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Modern State Building in an Asian Context:
Revisiting the Meiji Restoration

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Introduction

How does one understand the idea and concept of modern state or the concept of modern sovereignty and territoriality in the Asian context? How does one place the Meiji Restoration in the context of this global trend of modern statehood? These are the two main questions I will attempt to answer in this article.

For that purpose, my article will place the Meiji Restoration in a wider comparative perspective.[1)] It treats the Meiji Restoration not so much as an event that took place in 1868 that brought about the final demise of the Tokugawa Shogunate and returned control of the country to a direct imperial rule under the Meiji emperor, but more as a process of transforming the Japanese state into a modern sovereign and territorial nation-state. In other words, it concen-

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trates on the state building process that stretched from the middle of the nineteenth century until 1889 when the constitutional government was established.

This article thus revisits Asia in the nineteenth century. It was a period when contacts with the West intensified and many "traditional" Asian states and authorities came to be governed as colonies or vassals of Western powers. I argue that in the process of colonization, the first modern state in Asia emerged. A key component of the colonization was the creation of a modern administrative institution and bureaucratic hierarchy in the territory. To that effect, this article draws examples from Southeast Asia where formal colonization by Western powers began in the nineteenth century. By formal colonization I refer to the period when the colonies came under the direct rule of Western powers, instead of through proxies such as the United East India (VOC) and East India (EIC) mercantile corporations. It is thus irrelevant whether or not the colonizing project turned out to be successful, because what matters is that it set in place the blueprint of modern statecraft in the region. Before we proceed, it is worth spelling out how the modern state has been defined in the global political context.

1 Modern State: A Myth

It has been generally accepted that the 1648 Westphalian arrangements opened a new world order in Europe comprising sovereign territorial states. The treaty introduced the concept of bounded spatiality of states and of the institutional-juridical sovereignty of the states. In the nineteenth century, this foreign concept penetrated into Asia when states following the European model came into being. This "modern" statehood is generally measured by two major concepts: sovereignty and territoriality. The two concepts remain the basic components of modern states today, and are frequently used in conjunction with one another in the field of international relations (Krasner 1999). However, the two concepts reflect different organizing principles which can exist independently of each other, as Philip E. Steinberg (2009) demonstrates. This has led to ambiguity in understanding whether and when states in Asian achieved modern statehood as this article illustrates.

According to Steinberg, territoriality that applies to the modern state re-

fers to the manner in which the definition of a society's geographic limits, the organization of its processes, and the control of its people are exercised through claims of authority over a bounded area of land. In theory, a territorial state can exist in isolation because it is essentially an inward-looking entity. At the abstract level, the concept of state territoriality can exist independent of a state system. By contrast, sovereignty is the assertion by absolute authority within its realm. It attaches to the power which exists within a mutually exclusive system wherein other sovereigns have power within their respective and equivalent entities. Sovereignty can persist only when multiple sovereigns recognize each other's equivalency. Therefore, it has the outward-looking as well as inward-looking aspect (Steinberg 2009: 470–471).

Because of this basic difference between territoriality and sovereignty, there is little consensus among historians and political scholars about when precisely the modern state emerged. The disagreements stem from which aspect of the modern state one emphasizes. For those who stress the functional-administrative or inward-looking aspect of state sovereignty, the earliest dates go back to as early as the twelfth century Europe (Spruyt 1994). Others who focus on the territorial aspect of the modern state date its origins in the middle of the sixteenth century when "national" boundary lines on maps became indicators of zones of influence by political power (Sahlins 1989). There is also a group of scholars who emphasize the systemic or outward-looking aspect of the modern sovereign state. It tends to stress the territorial nature of the modern state and the rise of a system of mutually exclusive sovereignties with centralized powers. This group dates the modern state's origin between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries (Krasner 1999; and to some extent Spruyt 1994).

