THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

VOLUME ONE

From Early Times to c.1800

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The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia

VOLUME ONE

From Early Times to c. 1800

edited by

NICHOLAS TARLING

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NOTE ON SPELLING

The spelling of proper names and terms has caused editor and contributors considerable problems. Even a certain arbitrariness may have not produced consistency across a range of contributions, and that arbitrariness contained its own inconsistencies. In general we have aimed to spell placenames and terms in the way currently most accepted in the country, society or literature concerned. We have not used diacritics for modern Southeast Asian languages, but have used them for Sanskrit and Ancient Javanese. We have used pinyin transliterations except for some names which are well known in English in the Wade–Giles transliteration.

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NOTE ON GENDER IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN LANGUAGES

Southeast Asian languages do not distinguish the sexes in general. Many references to individuals or groups of people in ancient indigenous sources leave it unclear whether women are meant or included. For example, we usually do not know whether a certain function is occupied by a male or a female. Even words borrowed from Sanskrit (which has genders corresponding to sex) are sometimes applied without observing this correspondence: Queen Tribhuwanā (sic) or Tribhuwanottungadewī is called *mahārāja* (a masculine word). These languages do not distinguish between brothers and sisters, but they do between younger and older siblings.

There also seems to have been little discrimination between sexes as far as functions are concerned. There were not only queens reigning in their own right in ancient Java, but also 'prime ministers', such as Airlangga's Mahārastrī i Hino with a name ending in '-Dewī'. As to Kĕrtanagara's four daughters, it seems that this king had no sons—at least they are never mentioned. Therefore what the sources tell us about the daughters provides no evidence of matrilineal descent. Apparently, both lineages were equally important. In some ways ancient Indonesian society was less 'sexist' than our own still is.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AP	*Asian Perspectives*, Honolulu.
BEFEO	*Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Paris.
BIPPA	*Bulletin of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association*, Canberra.
BKI	*Bijdragen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 's-Gravenhage.
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, London.
FMJ	*Federation Museums Journal*, Kuala Lumpur.
JAS	*Journal of Asian Studies*, Ann Arbor.
JBRS	*Journal of the Burma Research Society*, Rangoon.
JMBRAS	*Journal of the Malay/Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Singapore/Kuala Lumpur.
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, London.
JSEAH	*Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Singapore.
JSEAS	*Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Singapore.
JSS	*Journal of the Siam Society*, Bangkok.
MAS	*Modern Asian Studies*, Cambridge, UK.
MQRSEA	*Modern Quaternary Research in Southeast Asia*, Rotterdam.
TBG	*Tijdschrift van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten et Wetenschappen*, Batavia/Jakarta.
VKI	*Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 's-Gravenhage.

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PREFACE

Two ideas came together in the project for a Cambridge History of Southeast Asia. One was the concept of the Cambridge Histories themselves. The other was the possibility of a new approach to the history of Southeast Asia.

In the English-speaking and English-reading world the Cambridge Histories have, since the beginning of the century, set high standards in collaborative scholarship and provided a model for multi-volume works of history. The original *Cambridge Modern History* appeared in sixteen volumes between 1902 and 1912, and was followed by the *Cambridge Ancient History*, the *Cambridge Medieval History*, the *Cambridge History of India* and others.

A new generation of projects continues and builds on this foundation. Recently completed are the Cambridge Histories of Africa and Latin America. Cambridge Histories of China and of Japan are in progress, as well as the New Cambridge History of India. Though the pattern and the size have varied, the essential feature, multi-authorship, has remained.

The initial focus was European, but albeit in an approach that initially savoured rather of the old Cambridge Tripos course 'The Expansion of Europe', it moved more out of the European sphere than the often brilliant one-author Oxford histories. But it left a gap which that course did not leave, the history of Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asia has long been seen as a whole, though other terms have been used for it. The title Southeast Asia, becoming current during World War II, has been accepted as recognizing the unity of the region, while not prejudging the nature of that unity. Yet scholarly research and writing have shown that it is no mere geographical expression.

There have indeed been several previous histories of Southeast Asia. Most of them have been the work of one author. The great work of the late D. G. E. Hall dates back to 1955, but it has gone through several editions since. Others include B. Harrison, *South-east Asia, A Short History*, London, 1954; Nicholas Tarling, *A Concise History of Southeast Asia*, 1966; and D. J. Steinberg, et al., *In Search of Southeast Asia*, 1971. The authors of these works faced difficult tasks, as a result of the linguistic diversity of the area; the extent of the secondary material; and the lacunae within it.

Given its diversity, Southeast Asia seemed to lend itself to the Cambridge approach. A magisterial single-volume history existed; others had also made the attempt. A single volume by several authors working together had also been successful. But a more substantial history by a larger number of authors had not been attempted.

The past generation has seen a great expansion of writing, but Southeast Asia's historiography is still immature in the sense that some aspects have

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been relatively well cultivated, and others not. The historical literature on the area has become more substantial and more sophisticated, but much of it deals with particular countries or cultures, and many gaps remain. A range of experts might help to bring it all together and thus both lay the foundation and point the way for further research effort.

The Cambridge approach offered a warning as well as an invitation. There were practical obstacles in the way of histories on the scale of the original European histories. They got out of hand or were never finished. A summation that was also to lead other scholars forward must be published within a reasonable time-span. It must not be too voluminous; it must not involve too many people.

Practical indications of this nature, however, coincided with historiographical considerations. There were some good histories of Southeast Asia; there were also some good histories of particular countries; but there was, perhaps, no history that set out from a regional basis and took a regional approach. This seemed worthwhile in itself, as well as establishing a coherence and a format for the volumes.

In almost every case—even when chapters are the work of more than one person—authors have been taken out of their particular area of expertise. They were ready to take risks, knowing that, whatever care they took, they might be faulted by experts, but recognizing the value all the same in attempting to give an overview. Generally contributors felt that the challenge of the regional approach was worth the hazardous departure from research moorings.

Authors invited to contribute recognized that they would often find themselves extended beyond the span of the published work which has made them well-known. The new history did, however, give them a chance—perhaps already enjoyed in many cases in their teaching—to extend into other parts of the region and to adopt a comparative, regional approach. The publishers sought a history that stimulated rather than presented the last word. Authors were the more ready to rely where necessary on published or secondary works, and readers will not expect equally authoritative treatment of the whole area, even if the sources permitted it.

At the same time, the editor and the contributors have had, like any historians, to cope with problems of periodization. That is, of course, always contentious, but particularly so if it seems to result from or to point to a particular emphasis. In the case of Southeast Asia the most likely temptation is to adopt a chronology that overdoes the impact of outside forces, in particular the Europeans. The structure of this history is not free from that criticism, but the contributors have sought, where appropriate, to challenge rather than meekly to accept its implications.

A similar risk is attached to the division of the material into chapters. The scope of a work such as this makes that all the more difficult but all the more necessary. Sometimes the divisions appear to cut across what ought to be seen as a whole, and sometimes repetition may result. That has been allowed when it seemed necessary. But it may still be possible to pursue certain themes through the book and not to read it merely in chronological sequence. Within the four major chronological divisions, chapters are in

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general organized in a similar order. The work may thus in a sense be read laterally as well as horizontally.

Some topics, including treatment of the arts, literature and music, have been virtually excluded. The focus of the work is on economic, social, religious and political history. But it will still be difficult to pursue the history of a particular people or country. The work does not indeed promise to offer this; though it offers guidance to those who wish to do this in its apparatus, the footnotes and bibliographic essay to each chapter, the historiographical survey, the list of bibliographies, and the index.

The regional approach has tested the authors, but it has also emphasized the deficiencies of the sources available. Much work has still to be done; much of the earlier life of Southeast Asia remains outside our reach. Each author found a different problem: too much material in one respect, too little in another.

The contributors come from Europe, Japan, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand, the USA. They have received help from other scholars, acknowledged in the notes to their chapters. The whole project benefited from a meeting of the contributors, held in Singapore with aid from the Sasakawa Foundation. In particular they received comment on their drafts from a number of Southeast Asian scholars at that conference, brought there with the aid of the Toyota Foundation. The editor expresses his grateful thanks to them, Dr Cheah Boon Kheng, Dr Abu Talib Ahmad, Professor Khoo Kay Kim, Dr Taufik Abdullah, and Dr Sombat Chantornvong, to Dr Kathirithamby-Wells, who became a formal contributor, and to Professor Wang Gungwu, who also attended. Other scholars have been of assistance to particular authors, such as Victor Lieberman, Ann Kumar, A. H. Johns, Taufik Abdullah, and Adrian Vickers.

Those to be thanked, indeed, are too numerous to mention. But the editor must record the encouragement, aid and support of Dr Robin Derricourt of the Cambridge University Press, and of his colleagues, Leonard and Barbara Andaya.

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CHAPTER

1

THE WRITING OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN HISTORY

The writing of Southeast Asian history, as distinct from the history of its several parts, is a comparatively recent development. The first major history of the region as a whole, D. G. E. Hall's *A History of South-East Asia*, appeared only in 1955.[1] Hall's work, though describing itself as 'a bare outline, perilously compressed and oversimplified in many parts',[2] was a massive achievement, basing itself on the detailed work of other scholars and reflecting a knowledge of the critical issues of debate amongst them. Apart from urging that Southeast Asia be studied as an area 'worthy of consideration in its own right' and not as an appendage of India, China or the West, it offered no new conceptual or methodological approaches of its own. But in bringing together the fruits of existing scholarship it provided a kind of stocktaking of the state of that scholarship.

Since then the suitability of the region as a whole as an object of study has been more readily accepted. Cornell University had already established, in 1950, its Southeast Asia Program, and a number of other institutions in various countries followed suit. And, increasingly, comparative works focused on the region as a whole. Charles Fisher's social, economic and political geography (London, 1964) was entitled simply *South-east Asia*, and other works with a similar ambit followed: John F. Cady's *Southeast Asia: its Historical Development* (New York, 1964) and his *Post-War Southeast Asia* (Athens, Ohio, 1974) and Nicholas Tarling's *South-east Asia: Past and Present* (Melbourne, 1966) are but a few examples. The very perception of Southeast Asia is, of course, a modern and external perception. Southeast Asians themselves, though aware of local, ethnic and cultural identities, did not, until very recently, perceive a Southeast Asian identity. And the external perception was, of necessity, somewhat contrived. The preface to *Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia*, edited by George McT. Kahin in 1959, still hesitated to see Southeast Asia as a significant unity. 'Southeast Asia is not an area of great political homogeneity. Politically as well as culturally its component states are more

[1] 2nd edn, 1964; 3rd edn, 1968; 4th edn, 1981. Brian Harrison's useful *South-East Asia: A Short History*, London, 1954, had appeared in the preceding year, but it was directed to the general reader and not to the specialist (Preface, v).

[2] Hall, *History*, Preface to the First Edition, v.

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varied than those of Europe.'[3] And as late as 1971 six authors attempting an integrated and thematic history of the region entitled their work *In Search of Southeast Asia*.[4]

Hall's work, coming ten years after the end of World War II, constituted a watershed, embodying the changes in the direction of scholarship that had begun to make themselves felt after the war, and setting the stage for the expansion of Southeast Asian studies which followed. However, it was, of course, the war itself which changed the whole setting within which the region was studied, and it will be convenient, for the purposes of this chapter, to take that as a main dividing line in the development of the writing of Southeast Asian history.

Two further points must be made at the outset. First, in surveying writings about Southeast Asia's past, certain limits have been set. Attention will be confined to works that may be described as belonging to a modern, international tradition of historical enquiry. It would have been possible, in a chapter of this kind, to examine the different types of indigenous writing which contain views about, or presentations of, the past: *babads*, *hikayats*, chronicles of various kinds, literary works and inscriptions. One might have viewed these not merely as sources to be subjected to the critical scrutiny of modern historians, and examined for the light they might throw on past cultural configurations, but as historical writings in their own right, to be approached in their own terms and considered for their assumptions about the nature of the historical process. On the other hand it can be argued that—with the exception of Vietnam, whose dynastic historians did attempt to preserve a record of events—there was no genuinely historical tradition in Southeast Asia. For the most part the function of indigenous chronicles, even when they purported to deal with the course of events—the rise and fall of dynasties, battles, victories and defeats—was not to record a factual past but to perform other, largely moral, functions: to legitimize, to glorify, to assert unity or to express a perceived moral order of society. They might sometimes create a different past in the interests of the present, devising, for example, an appropriate lineage for a usurper. They might serve as part of the regalia of a ruler.[5] There are possible exceptions. One student of Javanese history draws a distinction between 'historical' and 'mythical' Javanese texts and takes the view that, where texts do purport to describe actual events, they are 'often more accurate than a survey of the secondary literature on

[3] Ithaca, 1959, Preface, v.

[4] David Joel Steinberg, David K. Wyatt, John R. W. Smail, Alexander Woodside, William R. Roff and David P. Chandler, ed. Steinberg, New York, 1971; 2nd edn, with additional author, R. H. Taylor, Honolulu, 1988.

[5] These issues were discussed at a seminar held in Canberra in 1976 at which an attempt was made to consider indigenous writings in their own terms. See Anthony Reid and David Marr eds, *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, Kuala Lumpur, 1979. Contributors were of the view that these works could not be described as historical. As examples, see the essays of Charnvit Kasetsiri who contrasted religious and dynastic histories in Thailand with modern analytical history; Michael Vickery who argued that, in Cambodia, a recorded antiquity was necessary to validate kingship; and O. W. Wolters, who suggested that the function of eleventh-century Vietnamese texts was to assert the equality of Vietnamese and Chinese empires.

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Javanese historiography might suggest'.[6] And it is possible, of course, to draw too sharp a contrast between the ritualistic function of texts and the purposes of the so-called 'scientific' historians. Scientific history, too, may justify or legitimize a later state of affairs and create a past to serve the needs of the present. The difference, reflecting a difference of intention, is that it can be called to account and criticized in terms of evidence and argument. It is, after all, perhaps a difference of degree. However, for the purposes of the present chapter it has been decided to regard traditional writings as amongst the sources for the study of Southeast Asia rather than as contributions to that study in their own right, and to confine attention to works based on a critical consideration of surviving sources and belonging to a modern scholarly tradition.

Second, it is not intended to offer here an exhaustive bibliographical survey. In the space available it is possible to refer to only a small minority of the significant works dealing with Southeast Asian history. What is proposed is rather an essay which will seek to identify the main characteristics of historical writing and to notice the principal shifts of focus, emphasis and modes of interpretation. Reference will be made to individual works merely by way of example.

SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES BEFORE WORLD WAR II

Before World War II the study of Southeast Asian history may be divided into two broad categories. There was first of all a concern with early history, with an attempt, in effect, to piece together from archaeological, epigraphical and literary sources, the outlines of a previously unexamined chronology. Second, attention was given to the activities of the European powers from the sixteenth century on, to the gradual creation of commercial and territorial empires in Southeast Asia and to the colonial policies pursued therein.

The first type of enquiry was severely constrained by the nature of the available evidence. It is only from about the fifth century CE that evidence exists to support some kind of genuinely historical perception of Southeast Asia. There are material remains deriving from before that period that allow tentative conclusions to be drawn about the indigenous prehistoric cultures of the region. Little can be known about original migrations. Stone tools, both chipped and polished, and bone artefacts give some evidence of palaeolithic and neolithic periods. There are tentative conclusions about the development of agriculture and about whether it was an indigenous development or was introduced from outside. The bronze drums discovered in the north Vietnamese village of Dong-son testify to the existence of a metal-working culture in about the fourth century BC. Megaliths and burial places provide evidence of a different kind. But the character and

[6] M. C. Ricklefs, *Jogjakarta under Sultan Mangkubumi, 1749–1792*, London, 1974, xix. A similar view is implied by Victor Lieberman whose study of Burma from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century draws heavily on indigenous sources: *Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580–1760*, Princeton, 1984, 6 and 271ff.

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the scarcity of such remains meant that their interpretation required considerable speculation.

Even for the period where written sources and architectural monuments exist, there is considerable obscurity. According to de Casparis, the earliest known written materials in Southeast Asia are inscriptions on seals and other objects, discovered in south Vietnam and dated as belonging to between the second and fifth centuries CE[7] and the Vo-canh (Vietnam) inscription dated as third century. From about the fifth century epigraphical evidence becomes more plentiful, both on the mainland and in the archipelago, and this provides evidence of polities of substance. It is accompanied by monumental remains such as the ninth-century Buddhist stupa, the Borobodur, and the tenth-century Śaivite Lara Jonggrang complex at Prambanan in central Java, the splendours of Angkor from the ninth to the thirteenth century and of Pagan from the eleventh to the thirteenth century.[8] The evidence of organized power is there, but not a detailed political history of the kingdoms which created these monuments. On the basis of evidence of this kind, scholars have been free to debate such issues as, for example, the exact nature of early trading patterns or questions of political authority such as the Śailendra problem—the apparent simultaneous presence in central Java of both a Śaivite kingdom of the Sanjaya house and a Buddhist kingdom under the Śailendra dynasty (later to be rulers of Śrīvijaya in south Sumatra) in the eighth and ninth centuries—without a conclusive result.[9] Chronicles and other literary works have survived from about the fourteenth century.[10] In Java the more extended texts such as the *Pararaton*, the *Nāgarakĕrtāgama* and the *Babad Tanah Jawi* appear to contain details of political history. These works have survived only because they have been copied and recopied and, in their present form, they are therefore not documents of the period in which they were first written. In any case, for the reasons already suggested, they cannot be taken as reliable sources for the events they purport to describe.

For the second type of pre-war enquiry into the history of Southeast Asia, sources are much more abundant. Whereas students of early history had, perforce, to make what they could of very fragmentary evidence, students of the later period were able to draw on extensive sources provided by the writings of European observers and, in due course, by the colonial archives of the Western powers—Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French, British and American. To a European eye these appeared to provide sure ground for historical knowledge, though, as will become apparent, they have always presented their own problems of interpretation and perspective.

The two categories of enquiry shared certain features. The first of these has already been noticed: the almost universal tendency of historians to

[7] *Indonesian Paleography*, Leiden, 1975, 12.

[8] For Pagan see G. H. Luce, *Old Burma—Early Pagan*, 3 vols, New York, 1969–70.

