

# Chapter 17 - Feudal Europe

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## The Quest for Political Order

### Germanic Successor States

- **Before Germanic Kingdoms**
  - Attempted to restore centralized order to Europe, but fell due to internal power struggles.
  - 476 - Germanic general Odoacer deposed the last western Roman emperor.
    - Provincial governors continued governing.
    - Roman generals continued armies throughout the crumbling empire.
    - Cities lost population due to invasions.
- **Germanic Kingdoms**
  - Rome's invaders organized a series of Germanic kingdoms as successors of the Roman empire.
    - Visigoths conquered Spain in the 470s.
    - Lombards ruled Italy from 550s to 750s.
    - Gaul fell under control of Burgundians and Franks.
    - Britain was ruled by Angles and Saxons.
  - These kingdoms replaced authority and institutions of Rome.
    - Converted to Christianity.
    - Adapted Roman law to their own needs.
    - No one had the power to dominate the region, except partially the Franks.
- **The Franks**
  - Organized half of the former Roman territories.
  - Lasted for a brief time.
  - Profoundly influenced politics, society, and cultural development in Western Europe.
    - Society fueled on agricultural production in continental Europe, instead of Italian trade through Mediterranean basin.
    - Encouraged decentralized political institutions.
    - Allied with Roman church, making Roman Christianity dominate.

### The Franks and the Temporary Revival of Empire

- **Clovis**
  - Under him, Franks became dominant military and political force.
  - Conquered last of Roman remnants in Gaul.
  - Transformed Franks into most powerful and dynamic state-builders in western Europe.
- **Clovis's Conversion**
  - Other nomadic invaders were polytheists.
  - Clovis converted to Roman Catholicism.
  - Franks attracted allegiance of former Roman subjects.
  - Caused Franks to become most powerful people from 400s to 800s.
- **The Carolingians**
  - Franks lost much of their territory after Clovis died.
  - Carolingians deposed Frankish leaders in 800s.
  - 732 - Charles Martel deterred further Muslim Moor invasions for a while.
- **Charlemagne**
  - Grandson of Charles Martel, reigned from 768 to 814.
  - Reestablished centralized rule in society.
  - Maintained diplomatic relations with Byzantines and Abbasids.
  - Expanded Frankish realm to northeastern Spain, Bavaria, and Italy.
  - Rulers outside the empire (eastern Europe, southern Italy) paid tribute to him.
- **Charlemagne's Administration**
  - Established a court and capital at Aachen.
  - Traveled to maintain his power, because he could not financially afford a bureaucracy.
    - Appointed aristocratic deputies called counts.
    - Held political, military, and legal authority in local jurisdictions.
    - Overseen by missi dominici, who checked to see that counts were still loyal to Charlemagne.
    - Challenged the Byzantines by calling himself Emperor.
- **Charlemagne as Emperor**
  - 800 - Called himself emperor.
  - Pope proclaimed Charlemagne emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.

**Objective #9** - Frankish Empire promoted Roman Catholicism in the lands it conquered. It allied with the Catholic church, and was even named the Holy Roman Empire by the pope. Most importantly, it provided a realm for the Roman church to spring up more churches to expand its influence.

**Objective #10** - Charlemagne's empire was able to establish centralized rule in a fragmented region, and maintain diplomatic relations with foreign lands. However, It failed to create an efficient ruling bureaucracy, with Charlemagne having to personally ride around the empire to keep order.

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  - 843 - His three sons split the empire as kings.
- **Invasions**
  - Three groups of invaders attacked the Frankish realms for wealth.
  - Muslims raided the south and seized southern Italian regions.
  - Vikings came from the north.
- **Norse Expansion**
  - Viking invasions were part of Norse expansion out of Scandinavia.
  - Very good shipbuilders.
    - Could travel long over open ocean.
    - Colonized Greenland, explored North America in 1000.
  - Some Norse used these skills for merchant activities, other for raiding.
- **The Vikings**
  - Sailed on the rivers that led to internal Europe.
  - Surprise-raids on riverside towns.
  - Attacked various cities with large amounts of ships.
  - Carolingian Empire had no navy to fend off all of these attacks so it died.

## Establishment of Regional Authorities

- **England**
  - King Alfred - Merged Angles, Saxons, and other Germanic tribes into one realm.
  - Built a navy to fend off the Vikings.
  - Successors became the kings of all England.
- **Germany**
  - King Otto I - Fended off the Magyars, imposed authority throughout Germany.
  - 962 - Proclaimed the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.
- **France**
  - More decentralized approach.
  - Local rulers broke away from Carolingian law and collected their own taxes.
  - Each state effectively laid the foundation for social, economic, and cultural development.

## Early Medieval Society

### Organizing a Decentralized Society

- **Lords and Retainers**
  - Nobles built decentralized society to protect their lands from invaders and weak central authorities.
  - Lord-retainer relationship: Lord gives land in exchange for retainer's services.
  - Retainers owned the land and the people in it, to use as cultivators.
- **Potential for Instability**
  - Retainers could also be lords, and lords could have multiple retainers.
  - Sometimes retainers tried to pursue their own interests.
  - Lords ended up monitoring retainers for loyalty.

