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