The Origins Of Southeast Asian Nations: A Question Of Timing

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter explores the historical origins of today's Southeast Asian nations. Some of the region's precolonial societies—including Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and Burma on the mainland, but also Java in maritime Southeast Asia—had characteristics which predisposed them to serve as vehicles for modern nationalist movements: ethnic distinctiveness and homogeneity, and a tradition of political unity and independence. Whether or not this potential was realized, however, depended on whether the process of colonization reinforced or eroded existing political identities. A crucial factor here was the time lag between the demise of the indigenous state and the spread, via Western education, of a modern ideal of popular sovereignty. Where this lag was short, as in Vietnam (conquered in 1885), or nonexistent, as in uncolonized Thailand, nationalist movements crystallized around old polities and ethnicities rather than around new colonial states and communication communities (such as French Indochina). Where it was long, as in the case of Java, anticolonial nationalism created a new national community (Indonesia) coterminous with the new colonial state (the Netherlands Indies).

Keywords: Nationalism, history, political geography, ethnicity, colonialism, Southeast Asia, Indochina, Indonesia

THE subject of this chapter is the history of nations and nationalism in Southeast Asia up to the end of the period of European colonialism in that region—that is, up to approximately 1950. Southeast Asia is the region east of India, south of China, north of Australia, and west of Papua New Guinea. In land area it is about half the size of Europe; in population, three quarters of the size (although this proportion was smaller in the past). Today it comprises the ten countries of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations)—Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, and the Philippines—together with the new state (and aspiring ASEAN member) East Timor. A complex topography, combined with multiple prehistoric immigration streams, a polycentric pattern of indigenous state formation, a historic openness to foreign commerce and cultures, and more than four hundred years of competitive intervention by five European powers, have made Southeast Asia a region of intricate ethnic and

political fragmentation. Partly for this reason it has proved—like eastern Europe, another complex, volatile, post-imperial region beloved of scholars of nationalism—a productive nursery for ideas about the nature and origins of nations, most notably in the work of Benedict Anderson.

This short chapter cannot claim comprehensive coverage of its topic. Nor does it aspire to balanced treatment of the various countries of the region, although each of the modern nations receives at least some attention. More complete factual accounts of the story of nationalism, particularly anticolonial nationalism, in Southeast Asia can be found elsewhere. (For fuller accounts, see Suggested Further Reading.) Here, instead, the origins of Southeast Asian nations are explored with particular reference to the two (p. 264) largest colonial states of the region, Dutch Indonesia and French Indochina, and in the context of two theoretical questions, one arising from a fundamental debate in the study of nationalism, the other from an influential theory of nationalism developed in a specifically Southeast Asian context.

The first question is the vexed one of antiquity: how old are nations? Specifically: do Southeast Asian nations pre-date the spread to Asia of the formal doctrine of political nationalism, developed in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which holds that every nation has a right to its own sovereign state? The second, and closely related, question is this: why did one of the two giant colonial states of Southeast Asia, the Dutch East Indies, become a single independent nation (Indonesia) whereas the other, French Indochina, split upon independence into three nation states (Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos)? Was it, as nationalists in all four countries usually claim, because both outcomes were predetermined by centuries of pre-colonial history? Or was it, as Anderson proposed in his seminal book *Imagined Communities*, because the decentralized structure of colonial institutions in Indochina made it difficult for Viet, Khmer (Cambodian), and Lao anticolonialists to see themselves as belonging to a single national community, as their Javanese, Malay, and Dayak counterparts did in Indonesia? Do the origins of today’s Southeast Asian nations, in other words, lie in indigenous affinities and solidarities? Or are they to be found in the dynamics of Western expansion in the region, and the reaction against it?

Two Types of Southeast Asian Nation?

At first sight, the answer to both questions seems straightforward: it depends on which part of Southeast Asia we are looking at. In broad terms, the major modern nation states of *mainland* Southeast Asia—Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam—can all plausibly trace their origin to a major pre-colonial state that was, in turn, associated with a particular ethnicity and language: Bamar (Burmese), Thai, Khmer, Viet (Kinh). Only the ‘residual’ nation of Laos, consisting originally of that part of French Indochina which lay beyond, or at the margins of, the spheres of influence of pre-colonial Vietnam and Cambodia, and was culturally and sometimes politically closer to Siam (Thailand), is harder to see as the linear successor to an indigenous state. In one case, that of Thailand, the line of descent

from pre-colonial kingdom to independent nation appears unbroken, since Thailand is the only country in the tropical world that never came under European rule. In the other cases there was a more or less lengthy colonial interlude (Burma: 1885–1947; Cambodia: 1863–1953; Vietnam: 1884–1954) during which the indigenous state was either abolished or reduced to the status of a powerless 'protectorate', but the memory of its independence continued to inspire and shape anticolonial movements.

By contrast, the major countries of *island* or *maritime* Southeast Asia—Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines—all owe their borders to colonial states (respectively (p. 265) British, Dutch, and Spanish) rather than pre-colonial kingdoms. West (peninsular) Malaysia became independent from Britain as the Federation of Malaya in 1957; East Malaysia, comprising the British territories in Borneo, joined it in 1963. Indonesian independence was declared in 1945, and recognized by the Dutch in 1949. In the Philippines a vigorous nationalist movement directed against Spanish rule developed before the end of the nineteenth century, and an attempt was made to form an independent republic in 1898. Soon afterward, however, the country came under American rule, which lasted until 1946.

In a pattern more reminiscent of India or Africa than of the Southeast Asian mainland, these three maritime states each incorporated a large number of indigenous political and cultural units, most of them very small. In one case, that of the Philippines, the independent successor state even retained, in African or Latin American style, its colonial name, while Malaysia and Indonesia both adopted names that were neologisms constructed from European languages. The island microstates of Singapore and East Timor are equally colonial in origin. In maritime Southeast Asia it is only the little sultanate of Brunei, being the remnant of an indigenous polity that fell under British control but refused, on decolonization, to join its neighbours in the Federation of Malaysia, which possesses a direct genealogical link with the pre-colonial past.

In the European context it is common to follow Hugh Seton-Watson by distinguishing between 'old nations' such as France, England, and Russia, which 'acquired national identity or national consciousness before the formation of the doctrine of nationalism', and 'new nations' such as Italy, Belgium, and Greece, where 'two processes developed simultaneously: the formation of national consciousness and the creation of nationalist movements'.[1] In mainland Southeast Asia a long process of political centralization, fuelled by interstate conflict, led over a period of centuries to a growing uniformity of language and culture within each state, akin to that of the 'old nations' of Europe. In island Southeast Asia, by contrast, political and cultural units remained much less connected with each other, and nation-building had to wait, as it did in the 'new nations' of Europe, until the imported doctrine of popular sovereignty provided (together with resentment of foreign rule) a basis for national solidarity other than cultural affinities and historic rivalries.

So far, so good: the countries of modern mainland Southeast Asia, with the possible exception of Laos, appear to be old, gradually evolved nations, whereas those of island Southeast Asia (except Brunei) are essentially new nations, constructed by nationalists to

fill the arbitrary borders of the colonial states that they challenged and ultimately inherited. When the People's Council (*Volksraad*) of the Netherlands Indies debated the introduction of 'Indonesia' as an alternative name for the colony in 1921, one (European) member described it as 'a good name for a brand of cigar'.[2]

Closer inspection, however, casts doubt on the simplicity of the old nation/new nation dichotomy. In the first place, there is doubt about the degree to which the nations of mainland Southeast Asia really possessed, before the twentieth century, the 'national consciousness' that has been attributed to their counterparts in pre-Enlightenment Europe. Lower Burma, centred on Rangoon, was annexed by the British (p. 266) in 1852, and Upper Burma, including Mandalay, capital of the last independent Burmese dynasty, in 1885. Yet the rise of a Burmese nationalism, as opposed to royalist resistance or agrarian unrest, is usually said to have begun only with the foundation of a movement of religious revival, the Young Men's Buddhist Association, in Rangoon (not Mandalay) in 1906. It was not until the 1920s that explicitly nationalist political organizations appeared in Burma, and not until the 1930s that the call for independence from Britain became strong.

