GeoJournal

As you read this chapter, use your journal to describe the many ways of life in Southeast Asia. Use vivid details to depict homes, jobs, governments, and cultural activities.

Chapter Overview  Visit the Glencoe World Geography Web site at tx.geography.glencoe.com and click on Chapter Overviews—Chapter 30 to preview information about the cultural geography of the region.
Consider What You Know

Many Southeast Asians have migrated to other countries, including the United States. What impact do you think migrants have on the cultures of their adopted countries?

Read to Find Out

- What are the various ethnic roots of Southeast Asia’s peoples?
- Why do the majority of Southeast Asians live in river valley lowlands or on coastal plains?
- How have population movements and settlement patterns affected Southeast Asia?

Terms to Know

- urbanization
- primate city

Places to Locate

- Cambodia
- Vietnam
- Myanmar
- Indonesia
- Java
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Philippines
- Bangkok
- Jakarta

Population Patterns

Vietnam’s Western-style buildings are recent examples of a series of cultural influences—Chinese, Indian, Islamic, European, and American—that have shaped Southeast Asia over thousands of years. Each culture has added its own unique flavor to Southeast Asia’s cultural mix. In this section you will learn about the diverse peoples of Southeast Asia, how physical geography affects where they live, and what challenges population changes are bringing to the region.

Human Characteristics

Southeast Asia’s cultural geography is as varied as its physical geography. About 520 million people live on the many peninsulas and islands of Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia’s population today includes descendants of indigenous peoples, Indians, Chinese, Arabs, and European colonists.
Humans have lived in Southeast Asia for tens of thousands of years. About 2,500 years ago, groups of migrants from western China and eastern Tibet arrived in the region. Many of today’s Southeast Asians are descendants of these early peoples. On the Southeast Asian mainland, the Khmers settled Cambodia and Vietnam, the Mons moved into Myanmar, and the Malays settled the Malay Peninsula. Some Malay groups also undertook sea voyages, settling the many islands that today form Indonesia. These indigenous peoples developed agricultural civilizations and borrowed from other peoples without losing their own identities.

**Indian and Chinese Influences**

Valuable spices grown in Southeast Asia drew outside traders to the region. While exchanging goods with Southeast Asians, these foreigners passed on new ideas and practices that blended with Southeast Asian traditions. Beginning in the A.D. 100s, merchants from India introduced the Hindu and Buddhist religions, art forms inspired by these religions, and a concept of government that glorified kings as both political and spiritual leaders. Meanwhile, Chinese traders and soldiers brought Chinese cultural influences to the region through Vietnam. During a thousand years of Chinese rule, the Vietnamese adopted China’s writing system, Confucian traditions, and system of government. Today Indian and Chinese ethnic communities are scattered throughout Southeast Asia, particularly in Brunei, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. In Singapore today, people of ethnic Chinese ancestry make up 76 percent of the country’s total population.

**Islamic Influence**

In search of spices, Arab and Indian traders brought cottons and silks to Southeast Asia beginning in the A.D. 800s. They and locally based Malay traders set up trade routes that linked Southeast Asia with other parts of Asia. During the 1200s, Southeast Asians—especially those in port towns—began to convert to Islam, the religion of these traders. Over the centuries, Islam spread from coastal areas to interior areas of the Indonesian islands and the Malay Peninsula. Today Muslims form the majority of the population in Brunei, Malaysia, and Indonesia.
Western Colonization

During the 1400s and 1500s, European explorers, like others before them, sought new sea routes to acquire Southeast Asia’s spices and other rich natural resources. Their voyages eventually brought nearly all of the region, with the exception of Thailand, under European control. While exporting nutmeg, cloves, and pearls to Europe, European traders brought new products to Southeast Asia. For example, from Latin America the Spaniards introduced various chili peppers that added new flavor to Southeast Asian cooking. When drinking coffee became popular in Europe during the 1600s, the Dutch began cultivating coffee trees—originally from the Arabian Peninsula—on various Southeast Asian islands.

Population Growth

Many of Southeast Asia’s 520 million people live in fertile river valleys or on the coastal plains. A ready supply of water, fertile land, adequate transportation, and available jobs have all contributed to these concentrations of people. In general, highlands areas have fewer people than lowlands, and rural areas have fewer people than the cities.

Population Density

Population density varies widely throughout Southeast Asia. Indonesia, the world’s fourth most populous country, has more than 206 million people living on 13,600 scattered islands. The Indonesian island of Java is one of the most densely populated islands in the world. The overall population density of Indonesia is 280 people per square mile (108 people per sq. km). Singapore, the region’s smallest country in land area, has the greatest population density—17,320 people per square mile (6,687 people per sq. km).