This brief review of the conceptual origins of the modern state reveals that the modern state has three different but united elements: inward-looking aspect of sovereignty, territoriality, and outward-looking sovereignty. When these three elements are combined, it becomes the modern state that is widely recognized today as the standard form. It is therefore easy to contend that the Meiji state, when it was conceived in 1868, did not have all the elements of modern state. However, this understanding may conflict with the widely shared assumption among scholars of Japanese history.

2 Japan, the First Modern State in Asia?

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan allegedly became the first modern state in Asia. This assumption is widely shared including by ordinary Japanese citizens. It also contributed to the idea of Japan's self-identification – that Japan has been the exceptional nation and state in Asia (Shih 2012: 38).

This Japan's self-identification originates in the Meiji government's series of efforts to modernize and transform Japan into a nation-state. The turning point for Japan's modernization was the peaceful power transition from the "feudal" Tokugawa regime to the Meiji government. It is often described as a unique political transition in modern history as it took place without any bloodshed. The Meiji Restoration also involved a process of transforming Japan into a modern territorial state, which manifested among others in the formal incorporation of peripheral territories and the subsequent assimilation of respective cultures. Throughout the Meiji era (1868–1912) Japanese leaders emulated what they understood as Western best practices in the art of governance, while ironically the samurai class who made the Restoration happen disappeared (Banno 2014).[2)]

Existing academic literature on the Meiji Restoration and modern Japan habitually place modern Japan in a comparative perspective. It tends to compare Japan with either China or western countries; China as the example of the failed modernization or consolidation of the state in the context of East Asia (Shih 2012), while Western countries as the prototype of modernization in the context of the global phenomena (Ravina 2017; Swale 2009). Even those who pay attention to international politics tend to limit their views on the East Asian context, which connected the rise of Japan with the collapse of the Sinocentric interna-

2) In order to claim Japan's uniqueness, it is imperative to place the Meiji Restoration in a comparative perspective and to show how it was different from other modern nation-states. By describing how the Tokugawa regime and the Meiji government restrained the commoners from being weaponized, the historian Mark Ravina (2017) contends that Japan established its power and authority differently from western nation-states, which were usually built upon a militaristic basis, and as such Japan succeeded in creating distinctive culture, politics, and society.

tional system (Mitani 1997; Kono 2001). Such literature rarely mentions other parts of the globe or other Asian neighbors in the nineteenth century.[3)]

In recent years there emerges a new tendency to examine Japan's modern history in a broader comparative perspective. This kind of literature belongs to the field of study called global history. Global history, as Sebastian Conrad claims, "has a polemical dimension. It constitutes an assault on many forms of container-based paradigms, chief among them national history. [...] global history aims to effect a change in the organization and institutional order of knowledge" (Conrad 2016: 4). It challenges the orthodoxy of Eurocentrism and national histories, and instead introduces a wider context to a particular historical narrative.[4)] In this academic trend, there are historians who have located pre-modern and modern Japan in a wider contemporary and comparative historical context. The former instance is a historian of Southeast Asia, Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels* (2009), which though focusing on Southeast Asia compares both sides of the Eurasia continent in a macro-historical way and touches on the case of Japan. The latter example is Charles Maier's *Leviathan 2.0* (2014) that connects state building in Japan and China to Mexico along with western European countries.[5)]

Maier's thesis (2014) is worthy of attention. He argues that there was a se-

3）An exception would be the study of economic history. As for a comparative study of modernization between Japan and Siam, see Feeny and Siamwalla (1998).

4）A Japanese historian specializing in modern Chinese history, Okamoto Takashi, is critical to the nature of global history. Okamoto argues that global history grows out of Western history tradition, which now turns to their attention from "internal" histories of their "world" – politics, diplomacy, society and culture – to their "outside world." According to him, their approach and terms remain the same – Eurocentric –, and a typical example is the recent growing academic interest in the history of British empire (Okamoto 2018: 13–23).

