CHAPTER 2: EARLY USES AND CONCEPTUALISATION
OF THE TERM ‘SOUTHEAST ASIA’

Introduction

Southeast Asia is one of the sub-regions in Asia. It lies south of China, east of India, and north of Australia, geographically dividing into ‘mainland’ and ‘maritime.’ While the former consists of Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, the latter forms a string of archipelagos in the southern part of the region and includes: Brunei, East Timor, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore. This region is among the most diverse region in the world. Climate, ethnic composition, linguistic composition, religions, and government systems all exhibit differences in each country of the region.

Although the region has emerged as a single region over the last sixty years, the origins of the geographic term ‘Southeast Asia’ remain unclear. The term was widely used by government officials, newspapers’ writers and businessmen in the nineteenth and in the first half of the twentieth centuries. However, the conception of the term varied from writer to writer. Some of them used the term in a larger geographical scope than as used presently In addition, ‘Further/Farther India,’ ‘the Indian Archipelago’ and ‘the Malay Archipelago’ (hereafter collectively referred to as the ‘old terms’), which were generally used by the 1940s, were also often used with no clear distinction from ‘South Eastern Asia,’ ‘South East Asia,’ and ‘Southeast Asia’ (hereafter referred to as the ‘new terms’).

This chapter traces the earlier use and conception of the term ‘Southeast Asia.’ It examines how the old and new terms have been defined and used in English newspapers published in the United Kingdom and Singapore in the past. This chapter will first examine the terms for the region used in India, China and Japan, before tracing
the emergence of the English usage of the regional terms. The next section focuses on how the old terms were used in English newspapers prior to the nineteenth century. The usage of the new terms in the period are examined in the third section. The last section shed lights on the usage and the conceptions of the regional term ‘Southeast Asia’ after the 1940s among scholars and writers. We shall now examine how the neighbouring countries of India, China, and Japan referred to the region known to the West as Southeast Asia.

Terms used in India, China, and Japan

The Indians and Chinese sailed to Southeast Asia and were familiar with the region in the centuries before the arrival of Europeans.¹ The geographical location of the region was known to them and they had their own regional terms for the whole or part of the region since ancient times. The Japanese, too, knew the geographical region and conducted business with local traders but only from the beginning of the twentieth century.

Indian manuscripts used the term ‘Suvannabhumi’ (the Golden Land) as a regional term loosely, sparking some controversies about its exact location. Jack-Hilton opined that the term ‘seems to have been [used in] general rather than [for] particular names for the area.’² Paul Wheatley however pointed out that although Indians had several terms to refer to a part of the region in earlier periods,³ it ‘is not unlikely that the name (Suvannabhumi) came to be applied to the whole of the archipelago and the peninsula.’⁴

⁴ Ibid., p. 182.
George Coedès also interpreted the term as a reference to Sumatra or the Malay Peninsula. On the other hand, other scholars concluded that the term was used for Lower Burma and for Sumatra only. Though the Indian term might not have included the whole of modern Southeast Asia, at the very least, the term identified parts of the region.

China used two regional terms in ancient times, namely ‘Nanhai’ (South Sea) and Nanyang (South Ocean) to refer to the region. According to Miyazaki Sadaichi, a prominent Japanese scholar on Chinese history, ‘Nanhai’ was defined as a collective term for southern countries in the era of the Emperor Xianzong of the Tang dynasty. Nanyang referred to the southern countries from Quanzhou or Guangzhou, where the major international seaports were located. Hence, according to the Chinese, Nanyang was divided into two sub-regions, namely the East ocean and the West ocean. While these regional terms had been used since the ninth century, ‘[i]t was not until the British had confirmed their power in India and sharpened their taste for the China market that the basic condition for a Southeast Asia in-between region appeared during the nineteenth century.’ The scope of Nanyang remained unclear till the beginning of the twentieth century, though it was much closer to the modern idea of Southeast Asia. However, with the establishment of Nanyang Zhibu (Tongmeihui headquarters of South Ocean) in Singapore by Sun Yat-Sen in 1907, the term ‘Nanyang’ became well known among Chinese. Sun Yat-Sen’s political campaigns in the region to topple the Qing dynasty attracted much interest among the Chinese within and outside China, and the

