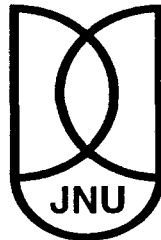


**MARITIME RIVALRY AND BOUNDARY
DEMARCATIION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

*A Dissertation submitted to the
Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

SANDEEP SHIVHARE



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DECLARATION

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**MARITIME RIVALRY AND BOUNDARY DEMARCATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**” submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** is my own work and has not been previously submitted for the award of any other degree of this or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Dedicated
to
Amma & Dadda

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Sandeep Shivhare

Preface

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, rivalries over the control of sea trade were to bring changes to Southeast Asia. In an effort to break the Arab monopoly on trade between Europe and Asia Portuguese decided to establish direct trading links in Asia. The potential riches from the trade forced them to embark upon a series of expeditions to gain control of the trade by force and in 1511 they captured Malacca. But political changes in Europe in the seventeenth century and rivalry over who would control the Asian trade, reared its head again and the Dutch became the fierce rivals of the Portuguese in Southeast Asia, eventually, conquering Malacca in 1641. The British were not to be left out and they too attempted to set up their own trading ports to rival Malacca. Even as the European powers sought to control the Asian trade, various Southeast Asian empires too were struggling to gain supremacy in Southeast Asia. Sometimes they competed with and fought the colonial powers, but at other times they sought alliances of convenience with which to strengthen themselves against their rivals. Aceh in North Sumatra, Johor in South Malaya and Bugis in Sulawesi were some of these rival Maritime based powers.

The British gradually built up their position by establishing themselves in Benkulen in West Sumatra, Borneo and Penang, and in 1819 they established a trading post in Singapore. Dutch and British rivalries intensified, and in 1824, in the treaty of London, the British and Dutch established their spheres of influence using the Malacca straits as the demarcating line, they exchanged Benkulen and Malacca. The results of this treaty of 1824 are still evident today and manifest themselves in today's Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, British and Dutch dominance in Southeast Asia was to continue until the mid-20th century. Elsewhere in Maritime Southeast Asia, the Spaniards had gained control of the Philippines from the late 16th century, passing control to the Americans in the late 19th Century after the Spanish-American war.

In this study an attempt has been made to provide a comprehensive analysis of maritime rivalry in the region and the proposed dissertation aims to examine how rivalry among colonial powers led to the demarcation of frontiers in Southeast Asia, to study the nature and growth of the countries in the region because of maritime rivalry. The study will also assess why Britain made territorial compromises with France and Holland in spite of being supreme power in the region and why the rise of Japan in the first half of 20th century disturbed the status quo in the region.

The first chapter of the study gives the introductory background and also analyses the nature and scope of the study. It would lay down the basic formulations on which the succeeding chapters would be based.

The second chapter discusses and analyses how British established and consolidated their positions in Indian Ocean and were able to follow such maritime policy that established its predominance in the region.

The third chapter discuss and analyses how maritime rivalry in Indian Ocean led to the delimitation of frontiers. It would also discuss how this contributed to the resurgence of Nationalism in the region.

The fourth chapter discuss how the rise of Japan as a maritime power changed the balance of power in the Indian Ocean; and how it had made boundary delimitation redundant. But after Japan's surrender the colonial boundaries were restored and various countries fighting for their nationhood accepted the colonial boundaries as left to them by their colonial masters.

The fifth chapter has concluding observations.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

As the topic taken up for study pertains to historical relevance, it needs proper understanding of the European scramble for colonialism in Southeast Asia. History creates political structures within a set geographic limits. Even after these political structures crumble or disappear, the legacy of their erstwhile existence continues to impinge on the human environment. Many centuries after its collapse, the Roman empire continued to make its heritage felt over large parts of Europe. Similarly the impact of former British or French mastery in Asia and Africa has not been fully expunged by the end of colonial rule. A quasi-invisible bond still survives between these Asian-African countries and the former metropolitan countries. Also, as a corollary to this, the maritime history of Southeast Asia reveals that within Southeast Asia, the exercise of power and influence depends on being able to make use of seas within the region. This is clearly illustrated by maritime politics of competing powers that sought to impose their will on Southeast Asia. In this context, one can see that at the beginning of the eighteenth century but rivalries over the control of the sea trade were quite intense in Southeast Asia ever since the Europeans started coming to the region.

Most of the countries in the Southeast Asian region are littoral states of the Indian Ocean. With its geographical and politico-strategic importance, the Indian Ocean is an area of growing interest amongst academics and scholars and especially the reason where Southeast Asia is located. The geo-strategic significance of the Indian Ocean is amply reflected in Admiral A. T. Mahan's statement of 1890 that "Whoever controls the Indian Ocean will dominate Asia...in the 21st century; the destiny of the world would be decided on its waters."¹ In simple words, the destiny of the region depends upon the control of the Indian Ocean. Therefore, whoever controls the Indian Ocean will be influential in the

¹ Cited in P.S.Das, "Indian Ocean region in India's Calculus, Journal of Indian Ocean Studies, vol. 9 No.3, Dec.01, P.315.,

region. The Indian Ocean has seen intense maritime activity since ancient times, primarily for trade. Earlier, the trade was mainly in silk and spices, but it became diversified in due course.

In an effort to break the Arab monopoly on trade between Europe and Asia Portuguese decided to establish direct trading links in Asia. The potential riches from the trade forced the Portuguese to embark upon a series of expeditions to gain control of the trade by force. “The Portuguese conquest of Malacca in 1511 was the first attempt by a western European power to control the lucrative spice trade”². However, the efforts of these outsiders to dominate the spice trade and extend their influence in Southeast Asia had only limited success for the next three centuries. Any control they had was largely confined to coastal areas and commercial ventures, and, for the most part, the interlopers operated within established economic and political frameworks. It was not until the 19th century that they emerged as a force capable of reshaping Southeast Asia’s political, social and economic fabric.

Nevertheless, the arrival of outsiders from western Europe began a process by which Southeast Asia was opened to greater direct trade with the outside world. In a clear break with the past, the Portuguese went directly to the source of the spices, bypassing intermediary suppliers and ports. “The immediate effect was that the Javanese control of the spice trade that had been built up over more than 1.000 ears was broken”³. However, the Portuguese were not able to monopolize the trade. Rather, the opening up of the archipelago resulted in a variety of groups, Asian and European, competing to exploit the region’s wealth. Commercial activity continued to be largely in Asian hands. “Aceh

² J.K. Whitmore, “The opening of Southeast Asia : Trading patterns through the Centuries.” In Karl L. Hutterer (ed.), *Economic Exchange and Social Introduction in Southeast Asia : Perspectives from prehistory, History and Ethnography*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1977, P.147.

³ Ibid

became the center of the Sumatra pepper and gold trade, while Johore handled the trade of the eastern archipelago. On the mainland, Pegu (Burma) and Avutthaya (Thailand) thrived because of the new foreign contacts and the opening of the maritime realm⁴.

When the Dutch entered Southeast Asia, in the 17th century they too were forced to operate within this competitive environment and had only limited success in controlling the region's trade. Operating from their base at Batavia (now Jakarta), which they founded in 1619, they attempted to restrict access to the Malacca islands and dominate the Java Sea and the archipelago. They also became actively engaged with the continental cities and ports of Burma, Ayutthaya, Laos, and Vietnam. Trading on the mainland, they found themselves in direct competition with the Japanese for a short period in the 1630s, before the Japanese withdrew into semi-isolation, and then later they had to compete with the Chinese. "The Chinese had managed to establish themselves in almost all Southeast Asia's key trading centers before the Europeans arrived"⁵ and they became important agents in the European centers of trade such as Malacca, Batavia, Manila, and Penang. Thus, while Europeans played a role in opening up the trade of Southeast Asia, to a large extent they were simply another element within an already complex trade network. Indigenous polities and ports were actively engaged with the Europeans, and continued to maintain a high level of autonomy, particularly in the political and cultural spheres, until the 19th century.

International commerce in the 19th century ushered in an era of unprecedented economic and social change for Southeast Asia. The region's longstanding connections with international trade had played a central part in shaping its political, economic and social development from at least the beginning of the Common Era. However, the western European powers were now on the verge of radically transforming the economic relationship that had prevailed for centuries. The old mercantile order, involving the collection and transportation of goods produced by others for sale at a profit on the

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid. P.148

international market, was about to give way to new economic and social imperatives. The development of western capitalism and, in particular, the industrial revolution in western Europe provided the impetus for this change over the course of the 19th century. The industrial revolution armed western Europe with a range of new powers that gave it the capability to undertake direct and forceful intervention in the political, economic and social structures of Southeast Asia. Advances in communications, weaponry, and transportation, among other areas, gave it an edge over the indigenous polities and the other Asian states operating in the region. China and India were increasingly subjected to European power, and effectively eliminated from any balancing role in the region. Rivalries among the powers of western Europe resulted in a process of territorial annexation in Southeast Asia from around 1850. In this environment, trading posts gave way to colonies, which could supply raw materials to feed the industries of western Europe. They were also functioned as markets for the processed goods that the factories of the industrializing world produced in ever greater abundance⁶. Clear lines of demarcation between areas of influence were quickly drawn, in a process that ultimately created the modern states of Southeast Asia. By the mid-19th century, Britain had established itself as the predominant power in the Malacca Straits and on the Malay Peninsula, most notably with its acquisition of the island of Singapore in 1819. It also annexed Lower Burma, in 1852, and forced the Burmese kingdom to open its doors to trade. The Dutch, meanwhile, were extending their hold over the archipelago, proclaiming it to be the Dutch East Indies, and in the Philippines the Spanish continued to exert and extend their authority. The French also entered the race for colonies in Southeast Asia, beginning with acquisitions around the Mekong Delta between 1859 and 1862 which became Cochin China (southern Vietnam) and later extending their control to include Cambodia, Laos, and the rest of Vietnam (the provinces of Annam and Tonkin. Siam (Thailand) was the only state in Southeast Asia that avoided succumbing to the imperial ambitions of western Europeans, although in 1855 King Mongkut signed the Bowring Treaty, which granted huge concessions to the colonial powers, including the

⁶ Milton Osborne, "Southeast Asia : An Introductory History, second edition, Sydney, London and New York : Allen & Unwin, 1983, P.77

acceptance of extraterritoriality (meaning that citizens of European powers were beyond his state's jurisdiction) and the abolition of state trade monopolies. Aware of Britain's military actions against China (the Opium War of 1839—42) and Burma (1852), Mongkut was under no illusions as to Siam's position.

Under European direction and control, the region became a major supplier of rice, rubber, tin, and other commodities for the world market. In the process Southeast Asia's physical, political, economic and social landscape was transformed. Jungle gave way to plantation agriculture and mining, while the influx of tens of thousands of Chinese and Indian laborers to work in these colonial enterprises forever changed the region's social and cultural composition. By 1870, the European powers were poised to complete their transformation of Southeast Asia.

In this way the nineteenth century brought a new wave of colonial expansion to South East Asia, and by the early 1900s the greater part of the region was under some form of Western control. The reasons for this expansion, and the nature of the control exercised, varied considerably. British rule in Malaya grew out of a felt need to forestall the possibility that another power might threaten the trade passing through the Straits of Malacca by acquiring a colony in the Malay Peninsula. British Burma began to take shape as a result of measures taken to defend the eastern frontiers of India, and the process received added impetus from attempts to trade with Burma, and with China through Burma. The hope of gaining access to China through South East Asia also lay behind France's entry into Vietnam, where the Mekong and Red Rivers appeared to offer prospects for trade with the interior. The Netherlands had maintained a presence in the Indonesian archipelago since the 1600s, but the Dutch now extended their control over a much wider area in order to secure this long-established sphere of influence from imperial adventures on the part of other European powers, and protect Dutch interests from the unrestrained exercise of power by local rulers. At the end of the century, the United States acquired the Philippines in the aftermath of the Spanish American War and kept the territory with few clear goals except to prevent it from falling into the hands of other empire-minded powers.

While trade and the protection of borders clearly played a significant role in colonial expansion, some historians have suggested additional explanations. One argument suggests that Western businessmen with a particular interest in colonial territories, or in selling supplies to the military, pushed governments into imperialist adventures. Another calls attention to the activities of 'men on the spot' who vent beyond the stated wishes of their home governments in acquiring territories or making treaty commitments. Examples of both certainly can be found in South East Asia. Private interests preceded their governments into a number of areas, notably the east coast of Sumatra and the Malay states. And Sir Andrew Clarke arguably exceeded his instructions when he intervened in the affairs of the Malay states, while the French advance in Laos was an almost single-handed effort.

Southeast Asia is of interest to countries well beyond the region. It is rich in natural resources and its sea routes are vital for maritime traffic. Europeans first came to Southeast Asia to secure not only spices and other trade here, but also the trade route to China. Today the commodities and the countries may be different but the region is still a major source of strategic materials such as rubber, tin and oil. Japan, Europe and America depend on the routes in Southeast Asia for the movement of fuel, raw materials and finished products. Moreover, Southeast Asia lies between the two major Asian powers, India and China. While the land route between India and China is shorter, there are many natural obstacles. The sea provides more convenient route. Over many centuries, these two countries have left their mark on the culture, religion, language, population and politics of the region.

“The most obvious legacy of the maritime rivalry during imperial phase is the establishment of colonial frontiers or borders. They have in general, become the frontiers of contemporary Nation States in Southeast Asia, though never designed for that”⁷. Also it was maritime rivalry, which forced the European powers to influence the economic life of the countries of the region, which in turn brought some degree of modernization of these countries.

⁷ N.Tarling, “Nationalism in Southeast Asia”, Routledge Curzon, Taylor and Francis group London & New York, 2004, P.60

In this context, the Anglo-French rivalry for colonialism in the region is interesting. "The French had shown interest in Vietnam as the British began to exclude them from India. The divisions and palace intrigues in Vietnam in the late eighteenth century seemed to give them opportunity. The opening of China after the end of the Opium war (1842) had facilitated the arrival of the French warships in the region. The French forces were eager to retaliate against Vietnam as the king of Vietnam had passed some edicts against Christian missionaries. In the conflicts that ensued, the British supported the French action, as long as it did not intrude into their security interests in Burma, India and Malaya"⁸. Moreover, the aim of the British policy was to provide stable conditions for British trade. As a resultant, the French had secured the three eastern provinces of Cochin China and then, under local initiative, took over the western provinces, and by 1882 established an effective protectorate over the rest of Vietnam. Thereafter they occupied Tonkin and laid a claim for Laos.

The French moves to have natural frontiers up to Mekong produced a crisis not only for Siam but also for the British; as they saw Laos as a buffer, not only now for their Malayan interests and for lower Burma, but also for upper Burma, which they had recently conquered. "Pavie, French envoy in Bangkok, indicated in March 1893 that France intended to assert a claim to all territory east of the Mekong, and a naval demonstration at Bangkok in July was designed to secure Thai compliance"⁹. Britain urged Siam to accept French demands so as to avoid there being stepped up, and at the same time tried to restrain France. The British then sought the creation of the promised buffer, but in vain. Instead, in 1896 they, too, surrendered their claims east of the Mekong, making the river the frontier of Laos and Burma, this was further reaffirmed in 1904 by an Anglo-French agreement.

⁸ N.Tarling (ed.) *Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, P.41-42.