[9] For a consideration of that debate and a suggested solution to the problem see J. G. de Casparis, *Inscripties uit de Çailendratijd*, I: *Prasasti Indonesia*, Bandung, 1950, and II: *Selected Inscriptions from the Seventh to the Ninth Century A.D. Prasasti Indonesia*, Bandung, 1956.

[10] de Casparis, *Indonesian Paleography*, 53.

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focus on the constituent parts of Southeast Asia rather than to develop a perception of the region as a whole as a suitable object of study. This was perhaps inescapable where it was a matter of studying the activities of the imperial powers in the area. The very names, British Malaya, Netherlands India, French Indochina, indicated the territorial constraints of Western students of Southeast Asia.[11] Much of their work was concerned either with the broad goals of imperial policies or with administrative structures and methods, and such studies concentrated naturally on particular colonial dependencies. But the students of early history, too, focused for the most part on the past of the potential nations of the future, nations defined sometimes by the accidents of colonial rule, rather than on what might be described as 'natural' ethnic, linguistic or cultural entities cutting across the artificially established political boundaries. This represented, of course, the hindsight of nineteenth- and twentieth-century authors, though it is true that, by the eighteenth century, outside observers were bringing European notions of 'country' and 'state' and were imposing their own perceptions of the main political divisions of Southeast Asia. As examples taken almost at random may be cited the epigraphical work of G. H. Luce and Pe Maung Tin in Burma,[12] Georges Cœdès in Thailand and Cambodia,[13] and Cœdès, G. Ferrand, K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, F. D. K. Bosch and others in Indonesia.[14] In the field of archaeological studies and art history were Paul Mus' study of the Borobodur, the archaeological description of the same monument prepared by N. J. Krom while head of the archaeological service of Netherlands India, Bernet Kempers' work on Hindu-Javanese art, Stutterheim on Balinese art, Le May's history of Buddhist art in Siam, and Parmentier on Khmer art.[15] Textual and philological studies, too, followed the same pattern of local concentration, necessarily so in this type of enquiry because of the linguistic specialization required.[16]

[11] The literature is extensive. As examples one might cite J. L. Christian, *Modern Burma*, Berkeley, 1942; P. Le Boulanger, *Histoire de Laos Française*, Paris, 1931; A. Leclère, *Histoire du Cambodge*, Paris, 1914; G. Maspero, ed., *Un Empire Colonial Français: L'Indochine*, Paris, 1929–30; C. B. Maybon, *Histoire Moderne du Pays d'Annam*, Paris, 1920; V. Thompson, *French Indochina*, London, 1937; J. S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, Cambridge, UK, 1939; Clive Day, *The Dutch in Java*, New York, 1904; E. S. de Klerck, *History of the Netherlands East Indies*, Rotterdam, 1938; F. W. Stapel, ed., *Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch-Indië*, Amsterdam, 1939; L. A. Mills, *British Malaya 1824–1867*, Singapore, 1925.

[12] *Inscriptions of Burma*, published in the form of rubbings, 1933–9.

[13] *Reçueil des Inscriptions du Siam*, Bangkok, 1924–9; *Inscriptions de Sukhodaya*, Bangkok, 1924; and *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, Hanoi, 1937–51.

[14] Cœdès, 'Le Royaume de Çrivijaya', BEFEO, 18 (1918), and 'Les inscriptions malaises de Çrivijaya', BEFEO, 30 (1930); Ferrand, 'L'Empire Sumatranais de Çrivijaya', *Journal Asiatique*, 11th series, 20 (1922), and 'Quatre textes épigraphiques malayo-sanskrits de Sumatra et de Banka', *Journal Asiatique*, 221 (1932); Sastri, 'Sri Vijaya', BEFEO, 40 (1940), and 'Takuapa and its Tamil Inscription', JMBRAS, 22 (1949); Bosch, 'De Inscriptie van Keloerak', *Tijdschrift van het Bataviaasch Genootschap*, 48 (1928).

[15] Mus, 'The Barabadur: Les origines du stupa et la transmigration', BEFEO, 32 (1923); Krom, *Barabadur: Archaeological Description*, The Hague, 1927; Kempers, *The Bronzes at Nalanda and Hindu-Javanese Art*, Leiden, 1930; W. F. Stutterheim, *Indian Influences on Old Balinese Art*, London, 1935, and other works; R. S. Le May, *A Concise History of Buddhist Art in Siam*, Cambridge, 1938; H. Parmentier, *L'Art Khmer Primitif*, Paris, 1927, and *L'Art Khmer Classique*, Paris, 1930.

[16] Editions and translations of major texts include, for Indonesia, J. J. Meinsma's Javanese edition of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* (1874), H. Kern's Dutch translation of the *Nāgarakĕrtāgama*

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The same division of labour was apparent in works of synthesis, drawing together the detailed findings of scholarship. An example was the publication in 1926 of the first edition of N. J. Krom's monumental *Hindoe-Javaansche Geschiedenis* (Hindu-Javanese History) which represented a milestone in the study of early Javanese history. Based on the archaeological, epigraphical and textual work of earlier scholars as well as of Krom himself, it addressed questions that had been the subject of debate and aimed to present, in detail, what he believed to be the established record of that particular society. His methods and findings were later to be the subject of systematic criticism, specifically by C. C. Berg. For the time being, however, his work represented an important examination of earlier scholarship and the presentation of what was thought to be known about the history of Java.

There were important exceptions to the country-by-country study of the region. The publication of the first edition of Georges Cœdès' work, *Les États Hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie* in 1944[17] represented a culmination of his pre-war work and dealt in terms of cultures and political organization over a wider geographical area. Using the concept of 'Hinduization', he developed a broad analysis of Southeast Asian societies and polities and the ideas which supported them. The picture was one of inland kingdoms based on intensive wet-rice cultivation; they were hierarchical in character and sustained by ideas of cosmic order and of rulers embodying that order. But for the most part specialist historians focused on the past of what were to become the individual states of post-war Southeast Asia, and general historians, concerned not with the reading of a particular text or the interpretation of a particular inscription, still devoted themselves to the histories of the political entities created by the colonial era: G. H. Harvey's *History of Burma from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Conquest* (London, 1925), W. A. R. Wood's *History of Siam* (London, 1926), H. G. Quaritch Wales' *Ancient Siamese Government and Administration* (London, 1934), E. d'Aymonier's *Le Cambodge* (Paris, 1900–4), C. B. Maybon's *Histoire Moderne du Pays d'Annam* (Paris, 1920), Richard Winstedt's *History of Malaya* (Singapore, 1935).

A second characteristic of most pre-war studies, whether of the earlier or the later periods of Southeast Asian history, was the tendency of scholars to see that history as shaped by influences external to the region rather than as the product of an internal dynamic. This was partly a consequence of the prior training of many scholars in either Indology or Sinology, which tended to lead them to see Southeast Asia from one or other of those perspectives; but it was perhaps more a consequence of the nature of the available sources. The presence, after about the fifth century CE, of the more extensive archaeological, epigraphical and architectural evidence

(1919), Krom's edition of the *Parataton* (1920), and Olthof's translation of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* (1941); for Malaya, Winstedt's edition of the *Sejarah Melayu* (1938); for Burma, the translation by Pe Maung Tin and G. H. Luce of *The Glass Palace Chronicle* (1923); for Thailand, the translation of the *Annales du Siam* by C. Notton (1926–39).

[17] Published under the title *Histoire ancienne des états hindouisés d'Extrême-Orient*. See Notes on the 2nd and 3rd Editions in the translation edited by Walter F. Vella, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, Honolulu, 1968.

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to which reference has already been made corresponds with the period when the cultural influence of India is so obviously apparent in the language and paleography of inscriptions, in the general style and the decorative detail of architectural remains, in the religious ideas of Hinduism and Buddhism and in other artistic forms such as the borrowing of the Sanskrit epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*. So extensive were the signs of that influence that many saw it as the result of Indian emigration to, and colonization of, parts of Southeast Asia or of actual conquest, and wrote of Southeast Asia as 'Further India' or 'Greater India'.[18]

The character of this influence, and the way in which it was transmitted, formed a major subject of debate amongst pre-war students of Southeast Asia. A number of Indian scholars, R. C. Majumdar for example, advanced variants of the trade, colonization or conquest theories, even though Indian sources did not provide evidence of a colonizing process in Southeast Asia. And some European scholars argued in similar vein. C. C. Berg argued that Indianization was the result of conquest and settlement by Indian warriors, and N. J. Krom, in his *Hindu-Javanese History*, saw it as the result of the expansion of Indian trade and consequent settlement and intermarriage.[19] A contrary view, which emphasized indigenous impetus, was argued in different forms by other scholars. To take three examples, significant contributions of quite distinct kinds were published by Paul Mus in 1933, J. C. van Leur in 1934 and F. D. K. Bosch in 1946.

Mus, who had received his initial education in Indochina, and who was subsequently employed by the École Française d'Extrême-Orient in Hanoi, argued, with particular reference to earth cults in Champa, the existence of a common, primordial substratum of belief and culture in both Indian and Southeast Asian societies. Thus, when Hinduism and Buddhism became, as it were, available, there was a local basis in Southeast Asia for the acceptance of these beliefs and for their absorption into a local totality of belief.[20]

In 1934 van Leur, subsequently an official of the Netherlands Indies government (he was killed in the Battle of the Java Sea in 1942) published his doctoral thesis for the University of Leiden which applied new theoretical concepts to the study of Southeast Asian trade and which challenged the way in which scholars had approached the study of the region.[21] He insisted that Indian influence in Southeast Asia, and subsequently that of Islam, powerful though they may have been, were nevertheless comparatively superficial when seen in the context of the societies they were affecting—'a thin and flaking glaze' under which the

[18] e.g., R. C. Majumdar, *Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East*, I, Lahore, 1927, II, Dacca, 1937–8.

[19] Berg, *Hoofdlijnen der Javaansche Literatuur-Geschiedenis*, Groningen, 1929; N. J. Krom, *Hindoe-Javaansche Geschiedenis*, The Hague, 1926.

[20] P. Mus, 'Cultes indiens et indigènes au Champa', BEFEO, 33 (1933), published as *L'Inde vu de l'Est: Cultes indiens et indigènes au Champa*, Hanoi, 1934; trans. I. W. Mabbett, and edited by Mabbett and D. P. Chandler as *India Seen From the East*, Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, no. 3, Clayton, 1975.

[21] Van Leur's thesis was published in 1934 under the title *Eenige beschouwingen betreffende den ouden Aziatischen handel* (Some Observations concerning Early Asian Trade). An English translation, 'On Early Asian Trade', was published, together with some of his other writings, in 1955 in a volume entitled *Indonesian Trade and Society*, The Hague and Bandung.

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main form of an older indigenous culture continued to exist.[22] Van Leur rejected, first of all, hypotheses of Indian colonization and of cultural influence carried by trade, and advanced instead the idea of a deliberate Southeast Asian borrowing of ideas, artistic styles and modes of political organization as local polities of substance emerged. His view was based on arguments about the particular aspects of Indian culture that found a ready home in Southeast Asia and about the nature of early Asian trade which, according to some scholars, had been the bearer of that culture. In brief, he characterized Southeast Asian trade as a pre-capitalist, peddling trade which, by its nature, could not have been the means of transmitting those elements of Indian culture that were absorbed into the local scene. These were aspects of high culture—art, literature, ideas of power, sovereignty and kingship—and must therefore have been brought by brahmins, not by petty traders. Indian influence was a court matter and the process, in consequence, could only have been one of deliberate borrowing by Southeast Asian rulers seeking ideas, rituals and organization, not an example of general cultural diffusion. Second, the view that foreign influences did not transform indigenous culture but were a thin and flaking glaze imposed on it, followed from the idea of local initiative. The form of van Leur's analysis became the subject of renewed discussion after the publication of an English translation of his thesis in 1955.

F. D. K. Bosch's argument, advanced in a lecture at Leiden in 1946 which brought together the fruits of his pre-war work,[23] supported van Leur's general view. But whereas van Leur based his case to a considerable extent upon a conceptual analysis of Southeast Asian trade, Bosch had an eye to specific evidence. This included the absence of references to Indian conquest in any inscriptions; the character of linguistic borrowings; and the fact that signs of Indian influence were strongest in inland kingdoms, not coastal ones, as might have been expected if culture had been carried by commerce.

In spite of the growing conviction carried by these arguments, the idea of Greater India had considerable staying power and was reaffirmed in the synthesizing work of Cœdès in 1944 (his term was 'l'Inde extérieure'). His ideas about how Indian influence was conveyed were, however, not so very different from those of van Leur. He saw Indian influence as manifested not through conquest or colonization, but initially through trade; this laid the foundations for the subsequent transmission of the higher culture associated with the development of indigenous kingdoms able and ready to receive, or to take an initiative in acquiring, Indian conceptions of royalty, the sacred language of Sanskrit and the prescriptions of Hinduism.

The debate had many dimensions: the mechanics of transmission with which we have been concerned, the peculiar blend of Buddhism and Hinduism to be found in Southeast Asia, the question of passive acceptance as against active borrowing, of borrowed forms and local genius,[24]

[22] *Indonesian Trade and Society*, 95.

[23] Subsequently published as 'The Problem of the Hindu Colonization of Indonesia' in his *Selected Studies in Indian Archaeology*, The Hague, 1961.

[24] A notion later used by H. G. Quaritch Wales in his *The Making of Greater India*, London, 1951.

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and these themes continued to be the subject of later argument. So did the more general issue: that of the 'autonomy' of Southeast Asian history. How is one, in the light of the available evidence, to judge the shaping forces of Southeast Asian culture? Is it indeed a matter of evidence? Or is it perhaps a matter of choice of perspective and framework and point of view? Do contending analyses contradict each other or do they present complementary points of view? In the post-war period, a new generation of scholars were to be less concerned with the details of the evidence than were their predecessors of the 1920s and 1930s, and more with the ways in which the process might be described.

The Indianization debate was so extensive because of the inconclusive nature of the evidence. China's impact on Southeast Asia was less a matter of controversy, perhaps because the record is established more clearly. That influence was felt directly through almost a thousand years of Chinese rule in Vietnam, but it had its effect beyond that. Chinese trade was carried on throughout the region as a whole, and Chinese political dealings with Southeast Asian kingdoms extended as far afield as the Indonesian archipelago. The fact that Chinese sources provide evidence of trading relations and of the receipt by China of tribute missions again means that a good deal of early Southeast Asian history is seen through Chinese eyes.

The penetration of Islam into the Malay peninsula and the archipelago from perhaps about the ninth century provided a further powerful external influence. Controversies about the coming of Islam, however, belong rather to the post-war period of Southeast Asian historiography.

For the period after 1500 the use of European sources has perhaps had an even more dramatic effect on the perspectives of historians. With the establishment of European trade monopolies and of an Asia-wide commercial network, followed by the acquisition of territory and the formation of directly ruled colonial dependencies, it seemed that Southeast Asian history had lost its autonomy. And colonial history, almost by its nature, was necessarily Eurocentric. Even if an attempt were made to read European sources 'against the grain' in an effort to recapture a Southeast Asian perspective, the issues they presented and the categories they used were inevitably those of the invader and not necessarily appropriate to the experiences of the region. Van Leur's analysis was relevant here, too, and one can hardly avoid quoting his famous remark, made with reference to Indonesian history, that 'with the arrival of ships from western Europe, the point of view is turned a hundred and eighty degrees and from then on the Indies are observed from the deck of the ship, the ramparts of the fortress, the high gallery of the trading house'.[25] In that sentence he caught the prevailing tendency of existing Southeast Asian historiography to interpret events after 1500 in terms of Western challenge and Southeast Asian response, and to imply his own contrary view that, at least until the nineteenth century, Europeans in Southeast Asia were fitting into Southeast Asia's existing political and economic patterns rather than making them over.

[25] Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*, 261.

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It was characteristic of the pre-war study of Southeast Asia, then, to focus on the parts rather than the whole, and to see events as being shaped by external influences. A third feature of the pre-war study of Southeast Asia, both of the earlier and later periods, is that it was almost entirely the work of outside observers, European, Middle Eastern and Asian. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a number of indigenous Southeast Asian scholars emerged, but such individuals as R. Ng. Perbatjaraka and Hoesein Djajadiningrat in Netherlands India, U Tin in Burma, Tran Van Giap in Vietnam, and Prince Damrong in Thailand were themselves the products of Western education and were scholars in a modern international tradition.

Western students of Southeast Asia in the late nineteenth century were, of course, the latest in a long line of foreign observers of the region. Some of the earliest available information about Southeast Asia is in the form, not of local archaeological or epigraphic remains, but of written reports of travellers from elsewhere, whose accounts have served as sources for the later study of the trading patterns and the cultures of the area. Such accounts included those of the seventh-century Chinese traveller, I Ching (I Tsing), who is one of the sources for the existence of the kingdom of Śrīvijaya;[26] Marco Polo, who visited parts of Southeast Asia while at the Chinese imperial court and who returned to Europe by way of the Indonesian archipelago and the Malay peninsula in the late thirteenth century; Arab travellers such as Ibn Batuta in the early fourteenth century;[27] Pigafetta who accompanied Magellan;[28] the Portuguese, Tomé Pires, in the early sixteenth century;[29] John Jourdain, who visited India and the archipelago between 1608 and 1617;[30] and many others.

From the beginning of the sixteenth century, with the establishment of the Portuguese at Melaka (Malacca) and, later in the century, of the Spaniards at Manila, the period of European empire had begun—the 'Age of Vasco da Gama' as the Indian historian, K. M. Panikkar, has called it[31]—and reflective accounts of the societies and cultures they encountered become more abundant. A wide range of observers, such as Portuguese or Spanish missionaries, or those employed in the service of one or other of the European powers or engaged, sometimes, in the conduct of an official mission, produced significant works of reportage. Examples may be given almost at random. The Jesuit missionary, Alexander of Rhodes, published a history of Tonkin in 1651. Michael Symes, who represented the govern-

[26] See J. Takakusu, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as practised in India and the Malay Archipelago, 671–695 by I Tsing*, Oxford, 1896. See also W. P. Groeneveldt, 'Notes on the Malay Archipelago and Malacca, compiled from Chinese sources', *Verhandelingen v. h. Bataviaasch Genootschap*, 39 (1876).