---

7 Miyazaki Ichisada, ‘Nanyo wo touzaiyouni wakatsu konkyo nitsuite (Evidences divided the East and the West ocean in the South ocean),’ *Toyoshi Kenkyu* Vol. 7, No. 4 (1942), p. 200.
8 Ibid.
10 Ibid., p. 65.
term ‘Nanyang’ was woven into the fabric of Chinese society. Although the term Nanyang was often used, it was gradually replaced by ‘Dongnanya’ (Southeast Asia, literally East-South Asia) after the Second World War. According to Wang Gungwu, it was due to change of an ideological shift against Communist China among Western powers and Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms.12 While academic journals in China continued to use Nanyang between the 1950s and the 1960s, the term disappeared completely from academic journals by the 1980s.13

Another neighbouring country, Japan, named the region ‘Nanyo’ (South Ocean), before the term ‘Tounan Ajia’ (Southeast Asia, literally East-South Asia) became widely used. The term ‘Nanyo’ was derived from the Chinese term Nanyang, pronounced in the Japanese language. The early use of ‘Nanyo’ dates back to the eighteenth century. According to Shimizu Hajime, the term was first used in Seiiki Monogatari (Tales of the Western Regions) by an intellectual, Honda Toshiaki, in 1798. Shimizu argued that the concept of ‘Nanyo’ was almost the same as that of the current Southeast Asia.14 This regional term was popularly associated with the idea of ‘southward advance’ (Nanshin-ron) during the Meiji (1868-1912) and the Taisho (1912-1926) eras, indicating the expansion of business and immigrating to the region. During this period, two books on the region were published, namely Nanyo Jiji (the South Seas Affairs) by a geographer, Shiga Shigetaka, in 1887, and Nangokuki (Travels in Southern Country) by a historian, Takekoshi Yosaburo, in 1910, helped the Japanese people navigate the region.15 Although other terms such as ‘Nanpo’ (the South) and ‘Nanpo-ken’ (the Southern sphere) were also popular by the time of the Second World War, ‘Nanyo’ was more frequently

---

13 Ibid., p. 69.
14 Shimizu Hajime, ‘Southeast Asia as a Regional Concept in Modern Japan,’ in Paul H. Kratoska et al., Locating Southeast Asia: Geographies of Knowledge and Politics of Space, Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2005, pp. 85-86.
15 See the analysis for the two books in Yano Toru, Nanshin no Keihu (The lineage of southern expansion), Tokyo: Chuo Koronsha, 1975, pp. 55-64.
used among the Japanese. The region was attracted much attention as it was rich in natural resources. The invasion of the region by the Japanese military in 1941 was also to gain access to these resources. After the end of the Second World War, the Japanese terms were gradually replaced with the term ‘Tounan Ajia’ (Southeast Asia)\textsuperscript{16} because the older terms, along with ‘Daitoua’ (Greater East Asia), had overtones of military aggression.

While the Asian countries surrounding the region had their own terms and concepts since early times,\textsuperscript{17} the emergence of the term ‘South East Asia’ in English, led to Asian countries using the English translation of this term in their local languages. The next section examines the regional terms used to describe the current East Asia in English.

The usage of the old terms by the nineteenth century

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the present Southeast Asia was not collectively described and was divided into two areas. Modern mainland Southeast Asia was referred to as ‘Farther/Further India,’ while the maritime area was referred to as the ‘Indian Archipelago,’ or ‘Malay Archipelago.’ While the term ‘Farther India’ was first used in a newspaper article about the kingdom of Pegu in Burma in 1742,\textsuperscript{18} the term ‘Further India,’ which has a slight spelling difference, appeared in 1788. A passage in the article stating ‘the Peninsula of Further India to the mouth of Ganges’ referred to the current mainland area.\textsuperscript{19} With regard to the maritime area, \textit{The Ipswich Journal}, a newspaper in a country town of England, begun using the term ‘Indian Archipelago’ in

\textsuperscript{16} This term was used in text books in elementary and middle school immediately after the First World War. See Shimizu Hajime, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 82-112.
\textsuperscript{17} For the conceptions of Southeast Asia used by Arabians, See G. R. Tibbetts, \textit{A Study of the Arabic texts containing material on South-East Asia}, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Newcastle Courant}, 25 Sept. 1742, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Norfolk Chronicle}, 21 June 1788, p. 2
This term was sometimes used in other newspapers after that. Another term for the same area, ‘the Malay Archipelago,’ appeared for the first time in a newspaper, *Inverness Courier*, in 1824.21

