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ON THE TYPOLOGY OF *ETHNOSES* IN INSULAR SOUTHEAST ASIA

Southeast Asia is a geographical and cultural-historical area which comprises the Indo-Chinese Peninsula and the Malay Archipelago. The following countries exist there at present: Burma, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Brunei, Eastern Timor, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines.¹ Geographically, culturally and historically, Southeast Asia is usually subdivided into a continental and an insular region, the Malay Peninsula being included with the latter. Thus the historical-ethnographical region known as Insular Southeast Asia includes not only the insular countries proper, i.e. Brunei, Eastern Timor, Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines, but also those parts of Malaysia on Kalimantan Island and the Malay Peninsula.

The insular part of Southeast Asia coincides almost exactly with the area populated by people who speak languages belonging to the Indonesian branch of the Austronesian family. The population of Insular Southeast Asia is made up mainly of people belonging to the small Southern Mongoloid race. Their common racial and linguistic characteristics go back to the common origin of these peoples, as do the common features of their material and intellectual cultures. Certain similarities can also be observed in their history, at least before the European conquest. All of this allows one to regard the insular part of Southeast Asia as an independent historical-ethnographical area, which can be further subdivided, on the strength of certain less general traits, into historical-ethnographical regions and districts.

ALEXIS I. KUZNETSOV, who took his Ph. D. at the Moscow Institute of Ethnography, is at present a member of that Institute. His interest focuses mainly on ethnohistory and ethnosocial processes in Southeast Asia, and his principal publications are 'Political and Ideological Factors in the Formation of the Indonesian Nation', *Rasy i Narody* 4, Moscow 1974, and 'Specificity of Ethnic Self-Identification in the Countries of Southeast Asia', *Rasy i Narody* 9, Moscow 1979. Dr. Kuznetsov may be contacted at the Institute of Ethnography, 19 Dim. Uljanov St., Moscow 117036, USSR.

While the insular part of Southeast Asia can be regarded as a separate historical-ethnographical area, one can distinguish within it aboriginal and alien populations. The aboriginal population consists of: (1) the most ancient stratum of the Australoid population, surviving in isolated pockets in all parts of the area, i.e., the Senoi and the Semang of Malacca, the Kubu in Sumatra, and the Aeta and the Battak in the Philippines; and (2) the basic population of the region, i.e., the Southern Mongoloid Austronesians. Immigrants include the Chinese, Indians, Arabs, Europeans, and other groups whose size and role in the economic and political life are less important.

In Insular Southeast Asia there are more than 300 groups which can be classified according to different traits, e.g., racial, linguistic, religious, etc. In practice, apart from the great bulk of the Southern Mongoloids, the Veddas, Negritos, Dravidians and representatives of other races and ethnic groups can be distinguished. Linguistically these peoples are divided into those who speak the languages of the Indonesian branch of the Austronesian family, those who speak the languages of the China-Tibet family, and the speakers of the languages of the Mon-Khmer family. On the basis of religious beliefs the population is usually divided into Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Confucianists and Animists. In the Philippines the population, apart from the Muslim group, is subdivided into the peoples of the plains and the uplands, and in Indonesia into coastal and inland peoples. All of these classifications are useful because they reflect certain regularities in the development of the peoples so classified and disclose certain ties between them, thus providing a basis for generalization.

All Southeast Asian countries have multiple societies. In the countries of Indo-China, however, generally one particular group has a numerical majority and dominates all spheres of the social life. The ethnic name of this group is reflected in the name of the state. For example, the Burmese comprise 72 per cent of the population of Burma, the Vietnamese 85 per cent of the population of Vietnam, the Khmers 85 per cent of the population of Cambodia, the Lao people over 60 per cent of the population of Laos, and the Khon-Thais more than half of the population of Thailand.² In Indonesia and the Philippines, on the other hand, there is no single group which preponderates in size or dominates all spheres of the society's economic and political life. Both of these countries have several major ethnic groups which are comparable in size, in levels of socio-economic development, and in the roles they play in the socio-political life of the country. Together these

ethnic groups make up 85 per cent of the total population of both Indonesia and the Philippines, i.e., nearly the same percentage as that of the Vietnamese in Vietnam.

Soviet literature generally employs the synonyms *maliye narody* (small peoples) and *natsional'niye men'shinstva* (national minorities) to describe the comparatively small groups of people living in states with a multiple society. In English "national minorities", "ethnic groups" and other terms are used. In my opinion it is correct to use the term "national minorities" only when speaking of immigrants. The numerically small groups of aboriginal peoples who live in certain territories should be designated as "small peoples". Their ethnic territories may be dissected by national boundaries, and one and the same people may live in two or more countries (e.g., the Naga people in Burma and India). But in each country where they live such a group of people should be regarded as an aboriginal "small people" and not as a national minority.