[27] See S. Lee, trans., *The Travels of Ibn Batuta in Asia and Africa, 1324–25*, London, 1829. See also G. Ferrand, *Relations de Voyages et Textes Géographiques Arabes, Persans et Turcs relatives à l'Extrême-Orient du VIII au XVIII siècles*, Paris, 1913–14.

[28] Lord Stanley of Alderley, trans., *The First Voyage Round the World by Magellan*, translated from the account of Pigafetta and other contemporary writers, Hakluyt Society, First series, no. 52, 1874.

[29] See A. Cortesão, ed. and trans., *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, London, 1944.

[30] William Foster, ed., The *Journal of John Jourdain, 1608–1617*, Hakluyt Society, Second Series, vol. XVI, Cambridge, UK, 1905.

[31] *Asia and Western Dominance*, London, 1953.

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ment of India in two missions to Burma in 1795 and 1802 gave one of the first full accounts of the history, political system and society of that country in the published account of his first mission, *An Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava sent by the Governor-General of India in 1795*.[32] Thomas Stamford Raffles used his period as Lieutenant-Governor in Java between 1811 and 1816 to collect material for his *History of Java*.[33]

From the eighteenth century many European observers of Asia combined a philosophical interest in the exotic with a scientific temper. Asian and Pacific societies provided material for reflection on the nature of social evolution, perceived, sometimes, within the framework of contemporary romanticism. This coincided with the more general development of scientific enquiry and the establishment of divisions between emerging disciplines. Just as, in the observation of the natural world, botany, geology and geography began to establish themselves as distinct lines of enquiry, so one could perceive, in the study of other societies, the laying of the foundations of what were to become sociology and anthropology. In the nineteenth century such observations multiplied. Sir Arthur Phayre, who led a mission from the government of India in 1855 and subsequently became Chief Commissioner of British Burma, wrote the *History of Burma* (London, 1883), the first such work in English. Henry Yule, secretary to the 1855 mission, prepared the report of the mission and published Phayre's journal.[34] Francis Garnier's *Voyage d'Exploration en Indo-Chine* was an account of a journey up the Mekong under the command of Doudart de Lagrée, but it included what might be called philosophical observations on the customs observed and a vision of the Mekong as a way of entry to China.[35] Auguste Pavie, whose two missions to Luang Prabang between 1887 and 1892 helped to resist Siamese claims to part of Laos and to expand French control in Indochina, produced a massive account of his work.[36] These are but a few examples.

With the territorial expansion of the European powers and the rounding out of their colonial empires in the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a new class of colonial administrators emerged, many of whom engaged in the study of the societies in which they worked. For some this was an amateur interest, and the tradition of the scholarly amateur observer became a strong one. Many developed a high degree of professionalism and, as scholar administrators, they pioneered the archaeological, linguistic and historical study of Southeast Asia. Winstedt, Swettenham, Braddell and Wilkinson in Malaya, and Furnivall in Burma were distinguished examples. In the Netherlands Indies there emerged, at the end of the nineteenth century, a direct official interest in the study and

[32] London, 1800. For documents relating to his second mission, and for a defence of Symes' role, see D. G. E. Hall, ed., *Michael Symes: Journal of his Second Embassy to the Court of Ava in 1802*, London, 1955.

[33] London, 1817; published in facsimile by Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1965.

[34] Hugh Tinker, ed., facsimile edn of Sir Henry Yule, *Narrative of the Mission to the Court of Ava in 1855*, Kuala Lumpur, 1968.

[35] *Voyage d'Exploration en Indo-Chine effectué pendant les années 1866, 1867 et 1868*, Paris, 1873, and the unofficial posthumous account published by Garnier's brother Leon, 1885. See also M. E. Osborne, *River Road to China: The Mekong River Expedition, 1866–73*, New York, 1975.

[36] *Mission Pavie*, Paris, 1898–1904.

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preservation of antiquities, and scholars with a background in philology, Sanskrit and Indology were appointed to appropriate positions. Brandes was Government Philologist, Krom was President of the Archaeological Commission established in 1901 and, from 1913, head of the Archaeological Service which replaced it. Snouck Hurgronje was adviser to the government on Islamic affairs. But the amateur tradition was represented there also, for example, in G. P. Rouffaer whose extensive work earned a major tribute from Krom.[37] And after the introduction of the requirement that recruits to the colonial service receive an appropriate linguistic and cultural training, many officials had a more thorough preparation for extending that kind of interest in the field. There were significant differences in the kind of Indological training provided. The University of Leiden placed its emphasis on language, literature and sociology, while Utrecht was more interested in legal studies and in the nature, in particular, of customary law in Indonesian societies. These different emphases had certain policy implications. In practice the former emphasis became associated with reforming tendencies within the bureaucracy. There was a Leiden influence in the so-called Ethical Policy of 1900 which emphasized the responsibility of the metropolitan government to promote the welfare of its colonial subjects and which believed, too optimistically, in the possibility of effecting modernization and desirable social change by benign government action. The Utrecht approach, by contrast, tended to emphasize the social inertia of traditional social orders, the damage that could follow contact with the West, and the importance of shielding vulnerable societies from the worst effects of change.

Professional and amateur interests were supported by the growth of learned societies and their establishment of scholarly journals. In 1851 the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië (Royal Institute for Linguistics, Geography and Culture of the Netherlands Indies) was established at The Hague and its journal, the *Bijdragen* was, as it continues to be, a forum for the publication of scholarly work and debate. In the Indies the Batavia Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen (Batavian Society for Arts and Sciences), founded in 1788, provided a centre for scholars, officials and others with an interest in, amongst other things, the history and cultures of the Indies. Its *Verhandelingen* was launched in 1779 and its *Tijdschrift* in 1853. A similar highly significant role was played by a local organization in the Straits Settlements. In 1877 a Straits Asiatic Society was formed and within months it had arranged its affiliation with the Royal Asiatic Society (founded in 1826) and become the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. In 1923 it was converted to the Malayan Branch and, in due course, after the formation of Malaysia, it became the Malaysian Branch (1964). Its distinguished journal went through similar metamorphoses.[38] The Burma Research Society and its journal (*Journal of the Burma Research Society*, 1911), the bulletin of the London School of Oriental Studies, later the School of Oriental and African

[37] 'Herdenking van Dr G. P. Rouffaer', BKI, 84 (1928).

[38] See the centenary volume of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Reprint Series, no. 4, 1977.

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Studies (1917), and the Siam Society and its journal (*Journal of the Siam Society*, 1904) provided further support for scholarly study and publication. Comparable roles were performed for French scholarship by the Societé Asiatique in Paris and the École Française d'Extrême-Orient in Indochina and their respective journals, *Journal Asiatique* (1822) and the *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* (1901).

The picture of Southeast Asia that had emerged from the work of these individuals, organizations and societies before World War II was clear enough in its main outlines, though highly debatable in its details. It was a picture of ethnic and cultural diversity, but some common patterns were also perceived. A broad distinction was made between societies based on intensive wet-rice cultivation, to be found in river valleys and on volcanic plains, and those in upland areas engaged in shifting slash-and-burn methods of agriculture. These societies participated to varying degrees in an extensive international trade, extending round the coasts of Asia from China to the Middle East. The picture was one of pockets of dense population where the economy allowed it, and of complex civilizations centred, in the so-called Indianized areas, on royal cities rather than on a perception of firm territorial boundaries. Indeed for the pre-colonial period it was seen as more appropriate to think of political centres rather than of states or kingdoms. Capitals were centres of the realm, reflective of a cosmic order, and shifted as dynasties rose and fell. Visible also were the influences of foreign religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Theravāda and Mahāyāna, Confucianism, Islam and Christianity. Efforts were made to impose some sort of order on this diversity by classifying it in terms of dominant religious traditions—Confucian Southeast Asia (Vietnam), Theravāda Buddhist Southeast Asia (Burma, Thailand, Cambodiá), Muslim Southeast Asia (Malaya and Indonesia), Christian Southeast Asia (the Philippines)—rather than in ethnic terms, such as Thai, Burman, Mon, Malay, Khmer, etc., or in terms of patterns or dominant cultures as shaped by outside influences, such as Sinicized Southeast Asia, Hispanized Southeast Asia, Indianized Southeast Asia. The main difference between these attempts to group defining characteristics is that a cultural classification might see Indonesia as part of Indianized Southeast Asia, and link it with the Buddhist countries rather than with Malaya as part of Islamic Southeast Asia. For Cœdès, for instance, the features of Indonesia which justified such a linking were far more important than were religious links. As he said in the concluding sentence of *Les États Hindouisés*, it is 'the imprint of the Indian genius which gives the countries studied in this volume a family likeness and produces a clear contrast between these countries and the lands that have been civilized by China'.[39] And the whole is ultimately subjected to, and transformed by, the power of expanding Europe.

These perceptions were reflected in the conventional periodizations of Southeast Asian history: prehistory, Indian influence from, say, the fifth century CE to the thirteenth century, followed in the Malay peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago by the penetration of Islam and, in due course,

[39] Cœdès, ed. Vella, *Indianized States*, 256.

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by the impact of Europe from the sixteenth century. In the works of colonial historians the effects of European empire were seen as so profound, at least by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth—restructuring the economies of Southeast Asia, stimulating enormous social changes, establishing modern political systems, and bringing order and unity to the individual parts of the region—that they constituted a fundamental break in the continuity of Southeast Asian history.

It was a neat picture and, no doubt, it had its patronizing elements. The scholar administrators of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries belonged to a broad orientalist tradition which tended to see other cultures as objects of study—and perhaps as inferior objects. Some, who became deeply attached to the societies in which they worked, were attracted by the romanticism of the exotic. Others displayed a paternalistic conviction that their duty was to achieve the uplift of those they had come to rule. Even when scholarly study was based on respect for the local society rather than on a sense of superiority, there was likely to be an unquestioned assumption that the ultimate and inevitable outcome would be the transformation of that society by Western civilization. (There was, perhaps, a more open-minded acceptance of the patterns and values of other cultures on the part of eighteenth-century observers than on the part of their successors who belonged to the high imperialism of the late nineteenth century.)

This general outlook, and, in particular, a periodization leading up to the imperial present, served the interests of empire, and, in spite of the emergence of nationalist movements in some colonial dependencies, there seemed no reason why the processes set in motion by European rule should not continue indefinitely. Different powers had different views about the ultimate goals to be pursued in colonial policy. Self-government was at least the professed goal of Britain in Malaya and Burma, though, in the former case at least, it was not seen as likely to be an early outcome. In the Philippines the United States, having succeeded Spain after the war of 1898, did envisage a specific transition to independence. In the Indies the Dutch spoke of a planned development of Indies society and, again in an indefinite future, a degree of autonomy for the colony within an as yet undefined relationship with the Netherlands. The future 'East Indian Society' would have a place for a permanent European component. The French, pursuing their 'mission civilisatrice' (civilizing mission), looked to self-government of a different kind: the incorporation of the dependencies, in due course, within the framework of metropolitan France. Colonial nationalism did not appear to be inconsistent with these various perspectives for it, too, was part of the progressive forces perceived by colonial historians. Its élite leadership was itself a product of the modernizing process that imperialism had set in motion.

The basis of this way of looking at Southeast Asia was effectively destroyed between 1942 and 1945, and scholars after the war came to the study of the region in an entirely different setting from that of the past. They had different expectations, different preoccupations and found dif-

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ferent answers to different questions. And they were present in much greater numbers than before.

SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES SINCE WORLD WAR II

The tremendous expansion of Southeast Asian studies in the post-war years was hardly a surprising phenomenon. The Japanese occupation of most of the region had swept away the apparatus of colonial rule, and rendered impossible its simple restoration when the war was over. The struggles of new nations for independence, the attainment of that independence in the first instance by the Philippines, Burma and Indonesia and in due course by Malaya, the intensification of nationalist struggle in the French dependencies of Indochina, and changes in the surrounding areas of Asia—the establishment of India and Pakistan and, in 1949, the victory of the Chinese Communist Party—combined to evoke a concentrated study of the region in the West and to transform what it was that was being studied. The same developments stimulated the study of their history by the new nations of Southeast Asia themselves.

A mixture of imperatives was present. The emerging republics of the region required, as part of the creation of their identity, new perceptions of their past, perceptions going back beyond the intrusion of the Western powers and finding earlier roots in older pattens of culture and polity. For observers from outside Southeast Asia there were issues of policy which made a focus on the region not just a matter of scholarly investigation but a matter of practical urgency, arising from the changed distribution of power in the area. For the major powers these included what might be called Cold War issues. Southeast Asia was perceived in a global context. Political affiliations and questions of economic development, modernization and growth interlocked as the powers adjusted to the turbulence of what had appeared, in the past, to be a stable area, firmly under the benevolent rule of Western Europe and America. The Korean War and, in due course, the long-drawn-out trauma of Vietnam, accentuated the concern of Western students of Asia. The result was a massive expansion—one might almost say an explosion—of Asian studies in general, and Southeast Asian studies in particular, in the Western world.

The effect was apparent both in the expansion of institutional arrangements for the study of Asia and in changes in approach and in methods of study. In some cases these took the form of 'area studies' in which the methods of a variety of social sciences—sociology, anthropology, political science, economics—together with history, literature and philosophy, were brought together for the study of a defined area. In other cases the disciplines were preserved as providing distinctive methods of understanding. With differing emphases and styles of organization, a variety of programmes was developed in America, Canada, Britain, the Netherlands, and the Soviet Union; in Australia and New Zealand, which felt themselves to be in an exposed position on the edge of the region; and also in new or expanding universities in the countries of Southeast Asia itself.

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Space does not allow a full catalogue, but some examples should be mentioned. In the West the United States was the powerhouse of the expansion and change of direction. Cornell University's Southeast Asia Program co-ordinated the study of the region at undergraduate and graduate levels, and its Modern Indonesia Project, supported by Rockefeller funds, launched a sustained research and publications programme. On a more modest scale Yale also developed a Southeast Asian emphasis and other universities, amongst them Berkeley, Michigan, Northern Illinois, Ohio, Washington, Wisconsin, followed suit. In Canada, the Department of Asian Studies in the University of British Columbia cast its net more widely and placed most emphasis on China and Japan, but Southeast Asia was included also. In Britain the London School of Oriental and African Studies (originally founded in 1917 as the School of Oriental Studies) expanded its activities; and after a committee of enquiry, appointed by the University Grants Committee, and chaired by Sir William Hayter, several new institutional initiatives were taken in order to strengthen Asian studies and to shift the emphasis from a traditional orientalist approach, concentrating on classical literature and philosophy, to a study of modern problems. St Antony's College, a new Oxford foundation, gave a special place to the graduate study of Asia. The University of Sussex established a School of African and Asian Studies, and its Institute of Development Studies (1966) gave some attention to Asia. For Southeast Asia the Centre of South-East Asian Studies at Hull and, later, the Board of Southeast Asian Studies at Kent were examples. In Australia, the establishment of the Research School of Pacific Studies, and later the Faculty of Asian Studies, at the Australian National University, of departments of Indonesian Studies at the Universities of Sydney and Melbourne, of the Centre of Southeast Asian Studies at Monash and the School of Modern Asian Studies at Griffith, and the placing of similar emphases at the University of Western Australia and at Flinders, reflected the same kind of interest.

At the same time Asian countries expanded the Southeast Asian emphases of existing universities—in the Ateneo de Manila, in Chulalongkorn and Thammasat University in Bangkok, for example—and founded new universities—Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, the University of Singapore and others. In all of these, local circumstances and national interest dictated the placing of a Southeast Asian emphasis in undergraduate offerings and graduate programmes in the humanities and social sciences. The history of individual nations rather than of the region as a whole normally formed the main focus, but this was not always the case. The foundation in Singapore in 1968 of an Institute of Southeast Asian Studies represented an attempt to break the pattern. Set up by the government of Singapore as a research body, the institute had, amongst its other goals, the idea of giving fellowships to Southeast Asian scholars to enable them to study countries other than their own. In Japan a Southeast Asian focus was developed in, amongst other places, Waseda University in Tokyo and in Kyoto's Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, founded in 1963.

The institutional expansion was accompanied by the rejuvenation of old

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scholarly societies, the formation of new ones and the development of new avenues of publication. Earlier associations and their journals remained—the Koninklijk Instituut and its *Bijdragen*, the École Française and its bulletin, the Siam Society and the Malayan branch of the Royal Asiatic Society and their journals. Others changed their character. In America the Far Eastern Association transformed itself into the Association for Asian Studies in 1956, and its journal, the *Far Eastern Quarterly*, which had been launched in 1941, became the *Journal of Asian Studies*. This change meant both a shift from a Eurocentric perception of the 'Far East' and a widening of geographical scope to include the whole of Asia. In the Netherlands the journal *Indonesië*, launched in 1947 by the van Hoeve publishing house, was an important new organ of analysis, though it was to last for only ten years. The first issue of *Indonesia*, published by the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project in 1966, noted that Indonesian specialists had tended to confine themselves too narrowly within their respective disciplines, and aimed to publish articles covering a wide range of subject matter and methods of approach. It has continued to offer an avenue for innovative and provocative work, designed to 'stir discussion and criticism'. In Singapore the *Journal of Southeast Asian History* was launched in 1960. In 1969 it decided to widen its scope and changed its name to the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*. *Archipel*, published from 1977 under the patronage of the École Pratique dés Hautes-Études in Paris, provided a forum for the study of island Southeast Asia. And a variety of publication series also served the growing market: the Cornell Southeast Asia Program's Data Paper series, the Interim Report Series and the Monograph Series of the same university's Modern Indonesia Project, Yale's Monograph Series, Ohio's Centre for International Studies Series, the Monograph Series of Monash University, the Southeast Asia Publications Series of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, and many others.

While it would be true to say that the greater part of the new effort was directed to the study of the contemporary scene, the study of Southeast Asia's past also had its place in the radically altered environment.

Between 1956 and 1958 a series of seminars was held at the London School of Oriental and African Studies to survey the current state of historical writing about Southeast Asia. The seminars attempted an evaluation of what had been done in the pre-war years and in the first dozen years after the war, noticed some of the changes that were taking place, and posed questions for the future. Attention was drawn to a variety of special problems facing historians of Southeast Asia: the paucity and difficulty of the sources for the early history of the region; the multiplicity of indigenous languages, classical and vernacular, and of European languages also; the tendency of earlier scholars to concentrate on parts of the region without being fully aware of what was going on in other parts; and changes in perspective as new nations came into being.

