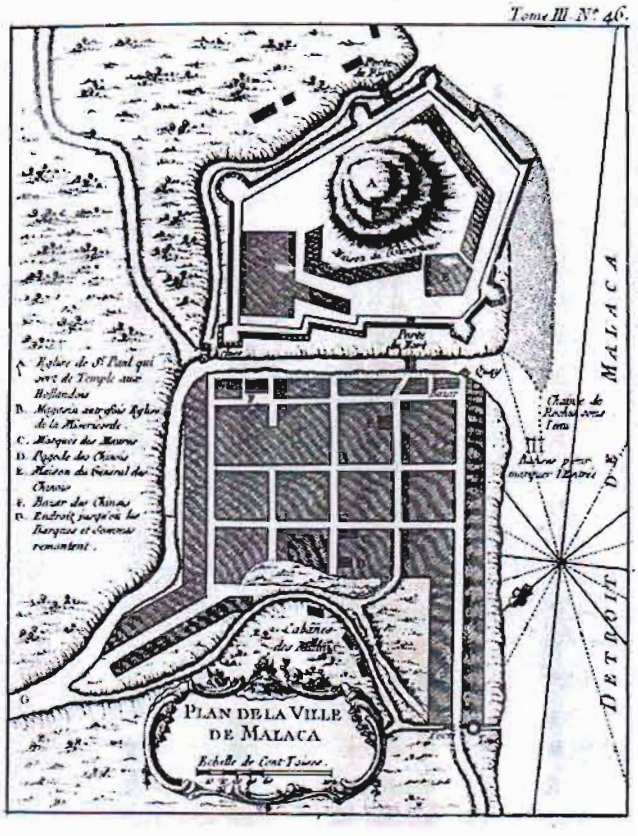
CHAPTER 5

Christians, Spices, and Western Expansion, 1500–1750

In 1509 five unknown but well-armed ships, each with a banner bearing a cross and full of strange, menacing pale-skinned men, lowered anchor off Melaka. The local people were curious about, but also wary of, these Portuguese in their uncomfortable-looking clothes. As the *Malay Annals* recorded: "The Portuguese saw that Melaka was magnificent, and its port was exceedingly crowded. The people gathered around to see what the foreigners looked like, and they were all surprised by their appearance. But these Portuguese are people who know nothing of manners."[1] The fame of Melaka as a treasure trove of Asian luxury goods had reached Europe. For a century the Portuguese had been seeking a sea route to the Orient around Africa. As one of their greatest explorers, Vasco da Gama, put it, they sought "Christians and Spices," meaning allies against Islam and the valuable products of Southeast Asia. The Portuguese voyages inaugurated a new era of European activity in Southeast Asia and eventually led to the colonization of most of the region.

The Portuguese adventurers came from a country with superior military technology and a compelling appetite for wealth but a standard of living that was little, if any, higher than that of Siam, Vietnam, Melaka, or Java. Earlier, in the 1400s, the Portuguese had improved the imported Asian and Islamic naval and military technologies—such as magnetic compasses, lateen sails, and cannons—that had reached Europe over the trade routes, and a century later, they sailed into Southeast Asia with these instruments. The missionary zeal to spread Christianity and the dynamism of capitalism, which was beginning to emerge as medieval feudalism declined, also provided incentives for expansion.

According to the *Malay Annals*, "Around each [Portuguese] there would be a crowd of Malays, some of them twisting his beard, some taking off his hat, some grasping his hand."[2] But the first encounter ended poorly. Portuguese intentions were unclear to the sultan. They did not act like the mostly peaceful Asian merchants who arrived regularly in trading ships, nor did they bring the customary gifts for the sultan and his officials. The Portuguese visitors, ignorant of traditions such as bringing gifts to the sultan, violated local customs, antagonized local officials, and alarmed influential local Indian traders, who feared competition. The Portuguese also considered Sultan Mahmud Shah, who did not welcome them, arrogant and treacherous. Some local merchants, disenchanted with the sultan's growing demands on them, befriended the Portuguese. As tensions rose, fighting between Portuguese sailors and Malay visitors to their ship broke out. After the Melakans arrested



The Portuguese, who conquered the great trading port of Melaka in 1511, added their own flavor, building a fort as well as a Roman Catholic church on a hill overlooking the old Malay and Chinese neighborhoods of the city. But Melaka stagnated under Portuguese and then Dutch rule, losing its position as the region's key commercial entrepôt.

15 to 20 Portuguese sailors shopping in town, the remaining Portuguese force, unprepared to launch a full-scale assault on the heavily defended city, sailed away to India, vowing revenge.