Population Growth Rates

The population of Southeast Asia is growing at a rate of 1.6 percent per year compared with the 1.3 percent average growth rate for the world. Some estimates indicate that more than 775 million people will live in the region by 2050, representing about a 50 percent increase over the number of people living there today. Some countries, such as Thailand, Indonesia, and Singapore, are working to slow their population growth rates. Singapore, in fact, has succeeded so well in reducing its population growth rate that there is concern the country may not have enough young workers to replace and support its aging population. As a result, married couples are now encouraged to have more children.

History

Cambodia: Population Decline

Since the 1970s Cambodia’s population growth rate has been below the region’s average. Between 1975 and 1979, Cambodia lost 38 percent of its population as a result of harsh rule by the Khmer Rouge communist government. Many people died as a result of starvation, torture, and executions. People considered to be intellectuals were often the first targets of the violence as described below:

“Even someone who as much [as] wore glasses was considered an intellect, [and] was killed. Thus began a vast extermination of all the wealthy and educated people in Cambodia…. The Khmer Rouge watched over the people constantly, making sure everything they did was right, and if they showed any signs of an education, they would be first tortured to confess, and then executed.”

Jerry Adler, “Pol Pot’s Last Days,” Newsweek, April 27, 1998

Movement to the Cities

For centuries, the majority of Southeast Asians lived in rural villages and farmed the land. Today increasing numbers of the region’s people are moving from rural areas to urban centers. This population shift has resulted from political conflicts and government policies, but greater economic and educational opportunities available in cities have also been factors. The Philippines, for example, reflects this trend toward urbanization, or the shift from rural to urban lifestyles, in Southeast Asia. At the beginning of the 1900s, more than 80 percent of Filipinos lived in rural areas. Today about 53 percent of the Philippines’ population lives in the countryside.
At least 11 Southeast Asian cities now have populations of more than 1 million. In some countries in the region, a single major city leads all other cities in attracting people, resources, and commerce. Such a magnet is called a primate city, an urban area that serves as a country’s major port, economic center, and often its capital.

Bangkok, Thailand, and Jakarta, Indonesia, are examples of primate cities. Rapid growth in these and other urban areas has brought challenges as well as benefits. Thailand’s capital, Bangkok, grew by 650 percent between 1950 and 1998, but the city’s roads, housing, water and electric systems, and other public services could not adequately support all of the new migrants. About 1 million residents of Bangkok live in densely populated areas characterized by poor housing and poverty. Thailand is trying to solve these urban challenges by encouraging people to return to rural areas. The Thai government has offered incentives for industries to locate outside of cities. In spite of these efforts, however, the lure of urban jobs and lifestyles continues to drain small villages.

Indonesia also faces a movement of people from rural to urban areas. The major attraction for migrants in Indonesia is its capital, Jakarta, a city of more than 10 million on the densely populated island of Java. Some of these migrants are temporary residents seeking seasonal employment in the cities.

In an attempt to reduce urban overcrowding, Indonesia’s government during the past 40 years has relocated 3 million people to the country’s less densely populated outer islands. Although relocation has increased the rural population in some parts of Indonesia, it has done little to lessen overcrowding on Java. In addition, the mixing of peoples of different ethnic backgrounds has sparked conflict as groups compete for jobs, housing, and social services.

### Outward Migrations

Since the 1970s, a number of Southeast Asians have left their homelands to settle in other parts of the world. Between 1975 and 1990, thousands of

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**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC**

**CHART STUDY**

**Southeast Asia: Urban and Rural Growth (Selected Countries)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percent Urban</th>
<th>Percent Rural</th>
<th>Annual Urban Growth %</th>
<th>Annual Rural Growth %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.4</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Thailand</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
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<td>73</td>
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<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>84</td>
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<td>Laos</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>83</td>
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<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** 2001 World Population Data Sheet; United Nations Population Division, 2000

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**Geography Skills for Life**

1. **Interpreting Charts** Which country is the most urbanized? The least urbanized?

2. **Applying Geography Skills** How might migration and other human processes affect patterns of settlement in the region?
people left Vietnam to escape the widespread economic distress and political oppression that gripped the country. Since the mid-1970s, many people have left their homeland in Laos for similar reasons. Many of these Southeast Asian migrants came to settle in the United States. By 2000, for example, the United States population included 955,264 Vietnamese, 176,148 Cambodians, and 331,340 people of the Hmong and Lao ethnic groups. One effect of these outward migrations is that the countries of Southeast Asia lose skilled and educated workers who could contribute some of the valuable skills that their home countries need for sustained economic growth. Outward migration is only one factor that shapes the region’s population patterns, however.

Southeast Asia’s physical features—the many islands and peninsulas—as well as its growing cities have also shaped the region’s population patterns. In the next section, you will learn how historical events, such as migration and colonization, and contemporary politics have left their marks on Southeast Asia.
History and Government

A Geographic View

A Mighty Waterway

From its source, the Mekong [River] travels about half its length in China; then it borders or moves through Myanmar (formerly Burma), Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. I would find it called by many names: River of Stone, Dragon Running River, Turbulent River, Mother River Khong, Big Water, the Nine Dragons. Along it empires, kingdoms, and colonial realms have risen and fallen. . . .


