**Manorialism**

Manorialism was the economic system of the Middle Ages. An economic system is the way a society produces, distributes, and consumes goods. Manorialism got its name from the manor or large farming estates that fiefs were broken into during the feudal age. A manor was the name used for all land owned by a lord, including the land that he allowed his peasants and serfs to live and work on.

Manorialism was an economic system that was tended to isolate people. Most peasants were serfs, which means they were bound to the land where they had been born, and they could not leave their land or marry outside the manor. There was little to no trade during this time because it was unsafe to leave one’s manor. As a result people became self-sufficient. Everything that was needed was produced on one’s manor: food, clothing, and shelter were all produced on the manor. The serfs produced the necessities that they needed to survive, and they did the same for their lords. Some luxury items were purchased from off the manor, but most serfs couldn’t afford these items; they tended to be only be purchased by richer nobles.

The land on the manor was owned by a lord, who had serf families that lived and worked there. The lord kept 1/3 of the land for himself. This land was known as his domain. The serfs farmed the remaining 2/3 of the land. In return for being allowed to work the land, the serfs gave the lord some of their crops, farmed his land, and also paid him taxes (which were usually paid via services performed for the lord, or with products, rather than with money). The duties, services, and taxes that were required of serfs made it so that they were perpetually in debt to their lords.

They used an early form of crop rotation on manors. They divided the farmland into 3 fields. Only 2 were planted at a time and the third lay fallow to regain its fertility. They would rotate which fields were planted and which was left fallow on a yearly basis. This served to limit the amount of food they could grow in a given year, but stabilized the food production over time, so that the manors could be relied upon to produce a certain amount of food every year.