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0521663695 - The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia: From Early Times to c. 1500,

Volume One

Edited by Nicholas Tarling

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF
SOUTHEAST ASIA

VOLUME ONE

From early times to c. 1500

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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 place-names 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.

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 Mahāraṣṭrī i Hino with a name ending in '-Dewī'. As to Kērtanagara'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.

ABBREVIATIONS

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

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PREFACE TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION

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, Latin America and the Pacific Islanders. 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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PREFACE TO THE PAPERBACK EDITION

This work was originally published in 1992 in two hardbound volumes. The paperback edition is a reprint in four volumes with minor revisions. While the work in its two-volume format has been quite widely welcomed, it is hoped that the new format will make it more accessible, and in particular bring it more readily within the reach of those who teach and are taught about the region, as well as those who are simply curious about it. The four paperbacks may stand on their own, though it is also the case that the whole is more than the sum of the parts.

The present volume contains an essay on the historiography of Southeast Asia and Part 1 of the original Volume 1, 'From Prehistory to c. 1500 CE'. The next volume contains Part 2 of the original Volume 1, covering the years c. 1500 to c. 1800. The third paperback covers the region from c. 1800 to the 1930s, and the fourth the period from the World War II to the late 1980s. While all the chapters have a bibliographic essay, the list of bibliographies will be found at the conclusion of Volume 4.

Each of the paperback volumes has a new preface. That, though short, is intended to fulfil two purposes: to point to the relationships with the other volumes; and to comment on some of the research into and thinking about the subject undertaken since the original contributions were completed in 1990–91. Some of that has been generated by the challenges the region's past offers the historian and the historian's techniques. Some of it has been generated by a growing public interest in the region, the nature of which also affects the historian's approach.

At the beginning of the decade the region seemed to be enjoying an extraordinary economic boom, and at the end to be suffering a collapse, the remedy for which seemed even more uncertain than the reasons. A history may at least offer a longer-term perspective on these changes, their origins and effects. The same comment applies, second, in respect of the current relationship between China and Southeast Asia. China's growing economic importance and its increasing power invite the attention of both historians and their readers to the earlier relationships. A third context comprises the so-called globalization of the closing years of the twentieth century and its as yet ambiguous challenge to the nation-state. That may result both in renewed assertions of the century's nationalism, but also, perhaps, in assertions of differing kinds of identity, ethnic or otherwise, with a larger or a more local focus.

Once more the historian will be engaged, more or less willingly; and once more the reader will look to the historian. Arguably, indeed, the significance of the historical approach will increase. If, in one sense, the historian's inspiration has always been dual—both to respond to the interests of the present and to offer a better understanding of the past—the historian's task

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has also been two-fold. It is concerned with uncovering what are called facts, but also with eliciting trends or processes. Yet, as Stephen J. Gould puts it, in history 'events occur but once in detailed glory' ('Evolution and the Triumph of Homology, or Why History Matters', *American Scientist* 70, January–February 1986, p. 64). The discipline is in some sense specially suited to a world where once ruling ideologies have been challenged or overthrown, and not as yet replaced by credible new visions, try as the protagonists of the 'market' may.

An array of 'new conceptual tools' is available, to use Ruth McVey's phrase, whose 'very names—post-modernism, post-structuralism, post-Marxism—betray the ideological exhaustion of our time' ('Change and Continuity in Southeast Asian Studies', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26, 1, March 1995, p. 9). For many historians the tools were not so new: they were burnished remodellings of the old, which, misused, could injure the user. Historians could readily accept Dominick LaCapra's view that the past has its voices which must be respected, 'especially when they resist or qualify the interpretations we would like to place on them' (quoted by L. Kramer in Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* University of California Press, 1989, p. 103). Historians might less readily take the further step that Hayden White took, when he suggested that it was possible to 'imagine not only one or two but any number of alternative stories of . . . any culturally significant event, all equally plausible and equally authoritative by virtue of their conformity to generally accepted rules of historical construction' (quoted in P. Nozick, *That Noble Dream. The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 602). Gertrude Himmelfarb argued by contrast that the discipline of history was in a sense designed 'to forestall the absolutistic relativism of post-modernism'. Aware of the deficiencies of the historian and the historical record, 'of the ambiguous relationship of past and present', the historical profession created the checks and controls associated with 'critical history'. The aim was to encourage 'a maximum exertion of objectivity' (in *Times Literary Supplement* 16 October 1992).

McVey suggests that the tools 'may help the researcher to go beyond the terms of the established framework. . . . It is in periods of intellectual uncertainty and unease, of a lack of orientation, that scholarship is likely to be most creative' (p. 9). Those who study have indeed been affected by the intellectual currents of the 1990s. Though McVey had in mind a challenge to what she saw as the 'regnant paradigm' in the study of Southeast Asia—the emergence of the nation-states and their progress to modernity—the 1990s has also seen a renewed questioning of the concept of Southeast Asia as a region.

