
UNIT 5 FORM AND STRUCTURE OF FEUDALISM*

Structure

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- locate Feudalism in a historical context and understand its connections with the medieval period in history,
- understand its defining features and the debate surrounding the concept of Feudalism, specifically in Europe,
- learn some of the differences in its features as they occurred in different parts of Europe,
- identify the key aspects in the structure of Feudalism in Europe, particularly the specific social formation and mode of production essential to the prevalence of Feudalism in Europe,

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- have an idea of the forms it was manifested in, in various parts of Europe; what we mean by demesne, manor, fief, etc.,
- analyze the fact that culture and art of this period characterized as Feudal in Europe had some relationship with the structures and forms of feudalism, and
- appreciate that chronologically what can be identified as Feudalism did not occur at the same time all over the world.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit we will discuss mainly the form and structure of Feudalism in Europe, but we would like to discuss this structure and form in its historical context. We shall also relate these forms and structures with other aspects of society, polity and culture that constitute the broader features of a feudal society. In other words, we would like to look at feudalism as a specific **mode of production**. We will examine how society and economy were organized, as different from the ancient societies studied earlier and from capitalism that emerged later. Thereby informing ourselves of the broader aspects of medieval societies that formed their setting.

This does not, of course, mean that those patterns of life that existed prior to the emergence of feudalism disappeared overnight, or that the beginnings of what came to be known as capitalism did not have their roots in certain developments that took place within the feudal societies, particularly in the later years. Continuities and change always go together, and at different points of time the change becomes noticeable and fundamental in different places at different times. Different types of modes of production, i.e. different types of economic and social forms also continue to co-exist long after new forms have become dominant.

So when we talk of the structure and form of feudalism we speak of the periods in human history when Feudalism was the dominant form of organization of economy and society. This system of organization was accompanied by certain forms of polity, culture, mentalities and ways of thinking. Feudalism, as per this approach, is a study of not just structure and form, of social and economic organization, but of feudal societies as a whole.

Finally, even as we say that feudalism in Europe was the period from the ninth century to the fourteenth century¹, the period was not by and large unchanging. We have the early phases, the middle phases and finally what are called the High Middle Ages. The latter centuries were very different from the earlier ones². Therefore, the study of structures and forms of feudalism is inseparably linked with these changes and phases of medieval societies. There were some very clear distinctions between the first phase (9th to 11th century) and the second phase (from 11th to 14th century), with some features that grew or got transformed in the overlapping 11th century. These encompassed changes in extent, means, methods and organization of agricultural production, population, trade, social stratification and cultural expression and cultural production, and some political changes as well. These were the features and changes that can be accommodated in or which characterized, in some form or the other, medieval societies all over the world.

Just as societies characterized by slavery were seen as ancient societies, and ancient economy was seen as based on slavery (though not all production was carried by slave labour), similarly feudalism (or other forms of similar economies, preceding capitalism)

¹ There are debates about where did feudalism originate first and in which years specifically; and when it began to decline or get overtaken by capitalistic elements.

² You shall learn more about the phases of Feudalism in the next **Unit (6)**.

is characterized as medieval, and referred to as medieval economy and the period as medieval society. The 14th century marked the decline of feudalism in western Europe, and the transition to the early forms of capitalistic development.³

5.2 FEUDALISM: HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MEDIEVAL SOCIETY

Often it is thought that medieval amounts simply to something that is in the ‘middle’ of the human history. The timeframe of the centuries we speak of as medieval, or even its phases, are not uniform everywhere. Feudalism or what can be termed as medieval societies did not emerge chronologically at the same time in all the regions of the world.

We must remember that Feudalism and the historical setting of medieval societies were not a mirror image of each other: the geographical setting, economic conditions, political vicissitudes, and external influences shaped the nature of medieval societies in the specific regions of the world. That said, there are certain features and forms of organization of economy and society that we characterize as medieval and more specifically feudal. It is Europe that we will talk about here, primarily Western Europe, and about its basic features rather than the dynamic of changes through stages and variations, which you will learn about in the next Unit of this Course.

5.3 WHAT IS FEUDALISM?

The term Feudalism signified the changes that occurred in Western Europe between the late 8th to the 14th century. Central to these changes was the grant of land called ‘fief’ (a form of real property right) around which revolved the social and economic relationships of the period under study. The word feudalism is derived from the German word ‘feud’, which literally meant a piece of land. In pre-modern societies, before the industrial revolution, land was the chief source of wealth. Who owned this land, who worked on it and on what terms, and how much income each derived from it, was not merely an index of the economic condition of society, but also of individual wealth and status. Therefore, the relationships that governed the tilling and income from this land are crucial to understanding feudal societies. The terms on which the relationship of each section of society utilized this land also governed their relationships to each other. Feudalism in this sense represents the entire complex of social, economic and political system derived from this crucial relationship.

Serfdom was the basic institution that determined the mechanics of feudalism: as distinct from slavery, in which the one who worked the land was also *owned* by a member of the ruling landed aristocracy. The relationship with the lord, although less onerous than under slavery, was nevertheless one in which he was oppressed and his labour exploited to an extent that barely left him enough for survival. Mostly he worked with his own tools, and he had to draw his means of livelihood from the parcel of land he was tied to, not from any remuneration from the work he did on the lord’s land. This remuneration was a form of labour rent for the **strips of land** allotted to him by the lord precisely to ensure labour for himself once slavery no longer remained viable.

5.4 CHIEF COMPONENTS OF FEUDALISM⁴

Feudal society had a hierarchical structure in which individuals had their designated

³ On which (transition for feudalism to capitalism) too there is a very lively debate, to which social scientists of different disciplines have contributed over the decades.

⁴ This Section is taken from **IGNOU Course MHI-01: *Ancient and Medieval Societies*, Block 6, Unit 21**, ‘Feudalism: Forms and Structure’ written by Dr. Bodhisattva Car, Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, New Delhi.

positions. King was at the top of this structure who bestowed fiefs or estates on a number of lords. The lords distributed fiefs to a number of vassals who had their specified duties and obligations. The knights were at the bottom of this hierarchy and performed military duties. The whole system worked on strong bonds of personal loyalty and allegiance. In this Section, we will define the chief components of feudalism.

Lords, Vassals and Homage

The legal complex of acts by which one free man placed himself in the protection of another was known as 'commendation'. It involved a series of obligations binding on both parties. The person who commended himself was called a vassal and assumed the obligation of serving and respecting his superior, whom he called his lord, with the reservation that this service and respect was compatible with the maintenance of his status as a free man. The lord on his part agreed to assume the obligation of providing maintenance and protection to the vassal. The validity of commendation depended on the precise accomplishment of the formalities that accompanied these acts.

