D. R. SARDESAI

SECOND EDITION

SOUTHEAST ASIA PAST & PRESENT

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For Vandana and Archana

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Preface

Most general historians of Southeast Asia, with the notable exceptions of D.G.E. Hall, Georges Coedes, and John F. Cady, have given an undue emphasis to the period of European rule. They have consequently treated the pre-European period merely as a prologue to the understanding of the colonial rule. Such a treatment, condemned first by the Dutch scholar J. C. van Leur as providing a Eurocentric view regarding Indonesian history, for example, "from the deck of the ship, the ramparts of the fortress, the high gallery of the trading house," is unacceptable to most contemporary historians. On the other hand, the Indian historian-diplomat K. M. Panikkar, a well-known partisan of the Asiacentric viewpoint, has conceded that, qualitatively speaking, the changes brought by Western rule could only be described as "revolutionary." There is no denying that most of the present-day economic, communications, and educational patterns of the region's independent states owe much to the colonial period. Therefore, while focusing on the activities of the indigenous people, I have felt compelled to treat the colonial period as more than an "interlude." A fairly large section of the book consequently is concerned with the Western activity in the region and the indigenous reaction to it.

This book is the product of two decades of teaching courses in Southeast Asian history at the University of California, Los Angeles. I appreciate the contribution of many a bright student who raised questions or offered comments during innumerable discussions in and out of the classroom. These have helped immensely in clarifying my ideas on a wide range of historical problems concerning Southeast Asia. I am also thankful to the many scholars whose monographs, translations, and articles provided a research base for much of what is included in this book. The footnotes, which I have deliberately kept to the minimum, are an inadequate acknowledgment of my debt to those scholars; the bibliography at the end of the volume is a truer measure of it.

In a treatment of a region like Southeast Asia, with its diverse ethnic units, states, and two millennia of historical development, there are bound to be gaps in information. In fact, I have tried not to clutter the book with too many details unless they represent major historical landmarks or have relevance for illuminating a point. After all, modern history writing is not just a record of every event as much as a recollection of and reflection

upon the more significant of the happenings. What is attempted here is a broad survey of trends and currents in the historical panorama of the region, combining thematic and chronological approaches.

I must record here my appreciation of the assistance received from several persons. Drafts of this manuscript were read in part or as a whole by several professional colleagues and graduate students. I am particularly thankful to Mark McLeod and Ingelise Lanman, who read the entire manuscript from a student's angle and made numerous suggestions for improvement. I am also grateful to Charlotte Spence of UCLA's Research Library for extensive bibliographical assistance and to Jane Bitar, manager, Word Processing for Social Sciences and Humanities, and Nancy Rhan at UCLA for their technical assistance with a smile. My deepest appreciation to my wife for her unfailing inspiration and encouragement at all times and to my daughters, Vandana and Archana, for their silent (more often than not) sufferance of my erratic schedule, often cutting into the family's leisure hours.

