

Political impact of colonial powers upon southeast asia history essay



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Colonial powers began as early as the first decades of the sixteenth century. From the 16th century until the 20th century, the major colonizers in Southeast Asia were European powers, including the British, French, Spanish, Dutch, and Portuguese. Besides the Europeans, Japanese and the Americans used to colonize Southeast Asian countries as well. Southeast Asians were under the European powers because Asian empires and kingdom declined while the Europeans became stronger. Moreover, Europeans was aiming to expand their territory, export the raw materials to Europe, explore the new markets, expand their trading routes, spread their culture and religion, etc. Hence, there were several reasons for the European powers to colonize Southeast Asia, mainly for the political, economic, and cultural purpose.

During the colonial period, colonial powers had a significant effect on Southeast Asia. While colonial powers gained many benefits from Southeast Asia including vast of resources and largest market, they brought the development to the region as well. Commercial agriculture, mining and an export based economy developed rapidly during this period. Besides development, there were many changes in the region as well. The arrival of Christianity that brought by the Europeans have affected Southeast Asian society and culture. In addition, a large demand for labor resulted in mass immigration that caused the demographical change. Simultaneously, western political system and education system were brought into the region as well. Mainly, the colonial powers have changed Southeast Asia politically, socially, and economically.

The paper will assess the economic, social, and political impact of colonial powers, particularly Europeans power, upon Southeast Asia and forecast mainly in the colonial period. The following questions are used as a guide:

How did nationalism arise in Southeast Asia?

What were the administrative reforms in Southeast Asia?

How did colonial power affect Southeast Asian society and education?

How did the Christianity influence Southeast Asia?

How did European's industrialization change Southeast Asia?

According to this paper, readers would understand about the significant impacts of colonial power on Southeast Asia, so that it will help improve the consciousness about the development and general situation of Southeast Asia in the post-colonial period, and this will lead people understand clearly about the Southeast Asia today.

Impact of colonial powers on Southeast Asia

Political Impact

How did nationalism arise in Southeast Asia?

Colonial power's rule upon Southeast Asia had an impact on the rise of nationalist movements because people tried to fight for their independence. According to Chong (2012), there were three general historical causes of nationalism in Southeast Asia. The first cause was cultural and religious movements. In fact, religion plays an important role in Southeast Asian

society. Religion combined with culture, provided people the nationalist awareness. Many religious movements occurred during the colonial period. For instance, the Young Man's Buddhist Association in Burma (1906) and the Sarekat Islam in Indonesia (1912). These movements were aiming to united local people to against the western powers. The second source was western-style education. Many western-style political movements were created because of the influence of western education. People were inspired by western ideologies and followed its models. It is notable that the earliest nationalist movement occurred in the Philippines. Nationalist movements in the Philippines were formed by a group of people called " ilustrados" – the Spanish-educated children that were influenced by the liberal reforms in Spain in 1868. They began to seek for the same right as Spaniards and the separation of state and church. Later, the Philippines nationalists led by Apolinario Mabini took the advantage of the weakened Spain resulted from the American-Spanish war, and declared independence in 12 June 1898. The Filipinos became the first people in Southeast Asia to defeat their colonial rulers and then created a modern nation state. The same case occurred in Burma as well. In Burma, Students from University of Rangoon formed the Dobayma Asiyone (" We Burman") society in 1935. They called themselves as Thakins, or Master. Furthermore, U Aung San, U Nu and U Ne Win were the key leaders of nationalist movement (Thirty Comrades) in Burma and led Burma to gain the independence from the British. Besides the Philippines and Burma, western education had impacts on other countries in Southeast Asia as well. In Indonesia, Dutch-educated Indonesians formed the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) in 1927 in order to create a modern state free from Dutch colonial rule. In Singapore, People's Action Party was formed

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in 1954 by middle-class English-educated Chinese. Later, PAP led Singapore became a completely independent state. Western education educated Southeast Asian people the concept of freedom, equality, and dignity so that it led to the nationalistic movements in the region. The last contribution was communists. According to Rey Ty's study of Southeast Asia, communist leaders and parties arose in many areas of Southeast Asia, particularly in Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam; for example, the Malayan Communist Party, the Indonesian Communist Party, and the Vietminh in Vietnam. The most significant communist nationalist movement was the Vietminh, or League for the Independence of Vietnam, which was considered as the former Indochina Communist Party (ICP) with the participation of Ho Chi Minh created at Pac Bo on May 19, 1941. Ho was the most famous communist leader in Vietnam. He tried to maintain good relations with both Soviet and Chinese communist, and developed his own revolution path in Vietnam. During the war, the Vietminh developed its strategy in order to seize the power after the war. Later, a few days after the Japanese surrender, Vietminh force controlled most of the northern and central Vietnam. On 2 September 1945, Ho proclaimed the independence of Vietnam in Hanoi. In short, nationalist movements in Southeast Asia occurred in three forms including religious movements, western political movements, and communist movements.