The many names given to the Mekong River serve as reminders of Southeast Asia’s rich and colorful history. Over the centuries the Mekong River has been a major waterway for the different civilizations that have flourished along its banks. In this section you will learn about Southeast Asia’s ancient kingdoms, its era of European colonial rule, and its struggles for independence and democracy. You will also learn about the regional conflicts that have taken place in Southeast Asia during the past 50 years.

Early Civilizations

Early peoples in Southeast Asia were highly skilled farmers. Rice was the staple grain of these agricultural societies, as it is in Southeast Asia today. During this early period, farmers in the region grew vegetables and domesticated cattle and pigs. Early Southeast Asians also were advanced metalworkers. Bronze was first cast in Thailand in 3000 B.C., nearly one thousand years before the Chinese developed the same skill.
Many Southeast Asian cultural traditions arose during this period. Early Southeast Asians worshiped their ancestors as well as animal and nature spirits. In society, power and wealth were passed down through the mother’s family.

**Kingdoms and Empires**

Many civilizations in early Southeast Asia developed on waterways or around strategic ports. Maritime, or seafaring, empires gained power by controlling shipping and trade. Land-based empires gained wealth from crops grown in fertile soil.

**Funan**

During the A.D. 100s, traders from India set up trading posts along what is today the Gulf of Thailand (Siam). Southeast Asians living in the area blended Indian traditions with their own. By the A.D. 200s, they had established the kingdom of Funan. The people of Funan adopted Hinduism and the Indian model of a centralized government under one powerful ruler. They became skillful goldsmiths and jewelers and developed an impressive irrigation system. As a maritime power, Funan traded with regions as far away as India, China, and Persia.

**Khmer**

An abundance of crops grown in fertile river valleys and deltas brought wealth to mainland Southeast Asia. During the A.D. 1100s and 1200s, the Khmer Empire flourished along the Mekong River and covered most of the Indochina Peninsula and the northern part of the Malay Peninsula. Technologically advanced in irrigation and agriculture, the Khmer used a complex system of lakes, canals, and irrigation channels to grow three or four rice crops annually.

Although agriculturally advanced, the Khmer are best known for their magnificent architecture. Located in present-day Cambodia, Angkor Wat, a Khmer temple more than 800 years old, was designed to resemble the home of the Hindu gods and goddesses. A mixture of Indian and local styles, Angkor Wat is both a Hindu temple and a tomb for Suryavarman II—the Khmer ruler who built it.

**Srivijaya Empire**

Based on the island of Sumatra, the Srivijaya Empire controlled the seas bordering Southeast Asia from A.D. 600 to 1300. Ancient trade routes from Africa and Southwest Asia to East Asia went through the Strait of Malacca and the Sunda Strait and linked the Indian Ocean, the Java Sea, and the South China Sea. The Srivijaya Empire used its navy to control these straits. Once its power was established, the empire gained wealth by taxing traders whose ships passed through these waters.

By the 1300s, the Srivijaya Empire had declined, but its legacy shaped later maritime territories in Southeast Asia. Today Singapore owes its economic prosperity to these same trade routes.
Vietnam

The Vietnamese people controlled the Indochina Peninsula from the Red (Hong) River delta in the north to coastal lands in the center. Throughout their history, the Vietnamese struggled against Chinese invaders. Finally, in 111 B.C. the Chinese emperor Wudi conquered the territory. The Chinese introduced their writing system and ideas about religion, philosophy, and government. Their control of the Vietnamese ended during the early A.D. 900s.

Islam

Muslim Arab merchants and missionaries from Southwest Asia traded and settled in Southeast Asian coastal areas during the A.D. 800s and 900s. Because of this influence, many coastal Southeast
Asians adopted Islamic ways and converted to the religion of Islam. After 1400, Islam quickly spread from coastal to interior areas in the Malay Peninsula and neighboring islands. During the 1400s, Malacca, on the Malay Peninsula, was an important seaport and Islamic cultural center.

**Western Colonization**

By the 1500s Europeans had arrived in Southeast Asia to trade, spread Christianity, and claim territory. The European powers at first set up spheres of influence—agreed-upon areas of control. They later acquired Southeast Asian lands as colonies. Dividing British- from French-ruled territories, the kingdom of Siam (present-day Thailand) served as a buffer state, or neutral territory between rival powers. Because of its position, Siam was the only Southeast Asian territory that remained free of European rule.

**Western Holdings**

During the early 1900s, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, France, and the United States dominated Southeast Asia. The Netherlands claimed most of the islands that today make up Indonesia. The United Kingdom controlled what is now Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei. France governed territories in Indochina that later became Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos. The United States gained control of the Philippines in a war with Spain in 1898.

**Economics**

**Effects of Western Rule**

Europeans and Americans brought widespread changes to Southeast Asia. They built railroads, paved roads, and improved harbors to speed the movement of people and goods throughout the region. Westerners expanded tin mining and oil drilling, and they replaced small farms with large commercial plantations. The production of rice, rubber, coffee, and other products soared, and Westerners received enormous profits.