5）Richard S. Horowitz (2004) provides a convincing comparative study about international law and state formation in China, Siam and the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century. He describes how a British diplomat, Sir John Bowring, diplomatically and politically engaged with China, Siam and the Ottoman Empire in the 1840s and 1850s, and contributed to modernize the three countries by making diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom. As a comparative political scientist specializing in Southeast Asia, Tuong Vu (2010) places East and Southeast Asian countries in a comparative perspective.

ries of wars in the middle of the nineteenth century that contributed to the formation of modern states in many corners of the globe; the Taiping Rebellion in China (1850–1864) and the American Civil War (1861–1865), as well as Risorgimento Italy (1815–1870), Bismarck's Germany (1862–1890), and Meiji Japan (1867–1889). In confronting these major conflicts, the modern statecraft transformed into a nation-state because technologies like the railroad and the telegraph revolutionized the ability of governments to govern. In fact, it was not coincident that the second wave of Industrial Revolution served as the basis for such condition in the middle of the nineteenth century. Maier maintains that the modern state was born in the middle of seventeenth century, a century later got stagnated, and transformed from the absolutist state into nation-state in the middle of the nineteenth century. What happened to the modern state in the nineteenth century?

Maier contends that true integration of the state as a territorial unit did not occur until the middle of the nineteenth century even in the European context. If one follows Maier's argument, then there was no state that was entirely modern before this time. In other words, the modern state materialized in stages. It does not mean that there was no modern state before the middle of the nineteenth century; rather, modern states by the middle of the nineteenth century had one or two out of the three elements mentioned above. Another precondition Maier puts forward is the importance of modernization process that accelerated transformation into the modern nation-state. If one accepts this idea of modern state's incompleteness, that a truly modern state emerged only gradually, then one can find the first modern state in Asia prior to the Meiji Restoration.

Here the key concept is modernization. In this article, I follow Ronald Inglehart's definition: "Modernization is, above all, a process that increases the economic and political capabilities of a society; it increases economic capabilities through industrialization, and political capabilities through bureaucratization" (Inglehart 1997: 5). In terms of state formation, therefore, bureaucratization is a significant factor to turn a traditional state into a modern state. Modernization also requires us to draw attention to the relationship between the political power and science. Patrick Carroll (2006) argues that the modern state was conceptually elaborated and materially engineered through the transformation of

scientific thought in “experimental politics” aimed at managing the land and the people. With this in mind, the discussion of whence the first modern state in Asia emerged paints a different picture.

3 Dutch East Indies: Asia’s First Modern State

In the conventional Eurocentric view of world history, the post-World War II Asia has five distinctive regions: East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Middle East and Central Asia. At the dawn of the nineteenth century Western powers advanced into these Asian regions more aggressively than ever. In the course of the century, in particular, Western powers more or less successfully established their colonies in Southeast Asia: the Dutch East Indies, the British Straits Settlement, British Malaya, British Burma, French Indochina, and the Spanish Philippines. Siam was an exception, because it managed to maintain a relative independence by modernizing itself under the reign of King Chulalongkorn or Rama V (1868–1910). Unlike at an earlier time when the colonies functioned largely as European trading outposts and for the most part were administered by proxies, the nineteenth century Western rulers installed “modern” bureaucracy in order to consolidate and efficiently govern their territories. For this purpose, Western powers set off a process of modernization in various aspects of life and production in their colonies, including the creation of an administrative hierarchy.

In his article “The Myth of Colonialism: Java and the Rite of Colonialism,” the historian Onghokham observed, “The then Netherlands Indies was the first state in Asia with a modern bureaucracy and administrative structure, modeled after the new state after the French Revolution of 1789” (Onghokham 2003: 161). This observation corresponds with one aspect of the modern state, that is the inward-looking sovereignty, and therefore it is arguable that the Netherlands Indies was the first modern state in Asia.

How was the modern bureaucracy and administrative structure introduced in the Netherlands Indies? It was a consequence of what happened in Europe and especially the mother country, the Netherlands. After the Netherlands fell to Napoleon’s army, Louis Napoleon was installed as king in 1808. Integrated

into the French empire, the kingdom sought to extend to the colonies the Napoleonic state model of a centralized and hierarchical administrative bureaucracy. However brief this French confluence turned out to be, upon this foundation the Netherlands Indies subsequently underwent a "political-administrative revolution" (Cribb 1994: 5) throughout the nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth century, and came to be considered as a *beamenstaat* (bureaucratic state) with relatively efficient bureaucratic machine (Benda 1966; Sutherland 1979; Anderson 1983), which was guaranteed by the infrastructural power of the state (Mann 1984).