It is interesting, thirty and more years later, to look back at the papers resulting from these seminars.[40] It would be fair to judge the outlook of the participants as compounded of a mixture of humility and confidence. They

[40] D. G. E. Hall, ed., *Historians of South-East Asia*, London, 1961.

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were humble in the face of the sheer difficulty of the task, and were aware of the danger of bias of various kinds, whether arising from the Eurocentric perspectives of European historians in the past or from the Southeast Asian perspectives of new nationalist historians. But bias was seen in comparatively simple terms, as something that, with care and goodwill, could be corrected or avoided. Hence the ground for confidence. Was it possible, asked the editor of the collected papers, 'to write a real history of South-East Asia before the coming of the European?' (p. 7). The expectation appeared to be that it was possible. The problem here, however, was one of sources and whether they were such as to enable satisfactory knowledge to be achieved: a knowledge comparable, say, to that available for Greece and Rome. What was not questioned, but would certainly be questioned by historians of a later generation, was the very notion of a 'real history', a notion reminiscent of the confidence of Acton introducing the first *Cambridge Modern History*. In the same vein D. G. E. Hall, as convenor of the seminars, referred to a 'new enlightenment' in the approach of Western scholars to the study of the history of the region, revealed in a readiness to see Southeast Asia from a Southeast Asian centre rather than from outside, and in the search for an appropriate nomenclature and for 'a periodization free from colonial implications' (p. 9). Hall referred also to the idea of scientific enquiry by which the 'real' history would be achieved. Indeed Southeast Asia's awareness of its own past and its 'first real notions of history' were largely the product of its contact with the scientific tradition of the West (p. 2). The historians who gathered in London at that time, though cautious about the problems of dealing with Southeast Asia's past, were certainly not plagued to any great extent by fundamental doubts about their craft.

Against that background one might judge post-war historical scholarship, as it continued after the date of the London seminar, as revealing, at first, a considerable confidence in the historical enterprise—a confidence very much in line with that of the historians' social-science colleagues in their onslaught on the problems of the modern world—but with a growing awareness of the sheer difficulty of securing any genuine understanding of other cultures and other times. Such an attitude was not confined to the study of Southeast Asian history. It is possible to detect, in the profession of history in general in the latter part of the twentieth century, a sense of uncertainty and a recognition of the precarious nature of historical knowledge: a reflection, no doubt, of the scepticism of the age.

The initial mood of historians of Southeast Asia in the post-war years was certainly one of confidence, a confidence which must be seen against the background of the expansion of Southeast Asian studies in general to which reference has been made. That expansion, it was noted, involved changes in method as well as in focus. Since much of the motivation came from urgent issues of policy, a great deal of the effort was concentrated at first on the study of current political and economic issues: questions of political trends and political stability, the nature of emerging political systems, the conflict of ideologies, questions of economic development and distribution. To a great extent the methods used were, in con-

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sequence, those of the social sciences: economics, political science, sociology and anthropology. These were the disciplinary approaches that were regarded as likely to provide an understanding of the modern Southeast Asian world.

The same general outlook was to be found amongst historians. In the post-war period they were affected both by the methodological themes of their social-science colleagues and by the concern with the immediate problems of the post-war scene. On the methodological front they learned more and more to draw on the methods and the findings of neighbouring disciplines. In a seminal article of the early 1960s, H. J. Benda argued vigorously that historians must be social scientists as well, and should address themselves to the structure of Southeast Asian history as distinct from 'the mere charting of dynastic cycles or the chronicling of wars, as ends in themselves'.[41] He sought to establish a periodization based not merely on political developments but on major structural changes in the social, economic and political relationships of the region. In similar vein, W. F. Wertheim called on historians to apply the techniques of sociology in studying Southeast Asian history.[42] And J. H. Romein urged historians of Southeast Asia to adopt a comparative approach as a means of developing a more systematically scientific method and of coming to grips with such processes as nationalism, revolution and social change in Asian societies.[43] The fact that the countries of Southeast Asia had shared a broadly common experience of Western imperialism over the previous couple of centuries was, in itself, a stimulus to the development of comparative enquiries. It must be conceded that, in spite of a growing disposition to see Southeast Asia as a region, much of the post-war work in history and the social sciences continued to be directed to individual countries rather than to the region as a whole. However, most scholars were aware of comparative considerations even when focusing on one area, and that awareness did give substance to the idea of Southeast Asian history.

The emphasis on the need for historians to draw upon the techniques of neighbouring disciplines went, naturally enough, with a focus on recent history. Such a focus was, indeed, characteristic of a general approach to Southeast Asian history at least in the first two decades of the post-war period. Historians shared the general concern with the major political and international issues of the day and it was not unusual for them to direct their enquiries to the immediate background of the contemporary scene, to the point where the boundaries between disciplines, especially those between politics and history, tended to become blurred.[44] The work of

[41] 'The Structure of Southeast Asian History: Some Preliminary Observations', in JSEAH, 3 (1962), reprinted in *Continuity and Change in Southeast Asia: Collected Journal Articles of Harry J. Benda*, Yale University Southeast Asian Studies Monograph Series, No. 18, New Haven, 1972.

[42] 'The Sociological Approach', in Soedjatmoko, Mohammad Ali, G. J. Resink and G. McT. Kahin eds, *An Introduction to Indonesian Historiography*, Ithaca, 1965, 340ff.

[43] 'The Significance of the Comparative Approach in Southeast Asian Historiography', ibid., 380ff.

[44] For a discussion of these issues J. D. Legge, 'Southeast Asian History and the Social Sciences', in C. D. Cowan and O. W. Wolters, eds, *Southeast Asian History and Historiography: Essays Presented to D. G. E. Hall*, Ithaca and London, 1976.

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George McT. Kahin, a political scientist with historical training, provided an example of a dominant style. Kahin carried out fieldwork in Indonesia in 1948 and 1949, formed close links with leading figures of the young republic, and was a first-hand observer of events as they unfolded during the closing months of the struggle for independence. This privileged position gave a sharpness and an immediacy to his study of the Revolution, but he added depth and analytical coherence by placing it in an historical context of Dutch rule, the rise of a nationalist movement and the impact of the Japanese Occupation.[45]

This became a familiar pattern. John F. Cady's *A History of Modern Burma* (Ithaca, 1958) devoted over half of its length to pre-war history. F. N. Trager's *Burma from Kingdom to Republic* (London, 1966) was subtitled 'a historical and political analysis', and dealt with British rule as the background to independence. The Cornell tradition of linking politics and history received further expression in a major textbook, *Government and Politics of Southeast Asia*, the seven authors of which wrote to a prescribed pattern in which a substantial historical chapter preceded an examination of the contemporary setting and the political processes of the individual countries of Southeast Asia.[46]

Given this style, it was sometimes difficult not only to distinguish historical writing from that of political scientists (such works, for example as J. H. Brimmell's examination of Southeast Asian communism or Ellen J. Hammer's account of the initial stages of the Indochina conflict),[47] but to distinguish either from the enormous body of works of serious reportage of, and comment on, the contemporary scene. One might mention, as distinguished examples of the latter, Bernard Fall's *Street Without Joy: Indochina at War, 1946–1954* (Harrisburg, 1961) or, from a decade later, Frances FitzGerald's *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* (Boston, 1972). Some of the writings on the borders of history, politics and the other social sciences were more concerned than others to develop, self-consciously, a conceptual analytical framework and this served to mark them off from narrative accounts. Herbert Feith, a political scientist, placed his political history of the first ten years of the Republic of Indonesia within a framework of contrasting leadership styles—solidarity-makers and administrators—and contrasting political cultures—Javanese aristocratic and Islamic entrepreneurial—as a means of explaining the instability of successive governments during the 1950s.[48] A specifically sociological approach was adopted by G. W. Skinner in his history of Chinese society in Thailand.[49] And other conceptual tools lay to hand: Fred Riggs' distinction between 'diffused', 'prismatic' and 'diffracted' societies;[50] Lucian Pye's exploration of personality traits in shaping leadership modes in transitional societies;[51] Karl Deutsch's attempt to define the

[45] *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, Ithaca, 1952.
[46] George McT. Kahin, ed., Ithaca, 1959.
[47] Brimmell, *Communism in South-East Asia*, London, 1959; Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina, 1940–1955*, Stanford, 1955.
[48] *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*, Ithaca, 1962.
[49] *Chinese Society in Thailand: an Analytical History*, Ithaca, 1957.
[50] *Administration and Developing Countries: The Theory of Prismatic Society*, Boston, 1964.
[51] *Politics, Personality and Nation Building: Burma's Search for Identity*, New Haven, 1962.

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essential characteristics of nationalism;[52] John Kautsky's consideration of class formation;[53] and Clifford Geertz's notions of primordial loyalties, cultural 'streams' and agricultural involution.[54]

Not all historians were concerned with the contemporary scene and its immediate background, though most of those who directed their enquiries to earlier periods still tended to remain within the period of European contact with Southeast Asia. Walter Vella, A. L. Moffat and David Wyatt explored the successive reigns of Rama III, Mongkut and Chulalongkorn.[55] An historian, M. A. P. Meilink-Roelofsz, and an economic historian, Kristof Glamann, brought different tools to the study of trade in the Indonesian archipelago.[56] Wong Lin Ken surveyed the development of the Malayan tin industry and later R. E. Elson subjected the cultivation system in nineteenth-century Java to a new and close scrutiny.[57] Imperial history, in the sense of a focus on the motives and policies of the metropolitan powers, continued to be studied in the post-war period, especially the history of Britain in Malaya. Nicholas Tarling examined the circumstances surrounding the British interest in the Malay world in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[58] Mary Turnbull traced the evolution of British policy in the Straits Settlements.[59] C. N. Parkinson and C. D. Cowan considered, from different angles, the reasons lying behind the British 'forward movement' in Malaya.[60] And a number of studies were devoted to the methods and character of British administration and to the economic history of the peninsula.[61]

Increasingly, historians writing of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were as ready to draw on the methods and conceptual schemes of neighbouring social sciences as were their colleagues who focused on more recent developments. Edgar Wickberg brought the skills of an

[52] *Nationalism and Social Communication*, New York, 1953.

[53] *Political Change in Underdeveloped Countries: Nationalism and Communism*, New York, 1963.

[54] *The Religion of Java*, Glencoe, 1962; *Agricultural Involution*, Berkeley, 1963; *Peddlers and Princes: Social Change and Modernization in Two Indonesian Towns*, Chicago, 1963; and *The Social History of an Indonesian Town*, Cambridge, Mass., 1965.

[55] e.g., Vella, *Siam Under Rama III*, New York, 1957; Moffat, *Mongkut, the King of Siam*, Ithaca, 1961; Wyatt, *The Politics of Reform in Thailand: Education in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn*, New Haven, 1969.

[56] Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630*, The Hague, 1962; Glamann, *Dutch–Asiatic Trade, 1620–1740*, Copenhagen and The Hague, 1958. C. R. Boxer's two volumes, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600–1800*, London, 1965, and *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415–1825*, London, 1969, though magisterial works of maritime history, were more conventional in approach and style.

[57] Wong Lin Ken, *The Malayan Tin Industry to 1914*, Tucson, 1965; Elson, *Javanese Peasants and the Colonial Sugar Industry: Impact and Change in an East Java Residency, 1830–1940*, Singapore, 1984.

[58] *British Policy in the Malay Peninsula and the Archipelago, 1824–1871*, Singapore, 1957; *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Malay World, 1780–1824*, St Lucia, Qld, and Cambridge, UK, 1962; and *Piracy and Politics in the Malay World*, Melbourne and Singapore, 1963.

[59] *The Straits Settlements, 1826–67: Indian Presidency to Crown Colony*, London, 1972.

[60] Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya, 1867–77*, Singapore, 1960; Cowan, *Nineteenth-Century Malaya: The Origins of British Political Control*, London, 1961.

[61] E. Sadka, *The Protected Malay States, 1874–1895*, Kuala Lumpur, 1968; Eunice Thio, *British Policy in the Malay Peninsula, 1880–1910*, Singapore, 1969; Khoo Kay Kim, *The Western Malay States, 1850–1873*, Kuala Lumpur, 1972; G. C. Allen and Audrey Donnithorne, *Western Enterprise in Indonesia and Malaya*, London, 1957; J. Norman Parmer, *Colonial Labor Policy and Administration: A History of Labor in the Rubber Plantation Industry in Malaya*, New York, 1960.

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economic and social historian to his study of the Chinese community in the Philippines in the last fifty years of Spanish rule, observing its internal structure and consciousness and its relations with the surrounding society in a period of rapid economic and social change.[62] Daniel Doeppers' study of Manila between 1900 and the outbreak of World War II—a study in social mobility—focused on the city as 'a set of employment structures and as a stratified society', and buttressed its findings by close statistical analysis.[63] The Indonesian historian, Sartono Kartodirdjo, endeavoured to construct a taxonomy to distinguish between various categories of peasant unrest in Java.[64] In an exercise in economic geography, Michael Adas sought to provide a new framework of analysis of British rule in Burma by focusing on the 'Burma Delta'. This enabled him to develop Furnivall's notion of a plural society and, by using a demographic approach based on information drawn from the settlement reports of the Revenue Department, to integrate the role of the peasantry with that of traditional rulers, British administrators and a nationalist élite from the mid-nineteenth century.[65] Many other examples could be cited. The contributors to the book edited by A. W. McCoy and E. de Jesus, *Philippines Social History: Global Trade and Local Transformations* (Quezon City and Sydney, 1982), took as their starting point the intensive work done on Philippines regional history over the previous two decades, and brought the techniques of economic history and sociology to their assessment of late colonial Philippines society. In Thailand, Jit Poumisak offered a class interpretation of what he saw as Thai feudalism.[66] And following the students' uprising of 1973 a new emphasis could be seen in Thai historical studies, an emphasis on socio-economic history led by such scholars as Chattip Nartsupha, Chai-anan Samudavanija and Nidhi Aeusrivongse, and directed, in different ways, to the study of the structure of pre-capitalist society and culture.[67]

The post-war concentration on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, taking place as it did within the context of a greatly expanded Asian studies 'industry', tended to overshadow the study of earlier periods, but did not entirely eclipse it. Early history continued to command the attention of distinguished scholars. Wang Gungwu's examination of early Chinese trading patterns in Southeast Asia, O. W. Wolters' study of early Indonesian commerce and of political rhythms in the Malay world in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the epigraphic work of J. G. de Casparis, and Paul Wheatley's construction of the historical geography of the Malay peninsula before 1500, may be given as examples.[68] More

[62] *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850–1898*, New Haven and London, 1965.
[63] *Manila, 1900–1914: Social Change in a Late Colonial Metropolis*, New Haven, 1984.
[64] *Protest Movements in Rural Java*, Singapore, 1973.
[65] *The Burma Delta: Economic Development and Social Change on an Asian Rice Frontier, 1852–1941*, Madison, 1974.
[66] *The Real Face of Thai Feudalism Today*, 1957, trans. Craig J. Reynolds in *Thai Radical Discourse: The Real Face of Thai Feudalism Today*, Ithaca, 1987.
[67] Craig J. Reynolds, 'Marxism in Thai Historical Studies', JAS, 43, 1 (1983).
[68] Wang Gungwu, 'The Nanhai Trade: A Study of the Early History of Chinese Trade in the South China Sea', JMBRAS, 31 (1958); Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce: A Study in the Origins of Srivijaya*, Ithaca, 1967, and *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History*, London, 1970; de Casparis, *Prasasti Indonesia*; Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, Kuala Lumpur, 1961.

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recently, the early history of the region has attracted a growing number of younger scholars, such as Michael Aung-Thwin (Pagan), Pierre-Yves Manguin (Śrīvijaya), Nidhi Aeusrivongse (Angkor), and K. W. Taylor and J. K. Whitmore (ninth- and tenth-century Vietnam).[69] Many of the recent advances made in the study of early history have been, in effect, archaeological in character.[70] Archaeological enquiry using modern techniques has also begun to transform views about the prehistory of the region. The archaeological services of the individual republics of Southeast Asia have played an increasingly significant part in these enquiries and have contributed to a rethinking of the conclusions of pre-war studies and to a clearer perception of cultural development taking place over some thousands of years and predating influences from outside the region.[71]

MAJOR THEMES IN POST-WAR STUDIES

Against the background of these general remarks about the methods of approach and the focus of historical writing after World War II, some of the main themes that attracted the attention of historians may be indicated.

One of the most important of these took up the thread of the pre-war debates about the nature and significance of external influences, Indian, Islamic and European, on Southeast Asian societies. The publication, in 1955, of the English translation of van Leur's doctoral thesis and other writings under the general title, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History* (The Hague and Bandung, 1955), captured the attention of historians. It revived the earlier debate but carried it in a somewhat different direction. Whereas the pre-war argument had focused largely on the processes of 'Indianization' and the extent to which it shaped, or was shaped by, local cultures, the new debate was conducted to a considerable degree at a more general and conceptual level. It was concerned with the notion of the 'autonomy' of Southeast Asian history.

The Indianization question as such was not, of course, ignored. A

[69] See articles by Michael Aung-Thwin, Nidhi Aeusrivongse, K. W. Taylor and J. K. Whitmore in Whitmore and K. R. Hall, eds, *Explorations in Early Southeast Asian History: The Origins of Southeast Asian Statecraft*, Ann Arbor, 1976; Pierre-Yves Manguin, 'Études Sumatranaises: I. Palembang et Sriwijaya: anciennes hypothèses, recherches nouvelles', BEFEO, 76 (1987); K. W. Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam*, Berkeley, 1983; and articles by a number of scholars in David Marr and A. C. Milner, eds, *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, Singapore and Canberra, 1986.