⁹ *Ibid* P.51

The most significant period in the history of Southeast Asia starts with 1819 A.D. and ends up with the closing of the Second World War i.e. 1945, both these years had far-reaching consequences for the Southeast Asia. In 1819, Singapore came under British rule and it was developed as an important entrepot. The opening of Suez Canal in 1869 gave a new thrust and dimension to the maritime rivalry in the Indian Ocean. It reduced the distance between Europe and India. The torrent like diffusion of steam navigation throughout the Indian Ocean after 1869 brought in its immediate wake urgent demands for expanded and sophisticated port facilities. It resulted in the development of ports like Suez, Hong Kong, Albany, Melbourne and Sydney.

An inbuilt part of the inter-state rivalry was the modernization of the states in Southeast Asia. Rivalry among European powers made modernization more crucial as it defined the resources, human and physical, that a state could exploit. The expanded size and broader scope of imperial government produced intensity in governance, which had never previously been experienced by Southeast Asian countries; the shape of rule was transformed from a fragmented and localized sprawl into a centrally controlled, regular and compact hierarchy. Thus in Southeast Asia leaders and people inherited frontiers, nationalism emerged in that context and Nation states were successor states.

In their disputes the colonial powers had much in common, they conceived the building of an empire as part of their own state building and imperialism was part of the formation of their states. Therefore they avoided open conflicts and no major naval encounter between capital ships took place in the Indian Ocean until Second World War. This sort of status quo is very unique in the history of maritime rivalry.

The rise of Japan as a major Asian power disturbed the status quo maintained by the European powers and Indian Ocean became one of the major battle arenas during the Second World War. The astonishing success of Japan against the allied powers gave a new dimension to the maritime rivalry, now the allied powers tried their best to secure sea lanes of communication in Indian Ocean, the sole motive of this was to check the rising tide of Japanese aggression but after the war it became one of the major issue between super power rivalry.

Chapter 2

HOW INDIAN OCEAN TURNED INTO THE BRITISH LAKE?

The narrative of the principal naval operations in the east during the eighteenth century affords one of the best illustrations in history of the processes whereby the installation of a trans-marine sovereignty, such as the British rule in India, alone becomes possible in the face of hostile and formidable competition. In the nineteenth century after the French fleet was destroyed in Trafalgar in 1805, Great Britain was the only naval power in the world. "It was a century in which it could legitimately be said that Britannia ruled the waves"¹. The mere presence of the British gunboat in the seven seas had a decisive effect for both maintenance of peace and enforcement of policy. In an intensive maritime rivalry, only Britain succeeded in the creation of an extensive and long-lasting empire in Asia. Early industrialization, the Royal Navy, and the inherent mobility of its sea power allowed Britain to eliminate its European rivals and establish an imperium in the Indian Ocean region.

The British connection with the region developed in the early seventeenth century. A strategy of gradual penetration and effective use of sea power greatly enhanced Britain's political and military influence in the Indian Ocean. It was the victory of Plassey (1757) which finally changed the South Asian balance of power in favour of Britain. The occupation of Bengal provided a strategic territorial unit for further expansion in the South Asian subcontinent. After Tippoo Sultan's defeat in 1799, Southern India became another possession of the British East India Company. In north central India, the company extended its control to the borders of Punjab by capturing the Mughals' seat of power (Delhi) in 1804. Along with territorial expansion on the South Asian landmass, British also extended its power to Ceylon in 1796 and then occupied Cape province in South Africa in 1806. In 1794 the British captured Seychelles and in 1810-1811 they took Mauritius – a French stronghold in the middle of the Indian Ocean.

¹K.M Panikkar, "India and the Indian Ocean", George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1945, P.72.

Britain's Asian conquests and her victory in the battle of Trafalgar made her the dominant global power. After the treaties of Paris (1815, 1841), a world market system, a world currency and a world network of Oceanic transportation developed under British hegemony². The dynamics of world power and industrial growth reinforced Britain's quest for further territorial expansion in Asia and Africa. A doctrinal shift from mercantilism to 'free trade' in the mid – nineteenth century did not alter the basic intent and tactics of Britain's colonial policies. The 'imperialism of free trade' marked a tactical change from informal to formal mechanisms of political control and influence³. The emphasis on laissez-faire principles was more apparent than real. Britain continued to pursue interventionist policies to open up new commercial opportunities or to protect existing interests. The policy of a free trade empire has rightly been described as 'trade with informal control if possible; trade with rule when necessary'⁴.

A combination of economic, political and security factors influenced Britain's imperialist expansion in the Indian Ocean region. Disregarding commercial and financial influence, power and security issues had a substantial impacts on Britain's colonial acquisitions. Many areas were annexed to safeguard existing colonial holdings against potential encroachments by imperialist rivals. Britain's empire – building was unprecedented in scope and speed. An extensive imperial rule was established over most of South Asia, the Far East and Africa. In the Southeast Asian region, Singapore was founded in 1824 on the eastern entrance of the straits of Malacca. The sultans of Malay peninsula accepted British protection towards the end of the nineteenth century. After their wars 1824-85, Burma was also annexed and put directly under the British Government of India.

² George G. Thomson, "Problems of Strategy in the Pacific and Indian Ocean" (New York: National Strategy Information Center, 1970), P. 10

³ John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade". *Economic History Review*, 2nd series 6 (Aug, 1953), PP 12 – 13.

⁴ Ibid

The one development in the nineteenth century which affected the Indian Ocean, the construction of Suez canal, only strengthened British hold on the seas. And it may be said that the Suez canal became as events developed, the strongest link in the chain which bound India to Britain⁵. It served multiple British interests in the Indian Ocean area, but at the same time it reopened her maritime domination by opening the area upto the European merchant marines. The political and strategic consequences of the Suez canal route had a great impact on international developments in the following decades. In the aftermath of 1870, the appearance of the Germans and Italians in the Indian Ocean area and a revival of French, Portuguese and Dutch naval activity coincided with the opening of the Suez canal. Thus, "India and the Indian Ocean became many thousands mile nearer to the European bases of power and consequently, along with an unprecedented development of trade it also witnessed more effective control of the Indian Ocean routes"⁶. Now it becomes imperative to discuss how British consolidated their position in India and used the secure resources to acquire a dominant position in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia region.

At the end of the fifteenth century a new epoch began in the history of British commerce. The voyages of discovery of Columbus and Vasco da Gama had removed the centre of gravity of the commercial world from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. Henry VII displayed great interest in the promotion of foreign trade. He perceived that if England was to take her proper place in the new Europe that was brought into being by the discoveries of the Spaniards and the Portuguese, her energies should be directed towards the discovery of a new route to India other than those secured by the aforesaid nations. And yet both Henry VII and his son Henry VIII were eager to share in the trade with the Indies. They cherished hopes that they could find out a nearer passage to India and the East by the north-east or by the north-west and secure a profitable trade with the East by this route without encroaching on the Spanish and the Portuguese rights. The merchants

⁵ K.M. Panikkar, "India and the Indian Ocean" George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1945. P.72

⁶ Ibid P.73

of England, jealous of the prospects of their Dutch rivals, began preparations for a commercial voyage to the East. . By a charter granted by Queen Elizabeth I on 31 December 1600 those interested in such a venture were incorporated under the title of ‘The Governor and Company of Merchants of London Trading into the East Indies*’.

The immediate aim of the Company was the acquisition of the spices and pepper of the Eastern Archipelago. Moreover, England was at war with Spain and Portugal. So the first (1601 – 3) and second (1604 – 6) voyages were made, not to India, but to Aceh (in Sumatra), Bantam (in Java) and the Malacca. After the conclusion of peace with Spain and Portugal (1604) it was decided that the third expedition should, on its way to Bantam, attempt to open up trade at Aden and Surat. The second in command, William Hawkins, who had experience in such ventures and could speak Turkish, was provided with a letter from King James I to Akbar.

The English beginnings in India were not very promising on account of Portuguese rivalry. Captain William Hawkins journeyed from Surat to the Mughal court (1608), but failed to get permission to erect a factory at Surat. In 1611 Captain Middleton landed at Swally near Surat in spite of Portuguese opposition, and got permission from the Mughal governor to trade at the place. The victory of Captain Best in the Surat roadstead broke the tradition of Portuguese naval supremacy and an English factory was permanently established at Surat. From this place the English extended their trading operations inland and soon built subordinate factories at Ahmedabad, Burhanpur, Ajmer and Agra. Sir Thomas Roe, the royal ambassador from King James I to the Mughal emperor, succeeded in getting two *farmans* by 1618, one of the King and the other of the Prince (Khurram) confirming the trade and its continuance as well as exemption from inland tolls.

* Note: in subsequent discussion of British ascendancy in India , he references has been taken from the “Gazetteer of India, History and Culture”, Vol.2, Sixth Edition, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. Of India, 2003.

Surat may very well claim the distinction of being the historic soil where the British empire in the East first took root. Here the English traded largely in the fine cotton fabrics and muslins of upper India, as well as in indigo which was cultivated in large quantities in the neighbourhood of Agra. Surat was one of the chief centres of maritime trade from the Straits of Malacca to the Persian Gulf; and caravans started from it for all the inland parts of India and for the great cities of Golconda, Agra, Delhi and Lahore. Indeed, it was from Surat that the English extended inland their trading operations and built subordinate factories at Ahmedabad, Burhanpur, Ajmer and Agra.

In the initial stage, however, there were difficulties. Thomas Aldworth, a merchant of great energy and determination, remained at Surat, taking whatever advantage he could out of Best's victory. He secured permission for the establishment of factories – apart from that of Surat – at three other places on the Gulf of Cambay. But the trade of the English was not prosperous; the Indian merchants were tired of their constant hostilities with the Portuguese, and Aldworth could lead only a fitful existence.

By 1616, the English had contrived to establish four factories at Ahmedabad, Burhanpur, Agra and Surat, while an attempt was made to oust the Portuguese from Cochin and destroy their influence in Malabar. Through the efforts of Best and Downton, Aldworth and Thomas Roe, the English factory at Surat attained a fairly high degree of reputation. They were equally fortunate in the Persian Gulf, where Portuguese influence had been steadily declining. In 1618 the Shah of Persia permitted the English to open trade at the port of Jask near the entrance to the Persian Gulf. In 1620, the English gained a victory over the Portuguese which secured for them great influence and respect in the Persian Gulf. Two years later they co-operated with the Persians and captured Ormuz from the Portuguese. The capture of Ormuz weakened the trade and strength of the Portuguese port at Diu. Shortly afterwards the Portuguese were completely driven out of the Gulf of Cambay. In 1629 and 1630 the English secured further victories and they were entrusted by the Mughal emperor with the duty of keeping watch over the seas and safeguarding the annual fleet of pilgrim ships that traveled from India to the Red Sea. Thus the English at Surat were looked up to for the purpose of keeping open the sea-way for pilgrimage to the holy cities of Islam. "Surat illustrates the position which the English

quickly secured in the economy of the Mughal empire as a sure source of revenue, as sea-police for the coast and the patrol of the Ocean-path to Mecca, gradually developing into negotiators on behalf of the native government.

In 1630 the trade of Surat had grown to such dimension, that the directors constituted it into the chief of the English settlements in the East and subordinated even distant Bantam in Java to its control. The Dutch, who had established their own factory at Surat in 1616, were powerless to compete with the English on equal terms on the west coast. They held possession of Cochin and had a share in the pepper trade to Malabar. But they were not all able to gain any influence either at the Mughal court or with the Mughal viceroy of Gujarat. They, however, established themselves in greater strength on the Bengal coast, which was comparatively within easy reach of Java and the pried for the trade of Masulipatam which was the chief sea port of the great inland kingdom of Golconda and largely traded in diamonds, rubies and textiles of that region. In 1614, and again in 1624, the English had serious quarrels with the Dutch who tried to win over the local ruler to their side. In 1628, the English abandoned Masulipatam in despair and attempted to settle at Armagaon in the present Nellore district. Only two years later they were able to revive their factory at Masulipatam. It was only with the foundation of Madras by the English in 1639, their arrival at Hughli in 1650 and their establishment of a factory at Balasore in north Orissa that the position of the English on the eastern coast became strong and permanent. Meanwhile, the prosperity of Surat was threatened by a terrible famine, followed by pestilence, which broke out in Gujrat in 1631.

In 1620, the English began to trade at Pulicat, but the hostility of the Dutch compelled them to abandon the place three years later. For the same reason they had to abandon Masulipatam (where they had been permitted to trade in 1613) in 1628. But they returned to Masulipatam in 1630 and secured the 'golden farman' from the Sultan of Golconda (16320 which ensured safety and prosperity for their trade. At Masulipatam the English purchased piece-goods for export to Persia. In September 1641 Fort St. George in Madras superseded Masulipatam as the Company's headquarters on the Coromandel coast.

In 1661, the Portuguese gave Bombay as a part of dowry to their princess, Catherine of Braganza, on her marriage with Charles II. The English had secured Bombay at a very crucial moment when Surat was being repeatedly attacked by the Marathas.

Gerald Aungier, who was president of Surat and governor of Bombay from 1669 to 1677, was the true founder of Bombay's greatness. He resolved to make Bombay completely safe for shipping and trade, free from danger on the landside from the Marathas and on the sea-side from the Portuguese and the pirates of the coast. He fortified the citadel, constructed a dock, laid out a town, established a court of justice, created a police force and a militia, and started a mint which coined both silver and copper money. Under Aungier, Bombay became a safe asylum for all merchants and manufacturers. He established vigorous and strict discipline over all the inhabitants of the city and allowed every community to enjoy the free exercise of its religion without molestation. During his governorship the old *panchayat system* was revived, so that justice was actually brought to the door of the people in minor causes. He saved English lives and properties during Shivaji's second sack of Surat in 1670. Under Aungier, Bombay became the best naval station on the Indian coast and a harbour of refuge from the Marathas and the Malabar pirates. Its population rose to 60,000 and its revenue increased threefold. During the period of the governorship (1677 – 82) of Rolt, Aungier's successor, Bombay's very existence as an English settlement hung in balance, while the islands in its neighbourhood were occupied by the Mughals or the Marathas. From this time began the general decline of Bombay which continued till the close of the first quarter of the eighteenth century. The peaceful and orderly government of Aungier was in striking contrast with the terror which prevailed under Sir John Child.

During this period, interlopers (the individual English merchants independent of the Company's control) created problems. At the close of the seventeenth century, these interlopers took to open piracy. In 1686 two pirate ships captured several Mughal vessels in the Red Sea, upon which the Mughal governor of Surat violently reacted against the English, particularly at Sir John Child, president of Surat and governor of Bombay. Soon the Mughals visited on the Company all their wrath at the depredations of the English pirates, placed a guard over the Company's factory at Surat and laid an embargo on its

trade. Though John Child punished the interlopers savagely whenever they were caught, the evil grew more rampant. These pirates and interlopers were the principle cause of the disastrous war which the English subsequently waged with the Mughals.

John Child got really frightened and hastened to assure the emperor Aurangzeb, who was then in the Deccan, that he had really no hostile intentions. But Aurangzeb was not deceived by Child's profession of friendship; he issued orders that the English should be treated as enemies and that the Abyssinian Sidis in his service should blockade and capture Bombay. The English prisoners at Surat were very badly treated. At last, John Child supplicated the emperor for peace, whereupon the latter imposed the following humiliating terms upon the English: (a) all sums due from the Company to the Mughal subjects should be immediately paid; (b) recompense should be given for such losses as the Mughals had suffered; and (c) the hated Sir John Child should leave India within nine months.