In Thailand (Siam), as noted, the indigenous state never lost its sovereignty, successfully manoeuvring between British and French threats under its great nineteenth-century kings Mongkut (r. 1851–68) and Chulalongkorn (r. 1868–1910). Nevertheless the idea of a Thai nation, consisting of citizens and territory as well as king and subjects, may be barely older than its Burmese counterpart. Nineteenth-century Siam, although loosely associated with the Thai ethnic group, was a dynastic polity based on personal hierarchy and supernatural legitimacy rather than territorial sovereignty or mass solidarity. It was not until 1902 that the king, previously the 'Lord of Life of Siam', was referred to as ruler of *prathet thai*, or 'Thai-land'.[3] And it was not until 1939 that this became the official name of the country.

Even in the 'old nations' of Europe, as Eugen Weber memorably demonstrated in *Peasants into Frenchmen*, the creation of nation states out of dynastic states was a slow process.[4] But if Thailand is really an old nation like France or England, then it still seems hard to understand why well into the twentieth century, the Western-educated Thai king Vajiravudh (r. 1910–25) had to wage a long propaganda campaign in order to convince his own people of that fact. And if Burma is an old nation, then the apparent acquiesence of the Burmese political elite in the first decades of British rule, and the subsequent detour through religious revival en route to the eventual 'national awakening', are almost equally puzzling. As Miroslav Hroch has shown, it is in new, not old nations that agitation for national sovereignty is characteristically preceded by a preparatory phase of heightened cultural awareness among the intelligentsia.[5] Even in mainland Southeast Asia, then, it seems that the period of high colonialism and anticolonial nationalism was more than just a passing hiatus in the history of a set of old, established nations.

Turning to maritime Southeast Asia, conversely, the absence of pre-colonial polities coterminous with the colonial and post-colonial states of Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines should not blind us to the fact that these nations, although originating in the first

place as daring figments of the anticolonial imagination, were in some ways also prefigured, and perhaps shaped, by other types of imagined community that had nothing to do with colonialism. The Malay (Melayu) ethnic group that gave Malaysia its name, and both Malaysia and Indonesia their national languages, was already a subjectively perceived community of sorts—sometimes referred to as the *alam Melayu*, or 'Malay world'—long before its members began to see it as a focus of national solidarity. Like Germans and Italians before German and Italian unification, pre-colonial Malays were widely aware of their shared language, culture, and institutions; in some contexts, they also recognized a common origin in the historic sultanates of Sriwijaya and Malacca.

(p. 267) Unlike the major ethnic identities of mainland Southeast Asia, that of the Malays was shaped more by their long history of commercial interaction—the Malacca Straits, where Malay ethnicity originated, being one of the world's great arteries of trade—than by warfare and state-formation. This helps to explain why a pre-colonial ideal of Malay political solidarity was not present. By the nineteenth century, however, the Malays did share a common religion, adherence to Islam having become an essential criterion, alongside the Malay language, of Malay identity. The idea of the indigenous population as a community of Islamic believers seems to have paved the way, at least in some degree, for the idea of a political nation both in Malaysia and in Indonesia.[6] Throughout Southeast Asia, from Buddhist Burma and Thailand to the Christian Philippines, nationalist movements have in fact been associated, especially in their early years, with religious beliefs, institutions, and communities.

It may therefore be too simple to say that the nations of island Southeast Asia are colonial in origin, and those of mainland Southeast Asia indigenous. Even in the Spanish Philippines, where the dominant religious institution, the Catholic Church, was as European in origin as the state, the elite constitutionalism and Enlightenment ideals of early nationalist leaders concealed, among their followers, solidarities based on indigenous Tagalog magic and millenarianism as well as folk Catholicism and freemasonry. In what follows, the diverse origins of Southeast Asian nations and nationalism—ancient and recent, indigenous and exogenous—are explored in greater depth with the help of a comparison between Indonesia and Indochina.

Ethnogeographic Integration and Exclusion in Anticolonial Nationalism

French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies were the two giant states of colonial Southeast Asia, accounting for 60 per cent of the region's land area and almost two-thirds of its population. Both produced strong anticolonial nationalist movements, culminating in almost simultaneous declarations of independence in 1945 following the surrender of the Japanese forces that had briefly occupied the region during the Second World War.[7] There was a major difference, however. In the Dutch East Indies, nationalists had sought to unite all of the regions and ethnic groups of the colony into a single nation, and it was as one nation that Indonesia became independent. In Indochina, by contrast, existing ethno-

geographic divisions were not abridged by the common reaction against French colonialism, and the independence declared in Hanoi in 1945 was not that of Indochina as a whole, but of one part only, Vietnam. The remainder of Indochina was to follow its own paths to independence as two further nations, Cambodia and Laos. The Indonesian and Indochinese responses to colonialism represent examples of what may be called 'integrative' and 'exclusive' nationalism respectively.[8]

(p. 268) French Indochina has been described as 'an utterly anomalous entity that owed its existence entirely to French fiat'.[9] The construction of this 'anomaly' began with the French conquest of Saigon in 1859, and was completed in 1907 with the last of a series of territorial annexations at the expense of Siam. The resulting boundaries, determined essentially by the dynamics of Franco-British imperial rivalry, encompassed diverse cultures, and also divided singular ones. Both the Buddhist kingdom of Cambodia (a remnant of the medieval Khmer Empire of which Siam was also an offshoot) and its historic adversary Dai Viet (Vietnam), Southeast Asia's only Confucian state, were incorporated, as were dozens of smaller indigenous polities and ethnic groups. The colony's western border along the Mekong, meanwhile, split the ethnic Lao, historically the people of the Mekong Valley, arbitrarily between the control of France and that of Siam, which served as a buffer state between French Indochina and British Burma. When Laos became independent in 1954, consequently, most Laotians were not Lao, and most Lao lived in Thailand.

By the same token, however, Indonesia was no less a product of European fiat. (The term 'Indonesia', meaning 'Indian Archipelago', was first coined by two British scholars in 1850.) 'Netherlands India', approximately three times larger than Indochina in area and population, was also three times longer in the making, Dutch expansion in the archipelago dating back to the seventeenth century. But Java was the only major island to come under firm Dutch territorial control before 1850, and many areas, including Hindu Bali as well as the pagan interiors of Sumatra, Borneo, and Sulawesi, remained virtually independent until the early twentieth century. More than four hundred languages were spoken within the area that the colony eventually came to encompass, while in the north and west its borders with British Malaya divided the ethnic Malays, historically the people of the Malacca Strait, between the future states of Indonesia and Malaysia, just as Indochina divided the Lao between Thailand and Laos.

It is true that twentieth-century Indonesian nationalists found some useful historical material at their disposal when they sought to project the nation back into the pre-colonial period. They could, for instance, point to evidence that the fourteenth-century state of Majapahit had possessed dependencies in many parts of the archipelago. This knowledge, however, came from colonial scholarship rather than folk memory, and reflected a politically useful coincidence rather than a real historical continuity.[10] Ironically Majapahit, as a Javanese state, was probably more useful to Indonesian nationalism as a remote abstraction than it would have been as a recent memory. In Indochina, where the Vietnamese king Minh Mang made an unpopular attempt to rule Cambodia as a puppet state

in the 1830s, the memory of this imperial expansion proved a positive impediment to Indochinese unity a century later.

