

Feudalism - Japan and Europe

Similarities

- Both knights and samurai wore armor and rode horses into battle
- Both spent their entire lives preparing for war
 - Started as boys to learn the arts of war
 - First learned the strategy of war, basic swordplay, and the code of honor
 - Second, acted as the personal servant of the knight or samurai, and would accompany them to war
 - Last, would be considered fully trained and able to take on trainees of their own
 - Followed strict ethical codes
 - Bushido for the samurai, chivalry for the knight
 - Loyalty to their lord was held as a very high virtue
 - Practiced a religion, expected to be a model of virtue to the lower classes
 - Members of a special warrior class
- Great landowners were dependent on the knights and samurai for military service
- Lords and daimyo build castles for protection, with rounded walls to make the attack harder and the castles less prone to earthquakes in Japan

Differences

- Feudalism in Europe lasted from 800 to 1400, while in Japan it started in 1192 and lasted till 1868
 - Japan was isolated from the west from the 17th century to the 19th century, and preserved the feudal society 400 years later
- Military technology advanced more in Europe with the invention of the longbow and cannon, making knights less effective and necessary
- Knights were not as well educated as the samurai, who were usually literate and sometimes worked as government officials
- A knight's loyalty was based on a legal contract, rather than moral obligations
- Samurai used lighter armor
 - Made of tiny iron strips and plates sewn together with leather which covered the body, head, neck, and shoulders
 - More flexible than plate armor
 - Wore helmet usually in the form of an animal
- Most important possession was two handed sword known as a katana, which was called the "soul of the samurai"
- Samurai practiced Buddhism or Shintoism, while the knights practiced Christianity
- Samurai would commit suicide rather than face defeat or capture, while knights were often captured and traded back for ransom, only to fight again
- Samurai would not fight with their inferiors, and so peasants were safe. Knights often attacked peasants and destroyed farms
- Common practice while on the Crusades to ransack farms for provisions