

## 2 Understanding Southeast Asian nationalisms

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Anti-imperial nationalism was strong in twentieth century Southeast Asia partly because there was little of the older state nationalism to balance it. Burmese, Siamese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Aceh and Lombok kings had generated some degree of commonality with the majority people they ruled, partly by manipulating religious symbols. But unlike the Northeast Asian rulers, they employed abundant foreigners and utilised broader sacred or trade languages (Pali, Sanskrit, Arabic, Malay) often in preference to the vernacular which united them to their people.

The model for anti-imperial nationalism was the Philippines, where three centuries of Spanish rule and shared religion made the imperial unit appear persuasive as early as the 1860s. By the time of José Rizal and his fellow-*ilustrados* in the 1890s, the case they made in Spanish for a Filipino national unit as a focus for passionate loyalty was sufficiently convincing to dominate the anti-Spanish revolution of 1896 and the war of resistance against American occupation that followed. At more populist levels, there were naturally tremors of ethnic nationalism carried by Tagalog and Cebuano, but these never seriously shook the conviction that the boundaries established by colonial fiat were the correct ones.

Indonesian nationalism, as we shall see, initially coexisted with embryonic Javanese, Minangkabau, Batak and Minahasan ethnic nationalisms. But without the stiffening of state nationalism, these were quickly swallowed up in the anti-imperial mood. The watershed moment is usually taken to be a Youth Congress in 1928 (see below), when various ethnic, regional and religious student groups agreed on one fatherland, race/nation and language. The first two represented the classic tool-kit of anti-imperial nationalism in claiming the imperial unit as their own. But in adopting as national language the *lingua franca* of trade, of Islam and of the Dutch administration, Malay, they put themselves in a uniquely advantageous position. Javanese was mother tongue to almost half the Indonesian population, but unknown to most others. Dutch, in which most of the student elite spoke and felt comfortable, would have had to be abandoned eventually. Malay was mother tongue to only a tiny

minority of islanders at the time, but understood in all the cities. It gave the anti-imperial nationalists an advantage over both the Filipinos, who had to operate uneasily between a foreign language (Spanish and later English) and a regional one (Tagalog/Pilipino), and the mainland nationalisms, which had to use the language of one dominant ethnic at the expense of minorities.

Change of imperial masters at a critical juncture (Spanish to American in the Philippines, 1898; Japanese to European in the rest of Southeast Asia, 1945) made possible the revolutionary assertion of the new anti-imperial identity in the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and Burma. As in France in 1789, the revolutions sacralised the new identities which had been charted on the map by the old empires. To greater or lesser extent, the alchemy was effected through revolution, making the multi-ethnic imperial identity transform into a passionately felt new community. This provided a huge impetus for the new states in building on the heroic myths of revolution for their state nationalisms.

Through this revolutionary means, the new states partook of some of the supernatural aura of pre-colonial Southeast Asian states. The blood of revolutionary martyrs helped to sacralise the flag, the independence declaration and the sacred sites of the dead. They were for the most part not able to continue or revive an older state nationalism, as in Europe or Northeast Asia, but instead inherited two potent lineages of past states that had ruled them. One was that of the state as a supernatural source of power, awe, fear and belonging. In Indonesia and Burma, where it is strongest, this inheritance was sacralised by revolution to legitimate harsh military suppression of those who challenged the state. The other lineage was the imperial one of the state as an essentially alien but necessary construct, which opened doors to a broader modernity than would otherwise be possible. The absence of an indigenous strong state tradition made the post-colonial states appear fragile or 'soft', in Gunnar Myrdal's (1968) parlance. Nevertheless this combination of matter-of-fact if alien necessity with a real, if fading, supernatural charisma, has gone some way to create genuine new imagined communities, which look set to outlast most of the ethnic nationalisms that revive in democratic environments.

### **Key identity-markers**

#### *Language*

Benedict Anderson (1991: 43–5) showed how the development of print in Europe stimulated national consciousness through creating 'unified fields of exchange', a new 'fixity' which could be made to appear

antique, and a privileging of 'core' spoken languages closer to the print version, and thereby able to provincialise their more distant cousins. But while Northeast Asian identities had a much longer interaction with print than did European, Southeast Asian identities had a singularly short one. The books that arrived in the region printed first in Chinese characters and, from the sixteenth century, in Latin characters, seemed alien from the Indic and Arabic scripts in use in the region, and did not inspire emulation.

Until the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries were alone in introducing printing to Southeast Asian languages, but did so chiefly in romanised form. The first book was a version of the *Doctrina Christiana* translated into romanised Tagalog and printed in Manila in 1593. Through the subsequent expansion of doctrinal texts also into Cebuano and Ilocano, Filipino languages did become more fixed and unified among the Christian elite. But since very little else was printed in Philippine languages, literacy in the romanised script led quickly towards Spanish for the elite, and did not generate strong ethnic nationalisms around language.

In Vietnam the Jesuit pioneer Alexandre de Rhodes stimulated the creation of a romanised script, in which Christian texts were printed as well as his 1651 dictionary. In the longer run, once adapted as the standard Vietnamese 'national language' (*quoc ngu*) in the 1920s, this would have profound effects on cultivating ethnic nationalism. But previously its role was marginal 'as a rather crude vehicle for foreign religious and political propaganda' (Marr 1981: 145). At a similar period Dutch missionaries developed romanised Malay as the language of the printed Bible for their formerly Catholic constituency in Batavia, Maluku and Minahassa. Early examples of print romanisations are in fact very various and did nothing to promote standardisation. Only with the so-called Leydekker Bible (New Testament 1731, Old Testament 1733) did printing begin to have this effect for Christian populations. In the nineteenth century, printed romanised Malay built on this tradition to become the vehicle for a new polyethnic urban culture, in the Indies and more hesitantly the Peninsula. But for almost everybody except local urban-born Chinese and Malays for whom it became a mother tongue, romanised Malay remained a second language, a *lingua franca*. Very late, essentially in the 1920s, it began to be a unifying language of urban high and low culture.

Thai and Burmese began to be printed in their indigenous scripts in the second half of the nineteenth century, largely again through the mediation of Christian missionaries. When newspapers followed in the twentieth century they had the standardising effect on nationalism

known from Europe. In the Archipelago, however, only Javanese, Sundanese and Arabic-scripted Malay were large enough language pools to sustain a vernacular press in the original script for much of the twentieth century, but these always struggled to survive against the romanised Malay media. For the upland people who were Christianised only after European romanticism had convinced missionaries that they must operate in the vernacular, romanised print did become important in their ethnic nationalisms (see chapters 6 and 7). Most other ethnic in the Archipelago, however, used their language primarily as an oral medium and wrote by preference in Malay, whether in Arabic or romanised script.

