



Unit 4 - Post-Classical Afro-Eurasia

Section Summary

THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

The Roman emperor Constantine rebuilt the city of Byzantium and renamed it **Constantinople**. Constantinople grew wealthy from trade. In 330, Constantine made Constantinople the new capital of the Roman empire. In time, the eastern Roman empire became known as the Byzantine empire.

The Byzantine empire reached its peak under **Justinian**. Byzantine armies reconquered North Africa and parts of southern Europe. However, these victories were only temporary, as Justinian's successors later lost these lands. After a fire in 532, Justinian made Constantinople even grander. One of his most important achievements was rebuilding the church of Hagia Sophia. Justinian also had a commission collect and organize the laws of Rome. This collection became known as **Justinian's Code**. It helped unify the empire, which Justinian ruled as an **autocrat**, or with complete authority. His wife, **Theodora**, served as his advisor and co-ruler.

Christianity was practiced differently in the Byzantine empire than in the West. The Byzantine emperor controlled Church affairs and appointed the **patriarch**, or highest Church official in Constantinople. Byzantine Christians rejected the pope's claim to authority over all Christians. During the Middle Ages, the eastern and western branches of Christianity grew further apart, partly due to a dispute over the use of **icons**, or holy images. In 1054, other controversies caused a complete split known as the **Great Schism**. The Byzantine church became known as the Eastern Orthodox Church. The western branch became known as the Roman Catholic Church.

By this time, the Byzantine empire was in decline. In the 1090s, the Byzantine emperor asked the pope for help in fighting the Muslim Seljuks. This started the First Crusade. In 1204, knights on the Fourth Crusade attacked Constantinople. The Byzantines lost control of trade and much of their wealth. In 1453, Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople, renamed it Istanbul, and made it the capital of their empire.

The Byzantines left an influential heritage. Their civilization combined Christian beliefs with Greek science, philosophy, and arts. Byzantine artists created unique religious icons and mosaics. Byzantine scholars preserved Greek literature and produced their own great books, especially in the field of history.

Review Questions

1. How did Constantinople become a wealthy city?

2. How did the Crusades help to weaken the Byzantine empire?

READING CHECK

What was the Great Schism?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *temporary* mean in the underlined sentence? Note that the victories were "only temporary" because Justinian's successors later lost these lands. Use this context clue to help you understand the meaning of *temporary*.

READING SKILL

Recognize Sequence List in chronological order the three names that Constantinople has had.

CHAPTER
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SECTION 1

Section Summary

THE RISE OF ISLAM

The religion of Islam, whose followers are called Muslims, emerged in the Arabian Peninsula. There, in A.D. 570, **Muhammad** was born in **Mecca**—a trading and religious center. Muhammad worked among nomadic herders called **Bedouins**. Later, he became a successful merchant and decided to marry at 25. He was known for his honesty in business and devotion to his family.

Muhammad often meditated on the moral ills of Meccan society, including greed. According to Muslim tradition, Muhammad became a prophet at 40 when he was asked by an angel to become God’s messenger. When he began teaching, a few listened, but others opposed him with threats. In 622, he and his followers fled Mecca for **Yathrib**, on a journey called the **hijra**. Later Yathrib was called **Medina**. In Medina, thousands adopted Islam and formed strong, peaceful communities. When Meccan leaders grew hostile, Muslims defeated them in battle. Muhammad returned to Mecca in 630, where the **Kaaba**, which Muhammad dedicated to Allah, became the holiest Islamic site. Muhammad died in 632.

The sacred text of Islam is the **Quran**, believed to be the direct word of God as told to Muhammad. All Muslims study it to learn about God’s will and living a good life.

Muslims believe that priests are not necessary to mediate between people and God. Muslims gather in **mosques** to pray. They follow the Five Pillars of Islam, which are the following duties: declaring faith, praying five times daily, giving charity to the poor, fasting during their holy month, and making the **hajj**, or pilgrimage to Mecca, if a person is able. Another duty is **jihad**, which means to struggle in God’s service.

