

III. THE BARRIERS TO MEDIEVAL ECONOMIC GROWTH: FEUDAL AGRARIAN SOCIETY

A. Western European Feudalism in its medieval agrarian context

<p>5. 9 October 2013</p> <p>Epstein, ch 2, Brady, chs. 2-3 (Wiesner, Robisheaux)</p> <p>Cipolla, chs 2-3,6</p> <p>Davis, ch. 7</p> <p>ET 1, 3</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>BARRIERS TO GROWTH IN THE MEDIEVAL ECONOMY:</p> <p>FEUDALISM, MANORIALISM, AND SERFDOM:</p> <p>Feudalism: as a military, political and socio-economic institutions; Feudal barriers to a market economy and economic growth</p>
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Importance of Agriculture and Agrarian Socio-Political Institutions

- (1) **Agriculture**: overwhelmingly dominant sector of the medieval and early-modern European economies (outside of Italy and the Low Countries): employed over 90% of population
- (2) **Reflects very low productivity of agriculture** and of the medieval economy in general:
 - → **so that most people were tied to the land** just to earn subsistence incomes
- (3) **Low productivity of land, labour, and capital**: but especially the first two factors

Feudalism: an Agrarian Institution 1

- (1) All medieval feudal institutions were agrarian institutions:
- (2) The tri-partite nature of Feudalism
 - - **Feudalism itself**: hierarchic military form of government, composed of military aristocrats
 - - **Manorialism**: the economic superstructure of feudalism: a landed estate granted to a feudal lord for his maintenance (including retinue)
 - **Serfdom**: a system of subservient, dependent peasant cultivation, on manorial estates: to work for the benefit of the feudal landed lord.

Feudalism: Agrarian Institution 2

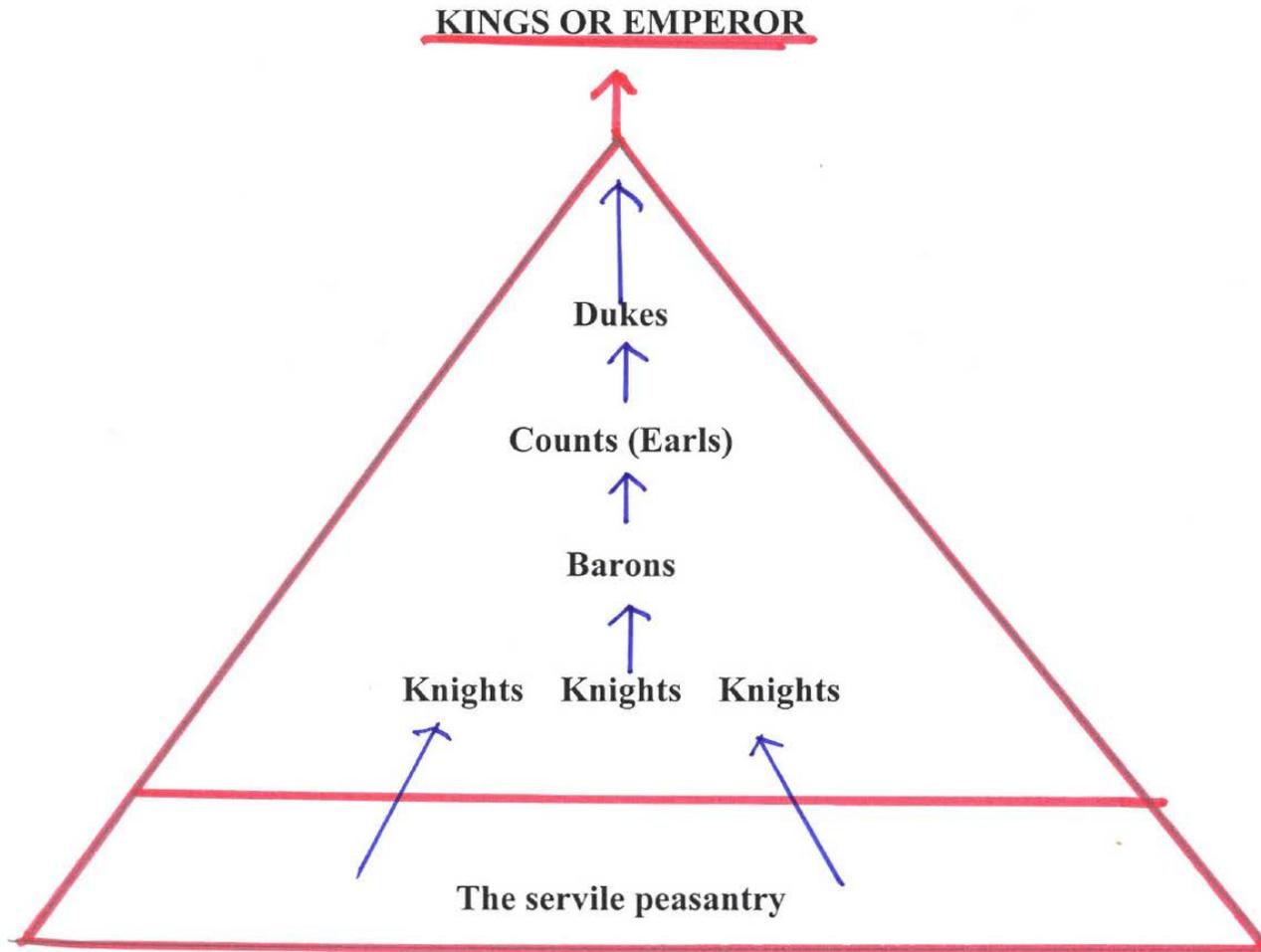
- (3) **The medieval Church**: also a feudal agrarian institution: bishops and abbots as manorial lords in a feudal structure
- **but I will leave the role of the Church** to a later topic (on Banking)
- (4) **All these institutions were major barriers**: to innovation, productivity, & economic growth:
- (5) **Increasing productivity in agriculture**: meant
- **liberating land, resources, labour, capital**: to be employed elsewhere for more profitable uses

