

NOTES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA*

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The following discussion is not intended to present my limited political analysis of the current situation in Southeast Asia but to call attention to certain sociological and cultural aspects of this region with which all of us should be concerned because Southeast Asia today is becoming of increasing importance in the world. The area that we know and call Southeast Asia today lies within a triangle that one might possibly start in Northern Luzon. Draw one side of the triangle across the Indo-Chinese peninsula to take in the areas formerly known as Indo-China (that are today broken up into Vietminh, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia), Siam (or Thailand), Burma; and the peak or point of the triangle would include a great portion of India. Draw the other line down this side so that the point will reach almost into Australia. Joining these two points you would find that there is formed a triangle, the center of which is the area that we know specifically as Southeast Asia.

In this great Southeast Asian triangle, if we include India, there live today 600,000,000 people. This is one quarter of all the people in the world. India of course has been and is today the great population center of South Asia; but excluding the 400,000,000 million people of India we still have in this area over 200,000,000 people. The smaller areas of Southeast Asia are increasingly showing significant signs of population pressure which already are affecting our life today and will have a profound effect in the very near future. Indonesia for example already has a population of over 70,000,000 of which 50,000,000 are concentrated on one small island—that of Java. One small island not much bigger than the island of Luzon is keeping alive an expanding population which today already has gone above the 50,000,000 mark! Burma has a population of around 18,000,000 to 19,000,000 million; Thailand, about 20,000,000. The four countries that today make up Indo-China, total approximately 19,000,000 to 20,000,000. There are six to seven million on the Malay Peninsula, and then there are hundreds of thousands scattered on the many small islands that make up this particular Southeast Asian area. Briefly, this is geographically the area that we call the world of Southeast Asia.

Now let us consider just two prominent aspects of this area. First, I want to stress certain basic similarities of the area regardless of the fact that there are different languages and even different religions. Second I want to mention the potentialities of what we might call the demographic dynamics of the area, in other words population growth. And lastly, a few comments on what nationalism connotes or means

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today in certain of these new countries that have been merged in the area only in the past ten to fifteen years.

Southeast Asia could be called a great melting pot, not only from the standpoint of its peoples and racial types, but also from the standpoint of its cultures. For many thousands of years Southeast Asia has been receiving diverse strains from various peoples and some of the great cultures of the world. Take one limited example in the field of religion. Practically all the great religions of the world have at one time or another entered into this area. Many of them have blended together to form patterns that are unique for Southeast Asia; others have risen to great heights and then have succumbed to later religious forces that have come in. We have Hinduism, with its Brahministic patterns dominantly influencing the area. During another period, Buddhist influences swept through the region. In more modern times there has been the tremendous force of Islam marching into the area; and within our so-called historic period we have had Christianity effecting very profoundly one region of Southeast Asia, and that of course is the Philippines.

Underlying all of the modern cultures of Southeast Asia today is a broad, similar folk society—a peasant or folk society based upon wet rice agriculture. That wet rice agriculture includes such cultural factors as the use of carabao, terracing where necessary, specific kinds of house types (generally houses built on posts), and in an earlier day a very deeply ingrained animistic or spirit worship pattern. This is sometimes described today as the typical Malayan culture pattern—an animistic or spirit worship, wet rice agriculture, and a host of minor associated cultural factors. Hence, this pattern is found in the Philippines which is predominantly Christian, Thailand which is predominantly Buddhist, and Indonesia which is predominantly Moslem. As a result, the peasant peoples of this region (in spite of the fact that they have different dialects, different languages, many different customs and religions, and other ways of behaving) have nonetheless a broad cultural base that is common to all of them.

For example, throughout all of SEA, as far as the daily life of the farmer and peasant goes, the old animistic or spirit worship pattern has not been erased despite the presence of the great world religions. In Thailand where the people are extremely devoted Buddhists and where for perhaps 15 hundred years Buddhism has taught that spirit worship is not proper, most of the farmers still have little spirit houses and make offerings to the spirits; making the proper offerings when the rice is planted and when the rice is harvested. In Indonesia, Islam frowns upon that kind of spirit worship, yet it goes on in spite of the very profound effect that the Mohammedan religion has had on the life of the people. And 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines has not wiped out the belief in the evil spirit or good spirits, the belief that illness may be caused by spells or by bad spirits, or that there are witch doctors working against people. The broad religious base has changed, but underneath it these old forms still persist. It is well to keep in mind that there is a kind of cultural identity amongst all the people of SEA, and that some of these other differences, as for example, the

differences in language or dialect differences are perhaps rather minor in nature.

