

Feudal Europe



Castle by Mary Bull

Medieval European Society



- Nation states were weak or non-existent
- Most people reverted to farming
- Political instability made it impossible for merchants to get goods for trade
- A new local government system emerged

Feudalism



- A political system where a hierarchy (level) of lords and vassals took charge of political and military affairs



Lords



- Owned the land and everything on it, including serfs, who were considered property by the lords
- Used their main resource, land, to win the allegiance and service of vassals and knights

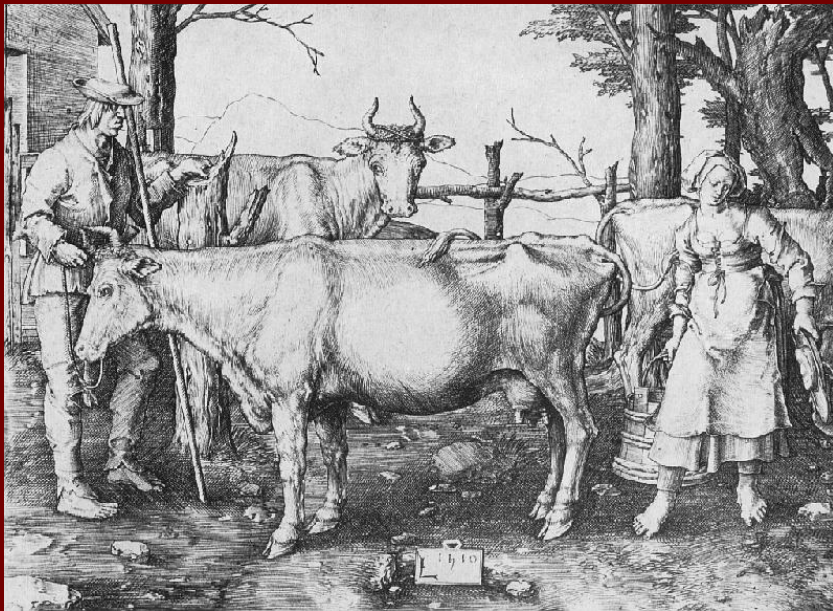
Vassals or Knights

- In an investiture, a symbolic ceremony, vassals pledge their oaths of allegiance to their lords, forming a lifelong relationship
- The vassals or knights worked their pieces of land or fiefs; land given to the vassal by the lord
- In return, the lord was repaid with the military services of the vassals/knights



Peasants

- Free from serfdom, would work for wages or for lords or vassals
- Few could afford their own land



Serfs



- Part of the land granted in fiefs to vassals/knights
- Remained in serfdom for life, close to slavery
- Did most of the work on medieval manors



The Medieval Manor

- Part of the land granted in fiefs to vassals/knights
- Remained in serfdom for life, close to slavery
- Did most of the work on medieval manors
- Was an economic system that supported the lord and vassals
- The manor was actually a small estate where the community worked, primarily in agriculture
- Manors were self-sufficient, providing all of the necessary goods for the manor and its inhabitants
- Inhabitants of the manor had specific duties to perform:
- Lords oversaw the manor, collected taxes
- Vassals took care of their fiefs, paid taxes, and provided and fought for protection of the lord and manor
- Peasants were hired to work or perform duties for a place to live and small plots to farm; they could leave the manor
- Each manor had some sort of church or religious building and some land to support the Catholic Church

