

# **HIS4B05- HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL WORLD**

## **MODULE-1 MEDIEVAL EUROPE**

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# Nature of Medieval European Society

- ❑ “Middle Ages” to describe Europe between the **fall of Rome in 476 CE and the beginning of the Renaissance – 5<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> C**
- ❑ **476CE- fall of Roman empire**, end of ancient period & beginning of medieval period
- ❑ **1453-fall of Constantinople-** when Turks conquered Constantinople- end of Medieval period
- ❑ Henri Pirenne- Belgian historian & John Huzinga, Dutch Historian-subdivisions to medieval European history as
  - Early Medieval Period (CE476-1000)
  - High Medieval Period- (1000-1300)
  - Late Medieval Period- (1300-1453)

Medieval  
Period

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Early  
Medieval

High  
Medieval

Late  
Medieval

❑ Early Medieval Period-

- rise, growth & decay of **Carolingian dynasty** started by Emperor Charlemagne- fill the power vacancy existed since fall of Roman Empire-Carolingian renaissance- break up in 10<sup>th</sup> C

❑ High Medieval Period-

- **Urbanization**- military expansion- intellectual revival b/w 11<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> C

❑ Late Medieval Period-

- Calamities & upheavals- climatic change resulted in Great Famine of 1315-17- **black death**

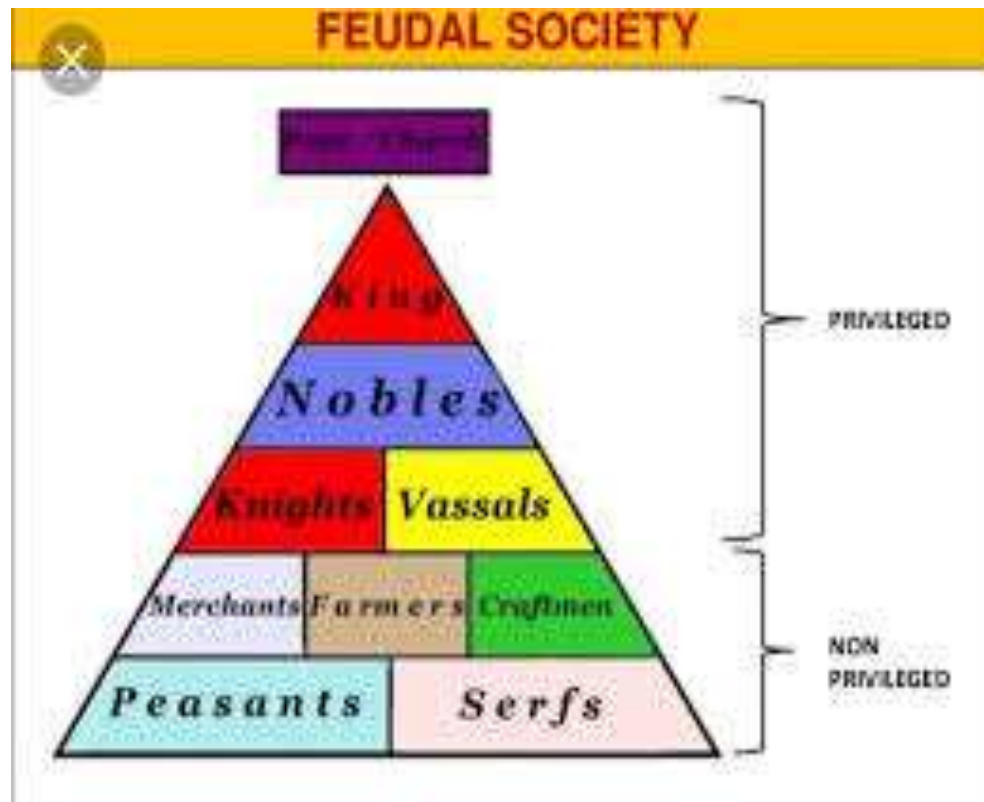
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# Important Ruling Powers

- **Eastern Roman Empire/Byzantine Empire**
  - emerged after the decline of Western Roman Empire in 5<sup>th</sup> c
  - Capital- Constantinople
  - Declined after the capture of Constantinople by Turks
- **Carolingian Dynasty**
  - founded by Charlemagne in 9<sup>th</sup> C
  - ruled in parts of modern France, Germany & parts of Italy
  - its centralization was no longer a source of political stability
  - later decentralization paved way for emergence of feudalism

