

The Predicament of Thailand's Southern Muslims

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Abstract

Recent events in Southeast Asia have revived interest in the role of political Islam in the region. This article examines the position of Muslims in Thailand's four southern border provinces. It addresses the historical background of the area's relationship with forms of centralized government by Thai political centers, the relevant elements of ethnicity and their significance for cultural (religious) self-identification, and how this may be translated in the political use of Islam. In a wider context, the study can be considered as illustrative of the problematic relationship between centers and peripheries, particularly those on the frontiers of culture zones.

Introduction

In 2004, after more than a decade of relative quiet, Thailand was rocked by a sudden upsurge of unrest in its predominantly Malay-speaking Muslim-inhabited southern provinces. Together with the arrest of suspected Bali bombing mastermind Hambali in the central Thai town of Ayutthaya in August 2003, these events have shoved Thailand into the limelight of the American-led international war on terrorism. Although the Bush administration claims that terrorism and Islam are in no way to be equated, the fact remains that so far, the campaign has mainly focused on combating this

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“scourge of our time” in Muslim countries. So, what is the connection of Buddhist Thailand with Islam?

In spite of having a predominantly Theravada Buddhist population, Thailand also has a numerically small Muslim minority, or rather minorities, because the country’s Muslim citizens present a highly diverse picture.¹ One of the most recent studies of Thai Muslims estimates their number at around 5 million, or 7 to 8 percent of the country’s total population. The position of Thailand’s southern Muslims differs from the other communities in the sense that in their particular region, they constitute numerically a majority; the total Muslim population of Thailand’s southern border provinces is probably around 3.5 to 4 million, or more than 80 percent of the region’s overall population.²

To understand the complexities of that composite image, this article starts by placing Thailand in its geographical and historical context within Southeast Asia. A correct appreciation of the apparently antagonistic situation in southern Thailand further requires an excursion into the issue of ethnicity as it pertains to frontiers between different culture zones, such as Thailand’s south. This brings together elements of religion, linguistic diversity, and historical experience.

Thai-Muslim Relations in Pre-Modern Times

Present-day Thailand did not take shape until the late nineteenth century; however, other indigenous political entities dominated by ethnic Thai, covering more or less the same area, had been in existence for many centuries.³ The most powerful of these earlier “states” centered around a city named Ayutthaya. Although the state was often referred to by the name of its capital, it also became known as Siam. From the fifteenth until the late eighteenth century, Siam was a dominant mainland Southeast Asian power. Its influence extended not only into what are now Laos, Cambodia, and Burma [Myanmar], but also into the Malay Peninsula. In those days, political domination was not so much exercised through direct administrative control as by means of a system of tributary relations, in which vassal states paid a tribute to their overlords in acknowledgement of the latter’s superior power.

During that same time-frame, the larger Malay-Indonesian world was experiencing a process of Islamization, which had started with the conversion of an increasing number of ruling families of Malay petty states (“principalities” or “sultanates”). There are indications that the first such conversions took place on the Indonesian island of Sumatra as early as the late thirteenth

century. However, more relevant for the current account is the acceptance of Islam by the rulers of the two important power centers on the Malay Peninsula, Malacca and Pattani, in c.a. 1409 and 1457, respectively.⁴

These petty states, located at the periphery of larger political entities, led a precarious existence based upon trade instead of military might or the assumed inherent stability of agricultural societies. Islam provided the unifying factor necessary to iron out antagonisms and instill a sense of common interest; it became a vehicle for regulating the relationships between local potentates, who, for that reason, were usually the first to convert. Winning over the inhabitants was a far more gradual affair that only gained pace in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In an environment so different from the Middle East, elements of religious traditions predating Islam's arrival were also incorporated into the Southeast Asian variety of Islam.

Scholars have pondered and debated the long interval between Southeast Asia's initial contacts with Islam and the time that the religion effectively gained a foothold among the indigenous population. The currently prevailing view is that it was a complex development that consisted of multiple centers of origin, the active participation of both transmitters and recipients, and, initially, a central role for the mystical strand of Islam (Sufism).⁵ What evolved out of this process was a distinct Malay-Muslim culture with unique ethnic features.

During its heyday, Siam had reduced most of the Malay states located to its south to vassal status. Thus, a Buddhist kingdom claimed suzerainty over its Muslim neighbors. It must be noted, however, that while Siam considered the payment of tribute to be a sacred oath of allegiance, the Muslim rulers more likely regarded the relationship in terms of "buying-off" a more powerful neighbor in order to be left alone and go about their own affairs. Such differences in perception would lead to the mutual incomprehension lying at the root of the tensions that have survived until the present day between the central Thai authorities and the southern periphery.⁶ A key player in these relations between Muslim maritime Southeast Asia and the continental power of Siam was the state of Pattani, which became the peninsula's main center of Malay-Muslim culture following Portugal's conquest of Malacca in 1511. Although it has since fragmented into several Thai provinces and Malaysian federal states, the strained relations between the deep south and Bangkok can be traced back to almost half a millennium of troublesome exchanges between the greater Pattani region and successive Thai power centers.

Apart from dealing with neighboring kingdoms and vassal states, the emporium of Ayutthaya, as a major Asian trading power, hosted a vast array of foreign visitors, who often established expatriate communities in the city's vicinity. Among these were representatives of Muslim nations from within and without Southeast Asia, such as Malays, Javanese, Bawean, Macassarans, Bugis, Cham, Indians (e.g., Bengalis, Tamils, and Gujaratis), Persians, and Arabs.⁷ Some of these would rise to high positions, such as the descendants of the leaders of a Persian merchant mission that traveled to Ayutthaya in the late sixteenth century.⁸

In order to further appreciate the heterogeneity of Thailand's Muslims, it must be pointed out that in addition to the southern maritime route, Islam also entered mainland Southeast Asia via an offshoot of the Silk Road. Between the tenth and twelfth centuries, Central Asian caravans brought Islam to China's western reaches. Due to their martial qualities, the local converts, called Hui, became highly regarded mercenary forces for the Chinese empire. By the late 1200s, a Muslim was appointed governor of Dali in China's southwestern Yunnan province. For centuries to come, Yunnanese Muslims controlled the caravan trade with present-day Burma, Laos, and northern Thailand. But not until the 1860s and 1940s, when a wave of political unrest and repression ravaged southern China, would Chinese Muslims be enticed to take up permanent residence in selected locations in northern Thailand. After the Second World War, they were joined by Bengali Muslims leaving an increasingly inhospitable Burma.⁹

Returning to the more sustained interaction on the Siamese-Malay frontier, although the tribute system functioned for centuries, it was far from stable. For example, during times of a relative decline in Siamese power, the Muslim sultanates would often throw off its yoke and then face punitive actions after the kingdom recovered. However, with the arrival of European imperialism, the relationship started to change. After the Burmese sacked Ayutthaya in 1767, a new Thai kingdom was effectively restored in 1782 by the founder of the current Chakri dynasty, who chose Bangkok as the new capital.¹⁰ His successors, experiencing the increasing pressure of colonial Britain and France, both of which were establishing themselves in Burma, Malaya, and Indochina, felt a need to reassert their power over their former dependencies. From then on, Thai policy toward its southern neighbors was characterized by more concerted attempts to incorporate the Malay territories into the Thai state while simultaneously breaking Malay power structures through a policy of divide and rule.¹¹

The Formation of Modern Thailand

In 1785, Thailand's royal heir-apparent led an expedition to the south and subjugated the Malay sultanates of Pattani, Kedah, Kelantan, and Trengganu. All four dependencies were placed under the administration of Nakhon Sri Thammarat, the principal southern province.¹² When Bangkok faced an uprising in Pattani in 1789, it divided the administrative control over its Malay dependencies: Kedah and Kelantan remained under Nakhon Sri Thammarat, while Pattani and Trengganu were transferred to the responsibility of Songkhla province. To break the effectiveness of Malay power, in 1816 Pattani was broken up into seven smaller principalities: Pattani, Yaring, Nongchik, Saiburi (or Teluban), Rahman, Yala, and Ra-Ngae (or Legeh). All of these dependencies were administered as so-called third- or fourth-class provinces. This implied a higher status than the realm's ordinary provinces: The rulers were still selected from the descendants of the old rajas or sultans, but now had to be invested by the Thai monarch in Bangkok. This investiture was often withheld in order to make the local Muslim rulers more pliable.