The idea of an Indonesian nation, as already noted, was prefigured in some respects by that of a Southeast Asian Islamic ecumene. By the beginning of the twentieth century close to 90 per cent of the inhabitants of Netherlands India were Muslims, and increasing numbers of them were travelling as pilgrims or students to Arabia and Egypt, where they were collectively known as Jawi or 'Javanese', the Arabic term for anything originating from Southeast Asia. Michael Laffan argues that their intensifying (p. 269) interaction with the central lands of Islam, and with each other via local and international networks of Jawi *ulama* (men learned in Islam), gave rise to a new collective consciousness in rather the same way as did colonial education and travel to Europe, and perhaps with even greater potential to inspire anticolonial sentiments.[11]

Against this, however, it must be noted that Islamic Southeast Asia included parts of what would become Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines as well as Indonesia, and that whatever the contribution of Islamic ecumenicalism to the spirit of anticolonial nationalism in the region, it manifestly failed to transcend the borders of colonial states. Nor was it capable of mobilizing the non-Islamic minorities within the Dutch colony. As a specific, bounded community including both Muslims and non-Muslims, the Indonesian nation was in fact coeval with the Netherlands Indies, and was conceived only as that state reached its full development in the twentieth century. Majapahit was duly invoked to help legitimate it, and even inspired fleeting dreams of expansion into Malaya and Melanesia. But the success of Malaysia in creating a separate national identity for the Malay Muslims on the peninsular side of the Malacca Strait, like the story of East (until 1975, Portuguese) Timor and its long resistance to Indonesian annexation, confirms that if what is now Indonesia had been divided between many colonial states, it could just as well have become many separate nations.

The idea of Indonesia as a 'new nation', then, stands up after all to close inspection. And if Indonesia became a single new nation because it came under the control of a single colonial state, then it remains to be explained why Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos became (or remained) separate nations *despite* coming under the control of a single colonial state. The discussion that follows begins by making a straightforward distinction between two broad approaches to this question. Explanations that locate the origins of Indochina's disintegration in the pre-colonial past, whatever their theoretical content, are referred to here as 'perennialist'. Theories that attribute the breakup to aspects of the situation under colonial rule, conversely, are referred to as 'modernist'. Both terms are borrowed from the work of Anthony Smith, although the meaning of 'perennialism' here, as explained below, is slightly different from the way Smith uses it.[12]

Explaining the Divergence: 1. Modernist Approaches

Nations, in the modernist view, are the products of a set of technological, social, and political changes—'modernization'—which began in Europe not much earlier than the eighteenth century. For Benedict Anderson, the most important of these changes concerned the development of new media of communication.[13] It was commercial printing and mass literacy that first made it possible for people to feel themselves part of the huge, anonymous 'imagined community' of a nation. Printed news media (p. 270) generated a sense of shared experience and fate that had no precedent in societies based on local and personal relationships. Mass publishing gave rise to national consciousness, and the geography of 'print-capitalism' therefore determined the geography of nations.[14]

When Europe exported commercial printing to its colonies, each colonial territory typically became a discrete publishing domain, most often with the imperial language serving as the main language of the printed media and therefore as the main vehicle for national consciousness.[15] In Indochina, however, the colonial government decided to concentrate upon promoting mass literacy in the main vernacular languages—Vietnamese, Khmer, and Lao—rather than in French, which consequently could not become a language of national unity. Instead, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos each acquired a separate reading public. Dutch educational policy in Indonesia also favoured indigenous languages, but here one particular language, Malay, was taught even in areas where it was not the local vernacular. Although already widely spoken in trade and diplomacy in pre-colonial times, Malay became the national language of Indonesia essentially because of its systematic promotion by the colonial state, and its consequent emergence as the medium of the nationalist press and literature.[16]

A supplementary argument concerns the geography of career trajectories for indigenous students and officials in each colony.[17] The comradeship of the classroom, Anderson notes, was perceived by Indonesian students as a microcosm of the emergent nation. In the secondary schools and colleges of Dutch Java, members of a multi-ethnic elite drawn from all over the archipelago learned to see themselves as natives of the single country marked out on their classroom maps. Initially a similar situation existed in Indochina, with the best Khmer and Lao students studying alongside Vietnamese classmates in Hanoi and Saigon. Later, however, such contacts became less common as educational facilities improved in Phnom Penh and Vientiane. The Indochinese administration also had a tendency to restrict Cambodian and Laotian officials to careers in their home territories, whereas outer islanders in Indonesia could and did seek state employment in Java. Recent research has expanded on Anderson's arguments by showing how the divisive effects of French language and administrative policy were enhanced by deliberate efforts on the part of the French to cultivate a sense of separate nationhood in both Cambodia and Laos.[18] Inspired partly by a desire to insulate their Khmer and Lao subjects from the political influence of neighbouring and culturally cognate Thailand, this project was pur-

sued through the medium of officially sponsored Buddhist religious and cultural institutions as well as through the educational system.

While Anderson's model is convincing with regard to Indonesian integration, his explanation for Indochinese disintegration does not accord with the chronology of the exclusively Vietnamese nationalist movement. For a short time at the beginning of the twentieth century, according to Anderson, the Indochinese intellectual elite in Hanoi and Saigon did indeed understand its 'Indochinese-ness' in the same way as the students who converged on Batavia and Bandung understood their common Indonesian identity.[19] It was not until after 1917, when French education policy shifted toward (p. 271) decentralization and the vernacular languages, that this understanding broke down. The only direct evidence supplied by Anderson to support this assertion comes from the memoirs of a Laotian leader. But it was the Vietnamese, not the Lao, who pioneered anticolonial nationalism in Indochina; and well before 1917, nationalists in Vietnam had already determined that theirs was a Vietnamese rather than an Indochinese nation.

Dating the emergence of Vietnamese nationalism is difficult because of the gradual way in which it developed out of the royalist resistance movement of the late nineteenth century. After the annexation of central and northern Vietnam in 1885, supporters of the fugitive emperor Ham Nghi continued for a time to fight against the French. Their struggle, although in itself unsuccessful, shaped the experience of the first generation of explicitly nationalist intellectuals. Phan Boi Chau, who founded Vietnam's first modern political organization in 1904, had himself been involved as a youth in the resistance of 1885, as had the second most important nationalist of his generation, Phan Chu Trinh. Such men identified themselves as Vietnamese, not Indochinese, patriots, and while they did not themselves belong to the French-educated elite discussed by Anderson, they did have a strong influence on it. Insofar as nationalists in the first three decades of the twentieth century were interested in Indochina, they saw it mainly as a gratifyingly enlarged reincarnation of Vietnam (Annam): a 'remarkable confusion of two very different geopolitical entities, the first a traditional remembrance of a unified Annamese empire…and the new one being a French Indochinese space'.[20] After 1930, when dissenting voices in Cambodia and Laos began to highlight the contradiction between Vietnamese nationalism and Indochinese unity, this expansionist conceit was no longer tenable.

If Anderson sees the appearance of nations as a matter of technological and cultural transformation, most modernists have seen political change as a more important factor. For John Breuilly, nations are defined and created by the phenomenon of political nationalism.[21] There are two preconditions for the appearance of such nationalism: an undemocratic state claiming sovereignty over a given territory, and the presence of an ideal of popular sovereignty according to which that state should be controlled by 'the people'. Defining this 'people' in the racial terms suggested by the discriminatory behaviour of the colonizers, nationalists usually sought to mobilize the whole indigenous population of a colonial territory in order to depose the European rulers and appropriate their state. In some cases, however, special features of the colonial system caused the anticolonial response to be deflected to the regional level and diffracted into what Breuilly calls 'sub-na-

tionalism'. This was likely to happen if the colonial state featured devolution of administrative and representative functions to regional sub-units, and if it discriminated not only against 'natives' in general, but also between indigenous ethnic groups.[22] In French Indochina, both diffracting features were present.