# Medieval Society

- Stratified society
- Hierarchical structure



# FEUDALISM

- Social, economic & political system
- Beginnings- after decline of Roman Empire
- Matured b/w 9<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries
- Land was source of power
- Latin word- “Feodum”/”Feudum”-fief/piece of land
- System based upon land
- Not conceived as a formal political system by people of medieval period
- Term feudalism formulated in 17<sup>th</sup> C by later writers

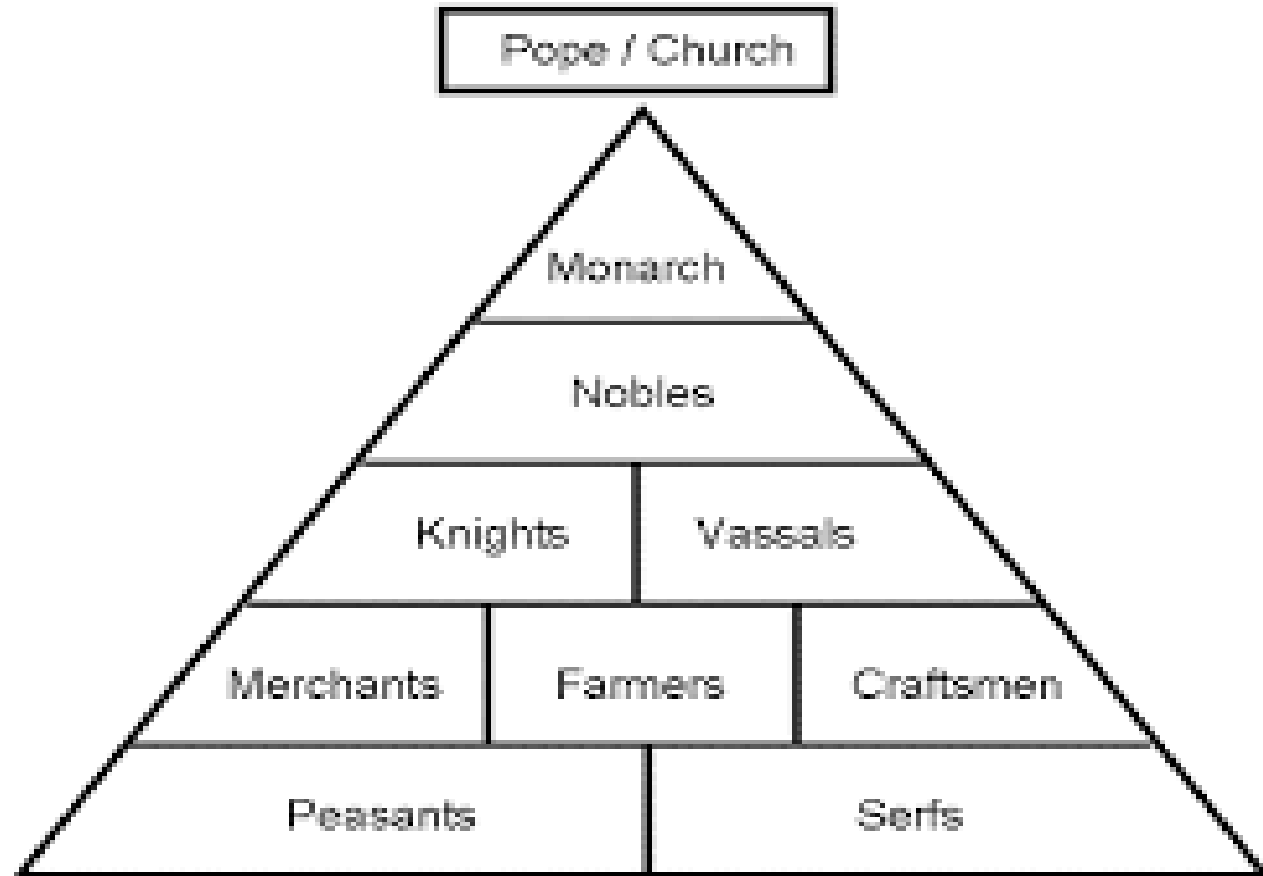
- No commonly acceptable definition
- Definition by March Bloch- calls it “**Feudal Society**”- includes -a subject peasantry,
  - wide spread use of fief as service tenement,
  - supremacy of specialized warrior class,
  - bonds of interdependence b/w men expressed through vassalage form
  - fragmentation of political authority



- Relatively agrarian rural subsistence economy
- No scope for trade & commerce
- 500CE Western Europe left without a strong centralized govt due to the breakdown of Roman empire
- Lack of centralized power –many German invaders invaded Western Europe
- City dwellers moved to country-sides for safety
- As a result of invasions & absence of strong govt- new social & political system, feudalism emerged
- Land lords become powerful- formed strict code of behaviour & allegiances