Because Jews and Christians worship the same God and study what are considered God’s earlier revelations, Muslims call them “People of the Book.” In most cases, they have been allowed religious freedom in Muslim societies.

The **Sharia** is a body of laws that interprets the Quran and applies religious principles to legal situations. According to the Quran, women are spiritually equal to men but have different roles. In different places, Muslims interpret women’s roles and rights differently. In some cases, Muslims adopted practices of conquered peoples, such as requiring upper-class women to wear veils.

Review Questions

1. What is the Quran?

2. Why do Muslims call Jews and Christians “People of the Book”?

READING CHECK

What was the hijra?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *mediate* mean in the underlined sentence? What clues to its meaning can you find in the surrounding words or phrases? Circle the context clues you find that help you to figure out what *mediate* means.

READING SKILL

Identify Main Ideas Which of the following would be considered main ideas for this Summary? Circle your answers.

- Muslim holy days are enforced very strictly.
- Muslims believe in making a hajj.
- Muslims believe in one God, the Quran, and the Five Pillars of Islam.
- Islam governs daily life and affects the roles and rights of women.
- Muslims have little religious connection to Jews and Christians.

CHAPTER
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SECTION 2

Section Summary

BUILDING A MUSLIM EMPIRE

In 632, **Abu Bakr** became the first **caliph**, or successor to Muhammad. He united all Arab tribes as Muslims. Once united, the Arabs defeated the Persian empire and parts of the Byzantine empire. However, a schism between Sunni and Shiite Muslims occurred after Muhammad's death, and still exists today.

Shiites believe that Muhammad's successors must be descendants of his son-in-law, Ali. They also should be religious leaders and interpret the Quran. **Sunnis** believe that any pious male Muslim from Muhammad's tribe can lead without performing religious functions. Today, about 90 percent of Muslims are Sunni. Both groups believe in the same God, the Quran, and the Five Pillars of Islam, but they differ in religious practices and laws. **Sufis**, who may be Sunni or Shiite, meditate and fast to gain communion with God.

In the 700s, a powerful Meccan clan set up the Sunni **Umayyad** caliphate. They directed conquests that extended Muslim rule from Spain to the Indus River Valley. Their empire lasted until 750. The Muslims brought many people under their rule. Muslim leaders imposed a special tax on non-Muslims, but Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians could worship and some held important positions. Many people converted to Islam.

However, the Umayyads later faced economic tensions and opposition from those who did not have the same privileges as Muslims. After capturing Damascus in 750, with strong support from Shiites and non-Arabs, Abu al-Abbas founded the **Abbasid** dynasty. The Abbasids ended conquests and supported education and learning. They enjoyed a golden age, with a more efficient government and a beautiful new capital, **Baghdad**, in the former Persian empire. Mosques with **minarets**, or slender towers, graced the cities, and markets sold goods from far-off lands.

In Spain, one of the Umayyads established a separate state. Muslims ruled parts of Spain until 1492. They were tolerant of other religions, supported scholars, and constructed grand buildings.

As the empire declined, independent dynasties took power. Seljuk Turks gained power and their **sultan**, or ruler, controlled Baghdad by 1055, keeping the Abbasid caliph as a figurehead. Beginning in 1216, the Mongols attacked across southwest Asia. In 1258, they burned and looted Baghdad, ending the Abbasid dynasty.

Review Questions

1. What are the differences between Shiite and Sunni beliefs?

2. What two groups took power from the Abbasid dynasty?

READING CHECK

Which dynasty enjoyed a golden age?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *schism* mean in the underlined sentence? Read the nearby words, sentences, and phrases to find clues to its meaning. What do the context clues tell you about the meaning of *schism*?

READING SKILL

Recognize Sequence Number the following events to show their correct sequence:

- ___ Umayyads take power.
- ___ Damascus becomes the capital.
- ___ Abu Bakr becomes the caliph.
- ___ Muslim empire expands into Persia and Byzantine empire.

