

# Kingdoms of Southeast Asia and Korea

## MAIN IDEA

### CULTURAL INTERACTION

Several smaller kingdoms prospered in East and Southeast Asia, a region culturally influenced by China and India.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Chinese cultural influences still affect East and Southeast Asia today.

## TERMS & NAMES

- Khmer Empire
- Angkor Wat
- Koryu Dynasty

**SETTING THE STAGE** To the south of China lies the region called Southeast Asia. It includes the modern countries of Myanmar (Burma), Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei, and the Philippines. Thousands of miles from this region, to China's northeast, lies the Korean peninsula. This peninsula is currently divided between North Korea and South Korea. In the shadow of powerful China, many small but prosperous kingdoms rose and fell in Southeast Asia and Korea.

## TAKING NOTES

**Categorizing** Use a chart to note important information on the kingdoms discussed in this section.

Kingdom	Notes
Khmer	
Dai Viet	
Korea	
Sailendra	
Srivijaya	

## Kingdoms of Southeast Asia

In Southeast Asia's river valleys and deltas and on its islands, many kingdoms had centuries of glory and left monuments of lasting beauty.

**Geography of Southeast Asia** Southeast Asia lies between the Indian and Pacific oceans and stretches from Asia almost to Australia. It consists of two main parts: (1) Indochina, the mainland peninsula that borders China to the north and India to the west, and (2) the islands, the largest of which include Sumatra, Borneo, and Java. All of Southeast Asia lies within the warm, humid tropics. Monsoon winds bring the region heavy seasonal rains.

Seas and straits separate the islands of Southeast Asia. On the mainland, five great rivers flow from the north and cut valleys to the sea. Between the valleys rise hills and mountains, making travel and communication difficult. Over time, many different peoples settled the region, so it was home to many cultures.

Throughout Southeast Asia's history, the key to political power often has been control of trade routes and harbors. This is because Southeast Asia lies on the most direct sea route between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. Two important waterways connect the two seas: the Strait of Malacca, between the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, and the Sunda Strait, between Sumatra and Java.

**Influence of India and China** Indian merchant ships, taking advantage of the monsoon winds, began arriving in Southeast Asia by the first century A.D. In the period that followed, Hindu and Buddhist missionaries spread their faiths to the region. In time, kingdoms arose that followed these religions and were modeled on Indian political ideas. Gradually, Indian influence shaped many aspects of the region's culture. This early Indian influence on Southeast Asia is evident today in the region's religions, languages, and art forms.

Chinese ideas and culture spread southward in the region through migration and trade. At different times, the Chinese also exerted political influence over parts of mainland Southeast Asia, either through direct rule or by demanding tribute from local rulers.

**The Khmer Empire** The **Khmer** (kmair) **Empire**, in what is now Cambodia, was for centuries the main power on the Southeast Asian mainland. By the 800s, the Khmer had conquered neighboring kingdoms and created an empire. This empire reached the peak of its power around 1200.

Improved rice cultivation helped the Khmer become prosperous. The Khmer built elaborate irrigation systems and waterways. These advances made it possible to grow three or four crops of rice a year in an area that had previously produced only one.

At their capital, Angkor, Khmer rulers built extensive city-and-temple complexes. One of these, called **Angkor Wat**, is one of the world's greatest architectural achievements. The complex, which covers nearly a square mile, was built as a symbolic mountain dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu. The Khmer also used it as an observatory. **A**

**Island Trading Kingdoms** Powerful kingdoms also developed on Southeast Asia's islands. For example, a dynasty called Sailendra ruled an agricultural kingdom on the island of Java. The Sailendra kings left behind another of the world's great architectural monuments, the Buddhist temple at Borobudur. Built around 800, this temple—like Angkor Wat—reflects strong Indian influence. The massive complex has nine terraced levels like a stepped pyramid.

The Sailendra Dynasty eventually fell under the domination of the powerful island empire of Srivijaya. At its height from the 7th to the 13th centuries, Srivijaya ruled the Strait of Malacca and other waters around the islands of Sumatra, Borneo, and Java. It grew wealthy by taxing the trade that passed through its waters. The

**MAIN IDEA**

**Making Inferences**

**A** What does the size and splendor of Angkor Wat suggest about the empire that constructed it?



▲ Built in the 1100s, Angkor Wat is the world's largest religious structure.

◀ The temple at Borobudur has 92 statues of Buddha on its top level.

**GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps**

- Location** Where is the Strait of Malacca and why was it important to trade?
- Movement** Name one way Chinese culture might have spread around Southeast Asia.

Srivijayas established their capital, Palembang, on Sumatra. Palembang became a great center of Buddhist learning, where Chinese monks could study instead of traveling to India.

**Dai Viet** The people of Southeast Asia least influenced by India were the Vietnamese. Located in the coastal region just south of China, Vietnam fell under Chinese domination. Around 100 B.C., during the mighty Han Dynasty, China took northern Vietnam. When China's Tang Dynasty weakened in the early A.D. 900s, Vietnam managed to break away. It became an independent kingdom, known as Dai Viet, in 939.

The Vietnamese absorbed many Chinese cultural influences, including Buddhism and ideas about government. However, they also preserved a strong spirit of independence and kept their own cultural identity. Vietnamese women, for example, traditionally had more freedom and influence than their Chinese counterparts. **B**

Rulers of the Ly Dynasty (1009–1225) located their capital at Hanoi, on the Red River delta. They established a strong central government, encouraged agriculture and trade, and greatly improved road and river transportation. The changes made by the Ly continued to influence life in Vietnam long after they fell from power.