By 2000 years ago, roughly at the time of the Christian era, the kind of people that today comprise the groups known as the lowland Filipinos, the Indonesians, the Thailanders, and the Burmese were already settled in the region of Southeast Asia with this kind of wet rice agricultural pattern. And apparently they were already politically affiliated into village organizations loosely grouped together in what might be called a tribal organization. Thus certain villages in an area gave allegiance to a particular tribal leader. It seems that this was the kind of life pattern that the first great invaders of Southeast Asia found. In this instance "first great invaders," refers to a more sophisticated kind of cultural pattern which was the flow of Hinduism with its Brahmanistic pattern from India into the area. All through this region, with possibly the exception of the Philippines, this Hinduistic pattern profoundly affected this wet rice farmer with his animistic or spirit worshipping religion.

At a little later period another great cultural influence flowed out of India and that was the tremendous religious philosophy of Buddhism which also affected most of the area of Southeast Asia, again with the exception of the Philippines. However, Buddhism which reached its height around 800 A.D., succumbed a little later on to Brahmanistic patterns. Thus eventually Buddhism and Brahmanism in Indonesia, in Thailand, and in Burma became blended so that modern Buddhism today in Burma and in Thailand actually has many elements of Hinduism interwoven in it.

Then another great cultural force began to enter the area and that was Islam—coming from North India where it had already undergone profound changes from the kind of Islam found in the Near East. As Islam moved southward out of north India it met resistance in the form of the solidly Buddhist countries like Burma, Thailand, (or Siam), and the region of Indo-China. So it was not able to penetrate there to any great extent. Instead it flowed around this particular region and came down the peninsula. Then it gradually worked down into the area of Indonesia, which by this time developed politically into the so-called Hinduistic city state empires. Hinduistic empires began to crumble under the onslaught of this movement of Islam.

Next we find European contact appearing on the scene. European contact is interesting in many ways. In Indonesia, for example, the entrance of the Dutch at this particular time preserved one small area of Indonesia in a Hinduistic-Brahmanistic pattern. That is of course the Island of Bali where the last of the great Javanese Empires made by Mahjapahit crumbled under the onslaught of Mohammedan Rajahs. With the fall of Mahjapahit the court, the priests, and the small army fled to Bali and set up a new court on that particular island, which already had been profoundly influenced for the previous 1500 years by Hinduism and Buddhism. The Dutch coming in very shortly after that, through their system of economic control of the area, preserved the *status quo*. So that while Islam swallowed up almost all the rest of Indonesia, Islam never penetrated into the island of Bali to any appreciable

extent. Today Bali remains as one of the places where the old Brahmanistic pattern of 2000 years ago is still to be seen within the region of Southeast Asia. For the first 200 years, however, European contact was almost completely of a commercial nature. At first, they did not have colonial patterns in the sense of European governments taking over areas in Southeast Asia. The Dutch, for example, controlled Indonesia for 200 years through the Dutch East India Company which was a chartered private company only licensed by the government. India and Burma for a hundred years or more were controlled not by England directly, but by a private commercial firm—the East India Company.

However, as the great spice trade of the sixteen and seventeen hundreds began to crumple, discontent and unrest began to appear in this commercial empire of Southeast Asia. Therefore the governments decided to step in and take over these earlier commercial empires. Holland then, in 1798 I believe, first officially took over Indonesia, and England also took over as a colony Burma and India. With the change in Europe to an industrial pattern following the industrial revolution we have, as far as the Southeast Asia area is concerned, a shift also to what may be called colonialism. So the political control very definitely became that of the colonial pattern, because at that time the great European countries were interested in exploiting these areas for their own industrial needs at home. Gradually as Southeast Asia entered the modern period, certain aspects of westernization and modernization began to infiltrate into the countries. As a more intellectual, educated class emerged in each of these areas of Southeast Asia, there developed the first builders and planners of the nationalism that began to emerge in this particular region.

Now let us examine the demographic pattern of the region—the population patterns. Two thousand years ago this area was an area of low population pressure. We, of course, have no idea of how many people lived here, but there were at best perhaps small scattered villages, or groups of villages throughout the lowland areas. The Indian invaders came in only very small numbers. Only priests, the traders, the merchants, and the minor Indian princes who were looking for areas to subdue, actually moved into SEA. And since this was a Brahmanistic pattern, which brought with it rigid caste law, there was little or no inter-marriage amongst this invading Indian-Brahmin group with the local population. So there was a type of political control put upon this village area, but the Indian pattern as far as mixing with the local people really did not affect the people to any great extent.

