

Introduction to Australia and Asia



chapter 9

9A

What factors led to the colonisation of Australia?

9B

What factors led to the colonisation of Asia?

9.1 Australia and British imperial expansion

Australia's settlement by the British was largely a result of changes brought about by the **Industrial Revolution** in Britain and Europe. The mass movement of people from rural farming villages across Britain to the new factory towns in search of work led to harsh living conditions and overcrowding. In turn, this led to a rise in crime rates and an increase in the numbers of prisoners held in jails. Ultimately, the **penal colonies** established in New South Wales and other parts of Australia were seen by Britain as a solution to its overcrowded jails and social problems.

Australia's settlement was also linked to Britain's expansion of its colonies, at a time when European powers were competing for power and wealth around the world. Exports of wool, timber and sugar from its Australian colonies increased the wealth of the British Empire, and contributed to Australia's developing economy.

Over time, Australia became a place where hard-working ex-convicts and free migrants could build new lives and be granted new opportunities – particularly in the boom decades of the 1850s after the discovery of gold. **Convicts** and **free settlers** provided the labour that helped build a new nation. Some also brought progressive political ideas with them that would go on to play a crucial role in the establishment of Australia's democratic system of government and the formation of a national identity.

Impacts on Indigenous Australians

From the earliest days of British settlement, all colonies around Australia shared the same view of the Indigenous peoples. The concept of *terra nullius* (a Latin term meaning 'empty land' or 'land belonging to no-one') was applied to the land and generally accepted by the colonists. This concept justified the British belief



Source 1 A view of Sydney Cove in 1794



Source 2 A view of the settlement of Sydney, c. 1870

that they were entitled to land and all of the resources it provided. The actions of the white settlers had a dramatic effect on Australia's Indigenous populations. Indigenous Australians were **dispossessed** of traditional lands, killed by disease and isolated by government policies that removed them from their homelands and placed them on **reserves** or in **missions**. As a result, traditional cultures and ways of life were changed forever.

Federation makes a nation

Over time, Australia transformed from a group of independent penal colonies established by the British, to a united and prosperous democratic nation. Although six colonies established across Australia were settled separately by the British, they shared many common characteristics – culture, language, political systems and religion.

During the second half of the 19th century, Australian colonists became increasingly aware of

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the fact that they also shared many common goals and beliefs. As a result, the idea of nationhood began to grow. Many other nations – such as the United States, France, Italy and Germany – were formed after revolution or war. In Australia, progress towards **Federation** was a gradual and peaceful process. A series of referendums (national votes) and constitutional conventions led to the development of the Constitution of Australia in 1900. This series of documents – the most important of which is known as the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia – outlined the supreme laws of the Commonwealth Government (also known as the Federal Government). It also established the relationship between the Federal Government and the states and territories of Australia in 1900. Following a positive vote from the majority of the people in each colony, the Australian nation was created in 1901.



Source 3

Check your learning 9.1

Remember and understand

- 1 How did imperialism affect Indigenous Australians during the 19th century?
Describe the concept of *terra nullius* in your own words.
Describe the process that changed Australia from a collection of separately governed states to a unified nation.

Apply and analyse

Examine Sources 1 and 2. They show Sydney in 1794 and 1870. During this time Australia's non-Indigenous

population increased from an estimated 3500 people to 1.6 million people.

- a Describe the continuities and changes that can be seen between these two depictions of Sydney, 76 years apart.
- b What developments and events during this period would have contributed to these changes?
- c Locate a photograph of Sydney Harbour and the Rocks today. What continuities and changes can you see?

9.2 Asia and European imperial expansion

Societies and cultures across Asia emerged and developed as powerful and unique empires over thousands of years. Until the mid-18th century, many Asian societies remained largely isolated from Western societies. Contact between East and West was limited to a few established trading ports across Asia. From 1750 onwards, however, a number of European powers

– particularly Britain, France and the Netherlands – challenged the authority and **sovereignty** of a number of traditional Asian societies as they competed to expand their empires around the world. By the end of the 19th century, most Asian countries had been occupied by a European power (Source 1).