- Little opportunity for social advancement
- Only those men who could guarantee immediate protection & security from war, invasions & famine were true lords
- Feudal society dominated by warriors
- By 9<sup>th</sup> C Carolingian dynasty became weak & disintegrated, feudalism spread to other parts of Europe

# Landlord-Tenant Relations



- Hierarchical
- King- at top- divided land of country among nobles ie Earls/  
Dukes
- Earls/Dukes- distribute land to lesser nobles called Barons
- Knights formed lowest category- provide military aid to their  
lords
- Nobles & barons were lords & vassals at the same time
- Lord- noble who owned land
- Vassal- a person who was granted possession of land by lord-  
in exchange of fief vassal provide military

- Basis of feudalism- obligation & relation b/w lord, vassal, & fief
- Before lord grant land to someone he had make him vassal-commendation-homage & oath of fealty
- Homage- lord & vassal enters into a contract in which vassal promised to fight for the lord at his command
- Fealty- fidelity owed by vassal to his lord
- Principal obligation of vassal to lord- military aid
- Land lord- tenant relation derived from relationship b/w lord & vassal

- Tenant / vassal do not own property but allowed to use it for a fee
- Living arrangement- exist only if lord gives consent to occupancy- if the tenant acknowledges the title of property with the lord- if the tenant receives a limited right to use the land & if the owner transfers possession & control of land

# SERFDOM

- Condition of a tenant farmer who was bound to a hereditary plot of land & to the will of his landlord
- Form of servile labour which the serf performs unpaid labour for his lord in medieval Europe
- Servitude to a landlord- different from slavery by being regulated by custom
- Serfs differed from slaves- slaves could be bought & sold without reference to land- where serfs changed lords only when the land they worked changed hands
- Small peasants farmers of Europe came to depend on large landlords for protection in the turbulent times & swearing fealty to the landlord became a common practice

- In 4<sup>th</sup> C – Emperor Constantine –declared serfdom legal by requiring tenant farmers to pay labour services to their lords
- forced to work on the fields of the landlord in return for their protection
- Condition of bondage or modified slavery
- Labourers who were bound to land & they formed the lowest social class of feudal society
- Saying – “serfs worked for all, knights fought for all & churchmen prayed for all”
- Worked harder than others – but worst fed & paid



- Serfs could not be sold but transferred along with land
- Serf could not abandon his land without permission of lord
- Freeman become serf- through force or necessity
- Intimidated into dependency by greater physical & legal force of a local lord in the ceremony known as **bondage**- in which a serf placed his head in his lords hands
- **Homage**- vassal placed his hands b/w those of his lord
- Serfdom-inherited –bound not only themselves but also their future heirs

# HOMAGE



- **Villein**-another type of serf
- More rights & higher status than serfs
- But had more legal restrictions than freeman
- Had to spend some of their time to work in the fields of their lords
- Had to provide other services in addition to paying rent
- Tied to land & could not move away without permission of their lord
- Taxes – based on assessed value of land & holdings
- Paid in form of food stuffs

- Serfdom- institution of medieval Europe- landlord assured that others –the serfs- worked to feed them
- Disappear by 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> C
- Reasons-
  - devt of centralised political power
  - shortage caused by Black Death
  - endemic peasant uprisings
  - devt of trading activities
  - changes in cultivation system
  - Industrialisation
  - changes in the laws governing lord- tenant relations

# MANORIALISM

- Manorial/seignorial system
- Part of feudal society
- Political, economic & social system- by which peasants of medieval Europe were rendered dependent on their land & on their lord
- Basic unit –manor-a self sufficient landed estate or fief which was managed by lord, who enjoyed a variety of rights over it & peasants attached to it by means of serfdom
- Most convenient device for organizing the estates of aristocracy & clergy in Medieval Europe

- Had its origin- later period of ancient Roman Empire- when large land owners had to consolidate their hold over both their lands & labourers who had worked under them
- A period of civil disorders- weak govts & continuous external invasions
- Small farmers & landless labourers exchanged their land or their freedom & pledged their services in return for protection by powerful land owners who had military strength to defend them
- The landless were ensured permanent access to land which they could work in turn for the rendering of economic services to the lord who held the land
- - this arranged into manorial which in turn supported the feudal aristocracy of king, lords & vassals