That did not begin with the impact of deconstruction. Philosophers warned about reification, Waddell observed in 1972. 'Words like "Southeast Asia" and "unicorn" enable us to discuss topics about which we would not otherwise be able to hold a conversation, but we should be wary of attributing any more solidity to these concepts than the facts will allow' (J. R. E. Waddell, *An Introduction to Southeast Asian Politics* Sydney: Wiley, 1972, p. 3). In an article published in 1984, Donald K. Emmerson quoted this alongside Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: 'What's in a name? That which we call a rose

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by any other name would smell as sweet'. 'Some names', wrote Emerson, 'like "rose", acknowledge what exists. Others, like "unicorn", create what otherwise would not exist. In between lie names that simultaneously describe and invent reality. "Southeast Asia" is one of these' ('"Southeast Asia": What's in a Name?', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 15, 1, March 1984, p. 1).

The description, as Emerson says, was rarely used in the imperial phase, and the sense of it as a region was more common among Germans and Austrians, who did not possess colonies in the region, than among those Europeans who did. In the 1930s it became somewhat more common, but it was the war that gave it currency and literally put it on the map. Its dimensions remained, however, uncertain, and, though scholars more or less reached a consensus on them, the public, at least outside the region, even now perhaps shares no such certainty. '"Southeast Asia" turned out to be an aggregate of nations—individually distinct and collectively a battleground in, first, the Pacific War, then the Cold War, including two Indo-China Wars, and finally, in Cambodia, a Sino-Soviet "proxy war"'. Creating 'a need to talk about the region', Emerson suggests, international conflicts ironically 'underwrote the popularity of the name in the very act of undermining its empirical prospects' (p. 10).

He pointed, however, to the neutrality of the term. 'Unlike the "Near" and "Far East", the name does not betray the location of an outside namer. Because it is not a reminder of dependence, the term is easier for the region's inhabitants to use.' It did not have the imperialist overtones of 'Orientalism' (p. 17). But how meaningful was it? Was it yet a rose or still a unicorn?

Some historians sought to make a virtue of necessity. The present editor's own *A Concise History of Southeast Asia* (New York: Praeger, 1966)—also published in Australia under a title later used by D. R. SarDesai, *Southeast Asia Past and Present*—suggested that the region had 'a unity in its very diversity' (p. xii). Later scholarship gave the regional approach a more positive connotation. Perhaps the most obvious example is the masterly work of one of our contributors, the appearance of which straddled the publication of *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*. For Anthony Reid, Southeast Asia was a region in the sense that the Mediterranean was for Fernand Braudel, and it possessed at a deeper level a unity which event-oriented historiography tended to conceal. It was thus possible to go beyond the study of diversity, even beyond a comparative approach. In his *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988, 1993), Reid suggested 'that treating Southeast Asia as a whole makes it possible to describe a number of areas of life which would otherwise remain in the shadows'. For each cultural area sources for his period, the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, are fragmentary; but studying them together offers 'a coherent picture . . . of the life-styles of the region as a whole' (vol. 1, Preface, p. xiv). The process put 'Southeast Asians' on the stage, though none of the actors would then have so recognised themselves.

If historians were enhancing the reality of Southeast Asia, so, too, were some of the contemporary political processes. Nation-states were more than ever the dominant political entities, but their leaders saw a need, if only to preserve those entities, to collaborate and build a sense of region. The main

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focus of their endeavour was ASEAN. In the course of the 1990s it came to encompass almost the whole region.

Yet neither the example of historians outside Southeast Asia, nor this somewhat ambivalent political regionalism, induced historians within Southeast Asia to engage in writing the history of Southeast Asia as distinct from the history of countries within Southeast Asia. 'My aim', Emmerson wrote, 'is . . . to help indigenous scholars increase understanding and reduce mistrust by getting out from under the imprint of the nation-state—for example, through collaborative research on Southeast Asian topics that are nonpolitical, crosscultural, and sub- or supra-national.' The question, he added, was 'not whether regional unity is a fiction. The question is how to make the fiction useful enough to become true' (p. 21). Apparently it did not become true enough to be useful.

Hong Lysa has argued that 'indigenous scholars have no need to justify their national focus, and in fact have a compelling sense of mission in pursuing their work, which often simply cannot be divorced from their responsibility as members of that society' (Hong Lysa in Mohammed Talib and Tim Huxley, eds, *An Introduction to Southeast Asian Studies* London and New York: Tauris, 1996, p. 66). That comment could be supported by the case of Thailand, where the breakdown of the military regime led to the recovery and development of alternative views of the past. It was also relevant to the Philippines, where the school of historians associated with Zeus Salazar criticised those more concerned to sustain 'a discourse that defensively reckons with the view of the foreigner', rather than 'inquiring into the internal dynamics of Philippine society as it evolved over the centuries' (F. Llanes in Putu Davies, ed., *Constructing a National Past* Bandar Sri Begawan: Universiti Brunei Darussalam, 1996, p. 315).