What were the administrative reforms in Southeast Asia?

The arrival of the western powers had an impact on Southeast Asian political and public administration as well. The institutions for a modern state such as a state bureaucracy, courts of law were created. Then, Southeast Asian

countries were transformed from a traditional kingdom into a modern nation state. In most Southeast Asian countries, the colonial-bureaucratic model offers the guiding principles for modernizing state administration, which replaced the traditional local administration. According to Wilson, there were two main types of colonial governments in Southeast Asia – Liberal colonial governments and Repressive colonial governments. The administrative reforms were different between these two types of governments as well. The British and the Americans were the two liberal colonial governments at that time. The British colonized Malaysia, Singapore, and Burma, while the Philippines were under the Americans' rule. In Malaysia, the British established the bureaucratic model of administration based on the concept of neutral politics and hierarchical loyalty. After getting independence, the Malaysian government also adopted this model. Similarly, Singaporean government followed the British style of public administration after its separation from Malaysia in 1965. Along with the bureaucratic model, the public services in Singapore focused more on discipline, efficiency, rationality, and capacity. Under the British's rule, the same bureaucratic model of public administration was adopted in the Burma as well. While Malaysia, Singapore, and Burma followed the British parliamentary system of government, the Philippines adopted the American political model. During the period of American's rule, the bureaucratic model of public administration was formed under the American style political system which including the separation of power, the direct election of the President, and the system of checks and balances. The British and the Americans brought their colonies the rule of law, civil liberties, and rights in politics. Both were willing to provide independence to their colonies and prepared them in the

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path to independence. Wilson also mentioned other type of colonial governments as well – Repressive colonial governments. The Spanish, Dutch, and French were repressive rulers. They had a very different system compared to the British and Americans. In Indochina, under the French's rule, the bureaucratic model was developed. but was headed by a cadre of French official under a mid-level official recruited by French. Local people could become the lower-level officials only. Similarly, under the Dutch's rule, Indonesian people's liberty was limited. The Dutch established an efficient bureaucracy and a police and military service in Indonesia, but was aiming to maintain the social control and to avoid people to against the colonial government. Thus, people have limited liberty under the control of the repressive government, because the colonial powers always regarded their own interested as superior. Another interesting case was Thailand. Although Thailand was the only state in the region that was not under the colonial rule, its administrative system started to alter towards the western bureaucratic style as well, especially under the regime of King Chulalongkorn. King Chulalongkorn established the bureaucracy and put Thai society on the way to political reform with the use of Western model. The reforms based on the uniform standards of public service, arrangement of career services, principle of neutral politics, and separation between public office and personal life. As a result, Thailand transferred from a traditional Kingdom into a modern state. In short, western bureaucratic model of administration was established in Southeast Asia, but was in different forms.

Social Impact

How did colonial power affect Southeast Asian society and education?

Colonialism has altered Southeast Asian social structure and brought modern western ideas and concepts into society as well. Some of these ideas contained the western culture, western style education, human rights, religion, etc. The arrival of European powers has made the growth of population in the region. First of all, the economic activities in the region during colonial period were growing rapidly. Then, in order to fulfill the demand such as labour forces to produce the raw materials and industrial plants, populations were in the growing trend. Meanwhile, the immigration brought changes to some countries in the region. For instance, in Malaysia, Chinese immigrants came into the peninsula because of terrible condition in China and the economic opportunities in Malaysia. The British hired Indian labour as well. Then, the immigration of numerous Chinese and Indian people into the Malay Peninsula brought Malaysia into a multicultural state. There were divisions among Malays, Chinese, and Indian in Malay society as well. The same case happened in Burma during the colonial period. Because of the expansion of agricultural activities in Myanmar Delta, Chinese labour was recruited from British Malaya and Singapore. Then, the Chinese composed about 2% of the population in Burma. Until the eve of British conquest, major habitants in the Myanmar lowlands were ethnic Burmese. Thus, Burma became a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society (Church, 2003). Besides the change in the social structure, European powers applied western education in Southeast Asia as well, and this had been transformed Southeast Asian traditional education into the modern education. The Southeast Asian people could study about the western ideas such as liberty,

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equality, nationalism, etc. The most significant case is the western-style education brought by the American into the Philippines. Under the rule of the United States, industrial and craft schools were introduced in the Philippines in order to provide the skills, such as making shoes and basket, to the people. Moreover, both the Spanish and American system encouraged the education among the middle class in urban area, so that the literacy was widespread in the Philippines during the colonial period. American brought the concept of democracy into the country and helped prepare the Philippines for self-government as well (Basu, 1982). Meanwhile, education system in other countries was influenced by the western education as well, including the French Indochina, British Malaya and Singapore, and the Dutch Indonesia. In the colonial era, thus, the social structure in the region had been changed because of the growth of the population and the immigration, and the western style education had brought the modern education system into Southeast Asia.

How did the Christianity influence to Southeast Asia?