The Portuguese soon returned, making Malaya the first region to be severely disrupted by European power. In 1511 a Portuguese fleet of some 40 ships, mounted with cannon and carrying hundreds of soldiers armed with muskets, captured Melaka. The Portuguese triumphed only after a bloody month-long assault against fierce resistance that resulted in the gutting and looting of the city. According to the *Malay Annals*, "The noise of the [Portuguese] cannon was as the noise of thunder in the heavens and the flashes of fire of their guns were like flashes of lightning in the sky."[3] Admiral Affonso de Albuquerque told his soldiers to "cast the Moors [Muslims] out of this country,"[4] and his men slaughtered much of the population, including the sultan, who led the defense mounted on his elephant. The Portuguese now had a strategic advantage over their European and Malay enemies, as the victorious admiral boasted: "Melaka is the source of all the spices and drugs which the Moors carry every year to [the Middle East]. Cairo and Mecca will be entirely ruined, and Venice will receive no spices unless her merchants go and buy them in Portugal."[5] Melaka became one of Portugal's major outposts in a scattered Asian empire that included ports in Persia, India, Sri Lanka, and China.

Charged by the pope to spread the Catholic faith throughout the world, the Portuguese carried out a crusade against Muslims designed to break Islamic control of the East-West maritime trade. The fanatical Portuguese often forced conversion to Christianity, and their intolerance made both the Portuguese and Spanish missionaries unwelcome in most places. The Portuguese intended to control the maritime trade themselves, mostly using brute force. Although they devoted some 800 ships to the effort and did control some ports, they never completely dominated the Indian Ocean commerce. Asian merchants often outmaneuvered or evaded Portuguese ships, and many Asian states resisted Portuguese demands. Furthermore, Melaka languished under Portuguese control, as fewer merchants chose to endure the higher taxes and Portuguese intolerance of non-Christians. The well-fortified Portuguese also faced constant challenge from various neighboring states such as strongly Islamic Acheh in North Sumatra.

The fall of Melaka shattered the unity of the Malay world. Several strong and dynamic sultanates, including Johor at the tip of the Malay Peninsula and Brunei in Northern Borneo, took over some of Melaka's

trading functions, however, and flourished for several centuries. Siam came to control some of the northern sultanates. The population of southernmost Thailand is still heavily Malay Muslim.

The Portuguese conquest of Melaka marked a turning point for Southeast Asia. In the next four centuries traders and colonizers from Spain, Holland, England, France, and finally the United States followed the Portuguese into the region. The Western world had rapidly been transformed and strengthened by expansionism, capitalism, and, later, industrialization. The sixteenth century was an age of discovery for Western adventurers. A Portuguese captain, Ferdinand Magellan, sailing under the Spanish flag, became the first explorer to lead a circumnavigation of the world. Sailing around the southern tip of South America and across the Pacific, he proved that Columbus was correct in believing that Asia could be reached in that direction. The maritime achievement came at a huge cost, however. Magellan's ship barely completed the long voyage across the Pacific, and at one point the crew had to eat rats to survive. Then Magellan was killed in a skirmish with local chiefs in the Philippines in 1521, after claiming the islands for Spain.

Magellan reflected the intolerance of his culture and time, pressuring the Filipinos he encountered to adopt Christianity. According to Antonio Pigafetta, an Italian on the voyage, Magellan ordered the local chief to "burn all the idols, and, instead of them, place a cross, and that everyone should worship it every day on their knees."[6] Despite Magellan's death, his remaining crew continued on to the Maluku or Spice Islands and then finally reached Spain by way of Southern Africa. Today, on the beach at the island of Cebu where Magellan died, a memorial honors Lapulapu, the chief who led the attack, as the first Filipino to repel European aggression.

By the time of Magellan's visit, the Portuguese were already active in the spice-rich Maluku Islands. Some Chinese and Indian merchants were bypassing Portuguese Melaka, however, to obtain spices at other ports, increasing the Portuguese determination to control spice production. In the early 1500s the Portuguese brutally conquered the Maluku Islands, thus gaining near total control of the valuable spice trade to Europe, but they also faced challenges from the Spanish and Dutch. Commenting on Portuguese behavior in Maluku, the Spanish Roman Catholic missionary St. Francis Xavier wrote that their knowledge was limited to conjugating the verb *to steal*, in which they displayed "an amazing capacity for inventing new tenses and participles."[7]

Portuguese traders and adventurers were also active elsewhere in the region. Portuguese mercenary soldiers helped the Toungoo kings to

expand their territorial power and invade Ayutthaya. And one Portuguese adventurer, Philip de Brito, even seized power in the Pegu port of Syriam in 1599. But his attempts to impose Christianity alienated the Mon residents, and his attacks on Toungoo resulted in a Burman invasion that killed de Brito and his Portuguese supporters in 1613. The Dutch used military force to take Melaka from the Portugese in 1641, but a small Roman Catholic, Portuguese-speaking community still lives in the city. In Melaka today, Roman Catholic churches, schools, and festivals remain at the heart of Portuguese community life, but the local Portuguese language contains many Malay words, the cuisine has borrowed extensively from Malay and Chinese cooking, and, unlike their merchant, sailor, and soldier ancestors, most men work as fishermen or run small businesses catering to tourists.