But this region, as already noted, today contains 200,000,000 people in an area that has demonstrated tremendous population growth in the last half century. India, for example, which is one of the great population centers of the world today, in 1901, the year of its first census, that is regarded as accurate) had roughly about 235,000,000 people. In 1951 it was estimated to be about 356,000,000 million—that is the official census estimate. If certain other subsidiary areas of India are included, we generally speak of a round figure of 400,000,000. But what is significant is this: that in 50 years' time there was a 52 per cent increase in population. In Siam (or Thailand), in 1900 there were roughly 8,000,000.

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people. Today there are 20,000,000. Our records are not as complete for 50 years' time in Indonesia, but we can take, for example, the small island of Java to demonstrate what has been happening as far as population goes. In 1815 the Dutch made a census of that island and their estimate was 4 and 1/2 million. Today there are over 50,000,000 on this island of Java. In the Philippines in 1903, I believe, that census estimate was roughly 7,600,000. Today it is probably over 19,000,000 which is almost a tripling of population in 50 years.

Now the reason, of course, is obvious. One of the aspects of westernization has been the development of social, economic, and health conditions. The tremendous high death rate of this region of Southeast Asia has progressively lowered in the last 50 years, whereas the birth rate has remained more or less stationary. Thus there has been this tremendous mushrooming of population. The significant feature of this is that if the statistics cited seem rather staggering remember this: *that these tremendous increases between 1900 and 1948 come before the era of our miracle drugs, before the era of our tremendous large-scale health programs where they are eradicating diseases like malaria, reducing tuberculosis and all of these other particularly malignant killers. What would this mean, then, if we would put into effect every life-saving technique that now exists?*

To cite an example, in 1948 a malaria control program was instituted on the Island of Ceylon. The Island of Ceylon, moreover, is small enough so that the health program could adequately control all of the other factors. In less than three years time, with a nation-wide malaria control program from 1948 to 1951, general mortality in Ceylon has been cut by one third, and infant mortality has been cut by 50 per cent. This is only one of the great killers of the region.

This means that all through Southeast Asia where, with the cooperation of the new government agencies, the United Nations' subsidiary agencies such as UNESCO and WHO, and such entities as the American FOA and other aid programs tremendous modern health programs are being put into effect, the potentialities of population growth for the future are tremendous. It is not inconceivable that there could again be a doubling of population in the next 50 years. If that would be the case, then just from the standpoint of population alone, SEA would itself have, not counting India, over 400,000,000 people.

Java at the present time can still feed its people, but if any small thing ever goes wrong with the rice harvest there is famine. Other areas like Thailand and the Philippines, if they use modern technological aids can support a rapidly growing population and can support population that would be double, triple, or perhaps even quadruple, of the present population. Some areas like Thailand, from the standpoint of resources are actually under-populated. Other areas are already overpopulated, which means that the peoples of SEA must work as a unit because some countries are going to be much more capable than others in caring for their great mushrooming populations.

Now it is true that later on there may be a population decline, for wherever westernization and modernization have occurred the birth rate also begins to decline. But that decline is not very rapid nor in

one generation. In the immediate future, therefore, the population potentialities of the Southeast Asian area are tremendous.

Last, there is today in SEA a whole host of new countries—countries that have come into being mainly within the last ten years or so. Thus there is an emerging pattern of nationalism. Out of this nationalism, have come many internal problems, some of which do not seem very realistic. When we read that one cannot go more than 10 or 15 miles outside the capital of Burma, Rangoon, without running into dissident trouble, we sometimes shake our heads. It is forgotten, for example, that these countries of SEA are having internal troubles which probably were also found in the Philippines, or may have been possible in the Philippines, but were worked out during the American Commonwealth days or were avoided by the particular patterns that the Commonwealth period instituted here. It shall be remembered also that nationalism as it is found in SEA is a European invention. It means that the young intellectuals who were trained in Europe or in America came back and began to try to put into practice the kind of political ideologies that they witnessed or studied outside of their own particular country. One should, of course, be aware of and must not overlook, the effect that Marxism or Communism has had in this particular region.