D. R. SarDesai

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Maps

PART ONE

Cultural Heritage

1

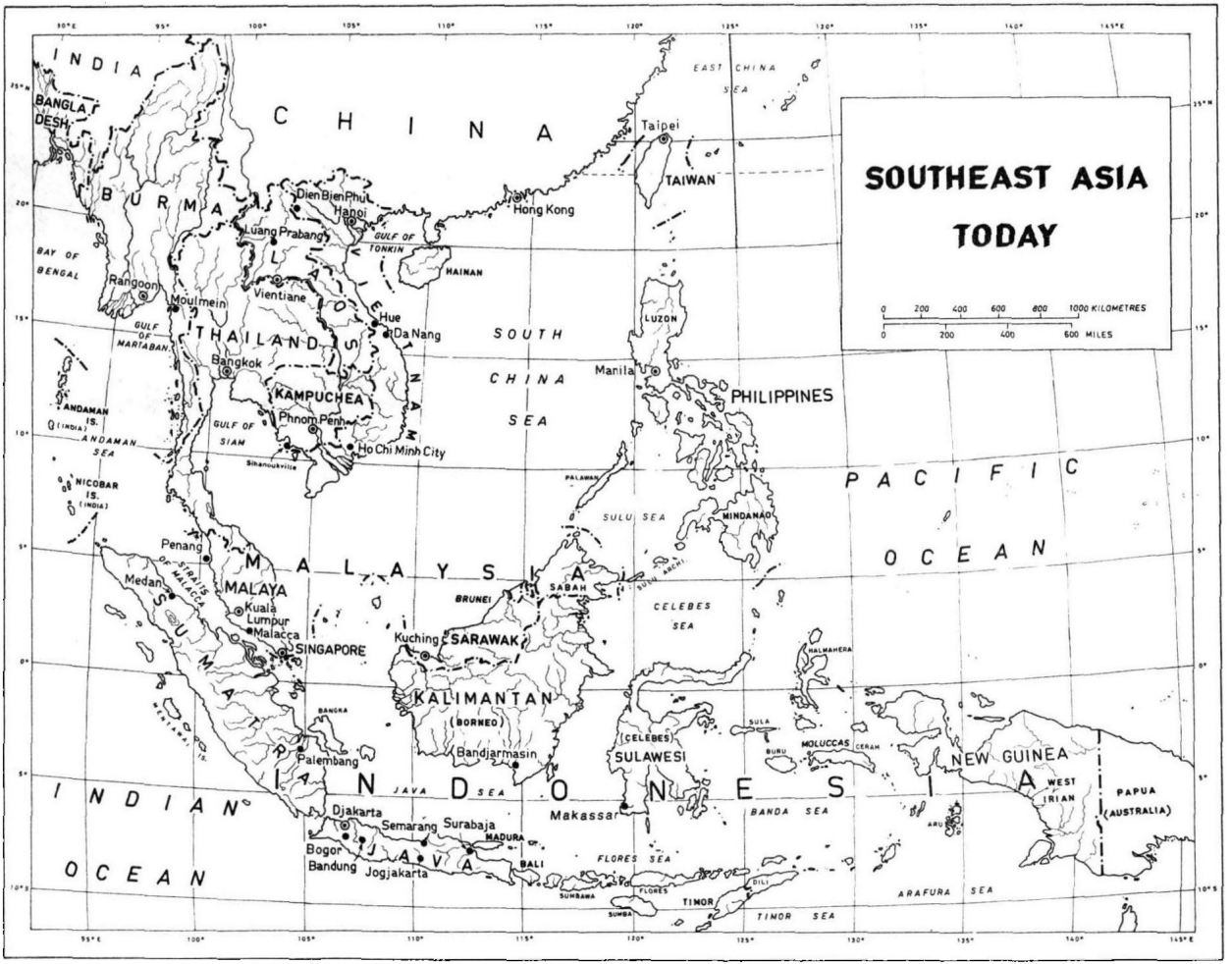
The Land and Its People

The Region's Name and Significance

The term *Southeast Asia* is of recent origin. It became popular during World War II, when the territories south of the Tropic of Cancer were placed under Lord Louis Mountbatten's Southeast Asia command. The command included Sri Lanka, and at least one study covers that island country along with Southeast Asia because of "similar" experience with Portuguese, Dutch, and British colonialism and because it is "closely related to the Malay Archipelago."[1] On the other hand, D.G.E. Hall excluded the Philippines in the first edition of his monumental history of Southeast Asia because that country lay outside the region's mainstream of historical developments.[2] Most scholars presently use the term *Southeast Asia* to include the geographical areas bounded by the states of Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Kampuchea (Cambodia), Vietnam, and the Philippines.

Older books on Southeast Asia designated it variously but mostly in reference to either of the two large neighboring countries. Thus, many British, French, and Indian scholars called it Farther India, Greater India, L'Inde Exterieure, and the Hinduized or Indianized States. On the other hand, most Chinese writings identified the region as Kun Lun or Nan Yang (Little China). Still others have referred to the land mass between India and China as Indo-China, from the term *French Indochina*, to include Laos, Vietnam, and Kampuchea. The noted geographer George B. Cressey has suggested that the region be called "Indo-Pacific," since it lies between two oceans and cultures.[3]

The variety of terms is perhaps suggestive of the minimal role Southeast Asia played in world affairs until very recently. For the famous British political geographer Halford Mackinder, Southeast Asia was a peripheral region, a part of the "rimland." A series of events—beginning with the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia during World War II, the emergence of the People's Republic of China and the long, drawn-out conflict and eventual unification of Vietnam—has transformed the entire region into one of the most strategic and sensitive areas of the world. To use Mackinder's geopolitical term, it is the "heartland" of our times. Both the superpowers—