Early English Settlements in Bengal: The early history of the English settlements in Bengal easily falls into several well-marked stages. Between 1633 and 1663 the English factories in Bengal aimed at nothing more than peaceful trade under the protection of the Mughal power. In the next stage, 1663 – 85, the English merchants in Bengal were hampered by quarrels with native powers by quarrels with interloping rivals, and by quarrels among themselves. After 1685, when they had come to despair in respect of maintaining their trade by peaceful means and by treaties with the Indian powers, they resolved to protect themselves by force and entered into open war with the Mughal power. During the years 1685 to 1690 "the English in Bengal were in a state of flux"; they were several times defeated and driven out of the Hughli and other settlements. At last in 1690 they returned to Bengal at the invitation of the Mughal viceroy and formed a fortified settlement at Calcutta. It was in the fourth period which begins from 1690 that the English settlement took a definite shape. In 1633, the Mughal governor of Orissa gave the English merchants permission to establish factories at Hariharapur (near the mouth of Mahanadi), Balasore, Pipli.

In England there was a growing demand for Bengal foods, especially for silk and saltpeter; and the trade of the Bengal factories consequently increased. In 1667 Aurangzeb gave the English a *farman* for trade in Bengal, and five years later, in 1672, the Mughal governor, Shayista Khan, issued an order confirming all the privileges already acquired by the English. Even before this date, Shayista Khan extirpated the numerous river and sea-pirates of Chittagong and Arakan who had for more than a century infested the whole of the Bay of Bengal. In this time the French and the Danes commenced their commercial activities in Bengal. But the Mughal governor did not take any measure at all to check the oppressive proceedings and exactions of his local officers, and the foreign merchants had to rely on their goodwill.

In spite of certain privileges granted to the Company by the *nishans* of Shah Shuja, the Mughal governor of Bengal (D.A. 1651), the Company's trade was occasionally obstructed by local customs officers who demanded payment of tolls. In pursuance of its changed policy, the Company wanted to have a fortified settlement at Hughli so that force could be used, if necessary. This mission of William Hedges (the first governor and agent of the English Company in Bengal) in August 1682, to Shayista Khan, governor of Bengal, proved to be of no avail. Four years later, hostilities broke out between the English and the Mughal government in Bengal. In retaliation for the sack of Hughli (October 1686) the English captured the imperial forts at Thana (modern Garden Reach), raided Hijili on the east of the Midnapore district, and stormed the Mughal fortifications at Balasore. But the English were forced to leave Hughli and to retire to an unhealthy place at the mouth of the river. Their agent, Job Charnock, opened negotiations for permission to return to Sutanuti. But hostilities were renewed on the arrival of the Company's new agent, Captain William Heath. In November 1688 he stormed the Mughal fort at Balasore and committed inhuman atrocities on the people there. His attempt to capture Chittagong did not succeed and he sailed away for Madras on February 17, 1689. After the conclusion of peace between the Company and the Mughal government in February 1690, Job Charnock returned to Bengal as agent and reached Sutanuti on August 24, where he established an English factory on February 10, 1691. On the same day, an imperial order was issued permitting the English "to contentedly continue their trade" in Bengal on payment of Rs. 3,000 a year in lieu of all

dues. This marked the foundation of Calcutta, which was destined to develop as one of the greatest Indian cities. The rebellion of Sobha Singh, a *zamindar* in the district of Burdwan, gave an opportunity to the English to fortify their settlement at Sutanuti in 1696. They were permitted by Azimush Shah, governor of Bengal, to purchase the *zamindari* of the three villages of Sutanuti, Kalikata and Govindpur on payment of Rs. 1,200 to the old proprietors. In 1696, a serious rebellion occurred in Bengal under an Afghan named Rahim Khan who plundered the whole country along the Hughli. Alarmed by rebellion and the inability of the Mughal viceroy to put it down, the English at Calcutta as well as the Dutch at Chinsura asked permission to fortify their factories and to raise troops. The viceroy ordered them, in general terms, to defend themselves; so the English began to build walls and bastions round their factory (1697). This was the origin of Fort William, named after King William III. Next year they got from the viceroy permission to rent, besides Calcutta, the villages of Sutanuti and Govindpur. The security of Calcutta, which began with the building of the fort, was now completely assured.

In 1700, the directors constituted Bengal as a separate presidency independent of Madras, and nominated Sir Charles Eyre as its first president. Eyre resigned his post soon after and was succeeded by an old servant of the Company which was started in 1689 and had also to meet a series of attacks on the English by the local powers. In 1701, Aurangzeb, who had often suspected the English of piratical acts and was now confirmed in his suspicions by the two rival English Companies accusing each other of piracy, ordered the general arrest of all the Europeans in India. The Company's servants at Patna and Qasimbazar were seized and Beard had to see that Fort William was made sufficiently strong to resist any sudden attack. He mounted additional guns on the fort walls and strengthened the garrison of the settlement.

Aurangzeb's death in 1707 made the English at Calcutta fear that their growing trade would be swept away by the coming tide of civil war and anarchy. Efforts were made to strengthen the fort, and two new bastions were built by the riverside without delay. The English had by then become so bold as to write to the Mughal officials that if any of the Company's merchants were plundered, they would recompense themselves by sacking Hughli town or any other place that lay open to them. After protracted

negotiations, the English got confirmation of their privileges from the new emperor, Shah Alam, and the *de facto* ruler of Bengal, Murshid Quli Khan. They looked hopefully to peace and prosperous trade.

The period from 1708 up to the middle of the eighteenth century, when political motives began to dominate, saw the expansion of the Company's trade and influence in India; and the impediments which appeared as a sequel to the disintegration of the Mughal empire were easily overcome. The most important event in the history of the Company during these years was the diplomatic mission led by John Surman in 1715 to the court of the Mughal emperor Farrukhsiyar, resulting in the grant of three famous *farmans* addressed to the officials in Bengal, Hyderabad and Gujarat. The *farmans* gave the Company many valuable privileges. In Bengal it exempted the Company's imports and exports from additional customs duties, excepting the annual payment of Rs. 3,000 as settled earlier. The Company was allowed to rent additional lands around Calcutta. In Hyderabad, the Company's old privilege of freedom from dues in trade was retained, and it had to pay only the existing rent for Madras. At Surat, the Company was exempted from the levy of all duties for its exports and imports in lieu of an annual payment of Rs. 10,000; and the coins of the Company minted at Bombay were to have currency throughout the Mughal empire.

In Bengal, Murshid Quli Khan, its able governor, tried to control the Company in various ways and to place it on the same footings as the other traders. But, on the whole, the Company's trade prospered. The importance of Calcutta increased and its population grew to 100,000 by the middle of the eighteenth century. In Madras, the Company carried on 'peaceful commerce' and its relations with the *subahdar* of the Deccan and the *nawab* of Karnatak were cordial. Thomas Pitt, governor of Madras from 1698 to 1709, obtained from the *nawab* of Karnatak a grant of five villages near Madras in 1708; and in 1734 it also got Vepery and four other settlements. In Bombay, there were some disturbances for nearly two decades due to quarrels between the Portuguese and the Marathas and the exploits of the Maratha se captains, notably Kanhoji Angria, on the western coast. But here also the Company's military strength and trade increased and, in 1744, Bombay had a population of 70,000 and the revenues amounted to about sixteen

lakh rupees. In the next decade, the English East India Company began to extend its territorial claims; and by the end of the eighteenth century, it succeeded in establishing its paramountcy.

Now, after discussing and analyzing how British established and consolidated their position in the Indian Ocean, let us discuss in brief how they acquired dominant position in Southeast Asia region. Initially British interests in the region became substantially commercial and economic rather than territorial and political⁷. In Southeast Asia Britain sought security and stability; it did not necessarily seek to rule, though its power might be felt in other ways⁸. Moreover, they did not use their predominance to eliminate their European rivals, but rather to constrain them. In this way the British set the agenda for lesser European powers, and for the indigenous states also.

The British were late in developing major colonial interests in Southeast Asia. They had cooperated with the Dutch in early challenge to the Portuguese but later refocused most of their resources on developing India. Not until the late eighteenth century were the British, working from their secure Indian base, able to challenge and eventually supplant Dutch control. The Dutch had tried to monopolize not only the China-to-Europe trade but the inter-Asian trade as well. But it was the British using private capital and vessels, who were able to dominate this inter-Asian trade: “whereas the Dutch Empire had operated from within Indonesia and had been essentially monopolistic in its character and objectives that of Britain was based on the enormous resources of the Indian subcontinent and finally functioned virtually on a free trade basis⁹. This free trade system, which was

⁷ Nicholas Trading (ed.), “The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol. II”, Cambridge University Press, 1992, P.9

⁸ Ibid

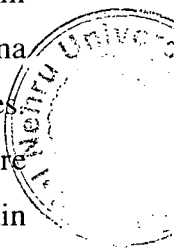
based in Singapore, harked back in some respects to the traditional entrepot centers of Sirvijaya and Malacca, although, more important, it was initially managed by the British and later by local Chinese – not by indigenous entrepreneurs.

British territorial acquisitions in Southeast Asia followed their general economic activity. Penang, an island off the west coast of Malaya was acquired from the sultan of Kedah in 1786. Singapore, acquired from the Dutch in 1824, evolved as a leading entrepot center during the remainder of the nineteenth century and became the regional base for British colonial free trade. Control of the coastal regions of Burma came in 1826, following a war precipitated by Burmese military activity in India; upper Burma was not annexed until 1886 as the British responded to fears of renewed French activities. The Malay states of Singapore's hinterland held little interest until instability there threatened tin production, much of which was exported through Singapore. Britain developed a protectorate system for four tin-mining states – Larut, Selangor, Sungai Ujong, and Perak. These were followed by similar agreements with Negri Sembilan (1888), Pahang (1888), and Johore (1895). Four other states – Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Trengganu – were acquired from Thailand by treaty in 1909. Thus, directly or indirectly, Britain's influence and interest were after decisive in determining the frontiers of the new Southeast Asian states, in locating the central authorities within those frontiers, even in shaping the policies those authorities pursued.

⁹ John F. Cady, "A History of Southeast Asia : Its Historical Development", New York: Mc Graw Hill, 1964. P.213.



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Chapter 3

MARITIME RIVALRY AND DELIMITATION OF FRONTIERS

The question of how important the European role has been in the history of Southeast Asia has been one of the great preoccupations of those who have studied the region since the Second World War.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, profound changes took place in the political order in all Southeast Asian countries. A main feature of these changes was the foundation of European-style state administrations within territories formally defined by European imperialism. Colonial rulers created centrally controlled and functionally organized bureaucracies to govern regions which were delineated with little or no regard for indigenous conceptions of political or cultural boundaries. The personalistic and quasi-feudal complex of arrangements which had been the hall mark of earlier political systems was overridden and often eliminated¹. All this happened shortly and gradually.

Europeans came to Southeast Asia with a mix of objectives and strategies designed to enhance commercial power and spread Christianity. The strategies of the colonial regimes changed frequently, and at times major objectives of the colonial metropolis changed as well. Although actions were often couched in Christian or other moral terms, the economic significance of the colonial policies cannot be overstated. For example, despite the high costs and enormous potential for total loss of any specific fleet, the rewards were such that by 1518 "the spice trade produced.....some 39 percent [of royal income in Portugal], which was more than the Crown's income from metropolitan Portugal. Three colonial powers – the Portuguese, Dutch, and British – stand out: the

¹ N. Tarhing (ed.) "Cambridge History of Southeast Asia," Vol.2, Cambridge University Press, 1992, P.79

Portuguese because they initiated colonial interventions and control and the Dutch and British because their strategies had longer-term impacts on the regional system. From the time of the voyage of Pedro Alvares Cabral in March 1500, it was clear that the Portuguese and Europeans meant to dominate the trading system and that 'the period of unarmed trading was over in the Indian Ocean.'²

The Portuguese

Southeast Asians did not realize that the Portuguese were pursuing two goals that would inextricably alter the indigenous system. Motivated by their animosity towards Islam, the Portuguese linked their aim of securing monopoly control of the commercial spice trade with the religious goal of arresting the expansion of Islam. These goals became intertwined because by the sixteenth century, most active traders in the South and Southeast Asian sections of the international trading system were Muslim. The Portuguese plan for control was not a unified strategy, and decisions were taken in the field without approval or agreement from Lisbon. After the Portuguese had extended their position around Africa and through India, it became apparent that achieving either of their primary goals would necessitate expansion into Southeast Asia.

European knowledge of Asia, particularly Southeast Asia, was fragmentary at the beginning of the sixteenth century. However, European and especially Portuguese navigational skills and equipment were improving rapidly, and the Portuguese extended the range of their commercial ventures in stages. By the latter part of the fifteenth century, Portuguese sailors had rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and they reached India (Malabar) just before the close of the century. Once they were established in Goa in 1510, the move to Southeast Asia at Malacca was the next logical step in the Portuguese quest to stop the eastward diffusion of Islam and to control the flow of spices and other commodities on the westward route to Europe. By the early 1600s, galleons weighing up to 2,000 tons were being built for the Asian routes.

² K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, P.68

The defeat of Malacca did not alter the basic interstate system of sixteenth-century Southeast Asia. Malacca may have been past its zenith as an entrepot center, but several other trading states and kingdoms – notably Aceh, Demak, Ternate, Johore, and Mataram on Java – were strengthened by the shift of commerce away from Malacca. The Portuguese had some success in controlling the spice trade to Europe, although they were unsuccessful in maintaining monopoly control because they were unable to control all of the producers, particularly Aceh and the Javanese and Eastern archipelago kingdoms. Individual traders also circumvented Portuguese control, and by the 1550s supplies of black pepper were again plentiful in Alexandria and Italy”³. The Portuguese secured their position in Malacca with the assistance of disgruntled merchants, but they had neither the human resources nor the diplomatic skill to assert the monopoly control they had sought. And they were not successful in their missionary efforts to spread Christianity or to curtail the spread of Islam.

In the religious competition between Islam and Christianity, the Southeast Asians, especially those in the archipelago, recognized the adversarial situation. The Portuguese introduced the region to the previously European and Middle Eastern conflict between the two religions, but Islam was actually strengthened by the intrusion of the Portuguese because it became a rallying symbol against them. Arab and Indian merchants, many of whom were also Muslim, were well acquainted with the Portuguese goals from their experiences in South Asia. They were anxious to block Portuguese influence and control but were unable to translate these desires into political force. Although Islam arrived in Southeast Asia at least several centuries before the major European push for Christianity, it had been slow to penetrate inland until after “the decline of the Maritime states, [when] many of their citizens migrated to the territory of Mataram and other inland areas,” thus greatly expediting the Islamization of the countryside⁴.

