

SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF MEDIEVAL EUROPE

5th - 8th Century EARLY MIDDLE AGES

Collapse of Roman centralized authority. Emergence of tribal kingship and the foundation of the Comitatus bond between lords and warriors.

9th - 11th Century RISE OF FEUDALISM

Formalization of the Feudal Pyramid: Monarchs, Nobles, Knights, and Peasants. The Manorial system establishes economic self-sufficiency.

12th - 13th Century HIGH MIDDLE AGES

Growth of towns and the Merchant class. Rise of Guilds challenges traditional land-based social hierarchies. Chivalry becomes a codified social ethos.

14th - 15th Century LATE MIDDLE AGES

Social upheaval following the Black Death. Labor shortages lead to the decline of serfdom and the rise of a wage-based economy.