First the Portuguese and then the Dutch gained partial control of the Indian Ocean maritime trade by force, altering its character and diminishing its dynamism. By controlling a few Asian ports, such as Melaka, Macao in China, Goa in India, and, for a time, Hormuz in Persia, the Portuguese created what historians term a trading post empire, organized around trade, rather than a true territorial empire. The European monopoly on trade at many ports forced some of the seafaring merchants into piracy to survive. Eventually Europeans affected nearly all Southeast Asia in various ways. Still, states like Siam, Vietnam, Burma, and Acheh were strong enough that it took 400 years of persistent effort for Westerners to gain political and economic control. The several conquests during this era and then the more ambitious Western colonization that followed in the nineteenth century ultimately made Southeast Asia a very different place from what it had been during the Golden Age, although many features of the traditional cultures survived Western domination.

The greatest Western impact before 1750 came in the Philippine Islands. When the first Spanish ships arrived they found these remote islands inhabited by some 1 to 2 million people speaking more than 100 different Austronesian languages and scattered across 7,000 islands, although the great majority lived on Luzon and Mindanao. Muslims occupied the southernmost islands, divided between several rival sultanates, and they were slowly extending their influence northward. The islands had received little cultural influence from India or China. But a few Filipinos were maritime traders who traveled as far as Burma, and Chinese traders had established several outposts in the Philippines, including one at Manila, to obtain gold, sugar, and cotton. The largest non-Muslim political units were villages led by chiefs such as Lapulapu, whose followers had killed Magellan.

The many Philippine societies differed from each other but shared various common traditions. Most were led by nobles and also had both free people and slaves. Most Filipinos were animists, though many also believed in an afterlife and one supreme being. Women enjoyed considerable influence and a high status in many of the societies, producing the textiles, pottery, and rice used as trade goods. They inherited equally with men, owned property, engaged in trade, and occasionally became community leaders. The Spanish were shocked that divorce was common, one official writing that "they used to dissolve these marriages for trifling causes."[8] Although we do not know much about the subject matter, some Filipinos used a simple writing system of 15 characters and carved words into bamboo. A Spanish priest recorded in 1604 that almost all the people, "both men and women, write in this language. There are few who do not write it excellently and correctly."[9] Spanish priests considered the writing to be heretical, however, and destroyed most of the bamboos.

Returning to the region four decades after Magellan's death, the Spanish, who were also conquering vast territories in the Americas, had both commercial and religious motives for colonizing the islands, which they named after their king, Philip II, known in Europe as "the most Catholic of kings." The Spanish also hoped to use the islands as a basis for trade with China and perhaps for conquest of Vietnam, which they naively believed would be an easy task. Given the ethnic divisions and lack of a dominant Philippine state, the militarily superior Spanish had little trouble conquering the islands over a few decades and co-opting many chiefs. But the Spanish never gained complete control over the Muslims in the south, whom they called *Moros* (Moors). Used to considerable autonomy in colonial times, some Muslims in Mindanao and the Sulu Islands still seek separation today from the Christian Philippines. The Spanish established their capital at Manila, a Chinese trading post on a large bay.

Spanning eight decades beginning in 1565, the Spanish imposed many aspects of their culture on the local people, in a process known as *Hispanization*. Some 85 percent of the population adopted Roman Catholicism as a result. Catholic friars accompanied the soldiers into the islands and began the process of conversion, as soon as the first ships landed. The rigidly dogmatic Spaniards considered the Filipino people to be immoral devil worshippers, and the colonial government gave the missionaries special authority over the people and their land. The Spanish crown financed these missionaries' efforts.

The church governed most regions outside of Manila and acquired great wealth. Priests collected taxes and sold the crops grown

by parishioners. Several religious orders competed to gain the most converts. They required people to move into towns to better control and evangelize them. Some methods were harsh. In 1842 the colonial government finally forbade friars from whipping their parishioners for not rigorously observing church requirements. There were few schools outside Manila, and what education existed was in church hands and emphasized learning the Roman Catholic catechism. Few Filipinos were allowed to rise in the church hierarchy or in government, however, due in part to Spanish racism. One Spanish observer mocked the Filipino priest as "a caricature of everybody. He is a patchwork of many things and is nothing. He is an enemy of Spain."[10] But Filipinos accepted Christianity on their own terms, incorporating animist traditions, to the disgust of the Spanish. Saints replaced the traditional friendly spirits, and miracles became the new form of magic. Abounding faith in the power of holy water probably derived from ritual bathing in pre-Spanish times.

