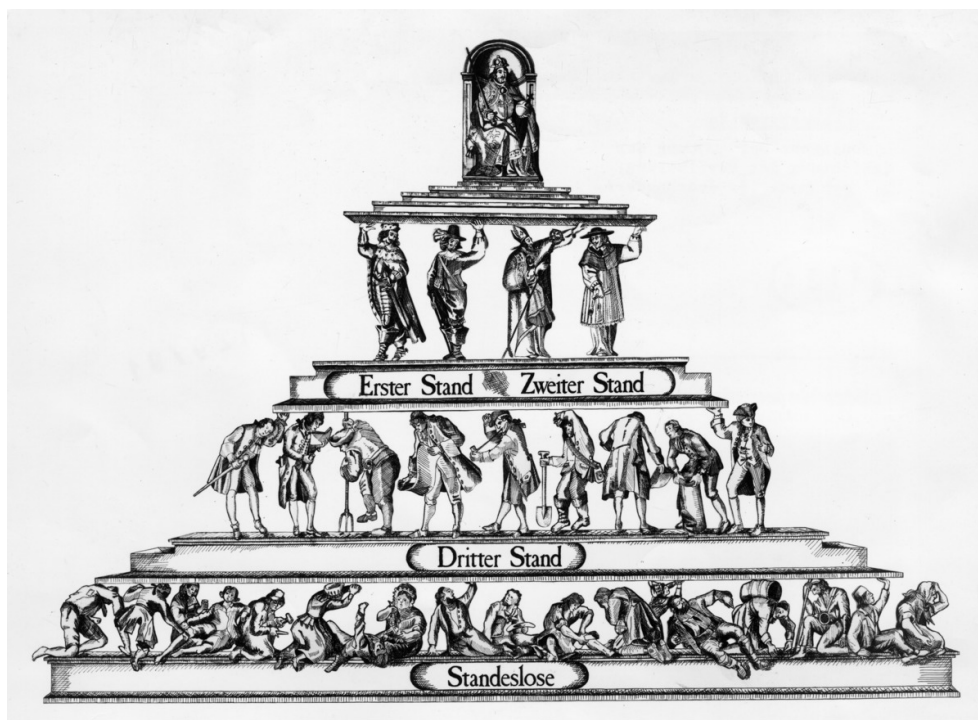


Symbolic Representation of the 18th-Century Class System (c. 1795)

Abstract

This wood engraving by an unknown artist depicts the class and power structure of the monarchical-aristocratic *ancien régime* as it had developed up to the late eighteenth century. The relatively few members of the first and second estates (nobility and clergy) are shown easily shouldering the burden of the king on his throne, a metaphor for the princely court and the state. The third estate (the bourgeoisie, the free professions, landholding farmers, artisans, businessmen, manufacturers, and merchants) bears a greater portion of the weight, bending under the strain. Finally, the *Standeslose*, the multitudes lacking affiliation with any of the estates (including landless rural laborers, servants, peddlers, urban day laborers, cottage industry workers, and the rest of the underprivileged) are nearly crushed by the weight of the hierarchy above them.

Source



Source: Wood engraving, unknown artist, c. 1795.

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Recommended Citation: Symbolic Representation of the 18th-Century Class System (c. 1795), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/the-holy-roman-empire-1648-1815/ghdi:image-2724>> [July 16, 2024].