

CHAPTER

1

INTERACTIONS WITH THE OUTSIDE
WORLD AND ADAPTATION IN
SOUTHEAST ASIAN SOCIETY, 1500–1800

Southeast Asia in the period 1500–1800 witnessed important demographic developments which were to have significant consequences in the region. While the Indians and the Chinese had visited Southeast Asia regularly since the early Christian era, they were now coming in far larger numbers than previously. During the early seventeenth century the Japanese, new to the area, became involved in Southeast Asian trade in order to redress internal economic problems faced by the new Tokugawa shogunate. The newest and most formidable of the foreigners were the Europeans, who were determined to acquire a monopoly of the spice trade. The story of the circumstances which brought these foreign groups to the region and the manner in which they became established is an essential part of Southeast Asian history.

Equally important to the history of this period is the interaction between the foreign and Southeast Asian communities which brought innovations and adaptations in local society. The establishment of the European-controlled city, which created a unique mixture of foreign and indigenous elements in its physical structure, government, economic affairs, and inhabitants, was one such innovation in Southeast Asia. With its European administration and large foreign Asian population, the city presented local inhabitants with the opportunity to observe and participate in new economic activities, to adopt and adapt useful novel ideas, and even to establish sexual liaisons with the foreigners which produced the various types of mestizo or mixed racial/ethnic communities. These mestizo communities flourished in the cities and became the ideal intermediaries, helping to bridge the social, economic, cultural, and technological gaps which divided the foreign groups from the Southeast Asians.

The frequent interaction between Southeast Asians and foreign groups also led to transmission of ideas in shipbuilding and firearms technology. The Southeast Asian boat had evolved through contact with traditions of neighbouring lands, and local shipwrights continued to build new types of ships, modify existing ones, or abandon outdated designs in accordance

with their needs. The vastly increased presence of European and foreign Asian shipping in Southeast Asian waters in this period provided the Southeast Asian with an ideal opportunity to learn new foreign shipbuilding techniques and to make crucial decisions regarding the feasibility of competing with particular foreign carriers or warships. The decisions taken were to have important repercussions on Southeast Asia's ability to maintain its dominance in both long-distance and regional trade.

The technology of firearms was introduced to Southeast Asia via China, India, and Turkey, but it was Europe which made the greatest impact on local firearms production in this period. While Southeast Asians had learned to manufacture their own cannon, handguns, and gunpowder, they and the rest of the world were left in the wake of the European as a result of a technological revolution in the late seventeenth century which took the European to the forefront in firearms technology. The Southeast Asians on the whole attempted to incorporate the latest ideas, but cultural factors hindered a total adoption of the new technology. An added obstacle was the policy of the European governments in Asia to deny outsiders access to this information, thereby reducing Southeast Asia's ability to maintain the pace of change.

This, then, is a story of certain innovations and adaptations which occurred in Southeast Asia as a result of the interactions between foreign groups and the local inhabitants between 1500 and 1800. The Southeast Asians received foreign groups with their new ideas, and they adopted and adapted those ideas which best suited their purposes. In the past such an approach had always been appropriate, and in this period there was little reason to believe that a selective response would not once again prove successful in strengthening and enriching Southeast Asian society.

THE COMING OF FOREIGN GROUPS

The Asians

Throughout their long trade and cultural relations, China has always regarded Southeast Asia as inferior in status. China was the Middle Kingdom, the Centre of the Universe, the superior and self-sufficient civilization. The non-Chinese 'barbarian' races sought contact with China to receive its beneficence in the form of knowledge and material goods. Objects from the outside world could therefore be regarded only as 'tribute', while reciprocal goods in exchange from the Chinese emperor were seen as 'gifts'. In keeping with this state philosophy, all foreign trade was entrusted to the Ministry of Ritual Affairs (*Li bu*). Chinese imperial governments actively discouraged the movements of their traders to foreign lands and regarded overseas trade as 'tributary trade', a concept which had originally applied to China's relations with its nomadic neighbours but later extended to all foreign groups. Soon after 1433, the date of the last of seven vast overseas expeditions known as the 'Ming voyages',

the Ming emperors turned away from the sea and enforced a policy in which 'not even a little plank was allowed to drift to the sea'.¹ The state-initiated expeditions ended, and all overseas trade was placed under a ban, not to be lifted until 1567.

