

# EXPLORATIONS

a graduate student journal of southeast asian studies

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Special Edition  
**ISLAM**  
in  
**SOUTHEAST ASIA**



A Day Out | Tim S. Pappa



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THE CENTER FOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES  
SCHOOL OF HAWAIIAN, ASIAN & PACIFIC STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MĀNOA

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**EXPLORATIONS** is a student publication of the Southeast Asian Studies Student Association in conjunction with the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Hawai`i at Manoa.

The principle mission of **EXPLORATIONS** is to offer a forum for students to present disciplinary and interdisciplinary research on a broad range of issues relating principally to the region which today constitutes Southeast Asia. Embracing both the diversity of academic interests and scholastic expertise, it is hoped that this forum will introduce students to the work of their colleagues, encourage discussion both within and across disciplines, and foster a sense of community among those interested in Southeast Asia.

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## **An Introduction to the *EXPLORATIONS* Special Edition on Islam in Southeast Asia**

This theme issue of *Explorations*, concentrating on Islam in Southeast Asia, is particularly significant in today's world, and it is gratifying that the topic generated so many responses. As most of us know, media images of Islam in the United States are usually focused on the Middle East. Despite their long tradition of adjustment and toleration, Southeast Asian Muslims receive little attention apart from journalistic accounts of "newsworthy" events that commonly highlight outbreaks of violence. Too often, however, simplistic reporting and talk of "terrorism" fails to convey the nuances of local experiences which must inform our understanding of contemporary tensions in southern Thailand, southern Philippines, and parts of Indonesia.

The essays presented here reflect the influence of different disciplines, but they all demonstrate the cultural, ethnic and historical complexities that underlie general categories like "Southeast Asian Muslims." What makes this collection particularly refreshing is the personal engagement of the authors, whether their "explorations" entail a close reading of historical texts and contemporary documents, interviews with *santri* in a Javanese *pesantren*, attendance at an Indonesian Idol concert in Manado, or the organization of photographs taken during field research. In congratulating all those who have worked on the production of this issue, I would like to make one additional point. At no point in human history is an understanding of cultural and religious difference more important than it is today. We are indeed fortunate that technology has facilitated the global exchange of ideas in a way that would have been unthinkable a generation ago, and it is our hope that *Explorations* can contribute to this critically important conversation.

**Barbara Watson Andaya**  
Director, Center for Southeast Asian Studies  
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# Chinese Muslims in Colonial and Postcolonial Indonesia

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## SYNOPSIS

This paper is an historical survey of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia. The author reviews Chinese migration to the Indonesian archipelago in the pre-colonial era, the forces that stimulated conversion to Islam, and the hybrid cultures that emerged from this process. The effects of the colonial and post-colonial periods on this process are also examined. Finally, the author focuses on the role of post-colonial organizations in challenging, defending and/or asserting new historical, Islamic and Chinese identities.

## Introduction

When asked in 1979, Junus Jahja, a prominent Chinese Muslim leader, who was born and had lived for long in Indonesia, expressed his self-identity as: "I am a Muslim, an Indonesian, and a Chinese."<sup>1</sup> This personal statement illustrates not only how an individual can simultaneously be Muslim, nationalist, and Chinese, but also raises an important question relating to the studies of Diaspora: How did Chinese Muslims identify themselves in Indonesia, during the colonial and post-colonial periods?<sup>2</sup> This article seeks to examine what it meant to be a Chinese Muslim in Indonesia.<sup>3</sup> It mainly argues that many Chinese Muslims in Indonesia were hardly "diasporic" because they felt that conversion to Islam was the way of assimilating to local Indonesian culture. Here I would coin the term "post-diasporic experience" to refer to the situation where Chinese Muslims were born in Indonesia and thought of new boundary identification beyond their homeland and sought to assimilate with the "local." "Post-diasporic Chinese" also means that they wanted to challenge or counter the "diasporic Chinese" iden-

ty. "Identities," in plural form, implies that Chinese who converted to Islam had different and changing identities according to changing circumstances.<sup>4</sup>

This paper begins with an historical survey of Chinese Muslims from the Dutch colonial era and then discusses Chinese Muslim identities in post-independence Indonesia by focusing on some Chinese Muslim individuals and organizations.

## The Experience of Chinese Muslims in the Dutch Colonial Era

Southeast Asia has been among the most attractive destinations for Chinese to migrate and to live. There have been a variety of reasons why Chinese left their homes: political, religious, economic, or a combination of all.<sup>5</sup> Nearly all the "overseas Chinese" were not from the Han center of China, but from the peripheral regions of Fujian and Guangdong.<sup>6</sup> But most of the Chinese in Southeast Asia decided to settle in the new countries.<sup>7</sup> This migration pattern affected the ways in

which Chinese expressed their identities in the host countries.

In the pre-World War II era, prior to Indonesia's independence in 1945, many of the Chinese in the Netherlands East Indies came to identify themselves with their homeland, China. These Chinese were later called *Totok* (originally meant 'full-blooded'). *Totok* Chinese were apparently "diasporic" in the sense that they still had strong attachment to their homeland. However, the *Peranakan* Chinese, who had lived in the Netherlands East Indies for a long time, had lost much of their Chinese culture and no longer spoke Chinese, and could thus be regarded as post-diasporic Chinese.<sup>8</sup> Many mixed marriages had taken place, and the *Peranakan* had become part of their local society. But because the colonial state and society put much emphasis on the concept of "race," the Indonesian people were not "free" and the Indonesian nation was experiencing a flood of new Chinese immigration, hence Chinese communities were split along racial and political lines. A Chinese figure, Tjoe Bou San, for example, was oriented toward China and believed that the only road open to the Chinese was that of "Chinese nationalism." Kwee Hing Tjiat, on the other hand, put forward the idea of "total assimilation" with native Indonesians. However, before World War II, Indonesian nationalism was still weak among many of the Chinese. The idea of Indonesian nationalism did not gain strength among the Chinese until Indonesian independence in 1945.<sup>9</sup> In short, during the colonial period, two general types of Chinese had been discerned in Indonesia: the "pure-blood Chinese" (*Totok*) and "half-blood Chinese" (*Peranakan*), but the *Totok* gained greater supports.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, debates among these groups took place.

However, the *Peranakan* had actually existed long before Indonesian independence in 1945. Assimilation had long taken place. Some historical evidences show that there had been significant numbers of Muslim Chinese individuals before World War II. French historians, Denys Lombard and Claudine Salmon, for example, have drawn our attention to some historical evidence which shows that the Chinese had been able to assimilate to Indonesian local culture since the fifteenth century. The Chinese Muslim named Ma Huan, who accompanied Admiral Zheng He (Cheng Ho, 1371-1431/3, also known by the name of Sam Po) on his series of expeditions to the South Seas/ Indian Ocean

(1405-1437), reported at the time of their passage through East Java that the population was already made up of three groups of people: natives, Muslims (*Hui-hui*), and Chinese (*Tangren*, many of whom were Muslims). Ma Huan reported that the natives had tousled hair and bare feet and worshiped ghosts; the Muslims were foreign (mostly Indian and Arab) traders that wore clean dress and ate good food. According to Ma Hun, the Chinese came during the Tang Dynasty era (627-906 C.E) from the cities of Guangdong, Changchou, Chuan-chou and others.<sup>11</sup>

In China itself, Muslim communities had existed at Canton as far back as the 9<sup>th</sup> century or earlier and Muslim merchants played a crucial role in coastal towns of China, such as Canton and Quanzhou in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. These Chinese merchants had commercial and cultural contacts with people in Champa and Java.<sup>12</sup> Chinese Muslims in the 9<sup>th</sup> century fled to Southeast Asia because of political chaos in China. Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Persians in Canton had to leave their homeland and find new settlements. Many of them went to Java.<sup>13</sup> A Javanese historian, Slamet Muljana, used these stories and other evidence (such as documents found in two temples: *Klenteng Sam Po Kong* in Semarang and *Klenteng Talang* in Cirebon) to suggest that the Chinese themselves also participated in the Islamization of Java.<sup>14</sup> A controversial book, a Javanese text, called *Serat Dermagandul*, considered some of the Muslim missionaries/saints in Java (*walis*) to be of Chinese origin (*Peranakan*).<sup>15</sup> The well-known Portuguese traveler Tomé Pires observed that the Javanese used to have contacts with the Chinese and that Islam had been widespread among the cosmopolitan population of the coastal areas, made up of Chinese, Arabs, Gujaratis, Bengalis, and other nationalities.<sup>16</sup> Hence, when the Dutch came in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, many Chinese already lived in the archipelago. Moreover, many of them had been Muslim and played a crucial role in the Islamization of Java and other islands in the archipelago.<sup>17</sup>

From the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the account of the first Dutch fleet makes it clear that one must distinguish "pure-blood Chinese", *Totok*, that is, those remaining loyal to their ancestral religion and region, from those who have lived here for a long time and who have adopted the Mohammedan faith. Edmund Scott (1603-5) had a report on these two kinds of Chinese: "The Chyneses (*sic*) are very craftie (*sic*) people in trad-



ing, using all kind of cosoning (*sic*) and deceit which may possible be devised. They have no pride in them, nor will refuse any labour, except they turne (*sic*) Javans (as many of them doe when they have done a murther (*sic*) or some other villanic (*sic*)).<sup>18</sup> Another Dutch report in 1617 stated that, according to the Javanese themselves, he uses as his counsel nothing but greedy, false thieves: shaven Chinese.<sup>19</sup> At Makassar (Sulawesi), a local chronicle alludes to a family descended from a Chinese Muslim and says of his origins as follows:

They were two brothers, originating from the land of the *Huihui* (that is Muslims come from China), the elder was called *Panlaoetia*, the younger *Laitji*, both of them had left their country after disappointments. They had boarded boats and migrated towards Cirebon in Java. There *Laitji* married the daughter of the *Tumenggung* (high-ranking administrative officer) of Batang (to the east of Pekalongan), after which they shared their fortune and *Panlaoetia* asked his younger brother for permission to continue his voyage in the direction of the east as far as Makassar and up to the land of Sanrabone. There he stayed and sought to earn a living by all means possible.<sup>20</sup>

While the previous centuries had scattered historical evidence the eighteenth century had more sources on the existence of Chinese Muslims. Thomas Horsfield (1848) wrote on the Chinese Muslims who exploited the tin mines at Bangka as follows:

Several families, the names of the heads of which are recorded by the inhabitants of Minto (Muntok), formed the first stock of colonization; the chief of these was the father-in-law of Raden Lumbu (i.e. Sultan Badr al-Din); they were of Chinese descent, but their ancestors for several generations had embraced the Mahomedan (*sic*)...the physiognomy of the present generation evidently indicates their Chinese derivation...<sup>21</sup>

It was a habit of the Sultans of Palembang to marry one of the daughters of these worthy people of Muntok.<sup>22</sup> For Palembang, Sumatera, Storm van's Gravesande reported that the Chinese who converted to Islam "distinguish themselves, like elsewhere, by their dress, their morals, and their religion, but more than anywhere else in the Indies, they were attracted to local dress, and it has resulted in a large number of them becoming Muslims in the course of time; many of the Palembangese have, moreover, in the past, like today, married Chinese. Most of these Chinese women

are of Muslim religion."<sup>23</sup> For Java, there are more examples of Muslims of Chinese origin. Lombard and Salmon talk about the family of Surabaya who converted to Islam and assimilated into the surrounding Javanese society to the point of "forgetting" their origin.<sup>24</sup> For Semarang, Java, there was a report suggesting the existence of *kampung Peranakan* (local-born Chinese village):

As the *Parnakkangs* (*sic*) have become Mohammedans or are by birth, they live more in the style of the country than in the Chinese way. Their job is generally fishing and the navy, hiring themselves out of sailors or skippers of entire vessels...they are whiter than the normal to be Javanese but not as white as the Chinese. They marry Javanese women; this results in mixed blood which becomes less so from generation to generation.<sup>25</sup>

The increasing *Peranakan* Muslim community merged into or mixed with the local Indonesian societies from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>26</sup> For example, a fair number of Chinese Muslims participated in local anti-colonial wars. Raden Prawiro allied with a Chinese Muslim named Boengseng in an uprising in 1839 against the Dutch. Boengseng spoke native and Arabic languages and concealed himself under an Arab costume.<sup>27</sup> Another case concerns Ibu Melati, a shaman of Chinese origin, who helped an uprising in Tangerang in 1924.<sup>28</sup> Another demonstration of Chinese participation in nationalist movements was when different youth organizations proclaimed The Youth Oath (*Sumpah Pemuda*) on 28 October 1928. Although no Chinese organization was involved, a young Chinese *Peranakan* named Johan Muhammad Chai, a delegation from the *Young Islamiten Bond*, signed the Oath.<sup>29</sup> Other Chinese, who were non-Muslims, were also present in the meeting.<sup>30</sup>

The early part of the twentieth century also witnessed an increasing movement of Islamic propagation (*dakwah*) by Chinese Muslims. In Sulawesi, there was Ong Kie Ho, the founder of an Islamic Party. In Medan, Haji Yap A Siong (d.1984), alias Haji Abdussomad, born in Canton at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, propagated Islam in Medan, Sumatera and in 1936 founded the Muslim Chinese Union (*Persatuan Islam Tionghoa*). The Muslim Chinese Union, according to a local newspaper dated November 3, 1936, received land to be used as a center of Islamic propagation. In 1938, it is reported, the union's membership totaled 4,800 people in Pa-

lembang, and 9,500 in Jakarta.<sup>31</sup> The Indonesian Islamic Chinese Party published a magazine called *Wasi-lah* (Medium), issued on 1936 for the first time with Tjoa Goan Lian and Tan Kim Peng as chief-editors.<sup>32</sup> In Makassar, Liem Kie Chie founded another party, The Indonesian Islamic Chinese Party (*Partai Tiong-hoa Islam Indonesia*) which was aimed at increasing the prestige of Chinese Indonesians through Islamization.<sup>33</sup>

It is worth discussing the belief that Chinese Muslims contributed little to nationalist movements during the colonial era. It has been argued that such Islamic organizations as the *Sarekat Islam* (Union of Islam) were founded in 1912 to attack, rather than accommodate, Chinese interests. Leo Suryadinata, for example, argued that the *Sarekat Islam* aimed to protect their business interests against Chinese competition. He believed that it was anti-Chinese, and never appealed to the *Peranakan* Chinese.<sup>34</sup> Chinese Muslims in coastal areas in East Java, for example, were said to hold the position as regent (*bupati*) under the VOC system.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, the colonial era witnessed a gradual growth in the numbers of Chinese Muslims; some had been Muslim before coming to Indonesia, but many converted to Islam during their stay in the country. After they became Muslim, they participated in religious movements in different local areas.

### Hybrid Cultures, Diverse Religiosities

In different places, the Chinese *Peranakan* Muslims developed “hybrid cultures,” combining local, Islamic/Arabic, and Chinese attributes or elements. These were made possible largely because the Dutch colonial state did not seem to have prohibited Chinese cultural expressions. The Chinese shaped the architectural culture of the mosque (*mesjid*). Many mosques had architecture, décor or furnishings by Chinese artisans. For example, the old mosques in Jepara and in Maluku showed a circular door in the style of the gardens of Suzhou. Other mosques had pulpits (*mimbar*) whose décor, adorned with gilded wood, revealed the techniques of the Cantonese cabinet-makers.<sup>36</sup> In Banten, the Pacinan Mosque (*Mesjid Pecinan*), which remained in 1902, had a European minaret and Chinese ornaments.<sup>37</sup> Another mosque, Mesjid Jami Angke in Jakarta, had some Chinese ornaments on its gate and

ropes like that of Chinese temple (*kelenteng*).<sup>38</sup> Traditional drums called *bedug*, a percussion instrument for calling prayers, could also be found there. To hang the drums on part of mosque building might be a Chinese architectural influence. This practice has been adopted outside the Chinese Muslim community in Java and other parts of Indonesia.<sup>39</sup>

Apart from the mosques, one also finds a large number of sacred tombs attributed to Muslims of Chinese origin. For example, in a mosque in Angke district, a Muslim tombstone was found with a Chinese inscription. A tomb which dated back to 1792 near the Mosque of Kebon Jeruk, used Chinese and Arabic words, with dragons and other Chinese ornaments.<sup>40</sup> Many of the holy tombs were built in an Islamic style, with a stele at the two extremities, but some have kept the Chinese model in the form of a tumulus.<sup>41</sup>

Chinese Muslims also contributed to local literary development. Their Chinese origins can only be traced if the authors reveal it themselves in the introduction or in the course of the work. The use of reading rooms (*taman bacaan*) – attested to in China under the Tang Dynasty (618–907) – was found in the Indonesian archipelago, in towns such as Palembang and Jakarta. We also know of the famous copyist, Ching Sa’id Allah Muhammad, who transcribed a great number of manuscripts while employed at the secretarial office at Batavia in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>42</sup>

By the colonial era, Chinese Muslims had demonstrated a variety of religious orientations too. As expressed in the local literature, three tendencies of the Chinese Muslims during the nineteenth century can be identified: *Kejawen* or Javanese mysticism, Islamic orthodoxy, and political militancy. The first tendency, Javanese mysticism, was represented by *Serat Tasawuf* or “mystical treatise” which claimed to teach some knowledge of Islamic religion (*bab kawroeh agami Islam*), but adopted Javanese ideas. Another work in this Javanese mystic line was a poem called *Sjair Ilmoe Sedjati dan Sjair Nasehat* or a “Poem about the True Knowledge and Poem of Admonition” re-edited in 1921 by Tan Khoen Swie at Kediri, East Java and attributed to Kyai Kiem Mas (1834–96). Kyai Keim Mas was a member of the great Han family and a convert to Islam, but he endorsed a type of Javanese syncretism.

The second tendency was Islamic orthodoxy, represented by the work entitled *Sair Tjioko dan Pejjoen or*

“Poem on the Ghost Festival and Boat Races Festival”, containing technical Hokkien terms, but also critical statements of perceived “Chinese superstition.” The anonymous author, who was a Chinese *Peranakan* converted to Islam, described different great festivals of the Javanese community: first, the Ghost Festival (the *Avalambana* of the Buddhists, usually called *Pesta rebutan* or *Tjioko* in Java); second, that of the boat races or *Petjoen (Pecun)*, which are to commemorate the death of the famous poet and loyal minister Qu Yuan (B.C. 332-295); finally, that of the Chinese New Year of *Capgome*. The author criticized the “superstitious Chinese” and the “unscrupulous Muslims” who came together in the festivals. The author, for example, lamented seeing his fellow Muslims hurl themselves at the offerings exposed on the scaffolding to snatch them (*jioko*, literally “to scramble for the offerings made to the ghosts”):

Here they are united, these insane Muslims  
Swallowing their saliva and shaking their heads....  
They also gobble down Chinese food,  
There are lots of vegetables and pork...  
And if there is alcohol in a bowl,  
They waste no time in lapping it up...  
The Muslim women gather,  
All against the *Sengke* and the *Peranakan*,  
What aberrant morals!  
By the riverbanks, they all eat together...  
The Chinese eat, the others gorge themselves,  
The Chinese bathe, the others paddle,  
The Chinese celebrate their New Year, and they get  
drunk...<sup>43</sup>

The third tendency of Chinese Muslim orientation was the political, as exemplified by the work of the *Sair Serikat Islam* or “Poem on the Sarekat Islam”, published at Batavia by Kho Tjeng Bie in 1913. Sarekat Islam was an Islamic organization established by Islamic traders and landlords in 1912 to strengthen Muslim economic and political networks and to break the Chinese commercial monopoly. Making repeated references to Muslim faith (*Bismillahi ioe permoelaan kalam* or “in the name of God, such is the beginning”), the text “Poem on the Sarekat Islam” was addressed to a converted *Peranakan* public and makes an apology on behalf of Sarekat Islam which had just come into existence. However, the following text indicates a criticism of the perception that Sarekat Islam was aimed at challenging or attacking the Chinese.<sup>44</sup> It implies that the author might be one of the members of the Sarekat Islam or at least was sympathetic with the organization.

And still at Keputran [district of Surabaya] in Java,  
The natives fought with the Chinese,  
Several have lost their lives,  
And the Sarekat lost face.  
The Muslim nation  
Has suffered for decades,  
Throughout the country and in the heart of the vil-  
lages,  
It is as if one was being tortured.  
Many have told  
At the time of the events in Semarang,  
That the Sarekat Islam had clearly said  
That they were going to attack the Chinese.  
All these mad words,  
It is to be hoped that you do not listen to them.<sup>45</sup>

Apart from such local literature, Chinese Muslims had also translated the Arabic Koran into Chinese language since the seventeenth century. But the Chinese translations didn’t appear until 1932 by Wang Wen-tjhing, then in 1943 by Liu Tjin-piao, again in 1946 by Wang Tjing-tjai and in 1947 by Yang Tjung-ming.<sup>46</sup> These translations show how some attempts at translating religious books had been made to bridge the gap between Chinese converts and their religious scriptures.

Thus, by the early twentieth century, there had been different orientations among the Chinese *Peranakan* Muslims; some of them tended to be more consciously religious (“orthodox”) than others (“syncretic” or “hybrid”), but some were more political in tone. Such diversity in religiosity indicated that Chinese Muslims had assimilated to the local cultures in a variety of ways. Related to religious orientations was language, an issue we shall discuss in the following paragraphs.

Most Chinese Muslims from the nineteenth century onwards used Malay language, rather than Chinese or Arabic language. The Chinese Muslims – as part of the *Peranakan* – were characterized by a loss of competence in Chinese languages and the adoption of the *lingua franca* (Malay) as well as the regional/local languages (such as Javanese). As Ellen Rafferty pointed out, the Chinese *Peranakan* learned to speak languages that were useful and accessible to them, and they chose as their home language the most advantageous one. Generally speaking, the majority of *Peranakan* did not maintain their original language, for only the elite were able to hire tutors from China.<sup>47</sup> The elite continued attachment to their homeland and its culture, and were in a strong economic position as intermediaries between the higher-level European

economy and the lower level Indonesian one.<sup>48</sup> For the elite, only after 1875 did Hokkien-language schools become popular in Indonesia, and 217 such schools were operating in Java and Madura by 1899.<sup>49</sup> Dutch-Chinese schools (HCS) were established in 1908. However, among the graduates from HCS were Chinese who later converted to Islam in the postcolonial period. However, most of the Chinese *Peranakan* did not have the chance to learn Chinese or Dutch. Instead, they spoke Malay or a local language.

The *Commissie voor de Volkslectuur* (Balai Pustaka), which emerged from the Office of Native Affairs, was established to further spread Romanized Malay (*rumi*) among the inhabitants of the Indies, following up on the vigorous activities of the *rumi* presses under Eurasians and Chinese *Peranakan* from 1856.<sup>50</sup> Chinese *Peranakan* had learned the Malay language, and it was through this knowledge of Malay that some of them converted to Islam. Thus, Malay language became the language of local Islam in the Netherlands East Indies. In the following, we shall address the perceptions of outsiders toward Chinese Muslims during the colonial era.

### Dutch Perceptions of Chinese Muslims

Dutch officials usually called Chinese Muslims “*geschoren Cineezen*” (shaved Chinese with a pigtail, *orang-orang Tionghoakuciran*). In Banten, West Java, Chinese Muslims were commonly bald-headed with a pigtail. They also wore local dress and sometimes had a local name. The Dutch called them also “*getornden Chineezen*” (the Chinese who have changed). These terms, however, later underwent a shift in connotation. *Geschoren Chineezen* came to mean “the Chinese who have just come with pigtail on their heads,” and Chinese Muslims came to be called *Peranakan*. The *Peranakan* later referred to a person whose mother was a local woman but whose father was Chinese.<sup>51</sup> In 1874 in Sumenep, Madura, there were some 40 Chinese Muslims called *Peranakan*. They lived local life, using local name and wearing local dress. The Dutch officials initially regarded them as the natives, but later on classified them as Chinese.<sup>52</sup>

In terms of civil status, the Dutch colonials created three racial categories: Europeans (Dutch), Foreign Orientals (mainly Chinese, also Arabs), and Natives (*Inlanders*).<sup>53</sup> Each group was governed by different

laws and had different rights. The local Chinese were considered to be “native” for legal purposes, such as when a Muslim married a Chinese woman, and subject to local courts, but considered as “non-natives” when the Chinese, for example, intended to own farmland.<sup>54</sup> In Batavia, the Chinese were required to pay higher taxes than the native population. If the Chinese became Muslim, they were looked upon and treated in the same way as natives. In 1755, however, the Dutch specified that Chinese Muslims would be required to continue paying taxes and they would not be given freedom to travel. In Banten, for example, conversion to Islam did not immediately reflect on societal status: they still had to pay higher tax and only the children of these Chinese converts would legally be native or local. These regulations, as Dutch scholar Karel Steenbrink argued, were issued to keep the Chinese from becoming Muslims.<sup>55</sup>

Although many Chinese (including the government of China) felt that they were being discriminated against by the Dutch colonial government, the Dutch still viewed the Chinese as being higher in status than the natives. Chinese were seen as “hard workers” and the natives as “lazy”. For example, Jan Pieterse Coen, the founder of the Dutch colony in Batavia, enthused, “there are no other people who can serve us better than the Chinese.” Coen sought to get Chinese immigrants and sent expeditionary parties to kidnap Chinese from the Chinese mainland.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, generally speaking, the Dutch viewed the Chinese Muslims as a group between the Chinese (foreign orientals) and the Muslim natives (*inlanders*). The Dutch sometimes regarded them as Chinese so that they could impose higher taxes on them, but in other times they could view the Chinese Muslims as simply “natives.” The Dutch racial distinction contributed to the tense relationships between the Chinese and the natives in later periods. But now, we will consider the attitudes of fellow Chinese toward Chinese converts.

