

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

■ INTRODUCTION

There is a good deal in common among the cultures, traditions and histories of the peoples living within the regions we usually know as East Asia and Southeast Asia. Other than a few areas like the pastures of Inner Mongolia, the economies of the overwhelming bulk of these two regions were based on agriculture. The staple diet of the great majority of the people of East and Southeast Asia was — and still is — rice, a highly productive cereal that has dominated the agriculture of most of the region since the early centuries A.D. Most people lived in villages and by far the most important productive calling was farming.

The organizations of most of their societies were hierarchical, with the welfare of the individual subordinated to that of the group. Almost all these societies were based on the family, three generations usually living together. Generally speaking, young people deferred to old and females to males. However, the degree of patriarchal dominance varied greatly from society to society. It was generally far stronger in the Confucian and Islamic societies than the Buddhist, and in China, Japan and Korea than in Southeast Asia. (Murphey, 1992: 4–6.) Reid argues (1988: 146—147) that females had a relatively high degree of autonomy throughout Southeast Asia, except in Confucian Vietnam.

Defined as those territories within the current states that make up China, Japan, North and South Korea, and the states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Asia Pacific can be defended as a valid and more or less coherent unit for the

purposes of study. Yet there are also great diversities among the peoples of East and Southeast Asia. The traditions of China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam are strongly dominated by Confucianism, a state-centric ideology I cover in more detail later. Government in Southeast Asia featured kings and chieftains but, other than in Vietnam, was commonly less centralized than in the Confucian states, with no defined, let alone fixed, borders. The political influence of the sovereign diminished the further away one travelled from the centre (Stuart-Fox, 2000: 84).

It is also worth noting that there are some factors making the countries of Asia Pacific more diverse than other great civilization centres. If we make a comparison, for instance, with Europe, the differences are quite pronounced. Once Christianity reached an ascendant, it became a common, if not necessarily unifying, factor throughout almost all Europe until the onset of modern secularism. The most important exceptions were those territories that adopted Islam through belonging to the Turkish Ottoman Empire. In East and Southeast Asia, on the other hand, as Keri Cole details in Chapter 12, we find several major faiths with major influence and a plethora of folk religions as well. Buddhism, Islam and Christianity were among universalist religions competing for influence, with Confucianism, Shinto and Daoism also enjoying an impact in specific places. There are two broad forms of Buddhism: termed Mahayana and Theravada. Mahayana Buddhism prevails in Vietnam, Japan and all of China, except for one portion of Yunnan Province. Southeast Asian Buddhists, such as the Thais and Burmese, accept Theravada Buddhism. The older form of Buddhism is Theravada, while the Mahayana tradition claims to represent the Buddha's most complete teachings. Besides religion, a further source of diversity in the region is language and script. In Europe almost all languages belong to

the Indo-European family, the most notable exceptions being Finnish, Hungarian and Basque. Only three, related, scripts are in use, namely the Latin, Greek and Cyrillic, with the Latin alphabet being the overwhelmingly dominant form of writing, except in Greece, Russia, Bulgaria and Serbia. By contrast, the countries of East and Southeast Asia developed a plethora of languages, belonging to several different language families, including the Sino-Tibetan, Tai, Austro-Asiatic and Austronesian. Traditionally there were many scripts, though several major languages have adopted the Latin alphabet. The most widely used script is Chinese characters, which differ from most writing systems in being totally non-alphabetic. Vietnamese is closely related to Chinese linguistically and used Chinese characters until the French Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes (1591–1660) perfected a script called Quoc-ngu based closely on the Latin alphabet. Japanese and Korean are totally unrelated linguistically to Chinese, but have adopted Chinese characters. Japanese still uses Chinese characters and two syllabaries based on Chinese characters. In 1446 Korean King Sejong ordered the adoption of a specifically Korean syllabary called *hangul*. Aristocratic Korean literature continued to use Chinese, but novels adopted the Korean script.

For the purposes of definition and scholarly classification, it is both appropriate and desirable to define a region according to the political borders of existing nation-states. However, I should point out that these borders have not necessarily been constant over history. The oldest “state” in the region is probably the one we know today as “China.” The Chinese are justly proud of their history of “unity,” and there is a long Chinese tradition of a large territory within a state ruled by a single emperor. But the fact remains that it has not always been a Chinese government that has ruled over the territory

currently called “China,” and much of it has not always been within “China,” or whatever this state was known as at the time. There have been periods when two or several dynasties ruled over the territory that is nowadays regarded as China.

Even Japan, which has the great advantage, in terms of establishing borders, of being a set of islands, has seen periods of disunity and civil war. Southeast Asia has been anything but stable politically over its long history. The territories governed by the various Southeast Asian kings, chieftains and emperors have shifted over time and have often been quite porous anyway. There has been a recognizable Vietnamese kingdom for many centuries, but there have been times when the northern part of what is today Vietnam was part of China. Kingdoms like Champa (founded A.D. 192) took up much of the territory of the central and southern coastal areas of Vietnam until the Vietnamese absorbed it in the seventeenth century. The concept of “Indonesia” is mainly a modern one, deriving its legitimacy from the nationalist movement.

■ THE PEOPLING OF THE ASIA PACIFIC

The earliest finds of the species *homo erectus* (literally “person standing erect”) were made in 1890 by the Dutch army surgeon Eugène Dubois. Because he made the discoveries in Java, now in Indonesia, following them up with others on the same island, we usually know this species as Java man. The 1920s saw the unearthing of *homo erectus* remains at Zhoukoudian near Beijing, and since the English-language name for the city at the time was Peking, the specimens attracted the name “Peking man.” These and other finds in China and Vietnam date from about 500,000 years ago, and there

seems little doubt that the species *homo erectus* was widespread through the region of concern to this book by then, and probably quite a bit earlier. These hominids appear to have used chopping tools, such as hand axes. At least some of them lived in caves and had achieved the mastery of fire.

About 200,000 years ago, modern humankind or *homo sapiens* (literally “wise person”) superseded *homo erectus* and became the only human species on the planet. At approximately similar times, the minor differences in body characteristics we associate with different peoples began to emerge. These include facial features, colour of skin and extent of body hair. This suggests that the *homo erectus* found in East and Southeast Asia evolved into *homo sapiens* there, but of course this does not exclude the possibility of migrations from elsewhere or within the region.

However, the earliest evidence of human culture comes not from East and Southeast Asia but from further west. The earliest known Neolithic cultures in China are based in the Yellow River valley and date from about 6500 BC to 5000 B.C., being thus considerably more recent than counterparts in western Asia. These cultures produced unpainted pottery and practiced agriculture, living in villages. They had domesticated pigs and dogs and stored grain, mainly millet, underground.

The Yangshao Neolithic culture (about 5000 to 3000 B.C.) is well represented in the village of Banpo, which is still preserved as an archaeological site and tourist attraction just outside Xi’an, capital of Shaanxi Province, China. The burial places are relatively even, suggesting a reasonably flat society, including some measure of gender equality. There is evidence of “a slash-and-burn type of shifting agriculture largely dependent on the cultivation of an indigenous millet” (Fairservis, 1997: 230). The pottery

here is far more elaborate than in the earlier Neolithic predecessors, with colourful painted decorations.

Despite their ethnic similarities with the Chinese, the spoken languages of the Koreans and Japanese are totally different from any Sino-Tibetan tongue. There are, however, many similarities in the two languages both with each other and with north Asian Altaic languages. This suggests that both peoples descended, at least to a large extent, from migrants from the north. There are signs of cultures in Korea from about the third millennium B.C., in Japan probably earlier. Already in those early days, both Koreans and Japanese were able to make pottery but were not yet able to practice agriculture, making what they needed to survive through hunting and gathering, with fish a primary part of their diet.

The grains which archaeologists found signs of in northern China did not include rice, though by late Neolithic times rice may have become a major part of the diet of Chinese in the south, where the climate is milder and wetter than in the north. (Von Falkenhausen, 1991: 138–140). However, it is quite possible that one of the quintessential features of the cultures of East and Southeast Asia, rice cultivation, was found earliest in the region not in China but in mainland Southeast Asia. Rice and small cattle may have been domesticated in Thailand as early as 6000 B.C. (Fairservis, 1997: 230.) And as far as the situation further east is concerned, one Vietnamese author has written (Nguyen, 1993: 9):

It is reasonable to assume that at the end of the Neolithic Era, about 5,000–6,000 years ago, most of the primitive human beings living on the territory of present-day

Vietnam were entering into the era of rice cultivation. Recent archaeological discoveries have provided evidence of this everywhere, from north to south, from highlands to lowlands, and from littoral areas to islands off the coast.

At a time before written records and from a source that scholars have not determined with certainty the Malay peoples spread over most of Southeast Asia. There is a wide range of peoples in island Southeast Asia, in what is today Indonesia and the Philippines, and non-peninsular Malaysia. However, their languages and ethnicities are broadly similar, pointing to common origins, as Katherine Kaup describes in further detail in Chapter 10.

There are Malay peoples also in many parts of mainland Southeast Asia. However, from the third or fourth millennium B.C., and extending over many centuries, mainland Southeast Asia sustained a series of migrations from the north and northwest. The fact that there was also migration the other way is shown in the ethnic composition of Yunnan Province in China, but the mainstream migration was *towards* mainland Southeast Asia and *from* China, including the Tibetan areas.

It is notable that for a long period what is today south China and much of mainland Southeast Asia formed a single cultural region. Northern Vietnam was very similar in language, culture and ethnicity to southern China and even today the influence is very obvious. The languages of mainland Southeast Asia evince the strong impact of the Sino-Tibetan family, suggesting cultural influence. But there are very important ways in which influence moved in the opposite direction as well. For example, it has already been mentioned that rice cultivation may well have spread from Southeast Asia to China.

