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Annexation and Assimilation

An ethnic approach to the roots of conflict in Thailand's deep south

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the root causes of the conflict in southern Thailand. Ethnicity is central to the theoretical approach as the Malay Muslims of Pattani, being one part, and Thailand, being the other, are displaying very contrasting ethnical and cultural benchmarks. Power mechanisms have been able to function through a politicized ethnic ideology and have as such legitimized policies in a nation-building context that have ranked the Malay Muslims as second-class citizens. The empirical research ranges between the end of the 19th century up to 1947 and focuses mainly on an outlining of the political creed of 'nation, religion and king' as well as on various policies that have been carried out in the Pattani region by Thai authorities. The conclusion suggests that ethnic politics works well in amalgamating the ethnic majority of a nation, but that this strategy simultaneously works subordinating for ethnic minorities that fail to adjust to the policies of a mono-ethnic state. Consequently, the conclusion also suggests that the contemporary Pattani conflict is a result of historical circumstances and must be analysed as such in order to be comprehended in full.

Key words: Malay Muslims, Thailand, Pattani, Ethnicity, Discourse

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1. Introduction

In October 25th 2004 hundreds of Muslim protesters gathered in the town of Tak Bai of Narathiwat province, in Southern Thailand, demanding the release of six fellow Muslims that had previously been arrested. The demonstration grew in intensity and violence erupted. The army was called in as the violence escalated when the mob began throwing rocks and attempted to storm the local police station. Hundreds of the protesters were arrested and thrown into trucks for deportation to nearby Pattani province. Upon arrival at the military camp in Pattani, at least 78 of the protesters were left dead either by suffocation, heatstroke or convulsions. The bodies of another six protesters were found shot (http://www.theage.com.au). The then Prime Minister of Thailand Thaksin Shinawatra refuted allegations of disproportional violence by claiming that the protesters not had died due to ill-treatment conducted by the military, but rather that they had perished "because they were already weak from fasting during the month of Ramadan" (http://www.asiasentinel.com).

Despite the unusual high rate of death tolls, the Tak Bai incidence is not an isolated event. The four southernmost provinces of Thailand have experience of violence and animosities connected to tensions between differing claims of sovereignty and legitimacy of the central Thai government manoeuvred from Bangkok, and the Muslim minority of the country's deep south. Since the elimination of dominance of Pattani sultans by Thai authorities in 1902, Thailand has recognized its southern provinces as an indisputable part of the kingdom. Ever since, there has been a more or less constant ongoing conflict between the parties, despite periods of openings of relations and absence of violence. However, as of November 2008, some 2600 lives have been claimed by the conflict since it resuscitated in 2004 (http://www.crisisgroup.org).

1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study however, is not to examine the conditions or characteristics of the conflict of today. Rather, it sets out to shed light on events that occurred in the late 19th century up to the aftermath of WWII that can help us understand why the Tak Bai incidence and related violence in southern Thailand is an infected and complicated contemporary issue.

It aims at providing a theoretical framework that seeks to understand official ideology by the Thai state as elevated to a discursive power-exercising structure. By highlighting the roots and the early development of the conflict, this thesis also seeks to challenge the official stance held by Thai authorities that regard the issue as an internal affaire, often in terms of national security.

1.2 Method

Investigating the causes of the conflict requires an investigation of the development and characteristics of the ideology that has justified the systematic subordination of the predominantly Malay Muslim provinces of southern Thailand. As the Malay Muslims constitute a distinct ethnic community, displaying a culture, a language and a religion that does not correspond to the identity markers of the overall population of Thailand and as this distinctiveness of the Malay Muslims has legitimated discrimination and subordination, the relation between ethnicity and power is discussed. The first half of the theoretical approach mentions a few theories that have been used in attempts to explain the Malay Muslim situation, and goes on to discuss how ethnicity can uphold and maintain power-exercising structures by elevating arguments of the supremacy of certain ethnic groups into discursive practices, thus settling them into taken for granted truths. The second half of that chapter narrows the discussion to illuminate how ethnicity can take on itself political and nationalist presumptions in order to detect how Thai authorities has motivated the handling of the deep south. The theory aims at providing a framework of comprehension to facilitate and contextualise the empirical presentation.

The empirical chapter pinpoints the theoretical arguments by initially mentioning some political factors concerning the exclusion of Malay Muslims from Thai society and then continues by providing a brief historical outlining of how Thailand maintained its independence in the era of colonisation. This achievement gave rise to the spirit of Thailand as a free and sovereign country with the subsequent politicised national ideology of 'nation, religion and king'. This ideology is analysed in detail as its relevancy is central to an understanding of the mono-ethnic character of Thailand.

The story of the four southernmost provinces is then told with focus on the political trade-offs between Thailand and Great Britain with the following intrusion of Thai administration and "Thai-ification" of the area. The legacy of the first reign of Field Marshal Phibulsongkhran is given attention as this era is regarded by many scholars as the most

repressive regime for the Malay Muslims. It is also widely considered that the Phibul era gave rise to the modern irredentism of Pattani of today. As the purpose of the thesis, as mentioned, aims to track down the roots of the present conflict, I have chosen not to extend my investigation further than up to 1947. It is intended that the methodological setup will visualise a continuing trend of ethnic nationalism starting in the late 19th century up to the aftermath of WWII.