Feudalism: Hierarchic System of Military Government

- (1) **Feudalism: as a socio-political military system of government**
- - **militaristic system of government:** originally designed to provide defence and protection at the local level in absence of central authority
- **From the decline of the Roman Empire in the West:** and with ensuing Germanic invasions
- (2) **Hierarchic-Pyramidal system of service and dependence:** with kings or emperor at the top, served by a military aristocracy, who in turn ruled and were supported by a servile peasantry.

MEDIEVAL FEUDALISM

Hierarchic System of Military Government



Military Nature of Feudalism

(1) EQUATION:

- feudal noble (aristocrat: by blood inheritance)
= a knight = cavalry horse-soldier (mounted shock combat troops) = a feudal vassal or servant serving a superior military lord (barons, counts, dukes, kings)

(2) Connection with manorialism:

The feudal noble = feudal vassal (servant) receives and holds a landed fief in payment for his military services

(3) Feudal fief = manorial estates (one or more manors), worked by a dependent (servile) peasantry:

- feudal fief serves to support the knight (servant, vassal) and his military retinue: *feodum* = fee

Knights as aristocrats: military, economic, political powers

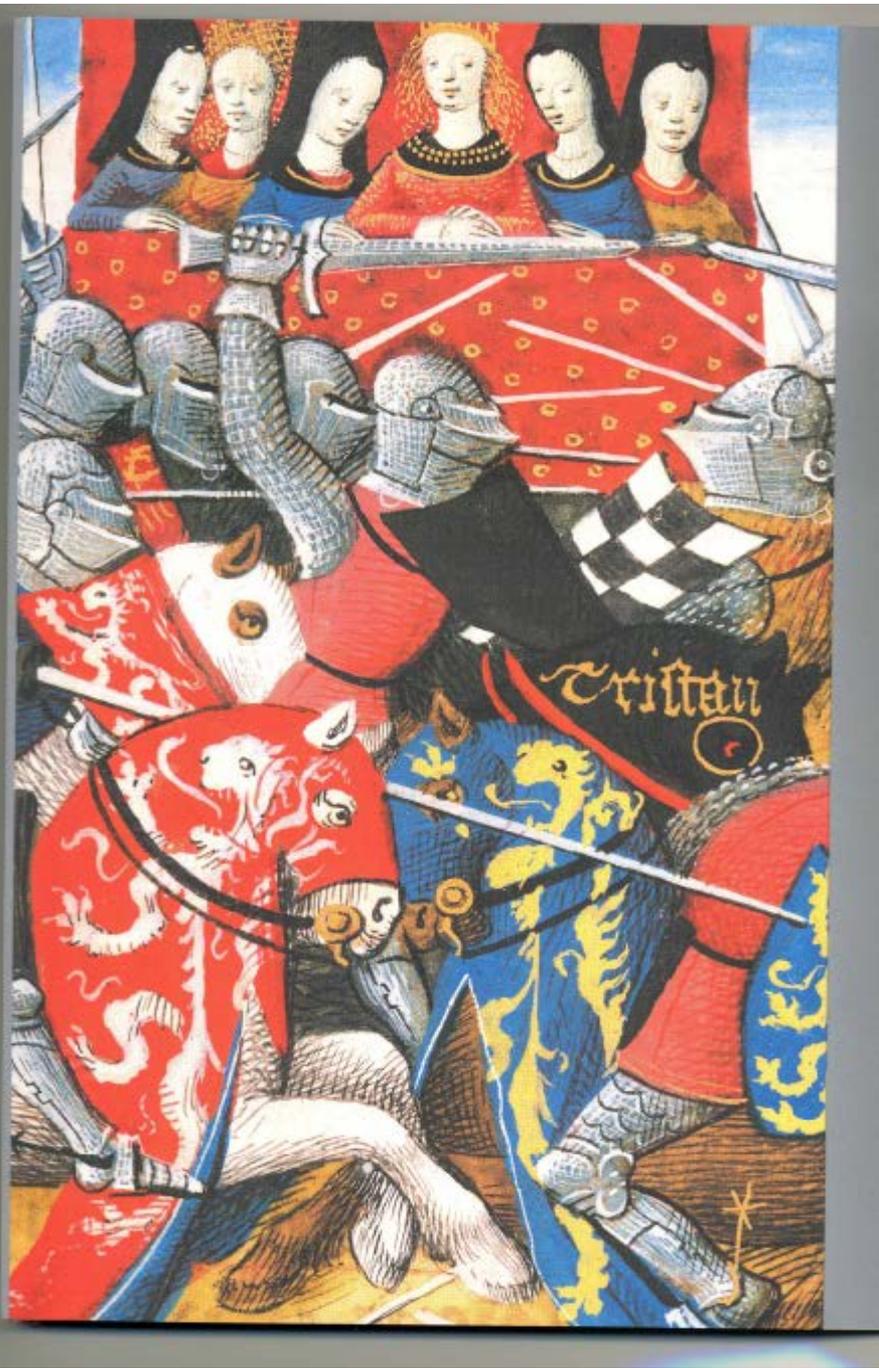
- (1) **The feudal aristocracy as a military class of cavalry horse-soldiers – i.e., knights (chevaliers: French ‘cheval’ = horse)**
