

From *Melayu Patani* to Thai Muslim

The spectre of ethnic identity in southern Thailand

Patrick Jory

Abstract: This paper is a study of how the people at the centre of

milar papers at core.ac.uk

historical background to a number of discourses of identity regarding the people in the region. It focuses on the struggle between competing discourses of Thai national identity, Malay ethnic identity, Muslim identity, and a more localized identity centred on the memory of the former sultanate of Patani and its associated linguistic and cultural traditions.

Keywords: identity; *melayu*; Muslim; Thai; Patani

In January 2004, a centuries-old conflict in Thailand's southern border provinces broke out once again. Over 2,000 people have been killed, the number of attacks has been increasing and the nature of the violence is intensifying. While in the past the main targets of militants were military and security officials, the current violence has targeted teachers, government officials, religious leaders and villagers – both Buddhist and Muslim – tourists, even women and children. Despite an escalation in the violence, it is still unclear who is leading the insurgency and what their political demands are. At present, it is South East Asia's most violent insurgency.¹

¹ For the fullest recent analysis of the conflict, see *Critical Asian Studies* (2006), Vol 18, No 2, Thematic Issue: Patani Merdeka – Thailand's Southern Fire, and an updated version of the same group of essays in Duncan McCargo, ed (2007), *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*, Singapore University Press, Singapore. See also the reports by the International Crisis Group, *Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad*, Asia Report No 98, 18 May 2005, and *Southern Thailand: The Impact of the Coup*, Asia Report No 129, 15 March 2007.

It would appear, then, to be the simplest of questions: *who* are the people at the centre of the violent conflict in Thailand's 'three southern provinces'?² Judging by the coverage of the issue by the Thai and international media, the statements by the Thai and Malaysian governments, and the work of a large number of academics, particularly those in the field of security studies whose opinions have been eagerly sought, most appear to have concluded: 'Muslims'. The Thai government will often add an adjective to this collective name to affirm this group's nationality: 'Thai Muslims' (or less correctly, though a term still widely used, 'Thai Islam'). The perception of the conflict as being religious in nature is particularly strong in Thailand. One has only to look at the Thai media coverage of the violence since early 2004, the regular seminars organized to promote interreligious understanding, concerns expressed to the Thai authorities by the Malaysian government about the 'Muslims of southern Thailand', and visits to Thailand in 2005 by representatives of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) as well as the heads of Indonesia's two major religious organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. Merely by the use of these religious labels to represent the actors involved in conflict, despite the Thai government's attempts to characterize the conflict as *not* a religious one, it is difficult for the Thai public to imagine it otherwise. Since the conflict has tended to be viewed in Thailand predominantly in religious terms, it is inevitable that the solutions that are offered tend to be based on religious considerations.³ Yet if the conflict were religious, it would raise the question as to why hundreds of thousands of 'Thai Muslims' residing outside the three southern provinces where the violence has been concentrated have not shown greater solidarity with their co-religionists in their struggle with the Thai state.⁴ Why then is this conflict consistently represented today using religious terminology?

² '*Sam jangwat phak tai*', the term most commonly used in the Thai commentary on this issue, referring to the three provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. Occasional violence has also occurred in Songkhla province.

³ See the recommendations contained in the NRC's (2005) report, 'Raingan khanakammakan isara phuea khwam samanchan haeng chat: ao chan khwam runraeng duan khwam samanchan' (English version: 'Overcoming violence through the power of reconciliation: recommendations of the National Reconciliation Commission to the government', April–September, available at the NRC's website: <http://www.nrc.or.th/th/>).

⁴ The exact total for the Muslim population in the three southern provinces and the country as a whole is a subject of much conjecture. Calculated from the 2000 figures

This paper is an attempt to present a brief historical overview of how the people in the southern border region have been represented. It will give particular attention to the struggle between competing discourses of Thai national identity, pan-Malay ethnic identity, Muslim identity, and a more localized 'Patani Malay' identity centred on the memory of the former sultanate of Patani and its associated linguistic and cultural elements.

Pre-nationalist discourses of identity

If one examines the chronicles and other documentary evidence produced by the Thai court in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries about the Patani sultanate, as well as the Thai kingdom's other Malay dependencies such as Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu, it is striking that there is, in fact, relatively little reference to the cultural identity of the peoples of the region. The narrative is dominated by the king and his administrative officials and their counterparts in the vassal states. However, when the people or the region are distinguished in cultural terms, the word that is used most frequently is *khaek*, and less commonly *khaek melayu* or *melayu*.⁵ *Khaek* is a more complex term than is often understood. In Thai, the common literal meaning is 'guest'. Sathian argues that it derives from a Hokkien word meaning the same.⁶ But the term *khaek* has also long been used by Thai officials as well as in popular discourse to refer to such diverse peoples as Malays, people from the Indian subcontinent (of whatever

provided by the Islamic Committee Office of Thailand, Gilquin quotes extraordinarily high figures of 7,391,235 for the country as a whole and 3,454,300 for Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat combined; Michel Gilquin (2005), *The Muslims of Thailand*, trans Michael Smithies, IRASEC and Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai, pp 39–40. Using the official figures, McCargo estimates that Malay Muslims make up approximately 80% of the total population of the three provinces of 1.8 million, ie 1,440,000; Duncan McCargo (2006), 'Introduction: Rethinking Thailand's southern violence', in *Critical Asian Studies*, p 3.

⁵ See excerpts from the Thai dynastic chronicles of the First, Second and Third Reigns, as well as histories of Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu and Pattani compiled by Thai state officials, in Paramin Khruethong, ed (2005), *Sayam-Pattani nai tamnan kan to su melayu muslim [Siam-Pattani in the History of the Struggle of the Malay Muslims]*, Sinlapawathanatham, Bangkok. See also Chulalongkorn's (1964) reference to *khaek* and *melayu* in *Raya thang sadet phra ratchadammen praphat thank bo thang ruea rop laem melau ratanakosin sok 109 [Royal Journal by Land and Sea Around the Malay Peninsula 1891]*, Vols 1 & 2, Khurusapha, Bangkok.

⁶ Mala Rajo Sathian, 'Rights over men to rights over land: the economy of Pattani and the Thai state (1880–1920)', unpublished manuscript, p 173, fn 28.

religion), Persians, Muslims generally, and others.⁷ However, today the term is regarded as derogatory by Muslims of the southern border provinces due to its association with the notion of ‘guest’ status in the Thai kingdom. In official Thai discourse today, *khaek* has thus been replaced with the term ‘Muslim’ as a gesture of political correctness. Yet Muslims of the middle and upper southern region still often willingly identify themselves as *khaek* with no sense of the term being derogatory.

It is notable that in the Thai court documents of the nineteenth century Islam scarcely receives a mention, nor are the inhabitants referred to as ‘Muslims’. The chronicle (*phongsawadan*) of Patani written by a Thai official Phraya Wichiankhiri in the late nineteenth century contains a revealing passage referring to the famous legend of Lim Toh Khiam, a Chinese adventurer who settles in Patani some time in the sixteenth century, becomes famous for manufacturing cannons for the Patani raja, and eventually converts to Islam. But the Thai author of the chronicle renders his conversion in this way:

‘... the person who created these three cannons is thought to have been a Chinese from China. He was a Hokkien called Lim, first name Khiam. He settled at Kaseh village. This Chinese man Khiam married a Malay woman and so converted to the *Malay religion*. So the Malays refer to him until today as “Lim Toh Khiam”.’⁸

It seems then that for the Thais, the terms *melayu* or *khaek* already signified people of a different religion.

