

HISTORIC KINGDOMS AND COLONIES



400-500 A.D.



1100-1200 A.D.



1450-1500 A.D.



1900 A.D.

Except in the Chinese-influenced Viet kingdoms, the major realms and cultures of mainland Southeast Asia combined local customs with the religious and political influences of India. Through the centuries these cultures retained their essential Indian characteristics. The mixture inspired the building of unique religious and royal centers such as Angkor and Pagan.

FUNAN From its beginning in the first century, this state prospered by its position on the trade route between India and China. Funan exchanged embassies with both countries and at its zenith was the dominant state of the region. In the fertile marshlands of the Mekong Delta the Funanese built canals to control floods and limit the intrusion of salt water.

PYU After the third century A.D., Tibeto-Burman tribesmen migrated from the north into present-day Burma and in 638 founded the Buddhist capital of the Pyu Kingdom at Srikshehra (today called Hmawia). Early seventh-century urn inscriptions bear Hindu names of Pyu kings.

CHAMPA The Hindu-influenced Kingdom of the Chams rose in the second century A.D. and for 1,200 years struggled to remain independent of the expanding Dai Viet and Khmer Kingdoms. In 1177 the Chams sailed up the Mekong, defeated the Khmers on the Great Lake, and sacked Angkor. A century later Champa joined forces with Dai Viet against Kublai Khan; 200 years later Champa succumbed to its former ally.

DVARAVATI, THATON, AND PEGU These Mon kingdoms ranging from the 6th to the 10th century had a lasting influence upon the culture of mainland Southeast Asia. They spread the Buddhism that ultimately became the faith of the people of Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos.

CHENLA The Khmer people of Chenla overthrew Funan in the sixth century. Their realm was long split into two distinct regions, Water Chenla (Mekong Delta area and present-day Cambodia) and Land Chenla (upland area of the middle Mekong Valley). From this divided kingdom emerged the powerful Khmer Empire.

KHMER In the ninth century the Chenla Dynasty set up its capital at Yasodharapura—the present site of Angkor—which became the center of a vastly expanded Khmer Empire. Here its kings received Indian scholars, artists, and religious leaders. The Siamese ravaged Angkor in 1431.

PAGAN This Burman empire developed after the fall of Pyu. The capital city, also called Pagan, with its thousands of Buddhist temples and pagodas, drew pilgrims from Mon areas and from Ceylon. After the 13th-century Mongol invasion the empire declined, and Shan princes assumed rule over the northern portions of the divided realm.

DAI VIET The Vietnamese gained independence by rebelling against the Chinese in the tenth century. Gradually, they expanded to the south at the expense of the Chams. Though traditionally hostile to Chinese interference, the Vietnamese absorbed much of Chinese character; industrial and agricultural techniques adopted from the north made them among the best farmers on the Southeast Asian mainland.

KAMBUJA The Khmers abandoned Angkor in the 15th century and established a new capital at Lovek. Siam repeatedly invaded their once-mighty empire, but they held to their chief rice-farming lands around Tonle Sap.

BURMA The Toungoo Dynasty united Burma in the 16th century after 300 years of divided rule under the Shan and Mon. From the 16th to the 18th century Burma repeatedly expanded its frontiers eastward into Siam. Britain annexed Burma as part of the Indian Empire in the 19th century.

SIAM By the early 13th century the Thai had established a capital at Sukhothai. Then in 1350, the political center moved south to Ayutthaya. Siam—today called Thailand—remains the only kingdom of mainland Southeast Asia never colonized by the West.

LAOS The Laotian Kingdom of Lan Xang, first established by a Lao monarch in the mid-14th century, encompassed all of present-day Laos and much of northern and eastern Thailand. In 1697 Lan Xang split into three rival states which for nearly two centuries wrangled among themselves while fighting off outside invaders. In 1893 the region became Laos, a French protectorate.

UNION OF INDOCHINA In the 19th century, as European nations competed to colonize Asia, the French organized the Union of Indochina. The protectorates of Cambodia, Laos, Tonkin, and Annam, and the colony of Cochinchina remained under French control until 1953, except for Japanese occupation during World War II.



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the Vietnamese imperial capital and a Cham center, Hue and its people suffered severely from ground combat and bombing during the 1968 Tet offensive.

LAO

Thai-speaking Lao are closely related to the Siamese Thai, but differ in dialect and in their preference for eating sticky rice. The Siamese and Vietnamese regard the Lao as rustics. But not all Lao are rural; they form the majority in Vientiane, the administrative capital of Laos. An imposing Buddhist wat, or temple, dominates nearly every Lao village. Cultural and linguistic differences separate the Lao of northern Thailand from those of the northeast and Laos.

HO CHI MINH TRAIL

An extensive network of routes from northern Viet Nam through Laos and Cambodia, over which men and supplies flow to Communist forces in southern Viet Nam and Cambodia. The trail's name, popularized by the Western press, refers to the late President of North Viet Nam.

MNONG GAR

One of many Mnong-speaking groups of southern Viet Nam and Cambodia, the Mnong Gar cultivate dry rice by slash-and-burn agriculture, which they term "eating the forest." The men wear loin-cloths and—occasionally—jackets, necklaces, and bracelets. For esthetic reasons they file down their front teeth and insert ivory plugs in their ear lobes. Their villages, made up of communal longhouses each functioning as a separate political unit, closely resemble those of the Rhade.

MONTAGNARDS

Almost two million Mon-Khmer and Cham-speaking tribesmen occupy the rugged backbone of Laos, Viet Nam, and Cambodia. Known collectively as Montagnards—French for "mountain men"—these isolated hill folk view with suspicion and distrust the lowland Vietnamese, who in turn regard them as savages.

RHADE

Upland rice farmers of southern Viet Nam, the Rhade live in villages notable for their distinctive longhouses built on piles. Partitioned into areas for work, social gatherings, and storage, the structures also include compartments occupied by family units or older members of the household.



On the rising Mekong banks up its left bank, the Mekong rises up its left bank to seven times its normal level, water enriches the surrounding areas, the lake one of the world's most fertile grounds.

Once called the "Paris of the Orient," Saigon has traded its leisurely atmosphere for the ailments of a modern metropolis. Refugees from the Vietnamese war have made this one of the most densely populated cities in the world. Cholon, the Chinese section, holds 850,000 people—about a fourth of Saigon's population.

MONSOONS

Monsoons are periodic wind systems that reverse direction during the year. Over mainland Southeast Asia they create two distinct seasons. Usually from October to April or May the northeast monsoon brings cool, dry weather. The southwest monsoon brings heavy rains, high humidity, and high temperatures from about May to September.

Called the "River of the Nine Dragons" for its many-mouthed delta, the Mekong rises high in the Asian heartland and travels 1,100 miles through Tibet and China before entering the area of this map. For much of its remaining 1,500 miles the river forms the border between Burma, Laos, and Thailand; some 30 million people live in its lower basin. Most traffic in the Mekong Delta moves on tributary canals, a complicated network of man-made waterways that date the place of birth of the Mekong Delta.