Indochina was not technically a single state, but a federation of five territories: Cochinchina, Annam, Tongkin, Cambodia, and Laos. In Cochinchina, which the French annexed outright in 1867, a direct system of colonial rule was applied. In (p. 272) Annam and Tongkin the Vietnamese mandarinate, complete with its system of recruitment by examination in the Confucian classics, was preserved in modified form, and in Annam the emperor himself retained vestigial powers. The Cambodian monarchy, under French protection since 1863, also survived, as did the main Laotian principalities. Each territory, moreover, had its own rudimentary representative council with indigenous membership. A second divisive feature of French colonialism in Indochina was that it employed large numbers of Vietnamese civil servants in, and encouraged Vietnamese migration to, Cambodia and Laos. The result was that many Khmer and Lao felt, in the words of Bernard Fall, 'twice colonized'—first by the French, and then by the Vietnamese.[23]

Once again, however, a crucial point here is that it was Vietnam, not Cambodia or Laos, which first made the choice against an Indochinese identity—and this despite the fact that with 72 per cent of the Indochinese population, the Vietnamese had little to fear from Khmer or Lao competition. By contrast the ethnic Javanese, with only 47 per cent of the Indonesian population in 1930, took a bigger risk when they condemned themselves to minority status by choosing the integrative option. And if the political geography of colonial Indochina was not conducive to integrative nationalism, it was not obviously conducive to a specifically Vietnamese form of exclusive nationalism either, since the old empire of Vietnam was split into three territories, Cochinchina, Annam, and Tongkin. Modernist arguments, in short, may illuminate some aspects of the fragmentation of Indochina, but are not in themselves enough to explain why anticolonial nationalism in Vietnam took an exclusive form at the outset. Another factor, without doubt, was a sense of separate Vietnamese identity inherited from before the French conquest.

Explaining the Divergence: 2. Perennialist Approaches

Most historians of Indochina have assumed, implicitly or explicitly, that Vietnam already constituted a nation well before its colonization by the French.[24] Anthony Smith uses the term 'perennialism' to indicate the view that nations, although not necessarily 'primordial' or 'natural', have figured in human affairs throughout the historical record.[25] Most writers on Vietnam are perennialists insofar as they make two claims. The first is that both the sense of community described by Anderson, and the political solidarity emphasized by Breuilly, were already found in pre-colonial Vietnam despite the absence of either citizenship or print-capitalism. The second claim, always implicit rather than explicit, is that these characteristics predestined Vietnam to become a discrete modern nation

state (rather than part of one, or a collection of several) once the political and ideological environment made this possible. (p. 273) The first of these claims is assessed below with the aid of comparative observations from Java. The second will be dealt with more tentatively in the following section.

Before the French annexation, an independent state had existed in what is now North Vietnam since the tenth century. After a thousand years as a Chinese province, it broke away from China in 938 and became a separate kingdom. Over the succeeding centuries this kingdom was to bear several names, including Dai Viet, Dai Nam, and, between 1804 and 1820, Viet Nam. Wars with China, which periodically attempted to recapture its lost southern possession, gave rise to unmistakably patriotic sentiments. Following the expulsion of a Chinese occupation force in 1428, to take a much-cited example, the Viet scholar and statesman Nguyen Trai wrote a poetic proclamation celebrating his country's independence of, distinctiveness from, and equality with, its northern neighbour:[26]

> Now think upon this Dai Viet land of ours;
> Truly it is a cultured nation.
> As mountain and river make for various lands,
> so our Southern ways must differ from the North.
> It was the Trieu, Dinh, Ly and Tran
> who in succession built this country.[27]
> Even as the Han, the T'ang, and Sung and Yüan,
> each was sovereign in its own domain.[28]
> Sometimes strong, sometimes weak,
> yet never lacking heroes,
> we beat the ambitious Liu Kung
> and crushed Ch'ao Chie with his dreams of grandeur.[29]

Statements like this, however, tend to be selected by historians from a great volume of more ambiguous material precisely in order to demonstrate an anticipation of modern nationalism. At times of confrontation with China, Vietnamese mandarins could certainly view the customs of their own country in a positive light. But in general they had a deep admiration for classical Chinese civilization, and found many aspects of local culture 'barbaric'. Their education concentrated almost entirely on the literature, philosophy, history, and geography of China. Their system of government, with its officials selected by examination in the Chinese classics, was modelled on China's. The language of state was Mandarin Chinese, in comparison to which vernacular Vietnamese was thought 'vulgar and inadequate'.[30] 'Confucius and Mencius are my masters, the Han Dynasty is my fatherland', ran a motto of the Vietnamese mandarinate in the nineteenth century.[31] The theme of cultural distinctiveness and pride is present in Vietnamese history before the twentieth century, but its importance fluctuated considerably, and was particularly slight under the Sinophile emperors whose reigns immediately preceded the French invasion.

Within the Vietnamese Empire, the dominant ethnic group was the Viet or Kinh. These made up the majority of the population and virtually the whole of the official class. Originally a people of the Red River delta, over the centuries they expanded down the coastal

lowlands, reaching the Mekong delta by the seventeenth century. At each (p. 274) stage, this southward expansion was accompanied by an equivalent extension of state power. Yet the relationship between ethnicity and political allegiance in pre-colonial Vietnam was neither explicit nor direct. The gulf between the Confucian official culture and the Viet vernacular culture was not the only reason for this. Another was that as a 'middle kingdom' in its own right, the empire included substantial numbers of Tay, Muong, Cham, and many other ethnic minority groups. The key to unity was not a common national culture, but a common set of political institutions, the most important of which was the monarchy. A 'son of heaven' like his Chinese model, the Vietnamese emperor personified the state and the country. The burst of anticolonial resistance that followed the French annexation of Annam and Tongkin in 1885 was known simply as the *can vuong* or 'save the king' movement.[32]

The existence of an ethic of loyalty (*trung*) to the king was no guarantee of stability or solidarity. For more than three centuries prior to the French conquest, the history of the country was one of almost continuous conflict between the followers of rival rulers and pretenders. From 1528 to 1592 the warring Le and Mac dynasties governed separate territories, both as hereditary crowns recognized by China. From 1600 to 1775 two great 'seigneurial' families, the Trinh and the Nguyen, ruled northern and southern Vietnam respectively as separate and mutually hostile states. A descendant of the Nguyen succeeded in reunifying the country, with Siamese and French help, in 1802, but the resulting state still proved no match for the colonial onslaught when it came. In 1863 Emperor Tu Duc ordered the defenders of Cochinchina to lay down their arms as part of his policy of conciliation toward the French. When the young king Ham Nghi fled his capital in 1885, the French were able to place his brother on the throne as the first in a series of puppet emperors. Preoccupied with Confucian ideals of personal virtue, most members of the mandarinate were prepared to accept the change once it became clear that under the new regime they would still be able to play their benevolent official roles.[33] Ham Nghi was captured in 1888, and by 1897 Governor General Doumer could report that 'the whole country seems to have come to accept our administration'.[34]

What nevertheless survived from this period to inform later political movements was a clear memory of Vietnam's past independence as a single state or 'country'—*quoc*, a term derived from the Chinese *kuo*—covering the territories which the French knew as Tongkin, Annam, and Cochinchina. In nineteenth-century texts the *quoc* is almost always mentioned in conjunction with the king, the two forming 'a dual concept, the twin elements of which were rarely differentiated'.[35] But the fact that the *quoc* had a territorial dimension, being a country as well as a polity, gave it the potential to be something more than an extension of the king. The conceptual breakthrough that heralded the rise of modern nationalism in Vietnam is associated with the Duy Tan Hoi or 'Reformation Society', a secret anticolonial organization founded in 1904. The essence of the breakthrough was that, in Phan Boi Chau's words: 'the people are in fact the country, the country is the people's'.[36] Out of this idea came a new term, *quoc dan*, 'country of people': the nation.

