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## Concepts of States and Political Rule in Southeast Asia

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## Concepts of States and Political Rule in Southeast Asia

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As far as I have been able to determine, the term "Southeast Asia" was first used in 1839 by Howard Malcolm, a Boston minister who incorporated it into the title of his two-volume book, *Journey to South Eastern Asia*. It is worthy of note that the term was first used in the United States, and since has been used mainly in America and England. The term was not used in Southeast Asia itself, however, until the end of World War II. As this indicates, the entity covered by the term "Southeast Asia" was externally, not internally, defined. In my opinion, no such entity as "Southeast Asia" actually existed historically. But as the term has gained currency, it has come to create a kind of reality of its own. In other words, Southeast Asia as a "historical Gestalt" is currently being constructed.

Unlike the Middle East, which is centered on the Arab world, Southeast Asia cannot be internally defined. It has been defined as a single entity largely for convenience. I believe, therefore, that Southeast Asia should be approached as a unique region formed as the result of the interaction between outside civilizations and its own internal world. The states of Southeast Asia and the various forms and styles of rule in the region, which are the focus of this paper, were also formed in the interaction of external and internal forces. There were no indigenous states or forms of sovereignty.

### 1. HINDUISM AND THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN WORLD

Historically, the exchange between external civilizations and the inner world of Southeast Asia has been continuous for nearly two thousand years. The most significant interactions, however, have been triggered by great waves of civilization flowing into the region from outside.

The first great wave to reach the shores of Southeast Asia was Hinduism, around the beginning of the first millenium. When Hinduism reached the area, "Southeast Asia" did not exist; it was a physical, not a political, space. Therefore, to speak of the interaction between an outside civilization and the internal world of Southeast Asia is inappropriate in reference to the arrival of Hinduism: the internal world had yet to be created. Rather, Hindu civilization reached out to the region presently called Southeast Asia and left its mark there. History books often use the expression, "Hinduism arrived in Southeast Asia" or "Hinduism extended to Southeast Asia," but these phrases are misleading: there was no Southeast Asia at that time.

Hinduism was the first and the most influential external civilization to reach the region. Specialists increasingly refer to the extension of the influence of the Hindu culture of India as "Sanskritization." This term was coined as an analogue to "Paliization," used in reference to the propagation of Theravada Buddhism which used Pali as the medium of communication. "Sanskritization" indicates a broader influence than that of Hinduism as a religious system; it covers such phenomena as the arrival of Mahayana Buddhism in central Java, a process for which Sanskrit was also the medium of communication. Angkor Thom presents an example of the influence of Mahayana Buddhism that was part of the process of Sanskritization.

There were two main currents in Sanskritization. One flowed over the continent from Burma to the area covered today by Vietnam. The other ran through Malaya to the southern islands, including Sumantra and Java. Both currents left traces in Southeast Asia that survive to the present day. For example, administrative centers, called *pura* (meaning town) were established within the region. The largest were the towns that were both administrative and religious centers, where major temples were built. There were called *Angkor* or *Nagara* in Sanskrit and *Nakhon* in Thai, meaning "capital." Their presence throughout Southeast Asia is the fruit of Sanskritization.

It is noteworthy that embryonic states emerged around the time *puras* were established. In explaining what form these states took, I would like to focus on the "cross-dimensional interaction" of Hindu and Chinese civilizations. I use the term "cross-dimensional" to signify that the two civilizations being blended were based on completely different, and even contradictory, principles. *Puras* were established under the influence of Hinduism, but as seen from China, they appeared to be states. Therefore China bestowed a name on each *pura* and enrolled them as tributary states, records of which are preserved in the Chinese chronicles. In other words, the Hindu-derived *puras* were given a political identity in the Chinese records. Many of these *puras* began to appear in the Chinese records, only some of which had a regular tributary relationship with China. These are the so-called ancient states of Southeast Asia. They were a remarkable phenomenon in a region which to that point had been culturally quite unexceptional. Their emergence is an example of what I call the "cross-dimensional interaction" of Chinese and Hindu civilizations in Southeast Asia.