Southeast Asia was probably the first place in the world to domesticate the chicken and the water buffalo and possibly even the pig. And the domestication of these fowl and animals, so crucial to humankind over the ages, spread both north and northwest, to China, India and Europe (Murphey, 1992: 12–15).

Cultural diffusion from India created a gigantic impact on all of Southeast Asia, except northern Vietnam, where the Chinese were in control, and the Philippines, which was too distant geographically. Indianization was an extremely gradual process beginning, probably, in the very early centuries A.D. It was from India that Buddhism, Hinduism and writing systems were introduced to Southeast Asia. To this day, Indian influences are very obvious in the arts of Indonesia; for instance, it is Indian themes that dominate Javanese shadow plays and Indian motifs that are used in traditional *batik* designs.

The method of this cultural diffusion was *not*, as one might have expected, mass migration of Indians. On the contrary, it appears that “a relatively limited number of traders and priest-scholars brought Indian culture in its various forms to Southeast Asia where much, but not all, of this culture was absorbed by the local population and joined to their existing cultural patterns” (Osborne, 2000: 28). And it may be, also, that Southeast Asian travellers, traders and/or religious specialists also brought back Indian concepts to their home countries.

■ POLITICAL PATTERNS OF THE PAST AND “THE STATE”

There is an enormous literature on “the state” and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to contribute to it. For present purposes, I understand “the state” as that complex

of institutions/people contributing to governance and holding some degree of sovereignty or control in a defined territory. In most periods, including the ancient periods under discussion here, a state has access to a writing system and military force, it controls wealth and resources, at least to some extent, and has a state ideology or religion. [It would be useful to explain specifically how states differ from kingdoms or dynasties.]

Among the countries covered in this book, it was in China that we first find politics developed to the stage where we can talk of recognizable “states.” The major states of Korea, Japan and Southeast Asia all belong to a much later period. Also, China exerted considerable influence on the growth of the state in neighbouring countries especially Korea and Vietnam, and also to some extent Japan. The Chinese state has for millennia been the most populous of the world. At the time of the birth of Christ, there were some 58 million people living in China (Ebrey, 1996: 73), somewhat more than in the Roman Empire, while the total population of humanity was about 300 million. For these three reasons, age, influence and population, it is necessary to allocate quite a bit of space to the growth of the state in China.

□ **The State in China**

Probably the first “state” in the Asia Pacific, as defined in this book, was China’s Shang dynasty (c. 1554 B.C.—1045 B.C.). Although sceptics doubted even the existence of the Shang at one time, extensive archaeological finds, especially near its last capital Anyang in Henan province, have enabled us to piece together some crucial features of this political and cultural entity. The Shang had a capital city and a royal dynasty, which exercised power, at least in part through military force, and levied taxes. Many oracle

bones have been discovered showing the first cast-iron evidence of writing in the history of the Asia Pacific. There was a complex ritual attached to the dynasty and a religion based in part on ancestor worship. “At the core of the state were groups of ritual specialists, administrators, warriors, artisans and retainers linked to the royal house by blood, belief and self-interest” (Keightley, 1991: 143).

With the fall of the Shang, another “state” was established, headed by the Zhou dynasty (c. 1122—221 B.C.). In its heyday, the Zhou held control over a fairly extensive territory, certainly far more than the Shang had done. In due course, however, the Zhou monarchy declined to a small area while more or less independent kingdoms fought for control. This period of the Warring States lasted from about the middle of the fifth century B.C. to the conquests of the Qin two centuries and more later. The constant wars made this a miserable period for the people as a whole, but it was nevertheless a spectacularly great one for the growth of Chinese philosophy and culture.

In 221 B.C., one of these “warring states,” namely the Qin, achieved dominance over all the others and established a powerful unified state. The leader of it is known to history as “the first emperor of Qin,” or Qin Shihuang. This man went out of his way to create a unified country. He imposed uniformity on the writing system and on weights and measures. Before his time there were significant differences in the writing of characters throughout China, but the standard characters his regime enforced remained essentially unchanged until the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) simplified the Chinese script in the 1950s.

Qin Shihuang is famous in Chinese history for his cruelty. Confucian historians have castigated him for his excessive emphasis on punishments as a way of creating

social stability. In 213 BC several scholars recommended the restoration of much of the old system of government, partly because they believed that antiquity should be regarded as a model. Qin Shihuang's response was to have many of these scholars buried alive and to order the burning of all books except those on farming, medicine and divination. It was Qin Shihuang's rule that first brought together into a single whole that great icon of Chinese civilization, the Great Wall. In the 1970s, archaeologists found thousands of terracotta warriors and horses near his grave-mound. This magnificent set of art-works was designed to protect Qin Shihuang in his afterlife.

Qin Shihuang expected that the empire he founded would last ten thousand years. However, it lasted only four after he died in 210 B.C. Peasant rebellion broke out against the harsh rule of the Qin, and, after a period of civil war, a peasant called Liu Bang set up the great and long-lasting Han dynasty (202 B.C.— A.D. 220), with himself on the throne as Gaozu ("the High or Eminent Ancestor"). The initial task of the Han emperors was to establish a state that would not be anything like as harsh as the Qin but would nevertheless be stable and strong. It was Wudi ("the Martial Emperor," 141–87 B.C.) who succeeded in doing this. His basic formula was a mixture of rigid authoritarianism with "a moral basis of superior-subordinate relations" based on Confucianism (Ebrey, 1996: 65). He broke the power of rival aristocracy by taking over their lands, and seized all power himself. He directed his subjects' labours into enriching the state and his own court. He set up the Grand Academy in 124 B.C. with the aim of instructing selected students in the Confucian classics. This contributed greatly to implementing the idea of the moral bureaucracy in the service of the emperor.

The net effect of the Qin unification and the Han restoration was the creation of what one scholar has called “the bureaucratic empire” (Ebrey, 1996: 60). This was a highly developed “state” with several main features. It was highly centralized and authoritarian and its emperors, assuming they were competent, were extremely powerful. It established the notion of the strong central state, which has survived in China down to the present. It had access to immense wealth through taxes and the labour of the peasants. It controlled an extremely powerful army. At the same time, its bureaucracy was selected in theory less through hereditary privilege than through learning and morality. The state was supposed to value the interests of the people and ensure a good livelihood for them in return for their loyalty.

More will be said about the methods of ruling this state and on the nature of Confucianism in the section on “state polity.” Here I note merely that the basic features of this “bureaucratic empire” remained constant until the twentieth century, and some would argue until the twenty-first. By saying this, I do not imply that there was no change. Chinese history is not static and the culture and society of the late imperial age are very different from those of the Han dynasty. Yet in terms of its political nature and culture, China may be less dynamic than some other great civilizations. (See, for instance, Murphey, 1999: 49–50).

The borders of China waxed and waned throughout the ages, reaching their greatest extent during the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). At times there were two or even more claimants to the throne, or two or a plurality of thrones within what we know as China. But the fact remained that unity was the ideal. There should never be more than one emperor at any one time, ruling “all under Heaven” (*tianxia*), that is, the empire. And it is

true that among large continental states, China has a particularly unified history. After the Roman Empire split asunder, it never came together again, and all attempts to reunify Europe have ended in failure. But when Han-dynasty China disintegrated in the third century A.D., the state was reunified by the Sui dynasty in A.D. 589 and though there have been periods of disunity since then, they are outweighed greatly in time and importance by the periods of unity.

According to the Marxist historiography of the People's Republic of China (PRC), "feudalism" lasted for 2,000 years or more, essentially from the time the Qin dynasty destroyed the slave-owning system of the preceding period until the mid-nineteenth century. Western scholars such as Henri Maspero (1883–1945) (1978: 34–63) or more recently Rhoads Murphey (1999: 34–35) apply the term "feudalism" to the earlier period of the Shang and Zhou dynasties. The difference is one of definition. The PRC historians understand feudalism as that system dominated by the class that owns land as the main means of production. Western historians, on the other hand, tend to see feudalism as that social system in which there is no strong central state, but instead a relationship between the sovereign and a network of "vassals" maintained by loyalties. Both understandings of "feudalism" are valid, but great confusion can ensue if they are not defined. But it is ironic that, by defining the whole period from the third century B.C. to the nineteenth A.D. as belonging to the "feudal" era, the Marxist view of the PRC in effect implies no, or very little, basic change in China over those centuries. The implication of change is historic significance; and one might have expected those proud of their country and its history to adopt an interpretation that strengthens the case for significance rather than weakening it.

□ **The Non-Chinese State**

The earliest “states” in what is now Korea were Koguryo in the north (firmly established second century A.D.), Paekche in the southwest (third century) and Silla in the southeast (fourth century). The “three kingdoms,” as they are called, were united by Silla, with Chinese help, in the seventh century. The Chinese attempted to conquer Silla, and absorb it into their own empire, at the time ruled by the Tang dynasty (618–907), but military and political defeat led them to recognize an independent Silla in 735. Since Silla, only two dynasties have ruled over Korea, namely Koryo (918–1392), from which derives the English word Korea, and Yi (1392-1910). Korea formally submitted to the Mongols in 1259, but even during their century-long rule in Korea, they never displaced the Koryo kings, though the latter enjoyed very little power. Koryo survived the collapse of the Mongol empire in the middle of the fourteenth century.

