

CHAPTER
29

Mainland Southeast Asia

Mainland Southeast Asia includes five countries: Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, and Vietnam. The region's mountains, rain forests, and river valleys have nurtured distinct cultures. The entire region has tropical environments, with most of the population concentrated along major river valleys.

Sawaddee! (May you have good fortune!) I am Chosita, and I am 14 years old. I live in Bangkok with my parents and older sister. My mother is a colonel in the Royal Thai Air Force and my father is a government economist.

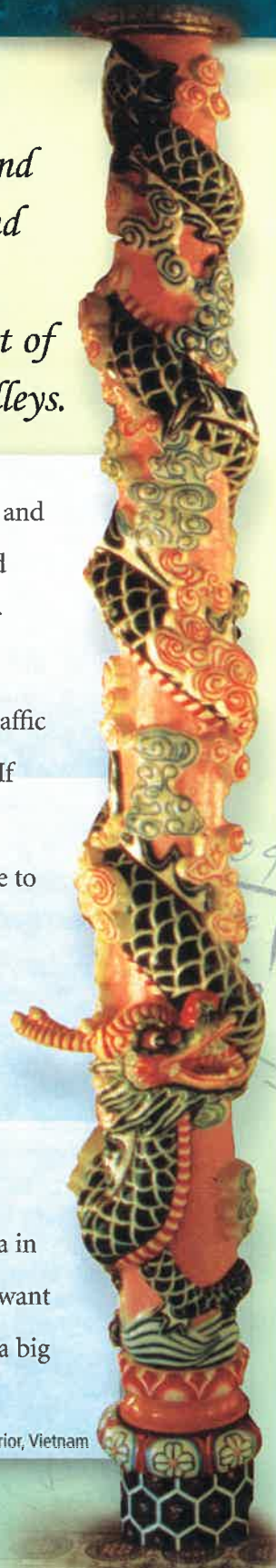
My sister and I get up very early for school because traffic in Bangkok is really bad. By 6:00 A.M. we are on the road. If traffic isn't too bad, we get to school in about 30 minutes.

However, if traffic is heavy, it takes more than an hour. We go to school from June to September and from November to February. Our big "summer" vacation is from March to May.

Our school is near Jatujak Park, where the city government has relocated all the street vendors in Bangkok to help ease downtown traffic. However, people come to Jatujak to buy everything from food to shoes, clothing, and souvenirs, so traffic is still a big problem.

In my free time, I like to listen to music, watch TV, or go to the beach. The sea in the south is beautiful, and the beaches are not very crowded. I'm not sure what I want to be when I grow up—maybe an economist like my father or an accountant for a big firm. I still have quite a few more years to think about it.

Banana seller,
Vietnam



Detail of temple interior, Vietnam

Section 1

Natural Environments

HOLT Geography's Impact Video Series

Watch the video to understand the impact of a country's location on the domino theory.

READ TO DISCOVER

1. What are mainland Southeast Asia's major landforms and rivers?
2. Which climate and vegetation types are found in the region, and what animals live there?
3. What are some of mainland Southeast Asia's main resources?

DEFINE

arboreal

LOCATE

Bay of Bengal
Andaman Sea
Malay Peninsula
Gulf of Thailand
South China Sea
Gulf of Tonkin
Indochina Peninsula

Khorat Plateau
Irrawaddy River
Chao Phraya River
Mekong River
Hong (Red) River
Tonle Sap

Reading Strategy

VISUALIZING INFORMATION Before you read, preview the physical-political map of mainland Southeast Asia. Make notes about features you see on the map that you think will help you understand what you are about to read. For example, what physical features do the countries have in common? What differences do you see? How might these similarities and differences affect each country's climate? As you read, explain how the features on the map relate to the materials in the section. Include key terms and their definitions.



Mainland Southeast Asia: Physical-Political





GO TO: go.hrw.com

KEYWORD: SW3 CH29

FOR: Web sites about mainland Southeast Asia



Landforms and Rivers

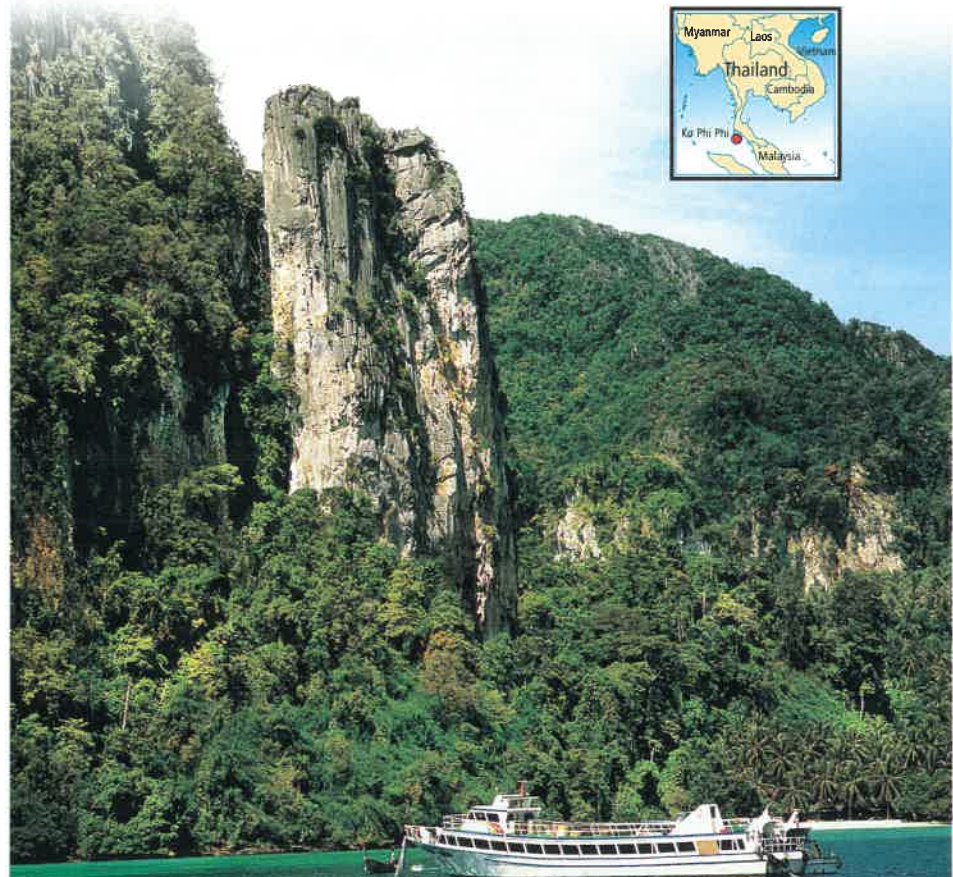
Mainland Southeast Asia stretches southward from the Asian landmass. To the west lie the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. The narrow Malay Peninsula, which includes part of Thailand, extends to the south. In the east, the Gulf of Thailand, South China Sea, and Gulf of Tonkin surround the Indochina Peninsula. Laos is the region's only landlocked country.

The area has three main landform regions. In the north, rugged mountain ranges fan out from the Himalayas and the Plateau of Tibet. They stretch into Myanmar (MYAHN-mar), Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. A central region of plains and low plateaus lies to the south in Thailand and Cambodia. Thailand's Khorat (koh-RAHT) Plateau is there. River valleys and deltas make up the third main landform region.