An attempt was made to define clearly the old terms. Howard Malcom, who travelled as a missionary to the region, defined the term ‘Farther India’ as ‘India beyond the Ganges, embracing Burmah, Asam, Munnipore, Siam, Camboja, and Cochin-China and all the region between China and the Bay of Bengal, south of the Tibet Mountains.’22 In 1905, Hugh Clifford, a British colonial officer, outlined the boundaries of ‘Farther India’23 which consisted of Burma, Malaya, Siam, and Indo-China. Unlike Malcom, Clifford narrowed it to only what is now mainland Southeast Asia.24 This term was relatively commonly used in British newspapers in the second half of the nineteenth century, but was hardly used in the twentieth century.25

The term ‘Indian Archipelago,’ on the other hand, was used more often in British newspapers in the late eighteenth century. Growing interest in the Asian islands in the nineteenth century popularised the use of the term, ‘Indian Archipelago.’ A clear definition was made by John Crawfurd in 1820. His concept of the ‘Indian Archipelago’ covered from Sumatra as the most east island to Papua New Guineas as the most west including the Malay Peninsula, and from Java as the most south island to the Philippines

---

20 The Ipswich Journal, 16 Nov. 1751, p. 2.
21 Inverness Courier, 4 Nov. 1824, p. 2.
24 George Coedès later made a definition of the Further India which stated: ‘island Southeast Asia except for the Philippines and the Indochinese Peninsula.’ Some conceptual confusion might have been made. Refer to *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968, p. xv.
25 See the Table 1 in the next page.
Table 1: The number of usage by year\textsuperscript{26}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>South East Asia</th>
<th>South Eastern Asia</th>
<th>Further India</th>
<th>Farther India</th>
<th>Indian Archipelago</th>
<th>Malay Archipelago</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 1830</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830-1839</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840-1849</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850-1859</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860-1869</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870-1879</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880-1889</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890-1899</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-1909</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910-1919</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920-1929</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930-1939</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

as the most north.\textsuperscript{27} In short, this term applied to the entire archipelago or what was known as maritime Southeast Asia. Malcom also defined in his book above mentioned that ‘the Indian Archipelago’ covered ‘Ceylon, the Laccadives (\textit{Lakshadweep islands in India}), Maldives, Andaman’s Nichobars, Moluccas, Philippines, Borneo, Sumatra, Java, Celebes, and all their minor neighbours.’\textsuperscript{28} The scope of the latter term was more extensive than the concept expounded by J. H. Moor in a publication two years earlier.

\textsuperscript{26} The British Newspaper Archive: www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk (accessed on 18 and 19 March 2012).
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., p. 134. The emphasis in Italic was made by the author.
Moor’s definition was straightforward because the scope of the term was almost the same as modern maritime Southeast Asia. Horace John who wrote about the history of the Archipelago thirty years after Crawfurd’s publication, adopting the latter’s concept. It appears that no writer attempted any further definition of the ‘Indian Archipelago’ till the twentieth century. It might be said that newspaper editors in Britain accepted the definition of the ‘Indian Archipelago.’

Besides these terms, there was another regional term which was used to describe the whole of the archipelago, namely the ‘Malay Archipelago.’ This regional term became well known after a British naturalist, Alfred Russel Wallace, published The Malay Archipelago in 1869. He explained that there were ‘a number of large and small islands forming a connected group distinct from those great masses of land, and having little connection with either of them’ between Asia and Australia. He named this area the ‘Malay Archipelago’ simply because of the Malay inhabitants in this region. The author writes, ‘[t]he Malay Archipelago extends for more than 4,000 miles in length from east to west, and is about 1,300 [miles] in breadth from north to south.’ As is clear from the passage, the regional term had a concept that was almost similar to that of modern maritime Southeast Asia. Compared with the term, the ‘Indian Archipelago,’ the scope of the ‘Malay Archipelago’ by Wallace was slightly larger because it included the Tenasserim Island in Burma and the Nicobar Islands in India. In fact, the term the ‘Malay Archipelago’ was not created by Wallace. This regional term had appeared in British newspapers in the 1820s. The use of this term subsequently became more frequent after the publication by Wallace in 1869. This book inspired newspaper writers to use it more

32 Ibid., pp. 2-3.
34 See the Table 1 in p. 31.
often. This regional term was also often used along with the ‘Indian Archipelago’ by the twentieth century. For example, a search in the British Newspaper Archive shows that in the nineteenth century the terms, the ‘Indian Archipelago’ and the ‘Malay Archipelago’ were still frequently used. The frequent usage of the former appellation peaked in the 1850s when it was used in 971 articles. As the Table 1 shows, it gradually decreased by the end of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, the usage of the ‘Malay Archipelago’ increased from the 1860s; the term was used in 251 articles in the 1880s, surpassing 224 articles which referred to the ‘Indian Archipelago.’ The usage of the ‘Malay Archipelago’ further increased, finding its way into 268 articles, exceeding the mention of the ‘Indian Archipelago’ in 114 articles in the 1890s.35