Other than during the Mongol century, Korea was an independent and united kingdom until 1910. On the other hand, though never a carbon copy, it was heavily influenced by China in political and cultural terms. As early as A.D. 372, the Koguryo king established a school for the specific purposes of teaching Confucian classics and Chinese language in order to train prospective government officials along Chinese lines (Han, 1970: 63). As a Korean historian notes, Silla also saw “the imposition of Chinese-style bureaucratic government,” involving the establishment of numerous educational institutions designed to teach the Confucian classics (Han, 1970: 102).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Japan has the oldest still surviving ruling dynastic line in the world. Though its legendary origins date back well before the

time of Christ, it is not till some centuries afterwards that governance developed to the point that we can with confidence talk about a “state.” The original Japanese community religion called Shinto (literally “the way of the gods”) was animistic and naturalistic, and political to the extent that the emperor could be seen as a living spirit (*kami*).

Chinese infusions spread to Japan through Korea, including both in the political and cultural spheres. By the end of the sixth century A.D., Japan was specifically modelling itself on China. In the mid-seventh century the Japanese court took several major decisions that firmly transplanted the Chinese centralized political system to Japan, along with the Confucian ideology that underlay it. Chinese was the written language of the elite, and Japan began to produce official histories based on the Chinese Confucian model. The design, structure and architecture of both the capitals of the period, Nara and Kyoto, were based closely on the Tang Chinese capital Chang’an.

It was also from China through Korea that Buddhism was introduced into Japan. The religion swept the country, becoming more or less universal there, and exerting a stronger influence over Japanese history than over Chinese. Yet Confucianism generally maintained its hold over the educated and official elite. Shinto has retained influence down to the present day as an emblem of Japanese distinctiveness and, from time to time, of Japanese nationalism.

Despite strong Chinese and Confucian influence, Japan showed quite strong differences from China in its patterns of governance. Late in the twelfth century there began the system of the shogunate, which was to last nearly 700 years, reaching its height in the Tokugawa period (1603–1867), when the shoguns had their capital in Edo (Tokyo), while the emperor stayed in Kyoto. The essence of this system was that the emperor was

reduced to being a figurehead, even though holding great prestige, while real power was in the hands of a military leader called shogun. The highest class was the samurai, who were both warriors and administrators.

The other factor distinguishing Japan over these centuries was its feudalism, in the classical non-Marxist sense. What this meant was that the greatest of the samurai, termed *daimyo*, were able to exert control over their own domains, but were themselves bound to the shogun through feudal ties of loyalty. However, during the Tokugawa period, the shoguns were able to gain enough control over these *daimyo* that one notable history of East Asia sums Tokugawa Japan up as “a centralized feudal state” (Reischauer and Fairbank, 1958: 579). They did this through mechanisms like political marriages and forbidding contact between the *daimyo* families without permission from the shogunate. The *daimyo* were forced to spend a good deal of their time in Edo attending on the shogun and even had to leave their wives and children there as hostages when they returned to their own domains. All this severely restricted their autonomy and gave greater central power to the shoguns.

The northern part of Vietnam was ruled as part of China for about a millennium from the first century B.C. There were movements towards independence, but all failed until 938, when China was undergoing one of its periods of disunity called the Five Dynasties (907–960). Ngo Quyen succeeded in defeating an invading Chinese army and the following year set up a centralized state. It was, as Vietnamese historians like Nguyen Khac Vien (1993 :28) claim, “the first truly independent Vietnamese state.” This state lasted less than a decade, but did lead on to the establishment of a successful set of dynasties shortly afterwards. Apart from a brief interlude in the early fifteenth century,

Vietnam has maintained its independence of China. Yet its governance was based quite closely on the Chinese Confucian model, with emphasis on a strong central monarchical state assisted by a mandarin.

In the rest of Southeast Asia, states were very different in origin from those of East Asia. We saw earlier the way trade and other factors had spread Indian influences to Southeast Asia. Among the forms this impact created was what the French scholar George Coedès (1948) has called *les états hindouisés* (the “Hinduized states”) of Southeast Asia. Central to these states is the notion of the god-king, which I explain later.

Actually, there is some controversy over just how much was Indian in these states and how much was indigenous. The very terms, Indonesia and Indochina imply that much of Southeast Asia is almost like an extension of India, but most scholars are much more inclined to give the peoples of the region credit for a vital role in the creation of their own statecraft. John Legge (1977: 38–46) discusses these kingdoms in terms of “borrowed forms and local genius.” It is, however, highly doubtful that any of the political units antedating the “Hinduized states” were developed enough to come into the category of “states,” as I defined them above.

The first of these “Hinduized states” was Funan, which lasted from the first to the sixth centuries A.D. and covered territories that today belong to southern Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand. Its neighbour Champa, mentioned in the introduction above, followed soon after but lasted much longer. The great maritime and commercial state of Srivijaya, lasting from the seventh to the thirteenth century, dominated most of Java and other parts of the Malay archipelago and though many of its political formations were similar to those of the “Hinduized states”, it was ironically Buddhist in its religion, not

Hindu. There was, however, a range of Hindu kingdoms based in Java, the last of them being Majapahit. Arising in the wake of the Mongol invasion of the thirteenth century, Majapahit lasted until the sixteenth century and succumbed to the spread of Islam and the rise of the Islamic states along the north coast of Java.

Possibly the greatest of all the Hinduized states, was the Khmer kingdom having its capital in Angkor from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries. Two kings of particular fame are Suryavarman II (r. 1113–1150) and Jayavarman VII (r. 1181–c. 1219). The former was an ambitious and expansionist warrior whom Hall (1955: 103) calls “the most powerful king of Khmer history.” However, he also exhausted his people to the extent that in 1177, the state of Champa was able to attack and sack Angkor. It was Jayavarman VII who defeated and drove out the Chams, going on to expand the kingdom to its greatest territorial extent, even further than under Suryavarman II. It dominated most of mainland Southeast Asia, extending into the Malay Peninsula, what is now Burma and even north to what is today Yunnan province in China (see map, p. **).

Though Jayavarman VII never abandoned the political forms of the Hinduized state, he is notable among Khmer kings for his conversion to Buddhism, probably at least in part because the sacking of Angkor in 1177 had appeared to throw doubt on the legitimacy of the Hindu cults. Buddhism was not a new religion for the kings of the region. In the Thai Nanzhao kingdom centred on western Yunnan province Buddhism had “begun displacing the earlier native religious orientation” in the first half of the ninth century (Backus, 1981: 129), and the founder of the Burmese Pagan kingdom Anawrahta (r. 1044–1077) had already adopted Theravada Buddhism as his official religion. Yet the

conversion of Jayavarman VII appears to have strengthened a new notion of kingship in mainland Southeast Asia, one based on Theravada Buddhism.

In the countries of concern to this book, it was in Thailand that Buddhist kingship reached its highest point. Both Nanzhao and Pagan succumbed to the Mongol invasions, in 1253 and 1287 respectively. These events, plus the decline of Khmer power to the east, provided the Thais with a good opportunity to expand their own power. The climax came with the enthronement of King Ramadhipati in 1350 who, according to Hall (1955: 151) “is regarded as the first King of Siam,” the old name for the country currently called Thailand. His capital was in Ayuthia, which is why the state is often described as “the Kingdom of Ayuthia.” The Siamese capital remained there until the Burmese destroyed the city in 1767.

Slightly later than the rise of the great Thai Buddhist kingdom we find the spread of Islam in the Malay Archipelago and Peninsula, mainly in its Sunni form. It needs to be pointed out that this was the original, or “orthodox” form of Islam. The other surviving important form is termed Shi‘ite, and derives from a political conflict of the late seventh century, and has been adopted mainly by the Persians (Iranians) and Arabs in Iraq. Both forms accept the main Islamic doctrines, but quite a few differences emerged in the theologies of the sects over the centuries. The “most characteristic” Shi‘ite doctrine is its theology of esoteric knowledge, meaning that, besides the external meanings, the Koran has “hidden esoteric meanings that can be known only through spiritual contact” with relevant leaders or imams (Rahman, 1987: 317).

Through trade and clerical missionaries Islam had apparently established a foothold in Sumatra by the thirteenth century. From a political point of view, it received a

powerful boost through the conversion of the ruler of Melaka on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula. The city was the centre of a sultanate that had risen as a commercial power early in the fifteenth century. As one authority (Tarling, 2001: 315) states, “It became the greatest entrepot of Southeast Asia, and Islam spread to other centres with which Melaka had commercial ties.”

According to Nicholas Tarling (2001: 315), the existence of strong Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms had at first exercised an inhibiting effect on the political spread of Islam. However, it was “then facilitated by their decline in the fifteenth century.” Certainly, Islam spread throughout the Malay Peninsula and across most of the islands of Indonesia, though not Bali, and into the southern Philippines.

Though of great significance for the region, the spread of Islam was very uneven politically. In Java, it exerted a far greater impact in the commercial towns of the coast than in the agricultural inland regions. Moreover, the Javanese are known for their syncretism, which meant that the political impact of Islam on kings and their courts was never total.

□ **Ideas on State Polity and Governance**

The above treatment of politics in the Asia Pacific during the pre-modern period, takes a chronological treatment in terms of when “states” arose. It also adopts a chronological treatment in terms of the political ideologies that prevailed there. In order, these are Confucianism, influences from India, notably Hinduism and Buddhism, and finally Islam. The present section adds some notes on governance in these ideologies and religions.

The first and most widespread in the Asia Pacific is Confucianism. Although the doctrine bears his name, Confucius (the accepted romanization of Kong Fuzi, 551–479 B.C.) was actually more of a transmitter than a creator [unclear what this means—please explain]. Yet it is true that, together with his disciples, he did bring together many of the pithy sayings that embody his values and political philosophy.

Confucianism, with its this-worldly emphasis, is often described as a philosophy rather than a religion (see Chapter 12 □ **Confucius and Confucian Thought**). It does, however, have much to say about morality and governance. It also places an enormous weight on the rites and ceremonial, which functioned as an outward manifestation of power and propriety in all traditional Confucian societies.