Despite the periodic central government decrees forbidding such trade, the southeastern provinces of Fujian, Guangdong, and Zhejiang were not significantly hampered in their traditional participation in overseas commerce. Fujian had been engaged in this trade since the ninth century and was the first to establish large settled communities in the 'Nanyang' ('Southern Ocean', the term used to refer to Southeast Asia). Quanzhou, the centre for Fujianese maritime enterprises between the ninth and the fifteenth centuries, was supplanted by Yuegang in Zhangzhou prefecture (later renamed Haicheng, as a new administrative seat in 1567) in the late fifteenth century, and in turn was displaced by Amoy (Xiamen) between the mid-seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. Fujian's prominent role in overseas ventures was due to the availability of capital derived from land and labour from a large lineage organization. Prominent local families with capital from their landed estates usually funded a junk and would hire a relative or servant to become managing 'partner' to undertake the risky overseas journey. While the shipowner held the largest part of the investment on the ship, all the crewmen were also given the opportunity to join the partnership (*gongsi*). Others were consigned space on the ship for their goods in a commenda system. It was commonplace to regard the crew as merchants first and sailors second. Rural poverty, particularly after the mid-sixteenth century, was also a contributing factor in forcing many Fujianese to go abroad, and by the beginning of the seventeenth century they were found in increasing numbers in the Philippines, Japan, and the Indonesian areas. Canton (Guangzhou) in Guangdong province and Ningbo in Zhejiang were two other ports which played an important role in China's overseas trade.

The Eastern (*Dongyang*) and Western (*Xiyang*) Seas trade system was initiated in Fujian in 1567. At Yuegang passes were awarded annually to the overseas trade guild (*yanghang*) that outfitted junks which took one of two routes. The Western Seas route went along the Southeast Asian mainland coast from Vietnam to the Malay peninsula and ended at the entrepôt of Banten in west Java. The Eastern Seas route went via Japan, the Ryukyus, the Philippines, and the Indonesian islands and had its principal terminus in Manila. In the early seventeenth century the system was disrupted by the cruisers of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC, the Dutch East India Company) which made the waters off Manila unsafe, attacked the Fujian coast, and blockaded Banten.

The disturbances created by Dutch activity on the China coast provided the opportunity in 1629 for an ex-pirate Zheng Zhilong to gain the favour of the provincial authorities and eventually control Fujian's overseas

¹ Leonard Blussé, 'Chinese commercial networks and state formation in Southeast Asia', paper presented to the Conference on Southeast Asia from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries, Lisbon, December 1989, 3.

shipping. When the Manchus began their conquest of China, the south under the dominance of the Zheng, including the famous 'Coxinga' (Zheng Chenggong), remained loyal to the Ming and continued to trade to Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, there was a marked drop in the numbers of junks arriving in the region, which forced the Chinese trade agents already settled in Southeast Asia to adapt to local economic networks in order to survive. Many of those who had settled in Batavia after 1619 were forced to move either to the northern coastal towns of Java to continue their former intermediary functions, or to the interior to become tax farmers.

With the end of Ming resistance in 1683, the new Manchu Qing dynasty adopted a more positive attitude toward overseas trade which lasted for over a century and led to greater co-operation between the merchants and state officials. The desire for security and 'maritime defence' encouraged the Qing dynasty to lift the maritime ban in 1684. They realized that places such as Fujian were dependent on international trade for their livelihood, and maritime security could be jeopardized by discontented coastal provinces. It was this security factor, rather than the ideological reasons of trade with the outside world, which was the reason for the promulgation and the rescinding of bans on overseas activities.

The return of Chinese trade and migration led to the opening of Batavia's Ommelanden where the Chinese became involved in agriculture, especially in the establishment of sugar plantations. Those who had earlier moved to the north Javanese coasts and the interior of Java helped to monetize Java's economy, with the most prominent even becoming part of the nobility in the northern coastal towns. The Fujianese were joined in this period by those from Chaozhou and Quanzhou, with the former becoming involved in the lucrative Siamese rice trade and in building junks in Ayutthaya because of the lack of suitable timber in their home region. Their ships also brought large numbers of Hakka migrants to Southeast Asia. The increased emigration from China was a major factor in the imperial authorities' decision in 1717 to impose yet another ban on overseas trade. But this ban was a failure at the very outset: trade to Vietnam was barely affected and that to the Indonesian islands was resumed after five years. The ban was thus officially withdrawn in 1727. The lifting of the ban saw the resumption of Chinese trade and migration to Southeast Asia and the involvement of Chinese in new ventures. There were those who established gambir plantations in Riau, and others who opened tin mines on Bangka and the Malay peninsula and gold mines in Borneo. With these new enterprises Chinese settlements began to sprout in the interior, as well as in the coastal towns.