CHAPTER
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SECTION 3

Section Summary

MUSLIM CIVILIZATION'S GOLDEN AGE

Muslim civilization enjoyed a golden age under the Abbasids. Their empire stretched into Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. Merchants crossed the Sahara, traveled the Silk Road to China, and sailed to India and Asia. New products and ideas were exchanged, and the religion of Islam was introduced to many regions. All this fueled the Muslim economy, leading to the development of partnerships, the use of credit, and a banking system. Artisans created manufactured goods for trade, and the government helped improve farming through large irrigation systems.

Muslim society allowed some **social mobility**, the ability to move up in social class through religious, scholarly, or military achievements. Most slaves were household servants and some were able to purchase their freedom. The children of some slaves could become free under another system.

The diverse cultures in the empire, as well as Islam, influenced art and literature. Early oral poetry told tales of nomadic life, while later poets developed elaborate rules for poems. Great Muslim poets include **Firdawsi**, who told the history of Persia, and **Omar Khayyám**, who wrote about fate and life in *The Rubáiyát*. Storytellers often used short anecdotes to entertain people. In architecture, buildings reflected Byzantine influences, and mosques included domes and minarets. Muslim artists also used **calligraphy**, the art of beautiful handwriting, for decoration on buildings and in books.

Muslims made great strides in education. Both boys and girls were educated so they could study the Quran. Several cities supported learning centers with vast libraries. There, scholars translated Greek, Hindu, and Buddhist texts. Known in Europe as Averrões, the philosopher **Ibn Rushd** believed that knowledge should meet the standards of reason. Another Muslim thinker, **Ibn Khaldun**, studied history scientifically and advised others in avoiding errors.

In mathematics, **al-Khwarizmi** pioneered the study of algebra. **Muhammad al-Razi**, chief physician in the hospital at Baghdad, wrote books on diseases and medical practices. **Ibn Sina**, a famous Persian physician, compiled an encyclopedia of medical knowledge. Both doctors' works guided medical study in Europe for 500 years. Other physicians improved ways to save eyesight and mix medicines.

Review Questions

1. How did trade affect the Abbasid empire?

2. How did Muslim poetry change during this time?

READING CHECK

Why were children educated?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *anecdotes* mean in the underlined sentence? The word *anecdotes* comes from a Greek word that means "unpublished items." Use this word-origins clue to help you figure out the meaning of *anecdotes*.

READING SKILL

Categorize Categorize the following Muslim advances:

- Mixing medicines
- Elaborate rules for written poems
- Partnerships
- Calligraphy
- A system of credit
- Improvements in treating eye problems

CHAPTER
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SECTION 2

Section Summary

KINGDOMS OF WEST AFRICA

READING CHECK

Who were the Hausa?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *administered* mean in the underlined sentence? It is related to the word *administration*. Think of where you may have heard either word used before. Use this prior knowledge to help you write a definition of *administered*.

READING SKILL

Identify Causes and Effects

Identify the cause and effect of Songhai's decline.

After early farmers moved from the Sahara to more fertile lands to the south, they began to produce more food than they needed, or a **surplus**. They were then able to trade surplus food for goods from other villages. A trade network developed that eventually connected Africa with Asia and Europe. Cities developed along the trade routes.

Much of the trade exchanged gold for salt, each a valuable product or **commodity**. Gold was common in West Africa, while salt was plentiful in the Sahara. However, people needed salt to stay healthy and preserve food. In fact, traders might exchange one pound of salt for one pound of gold.

About A.D. 800, the ancient West African kingdom of **Ghana** became a center of trade. From there, the king controlled the salt and gold trade. In addition, the king administered justice and other government activities, and kept the peace. Ghana was very prosperous and attracted Muslims from the north. They brought new ideas about military technology and business. Later, Ghana was swallowed up by a new power, the rising kingdom of Mali.