The primary rite of commendation was known as 'homage', which all classes performed during the Merovingian period but came to be limited under the Carolingian kings to the members of the aristocratic class. Two elements were comprised in the act of homage: *immixtio manuum* (the rite in which the vassal, generally kneeling, bareheaded and unarmed, placed his clasped hands between the hands of his lord, who closed his own hands over them) and *volo* or the declaration of intention, whereby the placing of the vassal's person at the lord's disposition and the lord's acceptance of this surrender was verbally expressed. Reflecting the improvement of the status of vassalage in the middle of the eighth century, the Carolingians added to the ceremony an oath of fealty (vassal's acknowledgement of fidelity to his lord) to emphasize the fact that the vassals, now comprising the members of aristocracy, served as free men.

During the **enfeoffment**, usually following the act of homage and the oath of fealty, an act of **investiture** used to be performed symbolizing the transfer of the property right and the vassal's assumption of the obligations of administering the fief which he received on this occasion. The positive aspect of the vassal's duty was to render certain services to the lord usually classified as aid (*auxilium*) and counsel (*consilium*). Military service was the essential element in the category of aid. In addition to its purely military aspect, the obligation of *auxilium* covered duties in the administration of the manor or in the lord's household, the carrying of messages, the providing of escorts, and rendering financial aid to the lord in case of need.

The mutual obligations created by homage and fealty were of a personal character, and so could affect nobody outside the two contracting parties. No legal relationship was therefore recognized between the lord and the sub-vassal. Although in theory provisions of sanctions existed in the case of one party failing in his obligations, up to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries they were usually quite ineffective and in practice the conflicts which followed such breaches of agreement were most often settled by recourse to arms.

Fiefs, Tenements and Allods

The lord or the chief of a group of vassals could either keep the vassal in his own house and feed, clothe and equip him at his own expense, or he could endow him with an estate or a regular income derived from land and leave him to provide for his own maintenance. The tenure granted freely by a lord to his vassal in order to procure for the latter the maintenance which was his due and to provide him with the means of furnishing his lord with the services required by his contract of vassalage was termed as **benefice** or fief.

A fief normally consisted of a landed estate, which could vary greatly in size. But a fief might also be some form of public authority, or a duty or right, including the right to tolls and market dues, the rights of minting and justice, the functions of advocate, mayor, provost, receiver, and so on. These fiefs which had no territorial basis but consisted in the right to certain payment made at regular intervals were known as 'money fiefs'. The nature of the rights enjoyed by the two parties, the lord and the vassal, did not remain the same across the centuries. Since vassalage was not transmitted by inheritance, the remuneration of the vassal could also not take on a hereditary character. But by the end of the twelfth century the investiture of the son in succession to the father acquired a legal status almost everywhere.

Fief involved an obligation of service which contained a very definite element of professional specialization and individual action. In this respect, it was sharply distinct from the *villein* tenement which was burdened with labour services and rents in kind. The usual *villein* tenement, ranging between ten to thirty acres, was distributed in scattered acre-strips in the two or three open-fields of the manor. These holdings were deemed in law to be at the will of the lord, but in practice were often protected by the local custom and generally subjected to quasi-legal rules of possession and inheritance on the payment of a tax.

While feudal tenure—the *villein* tenements and the fiefs—was certainly the most common mode of holding land, it was not the only form of real property rights. There were the 'allods', which remained independent to a significant degree owing to the porous and limited nature of the feudal network of dependent ties. The allodial right was one of complete ownership, not subject to any conditions of service or payment. It must be clarified that they did not fully escape the economic exploitation of the seigneurial class who controlled the local markets and the regional economy as a whole. Frequently, the allodialists had to pay levies directly or indirectly through an intermediary.

The Manor

The basic unit of production in the agrarian economy was the Manor, and at the level of the peasant it was the household or family. The manor was the landed estate in control of the feudal lord, which could constitute land in several villages, or parts of land in several villages, or parts of land in a single village. What is significant is that it was an institution that marked the land of a particular lord. Thus there were lords who controlled hundreds of villages, peopled by peasants and worked by them, while others had just a dozen families working on their land: the most obvious sign of gradation and hierarchy in the ruling classes under feudalism. The manorial estate was self-sufficient in many ways, insofar as daily necessities were concerned: grain, blacksmiths, carpenters, stone masons, household tasks were all taken care of within the estate. Women and children worked too, in the house and in wine presses, and spinning and weaving. Luxury items used by the lords and salt and some metalware came from outside through trade. Forest in his area provided grounds for hunting, and meadows served the purpose of grazing. The manor also housed the castle and household retinue of the lord.

How did the lord assume control over this land? Parts of it may have been received by him as fief, some taken over by his military might, some received as grant or gift. And how did he utilize it for maximum gain? He divided his manorial estate into two types of land: the *demesne*, which housed his castle and retinue; and land that he gave out to peasants for cultivation and use for their livelihood, in return for which the peasant family worked in his *demesne* without any further payments. In other words, the peasants in lieu of rent were required to perform labour services, the total sum of it not being jointly negotiated but imposed by the lord as expression of his power. It could vary in

direct proportion to his power vis-a-vis his peasants. The two components of the lord's land, and the terms of remuneration were linked by these relations of production, specific to feudalism.

The peasant was thus tied to the land, while the lord was ensured a regular supply of labour on terms of his choice. The demesne land was directly managed by the lord, but worked in the same way as peasant land i.e. divided into strips and subject to the same technology and agrarian relations, although in the later phase the lords began introducing new technology and also hiring labour for money payments if it so suited them. But the peasant had to work for certain number of days on the lord's demesne, on days most favourable for planting, harvesting, etc. The form of payment could change, but relationship between the lord and the peasant essentially remained the same, that of a serf, as described here. Thus under the feudal system, the peasant worked not only on his own holding allotted to him from which he gave over a share of the produce in the form of crop or money, but also on the lord's field. This as you would notice, was quite distinct from slavery in the ancient world. This system of social relations and economic organization was known as serfdom.

Leo Huberman has described several categories of serfs: the 'demesne serfs' who were permanently attached to the lord's land and lived and worked solely on it; 'bordars' who held barely two to three acres of land in strips at the edge of the village; and 'cottars' who had little more than the land on which their cottage stood. 'Cottars' were the most vulnerable as they mostly had to give out their labour to lord, for food and in the later period for meager money payments. However, with time there grew a section known as 'villeins', who enjoyed better conditions as their liabilities or obligations to the lord were fixed, and some of them didn't do any labour services at all. They were best placed for freedom when it finally came, although they were a small minority.

The most onerous were the 'banalities' or 'monopolies' the lord enjoyed by virtue of owning the facilities in the manor. For use of forest land, meadows, workshops, wine presses, flour mills – everything in the manor – the peasant had to pay arbitrary amounts. The peasant had nowhere else where he was permitted to go for such facilities. Not to forget the poll tax, inheritance tax, and even when he tried to repair his cottage or celebrate a marriage. It seemed like the peasant had to pay the lord for almost anything that he did! And all this the lord imposed, even though he was himself not the *owner* of the land: only a tenant vassal of a higher lord!

Serfdom as an institution was thus intrinsic to feudalism in Europe. The peasant had no right to buy and sell the land or commodities, no freedom of movement, inheritance of land, and not even free to take independent decisions regarding marriage, family and residence. Most peasants were born, lived their lives and died within the same manor. In a way, the manor was his world and his labour and struggle in the estate constituted his life experience.