It is described in history books (Ricklefs 2001: 145–148) that, appointed by Louis Napoleon, Herman Willem Daendels served as the Governor General of then French occupied Indies and laid the groundwork for a well-policed and centralized bureaucratic state, with a powerful executive unchallenged by representative bodies, well-ordered finances, and a vast military establishment. The legacy of the Napoleonic era in the Indies was the introduction of the model of a centrally-controlled, hierarchical and uniform administration that operated with the assumption that the executive chain descends without interruption from the minister to the administered, and transmitted the law and the government's orders to the furthest ramifications of the social order. The centralizing state can also be seen in fundamental changes in the treatment of bureaucratic personnel – all public officials became salaried, trained servants of the state, whose employment and promotion were supposed to be regulated according to "talent" and seniority within the administration, rather than through family connections, venality, or privileges of class that had characterized the "ancien régime."

The innovative aspects of the colonial state did not only manifest in the growth of policing or the trend towards bureaucratization and centralization, but also with the continuation of structure and culture (custom) of local authorities. The colonial state's administrative measures involved negotiation of the relations between state and society, resulting in the subordination of the local authorities to the central power. Hence the Dutch East Indies state preserved a "despotic" characteristic of government while establishing the penetrative and infrastructural controls.[6)]

But the most innovative aspects of Napoleon's system lay not with the growth of policing or centralization; indeed, these often represented a continuation of policies introduced by his predecessors. Far more novel was the way in which the administrative measures involved a renegotiation of the relations between state and society. Controls on the appointments of judges and teachers, the affirmation in the Civil Code of a "strongly patriarchal bias" in clauses relating to property, inheritance and marriage, and the subordination of the provinces to the central power all pointed to the creation of a more authoritarian and, in some respects, "despotic" form of government, as well as to a substantial increase in the penetrative or "infrastructural" control by the state.

After the French interregnum, the British interregnum in Java from 1811 to 1816 oversaw a weakening in terms of importance of the native regents. Thomas Stamford Raffles as the Lieutenant General of Java during that period, implemented reforms to reduce the distance between the state and society. Under his direction, an assistant resident and other lower-ranking officials worked directly with the populace (Sutherland 1979: 8). Both Daendels' and Raffles' reforms were never fully realized due to the limits of their tenure. Nevertheless, the reforms significantly affected the position of the returning Dutch officials in Java at the end of the interregnums. Several decades later, with the introduction of an institution specializing in educating civil engineers (or technocrats), the Indies state would turn to be a real bureaucratic one.

4 A Failed Attempt: British Rule in Burma

A not so well-known and failed attempt to establish a modern state in Southeast Asia took place in the newly annexed British territory in Burma, specifically the Tenasserim province, in the first half of the nineteenth century. John S. Furni-

6) Michael Mann introduced the concepts of despotic power and infrastructural power. According to him, despotic power refers to the range of actions that state elites can undertake without routine negotiation with society, whereas infrastructural power guarantees for the central state to penetrate its territories and logistically implement decision (Mann 1984). The concept of state infrastructural power has been elaborated and upgraded in the last two decades (Soifer 2008).

vall's 1939 account entitled *The Fashioning of Leviathan*[7] details how a modern state was imagined by British officers who attempted to build it from scratch. Furnivall served in the Indian Civil Service in Burma from 1902 to 1923, and later became a lecturer on Burmese and colonial affairs at Cambridge University.