Inequality between the Spanish and the locals was not limited to government and the church; it also showed up in economic and social patterns. Many Spaniards saw government offices as an opportunity for acquiring wealth and property, fostering widespread corruption, and helping to shape the colonial economy. The China trade remained paramount until the mid-1700s, when Spanish policies more strongly encouraged an emphasis on cash crops for sale on the world market. Much of the land that once grew rice and other food crops became devoted to sugar, hemp, and other valuable crops. Most Filipinos, once masters of the land, now worked as tenants for a few powerful landowning families or the church, almost like serfs in medieval Europe, or on vast plantations. Peasant revolts against local landlords and the Spanish system were not unusual but were put down. The colonial economy created a permanent gap between the extraordinarily rich and the impoverished, resulting in a stunted economic growth dependent on the international market.

The Spanish transported these crops as well as other products, including silk and porcelain imported from China, to Manila. Every year between 1565 and 1815, huge cargo ships known as Manila galleons carried these goods across the Pacific Ocean to Mexico, for distribution in the Americas or for onward shipment to Spain. The Manila galleon trade was highly speculative, and Spanish businessmen bet their fortunes that the galleons would arrive in Mexico safely. But this was a dangerous trip, thanks to storms and pirates. On a crossing in 1604, for example, the *Espiritu Santo* got stuck on a shoal leaving Manila Bay,

encountered a terrible storm off California that destroyed much of its rigging, and was struck by lightning that killed three crewmen before limping into Acapulco two months late. Sometimes the galleons never completed their voyages. There could be huge profits but also huge losses. The chance for success, however, fostered a "get rich quick" mentality rather than a long-term strategy to bring prosperity to the islands. The end of Spanish control in much of Latin America in the early 1800s ended the galleon trade and prompted many Spaniards to migrate to the Philippines from the Americas. Their competition with local-born businessmen created tensions, but it also spurred the expansion of export-oriented cash-crop agriculture as the Spaniards sought new sources of profit.

Although the Spanish created a country, they did not build a cohesive society. Regional and ethnic loyalties remained dominant, and the decentralized Spanish government encouraged such regionalism. Stark inequalities also characterized this colonial society. Spaniards controlled the government and church, most lived in Manila in luxury, and few ever learned to speak local languages. In 1603 a Spanish observer described the daily promenade in Manila's main streets of Spaniards

Marriages between Chinese and Filipinos in the Philippines produced a mixed-descent group known as Chinese mestizos, such as this nineteenth-century couple. Like most colonial cities Manila attracted a multiethnic population, including many Chinese. From Jean Mallat de Bassilan, *Les Philippines* (Paris, 1846)

gorgeously adorned in silks. Below the Spaniards were *mestizos*, mixed-descent people who resulted from intermarriage and cohabitation of some Spaniards with Filipinas or Chinese. A few Filipino families who descended from chiefs also enjoyed a high status. Below these groups were the Chinese immigrants, who worked as merchants and craftsmen. A Spanish friar observed in the mid-1600s that although Manila "is small, and the Spaniards are few, nevertheless, they require the services of thousands of Chinese."[11] Some Chinese became rich, but many lived more modestly, especially those who opened small shops in rural towns. Many became Roman Catholic or married Filipinas, forming the basis for a larger, mostly Roman Catholic Chinese mestizo community that gradually gained status. Many of the Philippine political and economic leaders today are of Chinese or Spanish mestizo ancestry. The Spanish needed the Chinese as middlemen but also despised and persecuted them. On occasion, when their resentment of Chinese wealth and concern with their growing numbers became intense, Spanish forces marched into Manila's Chinatown and slaughtered the residents.

Most Filipinos, called *Indios* ("Indies people") by the Spanish, occupied the bottom rung of the social ladder and faced many legal restrictions. It was illegal, for example, for Filipinos to dress in fancy clothes like Spaniards. Filipinos maintained a strong allegiance to their families for support. Women had held a high position in pre-Spanish society, but Spanish culture and church devalued women, imposing restrictions on their activities. For instance, the female priestesses integral to Filipino animism were pushed to the margins of society by male Roman Catholic priests, one of whom described the priestesses as "loathsome creatures, foul, obscene, truly damnable. My task [is] to reduce them to order."[12] A long-lasting contradiction developed between the considerable power of women in family and town life and male-chauvinistic attitudes. Women still controlled family finances, led underground animistic rites, and enjoyed a reputation for self-reliance. One result of this heritage of female power is that today there are many influential women in politics, business, and the professions.