It was under the influence of European nationalist ideas—albeit mainly as interpreted by Chinese writers—that Phan Boi Chau and his contemporaries decided that (p. 275) the people, not the ruler, were the foundation of the state and the source of its legitimacy. They did so at a time when intellectuals all over Asia were reaching the same conclusion. The Vietnamese situation, however, differed from that of many other colonial countries in that indigenous institutions and conceptual categories already existed to which the new ideas could be applied. The framework for the new nation was provided by the *quoc* of Vietnam: Phan Boi Chau entitled his most important essay *Viet Nam vong quoc su*, 'A history of the loss of the country of Vietnam'.[37] This *quoc* was already established as an object of loyalty and emotional attachment, even if that attachment was initially inseparable from loyalty to the king. The new order could therefore be grafted so effectively onto the old that, in retrospect, the seam is barely noticeable.

Both the strengths and the weaknesses of the perennialist argument in the Vietnamese context can be illustrated by a comparison with the group that occupied the equivalent central position in Indonesia, the Javanese. Like the Viet, the Javanese are a clearly defined and relatively homogeneous ethnic group. They occupy the greater part of the island of Java, and until recently they were not found elsewhere. All speak the same language and all accept the same ethnic label, Jawa. The Javanese have long possessed an awareness of a common history and a common homeland. Their best-known traditional historical text is called simply *Babad Tanah Jawi*, 'History of the Land of Java'.[38] Because the Javanese courts ceased to imitate foreign cultural models (in their case, Indian models) after the ninth century, and because of the wide influence of popular art forms based closely upon royal prototypes, the distance between folk and court cultures was smaller in Java than in Vietnam.

Like the Viet, the Javanese possessed an ideal of political unity. Javanese political tradition after Majapahit, according to Merle Ricklefs, was 'predicated upon the assumption that there could only be a single sovereign in Java'.[39] More clearly than in Vietnam, the ruler's divine mandate appears to have been limited to a single ethnic community: it was accepted that a separate state should exist in the west of Java, where the population spoke Sundanese rather than Javanese. Beyond Java lay other islands that might become conquests or dependencies, but which always remained foreign countries: *tanah sabrang*, 'the lands across the sea'.

In practice, the political unity of Java was not often maintained for long periods. As in Vietnam, succession conflicts and regional rebellions repeatedly divided the country. But whereas the onset of French colonialism in Vietnam happened to fall during a period of unity, the slower growth of Dutch political pressure in Java coincided with a period of disintegration. In the early seventeenth century, Sultan Agung, the 'Great Sultan', unified Java under the kingdom of Mataram. But after Agung's death in 1646, his successor Amangkurat alienated his vassals and a civil war broke out. In 1677 the Dutch East India Company intervened to support Amangkurat's son, who was helped onto the throne in return for commercial privileges. In 1740 there began another series of wars that led first to the annexation by the Company of the north coast provinces, and then in 1755 to the

division of Central Java between two separate courts, Yogyakarta and Surakarta. Further fragmentation produced two more even smaller polities, (p. 276) making four Javanese princely states (*vorstenlanden*) in all. This partition persisted until the balance of military power was decisively tipped toward Europe in the early nineteenth century. Whereas Vietnam faced the colonial onslaught as a single state, Java did so in a condition similar to that of Vietnam a century earlier: as a pair of regional kingdoms preoccupied by their own rivalry. And by the time the ideal of popular sovereignty spread among the intelligentsia in the early twentieth century, Javanese political unity was a dim memory. In French Indochina, by contrast, Vietnamese unity remained a living ideal, inadvertently nourished by the incorporation of the emperor and much of the old imperial bureaucracy into the colonial state.

Unlike Vietnam, Java had no strong pre-colonial tradition of patriotic resistance to foreign invasion that could inspire its response to the Dutch. However, there are signs that an explicitly defensive sense of Javanese solidarity was beginning to evolve during the eighteenth century as a result of prolonged interaction with the East India Company. In the *Serat Surya Raja*, a prophetic allegory written at the court of Yogyakarta in 1774, the Muslim Javanese battle together against the infidel armies of *tanah sabrang*, symbolizing the Dutch and their allies from the outer islands.[40]

Whatever the similarities and contrasts between Java and Vietnam before the twentieth century, the idea of a Javanese nation is less speculative than it sounds. An exclusive Javanese nationalism did exist for a time in late colonial Indonesia, and in the following section it provides a starting point for an approach to integration and exclusion in anticolonial nationalism that combines modernist and perennialist elements.

Nations that Might Have Been: Java and Indochina

The choice between integrative and exclusive forms of anticolonial nationalism was seldom an immediate or unanimous one. Successful integrative movements usually had to compete at some stage with exclusive ones, and vice versa. In India, for instance, the writings of Bombay intellectuals at the turn of the century reveal an exclusively Maharashtran regional nationalism that was later absorbed into the integrative Indian nationalist movement.[41] In this way, the ‘nations that might have been’ leave their mark on history in the form of ephemeral ideas and organizations. From the study of such organizations, it is possible to learn more about why the conceptions of the nation for which they stood did not ultimately prevail.

The beginnings of nationalism in Indonesia are conventionally traced to Budi Utomo, an association (and later political party) founded in 1908 by graduates of colonial schools and colleges in Java. But ‘nationalism in Indonesia’ is not synonymous with ‘Indonesian nationalism’, and Budi Utomo was an exclusively Javanese organization that consistently refused to include outer islanders either in its membership or in (p. 277) its vision of the

nation.[42] When the idea of an *Indisch*, or 'Indies' nation—the term 'Indonesia' became popular only after 1920—was subsequently promoted by the *Indische Partij*, or Indies Party, a more radical group established in 1912 and led partly by Eurasians, the reaction of many in Java was to reject it as too artificial, indeed too colonial, a concept to serve as the basis for the national 'revival' that they sought. 'Our history will develop towards the unity of the Indisch people, but not towards an Indisch national unity,' wrote Soetatmo Soeriokoesoemo of the Committee for Javanese Nationalism, sponsored by the ruler of one of Java's princely states, in 1918. 'An Indies nation—could this be attained—would again fly into fragments'; the Javanese nation could not 'sacrifice itself' in this vain cause.[43]

In the end, integrative nationalism nevertheless gained the upper hand. Budi Utomo itself accepted the principle of Indonesian unity in 1928, and dissolved itself into the Indonesian nationalist party Parindra in 1935. As Anderson suggests, one reason for the eclipse of Javanese nationalism was that the predominance of the Malay over the Javanese language, particularly in the press, prevented Java from becoming a modern communication community in its own right.[44] The centralized structure of the colonial education system also supported integration. These factors, however, were fairly constant over time and can therefore explain neither why Javanese nationalism appeared in the first place, nor why it survived for as long as it did. Budi Utomo itself adopted the Malay language for meetings and publications almost immediately after its foundation, yet did not abandon its exclusively Javanese conception of the nation until almost two decades later.

The decline of Javanese nationalism was associated not so much with the emergence of an Indonesian communication community, as with the reorientation of the Javanese intelligentsia away from cultural and social issues toward the specific political goal of independence from the Netherlands. The founders of Budi Utomo belonged to the preparatory, cultural phase of nationalism identified by Hroch as a characteristic prelude to the birth of new nations.[45] They were nationalists in the sense that they strove to unify the Javanese in the pursuit of educational and economic progress on the basis of a rekindled pride in Java's cultural heritage and historical achievements. Gradually, however, the conviction developed, in Java as elsewhere, that neither economic development nor cultural pride was compatible with the continuation of Dutch colonial rule. At this point, to quote Anthony Reid, 'the problem of imperialism itself became more interesting to most Indonesian intellectuals than a continuing search for historical identity'.[46] Dutch imperialism was not limited to Java, and the most effective way to oppose it was to form what future president Sukarno called a 'brown front', comprising all the indigenous peoples of the Dutch East Indies. With the acceptance of this principle, cultural nationalism was turned in a new, inclusive direction, embracing ethnic diversity under the motto 'unity in diversity' while promoting Malay (renamed Indonesian) as a national lingua franca.