[70] See, e.g. Alastair Lamb, 'Takuapa: The Probable Site of a Pre-Malaccan Entrepôt in the Malay Peninsula' in J. Bastin and R. Roolvink eds, *Malayan and Indonesian Studies: Essays Presented to Sir Richard Winstedt*, Oxford, 1964; E. Edwards McKinnon, 'Kota Cina: Its Context and Meaning in the Trade of Southeast Asia in the Twelfth to Fourteenth Centuries', Ph.D. thesis, Cornell University, 1984, and McKinnon and A. C. Milner, 'A Letter from Sumatra: A visit to some early Sumatran historical sites', *Indonesia Circle*, 18 (1978); C. C. Macknight, *The Voyage to Marege*, Melbourne, 1976; J. N. Miksic, 'From Seri Vijaya to Melaka: Batu Tagak in Historical and Cultural Context', JMBRAS, 60, 2 (1987).

[71] For an account of post-war archaeological findings see R. B. Smith and W. Watson eds, *Early South East Asia: Essays in Archeology, History and Historical Geography*, London and New York, 1979. See also Peter Bellwood, *Man's Conquest of the Pacific: The Prehistory of Southeast Asia and Oceania*, New York, 1979, and *Prehistory of the Indo-Malaysian Archipelago*, Sydney, 1985.

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number of new contributions were made, notably by H. G. Quaritch Wales, Alastair Lamb, O. W. Wolters, I. W. Mabbett and others. Wolters, in his seminal work *Early Indonesian Commerce*, threw light on the nature of trade in the archipelago before the seventh century CE. He took as his point of departure Cœdès' rediscovery of Śrīvijaya.[72] Exactly where Śrīvijaya was based and what sort of a kingdom it was remained obscure, but Wolters attempted, through his notion of the 'favoured coast' of Sumatra, to show why the emergence of a maritime power in south Sumatra in the seventh century made sense. Though he was concerned only obliquely with the process of Indianization, it was an important part of his argument that 'the expansion of trade at that time was an indigenous and not an Indian achievement'.[73]

Wolters confronted the Indianization question more directly in a consideration of the processes by which Hindu influences were received in Cambodia. In an article of 1979 he substituted the notion of 'prowess' for that of descent and dynasty as a means of understanding political authority in seventh-century Cambodia, and proceeded to argue that prowess was able to make use of Hindu notions of authority. In this and other ways the Khmers were able to construe Hinduism in terms familiar to them within their own culture and to 'empathize' with it on the basis of an experience that was 'as much Khmer as "Hindu"'.[74] Elsewhere he introduced the idea of 'localization' to characterize the way in which external influences might be absorbed into the local scene and restated in a local idiom to the point where a local–external antithesis becomes irrelevant.[75]

The arguments about Indianization and the nature of the relevant evidence were brought together and surveyed convincingly by Mabbett, who argued that different categories had been confused by earlier participants in the argument.[76] Mabbett's contribution was to clarify the issues by sorting out the separate and distinct questions which are involved. These questions relate to the evolving patterns of Southeast Asian agriculture; the date at which wet-rice cultivation might have begun; the kind of political order which might have preceded the emergence of centralized kingdoms like Angkor; and the kind of interaction which might have developed between local custom and Sanskrit lore, not only in Southeast Asia but in India itself. Pointing out that the evidence was inconclusive, Mabbett proposed a distinction between arguments about the process by which Indian influence spread and those about the extent to which it could be said to have dominated local cultures, and he then proceeded to dissolve both types. After surveying the evidence presented by a wide range of scholars,[77] he pointed out that in fact no evidence exists about

[72] Cœdès, 'Le Royaume de Çrivijaya'.

[73] *Early Indonesian Commerce*, 247. Further discussion of the location of Śrīvijaya can be found in Bennet Bronson, 'The Archaeology of Sumatra and the Problem of Srivijaya', in Smith and Watson, eds, *Early Southeast Asia*, 406–26, and in Manguin, Études Sumatranaises'.

[74] 'Khmer "Hinduism" in the Seventh Century', Smith and Watson, 427.

[75] *History, Culture and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*, Singapore, 1984.

[76] 'The "Indianization" of Southeast Asia': I. Reflections on the Prehistoric Sources; II. Reflections on the Historical Sources, JSEAH, 8, 1 and 2 (1977).

[77] Amongst others, H. G. Quaritch Wales, H. A. Lamb, Paul Wheatley, W. G. Solheim II, R. D. Hill, L. Malleret, K. A. N. Sastri, K. C. Chang, B. Bronson.

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process. All we have is evidence in Chinese, epigraphic and archaeological sources, of Southeast Asian polities already showing signs of Indian influence. And with regard to the second type of question he concluded that to oppose Indian imperialism and local autonomy is to present a false dichotomy, given the complexity of local patterns; the fact that in any case there was not a single, homogeneous 'India'; and that, in India itself, 'Sanskritization' was uneven and patchy.

While the search for evidence of process and character, and the analysis and discussion of that evidence, continued, the main interest of modern historians was captured by other aspects of van Leur's writings.

There were two features of his overall argument which were of particular interest in the late 1950s and early 1960s. First of all was the method by which he argued his case. The greater part of the pre-war discussion was concerned with the interpretation of particular items of evidence of an Indian presence, or the lack of items of evidence of conquest and settlement and, as we have seen, those who saw Indianization as a positive shaping process regarded India-based commerce as an important element in the transmission of that influence. Van Leur, by contrast, developed his conclusions not by examining existing evidence in detail, or by presenting new evidence, but on the basis of definitions of different types of trade. His thesis, indeed, was essentially a methodological discussion. At the centre of his argument was a definition of capitalism, not in terms of accumulation, investment and profit, but, more narrowly, as 'modern capitalism'—in terms of mass production based on a free market, a financial system involving stock market exchange, and a free market for sales—none of which, of course, applied to early Asian commercial activity.[78] Asian trade, he pointed out, was based on handicraft industry and was financed not by a capitalist class but by rulers or aristocrats, investing in individual voyages. From this conceptual framework followed the further concept: that of a peddling trade. Though trade was carried out over vast distances its actual conduct was in the hands of small traders—pedlars—who carried the goods, exchanged them, and formed foreign enclaves in the port cities of Southeast Asia.

The final conclusion formed part of the same conceptual rearrangement. It was a logical step to his view that commerce could not have been central to the transmission of high cultural forms; that the influence was therefore likely to have been the result of borrowings of those features of Indian culture which were of use in the emerging kingdoms of the region; and that India was therefore not imposing itself on indigenous cultures.[79] Southeast Asia becomes, not a passive recipient of external influences, but the active agent in the process. The conceptual device reversed, at one stroke, the framework within which the question was discussed.

The second feature of the post-war debate followed closely from this method of analysis. By changing sharply the terms of the debate, van Leur directed attention away from details of evidence and towards the more general notion of autonomy. If Indian influence were to be seen as

[78] *Indonesian Trade and Society*, 17.
[79] ibid., 103.

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borrowed or absorbed, it allowed continuing independence and authority to local cultures which might otherwise be seen as subject to, or conquered by, external pressures.

If this argument could be applied to Indian influence and to the coming of Islam, might it not also be applied to the period of European penetration into the region? This question, which was especially the subject of discussion for a decade after 1955, had obvious value implications. A view of Southeast Asia as continuously 'in charge' of its own history appealed alike to nations concerned with the consolidation of their newly acquired independence and to outside observers who wished to think in terms of the autonomy of the region as an object of study.

Van Leur himself argued that European influence had indeed been overemphasized by earlier historians. He did so by using much the same conceptual tools as had supported his discussion of indigenous and selective borrowings of Indian culture. The Dutch East India Company in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was not unlike a merchant prince financing successive voyages, and its employees in the Indies were performing functions similar to those of the pedlars. To that extent it fitted the existing patterns of trade of the archipelago. Even as its power expanded and it was able to impose its own monopoly over the area, and acquired territorial footholds, it was still far short of being a sovereign ruler. Its relations with indigenous authorities, van Leur argued, were more like international relations than relations between ruler and subjects, a point later developed in detail by G. J. Resink.[80] At the very most it might be regarded as a paramount power, stronger than other individual polities but not entirely different from them in kind.

While van Leur's criticism of historians who looked at Southeast Asia through European eyes was readily accepted, and the idea of an Asia-centric history became a goal to be achieved by a sensitive approach to local cultures, his argument that the coming of the European made almost no difference, at least until the late eighteenth century, would seem an overstatement. The Dutch East India Company, to take the example that van Leur focused on, was an organization very different in size, in the scope of its operations and in power, from the pedlars whom he saw as the bearers of trade in the past. It was able to enforce its control over trade and, in due course, to acquire territorial influence as well. There is certainly much point in identifying those features of its activity which can be seen in terms of the earlier trade and in stressing elements of continuity with the pre-European period. But there is also point in drawing attention to elements of change and discontinuity. C. R. Boxer examined closely the impact of the Portuguese commercial system, and M. A. P. Meilink-Roelofsz saw considerable changes following from the intrusion of Portuguese and Dutch into the trade of the region. Even van Leur himself conceded that, by the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, the sheer power of the European intruders into Southeast

[80] 'Inlandsche Staten in den Oosterschen Archipel, 1873–1915', BKI, 116 (1960), translated as 'Native States of the Eastern Archipelago, 1873–1915', in Resink, *Indonesian History between the Myths*, The Hague, 1958.

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Asia was such as to create a watershed in Southeast Asian history. And, since much of the work of modern historians has been directed to the study of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the period of greatest Western impact, it has been difficult for historians, either from within the region or outside it, to avoid interpretations couched in terms of European challenge and Southeast Asian response.

Difficult, but perhaps not impossible. The issues of perspective and autonomy became, for a time, a major focus for discussion. In 1961 John Smail, in an influential article, indicated a variety of meanings which the idea of Eurocentrism could have.[81] It could refer to the angle of the historian's vision: was the history of the region to be seen from the point of view of the outside observer or of the indigenous people? Or it could reflect the preferences and values of the historians: whose side were they on, as it were, in their account of events? Third, it could refer to a judgment of historical significance: what were the decisive factors in shaping the course of history? The three meanings, of course, often went together. If the angle of vision was that of the European intruder (and there was always a danger of this, given that the historian's sources were often those created by the intruder), it was perhaps likely that the value judgments would support the role played by the European and that the European would be placed in the foreground of the analysis as the shaper of events. Smail argued that the thought-world of modern scientific inquiry—both in the natural sciences and the humanities—was now a universal thought-world, and all serious historians, whether Western or Eastern, worked within it. In these circumstances his own concern was with the moral viewpoints and the perspectives of historians. By perspectives he seems to have meant judgments about causal significance. He noted that a new generation of nationalist historians had, in effect, reversed the moral position of the old colonial historians, 'exchanging one systematic bias for another', while preserving a perspective which tended to see the European still as the effective agent of change. By contrast Smail's aim was to achieve a morally neutral viewpoint and an Asiacentric perspective, an aim which might be achieved, he believed, by adopting a sociological method. If one focused on fundamental cultural patterns, the actions of the colonial ruler were likely to appear, if not superficial and transitory, at least less important. Local cultures were resilient, resistant to change, and readily able to absorb stimuli from outside. And even when the European intrusion had seemed most obviously to have promoted change—in stimulating the emergence of new élites or of urban working classes, for example—that could still be seen as part of a local evolution. His conclusion was that the antithesis between Eurocentric and Asiacentric was a false one. The goal should be, not the writing of an Asiacentric history, but the writing of an 'autonomous' history.

A retrospective look at this discussion makes it seem clearer that the question of perspective is very much a function of the issues that interest the historian and of the ways in which central questions are posed. The

[81] 'On the Possibility of an Autonomous History of Modern Southeast Asia', JSEAH, 2, 2 (1961).

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motives and policies of metropolitan powers are a legitimate subject of enquiry and impose a different framework from that appropriate for studies of what happened in Southeast Asia during the period of European expansion. The debate, however, undoubtedly affected the way in which historians framed their questions. Even studies which continued to concentrate on the colonial period no longer saw it almost as a part of European history as their predecessors had tended to do. On the contrary, they reflected a deliberate attempt to achieve a shift of perspective. Milton Osborne, for example, attempted to see both sides of the colonial equation in dealing with French rule in Indochina.[82] So did David Marr, whose *Vietnamese Anticolonialism 1885–1925* (Berkeley, 1971) placed evolving Vietnamese political thought firmly in a local setting. Both drew on *quoc-ngu* (Vietnamese) as well as French sources. And in dealing with Thailand, the one country that avoided the fate of colonial rule, David Wyatt portrayed Chulalongkorn's educational reforms, not in terms of the initiative of a Westernized absolute monarch, but as a response to the West 'which flowed painfully but naturally out of Thai history, society and culture'.[83]

The coming of Islam to Southeast Asia, and its impact on the societies of the region, formed a further major theme of historians in the post-war period, though the discussion was conducted in different terms from those of the debate about Indianization and the autonomy of Southeast Asian history. Van Leur, of course, had extended his analysis of the nature of Indian influence, and the comparative superficiality of its impact, to cover the penetration of Islam, but he had done so more or less in passing and as a consequence of the methodological position he had adopted. The coming of Islam did not, in his eyes, constitute a new phase or period of Southeast Asian history. He argued that Muslim trade introduced no significant change in economic forms; and culturally he saw Islam as being received and absorbed, not imposed on those who were converted. In general, however, the arguments by which he supported these conclusions were less developed than those relating to Indianization; it was rather a matter of bringing it within his general conceptual framework than of presenting new evidence or revising the old.

There was no major challenge to that general picture in the 1950s and 1960s. Broadly, historians of Islam in Southeast Asia addressed themselves to three types of enquiry: to the diffusion points from which Islam reached the peninsula and archipelago; to the nature of its initial impact; and to the evolution of Islamic thought and organization in that environment.

The issues in the debate about the method of Muslim penetration were threefold: whether it was carried by traders from Gujerat in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; or whether an earlier source was to be found in South India; or whether Bengal was the principal point of origin. Amongst the participants in the discussion were G. E. Marrison and G. W. J. Drewes, who inclined to the view that Southeast Asian Islam

[82] *The French Presence in Cochin China and Cambodia: Rule and Response, 1859–1905*, Ithaca, 1969.
[83] *The Politics of Reform in Thailand*, vii.

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came from the Coromandel coast of India.[84] By contrast, S. Q. Fatimi argued for Bengal as the diffusion point though he allowed that, at different times, different diffusion points might have played a part.[85]

Side by side with the question of origins went the second type of discussion: that concerned with the particular character of the Islam which established itself in Southeast Asia and the way in which it adapted to, or transformed, the local scene. Did it stimulate extensive social changes or was it, as van Leur asserted, adapted, domesticated and assimilated? There were obvious elements of change, both in belief and social order, with the coming of Islam. The almost universal observance of Islamic ritual in the societies converted, attendance at the mosque, the call to prayer, the fast, the pilgrimage, all appear to testify to a universal conversion. But it was an uneven conversion. The religion had a stronger foothold in those parts of the archipelago most directly involved in international trade—Aceh, the west coast of Sumatra, Melaka, the north coast of Java, Makassar—but the penetration of Islam in the inland agrarian society of Java, with its hierarchical tradition and its ability to blend Islam with older customary beliefs, was apparently less profound. This would seem to point to differences in Islam's transforming role. There were clearly incipient tensions between the new religion and an earlier tradition, which varied from place to place, and which became acute in certain areas from time to time.

Historians have stressed both continuity and change. A. H. Johns emphasized the role of members of Sufi orders in bringing to Southeast Asia a mystically tinged Islam. Sufi readiness to accept and use elements of non-Islamic culture was precisely what was important in making Islam acceptable in the Southeast Asian environment.[86]

However, while emphasizing the acceptability of Sufism, Johns was perhaps more concerned with the network of links connecting the city states of Southeast Asia with the centres of Islamic learning in Cairo, Medina and Mecca, and with diverse schools and a variety of influential teachers, than with the impact of the new religion on the society that received it. He noted the absence of a 'central, stable core of Islamic civilization and learning' within the region,[87] and drew attention to the theological and intellectual traditions of a wider Muslim world on which the Muslim leaders of Melaka, Aceh and other port cities were able to draw. He emphasized that it was 'not a single tradition, but a complex web'.[88] Within that diversity Sufism provided the main current until the rise of the Wahhabi movement in the eighteenth century stimulated a fundamentalist attempt to cut through 'the accretions and innovations' of the intervening centuries and return to what was seen as the original faith.

If Johns was concerned with the doctrinal world of the *ulamā* (learned

[84] Drewes, 'New Light on the Coming of Islam to Indonesia?' BKI, 124 (1968), 433ff. Marrison, 'The Coming of Islam to the East Indies', JMBRAS, 24 (1951).
[85] *Islam Comes to Malaysia*, Singapore, 1963, 53.
[86] 'Sufism as a Category in Indonesian Literature and History', JSEAH, 2, 2 (1961).
[87] 'Islam in Southeast Asia: Reflections and New Directions', *Indonesia*, 19 (1975) 33.
[88] ibid, 42. See also Johns, 'Islam in Southeast Asia: Problems of Perspective', in Cowan and Wolters, eds, *Southeast Asian History and Historiography*.

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men), other writers have focused more on the processes by which Islam was accommodated. Soemarsaid Moertono explored the resilience and persistence of Hindu-Javanese forms and ideas even after the conversion of the inland Javanese kingdom of Mataram.[89] Amongst the populace Islam provided a base for resistance to oppression, but at the court level old Javanese elements continued. A. C. Milner, who also focused on kingship, stressed the way in which local rulers adopted Islamic ideas selectively, adopting those aspects with which they could 'empathize'—the Persian tradition of kingship, or the mystical idea of the 'perfect man'—and thus fitting them into the local scene, rather than transforming it.[90] This kind of compromise became more difficult to maintain with changes in the character of Islam and the growth of '*sharī'a*-mindedness' in the nineteenth century.

