

The basic government in Europe during the middle ages was based around the feudal system. Small communities were formed around the local lord and the manor. The lord owned the land and everything in it, and he would keep the peasants safe in return for their services. The lord in return would provide the king with soldiers or taxes. Feudal system or feudalism is the legal and social system that evolved in Europe during the 8th and 9th centuries, in which vassals were protected and maintained by their lords, usually through the granting of fiefs, and was required to serve under them in war. The economic, political, and social system in medieval Europe, in which land, worked by serfs who were bound to it, was held by vassals in exchange for military and other services given to overlords. Under the feudal system land was granted to people for service. It started at the top with the king granting his land to a baron for soldiers all the way down to a peasant getting land to grow crops. The centre of life in the middle ages was the manor. The manor was run by the local lord who lived in a large house or castle where people would gather for celebrations or for protection. A small village would form around the castle which would include the local church. Farms would then spread out from there which would be worked by the peasants. Hierarchy of rulers: King: the top leader in the land was the king. The king could not control all the land by himself, so he divided it up among the barons. In return, the barons pledged their loyalty and soldiers to the king. Bishop: The bishop was the top church leader in the kingdom and managed an area called a diocese. The Catholic Church was very powerful in most parts of medieval Europe and this made the Bishop powerful as well. Not only that, but the Church received a tithe of 10 percent from all the people. Barons and Nobles: the barons and high ranking nobles ruled large areas of land called fiefs. They were very powerful and they divided up their land among lords who ran individual manors. Their job was to maintain an army that was at the king's service. If they didn't have an army, sometimes they would pay the king a tax instead. This tax was called shield money. Lords and knights: the lords ran the local manors. They also were the king's knights and could be called into battle at any moment by their baron. The lords owned everything on their land including the peasants, crops, and village. Peasants or serfs: most of the people living in the Middle Ages were peasants. They had rough life. Some peasants were considered free and could own their own businesses like carpenters, bakers, and blacksmiths. Others were more like slaves. They owned nothing and were pledged to their local lord. They worked 6 days a week, and often barely had enough food to survive.