



Unit 3. Feudal Europe

Vassalage, the basis of feudalism

Because the monarchs were unable to protect their people, they relied on the nobles for support and established a new system of relationships called vassalage.

Vassalage was a promise of allegiance established in a ritual ceremony.

- The **homage**, in which the vassal knelt before the king and promised to be loyal and provide him with military and economic help.
- The **investiture**, in which the king bestowed a vassal.

When a feudal lord could, in turn, transfer part of his fiefdom to lesser nobles (knights).

THE PRIVILEGED: THE CLERGY

Most people living in Europe in the Middle Ages were Christians, whose social and spiritual lives were controlled by the Church.

The church was the most important building in any city or village because its bells marked the hours of the day. Besides, the Church also retained the command in a person's life: baptism, marriage and funeral, as well as holidays throughout the year. Christian had to follow certain religious obligations, such as going to mass each week, to go to school and to make a pilgrimage to holy places there. Inevitably, the king.

The Church accumulated great riches and many members of the clergy had privileged positions.

A period of instability

From about 850 to 1100, Europe was divided and weak, so a new wave of invasions altered the continent. Three new people appeared in scene: the Vikings (from Scandinavia), the Magyars (from the steppes of Asia) and the Muslims (from North Africa).

These invasions created a climate of violence and insecurity understood as a punishment from God and a sign that the world would end in the year 1000. Besides, the European kings were very weak, they had no stable armies and could not protect their lands and citizens.

THE PRIVILEGED: THE NOBLES

Many nobles possessed large fiefdoms from which they earned an income. Their power and influence depended on these lands and the vassalage agreements that they had sworn to.

The role of the nobles was to militarily protect society, so the most important activity for them was training for battle. They also were hunting on horseback and practiced falconry, which involved training a bird to hunt.

Noblewomen (ladies) were responsible for the servants and domestic matters. They also played music, rode horses and hunted.

THE FEUDAL MONARCHY

The king occupied the higher position in society. He was considered to be **sacred** and chosen by God to govern, so the Church had to validate him in a coronation ceremony.

His lands (his kingdom) were his personal property and he was free to divide or unite them. In fact, boundaries changed a lot during the Middle Ages because kings usually divided their kingdoms between heirs. Also, many kings had no permanent residence and they moved between their cities and castles with their court.

This court was composed by the most important nobles and religious authorities, but they had supreme authority to take decisions (laws, military campaigns, etc.).

In matters of government they received help and advice from the **Cardinals**, **bishops**, **abbots**, **clerics**, **courts** and **marquises**.