Strictly speaking, the notion "small peoples" is not terminological but relative, for there is no absolute criterion for specifying the size of "small peoples". In the case of Insular Southeast Asia, such groups having less than one million members are usually regarded as small, while in India, for example, groups of this type usually have three or more million members. The adjective "small", therefore, should only be applied when one is comparing one group of people with another, considerably larger-sized one in the same country. But even within an individual country a division of peoples into larger or smaller groups is extremely difficult and conditional. The sizes of various "small peoples" in Indonesia and the Philippines vary from a few hundred to a million members, while among these countries' "larger peoples" there are some, like the Javanese, whose numbers run to dozens of millions. There are also such groups as the Macassarese in Indonesia and the Pangasinans in the Philippines whose numbers have just crossed the one-million mark.

The insular part of Southeast Asia provides yet another, more essential, criterion for distinguishing "small peoples". As a rule, they differ from the "larger peoples" in that their level of socio-economic development is relatively low, and that they live in pre-class societies or stand on the verge of class formation and the establishment of their own national identity. These two criteria (i.e., size and level of socio-economic development) are applicable for the characterization of the majority of the "smaller peoples" in Insular Southeast Asia, with the

exception of the numerically small but socio-economically further developed ethnic groups which have advanced to the early feudal stage in social development, e.g. the Tidore and Ternate peoples.

Consequently, in Insular Southeast Asia the following groups can be labelled "small peoples": in Malaysia the Senoi, Semang, Jakun, and Dayaks (in Sarawak and Saban); in Indonesia all groups except the Javanese, Sundanese, Malays, Madurese, Minangkabau, Bugis, Balinese, Banjarese, Achehnese and Macassarese; in the Philippines the Tasadai-Manube, Aeta, and upland peoples; and in Brunei the Dusun, Kedayan and Iban. There are no "small peoples" in Singapore. It should be noted that "small peoples" differ among themselves not only in size but also in level of socio-economic development.

Many scholars abroad as well as some Soviet scholars use the word "tribes" to designate the "small peoples" of Southeast Asia who have not developed as nations. These scholars often omit to define what they mean by "tribe", thus contributing to the vagueness of the term. In Southeast Asia it is possible to point to a few ethnic communities which are usually designated "tribes" but which, in fact, differ greatly among themselves both in numerical size and in level of socio-economic and cultural development. The specific features of the tribe as a social organization (i.e., exogamy, tribal councils, chiefs, etc.) may be possessed by these *ethnoses* in greatly varying degrees or may be totally absent. It is obvious that the designation of all these diverse ethnic communities by one and the same term, "tribe", is only conditionally admissible.³ In Soviet literature the term "tribe" is used to denote both a type of social organization and an ethnic community of the pre-class stage.

A tribe, whose members spoke a single dialect and shared a common culture and consciousness, was a social and ethnic entity, i.e., an entity embracing all social relations. In the tribe all relations were undifferentiated and ethnic relations were socially mediated. Men were members of a tribe only because they belonged to its social organization, and in every respect, including the ethnic, they stood in relation to the other members of the tribe as members of this social organization. It follows, then, that one can speak of the tribe as an ethnic community if it exists as a social organization. The majority of ethnic groups which are usually referred to as tribes, however, have already lost their tribal social organization through contact with other peoples who have long ago undergone division into social classes. This has caused the disintegration of tribal institutions. While individual features and institutions of the tribal organization have survived, they are not functionally

basic for the life of the "small peoples" concerned and do not form an integral system. Therefore in the social, and consequently in the ethnic sense, it is mere convention to designate "small peoples" as tribes.

The disintegration of the clan or tribal order and the emergence of a class society meant the destruction of the unity of the tribe and a differentiation of its varied relations. The process of the development of a class society, i.e., a prolonged parallel existence of the clan or tribal institutions and the newly emerging class ones, was at the same time a progression from the tribe as an ethnic community characteristic of the tribal phase to a new type of ethnic community which is characteristic of the class type of society. In the class phase different aspects of society are mutually relatively independent, and the ties between members of the ethnic community become immediate and direct. Every member of a given ethnic community feels that he is directly related to all the other members of the same community. This is the main criterion for differentiating between the tribe and the type of ethnic community found in the class stage.