Filipinos used various elements of Spanish culture itself, especially religious festivals, to subtly express opposition to colonialism. The Spanish introduced passion plays (known as *payson*), about the life and death of Jesus, as a way to spread Christian devotion and morality. But some Filipinos wrote their own versions with subtle anticolonial sentiments. These plays became something of a subversive act, with Jesus portrayed as a victim of political oppression. For example, the *Payson Pilapil*, written by an unknown author but based on an

eighteenth-century play, presented Jesus as a social activist of humble background, tormented by a corrupt ruling class who had contempt for the common people. The play was popular with rural folk, and one scene portrayed the high priests making the case against Jesus in the Roman court of Pontius Pilate:

> And we gathered here before your excellency, are aristocrats and town chiefs
> so you have no reason to doubt all our accusations [against Jesus].
> We plaintiffs here are gentlemen of rank and wealth.
> He is from Galilee, a man poor and lowly who shelters in other's roofs.
> Furthermore, his father is just a simple carpenter, devoid of fame and wealth,
> living in poverty without property of his own.
> Can he [Jesus] claim to be a gentleman of rank?
> [His disciples] are poor and lowly people without worth on earth,
> ignorant people without any education.
> Another treacherous act of this troublemaker is his plot with the people,
> not to pay taxes to Caesar, such great arrogance!
> We are all men of wealth who obediently follow our exalted king,
> in contrast to that blockhead who talks like a traitor.
> Puts the people in turmoil and turns them into fanatics.
> To be the awaited Messiah, what a preposterous lie![1]

Customs such as these paysons later stimulated movements for change and inspired revolutionaries in the nineteenth century.

Music of all sorts also played a strong role in Philippine life, and this pattern can be traced back centuries, certainly predating the Spanish period. Perhaps the music most identified today as truly Filipino is the *kundiman*—passionate, often sad, and romantic ballads that originated during Spanish colonialism. The emotional nature of the kundiman may have allowed Filipinos to express their love of country while sidestepping Spanish repression of all nationalistic sentiments. But even the classic songs of unrequited love were transformed into revolutionary meanings in the 1800s, through the use of metaphors about enslavement, oppression, and the martyrdom of nationalist heroes. Through the mixing of indigenous, Spanish, and later U.S. influences, the Filipinos developed their unique culture.

The Portuguese and Spanish were the first Europeans to have an impact on Southeast Asia but they were not the last. Portuguese power survived for only a century, and their noneconomic influence never really extended much beyond the small islands and ports they controlled. In Southeast Asia the Spanish were never able to extend their power

beyond the Philippines. The major challenge to the Portuguese and Spanish in the 1600s came from the Dutch, who arrived in the region after establishing colonies in South Africa and Sri Lanka. At the end of the 1500s political and economic power in Europe shifted northward from Spain and Portugal to the Netherlands and England, both of which had developed the most dynamic and prosperous capitalist economies in Europe while acquiring advanced naval power. This shift in power was symbolized by the English defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 during a Spanish-English war.

Dutch ships had long carried spices from Portugal to Northern Europe, and a few Dutch sailors had even visited the Indies on Portuguese ships. In 1595 the first Dutch fleet visited Maluku and returned to Holland with spices. The architect of the Dutch empire in Indonesia was governor-general Jan Pieterzoon Coen, a former accountant who ruthlessly sought commercial monopoly in the early 1600s. Coen made his trade goals clear while also confirming the vigor of the region's commerce: "Piece goods from Gujerat [*sic*] we can barter for pepper and gold on the coast of Sumatra . . . cottons from the coast of [India] for pepper in Banten; sandalwood [and] pepper we can barter for Chinese goods . . . we can extract silver from Japan with Chinese goods; piece goods from [India] in exchange for spices . . . one thing leads to another."[14] During the next century the Dutch fought for a share of the maritime trade against Arab, Chinese, Indian, and Indonesian competition, but they had their greatest success against the Portuguese. After many bloody battles, the Dutch dislodged the Portuguese from their outposts and replaced them as the dominant regional European power in Southern Asia. When the Dutch captured Melaka in 1641 from Portugal, the city had become a ghost of its former self. The Dutch tried vainly to revive Melaka as a trade entrepôt but the city never recovered its earlier glory.