The Hindu era continued until its cultural world in Southeast Asia was invaded by the Mongols, who penetrated as far as Indonesia and destroyed many of the physical artefacts of the Hindu influence. The Mongols brought no culture or civilization of their own to replace the Hindu culture they destroyed; its destruction was their only legacy to the region.

The earliest stages of the history of Southeast East can be defined in terms of the Hindu influence and the Chinese civilization which recognized the entities born of that influence. One of the more important phenomena in this context is the *Angkor*. The construction of a great temple and town such as Angkor Wat or Angkor Thom demands the mobilization of a sizable labor force. Given the absence of any stone quarries in the immediate area, a large labor force was required for transportation as well as building these great stone monuments.

In their Hindu context, the temples had a political as well as a religious function. The Hindu concept of sovereignty had virtually nothing to do with the feudal concerns about military domination of the peasantry or the relationship between lord and vassal that characterized ruling ideologies in many other regions of the world. Instead, it was a transcendently oriented concept linking temporal authority with heaven. A Hindu temple is a concrete expression of the myth of the universe, designed to form a cosmos in itself. The Hindu temple is not itself a symbol or manifestation of sovereignty; it is simply the place where rituals directed toward the heavens are performed.

Although the building of an *Angkor* demanded a large labor force, it was mobilized on a temporary, ad hoc basis, not through the more permanent mechanisms of a bureaucracy or a system of slavery. The construction of an *Angkor* is not in itself a proof of the existence of a large-scale polity. However, in the twentieth century, George Coedes, a French scholar, used the term "Khmer Empire" to describe one of the "ancient kingdoms" of Southeast Asia. This anachronistic use of the modern term "empire," with its suggestions of the dominance of an imperial political center over an array of subject states on its periphery, is extremely misleading and demonstrates a misunderstanding of why and where an *Angkor* (or its analogue in the Sanskritization of Southeast Asia, the *Pagan* in Burma) was built.

Sanskritization penetrated into the areas most similar to India in climate and ecology, and was much less evident in the humid delta areas of the region. For ease of access, however, some *puras* were built on the coast. The temples, however, were constructed inland, where the climate was drier and the physical surroundings were more similar to those of India. In addition, the construction of the *Angkor* required reservoirs and waterways for transport and for irrigation for the temple grounds. In most cases, these same conditions obtained for the *Pagan* of Burma. There are also traces of roads (for people, not vehicles) leading westward from Angkor Wat to Thailand and India. In other words, in discussing Sanskritization we must take account of ecological environments as well as of cultural conditions.

In terms of communications networks, it is less clear whether there were net-

works extending southward as well as westward. There was probably a water route running down the east coast of the Malay Peninsula, possibly extending southward through Nakhon Sithammarat to Sumantra or Java, the area influenced by the southern current of Sanskritization mentioned earlier. The "Khmer Empire" therefore probably had communication routes linking it both with the west and the south, meaning it had information about the names and locations of other *puras*.

To the extent that having information about a place is, in some sense, to bestow recognition on it, the Khmer did exhibit a kind of expansionism, although whether it justifies bestowing the name of "Empire" on them is doubtful. This expansionism did not involve ruling over a territory by force; it was, rather, a conceptual rule. Instead of invading by military forces or assuming the governance of a territory by dispatching a surrogate ruler or governor, Khmer "rule" involved obtaining information on the location of towns and activities. The imperialism typical of the nineteenth century did not exist in the era of the Khmer, and indeed would have been impossible given the technologies and physical environments of the time.