The third type of enquiry—that concerned with the later evolution of Muslim thought and action—was prompted in part by the general concern of post-war students of Southeast Asia with the contemporary scene. Students of politics, sociology and economic development were drawn, amongst other interests, to examine, in particular, the current strength and the social and political role of Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia, where tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims, among different types of Muslim, and between Muslims and the state are a central part of today's political conflicts. While in Malaysia the state itself has sought an Islamization of society, in Indonesia Islam has provided a basis for opposition to the Suharto regime. But to distinguish between those two situations in such simple terms is to obscure the complexity, in both situations, of differences within the Islamic community. In West Malaysia there are shifting intra-élite rivalries within the Malay community, where at one time an aristocratic élite, centred round the courts of Malay rulers, was in incipient conflict with *ulamā* leaders, and at another time a Western-educated élite, nominally Muslim, nevertheless did not share the desire of religious leaders for a *sharī'a*-based political order. In Indonesia the picture is complicated by regional differences. Orthodox Islam (though what is orthodox might be a matter of dispute) has established itself more strongly in Sumatra, south Sulawesi and west Java than in central and east Java, and even in those regions there is some tension between strict observance and the pull of custom. In central and east Java a division exists between what might be called 'nominal' Muslims (*abangan*), whose religion has developed on the basis of a syncretist accommodation with earlier beliefs, and the *santri* community whose members profess a stricter adherence to orthodoxy. Differences of this kind have had an impact on political alignments and conflict. Whether the issues at stake are religious and theological, or whether economic and social conflicts have taken on a religious garb, may be a matter of debate, but either way the religious dimension remains a fact of modern politics.

Historians have played their part in this type of enquiry by focusing on nineteenth- and twentieth-century developments in Muslim thought and

[89] *State and Statecraft in Old Java: A Study of the Later Mataram Period, 16th to 19th century*, Ithaca, 1968.

[90] 'Islam and the Muslim State', in M. B. Hooker ed., *Islam in Southeast Asia*, Leiden, 1983.

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action, concerning themselves with classical issues of Islamic debate and with conflicts between competing orthodoxies. The nineteenth century saw the development of fundamentalist doctrines stemming from the wider Muslim world, and challenging existing practice in one way or another. The Wahhābi movement, for example, originating in Arabia, attacked the compromises that Islam had made with custom and called for a return to the original simplicity and austerity of the faith. Towards the end of the century the Modernist movement, with its centre in Cairo, presented a challenge of a somewhat different kind. It, too, was concerned to strip the faith of the scholastic accretions which, it believed, had come to obscure the teachings of the prophet, but it also sought an accommodation between Islam and the forces of the modern world, believing that a purified—and rational—faith could be reconciled with science and contemporary thought.

Historians have tackled the question from a variety of angles. Christine Dobbin and Taufik Abdullah have considered the special circumstances of Minangkabau. Dobbin focused on revivalism in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which culminated in the Padri movement.[91] Taufik Abdullah's concern was the relation of religion and custom in the early twentieth century. Minangkabau custom, in his argument, embodied the idea of interaction with peoples, ideas and mores outside the Minangkabau heartland. Custom thus contained within itself the idea of its own transformation. Against that background he examined the conflict—in part generational, in part theological, and in part ideological—between reforming and conservative forces within the Islamic community.[92] Deliar Noer charted the growth of the Modernist movement in the twentieth century, the formation of the reformist organization, Muhammadiyah, in 1912, and the development of a political role for Islam in the closing decades of Dutch rule.[93] Though he did explore questions of doctrine—for example, the right of individual interpretation, and the role of reason—his particular focus was on the consequences of religious teaching for the exercise of political authority. A political role for Islam would, indeed, seem inevitable, given its absolute claims, summed up in Noer's view that Islam is 'both a religious and a civil and political society' (p. 1). Muslims are nevertheless likely to differ about how such claims should be implemented. W. R. Roff's study of the origins of Malay nationalism was concerned with the Islamic dimension of the emerging élites he was able to identify.[94] For Indonesia, B. J. Boland examined the way in which the relations of religion and the state took political form in the history of the independent republic.[95] A special case was that of the Muslim community in the Philippines whose role was surveyed by C. A. Majul.[96]

[91] *Islamic Revivalism in a Changing Peasant Economy: Central Sumatra, 1784–1847*, London and Malmö, 1983.

[92] 'Modernization in the Minangkabau World: West Sumatra in the Early Decades of the Twentieth Century', in Claire Holt, B. R. O'G. Anderson and James Siegel, eds, *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, Ithaca, 1972.

[93] *The Modernist Muslim Movement, 1900–1942*, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, 1973.

[94] *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, New York and London, 1967.

[95] *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia*, The Hague, 1971.

[96] *Muslims in the Philippines*, Quezon City, 1973.

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While some scholars have focused on the political role of Muslims, others have directed their enquiry towards their economic activities. Clifford Geertz threw out the suggestion that the austerity of Islam, and its insistence on the equality of believers, made it an appropriate faith for an embryo bourgeoisie, and hinted at a comparison between the role of Islam in Southeast Asia and that ascribed by Weber to Protestantism in Europe—the role of sacralizing commercial behaviour and thus assisting the development of a commercial class.[97] This suggestion was taken up by at least one historian, Lance Castles, whose study[98] of the cigarette industry in Kudus, on the north coast of central Java, attempted to test the Geertz hypothesis. James Siegel's study of Acehnese traders discussed the Islamic notion of reason (*akal*) as possibly contributing to the individualism of a commercial class.[99]

On the whole it can be said that the main thrust of historical enquiry into Islam in Southeast Asia was directed to what could be described as the political and economic behaviour of Muslims in the present and more or less recent past, rather than to matters of doctrine and belief. And such a focus was, of course, in line with the general preoccupations of post-war scholarship.

Another subject of increasing interest to historians was the character of traditional authority and social order—of ruler and realm, state and statecraft, to borrow the titles of two significant contributions[1]—and of the ideas which appeared to support that authority.

As described by Robert Heine-Geldern in an influential article of 1942,[2] the classical states of Southeast Asia were in theory highly centralized, and embodied ideas, derived from Indian influence, of a divine kingship and of parallelism between the universe and the terrestrial order. The capital of the ruler was the magical centre of the realm, and at its centre, in turn, a temple or the royal palace, whose towers and terraces and orientation were designed in accordance with an elaborate symbolism, represented Mt Meru, the abode of the gods. As the kingdom was a microcosm of the universe so the king in his capital, a descendant of a god or an incarnation of a god—Śiva or Viṣṇu, Indra or Brahmā—maintained the harmony of the kingdom, matching the harmony of the universe. The political reality was, of course, very different from the doctrine of the exemplary centre and it was, no doubt, precisely because of the facts of balance and division that the theory was so firmly centralist in character. T. Pigeaud, writing of Java, emphasized the precarious nature of royal power and saw the

[97] *The Development of the Javanese Economy*, Boston, 1956, 91.

[98] *Religion, Politics and Economic Behaviour in Java: The Kudus Cigarette Industry*, New Haven, 1967.

[99] *The Rope of God*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969.

[1] B. J. O. Schrieke, *Ruler and Realm in Early Java*, The Hague, 1957, being a collection of papers on which Schrieke was working at the time of his death in 1942; and Moertono, *State and Statecraft*.

[2] 'Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia', *Far Eastern Quarterly*, 2, 1 (November 1942).

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'perennial division and reunion of the realm' as an inherent part of the system.[3]

In the 1960s and early 1970s the interest in traditional political order and political theory sprang in part from the focus on recent and contemporary history. The political behaviour of the so-called 'new states' could be illuminated, perhaps, by the exploration of older forms and perceptions. That was essentially the thrust of B. R. O'G. Anderson's essay on 'The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture'.[4] Though probing traditional Javanese culture, and seeking to establish that that culture included a coherent political theory, its main concern was with the way in which these conclusions might sustain a better understanding of contemporary Indonesian politics, illuminating, for example, Sukarno's leadership style, the tension between centre and periphery, or the role of ideology in political action. Clifford Geertz's notion of the 'theatre, State', proposed in his *Islam Observed* (New Haven, 1968) and developed in his later study of the nature of the nineteenth-century Balinese principality,[5] served a similar function. Other studies, perhaps more strictly historical in character, have been concerned either to explore traditional concepts of authority for their own sake or to examine particular polities in particular periods.

As an example of the former approach, I. W. Mabbett re-examined conclusions about the nature of Khmer kingship by d'Aymonier, Finot, Cœdès and others, and asked whether the notion of divine kingship represented a literal or a metaphorical claim. He demonstrated the ambiguity of epigraphical references to the 'Devarāja', and of the expressions of that concept in ritual and in architectural forms.[6] He concluded that the symbolism of the Devarāja cult was a kind of language in which statements about the moral and political order were expressed. In similar vein, Hermann Kulke argued that the *devarāja* cult related to the worship of Śiva as king of the gods rather than to the worship of a god king, though kings may have been 'participants' in divine rule.[7]

In the second category are works such as M. C. Ricklefs' study of the reign of Sultan Mangkubumi in Yogyakarta, an account of the division of the realm and a consideration of Javanese ideas about the nature of the realm—and about its indivisibility.[8] In Ricklefs' account, the centralist nature of Javanese political theory masked, or was perhaps a response to, a reality in which power was in fact divided. Moertono's work was also directed to a particular period of Javanese history, the later Mataram period from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. More sociological in approach and method was Akin Rabibhadana's examination of Thai social

[3] *Java in the Fourteenth Century: A Study in Cultural History: The Nagara-Kertagama by Rakawi Prapañca of Majapahit, 1365 AD*, The Hague, 1960, IV. 122.

[4] In Holt et al., eds, *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*.

[5] *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali*, Princeton, 1980.

[6] 'Devarāja', in JSEAH, 10, 2 (1969).

[7] *The Devarāja Cult*, 1974, translated from the German, Ithaca, 1978. For further exploration of the question see J. Filliozat, 'Sur le Çivaisme et le Bouddhisme du Cambodge', BEFEO, 70 (1980), and Claude Jacques, 'The Kamraten Jagad in Ancient Cambodia', in Norobu Karashima, ed., *Indus Valley to Mekong Delta: Explorations in Epigraphy*, Madras, 1985.

[8] *Jogjakarta Under Sultan Mangkubumi, 1749–1792*, London, 1974.

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order and its stratification according to formal and informal patron–client relations.[9] Victor Lieberman's account of dynastic cycles in Burma between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries sought the explanation of the phenomenon of division and reunification in the administrative structure of the kingdom. Though sticking closely to his chosen case, Lieberman threw out the suggestion that there was a basic coherence in administrative processes throughout agrarian Southeast Asia and he concluded his work with a comparision of the Burmese case with those of Siam and Mataram.[10]

Part of the same general concern with social order and authority was the interest in peasant society and its occasional disturbances, uprisings and movements of resistance. These have sometimes been seen as early manifestations of nationalist revolt, but increasingly scholars have focused on the millenarian character of such movements and on the way they combined protest at specific grievances with elements of traditional belief and practice. For example the Javanese idea of a Just Ruler (*Ratu Adil*) who could restore harmony and prosperity to a disturbed society was a common element in the movements described by Sartono Kartodirdjo in his attempt to classify different types of peasant protest in Java. Sartono drew attention to the syncretistic nature of the ideologies to be found in his case studies where anti-extortion protests were apt to take on a messianic flavour, mixed with nativistic longings for a return to a pristine culture and with Holy War ideas.[11] Others have explored similar themes in other cases. Yoneo Ishii and Chattip Nartsupha have described the leadership of 'men of merit' and 'Holy Men' in revolts in Thailand.[12] David Chandler has observed a similar phenomenon in Cambodia,[13] and Reynaldo Ileto has shown how Catholic ideas were appropriated and incorporated into local ideology in the Philippines.[14] Michael Adas has attempted a bold comparative study, taking five different cases of millenarian revolts in Africa, India, Southeast Asia and Oceania. In the general setting of accelerated social change and dislocation under colonial rule, he emphasized the special role of prophetic leadership in shaping these revolts.[15]

These themes have been explored through a number of specific case studies, as in Sartono's study of the Banten Revolt in 1888;[16] and in the

[9] *The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period, 1782–1873*, Ithaca, 1969, and 'Clientship and Class Structure in the Early Bangkok Period', in G. William Skinner and A. Thomas Kirsch, eds, *Change and Persistence in Thai Society: Essays in Honor of Lauriston Sharp*, Ithaca, 1975.

[10] *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, 6 and 271ff.

[11] *Protest Movements*, Ch. 1. See also his 'Agrarian Radicalism in Java', in Holt et al., eds, *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*.

[12] Yoneo Ishii, 'A Note on Buddhistic Millenarian Revolts in North-eastern Siam', JSEAH, 6, 2 (1975), and Nartsupha, 'The Ideology of Holy Men Revolts in North East Thailand', in Andrew Turton and Shigeharu Tanabe, eds, *History and Peasant Consciousness in South East Asia*, Osaka, 1984.

[13] 'An Anti-Vietnamese Rebellion in Early Nineteenth-Century Cambodia: Pre-Colonial Imperialism and a Pre-Nationalist Response', JSEAH, 6, 1 (1975).

[14] *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840–1910*, Quezon City, 1979.

[15] *Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements against the European Colonial Order*, Chapel Hill, 1979.

[16] Sartono *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888*, The Hague, 1966.

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study of H. J. Benda and Lance Castles of the Samin movement in Java.[17] In this as in other fields, historians have been influenced by anthropological studies such as James Scott's exploration of peasant order and resistance in Malaya.[18]

The autonomy debate, changing emphases in the approach to the study of Islam, the increasing interest in the remoter past, the focus on the nature of social structure and political authority were but some of the matters commanding the attention of historians. Of importance, too, was the study of emerging élites, their role in movements of nationalist resistance to colonial rule, the institutions developed for the government of new states, questions of ethnicity and class.[19] A Marxist framework of analysis has been employed by some Thai historians and by Vietnamese historians, though in both cases it has been shaped by indigenous perspectives.[20] Local history has also become an important field of enquiry. Carried out by graduate students, by their teachers and by enthusiastic amateurs, it can be expected, in time, to provide an extended base for comparative studies. While biography has not yet been a major feature of historical writing about Southeast Asia, there have been a number of examples both of comparatively recent political figures (Poeze's study of Tan Malaka and Dahm's of the formative years of Sukarno are examples)[21] and text-based studies of earlier figures.[22] And a significant new approach to the history of the region is provided by Anthony Reid's attempt to apply the methods of the French *Annales* School to the study of the region. Reid aims at a 'total history' of Southeast Asia of the kind represented by Fernand Braudel's study of the Mediterranean world.[23]

[17] 'The Samin Movement', BKI, 125 (1969), republished in H. J. Benda, *Continuity and Change*, New Haven, 1972.

[18] *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*, New Haven, 1976, and *Weapons of the Weak*, New Haven, 1985.

[19] The literature on nationalism is extensive. Examples, almost at random, are J. E. Ingleson, *The Road to Exile: The Indonesian Nationalism Movement, 1927–1934*, Kuala Lumpur, 1979; R. T. McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, Ithaca, 1965; C. A. Majul, *The Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Philippine Revolution*, Quezon City, 1967; David Marr, *Vietnamese Anti-Colonialism*, Berkeley, 1971; W. R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, New Haven and London, 1967; R. van Niel, *The Rise of the Modern Indonesian Elite*, The Hague and Bandung, 1960; Alexander Woodside, *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam*, Boston, 1976.

[20] Reynolds, 'Marxism in Thai Historical Studies'; J. K. Whitmore, 'Communism and History in Vietnam', in W. S. Turley, ed., *Vietnamese Communism in Comparative Perspective*, Boulder, 1980.

[21] Harry A. Poeze, *Tan Malaka: Strijden voor Indonesie's vrijheid*, I: *Levensloop van 1897 tot 1945*, The Hague, 1976; and Bernhard Dahm, *Sukarnos Kampf um Indonesiens Unabhangigkeit*, Hamburg, 1966, trans. Mary F. Somers Heidhues as *Sukarno and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence*, Ithaca, 1969. See also J. D. Legge, *Sukarno: A Political Biography*, London, 1972, 2nd edn, Sydney, 1985.

[22] Anne Kumar, *Surapati, Man and Legend: A Study of Three Babad Traditions*, Leiden, 1976, and Peter Carey's assessment, in his edition of the *Babad Dipanagara*, of Diponegoro's leadership in the Java War of 1825, *Babad Dipanagara: An Account of the Outbreak of the Java War, 1825–1830*, a transliteration and translation of the Surakarta Court version of the *Babad*, Kuala Lumpur, 1981.

[23] Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680*, I: *The Lands Below the Winds*, New Haven, 1988. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. S. Reynolds, New York, 1976.

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In the study of these and other themes it is possible to discern certain shifts in the way historians of the region have handled and presented their subject matter. It might be appropriate to speak of changing fashions of interpretation or of changing views as to what constituted a satisfactory explanation of events. This is not to say that there was any sharp dividing line between successive types of approach or between successive periods. What is in question is rather the subtle alterations of emphasis or focus that take place within a continuing discourse. Before exploring these further, however, it may be appropriate to give consideration, first, to political developments which helped to shape changing perspectives both of the present and of the past of the region. For the most part, Western students of the contemporary scene after World War II had optimistic expectations for the future of the new states that were emerging. For Indonesia it seemed possible that the transfer of sovereignty by the Dutch would open the way to a democratic independent future. A peaceful transition to independence for Malaya and the Philippines held similar promise, though prospects for Burma and Vietnam were more clouded. The emerging reality was, however, to be different. Indonesia's constitutional experiment 'declined', to use Feith's term; authoritarian tendencies were to appear in the Philippines; and Burma turned inwards to a particular version of socialism. These developments necessarily affected the perspectives of later students, with respect both to the character of the forces at work in the immediate post-war scene and to the longer historical processes which had produced those forces. But of overwhelming importance for a whole generation of observers was the direction taken by events in Vietnam. Just as World War II had created a dramatically new environment for the study of Southeast Asia by Western and indigenous scholars alike, so the Vietnam conflict altered the framework of enquiry and affected perceptions of the very foundations of scholarship.

The post-war conflict between the French, anxious to reassert their control over Indochina, and the Vietnamese nationalist movement in some ways paralleled Indonesia's struggle for independence, but there were special complicating factors, in particular the increasing intervention of the United States as Vietnam came to be seen more and more in global Cold War terms.