³ Ibid, P.75

⁴ S. Soebardi and C.P. Woodcroft-Lee, “Islam in Indonesia,” and the Crescent in the East, edited by Raphael Isreali, London: Curzon Press, 1982, P. 181

The Portuguese also maintained contacts with Thailand, Burma, Vietnam, and Cambodia and on several occasions tried to form alliances with Java, but their focus from the base at Malacca was largely on spice production in the Moluccas. Meanwhile, most commercial interests in the region were flexible enough to bypass Portuguese control. During the sixteenth century, spice production spread to many new areas in Southeast Asia. Although Portuguese vassals (or allies) such as Tidore were required to give their entire spice production to the Portuguese, in fact the Tidorese simply resorted to smuggling and to black-market sales of the crops. Other trading centers expanded rapidly to accept the overflow of merchants leaving Portuguese-controlled Malacca. Aceh in particular benefited from the shift of Muslim merchants leaving Malacca and looking for new bases.

Although the Portuguese penetrated the Southeast Asian system, they became only one more new competitor in the existing system of political and commercial power. Their inability to dominate the system resulted from their limited human resources, poor management and organization skills, and meager financial resources. Their strategy was to establish a fort and a warehouse at each port while relying on naval forces to direct local shipping into port. In order for this strategy to be successful, large numbers of sailors and soldiers, as well as colonial administrators, were needed; without them, discipline broke down. Portuguese-led piracy and other forms of adventurism became common. The Portuguese nevertheless demonstrated that the Southeast Asian system was vulnerable to outsiders who brought sufficient force and manipulated the “rulers” of the system to their advantage. The Portuguese did not attain all of their goals, but the Dutch who followed were more successful.

The Dutch

News and information about Portuguese activities could not be kept secret, and in 1595 – 1596 a Dutchman, Jan Huygen van Linschoten, published three books – including a navigational guide – on his experiences in Portuguese possessions in Asia. By the time the Dutch arrived, Southeast Asians, who still saw no basic threat to their system, welcomed the Dutch, hoping they could counter the Portuguese; they did so, although as

late as the early 1700s some Portuguese influence remained in Cambodia in addition to their control of Timor⁵.

The arrival of the Dutch, who at first were in league with the English, was hastened by the closing of the port at Lisbon to Dutch merchants in 1594; hence, sources of pepper and spices the Dutch had distributed through northern Europe were cut off. The Dutch were initially content to adapt to customary trading practices within the regional system, and their early successful expeditions, which focused on commerce, created good profits as well as goodwill among the Bandanese, Ambones, and others. The Acehenese were more suspicious of Dutch intrusions, but they sent two ambassadors to the Netherlands to gain a better understanding of Europe.

In the early seventeenth century, the Dutch consolidated their commercial houses under the Dutch or United East Company (VOC) and concentrated on both monopoly regional control and elimination of Portuguese influences. The VOC was empowered to “act in behalf of the States General of the Netherlands and to exercise *all the rights of sovereignty*”⁶. However, at first the Dutch found it advantageous to follow standard commercial practices in the regional system by trading throughout Sumatra, where the sultans acted as intermediaries to the pepper growers. In the Moluccas, which were already politically and economically disrupted by the Portuguese and the Spanish, the

⁵ J. R. Brujin, F.S.Gaastra, and I.Schoffer, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, vol. 1, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987, P.59. This three volume work provides a detailed record of outbound shipping (volume 2) and homeward-bound shipping (volume 3) with an introductory summary and description (volume 1).

⁶ Bernard H.M. Vlekke, *Nusantara: A History of Indonesia*, The Hague: W.van Hoeve, 1965, P. 199

Dutch found an opening when Ternate sought their protection. A similar agreement with Ambon put the Dutch in a very strong position in the eastern archipelago. They also established a fort at Sunda Kalapa – sometimes called Jakarta – situated in the territorial buffer zone between the kingdoms of Mataram, whose power was centered in east Java, and Bantam whose power was centered in west Java”⁷.

Early in the seventeenth century the VOC, led by the aggressive Governor-General Jan Pieterzoon Coen, established a new southern sea route to Southeast Asia, initially to avoid Portuguese forts and strongholds along the coast of Africa. The Dutch could not dislodge the Portuguese from Mozambique, so the value of following the African coast after rounding the Cape of Good Hope was minimized. It later became known that making use of the prevailing westerly wind patterns south of the Cape could take Dutch ships directly to the Indonesian archipelago in a shorter time and under better conditions in terms of heat, hurricanes, and dependable winds⁸. This navigational strategy – establishing a southern route to Southeast Asia – had a great impact on Dutch thinking with respect to the shaping of its empire.

As the Dutch focused more intently on Southeast Asia, Coen and others recognized the shortcomings of the Portuguese strategy of controlling the flow of trade from fortified port cities. Smuggling and over production would always reduce the likely profit. Thereafter, the Dutch embarked upon a two-pronged strategy; first, to gain control of trade within Southeast Asia or between Southeast Asia and China, India, or Syria; and second, to control the local commodity crop and production areas to the greatest extent possible. The Batavia base was secured with the defeat of a large army from Mataram in 1629, and the Dutch poised for “the first decisive step towards the formation of a new empire, commercial at the outset like Srivijaya and Malacca, but gradually becoming predominantly territorial; yet not in the true line of succession to either since the centre of

⁷ Ibid, P. 130

⁸ Brujin, Gaastra, and Schoffer, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping*, PP. 59,70

control lay thousands of miles away⁹. Not only was the control center far away, but the rules that governed Dutch conduct in Southeast Asia were also at odds with those of the extant system. The Dutch strategy ultimately led to the destruction of the traditional Southeast Asian political and economic systems.

The Dutch captured Malacca in 1641, and by the 1650s the Portuguese had been effectively eliminated as a regional force. The Dutch extended their influence to Ayudhya, assisting the Siamese against both the Cambodians and Patani, after which they established a “factory of solid brick construction” there¹⁰. They tried, with limited success, to extend their contacts throughout Indochina, where they met strong competition from the English.

If the effect, the VOC became a new actor in the traditional Southeast Asian system. Within the context of that system, the VOC had enormous resources at its disposal, and it had been granted the power “to dispense justice, to employ and direct the use of troops, to conclude alliances with native princes, and to conduct diplomatic and commercial relations generally.”¹¹ At the same time, it experienced few of the limitations common among indigenous states: It had no general constituency to satisfy, as its shareholders received their dividends irregularly and they came from capital funds; even the company directors had little control because of the time required for communications.

The Dutch move to displace the Portuguese in Southeast Asia was initiated largely for economic reasons grounded in inter-European commerce. However, political goals within Southeast Asia almost immediately evolved in support of these European economic and commercial goals. From the time of the formation of the VOC in 1602

⁹ D.G.E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968, P.331

¹⁰ John F. Cady, *Southeast Asia : Its Historical Development*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964, P.213

¹¹ *Ibid*, P.215

through the period of direct government control after 1789, the Dutch progressively deepened their penetration of Indonesian social and economic activity and expanded their geographic control. During this period, more than 1,770 ships made 4,789 voyages to Asia – a greater number of voyages than any other European power including the British.¹²

Sometimes unwittingly, the Dutch introduced, social, economic, and political changes that fundamentally altered Southeast Asia. For example, under Dutch protection, the role of itinerant Chinese in the economy greatly expanded. Economic exploitation of agriculture reached highly intensive levels under the cultivation system, which theoretically required that farmers plant government-specified crops on one-fifth of their land. In reality, much higher percentages were often taken. Such intensive exploitation required that the “authoritarian content of native society be not only maintained but considerably increased.¹³ Even after the Dutch gave up their monopoly control and introduced private capital (after 1877), compulsory labor was still required, substantial taxes were due periodically, and credit at reasonable rates was not available. The continually stronger economic position of the Chinese and the new European entrepreneurs further increased the exploitation and disruption of Indonesian society. In some ways the Dutch colonial government sought to protect that society from external penetration and exploitation; failing that, its disjointed social, economic, and political policies maximized status and rewards for a few while stripping the remainder of society of all but the arrest essentials.

¹² Bruijn, Gaastra, and Schoffer, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping*, PP 95-96

¹³ Goerge McT.Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952, P.13

The British

For much of the nineteenth century, Britain was the predominant state in Europe and thus in the world. The French presented a challenge in the eighteenth century, but they were defeated at sea in 1805 and on land in 1815. Politically secure in Europe, Britain also took the lead in the Industrial Revolution. That gave it yet greater strength, but also shaped the application of its power. Overseas its interests became substantially commercial and economic rather than territorial and political. It saw its dominion in India, begun in the earlier phase, as essential but exceptional. Elsewhere, a combination of strategic positions and economic and political influence should suffice to protect its interests. In Southeast Asia Britain sought security and stability; it did not necessarily seek to rule, though its power might be felt in other ways.

The nineteenth-century patterns of interaction in Southeast Asia were naturally much affected by the influence and interests of the British, particularly during the period of their predominance. That predominance they did not use to eliminate their European rivals, but rather to constrain them. The Netherlands and Spain were now minor states in Europe; they were left with substantial holdings in Southeast Asia, with claims that the British were unlikely to challenge, with the option of implementing them in their own time provided they did not under mine Britain's interest. Even France, the eighteenth-century rival, was not obstructed in its Vietnam venture. In earlier centuries, European rivalry had rarely worked to the advantages of Asian states: it spurred the Europeans on, while the chance of playing the Europeans off against one another was often a chimera. But the autonomy which indigenous rulers might thus enjoy was somewhat illusory; they had no real chance of playing Britain off against the minor powers, and their status as independent actors on an international stage was diminished by this kind of semi-condominium. "The British set the agenda for lesser European powers, and for the indigenous states also. Siam (Thailand) alone retained real independence at the end of the period; it had seen that it was no longer a matter of playing off one alien power against another, but of coming to terms with the British¹⁴",

¹⁴ Chandran, J, *The Contest for Siam, 1889-1902: A study in Diplomatic rivalry*, Kuala Lumpur, 1977.

and it was able to do so. “Directly or indirectly, Britain’s influence and interest were often decisive in determining the frontiers of the new Southeast Asian states, in locating the central authorities within those frontiers, even in shaping the policies those authorities pursued¹⁵”.

The challenges to the patterns thus established that emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century did not merely, nor even primarily, result from the changes and tensions within Southeast Asia. The reflected changes in Europe and the world at large, in particular the external challenges to Britain’s power, as industrialization affected other parts of Europe and the world, and Britain and indeed Europe itself lost their extraordinary primacy. But by the late nineteenth century the major loci of authority in Southeast Asia had been settled, and the revived rivalry of the period affected only the rounding-out of frontiers. In this phase the British moved readily from tolerating other towards compromising with them. The conference on Africa and West Africa that met in Berlin in 1884 -5, and included the European powers, Turkey and the United States, provided a principle: European states would accept the frontiers established by their rivals if their claims were backed by effective occupation. The recrudescence of rivalry was thus no more to the advantage of indigenous autonomy than its earlier diminution: indeed it clearly conduced to the establishment of outside control. Intensifying rivalry in Europe and the emergence of non-European powers, the United States and Japan, had the same effect. “The former urged on compromise between Britain and France, helping to determine the frontiers of Burma, Malaya, Indochina and Siam¹⁶”. A combination of factors helped to ensure that Spain was replaced in the Philippines by the United States and that the authority of the Moro Sultanates was finally destroyed. But in a sense these were adjustments of a system that had developed during the British primacy of the nineteenth century. The system was overthrown only by the Japanese incursion of 1941- 42.

¹⁵ N.Tarling(ed.) “ Cambridge History of Southeast Asia” Vol.2 Cambridge University Press, 1992; P.11

¹⁶ Quoted N. Tarling , “Imperial Britain in Southeast Asia, Kuala Lumpur P.59

The making of the new frontiers in Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century had depended in some sense on British decisions. They in turn were affected by the essentially economic nature of Britain's world-wide interests; by its desire for European stability; by its acquisition of the raj in India; and by the importance attached to its trade with China. These concerns affected Britain's view of different parts of Southeast Asia in different ways. For this reason, though also for others, the outcomes differed. Much depended on the relationship of Britain with specific European powers. Where they were minor, it tended not to displace them, but to connive at their imperialism so as to avoid that of any powers that might be more threatening, and paradoxically that might reduce their immediate need to establish full control. Against major European powers, however, it might have to take more direct precautions, but that did not necessarily mean exclusion.

The attitudes and policies of other European powers have thus to be taken into account. The Dutch, whose dependence was underlined by British conquests and retrocessions, were promoted all the more to concentrate on Java; on areas that could be made profitable; on development, peace and order. *Onthouding*, or abstention was possible as well as desirable in the outer islands. The increased rivalry of the later nineteenth century, as well as new economic opportunities, spurred them on to round out their empire. Their concern over Islam was another factor. Generally they tried, as in earlier centuries, to avoid provoking it, and their war with Aceh was a challenge they found difficult to handle. Spain, whose weakness the British had also underlined by capturing Manila in 1762, recognized that it too was dependent on them and permitted them major economic opportunities in Luzon and the Visayas. The international rivalry of the late nineteenth century, and the challenge of Islam, led the Spanish into bloody but indeterminate efforts to make their claims over the Moro lands effective. In the late eighteenth century the French had seen a venture in Southeast Asia as a way of compensating themselves for British success in India and China. Their revival of interests in Vietnam in the 1850s not opposed by the British, responded to a need to demonstrate the greatness of France overseas. That seemed all the more necessary under the Third Republic, when its position in Europe was under challenge.

The opportunities for these European states were determined not only by the British, but also by the Southeast Asians. Their states might attempt to adjust to new circumstances: they might not; if they did, they might fail; if they began the task, they might not realize that further adjustment would be needed. Even in the early nineteenth century, it seemed that Asian states would have to modernize to survive, and that they might need a greater or lesser degree of European influence to ensure that they did so. Such in itself might destroy ancient authority without replacing it, and make them weaker rather than stronger. The alternative might be piecemeal partition, itself weakening the core structure. If either or both of these outcomes determined their position by the late nineteenth century, the new pressures then exerted by international economic expansion and political rivalry might bring about a final dissolution.

Other Colonial Powers in Southeast Asia

A second group of states – Spain, France, the United States, also played roles in the colonial period, but these roles were less systemic and were more limited in the territory under their control or the duration of that control. Importantly, although these countries' policies disrupted the social and economic structure of the territory they controlled, their activities did not directly alter the regional system, as did the Portuguese, Dutch and British.

The Spanish

Establishment of Spanish control in the Philippines took more than forty years to complete following Magellan's visit there in 1521. Blocked by the Portuguese, the Spanish traveled to Southeast Asia by way of Mexico and the Pacific, and a successful colony was not established until 1565 after four expeditions had failed. With only a very few Spaniards and some local allies, the Spanish were still able to unify the Philippines, although complete pacification and unification began with the Spanish missionary effort. The Filipinos seem to have been culturally amenable to outside influences. In those areas in which Islam had arrived ahead of the Spaniards, missionaries had little success. Elsewhere in the Philippines, Christianity, the Spanish language, and other cultural traits

were more readily adopted than was the case in any other Southeast Asian area. Moreover, the Spanish cultural impact was intense and spread into social services and education, although pacification did not occur in some areas in the north until the nineteenth century and the conflict with the Muslims of Mindana was never completely settled.

The Portuguese and later the Dutch prevented Spanish influence from extending into other parts of South Asia. The Spanish tried to establish direct trade links between Manila and China and Japan, but this proved difficult; moreover, the strongest Spanish commercial ties were developed between Manila and New Spain (Mexico), which left the inter-Asian trade in the hands of the China or other Europeans. Spanish galleons brought gold and silver to Manila to exchange for silks, rugs, cotton, spices, and aromatic woods. This trade continued until the Spanish lost Mexico, after which Manila reoriented its trade to accept non-Spanish shipping. Manila's role as a trading center declined throughout the nineteenth century, particularly as more ports were opened in China.