Britain occupied parts of Burma after the First Anglo-Burmese War in 1823–1826. One of the conquered territories was Tenasserim – the southern part of Burma that shared borders with Siam. Furnivall based his accounts of the early establishment of British Burma on the letters written between 1825 and 1843 by two officials, A. D. Maingy and E. A. Blundell, the first two Commissioners of Tenasserim (Furnivall 1991: 2). Sparsely populated, economically underdeveloped, and geographically isolated, Tenasserim was viewed by the British authorities as a province of a dubious value to their empire, and its retrocession to the Burmese Court of Ava was under consideration for a long time. Furnivall shows that until 1834 when the judicial and revenue branches of Tenasserim were placed under the Presidency of Bengal, there was a little interference with its affairs from the Governor-General of India under whose direct supervision the administration of the province was place upon its annexation.

The centralization and consolidation of colonial territories had a clear economic logic. Furnivall describes thus, "the incorporation in the Indian Empire of newly conquered territory; the building up of a local administrative organization; the gradual adjustment and adaptation of this local organization to the mechanism of the central government; and finally, the assimilation of the new province within the general imperial system, so that it could no longer be distinguished from the rest of India except by such accidents of geography as its peoples and products" (Furnivall 1991: 2). Thus it is no doubt that the British aim was to turn a newly acquired territory into an economically useful space for the British empire. This description reflects Furnivall's understanding of liberalism, which in the classical sense encompasses "doctrines of economic freedom: freedom of trade, enterprise and property, and equality before the law" (Furnivall 1948: 28).

7) Furnivall's piece was first published in April 1939 in the issue of *The Journal of the Burma Research Society* 29 (1): 3–137.

The contents of Furnivall's book illustrate precisely what aspects the Commissioners of Tenasserim focused on when they attempted to build a modern statecraft in Burma. The contents read as follows:

As the order of the contents reveals, Furnivall traces both Maingy's and Blundell's attempts to introduce the principles of liberalism into administrative practices, to reform the judicial and revenue systems. The idea of law and order directly connected to the effort to introduce the concept of crime and law enforcement. Therefore, "Law and Justice," "Jails," and "Police" were placed as priority in order to establish the colonial authority. Such liberal intentions and efforts however are not themselves the end; the modern state, which Furnivall calls "Leviathan," came to Burma to extract its resources and to organize its society for the purpose of production. "[Its] aim was to turn cities into factories, and villages into workshops" (Furnivall 1991: 157).

Eventually the British efforts to found a modern bureaucratic institution in Tenasserim failed. Tenasserim received few resources and personnel from Bengal. As a consequence, it was under-governed and in practice was reverted to traditional forms of administration. More than a half century later, the British earnestly tried to include Burma as a part of British India. In 1886 Burma was separated from Bengal to become a province of India in its own right, and start-

ed to develop the capacity of the British administration. Military officers became less prominent, and university-educated officials more common.[8] Furnivall was one of such educated officials or civil engineers to station in Burma in the early twentieth century.

5 Administering Southeast Asia

The institution of a centralized administrative apparatus was Asia's introduction to the modern statecraft. Since the early nineteenth century, Western powers – the British in particular – imparted the significance of territoriality to local rulers in Southeast Asia. From the 1820s on, Southeast Asia became a (semi-)colonized region with relatively defined colonial (imperial) sovereignties and territories.

The turning point was the 1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty. With the treaty, the Dutch secured British settlements such as Bengkulu in Sumatra, in exchange for ceding control of their possessions in the Malay Peninsula (Malaya). The resulting borders between former British and Dutch possessions remain today between modern Malaysia and Indonesia. It goes without saying that the 1824 Treaty entered by the British and the Dutch was without the consent of the Malay rulers and their ministers.

The 1824 Treaty symbolized the beginning of a new colonial era, later called imperialism, in Asia. Western powers, such as Britain, the Netherlands, and France, began to claim suzerainty over territories and proceed to colonize those territories with actual settlements and infrastructures. In 1819, five years before the treaty, modern Singapore was founded by Raffles. Realizing how the Dutch were monopolizing trade in the Malay Archipelago, he thought that the British needed a new trading outpost to counter the Dutch trading power. In

8) As it is commonly understood, the 1870s remarked the beginning of the age of imperialism. The idea of imperialism or imperial liberalism – led by John Stuart Mill – has grown out of liberalism as Jennifer Pitts explicitly illustrates in her A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France (2005). Mill accepted the idea of national character and the notion of "civilizing despotism" that encouraged the policy which turned the United Kingdom to empire.

