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| |  | | --- | | **Feudalism** | |

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| **European Feudalism** About 500 CE, much of western Europe was left without a strong [**centralized government**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=centralized%20government','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) due to the breakdown of the [**Roman Empire**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=roman%20empire','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');). With little organized resistance, Germanic invaders raided western European cities and monasteries. Because kings were often too weak to repel the invaders, many city dwellers moved into the countryside in hopes of greater safety. As a result of the invasions, and a weak central government, a new **social and political system** known as [**feudalism**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=feudalism','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) developed. Strong local lords formed a **strict** code of behavior and allegiances which became the foundation of feudal life.  For example, the king controlled huge tracts of land. He would **give his support and a large piece of land**, called a [**fief**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=fief','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');),to a powerful lord **in return for loyalty and military support**. This meant the lord was now a [**vassal**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=vassal','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');) of the king. The Lord would then divide up that land among his supporters, usually less powerful lords, obtaining vassals of his own. The Lesser Lords would do the same, dividing up the increasingly smaller land holdings to their knights. Finally, the knights would be left in direct control of the land and the peasants or townsfolk who lived there. The peasants were expected to grow food, tend the land, and provide military support to the feudal lords. Under European feudalism, there was very little opportunity for social advancement.  http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/themes/politicalsystems/images/hierarchy.gif  **The Feudal Economy** Feudal lords and knights lived in a manor house on a large estate. The economy that grew up around the lord's home is known as [**manorialism**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=manorialism','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');). Under this system, everyone had a well-defined place in the social structure.  Many nobles became knights, mounted warriors, who lived according to a code of conduct called [**chivalry**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=chivalry','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');). They were expected to be honest, brave, and loyal to their word. Most peasants were [**serfs**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=serfs','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');), meaning they could not leave their lord's lands without permission. The serfs farmed and provided manual and military labor for the lord, and in return, he protected them and gave them a few acres to farm for themselves.  **Feudal Japan** Japan's feudal period lasted from the 12th century until the 19th century. During this period, society was divided in different classes. At the top, was the [**Emperor**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=emperor','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');), although he had little real power. Japan was ruled by the [**Shogun**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=shogun','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');), who was a military leader with near absolute control. The most successful was the [**Tokugawa Shogunate**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=tokugawa%20shogunate','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');), which ruled Japan from 1603 until 1868.  In Japan, the real political and military power was in the hands of the **shogun**. Much like in Europe, the shogun distributed lands to his loyal vassals, who were called [**daimyo**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=daimyo','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');). The daimyo then granted lands to their warriors, the [**samurai**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=samurai','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');). Japanese warriors lived according to a code of conduct known as [**bushido**](javascript:%20window.open('http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/vocab/def.cfm?term=bushido','','status=no,resizable=yes,scrollbars=yes,%20width=400,height=200');%20void('');), which was even stricter than that in Europe. A disgraced samurai was expected to perform **seppuku** (commit suicide) in order to maintain his family's honor.   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Comparison of Feudalism in Europe and Japan** | | | |  | **Europe** | **Japan** | | **Nobility** | king, lord, lesser lord | emperor, shogun, daimyo | | **Warriors** | knights | samurai | | **Code of conduct** | chivalry | bushido | | **Evolution** | * Both practices developed in response to the need for security and stability * everyone had well-defined social roles * helped preserve law and order | | |