**Struggle for Freedom**

During World War II, Japan forced Western countries out of Southeast Asia. After Japan’s defeat in 1945, the Western countries tried to regain control. They met opposition, however, from Southeast Asians determined to gain their freedom. By 1965,
after two decades of struggle, all of the countries of Southeast Asia had gained independence.

**Culture**

**Regional Conflicts**

After independence, political conflicts and wars raged throughout Southeast Asia. Local Communists fought other political groups in Indochina. In 1954 communist forces defeated the French in Vietnam, which was then divided into two independent parts: communist North Vietnam and non-communist South Vietnam. Vietnamese Communists used force to unite all of Vietnam under their rule by the mid-1970s. In Laos and Cambodia, Communists also fought newly independent governments for control. During the 1960s and early 1970s, the United States intervened in these Southeast Asian conflicts to block the spread of communism. The feature on pages 746–747 describes the Vietnam War and the United States’s involvement in Southeast Asia.

Other Southeast Asian countries have faced ethnic conflict. In Malaysia, for example, ethnic Malays controlling the government have clashed with the Chinese and Indian communities that dominate the economy. The government has tried to boost Malay participation in business, an action that non-Malays regard as favoritism. Sometimes

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**Foreign Colonies in Southeast Asia, 1914**

**Map Study**

Find NGS online map resources @ www.nationalgeographic.com/maps

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1. **Analyzing Maps** Which European group controlled most of the island areas of Southeast Asia?

2. **Applying Geography Skills** What present-day countries were part of French Indochina?
ethnic and religious groups within a country have waged struggles for independence. **East Timor**, a Portuguese-ruled territory seized by Indonesia in 1975, is an example. For 20 years East Timor’s mostly Roman Catholic population resisted being absorbed into largely Muslim Indonesia. About 200,000 of East Timor’s people died during a fierce conflict. A journalist visiting East Timor in the late 1980s described the fighting at that time:

> The consequences [of fighting] have been devastating... ‘Practically speaking,’ [stated a local official], ‘every family in East Timor has lost someone in this civil war.’


When Indonesia’s corrupt dictatorship fell in 1999, East Timor finally broke away. Pro-Indonesian forces, however, spread unrest there. UN international peacekeeping forces arrived to keep order.

**Forms of Government**

Forms of government vary in Southeast Asia. Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore are democratic republics. In 1998 Indonesia moved toward democracy after years of dictatorship. Myanmar’s military government has tried to crush the efforts of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi (AWNG SAHN SOO CHEE) to bring democracy peacefully to the country. Brunei, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Thailand are constitutional monarchies. Communist governments rule in Laos and Vietnam.

**TAKS Practice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checking for Understanding</th>
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</thead>
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**1. Define** maritime, sphere of influence, buffer state.

**2. Main Ideas** On a table like the one below, fill in and describe influences of outside cultures on the development of Southeast Asia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Influences on Southeast Asia</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

**Critical Thinking**

**3. Comparing and Contrasting** How were the region’s three early empires alike? Different?

**4. Making Inferences** What physical and human factors have shaped Southeast Asia’s current political borders?

**5. Predicting Consequences** How might East Timor’s independence influence the region?

**Analyzing Maps**

**6. Region** Study the map on page 742. Why were the Strait of Malacca and the Sunda Strait vital to maritime development?

**Applying Geography**

**7. Interpreting Historical Maps** Write a paragraph explaining how the map of foreign colonies on page 744 helps us understand the region’s cultural diversity.
WITHIN THE JUNGLES OF VIETNAM, slim shafts of light penetrate the dense vegetation. In the 1960s and 1970s, American soldiers fought a war in these jungles, while their nation’s leaders struggled over how to end it.

The United States became concerned about Vietnam after World War II, when the Cold War split the world’s nations into two groups—those favoring the democratic United States, and those aligned with the Soviet Union and communism. Each side feared the other’s dominance, and U.S. President Truman vowed to help any country threatened by communism. This policy, expanded by Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson, led America to war in Vietnam.

America Intervenes
France ruled Vietnam from 1877 to the early 1940s. Japan occupied Vietnam during most of World War II. After the war, the United States supported France as it tried to resume rule. But Ho Chi Minh, a Communist and a Soviet ally, organized a revolt in northern Vietnam. In 1954 the Vietnamese won control, ending French rule. All parties signed a peace agreement, and Vietnam was divided into Communist North Vietnam, led by Ho Chi Minh, and non-Communist South Vietnam, eventually led by Ngo Dinh Diem.
A former soldier demonstrates a trapdoor in the network of tunnels near Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City). Today the tunnels are a tourist attraction.

