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0521663725 - The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia: From World War II to the Present,  
Volume Four

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF  
SOUTHEAST ASIA

VOLUME FOUR

From World War II to the present

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# THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

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edited by

NICHOLAS TARLING



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## NOTE ON SPELLING

The spelling of proper names and terms has caused editor and contributors considerable problems. Even a certain arbitrariness may have not produced consistency across a range of contributions, and that arbitrariness contained its own inconsistencies. In general we have aimed to spell 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.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AFPFL	Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, Burma.
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations.
BKI	<i>Bijdragen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde</i> , 's-Gravenhage.
BSPP	Burma Socialist Programme Party.
BWS	Burmese Way to Socialism.
DAP	Democratic Action Party, Malaysia.
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam.
GCBA	General Council of Burmese Associations.
ICP	Indochina Communist Party.
ISDV	Indische Sociaal-Demokratische Vereeniging (Indies Social-Democratic Association).
ISEAS	Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore.
JAS	<i>Journal of Asian Studies</i> , Ann Arbor.
JMBRAS	<i>Journal of the Malay/Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i> , Kuala Lumpur.
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.
MCP	Malayan Communist Party.
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front.
MPAJA	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army.
NLF	National Liberation Front, Vietnam.
NPA	New People's Army, The Philippines.
PAP	People's Action Party, Singapore.
PAS	Partai Islam se Tanah Malaya (Pan-Malayan Islamic Party).
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party).



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PNI	Perserikatan Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Association).
RVN	Republic of Vietnam.
SEAC	South-East Asia Command.
SEATO	South-East Asia Treaty Organization.
SRV	Socialist Republic of Vietnam.
UMNO	United Malays National Organization.

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## PREFACE TO THE PAPERBACK 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 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 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 greater than the sum of the parts.

The first 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 second volume contains Part 2 of the original Volume 1, covering the years c. 1500 to c. 1800, and the third volume covers the period from c. 1800 to the 1930s. The present volume deals with World War II and since, and also contains a bibliography of bibliographies on Southeast Asia.

Discussions about the work, both in the course of its preparation and since, have raised questions both about its regional approach and its periodization, questions that are indeed of enduring interest to historians and their readers, though not susceptible of enduring answers. The prefaces to the previous paperback volumes have again taken up those questions. They put forward the suggestion that 'Southeast Asia' is still a useful category, though we should always be on our guard lest we are tempted to over-emphasize either its cohesion or its diversity. They offer a similar defence of the periodization the work adopted, all the more necessary, perhaps, now that those periods may now divide one book from another rather than one part of a book. The defence comes as it were in the form of a health warning. The divisions cannot be hard and fast, implying, say, an over-emphasis on external factors rather than indigenous, or precluding a differential relationship among them in different parts of the region.

The debate on such matters is symptomatic of the historical approach. The advances the discipline has made depend partly on the application of its methods, designed as they are to maximize the objectivity with which the various materials at hand must be tackled, however elusive this objective may be. They also depend on the conditions under which an historian works and on the concerns of the society to which the historian belongs. Present-mindedness, though it has been responsible for major errors, has often brought with it a major access of new insight—bearing error and distortion not in arbitrary solitude but in a kind of fertile if illicit union with intellectual

discovery' (R. Hofstadter, quoted in Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 407). The paradox is thus less complete than it seems. No view can be final, since we cannot know all the 'facts', and cannot be entirely objective in interpreting them. Successive revisions of the past are not therefore a reason for condemning the historical discipline: they are, as Barzun and Graff suggest, 'additive' (J. Barzun and Henry F. Graff, *The Modern Researcher* 4th edition, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1985, p. 191). They are, too, a sign of its vitality.

The nature of the debate about the present volume, like that about the earlier volumes, reflects these issues, but in a somewhat different way. It covers a relatively recent period, all of it within the adulthood of many living people, and some of it at least widely regarded as contemporary. To write its history may seem somewhat foolhardy. Not to do so, however, would be to fail to respond to a widespread curiosity about the recent as well as the distant past of the region, or to endeavour at least to keep the record straight at a time when the past, recent and distant, is often invoked, but almost as often misrepresented or even traduced. A great deal of material is available, it will be said, and its copiousness is indeed as daunting to the historian as its paucity in earlier periods. But much of what is available, particularly in respect of the last three decades, is only what can be found in the public domain, or has been dragged more or less reluctantly or partially into that domain. That is, however, not a reason to avoid the attempt. Later historians can put us right, and meanwhile survivors of the recent past may be prompted to comment, digging, with whatever degree of reliability, into the sands of memory.