The use of the new terms in the nineteenth century

One of the new terms in English for Southeast Asia emerged between the 1820s and the 1830s. A newspaper, Bells Weekly Messenger in 1822 used the term ‘south-east of Asia’ in an article, defining it as the ‘dominion of the waters between the south-east of Asia and south-west of America from the 51st degree of north latitude.’36 The term did not have the same geographical span as modern day Southeast Asia, as it described a much larger area from China to modern Southeast Asia. The writer of the article perceived the whole area as a single regional unit.

The earliest book to use the other new term ‘South-Eastern Asia’ was Travels in South-Eastern Asia: Compiled from the most authentic and recent sources, which was published in 1831.37 The author is unknown, but this book indicates clearly the scope of

35 See the Table 1 in p. 31.
36 Bells Weekly Messenger, 7 July, 1822, p. 4, Royal Cornwall Gazette, 13 July, 1822, p. 4. Both papers used the same article titled ‘Pretentions of Russia’ by Sir James Mackintosh who was a professor in the East India Company’s College in Britain.
37 Travels in South-Eastern Asia: Compiled from the most authentic and recent sources, London: C.J.G. and F. Rivington, 1831.
the regional term; it embraces ‘the British possessions in the East, Hindostan, and the countries adjacent, Caubul, Nepaul, and the Birman empire’ and also the vast empire of China, ‘which on account of its commerce with England, passing through the hands of the East India Company.’ It should be noted that this description was much more extensive than the scope of ‘south-east of Asia’ in 1822.

Howard Malcom, as mentioned above, published his travelogue of the region and, interestingly enough, this book has the same title as the previous book published in 1831. While the author did not provide the definition of his ‘South-Eastern Asia,’ judging from the title, it is probable that the four geographic names in the title, i.e. Hindustan, Malaya, Siam, and China, indicates the scope of the term. Nevertheless, the attached map in the book shows the regional scope from the East of India to the Indochina Peninsula, the Malay Peninsula and the north of Sumatra Island. The exact demarcation of the region thus remains unclear. Malcom might have construed South-Eastern Asia as a collective term encompassing both ‘Farther India’ and the ‘Indian Archipelago.’ Although Yano Toru argues that his scope of South Eastern Asia might have referred to only modern mainland Southeast Asia excluding most of maritime Southeast Asia, Malcom might have made the definition of the region. Additionally, the term ‘South-Eastern Asia’ might have been ‘self-evident enough to need no definition’ in the author’s and readers’ opinions even in this period.

*The Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*, which was first published in 1847 and became ‘[t]he first regional scholarly journal,’ published two articles on

---

38 Ibid., p. v.
41 Donald Emmerson, *ibid.*, p. 5.
Southeast Asia: ‘The Ethnology of Eastern Asia’ by J. R. Logan, which had a section entitled ‘The ethnology of South Eastern Asia,’ and ‘Contributions to the physical geography of South-Eastern Asia and Australia’ by George Windsor Earl. Both of them do not provide us the definition of the term ‘South (-) Eastern Asia’ but it seems clear that while Logan applies the term to the modern mainland Southeast Asia, China, and a part of India, Earl uses it only for current mainland Southeast Asia because he distinguished the term ‘South Eastern Asia’ from the ‘Indian Archipelago’ in his article. Logan also proposed other regional terms, ‘Ultraindia’ or ‘Transindia’ for the regional name between China and India, but no one used the terms.

After the 1870s, the new terms ‘South Eastern Asia’ and ‘South East Asia’ were more popularly used. For example, though it is not well known presently, a book *The land of the elephant: Sights and scenes in South-Eastern Asia* was published by Frank Vincent in 1874. This book does not provide a clear definition of South-Eastern Asia, either, but it was reviewed and advertised in several newspapers. Also, *The Graphic*, a weekly illustrated newspaper, shows a clear and detailed map using the title ‘South-Eastern Asia’ in 1883, demarcating the region including China, India, Ceylon, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and all present ASEAN countries. Thus, in the period the terms were quite popular for writers and readers.