In short, the impact of printing was extremely late in fashioning Southeast Asian identities, primarily because of the factor of script. When it eventually came, it served in the island worlds to assist multi-ethnic anti-imperial nationalism (in Spanish, Dutch, English and especially romanised Malay) more than it assisted the vernacular of the ethnies. Because its impact came late and under imperial rather than state nationalist auspices (except in the Thai case), it seemed a very unequal battle between the printing of the multi-ethnic *lingua franca*, and the primarily verbal expressions of the hundreds of language communities, still not reduced and homogenised by printing as had happened in Europe and Northeast Asia.

### *Religion*

Religious identities preceded nationalist ones in Southeast Asia as elsewhere, and may well outlast them. We must distinguish however the world of the mutually exclusive Abrahamic religions, Islam and Christianity, from that still dominated by Indian-derived religions. In the world of Mainland Southeast Asia Buddhism continued to dominate and became popularly grounded through the beloved monkhood (*sangha*), present in every village. Migrants from other parts of the Buddhist or Hindu worlds had no difficulty fitting into this pattern, sometimes retaining aspects of their original religious world (Chinese spirit festivals, Burmese/Shan *nat* cults, Brahmanic rituals) while also joining royally patronised Theravada rituals. Because the king was the great patron of Theravada Buddhism within his domains, religion assisted him in integrating a diversity of people into his polity, but did not require them to conform to a cultural or intellectual norm.

Christianity and Islam, on the other hand, established and often enforced clear boundaries. For Islam the minimal boundaries with the older Southeast Asian belief pattern were the abandonment of pork

(formerly the favoured item of feasting) and the adoption of certain norms of modest dress and simple funerals (Reid 1988–93, II: 140–3). For Christianity, the boundaries had to do with monogamy and sexual mores, and some form of contact with the institutional church. Christianity was introduced in heavily politicised form. First the Portuguese used adherence to Catholic Christianity as a sign of loyalty to their side of their politico-commercial conflict with the Muslim trade network. The Dutch arrived in 1596 in an equally determined anti-Catholic spirit, forcing the Catholic converts in Maluku and Batavia to go along with their form of Calvinism as a sign of being on the Dutch rather than Portuguese side of their own politico-commercial struggle. Since the main threat to the Catholic Philippines was the Dutch Company (VOC) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the divide between Catholic and Protestant was one of the most clear-cut identity boundaries of the region. Although the anti-imperial nationalism of the Philippines produced its 1896 revolution in an anti-Catholic spirit influenced by masonry and the Enlightenment, the identity on which it drew had been created by the church.

Islam was free from internal boundaries of this kind in Southeast Asia, since the Shafi'i school of Sunni Islam was accepted everywhere. Externally, the contest with the Portuguese in the sixteenth century produced a politicised Islam in Aceh, Demak and Banten in particular, which engendered a counter-identity among the peoples who successfully fought to resist Islamisation by force. This helped create a non-Islamic identity for the Bataks of Sumatra and the Balinese in the sixteenth century, and for the Toraja of Sulawesi in the seventeenth, while the Dayak of Borneo and other non-Muslim peoples had a more porous boundary with coastal Malayo-Muslim culture.

The roles of Islam in creating identities can be distinguished in terms of the interactions between the Arabic script it introduced and the indigenous pattern. Of the peoples who became Muslim in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, most adopted the Arabic script as the only means of literary expression, with writing only known in Malay or Arabic itself. These peoples, including those later known as Malay, Acehnese, Minangkabau and Banjarese, thereby established a powerful commonality with each other and with the broader Islamic world. The most developed pre-Islamic literary cultures, on the other hand, the Javanese and Sundanese in Java and the Makasarese and Bugis in Sulawesi, retained their own scripts and literary languages, translating a limited selection of the Arabic and Malay corpus into their vernaculars. For them language represented a formidable boundary that prevented Muslim outsiders from penetrating and shaping their fundamental sense of identity.

For all who became Muslim, however, religion represented the principal option for solidarity beyond the particular speech-group or dynasty. Aceh was the spear-head of one kind of solidarity in the 1560s, when its economic rivalry with Portuguese Melaka in the spice trade drove it into alliance with Ottoman Turkey and various other Muslim ports involved in the spice trade. In his appeal to the Turkish sultan in the 1560s for military help against the Portuguese, the Acehnese sultan repeatedly appealed to the sufferings of 'Muslims' at the hands of 'unbelievers' and asked for help accordingly (Reid 1988–93 II: 147). In practice Southeast Asian Muslim rulers proved almost incapable of acting together. But after the Dutch Company had humbled the most powerful of them, a series of millenarian adventurers appealed with more effect to the solidarity of Muslims (*Ibid.*: 320–4). In the period 1850–1920 Islamic solidarity again became important as the readiest means to express resistance to the rapidly advancing power of the Dutch colonial state. The first mass movement of Indonesia's modern nationalist experience, from 1912, naturally called itself simply 'Islamic Association' (*Sarekat Islam*).

The triumph of anti-imperial nationalism everywhere after 1920 made it appear as though this form of religious solidarity was a thing of the past. Yet Islamic solidarity never disappeared. To some extent it nested harmoniously with the dominant nationalism, but it also coexisted in tension with it. Islam has reappeared as a political identity-marker whenever permitted to do so, and notably during Indonesia's democratic phases of 1950–7 and since 1998. In Malaysia since 1970 it has made huge inroads on Malay ethnic nationalism as the identity-marker of choice for younger Malays. Analytically it should be kept distinct from nationalism, though powerfully interacting with it.

#### *Bounded sovereign space*

If the indigenous 'state-averse' Southeast Asians focussed on centres and patronage, the European imperial nationalists introduced a great emphasis on the need for boundaries. As the British envoy Burney told the Siamese court in 1826, they believed that only fixed boundaries between territories would 'prevent all chance of mistake or dispute', and enable the British occupiers of Lower Burma to have more stable and harmonious relations with the Siamese than the Burmese had had (Burney 1971, I: 85–6). Boundary-making, with its presumption of sovereign monopolies within each boundary, even preceded the ships. Spain and Portugal signed the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, after Columbus' voyage but before the Portuguese had reached Asia by sea. It drew a North–South line between the lands to be conquered for Spain

and those for Portugal, an Atlantic meridian which implied a Pacific anti-meridian allotting most of Asia to Portugal. Other powers were excluded, and they naturally took little account of it.