The open-endedness of the venture presents, however, yet another difficulty. Without a longer-term perspective, we may be even less sure about the framework of our history. At the time this work was conceived, for example, the region was perceived in terms of economic growth, and some of its countries were, in actuality or potentially, among the 'tigers'. That affected the focus of historians. Were we right to choose a periodization that stressed the significance of the political changes brought about by the Pacific War? Now we may be asking ourselves whether or not the economic crisis that began in 1997 is marking off a new division in Southeast Asian history.

It may also lead us to question the regional concept. In this period it did indeed gain a new measure of acceptance. Initially that seemed rather to echo the political and military concerns that had popularized the concept of 'Southeast Asia' during World War II. Now it became a part of the world which was contested in the Cold War, the countries of which might fall like dominoes to the communists as they once had to the Japanese. Even before that war came to an end, however, the newly independent countries in the region had seen the possibility of an unprecedented degree of cooperation among themselves, partly in order to limit the penetration of outside powers, and partly to enhance the economic prospects of the region. Will that be sustained in the years of economic crisis? The answer may again shape the attitude of historians, among whom the regional concept has been both contested and stimulating.

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The outbreak of the Pacific War, in which the resources of the region had a crucial role, has been the source of deep controversy and also of much historical argument. Among the most recent works is A. Best, *Britain, Japan and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936–41* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995). Two recent authors have focused on the place of Southeast Asia in the diplomacy of the period: Richard J. Aldrich, *The Key to the South* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1993) and myself, *Britain, Southeast Asia and the Onset of the Pacific War* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

The Japanese occupation has continued to attract attention, not only because of its intrinsic interest, but also because of its position in the long-term history of the relationships between Southeast Asia and Japan. Most of the recent work takes a country-by-country approach. That applies even to the collection edited by Grant Goodman, *Japanese Cultural Policies in Southeast Asia during World War 2* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992). Among the contributors to that volume are Aiko Kurasawa, whose thesis on occupied Java dates from 1988, Kenichi Goto, and Yoji Akashi. Goto also contributes to a collection edited by Peter Post and Elly Touwen-Bouwisma, *Japan, Indonesia and the War: Myths and Realities* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997), as does Sato Shigeru, author, too, of *War, Nationalism and Peasants: Java under the Japanese Occupation* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994). Another collection on the Japanese occupation appeared in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* March 1996, and its editor, Paul Kratoska, a contributor to Volume 3 of *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, has published *The Japanese Occupation of Malaya 1941–1945* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998). E. Bruce Reynolds revised his thesis as *Thailand and Japan's Southern Advance* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1994), and the completion of David Marr's masterly trilogy on Vietnamese nationalism came with *Vietnam 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

The historiography of decolonization in Southeast Asia has benefited both from the official publication of extracts from the records in the US, the UK, the Netherlands and Australia, and from monographs relating to particular countries. Among those are Albert Lau, *The Malayan Union Controversy* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), and Simon C. Smith, *British Relations with the Malay Rulers from Decentralization to Malayan Independence* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995). Those concerned with Indonesia may look at two ends of the spectrum of leadership with Robert Cribb's *Gangsters and Revolutionaries* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991) and Rudolf Mrazek's biography of Sjahrir (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). A useful collection, edited by Robert Holland, is *Emergencies and Disorder in the European Empires after 1945* (London: Cass, 1994). My *Britain, Southeast Asia and the Onset of the Cold War* (Cambridge University Press, 1998) attempts an overview. The role of the USA in this period has been well discussed in William J. Duiker, *US Containment policy and the Conflict in Indochina* (Stanford University Press, 1994) and Daniel Fineman, *A Special Relationship. The United States and Military Government in Thailand, 1947–1958* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997).

The nature of the régimes that consolidated themselves in the 1970s and 1980s is well analyzed in David Brown, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994). William Case offers



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an interpretation of Malaysian politics in *Elites and Regimes in Malaysia: Revisiting a Consociational Democracy* (Melbourne: Monash Asia Institute, 1996), and a number of regional studies are among those that dealt with Suharto's Indonesia, such as Ichlasul Amal, *Regional and Central Government in Indonesian Politics: West Sumatra and South Sulawesi 1949–79* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1992) and Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989–1992* (Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1995). Separatism is the focus of Clive Christie's *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism* (London and New York: Tauris, 1996), and ethnicity the focus of Anthony Reid's new research project.