1.3 Material

The theoretical discussion has gained insightful perspectives from a number of different sources. Particularly Howarth (2000) and Dryzek (2006) helped to understand the nature of discourses. The discussion on ethnicity was mainly facilitated by Eriksen (1993). Collecting the empirical data lead me to turn mainly to historical accounts. Baker & Phongpaichit (2005) provided me with useful information as did Aphornsuvan (2004), Denudom (2005) and Brown (1988, 2008). Additionally, four internet sources have been used, none of whose credibility I have had reason to question. The exclusionary usage of second hand material has not posed any challenges to the working progress.

1.4 Clarifications

Siam or Thailand? Siam was the official name of the country up until June 1939, when it was changed to Thailand. The name Siam was reintroduced in 1945 only to be renamed Thailand again in 1949. I have for the sake of convenience been consistent in using the name Thailand throughout this thesis when not explicitly referring to Siam. This is however, not an untested strategy. Many scholars that I have encountered throughout the working process have employed the same approach.

Phibun or Phibul? Field Marshal Plaek Phibulsongkhran, whom will be mentioned in the latter part in this thesis, ruled Thailand in two episodes, the first from 1938 to 1944 and the second from 1948 to 1957. In the literature, his name is most commonly referred to Phibun or Phibul. I have been consequent in using the name Phibul in this thesis and hope to avoid any confusion on this matter.

2. Theory

2.1 Contemporary theoretical approaches

Various models of explanations have been put forth in order to better understand the nature of the conflict and the underlying causes of effect. Those that reappear most prominently focus to a great extent on historical circumstances, economical discrepancies or on various cultural qualities that make relative peaceful coexistence seem out of reach. The historical accounts highlight the colonial legacy and its decline, emphasizing the impact of decolonization with its related artificial territorial remapping of borders. This perspective also point to the subsequent nation-building projects that the war-torn states of Southeast Asia initiated after the defeat of Imperial Japan in WWII. The economic viewpoint shift attention towards a centre-periphery relation in which the periphery is economically subordinated the dominant centre, creating an unjust distribution of wealth. The argument is that such a discrepancy ignites discontent which in turn can lead to civil unrest and turmoil. Finally, cultural notions argue that cleavages between cultures may be so vast that they inhibit any constructive and mutually respectful dialogue that could possibly amount to a bridging of cultural differences, thus hindering the creation of a harmonious relationship between significantly different cultures. Acknowledgment of the explanatory strength of all these variables respectively is crucial and correct as they all approach the issue with important and insightful perspectives. However, as the mentioned approaches all provide excellent distinctive modes of explanation, valuable for distinct disciplines, they all fail to explain in broader, more general terms, how the situation can be interpreted in a more overarching manner, taking into account various approaches and appending these into one solid theory.

2.2 The relevancy of ethnicity

So what would an approach that can explain the complexity of the situation look like? Noting that even though Thailand is a multi-ethnic society, the identification of the state was and is one that promotes the ethnic majority group. Not only has individuals from minority groups been excluded from positions within the state machinery, but has also suffered from the more traumatic experience of being subjected to a state ideology that has identified the state, and

therefore the national identity, with the culture, language and values of the ethnic majority (Enloe 1981:2). Ethnicity, therefore, seems to be an effective and useful tool for further investigation.

Resting at the heart of the problem is the question of power. Any theory that approaches a case which is characterized by such a blatant inequality in terms of power, as the south Thailand insurgency, cannot overlook the significance that power poses to an understanding of the issue. If this significance is ignored, the credibility and bearing strength of the approach will be lost. Power, however, can adopt various shapes and garments why it best can be understood when defined and contextualised in a particular framework. It is argued that the most fruitful way to close in on the centrality of the issue is to view power through a lens of ethnicity. Although there is no necessary connection between ethnicity and conflict, ethnic community and identity are nevertheless often associated with conflict. In fact, ethnicity is a central issue in the political and social life on every continent insomuch that the 'end of history' seems to have begun in the era of ethnicity (Hutchinson & Smith 1996:3). The ethnic variable appears to be the one that no scholar seem able to disregard when attempting to explain the character of the south Thailand insurgency. Furthermore, as ethnicity is commonly associated with conflict, it makes sense to identify the innate power-maintaining and prosecuting characteristics of ethnicity, and to focus attention on how ethnic power manifests itself.

2.3 Ethnicity and discourse

It is necessary to present an outlining of how the mechanisms of ethnic wielding of power works. The theoretical starting point of this thesis is one that assumes that ethnicity can be used as a means through which power is effectively exercised and maintained. Ethnicity provides a basis for social reference and human interaction. As such, ethnicity can be elevated to a discursive level as both discourses and ethnicity share fundamental similarities. Discourses are in David Howarths words understood as "the semiotic dimension of social practice" and "a distinct level of the overall social system" (Howarth 2000:8). Ethnicity would also fit well into this description. Discourses are powerful in the sense that they have the ability to shape the behaviour of social activity so that it supports the same ideology. A discourse provides a framework based on shared sets of concepts, ideas and categories which enables people to make sense of assumptions, judgements, situations, capabilities, dispositions and intentions (Dryzek 2006:1). If the discourse is geared towards fixed

assumptions about the qualities of different ethnic groups, the imagined apprehensions about other people will be based on ethnic variables. Moreover, if ethnicity becomes a means of making sense and of structuring the world, the tendency to categorize people based on such assumptions will be looming around the corner.