The peasant also paid other dues, such as **tithe**, amounting to one-tenth of the produce, payable mainly to the Church, but in the early phase shared by the lord. It was called a religious tax, in addition to the dues enjoyed by the Church as landowner.

With time, the *fief* and other land controlled by the feudal lord became hereditary. The control over the peasants' labour and life remained immense throughout feudalism. Very little land, known as **allod**, remained outside this complex or outside its influence as long as feudalism remained the dominant mode of production. And here too there was a distinction between such land held by the landed aristocracy and peasants.

It must also be noted that although generally a grant of fief meant a landed estate, it

could sometimes also be simply the grant of a right. For example, to collect certain tolls and market dues, or rights of minting and justice, or certain functions, in which case, they were basically ‘money fiefs’. These were more so in France, Germany and England, particularly during the eleventh century.

The basic social and economic unit was the peasant household and family, firmly bound to the lord in servile relations that had legal sanction and political protection. *In turn, the nature of this servile relationship was the edifice of the entire complex of feudal societies.* Because of the juridical control, we can say feudalism came to include social and political aspects as well, which we have discussed below.

Knights, Tournaments and Chivalry

However, ‘the agents of the seigneurial exploitation’ – the phrase is Georges Duby’s – were the knights. A knight was essentially a mounted warrior in the service of his liege-lord. Using the speed and momentum of a charge, the horse could trample his rider’s enemies and the rider could use the long lance to injure his foes while he remained out of reach of their weapons. Then, with all speed, the knight could ride off, only to return for another deadly attack. This technique had the most devastating effect when the cavalry worked together in formation. They were frequently used also in intimidating and forcing peasants into paying dues etc.

From the end of the tenth century, along with hunting deer or wild boar and falconry tournaments began to emerge as the major amusement of the knights, which was also a way for warriors to practice working together and rehearse their combat skills. The tournaments immensely contributed to the fashioning of the idealized code of conduct for medieval knights which was known as chivalry. Gradually, the involvement of the Church in the Crusades added love of God and the defence of the Christian principles to the code of chivalry. By the twelfth century, the meaning of chivalry was expanded to include courtesy towards women and protection of the defenceless. However, chivalry might be understood more as a normative guide of knightly behavior than as a true reflection of what the knights actually did. Over time, chivalry was transformed into a code of gentlemanly manners in polite society.

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Give a brief description of the historical context of medieval society. What is meant by Feudalism?

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- 2) What was the relationship between lord and vassal?

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3) Give a brief description of Manor.

4) How was chivalry defined during the feudal period?

5.5 FEUDALISM: AN OVERVIEW OF FORM AND STRUCTURE

Feudalism, and medieval economy in general represents a class society essentially based on extra-economic coercion, but in which the economic pattern that was coerced by the ruling classes was very different from that of the ancient societies. This means its institutional and legal system was as important in creating and sustaining it, as were its economic patterns. Land continued to remain the main source of wealth throughout feudalism and the medieval period of human history. The control of land remained with the landowners or those who held land in return for a political or military function. It was not always irrevocable, but increasingly so during the latter phase of feudalism.

The main social classes were these landowners and the peasants who worked on the land, in varying capacities, and whose relationship with the landowners was through legal sanction, whereby they had to work for the lord, offer him services and obligations, and pay taxes. The Church held a singularly important position in this scheme of relationships, being part landowner and part a keeper of religion and conscience. The middle classes were not entirely absent, but quite weak in these societies, a situation that considerably changed over time by the 14th century.

Feudalism was thus a society of multiple hierarchies, within the broad division of landowners and peasants, each tied to those higher or lower by a set of duties and obligations and some rights, but never equal rights in any aspect of existence. In its sum total, 'the ambience sociale totale', as Marc Bloch (one of the celebrated historians of feudalism) looked at Feudalism, feudalism consisted of the *fief* i.e. a service tenement

instead of wage, the overlordship of a class of warriors with control over land through sheer muscle power and political patronage, ties of protection through every level of society linked with service in order to ensure territorial stability. This assumed the form of vassalage for the warrior-landed classes, leading to **parcellization of sovereignty** and the economic organization of peasant service around the manor for the peasant.

The economies varied from simple to complex in the different regions and over the centuries. The differences can be gauged from the growth of towns, trade, architectural achievements, social norms and lifestyles of the rich, as well as emergence of towns, urban centres and merchant classes.

Political sovereignty was essentially parcellized, with an overarching Holy Roman Empire on the top. In Eastern and Central Europe, however, feudalism was brought about by and sustained by absolutist monarchies. To understand a society comprehensively, and to be able to underline its basic features, it has to be studied in its developed form. When we talk of the form and structure of feudalism we, therefore, refer to the elements that constituted its mature, developed form. No society, however, emerges overnight in its developed form, and its various features can be traced in earlier years. Historians have engaged in a lively debate both about the origins of feudalism and its decline.

Debate on the Origins of Feudalism

The early historians such as F. W. Maitland, Karl Bucher, Fustel de Coulanges of feudalism emphasized upon the legalistic aspects of the system. Many of these historians traced the roots of these features and stressed on the continuity of elements from the Germanic kingdoms and the Roman Empire. The thesis of continuity with the classical world took a radically new turn with the work of distinguished Belgian historian Henri Pirenne. Pirenne based his thesis on the premises of the impact of Islamic expansion on the development of feudalism in Europe. He explained the cause of break with the tradition of antiquity and the end of the Mediterranean unity with the advance of the Arabs. Pirenne's thesis has drawn, both, approval and condemnation. Some historians have refuted the role of Islam and interruption of the Mediterranean trade and commerce as a decisive factor in the origin of feudalism in Europe. On the other hand, a criticism of this thesis stimulated new research in varied directions.

By the first half of the twentieth century, two conceptualities of feudalism emerged to the fore. The first conception, the mainstream liberal view, regarded feudalism as a body of institutions based on the practice of obedience and subordination. The second conception, especially propounded by Marxist and Soviet historians, undertook an examination of the economic structure of the feudal society. Largely moving away from both the restrictive legalistic view and the economic deterministic conceptualization of 'feudalism', the French historian Marc Bloch chose to explain the phenomenon by exploring the various forms of, what he called, 'the ties between man and man'. Bloch argued that the bond of kinship progressively tightened with the development of feudalism.

Now, let us turn our attention to the origins of feudalism. To Bloch, therefore, the term feudalism denoted a comparative study of local phenomenon, rather than being a blanket term for the medieval social order. Bloch's thesis has been criticized on several grounds.