Recent books on the development of ASEAN include Sueo Sudo, *The Fukuda Doctrine and ASEAN* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1992), Leszek Buszynski, *Gorbachev and Southeast Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), and, particularly perceptive, Dewi Fortune Anwar, *Indonesia in ASEAN: Foreign Policy and Regionalism* (New York: St Martin's Press, and Singapore: ISEAS, 1994).

So brief a selection only suggests the quantity and quality of the work now being done on contemporary Southeast Asia. Like its longer-term history, it offers plenty of challenge to the student. Bringing the two together is the special task of the historian. The present volumes represent only one of the ways in which it may be done. The door is open both to new work and to new interpretation from within the region, from without, or from both.

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## INTRODUCTION

Writing a history of Southeast Asia as a region presents many challenges: the diversity the region displays in so many fields of human endeavour makes its history exciting but intractable. But if this is true throughout, the period during and since World War II presents the historian with special problems. By contrast to much of the earlier history, the period is copiously covered in written and printed documents. But they tell only part of the story. The period is, too, relatively recent, so that, in assimilating and analyzing the material, it is hard to be sure that the right themes have been chosen. Even determining the date at which to stop is fraught with difficulty. The authors of this part have accepted that their approach must be tentative. At times they must content themselves more with narrative than interpretation.

The period indeed opens with an event the impact of which is still clearly being felt, the Japanese invasion and the collapse of the European empires. This is discussed in Chapter 1. Once more the fortunes of Southeast Asia were profoundly affected by forces outside the region. Once more its peoples reacted in a variety of ways. The colonial régimes were destroyed. In the Japanese phase new social and political opportunities were opened up for some, new constraints placed on others. The economy of the region, damaged in the Great Depression, was profoundly dislocated. Parts of it were fought over, parts not. The attempts of the colonial powers to return were again variously successful. Nationalist movements contended for power. They faced not only returning colonial rulers, but new local rivals. Their success was also partly dependent on the impact of changes outside the region, the decline of British and the rise of US power, the Cold War, the triumph of Chinese communism, the independence of India.

In general the nationalist élites inherited the colonial states. Their task was now to govern them. The political structures that they used are surveyed in Chapter 2. It argues that some structures were particularly shaped by war and revolution. Others were plural in nature, particularly those set up in the early years of independence. A third category the analysis discerns is maximum government. Its emergence may at least in part relate to the impact of and opportunities offered by the Asia-Pacific economic boom from the 1960s.

Chapter 3 discusses economic and social change in Southeast Asia. The

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leadership of the new states had to argue that independence would mean the end of poverty and developmental backwardness. Most sought growth, generally involving a good deal of direct government involvement in the economy. Different ideologies affected government policy. But so did the changing international environment, to which as ever Southeast Asia had to respond. That in turn was affected both by the economic policies of particular outside powers and by global economic trends. The search for growth met varying success, but urbanization and industrialization were often accompanied by degradation of the environment. Traditional hierarchy and community were challenged, sometimes enthusiastically, sometimes more doubtfully. Most Southeast Asians achieved some compromise between the old and the new. The other options were protest and, rarely successful now that the state was unprecedentedly strong, rebellion.

The region remains a site of encounter between divergent world-views, and its peoples experience a rich variety of religious experiences. Earlier transformations in Southeast Asian history had been attended by changes in religion, and, Chapter 4 suggests, pragmatic utilitarianism may be the most powerful missionary force in the Southeast Asia of the late twentieth century. But older patterns persist, particularly at the village level. They have also been taken up by the state, as governing élites seek to turn them to account, and in particular to integrate the states they have inherited. They continue, however, to have a vitality of their own. In effect, traditionalism, magic, millenarianism, mysticism, scripturalism and fundamentalism exist within all the world religions of the region. The experience of the spiritual among Southeast Asians remains intense, but increasingly they are likely to have faith in religion rather than accept it as an integral part of a whole system.

Throughout this work the authors have sought to adopt a regional approach to the history of Southeast Asia. The majority of them come from outside Southeast Asia, and it may be easier for those who live elsewhere to conceive of it as a region than for those who live in a Southeast Asian country. Chapter 5, which is the last chapter of the work as a whole, suggests that regionalism was slow to develop both because of the concern of the nationalist governments with consolidating the new states and because of the continued intervention of outside powers. But by the last decade of the century Southeast Asia had substantially determined the character of its nations and established a degree of regional cohesion. Though the region was as ever an object of interest to the great powers, its states had secured some control over their fate.