The relationship between physical environment and population is another theme that needs consideration. The population of the region in those days was small, and it was scattered over a wide physical area. Not all of that area was a congenial habitat for humans, however. Some places were better endowed—with water resources, with less exposure to malaria or predators—and these became the sites of choice for human habitation. Other areas remained difficult and forbidding environments, and they were largely uninhabited. Within some of the more congenial areas, population became increasingly dense, and some kind of ruling authority emerged. In other words, by the thirteenth century one can clearly identify three types of area in the region: the core areas, with a concentration of population and some form of governing authority; the congenial areas, habitable for humans but less densely populated than the core; and the uninhabited areas. Hinduism penetrated these areas in stages, and its influence on the nature of the ruling authority in the core areas should not be overlooked in discussing the subsequent evolution of sovereignty in the region.

## 2. PALIIZATION AND ISLAM

Beginning in the thirteenth century, Southeast Asia entered an era of fragmentation. Before that century, the influence of Hinduism gave the region a certain coherent identity. Thereafter, however, Southeast Asia began to develop into separate worlds, as its vast physical area saw some of its "congenial habitats" develop under the influence of Hinduism and animism, others under Chinese influence, and others under Islam. The difficulty of drawing a coherent picture of the region after the thirteenth century has led most textbook authors to distinguish between the maritime world of Southeast Asia and the continental world. However, this is too simple a picture of a much more complex process of differentiation.

One of the first forces for differentiation in the region was yet another wave of external civilization, "Paliization." With Sri Lanka as its base and Pali as its language, Theravada Buddhism penetrated to the regions which are now the countries of Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Kampuchea. It did not reach the area corresponding to present-day Vietnam, where the spread of Chinese civilization was becoming an important influence. But the southern part of Vietnam was exposed to another great external wave from the Arab world, Islam, which with Gujarat as one of its Asian bases reached Atjeh, Sumatra, Malaya, and Java (although it failed to penetrate Bali or Lombok Island).

As a result, one way of classifying the post-thirteenth century region is to see it as divided into two or even three distinct worlds: the Pali world, the Islamic world, and (in part of Vietnam) the Chinese world. Java poses a real problem for such a tidy classification, however. Central Java contains what is perhaps the most congenial habitat in Southeast Asia: the hillside of a volcanic region that became a major center for human habitation and evolved into a core area, as demonstrated by the principalities established in Jogjakarta and Solo. Java is the site of Borobudur, a historic monument similar to Angkor Wat, and Prambanan. The latter is completely Hindu in origin, the former is a product of Hinduism mixed with Mahayana Buddhism.

The major ruling authorities of Java were formed under strong Hindu influence, and their political culture went through a long period of "involution," by which I mean indigenous development in the details of form within a larger established framework which shapes the substance. The elaborate and rigidly prescribed ceremonies and language of the royal courts in central Java exemplified this process. Over time, this Hindu-derived political culture became so deeply entrenched that even the arrival of Islam could not displace it, and Java developed from the mix of the two civilization its own distinctive political culture. The Malay region, in contrast, accepted and absorbed Islam directly. The Sultanates of Java and Malaya therefore exhibited very different political cultures and forms of governance.

Therefore, a more appropriate categorization of the worlds of Southeast Asia might be to set aside Vietnam, the outpost of Chinese civilization, and divide the rest of the region into three parts: (1) the continental world; (2) the Malay world; (3) the Javanese world. The continental world, covering present-day Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Kampuchea, was strongly influenced by the initial wave of Hindu influence; thereafter, the strongest single influence was that of Theravada Buddhism. Hinduism provided the basic framework for governance: the association between sovereignty and its physical embodiment, the royal capital. Theravada Buddhism augmented this with its concept of *raachaasaat*: the tension between sovereignty and ethics. The Hindu legacy of the concepts of sovereignty and of the royal capital, and Theravada's addition of ethics and ceremonial form gave the continental world a distinctive pattern of rule in the thirteenth century.