After the establishment of Spanish Manila in 1571, it became one of the principal destinations for Chinese migrants, with an estimated 630 junks arriving from southern China in the first thirty years. By 1586 the Chinese population of 10,000 dwarfed the approximately 800 Spaniards and Mexican creoles in the city. The growing disparity in numbers caused the Spanish authorities grave concern and so they created a separate Chinese quarter, known as the Parian, within the Spanish walled city, the *Intramuros*. After the old Parian was burned down, a new one was built in 1595 outside the walls for security reasons. The numbers of Chinese continued

to grow despite massacres in 1603, 1639, 1661 and 1686, and in a number of other 'reprisals'. Attempts by the Spanish authorities after 1603 to limit the numbers of Chinese to 6000 through legislation proved unsuccessful, and by 1750 the Chinese population had risen to 40,000.

Batavia, founded by the Dutch East India Company in 1619, came to harbour another major concentration of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. It was the policy of the Company from the outset to attract a large population of Dutch freeburghers and Chinese. The former failed to come in sufficient numbers, and the Chinese were at first brought from coastal areas of China and from the northern Javanese port cities where Chinese communities had been established in earlier centuries. In 1620 junks began to arrive from China depositing hundreds of migrants, and with the resumption of China's official trade to Southeast Asia in 1683, the numbers of junks arriving annually in Batavia's roadstead grew from an average of three or four to about twenty. Many who came were illegal immigrants who were landed on the islands or isolated coastlines near Batavia and eventually found their way to northern Javanese ports. The new Chinese migrants were primarily from Amoy, Canton, Zhenhai, and Ningbo.

While the Dutch found the Chinese to be ideal settlers because of their diligence and ability to fulfil a great variety of tasks, they feared the sizeable Chinese population which dwarfed the European presence. Between 1680 and 1740 the Chinese population in Batavia doubled, with the Chinese accounting for 20 per cent of the total population or 50 per cent of the non-slave population. The office of Kapitan China was created by the Dutch in 1619 to administer the Chinese population, but the spectacular growth of the Chinese population in Batavia eventually led to the creation of other Chinese officials called 'lieutenants' and 'secretaries' to assist the Kapitan. By 1740 there were one captain and six lieutenants holding office in Batavia.

The third major area of Chinese concentration in Southeast Asia was in Siam, in the royal capitals of Ayutthaya, then Thonburi, and finally Bangkok. In the seventeenth century the Chinese lived both within the walls of Ayutthaya and outside. The Chinese quarter was located in the southeast corner of the city, while outside the walls the Chinese were concentrated to the south and the east. Only the Chinese and the Muslim trading communities had any substantial population in the city, and two of the finest streets ran through their quarters. Along these streets were the major public market and more than 100 two-storey houses of stone or brick with tiled roofs, which contrasted sharply with the vast majority of other buildings of bamboo and thatch. The Chinese community was so numerous that unlike the other foreign communities it had two leaders called *kapitan*, or by the Siamese noble title of *nai*. In addition to being traders and merchants, the Chinese were pig-breeders, artisans, physicians, and actors, with a fortunate few even becoming Siamese court officials.

The Chinese had a very favourable position in Siam because they were outside the system by which all freedmen (*phrai*) were registered in a specific district under a lord or noble (*nai*) and thus liable for corvée labour. The Chinese were therefore able to use the Siamese royal capital as a base and move freely throughout the country or go overseas and engage in

trade or become wage-labourers. They came to manage successful commercial enterprises and were employed by the rulers to collect taxes or to run government enterprises, such as tin-mining and state overseas trade. Since the bulk of the latter trade was with China, the Siamese court used Chinese as port officials, captains and navigators of royal junks, and purchasers and sellers of overseas consignments for the king and the nobility. In addition to the official tribute trade, Chinese merchants resident in Siam and China conducted an 'unofficial' trade by supplying products for the royal trade to China and assuring the delivery of tribute gifts to the Siamese court from the Malay vassal kingdoms. The most prominent Chinese came to serve as court officials in the Sino-Siamese tributary trade on behalf of the Ayutthaya court. Although such practices were condemned by the Chinese emperor elsewhere, he tolerated the Chinese serving the Siamese ruler as *Ratakusa-tibodi* (individuals charged with outfitting the royal junks for trade), interpreters, shipmerchants, shipmasters, and crewmen in the tributary trade.

