

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 | Disorganiz

- \* No national currency, nor system of weights and measures, nor a market
- \* Network of highways existed, but not very efficient
- \* 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
- \* Theory came under challenge by newer things 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 crowded in cathedrals