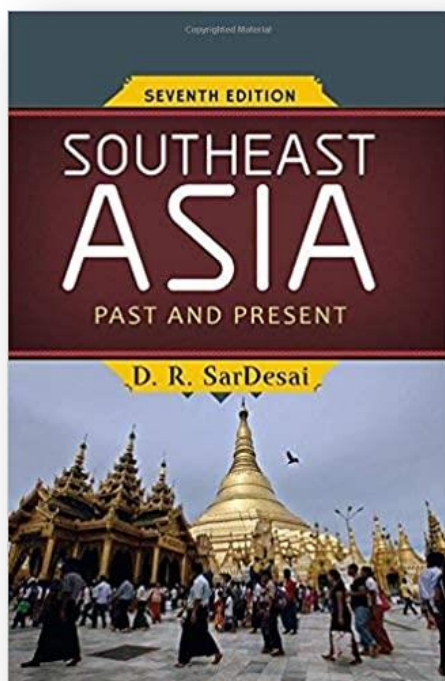




Book Review

Sida Sonsri*

SarDesai, D. R. (2018). *Southeast Asia: Past and Present*. 7th ed. London: Routledge, 450 p.



This new edition of Southeast Asia is divided into four parts. Part one describes the cultural heritage, which covers the land and the people, the early kingdoms of mainland Southeast Asia, the early kingdoms of Sumatra and Java, the rise of new states: Ayutthaya, Majapahit, and Malacca, European inclusion in the Indian Archipelago: the early phase, and mainland Southeast Asia: the consolidations of Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, and Vietnam. It concludes that the history of Southeast Asia up to the end of the eighteenth century may be regarded as premodern, or traditional.

The European influence from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries was mostly coastal and commercial, and therefore limited principally to some areas in the insular region. Most affected by the Europeans were the Philippines, particularly the Northern and Central regions, which were under Spanish control for two centuries and converted to Catholicism, though inadequately exposed to Western educational, cultural, and/or economic norms. Only those Indonesian islands or portions of them dealing with export crops - coffee, sugar, spices – that came under Dutch influence, after the mid-eighteen century, were increasingly under foreign political control. On the mainland, the dynamism of local politics was governed by traditional elements and rarely influenced by Westerners. Most of the elements of traditional Southeast Asian

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cultures -religion, literature, script, fine arts, etc. – that were passed down to the eighteenth century were largely uninfluenced by the West.

Part Two discusses the colonial interlude of the British and Dutch in the East, the British rule in the Malay States in the nineteenth century, Anglo-Burmese relations in the nineteenth century, the French in Vietnam and Cambodia, and Thailand remaining independent. This section summarizes that the impact of colonial rule on the people varied from blatant exploitation to the benign and benevolent. This generated forces of industrialization, urbanization, modernization, intellectual agitation, and political ambition that inspired a small elite in each colony to abandon part of the traditional aspects and enter the modern age. The colonial coin had nationalism stamped on its reverse side.

Part Three covers the nationalist movement in Southeast Asia, the Filipino desire for independence from Spain and US rule, the nationalist movement in Indonesia, Myanmar (Burma), Vietnam, Malaya, Cambodia, and Laos, as well as Thailand's constitutional revolution. It concludes that all countries had freedom and the era of independence had dawned bringing in its wake a different set of problems after this period.

Part Four deals with the independence and various problems of the Southeast Asian countries; namely, The Philippines, Myanmar (Burma): toward integration and democracy, Indonesia: unity and diversity, East Timor: birth of a nation, Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei, nationalism and communism in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, and Thailand: independence at any price. Decolonization and peace in Southeast Asia, especially in Myanmar and East Timor, are discussed in detail.

This books covers all details of the Southeast Asian countries from the cultural heritage in early Southeast Asia up to the 2010s. It concentrates more on history than the contemporary period. Thus, this text would be very beneficial for Southeast Asian students or students of Southeast Asia studies if the contemporary issues and problems are discussed about an individual country. Furthermore, the data of each country should be updated up to the present. The special characteristic of this book is the Chronological Charts, which gives the details of the early history up to the 2010s and the tremendous reading list at the end of each chapter.