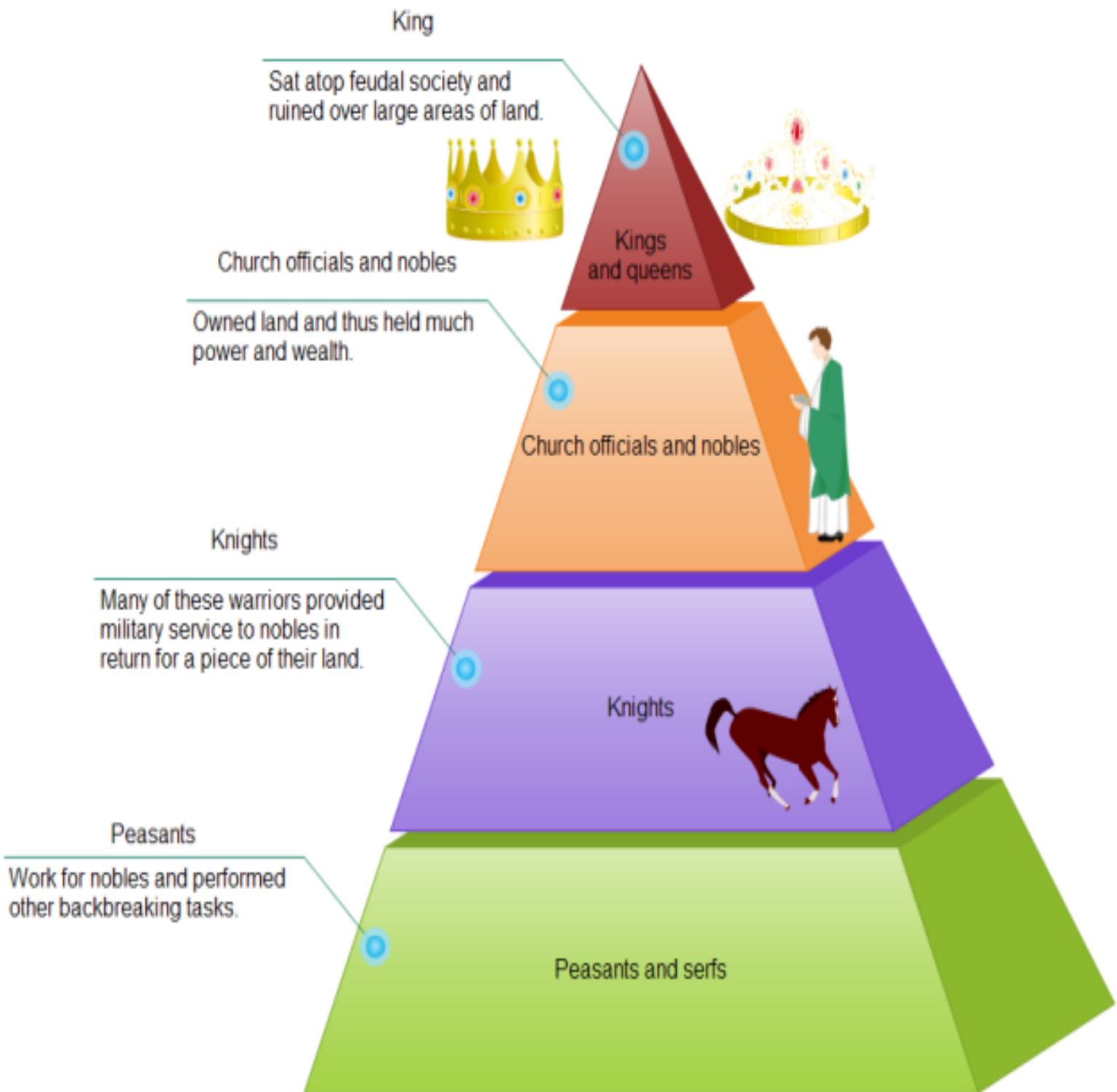


What Was Feudalism?