About 1235, **Sundiata** established the empire of **Mali**. He gained control of trade routes, the gold mining regions, and the salt supplies. **Mansa Musa**, Mali's greatest ruler, came to power about 1312. He fostered justice and religious freedom. His pilgrimage to Mecca created ties to Muslim states and brought Islamic scholars to Mali to provide religious instruction.

After Mali weakened, another kingdom, **Songhai**, developed in West Africa. After 1492, Songhai's emperor Askia Muhammad established a Muslim dynasty, expanded the territory, and improved the government. He strengthened ties to other Muslim states and built mosques and schools. However, internal conflicts weakened the empire, which was conquered by the sultan of Morocco around 1591.

Smaller societies, such as Benin, also flourished in the region from A.D. 500 to 1500. In the rain forests of the Guinea coast in the 1300s, the people of Benin built farming villages. They also traded pepper, ivory, and slaves to neighbors. At the same time, the Hausa built clay-walled cities. These cities grew into commercial centers, where artisans produced goods, and merchants traded with Arabs. Many Hausa rulers were women.

Review Questions

1. The king of Ghana controlled the trade of which two commodities?

2. What were Mansa Musa's contributions to Mali?

CHAPTER
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SECTION 3

Section Summary

KINGDOMS AND TRADING STATES OF EAST AFRICA

READING CHECK

What was Great Zimbabwe?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *unifying* mean in the underlined sentence? Its prefix *uni-* means "one." Use this word-part clue to help you write a definition of *unifying*.

READING SKILL

Understand Effects How was Swahili an effect of mixed cultures in East Africa?

After 100 B.C., the kingdom of Axum spread from the Ethiopian highlands to the Red Sea coast. Axum included the upland capital city of Axum and the port of **Adulis** on the Red Sea. The peoples of Axum were descended from African farmers and people from the Middle East. By about A.D. 400, Axum controlled a rich trade network connecting Africa, India, and the Mediterranean. Traders exchanged many cultural influences in their travels.

Axum became a Christian kingdom in the 300s. At first, this helped strengthen trade ties with other Christian countries. When Islam began spreading across North Africa in the 600s, however, Axum became isolated and lost power. Civil war and economic decline combined to weaken Axum.

Axum's legacy, however, survived for centuries in a portion of present-day **Ethiopia**. There, Christianity was a unifying influence that helped give Ethiopia a unique identity among Muslim neighbors. A distinct culture developed in Ethiopia. In the 1200s, under **King Lalibela**, Christian churches were carved below ground into mountain rocks. Ethiopian Christianity absorbed local customs.

After Axum declined, Arab and Persian traders established Muslim communities along the East African coast. By the 600s, ships regularly took advantage of monsoon winds to sail to India and back, and the cities in East Africa grew wealthy by trading goods with Africa, Southeast Asia, and China. The cities were independent, and although they competed for power, relations among them were generally peaceful. By the 1000s, the mixture of cultures created unique architecture, as well as a new language and culture, both called **Swahili**. The language was Bantu-based, using some Arabic words and written in Arabic.

Great Zimbabwe, the capital of a great inland Zimbabwe empire, was built by a succession of Bantu-speaking peoples between 900 and 1500. It reached its height around 1300. The city included great stone buildings, and its people mined gold and traded goods across the Indian Ocean. By the 1500s, the empire of Zimbabwe was in decline. Later, Portuguese traders tried, but failed, to find the region's source of gold.

Review Questions

1. How did the spread of Islam in North Africa affect the Axum empire?

2. How did Axum's decline affect trade in East Africa?

CHAPTER
11
SECTION 4

Section Summary

SOCIETIES IN MEDIEVAL AFRICA

READING CHECK

Who were the griots?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *complex* mean in the underlined sentence? Look for clues to its meaning in that sentence and the following sentences. Use these context clues to help you write a definition of *complex*.

READING SKILL

Recognize Multiple Causes

What caused different political patterns to develop?