When Taksin, the son of a Teochiu father and a Thai mother, was formally crowned in Thonburi in 1768, he was assisted by many Chinese from his father's home area of Chaozhou. Their trade provided the food and other resources necessary for Taksin to build his new capital at Thonburi on the Chao Phraya and to overcome the challenges of other Thai groups for dominance after the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. Once Taksin was firmly in control, the Chinese helped to stimulate the local economy with their gold and silver and through their international trade. In recognition of their role, Taksin created a privileged group known as the *chin luang*, or 'royal Chinese', whose role was perhaps modelled after the *huangshang* or emperor's merchants in China. He relied on them to deal not only with commercial matters but also with political and military affairs. Along the Gulf of Thailand and in peninsular Siam, Taksin appointed *chin luang* as tax farmers, provincial governors, and military commanders.

A great advantage of the Chinese as royal trade agents was their familiarity with and acceptance into international Chinese commercial circles. Through their knowledge of the China market, their personal links with the mercantile groups in southeastern China, and concessions made by Chinese authorities to Chinese sailors and Chinese-style vessels whatever the ultimate ownership of the ship or the cargo, the Chinese became indispensable to the Siamese elite for the China trade. Since those Chinese who served as officials of the state automatically became incorporated into the Siamese system of ranking based on 'dignity marks' (*sakdina*), the Chinese provided with the position of 'captain' of a trade vessel or of a tax farm achieved sufficient marks to be classified as nobility. In the late eighteenth century Chinese headmen in lower Siam were given clientships by Rama I with equivalent powers to an autonomous ruler.

While Manila, Batavia, and Ayutthaya-Thonburi-Bangkok became the three major centres of overseas Chinese populations in Southeast Asia, Vietnam through propinquity and historical circumstances continued to be a focus of Chinese activity in this period. The port of Fai-fo (present-day Hoi An) was a major trading centre in South Vietnam in the early seventeenth century and consisted of two settlements, one Japanese and

the other Chinese. By 1695 the Chinese were still prominent, serving the ten to twelve Chinese junks which arrived annually from Japan, Canton, Siam, Cambodia, Manila and Batavia. The Japanese, on the other hand, had disappeared from Vietnam and from many other parts of Southeast Asia, ending their short but spectacular involvement in the economic affairs of the region.

Toward the middle of the sixteenth century the continuous civil wars which had wracked Japan were coming to an end, and many of the lords (*daimyo*) began to devote their energies to overseas trade. The development of the domestic economy and the growth of towns gave birth to a wealthy class of merchants who also began to invest in international commerce. The first Tokugawa shogun, Ieyasu, encouraged foreign trade as a means of strengthening the finances of the shogunate. Japanese ships carrying the shogun's red seal increased in numbers in Southeast Asia, and they were welcomed by local rulers because they bore personal letters and gifts from the shogun himself. Between 1600 and 1635 more than 350 Japanese ships went overseas under the Red Seal permit system. They called into approximately nineteen ports, including Vietnam, Cambodia, the islands in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, and Luzon in the Philippines. A measure of the importance of this Japanese trade was their export of silver. Between 1615 and 1625 an estimated 130,000–160,000 kilograms of silver was sold, amounting to 30–40 per cent of the total world output outside Japan.²

The Japanese were especially prominent in Ayutthaya, and by the late 1620s the trade between Siam and Japan was probably greater than Siam's total trade with other nations. Japanese sources indicate that between 1604 and 1616 some thirty-six Japanese ships issued with the official Red Seal permit were destined for Siam, the highest number authorized for any single country in those years. A large colony of Japanese came to settle in Ayutthaya, with 1000–1500 living in the Japanese quarter of the city. King Sontham (r. 1620–8) had a personal Japanese bodyguard, and the Japanese adventurer Yamada came to wield considerable influence in the Siamese court. But in 1632 the new Siamese ruler Prasat Thong (r. 1629–56) massacred many of the Japanese in the city and forced others to flee the country. Thereafter the Chinese regained their dominance in the Siamese trade.