- (2) **With the full development of the cavalry, by the 8th century, knights enjoyed almost unchallenged military supremacy:**
- (3) **with both the military and economic power to be the paramount ruling (& exploiting) class.**

Knighthood: costly profession

- (1) **Very high-cost military profession**
- - full-time profession allowing no other:
- - very costly, time-consuming training
- (2) **Very costly capital equipment:**
- **pecially bred war horses, costly, heavy armour, costly saddles and stirrups, and a retinue of military servants**
- **ca.1300 – equipment of English knight = value of 20 oxen** = plough teams of 10 peasant families
- (3) **Infantry: part-time free peasant foot-soldiers** → not costly (little training, cheap equipment)

Medieval knight: horse & armour





Historical Evolution of Feudalism, 5th – 9th centuries

- From the decline of the **Western Roman Empire** in the **5th century CE (476)** to the collapse of the **Carolingian Empire** in the 9th-10th centuries
- **5th century, Germanic invasions ended Roman rule** in **Gaul**: establishment of Frankish **Merovingian dynasty**
- **Frankish leader Clovis (=Louis) (b. 466-511): became king** of Salian Franks in 481; of all the Franks in 509.
- **Merovingian era (511-752): failed to provide law, order, and security** in Frankish kingdoms
- **beset with civil wars**, when kingdoms divided by inheritance, and beset with foreign (Arab) invasions .