From the beginning, the Spanish had put Filipinos in positions of responsibility, if not authority. They relied heavily on local troops to complete the conquest of the islands. They created a Filipino constabulary and continued to use local chiefs and elders in the colonial administration and also created a Filipino clergy. These groups became the foundation for the elite that led the Filipino nationalist movement—the earliest and most sophisticated such movement in Southeast Asia, despite the previous lack of political organization and experience there.

The French

The French movement into Indochina was not as direct as either the Portuguese or the Dutch intrusions into Southeast Asia. The initial French focus was on missionary activities, and their first target for a base was Ayudhya. There, French Catholic missionaries encouraged political linkages between King Narai and France, but Narai died in 1688 before the agreements could be fully implemented. French interest in Southeast Asia receded to low-level missionary activities through most of the next

century, although a small group was instrumental in returning the Nguyen dynasty to power following the Tay-son rebellions.

Ostensibly, concerns about the persecution of Christians and the harassment of missionaries prompted the French to intervene in Vietnam during the 1830s. Their initial foothold around Saigon was not secured until 1863, and the French did not develop a plan for economic exploitation until later, when all of Indochina had come under their control.

The French, having established control in Vietnam, found it necessary to take control in Laos and Cambodia to block further Thai penetration. In both Laos and Cambodia the French employed some Laotian and Cambodian officials in the colonial administration but brought in large numbers of Vietnamese to handle upper-level bureaucratic functions. Colonial control was relatively brief in these two countries; it began in Cambodia in 1864 and in Laos in 1904.

The highest levels of colonial administration in Vietnam were controlled by the French colonial officials, and although the monarchy was left in place, all acts had to be approved by the French resident superieur. The French continued to place more emphasis on Vietnam, and they used most of the revenues obtained from Laos and Cambodia for programs in Vietnam. The period of colonial domination was insufficient to settle the many ethnic, dynastic, and other conflicts that had traditionally dominated life in these countries.

The United States

The U.S. acquisition of the Philippines, which was taken from Spain following the Spanish-American War in 1898, constituted the last introduction of a Western power to the region. From the beginning, U.S. policies seemed to give credence to the goal of Philippine independence; plans for that independence were first formalized by U.S. Congressional actions in 1916 and again in 1934. There were signs of a Philippine nationalist movement as early as 1815, and it became stronger during the 1840s and 1850s when Filipinos widely criticized the Spanish clergy for racial bigotry. The image

of championing freedom and independence fit nicely into U.S. mythology, but at the same time, economic policies were enacted to ensure continued Filipino dependence on the United States regardless of the country's political status.

Now after analyzing the role and position of various colonial powers in Southeast Asian regions, the fundamental question arises. What, then, did the Europeans achieve as they asserted their political and economic power in Southeast Asia? The European powers became, at the most fundamental level, the paramount powers of the region. This political development was accompanied by one of the most important features of the European advance into Southeast Asia; the creation by the colonial powers of the borders that, with minor exceptions, have become those of the modern states of Southeast Asia. At the same time, the Western advance called into question old values and ways of conducting government, since the success of the European powers in gaining control served as a testimony to the inadequacies of past system. To understand these political developments, and the shifts in power and thought that were involved, the time has come for a country by country survey of the establishment of colonial rule that ended forever the traditional world described earlier.

The Mainland States

Burma

Up to the end of the eighteenth century Burma had not been the target of major European expansion. Beset by its chronic problems of ethnic disunity over the centuries Burma in the second half of the eighteenth century seemed to have found new life under the vigorous leaders of a new dynasty, the Konbaung. Under the founder of this dynasty, Alaungpaya (reigned 1752—60) and his successors, most particularly Bodawpaya (reigned 1782—1819), Burma achieved a measure of internal unity and was able to lessen, if not entirely eliminate, the external threats posed by its neighbours. Relative success in these fields, however, only solved one set of problems facing the Burmese

states. The other set of problems was posed by the slow expansion of British power into areas of northeastern India that had previously been regarded by the Burmese as falling within their sphere of influence.

Here was an almost textbook instance of a clash between alien and Southeast Asian values. Eighteenth-century Burmese rulers regarded the areas of Assam, Manipur, and Arakan lying in or to the west of modern Burma as a frontier zone in which their interests should prevail. They did not, in general, seek to maintain strict control over these regions. What was expected was that Burmese interests should be paramount and that no place should be allowed to those who might challenge those interest. Such a view was quite the reverse of that that held by the officials of the British East India. The idea of frontier to them. Equally inexplicable in their eyes was a political system that allowed the rulers of over these region lying between India and Burma, on the one hand while accepting no of this region so long as Burmese interests were not involved. If, the British argument ran, raiding parties from Assam, Manipur, or Arakan struck into territories under East India Company control, then the Burmese court was responsible and should act to prevent its subjects' from behaving in this way.

There was no meeting of minds. What was more, the problem of the frontier zones was not the only issue in dispute between Burma and the British. Other irritants involving differing views on the rights of British traders—or to make the point more clearly, the lack in Burmese eyes of those rights—and the appropriate level of diplomatic interchange slowly but surely poisoned relations and led to the disastrous decision by Burma's ruler, King Bagyidaw (reigned 1819—37) to confront the British by invading Bengal.

The tragic result for Burma was the British advance into Lower Burma, advance into Lower Burma, the capture of Rangoon, and then the imposition of the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826 that gave the East India Company control of Arakan and Tenasserim.

For more than twenty years this was the limit of the British advance and in the Burmese capital at Ava complex domestic political concerns were of greater importance than the annoying but not unbearable. British presence in Arakan and Tenasserim. Once

again, however, totally different views of how government and business should be conducted between the Burmese and the British.

The parallel between developments in Rangoon in the early 1850s and those in Canton in the years 1839 – 42, when Britain fought the First Opium War, is striking. A Burmese official in Rangoon, seeing foreign merchants as interlopers, did not hesitate to seek personal enrichment through persecution of the aliens, believing, at the same time, that Burmese prestige was enhanced by this evidence of his unassailable power. His judgement proved fatally wrong as the British in India came to see events in Burma as a test of strength with significance for their role in the East as a whole. At first without authorization but later with approval from London British troops fought the Second Burma War that led to the occupation of Lower Burma, an area of considerable agricultural and timber potential

Once again there was a pause in Un' British advance. Having established themselves in Lower Burma by 1853 the British were content to wait and the Burmese court found it impossible to muster sufficient military power to evict the British or even to present a united diplomatic front as chronic domestic rivalries continued despite external danger. By the 1880s Burma had become important to Britain not only as a potential source of wealth but also as an element in Britain's rivalry with France for spheres of influence in Asia. It is far from clear how much of this was apparent to the apparent to the Burmese court, its ruler and officials. For some officials British traders were still seen as providing an opportunity for personal enrichment and the humiliation of foreigners. For other in the court at Mandalay issues of protocol often seemed more important than those of power-though it should be made clear that the British just as much as the Burmese attached great importance to the question of whether or not foreigners should wear shoes in the presence of the king.

By beginning of 1886 Britain had captured Mandalay and proclaimed control over those areas of Burma not previously occupied. Although much hard fighting took place over the next few years, often accompanied by harsh punishment of those captured by British forces, 'British Burma' had come into existence and a western border was

delineated between Burma and India. What might have happened if the Burmese leadership had better understood the nature of the challenge they faced can never be answered. The harsh, though accurate judgment must be that the Burmese leaders as prisoners of their own view of the world were unable to see that the values to which they attached so much importance were meaningless to the British.

Like Burma, Vietnam came under colonial rule in a series of steps. But unlike Burma the imposition of French rule was completed in a period of twenty-five rather than nearly sixty years. And in a fashion similar to Burma, also, Vietnam's ruler and court at times behaved in a fashion that suggested there was no true understanding of the nature of the challenge presented by the French.

The search for similarities should not be carried too far, however, since Vietnam was a very different state from Burma at the time of the first invasion by French forces in the late 1850s. Quite apart from the great cultural differences between the two countries, Vietnam in the 1850s seemed set on an ever-rising path towards success. There were internal difficulties but the state was unified and expanding, 'Whatever the political and cultural differences between the two states, there was a shared fatal flaw in the governments of Burma and Vietnam. In neither case was there any general appreciation of the power and the determination of the European invaders. The French saw Vietnam as a springboard for trade with China, little realizing that Vietnam's geographical location next to China did not mean that any significant trade passed between one country and the other. When French forces invaded Vietnam, hoping for trade, pledged to protect Christian missionaries, and jealous of British colonial advances elsewhere, the Vietnamese court could scarcely believe what was happening. The Confucian order had not prepared the ruler and his officials for a development of this kind, despite their awareness of events in China as the Western powers imposed their presence upon the Chinese state. As a result the Vietnamese, once they found they did not have the material strength or the diplomatic capacity to chase the French from the country, adopted a policy that had little more than hope as its justification. With the French occupying a large, fertile area of southern Vietnam between 1859 and 1867, the Vietnamese in the capital at Hue hoped that the invaders would advance no further even if they did not go away.

Their hopes were notably astray. The French intended to stay and went on in the 1880s to extend their colonial possessions to include all of Vietnam. In doing so the French did more than establish a new colonial empire in the East. They played a significant part in accelerating the developing intellectual crisis in Vietnam. The Vietnamese state at the time of the initial French invasion at the end of the 1850s was a paradoxical combination of dynamism and stagnation. Vietnam's continuing territorial advance into the lands of the western Mekong River delta was the clearest evidence of the state's persistent dynamism. But this was a dynamism that existed alongside the underliness of the bulk of the official class to recognize how great threat the West could pose. A very few voice were raised to argue the existence of threat and the need I change, but until the full import of the West's challenge was revealed by the establishment of French colonial rule throughout Vietnam the conservative element remained dominant.

The geographical shape of Vietnam was not determined by the French in a fashion that was to be the case with the impact of colonial rule in other parts of Southeast Asia. In part this was so because of the long concern that Vietnamese rulers and officials had always shown to delineate their country's borders. Nor, unlike the maritime regions, was France instrumental in creating a new state where none had existed previously. But in posing a military threat and then imposing an alien colonial government the French played an important part in the destruction of the old Vietnamese order. In their subsequent unreadiness to share power with the Vietnamese and consider the possibility of independence for their colony the French did more: they set the stage for one of the most powerful revolutions in Southeast Asia's history.

Cambodia

By comparison with Burma and Vietnam, Cambodia was a minor state in the mainland Southeast Asian world. Little remained of its former greatness, so far as power was concerned, and even its great temple ruins had by the middle of the nineteenth century passed out of Cambodian control to lie within the territories of the king of Thailand. That Cambodia survived at all was a reflection of the unreadiness of the rulers of Thailand and Vietnam to push their rivalry to its ultimate conclusion. Having clashed in a series of protracted campaigns fought across Cambodian territory earlier in the

nineteenth century the Thais and the Vietnamese concluded that their best interests would be served by permitting Cambodia's continued existence, in vassal relationship to both the neighbour courts, as a buffer zone between them

We can only speculate what might have happened if the nineteenth century had not been marked by France's advance into Vietnam and subsequently into Cambodia. Yet while it can only be speculation, the likely lines of historical development that might have affected Cambodia do not seem difficult to trace. Without the French advance it seems hard to think of Cambodia being felt for long to play its buffer zone role. Eclipse as a state seemed – though it can never be argued in any certain fashion-the most likely fate in store for this painfully weak country.

The decision of the French in Vietnam to extend control over Cambodia beginning in the 1860s may therefore be seen as ensuring the state's survival. Not only the state's, moreover, for by treating the ruler of Cambodia in such a way that he managed to remain as the symbolic leader of the nation the French also were instrumental in boosting the prestige of the royal family and the officials associated with the court. In this their actions were in striking contrast to what happened in the two other countries already surveyed in this chapter. In Burma the British brought the monarchy to an end. In Vietnam the French undermined the authority of the royal house so that no Vietnamese emperor could ever again command the loyalty that was demanded and received in pre-colonial times. But in Cambodia as a result of both planning and the lack of it the French helped the traditional royal leadership to remain important politically.

Laos

As the British and French pursued their aims in the rest of mainland Southeast Asia, two areas remained outside the general pattern of developments. The most important of these was Thailand, the one country in the whole of Southeast Asia that was able to avoid the experience of colonial rule. The other area was that region of the mainland that has come to be known as Laos.

No such entity existed in the nineteenth century. The region that is today called Laos was composed in the mid-nineteenth century of a confusing pattern of minor states, none of them able to act in any truly independent fashion. In the traditional Southeast Asian manner these petty states were vassals of more powerful overlords; on occasion a state would have more than one suzerain.

In a very real fashion the fact that a state of Laos came into existence was the result of colonial action, more specifically colonial rivalry. As the nineteenth century drew to a close rivalry between the French and British on the mainland of Southeast Asia was intense. With the British established in Burma and the French controlling Vietnam and Cambodia, the question of where spheres of influence would lie was a matter for prolonged, and sometimes emotional, debate. Thailand both benefited and lost from such a situation. The benefits flowed from the fact that so long as Thailand remained an independent state between the British holdings in Burma and the French holding of a buffer state to the two imperial rivals helped to preserve Thailand's existence. But Thailand's benefits had to be weighed against the losses that resulted from the concessions necessary to preserve the goodwill, or tolerance, of the rival European powers. So while Thailand remained free of colonial control it was at the cost of many concessions necessary to preserve the goodwill, or tolerance, of the rival European powers. So while Thailand remained free of colonial control it was at the cost of many concessions that ceded some at least of Thailand independence to foreigners. Foreign powers were able, for instance, to gain highly advantageous trading terms in Thailand and to insist, as they had done in China, on the right of their subjects to extra-territorial privileges should they become involved in both civil and criminal cases.

What was possible for Thailand was denied to the Laotian states. Without unity of their own, the vassals of various overlords, and subject to increasing disorder as Chinese refugees and bandits spilled out of China into the region south of the Yunnan-Kwangsi border, the Laotian states appeared an attractive prospect for colonial advance. The opportunity was seized by the French and between 1885 and 1899, through a combination

of individual audacity, great power manoeuvring, and reliance on dubious claims linked to Vietnam's past suzerainty over sections of Laos, the French established a colonial position in Laos. More clearly than anywhere else in mainland Southeast Asia this was a case of the European advance bringing into existence a new state, one that despite great political transformations has survived to the present day.

Thailand

Thailand's distinction in avoiding the experience of colonial control has already been stressed many times. Yet this success did not mean that Thailand was unaffected by the great changes that accompanied the colonial advance into the rest of Southeast Asia. Along with Vietnam, Thailand was one of the two notably successful states of mainland Southeast Asia. Unlike Vietnam, however, Thailand was able to build upon its historical success to survive without experiencing colonial rule. Many factors combined to make this possible. One of these has already been mentioned in discussion of developments in Laos the fact that Thailand came to be seen by the rival European powers as a buffer zone between their conflicting interests. But there were other more positive reasons for the Thai achievement. Most importantly, Thailand gained advantage from the leadership of remarkable kings and officials.