To denote large developed groups with a class type of society it is customary for, to us, foreign literature to use the term "nation". In Soviet literature a distinction is made between two types of ethnic community of the class stage, i.e. *narodnost* and *natsiya*. These terms are not simple, however, and Yu. V. Bromley believes that they must be understood to denote the ethnic community proper, i.e., *ethnos* in the narrow sense of the word, and the ethno-social organism (ESO). According to this author an *ethnos* in the strict sense of the word can survive through several stages of socio-economic organization, while the character of an ethno-social organism depends on its belonging to this or that form of socio-economic organization. "And this fact provides the basis upon which our scientific publications of recent years distinguish such types of ethnic communities (ethno-social organisms, in our terminology) as tribes, narodnosts, and bourgeois and socialist nations" (1972: 61-62).⁴

In the present paper the essential traits of an ethnic community are understood to be self-awareness (ethnic consciousness), language and culture. These traits are inherent in both the tribe and the *ethnos*. The formation of an *ethnos* takes place in a common territory and proceeds under certain material and historical conditions. The rate of development of ethnic processes and that of the formation of *ethnoses* differ from one historical epoch to another and depend on the level of socio-economic development achieved by the society in which they

occur. However, a low level of socio-economic development can find compensation in a substantial protraction of this process. The irregular socio-economic development of mankind has also affected the speed of ethnic development. Some *ethnoses* emerged in antiquity, others emerged under feudalism, and others still completed their formative stage of development under capitalism and socialism. But this is a characterization of the conditions under which a given *ethnos* might arise and not of the *ethnos* itself. While the process of the emergence of an *ethnos* depends on socio-economic factors, its own development is relatively independent. The ethnic identity of a person is not an aspect of his personality that emerges in the process of production, for it does not depend on the conditions of production. This is why there is no necessary correlation between certain types of ethnic communities and specific forms of socio-economic organization.

Prior to becoming itself, a phenomenon undergoes a process of formation and maturation of all its inherent features. It is absolutely necessary to differentiate strictly between these two notions, i.e., between the phenomenon and the process. A phenomenon can only be defined after it has reached its completed, historically established form. An established ethnic community must, therefore, be characterized by the elemental simplicity of its ethnic traits: ethnic self-awareness, language, and culture. These criteria enable the "larger peoples" of Insular Southeast Asia, and some of the "smaller peoples", e.g. the Tidore, to be classed as established *ethnoses*.

On the other hand, temporally long transitional phases which intervene between the disappearance of one and the emergence of another type of ethnic community are justified regularities and should not be characterized as an independent type of ethnic community, but only as transitional stages, i.e. stages in the formation of a new ethnic community. An established ethnic community (a phenomenon) is characterized by the elemental simplicity of its ethnic traits, while an ethnic community in the formative stage is characterized by a multipartite ethnic consciousness and by the existence of a number of dialects or languages and cultures that are inherent in the various ethnic components participating in the formation of the new ethnic community parallel with the emerging common language and common traits of culture. Thus, the term "established *ethnoses*" should not be used when discussing the Dayaks, the Bataks, the Toraja people or the Visaya, which latter rank first in numerical size among the peoples of the Philippines. In the Philippines the numerically largest ethnic

group does not, in fact, form an established *ethnos*, for the traits which characterize it are not simple. Its ethnic consciousness is, at least, double-faced, i.e., a man regards himself as not only belonging to the Visaya but also to some narrower group such as, for example, the Hiligaynon. This means, then, that in the case of the Visaya, one can only speak of the stage of the formation of an *ethnos* from a number of ethnic components. Only when all representatives of all ethnic components feel that they belong only to the Visaya, and not to any other ethnic group, will we be able to say that the process of the formation of the Visaya has been completed.

Similarly, the long-existing terms "Batak", "Dayak" and "Toraja" should not be considered as ethnic names for separate, established peoples. They are only collective names for the inland populations of the areas concerned in general, and it is not in any way justifiable to put these peoples in the same ethnic category on this basis. We should only proceed from the objective criteria of language, culture and ethnic self-consciousness.

The Bataks are an ethno-linguistic community. Their genetic origin is traced back to a single common ancestor and their languages to a single parent language. The Dayaks, on the other hand, are probably not an ethno-linguistic community. Among them several ethno-linguistic communities can be distinguished. The same is true of the Toraja people. The said ethno-linguistic communities consist of a few former tribes or unions of tribes, such as the Karo-Batak, the Toba-Batak, and the Mandailing, or the Kayan, the Ot-Danum and the Iban.

As was noted earlier, today these ethnic units are not tribes in a social or ethnic sense. They are either in a state of transition from a tribe to a new type of ethnic community, i.e., to an *ethnos*, or else they have already developed into *ethnoses*. The Iban have in all probability already formed a separate *ethnos* and identify themselves exclusively as Iban.

