

# Feudalism

## Feudalism

The term **Feudalism** refers to the political and economic system that was used during the middle ages from approximately the 700's – 1400's in Europe. This means that Feudalism is a system with rules that ran their government and the work force or economy.

## People of Feudalism

The King of the kingdom was the highest power. He ruled over a large physical area that was too big to govern himself. Instead, he would hire a **Lord** to run a village. The Lord would live in a castle inside the walls of the village.

**Knights** were hired by the Lords to fight for the village in the event of a battle. The rest of the people in the village were peasants and serfs.

**Peasants** were rural laborers, generally free to move, marry, and choose employers. They paid rent or fees to lords for working on their land. **Serfs**, a specific category of peasants, were legally tied to the land and lord, with limited social and economic freedom. Unlike peasants, serfs needed their lord's permission to change occupation or location, but they were not considered slaves, as they could not be bought or sold like property.

## Rules of Feudalism

The fall of the Roman empire led to the idea of Feudalism. Rome fell because no king could govern an area that large successfully. They were constantly invaded by neighboring groups or villages. This is why Feudalism worked.

In a Feudal society, the king divided up the kingdom into smaller **manors** and gave power to a Lord to rule over the land. The Lord would build a castle for protection and then build communities

around the castle. If they were ever attacked, the people would retreat to the castle and defend it. The knights' sole job was to prepare for invaders and make sure they could successfully defend the people.

The Lord's job was to make sure everyone else was doing their jobs. They would live in the castle and enforce the laws of the village.

The serfs were to work in the fields producing food for the rest of the villagers. They were not slaves, but they did have less rights than everyone else. They were encouraged to have kids, so that the kids could help on the farm.

If a serf died, the family was to pay extra to the Lord to make up for the lost crops. If everyone did their jobs, the village would survive and would be safe from enemy invaders.