Four major rivers flow southward from Asia's mountainous interior. The Irrawaddy (ir-ah-WAH-dee) empties into the Bay of Bengal. The Chao Phraya (chow PRY-uh) flows into the Gulf of Thailand. The Mekong (MAY-KAWNG), the region's longest river, borders Thailand. It flows through Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam to the South China Sea. The Hong (Red) River flows across northern Vietnam into the Gulf of Tonkin. The valleys and deltas of these large rivers have fertile alluvial soils, which support intensive farming and dense populations. The rivers have also been useful for local transportation. In addition, they have influenced the locations and growth of the region's cities.

Southeast Asia's largest freshwater lake is Tonle Sap (tohn-LAY SAP) in Cambodia. During the dry season, a river flows south from the lake into the Mekong River. However, during the wet season, the Mekong's water level is higher than the lake. As a result, water pushes upstream into Tonle Sap, more than doubling the lake's size.

 **READING CHECK:** *Places and Regions* What are the region's major rivers? What type of soils would you find in their valleys and deltas?



Southern Thailand's Phi Phi Islands, or Ko Phi Phi in the Thai language, are famous for spectacular karst landscapes. Limestone cliffs have eroded to create these towering karst formations.



INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

A boat approaches a house isolated by the flooded Mekong River. Floodwaters can rise to 22 feet (7 m) along the Mekong during the rainy season. How does this photo suggest that Cambodians have adapted to living in an area prone to floods?

Climates, Plants, and Animals

All of mainland Southeast Asia has tropical or subtropical climates. Precipitation is high throughout the region. Most coastal areas have a tropical humid climate with heavy rainfall. Interior plains and plateaus have a tropical wet and dry climate. The driest region is the Khorat Plateau in eastern Thailand. A tropical wet and dry climate extends across central Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and southern Vietnam. A humid subtropical climate region is found in northern Myanmar, Laos, and northern Vietnam.

Mainland Southeast Asia is greatly affected by the monsoon wind system. This system causes a rainfall pattern with distinct wet and dry seasons. Summer winds from the southwest bring heavy rainfall. The mainland gets most of its rainfall during this season. Winter brings dry winds that blow from the northeast.

The monsoons create serious natural hazards. During the wet monsoon, severe flooding is common. On the other hand, fires can be a major problem in the dry season. Between monsoons in the fall, Vietnam is sometimes hit by powerful typhoons. Myanmar lies in the path of typhoons that come in from the Bay of Bengal.

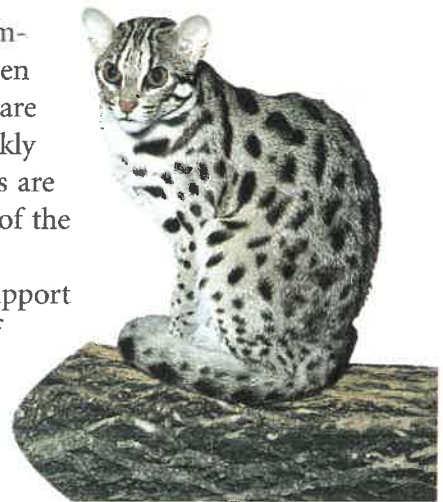
The region's tropical and subtropical climates support a great number of plants and animals. While much of the environment has been greatly modified by people, large areas remain almost untouched. Rare and endangered plants and animals live in these areas. Some thickly forested mountain areas are so rugged and inaccessible that scientists are still discovering new species there. To protect the environment, some of the region's countries have created large national parks and reserves.

The thick tropical rain forests of many lowland and coastal areas support **arboreal**, or tree-dwelling, animals such as monkeys. A wide range of birds also live in the rain forests. Many fish species and other marine life live in coastal mangroves. These mangroves are particularly common in places where mud is deposited along the shore. Drier inland areas have monsoon forests. These forests of broadleaf trees are not as dense as tropical rain forests.

✓ **READING CHECK:** **Places and Regions** What climates does the region have? Where is the driest region?



In the 1990s biologists working in the remote mountains of Laos and Vietnam discovered at least five new mammal species. These species included a striped rabbit, a deer that barks like a dog, and a 200-pound wild ox.



Leopard cats are native to the forests of Southeast Asia. Sometimes hunted for their pelts, these arboreal cats are now protected by law.

Natural Resources

Southeast Asia's tropical rain forests hold valuable hardwoods such as mahogany, teak, and ebony. Large areas have been logged for these woods or cleared by growing populations. Until recently there has been little concern for conservation or for replanting trees.

The continued clearing of tropical rain forests has damaged the habitat of endangered wildlife such as tigers and elephants. Removing trees and other plants has also led to flooding and soil erosion. In addition, a soil type common in the area, called laterite, hardens and becomes useless when the forest cover is removed. Some countries have tried to slow the deforestation. For example, Thailand has set up national parks to protect key areas and banned logging for export. However, in most countries logging and habitat loss continue at a rapid pace. (See Case Study: Studying Deforestation.)

Mainland Southeast Asia also has valuable minerals and fossil fuels. Iron, manganese, tin, and tungsten are found there. The region exports gems, including sapphires and rubies. In addition, Thailand has natural gas, Myanmar has oil, and Vietnam has coal. The large rivers have potential for the development of hydropower. Laos plans to build dams for hydropower in the near future. However, building dams may interfere with the natural soil-forming processes of the river valleys.

Although logging for export has been outlawed in Thailand since 1989, illegal operators continue to smuggle teak out of the country. Often elephants move the heavy logs. However, harsh treatment threatens the working elephants, and habitat destruction endangers the survival of those still living in the wild.



✓ READING CHECK:

Environment and Society How has clearing the region's rain forests affected the environment?

Section 1

Review

Define arboreal

Working with Sketch Maps

On a map of mainland Southeast Asia that you draw or that your teacher provides, label the Bay of Bengal, Andaman Sea, Malay Peninsula, Gulf of Thailand, South China Sea, Gulf of Tonkin, Indochina Peninsula, Khorat Plateau, Irrawaddy River, Chao Phraya River, Mekong River, Hong (Red) River, and Tonle Sap. Which is mainland Southeast Asia's longest river?

Reading for the Main Idea

- Places and Regions** What are the major landform regions of mainland Southeast Asia?
- Physical Systems** How does the monsoon system influence the region's climates?
- Environment and Society** How may building dams affect the environment?

Critical Thinking

- Analyzing Information** How is the distribution of mangroves in the region related to soils?

go-hrw.com Homework Practice Online
Keyword: SW3 HP29

Organizing What You Know

- Copy the chart below. Use it to describe mainland Southeast Asia's four major rivers.

River	Flows through	Empties into
Irrawaddy		
Chao Phraya		
Mekong		
Hong (Red)		

Section 2

History and Culture

READ TO DISCOVER

1. What are some major events in mainland Southeast Asia's history?
2. What are the main cultural features of the region?

Reading Strategy

BRAINSTORMING Write the letters of the alphabet down the side of a sheet of paper. Working with a partner, brainstorm what you already know about the history and culture of Southeast Asia. List your ideas by as many letters as possible. Use the key terms as clues.