Historical Evolution of Feudalism, 5th – 9th centuries (2)

- **Carolingian era: 752 – 987**
- **Charles ‘the Hammer’ Martel:** defeated Arabs (Saracens) at Poitiers-Tours in 732:
- **son Pepin III became first Carolingian king: 752**
- **Charlemagne (Carolus Magnus): Emperor 800 – 814**
- **death of his son Louis the Pious in 840: Empire divided** into three kingdoms (Treaty of Verdun 843)
- **The Carolingian-Frankish Empire racked with civil wars and three-pronged invasions to** late 10th century
- **Saracens (Arabs), Vikings or Norsemen (Danes, Norwegians), and Magyars (Hungarians),** from the East



The Carolingian Empire, 752 - 987



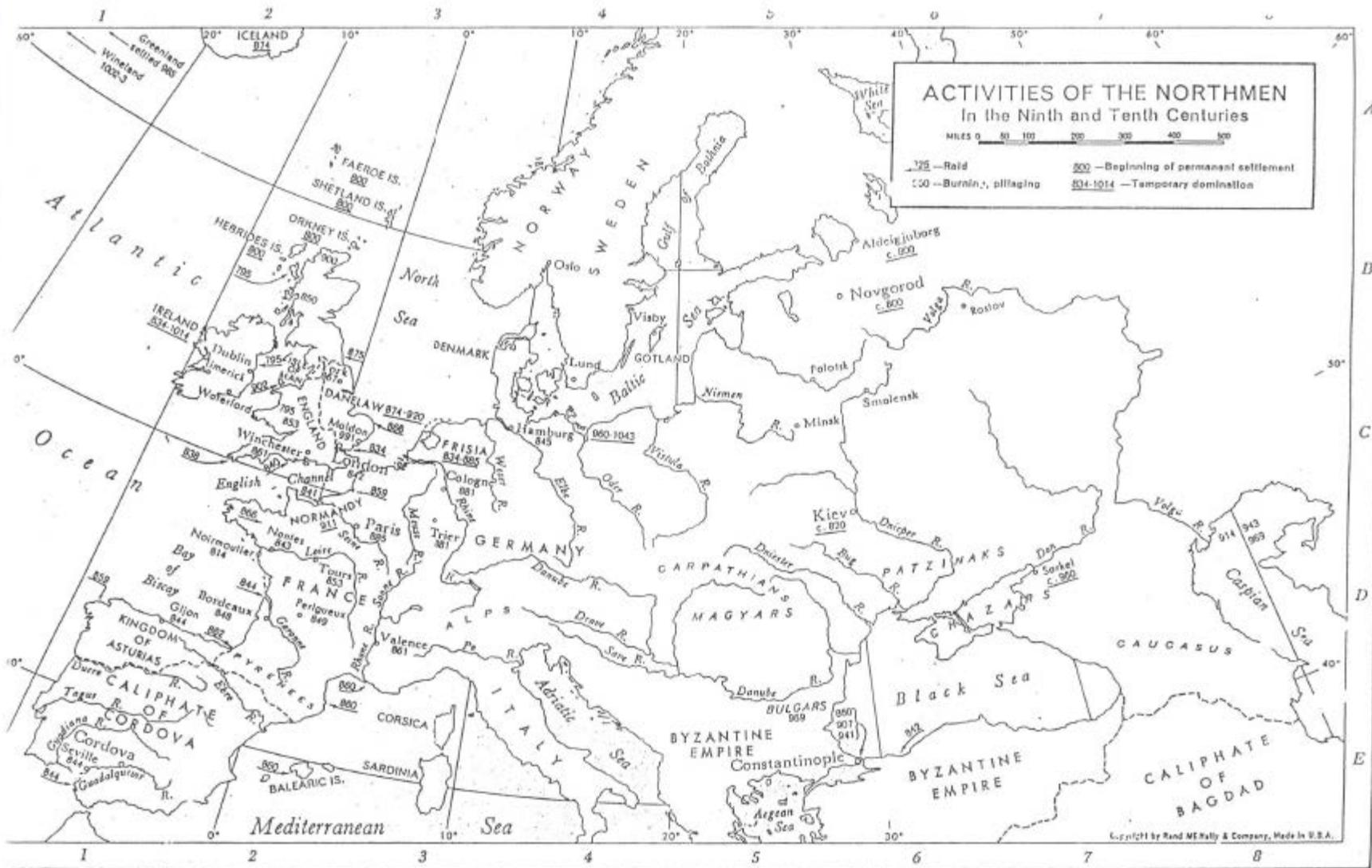
Division of Carolingian Empire: Verdun 843