As the region is brought under closer control of the Thai court in the latter part of the reign of King Chulalongkorn, we see the first appearance of the idea of ‘Thai-ification’ as a tool of government. Among the recommendations that Prince Damrong, Head of the Ministry of the Interior, made in a report to the King in 1896 was that the government should attempt to ‘cultivate’ local administrators who were ‘Thai both

⁷ On the use of the term *khaek* by the Thai court in the first half of the nineteenth century, see Davisakd Puaksom (2003), *Khon plaek na nanachat krung sayam nai khlung tang phasa thi wat pho* [University in Stone]: *ngan khian choeng chatiphanwanana* [ethnography] *chin raek khong sayam* [International Strangers in Siam in the Verses on Different Languages at Wat Pho (University in Stone): Siam’s First Ethnography], Sinlapawathanatham, Bangkok.

⁸ Paramin, *supra* note 5, at p 42 (emphasis added).

in mind and manners'.⁹ Yet even after the abolition of the Patani sultanate, the exile and imprisonment of its last sultan, Abdulkadir Kamaruddin, and the definitive absorption of the territories of the former sultanate into the Thai state under the 1909 Anglo–Siamese Treaty, the Thai court could still refer to the region's inhabitants as 'Malay'. According to Kobkua, the King aimed eventually to achieve a situation in which '*even though they are Malays and of a different faith . . . [they] are Thais in sentiment and outlook just as any other Thai. . .*'¹⁰ Thus it seemed possible then, still under the Absolute Monarchy, for the Thai government to recognize dual identities within one state, 'Thai' and 'Malay' (or *khaek*).

As for the Patani historiographical tradition, the Patani chronicle known as *Hikayat Patani*, the most important source for subsequent Malay historiography about Patani's early history, refers only rarely to 'Malay'.¹¹ It is essentially a narrative about Patani's rajas and court officials, and its relations with Ayuthaya and the other Malay sultanates of the peninsula, not about a 'people'. While Islam is certainly a defining feature of the chronicle – the conversion of the raja to Islam is a major event at the beginning of the chronicle – as in the Thai chronicles referred to above, there is very little reference to 'Muslims'. The *Hikayat Patani* is also noteworthy for the apparent lack of animosity its author displays towards Siam, and the close, if not always smooth, relations between Ayuthaya and Patani. In an early section, King Mudhaffar Syah deliberates with his officials regarding a proposed visit to Ayudhya: 'What would you say if We went to Ayudhya, for the king is no stranger to Us, and after all, two countries are better than one'.¹² While the

⁹ Panngam Gothammasarn (1976), 'The administration of the seven southern provinces during King Chulalongkorn's reign', unpublished MA thesis, Department of History, Chulalongkorn University, pp 159–175, quoted in Davisakd Puaksom (2008), 'Of a lesser brilliance: Patani historiography in contention', in Michael J. Montesano and Patrick Jory, eds, *The Plural Peninsula: Studies in the History of Ethnic Interactions in Southern Thailand and Northern Malaysia*, NUS Press, Singapore, and University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu.

¹⁰ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian (2004), 'Question of identity of the Muslims in southern Thailand: a comparative examination of responses of the Sam-Sams in Satun and of the Thai Malay Muslims in the three provinces of Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani to Thailand's quest for national identity', paper presented at the Workshop, *A Plural Peninsula: Historical Interactions Among the Thai, Malays, Chinese and Others*, Walailak University, 5–7 February, pp 178–192 (emphasis added).

¹¹ A. Teeuw, and David K. Wyatt – trans (1970), *Hikayat Patani: The Story of Patani*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague.

¹² *Ibid*, p 155.

chronicle records Patani's relations with Kelantan, Kedah, Pahang and Johore, there is little explicit sense conveyed of a common 'Malay' identity. Indeed, when Raja Léla of Patani makes a trip to Johore, he admits to his host, '... I am a foreigner ... I do not know the Malay rules for conduct. If I make any silly mistakes I ask you to teach me the correct behaviour.'¹³

The struggle for 'Patani Malays' and 'Thai Muslims'

The representation of the people of Thailand's southern border provinces changes significantly with the rise of nationalism on both sides of the border from the 1920s and 30s. In Thailand following the overthrow of the Absolute Monarchy in 1932, the new nationalist governments progressively sought to shift the concept of political loyalty from the person of the king to the Thai nation. Similarly, in the case of British Malaya, the rise of Malay nationalism, particularly after the founding of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) in the 1940s, meant that the political loyalties of the Malays were owed to the *bangsa melayu* rather than to the Malay sultans or the British colonial government.¹⁴ The peoples of the territories of the former sultanate of Patani thus appear to have been caught between these two forms of nationalism.

It is Malay nationalism that is the dominant theme in the most influential Patani Malay nationalist text that has been written, Ibrahim Syukri's *Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani* [*History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*]. For the author of this popular nationalist history published in Malay in the early 1950s, the subject of his narrative was the 'Patani Malays'.¹⁵ While Syukri relied significantly on the *Hikayat Patani* as a source, his protagonists have changed from the rajas of the Patani court to the Malay people. The dominant theme of the work is the antagonistic relations between the 'Siam-Thai' and the 'Patani Malays'. For Syukri, Siam is an imperial, colonizing power and the intention of its kings is to 'subjugate Patani and enslave its people'.¹⁶

¹³ Teeuw and Wyatt, *supra* note 11, at p 192.

¹⁴ Anthony Reid (2004), 'Understanding *melayu* as a source of diverse modern identities', in Timothy Barnard, ed, *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Borders*, Singapore University Press, Singapore, p 17.

¹⁵ Ibrahim Syukri (2005), *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani* [*Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani*], translated by Conner Bailey and John N. Miksic, Silkworm Books, Bangkok.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p 58.

When the Patani sultanate is divided in the early nineteenth century, Syukri writes, 'It was split up by the Raja of Siam with the intention of weakening the strength of the Malays in order to make it easy for him to rule and enslave the Malays according to the principles of colonization (imperialism); that is, 'divide and rule'.¹⁷ The theme of national liberation is strongest towards the end of the book when Syukri calls for the recognition of the 'nationality [of the population of Patani] as a Malay people':

'Among the 100 million Malay people of the world, the Malays of Patani are the most ill-fated. Even though the Malay people of Patani long have lived in the democratic world, because Siam-Thai democracy is limited, the fate of the Malay people is like a climbing vine unable to grow up the trellis.

In truth the fate of the Patani Malay people should not be placed in the hand of the Siam-Thai government. Rather, measures to improve their fate and condition should be place in their own hands.'¹⁸

The influence of Syukri's work and the Patani Malay nationalism that inspired it cannot be underestimated. Patani Malay nationalism is the motivating theme for numerous other historical texts on Patani, written in both Thai and Malay published on both sides of the border, as well as in English, up until recent times.¹⁹

Following the end of the Second World War, as Malay nationalism was gathering momentum across the border and Thailand was forced by the British to give up its irredentist annexations during the war (the Shan states, Laos, Cambodia and the northern Malay states), a group of Malay leaders in the Patani region submitted a petition to the British requesting the British government to 'have the kindness to release *our*

¹⁷ Syukri, *supra* note 15, at p 64.

¹⁸ Syukri, *supra* note 15, at p 101.