DEFINE

domino theory

LOCATE

Angkor Wat

History

Southeast Asia has been inhabited for a long time. The earliest ancestors of the region's peoples arrived at least 1.5 million years ago. Modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) have lived in Southeast Asia for at least 40,000 years.

Southeast Asia was an important center of plant domestication. Early peoples grew rice, citrus fruits, and bananas. By about 3000 B.C. rice farming had been established, and people had domesticated buffalo, pigs, and cattle. Evidence indicates that people from southern China began to migrate through the region at least 2,500 years ago. Over time, settlements headed by chiefs grew, and trade developed with China and India. Merchants from India probably introduced Sanskrit writing and Hinduism during this period.

Angkor Wat in Cambodia, built in the 1100s by King Suryavarman II as a Hindu temple, is the largest religious complex ever constructed. Inset: Statues line the road into the Bayon Temple near Angkor Wat.





The Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, Myanmar, is a shrine sacred to the country's Buddhists. Tradition dates the gold-covered pagoda to the 500s B.C. The structure seen here, though, was rebuilt in the 1770s.

Early Cultures and Settlement Over the centuries various peoples moved into the region, particularly from China. The largest highly developed culture group in the region was the Khmer (kuh-MER). The Khmer dominated what is now Cambodia beginning in the A.D. 800s. By the end of the 1100s, their empire included most of mainland Southeast Asia. Angkor Wat, a huge temple complex built by the Khmer, reflects their advanced civilization and Hindu religion. In the 1200s the Thais (TYZ) migrated from southern China into the Khmer regions. Buddhism, introduced earlier from India and Sri Lanka, spread across mainland Southeast Asia, replacing Hinduism.

✓ **READING CHECK: Human Systems** From where did Hinduism and Buddhism diffuse into the region?

Colonialism and Independence Europeans came to Southeast Asia in the early 1500s. Portuguese and Dutch sailors set up posts for trading in spices and other goods. Traders from Great Britain and France followed. Eventually, most of the region was colonized. Burma (now Myanmar) was a British colony. The French controlled Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, all of which they called Indochine, or French Indochina. Only Siam (now Thailand) was never colonized by Europeans.

During the 1800s the British and French set up plantations for growing export crops. They also built roads and railroads. They set up English- and French-language schools and introduced Christianity. Many

Chinese and Indians migrated into the region during this period. They came to work on French and British plantations, mines, and railroads.

The Japanese invaded Southeast Asia during World War II. Only parts of Burma remained free of Japanese control. After the war, nationalist groups in the region tried to end colonialism. Over time four newly independent countries emerged. French Indochina was split into three countries—Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Burma became independent from Britain. In 1989 Burma changed its name to Myanmar.

The transition to independence was not easy. In Vietnam, internal conflict led to a civil war involving the United States. (See Connecting to History: The Vietnam War.) The United States was involved because it wanted to stop the spread of communism in Asia. U.S. policy was based on the **domino theory**. This was the idea that if one country fell to communism, neighboring countries would follow like falling dominoes. The war in Vietnam also disrupted the neighboring countries of Laos and Cambodia.

✓ **READING CHECK: Human Systems** Why did migrants from India and China come to the region during the European colonial era?



In 1994 the U.S. space shuttle *Endeavour* scanned the Angkor area with radar. This and other remotely sensed images revealed the presence of previously unknown buildings.

Culture

Each country in the region has one dominant cultural group. These are the Burmans, Thais, Khmer, Lao, and Vietnamese. However, there are differences within each group. For example, China has influenced culture in northern Vietnam, while Khmer influences are more pronounced in southern Vietnam. Each of the region's countries is also home to many minority groups. These groups have their own cultures and languages.

People, Languages, and Religion Mainland Southeast Asia has three main language families. They are spoken by the largest ethnic groups. In the west the Burmans speak a Sino-Tibetan language related to Chinese. Languages of the Tai family are spoken in Thailand and Laos. These languages—Thai and Laotian—may have originated in southwestern China. In the east the Vietnamese and Khmer peoples speak languages from the Austro-Asiatic family.

Many of the region's smaller ethnic groups live in mountain areas. In fact, more than 50 ethnic groups live in the Vietnamese highlands. They include the Cham, Yao, Hmong (MONG), and Muong. Many of these people have maintained their traditional ways of life. (See Geography for Life: Keeping Traditional Ways of Life in Myanmar.) For example, they practice animism, wear unique clothing and jewelry, and remain cut off from mainstream cultures.

Most of the region's major cities have large Chinese populations. About 14 percent of Thailand's population is ethnic Chinese. In addition, the colonial languages

Connecting to

HISTORY

The Vietnam War

Vietnam's struggle for independence from France was long and hard. After years of fighting following World War II, the Vietnamese defeated the French in 1954. A peace settlement then divided Vietnam into two parts. North Vietnam had a Communist government, with its capital at Hanoi. In South Vietnam a pro-Western government was set up with its capital at Saigon. The two Vietnams could not come to an agreement about reunification, or rejoining as one country.

Communist groups supported by North Vietnam fought to control South Vietnam. The United States supported the South Vietnamese forces, entering directly into the conflict in late 1964. A long and bitter war followed. Nearly 2 million Vietnamese and more than 58,000 Americans lost their lives during the Vietnam War. The war even spread across the border into Laos and Cambodia. Most U.S. forces left South Vietnam in 1973. In 1975, North Vietnamese forces occupied Saigon, which they renamed Ho Chi Minh City in honor of their late leader.

More than 1 million South Vietnamese tried to escape the Communist takeover. Many became refugees in nearby countries. Some eventually settled in Western countries, particularly the United States, Australia, and France.

Drawing Inferences and Conclusions How did the Vietnam War affect the cultural geography of the United States?

In this 1975 photo, refugees flee to Saigon from cities taken by Communist forces. Local people offer food and drink.





of French and English are often spoken in the region. For example, English has become the language of international business in Southeast Asia. Some people in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos still speak French.

The region's dominant religion is Buddhism. Thailand, Cambodia, and Myanmar all have large Buddhist majorities. Most of the region's Buddhists practice a form of Buddhism called Theravada. They claim that Theravada, one of 18 major branches of Buddhism, is closest to the Buddha's original

INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

Thai Buddhists bring offerings of food and incense to a Bangkok temple. Theravada Buddhism has been Thailand's main religion since the 1300s. How might Buddhist traditions help unify the Thai people?

teachings. Buddhism and Hinduism coexist in a unique way in Thailand. There Hindu Brahmins lead most of the royal or official ceremonies.

Most Vietnamese practice a mix of Confucianism, which came from China, and Buddhism. Christianity and Islam are also present in the region. Animist religions are common in the highlands of Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar.

✓ **READING CHECK:** *Human Systems* What European languages are still spoken in mainland Southeast Asia? What religions are practiced there?

Hmong women in Laos sew elaborate new clothes for the New Year to prevent bad fortune throughout the year.