The term ‘South Eastern Asia,’ which was used mainly in travelogues by then, were found in articles on economy such as trading, ship transportation and natural resources, and international politics in the 1890s. At the same time these articles using

---

44 George Windsor Earl, ‘Contributions to the physical geography of South-Eastern Asia and Australia,’ *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*, Vol. 6 (1852).
the term were published in local newspapers in urban and rural areas in Britain. The same phenomenon was born in the U.S.\textsuperscript{48} with use of some varieties of the regional term: ‘Southeast of Asia’ and ‘Southeast Asia.’\textsuperscript{49}

In Singapore, the regional terms were often used in local newspapers. Earlier usage of the term was in \textit{The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser}, which introduced that the U.S. sent a diplomatic agent to ‘South Eastern Asia.’\textsuperscript{50} \textit{The Straits Times} also started to use the term ‘South Eastern Asia’ in 1850.\textsuperscript{51} When Joseph Balestier, Consul of the United States to Singapore, was staying on the island, his letter to Secretary of State, John Clayton, was published in the newspaper. The Consul described the term ‘South Eastern Asia’ twice in the letter. In fact, Balestier was appointed in 1849 as ‘Special Agent of the United States to Cochin-China and the other portions of South Eastern Asia’ by the President, Zachary Taylor, in order to improve relations with Cochinchina, ‘negotiate a commercial treaty with Cochinchina,’ persuade the Siamese to follow the terms of a treaty, and ‘negotiate treaties with several principalities’ in the Archipelago.\textsuperscript{52} As a Special Agent, his reference to the term covered a region corresponding to the whole of modern Southeast Asia. However, the regional term was hardly used for almost the next forty years in the local newspapers since then. It appeared again in 1887 in the newspaper which reported the speech of Holt S. Hallett, a British administrator who simply described the term ‘South-eastern Asia’ as a region roughly between India and China.\textsuperscript{53} Another article described the scope of the term in 1898: ‘From south eastern Asia, the Malay Peninsula stretches like a long arm for nearly a

\textsuperscript{48} From the filtered list on www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk and http://newspaperarchive.com (accessed on March 2012). The terms are found in newspapers in Lancashire, Sheffield and York in England, Glasgow in Scotland, Belfast in North Ireland, Waterloo in Iowa, Iola in Kansas, Lima in Ohio, Gettysburg in Pennsylvania, Newport in Rhode Island, San Antonio in Texas and so on.

\textsuperscript{49} The first use of the term ‘Southeast of Asia’ is in \textit{The New York Times}, 3 April 1896, p. 8 and 3 Sept. 1896, p. 16. For the earlier use of the term ‘Southeast Asia,’ see \textit{The San Antonio Express} in Texas, 23 April, 1868, p. 8, \textit{The Indiana Progress}, 28 Sept. 1876, p. 3 and \textit{The Atlantic Telegraph}, 12 February, 1879, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser}, 16 Nov. 1849, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{The Straits Times}, 13 Aug. 1850, p. 3.


\textsuperscript{53} \textit{The Straits Times}, 12 July, 1887, p. 3.
thousand miles down into the greatest archipelago on the globe.' This scope covered only the present-day mainland Southeast Asia. Thus, during this period the scope of the term ‘South Eastern Asia’ had two definitions, in which the preferred definition differed depending on the writers. The advent of the twentieth century saw wider use of the term not only in newspapers but also in government documents, academic journals, and corporate documents.

The British government officially started to use the term *South-East Asia* in documents at the start of the twentieth century. When the British government published importation rules in 1919, it used the phrase ‘importation to Australia from India, Ceylon, South Eastern Asia, East Indian Islands, Philippine Islands and Japan.’ In this context, ‘South Eastern Asia’ was applied only to the modern mainland Southeast Asia, because it was separately referred from East Indian Islands under the possession of Dutch and the Philippines, which is now labelled as the maritime Southeast Asia.

However, the scope was broadened to the whole modern region ten years later. S. P. Waterlow, a British officer in Bangkok, referred to the term in a letter which was sent on 28 May 1928 to Sir Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in which he mentioned that the countries of South-East Asia were ‘Siam, India, Burma, Malaya, Indo-China, Hong Kong, Manila and the Dutch Indies.’ Compared with the importation rules in 1919, the British government saw that the scope was extended to the whole of current Southeast Asia. It is not clear why the government referred to Siam and South-East Asia separately in the title but it is noteworthy that government officials had used internally the clearly defined term much earlier than the Second World War, with

---

54 The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser, 17 Jan. 1898, p. 3.
56 Further Correspondence Respecting Siam and South-East Asia: Part 1, 1928, FO422/85, p. 76.
the scope being enlarged from mainland Southeast Asia only to the whole of present day Southeast Asia.