Between 1633 and 1636 the Tokugawa shogunate gradually closed Japan to foreign traders, but the links between Japan and Southeast Asia, especially Siam, remained open. Between 1647 and 1700 some 130 Siamese ships arrived at Nagasaki, and though the Siamese in 1715 were limited to one junk a year, it was a privilege denied many other nations. Other Southeast Asian areas benefited from Tokugawa policy which divided foreigners into three groups: the Chinese (*To-jin*), the Catholic Europeans, i.e. the Spaniards and Portuguese (*Nanban-jin*), and the Protestant Dutchmen (*Kōmōi-jin*, lit. 'red-haired people'). Among the *To-jin* was a special category for areas of Southeast Asia known as 'inner ports' (*Okuminato*). Ships

² Iwao Seiichi, 'Japanese foreign trade in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', *Acta Asiatica*, 30 (1976) 10.

from such places as Tonkin, Cambodia, Ayutthaya, Nakhon Sithammarat, Songkhla, Pattani, Melaka, and Batavia were therefore able to maintain trade with Japan.³ One important consequence of Tokugawa policy forbidding Japanese abroad from returning home was the gradual amalgamation of the Japanese community into Southeast Asian society.

A third important foreign Asian group in Southeast Asia in this period was the Indians. Like their Chinese counterparts, the Indians had been trading to Southeast Asia since the early Christian era and had left a lasting impact on local culture. Indian overseas commercial ventures were mainly in private hands, since Indian states relied on agricultural production and internal commerce for their revenue. Nevertheless, there was considerable individual investment in overseas trade by rulers, administrators, and military officials who were content to leave control in the hands of merchants.

The high cost of building a ship and of obtaining a full cargo, as well as the danger of losing all through shipwreck, discouraged most merchants from purchasing more than one ship. Although an owner-merchant could go with his ship and cargo overseas, he usually appointed an agent to captain the vessel and to undertake all the necessary commercial transactions. The owner-merchant and the captain were allotted the largest cargo space, while the rest of the ship was parcelled out to small traders who accompanied their one or two bales of cotton cloth in the hope of gaining profit overseas. These smaller merchants were able to compete effectively alongside the few wealthier ones because they were satisfied with a lower profit margin and were able to establish their own personal networks in foreign ports. The ubiquity of the Indian trader, which so impressed Tomé Pires and other Portuguese observers in the sixteenth century, was a consequence of the practice of Indian ships bringing large numbers of these small Indian merchants with their goods. The sailors and ship's officers were also provided with space to carry trade goods which were sold abroad to supplement their wretched incomes. Unlike the Chinese, however, the Indians did not settle in large numbers in Southeast Asia in this period.

The vast majority of Indian traders to Southeast Asia came from three regions: the northwest (Gujerat), the south (Malabar and Coromandel), and the northeast (Bengal). In these areas there were a few major emporia serving as collection centres for a large well-developed inland trading system, while small individual ports serviced small specific interior trade networks. The importance of Gujerat lay in the strategic location of its ports lying at the confluence of a number of trading systems. Cambay in the sixteenth, Surat in the seventeenth, and Bombay in the eighteenth century linked the oceanic regional trade of Asia with the coastal and interior trade of India. Through links with the Portuguese ports of Goa and Diu, Gujerat became part of an international trade network which extended to China in the east and Europe in the west.

South India was a second major centre for Indian overseas trade. It was pepper which had made the Malabar coast attractive to international

³ Yoneo Ishii, 'Seventeenth Century Japanese Documents about Siam', *JSS*, 59, 2 (July 1971) 164–5.

traders, and by the beginning of the seventeenth century the ports of Calicut, Travancore, and Cannanore had emerged as commercial centres. However, the Coromandel coast in southeast India proved to be even more successful in international trade than Malabar. Masulipatnam in the northern Coromandel and Nagapattinam in the southern Coromandel were the most prominent trading centres in that region. In the sixteenth century Coromandel Hindu traders, called 'Klings' by the Portuguese, frequented the ports of Portuguese Melaka, Aceh, and Banten where they had factors and agents. From these western ports they then sailed westward to the other islands in the Indonesian archipelago. Coromandel trade suffered from Dutch restrictions in the seventeenth century, but Perak, Kedah, and Johor on the Malay peninsula continued to be major terminal points of the Coromandel trade. In mainland Southeast Asia, the Coromandel merchants were active in Arakan, Ava, and Ayutthaya, with Tenasserim serving as a terminal for Mergui and a transit point to the ports on the Gulf of Thailand and Cambodia. Ayutthaya and its outlying provinces became a major growth sector in the Coromandel trade in the seventeenth century.

