



Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted

Susan Reynolds

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Fiefs and Vassals is a book that will change our view of the medieval world. Offering a fundamental challenge to orthodox conceptions of feudalism, Susan Reynolds argues that the concepts of fiefs and vassalage that have been central to the understanding of medieval society for hundreds of years are in fact based on a misunderstanding of the primary sources.

Reynolds demonstrates convincingly that the ideas of fiefs and vassalage as currently understood, far from being the central structural elements of medieval social and economic relations, are a conceptual lens through which historians have focused the details of medieval life. This lens, according to Reynolds, distorts more than it clarifies. With the lens removed, the realities of medieval life will have the chance to appear as they really are: more various, more individual, more complex, and perhaps richer than has previously been supposed.

This is a radical new examination of social relations within the noble class and between lords and their vassals, the distillation of wide-ranging research by a leading medieval historian. It will revolutionize the way we think of the Middle Ages.



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