Food, Traditions, and Customs In the region's big cities, American fast food restaurants draw many new customers. Still, the most important food throughout mainland Southeast Asia is rice. In most places, rice is part of every meal. Other typical foods are fish and vegetables. Native tropical fruits like bananas, citrus, and durian are also available. Durian is a fruit known for its sweet flavor and unpleasant smell. The durian's odor is so strong, in fact, that some hotels and buses post signs forbidding the fruit. Spices such as ginger and chili peppers add flavor to regional dishes. Lime juice, lemon grass, and coriander add tang. Ground peanuts and coconut milk are other flavorings. Fish

sauces are popular throughout the region. These sauces, which have different names in different countries, are based on the liquid poured off of salted, fermented fish. Sometimes chilies or sugar flavor the fish sauce. Spicy sauces with Indian origins called curries are popular in Thailand. Curries usually flavor rice or vegetables. Thais often wash down their spicy food with sugarcane juice. Vietnamese food is particularly varied, with nearly 500 traditional dishes. Some use exotic meats, such as bat or cobra. Plain white rice with various sauces is now typical fare, however.

Buddhism shapes people's lives in mainland Southeast Asia. For example, Thai men often spend time working and serving in monasteries. In Laos, all



Buddhist men have traditionally been expected to become monks for a while. One of Myanmar's main holidays is the Festival of Light, which marks an event in the Buddha's life. Paper lanterns light up the streets, and families visit the local shrine. Also in Myanmar, a water festival called Thingyan marks the country's Buddhist New Year. The festival celebrates the cleansing of the soul and washing away of the old year. During this mid-April festival, people in the streets soak each other with water. Since the event falls during the hottest season, the buckets of cold water may be welcome! Other countries celebrate the new lunar year in similar ways.

Throughout the region, cultures of urban and rural areas may differ widely. Many rural people follow the same practices generation after generation. For example, village religious festivals may celebrate local animist beliefs. Country people are more likely to wear garments such as the *panung* in Thailand and the *longyi* in Myanmar. A *panung* is a colorful cotton or silk cloth wrapped tightly around the body. A *longyi* is a long skirt. Western clothing is common in urban areas.

INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

Two different education systems are pictured in these photographs. At left, Thai boys study at the Wat Po monastery in Bangkok. At right, Vietnamese girls attend a state school in Ho Chi Minh City. What are some ways in which these schools might differ?

READING CHECK: *Places and Regions* How is Buddhism a unifying element of the region's culture?



Review

go.hrw.com Homework Practice Online
Keyword: SW3 HP29

Define domino theory

Working with Sketch Maps On the map of mainland Southeast Asia that you created in Section 1, label the countries of mainland Southeast Asia and Angkor Wat. Shade in the countries that made up French Indochina. Which culture group built Angkor Wat?

Reading for the Main Idea

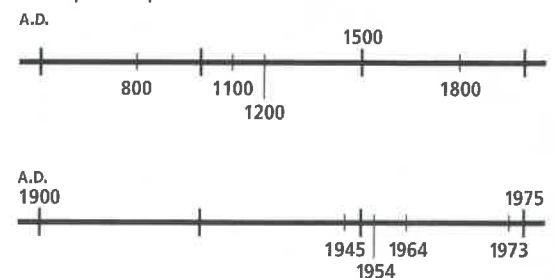
- Places and Regions** What were some of the first crops grown in mainland Southeast Asia?
- Places and Regions** Which two European countries had large colonies in mainland Southeast Asia? How did the U.S. military become involved in the region?
- Human Systems** What is the dominant religion throughout mainland Southeast Asia? What is unique about religious practices in Thailand?

Critical Thinking

- Analyzing** How has mainland Southeast Asia's location between India and China affected its culture?

Organizing What You Know

- Create two time lines like the ones shown below. Use the time lines to trace the region's history through important periods and events.



Geography for Life

Keeping Traditional Ways of Life in Myanmar

Traditions—established ways of thinking, acting, and behaving—are valued for many reasons. Traditional activities help people connect with their ancestors, land, and environment. In a world of rapid change, traditions offer a sense of stability. On the other hand, some traditions are controversial. For example, the shifting agriculture practiced by some peoples can damage the environment. Other customs may sharply limit the choices that women can make.

Indigenous cultures are particularly rooted in tradition. However, these cultures are under increasing pressure from the modern world. Modernization and economic development make it harder and harder for some to maintain their ways of life. These peoples are often viewed as backward by the majority culture in control of a country's politics, economic growth, and land use policies. The majority may dominate indigenous minority groups and force them to assimilate into modern society.

One example of the challenges facing traditional cultures is in Myanmar. Myanmar's largest ethnic group—the Burmans—make up about 68 percent of the country's population. The Burmans occupy the lowlands, river valleys, and large cities of Myanmar. As the country's largest ethnic group, they dominate Myanmar's government. However, Myanmar is also home to many smaller ethnic groups with different languages and cultures. Some of these groups include the Shan,

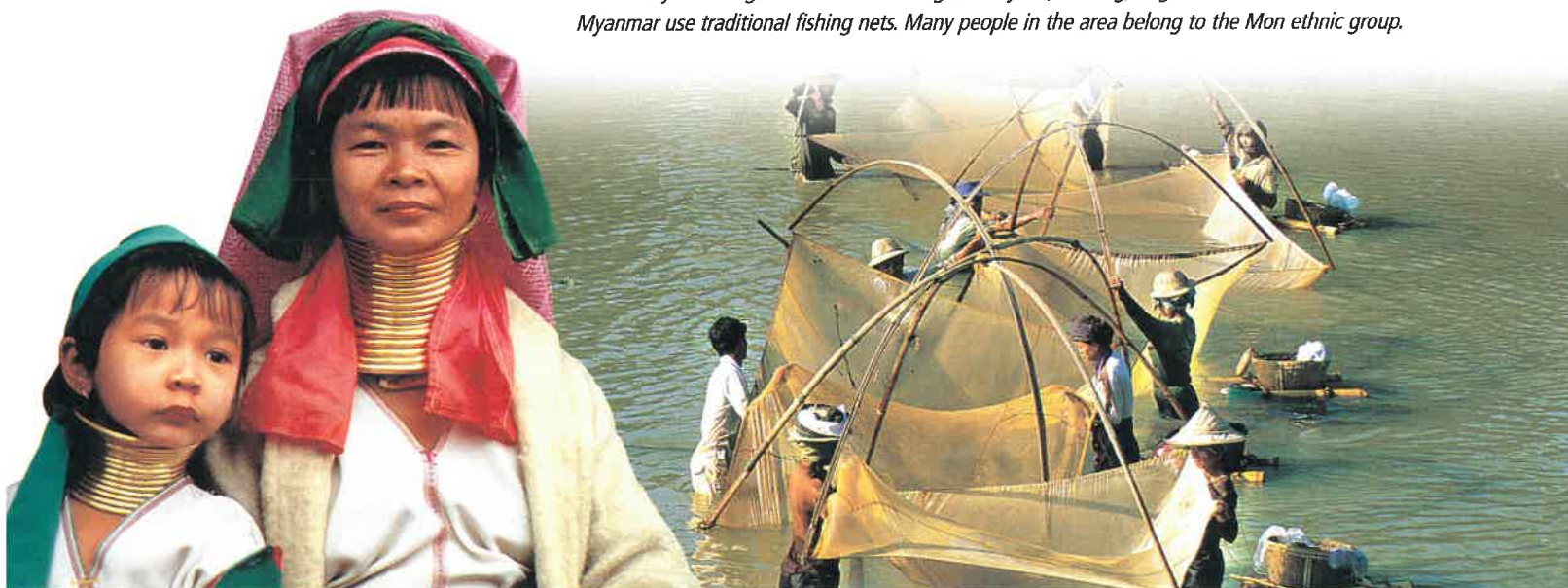
Karen, Rakhine, Mon, Chin, and Kachin. In general, Myanmar's minority groups live in the hills and uplands near the country's borders. In fact, they are often referred to collectively as the hill peoples. Most of these peoples live in small villages and practice animism.