The decline in Coromandel's trade began in the final decade of the seventeenth century with the fall of the Qutb Shahs of Golconda. The nobility and the patrician merchants appear to have abandoned overseas commerce, and Masulipatnam in northern Coromandel survived with only a reduced amount of international trade. In southern Coromandel Porto Novo, the successor to Nagapatnam, San Tomé, and Cuddalore became the chief ports of the principal Tamil Muslim traders known as 'Chulias'. They reaffirmed links with the rulers of Kedah, Johor, Arakan and Ayutthaya, which had been forged in earlier centuries.

Bengal was the third major Indian area involved in Southeast Asia. In the sixteenth century Satgaon and Chittagong were the two major ports from which Bengal merchants sailed to the Southeast Asian areas, but in the seventeenth century they were replaced by Hooghly, Pipli and Balasore. Bengal's trade was directed principally to Aceh, the Malay peninsula, and to the Burmese and Thai coasts. The Bengal Muslim merchants who were prominent in this trade in the seventeenth century consisted of influential expatriate merchants from west Asia, and possibly from Surat and Golconda, as well as local Islamic communities who were converts from Hindu seafaring castes. Hindu merchants were also an important part of the Bengal trade, though they were less influential than the Muslims. As in the other areas of India, Bengal witnessed a decline in its overseas trade toward the end of the seventeenth century due to the political and economic chaos in the interior.

The Europeans

In addition to the foreign Asians, the Europeans formed another substantial presence in Southeast Asia between 1500 and 1800. The new European traders had a distinct advantage over their more established and more experienced Asian counterparts because they enjoyed support from their governments. Indeed, the earliest European ventures were those initiated

and funded by the Portuguese and Spanish royal houses, with the former the first to undertake a systematic policy of finding a direct sea route between Europe and the spice-producing areas of Asia. Since the fourteenth century Portuguese rulers had encouraged the successful trading families of Italy, Spain and France to settle in Lisbon by granting them special privileges. This policy succeeded in making Portugal the 'wharf between two seas',⁴ serving both the northern European and the Mediterranean states. By the end of the century there were an estimated 400–500 ships loading annually in the port of Lisbon. The enclaves of Genoese, Venetians, Florentines, Flemings, French, and Germans established in Portugal provided the expertise and capital which encouraged the Crown to expand its trade links beyond Europe.

A major impetus for overseas expansion was the trade in spices—pepper, cinnamon, and the highly-desired trinity of clove, nutmeg, and mace. In the second half of the fifteenth century, Turkish control of the Levant forced the traditional spice routes to move away from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea. The desire to escape this dependence on the Muslims (an association which in Portugal had been strictly limited by law and constantly condemned by the Church) and to participate directly in the highly lucrative spice trade were important stimuli in Portugal's gradual search for a sea route to Asia. In the first half of the fifteenth century Prince Henry the Navigator encouraged a systematic programme of discovery, which culminated in Vasco da Gama's successful voyage to the west coast of India in 1498. The arrival in Asia was the culmination of Portugal's 'Glorious Enterprise' which had been motivated by a blend of religious fervour, national pride, and commercial profit. Though the Portuguese had not yet reached the home of the fabled clove, nutmeg, and mace in Maluku, da Gama's cargo of spices 'together with the boughs and leaves of the same' aroused considerable excitement in Portugal. To keep the new route a secret, King Manuel of Portugal decreed in 1504 that, on pain of death, complete secrecy must be maintained with regard to the new discoveries. This ban appeared to have been successful, for not a single book on the new information being collected on Asia by the Portuguese is known to have been published during the first fifty years of the sixteenth century.

Afonso de Albuquerque became the architect of the Portuguese Asian empire, or the *Estado da India*, with its administrative centre at Goa. It was he who conceived of the strategy to control the vital nodes of the spice route. This meant seizing Melaka, the principal collecting port of cloves, nutmeg, mace, and Southeast Asian pepper; controlling maritime traffic along the west coast of India; capturing Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf; and conquering Aden, which was strategically located at the entrance to the Red Sea. This grand plan nearly succeeded: the island of Goa fell in 1510, to be followed by Melaka in 1511 and Hormuz in 1515. Only Aden successfully resisted a Portuguese attack in 1513 and remained outside direct Portuguese control.

The Portuguese Crown created a unique form of state capitalism. It

⁴ B. W. Diffie and G. D. Winius, *Foundations of the Portuguese empire 1415–1580*, Minneapolis, 1977, 41.