**Lesson 3**

**MAIN IDEAS**

1. **Government** European and Japanese feudalism shared similar political structures and social values.

2. **Culture** Despite similarities, feudal Europe and Japan showed key cultural differences.

3. **Culture** Aspects of feudal culture still exist in present-day Europe and Japan.

**TAKING NOTES**

**Reading Skill: Comparing and Contrasting**

As you read about similarities and differences between European and Japanese feudalism, use a chart like the one below to compare the main political, social, and cultural characteristics of each land.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Skillbuilder Handbook, page R4**

**European Women** Women in Medieval Europe, shown here spinning thread, enjoyed fewer rights than women in Medieval Japan.

**CALIFORNIA STANDARDS**

**Framework** To understand what was distinctive about European culture during this period, students should compare Western Europe with Japan during the High Middle Ages. They will see that the two cultures had aspects in common: a feudal, lord-vassal system, with military leaders (shogun), great lords (daimyo), and knights (samurai). Both feudal societies emphasized personal loyalty to the lord, military skills, a strict code of honor, self-discipline, and fearlessness in battle. Students will also see striking differences in cultural values, religious beliefs, and social customs, including women’s roles.

**REP 4** Students assess the credibility of primary and secondary sources and draw sound conclusions from them.
Feudalism in Europe and Japan

Build on What You Know If you recall your reading from Chapter 8, you know that the Europeans and Japanese developed a similar type of feudal society at roughly the same time. As you will learn, these two cultures did indeed share many characteristics. However, they differed in a number of significant ways as well.

Similar Societies

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** What similarities did the feudal societies in Europe and Japan share?

Japanese and European feudalism shared a number of similarities—both in political structure and in social values.

**Two Feudal Systems** Both the European and Japanese feudal systems developed as a result of a weak central government. The Japanese emperor had no real power. After the Frankish king Charlemagne died in 814, most European kings did not have much power either. Because strong central governments did not exist, individual landowners were able to gain power in both regions. In Europe, these landowners were called lords. In Japan, they were called daimyo (DY•mee•OH).

Japanese Castle A lasting symbol of both Medieval Europe and Medieval Japan was the castle. This castle from feudal Japan still stands in Kobe, Japan.
Similar Structures  Both lords and daimyo had many peasants working for them. Farming was the main economic activity on both European and Japanese estates. In addition, the governments and landowners of both regions relied on professionally trained soldiers for protection. These soldiers were called knights in Europe. In Japan, they were known as samurai. In addition, both Europe and Japan had strong military leaders. As you recall, these military leaders were known as shoguns in Japan.

Similar Values  In the feudal systems of both Japan and Europe, personal loyalty was greatly valued. The military skills of both knights and samurai were also highly valued. As you read in Lesson 2, knights were expected to follow a code of behavior known as chivalry. According to this code, knights were kind to the weak, loyal to their lord, and courageous in battle. The samurai code of behavior was known as bushido. According to this code, samurai were generous, fearless in battle, and above all, loyal to their daimyo, or lord.

What values did both the European and Japanese feudal cultures admire?

Cultural Differences

ESSENTIAL QUESTION  How did European and Japanese feudalism differ?

Although the feudal systems of Japan and Europe had many similarities, they also were different. Among the key differences were those involving religion, literature, and the role of women.

Religion  Both knights and samurai were expected to be deeply religious. However, the two groups of warriors practiced different religions. Knights were Christians. Christianity is based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. As you read in Chapter 8, samurai practiced ancient Shintoism as well as a form of Buddhism known as Zen. Buddhism is based on the teachings of the Buddha.
The literature in feudal Europe and Japan also differed. Poetry thrived in both Medieval Europe and Medieval Japan. However, the types of poetry that gained popularity in each land were anything but similar. Poetry called haiku became popular in feudal Japan. Haiku are short poems that follow a common pattern (three lines with five, seven, and five syllables per line). Most haiku deal with nature.

In Europe, the epic poem became popular. An epic poem is a long poem usually about warriors or heroes. The poems often include legends and myths and heroes with superhuman qualities. Famous European epics include Beowulf and The Song of Roland.

Lyric poetry was also a significant part of European literature. These poems resemble songs. Most lyric poetry praises women and ideal love. Poet-musicians called troubadours usually wrote such poems.