1 Viking, Magyar and Saracen invasions

	boundary of Christian west on the eve of invasions		Danish
	Saracen attacks		Norwegian
	areas most affected by Saracen raiders		Swedish
	route of great Magyar invasion of 937		Viking routes
	main areas devastated by Magyars		Viking bases





Carolingian Feudalism

- **widespread insecurity and the absence of any military and judicial power** from Merovingian and Carolingian kings → **landed lords, with military and judicial powers provided protection and security at the local level:**
- **if not from invaders**, from other rapacious lords
- **Absorbed free peasant communities** into their lordships: offering 'protection' (Mafia style)
- **Formerly free peasants became serfs**: under feudal manorialism (next topic)

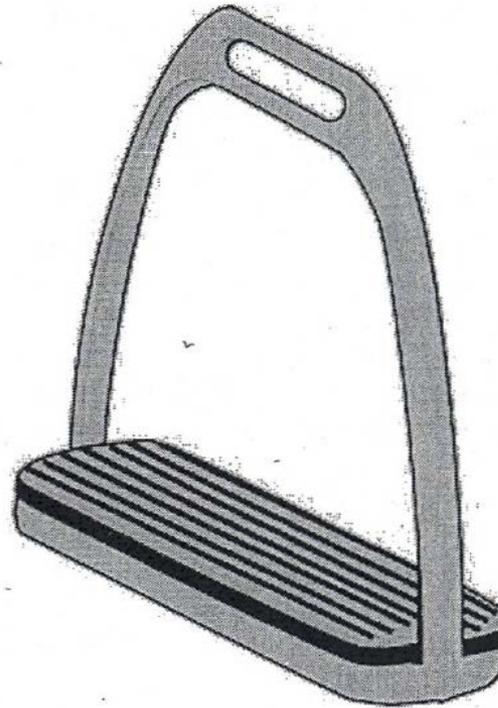
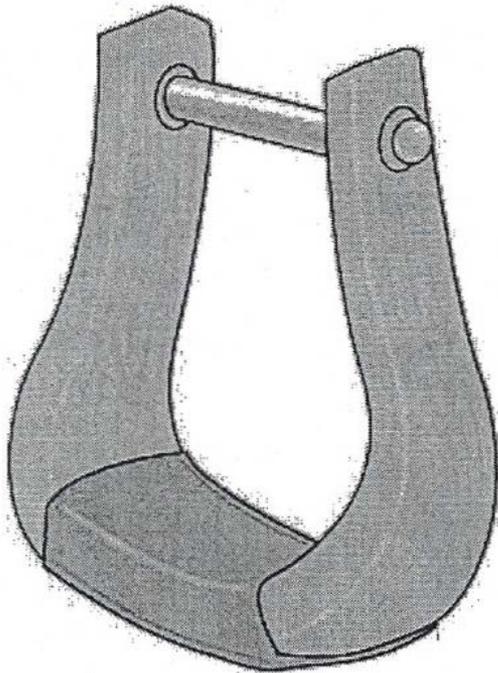
Technological innovations in the rise of the Frankish Cavalry