¹⁹ See for example Nik Anuar (1999), *Sejarah Perjuangan Melayu Patani 1785–1954 [History of the Struggle of the Patani Malays, 1785–1954]*, Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, cited in Sathian, *supra* note 6, at p 15; or Bangnara (1976), *Patani: adit lae patchuban [Patani: Past and Present]*, Chomrom Saengthian, Bangkok, cited in Davisakd, *supra* note 9. The ongoing influence of Syukri's book and the Patani nationalism it inspired is also apparent in a recent paper presented at Lund University by a descendant of the Patani royal family, Tengku Ismail C. Denudom (2005), entitled 'Politics, economy, identity or religious striving for the Malay Patani: a case study of the conflicts between Thailand and the Malay state of Patani', Dept of East and Southeast Asia Languages, Lund University. On the competing Thai and Malay historiographies on Patani, see Davisakd, *supra* note 9.

country and ourselves from the pressure of Siam,' since they did not wish to 'remain any longer under the Siamese Government'. For Patani, they pointed out, '*is really a Malay country, formerly ruled by Malay Rajas for generations*'.²⁰ The year 1948 saw the establishment in Kelantan of GAMPAR, the *Gabungan Melayu Patani Raya*, or Greater Patani Malay Association, supported by Tengku Mahyiddin, youngest son of the last sultan of Patani, which sought political union with Malaya. Moreover, the political ideology of the most prominent of the region's separatist organizations that sprang up soon afterwards, such as the Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO),²¹ the Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani (Patani National Liberation Front, or BNPP) and the Barisan Revolusi Nasional Melayu Patani (Patani Malay National Revolutionary Front, or BRN), has been the national liberation of the 'Patani Malays'.

Since the era of de-colonization and the formation of nation-states following the Second World War, we see the emergence of the 'Patani Malays' as a subject of political and scholarly discourse. It is remarkable how little reference there is to their religious identity. How then have the subjects of the conflict been transformed from 'Malays' into 'Muslims'? The answer can be found partly in the appearance of three new, though separate, discourses that have impacted upon the identity of the inhabitants of the former Patani sultanate.

First, since the era of de-colonization and the rise of Malay nationalism in British Malaya, the Thai government has actively sought to avoid references to the Malay ethnic identity of the subjects of the region. It feared that with the new, post-colonial logic of nation-based states, recognition of the people of the region as 'Malay' would give credibility to demands for a separate Malay state, either based on the territories of the old Malay sultanate of Patani, or through union with the other Malay states of British Malaya, which were now preparing for independence from Britain. In much the same way and for the same reasons, the Lao identity of the inhabitants of the north-east was officially erased as the Thai state created a new name by which they would be formally known, 'Isan'. Similarly, the Chinese were forced to declare their allegiance to the Thai state through a name change, by abandoning their Chinese names and replacing them with Thai ones. The State Cultural Directives (*ratthaniyom*) of the first Phibun

²⁰ Davisakd, *supra* note 9 (emphasis added).

²¹ In Malay, Pertubuhan Persatuan Pembebasan Patani (PPPP).

government (1938–46) banned official references to ethnic identity.²² Under the assimilationist policies of national integration that began in Thailand during the Phibun period and held sway through to the 1990s, Malay ethnic identity as expressed in terms of language, dress, education, history and custom was consistently discouraged by the state.²³ The government has attempted to replace it with a religious label, ‘Thai Muslims’ or ‘Thai Islam’, in the hope that this linguistic change would contribute to the overall goal of assimilation. Thus for the Thai government, the only possible identity officially acceptable for the former ‘Patani Malays’ within the Thai nation-state since the Phibun era has been as ‘Thai Muslims’.

Islamization in Malaysia

But discourses of Thai national identity and the government’s programme of cultural assimilation are only part of the answer. Another is the politicization of Islam amongst the Malays in neighbouring Malaysia. Although this process first becomes clearly visible in the 1970s, its seeds were sown with the establishment of the state of Malaysia and the legal definition of Malayness. One of the components of Malay identity as defined by the Malaysian Constitution was ‘a person who professes the religion of Islam’.²⁴ Following Malaysia’s independence in 1957, therefore, to be a Malay – and thereby eligible for the special privileges accorded to ‘Malays’ – legally one must be a Muslim.

Yet up until the 1970s, Islam is not central to most discussions of Malay identity. Reading Mahathir’s controversial *The Malay Dilemma*, published in 1970, it is striking that Islam receives hardly any

²² See Craig J. Reynolds, ed (1991), *National Identity and Its Defenders: Thailand 1939–89*, Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai.

²³ The Thai education system played a crucial role in this policy of assimilation. A colleague from Narathiwat province once told me of his experience as a student in a Thai government school in Narathiwat, where in place of the legends of Malay cultural heroes such as Hang Tuah he had learnt about while in the *pondok*, he was obliged to read *Sang Thong* and other classics of the Thai literary canon.

²⁴ Article 60 of the Malaysian Constitution defines ‘Malay’ as follows: ‘“Malay” means a person *who professes the religion of Islam*, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom and – was before Merdeka Day born in the Federation or in Singapore or born of parents one of whom was born in the Federation or in Singapore, or is on that day domiciled in the Federation or in Singapore; or is the issue of such a person.’ (Virginia Matheson Hooker (2004), ‘Malay and Islam in Contemporary Malaysia’, in Timothy P. Barnard, ed, *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Borders*, Singapore University Press, Singapore, p 158; emphasis added).

attention. The bulk of the book concentrates on Malay cultural traits that were supposedly responsible for the 'dilemma' in which, according to Mahathir, the Malays now found themselves.

The insecurity of the Malays, barely a majority 'in their own land' and economically disadvantaged compared with the Chinese and Indians, received violent expression in the deadly 1969 race riots in which hundreds were killed in clashes between Malays and Chinese. The government later enacted the New Economic Policy, which aimed at raising the socioeconomic status of Malays *vis-à-vis* the other races through a systematic affirmative action policy directed towards the Malays. Meanwhile student activism in Malaysia began to take on an Islamic face. The most prominent organization was ABIM, the Malaysian Muslim Youth Movement, led by the charismatic student, Anwar Ibrahim. The movement called for an end to the rural poverty and neglect of the Malays, and an enhanced role for Islam in Malay society and politics. Anwar's radicalism led to his arrest and detention under the ISA in 1974–75.

On becoming Prime Minister in 1981, Mahathir began to implement his own policy of Islamization, despite his credentials as secular nationalist modernizer. A year later, he co-opted Anwar into the government. Between them a policy emerged that viewed Islam as the answer to 'social ills' – corruption, laziness, materialism, drug addiction, promiscuity, incest, child abuse – which appeared to be more prevalent among the Malays than the other ethnic groups, and which were blamed on the government's policy of rapid economic development.²⁵ It is from this era that the government begins to promote Islam as a solution to these problems and to exhort Malays to obey and live out the teachings of Islam. Islamic discourse in Malaysia, therefore, became dominated by the government, a task that was made easier by its stranglehold on political power due to the racialized nature of Malaysian politics and its control of the mass media. Ironically, therefore, the two key figures in the Islamization of Malay society were politicians, Mahathir and Anwar, rather than trained Islamic scholars. Indeed, it is interesting that neither Mahathir nor Anwar, the authors of the government's Islamization campaign, had had any solid Islamic education, but rather received their schooling in the Western educational tradition. Mahathir graduated in medicine from Singapore's King Edward VII Medical College, while Anwar attended the

²⁵ Hooker, *supra* note 24, at pp 153–156.

prestigious English public school, Malay College Kuala Kangsar, rather than a *pondok*, before entering the University of Malaya where he read Malay studies, not Islam.

