

ORIGINS OF FEUDALISM

After the disappearance of the Carolingian Empire, in the 9th century, Western Europe was divided into many small kingdoms and suffered a new wave of invasions from the north and the east (Vikings, Magyars, Slavs...).

The power of the kings was weak, and they couldn't ensure the safety of their territories and its population. The lack of a strong central power (the empire) led to the emergence of small local powers: the ancient governors of Carlomagno (counts, dukes...). These nobles had received by him different territories and the right to rule them in exchange for their loyalty.

The kings relied on these local governors for support and military help, as these were able to protect their own territories. In exchange for that, these nobles became his vassals and received the whole control over their territories. That's the way the kings divided their lands and lost part of their power, while the nobles became the lords of their territories (fiefdoms). Their power was practically independent and made it hereditary.

In addition, the population also looked for the protection of these local lords. In exchange for that, the free people turned into serfdom: they lost their freedom in return for protection and work, becoming serfs. They will live and work in the territories of their Lord and were submitted to his authority.