The 1830s saw several campaigns launched against the sultanate of Kedah, located on the Malay Peninsula's west coast, as well as responses from other Malay states in the area. These events must be considered against the background of the turmoil pervading the wider Malay-Indonesian world at the time. Between 1825-30, Java was experiencing an uprising led by Prince Diponegoro, while in Sumatra's Minangkabau region, the Padri war (1831-38) was pitting Wahhabi-inspired orthodox Muslims against an expanding Dutch colonial administration.¹³

The rebellion in the greater Pattani area evoked by Bangkok's 1832 campaign was quickly subdued. While the rulers of Pattani and Yala fled to remote Kelantan, the rajas of Ra-Ngae, Saiburi, and the president of the short-lived Rahman "republic" were captured and taken, together with thousands of their subjects, to Bangkok for resettlement in central Thailand, where the authorities could closely monitor their activities. Such massive resettlement exercises, a common pattern in traditional Southeast Asian politics, also account for the substantial numbers of Thai Muslims in central and eastern Thailand today. This rebellion was followed by an abortive revolt in 1838, involving Ra-Ngae, Rahman, Yala, and Nongchik. In the wake of this uprising, a final campaign against Kedah resulted in the sultanate's division into Kedah proper, Kabangpasu, Perlis, and Satun.

For the next 50 years Thailand's southern dependencies enjoyed relative peace and quiet, until a further encroachment on Malay-Muslim autonomy in the final decade of the nineteenth century led to renewed unrest. The impetus for this new incursion was given by the drastically changed political circumstances in Southeast Asia. By the 1890s, both France and Britain had more or less carved out their Asian empires: France took control of what is now Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, and Britain established the colonies of Burma (which was part of the Indian Empire) and British Malaya (administered from Singapore). Wary of having to confront each other over territory, Britain and France agreed that Thailand could remain independent and function as a buffer between their two empires, provided that it would exercise effective control over its dependencies along the borders. It thus fell to Thailand's King Chulalongkorn [Rama V] (r. 1868-1910) to devise a functioning bureaucratic system that could ensure law and order in its frontier provinces.¹⁴

In response to British pressure to have its economic interests in the Thai-controlled Malay states safeguarded, a new provincial administration system took shape between 1892 and 1899. In 1896, Kelantan and Trengganu were placed under a so-called (Bangkok-appointed) royal commissioner, based in Nakhon Sri Thammarat. A year later, Kedah and its former dependencies of Perlis and Satun were reunited in a greater administrative unit known as the *monthon* of Saiburi. One consequence of the newly introduced efficiency measures was that the traditional rulers were deprived of their independent financial means. For example, the opium monopolies were abolished and administered centrally. In other words, revenues would first flow to the treasury for later redistribution to the rulers – and often were never paid. Royal commissioners also began to siphon off import duties and tin royalties.¹⁵

By that time, secret understandings had been signed: Britain would support Thai sovereignty over the Malay states on the condition that Bangkok would not award any concessions on the Malay Peninsula to third parties without British consent. When, in 1899, Abdul Kadir Kamaruddin succeeded to the throne in Pattani, Bangkok withheld his investiture and proceeded, in 1901, to unify Pattani and six other principalities into the so-called "Area of Seven Provinces." Even further restrictions were placed on Saiburi and Ra-Ngae, where Thai officials would now govern alongside the local rulers. The raja of Pattani wrote to the governor-general of British Malaya, asking for British intervention. After organizing an opposition movement against Thai influence, he was arrested and exiled to the northern Thai province of Phitsanulok. He was released in 1903.

One of the first measures that led to further Malay agitation was the 1902 Bill of Reform, by which Prince Damrong, the Thai interior minister, intended to overhaul the country's financial, administrative, and judicial systems. Until then, Thailand's interference with local systems of government had been minimal. This new act, however, severely curtailed the local authorities' powers. A further step followed in 1906, when the seven principalities were effectively dismantled: Rahman was merged with Yala; Yaring and Nongchik were incorporated into Pattani; Ra-Ngae was renamed Narathiwat; and although Saiburi remained intact, it was placed, with the others, in a new *monthon*: Pattani.

The watershed event came with the Anglo-Thai treaty of 1909. Thai suzerainty over Kelantan, Trengganu, Kedah, and Perlis was transferred to Britain, while Thailand retained the former Kedah dependency of Satun, in addition to Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. With this treaty, the final border between Thailand and British Malaya (now Malaysia) was drawn, and Bangkok remained in control of four provinces with a population that was more than 80 percent Muslim-Malay.

Within a year, Bangkok faced not only an uprising instigated by two Muslim "holy men," To' Tae and Haji Bula, both of whom were supported by the region's hereditary rulers, but also increasing tension between state bureaucrats and local Islamic scholars. The authority of Muslim judges had already been severely curtailed by the 1902 Bill of Reform, which, in effect, limited their sphere of jurisdiction to family and inheritance law. Adherence to the Shari`ah, whether in a strict or more relaxed sense, an adherence often supplemented with local customary law (*adat*), was an important element of the Malay-Muslims' sense of ethnic identity.¹⁶ It is, therefore, opportune to interrupt this excursion into the history of Thai and Malay-Muslim relations in order to introduce some of this culture's distinct features.

***Jawi* Culture and Malay-Muslim ethnicity**

Language is usually considered a key element of ethnicity. The Malay world's conversion to Islam had a major impact on the further development of its linguistic tradition. Contact with Islamic writings not only left its imprint on the Malay language by introducing Arabic terminology and adopting the Arabic script to write Malay, but Arabic and Persian literature also provided ideas that found new expression through local adaptations.¹⁷ Regional Muslim intellectual life reached its first climax in the

beginning of the seventeenth century in Aceh, a sultanate located on the northern tip of Sumatra. Between 1600 and 1640, Aceh was home to three giants of Malay religious writing who, apart from their theological contributions, were also instrumental in developing the Malay literary model, in particular the *syair* – a mathematically constructed form of written poetry.¹⁸

The pioneer of *syair* was Hamza Fansuri (also Pansuri, died before 1607). A somewhat enigmatic and controversial figure whose religious ideas borrowed heavily from Abd al-Karim al-Jili's (and, through him, Ibn al-`Arabi) *wahdat al-wujud* doctrine, Pansuri traveled throughout the Muslim world.¹⁹ The second authority of seventeenth-century Muslim thought in Malay, and probably the most respected transmitter and interpreter of the Ibn al-`Arabi-al-Jili legacy, was Samsuddin al-Sumatrani (also known as Shams al-Din of Pasai, d. 1630).²⁰ The third member of this trio was Nuruddin al-Raniri (d. 1658), whose texts are still consulted in Malaysian and Indonesian religious schools. Originally from Gujarat, India, al-Raniri rose to prominence at the Aceh court between 1637 and 1644 and became a fierce opponent of Pansuri's allegedly monist theology.²¹

In addition, these scholars are drawn together by their direct acquisition of Islamic knowledge at its centers in the Middle East, where they attained a sound knowledge of Arabic and the Islamic sciences. Their significance lies in the fact that, in the absence of any earlier direct evidence, they can be considered as having stood at the cradle of a new culture distinguished by a form of Malay suffused with Islamic concepts and style figures. Written in an adapted Arabic script known as *Jawi*, it became the primary vehicle for transmitting Islamic learning throughout Southeast Asia, including southern Thailand.

After Aceh, other centers of Islamic learning sprang up throughout the Malay-Indonesian world at Palembang, Banjarmasin, Trengganu, Riau, and Pattani. Recent studies have mapped the networks that existed between these indigenous Southeast Asian centers of Muslim learning and their Middle Eastern counterparts.²² The institution used to preserve and perpetuate this new religious tradition, and thus a core aspect of Malay culture, was an indigenous Southeast Asian phenomenon known variously as *pondok* (Malaysia, southern Thailand), *pesantren* (Java), *surau* (Sumatra), and *pandita* (the Philippines).²³ For many centuries the only form of education available to rural Muslims, *pondoks* were not as formally organized as Middle Eastern *madrasas*. Their existence centered around highly personalized relationships between the teacher or *guru* (also referred to as *kyai* in

Javanese or *to' khru* in the Malay vernacular of Thailand) and the pupils, who usually boarded at the school.