It could have been possible for the Malaysian government, like the governments of other developing countries, to promote 'traditional values' as a remedy for the social problems associated with economic modernization, yet Islam was chosen instead. Why? Even as a Malay nationalist, Mahathir in fact had a problematic relationship with Malay identity.²⁶ It could be said that no-one was more critical of the Malays than Mahathir. He was especially scathing of traditional Malay values – modesty, self-effacement, adherence to good manners and lack of interest in material advancement, which, according to Mahathir, had led to Malay 'backwardness' in comparison with other ethnic groups, especially the Chinese, and could even be seen as having contributed to the colonization of the Malays by the British.²⁷ So he turned to Islam – but not just any Islam. The Islam promoted by Mahathir and Anwar, according to Hooker, was more akin to a 'civil religion', 'expressed in a language that is more secular than Islamic'. Hooker compares it to the Christianity of America since the industrial revolution, that is, a religion that was 'activist, moralistic and socially oriented, rather than being contemplative, theological and innerly spiritual [. . .] There are no references to Islam as a means to salvation in the next world – the focus is on what Islam can do for its followers here and now.'²⁸ In this respect, as Kamaruzzaman shows, the Malaysian government's new campaign of *Islam Hadhari*, or 'Islamic Civilization', announced by Mahathir's successor Abdullah Badawi,²⁹ is in the same spirit as the early campaigns under Mahathir.³⁰

²⁶ Perhaps also partly due to his own mixed ancestry.

²⁷ Mahathir Mohamed (1970), *The Malay Dilemma*, Pelanduk Publications, Kuala Lumpur.

²⁸ Hooker, *supra* note 24, at pp 159–163.

²⁹ It is said by local residents in the southern Thai border provinces that some of Badawi's forebears came from Patani. One recent biography traces his ancestors from 'southern Siam', and more specifically Setul; Syed Ali Taufik Al Attas, and Ng Tieh Chuan (2005), *Abdullah Ahmad Badawi: Revivalist of an Intellectual Tradition*, Pelanduk Publications, Subang Jaya, pp 31–38, while another work states that Badawi had at least one ancestor said to be from Patani: see Zulkiple Abd. Ghani, Othman Talib, Farid Mat Zain, and Ezad Azraai Jamsari (2006), *Syeikh Abdullah Fahim: Ulama Melayu Progresif*, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, pp 2–3. My thanks to Abdulrazak Panaemalae for this information.

³⁰ Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad (2006), 'Voices of Islam in SEA after 11

However, for Mahathir, Islam also fulfilled another important function. It provided a useful *alternative* ideological basis for a Malaysian critique of Western ‘imperialism’ and neo-colonialism, in place of the Marxist conceptual framework and language that was common to anticolonial movements and sentiment in most newly independent Third World countries, and to which Mahathir was vehemently opposed. Mahathir later emerged as a leading Third World critic of the West, using a mixture of anticolonial rhetoric – which appealed to post-colonial societies globally – and called for a revival of Islamic values – which appealed to Muslim countries in particular. This critique only increased in appeal after the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, and especially following the end of the Cold War.

At the same time, besides the official UMNO brand of Islam developed by Mahathir and Anwar and sponsored by the central government apparatus, an alternative Malay political party and UMNO’s main rival for the Malay vote, the Parti Islam se Malaysia, or PAS, was also promoting its own brand of Islam. Significantly, this party’s heartland was in Kelantan, which is geographically and linguistically, not to mention historically, closely related to the Patani Malays. This link is important. Close ties between the two peoples go back at least as far as the late seventeenth century when, following the fall of the Kota Maligai dynasty, Patani came under the rule of rajahs descended from the Kelantanese dynasty. In 1842, following a decade of revolt and turmoil in Siam’s Malay dependencies, the Thai rulers themselves installed a member of the Kelantanese dynastic line as raja of Patani; and following his imprisonment in Phitsanulok after the abolition of the Patani sultanate in the early twentieth century, the former sultan Abdulkadir Kamarrudin went into exile in Kelantan, where he died. Today the border with Kelantan is marked by the Kolok River, and people can

September: “Islam Hadhari” and “Islam Liberal”, Workshop Proceedings, *Voices of Islam in Europe and Southeast Asia*, International Workshop, 20–22 January, Walailak University, Nakhon Si Thammarat, pp 86–100. The 10 principles of *Islam Hadhari* are as follows: (1) faith and piety in Allah; (2) just and trustworthy government; (3) freedom and independence to the people; (4) mastery of knowledge; (5) balanced and comprehensive economic development; (6) good quality of life for all; (7) protection of the rights of minority groups and women; (8) cultural and moral integrity; (9) protection of the environment; (10) strong defence policy. If one changed just one word – ‘Allah’ to ‘God’ – then these 10 principles could be the wish list for virtually *any* modernizing country in the world, no matter what the religion of its citizens.

cross the river and the border with relative ease. Close kinship ties exist between the peoples on both sides of the border, and many PAS leaders in Kelantan have relatives there.³¹ Separatist organizations have long enjoyed close links with Kelantan.³²

Farish Noor has discussed the changes in PAS's political ideology and the rise of the party 'from the ashes' under the presidency of Yusof Rawa in the 1980s.³³ From the Party's roots in anticolonialism, Malay ethno-nationalism and even leftism, Yusof Rawa began a major transformation of its ideology by promoting what is now popularly called an 'Islamist' agenda. Secular 'ethno-nationalism' (Arabic: *asabiyyah*) came under severe criticism as having demonstrably failed the Muslim world in the decades following de-colonization. It was said to be un-Islamic, a product not of a primordial essence, but a remnant of colonialism that had divided the *umma*. Ethno-nationalism should thus be seen as a throwback to the age of *jahiliyyah* (ignorance) before the coming of Islam. In one speech, he argued:

'The Malay people have become backward thanks to the practice of *asabiyyah* which is oppressive and corrupt. Efforts to help the Malays will fail because of the corruption and oppression (that accompanies this form of communitarian politics), and so such corruption must be resisted and destroyed for good. This tyrannical form of *asabiyyah* is the root cause of the backwardness and suffering of the people.'³⁴

He argued that the Party's previous adoption of 'forms of communitarian politics had merely led to divisions within the Muslim *ummah* and were the cause of the Islamic Party's lack of direction during the 1970s'.³⁵ PAS's rejection of ethnic politics from the 1980s thus clearly distinguished PAS's political ideology from the Malay nationalism of the ruling UMNO party. Yusoff Rawa's presidency also saw the rise of the *ulama* to positions of power in the Party apparatus, giving them a much more prominent role in the Party than ever before.³⁶

³¹ 'Bahrun' (2005), *Yihat si thao: khrai sang khrai liang fai tai* [Grey Jihad: Who Started and Who is Stoking the Southern Fire] Sarika, Bangkok, p 93.

³² International Crisis Group, *Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad*, International Crisis Group, Brussels, pp 7–10.

³³ Farish A. Noor (2004), *Islam Embedded: The Historical Development of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party PAS (1951–2003)*, Vol 2, Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, Kuala Lumpur, p 349 ff.

³⁴ Quoted in Noor, *supra* note 33, at p 354.

³⁵ Noor, *supra* note 33, at p 352.

³⁶ Noor, *supra* note 33, at pp 350–356.