**Women in Europe** While lyric poetry praised women, the role of women in feudal Europe was limited. Medieval women, for example, often had no say in whom they married. The woman's father and future husband often made this decision. In addition, women were expected to stay at home. They were trained in household chores, such as sewing, spinning, weaving, and farming.

---

**Primary Source**

**Haiku**

One of the most noted Japanese haiku writers was Matsuo Basho. Here is one of the many haikus he wrote.

As I ride my horse
Through cold rice-fields my shadow
Creeps along the ground.

---

**from Beowulf**

Translated by Burton Ruffel

The epic poem Beowulf tells the story of a hero who battles the evil Grendel and other monsters. Below is a small excerpt from the poem.

My people have said, the wisest, most knowing
And best of them, that my duty was to go to the Danes’ Great king. They have seen my strength for themselves,
Have watched me rise from the darkness of war,
Dripping with my enemies’ blood. I drove
Five great giants into chains, chased
All of that race from the earth. I swam
In the blackness of night, hunting monsters
Out of the ocean, and killing them one
By one; death was my errand and the fate
They had earned. Now Grendel and I are called
Together, and I’ve come.

---

**DOCUMENT–BASED QUESTION**

What is the subject of each poem?
Women in Japan  Women in feudal Japanese society enjoyed more equal status with men. In samurai families, women were allowed to inherit part of the family’s estate. Women could also join Buddhist convents. In addition, they were expected to live up to the values of honor and courage. Often women were trained in the martial arts. In fact, some women became samurai and fought alongside their husbands. Gradually, however, the role of women became more restricted.

**REVIEW** How did the main styles of poetry in Medieval Europe and Japan differ?

Legacies of Feudalism

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** What lasting legacy did feudal society leave in Europe and Japan?

Both feudal Europe and Japan left legacies. Aspects of the feudal culture can be seen today in Japan and Europe. For example, Japanese weddings are usually based on a Shinto ceremony. The Shinto religion was widely practiced in Medieval Japan. Haiku continues to be a popular form of poetry in Japan. Also, many Japanese today have a strong sense of duty and loyalty to the family. These attitudes are the legacy of the old code of bushido.

The ideals of loyalty and honor also remain strong in Europe—especially within the military. Another legacy of the European Middle Ages is surnames, or family names. Many European family names have medieval origins. For example, during the Middle Ages, a person took a family name from his or her job. Family names such as Baker, Carpenter, Cook, and Taylor (tailor) are still common today.
Many medieval structures, such as churches and castles, still stand in Europe. So do key institutions from this era. One of the most powerful institutions during this time was the Catholic Church. In the next chapter, you will learn more about the power of the Church during the Middle Ages. You will also learn about key political and military events of the Middle Ages—and how the institutions of Medieval Europe gave way to new institutions.

**REVIEW** What impact did the code of bushido have on Japan?

**Lesson Summary**

- The feudal system of Japan and the feudal system of Europe shared similar structures and values.
- The two feudal systems differed in many ways. These differences can be seen in the areas of religion, literature, and the role of women.
- The impact of both Japanese and European feudalism is still felt today.

**Why It Matters Now . . .**

From attitudes toward the family to family names, a number of cultural aspects from the Middle Ages still influence Europe and Japan today.

**Terms & Names**

1. Explain the importance of **bushido** epic poem

**Using Your Notes**

**Comparing and Contrasting** Use your completed chart to answer the following question:

2. In which society did women enjoy greater freedom? (Framework)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms &amp; Names</th>
<th>Terms &amp; Names</th>
<th>Terms &amp; Names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Europe</strong></td>
<td>political</td>
<td>social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Japan</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Main Ideas**

3. How were the codes of bushido and chivalry similar? (Framework)

4. What were the main cultural differences between feudal Europe and feudal Japan? (Framework)

5. What cultural traditions have survived from the Middle Ages in Japan? (Framework)

**Critical Thinking**

6. **Understanding Cause and Effect** How did the political structure help to bring about feudalism in Europe and Japan? (Framework)

7. **Forming and Supporting Opinions** Did Japanese or European feudalism leave a more lasting legacy? Explain. (Framework)

**Activity**

**Internet Activity** Use the Internet to learn about other works of epic poetry. Conduct further research on a poem that interests you and present your findings in a brief speech. (Framework)

**INTERNET KEYWORD:** epic poetry