
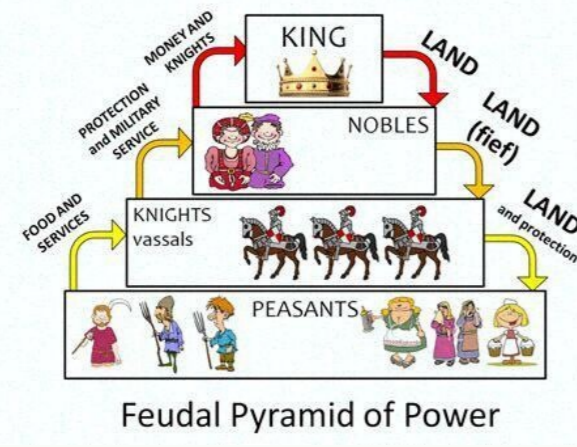


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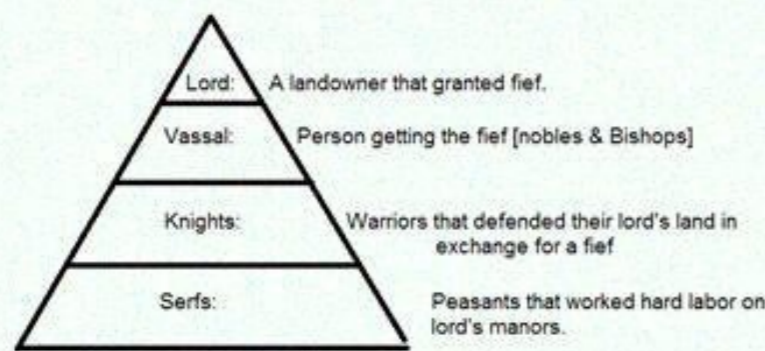
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Explain the feudal system in the middle ages

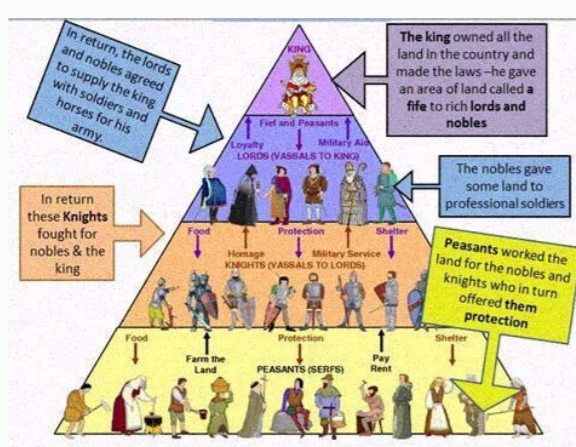
feudalism, Term that emerged in the 17th century that has been used to describe economic, legal, political, social, and economic relationships in the European Middle Ages. Derived from the Latin word feudum (fief) but unknown to people of the Middle Ages, the term "feudalism" has been used most broadly to refer to medieval society as a whole, and in this way may be understood as a socio-economic system that is often called manorialism.



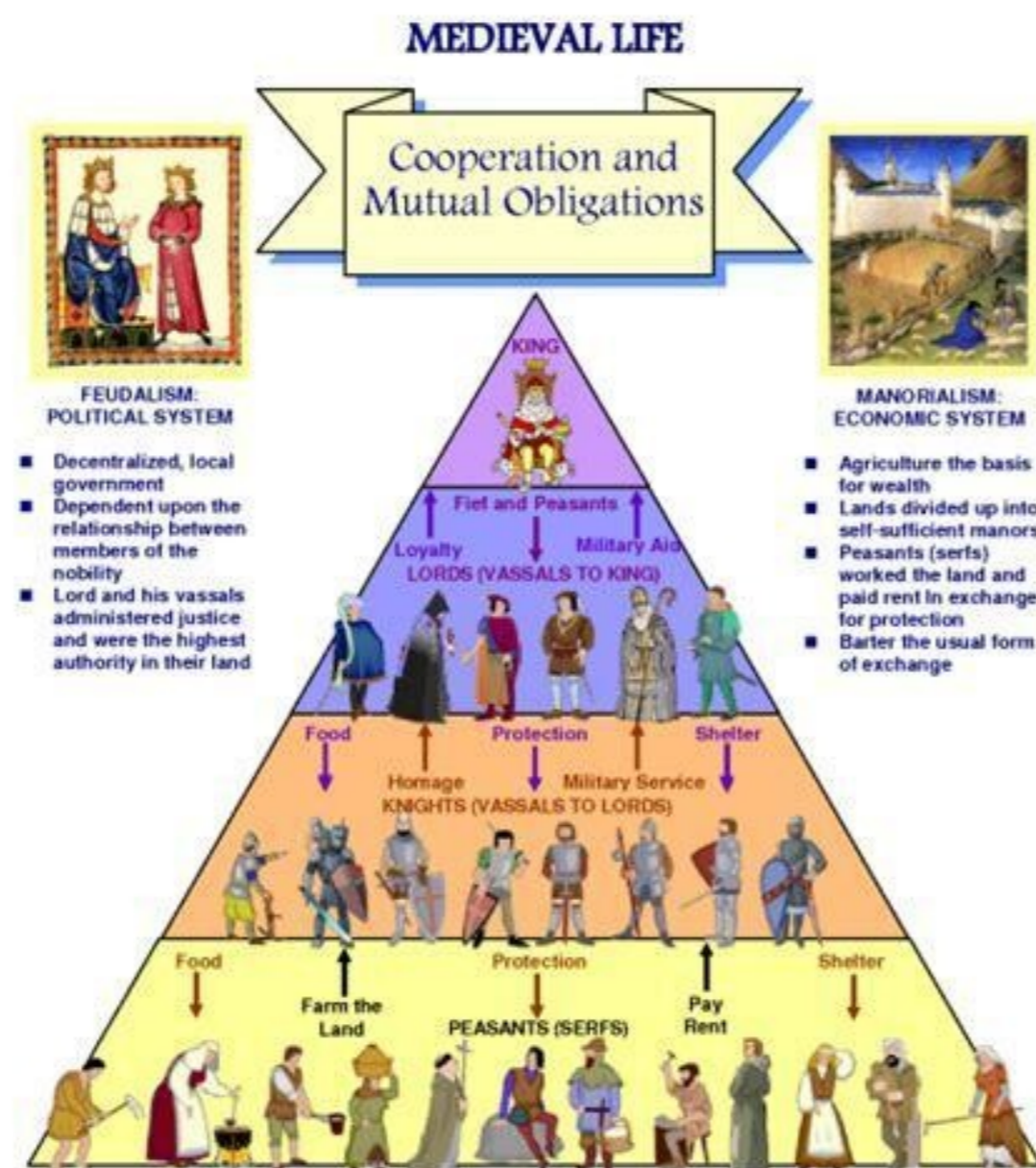
The many ways "feudalism" has been used have drained it of specific meaning, however, and caused some scholars to reject it as a useful concept for understanding medieval society. views updated Jun 11 2018 Overview History Theory in Depth Theory in Action Analysis and Critical Response Topics for Further Study Bibliography See Also OVERVIEW who controls government? Nobility how is government put into power? Birth: feudal contract what roles do the people have? Work for nobles' benefit who controls production of goods? Nobility who controls distribution of goods? Nobility major figures William the Conqueror; Eleanor of Aquitaine historical example Medieval England Few political systems have shown the adaptiveness and longevity of feudalism. This system, based on personal relationships, local administration, and defined hierarchies, touched several continents for more than 1,500 years. In some places it filled the void left by other political organizations; in others, it represented the next stage in the evolution of government. In both cases, feudalism grew out of practice and precedents. Theory followed experience. In all cases, a parallel code of values and aesthetics—chivalry in the West, bushido in the East—complemented and reinforced the system. Feudalism relied on personal and/or family honor as well as self-interest to work. Its informal and varied methods required a balance between superiors and dependents, rights and responsibilities.