Under PAS, which has been in power since 1959 for all but nine years, Malay society in Kelantan has been Islamized to a greater extent than ever before. Shadow-play, once one of the traditional icons of Malay culture throughout the Malay world, has almost disappeared, discouraged by the religious authorities on the grounds that it is un-Islamic. The rare performances that do take place, once an official permit has been obtained from the government, have been cleansed of their Hindu–Buddhist symbolism. Yet as Noor argues, PAS’s policies of Islamization could not have been possible without UMNO’s state-sponsored Islamization programme.³⁷ He describes the situation as an ‘Islamization Race’ between UMNO and PAS, which has reduced the ‘discursive space’ for other conceptions of Malaysian society and politics, especially in the Malay Muslim community.³⁸ The debate about the implementation of *shariah*, and especially PAS’s professed desire to bring in *hudud* penal law, can thus be seen in this context of trying to ‘out-Islamize’ its rival, UMNO.³⁹ It was out of this competition with PAS that Mahathir was able to claim controversially in September 2001 that Malaysia was now an ‘Islamic State’.⁴⁰

Thus when Patani Malays look today to their Malay brothers and sisters in Malaysia, whether in neighbouring Kelantan⁴¹ or Malaysia as a whole, they see a more Islamized Malay identity;⁴² and in the case of PAS’s Kelantan, the ethnic basis of Malay identity has been all but rejected politically in favour of an Islamic identity.

³⁷ Noor, *supra* note 33, at p 751.

³⁸ Noor, *supra* note 33, at pp 724–725.

³⁹ Noor, *supra* note 33, at pp 725–730.

⁴⁰ On the debate as to whether or not Malaysia can be termed an ‘Islamic state’, see Abdul Razak Baginda, and Peter Schier, eds (2005), *Malaysia: An Islamic State? Secularism and Theocracy: A Study of the Malaysian Constitution*, ASEAN Academic Press, London.

⁴¹ I am unaware of any scholarly study that has looked closely at PAS’s influence in the provinces of southern Thailand, despite the fact that PAS leaders frequently comment in the media about the situation in southern Thailand, and Party leaders including PAS Chief Minister in Kelantan, Nik Aziz Nik Mat, are well known in the southern Thai provinces and have travelled there on numerous occasions.

⁴² A poll taken of 1,029 people in peninsular Malaysia by the Muslim Identities Public Opinion Survey in 2006 revealed a surprising result: when asked if they had to assume a single identity, what would that be, 73% of respondents saw themselves as ‘Muslims’, 14% as ‘Malaysian’, with only 13% as ‘Malay’; ‘Poll shows 73% think we are Islamic state’, *The Sun*, 5 September 2006, in *World Wide Religious News*, Website: <http://www.wwrn.org/article.php?idd=22626&sec=33&cont=all>.

'De-culturalization' of Islam in southern Thailand

Between the Thai policy of assimilation and Malaysian programmes of Islamization across the border, one might well ask to what extent a Patani Malay identity still exists among the locals of the 'three southern provinces'. There are few empirical data on which to base an answer to this important question. In fact, the very problem of the lack of primary data from the region due to the ongoing violence is a crucial methodological obstacle hindering a better understanding of what is actually happening in lower southern Thailand.⁴³ Anecdotally, it is said that fluency in the Patani Malay (or *Yawi*) dialect among the young has decreased compared with a generation ago, and that competence in Thai has increased. Students from the southern border provinces studying at Walailak University where I teach will usually affirm (out of habit?) their 'Thainess'. While most are fluent in Thai, their *Yawi* accents are quite noticeable and they will speak in dialect to friends from the same region. Some anthropological work suggests that Muslim youths from the Thai border provinces working in Malaysia will talk to each other in Thai.⁴⁴ A half-century of assimilationist policies carried out by the Thai government must surely have had some effect. Yet many people from the region travel to Malaysia and some to Indonesia for educational and employment purposes, which exposes them to an alternative 'Malay' cultural milieu. Another cultural influence in the region that has increased is Arabic, as students return from their studies in the Middle East, or as a result of funding provided by Arab states for religious and educational purposes.⁴⁵ Some female Muslim students at Islamic colleges in the southern border provinces have adopted the full veil that covers the whole face apart from the eyes, a style of dress that

⁴³ The difficulty is manifold: the uncertain security situation; fear on the part of the locals of the consequences of divulging information to unknown outsiders, and the lack of familiarity with the local dialect and culture on the part of most researchers. Given such methodological obstacles, one would wish for more humility on the part of many academics in their representations of the situation in the south.

⁴⁴ Mala Rajoo Sathian and Saroja Dorarajoo (2002), 'Being *melayu* the Thai way: perceiving the Thai–Malay border from a people's perspective', paper presented at the 9th International Thai Studies Conference, 9–12 June, Nakhon Phanom.

⁴⁵ Here we should be just as careful not to essentialize a monolithic, unchanging 'Arabic' culture that is sometimes inherent in critiques of the so-called 'Arabization' of South East Asian Islam.

was previously unknown in the local Malay culture. The influence of so-called 'Wahabi' religious orthodoxy, for example, in the performance of daily prayers, has in some cases clashed with 'traditional Malay' religious practices. It has split some communities, and in some cases has led to people praying in separate congregations.⁴⁶

Numerous studies point to social problems prevalent among the youth in the region, including drug addiction and involvement in violence and petty crime. One wonders whether one of the sources of the violence might be an identity crisis among young men of the region resulting from the obliteration of Patani Malay identity over the last 100 years, resistance to the full adoption of a Thai identity (given its association with discrimination and oppression) and the attraction of a radicalized Islam to fill the void. The French scholar of Muslim society in Europe, Olivier Roy, argues that one of the reasons for extremism among some young European Muslims is their rejection of the traditional culture of their parents, their inability to find acceptance in the mainstream cultures of Europe,⁴⁷ and their refuge in a purified reconstruction of an 'imagined' Islam. 'The more radical the terrorists, the more they do not embody a traditional culture or a culture at all. Islamic radicalization is a consequence of "de-culturalization" and not the expression of a pristine culture.'⁴⁸ Roy's argument thus raises the question of whether a similar phenomenon of de-culturalization, albeit caused by different factors, may be a contributing factor to the radicalism in Thailand's south:

'The generation gap, coupled with a sense of disenfranchising [. . .] individualization of faith, self-teaching, generation gap, rejection of authority (including that of religious established leaders), loosening of family ties, lack of socialization with a broader community (including the ethnic community of their parents), and withdrawal

⁴⁶ Personal communication from Abdulrazak Panaemalae, who is currently undertaking a research project on this issue. While the term 'Wahabi' has recently come into use, other terms used to indicate 'modernist' Islamic practice in the region include the Malay '*kaum muda*', or in Thai, '*khana mai*'.

⁴⁷ In fact, these 'mainstream cultures' have themselves been undergoing a transition at the very moment of large-scale Muslim immigration, with the gradual weakening of the nation-states and the national identities they nurtured as a result of the project of European integration, and more generally, globalization.

⁴⁸ Olivier Roy (2005), 'A clash of cultures or a debate on Europe's values?' *International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) Review*, Vol 15, spring, pp 5–6.

towards a small inward-looking group akin to a cult: all these factors show the extent of the process of deculturation of the radicals.⁴⁹

If a Patani Malay identity is indeed in crisis, then that may also explain why the separatist organizations such as PULO, the BRN and Bersatu, whose political ideologies were originally based, as argued above, on national liberation rather than Islam, seem only tangentially involved in the conflict that has erupted since the beginning of 2004.⁵⁰ Despite repeated claims by the government, it is quite unclear to what extent, if at all, separatism is a goal of the militants. Indeed, one of the puzzling aspects of the conflict is the ambiguity regarding the objectives of the militants, which is perhaps a symptom of the confused ideology of the movement in the midst of the void left by the obliteration of Patani Malay identity.

