

Text B

The Peasant's Life

Villages consisted of from 10-60 families living in rough huts on dirt floors, with no chimneys or windows. Often, one end of the hut was given over to storing livestock. Furnishings were sparse; three legged stools, a trestle table, beds on the floor softened with straw or leaves. The peasant diet was mainly porridge, cheese, black bread, and a few home-grown vegetables. Peasants had a hard life, but they did not work on Sundays or on the frequent saints' days, and they could go to nearby fairs and markets. The lot of serfs was much harsher.

The Serf's Life

Although not technically a slave, a serf was bound to a lord for life. He could own no property and needed the lord's permission to marry. Under no circumstance could a serf leave the land without the lord's permission unless he chose to run away. If he ran to a town and managed to stay there for a year and a day, he was a free man. However, the serf did have rights. He could not be displaced if the manor changed hands. He could not be required to fight, and he was entitled to the protection of the lord.

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