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Imperialism in Southeast Asia

MAIN IDEA

ECONOMICS Demand for Asian products drove Western imperialists to seek possession of Southeast Asian lands.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Southeast Asian independence struggles in the 20th century have their roots in this period of imperialism.

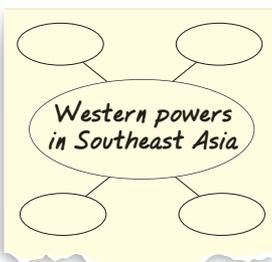
TERMS & NAMES

- Pacific Rim
- King Mongkut
- Emilio Aguinaldo
- annexation
- Queen Liliuokalani

SETTING THE STAGE Just as the European powers rushed to divide Africa, they also competed to carve up the lands of Southeast Asia. These lands form part of the **Pacific Rim**, the countries that border the Pacific Ocean. Western nations desired the Pacific Rim lands for their strategic location along the sea route to China. Westerners also recognized the value of the Pacific colonies as sources of tropical agriculture, minerals, and oil. As the European powers began to appreciate the value of the area, they challenged each other for their own parts of the prize.

TAKING NOTES

Clarifying Use a spider map to identify a Western power and the areas it controlled.



European Powers Invade the Pacific Rim

Early in the 18th century, the Dutch East India Company established control over most of the 3,000-mile-long chain of Indonesian islands. The British established a major trading port at Singapore. The French took over Indochina on the Southeast Asian mainland. The Germans claimed the Marshall Islands and parts of New Guinea and the Solomon islands.

The lands of Southeast Asia were perfect for plantation agriculture. The major focus was on sugar cane, coffee, cocoa, rubber, coconuts, bananas, and pineapple. As these products became more important in the world trade markets, European powers raced each other to claim lands.

Dutch Expand Control The Dutch East India Company, chartered in 1602, actively sought lands in Southeast Asia. It seized Malacca from the Portuguese and fought the British and Javanese for control of Java. The discovery of oil and tin on the islands and the desire for more rubber plantations prompted the Dutch to gradually expand their control over Sumatra, part of Borneo, Celebes, the Moluccas, and Bali. Finally the Dutch ruled the whole island chain of Indonesia, then called the Dutch East Indies. (See map opposite.)

Management of plantations and trade brought a large Dutch population to the islands. In contrast to the British, who lived temporarily in India but retired in Britain, the Dutch thought of Indonesia as their home. They moved to Indonesia and created a rigid social class system there. The Dutch were on top, wealthy and educated Indonesians came next, and plantation workers were at the bottom. The Dutch also forced farmers to plant one-fifth of their land in specified export crops.

British Take the Malayan Peninsula To compete with the Dutch, the British sought a trading base that would serve as a stop for their ships that traveled the India-China sea routes. They found a large, sheltered harbor on Singapore, an island just off the tip of the Malay Peninsula. The opening of the Suez Canal and the increased demand for tin and rubber combined to make Singapore one of the world's busiest ports.

Britain also gained colonies in Malaysia and in Burma (modern Myanmar). Malaysia had large deposits of tin and became the world's leading rubber exporter. Needing workers to mine the tin and tap the rubber trees, Britain encouraged Chinese to immigrate to Malaysia. Chinese flocked to the area. As a result of such immigration, the Malays soon became a minority in their own country. Conflict between the resident Chinese and the native Malays remains unresolved today. **A**

French Control Indochina The French had been active in Southeast Asia since the 17th century. They even helped the Nguyen (nuh•WIN) dynasty rise to power in Vietnam. In the 1840s, during the rule of an anti-Christian Vietnamese emperor, seven French missionaries were killed. Church leaders and capitalists who wanted a larger share of the overseas market demanded military intervention. Emperor Napoleon III ordered the French army to invade southern Vietnam. Later, the French added Laos, Cambodia, and northern Vietnam to the territory. The combined states would eventually be called French Indochina.

