How have governments affected the people in this region?

**power** the ability to exert control over people or situations; power can be in the form of force, authority, or influence

The people of Japan, North Korea, and South Korea have adapted to their physical environment by building skyscrapers that will survive earthquakes, and by making the most of limited land area. But these nations have also had to survive political and cultural challenges such as wars, changing systems of government, and cultural influences from other nations of the world.

People have lived in this region for about 30,000 years. During much of that time, the people of Japan and the Koreans have been ruled by powerful dynasties. Dynasties are passed down through a family. The historical dynasties in Japan and the Koreans were ruled by emperors and empresses.

**Korean Dynasties**

For thousands of years, kingdoms rose and fell on the Korean peninsula. Sometimes, Chinese empires controlled parts of the peninsula. Ideas from China, especially those of Confucianism and Buddhism, influenced the people living in the Korean kingdoms.

In 668 CE, the kingdom of Silla conquered the Koguryo kingdom and united the other Korean kingdoms. The Sillans pushed the Chinese empire off the Korean peninsula and created a strong government, uniting the kingdoms of the peninsula into one country, Korea. The Silla Dynasty lasted until 935 CE. After that, a series of dynasties kept the peninsula united for centuries.

**Emperors and Shoguns in Japan**

Around the time of the Silla Dynasty in Korea, Japan became a unified country under an emperor. People believed that the emperor was descended from a goddess.

For much of Japan's history, however, the emperors were not the strong ones. It was the military leaders, called shoguns, who really held power.

At times, neither the emperor nor the shoguns had complete control over the country. Beginning around 646 CE, power was held by several wealthy, competing landowners who commanded...
their own armies. These landlords gave land to the samurai, or warrior lords, in exchange for their military support. Using the samurai, the landlords fought each other to gain more land and more power. This created hundreds of years of conflict in Japan.

**The Tokugawa Shoguns**

In 1603 CE, a shogun named Tokugawa Ieyasu (toh koo gah wah ee yay ah soo) came to power. The Tokugawa shoguns who followed him tried to bring peace to Japan by placing all of the powerful landowners under one shogun’s control.

The Tokugawa shoguns wanted to protect Japanese culture. They closed the country off from contact with most other countries to insulate Japanese society from outside influences. The Japanese people were not allowed to build ocean-going vessels, and ships from other nations were not allowed to come ashore on Japanese soil.

The Tokugawa shoguns created strict divisions between nobles and commoners. People were not allowed to move between these two groups. The nobles were mostly samurai and the owners of the most land. The nobles had the highest status. People who were not nobles or samurai were known as commoners. The highest-ranking among the commoners were farmers. Below them were craftspeople and merchants. Farmers made up 80 percent of the population.

**Japan’s Early History of Feudalism and Isolation**

- Chinese culture influences Japan and the Koreas.
- Prince Shotoku encourages Buddhism and Confucianism.
- The power of the samurai warriors increases in Japan.
- Tokugawa Dynasty of Japan begins, and continues for 265 years.
- Early ships arrive from the West.
- Silla Dynasty unites the Korean peninsula into one country.
- Japan experiences 400 years of feudal wars and changing emperors.
- Tokugawa Dynasty of Japan closes off contact with other countries. Laws forbid travel or trade, as well as Christian books.
Conflicts and Connections

Both Japan and Korea have spent hundreds of years largely cut off from the rest of the world. By the beginning of the 1900s, however, both nations were pulled from their isolated societies into international conflicts. They were also exposed to cultural influences from the West.

In 1853, a heavily armed trade delegation from the United States arrived in Japan. They insisted on speaking to Japanese officials about trade. Realizing the military power of the United States was greater than theirs, the Japanese officials signed a trade treaty. Many Japanese felt that the agreements in the treaty would weaken their society, and they rebelled. The Tokugawa Dynasty was overthrown, and the Meiji Era began.

Modernization and Change

Japan signs agreements that open the country to trade.

Feudal system is dismantled and centralized power begins.

Japan declares Korea to be its protectorate.

Korean Declaration of Independence document is released.