There are signs that if Javanese nationalism had been able to 'mesh' with political institutions corresponding more closely with the geography of the Javanese nation, it might have done so and avoided dissolution. 'Javanese nationalism—that means a **(p. 278)** restoration of independent Java and thus, destruction of foreign rule,' wrote the politician and educationalist Suwardi Suryaningrat in 1917. Suwardi was an *Indisch* nationalist, but

also a Javanese patriot who looked for political as well as cultural inspiration to the princely states of Central Java, where the remnants of the Mataram empire survived. 'There in the *vorstenlanden*,' he declared, 'they know what Java was, how Java was feared by foreigners, but also how Java has suffered'.[47] Had Mataram survived as a single large princely state covering much of the island, it is probable that people like Suwardi would have been able to envisage Indonesia only in the same way as some contemporary Vietnamese nationalists envisaged the future of Indochina: as a federation of independent nations. And the indications are that it would not have been difficult to generate mass support for an exclusively Javanese nationalism on the basis of an existing state. The Pakempalan Kawulo Ngayogyakarta, a royalist party led by members of the Yogyakarta royal household, was still the largest political organization in Indonesia between 1930 and 1942 despite its very limited catchment area.

But Java had indeed suffered, and the tiny *vorstenlanden* could no longer provide a framework for Javanese independence. For the men who founded Budi Utomo, most of them young Javanese aristocrats or *priyayi*, the old ideal of a unified, sovereign Javanese state was perhaps still a living tradition despite the process of domestication and bureaucratization to which the *priyayi* had been subjected by the Dutch during the nineteenth century. But for Sukarno's generation of Javanese, born into an increasingly centralized Dutch colony at the beginning of the twentieth century, the only really important state was Hindia Belanda, the Dutch Indies, and it was this that they set out to conquer and make their own.[48]

In Indochina, where the Vietnamese equivalent of exclusive Javanese nationalism remained dominant to the last, the 'might have been' Indochinese equivalent of the Indonesian nation left only a fleeting mark on intellectual and political life.[49] Nevertheless, by the last few years of the colonial period the attraction of integrative nationalism was certainly being felt in some quarters. In 1930 the recently formed Vietnamese Communist Party renamed itself the Indochinese Communist Party (Dang Cong San Dong Duong) in order to carry the anticolonial struggle to Cambodia and Laos as well as Vietnam. The exponents of Indochinese communism talked in terms of proletarian solidarity rather than Indochinese *national* unity; at most they envisaged Indochina as a federation like the Soviet Union, comprising several 'nationalities'. But although their vocabulary was different, in substance their arguments closely resembled those used by Indonesian nationalists. The peoples of Indochina were natural allies against imperialism, and any hostility between them was to be blamed on the French: 'from the time Indochina was occupied, the imperialists have continued to carry out a policy of division and maintaining hatred of this people toward that people'.[50] A party periodical went so far as to state that 'although the three countries are made up of three different races, with different languages, different traditions, different behaviour patterns, in reality they form only one country'.[51] Here, surely, are the beginnings of an Indochinese 'unity in diversity' to match that of Indonesia.

(p. 279) A more explicit approach to Indochinese nationalism, meanwhile, was being made at the same period by an organization at the opposite end of the political spectrum: the Constitutionalist Party, a group of elite Viet politicians in Cochinchina who cooperated with the French regime. The Constitutionalists believed that Indochina as a whole should have dominion status within the French Empire, and in 1938 they began talking about the need to forge a single 'people' out of the various 'Indochinese peoples'. In 1939 one conservative Viet writer even looked forward explicitly to the creation of an 'Indochinese Nation'—albeit still in the ethnocentric form of 'a single country which Annamese blood will have fertilized', rather than as a fully multicultural project.[52]

If writers on Vietnam have tended to interpret Indochinese communism as a disingenuous combination of Vietnamese expansionism and proletarian internationalism, the Constitutionalist interest in Indochinese unity has been seen mainly as a symptom of excessive identification with the French *mission civilisatrice*.[53] Yet despite their deep differences, these two groups did also have something in common that helps to explain why they both approached an integrative position reminiscent of Indonesian nationalism: essentially, both were orientated in thought and action toward the colonial state rather than toward traditional institutions.

They shared this orientation partly for quite opposite ideological reasons: the communists saw French imperialism as the central issue and rejected the old Vietnamese institutions as reactionary, while the Constitutionalists believed in the continuing usefulness of French tutelage. But an element of common experience was also involved here. By the 1930s the traditional *quoc* that had inspired early Vietnamese nationalism was no longer the living institution that it had been for Phan Boi Chau. Most of its functions had been taken over by the colonial state, and this, for the young men who joined the Indochinese Communist Party, was the immediate reality. It was a government of Indochina that not only ruled and persecuted them, but had also educated and in many cases employed them; and so it was Indochina that they aimed to unify and liberate. The depiction of French Indochina in colonial school textbooks and maps, together with rapid improvements in transport and communications, had also given them a sense of personal familiarity and identification with the territory of the colony as a whole. The hegemony of colonial institutions and ideas was most complete in the homeland of the Constitutionalists, Cochinchina, where the French had exercised direct power for more than sixty years, where the Vietnamese Empire was no longer a living memory even for the old, and where the development of colonial education and representative councils had gone furthest.

In Indochina as in Indonesia, it is reasonable to suppose that the longer established and more intrusive the colonial state became, the greater the potential for integrative, as opposed to exclusive, nationalism. This is not to suggest that if the colonial period had gone on for longer, the existing ethnogeographically exclusive Vietnamese nationalism would have faded away.[54] By 1930 it already had too much momentum for that. But the timing of its birth, around the turn of the century, was critical.

(p. 280) Toward Synthesis: Chronology of Colonial Conquest as the Key to National Morphology

Whether or not Vietnam can be described as an 'old nation' is to some extent a matter of semantics. Both of the characteristics that modernist writers view as fundamental to nationhood—a sense of mass community and an ideal, if not always a reality, of political solidarity—were already present *in some degree* in pre-colonial Vietnam. But these features were only sometimes explicitly referred to in political discourse, and remained components of an ideological system that, as a whole, often worked against them. Not until they were selected, augmented, and combined, under the influence of Western rule and Western ideas about popular sovereignty, did they become defining features of the Vietnamese nation as it emerged in the early twentieth century.

The most important single aspect of the continuity between royalist and nationalist anticolonialism was the persistent notion of a *quoc*, a territorial state commanding—first as an extension of the emperor, later as an extension of the people—loyalty from its subjects. It was with *vong quoc*, the 'loss of country' to the French, that Phan Boi Chau began the intellectual and political journey that led to the *quoc dan* or nation. But this continuity was contingent on the coincidence that the idea that 'the people are the country' was disseminated close enough in time to the colonial conquest, while the independent *quoc* was still a recent memory, to ensure that *the country which was lost would also be the country which the nationalists sought to regain*. If all of Vietnam had been colonized early in the nineteenth century, and its administration incorporated into the colonial state as thoroughly as that of Java, such a conjuncture might not have occurred. And if the colonial conquest had coincided with a period of deep internal disunity, such as the north-south (Trinh-Nguyen) wars of the eighteenth century, then even the preservation of existing institutions within the colonial system might have militated *against* the emergence of a single nation—just as it did in divided Java—and ultimately strengthened the countervailing attraction of an integrative Indochinese nationalism.

It is of crucial importance here that the first generation of Vietnamese nationalists were brought up under the imperial system when the country was still independent. Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chu Trinh, both sons of imperial officials, had been involved in the 'save the king' movement and received classical Confucian education before they were exposed to the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Thomas Paine. They were not rebel children of the colonial state, but loyal children of the old Vietnamese Empire, suddenly exposed to a transformed political situation and a new intellectual world. The late date of the colonial conquest in central and northern Vietnam meant that the transition from royalist anticolonialism to modern nationalism was made within a single generation.