The origins of this institution can probably be traced back to the Hindu-Buddhist ashram (retreat) in pre-Islamic Southeast Asia.²⁴ But as the Malay word *pondok* (from the Arabic *funduq*: a wayfarer's inn) indicates, it developed into a uniquely Southeast Asian yet thoroughly Islamic institution. Maintaining such a *pondok* can be considered as fulfilling a religious duty, since taking care of traveling scholars or students "on the way of Allah" is one way to meet the obligation of *zakat*, one of the five pillars of Islam.²⁵ In the context of this current account, it should be mentioned that recent scholarship gives a central role to the Pattani region in maintaining the *pondok* tradition. The Indonesian historian of Islam, Azyumardi Azra, observed that:

[...] little attention has been paid to the growth of Islamic tradition and institutions among the Patani Muslims in the earlier period. More research needs to be done in order to throw some light on this important issue.²⁶

An important point conveyed by these accounts [by other Southeast Asian Muslim scholars, ck] is that the Patani Muslims were not isolated among their fellow Malay-Indonesians [...] Patani Muslims were made aware of developments in religious ideas and institutions in other parts of the Malay-Indonesian world. It is highly plausible that it was such scholars who stimulated the establishment of the traditional Islamic educational institution known in Patani as *pondok*. Furthermore it has even been suggested that the *pondok* system which also developed in other parts of the Malay Peninsula, *originated from Patani* [Italics mine, ck].²⁷

The contours of Pattani's importance in the development of Southeast Asian Islam can be more clearly discerned in the course of the late eighteenth century, and continue to come further into focus throughout the nineteenth century.²⁸ It is somewhat ironic to notice how this coincided with the growing Thai encroachment on the Pattani region.

A seminal figure in this development was Daud bin Abdullah bin Idris al-Patani.²⁹ Born in Gresik near Pattani, he made his way to Aceh and, from there, to the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah, which he reached probably in the late 1760s and never left.³⁰ Here, he became a lodestone for visiting and resident Muslim students from all over Southeast Asia. It is estimated that he died around 1847 in Ta'if, leaving behind a legacy of more than 50

works in Arabic and Jawi. In the nineteenth century, three more Islamic scholars from Pattani would rise to prominence in Makkah and serve as central figures in circles of Southeast Asian students. Of these three, Ahmad Patani (1858-1906) was of specific significance. Not only was he the teacher of the prominent Kelantan scholar and educator Muhammad Yusuf, alias Tok Kenali, (1868-1933), but he also supervised the Malay printing house located in Makkah during the 1880s.³¹

This leads to the next important constituent factor in sustaining Jawi culture in modern times: the emergence of the printing press. This technological advancement gave further impetus to the development of the *pondok* or *pesantren* tradition in Southeast Asia, because now study materials could be reproduced more rapidly and in greater volume. The products of Malay printing presses, first in Bombay, Cairo, Istanbul, and Makkah, and later on in Southeast Asia itself, were known as *kitab kuning* or *kitab jawi*.³² The writings of many of the scholars mentioned before thus were made accessible in print-form to *pondok* pupils throughout the Malay-Indonesian world. Scholars from Pattani played a pivotal role in editing and authenticating these earlier works.³³

In closing this elaboration on Muslim-Malay or Jawi culture, it should be pointed out that in addition to the above-mentioned “intellectual” features, there are elements of a more popular nature as well. But these have an equally important impact on the local population’s outlook, such as what Michel Gilquin has called an “emblematic figure” of Jawi society: the *bomoh* (faith healer).³⁴ Other elements pertain to the observance of Islamic practices and rituals.³⁵

The reason for this extensive digression is to illustrate the extent to which the greater Pattani region, which encompasses all of the present-day southern Muslim provinces of Thailand and the northern states of Malaysia, was incorporated into a cultural zone that differed vastly from Thailand, which now intended to exercise direct political control. In order to appreciate the further unfolding of events in southern Thailand, it is crucial to underscore the significance that ethnic diversity can have for political developments. This is how Surin Pitsuwan, a prominent Muslim intellectual and former minister of foreign affairs of Thailand, formulated it in 1982:

It is this sense of being separate from the dominant populace of the Thai nation and its bureaucratic apparatus that can be identified as the single most crucial factor that sustains the conflicts and violence in Southern Thailand today. It is, in other words, the problem of ethnicity.³⁶

Culture Clash: Causes of Malay-Muslim Discontent

In his analysis of the situation in southern Thailand, Surin Pitsuwan has characterized the period of resistance in the early part of the twentieth century as one dominated by the “royal connection.”³⁷ For the first 2 decades, the former raja of Pattani, Abdul Kadir Kamaruddin, remained a rallying point for Malay-Muslim opposition against Thai interference in their affairs, even after his decision to live in exile in neighboring Kelantan (his family was an offshoot of the Kelantan dynasty). From there, he remained in close contact with the religious leaders in southern Thailand, while, at the same time, he attempted to shore up support from his former colleagues in the sultanates of British Malaya and the British administration itself. The last great rebellion orchestrated by the raja was the 1922 Namsai Uprising in rural Pattani. Starting out as a “civil disobedience” campaign directed against the payment of land taxes and rent, it escalated into a confrontation with police forces that caused numerous casualties.³⁸

Parallel to this strand of ruler-led resistance, the role of the religious scholars (ulama), the second constituent group of the traditional Malay elite, was on the rise. Several factors contributed to this. First of all, the incumbents of the judiciary and teaching positions in the local Shari`ah courts and *pondoks* were recruited from their ranks – the very institutions that were being assaulted by Thailand’s central authorities after incorporating Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satun into the Thai state. An additional factor that should not be ignored is the emergence of Islamic reformism in the Middle East. There, the ideas of such scholars as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad `Abduh, and Rashid Rida were rapidly gaining influence.³⁹ As explained above, Southeast Asian Muslims had sustained contacts with the great cultural centers of the Middle East, and, therefore, were well aware of these developments. The increasing assertiveness of southern Thailand’s Malay-Muslim intelligentsia, which was inspired by these developments in the Muslim world at large, was bound to set them on a collision course with Bangkok.

In the meantime, great changes were taking place in mainstream Thai society. King Vajiravudh (Rama VI: r. 1910-25), King Chulalongkorn’s successor, set out to formulate new policies based on a Thai nationalist ideology emphasizing that all citizens should subscribe to the notion of one Thai nation, be loyal to their king, and profess allegiance to Buddhism.⁴⁰ Obviously, this third element was the most contentious from the Muslim perspective. It should come as no surprise, then, that Rama VI’s reign was marred by unrest in the south, which would see full-blown uprisings in

1910-11 and 1922. This instability forced the king to tone down his policies on education, bureaucratic integration, and socioeconomic involvement in the south. According to Surin Pitsuwan, the subsequent shift from conflict to accommodation marked,

... the beginning of a long and tortuous struggle to widen the sphere and deepen the level of autonomy for the Malay-Muslims of Patani based on specific ethnic differences. [But] the very nature of the Thai state and its bureaucratic set-up did not permit such a royal policy pronouncement.⁴¹

After the 1932 revolution ended Thailand's absolute monarchy, it suddenly seemed possible to reach an understanding with the new democratic government. When the former raja of Pattani died in 1933, his son Tengku Mahmud Muhyiddin returned to Thailand; however, he chose to settle in Bangkok instead of Pattani. Between 1933 and 1938 an increasing number of Malay-Muslim candidates were elected to parliamentary seats, thanks to the active lobbying on their behalf by the ulama leadership, who were now moving to the forefront of the campaign for autonomy.⁴²