In small societies in medieval Africa, the **nuclear family**, or one set of parents and their children, lived and worked together. In other societies, the family included several generations. **Patrilineal** families passed inheritances through the father's side of the family, while **matrilineal** families passed property down through the mother's side. Each family belonged to a **lineage**, a group of households with a common ancestor, and a clan included several lineages descended from a common ancestor.

Political patterns depended on the size and culture of a community. In small societies, political power was often shared among a number of people. Village decisions were often made by **consensus**, or general agreement, after open discussions. Because elders had experience, their opinions usually carried the greatest weight. Women sometimes took strong roles in the marketplace or as peacemakers.

Large empires usually required villages to obey decisions made by distant rulers and their courts. Another form of government that developed grouped many villages into districts and provinces governed by the king's officials. Around A.D. 1500, Kongo, a kingdom in central Africa, governed in this way. The king had limited powers. Villagers were governed by appointed royal officials, but each village had its own chief.

Early African religions were varied and complex. They involved many gods, goddesses, rituals, and ceremonies. Many people believed in one supreme being, and some honored the spirits of ancestors. By A.D. 1000, Christianity and Islam had spread and absorbed many local practices and beliefs.

The tradition of African arts includes the Egyptian pyramids, built 4,000 years ago. Much art served decorative, religious, or ceremonial purposes, such as cloths, pottery, and jewelry. Objects often had symbolic meanings, such as the bright blue-and-gold kente cloth of West Africa, which was reserved for the wealthy and powerful.

Medieval written histories from Africa provide records of laws, religion, and society. Arabic provided a common written language in Muslim areas, and Muslim scholars gathered in important cities. In West Africa, **griots**, or professional storytellers, kept traditions alive by reciting ancient stories and histories. Folktales and other stories encouraged a sense of community and common values.

Review Questions

1. What are a lineage and a clan?

2. How did the rulers of the Kongo control their lands?

CHAPTER
12
SECTION 1

Section Summary

TWO GOLDEN AGES OF CHINA

READING CHECK

What are tributary states?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *compelled* mean in the underlined sentence? Note that Li Shimin *compelled* his father to step down and then took the throne himself. Use this context clue to help you understand the meaning of the word *compelled*.

READING SKILL

Compare and Contrast Compare and contrast the social classes in Tang and Song China.

After the Han dynasty collapsed, China broke apart. During the Sui dynasty (589–618), the emperor Sui Wendi reunited north and south. In 618, the general Li Yuan and his son Li Shimin led a revolt and established the **Tang dynasty**. Eight years later, Li Shimin compelled his aging father to step down. Li Shimin then took the throne under the name **Tang Taizong**. Later Tang rulers conquered many territories and forced Vietnam, Tibet, and Korea to become **tributary states**, or self-governing states that sent tribute. Other Tang rulers, such as Empress Wu Zhao, restored the Han system of uniform government. Tang emperors also undertook **land reform** in which they redistributed land to peasants. However, the Tang eventually weakened. In 907, the last Tang emperor was overthrown.

In 960, Zhao Kuangyin founded the **Song dynasty**. The Song ruled for 319 years. They faced the constant threat of invaders from the north. Nonetheless, the Song period was a time of great achievement. A new type of faster-growing rice was imported from Southeast Asia. The rise in productivity created food surpluses, freeing more people to pursue commerce, learning, or the arts.

Under the Tang and Song, China was a well-ordered society. At its head was the emperor. Scholar-officials had the highest social status. Most of them came from the **gentry**, or wealthy, landowning class. The vast majority of Chinese were poor peasant farmers. Merchants had the lowest status because their riches came from the labor of others. Women had higher status during this period than they did later. However, when a woman married, she could not keep her **dowry**, the payment that a woman brings to a marriage. She could also never remarry.

The Tang and Song developed a rich culture. Song landscape painting was influenced by Daoist beliefs. Buddhist themes influenced Chinese sculpture and architecture. The Indian stupa evolved into the Chinese **pagoda**. The Chinese also perfected the making of porcelain. Among the gentry, poetry was the most respected form of literature. Probably the greatest Tang poet was Li Bo, who wrote some 2,000 poems.