Diem proved unpopular, and rebel groups formed. Having North Vietnam’s support, the rebels were called Viet Cong, or “Vietnamese Communists.” In 1963 a military coup overthrew Diem. After U.S. President Lyndon Johnson announced that North Vietnam had attacked American ships in the Gulf of Tonkin, the United States took action. Soon American planes were bombing North Vietnam. In 1965 the first American troops landed to support South Vietnam.

A Losing Battle
American pilots flew B-52 bombers in air strikes against North Vietnam. In the south, Americans used helicopters, tanks, and well-armed ground troops to seek out Viet Cong. Chemicals, such as Agent Orange, were sprayed to kill the thick jungle vegetation. Modern weaponry, however, did not deter the Communist forces. Viet Cong and North Vietnamese fighters relied on guerrilla tactics, on knowledge of the terrain, and on weapons from the Soviet Union and China. Viet Cong hid out and attacked from 200 miles (320 km) of underground tunnels. Many American soldiers lost their lives trying to infiltrate the jungles and tunnels of Vietnam.

As the war dragged on, antiwar protests erupted in the United States. Under pressure to end the war, U.S. President Nixon began withdrawing troops. The last American forces left Vietnam in 1973. By war’s end in 1975, more than 50,000 Americans and as many as 2 million Vietnamese were dead. By 1976 Vietnam was reunited, and Hanoi imposed harsh reforms on Saigon, which was renamed Ho Chi Minh City. In the following decade, more than a million refugees fled Vietnam’s shores by boat. Tragically, half of these “boat people” died.

Today Americans still study lessons of the war. In Vietnam, north and south remain vastly different, with little economic development in the north and foreign investment pouring into the south.

Looking Ahead
The United States established diplomatic ties with Vietnam in 1995. What role might the United States play in Vietnam’s economic recovery?
Cultures and Lifestyles

A Geographic View

Rural Progress

Thailand’s economic success is most obvious in the cities, but it filters into the countryside as well. Where families once tended small [rice] paddies just outside Bangkok, large tractors now groom sweeping fields of commercial farms... On the quiet side roads where I once slowed for water buffalo, I now dodged motorcycles piloted by young Thai men in love with speed.


Throughout their history, Southeast Asians have successfully adapted new ideas and practices to indigenous cultural traditions. Today the peoples of Southeast Asia are learning to blend their cultural heritage with the fast-paced changes brought by the region’s participation in a global economy. In this section you will learn about Southeast Asia’s many cultures and lifestyles.

Cultural Diversity

Cultures in Southeast Asia reflect the region’s ethnic diversity. In Vietnam, for example, a number of cultural traditions—Chinese, Hmong, Tai, Khmer, Man, and Cham—exist alongside the predominant Vietnamese culture. Indonesia has the region’s largest number of ethnic and cultural groups. About 300 ethnic groups with more than 250 distinct languages live on Indonesia’s many islands. Since independence, the Indonesian government has struggled to hold the country together. The collapse of its dictatorship...
and the breaking away of East Timor have encouraged independence movements in other parts of Indonesia to increase their demands.

History

Languages

Hundreds of languages and dialects are spoken in Southeast Asia. Most of the region’s languages stem from three major language families—Malayo-Polynesian, Sino-Tibetan, and Mon-Khmer.

Many of the languages spoken in Southeast Asia are the result of migration or colonization. In the Philippines, for example, Pilipino, English, and Spanish are the major languages. Pilipino, an official language of the Philippines, belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian language family and evolved from the speech of early migrants. Spanish was brought to the Philippines during the years of rule by Spain. English, the second official language, came later with rule by the United States.

Chinese, Malay, Tamil, and English are the official languages of Singapore, reflecting the importance of global trade to this tiny island country. In Malaysia, where British influence was strong during the 1800s and early 1900s, English is the language most often used in business and daily life. Affirming the country’s traditional culture, however, the Malaysian government has made Malay the country’s official language, especially in schools and universities. In Vietnam urban residents speak Vietnamese, Chinese dialects, French, or English. The presence of the three non-Vietnamese languages is a daily reminder of the influence that China, France, and the United States have had on Vietnam’s history and culture.

Religions

Because of the many cultures that exist in Southeast Asia, nearly all of the world’s major religions are represented in the region. Buddhism is the major religion of Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Many people living in Malaysia and Indonesia practice Islam. The majority of people in the Philippines are Roman Catholic. This Christian influence began when the Philippines came under the control of Spain during the 1500s. A great number of Southeast
A variety of instruments, chants, vocal styles, and dances are found throughout Southeast Asia. The use of bronze and bamboo instruments is common in Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

**Instrument Spotlight**
A metal gong known as a *gamelan* is the most popular instrument of Indonesia. These bronze gongs are made in many shapes and sizes and are usually featured in ensembles along with drums, percussion, flutes, singers, and dancers. Gamelans originated in Java prior to the 1400s, and by the 1700s they were an important part of the royal courts. From Java this music tradition spread to Bali and other neighboring islands.