### Non-Muslim Chinese Perceptions of Chinese Muslims

In many cases, Dutch attitudes toward Chinese and natives on the one hand, and the actual conversion of some Chinese to Islam on the other, caused tension among the Chinese populations. Thus, the *Totok* Chinese who remained loyal to the traditions of their an-

cestors in China looked unfavorably upon the holy tombs (*kramat*), which they called *shengmu* and saw as a sign of merging into a foreign society (*ru fan*).<sup>57</sup> As Denys Lombard and Claudine Salmon suggested, most of these holy tombs were in an Islamic style, “with a stele at the two extremities, but a few kept the Chinese model in the form of a tumulus.”<sup>58</sup> The development of collective ancestral temples and funeral associations in significant numbers led Chinese communities to stop the Islamization process.<sup>59</sup> In addition, the rules of the association in Surabaya in 1864 by the *Peranakan* Chinese of Fujian were aimed to regulate the question of marriages and funerals in the heart of their community, to warn members against the cults of Muslim tombs in which the Chinese took part, as well as against the *selamatan*, or religious meal and communal feast, another practice which became equally common in certain *Peranakan* circles.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, Chinese overseas nationalists during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also sought to “re-sinicize” the *Peranakan*, and to prevent other Chinese immigrants from being converts.

In the colonial society, Islam was commonly associated with a lower socio-economic group and hence not attractive to many Chinese. The Chinese convert, Abdul Karim Oey (Oei Tjeng Hien), whom we shall discuss again below, told the story of his conversion during the colonial period. Oei was born in Padang, Sumatera in 1905, and converted to Islam in 1930. When he proclaimed his new religion, the chief and the community around him in Bengkulu mocked him severely and boycotted his activities. Even his father stopped acknowledging him as his son. His father once said, “You are a well-to-do person, from a good family, why do you enter *Melayu*? They wear bad and ugly dresses.”<sup>61</sup>

In fact, many Chinese who were poor converted to Islam.<sup>62</sup> Yet, the Chinese converts not only came from poor families; some of them were part of the elite. Tjan Toe Some, a Sinologue, and Tjan Tjoe Siem, a scholar of Islamic and Javanese culture, from Solo, were born Muslims. They studied at Leiden University before World War II. Both were descendants of Chinese Muslims who had come to the archipelago before 1800. Among these Chinese who had lived for generations on Java was a Chinese Muslim family who aided Prince Diponegoro during the Java war (1825-1830) and due

to their support, Prince Diponegoro granted them land in Solo.<sup>63</sup>

Hamka, a Islamic leader of the Muhammadiyah organization from Padang, knew some Chinese Muslims before the independence period, including two Chinese Muslims who he met in the early 1930s. As Hamka became a teacher of Islam in Ujung Pandang between 1931-34, he met *Tionghoa* converts. He remembered the two Muslims of Chinese origin named Baba Kasim and Baba Bidol. Baba Kasim was well known for his ownership of a publishing company which received orders from the government. Baba Bidol (Abdullah) was an elderly man who had good connections with the Bugis people. For Hamka, their conversion to Islam increased, rather than reduced their prestige. Hamka admitted that during the colonial era, for a Chinese individual to be a Muslim meant to downgrade his or herself to an “inlander,” i.e. native, since Chinese in general were regarded as higher in status than the natives. But for Islamic leaders such as Hamka, Chinese converts were just as Islamic and nationalist as other Muslims and Indonesians.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, the Dutch and the Chinese viewed Chinese Muslims unfavorably. During the colonial period, conversion to Islam for Chinese was viewed as downgrading one’s social status.<sup>65</sup> Yet, as we shall see in the postcolonial era, evidence exists which suggests that Islamic leaders viewed Chinese converts to Islam more favorably and positively than in earlier periods. Also, more Chinese Muslim organizations and figures became increasingly assimilated to Indonesia and became vocal in expressing their identities and pursuing their specific interests.

## The Experience in Postcolonial Era

The postcolonial period witnessed more Chinese gradually converting to Islam. Many Chinese attempted to make some historical reference to the past, to the history of Zheng He as a Muslim traveler and perhaps a preacher in Indonesia in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The postcolonial Chinese Muslims attempted to assert their historical participation in both nationalism and the Islamization of the country. They emphasized that there existed not only Chinese who converted to Islam but also Chinese who had been Muslims before coming to Indonesia and had preached Islam there. Some have said: “The conversion of Chinese to Islam today is

simply to bring back the history;” “Chinese are one group of the Indonesian Muslim ancestors;” “The Chinese played a very important role in the Islamization of Indonesians.”<sup>66</sup> It becomes apparent that Chinese Muslims attempted to legitimize their historical presence and “indigenoussness” within the on-going tensions between the local and the non-local in post-colonial Indonesia. The tensions can be discerned in various Chinese figures and associations that developed in the postcolonial era.

### Abdul Karim Oey and the Chinese Muslim Association (PITI)

One of the prominent Chinese Muslim figures in postcolonial Indonesia is Abdul Karim Oey (originally named Oey Tjeng Hien). Oey Tjeng Hien (1905-1988) was a second generation Chinese Indonesian. His parents came from Fujian (Hokkien) Province in southern China and had migrated to Indonesia in the mid-nineteenth century. Oey’s father was a merchant and sent him to HCS, a Dutch school for Chinese children, and consequently Oey became an Adventist Christian, although he never actually practiced Christianity, as he admitted later. He went into business in Bengkulu. He said that his “Chinese soul” and the influence of the Minangkabau (Padang) made him want to leave home and become a merchant. His work often took him to Jakarta. Oey acknowledged that at first he became a Buddhist and Confucian. Then he converted to Christianity. Oey said that Adventist Christianity did not bring him peace. He felt that “the light of God began to illuminate his soul.” He felt drawn to Islam and began to study the religion. He converted to Islam at the age of 25. Since his religious knowledge was still lacking, he studied Islam with a teacher named Fikir Daud.

After becoming a Muslim, Oey’s relationship with his family was becoming more distant. On the other hand, his relationship with the local Muslims became closer, especially with the Sumatran people in the area he was born. He was able to persuade his father to convert as well. He became a preacher when he felt that his understanding of Islam was sufficient. For example, when someone wanted to give Oey a *zakat* (a religious alms/donation), he responded: “I am not a *muallaf* (new convert entitled to *zakat*); I am a Muslim preacher. I consider myself as a leader. I am well-to-do and certain in my belief in Islam. A *Muallaf* still has to be con-

vinced. It would be better to give the *zakat* to someone with a greater claim, a poor person who belongs to one of the eight groups entitled *zakat*.”<sup>67</sup>

Oey’s identities changed according to political circumstances. Oey founded a branch of the Muhammadiyah organization (established in 1912) in Bintuhan. Then he moved to Bengkulu as Muhammadiyah’s consul. He was close to President Soekarno while in exile. Oey remained active in the Muhammadiyah during the Japanese occupation (1942-45). When Japan surrendered, and the Masyumi Party was founded, Oey became party chief in Bengkulu. When the Dutch initiated military action in 1948, Oey and some other figures became guerilla fighters. Then, he moved to Jakarta and became a member of Majelis Tanwir (Council) of Muhammadiyah (1952-73). Oey was head of the Muhammadiyah Economic Council (1964-73). Apart from his entrepreneurial activities with other Chinese, he also sat on the Masyumi Party Council (1957-60). When Masyumi debated the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), he sided with the anti-communists because he felt PKI was anti-Islamic. When Soekarno dissolved the Masyumi Party, Oey founded the Organization of Chinese Muslims of Indonesia (PITI).<sup>68</sup>

Oey and other Chinese Muslims saw that one of the ways of asserting Islamic and national identity was through the creation of associations. PITI was and is still the most prominent one. The Muslim Chinese Union (*Persatuan Islam Tionghoa*) and The Chinese Muslim Union (*Persatuan Tionghoa Muslim*), which were established before independence, merged into a new organization called Indonesian Chinese Islamic Union (*Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia*, PITI) on July 6, 1963. This organization had many branches. One of its branches was in Jogjakarta, where Islamic propagation among the Chinese was undertaken through weekly and monthly Islamic studies. In 1971, PITI claimed that its members had reached 100,000 Chinese Muslims, predominantly in Pontianak and Medan. They said that some of the reasons reasons for Chinese conversion were self-awareness, love, and economic difficulty, among others.<sup>69</sup> A PITI activist said that *Tionghoa* Muslims should find Islam easy to observe and should not be shy and hide from showing Islamic identity.<sup>70</sup> M. Abnar Romli wondered why other Chinese should be overwhelmed by those Chinese converting to Islam. He believed that the Chinese played a crucial historical role in Islamization and

therefore no one should be surprised by the fact that the number of Chinese converting to Islam had now increased.<sup>71</sup>

In 1972, this organization changed its name into The Union of Iman, Tauhid, and Islam (*Persatuan Iman Tauhid Islam*), still using the same abbreviation, PITI, but without using Chinese terms. The shift in the name of organization showed a shift in identity due to changing circumstances. The leaders of PITI claimed that by dissolving the old organization (with the term *Tionghoa*) they wanted to allay doubts about the Islamic character of the Chinese Muslims for all parties. They believed that Chinese Islam was not unlike native Islam. They also said that this change was to ease the process of Chinese assimilating to the native Muslim norms. According to one of its leaders, Junus Jahja, the change occurred as a response to criticisms against the exclusively racial notion that the old PITI title retained. Yet, in practice, despite the change, Chinese and non-Chinese had known before World War II that PITI was a unique organization which aimed to promote Islam among Indonesian Chinese.<sup>72</sup>

It is worth noting that before group leaders changed the name, they saw that the use of the term *Tionghoa* had its pros and cons. Some non-Chinese figures, such as Hamka, Rasyidi, Mukhlas Rowi, and Letjen Sudirman contended that the word *Tionghoa* had its own attractiveness. However, according to *Tempo* magazine, in some regions, such as Aceh, Sukabumi, Cirebon, and Medan, Chinese came to religious meetings in abundance, but in other regions such as Solo, the term *Tionghoa* made Chinese individuals worry about the old *Baperki*, a Chinese organization which aimed to re-sinicize the *Peranakan* and to promote Chinese nationalism. For the Chinese in Solo, PITI with a new name (without *Tionghoa*) was more beneficial and attractive.<sup>73</sup> Yet, according to Abdul Karim Oey, the new name PITI without *Tionghoa* did not receive the expected support and sympathy it had received previously from the Chinese themselves.<sup>74</sup>

Nonetheless, the number of members gradually increased. In 1988, Junus Jahja estimated that there were some 50 Chinese Muslim preachers in Indonesia and some 50,000 Chinese Muslims in Indonesia. The preachers included the young Burnadi (Tjhia Sin Hak) and Alifuddin El Islamy (Sim Song Thian). Burnadi was 32 years old that year and had converted to Islam at the

age of 18 before going to high school. He came to Java and studied at the Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) Gontor in East Java for seven years. Burnadi continued his studies at the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Sunan Ampel in Surabaya. Alifuddin was another preacher who graduated from IAIN in Palembang, Sumatera.<sup>75</sup> Of course, Islamic leaders tended to welcome the conversion of Chinese to Islam and the increased in numbers of Chinese preachers. The Islamic leader Hamka, for example, noted about Abdul Karim Oey, "He was a Muslim and a son of Indonesia...who was fostered, nurtured, and became a true Indonesian nationalist."<sup>76</sup> Thus, Chinese Muslims became increasingly assimilated to the local culture.

After Oey's death in 1988, to maintain the goal of Islamization among the Chinese, the followers of Abdul Karim Oey established The Foundation of Haji Abdul Karim Oey on 9 April 1991. To include Oey after the Islamic terms Abdul Karim (thus, Abdul Karim Oey) in the name of the foundation was intentional; it was again to facilitate rapprochement between the ethnic Chinese and the Muslims. It was also used to attract new converts and to allow new converts to learn Islam together with other Chinese.<sup>77</sup> The Mosque of "Lautze" was built at Pecinan (Chinatown) in Jakarta. Younger Chinese were now involved. H.M. Syafi'i Antonio from an Islamic bank, Bank Muamalat, for example, headed the Business Contacts of Haji Abdul Karim Oey.<sup>78</sup>

Some Indonesians asked why Chinese Muslims maintained, rather than dissolved, PITI as an "exclusive" Chinese Muslim organization. In an article in 1987, Junus Jahja tried to answer the question. He observed that the majority of Chinese in Indonesia who converted to Islam intended to be engaged in the Islamic community without overtly expressing their ethnicity. The so-called "Chinese problem" should have ended with conversion to Islam. To show one's Chinese identity would undo the "smooth" assimilation process that had already taken place. Junus Jahja believed that by becoming Muslim an ethnic Chinese in Indonesia had automatically become "totally assimilated to or mixed with the community without any trace." Although Islam allows a person to assert his or her ethnic or racial identity, the actual fact is that Muslim Chinese preferred to mix with the community so that they could act and be treated just like others. However, Junus Jahja went on to argue, there was a tendency for new con-

verts to want to go along first with their fellow converts. They still needed some kind of communal identity. They had known that PITI was an organization of such Chinese Muslims. If a Chinese Indonesian wanted to become Muslim, he or she could come to PITI and be among other Chinese Muslims. Therefore, Junus argued, PITI was and remains necessary for Chinese Muslims seeking guidance and protection. PITI was like an Islamic research center whose specialization was Chinese studies. Along with such Islamic organizations as *Muhammadiyah* (founded in 1912), *Nahdlatul Ulama* (1926), *Al-Irsyad*, *Itiḥadul Muballighin*, and others, PITI had the religious duty to propagate Islam among the some 5 million Chinese then living throughout Indonesia.<sup>79</sup>

Along with PITI, there was another association called the Universal Blessing Foundation, *Yayasan Rahmat Semesta*, established on 22 June 1979, which was aimed at facilitating financial support for the program aimed at assimilating *Tionghoa* to Islam. This foundation, like others, made references to the history of Islam in Indonesia (Zheng He/Sam Po as pious Muslim, Raden Patah as founder of the Demak Kingdom, and Chinese Muslim Generals such as Soekarno's ministers). They also believed that Islam was the religion of the ancestors of Indonesians and was rooted in Indonesia. They would use various means of dissemination of Islam, including the film entitled "The Message," TV, radio, the press, books, brochures, and pamphlets.<sup>80</sup>

The above description about Abdul Karim Oey and his association (PITI) indicates that Chinese Muslims after independence began to perceive themselves as both "nationalist" and "Islamic", although their Chinese identity remained intact. Chinese Muslim assimilationist movements cannot be separated from wider assimilationist movements in the country which included Chinese from different religions too. One such assimilationist movement was *Bakom*, the Communicative Body of Understanding of National Unity.

### Communicative Body for the National Unity (BAKOM-PKB)

Based on the 1928 Youth Oath (one country, one nation, one language: Indonesia), some 30 Chinese leaders held a meeting in Ambarawa on January 15, 1961. They formulated The Charter of Assimilation. According to this group, assimilation has a general and

specific definition. The common definition of assimilation is a process of assimilating groups who have different mental attitude, customs, and cultural expressions to a meaningful sociological unity in one nation, Indonesia. The specific definition of assimilation in relation to the descendants of *Tionghoa* is the acceptance of the descendants of *Tionghoa* by the local people so that a distinct Chinese identity no longer exists.

Since 1966, the assimilation was becoming a normal order of life, either through spontaneous assimilation of the millions of Chinese who converted to Christianity, or assimilation stimulated by the government which undertook measures to eliminate the separate Chinese "identity." This included the suppression of Chinese schools; interdiction of using the term *Tionghoa* and obligation of utilizing *Cina*, an Indonesianized term for China; very strict limitation of all cultural manifestations of Chineseness (and prohibition of all the religious festivals outside the temples); obligation of choosing an "Indonesian" name. Even the ancient Chinese architecture was challenged to the extent that typically Chinese structures started to disappear.<sup>81</sup>

Within this context, K. Sindhunatha, a Christian, the chief of Communicative Body for the Appreciation of National Unity (BAKOM-PKB) welcomed the conversion of some *Tionghoa* people to Islam as well as to other religions. He argued that the assimilation of the *Tionghoa* people should take place in all fields: political, legal, social, cultural, etc. The terms *pribumi* (local) and *non-pribumi* (non-local) should disappear from everyday life. Assimilation could be done through churches, mosques, and so forth. Assimilation could mean an adaptation to a religion adhered to by the local people based on individual faith. Sindhunata said that Islam is a good religion, and it teaches solidarity because all Muslims are brothers. Thus, in Solo, a *Tionghoa* should assimilate to Javanese, in Parahyangan, he should assimilate to Sundanese, in Minahasa to Kawana, etc.<sup>82</sup>

Although BAKOM-PKB was not exclusively a religious organization, and it did not intend to give privilege to one religion over another, it celebrated different religious holidays with other institutions. One of the religious holidays that BAKOM-PKB held was the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday (Maulid Nabi), together with PITI in 1980. Thus, BAKOM-PKB was an organization that could also accommodate the needs of some Chinese Muslims.<sup>83</sup>



BAKOM-PKB had its own journal called *Pembaوران* (Assimilation), providing a voice for Chinese problems and grievances. Stuart William Greif argued that to counter-balance the predominantly Roman Catholic nature of the leadership of young, successful, and professional Chinese Indonesians, *Pembaوران* stressed the desirability of Islamizing the Chinese as a final step in assimilation.<sup>84</sup> It published a book entitled “Assimilation and Islam” (*Asimilasi dan Islam*) in 1981, which compiled a number of reports and articles on the issue of Islam and assimilation.<sup>85</sup>

Bakom encouraged assimilation by way of changing Chinese names to local names. This practice was also encouraged, if not required, by the government. Soekarno’s government issued decree Number 4/1961 regarding the changing and adding of family names. The decree stated that an Indonesian citizen could only change or add his or her name by asking permission from the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice had the right to reject the change if the name proposed contradicted customary law. Soeharto, then the cabinet presidium, reasserted the right to change names, by issuing a decree on 27 December 1966 on a similar matter, but more specifically on Chinese naming. The decree stated that an Indonesian citizen who uses a personal or familiar Chinese name who wants to replace his or her name with a commonly used Indonesian name, can express his or her will in a written letter to the local regents. It stated that the names chosen should not violate any local customary law.<sup>86</sup> Consequently, some Chinese did change their Chinese names. Thus, Ateng Kho Tjeng Lie became Ateng Suripto, Tjia Dji Siong became Darma Sutjiadi, Tjan Hok Soei became Harry Tjan Silalahi, etc.<sup>87</sup> One of those Chinese who changed their names and became a prominent figure after Abdul Karim Oey was Junus Jahja.

One of the Chinese who changed his name even before converting to Islam was Lauw Chuan Tho, born in 1927 in Batavia/Jakarta. His father, Lau Lok Soei, was the head of a Chinese community in Jatinegara, Jakarta. His mother, Oei Ay Nio, came from Central Java and played a Javanese musical instrument (*gamelan*). Lauw’s parents sent him to HCS, a school for Chinese children and then to MULO during the Japanese occupation. After graduating from AMS (high school), Lauw went to the Netherlands to pursue an economic degree and graduated in 1959. Lauw learned Indone-

sian language autodidactically and managed to show that he was among the few Chinese who spoke Indonesian at that time in the Netherlands. There, in 1952, Lauw initiated the abolition of an Ethnic Chinese organization called Chung Hua Hui because, as he saw it, the organization was exclusive while Indonesia had just gained independence in 1945. Instead, Lauw joined an Indonesian Student Association (*Persatuan Pelajar Indonesia*) in the Netherlands. When he returned to Indonesia, Lauw actively engaged in movements against Baperki, an organization based on Chinese ethnicity/nationalism, founded in 1954. Then, Lauw and others signed Charter of Assimilation (Assimilation Statement) in 1961. He became a member of Assimilation Committee, then of the Communicative Body for Understanding of National Unity (BAKOM), and a few other assimilation organizations.<sup>88</sup>

*Tempo Magazine* in its July 14<sup>th</sup> 1979 edition, reported the story of how Lauw Chuan Tho adopted an Islamic name, Junus Jahja, before he became a Muslim. He was not really sure about why he chose that name. He converted to Islam at the age of 52 at the Mosque of Al-Azhar, Jakarta. He met with Muljadi Djojomartono, the Minister of Social Affairs during President Soekarno’s era and a major Muhammadiyah figure, who was his classmate in the Netherlands. When he declared his new religion, some Chinese doubted his seriousness. People wondered if he converted to Islam merely for the purpose of assimilation. Junus Jahja refuted that accusation and argued that he converted to Islam because he was interested in the Islamic idea of brotherhood, not simply because he wanted to assimilate with Indonesian culture. He added that there had been many Muslims in China and that the Prophet Muhammad was reported to have urged Muslims to seek knowledge even in China.<sup>89</sup>

When asked in 1979, Junus Jahja replied that he was a Muslim, an Indonesian, and a *Tionghoa* descendent. He said he did not want to deny his “Chineseness” and “Islamicness.” He stressed that all Muslims are brothers. He said, “I also believe that to be a Muslim is to love his country, and in Islam, the love for country is part of the faith (*hubbul watan min al-iman*).”<sup>90</sup> Having changed his name to Junus Jahja in 1962 and then converting to Islam in 1979, he made his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1980. Jahja was recruited to be a board member of the Indonesian Council for Islamic Clerics (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI) in 1980 and remained in

that position until 1990. He was also an activist of the Muhammadiyah. He believed that Muhammadiyah would provide religious and economic service to Muslims, without discrimination. He agreed with what George Kahin of Cornell University had said about the organization, namely that Muhammadiyah was founded on modernist Islamic ideas and had a broad range of social services: clinics, poverty relief, orphanages, publishing, libraries, and schools.<sup>91</sup>

Junus Jahja was involved in what he called “social engineering” to improve the economy of Islamic community and at the same time to seek for rapprochement between the Chinese businessmen and the grass root local community. In 1992, he was on the advisory board of the Indonesian Association of Islamic Intellectuals (ICMI).<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, he was a prolific writer on the Chinese question and assimilation in Indonesia. His works included “Racial Line is Old-fashioned: Toward Assimilation” published in 1983, and “New Hope for Chinese Descents” in 1984.<sup>93</sup> As for his ideas on “total assimilation,” the following statement he made is worth quoting:

...by embracing Islam young ethnic Chinese experienced that immediately they are fully accepted as fellow-Muslims and compatriots by the people at large who are 90 percent Muslims. All kinds of hostility and controversy as an inheritance of the past disappear. They are heartily welcomed now and totally assimilated into the community. So they have at last a permanent ‘place in the sun’. This is exactly what ethnic Chinese are so looking and longing for.<sup>94</sup>

Junus Jahja observed that some Chinese Muslims remained “lonely Muslims.” When local Muslims celebrated the Islamic Holiday of *Idul Fitri* with their families and neighbors, many Chinese Muslims did not have fellow Chinese Muslims in their family or neighborhood. There were still “lonely Muslims” because their wife or husband or neighbor was not Muslim. Junus Jahja therefore suggested that the new converts can celebrate the holiday with the greater Muslim family as brothers or adopted children so that they no longer experienced loneliness. Junus Jahja himself claimed that he never felt lonely as a Muslim because he had had many local colleagues and friends, non-Muslim and Muslim, Chinese and non-Chinese.<sup>95</sup>

Jahja’s idea of assimilation was well accepted among other Chinese Muslims. For example, Hasan Widjaja supported the notion that without becoming Muslim,

assimilation would not be comprehensive. Hasan Widjaja sustained an Indonesian Islam in the sense that the preaching of Islam and nationalism became inseparable. He called the attempt “patriotic Islamization.”<sup>96</sup>

Another important figure in the Chinese Muslim circles is Masagung (Tjio Wie Tay) who was born in Batavia in 1927. He is the founder of the large publishing company Gunung Agung. He took the local name Masagung in 1962. He had close connections with then President Soekarno, and his companies included the publishing company Haji Masagung.<sup>97</sup> With support from Soekarno, Haji Masagung established Sedayu Foundation (*Yayasan Sedayu*) in Jakarta in 1966. His businesses also included Gunung Agung, Sari Agung, Inti Idayu Press, Jaya Mandarin Agung, and Ayumas Gunung Agung.<sup>98</sup>

In the 1970s, when he approaching the age of 50 and had reached the peak of his success, Masagung experienced a kind of crisis of conscience. He came across Mrs. Tien Fuad Muntaco, an expert in hypnotism and telepathy, and Masagung fell under her spiritual influence and decided to convert to Islam (before, he had adopted Hinduism) and established the Foundation of Clear Path (*Yayasan Jalan Terang*) aimed at financing the construction of a mosque, a hospital, and a museum of the Nine Saints (*Wali Sanga*). Masagung also participated in the preaching of Islam in diverse mosques in Jakarta. Masagung purposefully chose assimilation.<sup>99</sup> President Soeharto was glad to hear that more Chinese, including Masagung, became Muslim because their conversion would make assimilation into the Indonesian population easier.<sup>100</sup>

Hembing Wijayakusuma was another prominent Chinese Muslim, one who possessed a unique skill: acupuncture. Hembing Wijayakusuma was born in 1940 in Medan, Sumatra. His mother helped the guerrilla fighters against the Dutch colonial regime. The majority of the natives at Pasar Belakang, Medan, where he lived, were Muslim. Hembing learned Islam from a local Islamic teacher. He was taught how to practice Chinese medicine from his early years by his grandfather, but he read books from a variety of sources as well, such as the writings of Thomas Alva Edison, Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein, and other inventors. He studied at the Chinese Medicine Institute in Hong Kong and after graduating he taught at the University of Sumatera Utama and then moved to Jakarta. Hembing became actively involved in health

activities as well as Islamic activities; he believed that Islam taught a healthy life. Chinese acupuncturists greatly influenced his knowledge and skills. Regarding his Chinese identity, he acknowledged that he was of Chinese descent. He felt that assimilation among the Chinese population was still a big problem, but he believed Islam recognized all ethnicities without discrimination. Although Hembing himself was a Muslim, he did not believe that everyone should follow his path. To assimilate into Indonesian society, Chinese did not need to become Muslim. His inclusive understanding of Islam was different from that of his fellow Chinese Muslims such as Abdul Karim Oey and Junus Jahja. For Hembing, Indonesia was a multicultural and multi-religious nation, so there was no obligation for Chinese to become Muslim simply to assimilate in Indonesia, but instead Indonesians should recognize all ethnic groups without discrimination.<sup>101</sup> In this regard, Hembing was also influenced by his understanding of the historical figure Zheng He, the 15<sup>th</sup> century sailor and a delegate of the Ming Dynasty to the Indonesian archipelago. He wrote, “The main goal of Zheng He’s sailing was to introduce Islam to the Chinese and the natives in the archipelago. But Zheng He never imposed Islam on the natives. He respected the religions of the natives. In Tiongkok, Zheng He respected Buddha, Confucianism, and others.”<sup>102</sup>

Instead of promoting Islam for all Chinese, Hembing Wijayakusuma promoted the pluralist ideology of *Pancasila*, the five pillars of state ideology, which recognizes belief in one God, humanity, national unity, democracy based on representative government, and social justice. Hembing interpreted the first pillar, belief in one God (*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*) in reference to Chinese thought. He said that *Tai Chi Chuan* is derived from *uchi* which means emptiness. From *uchi* comes *Tai Chi*. The existence of emptiness is before *Yin-Yang* and the symbol of *Tai Chi* is *Ying-Yang*, the balanced forces of night and day, positive and negative, male and female, etc.<sup>103</sup>

Hembing noted that assimilation had taken place in Indonesia for centuries. He pointed to the stories by Zheng He’s companions who came and wrote about the 15<sup>th</sup> century Javanese community they encountered. He also mentioned other historical evidence indicating the harmonious relations between the Chinese and the natives. In 1998, Hembing supported the policy issued by President B.J. Habibie to remove the distinction

between *pribumi* and non-*pribumi* and to promote fair and just treatment for all.<sup>104</sup>

The tragedy of May 12-14, 1998, in which many Chinese were victimized in Jakarta and other cities in Indonesia, was a shock for many Chinese people in the country because the distinction was reinforced again between *pribumi* (local, indigenous) and non-*pribumi* (non-local). The Chinese were treated very severely in these riots. Hembing contended that these riots should be a lesson that the people who live in Indonesia should be tolerant and should recognize the Indonesian slogan “diversity in unity” (*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*). By his involvement in cross-religious and cross-ethnic activities, Hembing intended to accommodate different Indonesians regardless of race and religion.