However, the military takeover of 1938 marked the end of these prospects and heralded the beginning of a reversal of reconciliatory initiatives and a return to Thai political and cultural domination, which would last throughout the subsequent decades of military dictatorship. Studies of ethnic nationalism among Thailand's Malay-Muslims by Uthai Dulyakasem and Omar Farouk [Bajouned] have focused on the impact of Bangkok's educational and chauvinist cultural policies from 1938 until the mid-1980s.⁴³ In addition to that, Surin Pitsuwan has paid ample attention to the cumbersome process of integrating elements of Shari'ah law into Thailand's legal system, which was abruptly halted in 1944.⁴⁴

Uthai Dulyakasem has observed that as early as 1908, Bangkok instructed its provincial administrators in the south to establish public education committees. Although these measures did not affect the *pondok* system directly, the Malay-Muslims interpreted the introduction of a parallel educational system as an effort to inculcate them with Thai – including Buddhist – values and thereby undermine their ethnic (religious) identity. On its part, the new government that took over in 1932 considered education a major tool in its campaign to absorb different ethnic groups into Thai society. This was evidenced by the introduction of its National Education System (1932) and National Education Plan (1936).⁴⁵

While Thailand's central educational policies would continue to have a long-range destabilizing effect on Malay-Muslim society, the chauvinist

politics of the first military dictatorship, led by General Phibul Songkhram (1938-44), had a more immediate impact. Between 1939 and 1942, Bangkok promulgated a series of so-called "cultural mandates." These notorious measures were explicitly designed to rout out any cultural distinctions among Thailand's citizens. For example, they forbade any other designation but "Thai" for the country's inhabitants ("Siam" now became "Thailand"), prohibited the use of all languages other than central Thai, and introduced several instructions for a "modernized" lifestyle. These cultural mandates constituted a complete intrusion of private life, because they affected dress code, eating habits, and modes of personal conduct.⁴⁶ The situation became explosive in 1944, when Pattani's governor forced local religious leaders to pay homage to a Buddha image. This led to a formal protest by a member of Parliament from Narathiwat, which Bangkok brushed aside. As a consequence, the MP resigned, went into exile in Malaysia, and remained a leading resistance figure until his death in 1977.⁴⁷

Phibul Songkhram's confrontational policies provided the stimuli for a strong Malay nationalist reaction.⁴⁸ Frustrated by the setbacks it had suffered and profiting from Thailand's momentary weakness in the final years of the Second World War, the leadership of Thailand's Malay-Muslims turned south. After the Japanese invasion of British Malaya, Thailand was rewarded for its pro-Japanese stance and given possession of the Malay states that it had been forced to cede to Britain in 1909. One unintended – and certainly undesired – effect of this was that it brought Malays from both sides of the border closer together again. In addition, Tengku Muhyiddin's overtures toward the embattled British gained him access to allied policy-making circles and, for a brief moment, it appeared as if there were a real chance that, after the war, Thailand's southern provinces would rejoin their compatriots in British Malaya. Optimism was further stimulated by growing pan-Malayan nationalist sentiments at the end of the war.⁴⁹

Appeasement or Manipulation?

A brief respite from the increasingly confrontational encounter between Bangkok and the south came on May 3, 1945, when the "Patronage of Islam Act" was promulgated. The driving forces behind this initiative were Pridi Banomyong (the country's most senior civilian politician and future prime minister), and Cham Phromyong (a Muslim senator from Bangkok). This duo realized the southern Muslims could be weaned away from Malay nationalism only if their leadership was appeased by receiving offi-

cial recognition. The expression “patronage” referred to no one less than the king as “great sustainer of religions” – which also included Islam. At face value, the bill appeared to herald a sea change in the government’s attitude toward the Muslims of the south. But in his evaluation of the Patronage Act, Surin Pitsuwan has expressed reservations over the bill’s intent. Indeed, the motive of political expediency, if not outright manipulation, cannot be dismissed.

So far, the leadership of the southern resistance had been in the hands of the former rulers’ descendants. Of course, they had taken care to ensure themselves of the ulama’s support, whose patrons they had been throughout the centuries. However, by the end of the Second World War, it became clear that a changing of the guards was in the making. Having seen their position eroded by Bangkok’s attempts to incorporate the south into Thailand’s overall judiciary and education structures, the religious scholars were becoming increasingly assertive in protecting their own turf.

As described above, the Southeast Asian ulama had maintained contacts with the Middle Eastern centers of learning ever since Islam had gained a foothold in their region. Improved communications only intensified the traffic between the two regions from the middle of the nineteenth century onward. The earlier mentioned emergence of Islamic reformism further aided the determination of those scholars who were exposed to the ideology’s influence to preserve Islam’s role in their society. Surin Pitsuwan explicitly mentioned the importance of this “Arabian connection” for developing a vigorous ulama leadership in southern Thailand.⁵⁰

With regard to the leadership question, we should not disregard the possibility that the interests of former ruling families and the ulama have not always run parallel. Islamic history is full of examples of tension between these two sociopolitical classes, and Bangkok politicians may have been perceptive enough to realize and exploit these. Consequently, the “Patronage of Islam Act” can also be interpreted as a wedge intended to deprive the traditional rulers of part of their support base by coopting the ulama. The bill was primarily designed to incorporate existing mosque councils, *pondoks*, and the office of the Shaykh al-Islam into state officialdom. A new office, equivalent to the Shaykh al-Islam, was created: that of *Chularajamontri*.⁵¹ Effectively holding (by delegation) the king’s powers of patronage of Islam and the other religions, this official would be considered the leader of Thailand’s Muslims.

This act also drew attention away from ethnic tensions in the south and focused on Islam as it was perceived in central Thailand. In this respect, the

act's language is indicative. Prior to 1945, whenever addressing southern Muslims, the government had referred to them as "Malay," "Muhammadan," or "*khaek*"; but now, they were integrated into the gloss category of "Thai people professing Islam."⁵² Administering Islamic affairs fell largely into the hands of Bangkok Muslims. For example, since its formal inception as a bureaucratic institution, the incumbents of the *chularajamontri* position have all hailed from the Bangkok area, notwithstanding the fact that the vast majority of Muslims live in the south and that their problems are evidently the most acute.

Government influence over things Islamic was further enforced through the close coordination between the Ministry of Interior and the Central Islamic Committee of Thailand, which enabled the former to exercise control over the provincial Islamic committees and ensure the appointment of ulama loyal to the Bangkok line.⁵³ This trend, when combined with discrediting the traditional ruling families after the pan-Malayan prospects crumbled under the pressure of global politics, pushed representatives of the Malay-Muslim scholarly elite into the vanguard of the southern resistance.⁵⁴ Having matured into savvy politicians, the ulama resigned themselves to the fact that the southern Muslim provinces would have to remain within Thailand, and so focused their campaigns on securing as much legal and cultural autonomy as possible. Their main grievance was a legal issue: the status of the *to kali* or *to kodi* (*qadi*) and the application of Shari'ah law, which had been rendered ineffective by the 1944 decisions of the Phibun Songkhram government in order to give Thai civil courts full jurisdiction in the south.⁵⁵

The new leader emerging from southern ulama circles was Hajji Sulong bin Abd al-Qadir bin Muhammad al-Fatani, chairman of Pattani's Provincial Islamic Council and former lecturer of law at the Holy Mosque of Makkah's Shafi'i school.⁵⁶ Hajji Sulong was representative of the new breed of ulama educated in the Middle East and conversant with the ideas of Islamic reformism. Initially, it appeared that he and Prime Minister Pridi Banomyong could come to an understanding. However, after the demise of the latter's political career as a result of the 1946 debacle surrounding King Anand Mahidol's death, things started to unravel.