Academicians also have used the term frequently. When Dr. Stein van Callenfels, a Dutch archaeologist who was ‘well known as an authority on the pre-history of the Far East,’ had an audience with the King Prajadhipok and Queen Rambhai Barni of Thailand in 1931, the professor spoke about ‘the Pre-history of South Eastern Asia.’ Evidently, the indigenous people of the region had already learnt the term. Callenfels also used the term ‘South Eastern Asia’ in an academic seminar later. In the Third Congress of Prehistorians of the Far East in 1938, he gave three presentations on the prehistory of South-East Asia. Although other presenters did not use the regional term, it was widely accepted in the academic circles.

Companies set up in Singapore used the regional term in the names of branch offices. For example, while most insurance companies were established and operated as ‘a Singapore branch’ or ‘an Eastern branch,’ Federal Life Assurance Company of Canada, a British-Canadian company incorporated in 1882, formed a ‘branch of South Eastern Asia’ in 1908. This company regularly placed advertisements of the South Eastern Asia branch in local newspapers in the 1910s. After this branch was founded, other leading insurance companies such as the Sun Life Insurance, The National Mutual Life Association of Australasia, and The Motor Union Insurance also formed branches of South Eastern Asia. The scope of the term might have had the same definition as that of modern Southeast Asia. It is significant to note here that by using it frequently, corporations clearly gave recognition to the regional term.

57 The Straits Times, 2 Jan. 1935, p. 11.
61 The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser, 21 Nov. 1908, p. 12.
Asian politician, too, learnt the regional term in this period. On 17 January, 1931, Jawaharlal Nehru, who would later become Prime Minister of India, referred to ‘south-eastern Asia’ in a letter to his daughter.\(^{63}\) In the following year, he wrote another letter entitled ‘Farther India and the East Indies’ in which he explained the scope of ‘south-east Asia’ to his daughter. According to Nehru, the regional definition embraced the mainland and maritime area of modern Southeast Asia.\(^{64}\) As he studied between 1907 and 1912, he might have learnt the term through English newspapers. His conceptualization of the regional term was exactly the same as the current regional scope. The passage deserves attention not only because the two regional terms, i.e. ‘Farther India’ and ‘the East Indies,’ had been used to respectively identify the mainland and the maritime sections of modern Southeast Asia, but also because the term ‘south-eastern Asia’ was used with the combined conceptualizations of both ‘Farther India’ and ‘the East Indies.’ After the Second World War, The Discovery of India,\(^ {65}\) published by Nehru in 1956, discussed the history of relations between India and South East Asia. Judging from the contents of the book, his conceptualization of the term seems to be the same as his earlier conceptualization in 1932, but at least India was not included in the conceptualization.

**Increased popularity of the term ‘South East Asia,’ post-1940s**

The term ‘South East Asia’ leapt to public attention in the 1940s. As most of scholars emphasised, the formation of South East Asia Command (SEAC) in 1943 made the term more prevalent. Although the military body had no stable regional concept for political reasons, its formation was an important step towards official identification of

---


\(^{64}\) Ibid., pp. 483-490.

the region. Initially, the organization covered only Burma, Malaya, Siam, Singapore, and Sumatra. French Indo-China was controlled by Chiang Kai-shek, who became the President of the Republic of China later on. The Philippines was then under the control of the U.S. Subsequently, Borneo, Celebes and Java islands were covered by SEAC. Its region, South East Asia, was separately controlled by several external powers because of political reasons. Nevertheless, the term ‘South East Asia’ began to gain recognition uniting the region of ‘Farther India,’ the ‘Indian Archipelago,’ and the ‘Malay Archipelago.’ It was, therefore, logical to identify the region as ‘South East Asia’ after the name of the military body. In this sense, Fifield was right in saying that the formation of SEAC ‘was a major step in the military and political identification of the region.’