The contrast between Burma and Thailand is particularly striking in this regard. Facing a new and alien threat from the British, Burma's Buddhist kings and officials found, it almost impossible to appreciate the nature of the challenge, let alone to formulate a means of resisting it. In Thailand, on the other hand, inquiring minds from the king downwards were already seeking to understand the nature of European power and the scientific and technical learning that formed an essential part of that power. King Mongkut (reigned 1851 – 68) was one of the most outstanding of all Thai rulers and a virally important architect of Thailand's plans for avoidance of foreign rule. Mongkut's strategies involved positive efforts to acquire Western Knowledge and diplomatic concessions that prevented an opportunity arising that could have been used by one or other of the European powers as an excuse to impose foreign rule. His approach was followed by his son and successor, King Chulalongkorn (reigned 1868 – 1910). Both

monarchs were remarkable men and fortunate in the caliber of their senior associates whether these were other members of the royal family or officials in the Thai court.

Yet despite the great talents of Thailand's leaders the challenge of the European powers could not be evaded entirely. French determination to consolidate their colonial position in the Indochinese region led to Thailand losing control of territories along the Mekong River in the Laotian region and of the western provinces of Cambodia that had been regarded as part of Thailand for over a century. These losses of Thai territory took place around the turn of the century. A little later, in 1909, Thailand conceded control over four southern Malay states to the British. These states – Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, and Trengganu—then became associated with the British colonial empire in the Malayan Peninsula and form part of the modern state of Malaysia.

In short, if Thailand never experienced colonial rule in the fashion of its Southeast Asian neighbours it was nonetheless very much affected by the European advance. It lost control of territory and had to make substantial concessions to foreign interests. Despite this, Thailand presented a singular contrast to the rest of Southeast Asia in the late nineteenth century. Thai leaders followed policies that revealed a remarkable capacity to gain the greatest benefit from the new and intrusive element of European power. Only in Thailand did an independent Southeast Asian state seek to gain the benefits of modern science and technology through the employment of foreign, European advisers.

The Maritime States

Indonesia

When discussing the mainland region of Southeast Asia and the challenge posed by European imperialism the time span involved for the establishment of colonial states is at most some sixty years. For Indonesia the period during which the Dutch established an empire was in excess of three hundred years. Not surprisingly, with a slow advance of this sort spread over so many years, the character of the challenge posed and the response

it evoked varied tremendously. Having made this point it is as well to remember as emphasized later in this chapter, that the major period of Dutch advance in Indonesia took place over a period of about sixteen years at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Dutch came to the Indonesia Archipelago as traders. To pursue their initial goals it was sufficient to gain control of the major ports of northern Java and the principal commercial centres of the other island engaged in the spice trade. Slowly, however, and in a fashion that has certain distinct similarities with development in India, the Dutch East India Company became as much a territorial power as a trading venture. When Javanese rivalries led to the collapse of the kingdom of Mataram in the eighteenth century the Dutch had already become sufficiently involved in manipulating the internal affairs of Java to be vitally interested in playing a part in overseeing the establishment of Mataram's successor states, based in the central Javanese capitals of Yogyakarta and Surakarta (Solo).

By the middle of the eighteenth century the Dutch East India Company could claim to exercise political control over most of Java. But this political control was tenuous in character and there was no accompanying impact in terms of Dutch culture or technology. There was, however, an economic impact as the Dutch working through the Javanese elite and through Chinese tax agents; developed an ever-increasing number of ways to raise and extract the maximum agricultural production for the Company's benefit. The burden of this economic impact fell on the peasantry. But for the peasantry as well as for the elite economic changes did not mean there were any sudden transformations of their traditional world, its values, and its hierarchy.

The same was essentially true in the limited number of areas away from Java that sustained the Dutch impact before the nineteenth century. Challenge to established relationships and systems of values were part of the history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the Dutch slowly and intermittently expanded their control over the Indonesian Archipelago. This expansion was in part a response to a growing market for tropical products in Europe and in part a response to the increased activities of other foreign powers in the Southeast Asian region.

From the Dutch point of view the pressures of economic demand and foreign competition meant that it was no longer sufficient to maintain a loose control over the scattered islands, working from a limited number of bases and in association with local rulers. Instead the Dutch government in the Indies for the Dutch East India Company had been abolished at the end of the eighteenth century—now sought to establish closer control and more uniform administration. These aims on occasion led to sharp conflict with local forces and in areas of Sumatra most particularly the Dutch had to fight for decades before they were able to achieve dominance at the end of the nineteenth century. In Bali, too, Dutch control was only achieved after bitter resistance was overcome.

By the early twentieth century the basic structure of the Dutch East Indies had been established. As the result of conquest and treaty the Dutch claimed control over all of the Archipelago stretching from Sumatra in the west to the western part of New Guinea in the *east*. Only the tiny Portuguese colony located in the east of Timor escaped the Dutch net. The Dutch flag now flew above a strikingly diverse series of islands in which levels of cultural development ranged from the distinctive and refined world of Java to the modern stone age still found in New Guinea. In such a diverse region of the world the impact of an alien European force had to be equally diverse, ranging from the increasing impoverishment of the peasantry in central and eastern Java to the implantation of Christianity in such sharply differing regions as the Toba highlands in Sumatra and the outer Indonesian island of Ambon

More than all of the other changes and developments that came rule the eventual establishment of foreign control over all of the islands of modern Indonesia brought something else. This was possibility for the varied population groups in the Dutch East Indies to think of their common interests and a future common national identity. In more distant historical times here had been rulers who thought in terms of a *Nusantara*, an empire of the islands. As a result of foreign rule the outlines of such an empire were established, and in a clearer and firmer fashion than had ever seemed possible before. The final creation of the Indonesian Republic was the work of Indonesians. But this work was accomplished within a framework that in considerable part was laid down during the period of Dutch colonial rule.

Malaysia and Singapore

No less than Indonesia the modern state of Malaysia finds its geographical origins in the colonial period. In traditional times the present state of Malaysia was part of the wider Indonesian-Malay world. Malay sultans ruled in states of varying size along the sea coasts of peninsular Malaya, the northern regions of the great island of Borneo and in eastern Sumatra, an island that came under Dutch control. Non-Malay peoples inhabited the hinterland of both the Peninsula and Borneo. In traditional times the areas now occupied by Malaysia formed a region of shifting power and alliances. The northern states of peninsular Malaya were linked in vassal relationship with the rulers of Thailand while the southern states of the Peninsula had ties with sultanates in areas that now form part of Indonesia.

European expansion into this region was a slow and haphazard affair. The Portuguese capture of Malacca in the early sixteenth century was not followed by any major further advance into the area of modern Malaysia until the late eighteenth century. By that time the Portuguese had been replaced by the Dutch as the rulers of Malacca and the first British settlement in the territory of modern Malaysia had been established on the island of Penang, in 1786. Settlement of Singapore followed in 1819 and by the 1830s the British had advanced to the point that they held three settlements on the fringe of the Malayan Peninsula, Singapore, Penang, and Malacca where they had now replaced the Dutch.

These settlements were not only on the fringe in a geographical sense, they also had a fringe character in terms of their relations with the Malay states of the Peninsula. The Straits Settlements, as the three British colonial bases came to be called, were *in* but not *of* the Malay world that surrounded them. In all three the population grew not so much as the result of migration by Malays, though some took place, but rather through the influx of Chinese, and later of a lesser number of Indians. Nevertheless, as the years of the nineteenth century passed, links between the British settlements and the Malay sultanates of the Peninsula grew. The southern Malay state of Johore became, in economic terms, a close partner with, if not an integral part of, Singapore. All three units

of the Straits Settlements played roles as bases from which merchants and traders, tin miners and labourers gradually began to transform the economic structure of the Peninsula. To a considerable extent the usual proposition was then reversed and the flag followed trade into Malaya so that, as trade and commerce developed, Britain came first to achieve a political paramountcy in the region and then, subsequently, to build on that paramountcy to ensure direct political control of affairs.

The process that led to the final emergence of British Malaya in the first two decades of the twentieth century need not be detailed here. By the time of the First World War British control, with some degrees of variation, extended over the whole of peninsular Malaysia in addition to the Straits Settlements. Together the two political conglomerates formed an economic whole and a more or less unified political entity. But whatever had been achieved in these terms the result of colonial advance in the area of modern peninsular Malaysia had not been the achievement of unity in other terms. Chinese immigrants predominated in the Straits Settlements. In the sultanates of peninsular Malaya the Malays retained special rights as the 'people of the country' but they did so against a background of economic advance on the part of other communities, the European and the Chinese. Here was a very special result of the European advance into Southeast Asia. Britain's colonial efforts in peninsular Malaysia drew new geographical boundaries that were to become the basis of a later new state. But within those boundaries the same colonial power followed policies, for the most part without thought, that led to the creation of new problems that are still being worked out today.

The importance of the European powers in the creation of new boundaries is abundantly apparent in relation to peninsular Malaysia, but nothing could make the point more plainly than the developments that took place in Borneo, in the areas that have come to constitute East Malaysia (modern Sarawak and Sabah). As part of the general colonial advance of the nineteenth century Europeans considered the possibility of gaining economic and strategic advantage in northern Borneo. In the event the areas that have now been incorporated in the modern state of Malaysia were brought under a measure of European political control by two of the most unusual colonial powers to operate in Southeast Asia.

In Sarawak the agent of colonial advance was not a government but an individual, James Brooke, the first of the 'white rajahs' about whom so much has been written. In Sabah, by contrast, the colonial power was a commercial venture, the Chartered Company of North Borneo. In each case the peculiarities of the colonial 'power' led to very distinctive developments within these two territories. Yet the fundamental thread that has linked so much of the commentary on developments in the maritime world was there nonetheless. In Sarawak and Sabah, as elsewhere, the very existence of the later post-colonial states was the partial result of the European advance. Where no comparable state had existed before and no boundary lines had been drawn, the nineteenth century, even in these two eccentric cases, witnessed the establishment of new political entities.

The Philippines

Much of what has been written in this chapter concerning the importance of the European impact in establishing the territorial boundaries of Indonesia and Malaysia applies with equal force to the Philippines. The long period of Spanish rule over these island was virtually important in delineating the boundaries of a state where neither boundaries nor any entity equivalent to the modern Philippines existed previously. Yet just as the Dutch in Indonesia moved much more slowly than is often recognised to establish control over the whole of the modern Indonesian state, so was the Spanish achievement of control in the Philippines a slow affair. And not only slow; it was also incomplete. Although Spanish power in the Philippines was able to dominate most of the lowland areas of the northern Philippines by the middle of the eighteenth century, the highland areas remained regions apart. Moreover, the southern, Muslim areas of the Philippines never came under real Spanish control. Repeatedly the southern regions failed. Spanish control was achieved in some major ports such as Zamboanga, but the Sultan of Sulu and his less powerful counterparts never submitted to Spanish rule. The seeds of contemporary Muslim separatism in the southern Philippines were sown long ago.

But while the Philippines experience of the European challenge had the similarities with Indonesia and Malaysia that have just been noted, the imposition of Spanish rule provided an additional element in the history of those islands that did not exist elsewhere. This vitally important element was Catholicism. Conversion to the

religion of the invading European colonial powers took place elsewhere, most particularly in Vietnam. But nowhere else in Southeast Asia did the religion of the colonialists become, in a broadly universal sense, the religion of the colonized. (Once again stress must be given to the fact that it is the northern Philippines that is being discussed.

At a broader level one might see the implantation of Catholicism as reflecting the more general fact that Spanish rule in the Philippines gave the northern islands a new framework for society. Building upon the village structure of pre-colonial times the Spaniards created a new, non-indigenous system. To suggest that this system removed all indigenous elements from Philippines society would be an error. But it would be equally erroneous not to recognise that the administrative and economic, as well as the religious, structure instituted by the Spanish had the most profound effect.

The historical irony that marked the Philippines reaction to Spanish rule has been recorded in an earlier chapter. Filipinos became dissatisfied with Spanish rule when it became clear that the colonial power would not allow Indios-the non-Spanish inhabitants of the islands-to enjoy the same civil and ecclesiastical rights as the Spaniards did themselves. Yet the Indios who claimed these rights were the products of Spanish schools, seminaries, and universities. The Spaniards who ruled in the Philippines had created a situation with no real parallel elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Their colonial subjects began the revolt against Spanish rule in the nineteenth century because they were, in effect, excluded from being Spanish. In their resentment of the barrier placed in the way of their becoming Spanish the Filipinos established their own national identity, one that nonetheless remained inseparably linked with the experience of Spanish rule and the importance of Catholicism.

The colonial powers may be correctly seen as having established borders where none existed before, and their actions, whether good or bad, self-interested or altruistic played a part in shaping the new nations that were to emerge in Southeast Asia.

Colonial powers delineated the areas of states and played a part in shaping the character of their populations. In the final analysis, nonetheless, the indigenous

inhabitants, the Southeast Asians themselves, determined how they should live and by what standards. This must be constantly remembered when the challenges and the advance of the Europeans into Southeast Asia is being considered.

Chapter 4

SOUTHEAST ASIA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

During the First World War the Indian Ocean was a secondary theatre of naval operations. The conflict in this Ocean remained localized, in the Middle East and East Africa. Only the security of the Persian Gulf was considered a vital strategic concern because of Britain's interest in Persian Gulf oil. At sea, hostilities were limited to German privateering raids. However, the war did cause important political changes in the Indian Ocean region. "With the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the control of the Middle East passed to Britain. The main political effect of the First World War was the general awakening of Asia to the implications of European imperialism. Britain failed to consolidate her position in colonial areas in the wake of the growing strength of nationalist movements"¹.

On the strategic level, a new Anglo-American alliance emerged after the war. "The Washington treaties of 1922, forcing Britain to give up her maritime monopoly, recognised equal participation by the American Navy. A major shift in alliance from Anglo-Japanese (1911) to Anglo-American decisively changed the balance of forces in the Far East. The acquisition of the Philippines and the development of Pearl Harbor, along with the chain of important naval stations at Midway, Wake and Guam, made the US a dominant Pacific power². In addition to shifts in alliances, the interwar period also witnessed rapid military and political changes at the global level, creating new fundamental conflicts among nations. The Indian Ocean region also changed considerably. The spread of nationalist movements, in particular, weakened the foundations of colonial rule in this area.

¹ Rasul B. Rais, "The Indian Ocean and the Superpowers, Economic, Political and Strategic perspectives," Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1987, P.28

² Ibid, P.29

By the 1890s Southeast Asia included territories that Britain directly ruled, like Burma, conquered in three stages from British India; Singapore and the Straits Settlements, acquired as a protection for the Straits of Malacca, and island colony acquired in the 1840s part of a Borneo policy never fully taken up. "There were, however, three Borneo territories — Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo — with which Britain had made protectorate agreements in 1888, and it had closer relations with several of the Malay states on the peninsula, which in 1895 had become the Federated Malay States"³.