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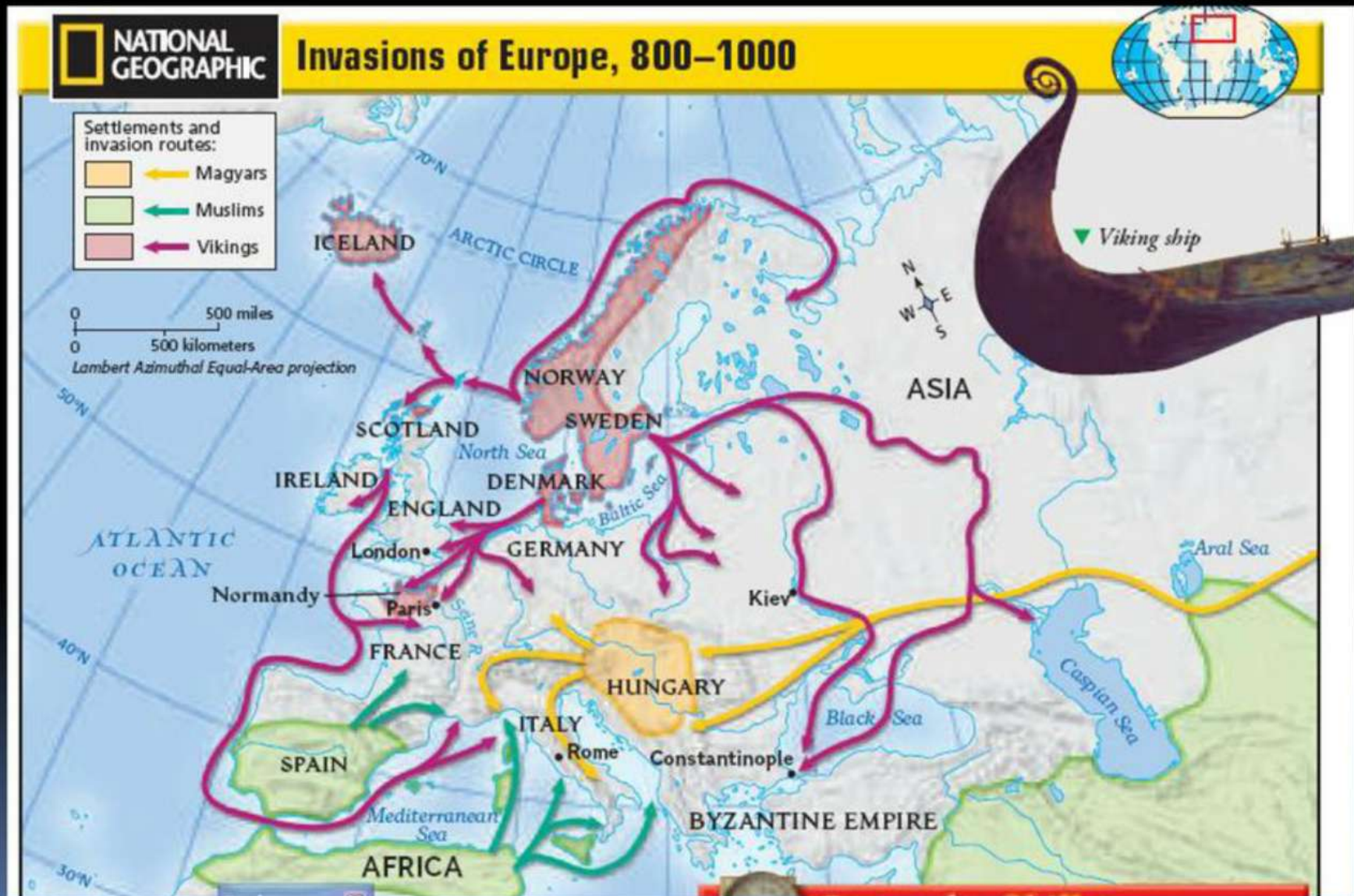
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Wave of Invasions – 9th-10th Centuries



Vassalage, the basis of feudalism

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Vassalage was a promise of allegiance established in a dual **ceremony**:

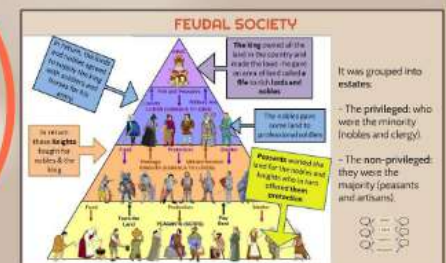
- The **homage**, in which the vassal knelt before the king and promised to be loyal and provide him with military and economic help.
- The **investiture**, in which the king a fiefdom to a vassal.

Then, a feudal lord could, in turn, transfer part of his fiefdom to lesser nobles (knights)



For protection, many free men and women turned to the most powerful nobles. Those who could afford military equipment became knights, while peasants fell into *serfdom*.

So Feudalism could be defined as the dominant social system in medieval Europe, in which the nobility held lands from the Crown in exchange for military service, and vassals were in turn tenants of the nobles, while the peasants were obligated to live on their lord's land and give him homage, labour, and a share of the produce, in exchange for military protection.