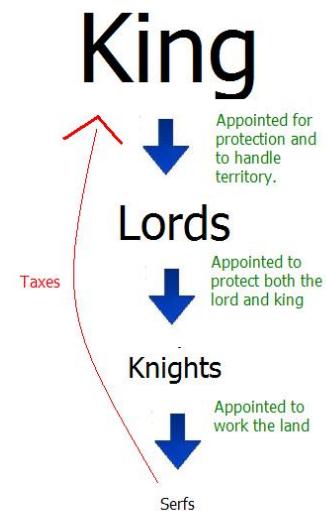
European Feudalism



It was a political system . . . THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT

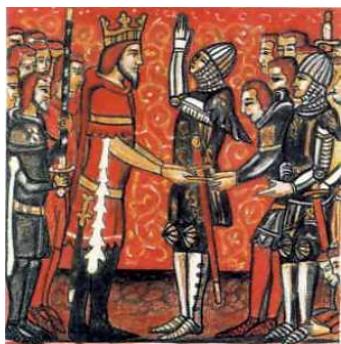
The ceremony

- In the beginning each vassal attached himself to lord in a ceremony called investiture.
 - It went like this: “I swear personal loyalty to you. I am your vassal. Whenever you are attacked, I will come to your defense (with many others) and fight on your behalf. In return, you give me land.”



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The Feudal Contract



- A vassal swore loyalty and military service to his lord; the lord rewarded him with land.
- Each side was bound to uphold his side of the contract.
 1. If the vassal broke the contract, he lost his land.
 2. If the lord broke the contract, the vassal was no longer obedient to him.
- By specifying rights and duties, the feudal contract provided the rules of government.

Feudalism provided strong local government

1. The lords on each manor held court and administered justice.
2. Before making laws (or going to war), the lord was supposed to consult his vassals.

It was a land system

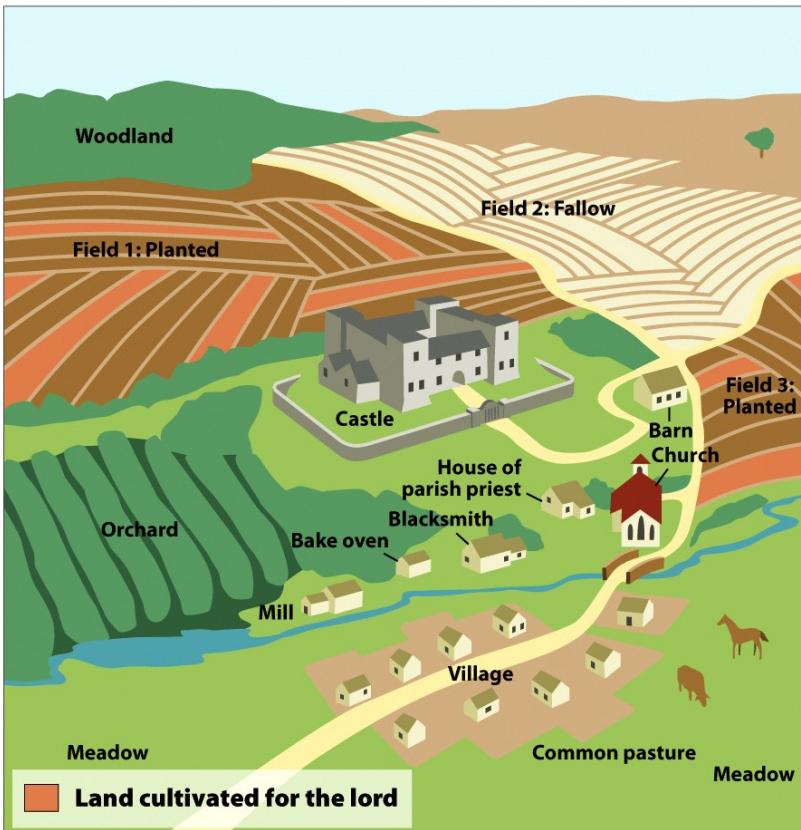


Figure 10.1 A Medieval Manor
Chapter 10, *A History of Western Society*, Tenth Edition
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Page 276

- Land was power
- In medieval Europe, power belonged to those who controlled the land.

(Later on, power will belong to those who control the sea.)

- The lord made a gift of land to his vassals. In return they gave him military service.
- The lord distributed land to his vassals.
 - The vassal did not own the land; he held it.
 - He did not pay rent; he owed military service.