Asians—mainly those of Chinese ancestry—follow Confucianism or Daoism. These different religious beliefs not only coexist but also mingle throughout Southeast Asia. In Vietnam people blend Buddhism, Confucianism, and, in some cases, Catholicism. A housewarming ceremony in Thailand might include blessings by a Buddhist monk and a Hindu priest, followed by offerings to ancestors and nature spirits. Hinduism, influenced by Buddhism and indigenous religions, is the basis for elaborate ceremonies on the Indonesian island of Bali.

**The Arts**
The civilizations of early India and China significantly shaped Southeast Asia’s cultural development. Over the centuries, local artists and writers creatively adapted Indian and Chinese styles to their own needs. Hinduism and Buddhism also inspired literature, art, and architecture in Southeast Asia. During the era of Western colonization, European artistic and literary styles began to influence Southeast Asian arts and literature.

**Architecture**
Many beautiful examples of religious architecture exist throughout Southeast Asia. Elaborate Chinese-style pagodas and Indian-style *wats*, or temples, dot the landscape. Thousands of these religious buildings are located on the Indochina Peninsula alone.

Borobudur, a Buddhist shrine in Indonesia, is a stunning example of Southeast Asian religious art and architecture. Built of gray volcanic stone around A.D. 800 on the island of Java, this temple is larger than Europe’s great cathedrals. A large tower shaped like a bell tops the pyramid-shaped monument. The shrine’s three levels, connected by stairs, represent the three stages of the Buddha’s journey to enlightenment.
The royal city of Pagan (puh•GAHN) in Myanmar was the ancient capital of an early Burmese empire. From A.D. 1044 to about 1300, kings and commoners honored the Buddha by building more than 5,000 pagodas. More than 2,000 pagodas still stand along 8 miles (13 km) of the Irrawaddy River. Many of these ancient structures remain in excellent condition.

Christianity and Islam also have influenced Southeast Asian architecture. In the Philippines you can find Roman Catholic churches built in the Spanish colonial style. In Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia, where Islam is the major religion, the minarets of many beautiful mosques are prominent.

Modern architecture dominates the skyline of major Southeast Asian cities, such as Bangkok, Jakarta, Singapore, and Kuala Lumpur. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia’s capital, has an area called the Golden Triangle that includes luxury hotels, multistoried office buildings, and a development project known as the Kuala Lumpur City Center (KLCC). The KLCC has one of the world’s tallest office buildings, the Petronas Twin Towers.

Crafts

The rich cultures of Southeast Asia have produced many fine crafts. Artisans in Myanmar and Vietnam produce glossy lacquerware. Boxes, trays, dishes, and furniture are covered with many layers of resin from the Asian sumac tree. Colored powders are used to paint designs on the pieces.

Creating lacquerware is time-consuming. Several weeks must pass between applications of layers of lacquer, and a piece may take up to a year to complete. An observer explains the state of mind an artisan requires to create this traditional craft:

“Good lacquer requires a mood of timelessness that even the visitor senses. Workers’ time clocks, if such existed, would be marked in months, not hours.”


Using a method known as batik (buh•TEEK), Indonesians and Malaysians produce beautiful designs and patterns on cloth. First, they use wax or rice paste to create designs on the cloth. Then, they dye the fabric. The dyes form a pattern, coloring only the untreated parts of the cloth. Finally, the cloth is boiled to remove the wax. A colorful pattern or picture remains.

Literature

Early literature in Southeast Asia consisted of folktales, legends, and love stories passed orally from generation to generation. Indian, Chinese, and Islamic literature later had a great influence on local writers, whose works still showed their own distinct character. For example, in Arjunavivaha, a story about the life of a king in Java, the court poet Mpu Kanwa modified the Indian epic Mahabharata to fit Southeast Asian circumstances.

In recent times Southeast Asian authors have used Western styles and themes in their works. Many...
of the region’s writers, however, have translated classic Southeast Asian literature into modern forms of language that can be read and understood by people today.

**Culture**

**Dance and Drama**

Performance arts remain immensely popular in Southeast Asia. Dance and drama are combined to retell legends or re-create historical events. Traditional dances often make use of religious themes. On the island of Bali, in Indonesia, young women perform a dance called the Legong. Making graceful gestures, the dancers reenact episodes from the Ramayana, an ancient Indian story. Dances can also serve as reminders of the region’s agricultural roots. In Cambodia, when the monsoon rains are late, dancers perform a type of rain dance called the Leng Trot.

Puppet plays are popular in many parts of Southeast Asia. These plays use historical and religious characters to perform tales. Sometimes a human dancer who imitates a puppet’s movement performs the play.

**Lifestyles**

Southeast Asia’s ethnic diversity leads to a wide variety of lifestyles in the region. Yet as global contacts have increased, similarities have also developed among the ways people in Southeast Asia live.

**Health and Education**

Since achieving independence, many Southeast Asian countries have enjoyed an improved quality of life. Industry has spread throughout the region, and per capita incomes have risen. Singapore’s per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of $26,300 is comparable to that of the United States. The per capita GDPs of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, however, are all lower than $2,000.