The Road to Violence

By this time, the drive for regional autonomy had reached such momentum that it could no longer be stopped. In April 1947, Hajji Sulong sub-

mitted a seven-point plan to the government that not only addressed the steady dismantling of Shari`ah law since the reign of Rama V, but also complaints of oppression, widespread corruption by government officials assigned to the south, and the dismal state of the region's economy. The plan foresaw, through the appointment of a Malay-Muslim as the region's high commissioner, several changes: an 80 percent quota of Malay-Muslims in regional government positions, recognition of the Malay language, application of Islamic law, full authority for the Provincial Islamic Council on all Muslim affairs and Malay culture, and control over the region's financial revenues so that they could be used for the people's welfare. Muslim leaders from Narathiwat and Satun provinces followed suit with similar demands.⁵⁷

Within a year, the Thai government lashed back. In November 1947, a military coup announced General Phibul Songkhram's return to power and led to the exile of former Prime Minister Pridi Banomyong and Cham Phromyong, the first *chularajamontri*. In the meantime, Hajji Sulong tried to enhance his bargaining power with the government by inviting Tengku Muhyiddin, by now director of education in Kelantan (in British Malaya), to assume the formal leadership of the four Muslim provinces. This move rekindled Bangkok's fear of a resurging pan-Malayan separatist movement and, in January 1948, Hajji Sulong was arrested. In response, uprisings raged throughout the south in April 1948, and Bangkok dispatched military forces to help the police subdue the unrest. In September 1948, a state of emergency was declared. Thousands of southerners fled to neighboring British Malaya.

One consequence of the military crackdown was the formation of the Gabongan Melayu Patani Raya (GAMPAR), the Association of Malays of Greater Pattani, by refugees in Kedah, Kelantan, Penang, and Singapore. The question of southern Thailand was internationalized further when the Malay-Muslim leadership brought the matter to the attention of such politicians as Indonesia's Sukarno and such organizations as the United Nations and the Arab League.⁵⁸

The Hajji Sulong affair was not resolved until 1952, when he was released from prison. Although the mysterious disappearance, and probable assassination, of Hajji Sulong and his oldest son in 1954 spelled the end of the ulama-led general rebellion, he has remained a *cause célèbre* and inspiration for Malay-Muslims. In evaluating his influence, Surin Pitsuwan has found that Hajji Sulong had enabled Islam to become a binding force by creating a sense of social cohesion or *`asabiyah*, as Ibn Khaldun called it,

“heightening the ‘primordial ties’ already existing among the Malay ethnic group.”⁵⁹

The phenomenon of southern Muslim separatism has been studied in great detail elsewhere and need not to be repeated too extensively.⁶⁰ However, for the sake of completeness and in order to articulate the apparent link between Bangkok’s reinvigorated attempts to establish an integrated education system in the south and the actions of separatist movements against it, a brief survey of separatist activism is needed.

Not long after GAMPAR’s formation and the 1948 general uprising, known as the Dusun Nyior or the Mandi Minyak incident, veteran leader Tengku Muhyiddin established the National Front for the Liberation of Patani – usually referred to by the abbreviation of its Malay name: BNPP.⁶¹ Between 1953 and 1977, it was led by former Narathiwat MP Adun na Saiburi.⁶² Based in Kelantan, it was royalist in orientation and maintained cordial relations with the Malaysia’s Party Islam (PAS), which controlled (and continues to control) Kelantan politics. The BNPP maintained a military wing that executed actions in Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat provinces.

The proliferation of separatist movements started in the 1960s and reached its saturation point in the 1970s.⁶³ The most important separatist movement was the Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO).⁶⁴ Founded in 1968 by an aristocrat from the former principality of Rahman, it became the best-organized armed resistance organization. In doing so, it was helped by its extensive international network, which stretched to Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Syria and gave it access to the funding and support needed to carry out a well-orchestrated and sustained campaign. The organization’s headquarters are thought to be in Makkah, but during the period of its violent actions, it maintained an operations base in Tumpat, Kelantan. Although PULO had “royal” origins, its support base was drawn from young intellectuals with Middle Eastern or South Asian degrees. Much smaller was the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), a city-based group that maintained a tactical alliance with the Communist Party of Malaya. Such links, incidentally, were the main motivation for Thailand and Malaysia to execute joint anti-insurgency operations in their border regions.

Apart from these Malay nationalist movements, smaller groups of a more distinct Islamist signature also operated in the region. In 1975, the Sabillah (Path of God) organization emerged. This urban guerilla group is thought to have been formed in the wake of the “Great Demonstrations” of 1975 and 1976. Other splinter groups included the Gerakan Islam Patani (GIP) and the December 1902 Group. It is thought that these organizations

were behind the terrorist attacks on Bangkok's Don Muang Airport and Hatyai railway station, as well as the attack in Yala during a visit by the Thai king and queen. Surin Pitsuwan is careful to point out that apart from these militants, who were not adverse to violence, Islamic activism also took place in the form of a vigorous *da`wah* (Islamic propagation) movement and even a revival of Sufi *turuq*.⁶⁵

The years between 1969 and 1973 saw the most spectacular surge in violence in southern Thailand, ostensibly due to a combination of widespread public indignation with military dictatorship and the inspiration derived from neighboring Malaysia's 1969 race riots. The violence appeared to wear off in the early 1980s, after the take-over by General Prem Tinsulanonda. Although a military-controlled regime, Prem Tinsulanonda's government distinguished itself from its predecessors by its willingness to work with Parliament and initiate a different approach to both the communist guerilla movements of northern and northeastern Thailand and the Malay-Muslim separatists in the south. Himself a Buddhist from the south, Prem Tinsulanonda pursued a carrot-and-stick policy that focused on stimulating economic development in this poor region. In this, he was helped by the economic boom that started in the late 1980s. Parallel to this development, the separatist movements saw their support base evaporate.

Again Education

The common targets of the separatist movements throughout the period of armed resistance were police posts, army units, and government schools. The inclusion of the latter shown that the central government's education policies continued to be considered a highly controversial intrusion into Malay-Muslim affairs.

The post-war military regimes that controlled Thailand from 1947 until 1973 again took up the cause of national secular education, and new integrative plans were promulgated in 1960 and 1963. These initiatives targeted the *pondok* system more directly, because Bangkok insisted on registering all *pondoks* with the Ministry of Education as "private schools teaching Islam" if they wanted official recognition. Between 1965 and 1971, the government increased its efforts to introduce a modern-secular curriculum with overt Buddhist dimensions into these schools. In 1971, registration became mandatory and registered *pondoks* were no longer permitted to teach in Malay.⁶⁶ These measures effectively deprived the Malay-Muslims of an education system that prepared individuals for social and cultural

functions in the Malay-Muslim communities and stimulated a drive to pursue an Islamic education abroad.⁶⁷ Another effect was that schools that failed to reform and seek registration faced devaluation, which, in turn, had real socioeconomic implications for their graduates.⁶⁸

In his continuous analysis of Thailand's "southern question," Surin Pitsuwan consistently argues that education is probably the most central issue not only for the Malay-Muslims' emancipation, but also for their sense of recognition of their distinct ethnic identity.⁶⁹ His 1982 thesis drew attention to the mistaken assumptions informing the Bangkok's ill-conceived education policies toward the south since the 1960s. Politicians thought that introducing a secular curriculum would somehow miraculously turn Malay-Muslims into Thais. In this respect, Surin Pitsuwan approvingly quoted the dissenting view of former Prime Minister Kukrit Pramoj, who thought that people's religious institutions, including the *pondoks*, should be left alone and that the government should limit itself to improving economic conditions and making sufficient education opportunities available on an optional basis.⁷⁰

But not only the politicians had it wrong. The security establishment, responsible for the uphill task of maintaining law and order in the south, insisted that ethnicity needed to be deemphasized in order to alleviate tensions between the center and the periphery. In the case of the Malay-Muslims, this meant that religion should be separated from other cultural traits; in the eyes of the security officials, Malay-Muslims were just "Thais professing Islam." The above account, however, convincingly demonstrates that Malay-Muslim ethnicity is a complex *mélange* from which it is impossible to arbitrarily subtract religion. As far as those directly responsible for the conversion process taking place in the *pondoks* were concerned, the regional education officials were of the opinion that much of the communal opposition was due to the perception that Bangkok was only interested in pushing through a secular curriculum. Instead, it would have been wiser to take a more comprehensive approach and acknowledge support for a distinct Islamic component in the curriculum.⁷¹

Unfortunately, the general conclusion must be that patronage and support usually give way to supervision and control. Probably the first real step toward empowering Malay-Muslims was given in 1988. As part of the less repressive approach introduced by Prem Tinsulanonda's government, that year saw the establishment of a College of Islamic Studies on the Pattani campus of Prince of Songkhla University. However, it cannot be denied that security concerns must also have been a motivation for this initiative: namely, an effort to discourage the earlier mentioned trend of seeking an

Islamic education overseas, which could expose Thailand's Muslims to the unwanted influences of Muslim radicals abroad.