Power and powerlessness manifests itself in the prosecution of culturally specific behaviour designed to define borders between the in-group and the out-group. Each group respectively, collectively behaves in ways that reinforce a sense of belongingness with the own group and a sense of non-belongingness with whichever group that is not ones own. There are surprisingly few accounts that argue that perceptions about distinct others tend to be neutral. Quite the opposite, most academics that have addressed the issue argue that the perceptions in almost all cases are charged with some kind of positive or negative characterisation. Sadly, many of them take a pessimistic stance. Regarding ethnicity through a discursive lens, it becomes clear how the separating mechanisms of discourses function as "discourses are concrete systems of social relations and practices that are intrinsically political, as their formation is an act of radical institution which involves the construction of antagonisms and the drawing of political frontiers between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (Howarth 2000:9). So when the qualities of different ethnic groups begins to function as the most important denominator for social categorisation and systematisation, ethnicity is no longer only an attribute of a particular group. It has become a system for making sense of those assumptions, judgements, situations, capabilities, dispositions and intentions that were the characteristics that Dryzek attributed discourses with. It is at this point that it becomes relevant to talk about ethnicity as discourse.

The fact that the Pattani Malays as an ethnic group has been widely excluded from positions within the government and the bureaucracy witnesses of an intentional and de facto curtailment of the political power of this ethnic group, based on ethnic conditions. These structures emerge from perceptions held by the dominant group towards the subordinate groups. A common denominator for discourses is that they inhibit the power to transform contingent senses of understandings into taken-for-granted truths, the apparent natural order of things, so pervasive and powerful as to be inescapable (Dryzek 2006:20). It is this persuasive power of the discourse that enables stereotype formation and a dichotomous world-view. It creates a situation were third positions appear irrelevant and where the formation and division between the in-group and the out-group, the superior and the subordinate, the haves and the have-nots, and the privileged as opposed to the marginalized appears (Petersson 2006:124). As the dominant group is in a position where it enjoys a sole

right to exercise prerogative measures, any kind of behaviour that deviates from normal behaviour, as stipulated by the dominant group, will be regarded with suspicion and envisaged as unworthy of serious attention, in other words, null and void. In consequence, the only opinions, ideas and values that will be regarded as legitimate will be those held by the dominant. The effects of such a situation is one pervaded by limited societal change and dynamism as any challenging attempts of altering the hegemonic discourse are likely to be futile.

2.4 Governmentality

Foucault adds another dimension to the discursive field of inquiry by his notion of governmentality. Power is, according to Foucault, present in all social relations as an attempt to shape the outcome of events. In this scenario, agents are subjective and capable of resisting and altering any particular production of order in a given field. Power operates in this space of free subjectivities that are nevertheless limited to the discursive hegemony that controls that space. Situated in rationalities that are capable of shaping conduct towards order in a special field, governmentality includes the operation of various modes of power (Connors 2007:19). Gordon suggests that these rationalities should be understood as a system, or a way of thinking about the nature of the practice of government, for example; who or what is governed, what governing is, who can govern (Gordon 1991:3). The substance of the rationalities can change over time, which means that different strategies can be employed in different times, depending on the surrounding settings. Power is therefore not a force that the state dictates or controls. Rather, power is a force present in the minds of the subjectives, under which the state is bound. The state can, however, utilize sentiments within a population to gather support for, and possibly reinforce, opinions that appeal to prevailing trends within the population. This would suggest that a decolonizing and nation-building context for example, would favour and provide the required incentives of certain types of ways and systems of thinking about the nature of government. This insight could help us explain how a mindset geared towards ethnic politics as an expression of a mono-ethnic state was fostered in Thailand.

2.5 Ethnicity and nationalism

The various policies carried out to induce conformity and cultural assimilation by Thai authorities in the deep south of Thailand manifests the contrasting cultural differences between the two groups. These policies illustrate the attitude of the Thai government towards the ethnically different Malay Muslims. The discourse that has triggered and justified Thailand's intrusion into Pattani is clearly not uncontested by the Malay Muslims. Discourses therefore, albeit being hegemonic in character, does not necessarily have to be inescapable. As the discourse being discussed here is one appealing to the Thai, it is not applied as a point of departure for the Malay Muslims. Rather, it is the contrast between these two points of departure that are important. The contrasts that are generated are the points of reference for the individuals in the respective ethnic group. Ethnicity is not a property of a group, but an aspect of a relationship between agents that consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups. As such, ethnicity can also be defined as a social identity, notes Eriksen (1993:12). He continues; "When cultural differences regularly make a difference in interaction between members of groups, the social relationship has an ethnic element. Ethnicity refers both to aspects of gain and loss in interaction, and to aspects of meaning in the creation of identity. In this way it has a political, organisational aspect as well as a symbolic one" (ibid.).