The most basic of Confucian ideas is the virtue of filial piety. The family-oriented nature of Chinese and other Confucian societies is obvious in this fact. Of the “five relationships” (*wulun*) that Confucius emphasized must be followed for society to function smoothly, three are associated with family. The five are, in order of importance, ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, and friend-friend. The relationships also suggest a somewhat male-dominated society, women being explicitly ignored in two of the three family relationships.

The relationships also imply that Confucianism was generally hierarchical. It was a philosophy that aimed at stable and harmonious governance. Traditional Confucian societies had no time for rebels or anybody who would upset the political applecart. Yet if the ruler and his courtiers and officials should be obeyed, Confucianism also imposed the duty of granting good government to the people, of caring for their needs and disposing of those forces that would harm their interests.

Confucianism held that it was the virtuous and well educated who should rule. It was study of the Confucian classics that would educate scholars to be good administrators. How should one choose these bureaucrats, or mandarins? From the time of the Han dynasty, the state conducted written examinations to choose recruits into the official bureaucracy. The system waxed and waned over the centuries, but reached its height as an integral part of the system of recruiting officials into the Confucian bureaucracy from the fourteenth century on. It became increasingly rigid and stereotyped, yet bestowed gigantic social prestige and power on those who did well.

Korea and Vietnam both adopted the system of competitive examinations for entry into the bureaucracy. In both cases, the format, style and content of the examination system were modelled on China's, including the emphasis on Chinese Confucian books and ideology. In both cases, success in the examinations ensured great social prestige and power. It is true that there were differences (on those between Vietnam and China see Woodside, 1988: 169–233) but the similarities were more fundamental and numerous.

There was an implication in this system. In theory, education was open to all men (not necessarily women). Any man could sit the examinations and enter the bureaucracy, no matter what his social class. So there was something egalitarian about the examination system. Japan experimented with the examination system during the eighth century, but it was because the hereditary aristocracy guarded their power jealously that the system failed. The Tokugawa government resisted introducing the Chinese way of selecting officials through examinations, and again the reason was the same: that the exams opposed the hereditary system (Dore, 1965: 194–197).

I should add, however, that there were major restrictions on the egalitarianism of the system in China. In practice, it was all but impossible for anybody not lucky enough to be born into the educated scholarly elite class to gain the kind of education necessary to have any chance of passing the examinations. Still, the Korean and Vietnamese systems appear to have been less open than the Chinese. In Korea the only men eligible to sit were in effect the members of the *yangban*, the term applied to the aristocratic, land-owning and official classes. In Vietnam under the Ly and Tran dynasties (eleventh to fourteenth centuries), only the sons of aristocrats or mandarins could present themselves for the examinations.

Another aspect of Confucian governance that states like Korea and Japan repudiated was the ancient doctrine of the “Mandate of Heaven,” undoubtedly the most important legacy of the early Zhou period to Chinese political culture (Hsu, 1997: 280–281). The last king of Shang had behaved in a tyrannical and wicked way, and it was because of this that Heaven, a vague cosmological force, had withdrawn his right to rule. The same would happen to any other king who failed to carry out his ritual and other duties properly and acted in a tyrannical way towards his subjects. There are implications in the concept. It enforces morality on rulers, but gives ultimate power to decide on the identity of a ruler to “Heaven.” It is the sovereign’s duty to look after his people, but they certainly do not have any say in who should rule them. In this sense the notion is at once authoritarian and democratic, but with the emphasis on the former.

Other than in Vietnam, the political patterns of Southeast Asia were very different from those found in Confucian countries. Martin Stuart-Fox (2000: 87) sums up the

contrasts well, including why Southeast Asian rulers rejected Chinese models in favour of Indian, even though most of them were actually much nearer China than India:

Confucian forms of ancestor worship did little to enhance local cults, and Heaven (*Tian*) was too nebulous a concept to serve as a ritual focus for Southeast Asian kings. As for Chinese administration in the form of a centrally recruited and appointed bureaucracy of mandarins educated in the Confucian classics, this was a model inapplicable in kingdoms held together by family ties and tribute which possessed no such tradition of government. The Chinese model was eschewed by Southeast Asian rulers because it could only be adopted *in toto*. The Indian model was acceptable because it could be endlessly modified in relation to local needs.

At the heart of the differences between the Chinese and Indian models was the role of the supernatural, types of cosmology, and ideas of what happens to kings or other individuals after death. Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam all rejected totally Confucianism's lack of concern with such matters. And they were extremely important not only for daily life, but for governance as well.

Perhaps the most important of all features of the Hinduized kingdoms was the idea of the god-king whose powers, writes John Legge (1977: 41), "underlay the whole system of authority," with the terrestrial order being regarded "as a reflection of the cosmic order," so that "in his splendour and might was expressed the splendour and might of the kingdom." Because of the god-king's quasi-divine power, the state was

centralized and the sovereign guarded his authority and legitimacy jealously. There could be no more than one legitimate ruler or one legitimate kingdom at any one time.

In the schema of the god-kings, spirituality was equivalent to power. Society was graded with supernatural sanctions, with people being less virtuous the lower their social rank. Clifford Geertz (1960: 232) writes that “Spiritual power flowed outward and downward from its royal fountainhead, attenuating as it sank through each layer in the bureaucracy, draining weakly at last into the peasant masses.”

One feature that flowed from the notion of the god-king, that supported his authority and gave it symbolic expression, was vast buildings designed to resemble enormous pyramids, or mountains, rising up in the capital. As Legge puts it (1977: 43), “Just as the kingdom represented a microcosm of the universe, so the royal capital in its turn was also, on a smaller though perhaps more perfect scale, a further microcosmic representation.” These buildings were temples or royal sepulchres, or both.

Many of these monuments can still be found scattered throughout Southeast Asia. A particularly large complex of them is at Angkor. The most famous of them is Angkor Wat, the most important of all Cambodian icons and the largest standing building in the world erected for a religious purpose, though of course no longer in use as such. The man who ordered this monument built was King Suryavarman II, who designed this gigantic and magnificent structure as his own mausoleum, placing in its central shrine a golden statue of god Vishnu, a representation of himself deified as the Hindu protector and preserver of the world. The mausoleum of Jayavarman VII also still stands among the Angkor complex. Called the Bayon, it is a pyramidal temple and features the king's sculpted face on each of the four sides of the main tower.

Buddhism was a religion that allowed for personal salvation for all people and had no dependence on the god-king notion. The sovereign was still very powerful, but his rank was far lower than in the Hinduized states. The Siamese kings of Ayuthia, according to Stuart-Fox (2000: 89) sought to emulate the ideal Buddhist king, the "universal monarch, whose rule would be coextensive with the Buddhist Dharma, or truth." It was his duty to accumulate as much merit as he could do. This would convince his subject of his progress towards Buddhahood, reinforcing his status in their eyes. One of the ways he could do this was by building temples, erecting stupas or moulding consecrated Buddha images as gifts to the Buddha. It is not surprising that the religious building programs of the Thai monarchs were grand and magnificent, even if not quite as large in scale as those of rulers like the Khmer Suryavarman II.

In this profoundly religious and spiritual view of kingship, it is the duty of the king to uphold the Buddhist Dharma as well as the moral order, including in the civil and

social spheres. The Theravada Buddhism of the Thais lays far more weight on individual merit and achievement than does Hinduism, far less on divine or cosmic assistance. It follows that the king could take a good deal of the credit for his progress towards Buddhahood. Moreover, his success in preserving the moral order showed his legitimacy to rule. But correspondingly, failure opened him to challenge. There is a parallel here with the “Mandate of Heaven,” except that the force bestowing the mandate is very different.

Islam is a very different religion from Buddhism or Hinduism, with its belief in the single God Allah in contrast to the anthropomorphic deities of the religions from India. As pointed out by de Casparis and Mabbett (1992: 322–324), there were stages and degrees of divinity in the notions of Southeast Asian kingship based on Indian thought, and for a king to be “divine” was not even necessarily “an instrument of enhanced power.” The Melaka rulers could show their adherence to Islamic political philosophy by adopting the title of sultan and claiming to be the deputy of Allah (Tarling, 2001: 315), but it was hardly appropriate to claim to be the reincarnation of Allah. What Islam shared with Hinduism and Buddhism was the total centrality of religion and the spiritual world in kingship and governance. Obedience to the king was a religious obligation, not merely a this-worldly one.

Yet the fact remains that Islam never actually displaced the old Hindu cults and ideas of kingship in Southeast Asia, but rather mingled and integrated with them. Mataram, in central southern Java, can serve as an example. At the beginning of the eighth century it had flourished as a major Hinduized kingdom in Java, and again became

the centre of a Muslim kingdom in the sixteenth century, spreading to take over most of Java in the seventeenth. John Legge (1977: 57–58) writes as follows:

Insofar as Islam was able to penetrate below the surface of inland Javanese society, it did so by adapting itself in considerable measure to existing patterns of belief and custom. This was particularly apparent at the Court level, where Mataram was able without difficulty to blend Islam in syncretistic fashion into the existing mixture. In making it the Court religion, Mataram used it to buttress a kingdom which was still essentially Hindu-Javanese in character. Mataram revered the nine walis—supposedly the bringers of Islam to Java ...; the ruler adopted the title of Sultan; but the bureaucracy remained, and the sultan, though he could not strictly be held to be a divine figure, was at least seen as the terrestrial representative of God, descended from the god-kings of former dynasties, possessed of mystical power Islam, in brief, was fitted into the courtly system, was mixed up with Hindu and other symbolism in true Javanese fashion and was made to perform magical functions for the monarchical order in the same way as Hindu concepts had done and continued to do.