(p. 281) The counter-example of Java shows that an ethnic community of sufficient coherence and historic stature can still generate the beginnings of a modern nationalist movement of the exclusive variety, even when it is no longer supported by an indigenous state. But by the same token, the eventual absorption of Javanese into Indonesian nationalism

shows that without a strong inherited claim to political sovereignty over the ethnic homeland, such a movement is hard pressed to maintain its ethnic exclusivity once the capture of state power becomes the central nationalist issue. Vietnamese political nationalism, by contrast, was able to grow straight out of the framework of the indigenous state, without passing through a preliminary 'cultural' phase of identity politics and solidarity-building. Viet ethnic pride and linguistic homogeneity subsequently supported the political movement and were developed within it under the influence of 'print-capitalism'.

Finally, the federal system of administration in colonial Indochina, although it divided Vietnam into three, also supported Vietnamese nationalism insofar as it allowed the Vietnamese to avoid making a conscious choice *not* to integrate Laos and Cambodia into their own nation. If Indochina had been as centralized as Indonesia, with no separate administrations for Cambodia and Laos and no territorial boundaries between them and Vietnam, an exclusive Vietnamese nationalism would still have been problematic despite the memory of Cambodia and Laos as separate pre-colonial *quoc*. Even if such a situation were not enough to induce the Viet to opt for a multi-ethnic integrative nationalism like that of Indonesia, it might well have tempted them into the risky 'Burmese' gambit of claiming the whole colonial state, but still calling it Vietnam. That this is less than fantastic is illustrated by the fact that the first Vietnamese national flag, designed in 1912, featured five red stars, one for each of the provinces of French Indochina, including Cambodia and Laos. When Cambodia and Laos eventually became separate countries, they still did so in the forms given to them as federal substates by the French administration. Vietnamese nationalism, in other words, was only partly a rejection of the colonial administrative framework.

Both pre-colonial and colonial antecedents, to recapitulate, have shaped today's Southeast Asian nations. Some pre-colonial societies—including Vietnam and the other supposed 'old nations' of the mainland, but also Java in maritime Southeast Asia—had characteristics that predisposed them to serve as vehicles for modern nationalist movements: ethnic distinctiveness and homogeneity, and more importantly, a tradition or ideal of political unity and independence established over a long period. But whether or not this potential was realized also depended partly on the way in which the societies concerned were incorporated into their respective colonial states. Important variables here included the direction of colonial language policy, and the degree of political decentralization and ethnic favouritism within the colonial system.

Another factor, seldom discussed in the existing literature but of critical importance, was what happened to traditional political institutions during the colonization process, and *at what dates*. In pre-colonial times, ideals of political unity and independence were focused primarily on states and their rulers, and only to a much lesser extent on 'peoples'. When indigenous states were replaced by colonial institutions, the ideals (p. 282) associated with the former automatically began to decline in importance, especially in the eyes of the new generation of intellectuals and politicians nurtured by colonial education. Unless quickly revitalized by fusion with the imported doctrine of popular sovereignty on a national basis, those ideals could fade to the point where the modern nationalist movement,

when it did arise, was shaped by the colonial state rather than by the memory of the pre-colonial kingdom. Whether anticolonial nationalism took an integrative or an exclusive form, then, depended heavily on *the time lag between the demise of the indigenous state and the onset of the ideological changes brought about by Western education*.

In this perspective Vietnam was not an 'old nation' that 'survived' colonialism, but rather a major pre-colonial state that was conquered almost intact and at a sufficiently *late date* to provide the most meaningful frame of reference for the inevitable anticolonial nationalist reaction of the early twentieth century. Java, conversely, did not emerge as a discrete nation not because it had 'never been one', but because the Javanese state lost its unity and independence well before the era of nationalism, and was gradually absorbed into a highly centralized colonial polity that eventually evoked an integrated nationalist reaction from the whole of an indisputably new nation, Indonesia.

It is worth concluding by briefly considering the relevance of this model to the other countries of the region. In what is now Malaysia, the absence of a pre-colonial tradition of political unity among the ethnic Malays tended to preclude them, as a group, from developing a strong exclusive nationalism, so in their case the 'question of timing' does not really arise. Although sometimes exclusive with respect to the resident ethnic Chinese minority, Malay nationalism has seldom been inclined to reject colonial borders. The lateness and looseness of British control over the individual Malay sultanate of Brunei, however, was certainly a factor in Brunei's last-minute choice to opt out of Malaysia, ultimately following a separate path as an independent microstate.[55] In the Philippines, as in Malaysia, the consistently integrative character of anticolonial nationalism reflected a lack of large, recently conquered indigenous states—although the relationship between the pre-colonial Muslim sultanates of the southern Philippines and the later Moro separatist movement there may well be worth re-examining in this context.[56]

On the mainland, the kingdom of Cambodia was incorporated into the French sphere both at a relatively late date—it became a protectorate in 1863—and in a relatively pristine form, its institutions surviving the colonial period more intact than those of Vietnam. Both circumstances would have predisposed it to an exclusive Cambodian nationalism even if Vietnam had not rejected the integrative (Indochinese) option. In Thailand the doctrine of popular sovereignty was grafted directly on to an unconquered indigenous state, without any sharp hiatus between royalism and nationalism. In Laos in the 1940s an indigenous principality preserved under French rule, Luang Phrabang, took a leading role in official nation-building, but it represented only part of the country and its leadership was short-lived. In Burma the core indigenous state remained independent until 1885—as late as in Vietnam. But it had already **(p. 283)** suffered serious territorial losses to the British well before its final conquest, and it was subsequently abolished rather than preserved as a protectorate. This discontinuity helps to explain why twentieth-century Burmese nationalism began more as a movement of cultural revival, as in Java, than as an ideologically reinvigorated movement of political resistance, as in Vietnam.

Here again we see that although it is a mistake to judge the antiquity of modern nations by the antiquity of the historic states from which they are keen to claim descent, the history of those precursor states—their rise, and more particularly their fall—may nevertheless greatly influence how new nations are imagined and constructed. In terms of the strength of this influence, the Southeast Asian nations represent a full spectrum. At one end of the spectrum lie Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam: whether or not these are old *nations* may be a matter of debate, but they are certainly countries where the morphogenetic link between an old *state* and a new nation is real and direct. In the centre of the spectrum are Burma and Laos, where traditions of indigenous statehood served alongside religious institutions as building blocks for national identity, but not as blueprints for national sovereignty. And at the other extreme lie Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, where, due to longer periods of colonial rule as well as weaker pre-colonial state formation, links between new nations and old states are either imaginary or absent.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Anderson, B. (2006) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 3rd edn., London, especially 116–31.

Edwards, P. (2007) *Cambodge: The Cultivation of a Nation, 1860–1945*, Honolulu.

Elson, R. E. (2008) *The Idea of Indonesia: A History*, Cambridge, esp. 1–97.

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Notes:

(1.) H. Seton-Watson (1977) *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*, London, 7.

(2.) H. van Miert (1995) *Een koel hoofd en een warm hart: nationalisme, Javanisme en jeugdbeweging in Nederlands-Indië, 1918–1930*, Amsterdam, 189.

(3.) D. Streckfuss (1993) 'The Mixed Colonial Legacy in Siam: Origins of Thai Racialist Thought, 1890–1910', in L. J. Sears (ed.) *Autonomous Histories, Particular Truths: Essays in Honour of John R. W. Smail*, Madison, WI, 140.

(4.) E. Weber (1976) *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914*, Stanford, CA.

(5.) M. Hroch (1996) 'From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe', in G. Balakrishnan (ed.) *Mapping the Nation*, London, 78–97.

(6.) W. R. Roff (1967) *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, Kuala Lumpur; M. F. Laffan (2003) *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The* umma *below the Winds*, London.

(7.) In both cases, it took some years of conflict before the independence proclaimed in 1945 was recognized by the colonizing power.

(8.) Most anticolonial nationalist movements followed the integrative pattern. Apart from Vietnam, successful examples of the exclusive form include Pakistan, and in a sense Burma, which was also administered as part of British India until 1937.