The symbolic aspect manifests itself for example in ancestral myths and the belief in a common origin. In this aspect, ethnicity can be seen as a kinship phenomenon, as a continuity within the self and within those that share an intergenerational link to common ancestors. Ethnicity is therefore a guarantor of eternity as it links every human in an eternal bond from generation to generation, from past ancestors to those in the future (Fishman 1996:63). A similar argument acknowledges that nationalist movements tend to cling to even the faintest evidence of historical continuity and adopt false conceptions about their ancient existence in order to assert that the evolution of their nation was a result of historical necessity (Tamir 1996:94). Other symbols or myths that are commonly frequented are those of a golden age often attached to a specific homeland and territory, flags, sacred texts, uniforms, national anthems and cuisine, rituals and maps. The importance of symbols is one of solidarity, renewal and transformation. They are a vital ingredient in the legitimation of institutions, the making of social cohesion and the accentuation of conventions of behaviour and beliefs (Smith 2001:522).

The organizational and political relationship of ethnicity towards the state has great resemblance with nationalism. It has been suggested that nationalism is a theory of political

legitimacy and as such it requires that ethnic boundaries do not cut across political ones (Gellner 1983:1). This suggestion implies that a nation is an exclusive entity since membership in the nation is not a matter of will or voluntarism. Quite the opposite, it stresses that a persons deepest attachments are not chosen, but innate. Thus membership in a nation can not be achieved through participation or by sharing the political creed of the nation. Acquiring membership can only be done by birth, through blood (Özkirimli 2005:23). This argument also implies that a nation in this sense necessarily have a political creed that appeals to the ethnic majority that constitute the political composition of the nation. The exclusion of some citizens means the favouring and benefitting of others, and this uneven distribution of political and civil rights leads to a directly discriminating political climate in which citizens of minority groups are caught up in a whirlpool of being labelled as secondary and inferior. It lies in the nature of things that the mechanisms that keep the politically favoured ethnicity in its advantageous position, allows it to do so by keeping politically unfavoured ethnicities in check. It is this scenario that perhaps most clearly illustrates how the discursive power of ethnic nationalism works. The scenario is one where the nation-state is an entity dominated by an ethnic group whose characterizing markers of identity, such as religion or language, are routinely engrafted in the states official legislation and symbolism (Eriksen 1993:99).

The state in a mono-ethnic community becomes an important guarantor for the upholding of the ethnic ideology that ensures a privileged status to favoured groups at the expense of those that fail to be recognized as citizens according to the definitions set up by the state. The relative concrete nature of the state, as opposed to the rather abstract character of ideology or discourse for instance, makes the state an important subject of investigation that can illuminate and illustrate the ethnic discourses that exercise and maintains the power-structures.

3. The Mono-Ethnic Character of the Thai State

The mundane and semi-official labelling of the Malay Muslims of Thailand's deep south as "khaek", meaning guest, and "jon bang yak dindan" that translates into the quite derogative term separatist bandits, insinuates that they are not recognized by the ethnic Thai as truly belonging to the nation, but rather that they are outsiders and a minority (Aphornsuvan 2004:3). Similar parlance has been used to describe other minority groups of Thailand (Brown 1988:55). The use of this language intends to create and maintain a distinction between the different ethnic minority groups that live within the borders of Thailand and the dominant ethnic Thai majority. As noted earlier, the state and the national identity of Thailand has been identified with the language, culture and values of the ethnic majority. Depicted as Thai-Buddhist culture, the national identity of Thailand enjoys legitimacy and support mainly from the fact that Thailand since the 13th century has managed to preserve both its independence and its monarchical system. The history of Thailand is depicted as one of successive and consecutive Thai kingdoms. Due to territorial expansion the non-Thai population of the country now make up approximately 40 percent of the total populace. Despite this significant amount of people, Thailand still maintains its ethnic character of the earlier kingdoms. Within the government machinery, senior positions are occupied by Thais (ibid.), a circumstance that adds to the apprehension that the state and nation is synonymous with Thai ethnicity and identity.

3.1 Preserving independence in the colonial era

With the exception of a few territorial trade-offs with France and Great Britain in the 19th and 20th century, Thailand, as the only Southeast Asian country, managed to preserve its independence. This effort has been explained in a threefold manner, all of which are likely to have explanatory capacities. The first argument highlights the interest of France and Great Britain to use Thailand as a buffer zone, thus avoiding a clash between rivalrous, expansionist campaigns between the dominant colonial powers of mainland Southeast Asia. The second argument stresses the proposed foresightedness of the court to outweigh competing external interests against each other through a pragmatic policy towards the colonial powers. This

argument is related to the third and last explanation of the independence of Thailand which sheds light on the internal ambition of the court and the kings to adopt western-style policies and to gear the nation-state towards a "civilized" type of country, similar to and on equal terms with the advanced and progressed European countries. Thailand therefore promoted free-trade, protection for foreign nationals, freedom of speech and discussed the proposed incorporation of a constitution and the rule of law in the nation-state discourse, believing that incentives for foreign colonization would diminish if the country had already succeeded in becoming civilized (Baker & Phongpaichit 2005:76). It was this context of modernization and progressive reform that triggered King Mongkut (Rama IV) and later King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) in the 19th century, completed and finalized by King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) in the 20th century, to embark on an irreversible path that would provide Thailand with a national ideology, consisting of three pillars; 'Nation, Religion and King'.