■ COMMERCE, EXPLORATION AND MISSIONARIES

The “age of commerce,” which followed a century or so after the beginning of the spread of Islam to the Malay Archipelago, produced very extensive economic and social change in the Asia Pacific, especially in Southeast Asia. It was accompanied by the

arrival of European powers in the region, bent on trading with the people of the region and converting them to Christianity. The first were the Portuguese, but they were followed by the Spanish, Dutch, French and British, while the Russians expanded overland to the east.

It should be noted that “commerce” was by no means new at this period. The overland Silk Routes that had begun and reached their height under the Han dynasty linked China with the Roman Empire through Central Asia, allowing for extensive commercial exchange between Europe and Asia, with silk sold from China to Rome probably the most important single commodity. It is notable, also, that trade over the Silk Routes was much more important for the Roman Empire economically and culturally than it was for China. Long before the “age of commerce” there were also sea routes used for trade, although in general they were less important than the overland ones, which the Silk Routes best exemplified.

According to Reid (1992: 460), the economic boom that led to the “age of commerce” began about the beginning of the fifteenth century, and was sparked by “the explosion of energy from the new Ming dynasty [1368–1644] in China.” The increase in trade brought about the rise of cosmopolitan commercial cities in Southeast Asia, as well as increased interconnections among them. Reid writes (1988: xv) that: “States formed and strengthened around the cities, and more secular forms of thought and culture flourished in them.”

The arrival of the Portuguese at the beginning of the sixteenth century contributed to this commerce, but initially they were, in Reid’s view (1992: 460), “a consequence, not a cause” of this upsurge in international commerce. What is beyond doubt, however, is

that the European explorations took place at a time of major economic expansion both in Europe and Asia. By the end of the “age of commerce,” which Reid (1993: xiv) dates to 1680, European economic, military and political power had expanded enormously, preparing the way for further penetration later on.

The Portuguese seized Melaka in 1511 and expanded eastwards, in effect breaking Javanese dominance of the trade on the eastern parts of the archipelago. The Portuguese were aware that there were more wealth and products in Asia than in Europe and keen to take advantage of the fact. In an age when there was no refrigeration but cattle had to be slaughtered because of the lack of winter fodder, fine spices were also of major importance and the Portuguese wanted very much to access trade in them.

Spain approached Asia from the opposite direction, through America. It was Asia the Spaniards had been aiming for when Christopher Columbus discovered America, and after conquering Mexico and Peru, they were able to trade across the Pacific, largely in Chinese products for precious metals from Mexico. Economically, this contributed to an early phase in what is nowadays called globalization because, as Tarling notes (2001: 171), “Making the world one by including the Americas created a rudimentary world economy.” In the latter part of the sixteenth century, the Spaniards established themselves in the northern and central part of what is now the Philippines, calling it after their King Philip II (r. 1556–1598). In these islands there had, before this time, been Chinese traders and tribal communities making their livelihood through shifting cultivation, hunting and fishing. The “state,” as understood in this chapter, had only emerged in very rudimentary form. The Spaniards established a central government in Manila and made many of the islands into an effective colony.

Following the long economic boom that had characterized the preceding two centuries or so, the period from about 1620 to 1680 was one of economic recession across Eurasia, especially in China. Prices fell, crops failed, and populations stagnated or fell (Reid, 1992: 489). Among Europeans, it was the Dutch who were best able to cope with these conditions. They were able to move into Asia, displacing the Portuguese.

At the apex of their endeavours was the VOC (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, literally United East India Company) or Dutch East India Company, which was founded in 1602, lasting till 1799. Over that period it exercised an enormous impact on world trade and became perhaps the first global trading company. It was crucial in the process of Dutch domination of Southeast Asian trade and, in the longer term, Dutch colonization of Indonesia. The VOC took Batavia (present-day Jakarta) in 1619 and followed up this victory by conquering other cities of the region. By 1680 the Dutch East India Company had succeeded in forcing most of the trading cities of Indonesia into monopolistic arrangements (Reid, 1992, 488).

The age of commerce saw what Reid (1993: 132) describes as “a religious revolution,” with the suggestion that “more than half the population of Southeast Asia adopted Islam or Christianity in some sense during the age of commerce.” The period also saw intense competition between the Christians and Muslims. Both Portugal and Spain were very keen missionaries. In addition to gaining profit, they hoped to spread their Catholic religion to Asia. When the Portuguese attacked Melaka, their commander told his soldiers that their primary reason was “the great service which we shall perform to the Lord” in ridding the place of Islam (quoted in Tarling, 2000: 115). The Spaniards

firmly implanted their Catholic faith in the Philippines as early as the sixteenth century, Manila having been a Muslim city when it fell to Spain in 1571.

Saint Francis Xavier (1506–1552) was the first of the great missionaries of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), a product of the Catholic Reformation of the mid-sixteenth century. Xavier was especially attracted towards Japan and spent over two years there, helping the Jesuits gain some initial ground. Father Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) lived in Beijing in the last decade of his life, at the time a notable privilege for foreigners and especially Europeans. He and later Jesuits achieved some influence among the Chinese intelligentsia, as well as establishing a significant Jesuit presence in China. However, it was in Vietnam in the early seventeenth century that the Jesuits won their greatest successes. The French Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes not only created a script based on the Latin alphabet for the Vietnamese language, but converted thousands of Vietnamese to Catholicism in the 1620s.

The Dutch, however, took very little part in missionary activity. According to Tarling (2000: 115), “In the two centuries of the VOC’s existence, fewer than 1000 predicants left to serve in the East.” In some ways this abstention from involvement in missionary work was of great benefit to them. In 1614 the new Japanese Tokugawa regime ordered the expulsion of the missionaries, banned Christianity and persecuted Christians. By 1639, the Tokugawa had imposed a series of measures that amounted to what is called *sakoku* (“closed country”), a policy lasting until the middle of the nineteenth century. This meant that Japan was more or less totally cut off from the rest of the world. However, the Dutch were able to retain a colony in Deshima in the harbour of Nagasaki, being the only foreigners allowed to stay on.

In the midst of the seventeenth-century recession, China underwent a major political storm when its corrupt and already tottering Ming dynasty succumbed to a major rebellion. The people who were able to take advantage of the situation were not the rebels themselves, but the Manchus, a people from what is now the northeast of China. They established the last of China's dynasties, called the Qing.

China was involved in trade, but to a much lesser extent than the countries of Southeast Asia since its economy was large enough to be rather self-sufficient. It was not a good market for the expanding European powers. However, one very important point about China's role in the "age of commerce" was the spread of Chinese people to Southeast Asia. Chinese émigrés found employment as artisans, farmers and intermediaries in the towns the Europeans had set up in Java, the Philippines and elsewhere. Though of course Chinese had traded outside their own country before this time, the expansion in the size of the Chinese population in Southeast Asia was very significant, and with long-term implications.

■ THE AGE OF IMPERIALISM AND COLONIZATION

The European powers strengthened their trade in Southeast Asia over the succeeding centuries. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the Industrial Revolution, first in Britain then spreading elsewhere in Europe and the United States, gave Europe added confidence in the superiority of its economic, political and cultural patterns. Of course the European powers competed with each other over the spoils of imperialism, especially France and Britain. The Napoleonic wars and Britain's victories

over Napoleon ensured that it would be Britain that led the imperialist push into Asia and elsewhere. However, the nineteenth century saw several of the Western powers increasing their hold on specific parts of Southeast Asia.

Robert Elson (1992: 141–151) distinguishes two phases of what he calls “the creation of a new order” leading to colonialism and the formation of the modern state in Southeast Asia. The first was the liberal phase and dominated the second half of the nineteenth century. It can be identified by its *laissez-faire* character, “a reflection not just of popular ideas about the universal applicability of liberalism but more concretely of the limitations of state power and the lack of private Western investment capital” (Elson, 1992: 142). From about the middle of the century European economies, led by Britain, moved into a phase of high capitalism, dominated more by industry than by commerce, with the result that influence in Asia merged increasingly into political control. Domination became clear enough that the term “imperialism” becomes appropriate, and almost all the countries of Southeast Asia were subjected into colonies.

Elson’s second phase began about the turn of the twentieth century. Characterized by control and management, it saw the creation of bureaucracies larger, wider and more complex than Southeast Asia had ever seen before. They depended not on personal relationships, as previous ones had done, but on procedures and formal and impersonal institutions. According to Elson (1992: 153) “The result was the creation in Southeast Asia of modern centralized states, with the will and the means to manage, exploit and ‘improve’ their subjects systematically, rather than simply oversee, motivate or cajole them.”

□ **Island Southeast Asia**

In the late eighteenth century, the Dutch in Indonesia, or as they came to call it “Netherlands India,” still depended on commercial contracts and treaties they had signed with local rulers. However, European rivalries, in which the British were crucial, caused changes in this pattern. Early in the nineteenth century the British actually took over control of some Dutch possessions in the Malay Archipelago, especially Java. But for reasons that had more to do with European politics than Southeast Asia, it suited the British to allow the Dutch an empire in Southeast Asia, as long as Britain’s own commercial interests were protected. In 1824 the British and Dutch signed a treaty by which the islands of the Malay Archipelago would be returned to the Dutch, but the peninsula would go to the British, who would be allowed to trade and profit in the archipelago.

