

Feudalism and new social order

[History](#), [Middle Ages](#)



Political turmoil and constant warfare led to the rise of the European feudalism, a political and economic system based on land ownership and personal loyalty. During the Middle Ages invaders raised havoc all over Europe, and as a result people looked at local leaders for protection, causing kings to lose political power. A new social order was set up as well as a different economic system. Feudalism changed the economic, social, and political systems severely, and made the way we know the Middle Ages in Europe today. From about 800 to 1000 invasions tore apart Europe. Vikings terrorized locals with fearsome raids, Magyars attacked and captured locals to sell as slaves, and Muslims were out to conquer and settle Europe. The Vikings came from Scandinavia by huge ships that held up to 300 hundred warriors. These huge ships had 72 oars and held tons in weight, yet could still maneuver through waters as shallow as 3 feet, making it easier for them to invade inland villages and monasteries. The Vikings carried out with terrifying speeds. Their approach was to beach their ships and get what they wanted then leave. The Magyars invaded sometime in the late 800's. They were nomadic people that attacked from the east from what is now Hungary. They were excellent horsemen and attacked isolated villages and monasteries. The Muslims struck from North Africa. Since they were superb seafarers they were able to attack settlements on the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts. In the 600's and 700's their goal was to strictly conquer and settle. By the 800's and 900's they added plunder to their goals. Kings couldn't effectively defend all the lands from these invasions, causing people to no longer look to a central ruler for protection. Local rulers who had their own armies gained political strength and power. During 850 to

950, the time of the worst years of the invaders' attacks, agreements were made all over Europe to ensure security, thus, the start of feudalism.

Feudalism structured society creating a pyramid of power and defined social classes. The feudal system was based on rights and obligation, so a lord granted land to a vassal in exchange for military protection. It all depended on the control of land. The structure of feudal society was much like a pyramid. The pyramid determined a person's power. At the tip top was the king, then came church officials and nobles. Beneath them were the knights. Knights pledged to defend their lords' land in exchange for fiefs. At the very bottom were the peasants. This feudal system enabled a cash-poor but land-rich lord to support a military force. But, in the end, the people were classified into only three different groups: those who fought (nobles and knights), those who prayed (people of the church), and those who worked (peasants). The social class you received was usually inherited. During the Middle Ages, the majority of people were peasants, and most peasants were serfs. Serfs could not lawfully leave the land they were born on, but weren't slaves because their lord could not buy or sell them, but whatever their labor produced belonged to the lord. Feudalism had an economic side as well, the manorial system. The manor system was the basic economic arrangement during the middle ages. It as well rested on a set of rights and obligations, but between lords and serfs. Lords provided serfs with housing, farmland, and protection from bandits and in return serfs tended the lord's lands and all other tasks needed to maintain the estate. All peasants owed the lord certain duties, whether they're a serf or not. Usually it was a few days a week of labor and a portion of the grain. But generally, peasants didn't

within 25 miles of their own manor. They could walk out into the middle of the field and see their whole world. A manor covered about a few square miles of land, and it usually had the lord's manor house, a church, and workshops. Typically, 15 to 30 families lives in the village on a manor. To live on the lord's land all peasants paid a hefty price. They had to pay a tax on all grain ground in the lord's mill and a marriage tax to the lord. Plus a church tax to the priest. Due to the turmoil and constant warfare brought about by the invaders, a new political and economic system had emerged and made its' mark. Feudalism ended the dark ages of European history by introducing order to the common person's life. it might not have been pretty, but feudalism helped restore order and a sense of community/lawfulness to the areas it was embraced by.