This is not the place to consider the course of the struggle, the issues involved or the bitterly divisive consequences for the United States and its allies, as opposing perceptions of the situation came into conflict with each other. Was American action a matter of supporting South Vietnam in its resistance to aggression from the North and, indeed, a defence of the free world? Or was intervention really a case of supporting one side in what was really a civil war within Vietnam? Were those differences in perspective insignificant in the light of the fact that the Hanoi regime was a communist régime supported by China? The fusing of ideological considerations and considerations of global balance was associated with fears of the consequences of a northern victory—the expectation that it would lead to the fall of the neighbouring dominoes. For our purposes here it is sufficient to notice the types of response evoked by the conflict from students of the region. There were committed approaches sympathetic to

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one side or the other in Vietnam. As examples could be cited Douglas Pike's detailed study of the organization and techniques of the NLF in South Vietnam, *Viet Cong* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966) which, in spite of its attempt to be dispassionate and 'affectively neutral', was clearly hostile to the NLF, and Jeffrey Race's *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province* (Berkeley, 1972), which attempted a more sympathetic explanation of the resilence of the Viet Cong. The perspectives of these works carried implied judgments on the validity of American intervention. Other works focused more directly on the intervention itself. George Kahin and John W. Lewis launched a sustained criticism in their book *The United States in Vietnam* (1967). So did Gabriel Kolko in his later *Anatomy of a War* (New York, 1985). A slightly more sympathetic, though still critical, assessment of American policy was G. Lewy's *America in Vietnam* (New York, 1978). There were many significant works of reportage and of serious journalistic comment. Bernard Fall's *Street Without Joy* has already been mentioned. Robert Shaplen's *The Lost Revolution* (London, 1966) is another example. Other studies attempted to see the conflict against the background of French colonial rule. Donald Lancaster, for example, in *The Emancipation of French Indochina* (London, 1966), set the post-war struggle, occupying about three-quarters of the book, in the context of French rule in Indochina. Finally reference should be made to George Kahin's massive study of the steps by which America became locked into a position of continuing commitment, *Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam* (New York, 1986). It is part of the framework of Kahin's approach that until 1966, where his story ends, there were other choices that might have been made.

The Vietnam War thus evoked a great deal of serious enquiry at a number of levels. Much of it may be described as scholarly analysis, of the contemporary scene or of the immediate background or of the longer-term history of the conflict and the setting in which it took place. And much of it was passionate criticism or defence of policy. Scholarly enquiry and passion are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and a considerable part of the scholarly work was indeed prompted by moral considerations and was directed to an examination of evidence bearing on the political issues. This was the rationale of the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars and of its *Bulletin*. Such enquiry was thus linked closely to the currents of passion and bitterness that ripped through American campuses and moved other sections of American society.

As we have seen, the post-war expansion of Asian studies had reflected a general concern with issues of national and international policy. The Vietnam War provided a focus for those issues. But whereas, in the 1950s and 1960s, there was a confidence that the accumulation of knowledge of Southeast Asian countries could provide a sound and agreed basis for policy, by the late 1960s and early 1970s it would be true to say that observers were disposed, not only to criticize the thrust of Western policies towards Southeast Asia, but to call into question the basic assumptions on which those policies had rested. And associated with such criticisms was a recognition of the difficulty of acquiring any real understanding of the processes of change transforming Southeast Asia societies.

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CHANGES IN INTERPRETATION

This leads us back to the suggestion that a gradual shift was to be observed, discernible perhaps from the early 1960s, in the interpretative modes of historians.

This is a complex matter, involving a variety of levels of analysis and interpretation. For the purposes of the present argument one may distinguish at least four aspects of the question. There have been, first of all, changes of perspective or changes in the angle from which the events of the past were perceived. Second, there have been changes in perceptions of what it was important to study, i.e. judgments about subject matter. Third, there have been changes in the categories of explanation—in ideas about what would constitute a satisfactory account of past events and processes. And finally there have been sharp and major changes in the actual circumstances of modern Southeast Asia which must affect the way in which the past is interpreted. Van Leur's realignment of concepts of Asian trade is a prime example of the first of these categories. The second category is well illustrated, for example, by Jean Gelman Taylor's posing of new questions about lineage and family relations in the mestizo society of the Indies which gave a different shape to the social history of the Indies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and by James Warren's essay in 'history from below' in his study of Singapore rickshaw drivers as an integral part of the society and economy of Singapore.[24] But it is intended to focus here on the third and fourth categories.

The readiness of many historians to adopt the conceptual models of the social sciences—of politics, or sociology or anthropology—in illuminating aspects of the region's past has already been noticed, and this was part of the shift taking place in modes of historical thought; but what is referred to here goes beyond specific methodological borrowing. It involves a general and growing disposition to move from interpretation in narrowly political terms toward a consideration of what were seen as more fundamental cultural patterns. The immediate problems of the post-war world which, as we have noticed, were important in stimulating the enormous expansion of Southeast Asian studies were seen, to a considerable extent, as political. They were to do, that is to say, with international balances of power, with the shape, character and politics of the 'new states' which affected that balance, with constitutional forms and leadership styles. And to a great extent they were explored at a political level: in terms of parties, emergent élites and political pressures, and of concepts such as statehood, nationalism, democracy, communism, with their implied comparisons with Western situations. These emphases were to change. As the new generation of scholars who came to the study of Southeast Asia gradually made their way, learning the necessary languages, acquiring through doctoral training and fieldwork a closer knowledge of the societies with which they were dealing, they came to a greater sense of difference rather than similarity, to an awareness of the deeper dimensions of local tradition

[24] Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia*, Madison, 1983; Warren, *Rickshaw Coolie: A People's History of Singapore, 1880–1940*, Singapore, 1986.

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and culture and to a recognition of their effect upon patterns of political action. In attempting to come to grips with such levels of interpretation, students of the modern world perhaps also became more alive to the sheer difficulty of grasping the 'inwardness' of other societies and, philosophically, of dealing with the problem of knowing 'the other'.

These changes in the commonly accepted frameworks of interpretation may have been due, in part, to the influence of the particular social scientists specifically concerned with the interpretation of cultures, the anthropologists. Observers such as Clifford Geertz, through their exploration of the social context of political action in Southeast Asia, have done much to illuminate the contemporary scene in a way that is of direct relevance for the work both of political scientists and historians. For students of Indonesia the seminal work of Geertz was of particular importance. His notions of agricultural involution, shared poverty, primordial loyalties, *aliran* (cultural streams) and theatre state, though subject to criticism by later students, combined to alter the way in which political events were perceived and understood in their cultural setting. The extent to which such categories became part of the conceptual equipment of historians might be seen, for instance, in Benedict Anderson's interpretation of the first year of the Indonesian Revolution in terms of fundamental configurations of Javanese society;[25] in his essay, already noticed, on the Javanese concept of power; in Ruth McVey's exploration of the way in which the Indonesian Communist Party appealed to the Javanese peasantry through its ability to tap traditional perceptions;[26] in Heather Sutherland's account of the impact of colonial rule on the Javanese aristocracy;[27] or in Bernhard Dahm's study of Sukarno whom he saw, for all his appearance as the modern leader of a twentieth-century state, as displaying the characteristic traits and modes of thought of the Javanese culture from which he sprang.[28] It was clearly no longer possible to see Indonesian political interactions primarily in terms of parties, pressures and institutions. In a similar way David Marr's essay in the intellectual history of Vietnam, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920–1945* (Berkeley, 1981), examined changes in Vietnamese outlooks and values, but also saw intellectuals as engaged in a dialogue with traditional ideas.

In broad terms, and in the light of what has already been said about the study of classical political theory and social order, it might be possible to describe the change in terms of an appeal to tradition as an explanatory factor, and an accompanying tendency to emphasize the inertia of tradition. Observers were increasingly disposed to switch their attention from the things that appeared to be in process of rapid change—political forces, in brief—to those that appeared to be stable, deeply rooted in the past and persistent. This focus, of course, fitted the emphasis placed, since the work of van Leur, on the essential autonomy of Southeast Asian history. If activities and institutions which seemed to owe most to the modernization

[25] *Java in a Time of Revolution*, Ithaca, 1972.
[26] *The Rise of the Indonesian Communist Party*, Ithaca, 1965.
[27] *The Making of a Modern Bureaucratic Elite: The Colonial Transformation of the Javanese Priyayi*, Kuala Lumpur, 1979.
[28] *Sukarno and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence*.

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processes set in motion by European imperialism, and to have been carried further by the radical transformation of the post-colonial era, were, on closer analysis, still really embedded in profound traditional patterns, the colonial era itself could be regarded not only as an interlude in the longer history of the region, but as an interlude which did not fundamentally alter indigenous patterns. Something of this way of looking at things was present in Harry Benda's idea of 'decolonization', which was not just a matter of ending colonial rule but of ending also the way it was perceived by Western historians, and of rejecting the excessive weight of influence they had tended to ascribe to it.[29]

The appeal to tradition as providing an explanatory framework for the analysis of 'modern' conflicts, however, had its own difficulties. Modernity and tradition are abstract concepts and are likely to distort the complexity of reality if used as simple antitheses in the examination of present-day societies. The very notion of tradition implies a judgment made now about past patterns of belief and behaviour. It tends to imply, further, if not a static past, at least a stable and slowly changing past. The idea of the 'inertia' of tradition is an integral part of the notion. There are enormous conceptual and analytical problems here. What is to be regarded as 'the tradition' and what is to be seen as change must depend in part on where observers take their stand. In Southeast Asia, for example, were Indian influences from the second and third centuries onwards to be seen as external to a more basic local tradition? And what of Islam? As we have seen, van Leur was in no doubt that the 'sheen of the world religions' was a 'thin and flaking glaze'. But other observers would tend to see these elements as absorbed and made an integral part of Southeast Asia's own patterns. A similar argument could be brought to bear when assessing the rapid currents of change of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Should emerging élites be categorized unquestioningly as 'modern' or regarded as a part of a continuously evolving local adaptation? There are no absolute criteria to be applied. The contrast between tradition and modernity may sometimes serve a useful analytical purpose, but only for particular ends and within the framework of a particular enquiry. It must also be remembered that the application of these categories is made in the present and may, indeed, be seen as a modern construction—a modern perception of what was the case in a more or less distant past. To that extent the tradition becomes the creation of the modern observer.[30]

Perceptions of tradition went hand in hand, of course, with recognition of the enormous upheavals that were transforming Southeast Asian societies. Terms like 'underdeveloped' came to be replaced by 'developing' or 'transitional' as adjectives to describe societies such as these, and attention was given to particular elements of change and to the analytical modes which could best express them. Was class an appropriate analytical cat-

[29] 'Decolonization in Indonesia: The Problem of Continuity and Change', *American Historical Review*, 70 (1965).

[30] For a discussion of these issues see S. N. Eisenstadt, 'Reflections on a Theory of Modernization', J. C. Heesterman, 'Political Modernization in India' and J. R. Gusfield, 'The Social Construction of Tradition: An Interactionist View of Social Change', in J. D. Legge, Convenor, *Traditional Attitudes and Modern Styles in Political Leadership*, Sydney, 1973.

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egory for Southeast Asian societies for example? To what extent was it useful to speak of new class formation? Were peasants in process of becoming proletarian as a result of the introduction of export commodities within a traditional agricultural framework? Were there signs of emergent middle classes within what were predominantly agricultural social orders?[31]

In a discussion of this kind it is necessary to distinguish between the 'real' changes occurring and investigators' perceptions of them, or at least to notice the theoretical necessity of such a distinction, even if, in practice, it is difficult to make with confidence. Questions such as those just listed cannot be taken as neutral and 'scientific' in character. They are loaded with values, and the way in which they are answered may reflect the attitudes of the observer rather than the reality that is observed. Even if that could be avoided, the use of a particular analytical framework might well influence what is seen and introduce its own unsuspected values. The placing of an analytical emphasis on the inertia of tradition, for example, may have the conservative effect of turning the attention of participants and observers alike away from elements of change. Similarly, to focus on the vertical divisions of society, divisions, perhaps, between ethnic groups or between competing regions, may be to play down elements of class conflict and emphasize the barriers in the way of any fundamental restructuring of society, and thus serve the interests of existing élites which are reluctant to accept changes that might possibly threaten their dominance. (And, of course, even to point this out may serve a purpose.)

Modern Thai historiography provides an example of the presence of such hidden perspectives. Thailand did not have to develop a nationalist history to cope with the colonial experience, and some recent Thai historians have argued that their predecessors, Prince Damrong amongst them, placed too much emphasis on the continuity of Thai history, and on the reforming role of the monarchy, perhaps to the point where the notion of continuity became one of the weapons whereby a traditional élite was helped to perpetuate its rule.[32] A similar view was argued by B. R. O'G. Anderson,[33] who drew attention to the emphasis placed by Western as well as Thai students on the uniqueness of Thai culture and on the role of the Thai monarchy, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as a modernizing and national institution. That focus, said Anderson, had strong value implications. To view the monarchy as a modernizing institution is to regard it as performing a national role. He argued that the monarchy should be seen more properly as comparable with the *colonial*

[31] See, e.g., discussions of the nature of labour engaged in the sugar industry in Java and the Philippines: G. R. Knight, 'Capitalism and Commodity Production in Java', in H. Alavi ed., *Capitalism and Colonial Production*, London, 1982; Knight, 'Peasant Labour and Capitalist Production in Late Colonial Indonesia: The "Campaign" at a North Java Sugar Factory, 1840–1870', JSEAS, 19, 2 (1988); J. A. Larkin, *The Pampangans*, Berkeley, 1972; A. W. McCoy, 'A Queen Dies Slowly: The Rise and Decline of Iloilo City', in McCoy and De Jesus, eds, *Philippine Social History*. See also Rex Mortimer, 'Class, Social Cleavage and Indonesian Communism', *Indonesia*, 8 (1969).

[32] See Charnvit Kasetsiri, 'Thai Historiography from Ancient Times to the Modern Period', in Reid and Marr, 166.

[33] 'Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies', in Eliezer B. Ayal, *The Study of Thailand: Analyses of Knowledge, Approaches and Prospects in Anthropology, Art History, Economics, History and Political Science*, Athens, Ohio, 1978.

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régimes of Southeast Asia, which were also modernizing régimes in their way, and not, as had been the case, as representative of the national leadership of a stable society. The Thai socialist, Jit Poumisak, challenged that perspective in 1957, and his work, said C. J. Reynolds, marked 'a seismic change in the semiotic code' by which Thai society was understood in both European and Thai historiography.[34] And after 1973, when Jit's work was rediscovered, other approaches, though still focusing on the continuity of Thai culture, did so for different purposes, using it either as a means of explaining Thailand's resistance to change or of emphasizing the adaptability of that culture and its capacity to incorporate external influences.[35]

Awareness of the presence of such value dimensions is a further element in the interpretative shifts that we are discussing. Historians and other social scientists became increasingly sensitive to the value positions and political assumptions embedded in what were apparently the most dispassionate of analyses, and that self-consciousness has simultaneously sharpened the tools of investigation and undermined some of the confidence with which those tools were formerly applied. Sometimes, of course, the values of investigators were proudly displayed. A new generation of nationalist historians, while anxious to maintain the rigorous standards of the discipline, were nevertheless naturally concerned to develop indigenous perspectives on the past, in order to sustain the identity of new nations. And it would be possible to describe most Western students of Southeast Asia in the early post-war period as representing a liberal orthodoxy. Reference has already been made to the way in which they were disposed to sympathize with the movements of emancipation to be observed in Asia and to be optimistic about the future political and economic progress of the new states once the imperial yoke had been thrown off. The rise of the theory of underdevelopment and dependency during the 1970s provided a further example of scholarly commitment to an open value position. The exponents of that approach were concerned with Third World poverty in general and argued in a variety of ways that there was an inbuilt and systematic inequality in the relations between underdeveloped and developed economies. This inequality could be removed, not, as orthodox growth theory had it, by aid and foreign investment but by alternative strategies aimed at achieving rural reform.[36] Such strategies, however, were unlikely to be chosen by existing power holders; the solution, in consequence, was conceivable only in a situation where the power of entrenched interests, anxious to

[34] *Thai Radical Discourse*, 139, 150.

[35] See Chatthip Nartsupha, 'Thai Studies by Thai Scholars since 1973', Paper presented to the 36th Congress of the Japan Association of Historians of Southeast Asia, 7 December 1986. Chatthip gives Chai-anan Samudvanija and Chusit Chuchart as examples of the first view and Nidhi Aeusrivongse as an example of the second. See also Reynolds, *Thai Radical Discourse*, 9–10, on the construction of continuities in Thai history.

[36] There is an extensive literature on underdevelopment/dependency theory (UDT). Major works include Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, New York and London, 1969, M. Barratt Brown, *Essays on Imperialism*, Nottingham, 1972, Samir Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale*, New York and London, 1974 and *Imperialism and Unequal Development*, New York and London, 1977, Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, New York, 1974.

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preserve the status quo, had been broken. Dependency theory presupposed, that is to say, major social revolution. In other words, what appeared at first to be a technical criticism of conventional growth theory seemed on closer inspection to contain a moral criticism of existing orders of power and to represent a direct and frank advocacy of, possibly violent, political and social change.

Not all students of Southeast Asia have been as open and frank about their preferences, or as aware of them. Values may be concealed in the way questions are posed, in the analytical models by which they are explored, or in the vocabulary that is used to present them; and historians have become conscious, as a matter of course, that this is so, with profound consequences for their perceptions of their enterprise. In the past they were aware of the dangers of concealed bias, but there was nevertheless a conviction that, in spite of the dangers, truth was attainable in principle. More recently there has developed a sense that, since the meaning perceived in the events of the past is necessarily that of the observer, the notion of truth is hardly applicable. All one can hope to achieve are competing perceptions. The excitement which stimulating teachers like Benda managed to convey to their students as they set themselves to understand the world about them has, perhaps, given way to caution and hesitation.

The effect of these considerations will be the main focus of the remaining sections of this chapter.

DECONSTRUCTING SOUTHEAST ASIAN HISTORY

For Southeast Asian historians of Southeast Asia who were also, perforce, participants in the struggles of the day, the problem was yet more complex than for others. For Indonesian historians the nature of their dilemma was explored in considerable detail in a major seminar organized jointly by Gadjah Mada University and the University of Indonesia in 1957, which led, some years later, to the preparation of a stocktaking symposium designed to identify the problems of writing Indonesian history and to chart possible directions for the future. Contributions were made by Europeans, Asians and one American, and the papers were published by Cornell University Press.[37] In the concluding essay Soedjatmoko attempted to bring into focus the peculiar problems of the modern Indonesian historian and, by extension, the modern historians of other Southeast Asian nations. Like scientific historians in general they must have 'a loving concern with the past in all its uniqueness', but at the same time they are caught up in an emotional involvement in the present. Their interest in the past is expected to serve the needs of that present which, in Indonesia's case, means providing a nationalist perspective and perhaps inventing new myths—or at least images of the past—to sustain a sense of identity and self-understanding for the nation in the present. Yet the new

[37] Soedjatmoko, Mohammad Ali, G. J. Resink and G. McT. Kahin, eds, *An Introduction to Indonesian Historiography*, Ithaca, 1965.