Review Questions

1. What effect did the introduction of a new, faster-growing rice have on Chinese society?

2. What religious beliefs influenced Song landscape painting?

CHAPTER
12
SECTION 3

Section Summary

KOREA AND ITS TRADITIONS

READING CHECK

What is hangul?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *evolved* mean in the underlined sentence? When species *evolve*, do they change quickly or slowly? Use this clue to help you understand the meaning of *evolved*.

READING SKILL

Categorize List events and developments during each of the three Korean dynasties.

Korea is located on a peninsula that juts south from the Chinese mainland. Because of its location, Korea has been strongly influenced by China. The earliest Koreans probably migrated from Siberia and northern Manchuria. They evolved their own ways of life before they were influenced by China. In 108 B.C., the Han emperor, Wudi, invaded Korea. The invasion brought with it Confucian traditions and Chinese ideas.

Between A.D. 300 and 600, local rulers forged three kingdoms in Korea: Koguryo, Paekche, and Silla. The three kingdoms often warred with one another or with China. Still, Chinese ideas continued to spread there. Missionaries brought Buddhism to Korea. Korean monks then traveled to China and brought home Chinese arts and learning. In 668, the Silla kingdom united the Korean peninsula. Under the **Silla dynasty**, Korea became a tributary state of China. As Chinese influence increased, Confucian views took root. However, Koreans adapted Confucian ideas to fit their own traditions.

The **Koryo dynasty** replaced the Silla in 935. Confucianism and Buddhism were both influential during this time. Koreans used woodblock printing from China to produce Buddhist texts. They learned to make Chinese porcelain. They then perfected the technique for making **celadon**, a porcelain with an unusual blue-green glaze.

The Mongols first invaded Korea in 1231 and occupied the country until the 1350s. When their rule collapsed, the Koryo returned to power. However, in 1392, the Korean general Yi Song-gye overthrew them and set up the **Choson dynasty**. This was the longest-lasting, but final, Korean dynasty.

In 1443, **King Sejong** decided to replace complex Chinese writing. Sejong had experts develop **hangul**, the Korean phonetic alphabet. Hangul spread quickly because it was easier to use than written Chinese. Its use led to an extremely high **literacy rate**.

In the 1590s, the Japanese armies invaded Korea. To stop the invaders at sea, Korean Admiral Yi Sun-shin sailed armored ships into the Japanese fleet. After six years, the Japanese armies withdrew from Korea. As they left, they carried off many Korean artisans in order to introduce their skills to Japan.

Review Questions

1. How did Korea's location affect its cultural development?

2. Why did Japanese invaders carry off many Korean artisans?

CHAPTER
12
SECTION 4

Section Summary

THE EMERGENCE OF JAPAN AND THE FEUDAL AGE

READING CHECK

What is bushido?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *stressed* mean in the underlined sentence? When you put *stress* on a syllable, do you say it with more or less emphasis? Use this clue to help you understand what *stressed* means in this sentence.

READING SKILL

Categorize List the levels in Japanese feudal society and give details about each level.

Japan sits on an **archipelago**, or chain of islands. In early times, surrounding seas both protected and isolated Japan. This region has many volcanoes, earthquakes, and tidal waves called **tsunamis**.

Early Japanese society was divided into clans. The clans honored kami, or powers that were natural or divine. The worship of these forces of nature became known as **Shinto**. Missionaries from Korea introduced Buddhism to Japan in the 500s. They also brought knowledge of Chinese culture. In the 600s, Prince Shotoku sent nobles to study in China. The visitors brought back Chinese technology and arts. In 710, the Japanese emperor built a new capital at Nara, modeled after the Chinese capital.

The Japanese kept some Chinese ways but discarded others. This process is known as **selective borrowing**. The Japanese revised the Chinese writing system and added **kana**, symbols representing syllables. From 794 to 1185, Heian was the Japanese capital. Heian women, such as Murasaki Shikibu, produced some of the most important works of Japanese literature.

