

THE MAKING OF
MODERN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

VOLUME ONE
The European Conquest



Map of South-East Asia 1835

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MODERN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

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The European Conquest

by

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Preface

THIS is the first of a series of three volumes designed to serve as an introduction to the history of modern South-East Asia for students at pre-University level and beyond, as well as for the general reader. The series itself is presented not as a history of South-East Asia as a whole, but as a study of the modernization of South-East Asia as a result of its impact with the Western world. The series has been drawn up to deal with this theme in three parts. The first part—the present volume—is concerned with the way in which the Western powers came to assert their presence in South-East Asia and how they came to bring virtually the whole region under their sway. The narrative here is primarily concerned with the political story, starting with the arrival of the Portuguese pioneers and culminating with the last struggles of the old states of South-East Asia for their independence. The second volume deals with the consequences of the Western ascendancy, the economic and social impact and the changes that were produced. The third volume outlines the administrative and political superstructure which was built up and traces the evolution of the South-East Asian reaction to Western imperialism, or in other words, the rise and development of nationalism throughout the region with the ultimate achievement of a new independence by the various peoples concerned.

Although this book cannot claim to be any more free from bias than any other history, it is not written consciously either from a Euro-centric or Asian-centric point of view, nor is it designed either as an apology for Western colonialism or as a vindication of South-East Asian nationalism. The intention has been to try and present what has happened, bearing in mind the different points of view of all who were involved. However, since the book has been written in Malaysia, it tends to deal with events according to their immediacy for this country and her neighbours. As a result, more detail and emphasis have been given to those episodes and happenings which most concern the people of Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia. Furthermore, quite a large number of footnotes have been included. It is hoped that these will serve as a useful supplement to the main text, and not as a distraction; the idea here has been to present the main story as clearly and as succinctly as possible, providing more detailed background material for those who care to pursue the matter further.

In conclusion, it must be pointed out that this book can lay no claim to originality, for it is almost wholly derived from secondary sources and is in fact the fruit of the labours of many men with different backgrounds and differing outlooks. I gratefully acknowledge the great debt I owe to the writing and researches on South East-Asian history by a whole host of distinguished scholars, some of whose works are to be found quoted in the lists of books and articles at the end of each section.