Such a nationalist emphasis, Hong added, was 'not permanent'. The region, once one of 'revolt', then part of the exploited Third World, was being redefined as one of economic growth and political stability. 'Southeast Asians may well find impetus, and indeed sponsorship, to master a second Southeast Asian language and to research the history of their neighbours' (p. 66). The undermining of economic prosperity in the closing years of the 1990s, together with the threats to stability, again put this prospect in question. Amid many other uncertainties, the stance of the region's historians is still to be determined.

At the same time, historians outside Southeast Asia at once wondered whether they had begun to over-emphasize the commonalities in the experience of its peoples, and to cut that experience off from the experience of peoples in other regions of the world. The first might underplay the particularities of the societies and politics within the region. The second might reduce the chances of understanding them more fully through a wider range of comparisons. The leading figure in this thinking has been Vic Lieberman, who has been particularly concerned that the history of mainland Southeast Asia in the early modern period has been skewed as a result.

His work has even broader implications. He asks himself whether it is not partly driven 'by a desire to compensate for Southeast Asia's obscurity' ('Transcending East–West Dichotomies . . .', *Modern Asian Studies* 31, 3, 1997, p. 537). Certainly it has rarely featured in the works on historiography cur-

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rently used in universities, suggesting that, so far as their colleagues are concerned, historians of Southeast Asia tend to be quartered off like foreign traders in the early modern cities of the region. Only a few works have made a wide impact: those of Ben Anderson (on nationalism), James Scott (on the 'moral economy' of the peasant), Clifford Geertz (on the 'theatre state'), for example. The work of many others—applying, even anticipating, deconstructionism, or pursuing 'history from below'—has received little general recognition. Yet what they have done could amplify the historiographical debate, and enrich the historiography of all the countries concerned.

Lieberman's work is perhaps yet more significant in its response to the world of the 1990s, marked by the end of the Cold War, the increased urge to globalization, the loss of old Western certainties. The opportunity should be taken to transcend, rather than reinforce, the East–West dichotomies that have so long marked the history of Asia through a focus on what he calls 'Eurasian' history.

It is in this context that *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia* is reprinted. It sought to emphasize the regional rather than the national, and partly for that reason, perhaps, most of the contributors came from scholars outside the region. They were convinced of the advantages of attempting a regional approach, though also thoroughly aware of the risks to themselves and their topics. One object was indeed to diminish the 'obscurity' of Southeast Asia. Rather less, perhaps, than Emmerson, if at all, did they seek to turn a unicorn into a rose, though recognizing that their words were also deeds. If what they wrote and did aroused controversy, they were ready to welcome it, and if others made up for their shortcomings, or filled gaps that they left, so much the better. This reprint emerges in a more tumultuous region and amid new historiographical controversies. It may still form a useful stepping-out point.

If the kind of regional approach the work adopts has been contested, so also have its chronological divisions. '(P)eriods', Anthony Reid wrote, 'are modes of dealing with specific questions and must change with the questions' (*Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce* vol. 2, p. xiv). That offers little guidance, though some caution, in respect of a general work. The contributors to *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia* were indeed not entirely happy with the divisions that were adopted for each part, and that now form the divisions between the volumes. Those divisions are indeed somewhat indeterminate as a result.

The division at c. 1500 CE implied, though it did not specifically assert, that the advent of the Europeans was a more significant event than many are now prepared to consider it. More important perhaps was the expansion of commerce in the fifteenth century, in which China played a major role. Adopting even that date may run the risk of over-emphasizing the external factors in the history of the region, and down-playing its own initiatives and capacities to innovate. Lieberman, for example, is convinced 'that the heavy emphasis on maritime influences to explain local change tends to be reductionist and exaggerated, at least for the mainland' ('Local Integration and Eurasian Analogies: Structuring Southeast Asian History', *Modern Asia Studies* 27, 3, 1993, p. 478). Divisions of some kind are unavoidable, particularly in structuring a large project. The reader must accept them, but also the health warning that goes along with them.

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Over the other divisions we also argued. That between what are Volumes 2 and 3 of the paperback edition took some account of the revisionary view of the eighteenth century, again associated with Lieberman's work, but well argued in our volume by Jeya Kathirithamby-Wells. The division between Volumes 3 and 4 we also subjected to criticism. Did it over-emphasize the impact of the Japanese? Did it obscure continuities within Southeast Asia? Whether the crisis of the 1990s marks another division, or should suggest another kind of division of the past, remains to be seen.

Nicholas Tarling 1999