Life expectancy and infant mortality rates also have improved. The general levels of health in Southeast Asia still vary widely, with Singapore having the best overall health conditions. For example, average life expectancy is 78 years in Singapore, compared with only 52 years in Laos.

Since 1945, literacy has increased dramatically in the region, although educational opportunities are still limited in many areas. Governments continue efforts to make education available to everyone. Thailand has the highest literacy rate in the region (95 percent), and Laos has the lowest (57 percent).

**Housing**

Housing in Southeast Asia varies throughout the region, depending on physical geography. In cities, people often live in traditional brick or wooden houses. Some urban residents make their homes in high-rise apartments. Although many Southeast Asians still live in poor conditions, government-funded housing projects have improved the situations in some places.

Despite rapid urban growth, many Southeast Asians still live in small farming villages. A typical village consists of about 25 to 30 homes made of bamboo or wood. These houses are built to suit the environment. Most have roofs made of tiles, corrugated iron, or tin to keep out heavy rains. Most of these dwellings lack running water and electricity.

In some rural areas of Indonesia and Malaysia, people live in longhouses—elevated one-story buildings that house up to 100 people. Elevating the houses on poles helps ventilate and cool the structures and offers protection from insects, animals, and
flooding. The residents of longhouses are usually members of several extended or related families.

**Food, Recreation, and Celebrations**

Most rural Southeast Asians live on the food they raise themselves. Throughout the region rice is the staple food and is usually served with spicy fish, chicken, vegetables, and sauces. Various countries have their own specialties. Some use curry and other spices; some make use of coconut milk.

Southeast Asians enjoy a variety of leisure activities. In large cities, such as Bangkok, Jakarta, and Singapore, people visit museums, theaters, parks, restaurants, and nightclubs. In rural areas people enjoy visiting their neighbors and celebrating family occasions such as weddings and birthdays.

People throughout the region enjoy sports such as soccer, basketball, and badminton. Traditional sports and pastimes are also popular. In Myanmar, people play a game called *chinlon*, in which players form a circle and try to keep a rattan ball in the air without using their hands. Indonesians practice a combination of dancing and self-defense known as *silat*. Thais enjoy a form of “kick” boxing that uses the feet as well as the hands.

Many Southeast Asian holidays are tied to religious observances. For example, Thailand celebrates *Songkran*, or the Water Festival, during the Buddhist New Year. People bathe statues of the Buddha and bless one another with a sprinkling of water. In January or February, Vietnam celebrates its New Year, called Tet. The celebration begins at the start of the lunar year and lasts three days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Group</th>
<th>Cultural Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**TAKS Practice**

1. **Define** *wat*, *batik*, *longhouse*.

2. **Main Ideas** In a graphic organizer like the one below, list cultural groups that migrated to the region in one column and their contributions in the other.

- Critical Thinking
  - 3. **Making Generalizations** What cultural features reflect Southeast Asia’s ethnic diversity?
  - 4. **Problem Solving** How might a new art museum ensure that it reflects Southeast Asia’s culture?
  - 5. **Comparing and Contrasting** How might standards of living differ between rural and urban Southeast Asia?

- **Analyzing Maps**
  - 6. **Location** Look at the map of Southeast Asia’s religions on page 749. In which country is Christianity the predominant religion?

- **Applying Geography**
  - 7. **Diversity** Trace the spread of foreign influences in Southeast Asia. How have these influences shaped Southeast Asian life and culture?
Understanding Cartograms

On most maps, land areas are drawn in proportion to their actual surface areas on the earth. A cartogram is a map in which size is based on some characteristic other than land area, such as population or economic factors.

Learning the Skill

A cartogram provides clear visual comparisons of the characteristic it measures. To read a cartogram, apply the following steps:

- Read the map title and key to identify the kind of information presented in the cartogram.
- Look for relationships among the countries. Determine which countries are largest and smallest.
- Compare the cartogram with a standard land-area map. Determine the degree of distortion of particular countries.
- Study these relationships and comparisons. Identify the most important information presented in the cartogram.

Practicing the Skill

Use the cartogram on this page to answer the following questions.

1. What data determine the relative sizes of countries on this cartogram?
2. What characteristics determine the color of the squares on this cartogram?
3. Compare the cartogram with the standard land-area map on page 721. How has the relative size of Singapore been changed on the cartogram? How would you explain this change?
4. From the information in this cartogram, would you expect Laos to have more squares than Vietnam in a cartogram based on 2010 data? Explain.
5. Suppose you want to compare the population densities of two countries in this region. Can this cartogram help you make this comparison? Explain.

Research the gross domestic product (GDP) of each country in Southeast Asia. Then create a cartogram that compares the GDP of these countries. Include a key for the symbols you use.

Each square represents one million people.