1830, six years after the treaty, the Netherlands Indies installed a new revenue system, the so-called Cultivation System (*Cultuurstelsel*), in Java. It was a system that compelled farmers to pay revenue to the treasury of the Netherlands Indies in the form of export crops or compulsory labor. Thus in addition to securing borders, both the British and the Dutch began to train their control inward over their respective territories.

Early in the nineteenth century, the Western powers were not quite ready for an extensive colonization. When they penetrated into Southeast Asia and established their authorities, there were no colonial servants. Instead, as they incorporated their respective territories gradually, they founded training institutions for colonial civil servants or the civil engineers. The British eyes were trained on India, not Southeast Asia. In 1806 the British established the East Indian College at Haileybury, which was to train administrators of the Honorable East India Company. Specifically, the college was to produce civil servants who were going to serve in India with the stated mission to "qualify them for governing themselves." The East India College had a specific mission. In the past, its administrators had been largely employed to oversee commercial transactions. By the late eighteenth century, they had become increasingly involved in the legal and fiscal administration of, and providing the government to, millions of people of various languages, manners, customs and religions. The East India College provided general and vocational education for young gentlemen of sixteen to eighteen years old, who were nominated by the Company's directors to writerships in its overseas civil service. From 1806 to 1857, it thrived at Haileybury, training more than 2,000 pupils for a future in the administration of the Indian subcontinent. Subjects taught included political economy and history, mathematics and natural philosophy, classics, law and humanity and philology. Crucially, language training occupied a significant portion of the curriculum and it included Hindustani, Sanskrit, Telugu and Persian (Explore Haileybury). As the curriculum showed, British India was the priority for those who were trained in the East India College.

Thus until the middle of the nineteenth century, there was no specific institution devoted to train officers for British colonies in Southeast Asia. It was the East India Company that provided educational opportunities to master the

local languages. Penang played a crucial role for language training. In 1786 the East India Company acquired Penang Island from the Sultan of Kedah, and turned into a free port for the sake of the Asian trade. The British vigorously studied local conditions and the intentions of indigenous rulers.[9] Stamford Raffles, John Crawford and other prominent colonial officers mastered the Malay language while stationing in Penang (Yamamoto 2018). Taking advantage of their language skills, they published important pioneering accounts about Southeast Asia in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Stamford Raffles wrote *The History of Java* in 1817 (Raffles 1817), while the Scottish diplomat John Anderson published *Political and Commercial Considerations relative to the Malayan Peninsula and the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca* in 1824 (Anderson 1824). The British also paid attention to the French activities in Asia, while closely monitoring activities and relationships among the indigenous rulers. In 1821, the then Governor General of India, Lord Hastings, sent John Crawfurd, the former Governor General of Singapore, to the courts of Siam and Cochinchina. Lord Hastings was interested in learning about Siamese policy with regard to the northern Malay states, and Cochinchina's policy with regard to French efforts to establish a presence in Asia (Crawfurd 1830).

The Dutch followed the British footsteps in preparation for colonial administration in Southeast Asia. Nearly forty years after the establishment of the East India College, the Dutch founded the Royal Academy for Engineers in Delft which provided the instruction and education of young officials for the

9) The British's eyes were also aiming at Japan in the early nineteenth century. For instance, the first English-Japanese and Japanese-English vocabulary book was printed in Batavia, the Indies, in 1830. The author was Walter H. Medhurst who was an English missionary based in Batavia back then. He was one of the early translators of the Bible into Chinese and compiled Chinese-English and English-Chinese dictionaries. He was fluent in Malay, but not Japanese. In the introduction to his *An English and Japanese, and Japanese and English Vocabulary*, he writes, "The following compilation is with diffidence offered to the public, principally because the author has never been to Japan, and has never had an opportunity of conversing with the native: but having through the kindness of several gentlemen from Japan, obtained the sight of some native books, particularly in the Japanese and Chinese character combined, the author has been enabled, from his knowledge of the latter language, to compile the following vocabulary" (Medhurst 1830).