Now Marxism as a philosophy probably would not or does not appeal to many of the peasant areas of SEA, because certain areas in SEA for thousands of years have had a perfectly cooperative type of communal organization. For example, in Java land has been more or less commonly held by the villagers for centuries. To talk about land reform in a place like Java makes little or no head way. This is because there are no particular land reform problems in the sense of taking farm land away from a landlord and giving it back to the peasants, since the peasants have always had it. In some other areas, however, which were under European colonialism, a kind of landlord-tenant arrangement came into existence and has provided fairly fertile ground for some of the teachings of the Marxist philosophy. And it must also be forgotten that under colonial patterns in the twenties, the young intellectuals who became too outspoken against the colonial power, and who agitated for complete independence of their country, generally were arrested or sent into exile. In many cases the only place of refuge available for them was communist Russia. The famous Lenin Institute which was established in Moscow and which flourished from the 1920's till the late 30's actually trained many of the leaders today of SEA. The trouble caused by these graduates of the Lenin Institute in recent years means that to some extent the colonial powers are reaping some of the things that they themselves have sown in a previous generation.

At the Bandung conference one of the major elements that has come out in the preliminary discussion and announcements is the continual talk about colonialism and the rejection of any sort of colonial pattern. That is significant, because very definitely the countries of SEA today are still suspicious of the older European or American cultures that have past records of colonialism. Again it must be kept in mind that it is not easy to overcome several hundred years of conditioning in a few short

years, and this is something that of course the European and American should particularly keep in mind.

There is one last element that should be mentioned, and that is our concept of nationalism today. Since nationalism is not indigenous in SEA, the various new countries, the Philippines included, have had to try to unify their people, which essentially are peasant or folk society people living in small villages having perhaps a kind of local democracy within their own small villiage but having little or no concept of identity on a national scale. Naturally one of the things that nationalism has stressed is education. Now education is a humanistic pattern, but it has been used very definitely as a tool by which to weld the people of the country into a national union. There are a great many problems, of course that center around this use of education. One of the minor aspects of this nationalist program is the emphasis upon welding the people into a national unit by creating or encouraging the so-called national language. Now this, to be sure, is a very practical type of approach, but unfortunately SEA because of its geographic terrain and its cultural isolation in some parts, has developed patterns by which one country does not have any one language. Instead there is a great variety of languages, all of which may belong to the same basic language, but through thousands of years have become so different that they are unintelligible from island to island and from province to province.

Hence, when we speak of the national language, the first problem is which language should be selected. The usual method has been to arbitrarily designate a language which apparently has the most common features. Indonesia, for example, has taken one particular dialect for their national language. India has decided that Hindu will be the official language, and in the Philippines the so-called national language is based largely on Tagalog. Other countries like Burma and Thailand have a little easier problem, because while they have dialect differences from part of the country to another, they are so minor that within a few weeks' time your ears pick up the differences and you can move from the north to the south through the central regions without too much difficulty. But in spite of this nationalist program encouraging the national language, unfortunately some of the countries of SEA have perhaps gone to extremes.

Now it has been well demonstrated that on psychological grounds, instruction in the vernacular in the early grades seems to be more effective than instruction say in English, or even in the national tongue if the national tongue is not the vernacular. There is one thing to consider however. Many of the countries of SEA have been going to the extremes of deciding that *all* education must be in the vernacular. Hence there are such countries as Indonesia that has decided that *all* instruction including the college and university level must be in the national tongue. India is also considering and putting into effect the curtailment of English as the medium of instruction on university level. Burma already has required that all instruction on college and university level be in Burmese. However, the countries of SEA are not equipped with their new national tongues to teach the kind of education that is

needed in the international world, and as a result the nationalism program itself, in that one aspect, is perhaps retarding its own development.

A short time ago a sociologist who had been serving as an adviser to the Burmese government came through Manila. One of the interesting things he said was that this year the student body of the colleges and universities in Burma have petitioned the government to restore English as a medium of instruction. They also want to restore the teaching of English on the primary levels rather than to have it only on the secondary school level, because the college student in Burma today is simply at a loss. There are no books that are adequate in the Burmese language and then, too, English has become essential. Some of you may know that the official language of the Bandung Conference is English. Now this is not intended to make any brief for English as the universal tongue in this part of the world. What I want to point out is that in some areas people are perhaps unfortunately going to extremes along certain lines of nationalism, without perhaps realizing that what may happen will actually be retarding the progress of the country rather than helping it. In this one aspect, the problem of the use of the national language in Southeast Asian countries which formerly did not have a common language is something that must be solved. Some very important decisions may be made in the very near future as to where the national language will be used, how it will be used, and the extent to which it will be used—say as a medium of teaching—particularly above the elementary school level.