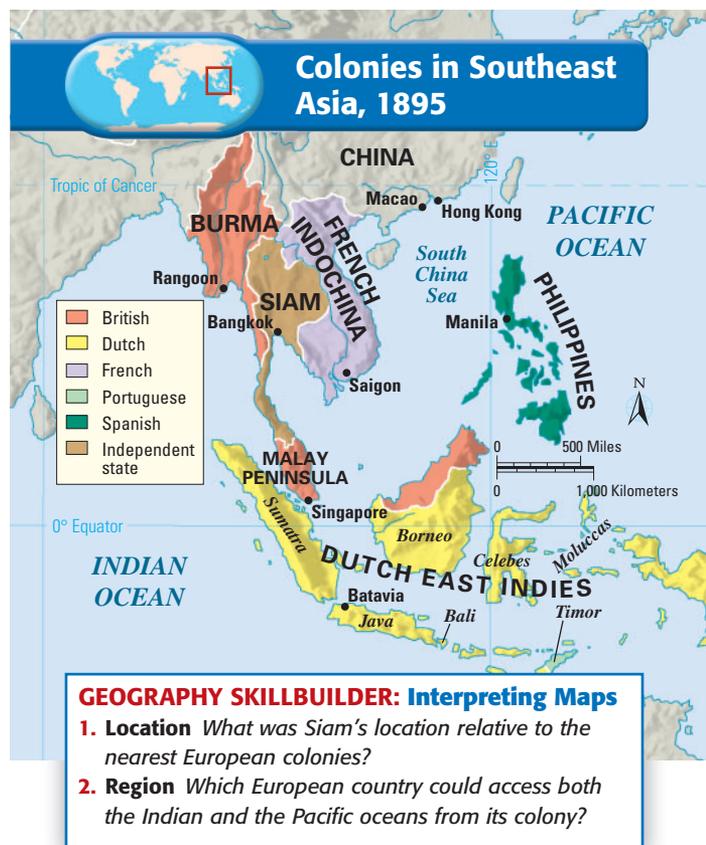
Using direct colonial management, the French themselves filled all important positions in the government bureaucracy. They did not encourage local industry. Four times as much land was devoted to rice production. However, the peasants' consumption of rice decreased because much of the rice was exported. Anger over this reduction set the stage for Vietnamese resistance against the French.

Colonial Impact In Southeast Asia, colonization brought mixed results. Economies grew based on cash crops or goods that could be sold on the world market. Roads, harbors, and rail systems improved communication and transportation but mostly benefited European business. However, education, health, and sanitation did improve.

Unlike other colonial areas, millions of people from other areas of Asia and the world migrated to work on plantations and in the mines in Southeast Asia. The region became a melting pot of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Buddhists. The resulting cultural changes often led to racial and religious clashes that are still seen today.

Siam Remains Independent

While its neighbors on all sides fell under the control of imperialists, Siam (present-day Thailand) maintained its independence throughout the colonial period. Siam lay between British-controlled Burma and French Indochina. (See map above.) France and Britain each aimed to prevent the other from gaining control of Siam. Knowing this, Siamese kings skillfully promoted Siam as a neutral zone between the two powers.



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- 1. Location** What was Siam's location relative to the nearest European colonies?
- 2. Region** Which European country could access both the Indian and the Pacific oceans from its colony?

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Motives

A Why do you think so many Chinese moved to Malaysia?

Siam modernized itself under the guidance of **King Mongkut** and his son Chulalongkorn. In a royal proclamation, King Chulalongkorn showed his understanding of the importance of progress:

PRIMARY SOURCE

As the times and the course of things in our country have changed, it is essential to promote the advancement of all our academic and technical knowledge and to prevent it from succumbing [giving in] to competition from the outside. In order to achieve this, it is imperative to make haste in education so that knowledge and ability will increase.

KING CHULALONGKORN, “Royal Proclamation in Education”

To accomplish the changes, Siam started schools, reformed the legal system, and reorganized the government. The government built its own railroads and telegraph systems and ended slavery. Because the changes came from their own government, the Siamese people escaped the social turmoil, racist treatment, and economic exploitation that occurred in other countries controlled by foreigners.

U.S. Imperialism in the Pacific Islands

Because Americans had fought for their independence from Britain, most of them disliked the idea of colonizing other nations. However, two groups of Americans were outspoken in their support of imperialism. One group of ambitious empire builders felt the United States should fulfill its destiny as a world power, colonizing like the Europeans. The other group, composed of business interests, welcomed the opening of new markets and trade possibilities.

The Philippines Change Hands The United States acquired the Philippine Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam as a result of the Spanish-American War in 1898. Gaining the Philippines touched off a debate in the United States over imperialism. President McKinley’s views swayed many to his side. He told a group of Methodist ministers his intention to “educate Filipinos, and uplift and Christianize them.”