- **THE STIRRUP:** The Lynn White thesis: much disputed
- **Introduction of the stirrup:** from Asia (7th century, or earlier) into Europe and the Islamic world
- **By the 8th century CE,** in widespread use in Frankish kingdoms – but also used by Muslim armies (Battle of Tours, 732)
- **The metal and leather stirrup attached to the saddle**
- **allowed the mounted soldiers to fight on horseback,** rather than having to dismount to fight

Technological innovations in the rise of the Frankish Cavalry 2

- **made the cavalry almost invincible:** as **mounted combat shock troops** – or almost invincible (until the early 14th century)
- **Opponents of White:** Bacharach (1970), De Vries (1992)
- **IRON HORSE SHOES (U –shaped):**
- **also very important: from the 8th or 9th centuries:** in protecting the horses' hooves

THE STIRRUP (for Horses)



Academy Artworks

The Stirrup



Spread of Carolingian Feudalism in the 9th & 10th centuries

- (1) **Heartland of Carolingian Feudalism:** between the Loire river (France) and the Rhine river (Germany)
- (2) **Carolingian feudalism spread eastwards,** into Germany, Central Europe, Scandinavia
- (3) **Spread Westward: into England,** with the Norman Conquest of 1066

Spread of Carolingian Feudalism in the 9th & 10th centuries (2)

- (4) **Southward**: into southern France, Italy, Spain:
- **but never spread effectively south of Loire river:**
- **Because Roman Law, Roman institutions, and urban civilization** remained much stronger there
→ as barrier to feudalism & manorialism
- **But also because Mediterranean agriculture was far less suited to raising horses** than was northern agriculture