Another Chinese convert was a female badminton national player, Verawati Fajrin, who converted to Islam in 1979 and went to Mecca on the pilgrimage, coordinated by the Islamic Brotherhood Foundation and Indonesian Council of Clerics (MUI). The head of MUI Hasan Basri welcomed her conversion to Islam. “By becoming a Muslim,” Hasan Basri said, “Verawati no longer belongs to her race or origin, but she is now in one Islamic brotherhood.”<sup>105</sup>

### Some Reasons for Chinese Conversion to Islam

The Siauw Giap, a Sinologue at Leiden recorded his prediction for the relationship between Islam and Chinese in Indonesia in 1965:

When the legacies from the colonial past, which tend to impair group relations in contemporary Indonesia will be wholly removed and an economic development takes place which affords a fair share to both ethnic Chinese and Indonesians, it is impossible that Islam will again attract Chinese converts and the parallel in the history of religions in Thailand and Java be restored.<sup>106</sup>

The Siauw Giap claimed that Chinese became Muslim merely because of political situations. In fact, there were different reasons why the Chinese converted to Islam.

According to a research carried out in 1984 by Keun Won-Jang in Yogyakarta, Jakarta, Semarang, and Surakarta, most of the Chinese who converted to Islam did so because they were motivated by the wish to free themselves from the status of being non-*pribumi* (non-

native). Another factor was political: the search for security. They became Muslim because they wanted to be safe from tensions caused by perceptions of ethnic differences. For example, after the anti-Chinese riots in Surakarta which spread to several towns in 1980, many Chinese converted to Islam. Apart from the political factor, there was also a religious factor. Many converted to Islam because of its teachings, but this conversion usually happened in the elite circles. Another reason was marriage: if a young Chinese man wishes to marry a Muslim girl, he has to first convert to Islam.<sup>107</sup> In some cases, Chinese men who wished to marry an Indonesian woman could do so by the “nominal” adoption of Islam. One could become a Muslim by pronouncing the *Shahadah* (confession of faith), and by circumcision which is considered a crucial symbol of conversion. Full religious assimilation could come later, after formal conversion.<sup>108</sup>

Yet, a purely religious reason cannot be marginalized. An example of a religious reason is evident when a Chinese convert said, “In mosques, there is no Chinese, no Javanese, no poor, no rich; everybody is the same, bowing their body to one God, and sitting equally.”<sup>109</sup> Anti-discriminatory elements in Islamic teaching are believed to be appealing to some Chinese. For these Chinese, conversion to Islam was not simply nominal.

After converting to Islam, some Chinese still maintained at least a few Chinese characteristics. One of the reasons why some Chinese Muslims could not completely eliminate their “ethnic” identity was the belief that their new religion recognized descent-based identifications (such as ethnicity), as well as territory-based identifications (such as nationalism). Thus, at least for some of the postcolonial Chinese Muslim figures, it was possible and desirable to be Chinese, to be Muslim, and to be Indonesian at the same time. For them ethnicity, religion, and nationalism were not incompatible.

### Chinese Muslims in Post-Soeharto Era

Since the downfall of the former President Soeharto in 1998, a political shift has occurred in Indonesia, and restrictions on Chinese culture have begun to lift. In 1999, President Habibie published his biography with a Chinese translation, aimed at bridging the gap between Indonesia and China.<sup>110</sup> Since 1999, Chinese Indone-

sians have begun to openly celebrate the Chinese New Year or *Imlek*, and shopping malls are decked out in red and gold lanterns every New Year. Chinese-language newspapers have hit the streets and Metro television, owned by a *Peranakan* Chinese, Surya Paloh, broadcasts the news several times a day in *Putonghua*, a Chinese language. Several Chinese political parties have been founded: the Indonesia Diversity Party (PBI), the *Tionghoa* Reform Party (Parti), the Indonesian Assimilation Party (Parpindo).<sup>111</sup> A group of Chinese-Indonesian professionals also launched a private think tank called the Center for National Affairs (Elkasa) aimed at developing pluralism, human rights and democracy.<sup>112</sup> In 2000, former President Abdurrahman Wahid lifted the legal ban on Confucianism with Decree No. 6 on Chinese religion, belief, and cultures.<sup>113</sup> In 2001, President Megawati Soekarnoputri, represented by the Minister of Religious Affairs, issued Decree no. 13, stipulating that the Lunar Chinese New Year, or *Imlek*, was a national holiday.<sup>114</sup>

How have Chinese Muslims responded to the Indonesian government’s relaxation of restrictions on Chinese culture, and the Chinese cultural revival that has resulted as a consequence? One of the responses to this question was given by Junus Jahja. He welcomed the retraction of restrictions against the Chinese in general. He felt that the cries and complaints among the *Peranakan* Chinese about the government’s discrimination against the Chinese population cannot be simply be seen from only a Chinese point of view. Many indigenous groups have also experienced the same discrimination. For example, Junus Jahja, argued:

The exclusive housing of the Chinese community will pose no problem if the indigenous group could afford to buy the same housing following the redistribution of economic resources. On the other hand, Chinese-Indonesians will gain proper access to political institutions to voice their aspirations. Therefore, both groups are actually practicing discrimination in terms of resources under control. The government has a very important role in the discrimination through political and economic policies. Lingering discriminative practices will only create tension between the groups in our society.<sup>115</sup>

Perceptions and attitudes of other Chinese Muslims, who now number more than 50,000, (if we believe the popular estimation), remain to be examined. But it is fair to say at this point that Chinese who converted to Islam are still at a crossroads, because on the one hand

their conversion is welcomed by the government and the majority Muslim population, but on the other hand, they are beginning to have more space for public cultural expression.

## Conclusions

Chinese Muslims have become part of the local population since the pre-colonial period. Some had converted to Islam before their arrival in the archipelago, but most did not convert until they became “local.” Thus, Islam was considered primarily as part of local, rather than world, religion. After Indonesian independence in 1945, a growing number of migrants and their children had chosen to identify with the land where they lived, to become like other “Indonesians.”<sup>116</sup> In the context of world history, it was only after World War II, when further migration had been cut off and Chinese migrants around the world were there to stay, that Chinese identities appropriate to pluralist nationalist politics began to be negotiated, usually in some sort of “hybrid” formulation such as Chinese-Indonesian (called *Peranakan*). Such identities were predicated on the idea that it is possible to be Chinese and still be part of a national community. And among these Chinese, one means of assimilating to the local or national community has been to adopt the religion of the majority: Islam.

According to Adam McKeown, the emergence of Chinese minorities within a new national community is best approached from an “ethnic” rather than a “diasporic” perspective. He argues that the “ethnic” perspective is an area in which identity and meaning of being Chinese is most strongly formed by local social relations, where “Chineseness” becomes a heritage, a political status, or merely a color of skin.<sup>117</sup> Thus, some Chinese Muslims retained part of their Chinese names, while adopting new ones. Some Chinese Muslims became interested in knowing more about the fifteenth-century-Chinese Muslim figure, Zheng He. Most of these Chinese were also merchants as well as practicing preachers. As Abdul Karim Oey said, his “Chinese soul” made him leave his home in Padang and become a merchant. The label *Tionghoa Keturunan*, or “Chinese descendant”, even after conversion to Islam and claims of assimilation, remains in common parlance. These all seem to suggest that a Chinese person who embraced Islam could never forget that he or she is of

Chinese descent, and the people around them still tend to look at him or her as “Chinese.”

However, Chinese Muslims in modern Indonesia can be viewed as being “post-diasporic” for a number of reasons. In the Chinese Diaspora, China became the core, and the host land was the periphery. In the post-diaspora, it was the reverse: the host land or their adopted country was the core and China became the periphery. In the Diaspora, the Chinese tended to look back to the Chinese past, whereas in post-diaspora, the Chinese tended to see themselves in and for the present and perhaps the future. In addition, in the Diaspora, Chinese populations had a strong connection with or attachment to the homeland, the Chinese past, ancestors, etc. However, in post-diaspora they tended to have a weak attachment to the homeland. Thus, Chinese Muslims who were born in Indonesia spoke Malay/Indonesian and/or other local languages such as Javanese or Sundanese, behaved according to local customs and wore local dress. A number of Chinese Muslims who were active in associations also tended to challenge and counter others’ perceptions that they were still Chinese, not “pure Indonesians” or not “pure Islamic.” This “post-diasporic consciousness” becomes no less ambiguous and dilemmatic than the “diasporic one”.<sup>118</sup>

The case of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia provides us with some insights on the question of multiple coexisting identities of nationalism, religion and ethnicity within the context of diaspora and post-diaspora.<sup>119</sup> It also supports the notion that identity is socially constructed, and it is constructed not only by external circumstances but also by individuals or groups themselves.<sup>120</sup> The expressions of “Chinese-ness,” “Islamic-ness,” and “Indonesian-ness” are revealed in different contexts, but suggest that there is a keener sense of the nuances of multiple identities and an enhancement of individual and communal self-consciousness within constantly changing circumstances.

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"Chinese-Indonesians Battle Discrimination", *South China Morning Post*, January 21, 2004.

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### End Note

<sup>1</sup> Junus Jahja, "Saya Muslim, Indonesia, dan Keturunan Tiong-hoa", in "Da'wah dan Asimilasi", *Masalah Tionghoadan Ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Jakarta: Yayasan Ukhuwah Islamiyah, 1982), p.10-11; Junus Jahja, "WNI Tanpa Beban", *Islam di Mata WNI* (Jakarta: Yayasan Haji Karim Oei, 1993), p.162.

<sup>2</sup> The word "diaspora" is derived from the Greek verb *speiro* (to sow) and the preposition *dia* (over). As Robin Cohen suggests, diaspora has different meanings, but in general, all diasporic communities settled outside their natal (or imagined natal) territories, acknowledge that the "old country" – a notion often buried deep in language, religion, custom – always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions. Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), ix; James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (London & Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp.244-77.

<sup>3</sup> Although no one really knows the exact number and percentage of Chinese in Indonesia, an estimate is often used. According to the 1930 population census, the number of Chinese was 1,233,000, constituting 2.03 % of the total population of 59,138,067 (Central Kantoor voor de Statistiek, 1934). Later, according to the 2000 population census, the number of the ethnic Chinese (from 11 provinces out of 30 provinces) was 1,738,936 or 0.86 % of the total population of 201,092,238. If the number of foreign ethnic Chinese is included, the percentage increases to 0.91 %. If all provinces are included, the number falls between 1.5 and 2 % in 2000. Self-identification was used in the 2000 census. Thus, more Chinese today might have not identified themselves as "ethnic Chinese" anymore, as they had assumed the identity of other Indonesian ethnic groups. As for the Chinese Muslims, there is no exact figure either. A Chinese Muslim leader, Junus Jahja, estimated the number of Chinese Muslim falling about 1-1.5 % (around 40,000 – 50,000) of the total Chinese in Indonesia. Another Chinese Muslim, Haji Yap Abdulshomad claimed in 1980 that he had shaken the hands of no less than 145,000 Muslims of Chinese origin. Others mentioned 100,000 Chinese Muslims. No exact number can be known. It is likely, however, that in the 2000 census, Chinese Muslims no longer identify themselves as ethnic Chinese, but as another local ethnic group. See "Table Ethnic Group Composition: Indonesia, 1930 and 2000", in Leo Suryadinata et al, *Indonesia's Population: Ethnicity and Religion in a Changing Political Landscape* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003), pp.12, 74; "Orang Islam Keturunan Cina: Sebuah Laporan," *Tempo*, August 23, 1980.

<sup>4</sup> Here I follow the categories made by Adam McKeown on Chinese Diaspora, namely "diasporic labor," "diasporic network," "diasporic nationalism," "ethnic Chinese," and "diasporic culture." He classifies Chinese minorities in Southeast Asia into the "ethnic Chinese." See Adam McKeown, "Conceptualizing Chinese Diaspora, 1842-1949," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 58, No.2 (May, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Wei Djao, *Being Chinese: Voices from the Diaspora* (Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2003), pp. 3-31.

<sup>6</sup> Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), p.87.



<sup>7</sup> Wang Gungwu, "Migration History: Some Patterns Revisited", in Wang Gungwu (ed.) *Global History and Migrations* (Colorado & Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), p.2.

<sup>8</sup> Patterns of Chinese migration to Southeast Asia were different and complex. Chinese migration to Java was largely individual or in a small group. Chinese migration to north Sumatra occurred in a large number. Onghokham, "WNI Keturunan Cina di Tengah Masyarakat Kita", Aswab Mahasin et all (eds.), *Ruh Islam dalam Budaya Bangsa: Aneka Budaya Nusantara*, vol.1 (Jakarta: Yayasan Festival Istiqlal, 1996), p. 58; Mason C. Hoadley, "Javanese, *Peranakans*, and Chinese Elites in Cirebon: Changing Ethnic Boundaries", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.47, No.3 (August 1988), p.516.

<sup>9</sup> Leo Suryadinata, "introduction", *Peranakan Search for National Identity: Biographical Studies of Seven Indonesian Chinese* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1993), ix-x.

<sup>10</sup> These terms however underwent changes as well during the colonial era. For further discussion see, for example, Mason C. Hoadley, "Javanese, *Peranakans* and Chinese elites..." pp.503-17.

<sup>11</sup> Ma Huan was said to speak Arabic and to be a secretary and spokesperson to Zheng He. Amen Budiman, *Masyarakat Islam Tionghoadi Indonesia* (Semarang: Penerbit Tanjung Sari, 1979) pp.9-10; Adhy Sukirno, *Pujangga Ma Huan* (Surabaya: Pustaka Karya, 1962) in Umar Hasyim, *Islam bukan Penghalang Pengasiatenggaraan Orang-orang Tionghoa* (Surabaya: PT Bina Ilmu, 1987), p.43.

<sup>12</sup> Denys Lombard and Claudine Salmon, "Islam and Chinese-ness," in *The Propagation of Islam*, p.183.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Amen Budiman, *Masyarakat Islam Tionghoadi Indonesia*, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> Slamet Muljana, *Runtuhnya Keradjaan Hindu-Djawa dan Timbulnya Negara-negara Islam di Nusantara* (Jakarta: Bhartara, 1968), p.272; H.J. De Graaf and TH. G.TH. Pigeaud, *Kerajaan-kerajaan Islam di Jawa: Peralihan dari Majapahit ke Mataram*, trans. Grafitipers and KITLV from *De Eerste Moslimse Vorstendommen op Java, Studien over de Staatkundige Geschiedenis van de 15de en 16de Eeuw* (Jakarta: PT Tempriint, 1985), p.10.

<sup>15</sup> The question of whether or not some or all the nine saints (*wali sanga*) in Java were of Chinese origin is a controversial one. Some historians, like Denys Lombard and Sartono Kartodirdjo doubted the existence of the documents in the two temples Klenteng in Semarang and that in Cirebon, and therefore rejected the idea that all saints were Chinese *Peranakan*. What has been less controversial, however, is the argument that one saint, Raden Fatah, the founder of Demak Kingdom (15-17<sup>th</sup> c) was a son of a Javanese Prabu Brawijaya and a Chinese wife. See G.W.J. Drewes, "The Struggle between Javanese and Islam as Illustrated by the *Serat Dermagandul*," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (van Nederlandsch-Indie)*, CXXII, 3 (1966), p.311, 364; H.J. De Graaf & TH.G.TH. Pigeaud, *Kerajaan-kerajaan Islam di Jawa: Peralihan dari Majapahit ke Mataram*, trans. Grafitipers & KITLV (Jakarta: PT Tempriint, 1985), pp.37-80.

<sup>16</sup> Tomé Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires...* transl. and ed. Armando Cortesao (London: HS, Second Series, No.89, 1944), I, pp179,182.

<sup>17</sup> A Dutch official visited Banten in 1596 and met Chinese Muslims there with an established mosque. See Amen Budiman, *Masyarakat Islam Tionghoadi Indonesia*, p.32. For further study of Chinese Muslims in Java, see H.J. de Graff et all, Chinese Muslims in Java in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries: The Malay Annals of Semarang and Cerbon, translated into Indonesian by Alfajri with the title *Cina Muslim di Jawa Abad XV dan XVI: Antara Historisitas dan Mitos*, cetakan kedua (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana Yogya, 2004); Sumanto Al-Qurtuby, *Arus Cina-Islam-Jawa: Bongkar Sejarah atas Peranan Tionghoadalam Penyebaran Agama Islam di Nusantara Abad XV & XVI* (Yogyakarta: Inspeal Ahimsakarya Press, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> *The Voyage of Sir Henry Middleton to the Moluccas, 1604-1606*, introduction and notes by Sir William Foster (London: HS, Second Series, No.88, 1943), p.174. in note 11, Denys Lombard and Claudine Salmon, "Islam and Chinese-ness", p. 201.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.185.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.186-7.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.187.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.188.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.189.

<sup>26</sup> The Siauw Giap, "Religion and Overseas Chinese Assimilation in Southeast Asian Countries," *Revue du Sud-est Asiatique*, 2 (1965), p.73.

<sup>27</sup> J. Steijn Parvé, "Landverhuur in de Vorstenlanden en Javasche oorlog," *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie*, II, 7 (1850), pp.52-3. in footnote 28, Lombard and Salmon, "Islam and Chinese-ness", p.203.

<sup>28</sup> Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Protest Movements in Rural Java* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1973), pp.50, 53-4.

<sup>29</sup> This fact was mentioned by Ridwan Saidi, then a board member of the Unity and Development Party (PPP), on an interview with Merdeka, 20 April 1982. There were also non-Muslim Chinese who promoted Indonesian nationalism. For example, in the newspaper *Mata Hari*, Semarang, on 1 August 1934, Kwee Hing Tjiat proposed his idea of *Poetra Indonesia* (Son of Indonesia) for Chinese *Peranakan*. Other Indonesian nationalists were Liam Koen Hian, Injo Beng Goat, Tjoa Sik Ien, PK Ojong, and Soe Hok Gie. See Junus Jahya, *Catatan Seorang WNI: Kenangan, Renungan & Harapan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Tunas Bangsa, 1988), p.9.

<sup>30</sup> Apart from Johan Muhammad Chai, other Chinese were present in the Youth Oath Meeting: Daud Budiman Kwee Thiam Hong, Ong Khai Siang, Jong Liaw Tjoan Hok, and Tjio Jin Kwie. See Hembing Wijayakusuma, "Warga TionghoaJuga Anak Bangsa", *Suar*, May 1999, p.7 in Siti Nafsiah, *Prof. Hembing: Pemenang The Star of Asia Award* (Jakarta: Prestasi Insan Indonesia, 2000), p.296.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Kwee Keu Beng, "Het Cultureele Leven Den Chineezee In Nederlandsch- Indie", *Koloniale Studien*, 1936, no.5-6, p.82.

<sup>33</sup> The Siauw Gap, "Religion and Overseas Chinese Assimilation in Southeast Asian Countries", *Revue du Sud-East Asiatique* vol.II, 1965, p.81.

<sup>34</sup> Leo Suryadinata's suggestion is in need of a critical analysis. At this point, I would suggest that there was at least one Chinese Muslim who joined the Youth Oath (Sumpah Pemuda) on October 28, 1928. Presumably there were Chinese Muslims who had assimilated into the local community and fought the Dutch in different areas. However, further research is needed to focus more on the role of Chinese-Muslim Indonesians in anti-colonial movements. For Leo Suryadinata's opinion about this issue, see "Pre-war Indonesian Nationalism and the Peranakan Chinese", in his *The Chinese Minority in Indonesia; Seven Papers* (Singapore: Chopmen Enterprises, 1978), p.64.

<sup>35</sup> See Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Pengantar Sejarah Indonesia Baru: Sejarah Pergerakan Nasional: Dari Kolonialisme sampai Nasionalisme*, vol.2 (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1993), p.112.

<sup>36</sup> Lombard and Salmon, "Islam and Chinese-ness", p.190.

<sup>37</sup> Amen Budiman, *Masyarakat Islam Tionghoadi Indonesia*, p.32.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p.38.

<sup>39</sup> Holmes Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China* (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p.249; Amen Budiman, *Masyarakat Islam Tionghoadi Indonesia*, p. 40.

<sup>40</sup> Amen Budiman, *ibid.*, p.38.

<sup>41</sup> Lombard and Salmon, "Islam and Chinese-ness", p.191.

<sup>42</sup> Claudine Salmon, "Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia: A Provisional Annotated Bibliography", *Études insulindiennes- Archipel*, 3 (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1981), p.16; Denys Lombard, *Le Carrefour Javanais: Essai d'Histoire Globale*, Vol.2 (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1990), p.276-7.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Lombard and Salmon, "Islam and Chineseness," pp.194-5.

<sup>44</sup> The Sarekat Islam was formed in 1912 by Islamic traders and landlords. According to Leo Suryadinata, it was aimed at breaking the local Chinese commercial monopoly. Islam was used as a vehicle to mobilize the indigenous masses in Java and later in the Outer Islands. The distinction between the Javanese (*bumi-putera*) and *bangsa Cina* (Chinese) was made, the latter being considered alien as well as "infidel." The conflict between the two ethnic groups occurred in the early twentieth century. But Leo's argument can be debated because the text reveals that there were some criticisms against the notion that the organization was aimed to attack Chinese in the first place. In other words, there might have been Chinese members of this organization during that time. This issue, however, requires further research. Leo Suryadinata, *Pribumi Indonesians*, p.15; Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Protest Movements in Rural Java: A Study of Agrarian Unrest in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Singapore, Kuala Lumpur & Jakarta: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp.142-185.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Lombard and Salmon, "Islam and Chineseness", p.196.

<sup>46</sup> *Harian Abadi*, 27 October 1970 in Amen Budiman, *Masyarakat Islam Tionghoadi Indonesia* p.47.

<sup>47</sup> Ellen Rafferty, "Languages of the Chinese of Java – An Historical Review," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.XLIII, no.2, p.247.

<sup>48</sup> Robert van Neil, "From Netherlands East Indies to Republic of Indonesia, 1900-1945", in Harry Aveling (ed.), *The Development of Indonesian Society: From the Coming of Islam to the Present Day* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), pp.121-2.

<sup>49</sup> Suryadinata (1978), Somers (1965), Purchell (1965) in *ibid*, p.252.

<sup>50</sup> Ahmad b. Adam, 1992, pp.38-78, in Michael Francis Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma below the Winds* (London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), pp.144-5.

<sup>51</sup> Amen Budiman, *Masyarakat Islam Tionghoadi Indonesia*, pp.32-4.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid*, p.35.

<sup>53</sup> In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the People's Republic of China (the Manchu government) tried to press the Dutch to permit the stationing of its consuls in the colony and to eliminate the various forms of legal discrimination against the Chinese in the Indies. In 1909 China promulgated the citizenship law principle of *jus sanguinis* – i.e. that every child of a Chinese father or mother was a citizen of China, regardless of birthplace. The Dutch countered this in 1910 with a nationality law embodying the principle of *jus soli*, i.e. birthplace as the key consideration. This conflict was not reconciled until the Sino-Indonesian Treaty abolishing dual nationality in 1960. See J.A.C. Mackie and Charles A. Coppel, "A Preliminary Survey", in J.A.C. Mackie (ed.), *The Chinese in Indonesia* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii & The Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1976), p.9.