The Dutch soon strengthened economic, political and social control. A major stage of this process was the introduction of the “Cultivation System” in the 1830s by Dutch Governor-General Johannes van den Bosch. The aim of the system was to cultivate products that could be exported to Europe for high profits, the main ones chosen being coffee, sugar and indigo. The method of the system was to compel the peasants to produce not for their own benefit but for that of the European market, with the local elite taking part in this exploitation. The Dutch soon strengthened their control in Java and elsewhere in the archipelago. The last three decades or so of the nineteenth century were taken up with an expensive war aimed at subjugating the sultanate of Aceh in the northwest of Sumatra, in which many Acehnese and Dutch were killed in battles or through disease and exhaustion. Though the sultan surrendered in 1903, in fact the Dutch

never fully pacified the area, which remained restive to the end of Dutch colonial rule and beyond.

Early in the twentieth century, the Dutch introduced their “Ethical Policy” to replace the Cultivation System. As its name implies, it saw a greater emphasis on the interests of the local people, with attempts to give them a greater share and control in the produce of the soil, with more attention given to education and social welfare. Ironically, however, the Dutch extended their control in the early twentieth century both territorially and in terms of management in areas already in their possession.

Britain was also quite happy for Spain to retain control of the Philippines, as long as Britain was allowed a share in the region’s trade. In the nineteenth century, Spain extended its control further over the islands. However, in a war in some ways analogous to the one the Dutch fought in Aceh, the Spanish came up against extreme opposition from an Islamic sultanate in the Sulu archipelago to the south.

The Spanish-American War of 1898 began in the Caribbean but spread to the western Pacific. It marked a very important turning-point in East Asia, because American victory brought the United States into the region as a colonial power for the first time. Under the Treaty of Paris of December 1898, which ended the war, Spain handed the Philippines over to the United States as its colony. In a series of military campaigns lasting from 1899 to 1913, the United States succeeded in subjugating the Sulu archipelago, but the Muslims there have remained to this day restive with respect to belonging to the Philippines.

In 1819, the British Sir Stamford Raffles established a port settlement called Singapore on the island of the same name. Following the Anglo-Dutch treaty of 1824,

Singapore became the main hub of British colonialism in Southeast Asia and the administrative seat of the Straits Settlements, which comprised the island, Penang, Melaka and Labuan island just off the coast of northwest Borneo. In 1867, the Straits Settlements became a British crown colony.

□ **Mainland Southeast Asia**

Meanwhile, the British were able to extend their control over the Malay Peninsula, signing agreements with local sultans. For a time the British asserted power against an expansionary Siamese kingdom and could thus claim to be acting in defence of the sultans. The culmination of the process was the establishment of the Federated Malay States in 1895–1896 with an administrative capital in Kuala Lumpur. The sultanates remained in place, but were under British “protection.”

Two commodities promoted British interest in the Malay peninsula. Chronologically, the first was tin. Actually, it was mainly Chinese entrepreneurs who profited from the tin mines, even though it was Malay chiefs who controlled the tin lands. However the British did not stand aloof, and provided the “political, legal and administrative circumstances for accelerated development” (Elson, 1992: 147). Certainly, tin production expanded enormously in the second half of the nineteenth century, and by 1895, 55 per cent of world tin production came from the western Malay states.

The second of the commodities promoting British interest in the Malay Peninsula was rubber. Malaya was not the only place in the world that produced the commodity, but the early twentieth century saw a boom in production with quantities required growing to be absolutely enormous. The reason was simply that this was the era when motor vehicles

with pneumatic tyres made of rubber came to hold an immensely important place in world transportation, especially in the United States.

In Vietnam, the Nguyen dynasty, which was set up in 1802, reunited the country after a period of division. The Nguyen dynasty set up an imperial capital in Hue in central Vietnam, and adopted the Chinese model of governance, making this a period of enormous Chinese influence, despite the fact that the Chinese empire itself was in rapid decline. According to Woodside (1988: 9), the emperors of the first half of the century “upheld Chinese concepts of empire and of the ways of ruling an empire.” However, the Nguyen emperors were themselves subject to pressures they could not manage.

The French had competed with Britain in India in the eighteenth century, but lost. They transferred attention further east, especially to Vietnam. In contrast to Netherlands India and other places, which had reached agreements protecting British interests, Vietnam made no attempt to play the French off against the British. When the French began to attempt colonizing southern Vietnam in the 1850s, Britain took no steps to oppose them. As Tarling notes (2001: 74), “Vietnam had escaped the threat that European rivalry often brought to Asia, but it succumbed to European agreement.” The French progressively took over Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in the second half of the nineteenth century through a series of conquests and treaties. Decrees issued in October 1887 set up the *Union Indochinoise* or Union of Indochina as a colony, including Cambodia and the three parts of Vietnam called, from south to north, Cochinchina, Annam and Tongking. Laos became a French protectorate in 1893, acquiring its present borders in 1907.

After the Burmese ended the Kingdom of Ayuthia with their destruction of the capital in 1767 (see above □ **The Non-Chinese State**), the new Chakkri dynasty arose with its capital in Bangkok. Under Rama III (r. 1824–1851), Siam became itself an expansionist kingdom, extending its rule in three directions, along the Malay Peninsula, into Laos and into Cambodia. Meanwhile, following three wars with the Burmese kingdom, in 1824–1826, 1852 and 1885, Britain took over the country fully, making it a province of its Indian empire in 1886, and then a separate colony in 1937.

The result was that Siam was squeezed between the two major colonial powers. Fortunately for Siam, neither was prepared to let the other take over the country, and it suited the two powers to have a buffer state separating their spheres of power. The Siamese kingdom did not stand idly by. Under its great King Rama V, or Chulalongkorn (r. 1873–1910), it undertook a modernization campaign. The kingdom proved quite skilful in diplomatic efforts to adapt to the realities of British and French power in the region and played each off against the other. Though Siam was forced to cede territory won under Rama III to both powers, Laos to France and four Malay states to Britain, it did remain the only country in Southeast Asia to maintain its independence and avoid the fate of being colonized.

□ **East Asia**

Further north, the great Chinese empire, dominated at the time by a Manchu dynasty that had adopted the Chinese name Qing, reached an apogee of power in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially under the great Kangxi (1662–1722) and Qianlong (1736–1796) emperors. By the late Qianlong it had begun to decline quite

rapidly. There are various reasons for this, but one important one was a trend towards overpopulation, which began to reach serious proportions by the early years of the nineteenth century. Rebellions broke out throughout the nineteenth-century. The largest in scale was the Taiping rebellion, which devastated the country from 1851 to 1864 and was responsible for the deaths of some 20 to 30 million people.

Meanwhile, the foreign powers began encroaching on China, contributing to a period of great humiliation for this once mighty empire. The British were the first. After the Opium War, fought with a small number of troops but with incomparably superior technology, the British were able to impose the first of the “unequal treaties” in 1842: the Treaty of Nanjing. Other Western powers quickly became involved, especially France, imposing their own treaties and taking over slices of Chinese territory or carving out areas where they were able to dominate. Concessions the Chinese were forced to make included:

- the opening of “treaty ports” to foreign trade and influence;
- Christian missionary rights to proselytise;
- extraterritoriality, meaning that foreigners in China were subject not to Chinese law, but to that of their own country;
- the payment of indemnities for wars lost to the powers; and
- the right to control China’s tariffs, usually done in a way more in foreign interests than in Chinese.

The encroachments of the foreign powers grew worse as the nineteenth century proceeded and reached a climax in 1900, the year of the famous Boxer uprising. The Boxers, who gained their name from a kind of magic boxing they practiced, attempted to besiege the foreign legations in Beijing. In response the eight strongest powers of the day invaded Beijing and lifted the siege, imposing on China the most humiliating treaty it had yet suffered. The eight were Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Russia, the United States and Japan. It was the only time in history these eight had actually fought on the same side against a common enemy. Many at the time thought China would actually succumb to colonization, though this did not happen. The foreign powers soon turned to promote their own rather than common interests, while the Qing dynasty undertook an extensive and at least partly successful attempt to reform. The net effect was that China never actually became a colony, but did undergo great humiliation at the hands of the foreign powers.

One aspect of Chinese influence that expanded in this period was Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. Although migration of Chinese to Southeast Asia was by no means new in the imperialist age, it expanded greatly after 1870. This was because the economic expansion brought by the imperialist age made their skills and labour valuable. We already saw their importance as entrepreneurs and miners in tin mining, but they could also take on other work. They became of crucial importance in the retail trade in more or less all cities of Southeast Asia. In Siam, they assimilated well into the population, but this was not the case elsewhere, so, despite their contributions to the economies of Southeast Asia, many people felt they were a bit *too* dominant and successful and harboured resentments against them.

Moving east from China, we find that Japan presented the most unusual picture of all, since it was by far the most successful undertaking those reforms that brought it into the modern world and created the modern nation-state. It was the United States that first compelled Japan to abandon its policy of seclusion with Commander Matthew Perry's 1853 mission requesting trade and diplomatic relations. In 1867, the last Tokugawa shogun surrendered to the imperial house, the young Emperor Meiji taking over titular control of government in 1868 in a move called the Meiji Restoration. Japan's rise was spectacular. It defeated China in the first Sino-Japanese war of 1894–1895, thereby increasing its power in Korea and in China's northeast at China's expense. In 1904–1905, after Russian troops had invaded the northeast in 1900 in the wake of the Boxer debacle, Japan fought against Russia on Chinese soil and without Chinese permission, and became the first Asian country to defeat a European one in the imperialist age. Japan even became a colonial power itself, taking over Korea in 1910 and holding it as a formal colony until its own defeat in World War II in 1945.

■ THE RISE OF NATIONALISM, AND ITS IMPACT

Imperialism and colonialism gave rise to nationalism, but at different times in each country of the Asia Pacific. It gathered momentum after World War I, at least in part because of the principle of national self-determination that American President Woodrow Wilson promoted (Fung, 2000: 140–141). At least in some parts of Asia, nationalism is among the most important forces driving history forward in the first half of the twentieth century, or even the single most significant force.