The boundary-making continued between European nationalists. The powerful trading companies of the Dutch and English did not make grandiloquent claims to territory as the kings of Portugal had done, but they were more effective in seeking the monopolies that were important to them—monopolies of trade and of spice production centres. As early as 1615 the VOC told the rulers of Makassar that their free-trading principles conflicted with VOC claims to monopolise the spice trade of Maluku. The king replied that an earlier generation of Dutchmen had also been ready to die in fighting for the claims of Spain. ‘God made the land and the sea; the land he divided among men and the sea he gave in common. It has never been heard that anyone should be forbidden to sail the seas’ (cited in Stapel 1922: 14). Nevertheless, after forty more years and a great deal more bloodshed, the VOC was master of the spice islands and able to exclude those it labelled ‘smugglers’. Among the losers in this process was the English Company, forced to concede its tenuous access to nutmeg-producing Banda at the Treaty of Breda in 1667, and to settle for what then seemed the meagre compensation of New York.

What might properly be called the third world-wide war, after the Hapsburg versus Ottoman conflict of the sixteenth century and Protestant versus Catholic of the seventeenth, pitted England and France against each other in a series of wars in Europe, North America and Asia between 1744 and 1815. While the two parties had begun by backing rival Indian monarchs in their contest for trade dominance in India, the English ended in control of vast swathes of territory. European state nationalism, greatly stimulated by war and revolution, transformed the nature of rival claims in Asia. Dutch possessions in the Archipelago were occupied first by the pro-French revolutionary general Daendels (1808–11) and then by Stamford Raffles for England (1812–15). The series of treaties which followed Napoleon’s final defeat concluded with the Anglo–Dutch London Treaty of 1824. This transformed maritime thoroughfares into international boundaries. The Straits of Malacca and of Singapore, in particular, were decreed to constitute the boundary between Dutch and British claims and ambitions. The territory on either side was by no means controlled by Britain and Holland respectively, but in contrast to local patterns, the boundary came first. Only about a century later were the inhabitants of the islands to realise they were part of one polity with monopoly claims over them, and those of the Peninsula of another—however disguised by continuing local ‘sovereignities’.

The boundaries between British and French territorial claims came later, at a time when state nationalism was at its peak, and the Europeans were ceasing to tolerate disorderly corners not responsible to a 'civilised' (read industrial) state. France conquered Vietnam in stages between 1859 and 1885, and advanced up the Mekong through Khmer and Lao regions in the long tributary to both Siam and Vietnam. Britain had done the same with Burma. But neither power could allow the other to occupy the third major state of the region, Siam. In 1893, France forced Siam to yield all its claims on the eastern side of the Mekong, making another former trade artery into a sterile boundary. Britain and France in turn agreed in 1896 that they would uphold the independent sovereignty of Siam, which had been quicker than its neighbours to grasp the need to modernise in a European fashion in order to survive. Siam's modern borders were in place after another round of carefully balanced advances. France took the contested Cambodian provinces of Siemreap and Battambang in 1907, and could not then object to Britain taking responsibility for the sultanates of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu on the Peninsula in 1909.

In the wilder east, Holland had agreed to divide Timor with Portugal in 1749. In New Guinea, lines on maps were drawn by Dutch, German and British negotiators in the 1880s and 1890s, though it would be long before the interior inhabitants knew anything of them.

These borders were all artificial in their origins, slicing various emergent ethnic in half and turning crucial crossroads and meeting places into remote peripheries of the new states. But in the twentieth century the boundaries impressed themselves on a new school-educated generation as fixed realities featured on the classroom maps. They became icons of the new nationalisms.

### *Censuses*

Southeast Asian kings frequently acknowledged the diversity of their subjects; a few kings, notably of Burma, Siam and Vietnam, also counted their subjects for tax purposes. The colonial innovation was to combine these two exercises, using a periodic census to classify the whole population, taxable or not, into groups. The British were much the most consistent census-takers, managing one every decade in Malaya and Burma between 1900 and the interruption of the (European) war in 1939. They were also the great classifiers, animated by their conviction in the early twentieth century that 'race' was an important scientific category, albeit of peculiar exuberance in Southeast Asia.



In practice census-takers encountered a huge diversity of self-identifications, having to do with place of birth or residence, language, religion and style of dress. This was very much at odds with their everyday understanding of race, which had in Europe become entangled with nationality, and therefore relatively fixed. The Burmese enumerators of 1931 saw no difficulty listing English, Welsh, American, French, Dutch etc as 'races' within the category of 'European and Allied races'. When they transferred this notion of basic self-identification to Burma, however, they found 135 indigenous 'races' (*Census of India 1931*, XI: i). The Malayan census of the same year identified over seventy 'races', fifteen of which were categories of 'Malaysians by race'. Of large categories, only the Chinese 'race' was blurred with the state nationalist category, so that speakers of different southern Chinese languages became 'tribes' in the census (Vlieland 1932).

Yet in having defined so many 'races', in consultations with various colonial officials knowledgeable about local languages and customs, the census-takers realised they were imposing categories on a shifting world. They complained of 'the extreme instability of racial distinctions in Burma' (*Census of India 1931*, XI, ii: 259). Census-takers in Malaya were similarly frustrated, seeking after 1900 to impose the 'scientific' category of race on a population blissfully unaware of it. C.A. Vlieland, in charge of the 1931 census, admitted that this attempt had failed. 'Most Oriental peoples have themselves no clear conception of race, and commonly regard religion as the most important, if not determinant, element.' Conceding that it was impossible to define 'race', but insisting on using the term, he sought some kind of 'judicious blend, for practical ends, of the ideas of geographic and ethnographic origin, political allegiance, and racial and social affinities and sympathies'. In a very English manner he excused this muddle-headedness as merely enshrining the everyday understanding of the question, 'in ordinary non-technical conversation, "What is that man?"' (Vlieland 1932: 73–4).

Yet the census conferred a spurious authority on these arbitrary divisions. The peculiar British confidence in the importance of race continued into the censuses of independent Malaysia, Singapore and Burma. The very people who had 'no clear conception of race' became among the few in the twenty-first century world still convinced by their governments that these categories were basic and ineluctable.