Since Myanmar became independent from Great Britain in 1948, many of the country's minority groups have struggled to maintain their identity and culture. Rapid economic and social change has altered old ways of life, particularly among younger generations. Minority groups have resisted government attempts at cultural assimilation. They have also demanded political freedom and basic human rights. Some have even taken up arms against the government. For example, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and Karen National Union (KNU) are fighting for independent states. Such conflicts are not uncommon in other parts of the world.

Applying What You Know

- Summarizing** How have the peoples who live in the hills and uplands of Myanmar struggled to maintain their traditional ways of life?
- Supporting a Point of View** Do you think younger generations are more or less likely to maintain traditional ways of life? Why?

Left: Heavy neck rings are common among the Kayan (Padaung). Right: Fishers in east-central Myanmar use traditional fishing nets. Many people in the area belong to the Mon ethnic group.



Section 3

The Region Today

READ TO DISCOVER

1. What are the economies and politics of mainland Southeast Asia like?
2. What types of agriculture are practiced in the region?
3. What issues and challenges do the region's countries face?

Reading Strategy

DEVELOPING VOCABULARY Find unfamiliar words in this section. On a sheet of paper, write down what you think each word means. Use context clues to help figure out the meaning. Look each word up in a dictionary to verify its meaning. Then, write an explanation of how each word relates to the section's topics.

IDENTIFY

ASEAN

DEFINE

wats
klongs

LOCATE

Bangkok
Ho Chi Minh City
Hanoi
Yangon (Rangoon)
Phnom Penh
Vientiane

Economic and Political Development

The countries of mainland Southeast Asia have different levels of development. Some of them, such as Laos and Cambodia, are very poor and undeveloped. In contrast, Thailand has experienced rapid industrialization. In fact, it is one of the "Asian Tigers." This group of East and Southeast Asian countries includes Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan. All have experienced rapid economic expansion since the 1980s.

Myanmar is rich in natural resources. However, the country's military government has kept its economy and people isolated. The Burmese have little freedom and remain poor. Both Laos and Vietnam have Communist governments. They have been trying to improve their economies by slowly accepting some features of capitalism. Vietnam has dynamic private businesses, but government policies still limit their growth. Still, Thailand is the region's leading economic power. It is a constitutional monarchy. Industry, agriculture, fishing, mining, and tourism drive Thailand's economy.

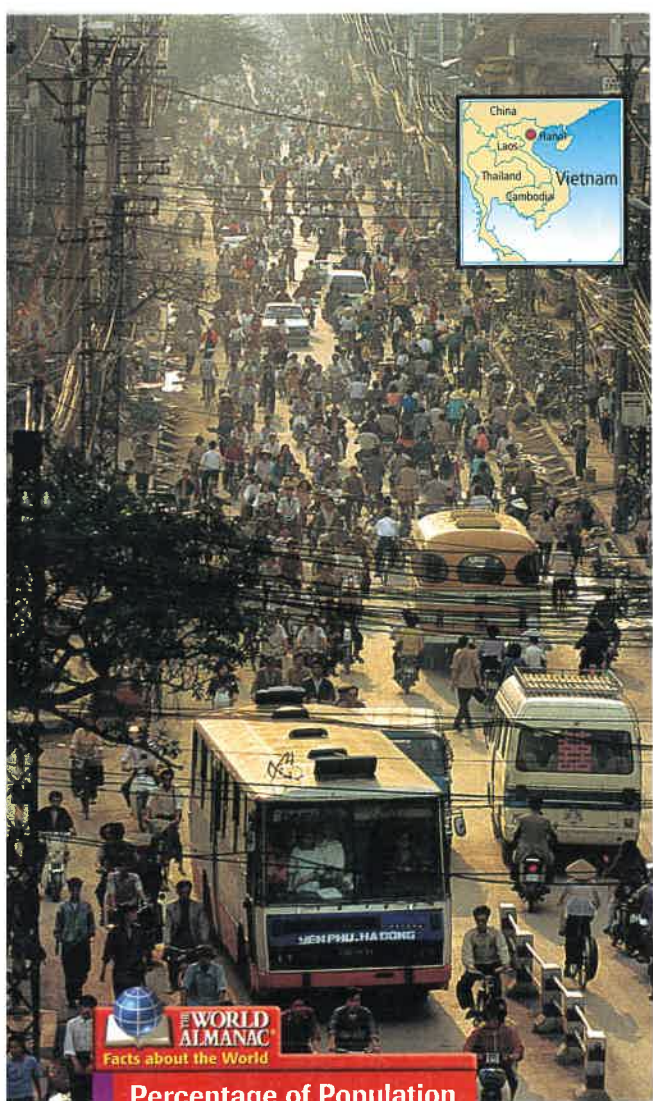


A Lao farming family loads hay into a cart.

INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

These shrimp were harvested from one of Thailand's seafood farms. Many farms release wastewater and fertilizer into coastal mangrove forests. This destroys the trees. How might damage to mangrove forests affect Thailand's coastal environment?





All the countries of Southeast Asia are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or **ASEAN**. ASEAN was founded in 1967. It promotes economic development as well as social and cultural cooperation among its members. The ASEAN countries have treaties of cooperation with each other. In the 1990s they moved to form a free-trade region.

✓ **READING CHECK:** *Human Systems* Why was ASEAN formed?

Settlement and Cities Most people in mainland Southeast Asia live in rural areas and are subsistence farmers. In general, coastal and lowland areas are more densely populated, while highlands are less crowded. The most crowded regions are along the rivers. These regions have both the main rice-growing areas and the largest cities. Because of their location along riverbanks, however, the big cities are subject to occasional flooding.

The region's cities are growing rapidly and display many contrasts. For example, motorcycles speed past pedicabs. Pedicabs are three-wheeled carriages with a separate seat for a driver who pedals. In some cities skyscrapers tower over huts, and street vendors compete with shopping malls.

With more than 7 million people, Bangkok is by far the largest city of mainland Southeast Asia. Thailand's capital is one of the most dynamic cities in Asia, with its modern technology blending with older ways of life. For example, Bangkok has more than 400 *wats*, which are Buddhist temples that also serve as monasteries. The *wats* are among the many attractions that draw thousands of tourists to the city each year.

Ho Chi Minh City, formerly called Saigon, is Vietnam's biggest city. Located in southern Vietnam, it is a thriving industrial center. It is also home to a busy social scene. Almost any type of entertainment, from disco to ancient forms of Vietnamese music, can be found in its nightspots. In the north, Hanoi is Vietnam's capital. Much of the country's history is evident in Hanoi's temples, monuments, and faded French colonial mansions. Hue has often been called the most beautiful city in Vietnam. Its historical attractions include a citadel surrounded by a wall 7 miles (11 km) long. Not far from Hue are tombs of the last Vietnamese royal family to rule the country.

The largest city in Myanmar is Yangon, the capital, also called Rangoon. It is a very green city, with so many trees that some travelers have compared it to a jungle. The city's skyline is dominated by the Shwedagon Pagoda, an enormous golden shrine which is said to hold eight of the Buddha's hairs. Gardens, museums, and a zoo also attract visitors.