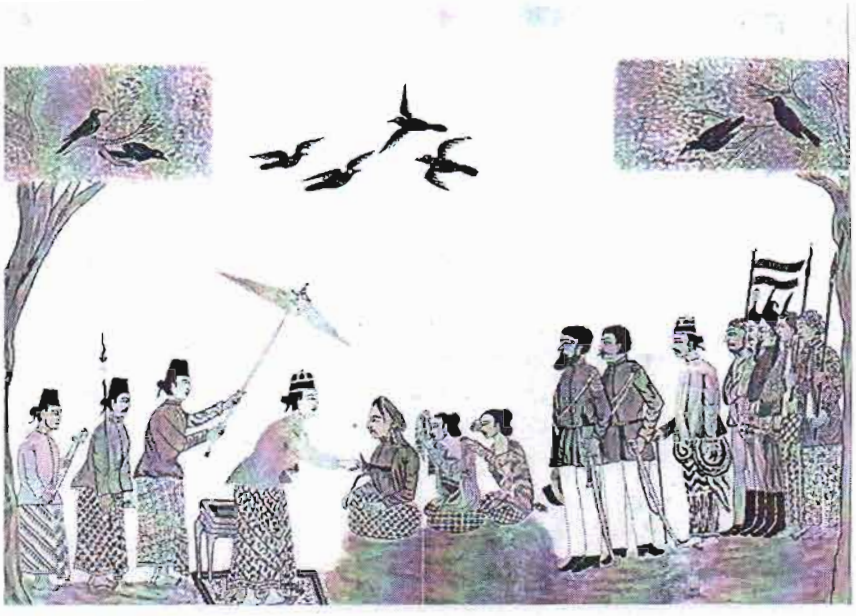
During the next several centuries, the Dutch gradually gained control of the Indonesian archipelago, except for the Portuguese-ruled eastern half of the island of Timor in Eastern Indonesia. Like the Portuguese, the Dutch often treated local populations harshly, and they gradually eliminated all competition, often by military force. As Dutch forces attacked and occupied the prosperous trading city of Makassar, in Sulawesi, in 1659, the city's sultan demanded of the Dutch commander: "Do you believe that God has preserved for your trade alone islands which lie so distant from your homeland?"[15] The sultan's secretary, Amin, wrote a long poetic account about the disaster: "Listen, sir, to my advice; never make friends with the Dutch. No country can call itself safe when they

are around."[16] The Dutch were ruthless, slaughtering thousands of Indonesians who opposed them as well as repulsing English forces who were arriving in the region. In 1621 the Dutch killed, enslaved, or left to starve the entire population of the spice-producing Banda Islands—some 15,000 people. In 1623 they massacred the residents of an English base on Ambon Island.

But the Dutch were also well-organized, resourceful, and shrewd diplomats, allying themselves with one state against a rival state or against the Portuguese or English. For instance, they cooperated with an ambitious and charismatic Bugis prince, Arung Palakka, to defeat his rival state, Makassar, making Palakka the most powerful chief in Southern Sulawesi. In return, his soldiers aided Dutch forces. Exploiting local conflicts, however, sometimes drew the Dutch into civil wars. Because the Dutch empire in the Indies was built over 300 years, their impact varied widely and they never destroyed all the preconquest commercial networks, such as those of the Chinese and the Bugis. The Dutch sought wealth but, unlike the Portuguese and Spanish, cared little about spreading their culture and religion.

Eventually the Dutch concentrated on Java, a flourishing island with a vibrant culture and mercantile economy. In the 1600s the great trading port of Banten in West Java and Mataram city in Central Java each contained some 800,000 people, and many cities had large, multiethnic populations drawn from throughout Asia. Javan artisans were noted for their fine craftsmanship, and the island's smiths made perhaps the finest steel swords in the world. The commercial prowess of the Javanese, the island's main ethnic group, was renowned. Javanese women were prominent in business alongside the men, and as one English observer noted: "It is usual for a husband to entrust his pecuniary affairs entirely to his wife. The women alone attend the markets, and conduct all the buying and selling."[17]

Requiring a base for exploiting Java, Coen established a settlement at Batavia (now called Jakarta), on the northwest coast, in 1619. Capitalizing on political instability and divisions, the Dutch slowly extended their power across the island, gaining dominance over ports and sultanates. Most of Java was under direct or indirect Dutch control by the end of the 1700s, helped by the Dutch policy of co-opting local rulers and their officials. As one Dutch official wrote: "The Javanese obeys his chiefs. It was only necessary to give them part of the gain—and success was complete."[18] The Dutch concentrated on consolidating and maximizing their gains in Java and Maluku, especially after Batavia became a flourishing trading city. With trade as their major goal, the Dutch left



The pro-Dutch king of Mataram stabs an anti-Dutch rival to death around 1680, coolly observed by Dutch soldiers and officials. The Dutch slowly extended their control throughout Java, marginalizing and co-opting the rulers of the various Javan states. KITLV Leiden 48 M 5

administration to the Dutch East India Company, a joint public-private organization established in 1602. Soon the company shifted in priorities from relying on the export of spices to making Java their primary source of wealth. The Dutch governed some districts through local rulers, and, admiring the activity of Chinese traders who had operated in Java for centuries, invited more Chinese to come in as middlemen.

The burden of economic change fell on the peasantry. Coffee, grown for centuries in Ethiopia and then Arabia, was becoming a more popular commodity in world trade, with a rapidly growing market in Europe and North America. The Dutch introduced coffee planting to Indonesia as an export crop in 1696 and in 1725 began forcing peasants in the West Java highlands, and later in Sumatra, to grow the crop through a system of annual quotas. Between 1726 and 1878 Holland controlled between 50 and 75 percent of the world's coffee trade. The Dutch earned enough profit from coffee to finance much of their industrialization in the 1800s, including building the Dutch national railroad system. And coffee even came to be known in the West as "java."