3.2 The emergence of a national ideology

It would be inconclusive, however, to suggest that Thailand through its modernizing phase was trying to introduce a European-modelled state apparatus per se. The purpose was rather to preserve its culture and independence and ensure its survival by adopting measures that would not only seem reasonable enough for the expansive European powers to refrain from interfering, but also to copy and implement the idea introduced by Europe that the political expression of a race was a nation. With the two most influential sources of Thai culture, India and China, under western domination, along with French and British advancement from all directions it became imperative for the Thai rulers to adopt any measures that could advance the chances of survival. Creating national sentiment and unity and a feeling of belonging among the people was perhaps King Chulalongkorns most enduring contribution in shaping the progress of Thailand. The notion of samakkhi, unity, was introduced by him. Being highly militaristic and deeply nationalistic in character it instantiated the history of the country as a series of wars. This trend of national unity, albeit being receptive to changing local and international contexts, would continue to be an important factor in the shaping of Thai nationalism (Baker & Phongpaichit 2005:105). In addition, Aphornsuvan argues that the discourse of independence was structured around the loss and preservation of territory (2004:1). Let us now look closer on the national ideology of 'nation, religion and king'.

3.2.1 Nation

A continuum of the thinking regarding preservation of territory and independence can be found in King Vajiravudhs (Rama VI) coining of what has evolved into the political creed of Thailand. Present in modern politics and persistently relevant is the notion of 'Nation, Religion and King'. The launching of this ideology by King Vajiravudh drew upon western and Thai concepts of identity while adding nation to the identity components of religion and monarchy (Connors 2007:37). The nation in this ideology was not a fixed and clearly defined concept. However it contains some key elements. The territory of Thailand, had traditionally not been physically defined, but had been based on levels of loyalty defined through a tributary system based on patron-client relationships. These relationships determined the territory so as whoever was willing to offer tributes to the sovereign was consequently also living within the territory of the sovereign. The European concept of territory as a defined and limited physical territory was not introduced until the emergence of colonial expansionism in Southeast Asia. Confronted with western cartography along with demands to clearly delineate boundaries of rule prompted a hitherto new imagination of territorial and bordered sovereignty to emerge. The new vision of a Thai 'geo-body' was imperative to the sustention of national identity. Particularly the discourse of an organic community evolved from the creation of the Thai nation-state with its related geo-body (Connors 2007:36f). The trend to copy the European model with emphasis on territorial borders was partly challenged by commoners that also wanted to include notions of a unique and long history, a common language and shared ethnic origins. These two trends eventually coincided and merged, however, as nations, belonging and identity, as well as borders, became more precise in the world-wide era of nationalism (Baker & Phongpaichit 2005:113f).

3.2.2 Religion

Religion, more accurately described as Thai Theravada Buddhism, is perhaps the easiest component to define in the Thai ideology. As of 2008, ninety-four percent of the total population of the sixty-five and a half million people living in Thailand belongs to the Theravada school of Buddhism (CIA World Factbook). The monkhood community, the sangha, enjoys a prominent position in the everyday life in Thailand. The modern nation- and state-building of Thailand has involved a monopolisation of religion to represent the nation and the state insomuch that the survival of the Thai state has been regarded as directly dependent of a unified sangha under royal patronage (Heikkilä-Horn 1996:11). The sangha is closely identified with royal authority although not regarded as identical to it. It derives its

prestige from its own moral authority and can therefore enjoy a degree of autonomy from the political power (Suksamran 1977:xii). The close relationship between the sangha and the highest political power has a long history. During the Sukhothai era (1238-1438) the intimate relationship between Buddhism and state emerged that has to a great extent persisted to this day. Wyatt explains the features of this correlation; "With king and monks sharing the same throne, Buddhism and the state were very closely identified. The state was Buddhist, but the religion was also political, certainly to the extent that political unity and identity were founded upon a religious basis" (Wyatt 2003:43). As the upholder par excellence of morality in Thailand, two basic functions of the sangha can be identified. The first one is that it works as an institution that provides the citizenry with the opportunity to improve their chances of a better rebirth. By giving alms to monks and supporting the sangha with other donations and by attending religious ceremonies, people make merit and through these merit-making acts they increase their chances of being born in a more favourable position in the life to come. Being the platform that enables people to climb towards nirvana, the sangha enjoys tremendous reverence, respect and support from the people. The second basic function of the sangha is that of legitimizing the ruler, in this case the monarch. It does so by accepting donations and allowing him to make merit. The monarch is expected to follow the morally accepted Buddhist rules and to be a virtuous person. This is best exemplified in the monarch's venerable relation to the sangha. In exchange the monarch provides the sangha with protection and allows it to thrive (Heikkilä-Horn 1996:8f). In so doing, the monarch uses his well-off position, acquired through virtuous past lives, to strengthen the position of the sangha, thus also empowering his own position as well as the position of other people. Consequently, there is a dimension of reciprocity in the relationship between the king and the monkhood. They are mutually reinforcing and dependent on each other.