1854 1868 1870 1889 1905 1919 1940

1889

Emperor Meiji creates a parliamentary constitution. Japan holds democratic elections, the first to occur in any country outside of the West.

Annexation Treaty is signed with Korea; 35 years of Japanese control begins.

Japan joins the Axis countries in the Second World War.

The trade delegation from the United States arrived in well-armed steamships, which the Japanese called the “Black Ships.”
The Meiji Era

The dynasty of Meiji emperors first came to power in Japan in 1868. The Meiji era was important for Japan, as it signalled the end of isolation and the beginning of a modern nation.

There were many advances made under Meiji leadership. A constitution was adopted and a parliament was elected. However, real power was still held by just a few people. The Meiji government was an example of an oligarchy. It was only the emperor or his advisors who could change laws. Only wealthy citizens could vote. In the first election, only 460,000 people voted, out of a population of about 40 million.

The Meiji advisors believed that Western countries were powerful because they were modern and industrialized. These countries had also colonized, or taken control of, other countries around the world. The advisors felt that Japan would also have to be strong and modern if it was to be an important world nation. But increased industry and growth meant that Japan had to find raw materials and workers for its factories. To do this, Japan colonized Korea in 1910. The Japanese empire would later include Taiwan and part of China. Japan controlled this empire until the end of the Second World War.

**THINKING CRITICALLY** Do you think the lives of the people of Japan improved under the Meiji Dynasty? Explain.

- **Emperor Mutsuhito** reigned from 1867 to 1912. He became emperor at the age of 14 after the death of his father.

- **Oligarchy** a system of government in which a small group has power through wealth, social position, military strength, or a combination of any of these factors.

- An artist's portrayal of a dinner at the palace of Emperor Meiji.
Japan annexed Korea in 1910. To annex another country means to take control of that country’s land and people. This takeover gave Japan access to large amounts of natural resources and workers. Japanese officials promised that they would keep order in Korea and bring the country into the modern world. But not everyone in either Japan or Korea agreed that the takeover was a good idea.

We are not allowed to hold important jobs. We have to convert to the Japanese Shinto religion. Our children can’t use their own language in school.

—Korean Citizen, 1916

The cultural roots of Japan and Korea are the same. We need to join into one strong nation. We will build roads and railroad systems across the country. Korea will become modernized and strong.

—Japanese Official, 1910

A modern celebration of Korean Declaration of Independence Day

A statue of a Korean independence activist
Japanese troops in Korea around 1900.

I count myself among the best and truest friends of Koreans... I think they are a capable people who can be trained to a large measure of self-government... [I have] a firm conviction that Japan is a steward on whom devolves the gigantic task of the uplifting of the Far East.

—Nitobe Inazo,
Japanese Envoy to Korea, 1919

We should not annex Korea at this time. Instead, we need to use our military and political strength to continue modernizing our own country. We cannot afford to spend our resources to colonize Korea.

—Okubo Toshimichi,
Meiji Advisor, 1873

1. What are the strengths and flaws in each point of view?
2. Put yourself in the place of the Koreans. How would you react to a takeover from another nation?
protectorate a country that is brought under the control of another country by a treaty or agreement

A Korean porcelain bowl

A Legacy Lost

Before Japanese rule, Korea's borders were closed to the outside world. Koreans had developed a unique culture. Korean potters made delicate porcelain objects valued around the world. Printing techniques using movable metal type were developed in Korea in 1234.

Beginning with the Protectorate Treaty of Japan of 1905, and then the Annexation Treaty in 1910, Korea began 35 years under Japanese control. This was a period of change for the Korean culture and hardship for the people. With the approval of the Japanese government, treasure hunters stole many of the cultural riches of Korea. Tombs were raided and the goods taken to Japan, along with objects such as royal jewels, bronze Buddha statues, works of calligraphy, and porcelain. Many Korean women were forced into slavery. The people were forced to give up their language, and also had to take Japanese-sounding names.

Restoring Aboriginal Cultural Items

Just as the takeover of Korea by Japan affected the Korean people, the colonization of Canada by the English and French had a drastic impact on First Nations and Inuit cultures. At first, new technologies and trade improved the lives of many First Nations and Inuit people. As European colonists began to arrive in greater numbers, Aboriginal languages, customs, and ways of life were changed. Along with these changes, significant Aboriginal cultural items were taken by non-Aboriginal governments and collectors.