The categories did, however, become steadily more homogenised into large blocks, convinced by the census that they were competing for survival or dominance in a social Darwinian world. As will be considered further in chapter 3, the British in Malaya progressively

defined a 'Malay' category as a protected one of political importance. While the 1921 census was still taking seriously the idea of 'race', and classifying as 'Malay' those Sumatran immigrants whose first language was Malay, that of 1931 adopted a political definition, so that only those born in the Peninsula, and thus entitled to 'protection', were classified as 'Malay'. Others in the 'Malaysian' category were specified by their self-identification or place of origin, Javanese, Boyanese and Minangkabau being the most significant (Vlieland 1932: 75–6).

Netherlands Indian officials were similarly bewildered by the variety of identities the population gave themselves. For them the term 'race' did not appear except in the abbreviated English translation of categories. The most important distinction was between the four 'population groups' (*bevolkingsgroepen*), translated as 'racial groups' for the English. These were European, Chinese, 'other Asiatics' and 'natives' (*inlanders*), the last being 95 per cent of the population. Different ethnies, in bewildering variety, were labelled *landaarden* (something like 'countrymen'), only translated for English eyes as 'races and tribes'. The 1930 census, the only comprehensive one, attempted a definition after pointing out the usual difficulties. 'We have taken as criteria for specifying the meaning of *landaard*, as far as possible: a common culture, and for smaller groups in particular also their own inclination, not to mix with other *landaarden*' (*Volkstelling* 1930, I: 13). As in Burma, the extraordinary variety of groups was difficult for the state in practice to 'read' or comprehend, and so they adopted the procedure of 'grouping as far as possible' the different *landaarden*—'so as not to make the work of the tellers too complex and the processing and publication of the data too costly' (*Volkstelling* 1930 IV: 15). As will be explored in the following chapters, these larger groupings had an important effect in forming the competitive ethnies of contemporary Indonesia. More important overall, however, was the profound divide created in every official statistic or publication, between the 'natives' on one side and the foreign population groups on the other. This was a major gift for eventual Indonesian unity, but at the expense of those labelled 'Chinese'.

### *Names*

In the contemporary era of globalisation and mixing, names have become the primary means of retaining identities over many generations. When assimilation was the predominant means of dealing with migrants, altering their names to something more 'normal' was seen as a vital means to hasten the process. The new multi-culturalism abhors such effacement, yet still compromise is common. One name may be used for

the majority society, another for the family; or bi-culturalism may be signalled in a hybrid name (Theresa Nguyen; Ibrahim Chen). The dynamics of naming are critical for understanding imagined communities and imagined boundaries, yet they remain strangely understudied (but see Macdonald and Zheng 2009).

Chinese and Arabic names have been particularly resistant to transformation in changed circumstances. In the Chinese case, this derives from the importance of patrilineages and the unchanging nature of the Chinese characters in which they are expressed. The Chinese were far ahead of the rest of the world in feeling that patrilineages should be preserved through the use of surnames. Legends place the requirement that all should have a surname (*xing*) to a decree of 2852 BC (Jones 1997: 1). Despite their longevity, Chinese surnames are few, and the characters well known. Conventionally there are said to be a hundred names, though the reality is perhaps two or three times that. However pronounced in different times and places, the character remains, and can lead back to standardisation in the age of a single *pinyin* romanisation. In diasporic situations of great diversity, Chinese have been reluctant to abandon the tight Chinese naming system even when they had no other command of Chinese language. Perhaps because the name appeared central to their residual Chineseness, Southeast Asian governments sometimes brought pressure on them to abandon it.

The same small corpus of Chinese surnames served for Vietnam and Korea, though the pronunciation of the characters varied even more widely than in Chinese dialects. Nothing so radically marked out the distinctiveness of Vietnam from China than the romanisation of names, along with the rest of the language, in the early twentieth century. When all those with one Chinese character (*Ruan* in pinyin) became Nguyen, and with another (*Pan* in pinyin) became Phan, they parted company with the Chinese naming world in a way that could not be rejoined.

Arabic names have been changeless for a different reason. Since the Quran was expressed in the sacred language of Arabic, and was studied and memorised in that language rather than in vernacular translations, the names of the characters within it did not change. The nationalisation of Christian saints' names, whereby a Latin Jacobus became French Jacques, Spanish Iago, German Jacob, English James and Italian Jacopo, was not paralleled in the Muslim world. For those Southeast Asians who adopted an Islamic or Arabic naming system, therefore, there was little in the name (except the slight shift to *bin*, 'son of', as opposed to Arabic *ibn*) to say they had any identity except an Islamic one. The practice of Islamic naming gradually spread to become the majority pattern among Malays, Acehnese and Makassarese by the twentieth

century, but was much more restricted among Javanese, most of whom have continued to the present to mark their ethnies in their name.

The dominant Southeast Asian pattern was one of bilateral descent and matrilocality, at the opposite extreme to the Chinese pattern of surnames and patrilineage markers. Nobody except Chinese and Vietnamese had any kind of surname passed down through a paternal line, with the possible exception of the Bataks discussed in chapter 6. Names might change at different life-stages, or even in relation to different people, but there was no idea that one name should be inherited (beyond one generation) and the other personal.

Modern nationalism did however bring a concern to emulate Europeans and Chinese by adopting surnames. Sometimes this was for the perceived advantages of a state, in making its population 'readable', to use James Scott's (1998a) term. The Spanish governor-general who proclaimed the need for Filipinos to adopt a surname in 1850, for example, was concerned at the confusion caused in 'the administration of justice, government, finance, and public order' by lack of surnames to hold people responsible for their families (Governor-General Claveria, cited in Cullinane 1998: 296). A *Catalogo de Apellidos* was circulated giving thousands of acceptable names, the majority of which were in fact indigenous although the elite set a pattern of choosing Spanish ones. This was a remarkably successful state-orchestrated transformation, which made Filipinos the first non-Sinified Southeast Asians with a clear surnaming pattern. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this contributed much both to subsequent Filipino identity and to the importance of family politics in the following century.

The founder of western-style Thai nationalism, King Rama VI (Vajiravudh, 1910–25), also decreed in 1913 that surnames must be selected by every male family head, to be passed down in the male line, 'to ensure that government records of births, deaths and marriages would be clear and reliable'. Part of the motive was undoubtedly state convenience of this kind, as with the Philippine governor. But there was clear state nationalism in his comment that 'Now we have surnames it can be said that we have caught up with people who are regarded as civilised' (Vajiravudh, 1913, cited in Vella, 1978: 131).