<sup>54</sup> Leo Suryadinata, *Pribumi Indonesians, the Chinese Minority and China*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Singapore: Heinemann Asia, 1992), p.12.

<sup>55</sup> *Corpus Diplomaticum*, VI, pp.13,415; *Plakaatboek*, VII, p.153 in Karel Steenbrink, *Dutch Colonialism and Indonesian Islam: Contacts and Conflicts 1596-1950*, trans. Jan Steenbrink & Henry Jansen (Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1993), pp.68-9; Karel Steenbrink, *Beberapa Aspek tentang Islam di Indonesia Abad ke 19* (Jakarta: PT Bulan Bintang, 1984), p.87.

<sup>56</sup> However, as Wang Gungwu pointed out, rather than loyal to a specific power or to their places of settlements, they were loyal to thriving entrepots and profitable arrangements, not caring much whether the British, French, Portuguese, Malays, Dutch, or Indians were in charge of the political superstructure. This lack of commitment to local political life in the places to which the Chinese migrated was linked to the practice of sojourning rather than settling. See Wang Gungwu, *China and the Chinese Diaspora* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991), pp.170-1; Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), p.86.

<sup>57</sup> Lombard and Salmon, "Islam and Chineseness", pp.190-1.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>59</sup> Claudine Salmon, "Ancestral Halls, Funeral Associations, and Attempts at Resinicization of Netherlands India", in Anthony Reid (ed.), *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (Asian Studies Association of Australia: Southeast Asia Publications, no.28 in association with Allen & Unwin, 1996), pp.183-214.

<sup>60</sup> Salmon, "Ancestral Halls...", in *ibid.*, footnote 36, p.204.

<sup>61</sup> To enter Melayu, *masuk Melayu*, means to convert to Islam. Amen Budiman, *Masyarakat Islam Tionghoadi Indonesia*, p.60.

<sup>62</sup> The Siau Giap, "Religion and Overseas Chinese Assimilation in Southeast Asian Countries", *Revue du Sud-East Asiatiques*, no.2, 1965, pp.67-93; Leo Suryadinata, *The Culture of the Chinese Minority in Indonesia* (Singapore & Kuala Lumpur: Times Books International, 1997), p.190.

<sup>63</sup> Lies Gan was a member of the family and told this story. *Tempo*, 23 August 1980; Junus Jahja, *Islam di Mata WNI*, p.56.

<sup>64</sup> Hamka, "Allah Memberi Petunjuk Kepada Siapa Yang Dikehendaki-Nya", *Dakwah dan Asimilasi* (Jakarta: Yayasan Semesta, 1979), p.11.

<sup>65</sup> Further research about how local Muslims viewed the Chinese who converted to Islam during the colonial period is necessary. Leo Suryadinata, a scholar of the Chinese question, claimed that "Islamic leaders, in general, considered the local Chinese as aliens, different from the 'sons of the soil.'" The term *bangsa* was used in a racial sense. The indigenous population (in this case, the Javanese), was a *bangsa* different from other *bangsa* (such as the local Chinese and Dutch)." Leo Suryadinata, however, did not provide adequate historical evidence to support his thesis. See Leo Suryadinata, *Pribumi Indonesians, the Chinese Minority and China*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition

(Singapore: Heinemann Asia, 1992), p.17.

<sup>66</sup> See for example, M. Abnar Romli, "Peranan Bangsa Tionghoa terhadap Perkembangan Islam," Moh. Amien Mansoer (ed.), *Ekawarsa Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia P.I.T.I. Wilayah Jogjakarta* (Jogjakarta, Pengurus P.I.T.I. Jogjakarta, 1971).

<sup>67</sup> Leo Suryadinata, "Abdul Karim Oey: A Chinese Muslim of Muhammadiyah," *Peranakan's Search for National Identity: Biographical Studies of Seven Indonesian Chinese* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1993), pp.105-7.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, pp.107-8.

<sup>69</sup> This number (100,000) in 1971 contradicts other figures. Junus Jahja estimated 50,000 Chinese Muslims in 1993. But the number of 100,000 was mentioned in different places. Haji Yap Abdulshomad claimed in 1980 that he had met some 145,000 Muslims of Chinese origin. Although these figures do not have any statistical data at all, this shows how Chinese leaders find it important to refer to quantity in their identity. For different quantities, see Moh. Amien Mansoer, *Ekawarsa P.I.T.I.*, Yogyakarta, 1971, p.6; Junus Jahja, *Islam di Mata WNI* (Jakarta: Yayasan Haji Karim Oei, 1993), p.4; H.M. Ali Karim, "Interaksi dan Dakwah Islam di Kalangan WNI Keturunan", in Aswab Mahasin et al (eds.), *Ruh Islam dalam Budaya Bangsa: Aneka Budaya Nusantara*, vol.1 (Jakarta: Yayasan Festival Istiqlal, 1996), p.213; "Orang Islam Keturunan Cina: Sebuah Laporan", *Tempo*, August 23, 1980.

<sup>70</sup> Junus Jahja, *Islam di Mata WNI*, pp.7-8.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Junus Jahja, "Mengapa Ada PITI?", in *Catatan Seorang WNI*, pp.38-9.

<sup>73</sup> *Tempo*, 3 February 1973.

<sup>74</sup> Aman Budiman, *Masyarakat Islam Tionghoadi Indonesia*, p.43.

<sup>75</sup> Junus Jahja, "Mengapa Ada PITI?", *Catatan Seorang WNI*, pp.34-5.

<sup>76</sup> "Dakwah dan Asimilasi" (Jakarta: 1979), pp.11-2.

<sup>77</sup> H.M.Ali Karim, "Interaksi dan Dakwah Islam di Kalangan WNI Keturunan," in Aswab Mahasin et al (eds.), *Ruh Islam dalam Budaya Bangsa: Aneka Budaya Nusantara*, vol.1 (Jakarta: Yayasan Festival Istiqlal, 1996), p.219.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, p.220.

<sup>79</sup> According to Junus Jahja, by 11 March 1984, there had been 66 Chinese pilgrims to Mecca and by 1987 the number reached 200 pilgrims. The Chinese proclaimed their new faith in the religious office (*Kantor Urusan Agama*), mosques, and houses of religious clerics. Junus Jahja, "Mengapa Ada PITI?" in *Catatan Seorang WNI*, pp.36-8.

<sup>80</sup> index (lampiran) 1, *Da'wah dan Asimilasi*, pp. 50-55

<sup>81</sup> Denys Lombard, *Le Carrefour Javanais: Essai d'Histoire Globale*, Vol.II (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1990), p.308.

<sup>82</sup> Sindhunatha, "Sambutan", *Da'wah dan Asimilasi*, pp.19-20.

<sup>83</sup> "Muslim Keturunan Cina dan Bakom PKB", in Junus Jahja (ed.), *Zaman Harapan Bagi Keturunan Tionghoa: Rekaman Dakwah Islamiyah 1979-1984* (Jakarta: Yayasan Ukhuwah Islamiyah, 1984), pp.83-85.

<sup>84</sup> Stuart William Greif, *Indonesians of Chinese Origins: Assimilation and Goal of "One Nation- One People"* (New York: The Professors World Peace Academy, 1988), p.16

<sup>85</sup> BAKOM-PKB, *Asimilasi dan Islam* (Jakarta: Bakom-PKB Pusat, 1981).

<sup>86</sup> Undang-Undang No.4 Tahun 1961 tentang Perubahan atau Penambahan Nama Keluarga & Keputusan Presidium Kabinet Tahun no.127/kep/12/1966, in Junus Jahya (ed.), *Ganti Nama* (Jakarta: Yayasan Tunas Bangsa,1987) pp. 41-47.

<sup>87</sup> Many adopted only local names, but others combined local terms with Islamic names: Tjio Wie Thay became H. Masagung, Soe Hok Djin became Arief Budiman (now a professor in sociology at Melbourne University), Go Tik Swan became KRT. Hardjonegoro, Ong Tek Bie became Hendra Esmara, Go Sian Kwan became Gozali Katianda, Lauw Chuan Tho became Junus Jahja, and A Lun became Yusuf Hamka. See H.M.Ali Karim, "Interaksi dan Dakwah Islam di Kalangan WNI Keturunan", in Aswab Mahasin et al (eds.), *Ruh Islam dalam Budaya Bangsa: Aneka Budaya Nusantara*, vol.1 (Jakarta: Yayasan Festival Istiqlal, 1996), p.218.

<sup>88</sup> Riyanto D. Wahono (ed.), *70 Tahun Junus Jahja: Pribumi Kuat Kunci Pembauran* (Jakarta: Bina Rena Pariwara, 1997), pp. 191-202.

<sup>89</sup> "Islamisasi, Asimilasi", *Tempo*, July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1979; *Da'wah & Asimilasi: Lahirnya Seorang Muslim dan Aneka Sambutan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Rahmat Semesta, 1979), pp.22-3.

<sup>90</sup> *Merdeka*, June 11, 1982

<sup>91</sup> Junus Jahja, *Silaturahmi Muhammadiyah & Pengusaha Nasional: Menyongsong Zaman Harapan* (Jakarta, 1990).

<sup>92</sup> Riyanto (ed.), *70 Tahun Junus Jahja*, p.203.

<sup>93</sup> Almost all his works are in Indonesian: "Garis Riasal Garis Usang - Liku-liku Pembauran" (1983), "Zaman Harapan bagi Keturunan Tionghoa" (1984), "Muslim Tionghoa" (1985), "Ganti Nama" (1987), "Catatan Seorang WNI Kenangan dan Harapan" (1988), "Kisah-kisah Saudara Baru" (1989, or WNI Beragama Islam, 1991), "Nonpri di mata Pribumi" (1991), "Islam dimata WNI" (1993), "Pri-Nonpri dan Konvensi Cina Sedunia" (1994), and "Reungan Seorang WNI 1952-1997 (1997).

<sup>94</sup> In Suryadinata, *Political Thinking of the Indonesian Chinese 1900-1975: A Source Book* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1979), p.170.

<sup>95</sup> Junus Jahja, *Catatan Seorang WNI*, pp.30-31.

<sup>96</sup> Hasan Widjaja, *Sekitar Pembauran & Problematikanya* (Solo: UD Mayasari, 1997); Hasan Widjaja, *Panggilan Islam terhadap Keturunan Cina di Indonesia* (Solo: UD Mayasari, 1989).

<sup>97</sup> *Berita Buana*, October 22,1981.

<sup>98</sup> Denys Lombard, *Le Carrefour Javanais: Essai d'Histoire Globale*, Vol.II (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1990), p.250.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Berita Pers*, 29 May 1982.

<sup>101</sup> Siti Nafsiah, *Prof. Hembing: Pemenang the Star of Asia Award* pp. 15, 156.

<sup>102</sup> H.M. Hembing Wijayakusuma (ed.), *Muslim TionghoaZ-heng He: Misteri Perjalanan Mubibah di Nusantara* (Jakarta: Pustaka Populer Obor, 2000), xiii.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, p.190

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, p. 294-6.

<sup>105</sup> "Malam Syukuran Hajjah Verawati" *Harian Indonesia*, 22 November 1981, in *Masalah Tionghoadan Ukhuwah Islamiyah*, pp.19-20.

<sup>106</sup> The Siauw Giap, "Religion and Overseas Chinese Assimilation in Southeast Asian Countries", *Revue du Sud-East Asiatique*, no.2, 1965, pp.67-83.

<sup>107</sup> The Siauw Giap, "Islam and Chinese Assimilation in Indonesia and Malaysia", Cheu Hock Tong (ed.), *Chinese Beliefs and Practices in Southeast Asia* (Selangor: Pelanduk Publications, 1993), pp.74-6.

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*, p.66.

<sup>109</sup> "Rasa Sayang di Ambang Pintu", *Tempo*, August 23, 1980.

<sup>110</sup> "BJ Habibie dan Buku Berbahasa Cina: Ke Arah Penghapusan Diskriminasi Riasal", *Kompas*, August 19, 1999.

<sup>111</sup> Junus Jahja was among the leaders of the Indonesian Assimilation Party. "Ethnic Chinese Parties unlikely to win in 2004", *The Jakarta Post*, August 10, 2003.

<sup>112</sup> "Chinese-Indonesians Launch Think Tank", *The Jakarta Post*, August 10, 2003.

<sup>113</sup> "Prosesi Keagamaan dan Adat Cina Tak Perlu Khusus", *Kompas*, January 18, 2000.

<sup>114</sup> Marrienne Kearney, "Chinese-Indonesians Battle Discrimination", report, *South China Morning Post*, January 21, 2004, p.10.

<sup>115</sup> Junus Jahja, "Who Discriminates against Whom?", *The Jakarta Post*, February 3, 2004.

<sup>116</sup> See Jennifer Cushman and Wang Gungwu (eds.), *Changing Identities of the Southeast Asian Chinese since World War II* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1988); Adam McKeown, "Conceptualizing Chinese Diaspora, 1842-1949", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 58, No.2 (May, 1999), p.326.

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<sup>117</sup> Adam McKeown, “Conceptualizing Chinese...”, p.327.

<sup>118</sup> For the discussion on “diasporic double consciousness”, see Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>119</sup> On the theoretical study of Chinese identities in Southeast Asia, see for example, Wang Gungwu, *Chinese and the Chinese Overseas* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991), especially chapter 11, pp.198-216.

<sup>120</sup> On the changing nature of identities, see, for example, Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in Changing World* (Thousand Oaks, London, & New Delhi: Pine Forge Press, 1998).

# Ethnicity in the Southern Provinces of Thailand: The Malay Muslims and the State

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## SYNOPSIS

This paper is an analysis of recent Muslim violence in southern Thailand and will place it in the context of a broader discussion of Thai identity, with reference to historic precedents and some examples of Thai policy toward its Malay Muslim population. The position of Malay Muslims has been complicated by international narratives regarding Islam. This analysis focuses on the way Thai government policies towards Malay Muslims in the south have served to exacerbate tensions and draw inappropriate parallels with Islamic conflicts elsewhere in the world.

## Introduction

In the opening scenes of the 2003 film, *Baytong*, (dir. Nonzee Nimibutr) a community of monks, sequestered in a forest temple, begin their day by performing the solemn, ritualistic routines of the morning: sweeping the leaves of the mango tree from the stone floor of the temple, hand-washing and dyeing their robes. The morning light suffuses the sequence in a gold sheen of contemplative silence. It is clear that we are in rural, Buddhist Thailand, and it is a scene which is found at dawn throughout the kingdom on any given day.

The next sequence of the film is set on a train pulling into a station. A woman is traveling with her young daughter. Hawkers are offering food and merchandise through the open windows of the train, people are disembarking and boarding, and the mood is light and cheerful.

The style of dress is markedly different from central and northern Thailand, with women wearing *hijab* and men wearing distinctly Malay costumes. This is in the south of Thailand, a place differentiated from the Bud-

dhist scenes earlier in the film. Suddenly, in a brief and startling instant, a bomb concealed in a Singha beer case rips through the passenger train compartment, killing a woman who had just been waving to some friends on the platform. It is the defining moment of the story, as it lures Tamm, a monk and brother of the woman killed in the attack, out of the Buddhist monastery and into the world in order to make sense of the violence that typifies what has been occurring regularly in Thailand's troubled south for the past several years.

The film is, essentially, an exploration of the conflict between Thai national identity and the nation's Muslim population in the south, particularly the provinces of Pattani<sup>1</sup>, Yala and Narathiwat. *Baytong* refers to an *ampoe* (a subdivision of the *jangwat*)<sup>2</sup> in the province of Yala. The film succeeds in its portrayal of the intricacies of the political and social problems in the south that arise from separatist energies that are the result of a long-standing identity crisis that has divided the Malay Muslims from the Thai Buddhists since Patani was a separate kingdom, one governed by Malay traditions and periodically either at odds with the Thai crown, or engaged in a vassal relationship with Bangkok.

The film is a powerful evocation of the elements that have served to undermine Muslim-Buddhist relations in this region, and which are predicated upon ideas of nationalism, identity, disparity and inequality. In addition, the film shows in great detail the differences between Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists. For example, the muezzin call to prayer in the small southern town occurs throughout the film, in sequences which suggest the overarching community to which the southern Muslims belong and which have the same function as the carefully proscribed rituals of Buddhist devotion seen within the opening sequence. The film covers questions of conversion, such as a Buddhist Thai woman to Islam, so that she can marry the principal antagonist. And all this occurs as well as the complex relationship of cross-border trade at the Malaysian border with the political and economic realities of Thailand's deep south.

This paper will contain evidence of the complex nature of the problems in Thailand's south. It will demonstrate the ways in which the relationship between Thai Muslims and the majority Thai Buddhists has evolved in southern Thailand, with an examination of the limits that have been imposed by the Buddhist regime, particularly in areas of education, language requirements, and media influence. It will attempt to determine how these developments have shaped and defined the current conflict and what policies, if any, might be pursued by the Thai government to ameliorate the unrest, pacify the southern provinces and/or construct a progressive dialogue of rapprochement, despite numerous policy decisions that have resulted in continued apathy, resentment, and calls for insurrection.

The Muslim minority in southern Thailand, while of Malay origins and possessing a culture that is distinct from the dominant Buddhist culture found throughout Thailand, has recently become the focus of more intense international scrutiny, as a result of sporadic violence and consequent repression by former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's administration. Muslims comprise 3.8% of a population of 65,444,371.<sup>3</sup> However, displays of violent discontent have not been the result of an international Muslim agitation fueled by Western foreign policy in the Muslim lands of the Middle East and Israeli policies in Palestine. Rather, they are localized expressions in keeping with ambitions that are restricted to Thai political divisions and

to the issue of separatism. Enmeshed with the distinct political ambitions of southern Malay/Thais are concepts fundamental to the differentiation of Thai Muslims and Thai Buddhists: what comprises Thai identity, what policies affect or determine Thai identity, what is central to identity and political thought and action, and finally, to what extent does internal colonialism offer a viable way of explaining the Thai government's position toward the southern provinces?

However, unrest has plagued the south of Thailand for many years, indeed well before when the British divided Malaya along the current Thailand-Malaysia border in a treaty between Siam and Britain in the early part of the twentieth century. While this paper will explore the ways in which Thai identity has been formed relative to its Muslim population, it will also seek the fundamental reasons for the more recent violence and synthesize the connections to Islamic resurgence patterns in a global context.

## Approach

This paper will consist of an analysis of recent Muslim violence in southern Thailand and will place it in the context of a broader discussion of Thai identity, with reference to historic precedents and some examples of Thai policy toward the Malay Muslim population. As a result of modern political and social developments in Thailand that are unfolding rapidly in international media, the thesis stated here will be explained primarily in accordance with the disciplines of history and political science, and will be qualitative in nature.

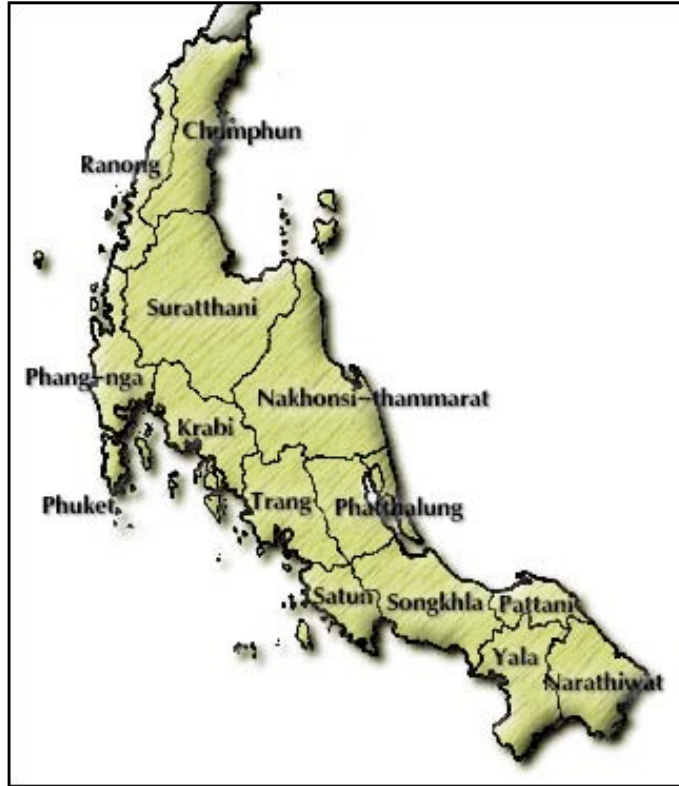
## Historical Precedents for Interaction between Thai Muslims and Thai Buddhists

Siamese influence had once reached as far south as Terengganu and Kedah in modern Malaysia since the thirteenth century onward, and powerful kingdoms and subsequent sultanates existed on the Malay Peninsula well before then. However, the geography of southern Thailand, used here to signify its current "geo-body" as politically and internationally recognized, was essentially defined by the treaty with the British. This distinguished Malay territory from Siam in the vocabulary of the nascent nation-state of what is now Thailand by

creating a measurable border south of Patani across the Malaysian peninsula, demarcating what is now its geopolitical territory. The Anglo-Siamese treaty (1909) signified Siam's cessation of territory which included Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah, and Perlis to British control in order to preserve independence from colonial rule by pacifying the British. Similar treaties were signed with the French, including the Franco-Siamese treaty of 1893, and the Franco-Siamese treaty of 1904, but in regard to Thailand's territory in what is now Laos and Cambodia.<sup>4</sup> These concessions at the turn of the twentieth century reified Siamese "national" identity in ways previously not "imagined" in the fullest sense of Benedict Anderson's text on the subject.<sup>5</sup>

These southern territories, which were ceded to Britain under the terms of the Anglo-Siamese treaty, were in essence sultanates, ruled in accordance with Malay custom and Islamic traditions. The region to the north of the newly created border represented the totality of the Malay-Muslim population in Thailand. And it is here that current violence, and an environment that supports separatist ideology and suffers from unequal resource allocation, as well as disparities in educational and career opportunities, have combined to create measurable problems for the central Thai authorities in Bangkok.

In his book *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geobody of Siam* (1994), Thongchai Winichakul illustrates the ways in which borders were imposed on Thailand, not only in accordance with the terms of political treaties and in reaction to colonial territorial ambitions, but also in conceptual terms. The Thais' unique system of understanding territorial relationships was contrary to the advances of cartography in the nineteenth century. Complicating the picture of southern Thailand then, is that within the imposed nation-state of Siam, power structures were altered and along with them the "imagined" borders that segmented the kingdom from its vassal states. Authority was no longer conveyed from the king to his vassal realms (which had their own systems of recognition of authority and legitimacy), but was colonially determined from external pressures,



Map of the Southern Provinces of Thailand

(Downloaded from: <http://sunsite.au.ac.th/ThailInfo/TourismInThailand/south/>)

particularly British colonial ambitions in Malaya. Thongchai writes:

The territorial delimitation of Siam was much more complicated when a border was not a corridor but a frontier town regarded as common to more than one kingdom. A modern boundary was not possible until what belonged to whose realm had been sorted out. But the premodern polity defied such a modern undertaking. Confrontations and controversies over the question of what we might call 'sovereignty' over the Shan states, Lanna, Cambodia, the Malay states, and the left bank of the Mekong were critical to the formation of the modern Thai state and its misunderstood history.<sup>6</sup>

There existed in Siamese and Malay interactions a cycle of submission and resistance that began well before the period analyzed in Thongchai's work. Indeed, as early as the seventeenth century, the vassal realms that paid obeisance and fealty to the Siamese king engaged in protracted struggles that initiated the patterns that would remain in place from the pre-modern period until today. In an article describing the relationship between the Sultanate of Terengganu and the Siamese crown, Barbara Andaya notes that "attempts by dependencies were more likely to occur when a state was geographically distant from the overlord, especially if

the cultural ties between them were tenuous. Such vassals were also more likely to fall within the sphere of another powerful kingdom or to drift when their suzerain was weak.”<sup>7</sup> Andaya further details the use of coercive force by the Siamese to ensure that the tributary relationship by and between Siam and the Malay sultanates remained strong, but suggests here that geographical distance and cultural distance were mitigating factors in undermining this relationship. Indeed, cultural distance is one of the defining features of the recent resurgence in violence in the south today, and may be underwritten by the growing economic influence, rather than simply the military strength of Bangkok.

In addition to the case of Terengannu in the eighteenth century, the Sultanate of Patani, once a powerful commercial center and locus for Islamic teachings, was held in similar patterns of vassalage to Siam beginning as early as the sixteenth century. In an analysis of the pattern of tribute established in the relationship between Siam and the Malay sultanates of the south, Moshe Yegar proposes that the political and military strength of Siam determined whether the Malay sultanates, including Patani, paid tribute to Siam. He writes, “Patani provided Siam with forced-labor levies until 1564 when Siam suffered a defeat by Burma, and the practice was brought to halt. It was not until 1631 that the Siamese again received *bunga mas dan perak* [tributary gifts] from Patani. Shortly afterward, when Patani achieved independence, the dispatch of forced labor ceased until 1679 when it was resumed until the middle of the eighteenth century, along with other Malay Sultanates.”<sup>8</sup> Citing a military defeat at the hands of the Burmese in 1564, Yegar concludes that this is a time when Patani discontinued its forced labor levies. In effect, the pattern of tributary recognition on part of the Malay sultanates in the sixteenth century appears to have been influenced by the waning and waxing strength of the Siamese kingdom, but was mitigated by distance as well. Sultanates closer to Siamese territory tended to be more directly affected by its shifting fortunes and military power.

### Ethnic Politics and Thai Nationalist Policies in Thai History

It is within the modern nation-state of Thailand, then, that the Malays in the south, isolated as they are

from Malay and Muslim culture, form their identity against the Thai Buddhist majority. That identity formation becomes more concrete in terms of the Thai majority (which is Buddhist and has historically considered itself a subject of the Thai king). The minority Muslim Malays living within Thailand’s modern borders, whose allegiance had been to the sultans of their history, found that relationship now superseded by Thai “national” interests.