The Malay world covers the maritime area extending beyond the present range

of Southeast Asia, extending to Taiwan in the north, Madagascar in the west, and Sulawesi in the east, covering an enormous range of tribes and races. The area is usually defined in terms of its religion, Islam, but its distinctive identity extends well beyond religion to include language, social structure, and village structure. Political units are generally small in scale, and concepts of sovereignty are greatly influenced by idiosyncratic local ideas that exhibit both tribal and racial patterns. Only Java within this region shows lasting traces of Hinduism, although many of the ancient states of this world, including Sriwijaya, were supposedly formed under Hindu influence. With no clearly established sovereignty to contest the influence of Islam, the Malay world was open to the new religion and the culture that it brought with it.

The Javanese world was a political and cultural zone that included Solo and Jogjakarta, the ancient ruling bases of Mataram sovereignty. Fundamentally clinging to Hindu concepts of sovereignty, the Javanese world also accepted Islam, and is most notable for the remarkable involution in its political culture that is perhaps typified by the unique ruling culture of Bali, which Clifford Geertz analyzed as "a theater state" (further discussed below).

These three different political and cultural zones are products of historical evolution from the thirteenth century on. They were formed out of the interaction between different civilizations and the inner world of the region, and the region itself must be viewed from the vantage points of Mecca, northwestern India, or Sri Lanka. In other words, the region must be externally, not internally, defined.

### 3. EUROPEAN COLONIAL DOMINATION

Southeast Asia became the target of European colonial expansion after its constituent worlds had reached a relatively mature stage. The European incursions began with the Portuguese occupation of Malacca in 1511. At this stage it is difficult to speak of "colonialism:" the object of the Europeans was the expansion of trade, not of territory. It was the age of the merchant adventurers, who sought bases for their trade in spices—nutmeg, cinnamon, and cloves. In the beginning, the Western incursions increased the compartmentalization of the worlds of the region that had begun in the thirteenth century. It should be noted that in these early stages of colonialism, there were not clear political entities in the region. It is generally believed that Burma and Thailand were established as states largely in response to Western colonialism.

The real change in the behavior of the Western powers came in the nineteenth century, beginning in the 1820s. From then on, Southeast Asia was divided in an entirely new way, according to the dominant power and without reference to its historical or cultural legacy: the British territories in Burma, Malaya, and Siam; the French in Indo-China; the Dutch in the East Indies; and the Spanish and then the Americans in the Philippines. These new "worlds" produced the political divisions of Southeast Asia today.

The compartmentalization of the worlds of Southeast Asia produced a kind of double structure in the region. One structure was that based on the patterns of core and congenial areas that had evolved since the thirteenth century. The other was the overlay of the European-created territorial states. One of the outcomes of this double structure was the bilingualism of the region, where virtually everyone must speak two languages: the language of the cultural group to which they belong, and the dominant language of the state of which they are citizens.

#### 4. THE LOGIC OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN "STATES"

There are four points which should be considered in any discussion of the traditional states of Southeast Asia. The first two concern the necessary conditions for the development of states in the region; the other two concern the concept of "state" itself, as applied to the historical reality of the region.

The first condition for the establishment of the state concerns its natural, ecological environment. States in this region were formed either in the river basins, or the continental plateaus, or (in Java) on a volcanic plateau. States were founded only in these "congenial" habitats. The second condition was the diffusion of civilizations. States were formed as a result of the diffusion of an external civilization—Hinduism, Islam, Paliization—into the region; they were not a product of internal evolution.

The concept of the state is problematic for two reasons. First is the important role played by the external definition of states. Many of the primary sources for the history of Southeast Asia are found outside the region, for example in Chinese books or Sanskrit epigraphs, and the existence of a certain political or urban space is deduced from these mentions. Ancient Chinese records hold many references to the states of Southeast Asia—but were they really "states" as we understand the term? We should consider more carefully the possible differences between the "outside" and "inside" points of view. Second, a state can be defined in two different ways: physically or culturally. In the former case, the physical territory—landscape, location, and physical borders—is the main consideration; in the second case, culture and self-definition become primary. For Southeast Asian states, the distinctive political systems and culture are the important defining traits. The state is best seen as a complex conceptual artifact composed of the religious system, ceremonies, and governance, where these three elements are often shifting and unstable. In this region, states are easier define in subjective than in objective terms. With these points in mind, let us proceed to an examination of the types of states found in Southeast Asia, of which six can be clearly identified.

