Feudal Europe

Feudal Europe

During the Middle Ages, a new social, political and economic system appeared in western Europe: **Feudalism**.

The **monarch** gave land (**fiefdoms**) to **nobles** and **clergy** to govern in his name. In return, they became the king's **vassals**. They had to swear loyalty to the king and help him in his military campaigns.

The population mostly consisted of **peasants**. Many of these became the nobles' **serfs** in exchange for his protection.
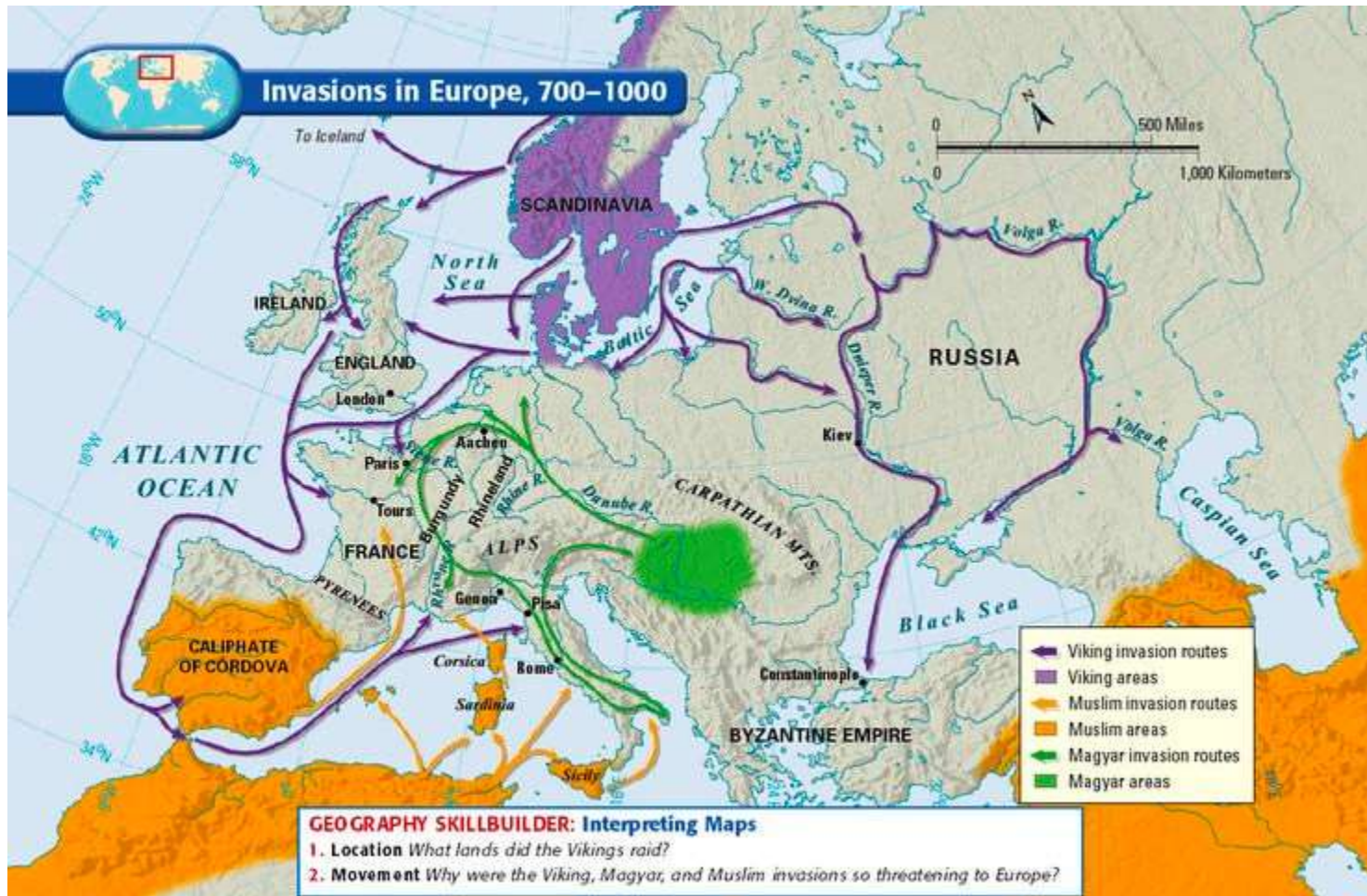
The Origins of Feudalism

Between the 9th and 10th centuries, Vikings, Muslims and Hungarians attacked and invaded western Europe (the Carolingian Empire).

The power of the monarchy was weakened and, in the face of these attacks, the kings asks the nobles and their private armies for help. In return, the king gave them land and power. The nobles became the king's vassals, and they could have land if they provided military and economic support to the king.

This arrangement between the monarchs and the nobles was the origin of **feudalism**.

Legend:
- Frankish kingdom
- Territories conquered by Charlemagne
- Marches
- Residence of Charlemagne

NORTH SEA

BALTIC SEA

PRINCIPALITY OF KIEV

ANGLO-SAXON KINGDOMS

Danish March

SAXONY

NORTH SLAVS

FRISIA

Aachen

Maguncia

Sorbian March

East March

BRITTANY

Paris

CAROLINGIAN EMPIRE

Breton March

Ratisbon

Pannonian March

ATLANTIC OCEAN

Bordeaux

Lyon

Milan

SOUTH SLAVS

CHRISTIAN KINGDOMS

Spanish March

CHURCH STATES

SPOLETO EARLDOM

Rome

AL ANDALUS

BYZANTINE EMPIRE

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

ISLAMIC KINGDOMS

Invasions in Europe, 700–1000

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps
1. Location What lands did the Vikings raid?
2. Movement Why were the Viking, Magyar, and Muslim invasions so threatening to Europe?