Lest anyone think he sought to emulate Chinese practice, he argued that the Chinese were still at the stage of divisive clan names, whereas real modern nations had surnames individual to them. He also believed that surnames would provide 'an aid in the maintenance of family tradition. It will also serve as an incentive to every one to uphold not only personal honour but the honour of the family as well' (Vajiravudh 1914, cited in Vella, 1978: 130). Vajiravudh gave names personally to

many of the elite, but encouraged even commoners to adopt one. Gradually, therefore, Thais followed Filipinos in adopting a family name, even if they were seldom used in common parlance. In relations with non-Thais, at least, these names served to demarcate the state, making the Thai-ness of the dominant ethnic clearer and minorities who declined to follow more alien. During the 1940s high point of Thai state nationalism, great pressure was put on Chinese and Muslims also to adopt Thai surnames. The degree of success of this process measured the success of Thai state nationalism against its major rivals.

### **Colonial constructions of states and ethnies**

Southeast Asian nationalisms were distinct from those of Europe not simply because they arose in a culturally different context. The modern states which introduced state nationalism in its modern form were alien imperial states. They were able to establish their authority in Southeast Asia in the late nineteenth century in large part because they embodied, to a much greater extent than their local opponents, that homogeneous amalgam of ethnic and state nationalism which proved so successful in the nineteenth century—‘the sure and attested way of attaining power and wealth’ (McNeill 1985: 56). The policies of these imperial states therefore have an important bearing on the shaping of identities.

Only the Spanish, in the Philippines from 1571 to 1898, extended their state nationalism to their Asian subjects, gradually remoulding them in the direction of Hispanisation. With this exception, the Europeans in Asia did not seek to create communities of belonging between the state and its subjects. Far from it. As they became more modern in their sense of an absolute state, they became more separate from the Asians they lived among, and more determined to remain so. Although it was no part of colonial intentions to generate ethno-nationalisms within the imperial borders, the homogenising effect of colonial rule was bound to produce such a result. By creating common legal, financial, bureaucratic and educational regimes within the domains they ruled, the British, Dutch and French laid a firm basis for anti-imperial nationalism, but they did not take the final step of mobilising populations for war or other common action. That step was left for the indigenous nationalists to take.

The effects of colonial rule or influence on ethnic-formation varied widely. The different styles and motivations of the rival colonisers was one factor, but far more important was the type of Southeast Asian society with which each interacted. We need to distinguish at least four types of interaction, which I will label: (i) expanding an ethnic core;

(ii) protecting fragile monarchies; (iii) from trade empires to revolutionary unities; and (iv) ethnicising the stateless.

*Expanding an ethnic core—Burma, Vietnam and Siam*

The British conquered Burma, and the French Vietnam, knowing them to be formidable established states proud of their independence. Both had beaten back Chinese attempts to absorb or ‘punish’ them as recently as the 1760s (Burma) and 1788 (Vietnam). The Burmese rulers claimed to be world-rulers (*cakravartin*), kings of many kings, as well as frequently *bodhisatva* (incarnations of the Buddha). In their contests with neighbouring Tai states they had been able to mobilise armies of hundreds of thousands, and to deploy artillery effectively. The Vietnamese were also extremely effective militarily, accustomed to prevailing in their contests with neighbours, as well as with China.

Both states also played the Asian diplomatic game of unequal alliances. They still sent profitable tribute missions to the Middle Kingdom, and were with Siam the only Southeast Asian states to continue doing so into the nineteenth century (Womack 2006; Reid and Zheng 2008). Accepting tributary relations of diverse kinds with their own neighbours, they had no such understanding of sovereign equality as Westphalia had taught the Europeans. Britain and France, however, were not interested in occupying a ritual space comparable with the intangible primacy of China in northern Southeast Asia—they sought control of certain key economic levers, and were unlikely to obtain it without a serious fight.

State nationalism was a reality in Vietnam, in the Northeast Asian pattern sketched above. Despite being divided into hostile states for most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Dai Viet had created the kind of homogeneities of bureaucracy and print culture which could readily be reassembled by the unifying Nguyen after 1802, on the Chinese model. Although the Viet states had many tributaries, as did China, they understood the boundary between civilised and barbarian, Viet citizen and highland tributary, only the former having direct responsibility for the state. Conquered Cham and Khmer could be assimilated into the settled population by adopting Chinese-style writing and names, but it remained clear where the boundary of the core ethnicity was.

Burma and Siam also had vigorous dynasties, generated out of the same period of turmoil in the second half of the eighteenth century, which had allowed the Nguyen to emerge masters of Vietnam. But they were conscious of being multi-ethnic amalgams. The Siamese king often saw himself as ruler of Thai, Lao, Khmer, Mon and at slightly greater remove, Malay and Chinese. Thai sovereignty had begun in pluralism,

with multiple rulers in Nan, Chiang Mai, Sipsongpanna and Sukhothai alternatively hostile and tributary to each other, as also to Burma or China. Much of the economic strength of nineteenth century Siam was due to Chinese traders and cash-croppers. Siamese skills learned in co-opting Chinese traders proved useful in dealing with Europeans in the nineteenth century.

The Burmans, with their capital more than a thousand kilometres from the port, were less inclined to accept symbiotic relationships with non-Burmans, and more inclined to repression and cultural assimilation. After brutally crushing a series of revolts from the embittered Mon of the southern Irrawaddy basin, the Burmese state encouraged the migration of Burmans to the Mon area, and the forcible assimilation in language and dress of Mons who remained. Lieberman calculates that in consequence the Irrawaddy basin became 90 per cent Burman by 1830, having been only 60 per cent so in 1400 (Lieberman 2003: 206). Outside this basin the strongest Burmese kings might have favoured reducing other ethnies to a kind of servitude, but assimilation was impossible both physically and in terms of the ideology of a world-ruler over scores of discrete 'peoples' (*Ibid.*: 200–1). Fr Sangermano (1818: 42–3) discussed nine different 'nations' within the Burmese empire, 'all of whom speak a peculiar language, and have customs different from the Burmese'. These were sometimes fierce competitors, sometimes tributaries, sometimes ruthlessly conquered subjects.

In conquering the two stronger states, Burma and Vietnam, but leaving Siam as a buffer, the Europeans gave the Chakri kings an additional benefit. By detaching most of their tributary periphery, they made it much easier for a more compact kingdom to transform itself into a modern nation-state. King Chulalongkorn and his able interior minister Prince Damrong knew that they had to emulate the colonial powers in establishing a monopoly of force and a unified government within the borders to which they had been reduced. Because they had none of the ambivalence of the colonial governments about absorbing the peripheries into a national identity which was essentially Thai, the Thai leadership can be considered the most successful in developing a strong state nationalism which went far to transform its population into a majority ethnies with only a modest periphery of 'minorities' (Bunnag 1977; Thongchai 1991).