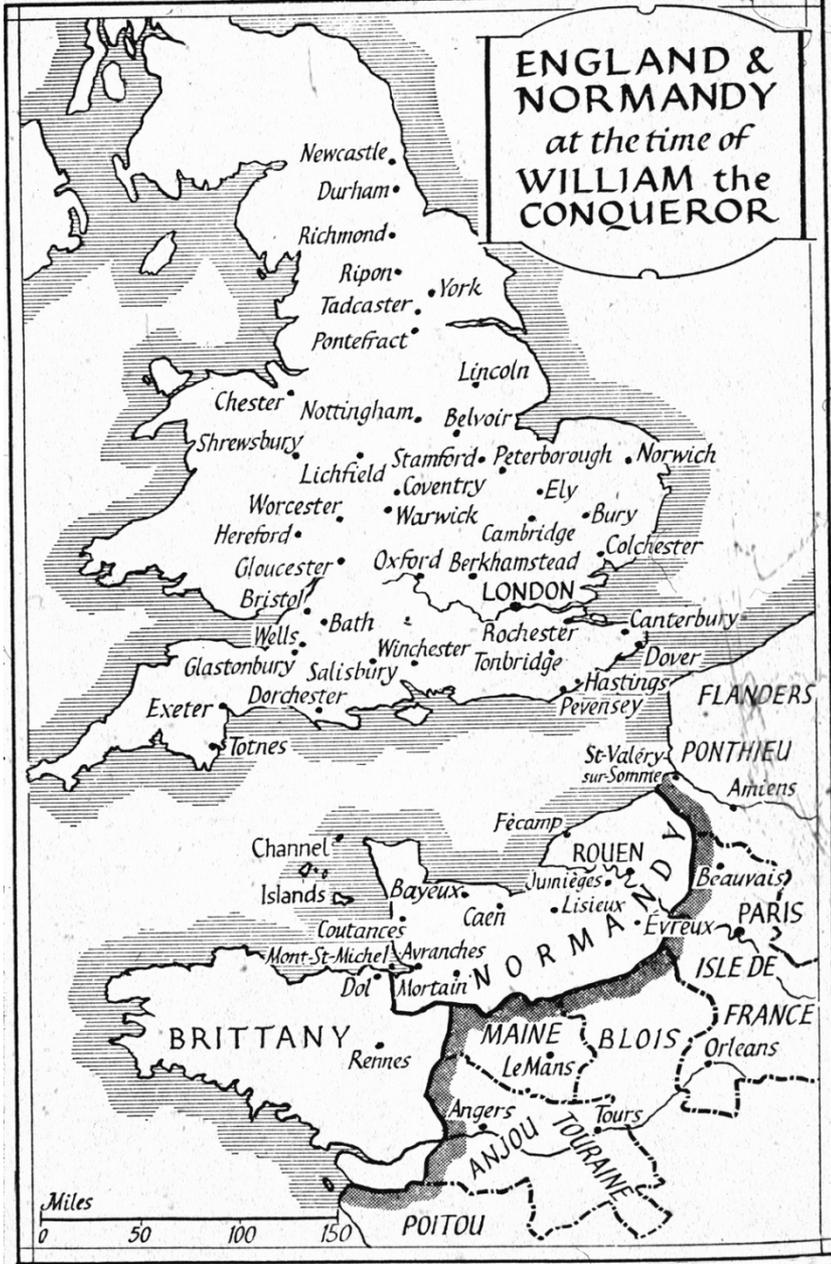


Business Centers and Maritime Trade Routes High Middle Ages

..... Genoa and Pisa
 ——— Venice
 - - - - - German Hanse
 0 500
 MILES

ENGLAND & NORMANDY

at the time of
WILLIAM the CONQUEROR



Norman Europe, ca. 1100



Challenges to Feudalism by 1300

- (1) **Growing powers of national monarchies:** especially in **France and England**, whose kings raised their own **national, non-feudal armies**
- **But English kings enjoyed a major advantage:** **England was NOT subdivided into feudal principalities:** i.e., duchies and counties ruled locally by feudal princes (from Norman Conquest)
- (2) **Growing threat of mercantile towns and urban bourgeoisie:** who financed kings, and lent them administrative support (though some became nobles)

Challenges to Feudalism by 1300

- (3) **Military Innovations:**
- - **new infantry formations:** pikes fixed in the ground: Scots & Flemings (1297-1314)
- - **Genoese cross-bows and English long-bows**
- - **Artillery:** iron and bronze cannons from the 1330s (supremacy of bronze: last lecture)
- - **hand-held firearms:** muskets and pistols

Feudalism: Impediments to Economic Growth (1)

- (1) **Feudal-manorial estates and their labour supplies: not really subject to laws of the market economy:** impeded market economy
- - **note that manors as fiefs were given as payment for military service:** and thus could not legally be alienated (i.e., sold)
- (2) **Control over and predominance (with the Church) in landed wealth:** with a disproportionate share of national income → highly skewed wealth distributions
- (3) **Adversely skewed effect on aggregate demand**
- **biased market demand** towards the production and distribution of high-valued luxury goods

Feudalism: Impediments to Economic Growth (2)

- (4) **Hostility of both nobility and the Church to mercantile bourgeoisie:** social and religious hostility undermined social respectability of capitalism, and thus prestige of merchants
- (5) **Aristocrats: not predisposed to invest their wealth productively as capital in the market economy**
- - **nobility were liable to 'derogation'** and loss of status and influence if they engaged in profit-seeking mercantile pursuits: in many parts of Europe
- **England and Prussia** were major exceptions

Feudalism: Impediments to Economic Growth (3)

- **Political fragmentation meant market & economic fragmentation:**
- **MARKET FRAGMENTATION:** in feudal Europe
- **before national unification:** most of Europe plagued with internal tariffs, tolls, local measures, and other barriers to trade
- **France, Germany, Italy, Spain** were never united kingdoms in the medieval era

Feudalism: Impediments to Economic Growth (4A)

- **FRANCE:**
 - - even though most feudal dynasties, those ruling duchies & counties, had died out by 16th century, the feudal principalities remained
 - **France did not become fully united** until French Revolution of 1789
- **GERMANY:** not united until 1871 (2nd German Empire)

Feudalism: Impediments to Economic Growth (B)

- **ITALY:** not united until 1870
- **SPAIN:** separate kingdoms of Castile & Aragon (from 1492): not united until Napoleonic wars
- **ENGLAND: the major exception:** England became a fully united kingdom: with national legal, judicial institutions from reign of **Henry II (1154-1189)**