The other national capitals are not as large as these cities. Phnom Penh (puh-NAWM PEN), Cambodia, saw most of its people driven out by the country's Communist government in the 1970s. The city's population is slowly increasing. Vientiane (vyen-TYAHN), also known as Viangchan, on the Mekong River, is the most important port for Laos.

✓ **READING CHECK:** *Human Systems* How are ancient and modern times evident in the cities of mainland Southeast Asia?

THE WORLD ALMANAC
Facts about the World

Percentage of Population Living in Rural Areas, 2005

Cambodia 80.3% Thailand 67.5%



Laos 78.4%

Vietnam 73.3%



Myanmar 69.4%



■ Rural
■ Urban

Source: UN Population Division

INTERPRETING THE GRAPH

Each country in Southeast Asia has only one or two large cities, like Hanoi, Vietnam, shown above. However, most people live in small villages. How do most rural residents make a living?

Agriculture

Agriculture plays a central role in the economies of all the countries in mainland Southeast Asia. Farmers in the river lowlands grow rice on fertile slopes along the riverbanks. The wet tropical climate lets farmers grow two or three crops each year. Workers move the seedlings by hand to flooded paddy fields. Harvesting is also done by hand. Because paddy agriculture uses so much human labor, it is a form of intensive agriculture.

Paddy farming is particularly successful in areas with good water resources. In these areas farming supports dense populations. For example, the delta regions of the Mekong and Hong (Red) Rivers are very fertile, productive, and crowded. This is true also in the Irrawaddy and Chao Phraya valleys of Myanmar and Thailand. Farmers in mainland Southeast Asia produce enough rice to feed the local population and to export. In fact, Thailand and Vietnam are two of the world's leading exporters of rice. (See the graph.) Many farmers grow vegetables or fruit to sell or trade in local markets. Farmers also raise ducks, water buffalo, pigs, and fish.

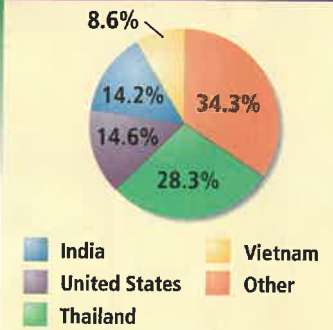
The region's many subsistence farmers grow a variety of crops besides rice. These crops include cassava, yams, bananas, pineapples, beans, and sugarcane. In the rugged and forested mountains, poor soils make farming difficult. Farmers must leave their fields after only a few years when soil fertility decreases. Then they move to a new area. This shifting agriculture is common in Laos, northern Thailand, and northern Myanmar. Governments today discourage this practice because it can damage rain forests.

While many people are subsistence farmers, plantation agriculture is also important. For example, Thailand is the world's leading producer of natural rubber. Other plantation crops include sugarcane and pineapples.

Some people grow opium in the rugged mountains of Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos. Opium is a major crop for some poor mountain peoples. This illegal crop is processed to make the deadly and addictive drug heroin. Opium dealing produces riches and risks for corrupt officials, smugglers, and drug dealers. Opium is smuggled out of the region and into the United States, Europe, and other parts of Asia.

✓ **READING CHECK:** *Environment and Society* Where is paddy farming most successful in the region?

World Rice Exports



Source: Goode's World Atlas, 20th Edition

INTERPRETING THE GRAPH

Most farmers in mainland Southeast Asia grow only enough rice for subsistence, but rice exports have increased in recent years. Most of the region's cultivated land is used to grow this single crop. Why do you think so much of Southeast Asia's farmland is dedicated to growing rice?

INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

Irrigation in this Vietnam rice field is a labor-intensive project. How does this irrigation system work?





FOCUS ON GEOGRAPHY

Bangkok's Klongs The farm and the city meet on the canals of Bangkok, called *klongs*. The people of Bangkok use this network of canals to travel around the city and to transport and sell goods. Some travelers have compared Bangkok to Venice, Italy, another city with a canal system.

In the 1900s Bangkok grew tremendously. New forms of transportation such as the automobile spread. Many *klongs* were filled in and paved to create space for cars and trucks. Today most of the canals have been converted to roads, and cars are more common than boats.

Despite these changes, *klongs* are still a part of life in Bangkok. Boats and river taxis ply the waters of Bangkok's remaining canals, transporting people around the city. As the city's traffic has grown, more people have been using the canals for local travel. Special commuter boats take people to and from work. The canals are also vital for moving fresh fish and produce around the city. In some places *klongs* are still the center of neighborhood life. Traditional houses built on stilts line the water. Families bathe on their front doorsteps. Boats loaded with mangoes, durians, and other produce or goods join together to form floating markets.

✓ **READING CHECK:** *Environment and Society* What role have *klongs* played in the development of Bangkok?



Vendors at Bangkok's floating markets sell fish, fruit, meat, rice, and vegetables to locals and tourists.

Issues and Challenges

The major challenges in mainland Southeast Asia involve both political and economic issues. Corruption and dictatorial governments have caused serious problems for most of the region's countries. These political problems have in turn led to economic difficulties.

Cambodia has experienced terrible problems since independence. From 1975 to 1979, the country fell under the brutal rule of a Communist group called the Khmer Rouge ("Red Khmer"). Its leaders wanted to change Cambodia into a rural peasant society. To further their plan, the Khmer Rouge forced all citizens to work as field laborers. They emptied the cities, separated families, and targeted educated people for execution. The country's intellectual and skilled worker classes were practically wiped out. Perhaps 1 million Cambodians were killed. Starvation, disease, forced marches, and other hardships killed many more people. An invasion by Vietnamese forces finally ended the terror. However, millions of land mines are left over from decades of fighting. They maim or kill farmers and other civilians who accidentally disturb the hidden explosives. Today Cambodia has a stable elected government, but it remains a poor farming country with a troubled heritage.

A military government took control of Myanmar in 1962. Pro-democracy groups have tried to regain political freedoms but so far have failed. Their leaders and supporters have been jailed and harassed. Minority and rebel groups in the northern mountains have also battled Myanmar's government. The government controls many parts of the economy, such as the rice trade and heavy

industry. Because of the political situation, many foreign investors have stayed away. The country remains poor, and living standards have not improved.

Tourism might be a source of income for Myanmar. However, leaders of the democratic movement there favor a boycott on tourism. They say that most of the money spent by tourists goes directly to the military government.

Aung San Suu Kyi is the best known opponent of military rule in Myanmar. Her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), won control of the country's parliament in 1990, but the military refused to give up power. The government placed Aung San Suu Kyi and other NLD members under house arrest. For her efforts to bring democracy to Myanmar, she received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. Although some political prisoners were released from house arrest in 2003, the United States and some Asian countries continue to push for the reform of Myanmar's government.

Both Vietnam and Laos have Communist governments. They have been slowly moving toward market economies, but many challenges remain. Both countries are poor, with most people working in subsistence agriculture. For years Laos was almost cut off from the Western world. This lack of outside influence now draws tourists who want to see a glimpse of traditional Southeast Asian life. In the late 1990s Vietnam and the United States began forming closer relations. American businesses, products, and tourists are now increasing in Vietnam.

