a 'D.' Now I want to talk about traitors – with a 'T.'

I mentioned earlier that Richard had left his friend William Longchamp in charge of England. But Longchamp was very unpopular. He was a Norman and didn't really have a knowledge of English politics. He didn't have a relationship with the English nobles, and he didn't speak English at all. Longchamp also placed many of his relatives in prominent positions. So Longchamp was very unpopular, and Richard's young brother John tried to take advantage of the situation. John led a movement to have Longchamp removed with the goal of seizing control of English government himself. It was also widely believed that Richard would probably die on Crusade anyway. So John was positioning himself to go ahead and take control before the inevitable took place.

So John and his supporters went after Longchamp and accused him of various offenses. Interestingly, one of the charges lodged against Longchamp was that he couldn't speak English. This implies that by the late 1100s, the people of England were starting to demand that officials have some knowledge of English. Of course, it should be noted that neither Richard nor John spoke English either. So maybe it just an expectation for administrators and bureaucrats. Or maybe the accusation was made

to emphasize the fact that Longchamp was a Norman with no real connection to England. It's difficult to say, but it was one of many complaints lodged against Longchamp.

Ultimately, the propaganda campaign against Longchamp put so much pressure on him that he was forced to flee the country. According to some contemporary reports, he fled to the southern coast disguised as a woman and was unable to respond to the local people when they spoke to him in English. Eventually, he did find his way back to Normandy.

Now William Longchamp may seem like an obscure figure from English history, but he is important to our story for at least one reason. Remember that he had been the Chancellor of England. And during his time as Chancellor, the first English documents were composed in which Richard the king was referred to with the plural pronoun *we* instead of the singular pronoun *I*. This was the first known use of the so-called 'royal we' – as in "We are not amused." And Richard was definitely not amused by what was happening back in England.

By this point, Richard and John's mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, had stepped in to prevent John from seizing control of the English crown in Richard's absence. But John had emerged as a thorn in Richard's side. And he was sowing rebellion among the English nobles. He was also being encouraged by Philip back in France.

In May of 1192, Richard received word of the alliance between John and Philip. The envoy warned Richard of "abominable treachery" and the potential loss of England. Richard knew that he needed to wrap things up as soon as possible and head back home.

A new campaign season was about to begin, so Richard embarked on one last campaign to take Jerusalem before heading back to England. Once again, Richard's forces made the trek to Jerusalem, but he experienced the same problem as before. He could barely maintain his supply lines, and he was facing a bloody protracted siege of Jerusalem. He also knew that he wouldn't be able to hold the city even if he captured it.

By this point, Richard's forces and Saladin's forces had fought each other to a standstill. Their resources were running low and both sides were looking to settle their claims to the region. In September, a 3-year truce was signed. It was agreed, that the Crusaders would continue to hold the coastline, and the Muslim forces would continue to hold Jerusalem. Christian pilgrims would be permitted to enter the city, but it would remain under Muslim control.

In the end, the Third Crusade produced mixed results. The Crusaders were able to re-secure a foothold in the region. And Richard left the Holy Land as a hero for having secured so many victories – from Sicily to Cyprus to Acre – all the way to the outskirts of Jerusalem itself. In the process, he helped to re-establish a viable Crusader kingdom in the Holy Land. But the main prize was always Jerusalem. And that prize remained elusive. Richard was never able to capture it, and in fact, it never passed back to the Crusaders.

I mentioned Richard's brother John as a possible traitor during the Third Crusade. But he wasn't the only figure in this story to be accused of treachery. The Templars eventually faced similar

accusation. After the Third Crusade, the Templars moved their headquarters to the captured port city of Acre. There would be more Crusades, but increasingly they were focused more on plunder and personal gain. People started to question the motivations of the Crusaders. And that criticism extended to the Templars.

During the Crusades, the Templars had emerged as one of the wealthiest institutions in Europe and the Mediterranean. And with the permanent loss of Jerusalem, critics alleged that the Templars were more concerned with acquiring wealth than taking back the Holy Land. There were rumors of corruption and misplaced priorities.

