

THE MEDIEVAL CHARACTER

by Riccardo Cappuzzo

Merchants, servants, professionsts and road-living people were outside the three estates. Servants had rewards depending on whom they served and how they served him. Merchants had their power mutating basing on their incomes. Richer merchants lived in London, while poorer ones lived in smaller cities too. Many different kinds of people lived on the road. There were beggars, tumblers and jugglers and hermits.

WOMEN

Women are usually described by their marital condition. They were categorised in maidens, wives, nuns and widows. The status of a maiden or wife depended on that of the man who supports her. From birth until widowhood they are living under the control of someone else, in most cases a man. Women are blamed for all the moral weaknesses of society. Medical knowledge holded than women had a physical need to have sex. Nonetheless, there were some great advantages to being a woman. They had not to fight in wars. High-status women shared the power of their husband and this was applied further down the social spectrum. Discrimination against women is only legal and not personal. Old women were seen as having gained much in wisdom. The life of a woman in middle ages depended of her luck in marriages. If a good marriage would mean a good life, a bad marriage could be fatal.

THE LAW

Common law was changed to suit circumstaces and those changes were made by members of parliament in front of the king. Even if mosto f the acts were completely ignored by the people, a few of them had a vital importance.

The parliament had another function: it was the highest court in the land and trials for treason took place there.

ROYAL JUDGES

There were three central royal courts, each one with its own functions: financial arrangements, criminal cases and appeals. Judges were the principal agents of royal justice in the Kingdom. There were different kinds of trials: the eyre, the trail baston, the assize and the gaol delivery. The sentence was usually hanging, and there were few other punishments.

COMMISSIONS OF THE PEACE

Keepers of peace were local men and so corruption was unavoidable. In 1361 was established the office of justice of the Peace: judges had the power to restrain, punish and arrest peace-breakers. They had to have some law knowledge but they were well paid to reduce bribes.

ORGANISED CRIME

Because of the lack of security in moving sums, those who could organise a gang stood in a good position to obtain large sums. About a third of criminal gangs were composed of family units, but usually they weren't that terrible. More dangerous were criminals who used force against their victims. Criminals had very often links with nobles and important people.

ECCLESIASTICAL COURTS

Many sorts of cases could be brought in front of ecclesiastical courts, but it wasn't cheap to. So, they were summoned only in extreme circumstances. The majority of cases are concerned with sexual offences. Clergymen had a great benefit: even if judged guilty, they wouldn't face death penalty.

SANCTUARY

If you were guilty of a crime, you could claim sanctuary by getting to a Church, and you were safe to up to forty days. After that, you had to be taken and judged or you could try to reach exile from the Kingdom. Thus, exile was difficult to reach.

Bibliography

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