Thailand's economy grew by almost 9 percent a year between 1985 and 1995. It was the highest growth rate in the world during that time period. Investment from Japan helped Thailand develop textile, electronics, and automobile assembly plants. However, economic growth slowed in the late 1990s.

Aung San Suu Kyi stands in front of the National League for Democracy flag.



READING CHECK: *Human Systems* How has Myanmar's political situation hurt economic development there?

Section 3

Review

go **hrw** **.com** **Homework Practice Online**
Keyword: SW3 HP29

Identify ASEAN

Define *wats, klongs*

Working with Sketch Maps

On the map of mainland Southeast Asia that you created in Section 2, label Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Yangon (Rangoon), Phnom Penh, and Vientiane. Which city has been compared to Venice, Italy? Why?

Reading for the Main Idea

- Places and Regions** How is Thailand's economy unique in mainland Southeast Asia?
- Human Systems** What makes paddy farming a form of intensive agriculture?

Critical Thinking

- Analyzing Information** How do rivers influence the location and patterns of movement of products and people in the region? How do you think the rivers might be used to attract business investment?
- Making Generalizations** Why do you think the region's countries have worked to form closer economic and trading ties with each other? What might such ties mean for the economic and political futures of the region's countries?

Organizing What You Know

- Copy the chart below. Use it to describe the major issues and challenges facing the countries of mainland Southeast Asia.

Country	Issues and challenges
Myanmar	
Thailand	
Cambodia	
Laos	
Vietnam	

CASE STUDY

Studying Deforestation

Environment and Society Environmental geographers around the world are concerned about deforestation in Southeast Asia. The region has about one fourth of the world's remaining tropical rain forests. These forests are being destroyed at an alarming rate. Some observers believe that most of the region's tropical rain forests could be gone in just 20 to 30 years.

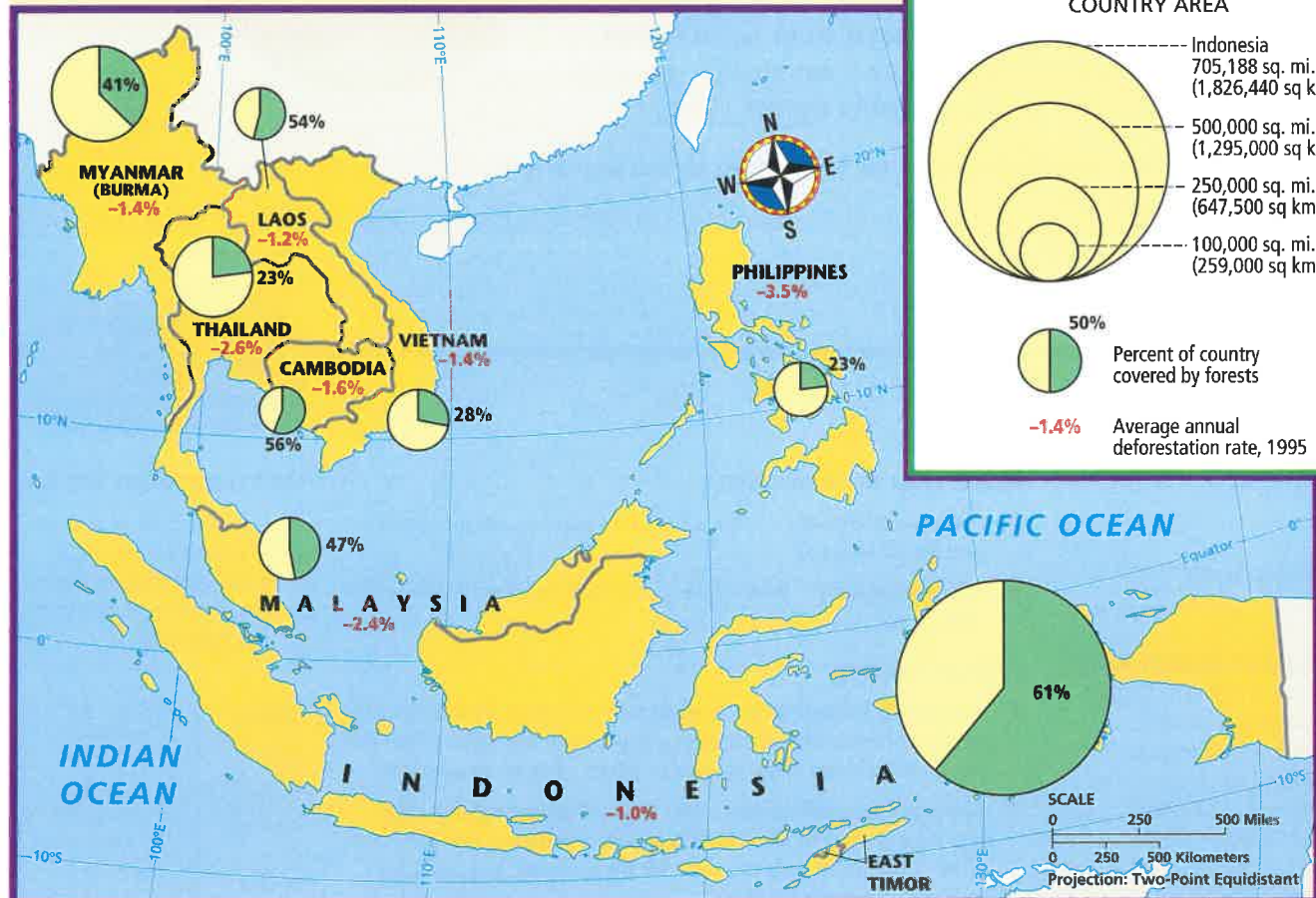
Geographers bring a spatial and environmental perspective to studying this problem. They begin by asking geographic questions from a spatial perspective. Where is deforestation occurring? What are the patterns and causes of deforestation? How is deforestation in Southeast Asia related to economic development and world trade? Geographers also ask

questions from an environmental perspective. How does deforestation affect the environment? How does it affect people?

Patterns and Causes

Geographers use satellite images and other tools to study the problem. They have found that Southeast Asia has one of the highest deforestation rates in the world. Between 1990 and 1995, about 56,255 square miles (145,700 sq km) of rain forest were lost. This figure represents an area about the size of Florida. The countries with the highest deforestation rates included the Philippines, Thailand, and Malaysia. (See the map.)

INTERPRETING THE MAP Which country in Southeast Asia had the highest rate of deforestation? Which country has the bulk of the region's remaining rain forests?





Left: In 1997, airplanes dropped water on the Indonesian fires. Right: A man looks out at the burning rain forest. For many years his people had used this part of Indonesia for hunting and for gathering medicinal plants.



In Southeast Asia there are many causes of deforestation. For example, people in many areas cut trees and use the wood for fuel. In addition, trees are cut and burned to clear fields for farming. As populations in Southeast Asia continue to grow rapidly, more forested areas are being used for farming. After nutrients in the soil are used up, farmers move on to other areas to grow crops. This pattern of shifting agriculture clears large forest areas.

Logging is another cause of deforestation. Valuable hardwood and wood-based products are important exports for countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos. Most logging is done by large corporations. Developed countries such as Japan import the timber. To limit deforestation, some Southeast Asian countries have enacted total or partial bans on logging. However, in many other countries, income from timber exports is used to develop national economies.

