

Source: [KBhHIST201FrenchRevolution](#)

## 1 | Acien Régime

The Old France was economy generally rural + dominated by subsistence farming.

### 1.1 | Societal Structure

Strict grid of social hierarchy resulted due to birthright => Great Chain of Being

**Great Chain of Being** The entire “world” was, according to GCB, organized structurally with god at the top, rocks at the bottom.

In the human world, King on the top — God’s divine representative (“L’état c’est moi” — the state is me), then the clergy, then aristocracy, and finally commoners.

In practice, this makes a...

### 1.2 | Estates: “Caste” System

French societies organized into three castes — “estates”.

- **First Estate** => clergy; enjoyed high status
- **Second Estate** => aristocracy; provided military and monetary support
  - *Les Grands*: largest landholders w/ large houses
  - *Seigneurs*: provincial nobles who simply owned estates in the countryside
- **Third Estate** => 97% of the population
  - Production!
  - Reproduction!
  - Work!
  - Relatively prosperous, but <40% owned land
  - Most rented land from lords as tenant farmers/sharecroppers

### 1.3 | Infrastructure Disorganization

- No national currency, nor system of weights and measures, nor a market
- Network of highways existed, but not very efficient

### 1.4 | Merchantilist Economy

- Economic policy guided by **merchantilist theory**
  - Notion that precious metals holdings is the ultimate goal
  - Encouraged development of manufacturing to provide for global market
  - Development of the new *bourgeoisie* class — small merchants and shopkeepers

### 1.5 | Need of Reform

The established merchantilist theory came under challenge by newer philosophies like the free market theory.

- **Adam Smith's** free market economy/bourseiosie challenged mercantilistic economy
- Old France very Roman Catholic
  - Church owned large amount of resources => almost 10%
  - Monarchs crowed in cathedrals