Other colonial powers in island Southeast Asia existed partly on the sufferance of the British. "The Dutch were in the process of filling out their claims to a realm that extended from Sabong to Merauke. Internationally that had involved deals with the British, including the treaties of 1824 and 1871, as well as the policy of a commercial open door, marked, for example, by the tariff of 1872"⁴. Although without the same kind of specific treaty relationships, Spain in the Philippines recognised the primacy of the British in a somewhat similar way; it permitted them a major economic role, hoping thereby to diminish any political challenge. The French had established themselves in what they called Indo-China. To this the British had offered little opposition. Their concern had only been to limit French expansion. "The main objective was to preserve Siam as a buffer between the empires. To that the diplomacy of the Thais, under the absolute monarchy of the Chakri kings, and their determination to maintain independence, substantially contributed"⁵. They succeeded, although having to make territorial concessions and 'unequal' treaties. Southeast Asia in the period of British primacy was a patchwork of jurisdictions, colonial, pseudo-colonial and independent European and Asian. On its remote verge stood a remnant of the earliest European empire. Portuguese Timor.

³ N. Tarling (ed) "The Cambridge History of southeast Asia", vol.2, Cambridge University Press, 1992, Ref. P.11-13.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Quoted, Chandran Jeshurun, "The contest for Siam 1889 – 1902, Kuala Lumpur, 1977. P.49

The form British primacy thus took naturally reflect Britain's interests. "The main concern of the British, in Southeast Asia and in general, was to preserve and enhance the economic opportunity their security and their prosperity gave them. Their political interest seconded those objectives. Territorial control was not the prime object; the aim was to ensure conditions under which commerce might flourish"⁶. India was an exception to prove the rule. There Britain had established a unique dominion, and it had its own political and strategic imperatives, which had a profound impact on the fate of Burma. But elsewhere Britain's interests lay in preserving the security of the sea lanes through Southeast Asia on which its connection with China depended and on preserving open-door access to the economic opportunities the area itself supplied.

The situation began to change in the beginning of the twentieth century above all as a result of changes in the world at large. The emergence of other industrial powers challenged Britain's primacy. Its attempt to meet the economic challenge was perhaps more limited than it might have been. Its attempt to meet the political challenge by a more assertive imperial policy was also limited; its dependencies had acquired considerable independence, and they had no intention of throwing it away. Its main thrusts were naval and diplomatic. There were limits to British naval power; other industrial powers also expanded their naval power. Now, what concerned the British most was the rise of Germany. "The core of British policy had been and was to remain its security in Europe. That could be undermined by the rise of a power with aspirations to what its Kaiser called a Napoleonic hegemony"⁷.

The most significant event after the first world war was the rise of Japan, which totally altered the balance of power in the Indian Ocean. It brought an end to the colonial European system in Southeast Asian region while imposing its own brief colonial role.

⁶ N. Tarling, "Nationalism in Southeast Asia" Routledge Curzon, Taylor & Francis group, London and New York, 2004, Ref. 62 - 63

⁷ Norman Lowe, "Mastering Modern world History", Macmillan India Ltd., 1997, P.13

The destruction of the European colonial system was accomplished in a time and fashion that could not have been imagined, let alone predicted. "The Japanese success was a spectacular stimulant for anti-Western sentiment, and nationalist feelings throughout Southeast Asia were strengthened by the call of 'Asia for the Asiatics.' The Japanese presence deeply stirred nationalist sentiments in places such as Java and Burma and challenged both the older intelligentsia and the "semi- militarized younger generation to become political force"⁸. Thailand was in a unique position to somewhat limit Japanese penetration during World War II, but as the hard realities of war and defeat became evident, its relationship with Japan cooled. As World War II unfolded and the U.S. military challenge increased, the harsh extractive policies of the Japanese in the region, as well as their brutality and insensitivity, soon turned people against them; yet Southeast Asians—to the surprise of many Westerners—did not look to the colonial powers for assistance.

The Japanese also stimulated strongly negative racial feelings, especially among indigenous ethnic groups and against local Chinese and — Indians. This was especially true in Malaya but was also the case in Burma and Indonesia. Although Southeast Asians were aligned on both sides in the global conflict, the underlying goal was to not assist the Japanese or the old colonial powers but to advance local national interests. The expectation that somehow Southeast Asians owed European colonial powers a measure of loyalty seems a bit ludicrous today. The Europeans had done little to engender such loyalty and, at the hands of the Japanese, had suffered far more than a military defeat; indeed, they lost the prestige and aura of invincibility⁹.

⁸ Benedict r. O'C Anderson, "Japan : The light of Asia" in *Southeast Asia in World War II : Four Essays*, ed. By Josy silverstern, New Haven : Yale University, Southeast Asia studies Monograph series No. 7, 1966, P.31

⁹ Jon M.Runhardt, *Foreign Policy and National Integation : The case of Indonesia*, New Haven : yale University, southeast Asia Studies monograph no. 17, 1971, P.28

The period of Japan's intervention in Southeast Asia was brief, and its goals were dictated by a war that quickly became a losing proposition. However, whereas from the beginning of its colonial venture Japan may have sought to establish a colonial regime similar to that of the displaced Europeans, the immediate needs for support of the war required a degree and type of human and resource mobilization in Southeast Asia that had not previously been experienced. And as the war progressively worsened, Japan moved to politicize the growing nationalist elements in the region. But events quickly overtook the Japanese colonial empire in Southeast Asia, and with the collapse of Japanese authority Southeast Asia had its first opportunity in more than 400 years to function as a regional system free of external domination.

Impact of the Second World War

The Second World War affected South-East Asia in two stages, the war in Europe and the Japanese invasion. The German occupation of Holland and France and the threatened invasion of the United Kingdom had an important, but not decisive, influence on events and institutions in the region. For the British colonies, and particularly Burma, it meant greater surveillance of the nationalists and the paying of more attention to local defence needs. "The former resulted in the arrest of a number of Burmese nationalist leaders who were considered dangerous to the colonial government. These comprised both older politicians, including two premiers, and young firebrands such as the later Prime Minister, U.Nu¹⁰. At the same time there were efforts to placate the politically aware Burmese in the light of the danger of a widening war. The economies of Burma and Malaya were not badly disrupted, since the former's rice exports were directed elsewhere and, the latter substituted other markets for her products. But the importation of necessary European goods was, of course, severely curtailed.

¹⁰ N. Tarling, "A sudden Rampage" *The Japanese Occupation of Southeast Asia, 1941 – 45*, "Hurst & Company, London, 2001, P.146

A somewhat similar situation existed in the Dutch East Indies, although there 'radical' nationalists had already been detained or exiled. During the war, however, renewed efforts were made to arrive at an agreement as to the political future of the colony and proposals for a type of commonwealth status were discussed. These attempts remained abortive at the time of the Japanese occupation in December 1941. Although ties with Holland were broken by the German occupation of that country, formal links remained with the government in exile in London, to which the colonial administration remained loyal. As a substitute for the traditional trade with Europe increased exports were sent to the United States, which was developing its own war potential and needed the islands' tin and rubber. Otherwise, things were largely as before.

It was in the French colonies that European events had their greatest impact. "With the fall of France and establishment of the Vichy régime the colonial administration in Indo-China had to decide where its loyalty lay"¹¹. It chose Vichy. Allied control of the seas therefore all but cut the colony off from effective ties with the mother country, and the French in South-East Asia felt more isolated than did the Dutch or British. Without financial or military support the colony became highly vulnerable to increasing — Japanese demands. Little political freedom had been granted to the indigenous inhabitants prior to the war, but as a result of events in Europe a number of nationalists who had decided to remain above ground were arrested and some were executed. In the short period between the German' occupation of France and the Japanese occupation of Indo-China little was done to change the political role of the local population.

¹¹ Ibid P.48.

What then was changed in South-East Asia by the events of the war? First and foremost, the whole colonial administrative, economic and social structure was disrupted, and disrupted fatally. The European could no longer lay claim to unquestioned authority over the area as he had previously done. The people had enjoyed a taste of independence, only symbolic perhaps, but they had seen their own leaders proclaimed president or premier, dealt with Asian rather than European administrators at all levels, been subjected to intensive anti-colonial and pro-nationalist propaganda, and had acquired arms and the training with which to challenge the returning colonialists. In sum, a significantly larger number of South-East Asians were (1) armed and trained for combat, (2) experienced in administration and politics, (3) ideologically committed to independence, (4) unwilling to accept the old social order, (5) more organized for political activity and (6) less respectful of colonial power. It should be emphasized that this change did not overtake all of South-East Asia. Many of the indigenous population still remained basically apolitical, wedded to their villages and families and unconcerned with politics and the establishment of national governments. Yet for most of the region the wartime period was a watershed, a fact that would become apparent in the crucial years that followed.

The Japanese movement into South-East Asia had considerably more far-reaching consequences. Even before the final invasion of the region began on 8 December 1941, the Japanese had attempted to project their power. There had, of course, been imperial agents in Thailand and the colonies in the 1930s; but there were more critical pressures prior to the war. One was through contacts with dissident young nationalists, especially in Burma, where the Japanese recruited men who were to play a major role in the nation's future

Economic pressures were also instituted by Japan, in an effort to gain favourable terms of trade and access to the raw materials necessary for the nation's military and industrial development. Bargaining in this area was long and hard as Japan sought to take advantage of the greater vulnerability of the Dutch and French. In the case of the Indies the Dutch negotiators were able to frustrate Japan's hopes.

“It was in Indo—China that Japan opened the first deep crack in the foundations of colonialism in South-East Asia. In this case the French were forced to make concessions never previously granted to an Asian power. Incapable of defending itself against Japanese demands, the Vichy government had but 50,000 French troops and 120 planes in Indo-China.”¹² An abortive effort to gain American support was met with the advice to acquiesce and only the Pétain régime in France counselled taking up arms. After a short engagement on land against small elements of nationalists and a sea war with the Thais, the French were forced to capitulate on Japanese terms. Ultimately territory was surrendered to the Thais, but the Japanese were allowed to maintain troops in Indo-China and products were exported to Japan in exchange for blocked yen. In return the French were able to maintain their colonial administration, police force and military largely intact. This was the first major loss of face for the Europeans, but ironically the French maintained symbolic and considerable real power over their subjects longer than any other colonial government in South-East Asia, since the Japanese allowed them to keep control until March 1945.

Once the war began the Japanese occupation of South-East Asia was relatively swift. “Thailand agreed to become an ally and Thai soil became a launching zone for attacks on Malaya and Burma.”¹³ Although an anti-Japanese ‘Free Thai’ movement was formed in Washington and London the country remained fundamentally untouched by the war except for shortages of goods. Imperial forces moved swiftly down the Malay Peninsula, capturing Kuala Lumpur on 11 January 1942 and accepting the surrender of

¹² Ref. *ibid.* P.51

¹³Ref. *ibid.* P.83

supposedly impregnable Singapore on 15 February 1942. In Burma the apparently inevitable took somewhat longer, for Commonwealth troops fought a rearguard action. Nevertheless Rangoon had been taken by early March and by May Mandalay had fallen as the Allied troops escaped to India. Burma was to remain under Japanese control for the duration, and it was not until 5 May 1945 that British—led units reoccupied Rangoon.

The imperial forces waited until the fall of Singapore before launching their invasion of the Indies, but after a series of disastrous naval engagements the Dutch capitulated on 8 March 1942, having carried out a scorched—earth policy but having offered comparatively little resistance on land. Apart from small areas on New Guinea no island in the colony was retaken until after the Japanese surrender in August 1945. “The Philippines held out the longest: the invasion there began soon after 8 December and Manila was declared an open city on 2 January 1942. American and Filipino units retreated to the Bataan Peninsula, where they held out until 9 April 1942, shortly after which the island stronghold of Corregidor capitulated. Although the Filipino command called for the surrender of all units on 8 May 1942, guerrilla bands were to harass the Japanese until MacArthur’s return in 1944.¹⁴” However, within approximately six months of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 no major armed resistance remained from northern Luzon to Indonesia and from the Indian border to western New Guinea.

In most cases the Japanese were inferior in number to the troops they were facing and the Asians witnessed mass surrenders of their former masters on Luzon, at Singapore and in the Indies. In places such as Penang and Rangoon they noted the flight of European families, leaving the native population to face the mercies of the Japanese. In Indo-China the French accepted imperial overlordship as a condition for remaining in nominal control. In short, the Japanese invasion was a military and political disaster for the colonial powers, who would never again feel complete masters of their territories in

¹⁴ Ref. *ibid.* P.91

South-East Asia. The profound changes which ensued during the next three years can be examined under three rubrics, the 'loss of face' of the Europeans, Japanese political aid to independence movements, and the ending of the colonial powers' monopoly modern weapons.

The impact of the so-called 'loss of face' was felt in many areas. The fact that the colonial governments were incapable of defending their subjects called into question their right to rule. The sight of white soldiers rather meekly surrendering, being sent on long marches to prison camps in which collapsed along the road and later being herded into forced-labour projects such as the infamous Burma-Thai 'railroad of death' may have elicited sympathy for the individuals from those watching but it did not reflect omnipotent colonial power. In addition the rounding-up of colonial administrators, merchants, planters and professional men and their families established an entirely new environment which was free from the old masters and lacked the racist tone which had characterized colonial society. Europeans behind camp walls were dependent upon friendly Asians for extra food and other necessities. Perhaps most important of all, the new power in the region was a fellow Asian who in the initial euphoria of victory appeared to many as a liberator from colonial oppression.

Of central additional importance were the Japanese programmes designed to move the occupied territories closer to independence and to increase nationalist awareness. These were not fully initiated by Japan immediately, however, and it is open to question whether the government in Tokyo really intended to offer independence as soon as it did. It is more likely that increasing internal pressure from local nationalists and the need to gain public support in the light of Allied victories accelerated the process. Certainly the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere did not initially envisage totally free and independent nations within it and probably Japan hoped to establish submissive states on the model of Manchukuo.

After the first enthusiasm over the defeat of the colonial powers had worn off, the Japanese new order encountered increasing dissatisfaction in its South-East Asian domains. There were those who were never prepared to accept the Japanese. Many people in the Chinese communities were well aware of the atrocity stories that had

accompanied the invasion of China and were understandably worried about their future. Christians in Burma and Indonesia had formed close ties with the British and Dutch and saw in their defeat an impairment of their own status. Both the Japanese and the nationalists were suspicious of their loyalty — and correctly so in Burma where many Christians aided Allied military activities. For the remainder of South—East Asia the Co—Prosperity Sphere developed into something less than had been expected. The disruption of old trade patterns and the increasingly successful Allied blockade produced severe economic dislocations and the disappearance of Western goods to which the urban populations had become accustomed. Maintaining an automobile in working order became a test of mechanical ingenuity if petrol was available, and even cloth and food became scarce.

These shortages would have been accepted by many as necessary sacrifices for independence had it not been for Japanese tardiness in offering freedom. They did release political prisoners from exile and jail, it is true, and Europeans were eliminated from positions of responsibility except in rare instances where their skills were temporarily necessary. Yet the new rulers displayed some of the same superiority seen in the former colonial systems, as epitomized by Tojo's instructions to the Japanese forces to 'respect the opinions of the natives and to take a true, fatherly attitude towards them'. It not until the last two years of the war that even symbolic independence was granted to Indonesia, Burma and the Philippines, while the Indo-Chinese states had to wait until after March 1945. Nevertheless real change did take place in South-East Asia during the war years.