Environmental Effects of Deforestation

Geographers also study the effect of deforestation on people and environments. Some believe the most serious result of deforestation is the extinction of plant and animal species. A great diversity of plant and animal life thrives in the rain forests of Southeast Asia. For example, Indonesia may have about 11 percent of the world's plant species. About 12 percent of all mammal species and 17 percent of all bird species may also live there. Deforestation destroys the habitats of many of these rare plants and animals.

Deforestation also causes flooding and soil erosion, which can more directly affect humans. When

areas are stripped of their forest cover, the soil is exposed directly to water's erosive power. As a result, the clearing of forests has led to erosion and flooding in many Southeast Asian countries, such as Thailand.

Smoke created by burning forests has been another problem. In 1997 and 1998, for example, a severe drought allowed fires to burn out of control, particularly in Indonesia. Some of the fires had been set to clear land. Smoke from these huge forest fires endangered people's health, shut down airports and schools, and disrupted the tourist industry.

Future Outlook

As you can see, deforestation in Southeast Asia is a very complicated problem. It is tied to the region's economies, world trade patterns, and people's need to use the resources around them to survive. To solve this problem, geographers and other scientists must learn more about the causes, rates, patterns, and environmental effects of deforestation.

Applying What You Know

- 1. Summarizing** How is deforestation linked to economic development, population growth, and environmental change in Southeast Asia? What have some governments done to slow deforestation?
- 2. Problem Solving** What do you think should be done to halt the destruction of Southeast Asia's tropical rain forests? Work with a partner to develop a proposed solution and present it to your class in a report.

Review the video to answer the closing question:
*What did the geographical location of Vietnam
have to do with the domino theory?*

Building Vocabulary

On a separate sheet of paper, explain the following terms by using them correctly in sentences.

arboreal wats
domino theory klongs
ASEAN

Locating Key Places

On a separate sheet of paper, match the letters on the map with their correct labels.

Malay Peninsula Irrawaddy River Mekong River
Indochina Peninsula Chao Phraya River Hong (Red) River
Khorat Plateau



Understanding the Main Ideas

Section 1

- Places and Regions** What are the major climates in mainland Southeast Asia, and where are they found?
- Physical Systems** What type of soils have made the region's river valleys rich farming areas?

Section 2

- Places and Regions** Which of the region's countries was never a European colony? What two European countries had colonies in the region?
- Places and Regions** What three major language families are found in the region? Who are some of the primary speakers of the languages in each group?

Section 3

- Human Systems** In what areas do most of the region's people live? What are the large cities of the region like?

Thinking Critically

- Drawing Inferences** Why do you think previously unknown animal species are still being discovered in the region?
- Analyzing Information** Where are the region's major cities located? What advantages might these locations offer?
- Comparing** Some crops, such as sugarcane and pineapples, are grown by both plantation owners and subsistence farmers. How are these two types of farming different in the region? How might the lives of subsistence farmers and plantation workers differ?

Using the Geographer's Tools

- Analyzing Statistics** Use the unit Fast Facts and Comparing Standard of Living tables to rank the region's countries in order, from most to least developed. Then note the political situation in the region's countries. How does the political geography affect the countries' economic geography?
- Creating Maps** Create a map of the region that shows rivers, deltas, mountains, plateaus, and plains. Then shade areas that have fertile soils and dense populations. Write a short paragraph noting the connections between the two.
- Creating Maps** Prepare a map showing past European colonies in the region. How might Thailand's (Siam's) relative location have helped it to remain independent?

Writing about Geography

Write a newspaper article about life in Myanmar today. Be sure to discuss the country's recent political, economic, social, and environmental changes. How are these areas related? How do they affect life in Myanmar? Compare the situation in Myanmar to the United States. How are they similar? How are they different?

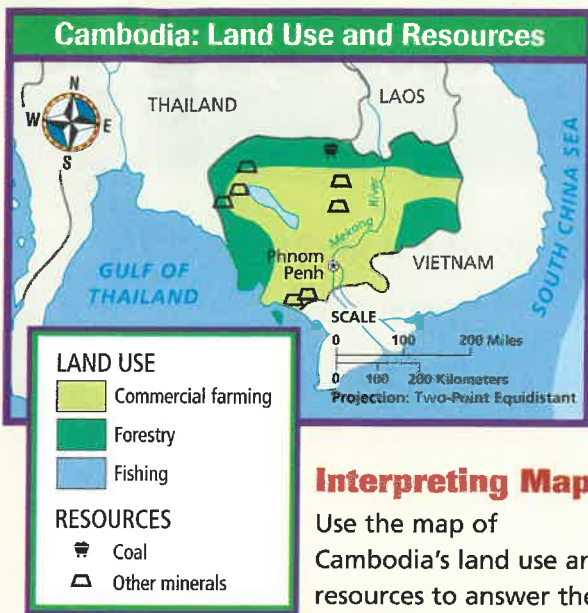


SKILL BUILDING

Geography for Life

Using Research Skills

Environment and Society Plan a research project on deforestation in mainland Southeast Asia. First, review the Case Study: Studying Deforestation. Then create three questions that you would like to research. For example, you might want to know more about how deforestation has affected a particular country. Use newspaper articles, documentaries, or statistics to research your questions. Then write a short report that answers your three questions.



Interpreting Maps

Use the map of Cambodia's land use and resources to answer the questions that follow.

- Which of the following can be concluded from the information shown on the map?
 - The country has no major manufacturing and trade centers.
 - Coal is found only along Cambodia's southern coast.
 - Commercial farming is common in central areas of the country.
 - Few forested areas are found in Cambodia.

- Why do you think commercial farming is located where it is?

Analyzing Primary Sources

Karin Muller spent seven months hitchhiking through Southeast Asia. Read her observations about Vietnam and answer the questions.

"Rice in Vietnam . . . is not just that fluffy white stuff in a box that you dig out once a month as an accompaniment to your favorite lemon chicken. Rice is life. Almost no meal goes by without it . . . The poor mountain Vietnamese say "there is no money" and "there is no rice" interchangeably because if they had money, they would use it to buy rice. In many areas rice is money. It is the traditional currency."

- Based on what you have read, which of the following is true?
 - Rice is Vietnam's least important food.
 - Most of Vietnam's rice comes from mountain areas.
 - Vietnamese eat rice mostly at special occasions.
 - Rice is a very important part of the Vietnamese diet.
- Why would a poor mountain Vietnamese person equate rice to money?

Alternative Assessment

PORTFOLIO ACTIVITY

Learning about Your Local Geography

Group Project: Research

Plan, organize, and complete a group research project on native arboreal animals in your area or state. First, use your local library to learn about some arboreal animals common near your community. Then have each individual in your group select one animal and learn more about it. In which tree species do these animals live? How are they adapted to life in the trees? What is their range of habitat in the United States and the rest of the world? To which other animals are they related? You might want to create maps and diagrams to illustrate the answers you find to these research questions. When you are done, share your results with the other group members.

Internet connect

Internet Activity: go.hrw.com

KEYWORD: SW3 GT29

Choose a topic on mainland Southeast Asia to:

- learn about the architecture of ancient and modern mainland Southeast Asia.
- create a brochure on Laos and Vietnam since the Vietnam War.
- understand the causes and effects of deforestation in mainland Southeast Asia.