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images must be scientifically defensible.[38] Is this a contradiction in terms or can the two be reconciled? Soedjatmoko referred to the 'polyinterpretability' of historical reality and the elusiveness of the search for objectivity. And he drew attention to other problems. Historians of today are operating in a period of rapid change, 'of shifting historical images the world over'. In a transitional situation our awareness, even of the present from which the past is viewed, is constantly changing. In all that transience how can one pin down a pattern of meaning in the events of the past? In these circumstances historians, because of their professional training, have lost the historical innocence which would enable them to write the patriotic history that their society wants.

Soedjatmoko advanced a moderately optimistic response to this cluster of dilemmas. Historical knowledge is at best provisional, and historians have to accept that limitation and recognize that they can work only for a 'new, but still limited' understanding of their situation. In so doing they remain participants in the events of the day, with the freedom and the responsibility that entails. But a strict adherence to the disciplinary requirements of the study will help to save them from the distorting effects of the surrounding culture.

In this way Soedjatmoko attempted to reconcile the idea of scientific history with that of participation. Others have been less sure of the possibility of any such reconciliation, or rather have been acutely conscious of the cultural determinants of any perception of the past and, in consequence, of the imperfect and partial character of any historical account. If, as has been suggested above, traditional writings are cultural artefacts, the same can surely be said about so-called 'scientific' history. What is seen from a privileged vantage-point in the present, what is taken for granted and what is selected for comment, is necessarily shaped by interest, purpose and culture and, at a more general level, will reflect fundamental assumptions about how the world is constituted.

One critic of Western studies of Asia, Edward Said, has detected an all-embracing framework within which Asia has been observed, a framework which he called 'Orientalism'. By this he did not mean simply studies of an objectively existing East. Certainly, though arguing that the 'Orient' was almost a European invention, he allowed the real existence of an Orient; but he was concerned, not with that reality, but with the way in which it had been perceived, with the special place that Asia had occupied in European experience and imagination, with Orientalism as a discourse. For Said, Western perceptions were a way of coming to terms with—and managing—the East. Orientalism was a 'corporate institution' for dealing with the East, 'dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it'. In short Orientalism was 'a western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient'.[39]

The idea of hegemony was central to Said's analysis, a hegemony which

[38] Indonesia's national history project attempted to give just such a combination of scientific method and national perspective. See Sartono Kartodirdjo, Djoened Poesponegoro, Nugroho Notosusanto, eds, *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia*, 6 vols, Jakarta, 1973.

[39] *Orientalism*, London, 1978, 3.

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he claimed was expressed in the structure of the disciplines—history, language, sociology, economics and others—by which the Orient was examined and in the assumptions which informed those disciplines. For him the idea of hegemony was the defining characteristic of Orientalism—and simultaneously an empirical conclusion about it. In illuminating fashion he detected that hegemony in both academic and imaginative accounts, in language, in artistic conventions and in the categories by which Asian societies and cultures were analysed, carrying his account from the eighteenth century to the present day. There is no doubt that there is substance in his argument, though it might be said that it needs to be demonstrated more carefully, and argued case by case, rather than by the development of the all-embracing category of 'Orientalism', which is itself a value-laden weapon designed for a counterattack. Once it was defined, innumerable examples could be fitted into the general picture. It is a question whether Orientalism is one phenomenon, or many; and even Said admits the possibility of 'a scholarship which is not as corrupt . . . as the kind I have been mainly depicting'.[40] It would indeed be odd if European perceptions of Asia in the eighteenth century and those of the twentieth century were so uniform and unchanging as to be satisfactorily covered by the one term, or if the linguist's Orient of the twentieth century were really part of the same Orient as that of the economist or the historian or the political scientist. And are Western students of China part of the same phenomenon as Western students of India? And what of Indian students of Indonesia or Japanese students of Thailand? Working within an international tradition of scholarship, are they too Orientalists in Said's sense? One might well doubt whether all these parts do form part of the 'larger whole' to which he refers.[41]

However, in setting up the problem as he did, and in drawing attention to elements of cultural hegemony, Said did emphasize in a dramatic form the way in which all social and historical enquiry is likely to be culture-bound. The framework within which it is carried out is a constructed framework and is therefore open to deconstruction, and to the laying bare of the influences and the interests that have shaped it in one way rather than another, and of the political functions it may be seen to perform. In general terms he was giving one formulation of the problem of coming to terms with the 'other'. It is not merely a cultural 'other' that is in question, of course. Certainly cross-cultural studies present their own significant difficulties of symbols and meanings; but those difficulties apply by extension to attempts to understand subcultures within the one society, to understand classes or social groups other than one's own, to understand, for that matter, other individuals—and, of course, other times. As L. P. Hartley remarked, 'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.'

The uncertainties and hesitations arising from the recognition of those difficulties have been accentuated over recent years by developments in

[40] ibid., 326.

[41] ibid., 24. Said, p. 25, specifically warns Asian students of Asia against the dangers of employing the structure of cultural domination upon themselves and others.

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the realm of literary theory, which were seen to have implications for the study of Asian texts: implications which went far beyond textual study in the narrow sense.

An example of a new approach to textual analysis was provided in the early post-war period by the work of C. C. Berg, who mounted a systematic criticism of the apparent certainties of early Javanese history as they had been presented by pre-war Dutch scholars. Berg's fire was directed especially at the work of Krom. In a series of articles, written from an essentially structuralist point of view, he argued that the so-called historical writings of Java, the fourteenth-century *Nāgarakĕrtāgama*, the possibly older *Pararaton* and the later *Babad Tanah Jawi*, were not works of history at all and could only be understood if read within the framework of the society which produced them.[42] Krom had assumed that such texts contained a substratum of fact. His method was to subject the texts to rigorous internal criticism but to proceed, nevertheless, on the assumption that they could provide evidence of an actual past. As Berg put it, his approach was 'to put aside intrinsically improbable assertions, in the case of conflicting assertions to select the most probable one, and to reject the others, for the time being'.[43] Instead, said Berg, the scholar should recognize the function—often the magical function—which the text performed, perhaps supplying a legitimate ancestry for a usurper, or transmitting myths about the past which sustained a subsequent world view. Following his own method, Berg advanced a radical reading of these texts and called into question the political history which Krom had been prepared to accept. He rejected, for example, the story of Airlangga's division of his kingdom between his two sons, he questioned the existence of the first two rulers of the thirteenth-century Singhasari dynasty in Java, and he argued that the *Nāgarakĕrtāgama's* account of the extent of the empire of Majapahit was no more than a display of geographical knowledge. In brief, the literary sources from which Krom drew much of his account of Hindu-Javanese history from the ninth to the mid-thirteenth centuries offered evidence not for events but only, if properly read, for the cultural configurations of Javanese society.

Notwithstanding their seminal effect on the assumptions underlying textual analysis, Berg's views did not entirely change the findings of scholarship. Later scholars have inclined to the view that Berg had overstated his case. F. D. K. Bosch, in an article in the *Bijdragen* in 1956, argued that, while the evidence for the political chronology accepted by Krom might be weak, firm evidence for Berg's alternative reading was lacking also.[44] He accused Berg of proceeding from an 'intuitive' brainwave on which he built 'an extremely unstable tower of hypotheses piled on top of each other'.[45] De Casparis, writing at about the same time, was equally

[42] 'Kartanegara, de Miskende Empirebuilder', *Orientatie*, 1950; 'De Sadang-Oorlog en de Mythe van Groot-Majapahit', *Indonesie*, 5 (1951); 'De Geschiedenis van Pril Majapahit', *Indonesie*, 4 and 5 (1950 and 1951); 'The Work of Professor Krom', in Hall, ed., *Historians*, 164ff.

[43] 'The Work of Professor Krom', in Hall, 167.

[44] C. C. Berg and Ancient Javanese History', BKI, 1956, 112.

[45] Bosch's critique, amongst other things, considered in detail the substance of Berg's argument with regard to the first two rulers of Singhasari and the extent of Majapahit's empire.

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emphatic. Arguing from an epigrapher's point of view, he insisted that the reading of at least some inscriptions was really beyond doubt and that this kind of evidence could not be brushed aside so easily by an attempt at alternative hypotheses based on a 'weak or even imaginary foundation'.[46]

What is important for the present discussion, however, is the confidence with which Berg put forward his alternative readings. Clearly, both he and his critics saw themselves as concerned with what might be called matters of fact. What was the political chronology of thirteenth-century Java? Was Majapahit an extensive realm? And they shared a belief that, if handled properly, textual study could illuminate some sort of reality. They disagreed about what constituted proper handling; but that there was a reality to be discovered by an examination of this kind of evidence was not in question. Later theorists were to raise more fundamental doubts about such a possibility.

The theorists in question were those adopting structuralist and semiological approaches to the reading of indigenous texts. The structuralist and post-structuralist enterprise has operated simultaneously at a number of levels. In part it has been an exploration of the nature of language, signs and meaning, of the links between linguistic systems and social order, and of the ways in which meaning is encoded in symbol and metaphor. In part it has focused on the relationship between reader and text, suggesting in some formulations that meaning is a function of that relationship and cannot exist independently of it. The reader creates the reading and there is no further criterion of reality, no external meaning to be ascertained. And it has also implied conclusions about the nature of reality and the grounds of knowledge. The evolving discussion of these and related ideas by Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, Jakobsen, Barthes, Culler, Derrida and many others over the years has had revolutionary implications for literary criticism. It sharpened the awareness not only of students of literature but indeed of those engaged in considering human behaviour in whatever form. And amongst others it has influenced modern students of the textual sources of Southeast Asian history, whose work has come to represent a renewed interest in the early history of the region, in its literary forms and cultural expressions.

In focus and method the work of this later generation of textual scholars differs sharply from the largely contemporary concerns, and the social science modes, of the 1950s and 1960s. Even where the attention of historians in the immediate post-war period was directed to early history—to a consideration, for example, of the structure of authority of the classical kingdoms—they tended to deal in terms of such generalized categories as patrimonial states, bureaucratic élites, patron–client relationships, status systems, and social stratification, rather than examining the cultural expressions of those periods for their own sake. Moreover, as we have seen, their primary interest was often in the light that traditional order might throw on modern political behaviour. It differs also from the earlier 'Orientalist' tradition. At first glance the growing interest in textual study may appear as a swing back to the linguistic, literary and philosophical

[46] 'Historical Writing on Indonesia (Early Period)' in Hall, ed., *Historians*, 160.

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concerns of classical scholarship, but, in fact, its application of structuralist theory has led it into new paths of enquiry. By an examination of basic formal patterns, inner relationships, codes and symbols embedded in the literatures, inscriptions and other records of the Southeast Asian past, it seeks to uncover meanings below the surface of the texts and to gain some perception of the cultural conventions and shared knowledge within which the creators of the sources unselfconsciously existed: to attain, that, is to say, insights into how these societies, perhaps unconsciously, saw themselves. And the language is now the language of image and myth, discourse, signs and symbols, codes and emplotment.

Examples of such an approach are provided by James Siegel's examination of Acehnese historical thinking, Shelley Errington's essay on assumptions about history in Malay writings, Anthony Day's exploration of Javanese concepts of time, prophecy and change, Michael Aung-Thwin's consideration of prophecies, omens and dialogue in Burmese historiography, A. C. Milner's study of the political ideas implied in certain Malay texts, Keith W. Taylor's use of texts to catch the voices of eleventh-century Vietnam, and Michael Vickery's attempt to discern the nature of state formation in Cambodia.[47] An example of the application of the same sort of approach to more recent history may be found in Craig Reynolds' consideration of modern Thai historiography.[48]

Of considerable importance in fostering this type of approach is the work of O. W. Wolters, whose attempt to detect the subtle implications that lie within the structure of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Vietnamese texts is a model of its kind.[49] It is a hallmark of his work that he has been more concerned than many other practitioners are to stay strictly within the texts he is reading. In the application of the method, he seeks, as a matter of principle, not to appeal for explanation to matters outside the text or to use the text as evidence of a reality external to it.[50]

Though much of the work done under structuralist influence has been directed to the study of texts in the literal sense—chronicles, inscriptions, poems and other literary creations—the same type of approach may be applied to texts of a different kind, texts by analogy. Cultural traits, patterns of behaviour, events in the normally accepted sense of the term

[47] Siegel, *Shadow and Sound*, Chicago, 1979; Errington, 'Some comments on Style in the Meanings of the Past', in Reid and Marr; Day, 'Ranggawarsita's Prophecy of Mystery', in David K. Wyatt and Alexander Woodside, eds, *Moral Order and the Question of Change: Essays on Southeast Asian Thought*, New Haven, 1982; Michael Aung-Thwin, 'Prophecies, Omens and Dialogue: Tools of the Trade in Burmese Historiography', in Wyatt and Woodside; Milner, *Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule*, Tucson, 1982; Taylor, 'Authority and Legitimacy in 11th-Century Vietnam' and Michael Vickery, 'Some Remarks on Early State Formation in Cambodia' in Marr and Milner, eds, *Southeast Asia*.

[48] *Thai Radical Discourse*.

[49] 'Possibilities for a Reading of the 1293–1357 Period in the Vietnamese Annals', in Reid and Marr; Wolters, *History, Culture and Region*; 'Narrating the Fall of the Ly and the Rise of the Tran Dynasties', *ASAA Review*, 10, 2 (November 1986); *Two Essays on Dai-Viet in the Fourteenth Century*, New Haven: Yale Southeast Asia Studies, 1988.

[50] Note his distinction between a 'textual' and a documentary approach to a text: Wolters, *History, Culture and Region*, 69. One might compare this with Victor Lieberman who also bases much of his work on textual analysis but who focuses more on the historical events evidenced by the texts than on the structure of the texts themselves: Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*.

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may also be regarded, in their own way, as texts to be read. They are like language, with internal relationships to be observed. Human actions themselves reflect the sign systems of those who perform them. To put it another way, culture is not merely 'like' language. It is in large measure shaped by its language, and indeed social behaviour is itself a language. There is no objective, external, 'innocent', world to be perceived. The student of society can only perceive the system of signs and language habits by which that society is encountered. These may be so private that an outside observer has little hope of really entering that society; and they may be distorted in the very process of being observed. But, by being attentive to the forms, the student of texts, both written and acted, may hope in some measure to penetrate the linguistic system and, as it were, to crack the codes within which meanings are concealed. Reynaldo Ileto's decoding of the language and gestures of peasant rebels in the Philippines, for example, was concerned with texts both written and acted.

Closely connected with the theoretical underpinnings of the textualist approach was the temper displayed in its practice. It involved careful, scrupulous and attentive consideration of words and actions. Wolters, in his study of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Vietnam, makes a distinction between 'choosing to do something to the past' and 'doing something with the past'.[51] The former involves constructing the shape of the past, with the danger that the shape might 'be influenced by preconceptions of the nature of the past in question'. The latter involves 'following directions and messages provided by the linguistic and structural systems that generate the sources' meaning when they are read as texts'. One might question the validity of the distinction. (Might not preconceptions of the nature of the past affect one's perceptions of the directions and messages? And is not the reading of the messages in a sense a construction of the shape of the past?) Nevertheless the distinction does convey a sense of the care, subtlety and sensitivity with which the sources are to be studied.

The method has been fruitful, though the ideas that sometimes accompany it and underpin it may be disturbing. The idea that texts are self-regarding, that they are not referential—that they refer only to themselves and not to a reality outside themselves, and that they may be open to an infinite multiplicity of readings—may seem to lead to an absolute relativism. Are the patterns and structures to be discerned in texts objectively there or are they merely the constructs of the reader, and as such open to deconstruction? Is there such a thing as a valid reading? Or must there be, as Derrida argues, a constant deferment of judgment, a continuing deconstruction of the rhetoric that is always present in a text and in any reading of it? Is the textual scholar, including the student of texts by analogy, to be left, in the end, with an inescapable indeterminacy of meaning?

Questions of this kind have become part of the general methodological discourse of the human sciences and have contributed to a recognition on the part of historians in general, and not merely of historians studying cultures other than their own, of the enormous difficulties facing their

[51] *Dai-Viet in the Fourteenth Century*, ix.

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enterprise. The difficulties are, of course, present in any enquiry in which human beings study themselves. Such a recognition has affected the fundamental assumptions on the basis of which historical study is conducted. For historians of Southeast Asia, the change of atmosphere which has taken place since the London seminars of the 1950s is apparent. No longer would they speak, with quite the same confidence, of the possibility of a 'real' history, whether of Southeast Asia or anywhere else, or of an attempt 'to arrive at a real world-history sense of values'.[52]

This is not the place to seek answers to the questions raised above, though a short response may be to suggest that many of the assertions that are to be found in structuralist theory are epistemological rather than practical assertions, concerned with the nature and grounds of knowledge rather than with the world as it may be perceived. Though students of history must certainly be aware of language as a social construct, and of the rhetoric built into their readings of texts, what matters, in the end, is how they might defend the statements that they make. They are anchored in the contingent world and must cope with it as best they can, describing and analysing it with the tools at their disposal. Even if they stay within the texts, the statements they make must be defended by reference to the texts. To that extent, and contrary to structuralist principle in at least some of its formulations, the texts are indeed referential. Historians may never succeed in capturing reality, but that is not to say that there is no reality to be captured.

The self-reflexive aspect of structuralist thought does not necessarily lead, it is suggested, to a paralysing relativism. Certainly the self-awareness it has brought, and the recognition of the difficulty of getting some kind of grasp of other cultures may appear to represent a retreat from the confidence which, according to the present argument, marked the study of Southeast Asian history in the early post-war years. But perhaps it should be described as an advance rather than a retreat? If it makes historians more cautious and self-critical than before, and more alert to the difficulties lying in the way of understanding other cultures, it leaves them still with the responsibility of grasping, as well as they can, the nature of the past of the societies with which they deal.

[52] Hall, ed., *Historians*, 7 and 9.

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