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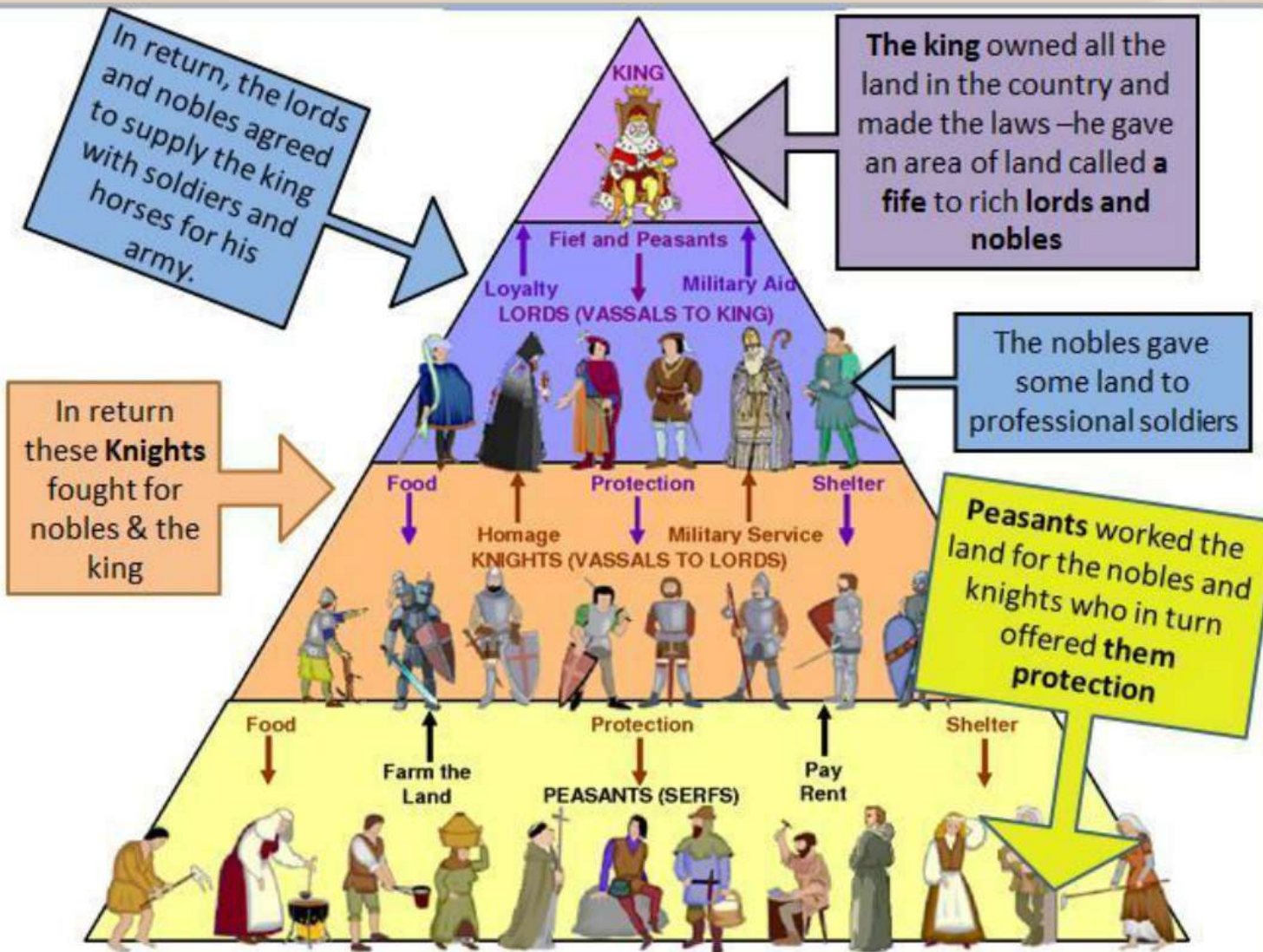
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In return and nobles to supply with soldiers horses for army.