Inheritance



- Owners of land held it as a gift from the lord.
- You could keep the land forever as long as you (and your heirs) served the king faithfully.
- When the vassal died, his first-born son inherited the land.

- The land could not be broken up, so it could not go to all the children.
- If he had no children, the land goes back to the lord.

(Note: This was not true of Church lands which always stayed in the Church. This is how the Church became the largest landowner in Europe!)

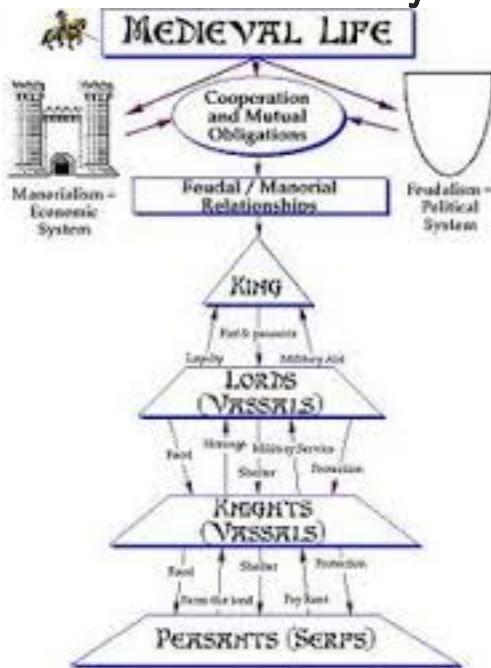
It was a military system

How it worked:

- An Englishman becomes a vassal of William the Conqueror.
 1. He swears personal loyalty to WTC.
 2. He pledges to bring 20 knights with him whenever WTC calls him to war.
 3. He is gifted a fief from WTC.
 4. He is called to war by WTC.
 5. He gifts manors to his 20 knights.
 6. He is their lord; they are his vassals.
- 7. He goes to war with his 20 knights.



It was a social system



- Feudalism was a social system based on land.
- The warrior held the highest status.
- The three classes: fighting men, praying men, working men.
 1. Nobles (In this order: King, prince, duke, marquess, earl*, viscount, baron, knight**)
 2. Clergy
 3. Peasants Serfs were tied to the soil. Freemen were not.

*The terms count and earl are titles of equal social standing. Continental Europeans mostly used the term count, while the British used earl.

**Although not technically land-owning nobility, knights are included in the category because they are part of the warrior class.

- A man could be both a lord and a vassal: A duke was a vassal of the king and the lord over a marquess.
- The clergy were the only educated class.
- Peasants were commoners: They do not own land and have nothing to do with the lord-vassal system.

- A serf was not attached to the lord; he and his family were attached to the soil.
- Serfs grew grain and gave their lord part of the harvest; in return, the lord protected them.
- The social system was fixed: You were born into your social class. Your class status was inherited.
- There was no social mobility: A peasant could never rise to the nobility. He could become a village priest.