The tendency among outside observers of the time was to regard the Japanese-supported regimes as mere puppets and their leaders as quislings or men of weak character. There is little doubt that these governments were denied full responsibility for their affairs and that Japanese civil and military authorities maintained the ultimate power of veto to the end. In military matters the representatives of Tokyo were supreme and efforts were made to control the wartime economy. Yet South-East Asians were to be found at all levels of the civil administration, where they acquired the experience often denied them by colonial governments. Whereas there was little change in the racial composition of the administrative elite in the Philippines, indigenous personnel took over

in Burma, Indonesia and Indo-China. Dr Ba Maw, first premier under the British, became the wartime ruler of Burma. Found politically and personally unacceptable by the younger nationalists, he did not outlast the war, but some of his colleagues, such as General Aung San and Information and Foreign Minister U Nu, were to lead post-war governments. In Indonesia the Japanese-supported régime was headed by President Sukarno, who was to rule after independence for more than two decades, and many of the military men who succeeded him in power served under the occupation. In the few months of full Japanese control of Vietnam neither Ho Chi Minh of the North nor Ngo Dinh Diem of the South participated in the government, but Emperor Bao Dai was made its titular head. In Cambodia the young Norodom Sihanouk had been ruling monarch since 1945 and was to continue to lead his country until 1970. Even in the Philippines some of those supposedly tainted with the brush of collaboration were later reinstated into political life, though the wartime president, Jose Laurel, was arrested and imprisoned for a period. Only in the two countries retaken by the Allies before the war's end, Burma and the Philippines, were the leaders deposed permanently. Thus a new post-war elite arose from the occupation, an elite generally considered as honourable nationalists by their people, an elite now somewhat better qualified to rule than had been true previously.

Not only did the wartime period spawn new leaders; in some cases it saw the formation of political and social organizations which were to outlast the conflict. In Burma was born the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) which was to rule Burma for some fifteen years. During this period there were also efforts to unite the fragmented Buddhist hierarchy and diminish the secularism which characterized the colonial system. In Indonesia new political and religious organizations burgeoned, although the traditional splits in the nationalist movement were not permanently mended by wartime co-operation. In Malaya the Chinese guerrilla movement developed strong Communist leanings which provided the foundation for post-war anti-colonial activities, while in Vietnam the Viet Minh was developing along similar lines. In sum then, this was not a period of stagnation, since the forced withdrawal of the colonial administrations opened new opportunities for the people of South-East Asia.

The Japanese played an active part in promoting anti-colonialist sentiment from the beginning, casting themselves in the role of liberators, fellow Asians and, to the Buddhists in the region, co-religionists. Special newspapers, pamphlets, speeches and slogans proclaimed the perfidious nature of European imperialism and nationalist leaders were expected to participate in this mass denunciation. While this campaign probably did help to break down some old loyalties, there were also complaints in Burma and the Philippines, colonies well on their way to independence, that the propaganda was too blatant; and the Japanese claims became less credible as the war progressed and conditions in the area were visibly deteriorating. As economic conditions worsened and actions by Japanese troops against civilians gave rise to resentment and criticism, the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere appeared less desirable as a substitute for colonial government to many South-East Asians.

But it was the positive pro-nationalist propaganda which the Japanese emphasized somewhat later that probably developed the most lasting effect. The inauguration ceremonies of the nearly 'independent' states were widely publicized, as were the activities and speeches of the new leaders. Campaigns were instigated in praise of the past history and accomplishments of the new nations, and flags, songs, plays, slogans and prose whipped up nationalist feelings within the population.

Some Japanese activities were distinctly detrimental to the development of national unity. Little was accomplished in the way of bringing into participation in national life the disparate peoples who lived outside the main population centres. In Burma Japanese suspicions of the loyalty of the hill peoples led them to acquiesce in precipitate nationalist actions against Christian groups. Stories of atrocities and forced conversions increased the bitterness of a people already pro-British and helped to light the fuse of the civil war which was to follow independence. In Malaya the mistreatment of the Chinese population fed both a growing sense of separate identity from the Malay majority and the dissident Communist movement. Out of the hatreds and dislocations of the war grew the Chinese dissatisfaction that led to the decade-long civil war in that country. In Indonesia the decision to give administrative control of the outer islands to the navy and Java and its environs to the army increased the sense of separate identity

which had already been fostered by the Dutch policy of indirect and direct rule in approximately the same geographical areas. Thus Japanese policy in these three countries only exacerbated the elements of disunity found in the old colonial system.

This leads us to the third basic effect of the wartime occupation, the weakening of the old monopoly of modern weapons held by the colonial powers. Prior to the war the efforts of nationalists to mount attacks against European forces were inevitably doomed to defeat. Minor inter-war insurrections, such as the Saya San Rebellion in Burma, the 'Red Terror' in Indo-China and the 1926—27 revolts in the Indies, were put down with colonial forces. In most colonies the military forces had as their backbone foreign troops supplemented by recruits from minority ethnic groups from areas outside the main population centres. Thus the British maintained no Burman units for most of the interwar years, preferring to depend upon battalions from hill tribes such as the Chins, Karens and Kachins, plus Indian professionals. A sizable percentage of the indigenous recruits in the East Indies were from Christian areas in the outer islands. Only in the Philippines was there a large national military force, which justified American confidence in it by fighting bravely against the Japanese advance. Usually the colonial powers felt it safer to draw their armed forces from areas and groups outside the influence of the urban nationalists. There were very few Burman, Javanese or Vietnamese officers in 1940 and almost no arms were available to nationalists who wanted to become involved in insurgent activity. The war ended that.

The Japanese actively sought to recruit and train military units in the former colonies. In some cases they employed men from the colonial forces, but to a great extent the new armies were composed of non-professionals men with nationalist ideologies recruited from youth groups, universities and political organizations. This process was not totally successful, as there was often competition among military units and the instilling of professionalism into politically oriented individuals posed problems. For their part the South-East Asians complained about Japanese foot-dragging in building local forces, about excessive imperial control and about inferior weapons. Yet by the end of the war there existed large stockpiles of weapons for those who would later take up arms against the returning colonial powers and the independent governments that

succeeded them. Generally, these military supplies came from four sources. First, the Japanese supplied units they considered loyal with arms as well as training. For their part the Allies did the same thing, providing arms to Chin, Karen and Kachin supporters in Burma, 'Free Thai' elements in Thailand, and, through the American OSS, to units under Ho Chi Minh in Indo-China. Thirdly, the invasions and counter-invasions of Burma and the Philippines allowed a leakage weapons to those who wanted them. Finally, after their defeat the Japanese often voluntarily allowed nationalists to 'capture' arms from them, and Allied measures for the surrender of imperial troops were not always careful enough about accounting for weapons. There are stores of Japanese soldiers being ordered to drop their rifles and step forward, only to have Indonesians come up behind them and carry off their weapons. There is no way of assessing just how many rifles, pistols, rounds of ammunitions, grenades, etc. fell into the hands of South-East Asians, but civil wars in Burma, Malaya, Indo-China, the Philippines and Indonesia were initially largely carried on with supplies obtained in the Second World War. No longer could the colonial powers be sure of defeating the now armed and trained nationalists.

What then was changed in South-East Asia by the events of the war? First and foremost, the whole colonial administrative, economic and social structure was disrupted, and disrupted fatally. The European could no longer lay claim to unquestioned authority over the area as he had previously done. The people had enjoyed a taste of independence, only symbolic perhaps, but they had seen their own leaders proclaimed president or premier, dealt with Asian rather than European administrators at all levels, been subjected to intensive anti-colonial and pro-nationalist propaganda, and had acquired arms and the training with which to challenge the returning colonialists. In sum, a significantly larger number of South-East Asians were (1) armed and trained for combat, (2) experienced in administration and politics, (3) ideologically committed to independence, (4) unwilling to accept the old social order, (5) more organized for political activity and (6) less respectful of colonial power. It should be emphasized that this change did not overtake all of South-East Asia. Many of the indigenous population still remained basically a political, wedded to their villages and families and unconcerned with politics and the establishment of national governments. Yet for most of the region the wartime period was a watershed, a fact that would become apparent in the crucial years that followed.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

The traditional Southeast Asian system proved incapable of responding effectively against the penetration of European colonialism. It was not that the traditional states had insufficient power in a military sense, although the heavy European ships and advanced armaments proved decisive against the lighter Asian vessels. But more critically, the individual states lacked the hierarchical authority structures that would have allowed them to respond quickly, nor did they recognize the arrival of the Europeans as a system-level threat until it was too late.

There are several reasons for the failure of the indigenous system to respond effectively. First, the Southeast Asian system was weak in terms of its systemic relationships, particularly the inability of regional states to develop and sustain cooperative interactions. This inability to cooperate was reinforced by a high degree of ethnic separation among the states and by Hindu political philosophies of state structures that inhibited the evolution of a multi-state system. Furthermore, the regional states had only a weakly defined sense of themselves as an exclusive grouping. Historically, they had recognized threats from the Chinese and the Indians, but even these threats rarely stimulated joint military defense. The openness of the region made the arrival of new groups of foreigners commonplace; moreover, early European arrivals, who also lacked the capacities to alter the system, tended to adapt to the existing system. Further, when traditional institutions and practices were insufficient to meet the European challenge, local innovations, changes, and the adaptations of European methods were very slow and were often insufficient to counter more effectively deployed European power. Southeast Asian states recognized the religious challenge posed by the Portuguese, their economic actions were familiar and non-threatening in terms of the standard systemic behavior of 'acquiring tribute and booty. The Portuguese did profit handsomely from their Asian intervention but only because they were able to transfer products out of the system and back to Europe.

It was the Dutch who first seriously disrupted the traditional regional system. They were successful because their military power, which had initially been employed against the Portuguese and the Spanish, later became an important tool against the indigenous states. Dutch military power was not only superior to that of the Portuguese, it was also more effectively organized

Although the Dutch gave support to Christian missionary activities, they did not have the fanatical approach of the Portuguese and concentrate more directly on economic control—an endeavor local states seemed completely unable to check even when economic disputes became overtly political. The typical sequence of the transition to Dutch control began with a contract, usually a monopoly purchase agreement for spice production, between the Dutch and the sultan or regent of a particular island or state. The sultan frequently signed the agreement under duress, either because Dutch warships were anchored in the harbor or because the sultan feared the power of another local potentate and needed Dutch protection and assistance. The contract price for the commodity was always significantly lower than its market value, and local traders and producers invariably turned to smuggling and black-market sales of the crop. The Europeans generally failed to recognize or care that most of the spice islands were net food importers; the heavy spice production in the Malacca had made them dependent on rice produced in Java, and the commodity exchange between the two countries was vigorous because it provided economic advantages to both. When the Dutch interrupted this commodity exchange, the traditional states had to use cash for food imports, but the low contract price for spices meant less food and an effective decline in the standard of living.

The results of these unequal economic relationships became increasingly political under the Dutch because they had sufficient military power to act, whereas the Portuguese had not. Many Southeast Asian states continued to seek protection from a European ally—most commonly the Dutch, rather than seeking security arrangements among themselves against the Europeans. The Dutch exploited this very effectively.

The power of the Dutch made it an actor with capabilities previously unknown in Southeast Asia. The Portuguese had used greater striking power and better navigational techniques to gain the upper hand in Malacca and elsewhere, but the Dutch added

organizational improvement and unity of purpose which allowed them to outstrip the local states still further.

The Dutch Company did not apt or fit into the locally operating regional system; in fact, it moved to fragment the traditional system in order to fit the remaining pieces into the European system. The company operated virtually without limitation except for that of available power. The Dutch rejected the sanctity of state sovereignty in favor of the primacy of conquest and refused to acknowledge legitimate economic interests or needs in their drive for monopoly control.

Having established themselves as the most powerful actor in archipelagic Southeast Asia, the Dutch soon recognized that attaining monopoly control of the Asia-to-Europe spice trade was probably impossible. More important, the spice trade could not generate enough profits to support the growing Dutch regional establishment. It soon became evident that control of actual commodity production as well as inter-Asian trade was the solution. Thus, in the second half of the seventeenth century, the Dutch took two steps that, while greatly increasing Dutch revenues, significantly advanced the demise of traditional Southeast Asian structures. First, they intervened in the Java-to-China trade and in other intraregional commercial routes, replacing local shippers with Dutch carriers. Second, they moved to control commodity production by, for example, destroying all of the clove trees on northern Maluku and Huamoal while generally impoverishing local populations throughout the archipelago with policies of buying spices cheaply and selling rice dearly. By decimating the indigenous economic system, the Dutch further ensured the fragmentation of political power, especially in the archipelago. As with the Portuguese, however, the Dutch seemed to reach the limit of their managerial capacities without creating new political forms or unity in the area.

During the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, Southeast Asia was pulled even farther from its traditional systemic economic framework. Such external events as the opening of the Suez Canal and the development of the steamship were critical in wedding Southeast Asia to the evolving global economic system. Materials such as tin and rubber replaced spices as the principal commodities sent from the region

to the industrializing world, and Southeast Asia itself became more important as a market for basic consumer goods.

Within the region, the British took preeminent control of the Southeast Asian economy. Although the Dutch built an empire on Java and the other islands under their control and exploited that empire as fully as possible for their own purposes, they were unable to match the free-trade system fostered by the British from Penang and later Singapore. Banking and investment became important in the region as industrialization began during the nineteenth century.

By the end of the nineteenth century, nearly every component of the regional economic system was controlled by Europeans or their Chinese or Indian surrogates. Important indigenous merchant groups and shipping interests had largely disappeared. In traditional Southeast Asian states, the commercial sector of the economy was very closely linked to the political system, and external domination of the economic sector only ensured the demise of the political sector.

Thus European interventions effectively destroyed the traditional interstate system of Southeast Asia in several steps. First, the Southeast Asian segment of the China-to-Europe trading system was disrupted, and the indigenous political leaders and merchants were strangled by the monopolistic economic practices of the European. Then, having lost much of their economic base, the political elites were further undermined, and the state system eventually collapsed as authority was secured to Europeans—even when indigenous leaders continued to hold title and office. Third, the socioeconomic integrity of the subsistence agricultural sector—at first only minimally affected by changes in the international commercial sphere—was penetrated through the introduction of forced cultivation, plantation agriculture, privatization of land, and other colonial production and social policies. Fourth, the colonial powers introduced and established alien groups, notably Chinese and Indians, in positions of economic power. And finally, the colonial powers furthered the overall regional economic and political fragmentation by developing intense economic dependencies on the respective colonial metropolis while cutting off virtually all contact with other regional centers.

At the same time, the colonial era introduced many Western concepts and practices, most in imperfect or fragmented form. Most prominent were governmental and military institutions based on Western rational concepts. Yet Western historical and social underpinnings of political culture, necessary for the effective adoption of these institutions and practices, were precisely what the colonial era failed to transmit.

The most significant legacy of the maritime rivalry in Southeast Asia is the establishment of colonial frontiers or borders and unnatural delimitation of the boundaries reinforced the feeling of nationalism in the region. Also rivalry in the Indian Ocean during the Second World War led to the emergence of the concept of sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) but the rivalries for the control of sea waters are yet to be resolved.

Also from our survey of geography and history, we can conclude that maritime power is important within the region for regional countries themselves in order to maintain their territorial integrity and secure their sea lanes of communications. Secondly, because of Southeast Asia's location between India and China. These two countries cannot be ignored in the long term. Finally, because of the importance of Southeast Asian sea routes to the world trading system, and the value of the natural resources that can be found there, the major powers in the world will always want to be able to influence events in the region.

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