In return these **Knights** fought for nobles & the king



FEUDAL SOCIETY



It was grouped into estates:

- The **privileged**: who were the minority (nobles and clergy).
- The **non-privileged**: they were the majority (peasants and artisans).





KINGS



LORDS



KNIGHTS

SERVANTS



THE FEUDAL MONARCHY

The **king** occupied the higher position in society. He was considered to be **sacred** and chosen by God to govern., so the Church had to validate him in a **coronation ceremony**.

His lands (his kingdom) were his **personal property** and he was free to divide or unit them. In fact, boundaries changed a lot during the Middle Ages because kings usually divided their kingdoms between heirs. Also, many kings had no permanent residence and they moved between their cities and castles with their **court**.

This court was composed by the most important **nobles and religious authorities**, but they had **supreme authority** to take decisions (taxes, military campaigns, etc.)

In matters of government they received help and advice from the **Curia** (bishops, abbots, dukes, counts and marquis)



Analyze a map (IDAC)



THE PRIVILEGED: THE NOBLES

Many nobles possessed large fiefdoms from which they earned an income. Their power and influence depended on these lands and the vassalage agreements that they had sworn to.

The **role** of the nobles was to militarily protect society, so the most important activity for them was **training for battle**. They also went hunting on horseback and practised **falconry**, which involved training a bird to hunt.

Noblewomen (ladies) were responsible for the servants and domestic matters. They also played music, rode horses and hunted.



A feudal castle

Nobles lived in **fortified castles**. There, they used to pass the days collecting taxes, checking the fortifications and weapons and imparting justice.



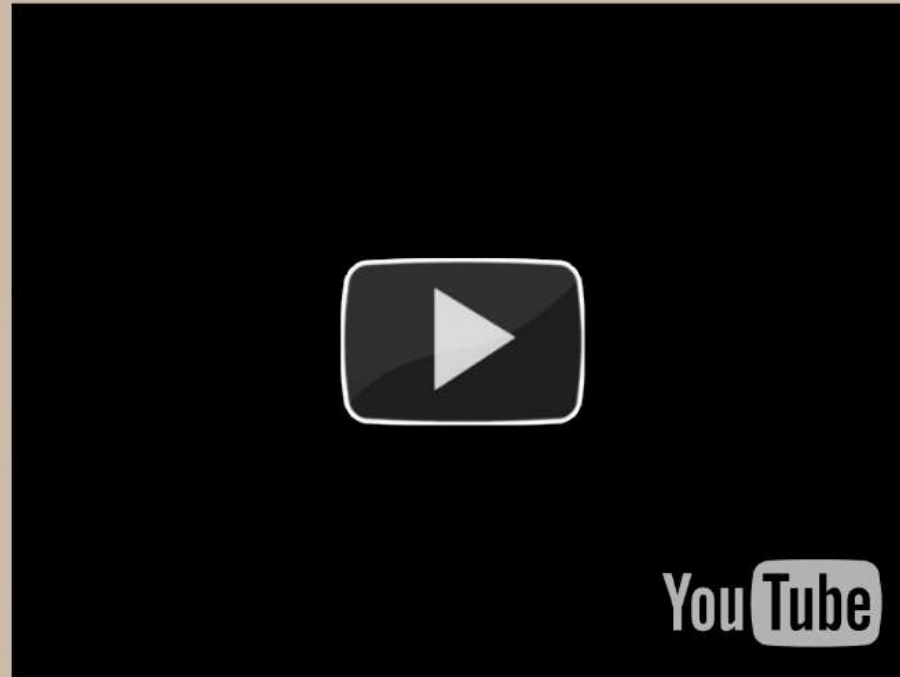
The castle was usually located on high ground in a fiefdom. Their walls are high and they served as a refuge for peasants in case of danger. Inside, there was a series of buildings around one or more courtyards.