One of the most trenchant critiques of Patani Malay identity comes from a former militant, now a columnist writing in Thai for the national news magazine *Nation Weekly* under the pen-name, 'Bahrun'.⁵¹ Unlike most Thai academics whose target was the Thai government and its insensitive treatment of the local community, Bahrun's main target is the Malay nationalist ideology of the resistance movements in southern Thailand involved in the violence. To illustrate the deep roots of Malay nationalism in the region in one of his columns, he recalls his days as a student in a *pondok* in Patani, where his superiors would warn him never to trust the Muslim students from other provinces who could not speak Malay. It was not surprising, therefore, that the Muslims of the three southern provinces should see themselves as distinct from the rest of Thailand, a mindset that supports separatist sentiment. Bahrun sees exclusivist attitudes such as these as the legacy of values instilled by Patani's former traditional rulers.⁵² He is particularly critical of academics (both Muslim and non-Muslim) for continually resorting to history, particularly 'Patani's glorious past', to explain the troubles in the south. He regards history as one of the main factors behind an enduring Malay chauvinism (*khlang chat*) that fuels

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p 7

⁵⁰ Nidhi Eeosiwong, 'Understanding the situation in the south as a "Millenarian Revolt"', *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*, Vol 6, available at Website: <http://kyotoreview.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp/issue/issue5/index.html>.

⁵¹ See especially 'Ngao atalak melayu patani' [Shadow of Patani Malay identity], in 'Bahrun', *supra* note 31, at pp 29–40.

⁵² 'Bahrun', *supra* note 31, at p 32.

militancy.⁵³ An even more serious charge he makes is that it is the influence of such radical Malay nationalism that has led to the distortion of Islamic teaching, seen for example in the controversial manual allegedly used by some of the militants, *Berjihad di Patani*:⁵⁴

‘The most important aspect about this mobilization of Muslim leaders and organizations is that they do not seem to realize that they are being ideologically led to create a distorted picture of Islam, caused by the force of the collision of Malay nationalism. This is one of the worst sins.’⁵⁵

In several of Bahrún’s columns, one can see the influence of the Islamic discourse that rejects ethno-nationalism, the prominent theme in PAS’s political discourse discussed above. Bahrún even refers explicitly to the well known commentary on the Qur’an by the Egyptian Islamist ideologue Sayyid Qutb, in which this idea is developed.⁵⁶ The danger is in letting Islam become ‘enchained’ by Malay identity.⁵⁷ Thus at the very moment that prominent Thai academics such as Nidhi Eeosiwong⁵⁸ and Chaiwat Satha-Anand⁵⁹ are calling for the

⁵³ ‘Bahrún’, *supra* note 31, at pp 35–36, 105–106, 161. He is particularly critical of the government-appointed National Reconciliation Council, which he views as ‘lost in the history of the Malay kingdom and Malay identity’; p 121.

⁵⁴ ‘Bahrún’, *supra* note 31, at p 109.

⁵⁵ ‘Bahrún’, *supra* note 31, at p 77.

⁵⁶ ‘Bahrún’, *supra* note 31, at p 84.

⁵⁷ ‘Bahrún’, *supra* note 31, at p 191.

⁵⁸ In 2006, Nidhi Eeosiwong’s ‘Midnight University’ network of academics, students and social activists organized an informal course in ‘Malay Studies’, with lectures delivered by Thai academics on Malay society as well as the conflict in the south. Some of these lectures were posted on the network’s Website: <http://www.geocities.com/midarticle/newpage330.html>. In May 2006, a seminar on Malay Studies was organized by Midnight University at the College of Islamic Studies at Prince Songkhla University, Pattani.

⁵⁹ Chaiwat is regarded as being the main influence in the report of the National Reconciliation Council released in May 2006, which among other things called for the government to recognize the local Malay dialect as a ‘working language’. The Chairman of the NRC, former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun, has also publicly called for the recognition of the Malay ethnicity of the Muslims in the border provinces in contrast to then PM Thaksin Shinawatra’s more nationalist line. Following the publication of the NRC’s report, Gen. Prem Tinasulanond, Chairman of the politically influential Privy Council and popularly regarded as the King’s spokesman, publicly rejected the proposal to use Malay as a working language. For Bahrún’s critique of the National Reconciliation Council, see ‘Bahrún’, *supra* note 31, at pp 75–82, and ‘Mong prawatisat duai ta nuea’ in *Fa Dio Kan*, Vol 4, No 2, April–June 2006, pp 107–111.

Thai government as well as the general public to accept the Malay ethnic identity of the people of the three southern provinces as part of the solution to the conflict, a view deriving from a liberal, multicultural critique of the Thai state's chauvinistic policies of assimilation, Bahrun regards the persistence of that ethnic identity (at least as an element in the ideology of the militants) as one of the principal factors behind the conflict. It is ironic therefore that the position of Bahrun, a former militant and presumably a local Muslim of Malay ethnicity, is actually closer⁶⁰ to that of the Thai state: he argues that it is necessary to de-ethnicize the conflict by affirming the Islamic identity of the people, and for the local Muslims to free themselves from the Patani Malay nationalism that has been so dominant over the last 50 years.

Conclusion

The extent to which the spectre of Patani Malay nationalism still haunts representations of southern Thailand can be judged by its appearance in an internationally influential report published by the International Crisis Group (ICG) in May 2005, *Southern Thailand, Insurgency, Not Jihad*. Near the beginning of the report, the author states:

'The Muslims of southern Thailand are mostly ethnic Malays and speak Malay, rather than Thai. They were once part of an independent sultanate of Patani, comprising the present-day provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and parts of western Songkhla, that flourished from 1390 to 1902. That history as a separate political entity and the second-class status and political neglect the Malay minority has endured ever since within independent Thailand, provides the backdrop to the violence today.'⁶¹

These sentiments might have come straight out of Ibrahim Syukri's *Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani* published 50 years earlier. Such a misleading statement on the crucial political question of 'independence' completely fails to account for the long history of Siam's overlordship over Patani – albeit a contested overlordship, as was the

⁶⁰ The difference being, however, that the objective of the Thai state is fostering an Islam over which it has administrative control.

⁶¹ International Crisis Group, *supra* note 32, at p 2.

case with Siam's relations with all its vassal states.⁶² The ICG goes even further than Syukri, who dates Patani's loss of 'independence' to the late eighteenth century, rather than the ICG's 1902.⁶³ The *Hikayat Patani* itself, the key source for the history of Patani–Siamese relations before the eighteenth century, shows clearly that Patani was only intermittently free of Siamese political overlordship.⁶⁴ Moreover, the first sentence of the above paragraph, for which the ICG cites no evidence, also ignores the diversity and complexity of 'Muslim' and 'Malay' identity in southern Thailand, and fails to take into account those Muslims who do in fact identify themselves as 'Thai' and speak Thai as their first language. It also omits the hundreds of thousands of Muslims in southern Thailand who live outside the region mentioned who speak no Malay and have no relationship, sentimental or otherwise, with the former sultanate of Patani. The Thais appear in the report mainly in the form of oppressive state security officials, and the ethnic Chinese, whose presence on the peninsula is ancient and continuous, are invisible.⁶⁵

This exclusionist conception of the 'Malay Muslims' of southern Thailand associated with a historically powerful Patani state, which is characteristic of Patani Malay nationalism, is central to the ideology of separatism. It can be seen, for example, in a map produced by the Bersatu separatist organization, which depicts the 'state' of Patani (*Negara Patani*) coloured in green, covering the *entire* region of southern Thailand. The existing provinces, whose present-day boundaries are

⁶² On how modern notions of national sovereignty disrupted pre-modern ideas of interstate relations based on vassal–overlord relations, see Thongchai Winichakul (1994), *Siam Mapped: the History of the Geobody of a Nation*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, especially chapters 3, 4 & 5.

⁶³ Syukri, *supra* note 15, at pp 57–58.