**Objective #11** - A lord gives a vassal land, in exchange for services. This benefits both parties with wealth, power, and protection.

### Serfs and Manors

- **Serfs**
  - Slaves and free peasants still existed and were the majority of western Europe's population.
  - Rulers and administrators recognized them as one category - serfs - that were tied to the land.
- **Serfs' Obligations**
  - Could work in certain lands and pass this right to their heirs.
  - Paid rents and labor in kind to their lords.
  - Male serfs worked three days a week in their lords' fields, and three days in their own fields.
  - Women churned butter, made cheese, brewed beer, spun thread, wove cloth, or sewed clothes for lord and families.
  - Some women kept sheep and cattle.
  - Serfs could only leave the land with permission from their lord.
- **Manors**
  - A large estate of fields, meadows, forest, tools, animals, and lakes/streams, and serfs bound to it.
  - Lord of the manor was in charge of it.
    - Provided government, police services, and justice.
    - Settled disputes between serfs.
  - Manors dominated rural regions in France, western Germany, southern England, and northern Italy.
  - Became largely self-sufficient communities.
    - Maintained mills, bakeries, breweries, and wineries.
    - Serfs produced iron tools, leather goods, domestic utensils, and textiles.
    - Local markets provided goods that residents could not make themselves.

**Objective #12** - Unlike slaves, serfs had legal status and protection. They were people (albeit dirty, low people), and their lords had to provide them with justice, rights, and protection.

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## Economy of Early Medieval Europe

- **Agriculture**
  - Heavy plows significantly increased agricultural production.
  - Serfs cleared new lands for cultivation under lord's authority.
  - Used horses instead of oxen to move the plows faster.
- **A Rural Society**
  - Agricultural production sustained political elites, but could not support development of cities.
  - Region engaged in little commerce, as manors were self-sufficient.
  - Towns were few and not so populated, served as economic hubs only for areas around them.
- **Mediterranean Trade**
  - Local markets offered small-scale exchange between lands.
  - Western Europeans traded with Muslims in Sicily, Spain, and north Africa.
    - Caused spread of crops between Europe and Muslim realm.
  - Never as prominent as the merchants of other lands.
- **Norse Merchant-Mariners**
  - Sea trade flourished in North Sea and Baltic Sea.
  - Norse merchants went between Russia and Ireland, carrying animal goods, crops, and furs between the areas.
  - Traveled down Russian rivers to the Black Sea, connected Western Europe with Byzantines and Abbasids.
- **Population**
  - Population dropped after fall of the Roman empire.
  - Fell drastically, from 36 to 26 million in 400 years.
  - Population recovered, hitting 36 million again by 1000.
  - Attributed to the economic expansion that stemmed from Europe's increasing influence in the Eastern hemisphere.

**Objective #13** - New farming technology, abundant labor, and widespread availability of horses contributed to agricultural success on the manors of Western Europe.

## Formation of Christian Europe

### Politics of Conversion

- **The Franks and the Church**
  - Franks were deeply committed to Roman Christianity.
  - Charlemagne tried to spread Christianity to northern Europe.
  - Established a central school at his court for Bible production and priest training.
- **Spread of Christianity**
  - Charlemagne promoted Christianity by military force, too.
    - 772-804: Campaign against pagan Saxons.
    - Saxons ended up having to convert.
  - Both by sponsoring and military conquest, Charlemagne established Christianity as the dominant religious/cultural tradition in western Europe.

### The Papacy

- **Pope Gregory I**
  - Organized defense of Rome from Lombards.
  - Reasserted papal primacy.
    - Bishop of Rome was ultimate authority in the Church.
  - Emphasized sacrament of penance.
    - Followers must confess sins to a priest.
    - Must follow the actions that the priest prescribes for forgiveness.
    - Expanded religious influence in lives of individuals.
- **Conversion of England**
  - Missionaries converted the kings of England.
  - Continued expanding Roman church through missionary activity.
  - Brought many lands such as Carolingian empire under Roman church.

### Monasticism

- **Monastic Rules**
  - Monks devoted themselves to pursuit of holiness.
  - Early monastic rules were not unified, and either went to extremes or were not strict enough.
  - Prevented monasteries from mounting Christian missions.
- **St. Benedict**
  - Strengthened monastic movement with sense of discipline and purpose.
  - Wrote the *Rule*, a set of expectations and regulations for monks.
  - After adopting it, monasteries could become productive parts of society.
    - Helped provide order.
    - Expanded agricultural production.
  - Monks gained land from donations from devout Christians.
  - Monks and serfs provided labor to expand agricultural production.

- St. Scholastica adapted *Rule* for women (nuns).
- **Monasticism and Society**
  - Monasteries provided social services.
    - Inns for travelers.
    - Places of refuge for people who suffered calamities.
    - Orphanages, medical treatment centers.
    - Provided schooling and even priest training.
    - Maintained libraries and scriptoria to copy books.
  - We get our works of Latin literature from their efforts.
  - Monasteries were sources of literate, educated, and talented individuals.
    - Provided secretarial and administrative services.
    - Crucial for organization of effective government.