

THE FEUDAL SYSTEM

1. Lords and vassals
 - a. Lord provided vassal a grant known as a benefice, usually grants of land often called fiefs
 1. enabled the vassal to devote time and energy to serve the lord
 2. provided resources to maintain horses and military equipment
 - b. Vassals owed lord loyalty, obedience, respect, counsel, and military service
 - c. The lord-vassal relationship was not entirely new, but became dominant now
2. Feudal politics
 - a. Multi-tiered network of lord-vassal relationships
 - b. Political stability depended on discipline and control of vassals

SERFS AND MANORS IN FEUDAL EUROPE

1. Serfs
 - a. Slaves and peasants took agricultural tasks, frequently intermarried
 - b. Free peasants often turned over themselves and their lands to a lord for protection
 - c. Serfs as an intermediate category emerged about the mid-7th century
2. Serfs' obligations
 - a. Labor service and rents in kind
 - b. Could not move to other lands without permission
 - c. Obligations fulfilled, serfs had right to work on land and pass it to heirs
3. Manors
 - a. Principle form of agricultural organization
 - b. A manor was a large estate, controlled by the lord and his deputies
 - c. Many lords had the authority to execute serfs for serious misconduct
 - d. Manors were largely self-sufficient communities