Taking the cue from Bloch, Georges Duby, one of the most original and influential post-war historians of medieval society, attempted to look beyond the economic to the ideological dimensions of feudal institutions. His detailed study of the political, economic, and social life in the Maconnais settlement in France from the tenth through the twelfth centuries focused a generation of historical research on what he called the 'feudal

revolution' of the early eleventh century. Arguing that fief never played 'more than a peripheral part in what is generally known as feudalism', Duby focused on the realignment of the social functions in this period. The term 'feudal revolution' signifies this entire social process, slow but unmistakable, which not only transformed the previous economy of war and plunder, but also restructured the aristocratic family into the patrilineage and effected related changes in the domains of mental attitudes. Duby's work has generated an intense debate amongst historians, and has invited disapproval on many grounds such as underplaying the role of women in the feudal revolution.

Lynn White Jr. made an important intervention in the growing debate in 1962 by strongly emphasizing the role of technology in shaping the feudal societies. At another level, White claimed that the invention of the stirrup and the horse-shoe played a significant role in shaping the military organization of feudal society. White has been criticized by later historians for isolating the technical improvements from the larger social and economic processes that marked the period. In this sense, Hilton and Sawyer argued, White's thesis retained a strong content of technical determinism. In a similar vein, Perry Anderson argued that the simple existence of technological innovations was no guarantee of their widespread utilization. Most importantly, many historians have questioned White's fundamental assumption that the Franks were the first to exploit the stirrup.

Although feudalism had continued to be analyzed as a mode of production dominated by land and a natural economy within this tradition for long, the theory was fully developed and worked out in the work of the British historian Perry Anderson in 1978. Anderson's analysis contradicted the conventional characterization of feudalism as an economy of regression or an era of decline and disintegration. Maintaining that feudalism was a more advanced system of enhancing agricultural productivity and the agrarian surplus than the classical slave mode of production, he argued that there were several structural contradictions within feudalism whose overall consequences were to drive the whole agrarian economy forward. Although his thesis with emphasis of the single aspect leaves out the larger picture of the feudal societies. The debate on feudalism, in the recent years, has led to the re-evaluation of the existent historical literature.

How and in which areas did Feudalism originate?

The origins of Feudalism can be found in the conditions created after the fall of the Roman Empire: the same factors that led to the decline of the slave mode of production and Germanic invasions also facilitated the seizure of power by local elites and the simultaneous emergence of dependent labour, a hallmark of feudal societies. This had already taken place by the seventh century. The features of decline of trade and commerce and money and exchange, of towns and lack of a centralized political authority once the Roman administrative institutions and military control gave way continued to be the major aspects of feudalism in its early phase.

But not everything was destroyed, and feudalism in Europe was a synthesis of both Roman traditions and the Germanic tribes, often referred to as 'barbaric'. Most of the institutions of feudalism in fact had, as Perry Anderson has shown, a hybrid origin: fief, manor and serfdom were derived from this synthesis (Anderson, 1974: 130-131). Traditions of folk justice and reciprocal obligations, as well as the Roman legacies of written law were significant inputs into the feudal societies.

The period of transition involved making concessions to the local elites and a changeover from slavery that had become a fetter to greater productivity, to a system where the lord need not be responsible for the peasant's survival apart from allotting him some strips of land to manage for survival of his family and himself. He did not need to provide him with tools either or to introduce any new techniques, except in his own *demesne* from which the earnings from production were entirely his – with labour of the peasant, as much as he could extract. On the other hand, the peasant also required protection from marauders, which was ensured through the link with a particular lord.

Three-fold Zone-wise typology of Feudalism

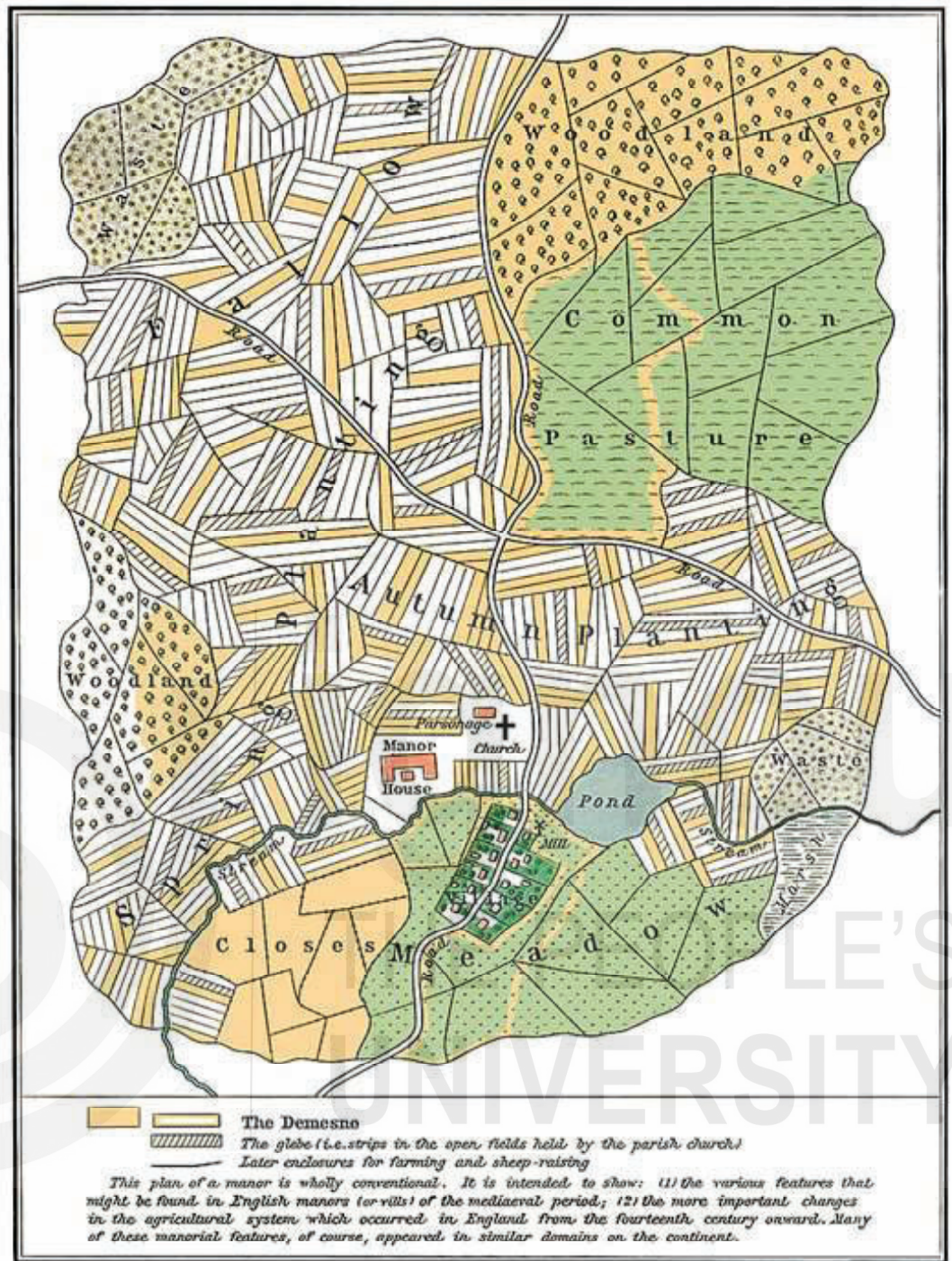
Following the Soviet historians, Perry Anderson advanced a three-fold zone-wise typology of feudalism: i) The first zone comprised of northern France and its neighbouring regions. In this '**core region of European feudalism**', which roughly corresponded to the homeland of the Carolingian Empire, Anderson saw a 'balanced synthesis' of the Roman and the Germanic elements; ii) The **second zone** that lay to the south of the core region included Provence, Italy and Spain. Here, especially in Italy, the Roman legacy was much more dominant in the recombination of barbarian and ancient modes of production. The rural society was considerably heterogeneous, combining manors (mostly in Lombardy and north Italy), free-hold peasants (principally in central Italy), *latifundia* (particularly in south Italy) and urban landowners in different regions. Precisely for the survival of the classical traditions, the municipal political organization could also flourish in the area from the tenth century onwards; and iii) In the **third zone**, lying to the north and east of the core region and consisting of Germany, Scandinavia and England, the influence of the Roman rule was either superficial or non-existent. Consequently, in these places an allodial peasantry strongly held on to its communal institutions which remarkably slowed down the pace of the transition towards feudalism. As a result, serfdom was not introduced into Saxony until the late twelfth century, and in fact, it was never properly established in Sweden at all.