In addition, since the 1940s, there has been increased research in area studies of South East Asia. Scholars began to focus on the region ‘as a new “space”’ for academic concentration as part of an Anglo-American movement which established ‘area studies’ as a legitimate and important field of academic endeavor. However, as there was no consensus regarding the regional definition among researchers, the scope of the region varied with each scholar. Furnivall’s book in 1941 was the earliest academic work which had the regional term in its title; subsequently, by 1943 he wrote three books on the region. In all his books, Furnivall’s interpretation of the region included the modern day Southeast Asia as well as India and Formosa (Taiwan). John Christian, who analysed the literature of the region, defined the regional concept as one which included the Yunnan province in China. Lennox Mills edited the special issue on ‘Southeastern

66 Russell Fifield, ibid., p. 44.
67 Ibid., p. 43.
68 Philip Charrier, ibid., p. 317.
Asia’ and the Philippines in an American journal in 1943,\textsuperscript{72} isolating the Philippines from the grouping, but his book published in 1949 included the island country into the region.\textsuperscript{73} Helmut Callis and Rupert Emerson’s books in 1942\textsuperscript{74} covered Taiwan, but Emerson added Hong Kong in the region. K.M. Panikkar, a prominent Indian scholar, excluded the Philippines from the region.\textsuperscript{75}

Even after the end of the Second World War, the scope of the region differed from the current understanding of the regional term. First, \textit{The Journal of Politics} in 1947, which focused on politics in the Asian region, saw the modern day Southeast Asia as being divided into four areas, namely the Netherlands East Indies, the Philippines, French Indo-China, and British Southeast Asia. There was a different writer for each area. Duncan Hall, who wrote about British Southeast Asia, embraced Ceylon (Sri Lanka) as a part of the region.\textsuperscript{76} Second, Virginia Thompson, an expert in Thai studies, separated the Philippines from the region. Even her subsequent book published in 1955 excluded the Philippines from the region.\textsuperscript{77}

Regional concepts among scholars in the 1950s were ‘flexible.’ With the development of area studies of South East Asia, the publication of books and journals on the region considerably increased in the 1950s. While H.J. van Mook defined South East Asia as the region covering ‘Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, French Indo-China, Malaya, Indonesia, the Philippines, and the smaller territories of British Borneo and Portuguese Timor,’\textsuperscript{78} D. G. E. Hall, \textit{A History of South-East Asia} in 1955 (first edition) hesitated to include the Philippines because it was ‘outside the mainstream of historical

\textsuperscript{73} Lennox A. Mills (ed.), \textit{The New World of Southeast Asia}, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1949, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{75} K.M. Panikkar, \textit{The Future of South-East Asia: an Indian View}, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943.
\textsuperscript{76} Duncan H. Hall, ‘Post-war government and politics of British South East Asia,’ \textit{Journal of Politics}, Vol. 9, No. 4, (1947), pp. 692-716.
developments,79 but the second edition (1964) included the country. As another case, probably Tibor Mende’s concept of South East Asia had the widest scope of the region among scholars in the period, as it included India, Pakistan, and Ceylon into the region.80 In the works by Army Vandenbosch and Richard Butwell, and George Kahin,81 the scope of the region used by them then and that of the present day South East Asia are similar. The former clearly listed the countries which comprised the region in 1967, and provided justification for doing so. The region is ‘forced by physical circumstances to be wholly internally oriented.’ It is because ‘high mountains divide the area from China and India to the north … and oceans from natural boundaries to the east, south, and west.’82 The latter grouped the present Southeast Asian countries together without any clear definition.

As discussed above, the regional concept varied from one writer to another even in the 1950s. This phenomenon of ‘flexible concepts’ was reflected not only in the academic circle, but also in the political arena.

Although the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which was formed in 1954, derived its name from the regional term, the term was not clearly defined.83 Considering that a great number of scholars had different conceptualizations of the regional term, the articles laid out in the treaty described vaguely the scope of the term in the phrase ‘the general area of South East Asia, including also the entire territories of the Asian Parties’ and the general area of the Southwest Pacific excluding north of the Philippines.84 The former ‘general area’ is evidence that the military body itself was not able to clearly demarcate the regional concept. This organization, as Liefer said, was to

83 See SEATO in the Chapter 5.
protect Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam from communists. Though the countries under its protection included those in the modern day Southeast Asia, its actual members were only Thailand and the Philippines. Some of the abovementioned scholars excluded the Philippines from the definition of the regional term, but the Philippines recognised itself as a member of South East Asia. The Philippines included itself in SEATO because of ‘an opportunity to develop close relations with Asian states.’

While the 1960s saw a consensus among scholars being gradually built up partly because of the formation of indigenous regional organizations, different concepts of the region still prevailed in this period. John Cady and Nicholas Tarling explain the history of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands under the Republic of India in their books. Tarling places emphasis on the inclusion of the islands in the region and pointed out that ‘the establishment of territorial dominion in India and the development of trade to China gave the Andaman and Nicobar Islands their importance in British policy in the late eighteenth century.’ This implies that the inclusion of the islands was from a historical point of view based on the British policy. On the contrary, Denis Warner’s definition of the regional concept excludes Burma and the Philippines. Another scholar, George Coedès, also excludes the Philippines and the north of Vietnam on the grounds that they were not historically Indianised along with the Assam region.

