Western Colonialism in Southeast Asia

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Outline of the lecture

- The Early Phase of Western Presence in Southeast Asia
- East Indies: the Dutch and British presence
- Britain and the Malay states
- The annexation of Burma
- France controlled Vietnam and Cambodia
- Independent Thailand
The early phase of Western presence

- The Portuguese conquest of Malacca in 1511
  - Inspired by three Gs: gospel, gold and glory
  - Trade: to dominate the trade route between India and China
  - Religion: to convert Muslin Southeast Asia to Christian
  - However, the anti-Portuguese feelings was growing, Islam inadvertently became a weapon against Portuguese oppression
  - Towards the end of 17th century, Portugal only held East Timor

- The Dutch United East India Company (VOC)
  - The Netherlands captured the Malacca in 1641
  - General administration was handled by indigenous rulers
  - In direct administrated territories: forced plantation of coffee, sugar and indigo crops
  - A complete monopoly of spice trade
The early phase of Western presence

The Spanish rule of the Philippines (1571-1898)
- The Spanish arrived in Southeast Asia from the East in 1521
- Treaty of Saragossa in 1529 (between Portugal and Spain)
- Manila (then a small town) turned into a headquarter of Christianity and Spanish expansion
- The Christian conversion largely succeeded
  - The Philippines did not produce valuable spices
  - The surrounding deep and typhoon-prone seas
  - Weak indigenous culture/tradition
- Because of the importance of Christianity, the Papal delegate was often more respected than the Spanish governor-general
- The administration below the provincial governors was indigenous and tradition-based
The early phase of Western presence

- The French in mainland Southeast Asia
  - The French effort of religious conversion was better received in coastal Vietnam in the early 17th century
  - The French influence on Ayutthaya
    - The fear of Dutch monopoly of Thai external trade
    - The French were initially invited, but they were later expelled by the anti-foreign group at the royal court.

- The early phase of Western influences
  - Governance through indigenous rules
  - Western presence was confined largely to coastal areas and limited to commercial activities
Western Colonialism in Southeast Asia in the 19th century
East Indies: the Dutch and British presence

- The British and Dutch presence in Southeast Asia
  - The British East India Company
  - The Dutch United East India Company

- The liberalist reforms in East Indies (1808-1816)
  - The Napoleonic occupation of the Netherlands influenced the governance in East Indies, and allowed certain coordination between the Dutch and the Britons
  - Hermann Daendels (1808-1811) and Thomas Raffles (1811-1816)

- The founding of Singapore by Raffles in 1819
  - A strategic port in the southern Malay water to challenge Dutch trade and supremacy in the region
East Indies: the British and Dutch presence

- The Treaty of London in 1824
  - The Dutch recognized the British claim to Singapore
  - The British not to enter ‘islands south of the Straits of Singapore’

- The restoration of Dutch rules
  - The Dipo Negoro revolt (1825-1830): the Java war
  - The imposition of the ‘Culture System’
    - Javanese peasants required to work on certain crops for the gov.
    - The old indigenous hierarchy was exploited
    - Building new Dutch bureaucracy in East Indie
  - For the Dutch: enormous wealth generated from East Indie
  - For indigenous people: sacrificing rice crops for indigo and sugar plantations → famine
Britain and the Malay states

- The British presence in the Malay peninsular
  - Before 1874, limited to Penang, Singapore and Malacca
  - Reasons behind the British intervention
    - Turbulence in the Malay states destabilised the Straits Settlements
    - The Strait Settlements transferred to Colonial Office control in 1867
    - Growing European competition

- The Resident System
  - The Malay states of Perak, Selangor, Pahang and Negri Sembilan

- The birth of FMS
  - The Federated Malay States was created in 1895
  - The Resident-General headquartered in Kuala Lumpur
The annexation of Burma

- For the British, Burma was an extension of India
  - Culture, economy and politics
  - The role of East India Company

- The first Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826)
  - The Treaty of Yandabo in 1826
    - The British Resident
    - Coastal provinces of Arakan and Tenasserim – rice and timber

- The second Anglo-Burmese War (1852)
  - Yangon and Lower Myanmar was ceded to Britain

- The third Anglo-Burmese War (1885)
  - The annexation of Burma into the Indian empire
France rules in Vietnam and Cambodia

- The French conquest of Cochin China
  - The religious persecution in Vietnam was used as an excuse
  - Three years’ war and the Treaty in 1862
    - Provinces in Gia Dinh region, included Saigon was ceded to France
    - French won the privilege in dealing with Vietnam
  - The French control over the entire Mekong Delta

- Protectorate over Cambodia
  - The Khmer monarchs had bowed to both Thailand and Vietnam
  - France claimed to succeed Vietnam as overlord of Cambodia
    - The Franco-Khmer Treaty in 1863
    - The Franco-Thai Treaty in 1867

- Complete conquest of Vietnam
  - Vietnam signed treaties to become a French protectorate in 1883-84
The independent Thailand

- Thailand managed to maintain independence amid the interference of Western colonial powers
  - Geographical location
  - Skilful diplomacy
  - Domestic policy of modernization

- From tribute to diplomacy
  - The last Siam tribute to China was delivered in 1853
  - The acceptance/adoptive of Western diplomacy

- The contribution of two Thai monarchies
  - Mongkut (Rama IV, 1851-1868)
  - Chulalongkorn (Rama V, 1868-1910)
Thai Diplomacy during the colonial period

- The Anglo-Thai (Bowring) Treaty in 1855
- The Franco-Thai Treaty in 1867
- Similar treaties were signed with several other Western powers

- France and Britain agreed in 1896 on the integrity and neutralization of the Menam Basin
- Still, Thailand ceded two Cambodian provinces to France in 1904, and four northern Malay states to Britain in 1909
Southeast Asia under Western Colonialism

- Western colonialism dramatically transformed the international relations of Southeast Asia
  - The pre-colonial kingdoms of maritime Southeast Asia (largely) disappeared
  - Inter-state relations in Southeast Asia heavily influenced by colonial powers and their relations

- Regional order: from a hierarchical tribute system to competitive modern states
  - Western colonialism in Southeast Asia encountered (almost) no resistance from China
  - Instead, sub-regional competition ‘helped’ the Western colonial penetration in Southeast Asia