The British and French claimed to have inherited the vaguer tributary relations of various peripheral communities towards Mandalay and Hue respectively. They created a border of modern sovereignty with the Manchu empire which excluded the possibility of further tribute to Beijing. Within the maximal borders they thereby established (for



themselves and for China), they built a wholly modern monopoly of power, and uniformity of financial, educational, commercial and administrative systems. Yet the form under which this steel frame of authority was exercised still appeared bewilderingly complex, reflecting the different local accommodations to the mosaic of indigenous structures. Indochina was divided into four protectorates each under a different mixture of indigenous and French authority, and the colony of Cochin-China in the Vietnamese south. One third of Burma constituted the 'scheduled areas' of the north, where Shan, Chin and Kachin princes continued to rule under British tutelage. Even in 'Burma Proper' where a parliamentary system was established, Karen and Rakhine (of Arakan) had somewhat different constitutional positions from Mon and Burman. Anti-imperial nationalists of the dominant ethnies naturally believed this superficial diversity was a sham and a feudal anachronism, only kept alive by colonial intrigue. The other ethnies, though touched in different degrees by anti-imperial nationalism, could accept the administrative novelties of a distant ruler more readily than a return to domination by Burmans. The tension between the ambitions of the dominant ethnies and those who discovered themselves 'minorities' within new states would dominate the twentieth century and continue into the twenty-first.

The effect of this type of imperial interaction was to create expectations in the nationalisms they produced which would be very difficult to fulfil. The colonial boundaries were of course sacralised as the 'correct' boundaries for anti-imperial nationalism. But in Burma, Burman ethnies became fatally entangled with state nationalism after independence, with a constant state of unwinnable war against minority ethnies nationalisms. Vietnam was very fortunate that the anti-imperial nationalism of the Indo-Chinese communist party was unable to take control of the whole colony in 1945, and eventually renamed itself the Vietnamese Workers' Party in 1951. The French were able to steer Laos and Cambodia to a fragile independence in 1954 (Goscha 1999). The wars of Indo-China up until 1980 were nevertheless bedevilled by Vietnamese attempts to lead the anti-imperial nationalisms of Laos and Cambodia in the 'Indo-Chinese Revolution' of which they had dreamed since 1930, and problems remain between these variants of nationalism.

*Protecting fragile monarchies—Malaya, Cambodia, Laos*

The British sphere in Malaya, and the French in the Mekong basin, were the outcome of purely economic objectives along real or imagined trade routes to China. The British sought trading bases in the Malacca Straits area for the collection of tropical trade goods for China; the French



hoped the Mekong would provide direct access to the fabled China market. No strong states posed major obstacles in these two zones. A number of petty port-states in the Peninsula had been partly tributary to Siam, partly to the old Malay dynasty of Riau (tributary to the Dutch since 1784), but overall very little populated because of the area's unsuitability for rice agriculture. As long-standing crossroads of trade these states had a tradition of cosmopolitanism, with traders from India, China, the Archipelago and the Gulf of Thailand all meeting in ports of which the *lingua franca* and most of the dominant dynasties were Malay. The Mekong region was also a 'water frontier' (Cooke and Li 2004), where Khmer sovereigns had a tenuous hold over Chinese, Malay, Cham and European traders, periodically invoking Vietnamese and Thai intervention against their rivals.

Having arrived for reasons to do with trade well beyond these regions, the British and French gained influence almost accidentally. Economic vested interests would come later in the twentieth century, but these did not begin by being strategic or economic prizes in themselves. The Europeans found a multiplicity of weak and divided princes, some of whom were eager to invoke their help against others, and so they quickly found themselves in the place of 'protectors' of endangered states. They preserved and enriched the monarchs they chose to back, but met their own expanding economic needs by encouraging outsiders to exploit resources—Chinese, Indians and Europeans in Malaya; Chinese, Vietnamese and Europeans in the Mekong countries.

In the twentieth century, as nationalist and Marxist pressures mounted, the colonial ideology shifted significantly from the protection of the rulers to the protection of their subjects. While the initial populations had been very heterogeneous, this protective system required that the objects of this colonial protection be homogenised as charming but indolent 'natives' of their territories, all peasants, fishermen or officials of the court, inherently loyal to the monarchs recreated by colonial intervention. The more developed the economy of the 'protected' area became, the more this population was seen to need 'protection' against more dynamic and modern migrants. Among such populations and their aristocratic elites, anti-imperial nationalism developed less robustly than ethnic nationalism. Populist commoners had difficulty wresting leadership from these elites, but when they did so, it was in the name of pressing the state to assist this weak and vulnerable 'native' population more effectively than had the princes against outsiders believed to be more dynamic.

The Malayan case will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 3, in the context of unravelling the multiple meanings of 'Malay'. In order to

suggest that it can be seen as part of a typology as well as uniquely *sui generis*, however, it will be helpful to consider here a few features of the Khmer and Lao ‘fragile protected monarchies’.

The vigorous new Thai state refounded after the Burmese conquest by King Taksin at Thonburi (1767), and by Rama I at its present Bangkok site (1782), wasted no time in expanding to the east. By 1779, military expeditions had established Siamese influence over all the Mekong territories. The three Lao kingdoms (Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Champassak) were subjected as never before, and their palladium, the emerald Buddha, was removed from Vientiane to Bangkok. A rebellion by the Vientiane King Anuvong in 1826 represented a final attempt at using Lao ethnic nationalism, on both sides of the Mekong, to reconstitute the seventeenth century Lansang kingdom. It was punished by the total destruction of Vientiane and removal of its remaining population across the Mekong where it could be better controlled.

For its part Cambodia began the century unusually subject to Siam, its kings crowned in Bangkok and their relatives held in the Thai capital as hostages for their loyalty. Siamese-connected officials were in key positions, especially in the westernmost Khmer provinces of Battambang and Siemreap, site of the Angkor ruins symbolically important to both monarchies. These provinces were effectively detached from Cambodia under a local dynasty responding to Bangkok rather than Phnom Penh. The Khmer court itself, riven by factionalism and irked by Thai paternalism, widened its options by sending tribute also to the Vietnamese court at Hue. In 1833, a Siamese army invaded, closely followed by a stronger Vietnamese army, each backing rival princes and intent on maintaining its influence. In the period 1833–40, the Vietnamese King Minh Mang applied his vigorous version of neo-Confucian state nationalism to Cambodia, attempting to ‘civilise’ and incorporate the central Khmer territory as had been done earlier with Cham territories and the Mekong delta. When this king died in 1840, however, his successors conceded that the challenge was too great, and accepted a kind of dual Viet/Thai suzerainty over Cambodia from 1848.