The first is the *nagara-tattadesa* state, of which the best example is Pagan. "Tatta" means dry, and "desa" means country. This type of state avoided deltas or other wet, low-lying regions in favor of inland plains with an ecological environment similar to that of India. It constructed extensive irrigation systems, and was a relatively powerful state.



The second type, *thalassaucratic emporium*, was an island trading base. This type of state exerted relatively little power over inland regions; instead, it focused on transporting natural resources from those regions. The states in this category were built at the mouth of a river, which gave them access to inland regions as well as a base for maritime operations. There were many states of this type, the kingdom of Malacca, whose trading network extended as far as the Ryukyu Islands, being the premier example. Even Malacca, however, was no more than a trading base or port. Nevertheless, it is regarded as a "state" because it had a king and a royal palace, which was built on a hillside a short distance from the shoreline.

The third type, the *kerajaan* state, was built on the islands of a river basin. One subtype was built at the river's mouth; another was built at the fork of the river. This latter type can also be called the *kuala* type of state: the word *kuala*, as in Kuala Lumpur, indicates the fork of a river. Several states could therefore be built along the same river. A large river would accommodate ten to twenty states between its upper reaches and its mouth. The *kerajaan* state was usually a comparatively small, patrimonial principality, where one family exercised power. It was a sovereign political entity, but its revenues were primarily from imposing taxes on passing boats and providing supplies, and, unlike a state like the Malacca Kingdom, it did not extend its trading network to remote areas.

The fourth type is the *conferée* state, meaning it was created by outside recognition rather than internal initiative. Often a village or town was caught in the emerging information networks of the region and came to be referred to by outsiders as a state. A letter of recognition would arrive from outside, notifying it of the formal recognition of it and its ruler. This would occur with no prompting or initiative from the town itself. Surprising as it may seem, this was a fairly common occurrence in the region, particularly in the islands of the Malay Peninsula. For example, a small village on the Malay Peninsula, Negri Sembilan, became a kingdom as a result of recognition of its sovereignty by Sumatra, across the Strait of Malacca. Another small port town was recognized as a tributary state by China, thus become a principality despite its tiny scale. The symbol of its recognition was the conferring of a name, or in some cases, even an entire mythology of its origins or its ruling ancestors.

A fifth type was the *muang* state, such as Chiangmai in northern Thailand. Chiangmai, located in a river basin, had a small-scale irrigation system for its paddy fields, and it had much in common with Japan's ancient Yamato Court or the old capital of Heijo. Located in a beautiful inland valley, Chiangmai was a pleasant, calm state with little ambition.

The sixth type is the *krung* state, exemplified by Ayuthaya and Bangkok in Thailand and Mandalay in Burma. *Krung* means "the capital of a king;" it was a castle town, where the Hindu concept of kingship was highly developed. The state itself was a single square castle surrounded by irrigation facilities. The early plans of Bangkok's castle show clearly this spatially limited model of the state. Usually developing in a relatively large river basin on the continent, this type of state had

significant contacts with the outside world.

All six states have some features in common. They each comprised one geographical point, and had no aspirations for more extensive territorial domination. They were also ideally suited to their individual natural environments, be that the sea, a river, or a river basin.

Instead of "state" or "kingdom"—the traditional terminology for territorial domination—I would like to propose a new concept: "kingcosm." This term refers to a cultural entity, whose boundaries may be extensive or very small, unified by the authority and energy of a king who becomes the center of the society.