In the early 16th century, Christianity entered to Southeast Asia and its origins came through trade, migration, colonialism and mission-migrants, merchants and missionaries. Soldiers all contributed in different ways and colonist was first introduced to Southeast Asia by Iberian (Portuguese and Spanish) missionaries and colonists (Roxborough, 1995). After controlling the Malacca (Malaysia) in 1511, the Portuguese began to spread Catholicism in the region. Both Portuguese and the Spanish were trying to bring Catholicism into Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The influence of Catholicism in the Philippines was remarkable. Manila was considered as the center for the

Catholic to evangelize and establish the church in the country and in other Asian countries as well. In the early of the 17th century, the Catholicism was widely spread to the Filipinos entire the country except the mountainous aborigines and the Muslims of Archipelago and Mindanao. Furthermore, the Spanish were likely to influence more on the religion rather than other developments such as modernization or industrialization, and this helped improve the Catholicism's status and power in the country. In the late 19th century, many positions in the government were held by friars from other countries as well. In addition, Catholics also had economic power because of their extensive landholdings. At the same time, the education in the country was dominated by the friar so that resulted in the essential position of the Catholics in the society and influence on the culture as well as intellectual life. In 1863, the Spanish government presented public primary education in the Philippines, and the Catholic orders. Furthermore, for those who changed religion did so for many reasons, a quest for social or personal security and identity in the face of social change, a search for personal salvation and for a religion that appeared to better cope with the modern world to which they aim, a faith which seemed to allow scope for traditional religious. Those who kept the faith and witnessed to Christ in successive generations sometimes did so because they had come in to what was now a tradition and the ability of Christianity to regenerate itself across time and culture in Southeast Asia. According to Roxborough (1995), the number of Christians in Southeast Asia is increasing. In 1980s, 87% of Filipinos were Christians while the percentage of Christians in Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia were about 18%, 9% and 8% respectively. Christians live in mainland Southeast Asia such as Vietnam (9%), Burma (4. 5%), and other countries as well. Thus, the Christianity, <https://assignbuster.com/political-impact-of-colonial-powers-upon-southeast-asia-history-essay/>

brought by the Europeans into the region, has become a main religion in Southeast Asia.

Economic Impact

How did European's industrialization change Southeast Asia?

Since the 19th century, European industrialization brought both the positive and negative impacts on the lives of workers in Southeast Asia.

Industrialization is the procedure of modernization and huge production of various types of goods. Industrialization also counts the mining and the forging of iron as well. Southeast Asia was an area where industrialization had a massive effect on. It emerged in order to fulfill the demand of the European modernization. By the mid-1800s, many nations, particularly the European countries, had joined the race in industrialization. The effects of industrialization were particularly observed in Southeast Asian countries. Southeast Asian economy was transformed from during colonial period because of the industrialization and modernization. In Burma, many fundamental infrastructures such as roads and bridges were built, and the infrastructure of crops and communication was developed rapidly so that crops could be exported to world market. In Vietnam, French brought the modernity to the country, especially in Saigon. The cities were equipped with sewers and electric lighting, and the Saigon-Hanoi railway, modern port facilities, and roads were built as well (Church, 2003). Vietnamese agriculture had been improved and Vietnam became one of the most important rice export country. Besides the growing of rice amount, there was expansion of rubber-growing and raw material-exploitation as well in order to

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fulfill the demand of industrialization in Europe. Many important ports were established during colonial period. The most significant port was Singapore. Due to its nice location, British made Singapore become the key port in the region and the important financial and economic center as well. Thus, European powers have transferred Southeast Asian traditional economy into modern market economy, and Southeast Asian economy has been linked to the world economy as well. However, along with the industrialization and the development, there were also the negative points. Workers were forced to work for long hours with a very low pay, and abusive children also occurred at that time. Even seven-year-old children were appeared in the work places, and sexual discrimination was seen. Mostly, factories hired women more than men because they were paid less than men. Moreover, during the colonial period, there was also the exploitation of natural resource in the region. In order to fulfill the demand of modern Europe and America, tin mines were widely explored in Malaysia and Indonesia; rubber plants were expanded rapidly in Indochina, Malaysia, and Indonesia; and other industrial plants were forced to produce in mass amount as well. In short, industrialization brought many changes and even modernized most countries. It made Southeast Asian economy develop quickly and joined with the world economy. However, it also had negative effects such as the rapid exploitation of raw materials and the labor forces in the region.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that the colonial powers, especially Europeans, had many impacts on Southeast Asian politics, economy and society. During the colonial period, especially in the 20th century, there were the establishment

of nationalistic movements and the administrative reforms in Southeast Asia as well as the industrialization and modernization in the region. In addition, colonial powers had the impact on Southeast Asian society, culture, and education as well. It is notable that Southeast Asian nations had transferred from traditional kingdoms into the modern states because of the colonial impacts. Even today, the influences of the Europeans powers still exist in Southeast Asia.