SOUTHEAST ASIA
TODAY
0 200 400 600 800 1000 KILOMETRES
0 200 400 600 MILES
INDIA
BANGLADESH
BURMA
CHINA
EAST CHINA SEA
Taipei
TAIWAN
Hong Kong
Dien Bien Phu
Hanoi
Luang Prabang
GULF OF TONKIN
HAINAN
BAY OF BENGAL
Rangoon
Moulmein
Vientiane
LAOS
Hue
Da Nang
SOUTH CHINA SEA
LUZON
GULF OF MARTABAN
THAILAND
Bangkok
Manila
PHILIPPINES
KAMPUCHEA
Phnom Penh
Ho Chi Minh City
ANDAMAN IS. (INDIA)
ANDAMAN SEA
GULF OF SIAM
Sihanoukville
NICOBAR IS. (INDIA)
PALAWAN
SULU SEA
MINDANAO
PACIFIC OCEAN
Penang
STRAITS OF MALACCA
MALAYSIA
Medan
MALAYA
Kuala Lumpur
Malacca
SINGAPORE
BRUNEI
SABAH
SULU ARCH.
CELEBES SEA
Kuching
SARAWAK
HALMAHERA
KALIMANTAN
(BORNEO)
SUMATRA
BANGKA
Palembang
Bandjarmasin
(CELEBES)
SULAWESI
SULA
BURU
MOLUCCAS
CERAM
NEW GUINEA
WEST IRIAN
PAPUA (AUSTRALIA)
INDIAN OCEAN
JAVA SEA
INDONESIA
Djakarta
Semarang
Surabaya
Makassar
BANDA SEA
ARU
MADURA
Bogor
Bandung
Jogjakarta
BALI
FLORES SEA
ARAFURA SEA
SUMBAWA
FLORES
TIMOR
DILI
SUMBA
TIMOR SEA

the United States and the Soviet Union—along with China and Japan are vitally interested in the politics and the economic potential of the region. Neither of the superpowers would permit Beijing to bring the states of Southeast Asia into a subservient relationship as China had done periodically over the previous two millennia. Such an eventuality would enlarge the parameters of the Communist world, enhance China's power, and deny the Southeast Asian peoples the fruits of freedom that most of them secured after a bitter struggle against Western rule. Besides, a Communist dominance might deprive the rest of the world of the largely unexploited, immense, and precious mineral and oil deposits of the area in addition to denying an easy access from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean. The last is a matter of the gravest concern for Japan, whose survival as an economic and industrial giant depends upon the transport of oil and raw materials from the Middle East, Africa, India, and Southeast Asia as well as the ability to dispatch finished goods to the markets of all these areas and Europe through the Southeast Asian sea-lanes. It should be noted that at any time there is a Japanese tanker or freighter almost every one hundred nautical miles in the Indian Ocean area. Thus, Southeast Asia may have been a marginal area during most of recorded history, but the various factors briefly outlined above have underlined its strategic importance and made it (along with the Middle East) a potential tinderbox of a global conflict in the last three decades.

The Southeast Asian region is not a unit in the religious, historical, geographical, or ethnic senses. There are at least four different religions in Southeast Asia: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Historically, the region never underwent political consolidation as India or China did. Recent colonial history has only helped to enhance separatist development among Southeast Asian peoples. Five non-Asian powers ruled the region: the British in Burma and Malaya; the Dutch in Indonesia; the French in Laos, Kampuchea, and Vietnam; the Americans in the Philippines; and the Portuguese in Timor. Only Thailand managed to remain free. The differing orientations of each of these colonies in the spheres of administration, education, trade, currency, and shipping, to mention only the most important aspects, have been responsible for erecting additional barriers between Southeast Asian people that impede easy and effective communication among them.

Ecological Setting

Geographically speaking, Southeast Asia is included in the monsoon belt and, except for a small portion of Burma, located between the tropics. However, nature has divided the land here as nowhere else in any of the Asian segments, effectively fractionalizing it into diverse social and political units, which complicates any attempt to develop a common approach to the entire region.

Southeast Asia can be seen as two geographical regions: "mainland" Southeast Asia, to include the countries of Burma, Thailand, Laos, Kampuchea,

and Vietnam; and "insular" Southeast Asia, comprising Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The inclusion of Malaysia in the latter group is justified by the Malay Peninsula's greater exposure to the sea and its ethnic, cultural, religious, and geographical affinities with Sumatra and Java. Indonesia and the Philippines are groups of islands, large and small, fertile and barren. No two numerical counts of these islands agree: Estimates vary between 3 thousand and 12 thousand for Indonesia and between 5 and 7 thousand for the Philippines. Along with Malaysia and the Philippines, the Indonesian islands constitute the Malay world.