⁶⁴ According to Teeuw and Wyatt, 'The Malay story [in the *Hikayat Patani*] makes it implicitly clear that Patani acknowledged the sovereignty of Ayudhya already in the time of Sultan Mudhaffar Syah [in the sixteenth century] . . . The story as it runs . . . suggests a relationship of dependence and inferiority rather than of equality'; Teeuw and Wyatt, *supra* note 11, at p 230. Even Che Man, leader of the umbrella group for Patani separatist organizations, Bersatu, writes, 'Ever since the establishment of Muslim dynasties, the kingdom of Patani seems to have experienced alternate periods of independence and Siamese control', Wan Kadir Che Man (1990), *Muslim Separatism: the Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, Oxford University Press, Singapore, p 34. On the history of political relations between Siam and Patani, see Davisakd, *supra* note 9.

⁶⁵ On the history of ethnic diversity and interaction on the middle part of the peninsula, see papers included in the Workshop Proceedings, *A Plural Peninsula: Historical Interactions Among the Thai, Malays, Chinese and Others*, Walailak University, 5–7 February 2004.

retained on the map, are renamed in Malay.⁶⁶ Underneath the map is the rallying cry, *Bersatu, Berjuang, Merdeka* – ‘Unity, struggle, freedom’. Bahrūn refers to similar extravagant claims made by the BRN over the southern Thai peninsula stretching as far north as Kho Khot Kra district in Ranong province, on the basis that these lands once belonged to ‘Melayu’.⁶⁷ The historical evidence for this claim would seem to be either the pre-Islamic state of Langkasuka, supposedly centred on the Patani region, or the larger ‘Malay’ empire of Sri Vijaya, which is believed to have extended as far north as Chaiya in Surat Thani province, near the northernmost point of the separatist group’s claim. Thus we see a confused conflation of the notions of ‘Malay’, ‘Islam’ and ‘Patani’ within the framework of Patani Malay nationalist discourse.

Seen in this light, Thailand’s policy of national integration in the south may be regarded as an attempt to exorcise this ghost. The official Thai concept of national identity has stood out from that of many of its South East Asian neighbours. Whereas Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, even Myanmar, have accepted the theory (if not always the practice) of dual identities, national and ethnic, since independence, Thailand maintains an essentially assimilationist model of national integration. It is revealing that one of the responses to the crisis in the south was to renew official nationalist campaigns to promote ‘Thainess’. In the words of one of the most popular nationalist propaganda songs: ‘underneath the Thai flag the whole population is Thai’.⁶⁸ Within this

⁶⁶ The map is included in Bunkrom Khongbangsathan (2005), *Kan to su khrang sut thai khong phon ek Chavalit Yongchaiyudh* [*Gen. Chavalit Yongchaiyudh’s Last Struggle*], Offset Press, Bangkok. The map is unpaginated; it appears after the table of contents.

⁶⁷ Bahrūn, *supra* note 31, at pp 172–173. Historical artefacts supposedly dating from the Sri Vijaya period have been found in Chaiya.

⁶⁸ The crisis in the south since 2004 has led to a nostalgic revival of nationalistic propaganda songs from the military dictatorship era, including *Rak Kan Wai Thoet* [*Let’s Love Each Other*], whose title is somewhat reminiscent of the name of Thailand’s former ruling party, ‘Thai Rak Thai’. A re-mixed (but artistically inferior) pop version of this assimilationist classic of the 1960s by assorted artists (affiliated with an entertainment company with close business links to the Thai Rak Thai party) in response to the crisis in the south can be listened to at the Website: <http://www.kapook.com/musicstation/newmusicstation/play.php?id=4240>. (Incidentally, this is a good example of how decades of statist discourse have created their own mass market, now exploited by Thailand’s culture industry, which is today far more efficient at producing and disseminating cultural products than its predecessor, the bureaucracy.) On the subject of Thai rock music and nationalism, see Suradet Phakphian (2005), ‘Rok rak chat tae chat (chai) mai jam pen tong rak rok’ [Patriotic rock, but the nation does not need to love rock], *Wathanasala*, Website: <http://>

Thainess, while there is a place for Muslims, it appears there is no place for Malays, despite the greater tolerance of the state for cultural diversity since the end of the Cold War and the best efforts of some of Thailand's academics.⁶⁹

Fraser's study of 'Malay villagers' in the Patani region in the 1950s, caught between assimilationist Thai educational and cultural policies on the one hand and Malay separatist sentiment on the other, sums up their predicament nicely:

['. . .] The most readily available means of signifying his distinctiveness in the face of increasing contact with the Thais is the Malay villager's membership in the Islamic world community. He is unable to rally around linguistic differences, for these are under direct attack by the government. Although he insists he is first a Malay and then a Muslim, he is unable to use his Malay culture as a mark of distinctiveness, for either he is branded as an irredentist, or he is unable to define clearly what the distinctive elements of Malay culture are – other than religion. . .⁷⁰

Unlike the Malays of the other states of the peninsula, the Patani Malays were unable to rally around another traditional source of belonging, their sultan, since the Patani sultanate had been abolished by Chulalongkorn at the beginning of the twentieth century – and in any case, the original sultanate had been divided up into seven districts with their own ruling houses early in the nineteenth century. Bereft of these markers of communal identity, it would appear natural that religion should take on an added significance. Fraser had already noticed the increasing role that religion was playing in the lives of Patani

www.wtnsl.net, 10 December. A Malay version of the song, complete with Malay lyrics, is also available for the benefit of Malay-speaking Thai nationalists, produced by the Ratchaphat University of Yala and sung by the artists from the same university and the Public Relations Department (see Website: http://www.thaisnews.com/prdnews/peace_song/song_south/song_1.html).

⁶⁹ For an interesting comparison of the different degrees of success in the integration of the ethnic Chinese and Malays, see Kasien Tejapira (2006), 'Jek lae khaek kap sangkhom thai: phinit panha khon thai muslim chuea sai melayu jak prasopkan khon thai chuea sai jin' [The Sino-Thai, *Khaek* and Thai society: a consideration of the problem of the Malay Thai Muslims from the experience of Thais of Chinese descent], *Mahawithayalai thiangkhuen [Midnight University]*, 22 February, Website: <http://www.midnightuniv.org/midnight2545/document95139.html>.

⁷⁰ Thomas M. Fraser Jr (1966), *Fishermen of South Thailand: the Malay Villagers*, Waveland Press, Prospect Heights, p 89.

men at the time of his writing. He finishes his study by noting an observation of the ‘old men’ in the village: ‘[. . .] the young men today are better than we were – they like to talk about religion and to go to *makan pulot*. They know that religion is good, especially in hard times.’⁷¹

Given the Thai government’s policy of suppressing Patani Malay identity and assimilating the population as Thai Muslims on one side of the border, and Malaysian government programmes (implemented by UMNO nationally and PAS in neighbouring Kelantan) of Islamizing the Malays on the other, it is not surprising that the language of the resistance movements in the region has taken on an Islamist hue.⁷² Yet since September 2001, and even more so since the outbreak of violence in the south in January 2004, this Islamic identity that the Thai state had sought to foster with increasing confidence until quite recently, has itself come under great suspicion, from the Thai government, other governments involved in pursuing the ‘war on terror’ and the international security studies community. Thus, the population of the ‘three southern provinces’ finds itself in what must be a difficult predicament, in which a Patani Malay identity is out of the question; adopting a mainstream Thai identity involves surmounting numerous cultural and religious obstacles; and embracing an Islamic identity, if expressed too overtly, places one at acute risk of being branded an ‘Islamic extremist’.