"Feudalism" also has been applied, often inappropriately, to non-Western societies where institutions similar to those of medieval Europe are thought to have existed. The many ways "feudalism" has been used have drained it of specific meaning, however, and caused some scholars to reject it as a useful concept for understanding medieval society. views updated Jun 11 2018 Overview History Theory in Depth Theory in Action Analysis and Critical Response Topics for Further Study Bibliography See Also OVERVIEW who controls government? Nobility how is government put into power? Birth: feudal contract what roles do the people have? Work for nobles' benefit who controls production of goods? Nobility who controls distribution of goods? Nobility major figures William the Conqueror; Eleanor of Aquitaine historical example Medieval England Few political systems have shown the adaptiveness and longevity of feudalism. This system, based on personal relationships, local administration, and defined hierarchies, touched several continents for more than 1,500 years. In some places it filled the void left by other political organizations; in others, it represented the next stage in the evolution of government. In both cases, feudalism grew out of practice and precedents. Theory followed experience. In all cases, a parallel code of values and aesthetics—chivalry in the West, bushido in the East—complemented and reinforced the system. Feudalism relied on personal and/or family honor as well as self-interest to work. Its informal and varied methods required a balance between superiors and dependents, rights and responsibilities. Though not in practice today, feudalism and the legends it inspired continue to fascinate many people. HISTORY Modern individuals often equate feudalism with the image of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. Medieval Arthurian legends sprang from the feudal tradition and its code of chivalry, and as fruits of the system, do reflect on the values of feudalism itself. But the contemporary, Hollywood-inspired image of a strong king uniting a close-knit Camelot is not an accurate picture of feudalism. In fact, feudalism grew because empires fell and kings were not strong. Local, decentralized, informal decision-making among individuals in the absence of powerful authorities led to the evolution of feudalism. A Chaotic Time The feudal system emerged out of a time of chaos in Europe. The rise of Augustus as the first Roman emperor had marked the beginning of the Roman Empire in 27 B.C. For 500 years, the empire provided stability and peace across a vast territory spanning three continents. Carefully constructed public works such as roads, bridges, and aqueducts united the lands physically, while personal allegiance and sometimes worship of the emperor united the people psychologically. Roman law became a universal standard, applicable even to commerce with non-Romans, and professional law schools ensured its uniformity and longevity. The death of Roman Emperor Theodosius I in 395 A.D. and the fall of Rome to the Visigoths in 410, however, spelled the beginning of the end for what had once been a unified West; the great Roman Empire and the peace it provided was no more. By 771, Charlemagne became ruler of a less vast but nonetheless impressive empire that stretched through France, Germany, and Italy, with the blessing and support of the Pope, but bitter civil wars after his death plunged Europe into disorder once again. Though the Church, based in Rome and led by the Pope, tried to fill the void left by the empire and provide central authority, protection, and law to the different peoples, it often faced internal strife and external obstacles. Invasions from the north, south, and east posed further threats to stability. This period is sometimes known as the Dark Ages, or, more properly, the Early Middle Ages. Developing Order As a response to the void of centralized authority, local areas began to develop or renew customs to help people live together in some kind of order.



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