It should be possible to cast a clearer light on the concept of the state in Southeast Asia by examining the small "kingcosms" and the large states and their relationships, in order to determine the conditions under which a "state" develops a level of dignity and respect different from other social units. This could help explain the conditions under which a village or a town came to be identified as a *muang*, *myo*, or *negeri*. The state must be studied both as a location in a physical space and as a social unit having functional relationships with other social units.

## 5. PROBLEMS IN THE CONCEPT OF THE STATE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The physical and ecological characteristics of Southeast Asia precluded the development of feudalism and therefore the transition from feudalism to absolutism that characterized the development of the European state. The formation of development of states in Southeast Asia, therefore, must be considered on their own terms. The traditional concept of the state in Southeast Asian societies was not that of a nation with an extended territory; it was rather a place, a "point," a powerful entity with a special political function in relation to other social groups. In this region, in the extreme case even a village could be a state—a "village state" rather than the classical "city state" of Western political thought.

What kind of theory can be developed for this kind of polity? The cultural relativists would insist that each local state should be understood in terms of its own unique history and indigenous language. But from the social science point of view, some more general conceptual base is required for analyzing the various types of states in Southeast Asia.

One such concept is the "small-scale patrimonial state" [YANO 1980]. This phenomenon is defined in terms of four elements: the natural environment; the nature of authority; the nature of its social structure; and its political culture. The definition of the small-scale patrimonial state is as follows: the base of its power is the management of a congenial environment (as determined by its natural and ecological environment), with both the concept and the actual exercise of territorial domination being quite weak, built on a non-monolithic society with a relatively loose social structure, and with an authority structure based on patrimonialism. The importance of rivers in this definition bears repeating, since it differentiates this polity from the feudal polities based on land. The idea of controlling land and im-

posing taxes on its crops did not develop in Southeast Asia. Instead, they controlled rivers, a type of domination that does not lead to territorial domination over an extensive land area.

Though there was considerable variation over time and among regions, the scale of authority was quite small, and clearly exhibited the characteristics of *patrimonialism*. Max Weber's use of the term "patrimonial bureaucracy" to describe the massive authority structures that mobilized large work forces in ancient Egypt or Imperial China has given the concept of patrimonialism a somewhat misleading connotation of large scale. "Patrimonial," however, is an appropriate description for the much smaller states of Southeast Asia, since authority was linked to the king's household finances and was dependent on royal lineage, and the administrative structures exhibited the features which Weber describes as patrimonial bureaucracy.

Such patrimonial authority could, in extreme cases, seem very much like the authority exerted in ordinary families, communities, or small villages, its only distinguishing feature being a special status deriving from recognition by an external higher authority. The role of the ruling figure had its meaning simply in existing as an authority, not in trying to expand the territory he dominated.

The small-scale patrimonial states sustained a variety of functional relationships with "outside forces"—external principalities that might be Hindu sacred city states, cosmopolitan trading bases, or even simple villages or towns with some centrality in the communications networks. In some cases, their control over part of a river might become control over larger water areas or ports. Whatever the conditions of authority, its form and substance varied very little. Only occasionally would one of these states combine with others to form an expanded zone of dominance, and the conditions under which this would occur provide an inviting area for further research.

There is little doubt that the concept of sovereignty in these small-scale patrimonial states has its roots in the adaptation of Hinduism to the local environments. The original concept might sometimes be diluted to seem more indigenous in its view of sovereignty. But the basic concept must be taken on its own terms, uninfluenced by Western concepts of states and sovereignty.

## 6. THE FORM OF POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

The fundamental issue in any discussion of the styles of governance is the base of power. That might be laws, institutions, coercion, or even culture. It is also necessary to consider external backing, which in some cases has been essential in maintaining power. As the analysis so far has indicated, cultural aspects carried considerable weight in the base for rule in Southeast Asia, or more accurately, the culture of Southeast Asian societies intrinsically involved the logic of rule and submission.

