

# Feminine Power in the Court of

## Louis XIV

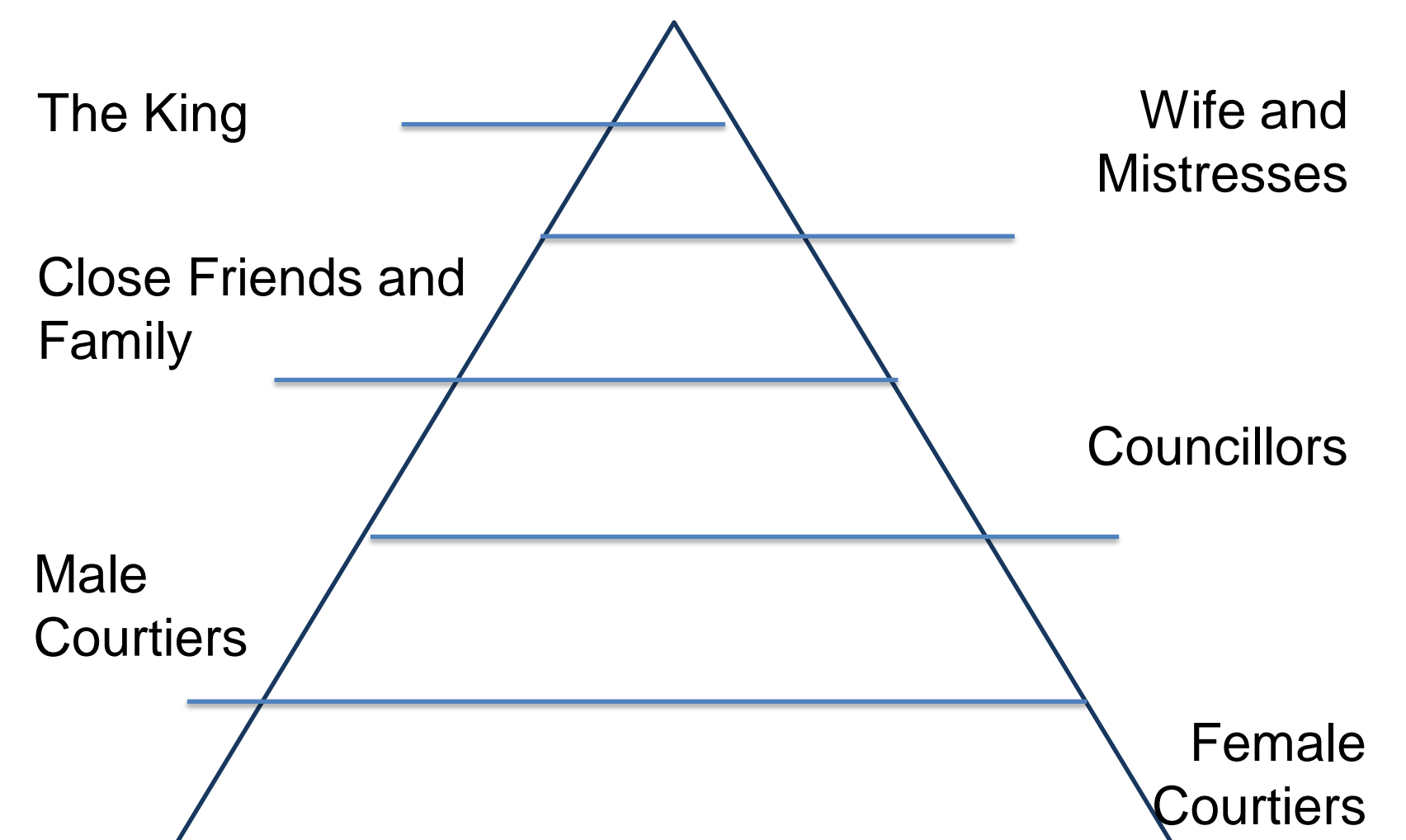
How was power gained and maintained within  
the structured court of Louis XIV?

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### INTRODUCTION

Louis XIV's court moved to the Palace of Versailles 1682. This move created more structural change within the court as Louis feminised it and created a more regimented structure. Ultimately creating a more feminised court generated a divide between the male and female courtiers as women were viewed as inferior to men. This led to their lives at court being more orientated towards making sure they held power to secure their place at court.



Hierarchy of the Court

### Mistresses

Louis had one wife and two mistresses in his lifetime. His mistresses, Madame de Montespan and Madame de Maintenon, held considerable power over the court during their reigns. The former introducing the latter to the king, eventually leading to her abandonment of court.

### Female Courtiers

Female courtiers formed salons, places where they could talk and discuss, without others over hearing them. These salons became places of sanctuary, female growth, and power dynamics. In the case of Madeleine de Scudéry, who became a published author under another male name.

### Critics of Female Power

The playwright, Molière, actively criticised the female courtiers, many of whom he interacted with regularly during his time at court. His play *Les Femmes Savantes* (The Learned Ladies), is an example of this. He dismisses the female intellect consistently placing male interests and education above female.

### Conclusions

Although Louis was feminising the court, women were seen as assets. In certain cases power was a necessary means of survival, especially after abandonment. Power was not always gained in a traditional sense, female courtiers did not always rise to the top of the hierarchy but instead used their positions wisely.

However, little is written on female courtiers and female power within the court. Women were neglected in history especially during a male dominated reign such as Louis XIV.

### References

- Figure 1: Rigaud, Hyacinthe. *Portrait of Louis XIV*. 1701-1702. Engraved print. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. [Portret van Lodewijk XIV | Europeana](#)
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Figure 1