David Wyatt suggests that the reign of King Rama V, (King Chulalongkorn) marked the beginnings of official Thai nationalism with the introduction of policies that enforced and reified it. Primarily, religious and educational structures were introduced which in turn codified Thai identity in such a way as to exclude non-Buddhists and non-Thai speakers. Primary education became more standardized in accordance with King Rama V’s Ministry of Public Instruction in the countryside, while standardized script and language (Bangkok Thai) became the lingua franca of the kingdom. Wyatt writes:

With these religious and educational changes came the development of a new civic sense. To a certain extent it sprang naturally from the changes, from sharing in a common religious tradition and educational experience. Both constituted new modes of social communication, those means by which a society becomes conscious of its own identity. The schools, the temples, and the contacts with government officials—all reinforced the idea that all inhabitants of Siam were subjects of a single king, members of a single body politic. For the time being, these ideas were expressed primarily in hierarchical terms analogous to the old patron-client relationship that pervaded the traditional society. All the inhabitants of Siam – including countless non-Siamese, as we shall see—were now clients of the same patron, the king. Obligations once owed a patron were now owed the king: loyalty, obedience, taxes, military service, education, proper behavior. In return, the king owed them security, protection, justice, compassion, help in time of need, moral example, and so on. This basic idea was, in a sense, a compromise between the old concept of the ‘subject,’ stripped of the intermediaries that stood between the king and the peasant, and the modern concept of the ‘citizen.’ It combined elements of both, and the contradictions inherent in the combination remained to worry history subsequently.<sup>9</sup>

While the “official nationalism”<sup>10</sup> of King Chulalongkorn’s reign served to centralize Thai identity and codify it in real terms, the Malays in the south already



adhered to structures that served to reinforce their identity. They spoke Malay dialects, they had educational associations predicated upon Islam and the study of the Koran (the *pondok* schools), and they showed fealty to the sultan in a patron-client relationship similar to the Thai monarchical model. It was in the attempts to impose policies from Bangkok under the aegis of official nationalism that resulted in conflict.

During the reign of King Vajiravudh (King Rama VI), a rebellion broke out in the Malay south that was caused, in part, by new tax requirements in 1922, and in 1923. Because the resistance demonstrations assumed political and religious tones and were directed against policies imposed from Bangkok, and since these policies risked attracting British attention, King Vajiravudh redressed the situation by reducing taxes and requiring a new set of laws and regulations that took into consideration the role of Islam in the south. The period from 1923 to 1938, therefore, was a period of relative calm.<sup>11</sup>

The events in Thai history following the coup in 1932 that replaced the absolute monarch with martial law exacerbated the Malay situation in the south with the consequent nationalism of Field Marshall Phibun Songkram's government, which lasted between 1938-1944 and again between 1948-1957. Phibun's reigns as prime minister of Thailand were marked by a distinct revival of Thai national interest in the southern Malay provinces – a continuation of absolute political authority that had been mirrored in the monarchy. Partly the result of the external threat of Communism, and partly the result of the nationalistic mythology of Phibun and its accompanying xenophobia and paranoia, the Malays again became the target of aggressive nationalistic goals and policies.

For example, during Phibun's second government (1948-1957) in the context of the Cold War, the Malays experienced outright martial law and revisions in the relationship between the Malay provinces and the new military rulers in Bangkok. Wyatt summarizes the historical precedents for the current crisis in the south with vivid clarity:

While ideas of northeastern Lao separatism during this period may have engaged the fancy of a handful of politicians and Free Thai activists, much more serious developments were occurring in the Malay provinces of the south. The efforts by Phibun's government late in the war to enforce the

Cultural Mandates and to substitute Siamese for Islamic law had provoked serious resistance with strong popular support. The Khuang and Thamrong governments lessened the pressures, but new issues arose with the application in the south of the educational policies that had been aimed primarily against the Chinese—Malay schooling was forbidden. Malays in the south felt like subjects of an alien colonial regime and, in August 1947, submitted to the government a list of demands, calling for regional administrative, education, fiscal, religious, linguistic, and judicial autonomy.<sup>12</sup>

Phibun's heavy-handed tactics established a long-term pattern with regard to Bangkok's authority over the Malay Muslim minority. The history of this period is important, because it sets the stage for the conflict with Malay Muslims in the south at present. Wyatt further explains:

Luang Tamrong's government had promised the petitioners sympathetic consideration of their grievances; but Phibun's response on coming to power was the arrest and imprisonment of the chief Malay leaders in the four provinces and the outlawing of Malay and Islamic organizations. By April 1948, there was large-scale insurgency in the south, put down by government troops with massive force that included aerial bombardment. There was much sympathy in Malaya for the dissidents' plight, but the onset of major and predominantly Chinese Communist insurgency against the British Malayan government in mid-1948, impinging on the border region, required cooperation between the Malayan and the Thai governments and resulted in the concentration of much military force and attention in the region with Western support. This contributed to the isolation and long-term muting of Malay dissidence.<sup>13</sup>

It is clear that Cold War mentality and ideology pervaded Southeast Asia, and that Thailand's reaction to Communists within the country, particularly during the period in which Communism was gaining a foothold from Vietnam across mainland Southeast Asia, also shaped its policies toward Muslims in the south. The apparatus, then, of a firm government policy that mirrored colonial administration (but was projected internally from the capital) became fixed at this time, under the umbrella of fears of nascent Communist movements.

## Integration versus Separatism: Factors of Integration as Defined by Thai Policy

The policies that are favored by the Thai administration with regard to Muslims in the south of Thailand have all been tailored toward accommodating and incorporating the southern provinces into a homogenized and centralized Thai identity. To this end, the policies have centered around four major elements: the use of national media to broadcast Thai national ideology and programming, an educational policy that includes Thai language instruction and nationalist history, offers of development incentives and aid packages to bring economic levels up to national parity, and the use of police and military pressure to ensure compliance with policy. Unfortunately, these approaches have been all historically fraught with problems and fail to take into account the disparate approaches to culture-based systems of knowledge and self-identity between Malay and Thai nationalisms.

### *The Use of Media*

The media plays a central role in legitimizing nationalistic identity programs and communicating such identity across various ethnic lines in Thailand. In an interesting study, Annette Hamilton looked at the ways in which Thai media is broadcast to the south as a way of reinforcing Thai identity. It is but one of the tools that the Thai government has employed to ensure that the Malays in the southern provinces begin to see themselves as Thais primarily. Indeed, the inherent flaws in this policy are in keeping with Benedict Anderson's view of national identity formation in the first place – that it is delimited by rhetorical ambiguities and is transmitted via print-capital. For example, Hamilton writes:

In the case of the Malay-Muslims of southern Thailand, the emergence and transformation of their own distinctive local cultures cannot be mapped by the existence of either national or transnational media environments. What it is to be a person in that space and time is constructed from historical memory and the negotiation of an everyday life-world and the values placed on local practices of distinction, rather than from a hegemonic national community, imagined, or imaginary, let alone one encountered only on television.<sup>14</sup>

As a policy, the media fails to articulate Thai identity to Malays in the south because it does not take into account the complexities of ethnic identity formation, and that national identity is defined through Buddhism and the Thai language. In addition, it underestimates or simply discredits the strengths of existing institutions in the south, particularly those that are most successful in resisting proposals from the government, e.g., secularization, modernization and linguistic mandates. The hegemonic Thai identity seeks to consolidate minority groups within its dictated vision of itself by way of inducement, media projection and, failing these methods, military and police force. Indeed, in Hamilton's research, she found that Thailand's policy communicated by way of national media has had little effect on the "hearts and minds" of Muslims in the south. She writes:

There has, however, been consistent resistance from Muslims in the south embracing Thai television, something which the Thais find both amusing and infuriating. One very famous story, constantly told to me during my fieldwork, concerned the role of the 5<sup>th</sup> Army (the Southern Region) in encouraging television viewing during the early 1980s. This very powerful and important segment of the national security forces was detailed to deliver free television sets to villages across Yala province. They drove in with their vehicles loaded with television sets and technicians, who were supposed to set them up in the houses of village headmen and other local leaders, including religious leaders. But the villagers refused and insisted they did not want television sets. They loaded them back onto the trucks and the 5<sup>th</sup> Army was obliged to take them away again. The principle point of this story, from the Thai teller's view, was that Muslims were demonstrably stupid; if they did not want the free television sets, at least they could have accepted them and then sold them later for a profit.<sup>15</sup>

The Muslims' resistance to the television sets is a remarkable example of the ways cultural resistance has functioned in the south. But the anecdote also reveals much about Thai-Buddhist attitudes toward, and perceptions of, Muslims. The Malays of the south had little need for Thai television, since they speak a different language, share a distinct cultural "thought-world," and rely on traditional forms of education and religious development. The free televisions were intended to serve Thai nationalist purposes but were incongruent with Malay-Muslim traditions and religious strictures which viewed television consumption as sinful. The

anecdote also reveals the disparity in the value systems between Muslims and Buddhists. Because the Muslims did not keep the televisions and re-sell them, they were deemed “stupid” by this person (presumably, a Thai Buddhist and pragmatist) who told the story.

Multi-media is a powerful new tool in the arsenal of nationalist policy. Benedict Anderson writes that “advances in communications technology, especially radio and television, give print allies unavailable a century ago. Multinational broadcasting can conjure up the imagined community to illiterates and populations with different mother-tongues.”<sup>16</sup> He further adds that “above all, the very idea of ‘nation’ is now nestled firmly in virtually all print-languages; and nation-ness is virtually inseparable from political consciousness.”<sup>17</sup>

However, if the media plays a central role in transmitting Thai nationalist ideology to the Muslim southern provinces, it is also used extensively throughout the south to report news from the greater Islamic world about international Muslim issues. And it is this phenomenon of fairly recent occurrence that has brought the Thai Muslim dilemma to the forefront of international consciousness.

In a brief sketch about how Muslims in the south perceive themselves in the broader context of international Islam, Chaiwat Satha-Anand analyzed Thailand’s Malay Muslim “worldview” as evidenced in the pages of independent Muslim magazines and newspapers he read within a discrete period of time. He writes that “the Thai Muslims’ perception of the world can be properly understood on the basis of three important and interconnected factors: the power of the contemporary Islamic resurgence; the proximity of Thailand, especially the four southernmost provinces, to Malaysia; and the ethnic origins of Muslims in Thailand.”<sup>18</sup> Chaiwat recognizes that external forces, most notably stories channeled through the Islamic media about Muslims elsewhere, are significant contributions to the ways in which Muslims in the south are able to maintain separatism, despite the efforts of Thai media to contain it or drown it out entirely.

### **Education**

Historically, one of the major pillars of government policy toward Muslims in the south of Thailand has been the imposition of Thai-based curriculum and language instruction in public schools. It is no surprise

then, that recent violence against the Thai state has been directed at Thai schoolteachers or toward the schools themselves. The Thai educational policy is predicated on the mission of providing Thai language instruction as a primary way of conveying notions of identity to the minority community in the south. However, this institution, like others that have roots in policy formation and official nationalism, has a long history.

For the colonial powers of Southeast Asia, educational policy contributed to an “Indochinese” consciousness, particularly among the French-administered colonies in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, of which the legacy may be seen in the interplay between Thai centralized educational motivations and the Malay systems in place in Thailand’s southern provinces. One objective of colonial educational policies was to “break existing politico-cultural ties between the colonized peoples and the immediate extra-Indochinese world.”<sup>19</sup> When viewed in the context of the south of Thailand, the policies of the central Thai government seem to differ little in intent from their colonial precedents, a factor which has supported the claims of “internal colonialism.”

For the most part, Malay Muslim education in the south of Thailand is centered around the *pondok* system. The *pondok* is a religious school that transmits Islamic education via Malay language and Muslim instruction. It has historic and cultural precedents based in Malaysia, with which southern Malays in Thailand share obvious cultural, linguistic and religious affinities. However, since the early 1970s the Thai government has constructed new Thai-based schools and sought to extend improved educational opportunities to Thai Muslims with a corresponding improvement in standards. The tampering with traditional Malay forms of religious instruction has had a tremendous effect on Malay sensibilities and has contributed significantly to resentment in the region.

Interestingly, educational policy as instituted by the Thai government is bound to the notion of modernization. That is, nationalistic educational policies seek to secularize, in general, where there had previously been religious affiliation. The conflict between Islam and modernity is certainly not new, but it is an additional element that exacerbates the tensions generated by Thai government policies among the Muslims who are forced to accept them.

The lynchpin of educational reform throughout the south is language. The Thai government for many years has sought to enforce educational reform policies that disregarded the importance of the Malay language in the south and that attempted to impose Thai language requirements, particularly within the *pondok* system.

In an essay by Raymond Scupin regarding the educational policies aimed at fundamentally altering the religious nature of the *pondok*, he writes:

In 1961, the Ministry of Education initiated a plan to regulate further the *pondoks*. A research and coordinating center was established in Yala in order to secularize the *pondoks* and introduce Thai language instruction, policies which were embedded in the strategy of *patanakorn*<sup>20</sup>. The curriculum was restructured for the *pondok*, and by the end of 1970, there were 463 *pondoks* in the South which were formally incorporated into the Thai government program. The textbooks were in the Thai language and the curriculum included geography, Thai history, Malay language (although eventually the Malay language was taken out of the curriculum), arithmetic, and Buddhist ethics.<sup>21</sup>

Here, we have clear evidence of the ways in which the *pondok* system has been compromised by the nationalist policies of the Thai government program. While the intent is to “secularize” the *pondok* schools and to eliminate the Malay language from the curriculum, the program nonetheless substitutes Islamic ethics with coursework in Buddhist ethics – hardly a secular replacement. Fundamental to Muslim identity formation in the south is the use of education as a means of conveying important information about Islam as practiced in its Southern Thai context; and government policies that aim to reconfigure or eliminate such aspects of education diminish the importance of the Malay Muslim culture in the south and force alliances with Muslim interests outside of the Southeast Asian world.

However, policy initiatives in the southern provinces are not implemented without reaction, either explicitly expressed or passively resisted. This is a consistent pattern: the Thai government enacts policies that aim to diminish the strengths of traditional systems of governance that have been in place in the south for centuries, and the Muslims in turn find ways to circumvent, resist or simply ignore such policies. Scupin explains:

In general the response of the *To Khrus* and *ulama* to these new educational policies has been a re-

strained participation. To preserve the study of Islam, they have complied with most of the new government regulations, but they have tried to emphasize Islamic teachings and reject much of the secular courses. This trend has led Thai authorities to establish systems of incentives and rewards and financial support to those *pondoks* which adopt secularization. This policy has had mixed results. One the one hand many of the larger *pondoks* have received awards and financial support from Thai authorities. On the other hand many Malay Muslim parents send their children to those *pondoks* who teach only Islamic subjects or send them abroad to other Islamic countries and regions for education.<sup>22</sup>

If the political integration of southern Thailand is one of the goals of national educational policies, including their insistence on Thai language instruction and secularized reform of traditional modes of education, it is discouraging that the policies have had the opposite effect. Resistance has been an effective means for Malay Muslims to preserve traditional forms of religious instruction, as well as the Malay language, which is used in virtually all other situations of day to day life, excluding the Thai-mandated public school curriculum.

The impetus to send children to other Islamic countries, neighboring or otherwise, only serves to divide the Muslims further from the Thai nation and to encourage Thai Muslims to view themselves as part of a more potent, larger community outside of Thailand. Although the Thai government has put in place incentive schemes and various development programs, these may have tended to devalue the autochthonous system and create economic inequities that are often insurmountable. Economic disparity is one of the major reasons for rejecting the Thai educational program, even though this affords the possibility of acceptance into a state university and thus better career opportunities.

While the economic disparity between Muslims in the southern provinces and those living in major urban areas in the central part of the country are significant, it is not possible here to delineate the ways in which economic differences function in the discussion of this relationship. However, briefly stated, the economy of the south, long tied to agrarian and fishing industries, has essentially dried up, due to the introduction of synthetic rubber on internationally dependent commodity markets destroying the profitability of rubber plantations (which were previously found throughout

the south and the Malay Peninsula in abundance); and to over-fishing taxing the natural resources of the seas that surround the peninsula. In short, the economic situation of the Muslim population in the south, particularly when compared to that of central Thailand, further exacerbates feelings of resentment and harassment and complicates the nature of the separatist movement. It also diminishes any potential for the success of national educational policies which make it extraordinarily difficult for Malay-speakers to succeed in university entrance exams, which are conducted in Thai.

### *The Use of Violence and the Thai Military Response*

The final element that has contributed most obviously to the pattern of action and reaction established by ill-defined and ill-conceived policies emanating from Bangkok is the reliance on the military to ensure compliance and to suppress rebellion. Onerous policies have resulted in the establishment of resistance groups whose agenda is defined by acts of rebellion or "terrorism" against the Thai state. The groups are various, with names designating and implying unity of purpose, but are localized and, relative to the Thai military, weak.

Nonetheless, the rebellion in the south has been a more serious national security concern since January of 2004, when the government officially initiated broad security measures in the most troublesome provinces by placing them under martial law following a series of well-coordinated attacks against military and police facilities. In addition, eighteen schools were attacked and burned to the ground in January as well, indicating that the rebellion, which was once characterized by sporadic acts of banditry without organization, had developed increasingly complex ways of using violence to attack the centers of Thai authority in the provinces, and to attract international attention to cultural and social problems in the south of Thailand.

The resistance organizations in southern Thailand have historical precedents and important connections to Malaysia. However, the chief objective of these resistance groups seems to be a reunion with Malaysia, rather than the creation of an independent and separate state. There are three guerilla movements associated with the armed resistance in the south: the Barisan

Revolusi Nasional (BRN), the Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani (BNPP), the United Front for the Independence of Patani (BERSATU), and the Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO). Of the four, PULO has the distinction of being supported by outside groups in the Middle East and Pakistan. It purports to have a membership that includes 10,000 guerillas and its activities have included sporadic violence from the 1980s onwards, mostly targeting police buildings and public utilities. In addition, it claimed responsibility for an assassination attempt on the life of the King of Thailand in 1977 during his visit to Yala Province.<sup>23</sup>

Generally, however, the resistance groups that have dominated the political equation in the southern provinces are irredentist in nature. They seek to reaffirm the ethnic and cultural heritage of Malay Muslims in the south with their ethnic cognate groups in Malaysia, and to throw off the yoke of Thai nationalistic ideology and official policy. However, one scholar has recently put forth the intriguing theory that the rebellion in the south may in fact be a millenarian revolt. In an article published recently, Nidhi Acusrivongse maintains that the participants in the recent fulmination of hostility are predominantly rural, poor and lacking a cogent plan to achieve a separate state status or independence. He argues that the resistance does little to attract sympathy for the Malay Muslims themselves, and that even less religious substance informs the rebellion. He writes:

Even if the militants and their movement (including organizations that supported them, such as PULO) may have wanted to establish an independent Patani state, up until 28 April these organizations had done nothing to make such a political separation practically viable under the prevailing conditions in the world today. There has been no serious attempt to gain the recognition, understanding, and sympathy of the world's superpowers for a new, would-be political entity. There has not even been any dissemination to the outside world of the sufferings of the Melayu Muslim people under the rule of the Thai Buddhist State.<sup>24</sup>

Nidhi's argument here is compelling, but it fails to take into consideration the fact that the Thai government's handling of the events that took place on April 28, 2004 arguably did more to publicize the plight of the Muslims in the south than any of the coordinated efforts of resistance groups in the past. Indeed, the images of Muslims massacred at a mosque signaled to

the world the intent of deposed Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's administration regarding internal security issues, and the gravity of his commitment to stability at any costs.

On April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2004,<sup>25</sup> an uprising occurred in three southern provinces, with participation by mostly young men wielding knives and machetes who attacked police stations and official military outposts. The violence was extraordinary in its size and scope. The brunt of the battle occurred in and around the Krue-Se Mosque in Yala Province. The military reacted by opening fire and killing nearly 110 of the rebels, many of whom had sought refuge in the mosque. A total of five policemen died in the attack. The media coverage of the event was extensive, with international media subsequently drawing parallels to the plight of the Palestinians in the Middle East. As significant and deadly as this eruption of violence had been, it had nonetheless brought worldwide attention to what in essence had been a localized conflict. For the most part, this attention has been unwelcome to the Thais, who, rather than adopt a more conciliatory or compromising approach to the southern provinces, have since maintained an aggressive stance toward them.

A second major episode in recent events of southern Thailand is equally demonstrative of the accelerating nature of the rebellion. On October 25, 2004, a mass demonstration occurred in Tak Bai, a district in Narathiwat province, when protestors demanded the release of six men accused of providing weapons to Muslim separatists. Military officials said the protest crowds numbered from 1,500 to 2,000 people. In an effort to quash the demonstration, the military rounded up the participants, by some counts as many as 1,300. In the ensuing arrests, 78 detainees died, apparently suffocating to death after they were bound, gagged and stacked atop each other in military transport vehicles. The images that were broadcast around the world were indeed disturbing, and it seems that the Thai government, in its treatment of its citizens in the south, has reached a level of military reaction that essentially guarantees continued resistance and rebellion in the region.

If it is true that Islam informs the activities of the rebels, then is the rebellion necessarily a religious expression of dissatisfaction? Nihdi claims that the Muslims in the south lack a codified ideology that could sustain a separate Pattani state. He believes that the image of a glorious Pattani has no basis in reality what-

soever and that the vision that rebels purport to advance is but a fantasy. Nihdi writes:

Amidst this absence of ideology, the Kreuse mosque became the only tangible cultural symbol for the villagers. The attempt to revive the Pattani *kris*, or the search for and reproduction of ancient technologies, were projects carried out by Thai academics (in collaboration with local villagers) and were funded by the Thailand Research Fund, which is a Thai government agency. It was represented in the Thai academic community as the local culture of the Thai state. There is no context for a Pattani state independent of Thai political authority, either in the past or in the future. I believe that the separatist organizations do dream of an independent Pattani state, or at least one free of the 'oppression' of the Thai state. But these organizations, and especially the militants, have only a vague idea of this fantasy.<sup>26</sup>

The observation, then, that the rebels in the south have an idealized, almost utopian vision for which they are struggling as their motive, identifies the uprising as *millenarian* in nature. Furthermore, Nihdi sees no basis in historical or political reality for the vision of a rebirth of Pattani, and illustrates that any harkening to an earlier era and to the glories of the past, have in fact been facilitated by the Thai government and are not organic to Malay Muslim sensibilities.

Similarly, Chaiwat Satha-Anand, in his most recent work on the subject of the Malay Muslims, sees the Kreu-Se Mosque, rather than a symbol, as a complex "theater" for the renegotiation of Muslim Malay identity in the region, and by extension in Thailand itself. He cites as evidence its symbolic power as a totem of Islamic dissatisfaction in direct conflict with its role in tourism in the south (it has been promoted as a tourist site for Malays), its presence in historical myth-creation (a powerful association with the shrine of Lim Khun Yew), and its role as a place of Islamic worship. Chaiwat concludes that the Kreu-Se Mosque is important because it is one of a series of theaters in which "the politics of identity renegotiation would continue to be more relevant to an understanding of a Muslim minority's relation to changing circumstances than the official politics of conspiratorial actors and clandestine foreign intervention."<sup>27</sup>

The violence in the south, then, may be seen in this context less as an armed resistance underwritten by complex Islamic ideals, and more as a simple peasants' revolt aimed at seeking economic redress for their

condition. But, qualitatively, how different is the Muslim vision of the former glory of the Sultanate of Patani from the reified vision of Thai unity (reflected within hegemonic policy formation) espoused throughout the kingdom? Whatever the case, it is certain that the violence in the south has long term repercussions for the Thai political establishment and for the citizenry as a whole. Images of tortured Muslims do little to win the good will of the international community and do far less for the image of Thailand as a powerful member nation of ASEAN, with a diversified population that has been developing its economy and infrastructure to establish critical links to facilitate international commerce.

### Thai Muslim Violence in Global Perspective

Scholars who study terrorism and modern political science have become more concerned that the violence in the south is increasingly the result of connections to external Islamic extremist groups from other parts of the world. However, for the most part, these fears seem to be groundless. What has been significant is the international attention that the violence in the south has attracted, generally the result of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's aggressive stance toward the rebellious provinces. The pattern of action and reaction, established by the military and propagated and supported by official Thai government policy, has served to exacerbate tensions and to draw parallels with conflict elsewhere in the world where Muslims are involved in military conflict.

The danger is that the distinctions that have kept this conflict localized for centuries, i.e., that the Malay Muslims merely had wanted to go about daily life maintaining connections to their cultural heritage, are rendered less clear by the power of multinational and international media, which typically show localized conflicts in terms of larger paradigms by reducing them to their minimal constituent parts, e.g., Muslim terrorists versus Buddhists. In particular, the Muslim rebellion in the south becomes a battle in a greater war that has more recently become the focus of so much international attention.

In addition to some evidence that PULO has had international cooperation from groups in the Middle East, Andrew Tan writes that external influence and aid

on behalf of the Malay Muslims in the south is indeed part of the picture. He writes, "An external element is present in three forms. The first is the sympathy from co-religionists in neighboring Malaysia. The second is the link with other Muslim secessionists in the region. The third is the most worrying of all – potential links with international militant Islam."<sup>28</sup> While indeed worrying, the third and final aspect of Tan's analysis of external influence might really be seen as a symptom of the Thai government's military policies directed against its Muslim minority. The greater the reaction to Muslim displays of political discontent, the greater the probability that international focus will shift toward Thailand's troubled provinces.

### Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to show the ways in which Thai national identity has historically been reified and applied to its minority Muslim population, as well as the constituents that comprise it. The theoretical components of national identity have also been applied to Thailand's understanding and vision of itself in nationalistic terms. Relative to notions of "Thainess" this paper has included an analysis of the Malay Muslim minority in the southern provinces and the rebellion that has simmered for centuries.