About a century after the Third Crusade, the city of Acre once again fell to Muslim forces – and the Templars looked to move their headquarters to Europe. Given their wealth and independence and military power, there were rumors that the Templars were going to try to create their own kingdom in southern France. So the Templars actually became a threat to the French king at the time named Philip the Fair.

The later King Philip decided to eliminate the Templars once and for all – to remove the political threat and get access to all of their wealth. In the year 1307, he accused the Templars of heresy, and the Order was formally abolished by the Church. Almost all the Templars in France were arrested, and most were executed. Many of the leaders were burned alive. In France and England, most of the Templars' wealth was seized by royal officials.

The destruction of the Templars created a financial void in Europe. That early banking system disappeared. But a short time later, new institutions stepped into to fill the void. Several prominent families in northern Italy started to offer many of the same services the Templars had offered. And those families created a new banking network that was really the beginning of modern banking in Europe.

Now in this episode, I've talked about the Crusades, the spice trade, and the origin of the modern banking system. So let me conclude by putting all of these various pieces together for you. The European obsession with Crusades and spices takes us back to Spain where so many of those Arabic influences passed into Western Europe.

Though the Crusades in the Holy Land fizzled over time, the attempt to recapture Spain in the west raged on. Around the time of the Third Crusade, Christian forces had reclaimed roughly the northern half of the peninsula. As Christian forces spread south, new Christian kingdoms emerged in the conquered regions. In the far northeast, the Kingdom of Aragon was firmly established by the year 1035. Around the same time, the county of Castile emerged in north-central part of the Peninsula, and it gradually emerged as the dominant Christian realm in the region. In the far west, the Kingdom of Portugal was established in the 1130s. These were all independent realms, but in 1469, the heir to the throne of Aragon married the heir to the throne of Castile. That was the famous marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon to Isabella of Castile. That marriage sealed the alliance between those two separate kingdoms, and it was the origin of modern country of Spain.

During their joint reign, the re-conquest of Spain was finally completed. In the year 1492, Christian forces finally captured the last Muslim region in the far south – called Granada. One of the persons who was present at the capture of Grenada was a man by the name of Christopher Columbus – perhaps you’ve heard of him.

Columbus was in Spain because he had a potential solution to a problem that had arisen in the spice trade. The failure of the Crusades in the Holy Land and left the Near East under Muslim control. And Western traders were finding it difficult to secure safe passage through those regions using the traditional trading networks. So Columbus was looking for a different way to get to China and India. Rather than sailing eastward – through the Muslim-controlled lands – he had an idea to sail westward across the Atlantic. He knew the world was round, so he could just go in through the back door. On his way back from siege of Granada, he got an audience with Ferdinand and Isabella. And you probably know the rest of the story. They agreed to help finance the venture, but Columbus still needed a substantial investment from those northern Italian bankers that had filled the void when the Templars were banned.

So it was the desire to find a new trading route – combined with the money of the Italian bankers – and fueled by the successful re-conquest of Spain – that ultimately led Columbus to set sail westward in August of 1492 – just 8 months after the fall of Grenada and the final defeat of Muslim forces in Spain. And of course, that voyage led to the discovery of North and South America, and that discovery led to a later Indo-European migration as Spanish, Portugese, French and English all made their way across the Atlantic to the New World.

One final note before I conclude this look at Eastern influences on English during the early Middle Ages. 15 years before Columbus set sail to the New World, William Caxton starting printing books in England using his brand new printing press. The first book he produced was a version of The Canterbury Tales. But after that book was printed, Caxton decided to date each book he printed so that the date of production could be clearly established. So the next book he produced was the first book to bear a printing date – the year 1477. It’s the earliest dated book printed in England, and printed in the English language, using the printing press. It was called “Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers.” The book was an English translation of a French translation of a Latin translation of a book that was originally composed in Arabic in the late 11th century. So the oldest dated book printed in the English language was actually a translation of an Arabic text.

So I’m going to conclude this episode on that note. Next time, we’ll explore what happened when Richard the Lionheart returned to England. He had to death with kidnapers, a disloyal brother who was trying to overthrow him, and a rival French king who was trying to carve up his empire. This was also the period in which we got the first version of the King Arthur legend written in English.

So next time, we’ll look at those developments. Until then, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.