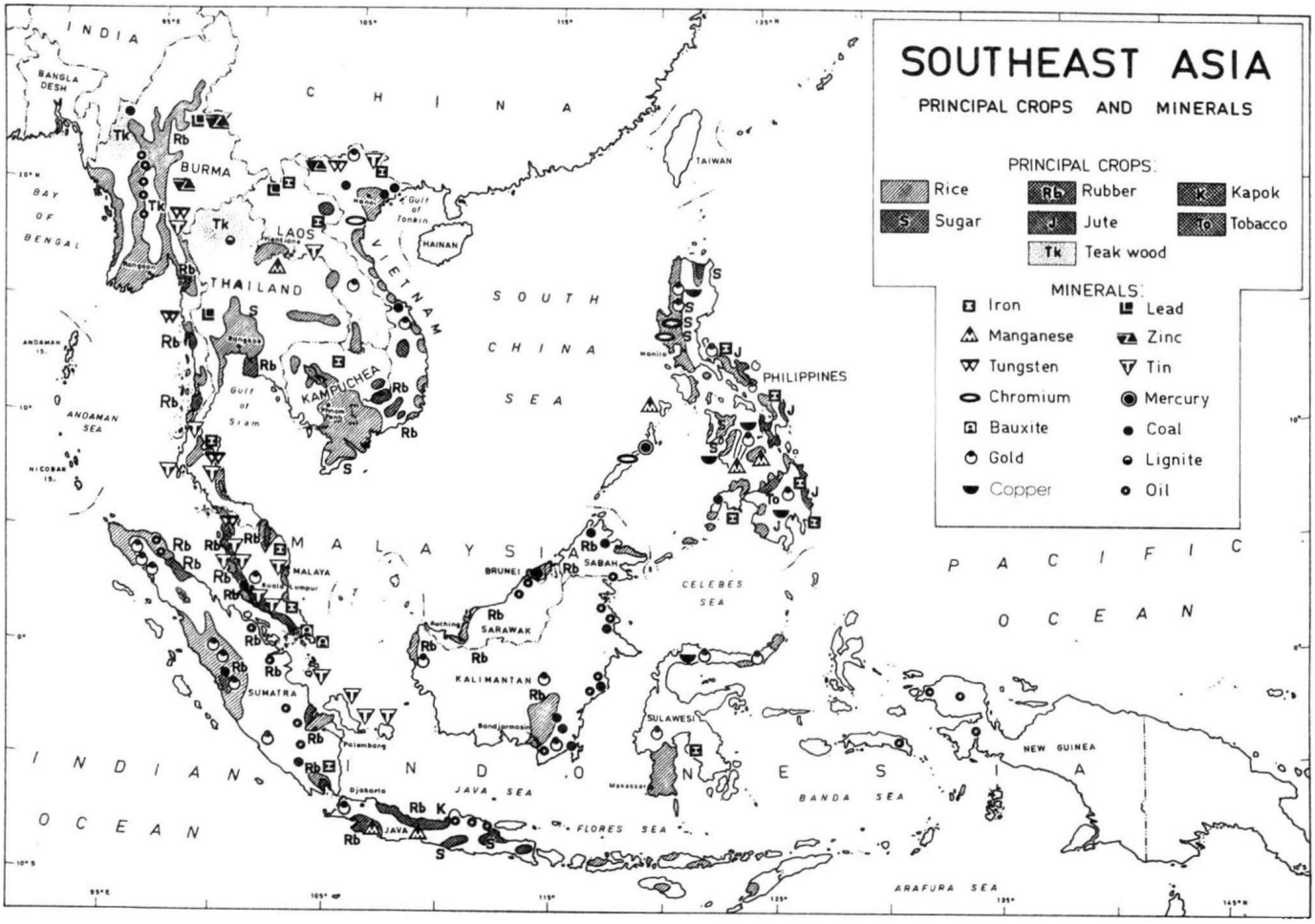
Some physiographers advocate a separate treatment for the Philippines and Sulawesi (the Celebes) because of their location between two geological shelves: the Sunda platform, covering Borneo, Sumatra, Java, and the Malay Peninsula in the west, and the Sahul platform, linking New Guinea and Australia. Between these two "massifs" lies a transitional zone of deep valleys in the seas around the Philippines and Sulawesi, at least partly responsible for the unusual configuration of those islands. In the Sunda platform area, the sea is often only a few hundred feet deep, in contrast to the six or seven mile depth of ocean troughs east of the Philippines. The geographical factor explains why the Philippines lacked much historical relationship with the rest of Southeast Asia before the advent of Islam in the middle of the second millennium of the Christian era.

