Empires in East Asia

Lesson 5

Kingdoms of Southeast Asia

Key Terms and People

**Pagan** kingdom that is now Myanmar  
**Khmer Empire** empire that ruled what is now Cambodia  
**Angkor Wat** temple complex of the Khmer Empire

Before You Read

In the last lesson, you read about early Japan and the rise of feudalism.

In this lesson, you will learn about smaller kingdoms in east and southeast Asia.

As You Read

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

**INFLUENCES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA**

What shaped the culture of southeast Asia?

The region of southeast Asia lies to the south of China. It includes mainland areas and many islands.

The region has never been united culturally or politically. The landscape makes travel and communication difficult. Rivers and valleys divide the mainland from north to south. Between the valleys are hills and mountains.

Political power in the area has often come from control of trade routes. This is because southeast Asia is on the most direct sea route between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

India had a great influence on southeast Asia. Hindu and Buddhist missionaries brought their faiths to southeast Asia. Kingdoms in the area followed these religions as well as Indian political ideas. This early Indian influence on southeast Asia is seen today in the region’s religions, languages, and art forms.

Muslims from India brought Islam to southeast Asia. Missionaries would travel with traders. They converted the people who lived near the ports. Islam is now practiced by almost 40 percent of the people in southeast Asia.

Chinese ideas spread to the area, too. Sometimes the Chinese ruled over the locals. Other times, they forced local rulers to bow down to them.

1. What has prevented southeast Asia from being more united?
Lesson 5, continued

EARLY KINGDOMS AND EMPIRES

Who ruled southeast Asia?

A few small, powerful governments ruled early southeast Asia. The kingdom of Pagan was established in the mid-800s. It occupied the area that is now Myanmar. King Anawrahta was the first great leader. He was Buddhist. His people, called Burmans, built many temples. The area became the center of Buddhist learning. The Mongols defeated the Pagan army. After the fight, the Pagan Kingdom lost all its power.

Around the same time, the Khmer Empire was the main power. It was located on the mainland of southeast Asia in what is now Cambodia. Growing rice was its main source of wealth. The Khmer used large irrigation works to bring water to their fields. Rulers built huge temples and palaces. One of these is called Angkor Wat. It is among the world’s greatest achievements in architecture.

Kingdoms were also founded on islands in southeast Asia. A dynasty called Srivijaya arose on Java. Java is an island. This dynasty reached its height from the 600s to the 1200s. Nearby islands fell under its rule. The capital, Palembang, was located on Sumatra. Monks studied Buddhism in Palembang.

Vietnam fell under the rule of China. China controlled the area from about 100 BC to AD 900. Vietnam became an independent kingdom, known as Dai Viet, in 939.

The Vietnamese borrowed from Chinese culture. For example, Buddhism became important. The Vietnamese, though, kept their own culture. Women in Vietnam, for instance, had more rights than women in China.

2. What kingdoms arose in Southeast Asia?

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Lesson 5, continued

As you read about the kingdoms that prospered in southeast Asia, fill in the charts.

How did India and China influence the people of Southeast Asia?

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What were the characteristics of the early governments of southeast Asia?

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