Dutch East Indian administration. The Minister for the Colonies, J. C. Baud, was the key person who brought about the decision to build a special institution to train colonial officers. The educational priority was to acquire competency in local languages, in particular Javanese and Malay. After 1850 some Dutch officials became more interested in the customs and manners of the people they administered in the Indies, and produced scholarly texts based on their observations. The first such texts included G. A. Wilken's studies on Central Moluccas, Minahasa in northern Sulawesi and Sumatra, and F. A. Leifrinck's piece about Bali and Lombok. After spending some years in the Indies, Wilken ended his career as a professor of ethnology in Leiden. Their close observations of the local customs and tradition, family law, and other topics paved the way for the establishment of a branch of study in custom law (*adat*). Cornelis van Vollenhoven was the leading scholar who became professor of custom law at Leiden University in 1901 (Fasseur 1989). At the same time, the Dutch formalized the Chinese and Japanese studies at Leiden University in 1854. Unlike the Sinology department in other Western countries, the program was a preparation for colonial administration in the Netherlands Indies. Koos Kuiper (2017) details the studies and work of the 24 Dutchmen trained as "interpreters" for the Netherlands Indies before 1900. Most of them began studying at Leiden University, before going to Amoy to study southern Chinese dialects. Their main tasks included translating Dutch law into Chinese, advising the courts on Chinese law, examining Chinese accounts books, and regulating coolie affairs (Kuiper 2017). The accounts that these Dutch Chinese specialists prepared were and have remained to be a significant contribution to the study about the Chinese population in the Indies.

In their respective colonies in Southeast Asia, both the Dutch and the British emphasized indigenous rule (the indirect governance) and took the position of privilege that allowed them to define and redefine what the rules should be in their territories. In the nineteenth century, the two imperial powers gradually created a class of rulers over the indigenous population, while maintaining that they were trying to preserve the indigenous system of rule. They also observed and studied the local culture and society, and accumulated such knowledge which contributed to further control and consolidation of their colonies.

This was how the Dutch and the British built administrative institutions and hierarchy, and as such colonized their territories in Southeast Asia. In the process of colonization, there emerged modern bureaucratic states with the inward-looking sovereignty and territories defined by treaties between imperial powers.

6 Siam Modernized: A Side Story

Siam was the only country in Southeast Asia that remained independent while the rest of the region underwent colonization. Intensive contacts with European powers in the region accelerated modernization in the kingdom as the Siamese elite confronted new modalities brought by Westerners with varying degrees of acceptance, rejection, and partial integration into "traditional" systems. Tension between competing systems came into direct confrontation throughout the process of modernization, and with the growth of the Thai nation state. As historian Thongchai Winichakul (1994) demonstrates in his *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*, space, sovereignty, and boundaries came to be contested and redefined as European presence in Southeast Asia increased.

Surrounded by formidable colonial powers, the political elite in Siam needed to adapt to and accept the modern concept of territoriality in the first half of the nineteenth century. As early as 1826 under the reign of Rama III, the British treated Siam as an independent sovereign state and signed the Burney Treaty. It stated that Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis and Terengganu were Siam provinces while Penang and Province Wellesley belonged to the British. The British envoy Henry Burney explained to the Thai court;

> the advantage of having regular boundaries established as soon as possible between the Siamese dominions and our conquests on the coasts of Tenasserim. … I added that the English earnestly desire to live in the vicinity of the Siamese as good friends and neighbours, and not in the same unsettled and unsocial terms as the Burmese had done; that for this reason we are anxious to have the boundary and rights of each party fixed, so as to prevent all chance of mistake or dispute between our sub-

ordinate officers (quoted in Reid 2015: 241).