Conclusion

Although there has been a marked drop in incidents since the late 1980s, the 1990s continued to witness the occasional flare-up of violence. These incidents have generally been attributed to breakaway elements of PULO or other organizations, consisting of foreign-trained young fundamentalists disaffected with the leadership's rapprochement with Bangkok following various overtures by the central authorities.⁷² However, the general tendency appears to be a combination of political participation and identity assertion. The respective standard bearers of this two-pronged course are local politicians taking advantage of Thailand's relatively unhampered process of democratization since 1992, and a new generation of religious teachers who have replaced "separatist sentiments with religious fervor."⁷³

Unfortunately, the guarded optimism in reports dating back to the late 1990s has recently made place again for a more worrying tone. In January 2004, an army weapons depot was raided and a large quantity of weapons was stolen. The ensuing heavy-handed security operations led to growing tensions and a wave of assassinations in the region until, on April 28, the situation erupted in an orgy of violence. At various places throughout the south, army and police posts were attacked by youths often armed with nothing but machetes. Outgunned, most of the attackers were killed. At the end of the day, the death toll was set at 107 individuals. The security forces' response was heavily criticized. A raid on the historical Krue Se Mosque, where a few dozen assailants had holed up, led to more than 30 deaths. This incident became the subject of an official investigation.⁷⁴

Commentators, politicians, security experts, and scholars seem to be unsure of the extent to which Thailand's Muslims, in particular the Malay-Muslims of the south, may harbor sympathy for militant Islamism. To take it one step further: There appears to be a concern that networks of violent Islamists have infiltrated Thailand's Muslim communities. However, authorities are still uncertain as to the exact nature of their influence. Some downplay the likelihood that separatists are regrouping and attribute the recent wave of arson attacks and assaults on smugglers, bandits, or even an altercation between rival elements of the police and the armed forces.⁷⁵

This article has endeavored to disentangle some of the elements that constitute Malay-Muslim identity. It intended to demonstrate that equating

the ethnic and religious referents of such a complex phenomenon is a gross simplification that does justice neither to the position of southern Thailand's population or its multilayered identity. Linguistic particularity, geographical separation, and religion serve as a compound of factors that segregate the Malay-Muslims from mainstream Thai society and connect them to the neighboring Malay world. History also weighs heavily on the regional conscience and has influenced the development of certain separatist tendencies. Against this historical backdrop, Gilquin's characterization of the entrance of a Malay-Muslim society into the modern Thai nation-state as a "difficult insertion" rather than an "actual integration" seems appropriate.⁷⁶

Symptomatic of the difficulty of accurately representing Malay-Muslim identity is that as events continue to unfold in the south, their exact nature cannot yet be gauged with a reasonable degree of certainty. This not only underscores the complexity of Thailand's "Malay-Muslim question," but also makes an oversimplified and ill-defined image of some multi-tentacled Islamist conspiracy menacing Southeast Asia untenable.

Endnotes

1. Cf. Raymond Scupin, "Thailand," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Modern Islam* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4:212-213; and "Muslim Accommodation in Thai Society," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, vol. 2 (1998): 229-58. A comprehensive survey of Thai Muslims is the two-volume study by Andrew D. W. Forbes, ed., *The Muslims of Thailand* (Gaya, India: Center for South East Asian Studies, 1989). Of more recent date, but much briefer, is Michel Gilquin, *Les musulmans de Thaïlande* (Paris/Bangkok: L'Harmattan/Institut de Recherche sur l'Asie du Sud Est Contemporaine, 2002).
2. Gilquin, *Les musulmans*, 55-61.
3. The term *Thai* is relatively recent. In fact, the majority of modern Thailand's inhabitants are part of a larger ethno-linguistic group known as the Tai, who inhabit an area that, apart from Thailand, includes the Shan states of Burma, Laos, parts of northern Vietnam, and areas of China's southwestern Yunnan province. For the concept of *Thai* in the context of nationalist ideology, cf. W. F. Vella, *Chaiyo! King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1978); Scot Barmé, *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies [ISEAS], 1993); Craig Reynolds, *National Identity and its Defenders: Thailand Today* (Chiang Mai: Silk Worm Books, 2003).
4. Cf. D. K. Wyatt and A. Teeuw, *The Story of Patani* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970); Alijah Gordon, *The Propagation of Islam in the Indonesian-*

Malay Archipelago (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 2001). Although the preferred spelling in Malay is “Patani,” I have decided to adhere to the official Thai spelling for the current province of Pattani.

5. The following titles can be considered key contributions to the study of the Islamization of Southeast Asia: Syed Farid Alatas, “Notes on Various Theories Regarding the Islamization of the Malay Archipelago,” *The Muslim World*, no. 75 (1985):162-75; Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas, *Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1969); Azyumardi Azra, “The Transmission of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian ‘Ulamâ’ in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries” (Ph.D. diss., New York: Columbia University, 1992); G. W. J. Drewes, “New Light on the Coming of Islam to Indonesia?” in *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, eds. Ahmed Ibrahim, Sharon Siddique, and Yasmin Hussein (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990), 7-19; Anthony H. Johns, “The Role of Sufism in the Spread of Islam to Malaya and Indonesia,” *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, no. 9 (1961); Anthony H. Johns, “From Coastal Settlement to Islamic School and City: Islamization in Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, and Java,” in *Indonesia: Australian Perspectives*, ed. James Fox (Canberra: ANU, Research School of Pacific Studies, 1980), 163-182; Anthony H. Johns, “Islamization in Southeast Asia: Reflections and Reconsiderations with Special Reference to the Role of Sufism,” *Southeast Asian Studies* (Tokyo) 31, no. 1 (1993): 43-61; Mohamed Taib Osman, “Islamization of the Malays: A Transformation of Culture,” in *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, 44-47; Anthony Reid, “Sixteenth Century Turkish Influence in Western Indonesia,” *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 10, no. 3 (1969): 395-414; and Peter Riddell, *Islam in the Malay-Indonesian World: Transmission and Responses* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2001). Important contributions to the Islamization of the southern Philippines include Peter G. Gowing, *Muslim Filipinos: Heritage and Horizon* (Quezon City: New Day Press, 1979); Cesar Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines* (Manila: University of the Philippines Press, 1999); and Thomas M. McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). An interesting overview of Arab influences on Muslim Southeast Asia can be found in Huub de Jonge and Nico Kaptein (eds.), *Transcending Borders: Arabs, Politics, Trade, and Islam in Southeast Asia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002).
6. Gilquin, *Les musulmans*, 20; Surin Pitsuwan, “Islam and Malay Nationalism: A Case Study of the Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand” (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1982), 58-61. The latter was also released as a commercial publication: Surin Pitsuwan, *Islam and Malay*