3.2.3 King

The monarchy of Thailand is one limited by a constitution. The absolute monarchy was replaced by a coup d'état in 1932 that placed the monarchy within the administration of a parliament. Formally, having only representative and symbolic assignments as head of state, the Thai monarchy is not dissimilar of those found in the Scandinavian and northern European countries. In reality though, the king enjoys far more support and legitimacy than any government. The legitimacy of the political system of Thailand has traditionally relied on the monarchy. Central to the ideology and the reality of political rule has been the king and his

dynasty (Morrell & Samudavanija 1982:4). The king is looked upon as a devaraja, a god-king, and his mission is envisaged in religious measures. By being the prime practitioner of untarnished Buddhist virtue his being is an ideal for others to follow. As the kings of Thailand has had a notable position in the making of modern Thailand and in the emergence of Thailand as an independent nation in the region through colonization, decolonization and two world wars, the role of the Thai kings is intimately related to the national and cultural sentiment of the country. Thai values call for the monarchy, the supreme image of national pride, to be protected of its continued prominent position. Never losing its spiritual legitimacy to western colonial intentions, the respect and the reverence of the monarchy is often accredited with maintaining the unique position of Thailand in Southeast Asia (ibid:312). As of today, the present king Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX) has on several occasions intervened in politics when tensions and violence has gotten out of hand as it did during the student uprising in 1973 and the Black May of 1992. His successful interventions have demonstrated the incommensurable status as a symbol of national unity and the placing of politics beneath royal power. The subsequent superseding of political objectives by politicians on Bhumibol's command illustrates the moral authority he possesses in the eyes of the public, unmistakable to the extent that no politician is capable of overriding this authority.

The relevance of presenting the pillars that constitute the Thai national ideology lies within the scope of comprehending national identity or "thainess". The ethno-ideology of thainess is imagined as a calm and happy village, a moral and immemorial community bound together by intimate ties (Connors 2007:235). The function of the ideology is that it provides the populace with the adequate means of sustaining an image of ethnic and social cohesion. As previously mentioned with reference to discourses, the ideology becomes a distinct level of the overall social system, to use the words of Howarth. It becomes the foundation from which people can associate with and interpret the complexity of reality. It is thus not only a matter of politicization of national sentiment, but the ideology also becomes instrumental in the formation of personal identities deeply attached to the imagined nation.

4. Pattani: Internally colonized

The labelling of the four southernmost provinces of Thailand as Pattani is quite an arbitrary one. In actuality, the term refers to the provinces of Pattani, Narathiwat, Yala and Satul. Their rather distinct religious, linguistic and cultural composition, in contrast to the rest of Thailand, has developed the mindset of one area, sometimes called Greater Pattani, instead of four separate provinces. There are, naturally, differences between the provinces. The most striking one is perhaps the successful assimilation into Thai culture by the Muslims in Satul which has spared the Muslims of this province from much of the violence between Bangkok administrations and the southern provinces. The purpose of this chapter is not to distinguish differences between the southern provinces, but rather to treat them as a coherent entity in order to trace the disparities between them and the central Thai ethno-ideology. Indeed, as Brown notes, public rhetoric insinuates that the issue is depicted as one between an ethnic minority community of the south against 'the nation', identified in ethnic terms as the Thai-Buddhists of Thailand (2008:3).

4.1 Annexation and consolidation

Even though the exact time of the Islamisation of Southeast Asia is a matter of scholarly debate, Denudom suggests that Pattani embraced Islam sometime after 1500 (2005:26). As a semi-independent Muslim sultanate, ruled by sultans, rajas and kings, Pattani's relation towards Thailand has for the most part been coloured by hostilities. With the exception of military assistance to the then Siamese capital of Ayutthaya in 1563, following a Burmese attack, the relation between Thailand and Pattani has been one of conflict. Denudom notes at least seven wars and major escalations between 1563 to 1902 (2005:4ff).

By the beginning of 1900, the Siamese began to successfully infiltrate Pattani. Owing to fears of British retaliation, with troops located in the Malayan peninsular and in Singapore, the Siamese dared not fully occupy the region. A gradual annexation of Pattani was initiated, with a non-aggression treaty being signed between Siam and Pattani in 1902. As the treaty was written in Thai it was not fully understood by the Pattani signatory. Besides the notion of non-aggression, the treaty also contained a confession agreement which obligated the king of Pattani to abdicate, receiving a yearly compensation of 500 Baht in return. Realizing the scam

and refusing to sign another treaty that would grant Siam sovereignty over all Pattani territories, the king of Pattani was sent to Bangkok and imprisoned. Siam simultaneously proclaimed that Pattani was now under Siamese control (Denudom 2005:12f). The British were at first not content with the development of Siamese expansion and consolidation of control in Pattani, but the Anglo-Thai treaty of 1909 changed that perception as well as cemented the territorial borders of the deep south that are still in effect at present date.

The Anglo-Thai treaty ceded the area of Kedah to British Malaya. The province of Satul that had been part of Kedah remained under Siamese control however. The three provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat were now de jure under Siamese control. With Pattani left without a native ruler, under Siamese sovereignty that was legally and politically recognized by the British and the traditional borders of the former kingdom split into separate provinces, Siamese superiority over the deep south was now, most likely unwanted and unpopular, but still nevertheless real and undisputable. It is not unlikely that the fact that the former kingdom of Pattani now was split by a border between Siam and British Malaya, thus under different legal, political and administrational entities, added to the apprehension of the Pattani Malays that the Siamese intention for Pattani was to divide and rule.

4.2 Administrational expansion

At the turn of the century Siam adopted to its new role as a nation-state. The new centralized structure had its base in Bangkok from which power flowed outwards and revenues collected inside the country flowed into the ministries and government offices located in the capital. The state bureaucracy expanded and the amount of government officials increased from 12,000 in 1890 to 80,000 in 1919 (Baker & Phongpaichit 2005:96). The new administration provided opportunities for the rural population that traditionally did not enjoy official occupations. The Malay population of the south were however not included in the expansion of the government structure. Revenues and taxes collected in Pattani were returned to Bangkok and they did not participate politically nor administratively. This development urged hundreds of thousands of Malays of the country's south to emigrate to British Malaya in search for better living conditions. The vacuum they left in terms of local government positions was replaced by Siamese administrators (Denudom 2005:17).