It is tempting to conclude, therefore, that the radicalism that is a feature of the Islamic discourse of the militants in the southern border provinces today is a logical outcome of the denial of Patani Malay identity and the difficulty involved in fully accepting mainstream Thai identity. But in this Islamic discourse that circulates in southern Thailand, one can still sense the presence of the spectre of Patani Malay identity.

Acknowledgments

A Thai translation of an earlier version of this article, ‘Jak melayu patani su muslim: phap lon haeng atalak thang chatiphan nai phak tai khong thai’ (trans Nipon Sohem and Prinya Nuanpiam) was published

⁷¹ Thomas M. Fraser Jr (1960), *Rusembilan: A Malay Fishing Village in Southern Thailand*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, p 248.

⁷² On the ‘Islamist’ turn in the rhetoric of the insurgents, see Wattana Sugunnasil (2007), ‘Islam, radicalism, and violence in southern Thailand: *Berjihad di Patani* and the 28 April 2004 attacks’, in McCargo, *supra* note 1, at pp 112–136; and International Crisis Group, *supra* note 32, at pp 12–14, 32, 37–38.

in the Thai journal *Fa Dio Kan* [*Same Sky*], Vol 4, No 2, April–June 2006, pp 154–165. The paper has benefited greatly from discussions about Islam and identity with my colleague in Regional Studies at Walailak University, Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad. I am grateful for comments and assistance from colleagues Davisakd Puaksom, Jirawat Saengthong and Duncan McCargo. I also thank the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore for the opportunity to revise and expand the paper while I was a visiting research fellow there in September–November 2006.

References

- Abdul Razak Baginda, and Peter Schier, eds (2005), *Malaysia: An Islamic State? Secularism and Theocracy: A Study of the Malaysian Constitution*, ASEAN Academic Press, London.
- ‘Bahrun’ (2005), *Yihat si thao: khrai sang khrai liang fai tai* [*Grey Jihad: Who Started and Who is Stoking the Southern Fire*], Sarika, Bangkok.
- Barnard, Timothy P., ed (2004), *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Borders*, Singapore University Press, Singapore.
- Bunkrom Khongbangsathan (2005), *Kan to su khrang sut thai khong phon ek Chavalit Yongchaiyudh* [*Gen. Chavalit Yongchaiyudh’s Last Struggle*], Offset Press, Bangkok.
- Critical Asian Studies*, Vol 18, No 2, March 2006, Thematic Issue: Patani Merdeka – Thailand’s Southern Fire.
- Davisakd Puaksom (2003), *Khon plaek na nanachat krung sayam nai khlung tang phasa thi wat pho* [*University in Stone*]: *ngan khian choeng chatiphanwanana* [*ethnography*] *chin raek khong sayam* [*International Strangers in Siam in the Verses on Different Languages at Wat Pho* (*University in Stone*): *Siam’s First Ethnography*], Sinlapawathanatham, Bangkok.
- Davisakd Puaksom (2008), ‘Of a lesser brilliance: Patani historiography in contention’, in Michael J. Montesano, and Patrick Jory, eds, *The Plural Peninsula: Studies in the History of Ethnic Interactions in Southern Thailand and Northern Malaysia*, NUS Press, Singapore, and University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu.
- Fraser, Thomas M. Jr (1966), *Fishermen of South Thailand: the Malay Villagers*, Waveland Press, Prospect Heights.
- Gilquin, Michel (2005), *The Muslims of Thailand*, trans Michael Smithies, IRASEC and Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai.
- Hooker, Virginia Matheson (2004), ‘Malay and Islam in contemporary Malaysia’, in Timothy P. Barnard, ed, *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Borders*, Singapore University Press, Singapore.
- International Crisis Group (2005), *Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad*, Asia Report No 98, 18 May, International Crisis Group, Brussels.
- International Crisis Group (2007), *Southern Thailand: The Impact of the Coup*, Asia Report No 129, 15 March, International Crisis Group, Brussels.
- Kasien Tejapira (2006), ‘Jek lae khaek kap sangkhom thai: phinit panha khon thai muslim chuea sai melayu jak prasopkan khon thai chuea sai jin’ [The Sino–Thai, *Khaek* and Thai society: a consideration of the problem of the Malay Thai Muslims from the experience of Thais of Chinese descent], *Mahawithayalai thiangkhuen* [*Midnight University*], 22 February, Website: <http://www.midnightuniv.org/midnight2545/document95139.html>.

- Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian (2004), 'Thai national identity in the Muslim south: a comparative study of the 'Sam-Sams' of Satun and the Thai Malay Muslims in the three provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat', paper presented at the Workshop, 'A Plural Peninsula: Historical Interactions Among the Thai, Malays, Chinese and Others', Walailak University, 5–7 February, pp 178–192.
- Mahathir Mohamed (1970), *The Malay Dilemma*, Pelanduk Publications, Kuala Lumpur.
- Mala Rajo Sathian, 'Rights over men to rights over land: the economy of Pattani and the Thai state (1880–1920)', unpublished manuscript.
- McCargo, Duncan, ed (2007), *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*, Singapore University Press, Singapore.
- Montesano, Michael J., and Jory, Patrick, eds (2008), *The Plural Peninsula: Studies in the History of Ethnic Interactions in Southern Thailand and Northern Malaysia*, NUS Press, Singapore, and University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu.
- National Reconciliation Council, 'Raingan khanakammakan isara phuea khwam samanchan haeng chat: ao chan khwam runraeng duan khwam samanchan' [Report of the National Reconciliation Council: Overcoming violence through reconciliation], Website: <http://www.nrc.or.th/th/>.
- Nidhi Aeusrivongse, 'Understanding the situation in the south as a 'Millenarian Revolt'', *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*, Vol 6, available at Website: <http://kyotoreview.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp/issue/issue5/index.html>.
- Noor, Farish (2004), *Islam Embedded: The Historical Development of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party PAS (1951–2003)*, Vol 2, Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, Kuala Lumpur.
- Paramin Khruethong, ed (2005), *Sayam-Pattani nai tamnan kan to su melayu muslim [Siam-Pattani in the History of the Struggle of the Malay Muslims]*, Sinlapawathanatham, Bangkok.
- Reid, Anthony (2004), 'Understanding melayu as a source of diverse modern identities', in Timothy Barnard, ed, *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Borders*, Singapore University Press, Singapore, pp 1–24.
- Reynolds, Craig J., ed (1991), *National Identity and Its Defenders: Thailand 1939–89*, Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai.
- Roy, Olivier (2005), 'A clash of cultures or a debate on Europe's values?' *International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) Review*, Vol 15, spring, pp 5–7.
- Syed Ali Taufik Al Attas, and Ng Tieh Chuan (2005), *Abdullah Ahmad Badawi: Revivalist of an Intellectual Tradition*, Pelanduk Publications, Subang Jaya, pp 31–38.
- Syukri, Ibrahim (2005), *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani [Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani]*, translated by Conner Bailey and John N. Miksic, Silkworm Books, Bangkok.
- Teeuw, A., and Wyatt, David K. (trans) (1970), *Hikayat Patani: The Story of Patani*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague.
- Thongchai Winichakul (1994), *Siam Mapped: the History of the Geobody of a Nation*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu.
- Wan Kadir Che Man (1990), *Muslim Separatism: the Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, Oxford University Press, Singapore.
- Wattana Sugunnasil (2007), 'Islam, radicalism, and violence in southern Thailand: *Berjihad di Patani* and the 28 April 2004 attacks', in McCargo, ed, *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*, Singapore University Press, Singapore, pp 112–136.