- Nationalism A Case Study of the Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand* (Bangkok: Thammasat University Thai Kadai Research Institute, 1985). For this essay, the original thesis has been used as a reference.
7. Raymond Scupin, "Islam in Thailand before the Bangkok Period," *Journal of the Siam Society*, no. 68 (1990).
 8. Omar Farouk, "Shaykh Ahmad: Muslims in the Kingdom of Ayutthaya," *JEBAT, Journal of the History Department Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*, no.10 (1980/81); Muhammad Ismail Marcinkowski, "Persian Religious and Cultural Influence in Siam/Thailand and Maritime Southeast Asia in Historical Perspective: A Plea for a Concerted Interdisciplinary Approach," *Journal of the Siam Society* 88, parts 1&2 (2000): 186-94; John O' Kane, *The Ship of Sulaiman*. Persian Heritage Series, no. 11 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972); David K. Wyatt, "A Persian Mission to Siam in the Reign of King Narai," *Journal of the Siam Society* 62, no. 1 (1974): 151-57.
 9. Accounts of this process can be found in Andrew D. W. Forbes, "The Yunnanese ('Ho') Muslims of North Thailand," in *Historical and Cultural Studies*, vol. 1 of *The Muslims of Thailand*, ed. Andrew D. W. Forbes (Gaya: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1988), 87-104; Suthep Soonthornpasuch, "Islamic Identity in Chiangmai City: A Historical and Structural Comparison of Two Communities" (Ph.D. diss., Berkeley: University of California, 1977); Ann Maxwell Smith, "Familiar Strangers: The Yunnanese Chinese in Northern Thailand" (Ph.D. diss., Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign, 1982); Michael R. J. Vatikiotis, "Ethnic Pluralism in the Northern Thai City of Chiang Mai" (Ph.D. diss., Oxford: St Catherine's College, 1984).
 10. Although the new state adopted the name "Siam" and would not become known as "Thailand" until 1939, I have chosen to use that present-day name for the remainder of the article. My intention is to underscore the changing political circumstances that led to the formation of the state that would eventually correspond to the current political-geographical entity.
 11. Uthai Dulyakasem, "The Emergence and Escalation of Ethnic Nationalism: The Case of the Muslim Malays in Southern Thailand," in *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia*, eds. Taufik Abdullah and Sharon Siddique (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), 208-49; Cyril Skinner and Justin Corfield, *Rama III and the Siamese Expedition to Kedah in 1839*. Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, no. 30 (Clayton [Victoria, Australia]: Monash University, 1993); David Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), 122-209; and Gilquin, *Les musulmans*, 92-98.
 12. Although Nakhorn Sri Thammarat has a substantial Muslim minority, the province is culturally much closer to central Thailand due to its proximity to that power center. In addition, it has remained an important center of Buddhist learning and worship even after the arrival of Islam. A useful reference is Stanley Tambiah, *World Conqueror or World Renouncer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

13. D.G. E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, 4th ed. (London: MacMillan, 1981), 506-11.
14. Cf. Michael Vickery, "Thai Regional Elites and the Reforms of King Chulalongkorn," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 29, no. 4 (1970): 863-81. For an innovating and highly original account of this episode, cf. Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: The History of the Geo-body of a Nation* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1994).
15. Cf. Uthai Dulyakasem, "Emergence and Escalation," 213ff.
16. "Ethnicity" has been the subject of considerable debate among anthropologists. In the context of Malay ethnicity, a recent and very innovative exploration is Alexander Horstmann, *Class, Culture and Space: The Construction and Shaping of Communal Space in Southern Thailand* (Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa [ILCAA], Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2002).
17. Cf. Hendrik M. J. Maier, "Malay and Indonesian Literature," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Modern Islam* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3:28-35; cf. Azra, "Transmission of Islamic Reformism," 100-5.
18. Maier, "Malay and Indonesian Literature," 30; Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas, *The Origin of the Malay Sha'ir* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1968); and *Concluding Post-Script to the Origin of the Malay Sha'ir* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1971).
19. Interestingly, this account contains speculations concerning his origins. For example, it has been suggested that he was born, or at least spent time, in Ayutthaya. Cf.: Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansûrî* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1970); "New Light on the Life of Hamza Fansuri," *JMBRAS* 40, part 1 (July 1967): 42-51; Vladimir I. Braginsky, "Towards the Biography of Hamzah Fansuri: When Did Hamzah Live? Data from His Poems and Early European Accounts," *Archipel*, no. 57 (1990): 135-75; and "On the Copy of Hamza Fansuri's Epitaph Published by C. Guillot & L. Kalus" (Paris), 62 (2001): 21-33; L. F. van Brakel, "The Birth Place of Hamza Fansuri," *JMBRAS* 42, part 2 (1969): 206-12; G. W. J. Drewes and L. van Brakel, *The Poems of Hamzah Fansuri* (Dordrecht: Foris, 1986); C. Guillot and L. Kalus, "La Stèle Funéraire de Hamzah Fansuri," *Archipel* 60 (2000): 3-24; Haji W. Mohd Shaghîr Abdullah, *Tafsir Puisi Hamzah Fansuri dan Karya-Karya Shufî* (Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Fataniya, 1996).
20. A. Hasymy, *Syarah Rub'i Hamzah Fansuri oleh Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1975); C. A. O. van Nieuwenhuijze, *Shams'l-Dîn van Pasai: bijdrage tot de kennis van de Sumatraansch Mystiek* (Leiden: Brill, 1945).
21. Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas, *Mysticism of Hamzah: Rânîrî and the Wujûdiyyah of the 17th Century Aceh* (Singapore: Malay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1966); G. W. J. Drewes, "Nûr al-Dîn al-Rânîrî's Charge of

- Heresy against Hamzah and Shamsuddin from an International Point of View,” in *Cultural Contact and Textual Interpretation*, ed. C. D. Robson (Dordrecht: Foris, 1986); and G. W. J. Drewes, “De Herkomst van Nurruddin ar-Raniri” (The Origin of Nurruddin ar-Raniri”), in *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia and Oceania), no. 111 (1955); Takeshi Ito, “Why Did Nurruddin ar-Raniri Leave Aceh in 1054 A.H.?” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, no. 134 (1978), 489-91.
22. Cf. in particular Azra, “Transmission of Islamic Reformism”; Drewes (1990), Johns (1980, 1993), Riddell, *Islam in the Malay-Indonesian World*. These studies have been very important to correct some of the views expressed in the work of Clifford Geertz, one of the greatest authorities on the anthropological study of Islam in Southeast Asia, in particular on Java. His *The Religion of Java* (1960) and *Islam Observed* (1968) leave the impression that Islam in Southeast Asia is but a thin veneer over a core of older religious traditions: cf., Robert Hefner, “Introduction: Islam in an Era of Nation-States: Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia,” in *Islam in an Era of Nation-States: Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia*, eds. Robert Hefner and Patricia Horvatic (Honolulu; University of Hawai’i Press, 1997), 13-18.
 23. Cf., Howard Federspiel, “Pesantren,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Modern Islam*, 3:324-26; Taufik Abdullah, “The Pesantren in Historical Perspective,” in *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia*, eds. Taufik Abdullah and Sharon Siddique, 80-86; Surin, “Islam and Malay Nationalism,” 175-87; More extensive studies are: Karel A. Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah* (Meppel: Boom, 1974); Zamakhshari Dhofier, *The Pesantren Tradition: A Study in the Role of the Kyai in the Maintenance of the Traditional Ideology of Islam in Java* (Canberra: Australia National University, 1980).
 24. Surin Pitsuwan, “Islam and Malay Nationalism,” 175.
 25. *Ibid.*, 181.
 26. Azra, “Transmission of Islamic Reformism,” 513. In contrast, the more recent developments in Malay nationalism among Thailand’s southern Muslims has been studied extensively. Cf. Andrew Forbes, ed., *Politics of the Malay-Speaking South*, vol. 2 of *The Muslims of Thailand*; Wan Kadir Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990); Ladd Thomas, *Political Violence in the Muslim Provinces of Southern Thailand* (Singapore: Institute for South East Asian Studies, 1975).
 27. Azra, “Transmission of Islamic Reformism,” 514.
 28. *Ibid.*, 515; Riddell, *Islam in the Malay-Indonesian World*, 198; Surin Pitsuwan, “Islam and Malay Nationalism,” 49; cf. Also: V. Matheson, V. and M. B. Hooker, “Jawi Literature in Patani: The Maintenance of a Tradition,” *JMBRAS* 1 11/1, 1-86.