(9.) M. F. Herz (1958) *A Short History of Cambodia*, London, 70.

(10.) A. Reid (1979) 'The Nationalist Quest for an Indonesian Past', in A. Reid and D. Marr (eds.) *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, Singapore, 288.

(11.) Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia*.

(12.) A. D. Smith (1986) *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford, and (2001) *Nationalism*, Cambridge.

(13.) This idea is prefigured, in a less sophisticated way, in K. W. Deutsch (1953) *Nationalism and Social Communication*, New York.

(14.) B. Anderson (2006) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 3rd edn., London, 41–79.

(15.) See Chapter 6 by Don Doyle and Eric Van Young, and Chapter 12 by Joya Chatterji.

(16.) One author has even called Malay/Indonesian a 'foreign investment' in Indonesia: J. Hoffman (1979) 'A Foreign Investment: Indies Malay to 1901', *Indonesia*, 27, 65–92.

(17.) Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 106–28.

(18.) P. Edwards (2007) *Cambodge: The Cultivation of a Nation, 1860–1945*, Honolulu; S. Ivarsson (2008) *Creating Laos*, Copenhagen.

(19.) Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 116.

(20.) C. E. Goscha (1995) *Vietnam or Indochina? Contesting Concepts of Space in Vietnamese Nationalism, 1887–1954*, Copenhagen, 52.

(21.) J. Breuilly (1982) *Nationalism and the State*, Manchester; see also E. Kedourie (ed.) (1970) *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, London.

(22.) Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 167–85.

(23.) B. B. Fall (1963) *The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis*, London, 33.

(24.) Some also use the word ‘nationalism’ in relation to Vietnam before the twentieth century: for instance, Truong Buu Lam (1967) *Patterns of Vietnamese Response to Foreign Intervention, 1858–1900*, New Haven, CT, 29. Others, however, stop short of this, preferring ‘protonationalism’: Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam*, 30, 287; C. A. Lockard (1994) ‘The Unexplained Miracle: Reflections on Vietnamese National Identity and Survival’, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 29, no. 1/2, 11; A. B. Woodside (1976) *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam*, Boston, MA, 29.

(25.) Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 12; Smith, *Nationalism*, 49–50.

(26.) The following translation is from S. O’Harrow (1979) ‘Nguyen Trai’s *Binh Ngo Dai Cao* of 1428: The Development of a Vietnamese National Identity’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 10–1, 168–70.

(27.) Trieu, Dinh, Ly, Tran: Vietnamese dynasties.

(28.) Han, T’ang, Sung, Yüan: Chinese dynasties.

(29.) Liu Kung: southern Chinese ruler who lost control over Vietnam in 938; Ch’ao Chie: second in command of a Chinese army that attempted to subjugate Vietnam in 1075–1077; Truong Buu Lam, *Patterns of Vietnamese Response to Foreign Intervention*, 61.

(30.) D. G. Marr (1981) *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920–1945*, Berkeley, CA, 136.

(31.) Huynh Kim Khanh (1982) *Vietnamese Communism, 1925–1945*, Ithaca, NY, 33.

(32.) Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885–1925*, Berkeley, CA, 44–76.

(33.) ‘Under the protectorate there will again be high mandarins’, observed a member of the imperial court soon after its seizure by the French. ‘Surely they will recover and govern us as in the past.’ Quoted in A. B. Woodside (1971) *Vietnam and the Chinese Model: A Comparative Study of Nguyen and Ch’ing Government in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, MA, 111.

(34.) Quoted in Truong Buu Lam, *Patterns of Vietnamese Response to Foreign Intervention*, 27.

(35.) Lam, *Patterns of Vietnamese Response*, 68.

(36.) Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism*, 129.

(37.) Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism*, 114–19.

(38.) J. J. Ras (1987) 'The Genesis of the Babad Tanah Jawi: Origin and Function of the Javanese Court Chronicle', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 143–2/3, 343–56. This chronicle was compiled in the seventeenth century; for older Javanese references to Java as a country or territory, see H. Kulke (1991) 'Epigraphical References to the "City" and the "State" in Early Indonesia', *Indonesia*, 52, 10, 18, 20.

(39.) M. C. Ricklefs (1974) *Jogjakarta under Sultan Mangkubumi, 1749–1792: A History of the Division of Java*, London, 416.

(40.) Ricklefs, *Jogjakarta under Sultan Mangkubumi*, 188–211.

(41.) J. C. Heesterman (1986) 'Unity and Diversity in India and Indonesia', *Itinerario: Bulletin of the Leiden Centre for the History of European Expansion*, 10–1, 85–7. See also Chapter 12 by Joya Chatterji.

(42.) The main academic study of Budi Utomo, by Nagazumi Akira, is entitled *The Dawn of Indonesian Nationalism: The Early Years of Budi Utomo, 1908–1918*, Tokyo. But even Nagazumi is obliged in places to describe the organization's standpoint as 'Javanese nationalism', and to regret its 'failure' to embrace the Indonesian ideal (54, 117).

(43.) Quoted in Reid, 'The Nationalist Quest for an Indonesian Past', 283.

(44.) Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 121.

(45.) Hroch, 'From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation', 81.

(46.) Reid, 'The Nationalist Quest for an Indonesian Past', 289.

(47.) Reid, 'The Nationalist Quest for an Indonesian Past', 284.

(48.) Although in theory the colonial administration continued to depend partly on local aristocrats, in practice the hereditary principle was abandoned and the *priyayi* became an increasingly unified administrative corps. See H. Sutherland (1979) *The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite: The Colonial Transformation of the Javanese* priyayi, Singapore, 130–1.

(49.) Goscha, *Vietnam or Indochina?*, 75, as his use of quotation marks suggests, overstates his case when he claims that in the early twentieth century 'the idea of an "Indochinese nation" was quite "real"'. The expression was in very occasional use by Viet writers, but only in the sense of a Vietnamese nation ruling the whole of Indochina—an

idea consistently rejected by Khmer and Lao intellectuals and politicians; Goscha, *Vietnam or Indochina?*, 52, 58.

(50.) From a party document of 1932, quoted in Porter (1981) 'Vietnamese Policy and the Indochina crisis', in D. W. P. Elliott (ed.) *The Third Indochina Conflict*, Boulder, CO, 123.

(51.) Quoted in Huynh Kim Khanh, *Vietnamese Communism*, 128. The party was not initially successful in recruiting Khmer and Lao members, and the ethnic emphasis in Vietnamese communism was reconfirmed with the formation of the Viet Minh (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi, 'League for the Independence of Vietnam') in 1941. But the Indochinese Communist Party continued to survive on a decentralized basis, laying the foundations for the 'special relationship' that existed between Hanoi and the communist regimes in Laos after 1975 and Cambodia after 1979, and which to some extent continues to exist today.

(52.) Tieu Vien, quoted in Goscha, *Vietnam or Indochina?*, 51.

(53.) Woodside, *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam*, 224–5; M. Cook (1977) *The Constitutionalist Party in Cochinchina: The Years of Decline, 1930–1942*, Clayton, Victoria, 125.

(54.) Again, Goscha (*Vietnam or Indochina?*, 75) probably overstates his case by making this argument. In the 1930s it was clear that Cambodia and Laos would never accept an Indochinese nationality based on Vietnamese identity. Yet there was still almost nobody in Vietnam who could envisage an Indochinese nation based on anything else—and, in truth, probably not many who could envisage an Indochinese *nation* (as opposed to an Indochinese space, territory, state, or federation) at all.

(55.) Brunei became a British protectorate in 1888, but a British officer was not stationed there until 1906. A local movement for independence did not develop until after the Second World War, and independence was not proclaimed until 1983. See G. Saunders (2002) *A History of Brunei*, 2nd edn., London, 2002.

(56.) T. M. McKenna (1998) *Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines*, Berkeley, CA, 25–68.

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