Castles had to be **self-sufficient** so markets developed inside and artisans' workshops supplied everything they needed.

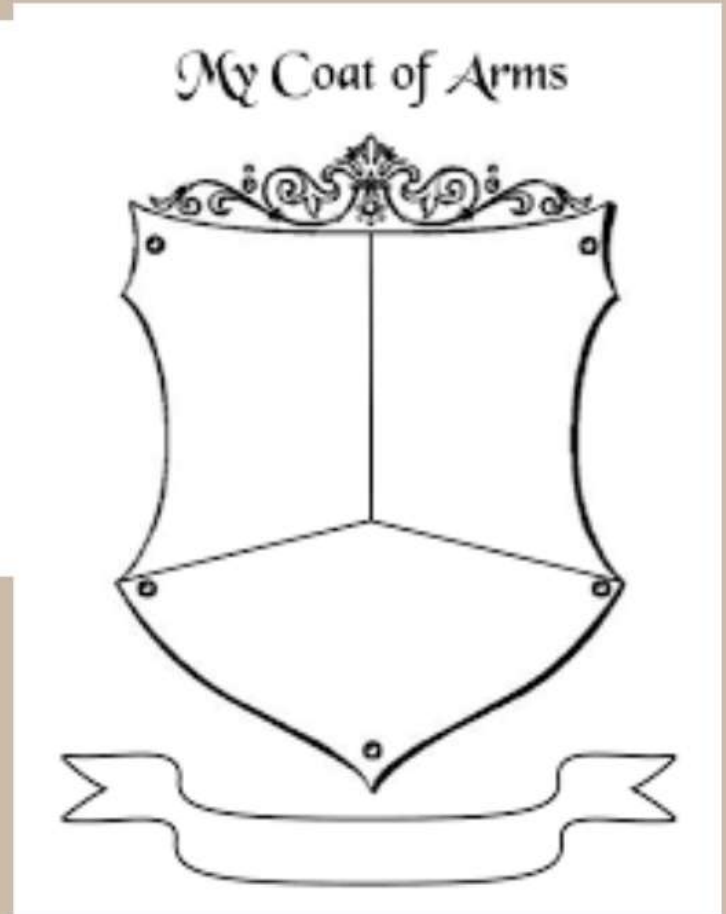