There were slightly different definitions of the region in the 1960s, but scholars have reached a consensus of the regional definition since the 1970s. Since then it has been quite rare to include countries except for the present-day ASEAN members into the region of Southeast Asia. As will discuss in the chapter five, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka)

86 Leszek Buszynski, ibid., p. 58.
88 Denis Warner, Reporting South-East Asia, Sydney: Argus and Robertson, 1966.
was invited to join to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) immediately before the formation in 1967. The island country, in which the headquarters of SEAC was located during the war, was regarded as one of the countries of the region. The country, however, has been considered not under Southeast Asia, but South Asia since then. As the Ceylon government turned down the invitation due to its domestic issues, scholars also have perceived that Sri Lanka belongs to South Asia.

In a similar fashion, other neighbouring countries, for example, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Taiwan, have not been taken in the region since the 1970s. Pakistan became a member of SEATO, and Bangladesh, which formerly called the East Pakistan and gained independence in 1971, is adjacent to Burma. The majority of Pakistan and Bangladesh is Muslim and shared the religion with Indonesia and Malaysia, but the regional organisations such as the Association of South East Asia (ASA), ASEAN and others never invited them and accepted the country as a member of the region probably because of diplomatic relations between the organisations’ members and India. Even most of historians and other scholars do not consider them as the parts of Southeast Asia.

In the case of Taiwan or Formosa, some writers included in the ‘Malay Archipelago,’ that is, the part of maritime Southeast Asia, in the nineteenth century. The people of the island originally were aborigines, but the Chinese population reached to 50,000 by the end of the Dutch, and has kept growing. The number of Chinese migrations grew to approximately 2.5 million by 1905. Taiwan became ‘China issue’ when Kuomintang members evacuated and formed the Republic of China after they were defeated by the Communists in mainland China. The Southeast Asian countries took different positions towards the governments in Taipei and Beijing because of its international legitimacy, which was related to the Cold War. After the issue of China

---

representative seat in United Nations was solved, the countries adopted ‘One-China policy’ supporting the Beijing government.\textsuperscript{92} Taiwan showed its desire to join ASA in 1966, but the members agreed that ‘China is not in Southeast Asia.’\textsuperscript{93} Even scholars has not defined Taiwan and China as the parts of the region.

Thus, most of scholars have fixed the scope of the region, i.e. the 10 ASEAN countries and East Timor since the 1970s. These countries have not been excluded from the region and at the same time other countries have not been included in Southeast Asia.

**Conclusion**

The present-day Southeast Asia was originally broken up into the two areas. While the mainland was called ‘Farther India’ by the beginning of the twentieth century, the insular area was called ‘India Archipelago’ and ‘Malay Archipelago.’ Nevertheless, the new word ‘South East Asia’ was born in Europe in the nineteenth century. Although this appellation originally indicated the large area including the surrounding area of the mainland Southeast Asia with China and India, Europeans did not take in the archipelago area.

So far it is said that the term ‘Southeast Asia’ has been used since 1943 when the SEAC was established. However, this research shows that the regional term has been used since the nineteenth century and has been popular in English newspapers at least since the second half of the century or at the latest since the beginning of the twentieth century. Also, the term was well recognised by government officials, scholars, writers and even businessmen.


\textsuperscript{93} Estrella D. Solidum, *Towards a Southeast Asian Community*, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1974, p. 44.
However, the definition was always not the same as the current definition. As mentioned previously, Europeans named the term with quite large area including China and India, but the British government has begun using for the region combined the mainland with the archipelago since the 1920s. Although the redefined area covered Indian and Hong Kong, which was colonised by the government, it was an epoch-making invention to include the insular area in the term. Since the formation of the military ‘regional’ organization, SEAC, which operated beyond the two areas (mainland and maritime), playing an important role to further promote recognition of the region. Thus, regional terms to indicate the region between China and India have unified into only the term ‘Southeast Asia.’

The following years saw area studies of the region being given much attention in the United States, and this resulted in the publication of numerous books and journals on South East Asia. Nevertheless, the definition of South East Asia still varied from one scholar to another for about twenty years, before a consensus on the regional term among scholars was reached in the 1960s.