Japan evolved into a feudal society. Theoretically, the emperor was the head of this society, but really he was powerless. The shogun, or supreme military commander, had the real power. Minamoto Yoritomo was appointed shogun in 1192. He set up the Kamakura shogunate. The shogun distributed land to lords, called daimyo, who agreed to support him with their armies. They, in turn, granted land to lesser warriors called **samurai**. Samurai developed a code of values, known as **bushido**. The code emphasized honor, bravery, and loyalty to one's lord.

Kublai Khan tried to invade Japan in 1274 and 1281, but typhoons wrecked the Mongol ships during both invasions. However, after the attempted invasions, the Kamakura shogunate crumbled. By 1590, Toyotomi Hideyoshi had brought most of Japan under his control. In 1600, Tokugawa Ieyasu defeated his rivals to become master of Japan. The Tokugawa shoguns created an orderly society. With peace restored to the countryside, agriculture improved and trade flourished.

During Japan's feudal age, a Buddhist sect known as **Zen** won widespread acceptance. Zen monks were great scholars, yet they stressed the importance of reaching a moment of "non-knowing."

Review Questions

1. How did the surrounding seas affect Japan's development?

2. How did the shogun gain the support of the daimyo?

CHAPTER
12
SECTION 5

Section Summary

DIVERSE CULTURES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

Southeast Asia is made up of two regions: mainland Southeast Asia, which includes present-day Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Malaysia; and island Southeast Asia, which consists of more than 20,000 islands. These islands include the present-day nations of Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, and the Philippines.

Historically, sea trade between China and India had to pass through the Malacca or Sunda straits, so the islands that controlled these straits were strategically important. Women took part in the spice trade and had greater equality there than they did elsewhere in Asia. **Matrilineal** descent, or inheritance through the mother, was an accepted custom in this region.

In the early centuries A.D., Indian merchants and Hindu priests slowly spread their culture through Southeast Asia. Later, monks introduced Theravada Buddhism. Indian traders eventually carried Islam to Indonesia, and as far east as the Philippines. Trade with India brought prosperity. Merchants exchanged cotton cloth, jewels, and perfume for timber, spices, and gold.

A series of kingdoms and empires developed in Southeast Asia. The kingdom of Pagan arose in present-day Myanmar. In 1044, King Anawrahta united the region and brought Buddhism to his people. He filled his capital city with magnificent **stupas**, or dome-shaped shrines. Indian influences also shaped the Khmer empire, which reached its peak between 800 and 1350. Its greatest rulers controlled much of present-day Cambodia, Thailand, and Malaysia. Khmer rulers became Hindus, but most people were Buddhists. In Indonesia, the trading empire of Srivijaya flourished from the 600s to the 1200s. Both Hinduism and Buddhism reached Srivijaya.

The heart of northern Vietnam was the Red River delta. There, the river irrigated fertile rice **paddies**. In 111 B.C., Han armies conquered the region, and China remained in control for the next 1,000 years. During that time, the Vietnamese absorbed Confucian ideas. Unlike the rest of Southeast Asia, where Theravada Buddhism had the strongest impact, Vietnam adopted Mahayana Buddhism from China. In A.D. 39, two noble sisters, Trung Trac and Trung Nhi, led an uprising that briefly drove out the Chinese. Finally, in 939, Vietnam was able to break free from China.

Review Questions

1. Why were the islands of Southeast Asia strategically important?

2. Why was Vietnam influenced more by Confucian and Mahayana beliefs than by Hindu and Theravada beliefs?

READING CHECK

What is matrilineal descent?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *impact* mean in the underlined sentence? The sentence contrasts the power of Buddhist beliefs in Vietnam with the power of Buddhist beliefs in the rest of Southeast Asia. Use this context clue to help you understand the meaning of the word *impact*.

READING SKILL

Summarize Summarize the influence of India on Southeast Asia.