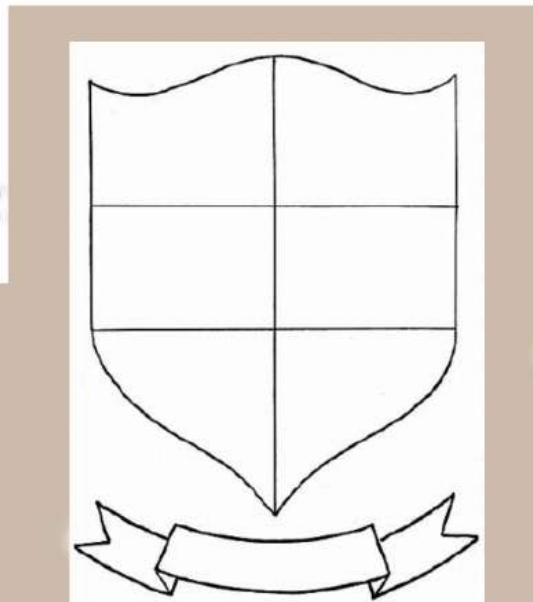
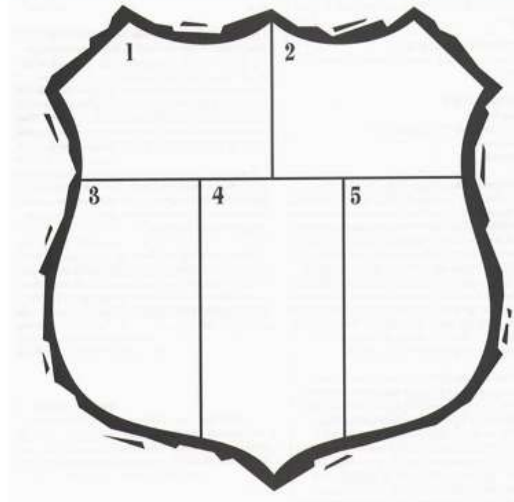
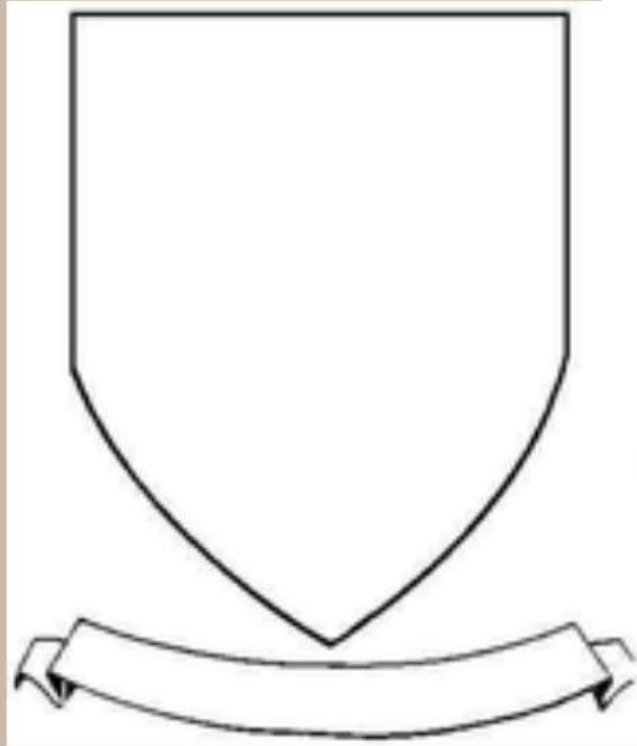
Knight's life



