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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.<sup>1</sup> Hall's work, though describing itself as 'a bare outline, perilously compressed and oversimplified in many parts',<sup>2</sup> 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 *Southeast 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

<sup>1</sup> 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).

<sup>2</sup> Hall, *History*, Preface to the First Edition, v.

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

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.<sup>5</sup> 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

<sup>3</sup> Ithaca, 1959, Preface, v.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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'.<sup>6</sup> 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

<sup>6</sup> 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<sup>7</sup> 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 Borobudur, 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> Chronicles and other literary works have survived from about the fourteenth century.<sup>10</sup> In Java the more extended texts such as the *Pararaton*, the *Nāgarakērtāgama* 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

<sup>7</sup> *Indonesian Paleography*, Leiden, 1975, 12.

<sup>8</sup> For Pagan see G. H. Luce, *Old Burma—Early Pagan*, 3 vols, New York, 1969–70.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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,<sup>12</sup> Georges Cœdès in Thailand and Cambodia,<sup>13</sup> and Cœdès, G. Ferrand, K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, F. D. K. Bosch and others in Indonesia.<sup>14</sup> In the field of archaeological studies and art history were Paul Mus' study of the Borobudur, 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> *Inscriptions of Burma*, published in the form of rubbings, 1933–9.

<sup>13</sup> *Reçueil des Inscriptions du Siam*, Bangkok, 1924–9; *Inscriptions de Sukhodaya*, Bangkok, 1924; and *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, Hanoi, 1937–51.

<sup>14</sup> 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 Inscripctie van Keloerak', *Tijdschrift van het Bataviaasch Genootschap*, 48 (1928).

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> 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 *Nāgarakērtāgama*

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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<sup>17</sup> 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 politics 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).

<sup>17</sup> 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'.<sup>18</sup>

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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup>

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.<sup>21</sup> 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

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

<sup>19</sup> Berg, *Hoofdlijnen der Javaansche Literatuur-Geschiedenis*, Groningen, 1929; N. J. Krom, *Hindoe-Javaansche Geschiedenis*, The Hague, 1926.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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,<sup>23</sup> 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,<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Indonesian Trade and Society*, 95.

<sup>23</sup> Subsequently published as 'The Problem of the Hindu Colonization of Indonesia' in his *Selected Studies in Indian Archaeology*, The Hague, 1961.

<sup>24</sup> 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'.<sup>25</sup> 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.

<sup>25</sup> 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;<sup>26</sup> 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;<sup>27</sup> Pigafetta who accompanied Magellan;<sup>28</sup> the Portuguese, Tomé Pires, in the early sixteenth century;<sup>29</sup> John Jourdain, who visited India and the archipelago between 1608 and 1617;<sup>30</sup> 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<sup>31</sup>—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-

<sup>26</sup> 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).

<sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> 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.

<sup>29</sup> See A. Cortesão, ed. and trans., *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, London, 1944.

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

<sup>31</sup> *Asia and Western Dominance*, London, 1953.