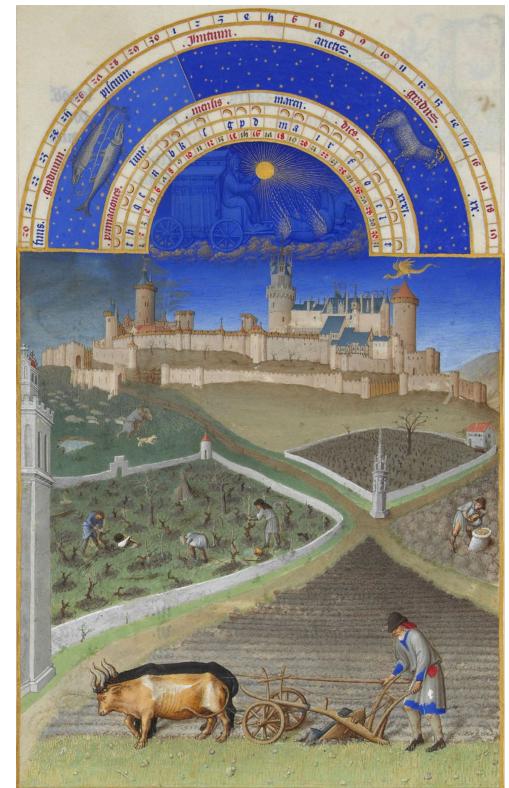
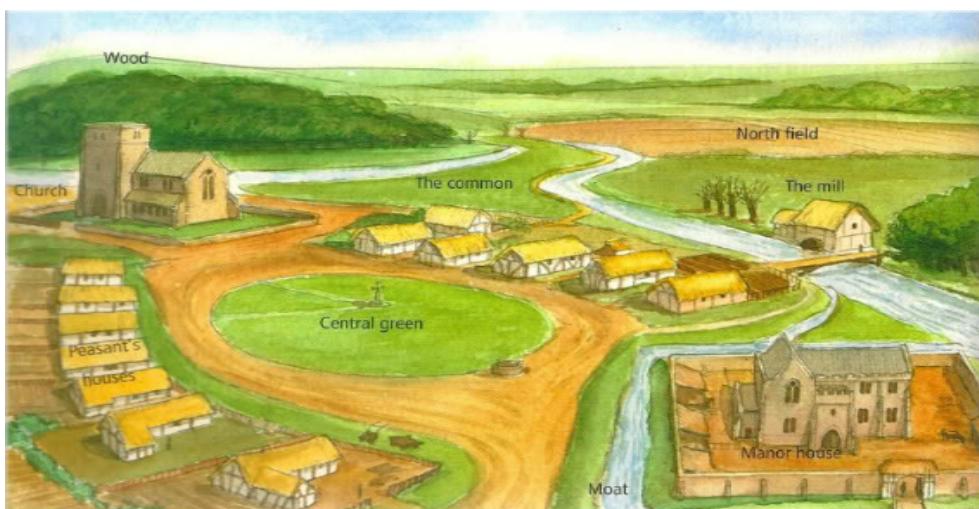
Manorialism was an economic system

- Medieval Europe was rural: Everybody lived in the countryside.
- The overwhelming majority were peasants who spent their lives farming.

How it worked

1. The fief – It could be 5,000 acres and have many manors.
2. The domain – The lord lived on this land.
3. The demesne – His manor sat on this land.

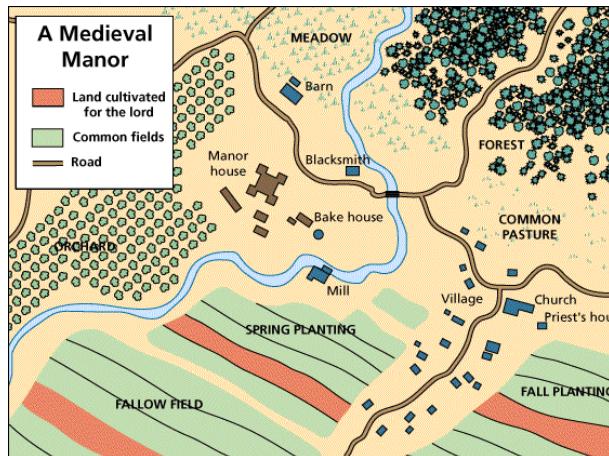
The Manor



- Each manor was self-sufficient. There was no marketplace and no reason for trade.
 1. Manor House provided military protection and a cultural life.
 2. Church provided church services, baptisms, marriages, funerals.
 3. Farmland provided food that was raised by serfs.

4. Pastureprovided food for livestock. Everyone was allowed to use this.
5. Forestsprovided game for hunting. Hunting was only for the nobility.
6. Riversprovided fishing. Fishing was only for the nobility.
7. The Villagepeasant huts provided services (mill, oven, smithy, brewery) produced crafts (weaver, shoemaker, weapons maker).

The manorial system was based on farming



- Peasants worked the nobleman's land; peasants worked their own strips.
- The three-field system: Two fields were planted; one was left fallow (unplanted) to let it rest.

Administration of the manor

- Day-to-day, the manor was run by the nobleman's officials:
 1. The stewardThe highest official on the manor. If the lord owned several manors, he traveled a lot.
 2. The bailiffHe was the supervisor over the peasants, directed farming, collected feudal dues.
 3. The reeveHe was foreman over the peasants. He helped the bailiff.

What were the benefits of feudalism?

1. It provided government for everyone – everyone from serf to lord, benefited from political order.
2. It provided protection for the peasants – who headed inside the walls of the manor.

3. It enriched the nobility – they gained land, economic wealth, and political power.