Now to conclude this very casual treatment of some very limited social aspects of SEA today, we might take a look again at the map. I mentioned India as having had a profound influence in the area. I neglected to mention China. Now China also for the last two thousand years had been sending a persistent and steady stream of people and cultural influences into the area. Today there are over 10,000,000 Chinese residents in SEA. These are the official figures. The unofficial figures are anybody's guess, because in some countries the official figures give only a fraction of what the real figures are. In the Philippines, in Thailand and in Indonesia, large segments of the economic life are controlled or have been controlled by an alien group of Chinese. Now previously, this alien group, while it might have caused certain social and cultural problems in the country, did not cause too much of a political problem.

Today, however, with the problem of two Chinas and a tremendously strong Communist China, there is this added problem of a political threat to the security of SEA. Now the great threat, of course, to SEA can come only from Communist China. Almost all the countries of SEA—Thailand and Indonesia particularly because they have a very strong and predominant Chinese minority—within the last ten years or so have become increasingly concerned about the foreign influence on the Chinese schools within the educational system of their own countries. In some countries like Thailand, stringent and rigid measures have been taken to try to deliberately force the Chinese schools into conformity with local patterns because (1) an attempt has been made to assimilate Chinese into Thailand, but (2) the political danger from outside today is so great that the foreign school must be closely supervised or it could conceivably become an agent of a foreign power who in turn would

begin to infiltrate into the educational system of the country in that particular way. This is one aspect, again that is a problem that faces SEA today. Large minority groups, in spite of the fact that they have existed there for hundreds of years, are not culturally a part of the country in which they live. This is a common problem with which all SEA powers have to wrestle and the answer is still, of course, unknown. The foregoing remarks have touched upon the basic cultural similarities of SEA, the social forces that have affected the area, the demographic situation, and problems of a rising nationalism, particularly in regard to language and the threat of Communist China. It is hoped that this rather casual treatment will stimulate further study and a better understanding of an area which is becoming of increasing importance in the modern world.

DURKHEIM'S CONCEPT OF SOLIDARITY*

By SISTER MECHTRAUD, S. SP. S.

Introduction

Durkheim was a French social philosopher, well known in sociological circles by his works, such as *The Division of Labor in Society*, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, *Suicide*, and *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. In these works, the social philosopher treats of certain key concepts which are basic to his theories and which, at the same time, clarify his whole thought system on social causation, social anomy, social constraint, collective representations, and so forth. One of the basic concepts recurring again and again in Durkheimian writings is that of solidarity, mechanical and organic solidarity. The following presents an only sketchy outline of this concept which has been taken by many, particularly, modern sociologists, as one of their basic forms. They use it, especially, in their suggestions for a reconstruction of our society; they point to it as a powerful antidote against that social disintegration which threatens modern society as it reveals itself above all in the atomistic trends of modern social life.

Only a few names may be mentioned here, outstanding in the field and using the concept of solidarity in this connection. Lloyd Warner and his group strongly emphasize this concept. Mention may be made only of the latest book of the Yankee City Series: *American Life: Dream and Reality*. It is especially the phenomenon of social symbolism that attracted these writers. Warner mentions, for instance, the cross as a symbol of unity for the Christians. Needless to say, the cross is much more to Christians than a mere symbol; an actual reality stands behind it, a historical fact which cannot be overlooked and which elevates this "symbol" far above other categories of social symbols and signs. Another writer, referring often to the concept of solidarity is Rev. Fr. Fichter, S. J., who speaks of it as of the unifying bond among a certain group of people, especially in his latest book on the Southern Parish. His concept of solidarity differs, however, in essential points from that of Durkheim.

The Durkheimian Concept of Solidarity

The concept of solidarity itself refers to the social unity of the group. It tries to answer the question, "What is that thing which keeps a group together and makes them cooperate—makes them act as a unit in which they combine their efforts?" Some thinkers have attributed this group unity to the effects of symbolism as has been stated before.

Durkheim wrote much, and most of his works deal with the concept of solidarity. In his works he also often combines the concepts of collective representations and solidarity. We find in his writings many

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