The Dutch East India Company had great capital and large resources in pursuing profit and seeking a monopoly of Southeast Asian trade, which it believed justified ruthless policies. If the population of a spice island grew restless, Dutch soldiers might kill many and carry off the rest to Batavia, Sri Lanka, or South Africa as slaves. To increase demand and reduce supply, the spice-growing trees and bushes might all be chopped down. Because the company's headquarters in Amsterdam were ten months away by boat, there was little guidance from Holland and few restraints on the company's power. Thanks to company policy, some once-vibrant trading cities, among them Melaka, languished. One Dutch observer regretted that Banten, "once the greatest place of trade in the East . . . has become a home only of wretches."[19] The Javanese merchant class, once major players in the world economy, was slowly displaced by Dutch and Chinese. Some resisted. Shaikh Yusuf, for example, from Gowa in Sulawesi, had studied Islam in Acheh and Arabia and became a spiritual adviser to the sultan of Banten. Enraged by Dutch practices that threatened Islamic morality—such as the toleration of gambling, opium smoking, and cockfighting—in 1683 he led 2,000 followers into a holy war against the Dutch. It failed and he was exiled to South Africa, where he died.

In the developing colonial society, the Dutch occupied the top rung, followed by mixed-descent Eurasians and the local rulers and aristocrats who cooperated. The commercial merchant class was mostly Chinese. Like the Spanish, however, the Dutch feared and occasionally massacred the Chinese. Most Indonesians occupied the lower rungs of society, with many working various occupations as slaves. Slavery had been common in Indonesia for centuries, and the Dutch maintained the practice. Most of the Dutch themselves lived in Batavia, built to resemble a city in Holland. This style, with close-packed, stuffy houses and stagnant canals, was poorly suited to the tropical climate, however. In contrast to Indonesians, who prized personal cleanliness, the puritanical Dutch wore heavy woolen clothes in the tropical heat but bathed only once a week. However, many Dutch soon found Javanese culture seductive, taking local wives, owning slaves, dressing in Javanese clothes, and indulging in the delicious and spicy curries, which became even tastier after the Portuguese introduced chilies from the Americas.

Social and cultural life in the capital was raw. Because few Dutch women came to the Indies, many Dutch men married or cohabitated with Indonesian women, and their Eurasian children often grew up speaking Malay. Batavia fostered a highly mixed, multiethnic society, with many migrants from Bali, Sulawesi, and Sumatra as well as Arabs,

Chinese, and Indians. The majority of Batavians, known as Orang Betawi, were a unique, Malay-speaking blend of Javanese and other peoples. The mostly Protestant Dutch, who recognized religious freedom at home, spent little money on Christian missions. Denied real power, the Javanese rulers and courts turned inward to concentrate on their traditional culture. The royal dances became fantastically fluid, graceful, and stylized. Their *batik* fabrics became more splendid and intricate. The Javanese became even more preoccupied with status. Peasants were encouraged to treat aristocratic officials with even greater awe and respect.

Despite success in Java, Maluku, Melaka, and the Philippines, European imperialists faced numerous thwarted ambitions in Southeast Asia before 1750. Constantine Phaulkon, a Greek-born adventurer

Wearing traditional Sasak garb and armed with traditional spears and shields as well as modern rifles, these local leaders on the Indonesian island of Lombok, photographed in 1865, faced many challenges as the Balinese, Dutch, and native Sasak people contended for political dominance on the island. Whether led by precolonial kings and chiefs or Western colonial rulers, national governments often used local leaders to enforce their policies and collect taxes. KITLV Leiden 3617

who had worked in India and Java for the British East India Company, after some initial personal successes, reflected these setbacks. In 1678 Phaulkon, then 31 years old, moved as a trader to the Siamese capital of Ayutthaya where the king, Narai, was resisting Dutch economic pressure to secure more commercial rights. Narai's reign was turbulent but prosperous and he promoted literature and the arts. He also sent three diplomatic missions to the French court to obtain Western maps and scientific knowledge. Employing foreigners in government was not unusual in Siam. A Persian-born Muslim had recently served as prime minister. Generally Chinese captained and crewed the royal trading ships to China and Japan. After Phaulkon was hired as an interpreter in Siam's treasury department, his British colleagues saw him as an ally in their competition with the Dutch for influence. His accomplishments there soon earned him a promotion to Superintendent of Foreign Trade. Phaulkon himself married into a long-settled Christian Japanese family. But the British fell out with Phaulkon, who was then wooed by French commercial agents. In 1684 the British traders left for India. The talented and charismatic Phaulkon was well liked by King Narai, who, recognizing European ambitions in Southeast Asia, wanted the French as allies to counter the more feared Dutch.