□ **The Concept of Nationalism**

Much has been written about the theory and nature of nationalism. It is well beyond the scope of this chapter to contribute to this discussion. However, I note that nationalism is based on the concept of the nation, a comparatively modern idea which, in its Asian forms, derives from the era of imperialism. One influential encyclopedia states that “Nationalism centers the supreme loyalty of the overwhelming majority of the people upon the nation-state, either existing or desired. The nation-state is regarded ... as the indispensable framework for all social, cultural, and economic activities” (Kohn, 1968: 63).

Nationalism is quite different from “culturalism,” a term which two well-known specialists have coined and attributed to China before the modern era. This was characterized by “a complete confidence in cultural superiority that is notably lacking in nationalism” (Reischauer and Fairbank, 1958: 292). A foreign people like the Mongols or the Manchus might conquer China, but they could never overcome Chinese culture. Indeed they were more likely to succumb to Chinese culture than to conquer it.

Nationalism is also very different from patriotism, which is simply love of the land of birth (Chavan, 1973: 5) or of country (Amstutz, 1999: 33). In the stages before the development of nationalism, the focus of loyalty may be a monarch, a cleric, a region, or a village. But if nationalism is to develop, we can expect to find such loyalties changing into a “primitive awareness of shared destiny and of ethnic or cultural distinctiveness” (Duiker, 1976: 15). Such consciousness might be termed “protonationalist.” Only when it

develops to the stage where the nation-state becomes the focus of loyalty can we really speak of modern nationalism.

Scholars have categorized nationalism in a range of ways. One way is to distinguish five types: political or civic nationalism, ethnic nationalism, religious nationalism, social revolution and anticolonialism (Amstutz, 1999: 33–34). Another way is along a spectrum of reactive to aggressive. Reactive nationalism owes its existence primarily to wrongs done to the nation. Proactive nationalism appeals to pride in the nation as a reason to promote the vigor and prosperity of the nation, but without becoming a threat to other peoples. And then there is aggressive or radical nationalism, or “ultra-nationalism,” which promotes the power of the nation to the extent that it wishes to go out and conquer and colonize other peoples. In the first half of the twentieth century, the dominant form of nationalism in the Asia Pacific region was the first, for the very simple reason that it took its origin as a reaction against imperialism and colonialism. However, aggressive nationalism also existed.

□ **Nationalism in Southeast Asia**

According to one authoritative study of Southeast Asia it was in the Philippines that modern nationalism involving consciousness of a Filipino or national identity emerged (Kratoska and Batson, 1992: 257–258). A period of Spanish repression, following a failed mutiny in 1872, gave rise to an intensely anticlerical movement promoting a form of cultural nationalism, which included such demands as equality for Filipinos, freedom of speech and assembly and staffing of the clergy with Filipinos rather than Spaniards. American intervention in the Philippines at the end of the century was a decisive factor in

the expulsion of Spanish colonialism from the country, but the activities of the nationalists certainly contributed greatly.

There were many anti-colonial movements in Southeast Asia in the latter part of the nineteenth century and through the first half of the twentieth that were based on traditional religion or ideas. One of particular significance was Sarekat Islam (Islamic League), founded in 1912 and led from the next year by Tjokroaminoto, noted for his splendid oratory. Emerging from an organization of indigenous batik traders in Central Java in competition with Chinese counterparts, it spread all over Java. What was extraordinary about this movement was the fact that it gained and, for several years, held a mass appeal and following, reaching over 2 million in 1919 (Steinberg, 1985: 306). Despite its enormous following, Sarekat Islam was, according to one authority, “a coalition of groups, associations, and sects varying according to local and regional circumstances” (Williams, 1990: 115). The implication is that this movement was not really focussed on the nation-state and was thus more proto-nationalist than nationalist, especially since its mass following was “secured on a traditional rather than a modern basis” (Tarling, 2001: 373). Despite its religious coloration, there was a partial merger of Sarekat Islam with the PKI (Perserikatan Komunis di India, or Indies Communist Party). When a PKI-led revolt erupted at the end of 1926, Dutch suppression broke the PKI for many years, and spelt the end of the “great folk movement” that was Sarekat Islam (Steinberg, 1985: 307).

In most of the countries of Southeast Asia, the factor of “national awareness” so crucial to modern nationalism developed mainly in the 1920s and 1930s. These two decades also “saw an awakening of interest concerning the nature and purpose of

government” throughout Southeast Asia (Osborne, 2000: 117), including in Thailand, itself never a colony. Given the importance of the state as a focus of loyalty for nationalists, this concern over government inevitably contributed to nationalist appeal and strength.

Modern nationalism in Southeast Asia took a major step forward in the late 1920s. In July 1927, Sukarno led a small group of like-minded enthusiasts to found the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI, Indonesian National Party), its name indicating a national identity that was significant and new. In October 1928, a congress of youth organizations declared the notion of Indonesia in a memorable slogan: “one nation — Indonesia, one people — Indonesian, one language — Indonesian.” (See Steinberg, 1985: 307). The congress also adopted a national flag and national anthem. Educated people in the Dutch East Indies came to identify themselves as Indonesians over those years. One scholar comments as follows (Steinberg, 1985: 308):

The idea of Indonesia spread so easily, once launched, that it seemed to later historians as if it had always existed, if not actually explicitly than inchoate in the hearts of the people. But it was, in fact, a new creation, the product of a great and difficult leap of the imagination. The idea of Indonesia required the denial of the political meaning of the societies into which the first Indonesians had been born. It required also the acceptance of the new reality of the Dutch Indies, and then the transmuting of that into “Indonesia.”

A Southeast Asian country worth special treatment for its Confucian tradition and adoption of Marxism-Leninism is Vietnam. There were proto-nationalists in the late nineteenth century, most notably the Vietnamese Emperor Ham Nghi who in 1885 led an unsuccessful rebellion against the French, wanting to restore the old traditional system of government. The early twentieth century saw the rise of a group of what one specialist calls “scholar-patriots” (Duiker, 1976: 288), the major representative being Phan Boi Chau (1867–1940). These rejected the traditional model and wanted to modernize the country. Phan Boi Chau visited and was influenced by Japan, which he regarded as a model for Vietnam. These scholars can perhaps claim to have taken “the first step toward modern nationalist movement in Vietnam” (Duiker, 1976: 287). The representatives of a new stage of urban nationalism grew to maturity just after World War I and were strongly influenced by French culture. Their focus on the cities and their Western orientation cut them off from any traditional roots in the villages, and this could only be a major weakness in their appeal to the Vietnamese masses, since the overwhelming majority of Vietnamese were rural.

The most enduring form of Vietnamese nationalism leading up to 1945 was dominated by socialism, with the most famous representative being Ho Chi Minh (1890–1969). This great nationalist leader led a Marxist-Leninist party for almost the entire period from 1925 until his death, but his interest in that doctrine lay not in dialectical materialism but in Lenin’s opposition to colonialism and imperialism. Ho admired and loved French culture, but reacted to French colonialism with a deep and abiding hatred. His tract *French Colonization on Trial* is infused with a passion that is rare in the writings of the Marxist-Leninist leaders of Asia. Though Ho’s initial revolutionary

activities against the French were not particularly successful, they laid the basis for the supremely important post-war struggle against the French and the Americans. Unlike the second-stage nationalism [This term seems unclear—does it refer to the “urban nationalists”?] discussed above, this revolutionary nationalism of the third stage had deep roots in the countryside and among the peasants. Ho Chi Minh was able to develop a mass following that eluded any of his nationalist predecessors. His prestige, respect and affection among the Vietnamese remain very powerful indeed into the twenty-first century. It is, for example, much stronger than Mao Zedong’s in China.

□ **Korean Nationalism**

We move now to East Asia, beginning with the smallest of the region’s countries and the only one to become a formal colony: Korea. The epochal event in modern Korean nationalism is generally agreed to be the uprising of 1 March 1919. Over thirty prominent people issued a proclamation of independence from Japan in Seoul, and very large but peaceful demonstrations flared all over the country. About two million people took part in several thousand demonstrations throughout the rest of 1919.

The Japanese colonial masters reacted by suppressing the demonstrations. During many of the demonstrations they fired at the crowds killing several thousand over the year. They also changed their policy in Korea, replacing “military” by “cultural” rule. However, historians both of the north and south of Korea nowadays agree that in fact the change in policy was superficial only and altered nothing essential.

The March 1 Movement did lead on to a rise in the labor and communist movements. It appears to have “greatly developed the spirit of national unity” (Han,

1970: 477), a matter of some importance given the definition for nationalism above. However, in the big picture of Korean history in the first half of the twentieth century, it is probably not as important as it seems. Not only did it fail in its aim of forcing the Japanese to give Korea independence, but “nothing on the same scale was repeated during the colonial period” that might show a gathering of nationalist momentum (Lone and McCormack. 1993: 58). When Korea did finally win its independence in 1945, it was primarily because Japan was defeated in World War II, not because of Korean nationalism.

□ **Nationalism in China**

Turning next to Korea’s large continental neighbour, to a country that had in the past influenced Korea enormously, we find that Chinese nationalism developed in several stages over the twentieth century, culminating in a major civil war that resulted in the establishment of the PRC in 1949. The Boxer uprising (mentioned above in ■ **THE AGE OF IMPERIALISM AND COLONIZATION**, □ **East Asia**) was an example of a proto-nationalist religious movement. The Boxers appear to have loved Chinese culture and expressed a deep, and even racist, hatred for Westerners and Christianity. Yet they can hardly be described as nationalists under the definition offered above, since their allegiance was not to the nation-state. However, their rebellion certainly led on to the rise of modern nationalism, and was probably even a cause of it.