▼ Tan'gun (or Dangun) is said to have founded Korea in Pyongyang in 2333 B.C.



## Korean Dynasties

According to a Korean legend, the first Korean state was founded by the hero Tan'gun, whose father was a god and whose mother was a bear. Another legend relates that it was founded by a royal descendant of the Chinese Shang Dynasty. These legends reflect two sides of Korean culture. On one hand, the Koreans were a distinct people who developed their own native traditions. On the other hand, their culture was shaped by Chinese influences from early dynastic times. However, like the Japanese, the Koreans adapted borrowed culture to fit their own needs and maintained a distinct way of life.

**Geography of Korea** Korea is located on a peninsula that juts out from the Asian mainland toward Japan. It is about the same size as the state of Utah. Korea's climate is hot in the summer and very cold in the winter. Like Japan, Korea is a mountainous land, and only a limited portion of the peninsula can be farmed. A mountainous barrier lies between Korea and its northern neighbor, Manchuria. Because of the mountains and the seas, Korea developed somewhat in isolation from its neighbors.

**Early History** In early Korea, as in early Japan, different clans or tribes controlled different parts of the country. In 108 B.C., the

Han empire conquered much of Korea and established a military government there. Through the Chinese, Koreans learned about such ideas as centralized government, Confucianism, Buddhism, and writing. During Han rule, the various Korean tribes began to gather together into federations. Eventually, these federations developed into three rival kingdoms. In the mid-600s, one of these kingdoms, the Silla, defeated the other kingdoms, drove out the Chinese, and gained control of the whole Korean peninsula.

Under Silla rule, the Koreans built Buddhist monasteries and produced elegant stone and bronze sculptures. They also developed a writing system suitable for writing Korean phonetically though still using Chinese characters.

**The Koryu Dynasty** By the tenth century, Silla rule had weakened. Around 935, a rebel officer named Wang Kon gained control of the country and became king. He

### MAIN IDEA

#### Comparing

**B** How was Vietnam's culture influenced by Chinese culture?

named his new dynasty Koryu. The **Koryu Dynasty** lasted four and a half centuries, from 935 to 1392.

The Koryu Dynasty modeled its central government after China's. It also established a civil service system. However, this system did not provide the social mobility for Koreans that it did for the Chinese. Koryu society was sharply divided between a landed aristocracy and the rest of the population, including the military, commoners, and slaves. Despite the examination system, the sons of nobles received the best positions, and these positions became hereditary. **C**

**MAIN IDEA**

**Comparing**

**C** How did the Koryu government compare with the early imperial government of Japan (page 340)?

The Koryu Dynasty faced a major threat in 1231, when the Mongols swept into Korea. They demanded a crushing tribute including 20,000 horses, clothing for 1 million soldiers, and many children and artisans, who were to be taken away as slaves. The harsh period of Mongol occupation lasted until the 1360s, when the Mongol Empire collapsed.

In 1392, a group of scholar-officials and military leaders overthrew the Koryu Dynasty and instituted land reforms. They established a new dynasty, called the Choson (or Yi) Dynasty, which would rule for 518 years.

**Koryu Culture** The Koryu period produced great achievements in Korean culture. Inspired by Song porcelain artists, Korean potters produced the much-admired celadon pottery, famous for its milky green glaze. Korean artisans produced one of the great treasures of the Buddhist world—many thousands of large wooden blocks for printing all the Buddhist scriptures. This set of blocks was destroyed by the Mongols, but the disaster sparked a national effort to re-create them. The more than 80,000 blocks in the new set remain in Korea today.

**Connect to Today**

**Two Koreas**

Since the end of World War II, Korea has been arbitrarily divided into two countries—communist North Korea and democratic South Korea. For years, many Koreans longed for their country to be reunited. Hopes for such a day rose in 2000 when the presidents of the two nations sat down to discuss reunification. In 2002, however, North Korea announced that it was developing nuclear weapons and would use them against South Korea if necessary. This greatly dimmed people's hopes for one Korea.



**INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY**

**INTERNET ACTIVITY** Write a news story outlining the latest developments in relations between the two Koreas. Go to **classzone.com** for your research.

**SECTION 5 ASSESSMENT**

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Khmer Empire
- Angkor Wat
- Koryu Dynasty

**USING YOUR NOTES**

2. What common themes do you notice about the mainland kingdoms? about the island kingdoms?

Kingdom	Notes
Khmer	
Dai Viet	
Korea	
Sailendra	
Srivijaya	

**MAIN IDEAS**

3. On what was Khmer prosperity based?
4. How did Srivijaya become wealthy and powerful?
5. Why are there two sides to the development of Korean culture?

**CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING**

6. **RECOGNIZING EFFECTS** How did geography influence the history and culture of Southeast Asia and of Korea? Illustrate your answer with examples.
7. **COMPARING** In what ways did the cultural development of Vietnam resemble that of Korea?
8. **DRAWING CONCLUSIONS** Why do you think that of all the cultures of Southeast Asia, Vietnam was the least influenced by India?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL SYSTEMS** Create an **annotated map** showing how Hinduism and Buddhism entered Southeast Asia from China and India.

**CONNECT TO TODAY CREATING A TRAVEL BROCHURE**

Conduct research to find information about Angkor Wat or the Buddhist temple at Borobudur. Use your findings to create a one-page **illustrated travel brochure**.