Such cultural items have important meaning for Aboriginal peoples. Many groups and individuals have worked for their return. In 2007, a significant cultural artifact was returned home to Saskatchewan. This artifact, a pictograph drawn by Chief Pasqua in the 1870s, shows Treaty 4 negotiations at Fort Qu'Appelle from a First Nations perspective. This item is the only physical First Nations representation of these events. The pictograph had been held in a private collection before coming to auction in Great Britain. The Pasqua Pictograph Project and the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, as well as the Saskatchewan government, worked for years to bring the pictograph back home.
Changes After the Second World War

The years following the Second World War brought many changes to the governments of Japan and the Koreas. Japan lost control of Korea at the end of the war. The southern part of Korea was then occupied by the United States, and the northern part was occupied by the Soviet Union. The United States and the Soviet Union did not agree on how the country should be governed. The United Nations then decided that two countries with their own governments would be created from the former Korea. A communist government was formed in what became North Korea, and a democracy was formed in what became South Korea.

Japan also changed. The Japanese empire no longer existed. Political reform took place, and more people were allowed to vote. The government also worked hard to develop a powerful economy.

South Korea

The leaders of South Korea's democratic government approved a constitution in 1948 and began building a new government. While the government's power was limited by law, the new constitution also stated that the leaders did not always have to follow those limits. For example, leaders did not have to protect individual citizens' rights if the country was facing problems such as war or economic hardship.
dictatorship  a system of government in which power is held by a person or group, with little or no influence on decision making by the population governed

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
How does government control of the Internet, individual communication, and social media affect the power of individuals?

The political system in South Korea would be unstable for several decades, and human rights were not always respected. More than once, the military took over control of the country. Freedom of speech and freedom of the press could still be taken away. In 1987, the South Korean people called for a change, and the constitution was reformed. Under the new constitution, the government could not take away freedoms, even during difficult times. The citizens were given more rights, and the military had less power.

North Korea
North Korea continued to be isolated from most of the world. When separated from South Korea, the North developed an unlimited government called a dictatorship. By law, the government could take any action it wanted. North Korea remains a dictatorship today, with leader Kim Jong-il in total control of the government.

In a dictatorship, individual citizens have very few freedoms and little power. The government controls all information channels, including newspapers and other media such as radio and television. Very few North Koreans have cellphones or access to the Internet and social media. People are not allowed to express opinions or to follow any religion that challenges the ideas of the leaders.
Japan

In 1947, Japan approved a new constitution that created a new system of government called a constitutional monarchy. In this system, although there is still an emperor, his powers are very limited. Instead, power is in the hands of the voters who elect government leaders. This was the beginning of the democratic system of government that exists in Japan today. Emperor Akihito, who became emperor in 1989, is still seen as the head of state in Japan, but this is a purely symbolic role. Why do you think this type of role would remain in a modern government?

Japan quickly rebuilt its country and economy following the destruction of the Second World War. The Japanese government supported education and job training. New factories were built that could produce better and cheaper goods than the old factories did. The Japanese economy once again gained strength with a well-educated workforce and modern equipment.

Thinking It Through

Key Ideas
1. Why are the early governments of Japan and the Koreas considered oligarchies?
2. How are oligarchies different from democracies and dictatorships? How are they the same?
3. Create your own timeline of important events during this time period. Use the timeline on page 136 as a model.

Thinking Critically
4. Consider the treaties that allowed Japan to trade with other countries and annex Korea. How do they compare with the treaty process in Canada? How did they affect individuals?

Chapter Focus Question
How do various forms of government affect people's lives?

What Do You Think?
5. Which system of government has had the greatest impact on the lives of people in Japan, North Korea, and South Korea? Justify your choice.

6. Which visuals (for example, a timeline or photographs) did you find most useful to help you understand the ideas in this section? Explain the strategies you use to get information from visuals.

△ The imperial family of Japan greets people attending a celebration of Emperor Akihito's birthday.