- Manor house- where lord resided usually set slightly apart from the village & village grew up around the fore court of the manor
- Manor- 3 classes of land-
  - 1. **Demense**- land directly controlled by the lord & used for the benefit of his hold & dependents
  - 2. **Dependent serf holdings**- serf carried the obligation that the peasant household supply the lord with labour services or a part of its output subject to the custom attached to the land
  - 3. **free peasant land**- free peasant had to pay rent to the lord fixed at the time of the lease

- Free peasant subjected to manorial jurisdiction & custom
- Lord in the manor house extracted various types of charges from his peasants like for using his mill, using his pasture land, court revenues etc
- Manor- economically self sufficient
- Production- needed for consumption – no incentive to produce more-no urge to improve production
- Tenury was hereditary & payment was to be made on each succession



# MONASTIC ORDERS

- Monasticism- religious way of life-in which one renounces worldly pursuit to devote fully to spiritual work
- Groups of men & women who dedicate themselves to god & live in an isolated community
- Plays an imp role in Christianity
- Male- monk
- Female- nuns
- live in monasteries- stay away from secular world
- Also exists in Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism etc

- Early period of Christianity- more pious people disillusioned by growing worldliness of church officials decided to segregate themselves away from main stream & retire to wilderness- beginning of monasteries
- some recognized by church – some branded as heretic
- Made a part of Christian church
- Make significant appeal to people in the time of social & economic disturbances
- Monks & nuns- strict ascetic life-wearing plain robes- eating simple food- praying & meditating- taking vows of celibacy- poverty - obedience

- State also encouraged it indirectly
- Given exemption from military service- debts- family obligations- personal bondage- punishment for crime
- Not invaded by invaders
- Ensured food & shelter to inhabitants in a period of poverty & disturbances
- Rules for entire monasteries were framed by St. Benedict (480-543)- Benedictan order at Monte Cassino near Naples in 529AD- Italy-5th C- rules provided a period of probation for new entrants & given a choice of becoming a monk or give up the idea altogether

- Rule provided for the election of head of each monastery called Abbot- enjoyed absolute power
- Rules –poverty, celibacy, obedience
- No private property
- As Benedictan principles were difficult to follow monasteries become centers of corruption
- Different monastic orders emerged to reform & purify monasteries
- Carthusian order(Chatreaux) – 11<sup>th</sup> C- France- acted as real reform institutions

- Cistercian order-Robert at Citeaux of Burgandy- wear only white dresses-St.Bernard- declined after 13<sup>th</sup> C
- Carmalite order, Dominican order, Franciscan order- 13<sup>th</sup> C  
– priority to meditation- manual labour- education
- Franciscan order- Francis of Assisi
- Dominican order- by St.Dominic- 1215 AD
- Imp role in medieval European life
- typical monastery acted as a farm, inn hospital, school, library
- Converted pagans to Christianity

- Provided education, food to needy ones & cured the sick
- Helped in spreading of Christianity to England, Holland, Poland, Prussia etc
- Copied manuscripts of classical authors, preserved valuable books that would have been lost- had libraries
- Recorded most of the striking events of medieval times & they became the chronicles of medieval history

# TOWNS& GUILDS

- Resurgence of trade » revival of old towns & emergence of new towns
- Towns developed because of trade
- -stimulated trade by providing markets & place for producing goods
- Utilisation of rivers for inland transport & growth of population in medieval Europe – growth of towns
- Towns- surrounded by town wall – protection from external invasions- show were town ended & countryside began

- Towers at certain points & gates & gates houses- to control entering & leaving of people
- Tolls- collected on all goods bought in to town for sale- used to meet expenses of construction & maintenance of town wall, buildings & bridges
- Had long street & narrow streets
- Main street- used as market place- had a market cross where public monuments were made- also the place for punishments & executions
- Houses –faced to streets- front side or ground floor was often a shop- goods were home made- shops were small in size



- Town people- merchants, craft workers, labourers
- Craftsmen- worked at home
- Each town had carpenter, embroiders, potters, shoe-makers, smiths, tailors, weavers, bakers, grocers etc
- Labourers- owned no property- depended on others for work & livelihood
- No space to grow food had to procure food from country side
- Farmers- come to town & sell their products in market & buy specialised goods from town

- Guilds- merchants & craftsman – developed in the background of increasing trading activities & specialization of crafts
- Towns- under control of nobles-, kings or feudal lords- imposed taxes upon merchants, traders & craftsman
- Trade increases- taxes also become excessive- not possible to protest & react against heavy taxes- guilds were formed to overcome this situation
- Revival of towns- led to formation of guilds
- By second half of 12<sup>th</sup> C – guilds organized in different parts of Europe

- Merchant guilds were first to appear- formed to provide protection – often found a town by obtaining a charter from King / feudal lords