2001 data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>62,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>4,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunei</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>22,700,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>260,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Timor</td>
<td>800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>77,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>52,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>5,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>13,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phnom Penh</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>67,500,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>80,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>77,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>47,800,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

POPULATION GROWTH RATE (excluding effects of migration)

- 2 – 2.9%
- 1 – 1.9%
**SECTION 1**

**Population Patterns** (pp. 735–739)

**Key Points**
- Southeast Asia has a diversity of ethnic and cultural groups.
- Most Southeast Asians live either in river valley lowlands or on coastal plains.
- Southeast Asian cities are growing rapidly as a result of migration from rural to urban areas.
- Since the 1970s, large numbers of Southeast Asians have migrated to escape political oppression and economic distress.

**Terms to Know**
- urbanization
- primate city

**Organizing Your Notes**
Use a web like the one below to help you organize the notes you took as you read this section. Fill in information about the population patterns of Southeast Asia.

**SECTION 2**

**History and Government** (pp. 740–745)

**Key Points**
- Southeast Asia’s early empires and kingdoms controlled shipping and trade that linked East Asia, South Asia, and Southwest Asia.
- European countries colonized all of Southeast Asia except Thailand (Siam). All of the region’s countries are now independent.
- During the late 1900s, political conflict between communist and noncommunist forces divided much of Southeast Asia.

**Terms to Know**
- maritime
- sphere of influence
- buffer state

**Organizing Your Notes**
Use a cause-effect chart like the one below to help you organize the information you read in this section.

**SECTION 3**

**Cultures and Lifestyles** (pp. 748–753)

**Key Points**
- Southeast Asian culture reflects the ways of life of peoples who migrated from other regions as well as those of indigenous peoples.
- Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam greatly influenced Southeast Asian art, architecture, drama, and celebrations.
- In spite of rapid population growth, Southeast Asia’s economic development has led to many improvements in the region’s quality of life.

**Terms to Know**
- wat
- batik
- longhouse

**Organizing Your Notes**
Use an outline like the one below to help you organize information in this section about cultures and lifestyles.

I. Cultural Diversity
   A. Languages
      1. Hundreds of languages
      2. 
2. Problem Solving  Identify Southeast Asia’s greatest challenge, and propose a solution.

3. Identifying Cause and Effect  Complete a flowchart like the one below to show the history of Southeast Asia from colonization to independence.

Using the Regional Atlas

Refer to the Regional Atlas on pages 710–713.

1. Region  What areas of Southeast Asia are the most densely populated?

2. Location  What Southeast Asian cities have populations of more than 2 million? What geographic factors do most of these cities have in common?

Critical Thinking

1. Making Generalizations  Why are small farms unable to compete with plantations?
Thinking Like a Geographer

Use your textbook, library sources, and the Internet to answer the following questions about Southeast Asia: What geographic factors might have drawn foreigners to the region? How might foreign influences have shaped forms of government in the region?

Problem-Solving Activity

Contemporary Issues Case Study  Push factors, such as unemployment or famine, are the unsatisfactory features of a place that cause people to emigrate. Pull factors, such as fertile soil or better job opportunities, are a place’s attractive features that draw migrants from other areas. Research Southeast Asia’s national and international migration patterns, and write a report explaining how push, pull, or both push-and-pull factors shape Southeast Asian migration today.

GeoJournal

Descriptive Writing  Using the details you logged in your GeoJournal as you read this chapter, write a letter to a friend or relative about one cultural element in the region. Imagine that you are visiting the region and you want your friend or relative to have a vivid picture of the places you describe. Include word pictures that appeal to as many of the five senses as possible. Explain how this cultural element differs from that found in different parts of the United States.

Technology Activity

Developing Multimedia Presentations  Use the Internet or the library to conduct research about one typical example of Southeast Asian religious architecture. Create a multimedia presentation about your temple or wat that uses narration, music, and images. Be sure to cite all the sources that you used to prepare your presentation, including print and Internet sources for text and photographs.

TAKS Test Practice

Choose the best answer for each of the following multiple-choice questions. If you have trouble answering the questions, use the process of elimination to narrow your choices.

1. Which countries’ cultures most influenced Southeast Asia’s religions?
   A  Japan and Korea
   B  China and the United States
   C  India and China
   D  Arabia and India

2. Southeast Asia is a region of highly diverse cultures for all of the following reasons EXCEPT:
   F  Trade and colonization from many regions spread new ideas.
   G  Diverse physical geography separated peoples who created their own traditions.
   H  High population density in many areas causes a variety of traditions.
   J  War and conquest by countries from outside the region forced changes in culture.

Test-Taking Tip  Think about what major religions are practiced in Southeast Asia. The answer that includes the cultures where those religions originated probably is the correct answer.

Test-Taking Tip  Consider how cultures from other world regions established a spice trade in Southeast Asia. Watch for key words such as except, not, and only that greatly affect what the question is asking. The question is asking for the exception. Therefore, answer choices that do reflect this important point of history can be eliminated.