Mainland Southeast Asia is noted for its diverse mountain ranges and rivers running north-south, most of them originating in Tibet. Following George Cressey, one might imagine eastern Tibet as a "complex knot or core area from which great mountain ranges radiate like the arms of an octopus,"[4] dividing the Asian peoples. Thus, the Arakan Mountains stand between India and Burma; the Dawna, the Bilauktaung, and the Tenasserim between Burma and Thailand, passing further through Malaya; and the Annam range between Laos and Vietnam, cutting the latter in two. Finally, such ranges as Nu Shan, Kaolikung Shan, Wuliang Shan, and Ailao Shan together separate Southeast Asia from China. The principal rivers and streams also flow north-south, providing little help in east-west communications. The numerous river basins, which have become the principal areas of human settlement, are hundreds of miles apart. The main rivers of mainland Southeast Asia are the Irrawaddy, the Chindwin, and the Salween in Burma; the Chao Phraya in Thailand; the Song Koi (Red River) and Song Bo (Black River) in North Vietnam; and the international stream of the Mekong, passing through Laos, Thailand, Kampuchea, and South Vietnam. These rivers meander over hundreds of miles bringing rich alluvial deposits to the deltas, which are like gateways open to the Indian Ocean. Four richly fertile deltas created by these rivers—Lower Burma, central Thailand, Tongking, and Mekong deltas—constitute the most populous areas of mainland Southeast Asia but are hundreds of miles apart. On the other hand, rapids in the northern reaches of the rivers obstruct intraregional travel and trade. Thus, the physical features of mainland Southeast Asia, with its numerous mountains and valleys, rivers and rapids, have militated against the development of a common focal point in the region.

At least one geographical factor is common to most of Southeast Asia. The monsoons—southwest and northeast—dictate a way of life in many ways common to most of the region's inhabitants. Precipitation averaging 100 inches annually comes with the southwest monsoon winds that hit the leeward side of the various mountain ranges between late May and middle September, and the northeast monsoons that bring the much-needed rains between December and February. The accompanying gusty winds, developing at times into devastating hurricanes and typhoons, compel the mostly nonpowered boats to sail only in the direction of the winds and wait at times for three to four months for a change of winds before resuming their return journeys. The monsoon belt is generally synonymous with the rice belt; most of Southeast Asia is known for both dry and wet rice cultivation. Rice is the principal crop and staple diet of the people of the region. Parenthetically, it may be stated that rice cultivation, long regarded to have been originated in the Ganges Valley around 2000 B.C., is now believed by scholars to have been first grown in an area covering eastern India, Burma, and Thailand around 3500 B.C., though the technique of wet rice cultivation may not have been known in Southeast Asia until after the impact of Indian culture in the beginning of the Christian era.[5] The much-awaited monsoons are often erratic, requiring sophisticated hydraulic controls to ensure water supply. Such were devised and mastered in ancient times by agrarian leaders, who often assumed political and spiritual leadership as well. The monsoon's vagaries have contributed to the peasants' belief in the supernatural, which leads to their propitiation of the appropriate spirits to ensure timely arrival of the monsoons and adequate sunshine during planting, weeding, and harvesting seasons. The location of their homes and temples preferably on elevated ground, the tapering design of the roofs of their homes, and the drainage and irrigation systems are all dictated by the often merciless monsoons flooding the dwelling areas and causing untold miseries to the population. The monsoons have thus governed the way of life, religious beliefs, commercial activity, and communications in the Southeast Asian world for ages.