On the other hand, the "small peoples" of the insular countries in Southeast Asia are subject at present not only to the influence of more developed neighbouring peoples, but also to the pressure exerted on their ethnic development by their respective states. The national policies of the Indonesian and the Philippine governments proceed from a recognition of the formation of their respective nations out of genetically kindred peoples. These countries are undergoing a process of "nation-building", which is reflected in the spread of Bahasa Indonesia and Philippino, and in the emergence of Pan-Indonesian and Pan-Philippine

features in the culture of all their constituent peoples. Despite this fact and because in both Indonesia and the Philippines attention is nevertheless also being paid to the development of local languages and cultures, the ethnic development of individual "small peoples" continues spontaneously at the same time that the sovereign states are exerting their conscious influence on the formation of the Indonesian and the Philippine nations. This influence is having a negative effect on the ethnic development of the "small peoples", but at the same time is including them in the process of the formation of the Indonesian and Philippine nations.

The process of the development of former tribes into *ethnoses* is affected, therefore, by the counter-forces of the processes of the Pan-Indonesian and Pan-Philippine ethnic formation. From a purely theoretical point of view it is probable that the most developed "small peoples", such as the Bataks, the Dayaks, the Toraja, the upland peoples of the Philippines, etc., will retain their ethnic integrity in existing forms or through consolidation with kindred ethnic groups. It is further quite possible that in the future all of the ethnic groups composing the Batak, for example, will be consolidated in a single *ethnos*. On the other hand the most backward ethnic groups, who are small in size and do not have their own written languages, will find it easier to switch over to Bahasa Indonesia or the Philippine language. It will also be easier for them to assimilate the features of the more developed national material and intellectual culture and to identify themselves with the Pan-Indonesian or Pan-Philippine ethnic entities. Thus it appears that it will be easier for them to join the Indonesian and the Philippine nations.

Economic factors also exert a great influence on ethnic processes. Stagnation in the traditional forms of economy is not very conducive to the consolidation of separate parts of former tribes into a single ethnic whole. The period of transition from a tribe to an *ethnos* is often characterized by the erosion of ethnic consciousness. For example, many Dayak groups identify themselves with geographical places and are not always conscious of their association with other Dayak groups. The drawing of "small peoples" into the contemporary economic life of the sovereign state will destroy their traditional economic and social structure, do away with their isolation and give an impetus to the unification of kindred ethnic groups into *ethnoses* or, conversely, will induce other groups to join the Pan-Indonesian or Pan-Philippine ethnic entities.

In summation, it can be said that the ethnic communities currently existing in Insular Southeast Asia represent either established *ethnoses*, which are characterized by the elemental simplicity of such ethnic traits as ethnic consciousness, language and culture, or are on a course of transition from tribes to *ethnoses*. There are no longer any "tribes" in either the social, or consequently the ethnic sense of this word. If these ethnic communities are in the process of consolidating a number of ethnic components, they are characterized by a multipartite ethnic consciousness and by the presence of a number of different dialects or languages and cultures, side by side with the emerging common language and common traits of culture.

The classification of the ethnic communities found in the insular part of Southeast Asia is the task of a special discipline. I have restricted myself here to demonstrating one of the approaches with regard to distinguishing types of ethnic communities, and to indicating the criteria for such distinction and for differentiation of the process of development of an ethnic community from an ethnic community proper.

NOTES

- ¹ E. H. G. Dobby, *South-East Asia*, London: University of London Press, 1950; Russian translation, Moscow, 1952. D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, London: MacMillan, 1970; Russian translation of an earlier edition *Istoria Yugo-Vostochnoi Azii*, Moscow: Izd-vo inostrannoi lit-ry, 1958. *Ocherki obschey etnografii: Zarubezhnaya Azia* [Essays on general ethnography: foreign Asia], Moscow: Nauka, 1959. *Narody Yugo-Vostochnoi Azii* [Peoples of Southeast Asia], Moscow: Nauka, 1966.
- ² [Population of the world; reference book on countries], Moscow, 1975.
- ³ N. N. Cheboksarov. See the conclusion in the book *Etnicheskie Protssessy v stranakh Yugo-Vostochnoi Azii* [Ethnic processes in the countries of Southeast Asia], Moscow: Nauka, 1974, pp. 303-304.
- ⁴ Yu. Bromley, [An attempt at a typology of ethnic communities], *Sovetskaya etnografiya* 1972-5: 61-81. See also Yu. V. Bromley, *Etnos i etnografiia* [Ethnos and ethnography], Moscow: Nauka, 1973.