Filipino nationalists were not happy to trade one colonizer—the Spanish—for another, the Americans. **Emilio Aguinaldo** (eh•MEE•lyoh AH•gee•NAHL•doh), leader of the Filipino nationalists, claimed that the United States had promised immediate independence after the Spanish-American War ended. The nationalists declared independence and established the Philippine Republic.

The United States plunged into a fierce struggle with the Filipino nationalists in 1899 and defeated them in 1902. The United States promised the Philippine people that it would prepare them for self-rule. To achieve this goal, the United States built roads, railroads, and hospitals, and set up school systems. However, as with other Southeast Asian areas, businessmen encouraged growing cash crops such as sugar at the expense of basic food crops. This led to food shortages for the Filipinos.

Hawaii Becomes a Republic U.S. interest in Hawaii began around the 1790s when Hawaii was a port on the way to China and East India. Beginning about the 1820s, sugar trade began to change the Hawaiian economy. Americans established sugar-cane plantations and became highly successful. By the mid-19th century, American sugar plantations accounted for 75 percent of Hawaii’s wealth. At the same time, American sugar planters also gained great political power in Hawaii.

▼ This photograph shows American soldiers fighting the Filipino nationalists in the early years of the war.



Vocabulary

Filipino: an inhabitant of the Philippine Islands

Then in 1890, the McKinley Tariff Act passed by the U.S. government set off a crisis in the islands. The act eliminated the tariffs on all sugar entering the United States. Now, sugar from Hawaii was no longer cheaper than sugar produced elsewhere. That change cut into the sugar producers' profits. Some U.S. business leaders pushed for **annexation** of Hawaii, or the adding of the territory to the United States. Making Hawaii a part of the United States meant that Hawaiian sugar could be sold for greater profits because American producers got an extra two cents a pound from the U.S. government.

About the same time, the new Hawaiian ruler, **Queen Liliuokalani** (luh•LEE•uh•oh•kuh•LAH•nee), took the throne. In 1893, she called for a new constitution that would increase her power. It would also restore the political power of Hawaiians at the expense of wealthy planters. To prevent this from happening, a group of American businessmen hatched a plot to overthrow the Hawaiian monarchy. In 1893, Queen Liliuokalani was removed from power.

In 1894, Sanford B. Dole, a wealthy plantation owner and politician, was named president of the new Republic of Hawaii. The president of the new republic asked the United States to annex it. At first, President Cleveland refused. In 1898, however, the Republic of Hawaii was annexed by the United States.

The period of imperialism was a time of great power and domination of others by mostly European powers. As the 19th century closed, the lands of the world were all claimed. The European powers now faced each other with competing claims. Their battles would become the focus of the 20th century.

History Makers



Queen Liliuokalani
1838–1917

Liliuokalani was Hawaii's only queen and the last monarch of Hawaii. She bitterly regretted her brother's loss of power to American planters and worked to regain power for the Hawaiian monarchy. As queen, she refused to renew a treaty signed by her brother that would have given commercial privileges to foreign businessmen. It was a decision that would cost her the crown.

INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY

RESEARCH LINKS For more on Queen Liliuokalani, go to classzone.com

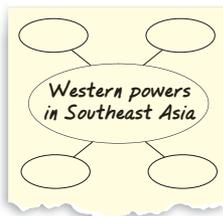
SECTION 5 ASSESSMENT

TERMS & NAMES 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Pacific Rim
- King Mongkut
- Emilio Aguinaldo
- annexation
- Queen Liliuokalani

USING YOUR NOTES

2. Which Western power do you think had the most negative impact on its colonies?



MAIN IDEAS

3. How were the Dutch East India Trading Company and the British East India Company similar?
4. What changes took place in Southeast Asia as a result of colonial control?
5. Why did some groups believe that the United States should colonize like the Europeans?

CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

6. **DRAWING CONCLUSIONS** How did the reforms of the Siamese kings help Siam remain independent?
7. **ANALYZING BIAS** What does President McKinley's desire to "uplift and Christianize" the Filipinos suggest about his perception of the people?
8. **ANALYZING MOTIVES** Why do you think Sanford Dole wanted the United States to annex Hawaii?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **ECONOMICS** Compose a **letter to the editor** expressing a Hawaiian's view on the U.S. businessmen who pushed for the annexation of Hawaii for economic gain.

CONNECT TO TODAY DRAWING A BAR GRAPH

Research to find out about the economic situation of Southeast Asian countries today. Rank the economies and present your findings in a **bar graph**.