The Human Fabric

Just as Tibet is the source of the major rivers of mainland Southeast Asia, southern China and eastern Tibet were the source of the region's population. The Southeast Asian peninsula is virtually controlled by China's land mass to the north. As Han Chinese expanded their habitational domain across the Yangtze, they drove most of the other ethnic peoples southward, eventually to cross the mountain ranges into Southeast Asia. Indeed, some migration southward had been taking place for nearly two millennia before the Chinese political consolidation in the third century B.C. It was limited in numbers compared with the large-scale exodus from China during the first millennium of the Christian era. It was during the latter period that most of the ancestors of the people of Burma, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia,


SOUTHEAST ASIA
PRINCIPAL CROPS AND MINERALS
PRINCIPAL CROPS:
Rice
Rubber
Kapok
Sugar
Jute
Tobacco
Tk Teak wood
MINERALS:
Iron
Lead
Manganese
Zinc
Tungsten
Tin
Chromium
Mercury
Bauxite
Coal
Gold
Lignite
Copper
Oil
INDIA
BANGLA DESH
BURMA
BAY OF BENGAL
ANDAMAN SEA
ANDAMAN IS.
NICOBAR IS.
THAILAND
LAOS
KAMPUCHEA
VIETNAM
Gulf of Tonkin
HAINAN
Gulf of Siam
CHINA
SOUTH CHINA SEA
TAIWAN
PHILIPPINES
Manila
MALAYSIA
MALAYA
Kuala Lumpur
SINGAPORE
BRUNEI
SABAH
SARAWAK
Kuching
KALIMANTAN
SUMATRA
Palembang
Bandjermasin
SULAWESI
Makassar
CELEBES SEA
JAVA SEA
FLORES SEA
BANDA SEA
ARAFURA SEA
NEW GUINEA
INDONESIA
INDIAN OCEAN
PACIFIC OCEAN
Djakarta
JAVA

and Thailand migrated under Chinese political and military pressures, mostly along the course of the rivers to the fertile plains and islands of Southeast Asia.

These migrations did not take place in a demographic vacuum. Recent archaeological discoveries (April 1979) point to Burma as the site of the oldest habitation of ancestors of the human race. Central Java has long been identified as one of the few known sites where human life first developed. In 1891, on the banks of the Solo River, searchers found the remains of hominids (intermediate between anthropoid and man), known to anthropologists as the Java man or *Pithecanthropus erectus*. The species was probably related to the more widespread *Sinanthropus*, or Peking man, of half a million years ago. Skulls of more advanced species, the *Homo sapiens*, or human beings, have also been found in the area. This species is referred to as the Solo man or Wadjak man, belonging to the Old Stone Age and dating around 12,000 years ago, whose later evolutionary forms, the Australoid-Veddoids, spread to Australia. The Sakais of Malaya and the population of southern Celebes and Enggano and Mentawai islands off the west coast of Sumatra belong racially to the Australoid group. Two other racial groups inhabited mainland Southeast Asia before historical times: the Negrito and the Melanesoid. Surviving elements of the Negritos include the Semang of Kedah and Perak, the Pangan of Kelantan, and the Aetas of the Philippines. The Melanesoid lived in the eastern part of mainland Southeast Asia before their movement to their present abode in the Pacific Islands.

With the present state of our knowledge, it is hard to tell the origin of these prehistoric groups or to be specific about the causes of their decimation and decline. The results of the interaction between them and the hordes of people who migrated to the region in the first millennium A.D. were not always uniform. While in most cases racial admixture and cultural assimilation occurred, some of the older groups retreated or were driven into the less-fertile highlands, where they preserved their ethnic purity but at the cost of insulating themselves from the cultural progress in the lowlands. Less than 1 percent of the present population of Southeast Asia claims ancestry from these early inhabitants.

The largest ethnic element in today's Southeast Asia is the brown-skinned Malay, inhabiting Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, and the Philippines. By most accounts, the original home of the Malays was southern China, from where they moved southward at two different times. First the Proto-Malays, having a clearer Mongoloid strain, arrived in Southeast Asia in about 2500 B.C., bringing with them elements of neolithic culture. They were followed by the Deutero-Malays, who migrated in around 300 B.C. and probably introduced bronze and iron to the area. Ancestors of the bulk of the present population of Malaya and Indonesia, the Deutero-Malays soon acquired control of the coastal districts as they pushed the Proto-Malays into the interior. In the process, very few successfully resisted the loss of cultural identity. Such were the ancestors of the Bataks of Sumatra, the Dyaks of Borneo, and the Alfurs of the Celebes and of the Moluccas. The Deutero-Malays spread