When the French in 1863 offered King Norodom protection, after they had conquered the adjacent portion of Vietnam, it was an already familiar pattern. Even when in 1884 they imposed a sterner requirement that he accept ‘all the ... reforms that the French government shall judge, in the future, to be useful’, it gave Cambodia a better chance of survival than Vietnamese rule had done. The princes of Laos, facing gradual absorption into an ever more centralised Siam, were equally ready to sign on as ‘protected’ in the 1890s. Even more than Cambodia,

Laos was a country that had to be reinvented by the French on the east bank of the Mekong, after its elites had effectively lost their battle for autonomy from Siam.

Under French protection the monarchies of the Mekong were institutionally secure for the first time in centuries, and protected from the sort of succession conflicts which had in the past ensured the survival of the toughest. Like their Malay counterparts they were encouraged to focus their energies in the areas of state ritual, symbolism, culture and religion. Some 220,000 Vietnamese migrants (2.7 per cent of population in Laos, 6.3 per cent in Cambodia) and 110,000 Chinese (0.3 per cent in Laos, 3.5 per cent in Cambodia) filled the middle positions of the administration and the economy respectively (Naval Intelligence 1943: 212). In Cambodia, rice production was stimulated by the French, and a stable peasantry grew rapidly in numbers. As with its Malay counterpart, the educated Khmer elite was tiny and predominately aristocratic. Such nationalism as developed before the Japanese occupation was directed against Vietnamese domination of the administration and Chinese of commerce, not against colonialism or the French *per se*. Anti-imperial nationalism remained very weak as a unifying force or a basis for civic nationalism.

*From trade empires to revolutionary unities—Philippines, Indonesia*

The Spanish empire in the Philippines, and the Dutch one in the Indonesian Archipelago, were also constructed for essentially commercial reasons, with the added element of imperially sponsored Christianisation in the Philippines. The Dutch had to fight gruesome and costly battles, but they chose their targets carefully for commercial purposes, generally seeking to fight for rather than against the strongest inland powers with which they had no quarrel. By the late nineteenth century when the British and French were fighting Burmese and Vietnamese monarchies, the Dutch and Spanish were already well established in their respective heartlands and engaged in fighting desperate Muslims in what they already identified as their peripheries—Aceh and Sulu respectively. The hitherto independent sultanate of Aceh believed itself comparable to the Burmese and Vietnamese monarchies, and put up a similar fight (see chapter 4), but from the perspective of Java Aceh had become a messy borderland that had to be made to conform with an established colonial pattern. Java and Luzon already represented secure if multi-ethnic bases of a (colonial) state. In these archipelagos the core of the future state was effectively the three-century experience of colonialism interacting with indigenous structures in a central island. No single

ethnie was placed strongly enough to be a core. Tagalogs and Javanese were closest, and attempts to make Tagalog the basis of the national language shared some of the problems of Burmese. But the effective *lingua franca* of Filipino nationalism was Spanish, followed in the twentieth century by English, while Dutch and Malay played this role in Indonesia. A much more creative task was needed in the two archipelagos for anti-imperial nationalists to develop the substance of new communities of belonging, to match the colonial boundaries.

European colonial authorities knew that they were dealing with peoples of various languages and cultures, but in the high colonial period of racial hierarchy (roughly 1870–1940) these distinctions paled before the status of ‘natives’ (Dutch, *inlander*) as the indigenous base of the racial pyramid. As the generic name for these indigenous subjects both Spanish and Dutch used the same term ‘Indians’—Spanish *Indio*, Dutch *Indiër*. The novel idea that there was a collective unity among the subjects of Dutch-ruled and Spanish-ruled archipelagos respectively, other than that of religion, began with the colonisers. It spread to the colonised as a category of humiliation, or as nationalism gathered strength, of oppression. As it did so a new term was necessary, which did not carry the negative or alien associations of ‘native’ or ‘Indian’.

The Philippines was luckier, paradoxically, in having the name of a Spanish king applied to it in the sixteenth century. By the nineteenth century, it was uncontroversial as the name of the colony. ‘Filipino’ was then used as the term for locally born Spaniards, but this was gradually accepted also by Chinese *Mestizos* and elite *Indios* in search of an inclusive local identity. There was opposition from ethnically Tagalog, used by Pedro Paterno in his ethno-nationalist *La antigua civilización tagálog* (1887). Influenced by Paterno’s idyllic view of pre-Spanish Tagalog society, the revolutionary populist Andres Bonifacio addressed his manifesto of 1896 to ‘the Tagalogs’ (Ileto 1979: 102–5). As a broader category of belonging, ‘Malay’ was also appealing, especially to the nationalist hero José Rizal (see chapter 4). But in the transition to a new American administration and its different set of idioms at the beginning of the twentieth century, ‘Filipino’ became firmly established as the object of nationalist striving. Although, as in Indonesia, those designated as ‘Chinese’ often fell outside its parameters, it had little of ethnically nationalism about it, and should be considered the Southeast Asian anti-imperial nationalism which can most confidently be described as ‘civic’ in spirit.

In the Dutch-ruled Archipelago, the earliest nationalists in quest of pan-Archipelago unity had to use a Malay equivalent of ‘Indian’—*orang Hindia*—to describe themselves. Only with the first generation of

nationalist students in Holland was the esoteric term ‘Indonesia’ embraced. This Greek term (‘islands of India’) had been occasionally used in European linguistic and ethnographic circles since the nineteenth century, and became more current around the First World War years as a more scientific term than the racialised ‘Malay’ for what we today call the Austronesian language group. A Latin version of the same term, *Insulinde*, had probably been rendered less appealing to majority nationalists by its adoption by one of the earliest colony-wide nationalist parties (1907), primarily Eurasian in membership. In 1924, the students changed the name of their association from ‘Indian’ to ‘Indonesian’, and began a nationalist journal with the rousing title *Indonesia Merdeka*. This novel term spread very quickly through the colony. In 1928, representatives of various youth and student groups in the colony subscribed to an oath of imagined unity later celebrated as the defining moment of Indonesian identity—‘One fatherland, Indonesia; one *bangsa* [nation or race], *bangsa* Indonesia; one language, *bahasa* Indonesia.’