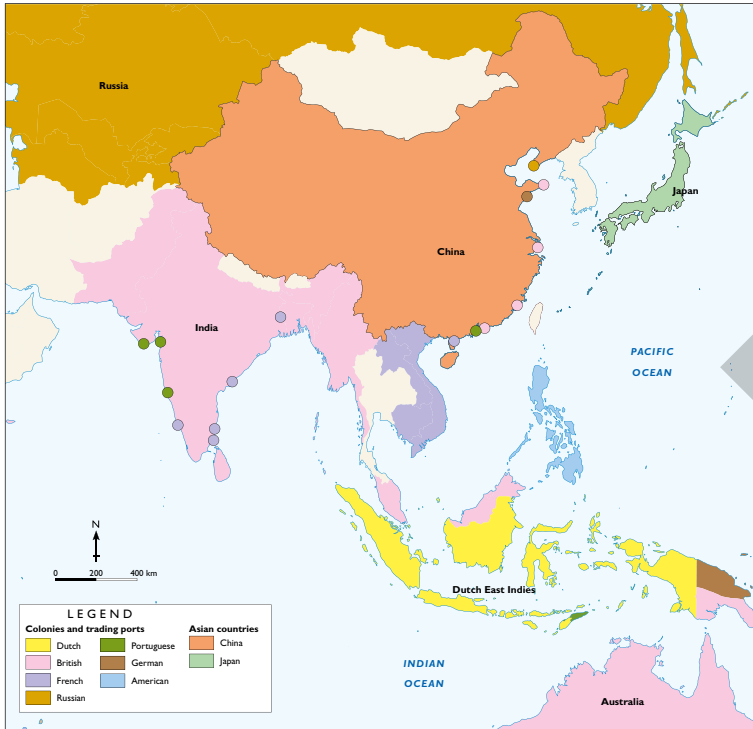
ASIA: EUROPEAN TERRITORIES, 1900

China

In 1750, China was ruled over by the Qing Dynasty and China was the supreme power in East Asia. The Chinese government kept out foreign influences. As a result the Chinese court and Chinese society remained largely unchanged for hundreds of years.

Dutch East Indies

The Dutch East Indies were colonised by the Dutch in 1800. The many islands were each home to different communities all with their own leaders. Now known as Indonesia, this archipelago (chain of islands) is made up of more than 17 000 islands. Today, Indonesia is one of the most culturally diverse nations on Earth.



India

In 1750, most of modern-day India was part of the Mughal Empire with an all-powerful and absolute emperor. The emperor had a *diwan* (government) to administer the empire, divided into provinces.

Japan

In 1750, Japan was technically under the rule of an emperor. Although the emperor commanded great respect, the real power lay with his military leader, the shogun. From 1603 to 1867, a powerful **dynasty** of shoguns known as the Tokugawa shogunate controlled Japan.

Source 1

Source: Oxford University Press

China

Trade: Around this time, China mainly traded with its Asian neighbours. In addition to this, it exported large quantities of porcelain (known as China) and tea to Europe. By comparison, the Chinese expressed little interest in importing goods from Europe.

Foreign influence: British traders finally found an answer to the trade imbalance in the drug opium – a highly addictive drug. The drug became widely used and the British flooded the Chinese market from 1773 onwards. China tried to stop this trade by going to war with Britain and France (Opium Wars 1839–1842 and 1856–1860). Defeated, China was forced to sign a series of unequal treaties with Britain, France, Germany and Russia. The treaties allowed these nations to set up their own trading hubs in China with their own laws and businesses. China was also made to pay **reparations** (fines) to the Europeans. These moves crippled China politically and financially.

Impact: Chinese military strength and weaponry was no match when it came to fighting the Europeans. Towards the end of the 1800s, China attempted to modernise its army and society, but growing unrest across the nation led to a rise in nationalist movements and anti-European protests. Ultimately, the ruling Qing Dynasty was overthrown in 1911.

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Trade: The Dutch East India Company was set up in 1602 to profit from the spice trade and break Portuguese control over this market. In 1619, the company established a capital in the port city of Batavia (now Jakarta). The Dutch East Indies were important to the trade of coffee, tea, sugar and spices, particularly pepper, as well as tin, copper and timber.

Foreign influence: When the Dutch East India Company was disbanded in 1800, its territories were taken over by the Dutch government and renamed the Dutch East Indies. The Dutch East Indies helped to make the Netherlands a rich, industrialised nation. It produced most of the world’s quinine (a substance used to treat malaria) and pepper, as well as over a third of the world’s rubber, and a fifth of its tea, sugar, coffee and oil.

Impact: The Indigenous peoples of the archipelago became the primary workforce on plantations established by the Dutch. The Dutch were well settled in the East Indies and influenced the development of the country’s institutions. The Dutch were removed by the Japanese occupation during World War II, and Indonesia became an independent nation in 1949.