The result of this rebellion, which some scholars characterize as millenarian in nature, and others see as an irredentist, or a unique combination of both, has been increasing political attention directed at the former Thaksin Shinawatra administration. This administration won its reelection bid in an historical first for the country since becoming a constitutional monarchy: a four year completion of an elected coalition government with a subsequent reelection of an incumbent. The results of the second term mandate revealed in part that the heavy-handed responses to rebellion in the south and the expressions of political discontent there, had not, in general, affected the opinion of his Thai Buddhist constituency, which tended to see the conflict as a problem created by the Muslims, rather than by the Thai government.

More recently, the domestic political situation in Thailand has shown marked signs of fatigue if not exasperation resulting in a swift and complete military coup on September 19, 2006, while instability in the southern provinces continues with incidents of spo-

radic violence. The overthrow of Thaksin Shinawatra by the Thai military clearly obviated a protracted period of instability in the Thai polity. While Shinawatra's political crisis was ostensibly the result of allegations of corruption involving the liquidation of his investment holdings through a shell company based in Singapore, it could be concluded that these political tensions had the seed of popular discontent within the Muslim soil of the south. Whatever policies the Thai military government now pursues in its restive southern provinces in the short term, the issues underlying the complexities of Thai Buddhist and Thai Muslim relations are likely to remain unchanged.

I have argued that the fundamental problem has been a seemingly incomprehensible insistence on Thai educational and language requirements enforced by official Thai policy that separates the Malay Muslims from their historical and cultural traditions and forces them to either accommodate a completely alien culture, or to seek linkages with the "imagined" and "globalized" Islamic community beyond the borders of Thailand. In addition, the political dissatisfaction of the Malay Muslims stems from the lack of viable opportunities to participate in an economy dominated by the needs and requisites of urban Thailand.

While it seems unlikely that there are any real international agitators fueling the rebellion in the south, and even less likely that Islam is the primary cause for disparities of wealth, or that it provides the sole ideological foundation for the rebellion, there are real and growing international concerns that Thailand's regional rebellion may attract transnational actors who see this conflict simply as a skirmish in a greater global "War on Terror." The real dilemma for the previous political administration had been containing the unrest in the south before the increasingly desperate insurgents began to seek targets further north for their political expressions of resentment. That this is occurring now, with crude explosive devices used as bargaining chips in the ever-escalating conflict, demonstrates the inherent weaknesses and risks when transnational ideologies inform localized conflicts, but are countered by aggressive, nationalistic reactions with strong military support. It demonstrates, too, the blurring distinctions between global and local theaters of political expression.

For the year 2005, the United States State Department issued a report on the status of human rights

throughout the world. The controversial report, which posits fundamental human rights as a desirable goal in keeping with US policy objectives in disparate regions throughout the world, includes a separate, highly detailed report for Thailand alone. In this report<sup>29</sup> the State Department warns against "growing resentment" in the southern provinces and details the human rights abuses that have resulted from the "Emergency Decree" that had authorized military suppression of the rebellion. The list of disappearances, extrajudicial killings in the south and elsewhere, and acts of violence in the region are disheartening indications that identity politics remain a fundamental problem in Thailand's political constructions, as are the passages in this report that detail the deliberate targeting of Thai Buddhists still living in the south and attempting to observe their own traditions.

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this article, there are two naming conventions of the Thai city and province of Pattani. In historical accounts, these variations are sometimes interchangeable. However, references to “Patani” in this paper stress the historical connection to the Malay Sultanate of that name with its Malay spelling, thus distinguishing the modern Thai spelling of the province, which would be Romanized properly with two “t”s. Historians and writers who choose to use the single “t” in descriptions that refer to the modern city or province (and are contemporary accounts) thus ignore Central Thai administrative convention. Where the references occur in citations, they retain the author’s choice.

<sup>2</sup> Thailand is administratively divided into 76 *jangwat* (provinces), then subdivided into *ampoe* which are functionally similar to the county/parish system in the United States. *Ampoe* are then further divided according to administrative units called *tambon* and, one level further, *mubaan* (village) resulting in a complex yet centralized political system.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/th.html>

<sup>4</sup> David Wyatt, *A Short History of Thailand* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 192.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso), 1991.

<sup>6</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1994), p. 81.

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Andaya, “The Making of a Tributary State: Siam and Terengganu in the Eighteenth Century” in *Anuson Walter Vella*, (Honolulu: Southeast Asia Papers, 1986), p. 157.

<sup>8</sup> Moshe Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002), p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> Wyatt, p. 202-203.

<sup>10</sup> Anderson, chapter 6.

<sup>11</sup> Moshe, p. 88.

<sup>12</sup> Wyatt, p. 258

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Annette Hamilton, “TV on the Border: Broadcasting and Malay Identity in Southern Thailand” in *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, Vol. 34, Number 1, 2000, p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 24

<sup>16</sup> Anderson, p. 135.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Chaiwat Satha-Anand. “The Internationalization of Ethnic Conflict: The World According to the Thai Muslims” in *Internationalization of Ethnic Conflict* edited by K.M. de Silva and R.J. May (London: Printer Publishers, International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Sri Lanka, 1991).

<sup>19</sup> See Anderson, p. 124-125.

<sup>20</sup> Thai term for socioeconomic development policy

<sup>21</sup> Raymond Scupin “Education and Development for Muslims in Thailand” in *Aspects of Development: Islamic Education in Thailand and Malaysia* edited by Scupin (Malaysia: Institute of Malay Language, Literature and Culture, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1989), p. 108-109. See also Pitsuwan (1985) cited in Scupin.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116-117.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Tan “The Persistence of Armed Muslim Rebellion in Southeast Asia: Implications after September 11,” in *Globalisation and the New Terror: The Asia Pacific Dimension*, ed. David Martin Jones (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., 2004), p. 222-223.

<sup>24</sup> Nidhi Aeusrivongse “Understanding the Situation in the South as a ‘Millenarian Revolt’” in the *Kyoto Review*, March 2005, downloaded at [http://kyotoreview.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp/issue/issue5/article\\_380.html](http://kyotoreview.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp/issue/issue5/article_380.html)

<sup>25</sup> Information detailing these more recent events is widely available in the archives of international news sites, e.g., <http://www.bbc.com.>, etc.

<sup>26</sup> Nidhi Aeusrivongse, *Kyoto Review*, March 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Chaiwat Satha-Anand. *The Life of this World: Negotiated Muslim Lives in Thai Society*, (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International Private Limited, 2005), p. 77.

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Tan, p. 224.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61628.htm> downloaded March, 2006.

# Muslim Influences in Seventeenth Century Ayutthaya: A Review Essay

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“For some years the impious dogmas of Mohammed have struck deep roots in Siam and there is considerable anxiety lest it become the dominant religion of the country. At first the king favored it very strongly and often contributed to the expenses necessary for the proper celebration of Muslim festivals. Their mosques are very fine, and they can preach and worship as freely as in the countries where they are masters. Every year they go in procession in the country and in the towns accompanied by a great multitude of people, who are attracted from all directions by the pomp and strangeness of the spectacle. Indeed, this ceremony is well worth seeing and could easily win over the Siamese, who love display and ostentation.”

Nicolas Gervaise, *The Natural and Political History of the Kingdom of Siam* (1690)

## Introduction

There is still debate on the topic of when Islam first came to Southeast Asia. In general, Western scholars traditionally claimed that Islam filtered through India and arrived relatively late, whereas Muslim scholars argue that Arabs have played roles as “mediators” and government officials since early times. One thing scholars can easily agree upon is the means of Islam’s travel and propagation—namely the Muslim spice traders who frequented Southeast Asian ports as far back as the thirteenth century.<sup>1</sup> By looking at the modern religious map of Southeast Asia we can easily see in which places Islam ‘took hold’ and in which places it either failed, or was subsumed by a competing religion. Thailand is one of the latter case: a ninety percent Buddhist rather than Muslim country in the center of Southeast Asia’s diverse religious landscape. Dipping as it does into the Malay Peninsula, it is the Southern Thai border areas that can be said to traverse the political divide

between the mainland Buddhist world and the Muslim world in Southeast Asia’s island region and West.

Recent tensions between Buddhist Thais and southern Thai Muslims show just how contentious this dividing line is becoming in modern times. In this paper, I wish to show that the division between Buddhists and Muslims in Southeast Asia has not always been so polarized. For many years, Muslims and Buddhists not only traded with each other and interacted peaceably, but in fact, worked side by side under the same administration. As I shall demonstrate, at no time and place in Thai history was this effective ‘harmony’ more apparent than in the seventeenth-century Thai city-state of Ayutthaya.

## On the Primary Sources

Primary sources related to Muslim involvement in the politics and trade relations of early seventeenth Thailand are somewhat scarce. Many Thai records were

destroyed during the final Burmese sacking of the kingdom in 1767. The extant *Royal Chronicles* are later era reconstructions of events, and thus cannot be thoroughly trusted. Also, within these limited Thai records, Indians and other Islamic foreigners are generally referred to not by their genuine ethnonym or place of origin, but instead either by their Thai governmental titles or simply by the generic term *kaek* (a term that has come to mean “guest” or “customer” in Thai) making individuals difficult to identify.

Still, the sources that exist do provide valuable insight into the relations of Muslim traders, officials, and diplomats with the various empires of mainland Southeast Asia. Among the European sources, one of the best and most oft quoted accounts is from the Portuguese explorer, Tome Pires. Pires wrote a travelogue of his voyages throughout Southeast Asia in the early sixteenth century, and he tells of Muslims of various national origins in the Siamese capital of Ayutthaya.<sup>2</sup> The writings of the Dutch factory president, Jeremias Van Vliet are also useful. Van Vliet arrived in Ayutthaya to take over duties as factory president in 1638, and his accounts, combined with those of his successor Joost Schouten, make occasional references to the powerful Muslims who held considerable power in Ayutthaya. Also important among the European sources are the writings of French missionary Nicholas Gervaise and Louis XIV’s special trade envoy, Simon La Loubere, both of whom make mention of the activities of Muslims in the Thai capital.

Perhaps the most intriguing firsthand record of Muslim influence in old Siam is *Safinina’i Sulaimani* (The Ship of Sulaiman, referred to by English title), an eloquent record of a Persian diplomatic mission to Ayutthaya during the reign of King Narai (1657–88) that was penned by the embassy scribe, Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim. The Persian embassy described was made up of men from various divisions of the army, as well as *Khasa* administrators from the Safavid Empire.<sup>3</sup> The embassy voyaged to Ayutthaya in response to a letter of good will that King Narai had sent to Shah Sulaiman’s court in Isfahan. Narai’s invitation was written just after the high point of Persian influence in the Kingdom of Siam. The account provides interesting insights into seventeenth century life in Siam from a Muslim perspective. It also offers a glimpse of Persian life during the reign of the mission’s sponsor, Shah Sulaiman the Safavid (1666–94).

*The Ship of Sulaiman* was first translated into English in 1972 by John O’ Kane and brought to broad scholarly attention two years later with the publication of David Wyatt’s 1974 article in the *Journal of the Siam Society* entitled *A Persian Mission to Siam in the Reign of King Narai*.<sup>4</sup> Wyatt argued that “*The Ship of Sulaiman* deserves to be included among the most important primary sources for the history of Siam in the reign of King Narai.”<sup>5</sup> And yet, despite Wyatt’s rallying cry, to date there have been few in-depth analyses of this text. The best and most frequently cited is Jean Aubin’s *Les Persans au Siam Sous Le Règne de Narai* (Persians in Siam during the reign of Narai) published in 1980. For his part, O’Kane, in his “Translator’s Preface,” suggests that “it is doubtful” that anyone outside of himself and Jean Aubin has studied the manuscript since its acquisition by the *British Museum*. Based on my research this situation still holds true today. I will discuss the conditions surrounding the Persian mission that birthed *The Ship of Sulaiman* below in my section entitled “Aqa Muhammad and the Persian Flowering.”

### Muslim Minority Groups within the Kingdom: Indian, Cham, Chinese, and Malay

Amidst the majority Buddhist populace, several minority Muslims groups also inhabited the seventeenth century entrepôt of Ayutthaya. Expanding Southeast Asian trade networks had brought Indian Muslim traders to the region, particularly to the port towns such as Mergui and Tennasserim.<sup>6</sup> Since Mergui was one of Ayutthaya’s tribute states, it is likely that members of the Indian trade population there moved to settle in Ayutthaya. As I will discuss below, there were also influential Arab Muslims who came from India to take up high positions in the Thai administration of the seventeenth century. As Leonard Andaya notes, these powerful Muslims brought south Indian merchants with them who, in the early 1600s, established retail shops in Ayutthaya. Under royal patronage, these Indians Muslims established a *baan kaek* (India-town), which contained a mosque and graveyard.<sup>7</sup>

There were also Cham Muslims in Ayutthaya who were military volunteers in a corps referred to in Thai as the “*Krom Asa-Cham*.” This group of Muslims was composed of refugees who arrived via Cambodia,

Malacca, and Java to which they fled after the 1491 fall of the Champa Empire. It was in these places that, through their interaction with Malay Sunni Muslims, the Cham had become more fully Islamicized. In Ayutthaya they stood out as a relatively pious group of Muslims in a sea of Buddhists that otherwise made up the Thai Empire.<sup>8</sup> Drawing on Thai historical documents, Scupin (1980) has charted the official ranks by which the Cham were divided under the *sakdi na* (or Thai feudal ranking) system.<sup>9</sup>

Other than the Persians, whose influence I will discuss in detail below, another significant Muslim minority that requires mention are the Chinese Haw of Northern Thailand. The Haw were transient traders of Chinese silk and other products in Southern Yunnan, northern Thailand, and other regions along the Yunnan-Southeast Asian border.<sup>10</sup> However, the Haw operated on the periphery of the Ayutthayan empire, and though they formed an important minority group in northern areas, this paper's focus is on Muslim influence in Ayutthaya, central, and Southern Thailand.

## Muslims on the Southern Thai Periphery

Before examining the Ayutthayan example, I would like to look at the historical relationships between Muslims and the Thai monarchy. For this, it is important to remember that because the ancient Thai capitals were geographically positioned on the outskirts of the burgeoning Southeast Asian trade routes, their influence on trade, and the influence that traders had on these capitals was less direct.

Following Tambiah's "Galactic Polity" model, we find that the Thai kingdoms of this period would have had varying relations with the nascent Muslim polities on the peripheries of their spheres of influence. Those cities, on the Indian spice route, which were exporting Islam, to China were mainly on the periphery of the Thai Kingdoms' spheres of influence. Of these peripheral regions, Malacca and Patani had the most significant relations with the Thai kingdoms to the north.

### Malacca

Malacca rose as an active trade entrepôt between India and China as early as the fourteenth century, but did not formally become a Muslim kingdom until the

mid-fifteenth century. The city-state had an active tributary relationship with Ayutthaya as evidenced by the "Palatine Law" of 1468.<sup>11</sup> Through these regular relations it is logical to conclude that some Malaccan Muslims eventually came to settle in the Ayutthaya. However, Malacca's stint as a Muslim trade center did not last. The Portuguese seized Malacca in 1511 and imposed serious restrictions on Muslim trade. Sunait Chutintaranond, following European accounts, argues that this was "an important factor behind the rapid growth of seaborne trade at other ports in mainland Southeast Asia (Syriam, Pegu, Patani, and Ayutthaya) and in the Indonesian archipelago (Acch, Johor, and Banten)."<sup>12</sup>

### Patani

Citing contemporary Thai documents on Islam in Thailand, Scupin (1980) claims that the area of Patani in southern Thailand was a part of the Sukhothai kingdom as early as the thirteenth century. But Scupin takes issue with the claim that this area was "an integral part of Thailand," as the documents claim.<sup>13</sup> Rather, he makes the case following Tambiah's *Galactic Polity* model, that the area likely experienced various degrees of autonomy that would have fluctuated with the changes in Thai royal power.

By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Patani was an intact, but occasionally unstable trading partner with Ayutthaya. Patani's tributary relationship with Thai power became increasingly volatile in the seventeenth century. Perhaps because of the influx of foreign wealth, particularly from the Japanese, Patani began to assert its independence, and in 1630 launched attacks against other Thai tributaries such as Phatthalung and Nakhon Si Thammarat.<sup>14</sup> Yet, despite its rebelliousness and close links to the Malay Sultanate, Patani remained an important connection linking Muslim traders to Ayutthaya. Ayutthaya, due to its cosmopolitanism and the sheer volume of commercial activity, naturally drew traders from across the region.

## Ayutthaya's Ties to Muslim India

From the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, there are reliable references in travelogue literature—European, Asian, and Middle Eastern—to the presence of Persian traders in Ayutthaya and the surrounding trade ports such as Malacca. This was largely due to the important trade

relationship between Ayutthaya and Muslim India. Marcinkowski (1994) and other scholars agree that the 1511 conquest of Malacca by the Portuguese was cause for the Siamese to look for “additional gateways for trade with the western Indian Ocean region.”<sup>15</sup> From the late sixteenth century, Tenneserim and Mergui provided just such a gateway—connecting Ayutthaya to the Gulf of Bengal and Mughal India.

In the sixteenth century the Sunni Mughals began to take control of many parts of northern India, and by 1600 they had full control over Bengal and Orissa giving them access to the Bay of Bengal.<sup>16</sup> But it was from south of this area that a distinctly Persian-influenced, Shi’ite empire took up trade with Siam and its vassal states. From the early 1500s the Deccan Kingdom of the Qotb-Shahi (also written Qutb Shahi) dynasty (1512-1687) in Golconda was, as Marcinkowski puts it, a “highly Iranized kingdom [that] was not only a major trading power but also was to become a haven for Shi’ites, in most cases Persians from Persia but also from northern India, who were at times subjected to persecution under the Sunni Mughals.”<sup>17</sup> The relationship between Mughal India and the Thai monarchies flourished for years. There was a fairly steady stream of influential Indian migrants to the Thai kingdom and some of these men were brought into the royal court as consultants and ministers. At the same time, state-to-state relations between these two parallel empires were somewhat informal.

Trade to the east, emanating from the Coromandel Coast and port cities such as Matchlibandar, intensified throughout the sixteenth century, and it is likely that at this time an uncertain amount of immigration took place as well. Of particular influence were the ‘Chulia’ or Tamil Muslim traders who resided in South Coromandel. The Chulia hubs such as Porto Novo exported diverse products such as spices, tin, woven baskets, rugs, and elephants to fill the growing demand Southeast Asian city-states such as Ayutthaya.<sup>18</sup> The traders of South India ventured to ports such as Tenneserim, Mergui, and Patani (as well as Indonesian ports), and from these cities traveled to Ayutthaya. These ports, and others in island Southeast Asia, bustling with commerce in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and as Muslim power centers developed throughout Southeast Asia, Muslim influence in Ayutthaya’s royal court grew accordingly.

When in 1660, King Narai sent a formal embassy to Qutb-Shahi, the Shah of Golkanda, it seems that relations were nearing a low-point. Judging from the historical circumstance surrounding this embassy, it is reasonable to conclude that the diplomatic mission represented more of an attempt to repair relations and save face than anything else. It was around this time that Constance Phaulkon, King Narai’s bold new Prime Minister, was actively bolstering the influence of Europeans in the Ayutthayan court. Various sources record that one of his first actions at his new post was to spoil a coup attempt by a faction of Ayutthaya’s resident Muslims.

### *Aqa Muhammad and the ‘Persianate flowering’*

What Marshall Hodgson has termed the “Persianate Flowering” is also evident in Siam. Hodgson coined the term to describe an expansive growth and influence of Persian culture emanating from the Safavid Empire, which he argued “bears several analogies with the Italian Renaissance.”<sup>19</sup> And although Hodgson does not include the Ayutthayan Empire as a ‘focus’ a strong case can be made that Ayutthaya, too, experienced the Persianate flowering, especially during the reign of King Narai.

The period of Persian influence seems to have begun in the reign of Prasat-Thong (1629-56), reaching its pinnacle in the reign of King Narai. The Iranian Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim tells of the seeds of Narai’s strong predisposition to Persian culture:

When the present king [Narai] was still a boy he used to visit the Iranians regularly and he took great pleasure in their social manners and their foods and drink. In that way he became quite familiar with the Iranian style of life.<sup>20</sup>

Ibrahim’s tale of Narai’s boyhood connection to Muslim culture is confirmed in other historical sources, including the history produced by Jeremias Van Vliet, in his *At the Court of King Prasat-Thong: An Early 17<sup>th</sup> Century Account*, Van Vliet describes the resolution of a controversy that had arisen between Dutch and Muslim workers. Based on Ibrahim’s comments, it is safe to assume that the Thai prince whom he mentions here is none other than future King Narai. Van Vliet writes:

In the morning of 11 December [1636], before sunrise, I went to Radie Ebrehem [Raden Ibrahim], a Muslim merchant and one of the slaves of the Prince, because he was a friend who, I knew, was quite influential at the court. I told him what had happened and induced him immediately to go to the palace to ask his Highness amicably to settle the difficulties that had arisen between his slaves and the Netherlanders, to send the Netherlanders home to me, and to keep the whole incident from the King. I added that he could assure his Highness that I would most sharply investigate the whole matter.<sup>21</sup>

Narai's boyhood interactions with the Persian Muslim community gave him a strong inclination to favor this group once he became king. The king was famous for his internationalism, and brought numerous foreigners into his court as officials, but for much of his reign he turned over to his Muslim ministers exclusive control on matters of trade with states to the south and west. The most influential of these was Aqa Muhammad, who is referred to in Thai records as Okphra Sinaowarat<sup>22</sup>.

What little scholars know about Aqa Muhammad comes mostly from *The Ship of Sulaiman*. This Persian embassy record includes a section entitled *The Rise of Aqa Muhammad*, which describes him as a successful Muslim merchant who rose through the ranks to become a high-ranking minister:

...It is more than evident from his works and deeds that he was a man of noble character. He possessed the laudable manners and fine integrity of a truly well-bred man. His is originally from Astarabad, the abode of the faithful. Wise and loyal, and a man of practical skill, trained in the school of experience, he originally settled in Siam to carry on trade. After learning the language and customs of that domain he rose to a position of authority and became a minister and a favored councilor of the king.<sup>23</sup>

Immediately proceeding is a section titled *The Siamese king receives instruction from Aqa Muhammad*. Here, the Persian scribe tells in poetic terms, of Aqa Muhammad's ongoing effort to convert King Narai to "beholding the beauty of true Beloved and mastering the Perfect Subject, which consists in knowing one God..."<sup>24</sup> But on these matters he makes little progress, and the scribe complains that the king's "inner eye of understanding remained limited to the bare exterior of the world," and "[d]espite the breadth of his

studies, the king held firmly to the path of ingratitude before his Maker and to this day continues on the road of ignorance."<sup>25</sup>

*The Ship of Sulaiman* goes on to detail the depth of Muslim influence on the kingdom of Thailand during Aqa Muhammad's life, and also its rapid decline in the years after his death. One detail relevant to this discussion is the mention of an honor guard of "200 Iranians, mostly men originally from Astarabad and Mazandaran" who were brought to the Kingdom under Aqa Muhammad's direction. The author claims that this somewhat rowdy group of soldiers was culled from the lower classes and "lacked the integrity necessary to succeed."<sup>26</sup> He continues:

Due to their lack of integrity, which is a commodity always wanting in the low-bred, they were quick to stumble into the meshes of mischief and sedition. They became embroiled in mutual hatred, malice, jealousies and all manner of perverseness. Despite the king's manifest affection, they opened the register and accounts of treachery.<sup>27</sup>

For Aqa Muhammad and the Persians, the establishment of these Iranian troops in Ayutthaya marked the beginning of the end. Whether it was the threat of their new presence that raised the enmity of the other foreigners vying for power, or it was that the King himself felt that the Persians had had their run is hard to determine. More likely, it was a combination of these factors

### ***Royal Warehouses and Muslims in Positions of Power***

By the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Ayutthayan monarchy had developed a system of royal warehouses in order to profit from foreign trade on certain goods. The royal warehouses operated as wholesale outlets in that they bought (or received as tribute) and stockpiled exportable goods of both domestic and foreign origin.<sup>28</sup> The agrarian Thai populace was divided into a complex social system of royals, nobles, and commoners<sup>29</sup> from which the king could exact commodities for the warehouses. The monarchy maintained a monopoly on most exportable domestic goods, most of which were obtained at no expense by way of tax and tribute.<sup>30</sup>

A foreign trade community that had close relations with the monarchy stood to benefit substantially, this is especially due to the way that domestic goods were

collected and consolidated through royal control. In the early period of the seventeenth century, the loyal service of Japanese warriors to several Thai Kings in fending off Burmese invasion appears to have given the Japanese this advantageous position. However, by the middle of the seventeenth century, Japan had entered its *Sakoku* (closed-country) phase and their influence had consequently diminished in Ayutthaya. The power vacuum was apparently filled by Muslims. Their star was rising, at least for the time being, in mainland Southeast Asia.

