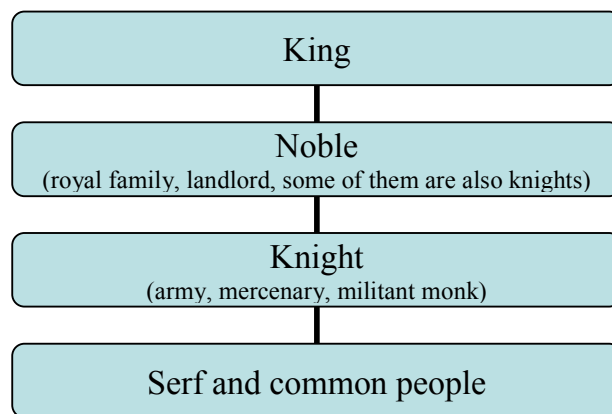# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

**Background of the Study**

In this analysis, I would like to show the portrayal of the medieval knight in Sir Walter Scott's <u>Ivanhoe</u> through characters in this novel who belong to the knight class. Having researched from Wikipedia, I find that 'the word 'knight' is derived from the Old English 'cniht', which means 'servant' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki//Knight). The knights occupy a high status during the period of history known as the Medieval Ages when feudalism is the law of the land. 'Feudalism in practice meant that the country was not governed by the king but by individual lords or barons, who administered their own estates, dispensed their own justice, minted their own money, levied taxes and tolls, and demanded military service from vassals' (Matthew, 2003: 15). These lords and barons belong to the knight class. In some cases, the knight could even have greater armies than the king. So, in theory, the king was the chief of feudal lords, but, in reality, the individual lords were supreme in their own territory. Many kings were little more than figurehead rulers.

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'During the Medieval Ages it was technically possible for every free man to become a knight, but the process of becoming a knight was very expensive; thus it was more likely that a knight would come from a noble or wealthy family.' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki//Knight) This knighthood status was hereditary. A boy from knight or noble family had been trained as a page or junior knight since his eighth. In some special cases, a common people and a serf could also become a knight for valor in combat after a battle.

| King |
|------|

| Noble |
| (royal family, landlord, some of them are also knights) |

| Knight |
| (army, mercenary, militant monk) |

| Serf and common people |

The development of feudalism helped sustain the knight class. A local lord, noble, or other leader would grant land to a knight in return for his military service and loyalty. Sometimes these knights were the nobility and sometimes men they hired, because noblemen were disinclined or unable to fight. 'In times of war and national disorder the monarch would typically call all the knights together to do their annual service of fighting.' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki//Knight) Peasants, then, would get protection from the knights and local lords, but they had to work hard to serve them by feeding them with their crops and by paying them tax. This kind of feudal system raised the role of the knight from mere soldiers to members of a new and powerful ruling class. Thus, the medieval knight had his origin in military and economical need.

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While economically the knights were supported by peasants who worked to produce food for them, ideologically they were supported by the church, especially after the rise of Islam as their rival. Many chivalric orders were formed with military activities against non-Christian states, i.e. Knight Templar, Teutonic Knight, Knight of St. John, Knight of St. Lazarus, etc. 'They sought the sanctification of their members through combat against "infidels" and protection of religious pilgrims.' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/knights_templar) These monastic orders were directly responsible only to the Pope. In Crusades, they gave great contribution in fighting the Moslems in order to struggle for possession of the Holy Land.

During the later Medieval Ages, there was also the other kind of knight, the mercenary knight, called Free Companies, which consisted of companies of mercenary troops. They fights for any lords or kings who employ them, and their main goal is the private gain. 'The mercenary fought primarily for private gain, usually with little regard for ideological, national or political considerations' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/mercenary). As some states lacked the funds needed to maintain standing forces, they tended to hire Free Companies to serve in their armies during wartime. Such companies were typically formed at the ends of periods of conflict, when men-at-arms were no longer needed by their respective governments. The veteran soldiers thus looked for other forms of employment, often becoming mercenaries.

In their job, knights are dictated by a moral system called Code of Chivalry, which introduces the concept of chivalrous conduct such as bravery, courtesy, honor, and gallantry toward women. The Code of Chivalry is

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documented in <u>The Song of Roland,</u> a French ballad consists of chivalrous values, which is popularized in England during the early period of William the Conqueror (11<sup>th</sup> century). Roland itself is taken from the name of the hero in that ballad, who dies heroically. In <u>The Song of Roland</u> the duties of a knight are described as follows:

- to fear God and maintain His Church
- to serve the liege lord in valour and faith
- to protect the weak and the defenseless
- to give succour to widows and orphans
- to refrain from the wanton giving of offence
- to live by honour and for glory
- to despise pecuniary rewards
- to fight for the welfare of all
- to obey those placed in authority
- to guard the honour of the fellow knights
- to eschew unfairness and deceit
- to keep faith
- at all times to speak the truth
- to persevere to the end in any enterprise begun
- to respect the honour of women
- never to refuse the challenge from an equal
- never to turn back upon a foe.

(http://www.castles.me.uk/medieval-code-of-chivalry.htm)

The idea of the Code of Chivalry is emphasized by the oaths that were sworn in knighthood ceremonies. These sacred oaths were combined with the ideals of chivalry and with strict rules of etiquette and conduct. The idea and ideals of a Medieval Code of Chivalry was publicized in the poems, ballads, writings and literary works of medieval authors.

Sir Walter Scott's <u>Ivanhoe</u> gives a portrayal about the life of knights in England during the Medieval Ages. In this thesis, I would like to analyze five characters in this novel. The first one is Wilfred of Ivanhoe, a Saxon knight loyal to his king and father; the second is Cedric, a Saxon lord who wants to restore Saxon rule; Brian de Bois-Guibert, a Knight Templar who is supposed to dedicate

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himself to the conquest of the Holy Land, but in reality is meddling in European politics; Reginald Front-de-Boeuf, a cruel knight allied to Prince John, Richard's brother, who tries to seize his throne during his absence; and the last is Maurice de Bracy, a mercenary knight who works for Prince John.

**Statement of the Problem**

Problems that will be analyzed are:

1. How are the major characters who belong to knight class portrayed?

2. How does the social system in the Medieval Ages affect the characters?

**Purpose of the Study**

Purposes of the study are:

1. To show the portrayal of the medieval knight in Sir Walter Scott's <u>Ivanhoe</u> through characterization.

2. To show how the social system in the Medieval Ages affects the characters.

**Method of Research**

The method of research used in this study is Historical-Biographical Approach. I learn the political, social, and religious context of the characters' life and times in order to understand the novel then apply it in my analysis.

The type of research used in this study is library research. I begin with reading the primary text, Sir Walter Scott's <u>Ivanhoe,</u> and obtain some relevant information which is related to the Medieval Ages from reference books and

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Internet sites. Afterwards, I apply the Historical-Biographical Approach. Then, I select, gather and use the information to analyze the primary text. Finally, I draw some conclusions from the study I have done.

**Organization of the Thesis**

I divide this thesis into three chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction, which contains the Background of the Study, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research and the Organization of the Thesis. In Chapter Two I present the analysis of the characters through their acts and speeches. Chapter Three is the Conclusion, which contains a summary of what has been discussed in previous chapters. This thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which contains the synopsis of <u>Ivanhoe</u> and the biography of Sir Walter Scott.

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