29. Also spelled "al-Fatani." Cf., Azra, "Transmission of Islamic Reformism," 515-22; Riddell, *Islam in the Malay-Indonesian World*, 198-99; H. W. M. Shagir Abdullah, *Syeikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani: `Ulama dan Pengarang Terulung Asia Tenggara* (Kuala Lumpur: Hizbi, 1990).
30. There is no agreement on the date of his birth, and records vary from 1709 to 1769: cf. Azra, "Transmission of Islamic Reformism," 516; Riddell, *Islam in the Malay-Indonesian World*, 198, note 1.
31. In that position, he was prominent enough to draw even the attention of the Dutch Islamicist Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, who spent time in Makkah in the 1880s; Riddell, *Islam in the Malay-Indonesian World*, 198.
32. Cf. Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab kuning, pesantren dan tarekat: Tradisi-tradisi Islam di Indonesia*, 3d ed. (Bandung: Mizan, 1999). Also relevant in this respect is Hasan Madmarn, *Traditional Muslim Institutions in Southern Thailand: A Critical Study of Islamic Education and Arabic Influence in the Pondok and Madrasah Systems of Patani* (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1990), 102-13. This thesis is also significant as one of the most recent studies of how the *pondok* tradition has survived into present times.
33. Riddell, *Islam in the Malay-Indonesian World*, 199-200.
34. Gilquin, *Les musulmans*, 83-84. A more extensive study can be found in Ruth-Inge Heinze, "Socio-psychological aspects of the Work of Thai-Muslim Bomohs in Pattani," in *Historical and Cultural Studies*, vol. 1 of *The Muslims of Thailand*, ed. Andrew D. W. Forbes, (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990), 135-54.
35. For a survey, cf. Raymond Scupin, "Popular Islam in Thailand," in Forbes, *The Muslims of Thailand*, 1:31-46. Other studies include Thomas Fraser, *Rusebilan: A Malay Fishing Village* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960); Kirk Endicott, *An Analysis of Malay Magic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).
36. Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 51.
37. *Ibid.*, chapter 2: "Historical Background: 1902-1922. The Royal Connection," 27-61.
38. Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 57-58; Uthai Dulyakasem, "Emergence and Escalation," 217.
39. Cf., William R. Roff, "'Kaum-Muda' – 'Kaum Tua': Innovation and Reaction among the Malays: 1900-1941," in *Papers on Malayan History*, K. G. Tregonning, ed. (Singapore: Department of History, University of Malaya in Singapore, 1961); William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).
40. Cf., Vella, *Chaiyo!*; Barmé, *Luang Wichit Wathakan*; Reynolds, *National Identity*.
41. Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 69.
42. *Ibid.*, 62-87.

43. Uthai Dulyakasem, "Emergence and Escalation"; Omar Farouk, "The Origins and Evolution of Malay-Muslim Ethnic Nationalism in Southern Thailand," in *Islam and Society*, 208-49.
44. Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 116-41.
45. Uthai Dulyakasem, "Emergence and Escalation," 218ff.; cf. also, Raymond Scupin, *Aspects of Development: Education and Political Integration for Muslims in Thailand and Malaysia*. Selangor: Malaysia: Institute of Malay Language, 1989.
46. Farouk, "Origins and Evolution," 252ff.
47. Nai Adun na Saiburi alias Tengku Abdul Jalal alias Yala Nasir. Cf. *ibid.*, 257-59; "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 98-99, Uthai Dulyakasem, "Emergence and Escalation," 220.
48. Farouk, "Origins and Evolution," 250; Raymond Scupin, "Muslim Identity and Nationalism in Buddhist Thailand," in *Dynamics and Dimensions of Inter-Religious Contacts in Southeast Asia: Examining Buddhist-Muslim Relations in Thailand*, Omar Farouk, ed., (Japan: Times Publication, forthcoming).
49. Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 93-100; Farouk, *Dynamics*, 259-61. See also the more extensive study of this episode, A. Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics during the Malayan Union Experiment 1942-1948*. (Kuala Lumpur: The Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society Monograph no. 8, 1979).
50. Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 95-96.
51. Cf., M. Ismail Marcinkowski, "Iranians, Shaykh al-Islams and Chularajamontris: Genesis and Development of an Institution and Its Introduction to Siam." Paper presented to the Eighth International Conference on Thai Studies. Nakhon Phanom: Ramkhamhaeng University; Imtiyaz Yusuf, "Islam and Democracy in Thailand: Reforming the Office of the Chularajamontri/Shaykh al-Islâm," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 9:2 (1998): 277-298. See also, Gilquin, *Les musulmans*, 63-68, 152-61.
52. Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 107. *Khaek* means literally "guest," but has since long also been used to refer to people of Indian or Middle Eastern descent, as well as Malay Muslims. For the latter, in particular, it carries a derogative connotation. For an elaborate discussion of the term, cf. A.V.N. Diller, "Islam and Southern Thai Ethnic Reference," in *The Muslims of Thailand*, ed. Andrew D. W. Forbes, 1:155-67. The issue is also discussed in Gilquin, *Les musulmans*, 33-35; Scupin, "Muslim Identity and Nationalism in Buddhist Thailand," 13, 25-26.
53. Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 105; a general overview of the administration of Islamic affairs in Thailand can be found in: Farouk, "The Muslims of Thailand: A Survey," in *The Muslims of Thailand*, ed. Andrew D. W. Forbes, 1:16-27.
54. Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 111-16.

55. Ibid., 119-41.
56. Ibid., 146-49. Surin Pitsuwan has observed that for the Malay-Muslims, Haji Sulong was in effect the supreme Muslim authority, their Shaykh al-Islam, rather than the incumbent of the Bangkok-based office of Chularajamontri.
57. Ibid., 151-54; Farouk, "Malay-Muslim Ethic Nationalism," 262-63; Uthai Dulyakasem, "Emergence and Escalation," 220-21.
58. Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 159-65; Darouk, Malay-Muslim Ethnic Nationalism," 264-268; Uthai Dulyakasem, "Emergence and Escalation," 221-24.
59. Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 164-65.
60. For example: Chaiwat Satha-Anand, *Islam and Violence: A Case Study of Violent Events in the Four Southern Provinces of Thailand 1976-1981* (USF Monographs in religion and public policy) (Tampa: University of South Florida, 1986); Wan Kadir Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of the Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990); Ladd Thomas, "Thai Muslim Separatism in South Thailand," *The Muslims of Thailand*, ed. Andrew D.W. Forbes, 2:19-32; Gaganath Jhan, "The Muslim Separatist Movement in Southern Thailand from an Indian Viewpoint," in *The Muslims of Thailand*, ed. Andrew D. W. Forbes, 183-200; Cf. Also Gilquin, *Les musulmans*, 115-20; Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 216-68; Uthai Dulyakasem, "Emergence and Escalation," 229-37.
61. Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani.
62. See note 46 above.
63. Surin Pituswan records "only" 49 groups totalling 249 operatives in 1973 against 84 organizations with over 1500 men in 1979. Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 240.
64. In Malay it is known as Pertubohan Persatuan Pembibasan Patani.
65. Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 247-56
66. Uthai Dulyakasem, "Emergence and Escalation," 217-19, 225-27; Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 188-96.
67. Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," 196.
68. Uthai Dulyakasem, "Emergence and Escalation," 227.
69. On of his most recent contributions is: "Developing Thailand's South" In: *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 12, 2004.
70. Ibid., 197
71. Ibid., 197-203.
72. Rodney Tasker, "Burning Question: School arson attacks leave politicians floundering," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 19, 1993.
73. Michael Vatikiotis, "Ties of Faith: Muslims want to integrate – but also keep identity," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 April 1996. Cf. Also, Imtiyaz Yusuf, "Islam and Democracy in Thailand," 288ff; Gilquin, *Les musulmans*, 166-70. Gilquin also mentions Thailand's gradual opening toward the

Muslim world, epitomized by its receipt of observer status with the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) during Surin Pitsuwan's tenure as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gilquin, *Les musulmans*, 175ff.

74. *The Nation Newspaper*, April 29, 2004; May 4, 2004.
75. Cf. Suparajanchitfah, "Southern Muslims plead for understanding," *Bangkok Post*, 30 September 2001; Kavi Chongkittavorn, "A middle path: fighting terrorism a la Thai," *The Nation*, 23 December 2002; "Regional Perspective: the thai Jemaah Islamiyah is unlike others" *The Nation*, 6 January 2003; Suparajanchitfah, "southern key is justice," *Bangkok Post*, 11 May 2003; Shawn W. Crispin, "Thailand's War Zone," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 11, 2004; Shawn W. Crispin, "Strife down South," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 22, 2004
76. Gilquin, *Les musulmans*, 98.