Source: MHI-01: Ancient and Medieval Societies, Block 6, Unit 20: 14

At a higher level the endowments of land were also tied to the bonds of service, more specifically military service, as different from gifts or grants: the system that came to constitute vassalage, down the line to the smallest lord and at the bottom the peasant, who was a serf. There were also some communal lands used by the community, over which the lords assumed control. These were grounds of contention between lords and peasants throughout the feudal period, a contradiction that derived from the period of transition.

These processes of feudalization of economy and society developed more completely and rapidly in France and later in Germany, but not so in parts of Italy that retained the strength of the traditions of antiquity and urbanism, the basis of the city-states. In Spain, feudal development was even more constrained, as kings here were able to retain some power over the magnates, and in Scandinavia almost absent. In Sicily and in England it was more rigorous, and in Slav areas it had its own specific pattern when it developed.

The second wave of invasions in the ninth century, of the Saracens in the Mediterranean region, and the Magyars in central Europe, ushered in a new phase allowing for more regions to adapt to the system of serfdom, and a society based on ties of dependence and hierarchy described above. The emergence and stabilization of the feudal system, and its form and structure was thus a long-drawn process in which the old and new forces of production and social relationships struggled to survive through both accommodation and coercion.



Map 5.1: Conjectural map of a feudal manor

Credit: William R. Shepherd, *Historical Atlas*, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1923 – [1]

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demesne#/media/File:Plan_mediaeval_manor.jpg

In the East, in the steppes and inhospitable climate of the northern region, the prolonged persistence of pastoral nomadism delayed the beginnings of serfdom, although eventually the boyars (landed magnates) who gained power at the expense of the monarchy were compelled to force a system that tied down the peasant to the land. Serfdom became the instrument for ensuring labour in conditions of peasant flight from their oppressive conditions. This has often been referred to as 'second serfdom' because of its variations from and chronologically late development as compared with Western Europe, 9th to 14th centuries in Western Europe and 15th to 18th centuries in Eastern Europe. Earlier attempts before the sixteenth century had been interrupted by conquests of the Russians and hugely resisted by peasant uprisings. Also, there was no precedence of ancient Empires like the Roman Empire and synthesis that the codification of laws and customary

practices of the Germanic invasions created. Finally, when serfdom was established it resembled more the backward and central regions of Europe than the western part, although the experience of the manorial system was of great influence.

5.6 ECONOMIC ARRANGEMENTS UNDER FEUDALISM

Unlike ancient societies, feudal economy had a much lower level of urbanism and trade. Production for market was much less and the size of towns was much smaller. The dominant feature of the agrarian economy was the large estates of the feudal lords. The methods of agriculture were simple, chiefly a wooden plough drawn by oxen, owned and worked by peasant labour, on a **two field system** whereby a part of the land lay fallow every second season of planting. In the absence of technological advance in the first phase, agriculture remained labour intensive, and the only way for the lord to increase his income was to make the peasant work longer hours and to increase the number of oppressive obligations that he imposed upon the peasant, and the taxes that were onerous. There was thus a fundamental contradiction between the feudal landed classes and the peasantry inbuilt in the feudal economy. The peasant on his part responded with passive resistance or violent uprisings throughout the feudal era.

By the eleventh century, new areas were brought into cultivation as a result of receding forests and by clearing marshes, the introduction of iron ploughs that enabled the plough to penetrate deeper and reach nutrients of the soil, methods of harness improved and horses began to replace oxen. Proliferation of windmills and water powered mills, the introduction of new crops and a **three field system** along with the above mentioned factors increased agricultural production and food availability. These developments benefitted the lords who could afford the changes, but not so much the peasantry, who continued to lose out in most regions due to the specific terms and conditions of their relationship with the lord. The latter continued to suffer because of the fact that land was primarily held by the feudal lords, who dictated the terms on which the peasants worked it.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Write a short overview of the form and structure of feudalism.
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- 2) Discuss the debate on the origin of feudalism propounded by various historians. Explain the different factors that have been stressed in each of the thesis.
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- 3) According to Perry Anderson, in which areas did Feudalism originate? Explain his three-fold zone-wise typology of feudalism.

- 4) What were the economic arrangements in feudalism?

5.7 FEUDALISM: LEGAL ASPECTS AND POLITICAL AUTHORITY

We mentioned above that Feudalism had certain extra-economic features. These were central to sustaining feudalism as a system of production with certain forms of oppression inbuilt into it. In fact, the earliest historians of feudalism emphasized precisely these legal aspects: these were fiefs, knightly or military service and forms of justice meted out by the lords or landowners, known also as **seigneurs**. These collectively constituted the method and institutions of governance and a way of securing the forces or military that helped maintain this form of governance. It was during the ninth century that the feudal lords were able to win for themselves political and juridical authority, which finally formalized and legalized the economic and military power they had already assumed, and in the tenth century this structure was firmly in place.

5.7.1 Political Decentralization, Decay of Royal Authority, Parcellization of Sovereignty

The collapse of the Roman Empire had led to the final collapse of central royal authority, the attempts by **Carolingians** and **Charlemagne** proving to be significant interludes that contributed to some features of the ensuing feudal development but failed to sustain a centralized political system. Kingship and the defense of occupied land passed into the hands of local but powerful individuals, who could exercise effective military and control of land (along with the peasants who worked these lands) in their areas. They, in turn needed to formalize this system in the areas under their control.

Even under Charlemagne there were 300 lords who administered the lands. Deriving legitimacy from the Pope, he earned for himself the title of Roman Emperor, and his successors that of Holy Roman Emperor. And the territories became designated as 'Holy Roman Empire'. But there was no centralized political system to back it and with time the feudal lords managed to get more and more power.

