

## Week 1 Trans-Asian Module

- Why is it problematic to try defining Asia using geography, ethnicity or language?
- What is meant by 'trans-Asian phenomena'?
- Can you think of trans-Asian phenomena that were *not* introduced in this module?
- What's wrong with stereotypes about Asia or Asians?
- Why is it problematic to say a certain country or culture is unique?
- Why is it useful to think in terms of 'cultural spheres' or 'streams'?

### Key words

- Trans-Asian phenomena
- Indianisation
- Sinification
- Localisation
- Chinese writing system
- Confucianism
- Buddhism
- Sanskrit
- Hinduism

### Notes:

- **Core themes: climate and topography, language (shared scripts), political legitimacy, religion and philosophy (including political relevance), social structures (hierarchies, genders etc.), material culture and trade (technologies, cities, monuments, things)**
- Asia is 30% of Earth's land area, 60% of world population, 1000+ languages.
- Birthplace of 2 major religions – Buddhism & Hinduism
- Examining Asia by countries is difficult as borders change, and national boundaries aren't cultural boundaries.
- **Climate & topography:** wet/dry, highland/lowland/sea, cold/hold, urban/rural
- Languages: shared scripts give cultures a linguistic heritage
- Lingua franca – a linguistic bond that expresses deeply rooted cultural exchange
- 2 great spheres in language streams – sinosphere (influenced by Chinese culture; sinification is to become more like China) and Indianisation (places that took on linguistic, religious, social practices of India)
- **political legitimacy:** how every level of society justifies their leadership. This reveals social structures, shared beliefs, explanations for the nature of the universe.
- **Religion & philosophy:** Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism (related to political legitimacy)
- **Social structures:** hierarchies, status, power (relates to religion & philosophy, political legitimacy)
- Hierarchies can be based on: meritocracy, aristocracy, sacred status, gender, occupation, skin colour etc.
- Material culture: mix of intercultural influences and the power of trade
- Asia: no cultural or historical entity that can be encompassed under a single term, i.e. there is no native word for this region.
- Boundaries are always changing, e.g. in India and East Asia.