

Feudalism and the Holy Roman Empire

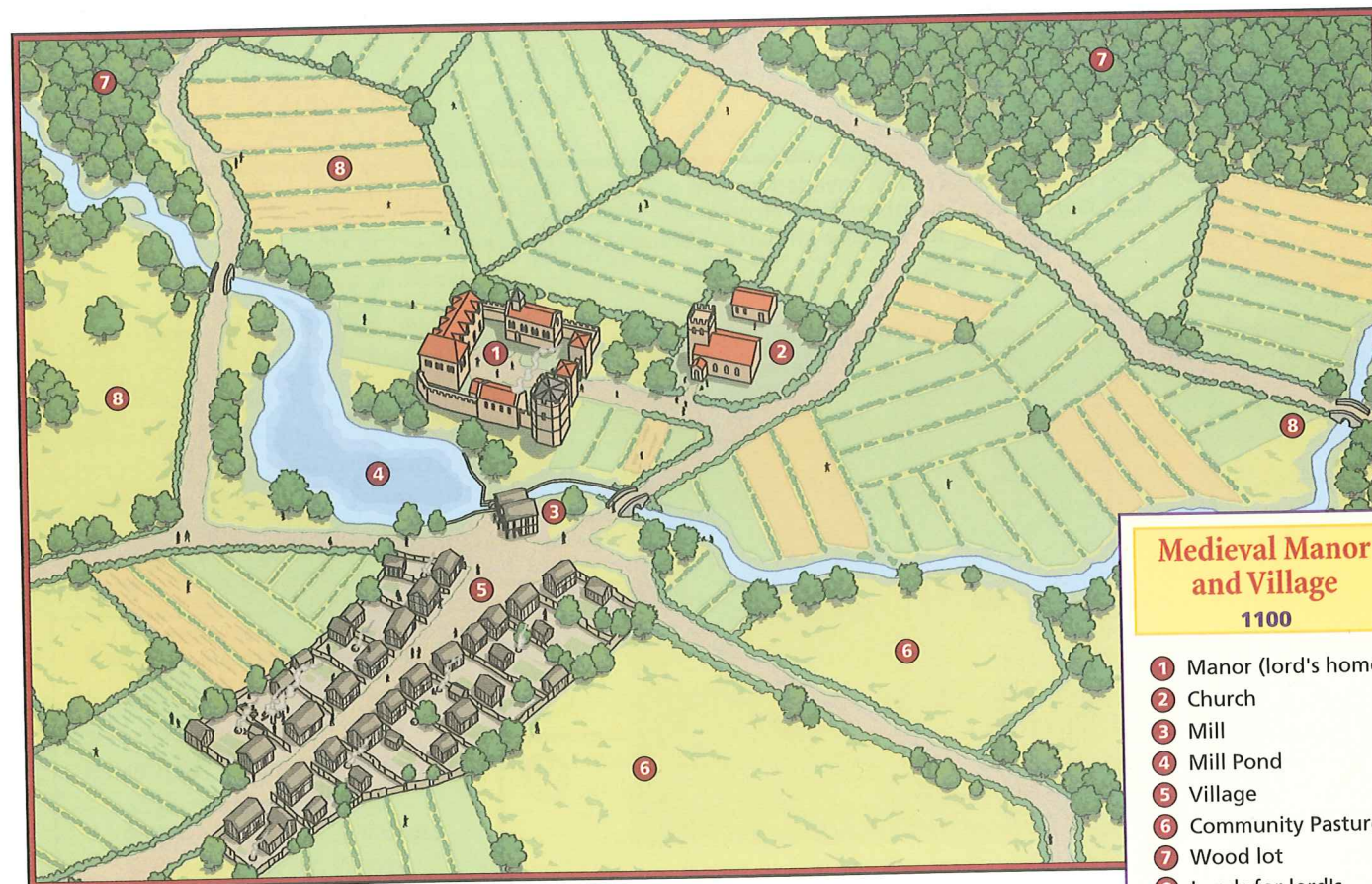
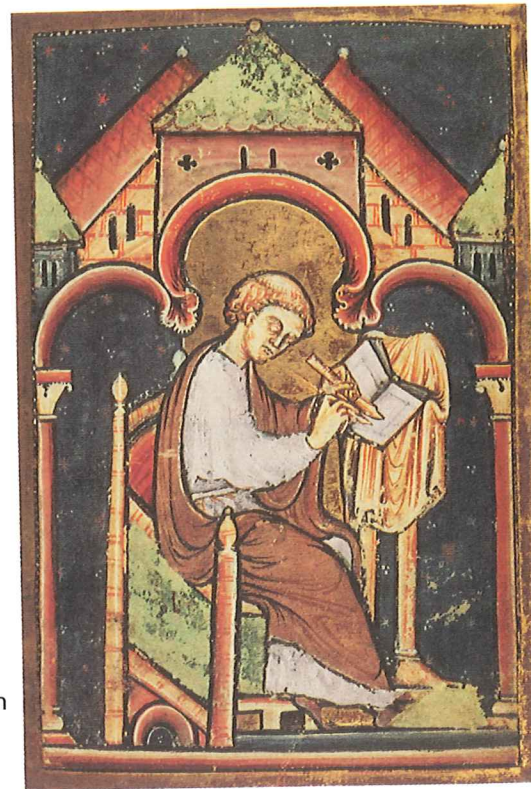
Although there were kings during the Middle Ages, power was held by local leaders.