The lords who carried varied titles, such as count and duke, and derived their authority from the king, passed on similar authority to the smaller lords, who in turn did the same for those under them: eventually there emerged a juridical hierarchy, down to the lowest level in social hierarchy. And at each level the one who enjoyed authority was virtually a ruler in his own right, apart from his military functions and control over income from the land. It is this system that created the '**parcellization of sovereignty**' (which Perry Anderson has emphasized), the tight control over a certain defined area being accompanied by a dispersal created through the rights and obligations based on pervasive social and political hierarchy.

Political power was not centralized or concentrated in a monarch, yet oppression and control over those who worked the land remained as effective as in ancient societies of slavery. The lords enjoyed complete authority in their jurisdiction over justice and punishment and imposition of dues and labour. This hierarchical system was maintained and afforded through the system of vassalage, based on the land relations referred to above and a military system linked with both land control and vassalage.

5.7.2 Military System

As Amar Farooqui puts it so aptly, 'their power was backed by force, i.e. by their ability to mobilize armed supporters who were *personally* loyal to them alone' (Farooqui, 2001: 428). This emphasis on 'personally' implied that the force commanded by an individual lord in a given area was his source of strength over those inferior to him as well as those above him: he both ruled over and controlled those below him, and provided means of control to the one above him, with whom he bargained for the maintenance of his own position because he in turn provided military troops to maintain the position of his overlord.

In times of uncertainty the military system also implied military control of the land by the vassal, thus ensuring stability of revenue and surplus extraction for the lord, and a protected existence of survival for the peasant. The military system cemented the bonds of economic exploitation and wealth for the landed classes in the absence of slavery, that almost disappeared if not completely.

Fighting was done by foot soldiers and on horseback. The introduction of a better saddle and the stirrup introduced a new dimension in the military system. Both men and horses were fitted with armour. Common soldiers and nobility participated in the fighting, the nobility on horseback, with heavy weaponry. The manor house was, both, castle for fighting and defense as well as for living. The knight was the main mounted warrior of the feudal regime: he protected his lord from vagaries of other lords in the region, and from the peasants within the manor. He specialized in fast attacks on horseback with long lance for combat and swift movement.

Under feudalism there was neither a centralized army nor a salaried central bureaucracy. The feudal system of production and the decentralized political and juridical authority did not allow for centralized collection of revenue and the maintenance of a centralized army. The hierarchical military system was thus intrinsic to, and part and parcel of the feudal mode of production. The military system was facilitated by the creation over these centuries of an elaborate set of rituals and actual political practice. A hierarchical system of bonds was created complementary to the hierarchical structure of power.

5.7.3 Lords and Vassals

Theoretically, the land was 'owned' by the king, but 'held' by lords through a hierarchy reaching down to the peasant. Therefore, at each level the lord was a tenant of a higher

lord as well as a giver of fief to a lesser one. Each held his land from a higher one who in turn held his from a still higher one. This was the system of *vassalage*: the relationship with the higher lord made the lesser lord his 'vassal'. Every lord, in order to have some military at his command found a vassal, and the only way to do this was to give away a part of his land i.e. command over a part of the land that he controlled. This ensured him military assistance in time of need. Vassals also contributed on other ceremonial occasions, when the lord gained new honours, or when his son became knighted, and so on. These were all part of the 'obligation' that the men of 'lesser' status owed to their lords.

These obligations and status of protector were symbolized in rituals and an elaborate code of conduct was observed. Knights had 'Sir' added to their names, others were dukes, earls, barons and so on. Orderliness was maintained through the rituals of hierarchy, particularly the 'commendation' (an act elaborating the conditions and obligations involved when a man placed himself in 'protection' of the other). This was expressed through 'homage', whereby the vassal kneeled before the lord bareheaded and unarmed with hands clasped between the hands of his lord, and pledged allegiance and surrender to his overlordship. Later an oath of fealty or loyalty was added, with placing the hands on scriptures to underline the nature of duty owed. Often it was accompanied by an act of investiture, which symbolized the transfer of rights over the fief granted and the obligations it entailed. Sometimes the lord retained a sword or scepter to signify that he was the higher lord, sometimes a ring or a lance or some such object was given to the vassal to symbolize the fief, and so on. The object became the act of taking over the fief and later in a ceremony, if revoked, of handing it back.

This relationship was between the two persons involved and did not concern anyone else, so no general law was broken that might be universal. As in the case of lord and peasant, between the two lords, one a vassal to the other, there was an inbuilt conflict of interest and tussle for drawing greater benefit on either side, although in relation to the peasant-serf they both stood on the same side, benefitting from the feudal social-economic arrangements of the period.

Besides, there was the question of relative strength and other changes external to the system. The rights of the lord and the vassal did not remain the same over the centuries of feudalism or across regions. Although the fief became hereditary over time, it was not really an inheritance according to law, and the death of a vassal or lord always became an occasion for some change in equations. An interesting development was that although women were originally completely left out in the rights of feudal succession, by the end of the tenth century we see some cases where they do manage to inherit it, and there were rules regarding minors too with regard to the fief succession.

5.8 SOCIAL ORDER

Medieval society was formally organized in 'Three Orders', believed to be dependent on their work: those who fought for and defended the land i. e. the Nobility; those who prayed for and satisfied spiritual needs and did charitable work, namely the Christian clergy; and those who did manual work, essentially the peasantry. This was a Church ordained understanding of society. In this scheme, each of the Orders enjoyed differential status and privileges and duties. The third Order having as its 'destiny' mostly duties and no privileges. Each was also hierarchical and graded within itself, as we will see, which actually resulted in the class society discussed above.

5.8.1 Church and Feudal Society

The Catholic Church was a powerful institution during the medieval centuries, which dominated the social and religious life of the people, apart from being a big landowner because it owned considerable lands. Because these lands were held on similar terms, often as grants, and cultivated on the same terms as land held by feudal lords, with the Church levying taxes (particularly the tithe) and demanding similar labour services, the Church can be considered a part of the feudal system. Moreover, it had its own laws and was not dependent on the king. There were tussles and conflict between the Church and rulers, but co-operation too in defense of the social order and the status quo, because, as explained above the Church enjoyed great privileges in society.

Within the Church were hierarchical positions that mirrored those in society. At the head was the Pope, and below them were the bishops who like the religious nobility commanded the income of vast amount of land under their control and lived very comfortable lives. Then there were the ordinary priests, not far removed in position from the common people among whom they worked in the parish, a church jurisdiction at the lowest level. Each manor had a church and priest that played an important role in the lives of the people, at marriages, births and deaths and several religious festivals, apart from preaching and readying people for an afterlife that they firmly believed in. Many customs and symbols, displaying loyalty (like kneeling and clasping hands while bowing) were shared with the system of vassalage described above.

In addition, were the monks and monasteries, in which those who chose to become monks or nuns lived celibate and isolated lives, unlike the priests. There were separate monasteries for men and women, where its inhabitants dedicated themselves to lives of prayer, study and manual labour. These institutions also had landed estates which provided income for their upkeep, two most famous ones being that of St Benedict founded in 529 and Cluny in Burgundy in 910⁵.

