

COLONIALISM: The Building Blocks

1 Grabbing the Cash

— *looting Asia*

The colonies of Asia—India, Malaya (now Malaysia), the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), the Philippines—were rich in natural resources. But the money from their crops and mines and forests wasn't spent in developing industries for the countries themselves. The money sailed off to Europe.

What do you mean?



Well, for instance, from 1850 to 1872, the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) contributed one-third of the total budget of Holland. The Dutch were able to reduce their national debt, and this money also paid for the building of the Dutch state railways.

Think about it:
If Asian money had been used to develop Asia rather than Europe, what differences might there be today?

2 The Raw Deal

— *exporting crops to Europe*



So what was so bad about growing a few crops to send to Europe? The people got paid, didn't they?

Well, for one thing, if you had just enough land for your family, and suddenly you were told that you had to grow crops to send to Europe, you'd probably find yourself getting pretty hungry! Plus the prices were set very low, and most of the money went to pay the heavy European taxes. So there wasn't enough money to buy food.

But that's not all. The Europeans organized their colonies so that each one grew just two or three different crops. India grew jute, cotton and tea. Ceylon grew tea. Malaya grew rubber.

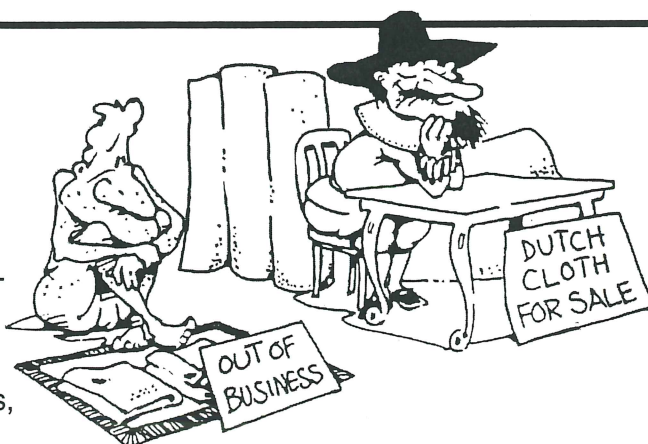


Think about it:
Having only one or two export crops might cause problems later on. What might those be?

3 The Craft Crash

— *de-skilling Asia*

The division of labour idea also affected the craftspeople and manufacturers of Asia. European countries went to great lengths to ensure that Asians would produce raw materials (to be sold at low prices to the mother country), and buy manufactured products (at high prices) from the mother country. Yet in Asia there were many expert weavers, potters, leatherworkers and other craftspeople. The colonialists discouraged these businesses through taxation, and made sure that the new machinery available in Europe wasn't brought to Asia.



Think about it:
How might this attack on Asian craftspeople affect Asia's development?

4 Drawing the Line

— *problems of addition and division*

Often, when the colonialists created a colony, people with little in common were chucked together, or those with a lot in common had a line drawn between them. Indonesia, for instance, is a collection of all the different people — some of them Asian, some Melanesian — whose countries were taken over by the Dutch in the region.

To make things worse, many of the colonizers came up with a great idea for running colonies.

Divide and rule! If we encourage distrust between the different groups, they won't rise up and throw us Europeans out!



In the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), for example, the Ambonese people were used as soldiers to suppress the other Indonesian people. When Indonesia became independent, the Ambonese were so hated by the rest of the country that most of them went to Holland as refugees.

Think about it:
What problems might the artificial colonial boundaries cause later?

Nearly all our major problems today have grown up during British rule and as a direct result of British policy. . . .

— Jawaharlal Nehru, later India's first prime minister, written from prison where he was serving his 9th term for protesting British rule, 1944

5 Holding up Hierarchies

The European colonizers had another problem:

There are so few of us, and so many of them! How are we going to keep all these Asians under control?



OUR RESOURCEFUL COLONIAL ADMINISTRATOR DISCOVERS THE ANSWER!

My dear chap, we'll help you stay in power as long as you keep all these peasants under control.

"Ah, now I can do what I want, and the English will support me!"



Think about it:
The colonialists used military might to keep in power leaders who were not chosen by the people. What problems might this cause after these countries became independent?

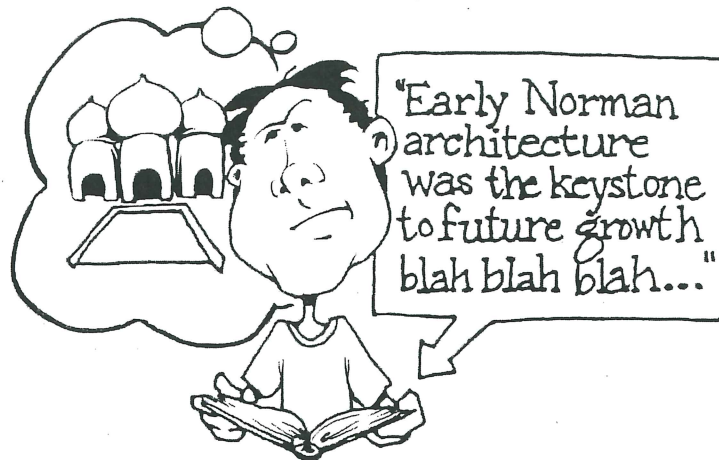
6 West is Best

In education, culture, agriculture, development, and economics, the colonialists pushed their own idea about the world:

WEST IS BEST!

"... colonialism tended not only to deprive a society of its freedom and its wealth, but of its very character, leaving its people intellectually and morally disoriented ..."

—D.K. Fieldhouse, *Colonialism 1870-1945*



Think about it:

In schools and universities, in literature and newspapers, and in countless other ways, Europeans insisted that Europe was the model of goodness.

How might this "cultural colonialism" affect Asia even today?

Well, it does sound as if colonialism might have had an effect on Asian development, all right.

That's an understatement! Colonialism was like a huge vacuum cleaner, sucking all the wealth and jobs and pride out of Asia.