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Japan

Trade: European traders had been visiting Japan since the mid-1500s. However from 1635 until 1853, the *shogun* banned all European ships from entering Japanese waters (except for Dutch ships which had limited access to islands off the mainland). It was also illegal for any Japanese person to leave the country. This period, known as *sakoku* meaning ‘chained country’, stopped foreign influence over Japan and protected the shogun’s power.

Foreign influence: Japan’s period of isolation ended in 1853 with the arrival of a fleet of American warships commanded by Commodore Matthew Perry. The United States forced Japan to open its doors to trade with the Treaty of Kanagawa in 1854.

Impact: The Japanese recognised that there was little they could do to prevent the increasing influence of foreigners. They recognised that modernisation would put the country in a stronger position. Japan modernised its government, economy and army over a period known as the Meiji Restoration. By the end of the 19th century, Japan had an army and a navy to rival many other modern powers and began attempts to create its own empire. Japan went to war with China in 1894 and with Russia in 1905 and defeated them both, gaining control over parts of China and Korea.

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India

Trade: The Portuguese, Dutch, French and British all had trading companies in India from the 1600s. India was a source of valuable trade items such as tea, silk and spices. By 1800, the British controlled all Indian trade. India was a source of the British Empire’s land, money, employment and military strength. In the late 19th century, the Indian army made up half of the British Empire’s troops and a quarter of Indian taxes went straight back to Britain.

Foreign influence: By 1800, the British East India Company had built up its private armies and taken political control over most of India. In 1857, uprisings by *sepoys* – Indian soldiers employed by the British East India Company – known as the Indian Mutiny led to the British government taking control of India in 1858. This period of British rule, known as the British Raj, lasted for almost a century.

Impact: India had until this time operated as a series of semi-independent provinces. New technologies introduced by the British allowed for mass transportation and long-distance communication, bringing the different regions of India closer together. By 1880, India had over 9000 miles of railway and the cable telegraph across India. This in turn led to nationalist movements such as the Indian National Congress, started in 1885, campaigning for self-rule. Independence was finally achieved in 1947.

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keyconcept: Continuity and change

Exploring continuity and change in Asian societies

As you explore the history of Asian societies and the impact that contact with European powers had on them, it will help you to keep in mind the key historical concept of continuity and change. In particular, the related concepts of ‘transformation’ and ‘change within tradition’ are useful lenses through which to view different Asian societies. These concepts are defined below and some examples of each are provided in Source 2.

- *Transformation* – this concept relates to sweeping change that was often brought about by military action and, at times, occupation by Western powers (that is, change from the outside).
- *Change within tradition* – this concept relates to change brought about by traditional leaders, heads of government, or religious and cultural institutions (that is, change from within).

For more information on the key concept of continuity and change, refer to **page XXX** of ‘The histy toolkit’.



Source 3 King George V and Queen Mary, attended by young Indian princes at the 1903 Imperial Durbar in Delhi. British monarchs were called emperors and empresses of India, rather than kings or queens, to remind Indians of the symbolic power of past emperors of India. They also held grand ceremonies in Delhi, called the Imperial Durbar, to demonstrate the wealth and strength of the British Empire. This echoed the *durbars* of earlier times, when Mughal emperors held court in great splendour.

Source 2 Examples of transformation and change within tradition

Transformation	Change within tradition
The rule of the once-mighty Mughal emperors in India was undermined by European trading companies. By 1800, the British East India Company had taken political control over most of India. In 1858, the British government took over direct control of India.	The British government deliberately kept some of the traditional leadership structures and practices after they took direct control of Indian territories. For example, India’s princes retained their local power and the rights of traditional landlords were respected.
In 1853, Japan was forced by Western powers to open its borders to Western trade. This change resulted in a change of leadership in Japan and the creation of a more Western-style government under the rule of Emperor Meiji, who was influenced by Western ideas and beliefs. This period became known as the Meiji Restoration.	During the Meiji Restoration, beginning in 1868, much of the real power rested with the same powerful clans that had once dominated Japan.

Check your learning 9.2

Remember and understand

- 1 List the main reasons why European countries competed to colonise territories across Asia?
- 2 Which Asian country managed to isolate itself from Western powers for more than 200 years? What was this period known as and what was it designed to achieve?

- 3 What name was Indonesia known by before it gained independence from the Netherlands? Why was it colonised in the first place?

Apply and analyse

- 4 How did China and Japan’s policies of isolation affect their abilities to defend themselves against attacks and interference from foreign powers?
- 5 Why was India considered to be ‘the brightest jewel in the imperial crown’ of Britain’s colonies?