According to the distinguished historian of China Mary Wright (1968: 3–4), reformers and revolutionaries of the early twentieth century considered the anti-foreign uprisings of the nineteenth century, culminating in the Boxers, as examples of “primitive

xenophobia.” Nationalism was a powerful force emerging from those upheavals demanding “the organization of a centralized nation-state, capable both of forcing back the imperialists and of forwarding the country’s new aspirations in political, social, economic, and cultural life.” Yet nationalism was initially aimed not only against the imperialists, but against the Manchus. Many Han Chinese regarded these people as foreigners who had taken over China. This is obvious from the manifesto of the Chinese United League (*Tongmeng hui*), set up in August 1905 with Sun Yat-sen. There were four main points in the manifesto: expulsion of “the Manchu barbarians”; restoration of Chinese rule; the establishment of a republic; and equalization of land rights. (See translation Mackerras, 1998: 97–98).

Sun Yat-sen achieved the first three of these aims through his revolution of 1911, which overthrew not only the Manchu dynasty but also the monarchy as an institution. Admired by Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, Sun is usually regarded as the father of the Republic and sometimes even of the modern Chinese state. Yet in fact his revolution was not particularly successful and China soon fell into disarray, dominated by warlords most of whom acted more in their own interests than in those of the people, let alone the Chinese nation.

On 4 May 1919 a major movement of political and cultural nationalism, which bears the name of the date it started, erupted first in the capital Beijing and then in other parts of China. What actually happened was a demonstration by students in Beijing against the Japanese. Its initial impetus was horror by Chinese intellectuals and students that the Paris Conference, which ended World War I and resulted in the Treaty of Versailles, had handed over formerly German interests in China’s Shandong Province to

Japan. The demonstrators were very concerned about China's national sovereignty, and so very nationalist in character. Chow (1960: 106–107) records a "Manifesto of All the Students of Beijing," part of which reads: "Japan's ... diplomacy has secured a great victory; and ours has led to a great failure. The loss of Shandong means the destruction of the integrity of China's territory. Once the integrity of her territory is destroyed, China will soon be annihilated." Ironically, the culture the Movement's proponents advocated was strongly influenced by Western values and hostile to Confucian. It was both modernist and nationalist, and a good example of how the two coexisted and supported each other.

Koreans nowadays point with pride to the fact that their own nationalist movement began over two months before its Chinese counterpart. Yet there is little evidence that the May Fourth Movement derived from the Korean Movement. Of course the nationalists of both countries shared a strong hostility to Japanese imperialism, but also had their own concerns. One of the contrasts between the two was the follow-on. As noted above, this was sparse for the Korean movement, but in the case of China there were many student nationalist movements in the three decades from 1919 to 1949, and they played a significant role in the history of the period.

Meanwhile in south China, Sun Yat-sen set up another government based in Guangzhou and attempted to develop his nationalist and republican ideas. He did reconstitute the Nationalist Party (*Guomin dang*) into a viable political organization and presided over its first congress in 1924. His vision was to reunite China, eliminate the warlords and imperialism, and preside over a powerful and prosperous country with a strong, centralized government. He did not really succeed. However, from 1926 to 1928,

his successor Chiang Kai-shek led a military expedition to the north and formally reunited the country with its capital in Nanjing.

Sun Yat-sen and the CCP, which had held its first congress in 1921, set up a united front in 1923. As a result members of the CCP took part in the first two congresses of the Nationalist Party (in 1924 and 1926) and played a very important role in the nationalist revolution associated with the reunification of the country. For example, Mao Zedong (1893–1976), later to become the leader of the CCP, was actually elected an alternate member of the Nationalist Party's Central Executive Committee at its first two congresses. However, in April 1927, Chiang Kai-shek turned against the CCP, ending the united front and carrying out a large-scale purge of the CCP and the labor movement that cost the lives of many thousands of people.

Chiang Kai-shek continued to regard himself as nationalist and the party he led still called itself the Nationalist Party. However, his was a somewhat right-wing nationalism. The Japanese took over Manchuria in 1931, and persisted in further encroachments on China, yet resistance to Japan was secondary in Chiang's mind to eradicating the CCP. He suppressed the student nationalist movements that demanded resistance to Japan, largely because he thought, rightly, that the Communists had infiltrated them. However, it is true that in December 1936, after being kidnapped by one of his own generals, he did agree to resist Japan and played an active leadership role against Japan when it launched a full-scale invasion of China in July 1937.

Ironically, Chiang Kai-shek's attempts to eradicate the CCP produced a nationalist backlash that was exceedingly damaging to him in the long term. It was military pressure from Chiang Kai-shek that forced the CCP to undertake the famous Long March of

1934–1935 from Jiangxi in the southeast of China to northern Shaanxi. At least one view of history, advanced by Chalmers Johnson, holds that peasant nationalism against the Japanese during the following period was an essential ingredient in the final victory of the CCP. It is for this reason that Johnson (1962: xi) considers communism in China to be “a particularly virulent form of nationalism.”

China may have been among the victors in the war against Japan, but the occupation and war were totally ruinous to the country. By the time Mao and his CCP forced Chiang Kai-shek out of the Chinese mainland in 1949, China was in a state of total disorder and economic and social disintegration. One scholar has even summed up the Republican period from 1912 to 1949 under the title “China in Disintegration” (Sheridan, 1975).

Chalmers Johnson’s view on the reasons for the CCP’s victory is not universally accepted among historians. Yet there is very little doubt that the CCP’s ability to appropriate nationalism was at least one of the reasons why it won against Chiang Kai-shek. It is also clear that nationalism was among the major elements in Chinese history in the first half of the twentieth century. The efforts of nationalists at state-building were not particularly successful, but they did try to establish strong central governments that would promote China as a nation-state.

□ **Japanese Nationalism**

Of all countries in the Asia Pacific, Japan was most successful in responding to the challenges the Western impact imposed. From the time of the Meiji Restoration, Japan showed itself very willing to adopt changes in the direction of Westernization. It adopted

policies that led to successful industrialization, such as developing a very good universal education system and an excellent infrastructure, including a central bank, and telegraph and railway systems. It also put energies into creating a modern army and navy. In 1889, the Meiji Emperor promulgated a Constitution, in which the “rights of Sovereignty of the State” were paramount (Mason and Caiger, 1972: 242).

It was not long after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 that Japan began to adopt nationalist policies that were more aggressive than reactive. As we saw above Japan began expanding towards other Asian islands and the Asian continent. Its victory against China in 1895 gave it Taiwan as a colony. After several decades of increasing involvement and intervention it made Korea a formal colony in 1910. The guiding principle of the Meiji government was “a rich country and a strong army” (*fukoku kyohei*) (Morris-Suzuki, 2000: 152) and in the 1880s it began to develop the nationalist doctrine of *kokutai* or “national entity.” In 1890, an imperial rescript on education laid down this ideology as a guiding principle for all children. Although mainly a demand for adherence to traditional Confucian virtues, it also included the requirement that “should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State” (see Mason and Caiger, 1972: 248).

After Japan defeated Russia in 1905, Japanese nationalism underwent a change that made it “a concomitant of confidence in the future progress of the nation” (Brown, 1955: 170). Japan remained highly aggressive in its policy towards Korea and China, and keen to expand its modernization program. It joined the Allies in World War I and, though it did not take much part in the fighting, was able to secure interests in China at Germany’s expense after the war was over.

The aftermath of World War I ushered in a comparatively liberal period in Japanese history, with many competing political ideologies, all of them with nationalist or radical nationalist components. At the same time, the military increased in power, even though the government remained in civilian hands. The Nine-power Treaty that concluded the Washington Conference of February 1922 forced Japan to restrict the size of its navy, because the major Western powers saw it as a threat, but at the same time provoked great resentment among Japanese nationalists. The fact that a Japanese army was able to move into Manchuria in 1931 against the explicit wishes of the civilian government showed that the power of the military was not only too great for comfort, but on the rise.

In February 1936 radical nationalists attempted, unsuccessfully, to carry out a *coup d'état* in Tokyo. Their failure “did nothing to weaken the power of the conservative nationalists in the army’s leadership” (Morris-Suzuki, 2000: 159). No less than four of Japan’s ten prime ministers in the 1930s were senior military officers. Although the famous ultra-nationalist Kita Ikki (1884–1937) was executed for his part in the 1936 *coup*, the essentials of his ideology triumphed. Japan was well and truly confirmed on the path of aggressive nationalism.

After launching a full-scale war against China in 1937, the Japanese seized the capital Nanjing at the end of 1937, their troops carrying out the Nanjing Massacre, famous for the extent and horror of its atrocities. In September 1940 the Japanese occupied Vietnam, but left the French to govern on their behalf until the last months of the war. In December 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, bringing the United States into the war. They then went on to occupy almost all of Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, Thailand, Malaya, Singapore and Indonesia, where the Dutch colonial

forces surrendered in March 1942. Despite these successes, the tide soon turned against the Japanese. In June 1942 they were defeated at the naval Battle of Midway in the Pacific, and later sustained a further succession of reverses, despite increasingly desperate attempts to prevent them. The end came in 1945, hastened by the dropping of American nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively on 6 and 9 August 1945.

This example of radical nationalism had ended in total disaster. Yet it certainly did not mean the end of nationalism in the Asia Pacific. Japanese ultra-nationalism had helped to undermine the power of European colonialism in the region. It had also helped provoke the nationalism of other peoples, leading to clearer formulations of precisely what nationalism meant. Both the decline of European imperialism and Asian nationalism were to play a major role in the post-1945 history of the Asia Pacific region. Indeed, nationalism in the region was just as important in the years immediately after 1945 as it had been before.

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