Knight's life



LET'S CREATE YOUR OWN COAT OF ARMS!



THE PRIVILEGED: THE CLERGY

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The church was the most important building in any city or village because its bells marked rhythm of daily life. Besides, the Church also marked the **ceremonies** in a person's life (baptism, marriage and funeral) as well as **festivities** throughout the year. Christians had to fulfill certain **religious obligations** (pray every day, go to Mass on Sunday, etc.), to practice charity and to make a pilgrimage to a holy place (Rome, Jerusalem or Santiago).

The Church accumulated great riches and many members of the clergy had **privileged positions**.



It owned considerable lands and buildings and it received a tithe from peasants living on its lands. It also received donations.

A FIEFDOM: LORDS AND PEASANTS

Most lands during the Middle Ages was in the hands of the nobility or the clergy. **Fiefdoms** were not private but **entailed property**, that meant they could be inherited by the lord's descendants but not sold.

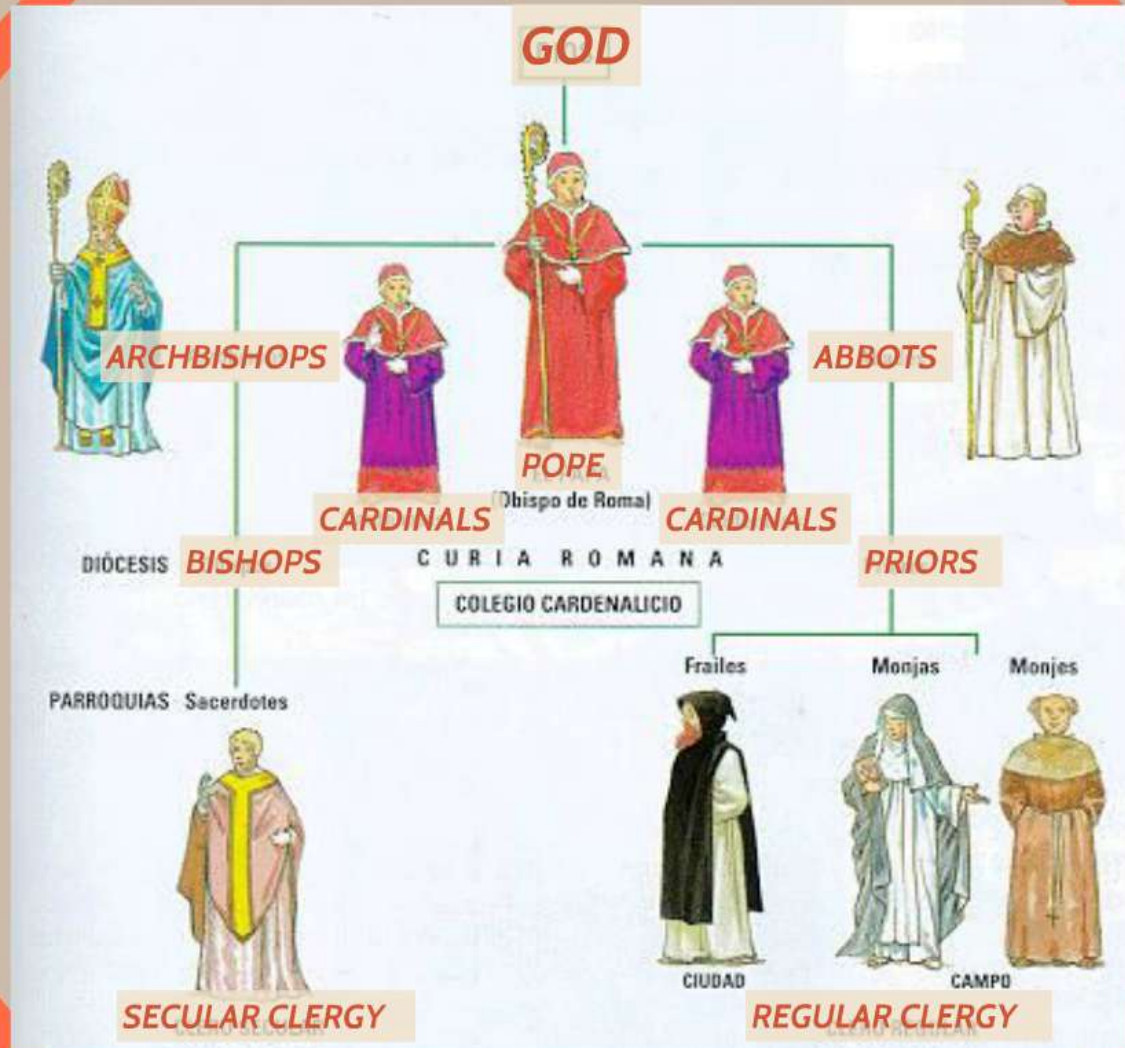
Peasants, who made up 90% of the population, were responsible for farming the land and raising the livestock. Another obligations were:

- Provide their labour.
- Pay the census, monopoly rights and other taxes.
- Pay for the right to use the forest and to fish in the river.
- Obey all the lord's orders.
- Help with the maintenance of the castle.

We can make the difference between **free peasants** (they could get married, leave the fiefdom and trade) and **serfs** (had no personal freedom and depend on the lord's permissions)