Although now a trusted advisor to Narai, Phaulkon secretly plotted with the French to expand French power in Siam. Meanwhile, French missionaries also arrived in the region, naively hoping to convert the king and then Siam to Roman Catholicism. In response, the Siamese monarch sent a letter back to the French king, arguing that God rejoiced not in religious uniformity but in theological diversities, preferring to be honored by different worships and ceremonies. The large French naval force in Ayutthaya, their demands for territory, endless quarreling among themselves, and obsessive proselytizing finally angered the Buddhist Siamese people. When King Narai fell ill in 1688, anti-French leaders took over the Siamese government, executed Phaulkon as a traitor, and pushed the French out of Siam. For the next few decades the Siamese, who once welcomed foreign influence and interaction, mistrusted the Europeans and refused to grant them any special privileges. But Ayutthaya remained a hub for trade with China and Japan, mostly carried out after 1688 by Chinese.

The French were involved not only in Siam but also in Vietnam beginning in 1615. The French sought trade but also dispatched Roman Catholic missionaries who recruited a small local following. The Vietnamese used the Chinese writing system, and the French missionaries created a romanized Vietnamese alphabet to undercut Confucian and

Chinese influence. In the twentieth century it became the official writing system. But the trading relationships were often disappointing to both parties, and Christian missionaries sometimes earned the hostility of local governments.

Before 1750 Western nations were dominant neither in political nor economic spheres except in a few widely scattered outposts. Vietnam and Ayutthaya were two of the powerful and prosperous states in an Asian region that stretched from Tokugawa Japan in the east to Ottoman Turkey in the west in the 1600s. The Vietnamese, continuing their long expansion down the coast, had annexed the Mekong delta by the late 1600s. The port of Hoian in Central Vietnam became a key hub for China–Japan trade, attracting many Chinese and Japanese traders. However, most of the Japanese left after the Tokugawa Shogunate called them home and banned emigration in the mid-1600s. Around the region European traders still had to compete with Chinese, Arab, and Southeast Asian merchants. Indeed, Chinese, especially from coastal Fujian province in Southeast China, remained the region's main shippers, middlemen, and local merchants and were also harbor masters, tax collectors, and financial advisers to several governments in Southeast Asia. The Europeans did not yet have a clear advantage in military and economic power over the stronger Asian states. As a result, the Siamese, while feeling it necessary to manipulate the rival Europeans, could also force them to leave. Although some states, especially in the islands, lost power and cities like Banten and Makassar declined, many Southeast Asian states remained dynamic in this era, so that, except on Java, European power was restricted largely to fringe areas like the Philippines and the Spice Islands.

Starting in the 1300s Theravada Buddhism dug deeper roots on the mainland, and Islam continued to spread throughout the Malay Peninsula, Indonesia, and the Southern Philippines. An age of commerce existed in parts of the region, especially the archipelago, at least until the later 1600s and some places much longer. There were also increasing urbanization and the strengthening of absolute monarchies in countries like Siam. And some smaller states were being absorbed into larger ones. On the mainland some 20 states in the fourteenth century had been reduced to fewer than 12 by the early eighteenth century, with Vietnam, Ayutthaya, and Toungoo clearly dominant. The economic changes, such as increasing maritime trade, were paralleled by a population increase to around 35 million by 1800. But during the 1600s the climate cooled significantly, causing less frequent rains and occasional famines in the once green lands. The side effects of climate change,

however temporary, may have weakened Southeast Asian states in their competition with the West. Cooler European weather that also hurt European harvests may also have encouraged more Europeans to seek their fortunes abroad.

Southeast Asia became an even more crucial part of the developing world economy, with the Portuguese, Dutch, and Spanish exporting luxury items such as Indonesian spices but also bulk products such as tin, sugar, and rice from their newly colonized possessions. Some historians trace the birth of a true world economy to the founding of Spanish Manila in 1571, which became the first hub linking Asia and the Americas across the Pacific. The Manila galleons that annually carried agricultural products as well as Chinese silk and porcelain from the Philippines to Mexico for distribution in Spanish America and Europe symbolized the new reality. The galleons returned to Manila with European goods, mail, personnel, and vast amounts of silver to pay for Asian goods. The Spanish used much of the silver to purchase Chinese products. The silver shipments drained Spanish imperial coffers, however, and contributed to the decline of the Spanish Empire. The American silver gave Asian trade a great push, encouraging increased production of Indonesian coffee and spices, Philippine sugar, Chinese tea and silk, and Indian textiles. There was little Asian demand for most European goods until the Industrial Revolution began in England in the late 1700s and created marketable products such as inexpensive machine-made textiles, which is why Europeans had to resort to force to get what they wanted. The West did not come into a decaying and impoverished Southeast Asia but rather a wealthy, open, and dynamic region. But conditions changed significantly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as a growing European interest in obtaining minerals and growing crops for export began to overshadow other commercial activity.