### Muslim Ministers

Kennon Breazeale's enlightening essay *Thai Maritime Trade and the Ministry Responsible* outlines the bureaucratic structure Thai kings employed to maintain their country's status as a profitable center for trade in the seventeenth century. Drawing on Thai records, Breazeale identifies four ministries: 1) Department of General Administration, Appeals and Records 2) Department of Western Maritime Affairs 3) Department of Eastern Maritime Affairs and Crown Junks and 4) Department of Royal Warehouses.<sup>31</sup> Of these, it was the *Department of Western Maritime Affairs and Crown Junks* (known in Thai as *Krom Tha Khwa*, Ministry of the Right) that was traditionally led by a Muslim minister. Breazeale explains:

The ministry was reorganized during the 1610s with the assistance of two prominent Muslim merchants who moved to Ayutthaya from the region of the Persian Gulf... it seems no coincidence that the new structural division placed all areas that were of primary concern to Muslim traders within a single department, encompassing all the ports on the northern and eastern rim of the Indian Ocean, as well as the Muslim trading centers of the archipelago.<sup>32</sup>

Essentially the *Krom Tha Khwa* was the Kingdom's method to engage profitably with the Muslim trade networks throughout Asia. The Muslim ministers, though likely of Persian descent, must have been conversant in Malay—then the lingua franca of Muslim trade in Southeast Asia—and it was through them that the King dealt with his Muslim neighbors, as well as those Muslims residing within his kingdom. The counterbalance to the *Krom Tha Khwa* was of course the *Krom Tha Sai* (Ministry of Left), which was traditionally run by a Chinese official, and oversaw trade with

China and Japan, as well as some portion of the emerging European trade.

Under King Narai's leadership Muslims and other foreigners were brought into the fold of government in Ayutthaya. Thus, the royal court was infused with many ministers whose ethnic backgrounds were non-Thai and whose ancestors would tend to dominate certain posts over many generations. David Wyatt's essays entitled *Family Politics in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Siam*<sup>33</sup> and *A Persian Mission to Siam in the Reign of King Narai*<sup>34</sup> illustrate the continuity of a "Persian line" that continued to be influential well into the nineteenth century. Though over time members of these imperially favored families may have converted to Buddhism, the Muslim roots of power in certain spheres of the Siamese court are quite clear.

### Faith, Scripture and Religious Diversity

According to Anthony Reid, in Southeast Asia both Islam and Christianity reached their convert-producing peaks in the early seventeenth century.<sup>35</sup> To Reid, conversion produced a sea change in the "mental universe" of Southeast Asians who sought to deal with what he calls "some perceived lack of fit between existing beliefs and the changing world."<sup>36</sup> He describes this era as a time of changing values, and suggests that converts were attracted to new world religions because amidst the region's instability, these universal religions offered: "Portability", "Association with Wealth", "Military Success", "Writing", "Memorization", "Healing" and "A Predictable Moral Universe."<sup>37</sup> Ayutthaya was an exception to the wave of conversions in Southeast Asia as these forces had little bearing on Thai Buddhism and the seventeenth century Thai monarchy. In each area, the rapidly solidifying Buddhist and State structures in Ayutthaya provided a strong counterpoint to the "attractions of conversion" mentioned by Reid. Ayutthaya's monarchs were always involved in building projects that lavishly displayed their wealth. Most of these projects were Buddhist in nature, though the Thai Kings also sponsored the construction of Mosques for the Muslim members of the community.

In an opening invocation of the *Ship of Sulaiman*, we are led to understand that the Persians, for their part appreciated King Narai's patronage of their religion:



Good rulers, therefore, take a further step on the path toward world harmony. With ambassadors and delegations as their key they unlock the doors of world-wide friendship. Such was the intent of the Siamese king, possessor of the white elephant and the throne of solid gold. For he loves all Muslims and was overawed seeing that our king, the brilliant luminary of the world had risen into the Heavens of eternal sovereignty our king who is the noble planet of good fortune, adornment, of the throne of omnipotence and bearer of Chosroes' crown and the cap of Kayan. Thereupon the Siamese monarch hastened to open the accounts of friendship and affection. 'May Allah bless him and guide him into the fold of Islam'.<sup>38</sup>

To be sure, the Muslim community had significant political power in seventeenth century Ayutthaya. Then again, so did the Europeans, so did the Chinese, and so did the Japanese in their time. It was this very balance of foreign influences on the Thai state, and the play of them each against the other that allowed it to thrive in the seventeenth century without undue colonial penetration. During the peak of Muslim influence in the Ayutthayan court, King Narai had also brought a skilled European—the Greek, Constance Phaulkon—to a high position of power. Phaulkon rose to the rank of Prime Minister, and according to Gervaise, it was he who spotted and crushed an imminent Muslim rebellion. In his *The Natural and Political History of the Kingdom of Siam*, Nicholas Gervaise remarks that “[i]f Monsieur Constance, the first minister of state had not discovered their [the Muslim community's] conspiracy and if he had not been crafty enough to prevent it being carried out, it would have been the end of the king and the kingdom of Siam.”<sup>39</sup>

Yet, Gervaise's assessment (above, and as quoted at the beginning of this section) does not necessarily fit with our contemporary scholarly understanding of the Thai monarchy in the time of King Narai. A religious transition to Islam would surely not have been as easy as Gervaise suggests. As one anthropological review of mass conversion summarizes: “Popular explanations attribute religious transitions to the enchantment of new visions of the cosmos, more efficient elite exploitation, and more effective administrative models, or some combination of these.”<sup>40</sup> Further, there exists a role for the relationship “between charisma and kingship” whereby “...a king's charisma does not just induce fear and awe in his subjects; it also promises to enhance the efficacy of his followers' actions.”<sup>41</sup> This

may be the key to the steady success of Buddhism vis-à-vis Islam and Christianity in Thailand and the rest of Buddhist Southeast Asia. By the time Islamic groups acquired political and economic power in Ayutthaya, the Buddhist Sangha had for centuries been growing as an effective religious and educational institution that would be immensely difficult to displace. The institution had royal patronage and legitimacy as a social institution in so many communities that it is difficult to imagine any local popular support developing for the high-level threat that Islamic groups posed to the Thai monarchy.

In the end, this should reveal the strict limitations on the “power” of foreign entities in Ayutthaya. How “real” was this power? This power may have been potent in the economic realm, and perhaps influential in terms of elite policy making. Yet, it appears to have been negligible in terms of popular support, the proverbial ‘hearts and minds’ of the Thai populace. Tambiah (1976) rightly rejects the Geertzian model of scripturalism as an “ideologisation of religion” for Thailand because, as he puts it:

...as far as most Thai are concerned, it would be difficult to detect a shift from religiousness, from Buddhism as a way of life in all its ramifications, to a more skeptical narrower on-the-defensive religious-mindedness. Virtually at all levels of society the integral relevance of their religion for conduct is not in doubt. Buddhism is as much the religion of the bourgeoisie as of the peasant, of the soldier as much as the recluse.<sup>42</sup>

Even though Tambiah is, at this point, referring to modern Thai society (Bangkok period forward), his argument is just as relevant to the Ayutthayan period. By that time Tambiah's ‘Asokan ideal’ whereby “purifications of religion occurred in the reigns of famous kings in Ceylon, Burma, and Thailand”<sup>43</sup> was already well established. Unlike the Islamic states that eventually formed in island Southeast Asia, it has been described that Southeast Asian Buddhist societies, composed as they were of householders, monks, and Bhodisatva Kings, were “like hallow vessels that have in the past and could in the future hold various contents.”<sup>44</sup> This image helps us to understand the way that Islam was integrated into Thai society in the seventeenth-century. It could grow and even flourish with royal patronage from Buddhist monarchs, but the very fact that it was, and always would be the client and not the patron, gave Islam a subordinate standing and, more

importantly nullified the possibility of any popular influence or widespread acceptance of Islamic thought or Islamic leaders.

## Conclusions

This article focused mainly on a brief period in the seventeenth-century when Muslims groups in Thailand enjoyed an unprecedented degree of autonomy and political power that has never been realized since. Within the context of a benevolent ruler and his administration, Muslims lived peaceably in the old Thai capital of Ayutthaya and played key roles during the city-state's famed age of international commerce. Minority Muslim groups from Southeast Asia and beyond came to Ayutthaya, as they would to any thriving entrepôt, in search of economic opportunities. They thrived in an environment with a comparable degree of freedom, and most importantly, freedom from persecution.

They found in Ayutthaya a bustling entrepôt of international trade and domestic commerce. Some, like the Persians, were quickly integrated into the Thai royal court, and given powerful positions as ministers of trade. These Muslims were an indispensable component of Ayutthaya's prosperity because they assisted in connecting the kingdom to vast Persian networks of traders stretching from the Middle East to South Asia, as well as the Chinese empire. These Persians appear to have worked closely with other local Muslim groups, such as the Chams, who resided within the Thai Kingdom. The Muslim community, particularly during the period of Aqa Muhammad, lived in peaceful co-existence in seventeenth-century Thailand. The turning-point came around 1660 when new leadership emerged in Ayutthaya. The Thai monarchy's focus began a gradual and inexorable shift towards European influence, a shift marked by the rise to power of Constance Phaulkon. Thus began the gradual diminishment of Persian influence in the Thai courts.

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## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Actually, even claiming that Islam arrived in the thirteenth century is controversial since some scholars give Islam credit for having an impact on places such as twelfth-century Aceh.
- <sup>2</sup> Andaya (1999): 121
- <sup>3</sup> O'Kane (1972): 2
- <sup>4</sup> Wyatt (1994)
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid: 157
- <sup>6</sup> Scupin (1980): 67
- <sup>7</sup> Andaya (1999): 125
- <sup>8</sup> Scupin (1980): 68
- <sup>9</sup> A system used by Thai kings to allocate land and divide manpower based on an individual's given status.
- <sup>10</sup> Scupin (1980): 70
- <sup>11</sup> There has been some controversy over the dating of this historical Thai legal document because the date of 720 that is given does not specify to what era it is referring.
- <sup>12</sup> Chutintaranond in Brezeale (1999): 114
- <sup>13</sup> Scupin (1980): 57
- <sup>14</sup> Wyatt (1984): 110
- <sup>15</sup> Marcincowski (1994): 1. Also see Chutintaranond in Brezeale (1999): op. cit.1
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid: 2
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid
- <sup>18</sup> Andaya (1999): 133-134
- <sup>19</sup> Hodgson (1974): Vol. 3, p. 49
- <sup>20</sup> O'Kane (1972): 94
- <sup>21</sup> Van Vliet (2000): 15
- <sup>22</sup> Dhiravat na Pombejra: 134
- <sup>23</sup> O'Kane (1972): 98
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid: 99
- <sup>26</sup> O'Kane (1972): 100
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid
- <sup>28</sup> Brezeale (1999): 5
- <sup>29</sup> This system was called "*nai-phrai*" and it is discussed extensively by Smith (1977) in his chapter "The Seventeenth-Century Thai Economy and the VOC": 72 - 97
- <sup>30</sup> Smith (1977): 74
- <sup>31</sup> Brezeale: (1999): 5
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid: 9
- <sup>33</sup> Wyatt (1994)
- <sup>34</sup> ibid
- <sup>35</sup> Reid (1993): 181
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid: 150
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid: 151-160
- <sup>38</sup> O'Kane: 19
- <sup>39</sup> Gervaise (1999): 63
- <sup>40</sup> Bentley (1986): 296
- <sup>41</sup> ibid
- <sup>42</sup> Tambiah (1976): 429
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid: 431

# From the City of Brotherly Love:

## Observations on Christian-Muslim relations in North Sulawesi

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A *bule*<sup>1</sup> voting for the Christian contender competing against a Muslim candidate might seem predictable enough. But that, combined with the summer's increasingly heated protests against the US support of Israel's military aggression towards Palestine, made my image likely to have shades of meaning that went well beyond that of a simple spectator. Would they recognize that I was voting for Dirly because he was the hometown hero, not just because of a perceived automatic affinity for the Christian and "Western-facing" characteristics that are often attributed to the ethnic Minahasans?<sup>2</sup> I tried to sink into my chair in front of the movie screen set up in the mayor's office at Manado city center, a little relieved that we were at a rally for the crowning of the 2006 winner of *Indonesian Idol*, and not at a rally for a political candidate.

The *Indonesian Idol* competition that summer was a beautiful expression of the complex nexus of issues that exist in the Minahasan region of North Sulawesi regarding religion, ethnicity, nationalism and the influence of a unique colonial history. The summer's *Idol* competition had culminated in a deadlock between Dirly, the local Manado boy raised on gospel tunes, and Ihsan, a Muslim from Medan who favored cheeky

performances of traditional religious tunes from his region in North Sumatra. Both sufficiently cute to hold the attention of young girls across the nation, and with enough vocal talent to handle everything from rock songs to Bollywood-esque ballads, the final competition morphed into something that wasn't just about whose dance moves were better. There were bigger issues at stake: loyalties to religion and region, and the place of minority religious or ethnic constituents vis-à-vis the Muslim majority. And these were being beamed out across the country from what had become, in essence, a national stage.

Back in Manado, things seemed much simpler on the surface. I was certain, as were my neighbors in the row behind me, that everyone in the crowd now numbering over three or four hundred that was gathered at the mayor's office to watch the *Idol* competition would be voting for Dirly, whether they were Christian or Muslim. During a commercial break, Mayor Jimmi Rogi made an announcement: the mayor's office would be handing out *Simpat* cell phone cards to everyone in the audience, so they could be sure and have enough minutes on their hand phones to call in a vote. Every single vote was important, we all understood, since we

might have been the only ones voting for Dirly, pitted against the weight of a country full of people who might be more inclined to ‘vote Muslim,’ even if they were from neighboring regions on the Eastern side of the archipelago. Certainly our numbers were puny compared to the voting power of Java alone, and Dirly was an underdog despite his good looks and the faith local women had in his superior training singing in front of the pulpit with GMIM (Evangelical Church of Minahasa) youth choirs. One thing was certain: this was a time when loyalty to a regional ethnic identity should trump loyalty to religious affiliations, as Mayor Rogi reminded the audience with the self-proclaimed regional slogan “*Torang Samua Basudara*” as he stood on the stage waving a handful of *Simpati* cards.

*Torang Samua Basudara. We are all brothers.* The words were splashed across the worn banners that festooned streets in the city center, and framed the ubiquitous answer to any questions about religious relations or the relative peace of Manado compared with other cities in Sulawesi, such as Poso to the south, that were infamous for incidents of ‘religious’ violence. What had begun as an interpretation of Christian ideology introduced by Dutch missionaries in their project to unite eight disparate regional tribes into a coherent and governable whole was transformed into an important aspect of local ethnic character that succeeded in joining together the different peoples of North Sulawesi.<sup>3</sup> People rarely cited the predominance of Christians in number and political power as the key to avoiding the violent instability of other regions where there is an even division of Christians and Muslims. Minahasans relied instead on the mantra of ethnic solidarity and a joint commitment to protecting the Minahasan homeland, in order to explain the relative peace of the region. This was something that was just as salient for the local Muslims I spoke with as local Christians. Families from both religious backgrounds, as well as local officials, were quick to mention the work of BKSAUA (*Bekerja Sama Antara Umat Agama*, the Association for Cooperation between Religious Communities), an organization formed in 1969 to foster inter-religious dialogue and cooperation of “all of the religions allowed by the government,” meaning the five religious traditions codified in the national ideology of Pancasila: Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism. The most visible manifestation of their work was the installation of local church

leaders outside area mosques during holidays and other religious events; Muslim elders performed the same function during Christian celebrations. People claimed that this deterred any type of mob violence or retaliatory acts like those that occurred in other parts of Sulawesi or Ambon, since these local leaders were an embodiment of the united ethnic front that was essential and *special* to the region. Their efforts only reinforced the feelings that ensured Manado and the surrounding areas were not plagued by inter-religious confrontations.

Manado seemed to embody perfection at the institutional level when it came to religious harmony. Official meetings began with the predictable Muslim greeting *Salam* but then veered into oddity with the addition of *Shalom*, a reference to relations local Christians feel with the holy land of Israel. The long-winded introductions and opening speeches found at any *acara resmi* (official ceremony) were closed with Muslim and Christian prayers, and no one seemed to find this in the least bit incongruous. At the summer’s birthday celebration for Manado city, the wives of local officials stood resplendent in their matching yellow and white *kebaya*<sup>4</sup> with the coconut tree regional crest, the only markers of religious identity being the occasional color-coordinated *jilbab*.<sup>5</sup> During a tour of a local primary school, the principal extolled the virtues of the school’s religious education program and how it went above and beyond what was required by the Indonesian state curricula. This curriculum was meant to promote religious harmony and education in cross-religious history. A few afternoons a week, students were sent out into the community to attend religious seminars to learn about religious traditions and ceremonies different than their own. But it wasn’t until the end of the afternoon that someone thought to ask where the children were given instruction in religions other than their own. It became clear that the children were not exposed to alternative religious ceremonies at all. The principal was dismissive of our suspicions about the reality of cross-religious education, being that they were never given the opportunity to visit the other religion’s place of worship. How would the mystery surrounding what the student sitting next to them did on those afternoons outside the classroom be dispelled if they had never witnessed it? What would happen if there was a mixed-religion family? The absurdity of this question was communicated by the principle’s raised eyebrows.

Although the choice of religious tradition was a student's, the principal assured us that once it was chosen there was no question of conversion or even reconsideration. This made religious identity seem just as immutable as a regional one.

Principles of balance between Islam and Christianity were not only the domain of institutional practices, but were part of the everyday praxis that constituted local life and local aspirations. When I pressed a friend to elaborate on her hedged admission that there was some metaphysical force afoot in the region that maintained its peaceful demeanor, she explained that the sincere and sustained prayers of local residents were the secret currency that had bought North Sulawesi years of calm and prosperity. I was caught off-guard by her indignant "of course!" when I asked if Muslim prayers contributed to this force-field generated by the faithful. I thought about a number of Saturday visits made to *Bukit Kasih*, "The Hill of Love," where Muslim and Christian families gathered to picnic in the shadow of giant statues of Lumimu'ut and Toar, the mythical progenitors of the Minahasan people, and then run breathless up the mountainside to Minahasa's version of *Taman Mini*,<sup>6</sup> complete with a miniature Catholic church, miniature mosque, and miniature Buddhist temple. And about how the dawn hour outside my window was heralded by the Muslim call to prayer colliding with (friendly?) competition from a nearby church broadcasting the names of their faithful congregants over a loudspeaker. Perhaps I shouldn't have been so surprised that Muslim and Christian prayers were joined in people's minds just as the sounds of worship mingled on the streets.

But the ideology of ethnic solidarity didn't entirely obliterate the tensions of religious relations, and the very different trajectories of Islamic versus Christian global politics sometimes forced the theme of regional brotherhood to take on strange permutations, as people tried to reconcile aspects of global religious narratives with the local. During a late night conversation, a retired Christian teacher began to conspiratorially whisper theories about the recent natural disasters on the Western side of the archipelago, insinuating that until Muslims on that side of the country recognized Jesus Christ as their savior, their luck would never get better. I reminded him that an hour earlier he had given a long and impassioned speech about the unity of all people in the eyes of God, and therefore his theory

couldn't possibly be true. However that didn't deter him. "But ah" he said, leaning closer "then I was talking about people here, in Minahasa. You see, the Muslims here are different. They're like us." People often said things that situated them in reference to global religious narratives that seemed contradictory, in my opinion, to the principles of ethnic brotherhood in Minahasa.

For example, one of the narratives most discordant with ideas of ethnic brotherhood was related to the way Minahasan Christians imagined their place in a global story of Christianity. This narrative centered on the relationship local Christians feel they share with Israel. Like it does for many other Christians worldwide, the holy land of Israel represents a touchstone of Christian faith, and local Christians often referred to Manado as *Israel kedua*, or the "second Israel," instantiating North Sulawesi as centrally located in a global Christian tradition. The affirmation of my American identity to someone on the streets of Manado often received a rousing reply of "Go Israel!" because local interpretations saw George Bush and Americans as protectors of Israel, and Christianity, in the field of global politics. How such Christian (and tacitly anti-Islamic) imaginaries fit with ideologies of ethnic brotherhood was sometimes difficult to for me to conceive. At times it seemed like the insistence on Manado as the "second Israel" was never stretched to its "logical" conclusion, one where it made a statement about the Christians in Manado versus their Muslim neighbors. However, it's likely that I misapprehended how linkages to global religious narratives might have little in common with local religious relations in the minds of Minahasans. This was evident even in the ways in which local followers of Islam also focused on a positive relationship with the West and specifically the United States, asserting those characteristics that linked ethnic Minahasans in a common bond, including their "forward" or "Western" facing personalities, regardless of the fact that they were often opposed to America's support of Israeli aggression against Palestine. When I asked people to explicitly address the differences between Christians and Muslims in Minahasa, they often countered with responses that *linked* the religious traditions – monotheism and shared religious texts: Moses and Abraham. These encounters contextualized experiences I had conducting fieldwork in Indonesian Christian churches in the United States, where the congre-

gations I worked with were predominantly from North Sulawesi. People had often quietly informed me that there were a number of Minahasan Muslims who regularly attended church activities. When I asked one of the pastors to explain their presence, she had replied simply: "They feel like they are a part of us. And we welcome them." Perhaps the idea that people's orientation to global political/religious narratives necessarily dictates the logic of everyday interaction on an intimate local level was one that referenced my own Western bias more than it exposed some sort of incongruity in Minahasan ideologies.

However, application of the ideal of ethnic brotherhood did not always have positive effects at level of local politics, especially for those perceived to be "outsiders" to the region. Perhaps most illustrative of this was an incident that occurred in a local street market known as *Paal Dua*. Located near the waterfront, behind Manado's very suburban main street called the Boulevard, Paal Dua is more of a typical *pasar* than the nearby Boulevard Mall complex, with crowded streets and labyrinthine paths weaving in and out of small, individually run booths selling everything from bootleg CDs to fruits and vegetables. Loud and chaotic, *Paal Dua*, which is serviced by the local blue public transport buses called *mikrolet*s, is filled with people soon after sunset and well into the night. It's everything the Boulevard, with its clean new buildings and Western restaurants like A&W Root Beer and Pizza Hut, is not.

The market made a good night spot for anyone out to saunter or people watch or to pick up a few *oleh-oleh* (souvenirs) to send home. However, after class one afternoon our program head announced that we should avoid the area until further notice since there had been "riots" earlier in the day, making it unsafe. We couldn't seem to get any information about the riots other than the fact that a rock lobbed by one of street merchants in the area had sparked an unaccustomed moment of violence, that the police had been involved, and that the market was closed until further notice. It took a day or two in which to sort out why a small incident had swiftly metamorphosed into something with such disturbing undertones. Our tutors and other mentors seemed hesitant to discuss the underlying causes, and as non-native speakers we had trouble deciphering the commentaries and rumors swirling about the event.

The story we slowly pieced together was one that pitted city officials against the merchants at *Paal Dua*. The city of Manado had recently introduced a goal to become the self proclaimed "Tourist City of the World," and the need to be an attractive destination for Europeans and Westerners led to the city's desire to "clean up" the area. *Paal Dua* was one of the first targets in removing all traces of the street economy away from what was to be a budding new center of tourism. When police threatened that they would begin to forcibly disassemble the plywood coverings that made the merchant's mobile carts into a ramshackle permanent structure, a rock was thrown in frustration. That was enough of a motivation for the police to clear the area by force.

Something seemed awry with the city's willingness to take such drastic measures to eradicate this street market and ignite a controversy that would last well through the summer's end. Who were these merchants, commonly known as *pedagang kaki lima* (PKL), who the local government had no qualms about violently and publicly relocating and who inspired little sympathy among the city's inhabitants? The situation was disconcerting when juxtaposed against the focus on regional harmony, hospitality and neighborliness that was evident in so many other aspects of life in Manado.

The real problem with this particular group of PKL was not that their mobile carts had mushroomed into an eyesore, although that didn't help their case. Instead, it seemed that people's underlying disdain for the situation at *Paal Dua* stemmed from the fact that most of these merchants were itinerants from the newly reconfigured *propinsi* Gorontalo,<sup>7</sup> a predominantly Muslim center about a 12-hour drive to the south. The Gorontaloese were outsiders twice over, hailing from another region that was no longer even peripherally connected to Minahasan political affairs and outside overt political control. This was certainly a factor in local official's decision to take such decisive and aggressive action to clear the marketplace. Their actions exacerbated a tense situation but media coverage and nationwide scrutiny caused the local government to adopt a much more conciliatory tone in their dealings with the group.

These events were not, as it might easily be assumed, just the machinations of a Christian dominated local government trying to quietly run a group of Muslim



merchants out of town. What people invoked over and over when I questioned them directly about their approval of relocating the PKL from *Paal Dua* was a sense of the danger emanating from regional outsiders, people who didn't know or respect the covenant that Minahasans, both Christians and Muslims alike, had to protect and promote the peace in their homeland. How could these men, who came from a region that wasn't populated by streets where mosques and churches coexist peacefully side by side, be trusted to maintain what Minahasans worked and prayed so hard to protect? Would they understand the affinity many Minahasans feel with Westerners and extend that special sort of hospitality to the droves of tourists that locals were anxiously hoping would arrive? What was at stake, as far as local residents were concerned, was if the PKL could really be trusted to understand something they believed was essential to Minahasan life, and was worth protecting.

These issues touched on questions of faith, something I heard a lot about during my stay in Manado. Not faith as it applied exclusively to any one religious tradition, but a perseverance of belief in the principle of ethnic brotherhood, an unshakable conviction that dedication to this principle would (and does) see it realized. Like any true faith, it is partially blind and certainly naïve, overlooking everything from the little inconsistencies to the glaring omissions that it encompasses. I encountered just as many contrary examples to the slogan *Torang Samua Basudara* as I did complimentary ones, making it difficult at times to understand how they all existed in the same universe. But as we sat in the mayor's office that night, Muslim, Christian and Westerner alike rooting for Dirly against the odds, I could see that despite its sometimes overly optimistic cast on local relations, I could not discount the belief that people shared in the intangible ideal of Minahasan brotherhood. At least in that respect we were essentially all the same.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Bule* is common Indonesian slang that refers to a white foreigner.