- To govern his land and protect it from invaders, each local leader—usually a noble—needed his own soldiers, supplies, and fortified castles. The result was a system known as **feudalism**.
- One leader, Otto I, created a feudal empire later called the Holy Roman Empire. In the Empire, local leaders held the real power.
- The Holy Roman Empire survived over 800 years.

Who were the nobles?

During the Middle Ages, all the people born into certain families were **nobles**. In theory, they owned land and provided the king with military service. But some nobles lost their lands, and others fought against the king.

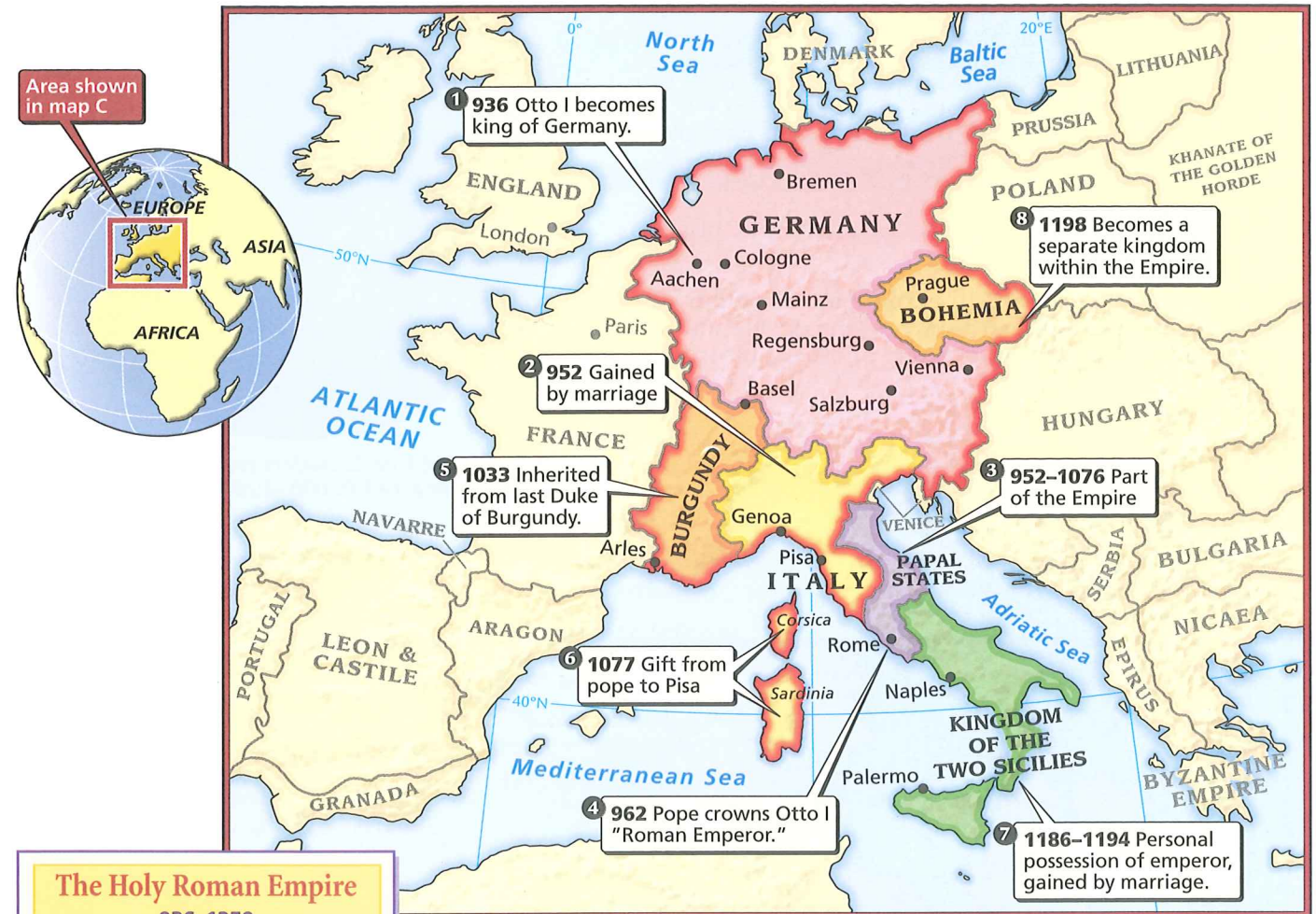
A Monks and priests were often the only educated people in a region, because Roman Catholic monasteries often had the only schools and libraries.



Medieval Manor and Village
1100

- 1 Manor (lord's home)
- 2 Church
- 3 Mill
- 4 Mill Pond
- 5 Village
- 6 Community Pasture
- 7 Wood lot
- 8 Lands for lord's personal use

B In much of Europe, lords owned manors like this one. Peasants who were the property of their lords were called **serfs**. Serfs farmed land both for their lords, who were usually nobles, and for themselves.



The Holy Roman Empire
936-1250

— Boundary of the Empire, 1250

0 200 400 miles
0 200 400 kilometers

C The Holy Roman Empire grew through conquest, marriage, and inheritance. But its emperors did not have firm control over the Empire, and each region had its own laws.

Holy? Roman? Empire?

Otto I united northern Europe with the Roman Catholic Church. Later emperors named this territory the Holy Roman Empire, but like Otto, they were violent, German, and did not have much real power. Someone once joked that the Holy Roman Empire was neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire.

How Big Was the Holy Roman Empire?

■ Holy Roman Empire



D The Holy Roman Empire included almost all of central Europe. Compare this empire with Charlemagne's empire on page 57.