The Origins of Feudalism

These nobles transformed themselves into feudal lords, with a lot of property, power and hereditary titles. The feudal lord had total authority over his lands.

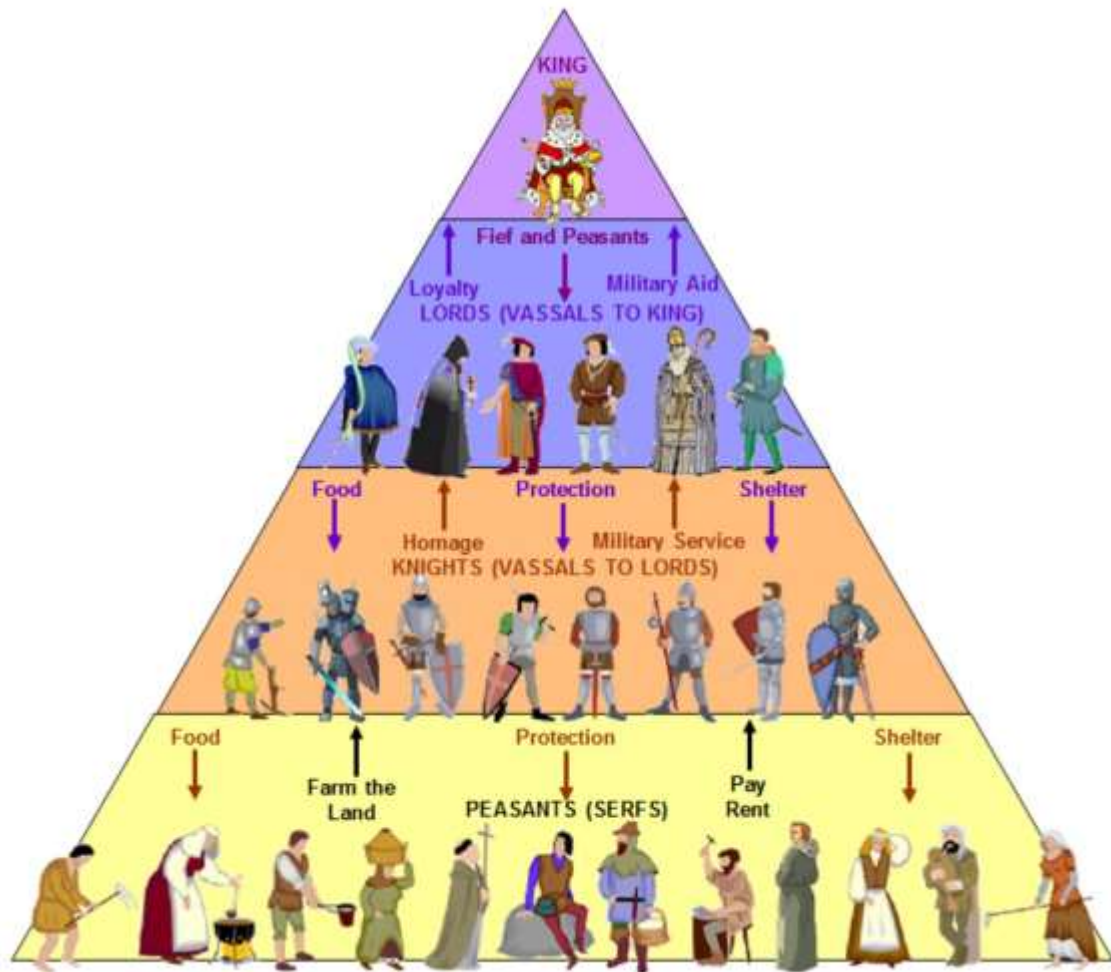Peasants worked on the nobles' land in exchange for protection against possible attacks.

Feudal Society

Feudal society was very unequal. One was born into a social group and remained in that social group for their entire life.

The privileged class consisted of the **nobility** (went to war) and **clerks** and **monks** (the Church).

The non-privileged classes were organized according to their jobs. There were **peasants** and **artisans**.

KING

Fief and Peasants

Loyalty   Military Aid
LORDS (VASSALS TO KING)

Food   Protection   Shelter

Homage   Military Service
KNIGHTS (VASSALS TO LORDS)

Food   Protection   Shelter

Farm the
Land   Pay
Rent

PEASANTS (SERFS)

The Feudal Nobility

According to the Church, monarchs were the representatives of God on Earth. Their mission was to govern their people and maintain a unified kingdom.

The king's **responsibilities** included:

- Leading the nobles and their armies in military campaigns
- Raising taxes for wars, coronations and weddings
- Acting as a supreme judge in legal disputes

The Feudal Nobility

To help him govern, the king had a **Royal Council**, a group of nobles who advised him on making decisions.

Medieval monarchs had no fixed residence. They moved between their castles, accompanied by their **court**.

The royal court consisted of relatives, friends, warriors and advisors.

The Warrior Nobles

In feudal society, the main function of the nobility was military. The sons of nobles were educated and trained to be warriors. First they served as **pages**, later as **squires** and, at 18 years old, they became **knights**.

Knights had to defend their territory and help the king and feudal lords.

The Warrior Nobles

When they won wars, knights gained land and riches. Knights enjoyed many **privileges**: they did not work, they did not pay taxes and they were the only people allowed to carry **weapons**.

Castles

Castles were the homes of kings and feudal lords. They were also places of refuge for the population when under attack.

Medieval Castles

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXXDThkJ3Ew