<sup>2</sup> Minahasa is an ethnic term describing people who live in the region of North Sulawesi, the fifth and smallest province in Sulawesi. Minahasa also refers to a political geographical designation that is used to describe the areas of Bitung, Manado and Minahasa regency, three of the five administrative units in North Sulawesi Province. Manado is the capital city of North Sulawesi province. A number of languages are spoken in the region including Indonesian, a Malay based creole called Manado Malay or *Bahasa Manado*, Tountemboan, Toulor, Tonsea and Tombulu. Although people may refer to village or sub regional identities, most people identify themselves as part of the *suku Minahasa* (Minahasan ethnic group).

<sup>3</sup> The word Minahasa itself first appeared in VOC communique 1789 referring to a meeting of *walak* or regional tribal heads in the area of North Sulawesi controlled by the Dutch, according to historian David Henley. Henley also notes that Dutch missionaries promoted the idea of a unified regional ethnic identity in order to unite the eight disparate tribes in the area under Dutch control into a single unit. In Henley, D. 1993. Nationalism and Regionalism in Colonial Indonesia: the case of Minahasa, *Indonesia* 55:91-112.

<sup>4</sup> Local traditional dress for women

<sup>5</sup> Indonesian term for the head covering worn by Muslim women

<sup>6</sup> Taman Mini Indonesian Indah (Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature) a theme park in Jakarta that has miniature replicas of regional ethnic structures from all over the Indonesian archipelago

<sup>7</sup> Gorontalo seceded from the North Sulawesi province and became its own province in December of 2000.



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# Speaking American in Indonesian Islamic Boarding Schools

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Tim S. Pappa lived in and toured clusters of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) across Java, Indonesia, from September 2005 to May 2006. In West Java Pappa 'shadowed' a *kyai* (*pesantren* director), and studied regional networking; in East Java he examined internal communicative processes within a large *pesantren* complex. Pappa will graduate with an MA in Southeast Asian Studies from Ohio University in June 2007.

I lived in and toured various *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) across Java, Indonesia, from September 2005 to May 2006. In West Java I 'shadowed' a *kyai* (*pesantren* director), and studied regional networking; in East Java I examined internal communicative processes within a large *pesantren* complex.

For 37 days, for example, I accompanied a particular West Java *kyai* (with whom I lived at Pondok Pesantren Al-Mizan, in Jatiwangi, Majalengka, West Java) to more than 25 regional and local *pengajian* (Qur'anic-based sermons held in mosques and *pesantren* and neighborhoods) and related events. In Cirebon, West Java, about an hour from PP Al-Mizan, I observed processes of a *pesantren*-affiliated Muslim non-governmental organization (Fahmina Institute), staffed by *kyai* and former *pesantren* students.

In Tambakberas, Jombang, East Java, I lived in Pondok Pesantren As-Sa'idiyyah I within Pondok Pesantren Bahrul Ulum, a large complex composed of 27 *pesantren* 'dorms' and 15 state or private *madrasah* 'modern day schools', and a nursing academy and two second-tier universities; near PP Bahrul Ulum were

several other substantive clusters of *pesantren* and *madrasah* in Jombang (e.g. Pondok Pesantren Tebuireng, Pondok Pesantren Dahrul Ulum).

In each research locale I regularly spoke to various audiences of *pesantren* and *madrasah* students and Javanese Muslims, about Americans and myself (e.g. pluralistic communities, freedoms, choice). In subsequent text I include vignettes of my initial (unintended) enculturation with a particular West Java *kyai*, who urged me to speak with him at underground punk rock concerts and radio talk-shows and seminars; and without him, speaking to thousands in various East Java *pesantren*.

On 10 February 2006 I accompanied Kyai Haji (KH) Maman Imanulhaq Faqieh to Pondok Pesantren Al-Munawar Al-Zarnujyah in Tasikmalaya, West Java, a city of about 700 *pesantren*. He spoke, and I sat, crowded by about 300 students. I was asked about research funds, and the CIA; girls quickly snapped cell photographs, ran off. Most students stared, and whispered. KH Maman mentioned the United States, and the crowd howled. Many students laughed and grum-

bled; other attendees shouted in the local dialect (Sundanese), and looked at me.

KH Maman (with whom I lived at PP Al-Mizan, about four hours away) recited Qur'anic *sura* (verses); a majority of students bellowed "Allah!" in response. Midnight neared. In previous days KH Maman and I had attended multiple late-night *pengajian* (Qur'anic-based sermons), sometimes back-to-back, far from PP Al-Mizan; I was tired, of travel, and celebrity. I was agitated by students' overt suspicion (relatively rare in *pesantren*), and upset by a large poster of Osama bin Laden, unruly shouts upon reference of New York City or the United States; I did not understand Sundanese. In my field notes I wrote and imagined negative things about fundamentalists.

KH Maman, meanwhile, discussed pluralism, inclusiveness. "*Kita berbeda*" ("We are different"), he said, smiling. In jest he mocked students' laughs, outfits, and himself. KH Maman talked about *ikhlas* (sincerity), in school, and homework assignments; he urged friendship and peace. They were just kids.

KH Maman and I had spoken weeks earlier at a seminar titled *Terorisme dan Budaya* ("Terrorism and Culture"), hosted by second-tier Muslim university Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Shalahuddin Al-Ayyubi (STAISA), at Pondok Pesantren Ulumuddin in Babakan, Cirebon, West Java, about 20 minutes from PP Al-Mizan. A majority of the 120 attendees read distributed copies of my paper ("*Saya 'Hanya' Orang Amerika, Tidak Lebih*", or "I'm 'Only' an American, Nothing More") during pre-seminar formalities; I spoke briefly, about American religiosity, pluralisms.

STAISA students (some PP Ulumuddin 'boarders') in particular asked about Muslims in the United States; I mentioned millions, inclusiveness. A STAISA student stood, and said in English, "Mister, I wish you were the president of America." Many chuckled; I smiled. Then for about 10 minutes he chided U.S. foreign policies, President Bush. A nearby STAISA student questioned Muslims' acceptance of aid from non-Muslim nations, tsunami relief. A *kyai* was asked about hegemonic news media association of Islam and violence; "it is clear" from Qur'anic content that Muslims oppose conflict, the student said. I added, "It's not clear. Most [non-Muslim] Americans have jobs and families and errands. They are busy. 'Islam' is just a brief news article, a TV news blurb, usually about violence. Ameri-

cans don't *know* any Muslims. They don't care. They don't want violence or war; but they don't care." Attendees were quiet, as if hurt. Later, I asked attendees about Indonesian Muslims' "obsession" with other Muslims, in Iraq and Afghanistan and Bosnia; I pointed outside PP Ulumuddin, and mentioned unemployment, poverty. Attendees muttered, smoked.

Later I was crowded, praised. I was ushered to prepared food. I posed for photographs, exchanged cell numbers. A STAISA student gave me a 'thumbs up', and said, "*Amerika bagus, bagus*" ("America is great, great").

## First days

About a hundred *santri* (male *pesantren* students) eyed me from several tiered balconies at Pondok Pesantren As-Sa'idiyyah I in Jombang, East Java. Groups of *santri* bunched. A few giggled, and hid or scurried away; some waved, and yelled, "Mister, mister!" Others pecked from window slits, from behind pillars.

In my room I stared at the walls, at photographs of past weddings and aged portraits, of the families that have managed Pondok Pesantren Bahrul Ulum, a large complex inclusive of 27 *pesantren* 'dorms' (including PP As-Sa'idiyyah I) and 15 *madrrasah* 'modern day schools' and thousands of students. I intended to examine internal communicative processes, interaction; but after six months of living in and touring various clusters of *pesantren* across Java I still hesitated to again abide celebrity, publicity. I thought about home, and of leaving. For two days I traveled to Jombang, on trains and mini-vans. I stunk of sweat and body odor, I had slept little; already I had met various *pesantren* officials at nearby complexes, and shared tea and silence, sparse conversation. I was agitated by passersby, staring; I was angered by smiles, even smirks. I was in a bad mood.

I sighed. I washed, and changed clothes. I entered the *pesantren* courtyard, smiling; I walked up nearby stairs, and extended my hand. I said my name. A few *santri* woke, bewildered. Some stared at me, and each other. Others rushed me. They asked my age, where I was from. "How many girls you have, mister?" I was asked, in English. We posed for photographs, in groups and one-by-one. I autographed their forearms; I even signed a few Qur'an. I tried on a white *topi haji* (a type of skullcap usually worn by Indonesian Muslim

males who have completed the Hajj to Mecca). “Handsome, handsome, mister” a student said. I was given a tour of the *pesantren*; we shuffled, together. An older *santri* and I entered the *santriwati* (female *pesantren* students) dorm of PP As-Sa’idiyyah One, gated off from *santri*. Girls screamed; younger *santriwati* ran off, hurriedly put on *jilbabs* (Indonesian Muslim female ‘veil’, a *pesantren* requirement). Several *santriwati* squirmed, giggled. “*Siapa nama kamu?*” (“What’s your name?”), I asked a girl, maybe eleven. She stared back, quiet. Girls shouted from a balcony, and waved.

The following morning I interviewed teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Al-F’adiah Bahrul Ulum (MAI-BU) a private *madrasah* high school across the street from PP As-Sa’idiyyah I; about 90 percent of MAI-BU curriculum includes Islamic studies, Arabic. I spoke to about 20 *santri*, too. For about two hours I talked about ice hockey parties at Ohio University (I am a former OU player), Christian friends, losing my virginity in high school, U.S. educational standards, and *Wu-Tang Clan* rap lyrics; I was sweating, and pacing. They asked about homosexuals, Vietnam War protesters, and former U.S. president John F. Kennedy. *Santriwati* in the street waved, and yelled, “I miss you, Tim!” and “I’m always with you, Tim;” I had visited PP As-Sa’idiyyah II the previous night, to speak. *Santri* brought me fruit. I showed photographs of friends and family; a *santri* asked for my sister’s e-mail address.

In the afternoon about a hundred *santri* from various *pesantren* dorms gathered at a nearby soccer field to drill, without coaches. I tended goal, playfully taunting shooters. Later I sat in the shade with other *santri*; in silence our eyes trailed the ball, and our smiles saluted skillful moves, and scores. Nearby mosque loudspeakers guzzled the call to prayer. Some of us talked about girls, and love.



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# Islamic Education in Southern Thailand:

A Photo Essay

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Anthony Medrano is a graduate student in Asian Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. These photographs were taken by the author in Nakhon Si Thammarat, in the summer of 2006.

Islamic education in southern Thailand can generally be divided into three types. The first type is the government-sponsored school. This type of schooling offers Islamic education in conjunction with the national curriculum. The language of instruction is Thai. The second type is a private Islamic school. In some areas, this school is referred to as a *madrassa(h)*. The

private Islamic school may offer non-Koranic subjects such as science and math, as well as the teaching of foreign languages (Arabic and English). These schools are usually registered with the

government. The third type is a *pondok*. This school is very simple in structure; generally, it is attached to a mosque. The name, *pondok*, refers to the huts that the boys stay in while pursuing their studies. A *pondok* school is deeply personal and intimate, and is traditionally built around its teacher, the local *imam*, or its founder (who could be both). The language of instruc-



Islamic schools in southern Thailand often appear, architecturally, just like government schools. This Islamic school in Nakhon Si Thammarat had an administration office, a flag pole, a library, a courtyard, and a dorm for boys.



*Girls in class at a madrasa in Nakhon Si Thammarat*

tion at many *pondoks* is Malay. The teaching of Malay and *Jawi* are important features of the cultural heritage of Islamic education in southern Thailand. At all the Islamic schools in Thailand, it is required that girls wear *hijab*, or headscarfs. Boys are expected to wear *kopiahs*, or caps.

In capturing these photographs, I would like to thank the support and friendship of the staff and faculty of the Regional Studies Program at Walailak University in Nakhon Si Thammarat.





*Top: In Malay, "pondok" means hut. Pondok function as homes for many of the boys studying at this traditional Islamic school in Nakhon Si Thammarat.*



*Bottom: An important cultural aspect of Islamic education in southern Thailand is the ability to learn Jawi, an Arabic script historically used for writing in Malay.*

*Boys at an Islamic school in Nakhon Si Thammarat. Like boys at any other school in Thailand, they occupy their in-between time with games, stories, and jokes.*



# “Spice Island” Forts, Colonial Monuments:

A Photo Essay from Ternate Island, Maluku

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Sarah Grant is a graduate student in Anthropology at the University of California, Riverside. These photographs were taken by the author in Ternate City, North Maluku in the summer of 2006.

The densely populated island of Ternate is located in the Indonesian province of North Maluku. As one of the most lucrative “Spice Islands,” Ternate remains a telling reflection of the Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch presence through its forts, monuments, and prominent clove trees. In particular, the forts of Ternate offer a stunning visual presentation of Ternate’s difficult past but also suggest a narrative about contemporary efforts to preserve and retell this history. On 15 March, 2006 in Ternate City, North Maluku, Indo-

nesia, over 50 students demonstrated for the renovation and protection of *Benteng Kastela*, a local Portuguese fort that had collapsed at the hands of the *Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Maluku Utara* (Office of Culture and Tourism, North Maluku, Indonesia).

Around the time of the demonstration, a number of newspaper articles at the local, regional, and national level illuminated the contemporary dispute over public and private space as well as raised questions about the



*Pulau Ternate, North Maluku’s most populated island sprawls a mere 42 square kilometers yet contains some of Indonesia’s most prevalent colonial forts.*

importance and responsibility of historical preservation in the city. In addition, the student demonstration and influx of media attention in Ternate brought attention to the ambiguous use of other forts in the city center. For example, *Benteng Orange*, the local Dutch fort situated in the city center, is officially designated as a public historical space, yet it still contains the private residences of military and police families. *Benteng Tolukko*, however, located above the shoreline, remains in immaculate condition although public accessibility is unreliable at best.

Other forts in the city remain in various states of disrepair and neglect, but the successful renovation of *Benteng Kastela* has emerged as one potential model in an ongoing case for the preservation of and access to historical space in Ternate. These photos shed light on the outcome of a community-based effort to preserve historically salient spaces in Ternate but also calls into question the responsibility behind the sustainability of such efforts and the importance of examining more ambiguous historical spaces that blur the line between public and private space.

**Top Left:** *Benteng Kastela*, a former Portuguese fort, recently became a topic of interest as local students staged a successful provincial, and ultimately national, demonstration to uphold its value as a recognized historical and cultural space.

**Top Right:** *Benteng Tolukko*, a Portuguese fort later restored by the Dutch, remains in pristine condition as the public entrance is guarded by a locked gate.

**Bottom:** The renovation and preservation of *Benteng Kastela* resulted in the creation of a public space. Strategically situated pathways separate the original fort walls from the visitors.





Left: This monument at the front entrance of the fort, a recent addition, serves as a pictorial marker of the violent encounter between the Portuguese and the Ternatean sultanate in the late 1500s.

Right Top: Tolukko appears unblemished when compared to the graffiti ridden Benteng Orange, yet public access is discouraged by the entrance donation, suggesting a tourist attraction rather than a public historical space.



Right Center: Despite local discontent over the DISPAR's ambivalence towards the fort's status as an official historical space, little consideration has been given to the relocation options for the 200 plus people living within the fort walls.



Right Bottom: Benteng Orange's location overlooking the city center, situate it as the most visible piece of Ternate's complex colonial history, yet it is also the most problematic space— a space that requires the same care and attention given to Benteng Kastela if it is to live up to its prominent location.

Left: Over one dozen Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) cannons remain inside Fort Orange, with the VOC or Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC logo still visible beneath the graffiti.



# The Ammatoa of South Sulawesi, Indonesia:

A Photo Essay

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Sapril Akhmady is a graduate student in Asian Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. These photographs were taken by the author in South Sulawesi, in the summer of 2005.

Tana Toa is a village located in Kecamatan Kajang (sub district of Kajang) in Kabupaten Bulukumba (District Bulukumba), South Sulawesi Province of Indonesia. At the center of the village stands a gate that marks a cultural boundary between two areas: *Tana Lohea* (outside the gate) and *Tana Kekea* (inside the gate).

The Ammatoa people live inside the gate in an area surrounded by thick, dense forest.

The Ammatoa always dress in black clothing, a reflection of the local religion that they practice, *patuntung*, meaning "the direction."



An Ammatoa man hunting wild pigs in the communal forest.

The Ammatoa people's spirituality manifests itself in two core religious beliefs that illustrates the community's value systems. The first is known as *pakpasang* meaning "messages from God," which describes the relationship between human beings and the Creator.

The second is called *pasang* meaning "messages from the ancestors." These messages are transferred through oral tradition. This element of *patuntung* is a

reflection of the Ammatoa people's customary laws. They believe that all dimensions of life are related to both the material world, and also the immaterial world. All of these ideas are embedded in their religious values. They believe, for example, that God is watching their daily lives from the forest. For this reason forests must be preserved as sacred places.

An Ammatoa boy wearing the traditional black clothing.

As more Ammatoa children attend Indonesian government schools, the practice of always wearing black clothing is fading, due to government proscriptions to wear uniforms.







Top: Three Ammatoa men walking back to Tana Toa.



Middle Left: Ammatoa men performing a "scarf" dance. Prior to the arrival of Islam, the Ammatoa people practiced cockfighting. With the advent of Islam, the cock was substituted with a scarf.



Middle Right: A group of Ammatoa men exiting the village, while some women in black are bringing goods back from the forest.



Bottom: The Ammatoa people continue to use organic and traditional methods for growing rice, in spite of government pressure to adopt high-yield crops, as well as modern machinery.



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# New and Emerging Research Tools for Graduate Students

## THE EDITORS

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### SYNOPSIS

Changes in technology and advances in digital scanning and recording have resulted in the development of a great many new research tools and digital library collections relating to the field of Southeast Asian Studies. As many of these new research tools are promoted in specialty journals or at professional conferences, they can escape the notice of graduate students. To this end the editors of EXPLORATIONS have decided to share with our readers a few of our favorite research tools in hopes that this may expand their use amongst other graduate students in the field of Southeast Asian Studies.

### Southeast Asian Archaeology Bibliographic Database

<http://seasia.museum.upenn.edu>

Much of the description of this resource can be gleaned directly from the title. The website has grown out of the Ban Chiang project's operations under Dr. Joyce White at the University of Pennsylvania Museum. The potential of a bibliography assembled for this project to be developed into a resource for archaeologists in finding obscure sources related to Southeast Asian archaeology was realized by members of that project and the site's webmaster, Dr. Christopher King, a recent graduate of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. The database has swelled to nearly 10,000 references related broadly to Asian archaeology and the site also offers researchers access to skeletal data from the sites of Ban Chiang and Non Nok Tha in northeast Thailand.

From the home page, the site is divided into two paths, one for the skeletal data and one for the bibliographic database. The bibliographic database requires

users to set up a username and password (free, of course) in order to maintain reference selections between sessions and to avoid electronic conflicts between multiple users. Once logged in, the database may be searched using familiar 'basic' or 'advanced' search options. Any returned references may be marked, sending them to a separate page (click 'view marked' tab at top right) which is maintained between sessions. These marked references may be



*"Grand Mandarin Annamite" An image available on Cornell's "Southeast Asia Visions" website*

*(Image from: Huit jours d'ambassade a Hue (Royaume d'Annam) by Brossard de Corbigny, Jules Michel (1878), p.44)*

displayed on the website in any of 13 common anthropological journal styles or exported into a personal bibliographic database program (such as Endnote or Biblioscape). The site also provides direct access to many documents in PDF format.

### Orang Asli Archive at Keene State College, New Hampshire

<http://www.keene.edu/library/OrangAsli/>

The Orang Asli (Aboriginal Malays) Archive was established at Keene State College in New Hampshire with the aid of a Historical Archives grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation in 2000. Initiated by anthropologist Robert Denton's search for a place to deposit his field materials on the Semai and Btsisi, and organized by Dr. Rosemary Gianno, the archive at Keene State was created as a safe storehouse for information on the Orang Asli that would be "accessible to researchers and Orang Asli alike" (See her article: "An Anthropological Archive for Aboriginal Malays," presented at the annual meeting of the Northeastern Anthropological Association in 2002). In addition to Robert Denton's field materials, the Orang Asli Archive now houses the research materials of geneticist Dee Baer, and personal collections from John Brandt, Narifumi Maeda, Romani Mohamad, Col. John Davie, Rosemary Gianno, and the photograph collection of Paul B. Means, along with the collections of numerous other scholars.

For students and professionals, the archive at Keene offers a wealth of historical, anthropological, journalistic and other documentary material on the 17-20 different Orang Asli cultural groups. Many of the materials have been digitized and can be easily accessed on the archive's website. There, researchers can also find population statistics, finding aids for the unpublished materials, maps, and a photo exhibit from Rosemary Gianno's 1987 field materials. (Unfortunately, at the time of writing, the archive does not contain any Dutch language materials, nor does it have any sources older than the photographs and diaries of John Davie produced in 1949.)

As a repository for important published and unpublished English and Malay language sources on the Orang Asli, the Orang Asli Archive at Keene State is an excellent tool for researchers. With its easy-to-use online format and dedicated full-time staff, anyone

interested in the various Orang Asli groups of Malaysia will enjoy the abundance of information available in the archive and on its website.

### Google Books

<http://books.google.com/>

Google books allows for keyword or phrase driven searches in Google's library of digitally scanned material. Searches will return book references and information about where to purchase the material online, or, if it is material that has been scanned into Google's digital library, it will provide excerpts and page numbers indicating the amount and location of phrase/key word appearances in the text. Some books are scanned in their entirety and are fully searchable through the site. Other features include interactive maps that pinpoint all the locations mentioned in a selected text, and links to recommended books, scholarly articles, and other texts related to the search topic.

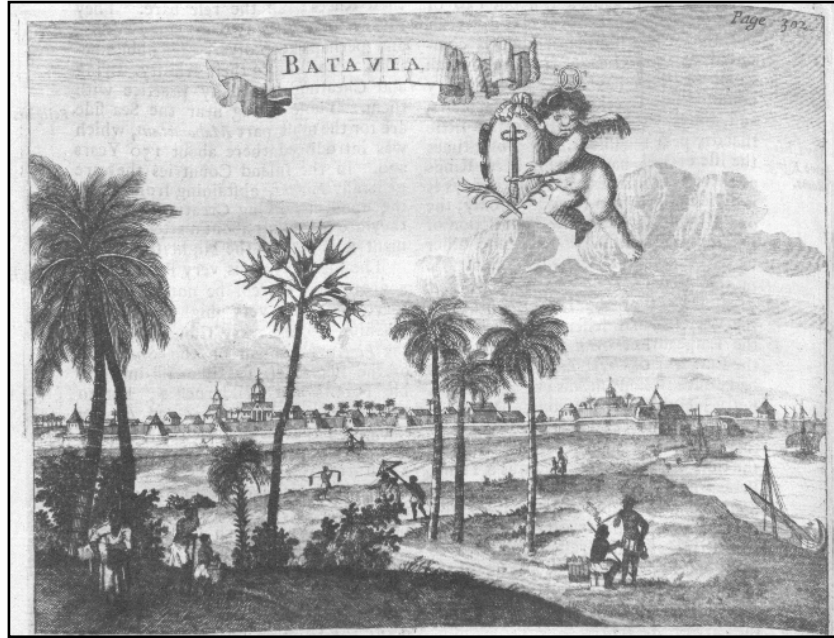
A great resource for any researcher, Google books allows a user to sift through vast amounts of information with speed, since keyword searches pinpoint the exact location and number of times where a word or phrase appears in a given text. Although not all texts are available in their entirety, searches will often include a scanned excerpt of the paragraph or sentences in which the key words are embedded in the text, allowing a researcher to ascertain if the reference is useful for their specific needs.

### Southeast Asia Visions

<http://dlxs.library.cornell.edu/s/sea/>

Recently, Cornell University unveiled this wonderfully useful tool: a digital mini-library of over 350 books and journal articles recounting European travel in Southeast Asia written in English and French. The site itself states that: "The works in the collection were selected for the quality of their first-hand observations and, together, provide a comprehensive representation of Southeast Asia." Though, perhaps more to the point, these books all date to the 1920s or earlier, the period before changes in copyright laws complicated a library's ability to digitize text. The site also contains many thousands of images also scanned from these same books and articles.

This sight is a boon for any graduate student doing research on the colonial period or before. Perusing the available titles suggests interesting research possibilities on imperial ambitions (Colquhoun's [1885] *Burma and the Burmans, or, The best unopened market in the world*); gender (Mitton's [1907] *A bachelor girl in Burma*); piracy and captivity (Brown's [1861] *A seaman's narrative of his adventures during a captivity among Chinese pirates on the coast of Cochinchina, and afterwards during a journey on foot across that country in the years 1857-8*); or even, simply, to a time when book titles precisely documented the subject matter of the text within (Forrest's [1792] *A voyage from Calcutta to the Mergui Archipelago, lying on the east side of the Bay of Bengal; describing a chain of islands, never before surveyed... also, an account of the islands Jan Sylvan, Pulo Pinang, and the port of Queda; the present state of Atcheen; and directions for sailing thence to Fort Marlbro' down the south-west coast of Sumatra; to which are added, an account of the island Celebes; a treatise on the monsoons in India; a proposal for making ships and vessels more convenient for the accommodation of passengers; and thoughts on a new mode of preserving ship provision: also, an idea of making a map of the world on a large scale*)



"Batavia" An image available on Cornell's "Southeast Asia Visions" website

(Image from: "Voyages and Travels, into Brasil, and the east Indies..." Nieuhof, Johannes (1703), p.302)

The text of all these books and articles was scanned so as to be word searchable, enabling graduate students to search them in a variety of ways: basic searches, boolean searches, proximity searches, etc. For those who do research with these kinds of texts, it is an incredible boon. Old books, particularly travel narratives, were rarely indexed, so researching them requires a great deal of reading to uncover the rare hidden gem. Word searching these documents reveals those portions of the text most likely to contain the information you're looking for. However, a word of warning, word searchable scans are notoriously inaccurate, and there is no reason to suggest that Cornell's "Visions" collection would be any different.