Geography of Japan

Japan is a series of islands off the coasts of Korea & China.

Like Greece, Japan was divided by mountains & had few areas for farming.

Before 400 A.D., Japan was not a unified nation but was ruled by hundreds of different family clans.

Japan’s island location provided protection from Chinese & Mongol invasions.

...but Japan was close enough to borrow cultural ideas from China.
By the mid-1000s, the imperial gov’t grew weak, regional landowners gained power, & Japan became lawless & dangerous.

Outlaws attacked farmers & pirates attacked the coast.

Rival clans competed for power & threw Japan into a series of civil wars.
Quick Class Discussion:
Based on these images, how were Japanese & European feudal systems similar?
As a result, Japan developed a feudal system. Farmers traded land to strong warlords called daimyo who offered protection. Daimyo were served by loyal warriors called samurai. The emperor had little power.
Japanese Feudalism

Samurai warriors were usually relatives or dependents of daimyo, although some were hired warriors called Ronin.

Samurai warriors lived by a code of Bushido which demanded courage, loyalty, deity, fairness, & honor.

Samurai were skilled swordsmen, but also used horses & guns (after the arrival of Europeans).
Japanese Feudalism

In 1192, the first shogun was named by the emperor.

The emperor remained in place, but the shogun held real power & ruled as military dictators.

Shoguns’ power varied over time, but the pattern of gov’t controlled by a shogun lasted until 1867.
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Oda Nobunaga      Toyotomi Hideyoshi      Tokugawa Ieyasu
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In 1568, a brutal daimyo named Oda Nobunaga conquered the Japanese capital of Kyoto. Oda seized power by force, was the first to use guns effectively, & eliminated Buddhist rivals that refused to accept rule by the emperor. By the time of his death in 1582, Japan was not unified.
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Oda Nobunaga’s best general was Toyotomi Hideyoshi who took over after Oda’s death.

Toyotomi was resourceful & not ruthless like Oda; He used political alliances, adoption, & marriage to gain power over the daimyo.

By 1590, Toyotomi Hideyoshi controlled most of Japan & tried unsuccessfully to conquer Korea.
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After Toyotomi’s death in 1598, one of his daimyo allies named Tokugawa Ieyasu completed the unification of Japan in 1600.

In 1603, Tokugawa became shogun of Japan, moved to capital to Edo (later called Tokyo), & restored gov’t & order to Japan.

Tokugawa ruled until 1615, but he created a line of succession called the Tokugawa Shogunate that ruled Japan until 1867.
Tokugawa Shogunate

For more than 250 years, Tokugawa’s successors ruled Japan as shoguns.

During this time, Japan benefited from peace; The economy boomed & became more commercial.
Tokugawa Shogunate

European merchants & missionaries first arrived in Japan in the mid-1500s

Tokugawa enjoyed trade with Europeans & was fascinated to learn about their military, new technologies, & ideas.
Tokugawa Shogunate

Between 1549 & 1600, European missionaries had converted 300,000 Japanese to Christianity. This upset Tokugawa because the missionaries ignored Japanese cultural beliefs & laws. In 1612, Tokugawa banned Christianity & began ruthlessly persecuting Christians. All Japanese were forced to be faithful to Buddhism. Execution of Christians.
Japanese Isolationism

Tokugawa shoguns decided to exclude foreign merchants & missionaries.

By 1639, Japan adopted a “closed country policy” & ended almost all foreign contacts.
Japanese isolation remained in place for over 200 years until the 1850s.

During this era of isolation, Japan had profitable trade, became self-sufficient, limited foreign ideas, & reduced Europe’s ability to colonize Japan.

One Japanese port at Deshima in Nagasaki Bay remained open but only to Dutch & Chinese merchants.