The external civilizations that so profoundly shaped this region were religious

civilizations: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam. The relationship with politics was deeply embedded in the religious rituals: religion involves prostration, charisma, awe of the mystical. But religion took precedence over politics, even though the two were so closely entwined: straightforward power politics was rare in Southeast Asia.

Religion prescribed the style of both ruler and ruled. The status of ruler demanded suitable regalia, without exception, and the number of artifacts involved was usually fairly large. Most rulers had ten, considerably more than the Three Imperial Regalia of Japan. Southeast Asia was a region where the proliferation of regalia was a common feature of the symbolism of sovereignty.

The title of the ruler was also complicated. The name of a king of Thailand is so long that it takes several minutes to pronounce, and its written form fills an entire page. The first and the last parts of the whole name are usually used as an abbreviation: Rame IV, for example, for Phramongkutklo-chaoyuua. Complex ceremonies were also devised. The principle of legitimacy for the ruler also developed an array of mythological elements describing the relationship with the outer world; its cultural richness and complexity was also a distinctive feature of Southeast Asian rulers. An elaborate framework of style was the hallmark of sovereignty in the region.

For the ruled, as well, special forms were developed for behavior, from the mode of bowing to the way of speaking. In Thailand, the formalities for the subject are called *wai*. The language used in the royal courts was not the language used inside the royal family; instead, it was the form of speech addressed to the royal family by non-royal personages, and vice versa. Submission, too, had its framework of style.

"Politics" in the region should be recognized as having a distinctive meaning; politics in the European sense did not exist. I would like to single out four forms of politics in Southeast Asia and look at the assumptions underlying each.

The first is characteristic of the continental areas of Southeast Asia and is a manifestation of the Hindu influence on the region. According to the Hindu idea of sovereignty, a king is a *devaraja*, a god on earth, an incarnation of Shiva or Vishnu. In keeping with this idea of the transcendent made physical, in a city state that was a "holy city" there was a generally temple or monument and surrounding it was an enclosed political space. The emphasis on visible manifestations of the transcendent—the worship of mountains or statues, the construction of temples—was very strong, and political behavior there was consequently characterized by rites and rituals. A divine king expresses a kind of transcendent charismatic authority, and therefore I would call this "super-charismatic" rule, an outstanding example of which was established at Angkor Wat. A divine king, possessing an other-worldly authority, would naturally inspire his people with awe, with his huge temple strengthening the charismatic nature of his sovereignty.

In general, the principle of charisma is a convincing explanation of the nature of sovereignty in the ancient states of Southeast Asia. However, it gradually, for whatever reason, began to change and to develop into a different form of politics.

The single greatest change was the transfer of emphasis from the temple to the palace, which signified a growing secularization of sovereignty. In this process, the king as a living being was conceptually distinguished from the abstract idea of "affairs of state." In Thailand, this was symbolized by the emergence of abstract concepts of rule, such as *raachakaan* (royal affairs): *raach* means ruler and *kaan* means "doing" and therefore *raachakaan* indicates "doing by a king." Thus the idea of "ruling" as something abstract and conceptual was separated from the person of the king. At the same time, since politics or rule was always centered in a city, politics also took on the character of "urban affairs." "Politics" in Thai, for example, corresponds to *kaan-muang*, meaning "affairs of the town".

Therefore a second concept of politics emerged in Buddhist countries such as Thailand. There is still a noticeable link to Hindu thought, but it was heavily modified by Buddhism. It could be called "ethical kingship"—a type of royal rule in which a king, as a follower of Buddhism, conducted political affairs in accordance with religious precepts and ethical principles. The king's political conduct, *raachaasat*, is bound by *phrathammasaat*, the rules for the king's actions. In other words, the king's will was oriented to the ethics of Hinayana Buddhism.