In 1921 the Compulsory Primary Education Act was introduced. Among other things it prescribed compulsory teaching in the central Thai language as well as Buddhism. As no dialect of Thai was used as a means of communication among the Pattani Malays and as they

were devoted Muslims, the Act of 1921 was regarded as an attempt to oust their religion and assimilate them into the Thai community (Denudom 2005:24). The project of assimilation through standardized education was continued in the 1930s under the ultra-nationalist military regime of Field Marshal Phibulsongkhran. The continued imposition of the central Thai language and a 'Thai dress' was carried through. The Phibul government was also closing local community schools and Islamic courts. The assimilation attempts failed to reach the desired results. In Pattani, Muslim Malays set up special schools that taught Islamic principles in the local Malayan dialect were formed (Baker & Phongpaichit 2005:173f).

4.3 Failed indoctrination

Through alignment with the United States in the Cold War, Thailand was given findings that made possible the further expansion of education and national discipline that had been contrived in the Chulalongkorn-era, but never realized in full. School texts and teachings promoted and encouraged students to love Thailand and love to be a Thai, to live a Thai life, to buy Thai goods, to speak Thai and to esteem Thai culture (Keyes 1991:12). Besides the teaching of central Thai, education focused on social studies and history. The subjects and educational programmes aimed to indoctrinate the children in the national ideology of 'nation religion and king' (Baker & Phongpaichit 2005:172). As they were carried out, it became increasingly clear that the national ideology was certainly not applicable to all parts of the country and to all people within its borders:

> "These programmes went much further in trying to realize the Chulalongkorn-era ambition to create the 'unity' of a 'Thai nation'. In particular, they tried to impose 'unity' on parts of Thailand where linguistic, religious and cultural traditions differed from the imagined national standard. These differences had been present ever since diverse areas were collected within the first national boundaries, but they became more apparent as the government intruded more deeply. Resistance to the spread of government was often expressed in terms of the defence of local identity and practice. The government perceived such resistance as a special threat to 'national security' because these remote communities had historical and cultural links which flowed across the borders drawn at the turn of the twentieth century". (ibid:173)

4.4 The 1932 revolution

The revolution of 1932 that ended the absolute monarchical rule and replaced it with a constitutional parliament elevated aspirations among the Malay Muslims for genuine

representation and the possibility of a greater degree of cultural autonomy. In the first general election, held in 1933, the four elected MPs from the Muslim provinces, with the exception of Satul, were all Thai Buddhists. The next election in 1937, however, produced Muslim representatives from Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat to the parliament. This achievement proved to be an isolated event. After Phibul seized power in 1938 the elections therefrom up to 1948 all seats in the parliament, disposable for the four southernmost provinces, mainly belonged to Thai Buddhist politicians (Aphornsuvan 2004:20). Despite the frustration regarding the shortcomings of the newly introduced parliamentary system, the Malay population were at least content with the public space to speak up their minds. The first years after the abolition of the absolute monarchy, Pattani witnessed for the first time in very long, a considerable peace and order. It was not until the pre- and post-war area that corrupt government officials, economic hardship and insecurity began to distort whatever illusions the Pattani Malays might have had about the new constitutional regime (ibid:21).

4.5 The Phibul era

Nation-building under the Phibul government, aimed at mobilizing the population under a banner of Thai nationalism with little or no toleration for minority cultures. In order to progress and to make Thailand a civilized and modern country, Phibul held that the country must rid itself of "the people [who] remain poor in culture and exhibit ignorance about hygiene, health, clothing, and rational ways of thinking" (ibid:24). With this mindset the government launched a series of state edicts in 1939. They were launched to promote unity and orderliness and to promulgate ethnic Thai nationalism. More significantly however, they illustrated the Phibul government's ambition to remake the nation and impose culture from above (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005:132). One of the edicts changed the country's name from Siam to Thailand. Phibul motivated the transition in ethnic terms; "We are of the Thai race, but...the name Siam does not correspond to our race" (Kobkua 1995:113). Another edict aimed at making 'Thai people truly Thai'. It stated that; "We must remember that there are many new Thai. Now we have Thailand, we can mix the true Thai together with the new Thai to work together in friendship for the united nation" (Baker & Phongpaichit 2005:133). This edict imposed pressure on the non-Thai to act and speak in ways that assured their membership in the national community. Rituals for honouring the flag, the anthem and other national symbols were introduced. 1944 saw the birth of a Code of National Bravery. Highly influenced by the Japanese warrior code, the Bushido, it defined the Thai race as peace-

loving, industrious, self-reliant, aspiring for progress, martial, Buddhist and loyal to their leader (ibid:135). Phibul explained the necessity of the state edicts in a paternalistic fashion, arguing that the strong state must impose doctrines in society for the sake of unity and national security; "[The] government is forced to reform and reconstruct the various aspects of society, especially its culture, which here signifies growth and beauty, orderliness, progress and uniformity, and the morality of the nation" (Kobkua 1995:102)