Indonesia’s revolutionary experience came a half-century later than that of the Philippines, in the aftermath of the Japanese occupation, in 1945–9. It was even more effective than its Philippine antecedent in transforming the unitary nationalist ideals from the discourse of a small group of intellectuals to the sacred foundational ideas of a new state. Even ethnies with strong and recent memories of proudly independent states, like Aceh and Bali, were passionately caught up in the unitary ideal as a means of overthrowing Dutch rule. Ideas of separatism, federalism or asymmetrical relationship with the new state were initially put on the back-burner as luxuries, and eventually redefined as treachery to the struggling post-revolutionary state. As revolutionary populism faded after the fall of its mouthpiece, Sukarno, in 1965–6, the unitary idea was kept sacred and central by the military-based regime of General Suharto. Only in the democratic space after his fall in 1998 have such questions again been vigorously discussed, with East Timor, Aceh and West Papua forcing the issue. The Aceh case will be taken as paradigmatic of these questions, in chapter 4 below.

### *Ethnicising the stateless*

While I have characterised ‘state-averse’ as an historical feature of Southeast Asia (minus Vietnam and the Irrawaddy basin), there was a wide variety of experiences with states both of the cosmic temple-building and the trade-oriented type. At one end of the spectrum were the hill peoples in general, along with boat people or ‘sea-gypsies’ of small-island clusters, and the inhabitants of some other small islands of

the east. These were examples of ‘untamed’ peoples who had disappeared centuries earlier in Europe and China proper. They were aware of rulers with some claims to statehood controlling river-mouths or other strategic trade arteries, because it was necessary to trade with them for essential items such as salt, fish paste, metalware and weapons. In many cases these exchanges were characterised as tribute, but most were complementary trade relations. Their life-style was in some cases nomadic, but more frequently based on the shifting cultivation of hill rice, a labour-efficient but land-expensive means of annually changing the fields to be cultivated from the forest.

Such societies consciously rejected assimilation into the states they knew. This always reflected a prizing of their relatively mobile mode of production, and often a difference in religion and of customary laws regulating land-holding and marriage. Most had had to fight at some time to protect their free status. At least one substantial group of South Sumatra highlanders explicitly claimed the status of free men (*orang mardika*), who paid no tax and owed no obligations to the *raja* of the river-mouths, nor to the Dutch and British (Collins 1979: 90–2). The Bataks of North Sumatra appear to have deliberately built up an exaggerated reputation as ferocious cannibals to ensure that they were left in peace by coastal rulers (Hirose 1996).

By definition these societies had a low sense of ethnic nationalism; they perceived themselves as extremely various, with different dialects and customs in each river valley, and a common sense of themselves only in relation to extremes of outside pressure. They faced a crisis of identity when for the first time at the beginning of the twentieth century they were brought, by force or persuasion, within the fixed boundaries of a modern (colonial) state, with strong ideas of sovereign rights over them. Before this incorporation, imperial authority had been limited to coastal ports, from which vantage hill peoples seemed no more than a primitive periphery. Europeans adopted from lowlanders some generic terms which perceived these people only as highlanders, countryfolk, pagans and savages—Montagnards, Karen, Orang Ulu, Dusun, Ifugao, Alfur, Toraja, Dayak or Batak. In general, the claims of lowland kings to hegemony over these peoples had been supported by colonial power, and taken over by that power when it supplanted monarchs.

Even the most ambitious Southeast Asian state could at best assimilate captive or adventurous individuals from these communities. Lieberman (2003: 208) put it in physical terms: ‘illiterate Chins, Kachins, Karens, Palaungs, and so forth escaped Burman political control entirely by virtue of their poverty, inaccessibility, and the fragility of

their supra-village organisations'. In the Archipelago I argue that this was also partly choice, but a choice no longer available once incorporated into colonial states after 1900.

Within the multi-ethnic European-ruled state, such people had need of broader ethnic labels, which the classifying work of European missionaries, ethnographers, linguists and census-takers hastened to provide. By this stage missionaries were convinced of the necessity of preaching in vernaculars, but practical necessities forced them to homogenise local dialects into a manageable number of languages for translation and printing of bibles and prayers. European officials also learned only a few languages, or more frequently used indigenous translators and mediators who imposed their dialects upon a wider group. The demands for political representation, when it came, also called for broad categories. Gradually, therefore, the colonial experience welded the variegated mosaic of stateless peoples into larger groups, some of whom became ethnies. Chapters 6 and 7 consider two of these cases, the Batak and the Kadazan/Dusun, in order to understand what this meant for the nationalist potential of such groups.

Dutch and English census-takers in the twentieth century began with relative diversity, reflecting the immense diversity of ways in which people identified themselves, particularly in stateless societies. The Burmese census listed forty-five distinct 'races' under the stateless Kuki-Chin heading, seventeen under the Karen, and eleven under the Palaung and Wa, the smallest of which had less than a thousand members. For practical purposes the state could only comprehend and deal with them on the basis of these groups. During the colonial period the Mon and Tai (Shan) categories, both Theravada and long acquainted with states, tended to be absorbed into Burman, diminishing from 3.1 per cent and 8.5 per cent respectively in 1901 to 2.3 per cent and 7.1 per cent in 1931. The other categories protected by the 'scheduled areas' status, on the other hand, held relatively stable or in the Karen case even increased (8.7 to 9.3 per cent). In the censuses after independence the fifteen indigenous groups of the colonial scheme were reduced to eight, and a reverse trend tended to increase all the lowland Theravada categories (Burman, Mon and Shan), which now had the benefit of states within the Union of Burma system. The once stateless highlanders fared less well, Karens dropping to 6.2 per cent in 1983 (*Ibid.*: i: 224; *Burma 1983 Population Census*: 1: 21).

The Batak and the Kadazan/Dusun, discussed in chapters 6 and 7, are among the more coherent and effective of the once stateless groups now making their way in independent modern states. It should be remembered that dozens of other language groups have been wholly absorbed

within the past century, either into the dominant national ethnies or into a regionally dominant one. The survivors are those which adapted relatively quickly to the new opportunities for education, entrepreneurship and political mobilisation that the colonial states offered. A few of them became favoured sons of colonial regimes, rewarded for perceived loyalty by being better represented in colonial armies, and wary of the dominant nationalism. Most, however, were supportive of the independent successor states, seeing in the national leadership the same kind of protection against local rivals or oppressors they had enjoyed under colonial regimes, without the paternalism. They had no other memory of state to resort to than this one, and the demands for statehood from some Karen, Ambonese and Papuans should be noted as exceptions to be explained, and by no means the norm.