Thailand's *kotmaai-traa-saam-duang*, a collection of traditional precepts of law, exemplifies this kind of rule, which was a form of legalism based on written laws. However, with modernization, the binding power of such traditional laws over the ruler wanes, and the result may well be absolutism. This occurred in both Thailand and Burma, where the traditional tensions between the king's will (*praraacha-niyom* or *praraacha-prasong* in Thai) and the *phrathammasaat* embodied in the various traditional laws were weakened as the tradition lost its compelling force. As a result, the ruler's will was no longer constrained, and these countries witnessed the emergence of a corrupt dictatorship.

A third form of politics can be observed in the small patrimonial states, and can be identified as the *raja* type: that is, authority established on a this-worldly basis. Provided with wealth, a palace, a title, and suitable regalia, and accordingly differentiated from the common people in life style, a ruler (*raja*) formed a closed "kingcosm" and dominated it. A *raja* might well be recognized by a greater external authority and provided with a title.

A source of considerable illumination for this type of politics is a book entitled *Tufat-al-Nafis*, which described the relationship between the Malays and the Bugi people at Joho until the mid-nineteenth century. The theme of the book concerns a dual political idea composed of two elements: *negara* and *ke-rajaan*, two words which have no English equivalents. *Negara* can be understood as "the political ecological space within the palace;" it does not carry connotations of the control of territory. *Ke-rajaan* is more difficult to interpret: it is closely akin to the concept of *raachakaan* (royal affairs) but it connotes something more tangible and appended to the ruler; it signifies "throne" as well. It is also premised on an authority granted by another authoritative body and is accompanied by numerous regalia. It is a less abstract term than *raachakaan*. But the two concepts, *negara* and *ke-rajaan*, are in-

separable, and the two together signify "politics."

Finally, I would like to refer to Clifford Geertz's latest work, *Negara* [1980], which has proposed a unique idea of politics. Geertz' concept of a "theater state" is one in which the political order is set up so that the functions of the state are focused on a faithful performance or presentation of cultural concepts and ideas introduced from outside. Bali is taken as an example, where politics involves the manifestation of Hinduism through ritualized performances in which the ruler is the producer, the monks are the stage managers, and the peasants are stagehands and audience. The capital and palace in the theater state are a microcosm of the universal order which is given expression in theatrical performance, and they are therefore called the "exemplary center" by Geertz. The king is positioned at the core of the exemplary center; he does not rule through power but instead evokes the loyalty of the peasants by the frequency of the performances, their richness of content, and their skilful production.

In the politics of a theater state, all community members take ritualized roles, and politics itself takes on the character of a ritual. The relationship between ruler and ruled in such a state, where both sides share a common aim of carrying out the rituals, differs considerably from the mutually opposing relationship characteristic of Europe. The theater state is unique in that the legitimacy of the ruler is conditioned not by power but by his close relationship to the core of the body politic, which is a ritualistic community.

## **7. CONCLUSION: MODERN STATES AS IMAGINED COMMUNITIES**

The distinctive forms of rule of Southeast Asia were destroyed by colonial domination. Colonialism, which particularly after the mid-nineteenth century was aimed at territorial expansion, brought the European concept of the state into Southeast Asia and dramatically changed the face of the region. Even local nationalism struggling for independence from the colonial rulers was premised on the same concept of the state as territory. Thus the traditional concept of the state as a zone ruled by small-scale patrimonial states was replaced by entirely new principles.

The movements for ethnic independence have created states which historically did not exist, like Indonesia. In these states, various mechanisms to foster national unity, such as a national language, have been artificially created. As a result, "citizens" were forced to use two languages and to extend their imaginations to encompass areas with which they had never, historically, had connections. In these artificial states, governance and administration also took on new styles, and inevitably turned to "mobilization systems" to build national power, a political expression of inward-oriented nationalism. Southeast Asia today continues to suffer from a conflict between the models of traditional states and those of the "modern nation."

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