4.5.1 Religious intolerance under Phibul

Whatever inclusive ambitions Phibul might have had for the 'new Thai' and the spirit of 'friendship for the united nation' they certainly did not tolerate any deviant culture or differing loyalties that might jeopardize the intended uniformity that Phibul sought to enforce on the country with his highly militaristic regime. Since 1929 the government had been working on a project that intended to unify Islamic marriage and inheritance laws with Thai laws. It was hoped that this project would result in increased understanding and compatibility between the two legal systems. Upon completion in 1944 it was suspended, only to be replaced by Thai civil law. Pattani had since the annexation in 1902 enjoyed the right to resolve family disputes through Islamic laws. The Islamic judge, responsible for family and property cases, was deposed along with the Islamic courts. The imposition of a universal Thai civil law, that meant the abolition of Islamic laws regarding marriage, divorce and inheritance, was a part of Phibul's nation-building project and a sign of a civilized country (Aphornsuvan 2004:25f). Further actions against Islamic religious practice were taken. Muslims were no longer entitled to observe Fridays as public holidays, but had to adjust to how the rest of the nation was organized calendrically. Moreover, attempts to convert Muslims to Buddhism were also occurring. The close-down of the Muslim legal system urged many Malay Muslims to cross the border into neighbouring British Malaya to settle disputes in Islamic courts. In Pattani, that had no direct proximity to the border, a religious judge was elected by the Malay Muslims in order to enable mediation that harmonized with Islamic law (ibid:26). Pitsuwan notes that between 1943 to 1947 there were no cases filed by Malay Muslims in Thai courts at all (1985:136-145), which indicates a lack of confidence and mistrust towards the religiously ignorant Thai juridical administration.

Finally, the unrelented developments and enforced policies of national unity, security and 'thai-ification' of the country during the Phibul era, motivated by progress, modernization and radical nationalism, inconsiderate towards minority cultures and split loyalties has made

Aphornsuvan argue that the year 1944 witnessed an increased radicalization of the Muslim community in Thailand. A radicalization that Aphornsuvan claims is related to the roots of resistance and irredentism of the Malay Muslim community of the southernmost provinces of Thailand towards that country's government and dominance (2004:26).

5. Conclusions

It seems, at this point, reasonable to suggest three concluding remarks. The first of these relates to the ideology that leaders of Thailand has used to enthuse a sense of unity and belonging with the nation. Initiated to fend of external threats as in the Mongkut and Chulalongkorn eras, then politicised into a discourse of 'nation, religion and king' under Vajiravudh only to be radicalized under Phibul as a means of rebuking dubious loyalties internally, the ideology has justified the leadership and legitimised authoritarian rule. Albeit displaying different garments depending on whose leadership the ideology has been promulgated by, it has always been intended to appeal to 'the people of the nation'. The definition of the people has however been limited to those who have managed to qualify as Thai through ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural markers. The nation has been the space and the imagination of the country as a home and safe haven for the people that manage to fulfil the ethnic requirements of "Thainess". As such the ideology has functioned well in providing belongingness and communion between the ethnic Thai as well as a deeply rooted attachment to the nation and the idea of the nation. If the purpose of the nation has been to provide its people with means of fulfilment and realisation of their own proposed Thai identity, the nation certainly has failed to provide those means to anyone who fails to follow the script. Not being able to comply with the promulgated ideology ethnically nor in terms of identity, the Malay Muslims of the south has been regarded with suspicion as second class citizens, a threat to national security and labelled as "guests" despite the take-over of Pattani by Siam in 1909. It seems as if the ideology depends on a dichotomous and asymmetrical way of functioning, where the inclusion of some requires the exclusion of others.

Secondly, it can not be concluded that this ideology has only been one promulgated by the government and authorities. It has nourished from sentiment based on assumptions of ethnic belongingness throughout a wider part of the population. It is possible that the rationale for this ethnic sentiment has evolved from the contexts of European colonialist expansionism, and later, the world-wide trend of nationalism across the globe prior to WWII. During these external threats to the sovereignty of the nation, Thailand had to adopt measures that ensured its continued integrity. Faced with interests that based their legitimacy on differences between peoples, Thailand accordingly adjusted to this mindset and began implementing the same

policies at home. This would help us explain the Foucauldian notion of free subjectivities under the spell of discourses that are shaped by surrounding variables. As such, authorities used present assumptions about ethnic belongingness and sameness rooted in the population to crystallize an ideology that both appealed to the broad public as well as legitimated the policies of unity, modernization and "thainess" that were carried out by regimes that also based their rule on ethnic preconditions.

Finally, the Malay Muslims of the deep south has partly due to the rather discriminating policies they have been subjected to developed a sense of their own uniqueness towards the rest of the population of Thailand. It is certainly not unlikely that this sense has been extended by the harsh treatment and triggered a process of radicalization among the Malay Muslims of Thailand. The alienation and deprivation of the Malay Muslims since the annexation of Pattani has directly influenced the turbulent situation of today. The demands of greater cultural autonomy within Thailand articulated by the Malay Muslims today are rooted in the nation-building project that Thailand began to initiate in the late 19th century that left no room for minority cultures. The Tak Bai incident in 2004 is but a continuum of this remnant that still, it seems, constitutes an important variable for the comprehension of the contemporary violence of Thailand's deep south.

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