The organization of the Church



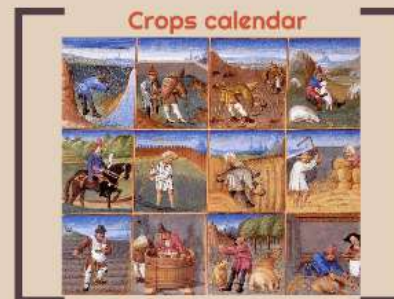
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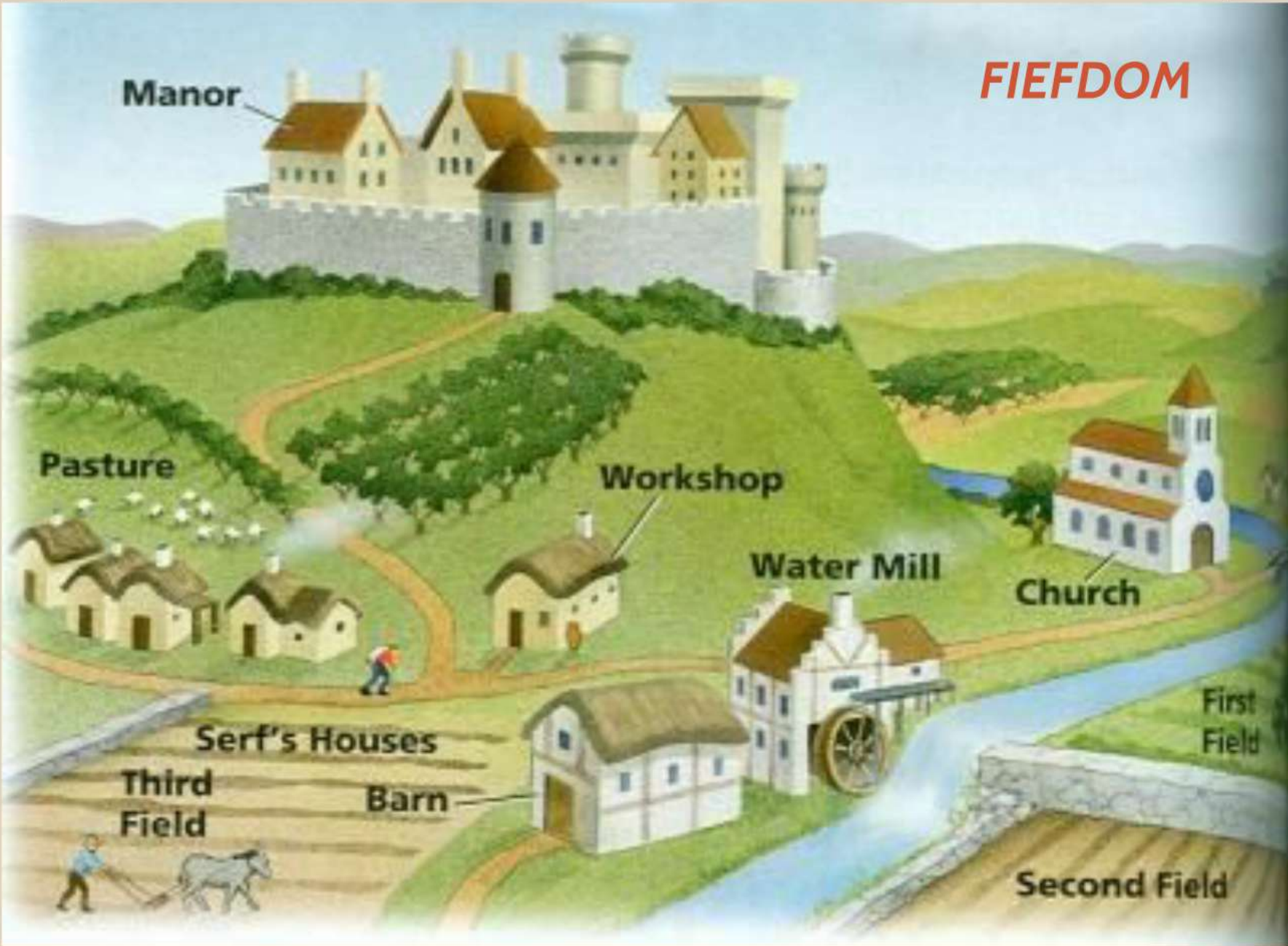
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FIEFDOM



Crops calendar





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