



A Brief History and Explanation of Feudalism

Hutton Webster

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Originally published in 1917 as a portion of the author's larger "Early European History," and equivalent in length to a physical book of approximately 20 pages, this Kindle edition explains and traces feudalism, the system in medieval Europe by which the holding of estates by nobles was made dependent upon an obligation to render military service to the king, and by which serfs (peasants) were obliged to live on their lord's land and give him homage, labor, and a share of the produce. Includes an easy-to-read introductory overview of feudalism.

Sample passage:

Of the arable land of the manor the lord reserved as much as needful for his own use. The lord's land was called his "demesne," or domain. The rest of the land he allotted to the peasants who were his tenants. They cultivated their holdings in common. A farmer, instead of having his land in one compact mass, had it split up into a large number of small strips (usually about half an acre each) scattered over the manor, and separated, not by fences or hedges, but by banks of unplowed turf. The appearance of a manor, when under cultivation, has been likened to a vast checkerboard or a patchwork quilt. The reason for the intermixture of strips seems to have been to make sure that each farmer had a portion both of the good land and of the bad. It is obvious that this arrangement compelled all the peasants to labor according to a common plan. A man had to sow the same kinds of crops as his neighbors, and to till and reap them at the same time. Agriculture, under such circumstances, could not fail to be unprogressive.

About the author:

Hutton Webster (1875-1955) was an author and historian. Other works include "Ancient History," "History of Mankind," and "Modern European History."

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