

Summary: History and Governments

New Cultures in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia was under the influence of two strong, advanced cultures: China and India. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism came to Southeast Asia from China and India. Writing systems, literature, and ideas about government and social class came from China and India as well.

Instead of having states or nations, Southeast Asia was made up of mandalas. The mandalas developed into states. Because of trade and communication, new ideas were exchanged. Each state then developed into a unique nation.

Trade with other parts of the world brought Christianity and Islam to Southeast Asia. In the 9th or 10th century, Muslim traders brought Islam to the islands of Sumatra and Java, part of what is now Indonesia. Islam slowly spread to the other islands of Indonesia and Malaysia. In the early 1500s, Christian missionaries came to Southeast Asia from Portugal, France, and Spain.

European Colonialism

In the 19th and 20th centuries, European nations colonized the nations of Southeast Asia. The Philippines was under the rule of Spain and then the United States. France ruled Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. The British ruled Myanmar (Burma), most of Malaysia, and Singapore. The Dutch ruled Indonesia. Only Thailand never became a colony. When World War II ended in 1945, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia, and Indonesia fought for independence. The Philippines won independence peacefully.

In Vietnam, Myanmar, and Indonesia, the military took control of the government. Over the next twenty years, the nations of Southeast Asia worked out their own unique government systems. Brunei, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Thailand are constitutional monarchies. Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore are republics. Myanmar also was a republic until the military overthrew the government in 1988. Since then, it has been a military dictatorship. Laos and Vietnam are Communist states.

East Timor declared its independence from Portugal in 1975. A month later, Indonesia invaded and took over. In 2001, East Timor held its first democratic elections.

Before You Read

Find and circle each vocabulary word.

mandala *noun*, in Southeast Asia, a political system in which a central ruler works to gain support and uses trade and business to influence others and maintain power

military dictatorship *noun*, a government ruled by a leader whose power comes from the army

After You Read

REVIEW How did nations develop out of mandalas?

Draw a box around the sentences that tell how nations developed out of mandalas.

REVIEW How do you think the people of Myanmar might have felt about the overthrow of their elected government?

Underline the sentences that would help you infer how the people of Myanmar might have felt.