Medieval Japan: Feudalism And Social Life

While Medieval Japan was a very unfair society for most people, Medieval Europe was a much more unfair society where the people living there had no freedom or choice. Although people in Medieval Japan's level of freedom was very low, they still at least had the chance to move classes in the feudal system. Feudalism in The Middle Ages came with many disadvantages and advantages in Medieval Japan. These disadvantages affected mainly just lower-class citizens greatly. Food and the quantity of food a person eats hasn't changed that greatly, however we do now have a wider range of food and compared to what lower-class citizens ate, we now eat more food per day.

Feudalism in the Middle ages was a controversial topic, debating where or not it was a fair society. The Japanese Feudal system consisted of 8 main classes each with their own job. The highest class was the emperor or the empress, who had no political power but was adored by his/her people. Shogun's were the next highest class who were in charge of managing laws and taxes as well as controlling military and economic power. The next class under shoguns were daimyos. Daimyos were in charge of areas of land and governed those who worked and lived there. Samurai were Japanese warriors sworn to fight and serve for their daimyo, they followed a stern code of conduct called bushido. A Ronin was under samurai in the feudal system. A Ronin was another name for a masterless samurai, there are many reasons of why they became Ronin's, for example, due to the death of their previous daimyo from losing a battle. Peasants were ranked at the top of the lower class. They made up 90% of the population. Peasants were farmers and fishermen, who worked at the sea and land to harvest everyone's food. Artisans were ranked below the peasants in Medieval Japan and they had professions of actors, musicians, entertainers, singers, painters and sculptors. Merchants were ranked below artisans and were seen as having no value; they didn't make, produce or protect anything. Although in time they became rich through trading goods with farmers and craftsmen, they also sold and lent the goods and money needed by numerous people because of the constant civil wars. Having such a strict feudal system came with many advantages but also with some disadvantages. Having a feudal system bought stability and structure. Everyone had a job and every class had protection and shelter. The higher-class citizens felt the true advantages of feudalism as they never had to do anything really hard. The disadvantages of feudalism only really affected lower-class citizens. Artisans and Merchants had no rights or independence. Most individuals had to pay taxes and the church was the judge of legal matters. Power through the feudal system shows that although higher-class citizens don't have to do as much work or work as hard for the small bit of food that they get, it's still the lower-class citizens that have no rights or independence and that are the ones that have to pay expensive taxes. This demonstrates that Medieval Japan wasn't a fair society as people have more power than others who work harder than they do.

Over time, women's freedom and rights has changed drastically into what is now a fairer society for all genders. In Medieval Japan the different classes ate different food, some classes would even go some days without a meal. A usual meal for peasants was vegetables, rice and fish which was used to make pottage. Pottage is a thick soup or stew containing mainly vegetables and sometimes meat. On a good day, peasants would eat about twice a day, but, on a bad day they would eat next to nothing. Samurai Warriors without a doubt had a wider range

of food compared to peasants. Whilst the samurai warriors were fighting at war their diet consisted of rice, beans, fruit, soy products, vegetables, seafood, meats and Fu. Fu is also known as wheat gluten. Since the upper class was very wealthy in medieval japan they could afford to eat foods such as tempura, miso, zoni (rice cake soup), sushi and many other foods that people still eat today. This shows how people's power rewards them more food even though the lower-class citizens are working just as hard or even harder yet they still don't get rewarded as much as they should. Compared to now women's independence in Medieval Japan and Medieval Europe has progressed to a much fairer society, over time. In Medieval Japan, there was only ever two empresses compared to the 40 emperors. This shows the power Men had over Women as only two Women ever held the power the highest-ranking figure at the top of the hierarchy. Women's jobs in the medieval period depended of what social class they were in. Low class women's job was to serve for their husbands their jobs included serving wealthier families, looking after their children, looking after animals and crops, cooking for the families, cleaning and carrying out other household tasks. Samurai women didn't partially fight in battle, they stayed at home and protected their children and their home. Women were also forced into marriage and were also not allowed to request to divorce. Some Women even committed suicide to escape from marriage when they were not happy or were mistreated by their husbands. However, even though Medieval Japan doesn't sound like a nice time for Women, Women in Medieval Europe were treated similarly if not worse. Women in Medieval Europe would do the same jobs as Men but receive less pay. Women also had to 'wait' on their families. The way Women were treated in Medieval times compared to now, shows the long way society has come, changing into the now fairer society for both genders.

Although, there were some horrible things that happened to people in Medieval Japan, Medieval Japan is a fairer society compared to Medieval Europe. In Medieval Europe, no one rose from the social class they were born into. This means that people could be left with very little power or a lot of power without choice, giving people no freedom as to what they want to do (e.g. be a samurai and fight). Although some of the 'trades' that different classes did for each other weren't fair, most of them at least helped lower-class citizens. It wouldn't be fair if the knights had all the land leaving all lower-class citizens with no land to live on. Instead, the peasants pay for the knight's land. This is a fair 'trade' which people still do whilst living in this current era. Peasants also got given food for farming knights land. The King didn't do anything for anyone, instead, he got people to do stuff for him. This shows power as the person with the most power had everyone be a slave to him. This was unfair as lower-class citizens didn't get anything in return from the King himself. Just like in Medieval Europe, there were 'trades' between classes. This made a fairer society in Medieval Japan as lower-class citizens got things in return for the hard work they did for the higher-class citizens. An unfair aspect of Medieval Japan was that Artisans and Merchants have no rights or independence. This shows the power higher-class citizens have as Artisans and Merchants didn't choose to be in that class which leaves them with no rights or independence. However, in Medieval Japan there was small movement between classes where some peasants to then become warriors especially during the frequent civil wars. This was not the case in Medieval Europe which shows that Medieval Japan was a more flexible, fair society.