This logic coveys a modern understanding of sovereignty and fixed boundaries, which was novel in Southeast Asia before the nineteenth century. Thirty years later, under the leadership of Rama IV or King Mongkut, Siam signed another territorial treaty with the British, that is the Bowring Treaty of 1855. The Bowring Treaty was drawn with a specific international context, that is after the British defeated Qing China in the First Opium War (1842) and Burma in the First Anglo-Burmese War (1826). The treaty provided British citizens living in Siam with extraterritoriality, which was a key point of dispute in many unequal treaties signed between Western powers and Asian rulers during the nineteenth century. King Mongkut made many concessions to the British and French in part to maintain his kingdom's independence.

Despite the two treaties with the British, Siam continued to face threats of Western expansionism. In 1868 (the same year the Meiji government was established), when King Chulalongkorn or Rama V ascended to the throne at the age of fifteen, Siam needed to deal with such a mounting threat to the country. Chulalongkorn managed to save Siam from colonization by installing a series of governmental and social reforms. His reforms included the establishment of various administrative units such as sanitary districts as sub-autonomous local administrative unit and the hierarchical system of monthons (administrative subdivision) (1897), centralized revenues, a national educational system, a modern army (1887) and modern land ownership law, the construction of railways in 1901, and the abolition of corvée (a form of unpaid, unfree labor) and slavery (1905). He also introduced the Western concept of state and territorial division, made territorial concessions to the British and French, and at the end signed the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909. In this way Siam modernized its state apparatus and maintained its independence as a sovereign state in Southeast Asia.

This modernization process, however, did not mean that Siam simply accepted Western ideas and institutions as they were. Rather, as Thongchai (1994) illustrates in *Siam Mapped*, the nation's "geo-body" – its territory, practices, values – are discursively created through a two-way positive and negative identification. Thongchai argues that Siam actively tried to carve out a "we-self" space in

light of European expansion and neighboring polities. "The creation of otherness, the enemy in particular, is necessary to justify the existing political and social against rivals from without as well as from within" (Thongchai 1994: 167).

Thongchai's argument is instructive for our discussion of Southeast Asia, even if his book focuses on Siam. He establishes how the modern cartographic map is an instrument of "modern" nation states and modern science, and how the map functions as a tool for exercising authority. As the above description of colonial territorial arrangements shows, this is exactly how Western powers drew territorial lines in Southeast Asia throughout the nineteenth century, by drawing them on the map and imposing them on the ground. Through such arrangement authorities, either indigenous or foreign, shifted from local to the Western powers and "modern" statecraft was introduced in the region.

Conclusion

The nineteenth century was a period of "global transformation" which brought about intensification of differential development and heightened interactions between societies. Industrialization, rational state building, and ideologies of progress were intertwined and constituted national and international processes on the global scale (Buzan and Lawson 2015).

In this process administrative and bureaucratic competences occurred within "national" boundaries. As this article discussed, however incomplete, the first modern state in Asia is arguably the Netherlands Indies, which underwent transformations of statecraft about a half century prior to the Meiji Restoration. As were the cases from Java and Burma, Europeans were eager to build a modern bureaucratic system in their respective colonies to maximize control and extraction of resources, and they divided up colonial territories among themselves without the consent of the indigenous populations or their rulers. It became imperative to educate and train civil engineers or civil servants, both Westerners and indigenous, in order to build a rational modern state.

However, the concept of modern state had been fluid from the beginning. It was in the middle of the nineteenth century when the concept of modern state with the inward- and outward-looking sovereignty and territoriality came to be

established. That was the time when the Meiji Restoration was taking place. Therefore, by incorporating ideas and practices of the modern statehood from Europe and the United States, the Meiji government tried to catch up with this "newly" defined international concepts, institutionalized them, and made great efforts to create a Japanese nation and nation-state. In this context, Japan became the first Asian nation-state towards the end of the nineteenth century. Their effort paid off; at the closing of the century, Japan was recognized by Western powers as a modern nation-state. For the first time in its history, Japan was invited to send its delegation to the Hague Conventions of 1899, which was the first multilateral treaties addressing the conduct of warfare.

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