The language of the Church and of learning in general, during the medieval times, was Latin. The Churches were important centres of learning and Church played a significant role in education, prior to the emergence of secular schools and rise of Universities. You will learn about popular religion, world of ideas and mentalities in **Unit 7** of this Course.

5.8.2 The Nobility

The nobility constituted the ruling classes by virtue of their control over land, and the social and economic processes of rural life. It is only the nobles who could raise or own 'feudal levies' or soldiers. They sustained the system of vassalage, where each person was 'the man of another man' i.e. a person to whom he owed allegiance and obligation to provide troops in time of need in return for protection. The latter in turn provided protection to another man who would provide him troops in time of need. Within his own fief or limited area of control he was as if the king.

The most powerful amongst them were the dukes and earls, who had received their fiefs directly from the king. They owed direct allegiance to the king. The persons to whom they granted control on parts of their fiefs were known as barons, who pledged military support to them. Then came the knights who had no nobles lower than them to whom they could grant fiefs. But they played significant role in medieval wars and conflicts, and considerable effort went into their training, in arms and manners. There are numerous stories about their jousts and chivalry that characterized medieval courtly culture, about which you will read in the Unit on medieval culture.

⁵ For a view of the Surviving remnants of the Abbey of Cluny, please see: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Clocher_abbaye_cluny_2.JPG

5.8.3 The Peasants

The peasants were both free peasants and serfs. Both were subservient to the feudal system. Even the free peasants were to provide military service and work in the lord's land or other work in the manor, such as roads, buildings, fences etc. They were also subservient to the judicial and political power of the lord in every way. Even having their own lands did not free them from any of the obligations. In case of the serfs, they were tied to the land controlled by the lord, in the sense that they could not leave it, not only because they had nowhere else to earn their livelihood, but because they were legally bound in the relationship of work and obligations. They also had to give some portion of their produce as part of the obligation. We have discussed some of these in the Section on organization of feudal economy (**Section 5.7** of this Unit).

5.9 TOWNS AND TRADE

While the emergence of feudalism coincided with the decline of trade and towns, production and consumption within the manor (except for luxury items consumed by the lords or those not locally produced), improvements in agriculture and growth of population began to stimulate production, demand and exchange by the eleventh century. There was significant growth of fairs and growth of towns around them. Crafts were stimulated. Towns became centres of production. There was growth of full-time artisans, organization of guilds and merchants who traded in these goods. Guilds became an important feature in the organization of non-agricultural feudal economy. There were specialized guilds of different types of work and production, which trained apprentices, regulated prices, work norms etc.

The first towns were small, and continued to pay taxes to the lord on whose land they stood. But gradually by the twelfth century and in the High Middle Ages, the Italian cities like Genoa, Florence and Venice became flourishing trading centres. Most European trading towns were sea ports. With prosperity many of these towns, unlike the earlier ones, became free of the feudal control of lords. They began to gradually administer their own affairs and be free of the institution of serfdom that was part and parcel of the feudal structure in rural Europe. The peasants who managed to flee the shackles of serfdom also tried to escape to the towns.

Towns also came up as cathedral towns in areas where the rich contributed to the building of cathedrals as an investment in religion. And not to forget the University towns that came up and flourished during the High Middle Ages. These developments are important for understanding the form and structure of feudalism. It helps break the stereotype of feudalism as a dark phase in the human history as well as of feudalism representing a stagnant economy and culture.

5.10 GENDER

There was a vast difference between the status of men and women and the roles they could play in the feudal society. The role of women was divided in terms of class, while all had subordinate role in their families. In peasant families, they did a great amount of labour and had no time for leisure that noble women had. Some noble women were also educated and women of great learning, some (very few) played a role in the estates. But the entire legal framework of feudalism ignored women. They might not have existed at all, insofar as fiefs and vassalage system functioned. They could become nuns, but not priests. They could be labelled as witches, and some granted sainthood, but not recognized as persons in their own right. Some of them gained succession rights when fiefs assumed a hereditary right, but it was an exception rather than a norm. They had a

shorter life span than men. Their place in the essential form and structure was invisible, except as that of labour.

5.11 QUESTIONS OF HISTORIOGRAPHY: STAGNATION AND DARK AGE

Our survey of the form and structure of Feudalism has shown that the decline of the slave mode of production and collapse of a central political authority leading to strife and wars throughout Europe were not an unmitigated disaster. Serfdom, however exploitative and dehumanizing, did change the situation of the peasant from being treated on par with instruments of production and as non-persons. Another person did not *own* him as a slave even though he slaved for the lord; as serf he attained some minimum autonomy, not much, but nevertheless he worked for himself and his family on the strip of land he held, the right over which was recognized as part of feudal obligation. The survival of common lands under feudalism was a significant factor in this autonomy, as well as in fuelling the many peasant protests by the peasant community against the feudal lords. These protests became one of the factors for ultimately loosening the feudal bonds and ensuring some peasant rights. They also made possible the emergence of a basic class contradiction between the landed aristocracy and the peasants, in a society that otherwise was detrimental to emergence of classes due to the many gradations and hierarchies overlapping claims and rights and obligations. These protests and constant strife and wars for control of land-lent dynamism and contributed to movement rather than stagnation in society.

New inventions and technology and increase in production and greater flexibility in extraction of surplus became viable and widespread only within the new social relations that feudalism entailed once slavery had become unviable. The adoption and adaption of these inventions and economic changes in the social order and interaction between the new factors and social milieu created basis for restrictions, but also dynamism within the given social order. The growth of market and monetary exchange, growth of towns, use of stirrups in armed warfare kept feudalism in place. The legal and extra economic forms of coercion were possible only within the dynamic of the feudal social formation and its actual workings in practice. It had lot of flexibility and variations which was evident across centuries and regions. One has to look at the emphasis on the various factors privileged by different scholars in the light of this observation, as made by Perry Anderson.

The Church was an important autonomous institution that marked continuity in learning and became almost the only agency for literacy and education. Its contradictory role as a feudal landholder and as the ideological defender of serfdom on the one hand and its mission in education became the basis for dynamism in thought, both religious and secular. We cannot imagine religious protests movements or questionings of the Universe and the revival of antiquity in the Renaissance without this contradictory role of the Church.

Parcellization of sovereignty was an important factor allowing for emergence and growth of towns in the later phase of feudalism, that we have discussed above. These towns were far more independent of the landed interest and control as compared to the city-states and towns of the ancient period, which were subordinate to agrarian interests. While the ancient towns were dominated by the landed aristocracy, in the late feudal period the great port towns saw independent administration. Its main features were elective principles of representation, the rise of a powerful new merchant class that challenged the feudal social order and ultimately, the emergence of the guilds in non-

Feudalism in Europe from the 7th to 14th Century

agricultural production. These features finally brought it out of the dominance of feudal lords. Works of art and architecture and literature are not absent.

The origins of feudalism lay in the developments of fifth and sixth centuries. The formation of colonnades or settlements with former slaves began the process of tying down peasants to land, in return for tribute and labour services of the landed elite. By the ninth century, feudalism was stabilized and well established. It expanded in the tenth century and reached its zenith in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. By fourteenth century there were developments that began to loosen the system, new elements that eroded and contributed to its decline. By the sixteenth century, Europe, particularly western Europe, was poised for changes that ushered in modernity and elements of capitalism.

The fourteenth century was a period of crisis that manifested itself in the economic and political sphere. It was a general crisis across Europe, to which western and eastern regions of Europe responded differently. In the west was a loosening of the feudal ties and serfdom in some regions and intensification in others, and in the East a more onerous implementation of serfdom with full support of the absolutist monarchies. It was abolished eventually from above, by the Autocracy in the Russian Empire in 1861 – long after western Europe.

Europe under feudalism in its last phases in western Europe, and in its last phases in eastern Europe, looked very different from feudalism in its earliest phase. You will read about it in the next Unit.

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) What were the rights and obligations of Lords and Vassals in feudatory relations?

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- 2) Discuss the nature of military system under feudalism.

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- 3) Explain the social order under feudalism in the medieval European society.

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- 4) Write a short note on the position of women in the feudal economy.

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5.12 SUMMARY

Feudalism was a social formation that existed before modern society emerged and is linked with the medieval period of history. It emerged in a situation of decline of the Roman Empire and the Germanic invasions in Europe, from the experience of which it derived its features. Serfdom was the basic feature of the feudal mode of production, and its institutions like the fief, the manor and vassalage were designed to create a hierarchical society. In feudalism, sovereignty was parcellized and political power dispersed, even as the control over territories was tightly maintained. The control was maintained through dependence and servitude at the lowest level, and obligations and dependence at all other levels. In the land under their control, the lords or seigneurs enjoyed complete authority of determining the life and working conditions of the peasants, of justice and punishment, with no check on the burdens placed on the peasant-serf. They were virtually the government in the areas under their jurisdiction. This is referred to as the parcellized sovereignty and wide dispersal of political power. At the local level, and at every level above till the king, it was backed by force, i.e. the ability to mobilize and command troops in defense of control of land and status of the seigneurs. This military system was intrinsically linked with the system of vassalage, as discussed in this Unit.

Feudal society was never a stagnant society and certainly not the Dark Age it was earlier thought to be. If anything, movement in the form of strife and wars was a continuing feature of the medieval period. The initial decline of towns and trade and monetary exchange was overcome in the later phases. These led to the emergence of circumstances that created conditions for a dynamic culture and intellectual advance, new forms of architecture and introduction of new techniques in production. All these eventually led to the decline of feudalism and the emergence of modern societies.

The Church was a powerful, autonomous institution, with a stake in serfdom and the defense of the oppressive social system, but also the only source of advances in literacy and education during the feudal era.

There were variations in the form and structure of feudalism over time and over regions. In Eastern Europe, in a marked difference from Western Europe, it was the centralized absolutist monarchies that sustained serfdom. In this region, serfdom coincided with centralized armies and centralized bureaucracy in the service of absolutism.

5.13 KEYWORDS

Allod

- : A piece of land owned and cultivated entirely by a single family which neither enjoyed labour services of others nor rendered them to any lord. It could however employ wage labour. The produce of the allod belonged entirely to the family. It represented an alternative form of economic production in the heart of the feudal economy.

**Feudalism in Europe from
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Benefice	: Having favourable influence, benefice property held by ecclesiastical officer.
Carolingian	: A Frankish ruling dynasty which rose to power in the 7 th Century. It gradually replaced Merovingian. Under Charlemagne it embraced most of the former territory of Roman Empire in the West. The empire dissolved by the end of 9 th century.
Charlemagne	: Known as Charles the Great, a king of the Franks (771-814), established a vast empire embracing the Roman territories in the West. In 800 he was crowned emperor by Pope Leo III.
Enfeoffment	: Investing a person with land or fief under the feudal system.
Investiture	: Formal investing of person (with office), especially a ceremony at which sovereign confers honours.
Labour Dues	: Also called 'obligations'; imposed upon enserfed peasants to cultivate the <i>demesne</i> land, the produce of which went to the lord's stores; however, the produce of the tenement, also cultivated by the same peasants, went to their own households. The labour dues took a way half the peasants' labour. Besides there were some other dues as well. None of these were paid for.
<i>Latifundium</i> (pl. <i>latifundia</i>)	: Large agricultural estate in the Roman world, usually worked on by slave labour; most <i>latifundia</i> were sheep and cattle ranches, and some grew olives and grapes.
<i>Manse</i> (pl. <i>mansi</i>)	: A unit of land cultivated by one peasant family's labour, whether it belonged to the lord or the peasant himself. This was the unit of measurement of labour dues.
Mode of Production	: A term used usually, but not exclusively, by the Marxist scholars to refer to the method of producing the necessities of life prevailing at a particular stage of history corresponding to particular relations of production like master-slave, lord-serf relations. According to Marx and Engels, this determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life.
Parcellization of Sovereignty	: Overlapping authorities of jurisdiction. For instance, by powerful lords over less powerful lords who held authority at the peasants who lay at the bottom of the hierarchy, i.e. serfs. This

process first developed in Western Europe and later was witnessed in Eastern Europe.

Seigneur/Lord	: Feudal lord, person of high rank in feudal system.
Stipendiary Tenements	: Lands or rents given by a superior on a stipendor allowance.
Strip System of Land Division	: Cultivated land was divided into strips, scattered all over the village; the best strips were reserved for the lord.
Tenures	: Form of right or title under which landed property is held.
Three-field Rotation	: A system of cultivation in which a field was divided into three parts. One part was taken up for cultivating autumn crops, the second part for spring crops and the third was left fallow in rotation.
Tithe	: A tax imposed upon the peasants, amounting to one-tenth of the produce, payable mainly to the Church. In the early phase it was shared by the lord. It was also referred to as a religious tax.
Two-field Rotation	: A system of cultivation in which one part of the field was taken up for cultivation and the other was left fallow.
Villein	: Tenant entirely subject to lord or attached to the manor.

5.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Section 5.2 and 5.3
- 2) See Section 5.4. Your answer must include a discussion of Lords, and their relationships with the vassals.
- 3) Manor was the basic unit in feudalism. See Section 5.4
- 4) The meaning of chivalry kept changing and becoming more inclusive between the tenth and twelfth centuries. See Section 5.4

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Section 5.5
- 2) See Section 5.5
- 3) See Section 5.5. Refer to the Information Box given in the Section.
- 4) See Section 5.6

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) See Sub-section 5.7.3
- 2) See Sub-section 5.7.2
- 3) See Section 5.8
- 4) See Section 5.10

5.15 SUGGESTED READINGS

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5.16 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

Medieval Feudalism: MGH

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rR0Dbp3wdKI>