

## Conflict Between the Thai and Islamic Cultures in Southern Thailand (Patani) 1948-2005

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### ABSTRAK

*Kajian ini melihat kembali faktor-faktor budaya dalam perkembangan nasionalisme Muslim secessionis di kawasan selatan Thailand yang sudut sejarahnya dinamakan Patani dan pada masa ini terdiri daripada wilayah-wilayah Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala, dan Satun (Setul) yang lebih dipengaruhi bahasa Thai. Budaya dan bahasa di kebanyakan kawasan selatan Thailand lebih rapat dengan kawasan-kawasan Muslim di utara Malaysia berbanding dengan kawasan-kawasan orang Buddha majoriti di Thailand dalam menghadapi usaha-usaha yang berulang kali oleh pentadbiran Thai untuk "mengthaikan" penduduk-penduduk Muslim ini sejak 1902. Kajian ini melihat kembali perkembangan sekolah-sekolah kerajaan Thai yang menggunakan Thai sebagai bahasa pengantar sebagai satu alat penting dengannya pemerintah-pemerintah Thai berterusan berusaha mengintegrasikan Muslim di selatan Thailand ke dalam negara Thai yang bersatu. Proses dekulturisasi sedemikian menggalakkan pemberontakan bersejната oleh sebahagian Melayu-Muslim di Thailand sejak akhir tahun 1960an. Esei ini mengesan bagaimana berbagai pentadbiran Thailand yang lebih liberal sejak 1990 sekurang-kurangnya telah berusaha mendidik Muslim di selatan Thailand dan membawa pembangunan dan pekerjaan dengan pandangan mengatasi ketidakpuasan ekonomi yang dapat memperdalamkan lagi pemberontakan. Walau bagaimanapun, pembentukan satu kelas ahli-ahli politik Muslim berbahasa Thai dalam sistem parlimen tidak membuatkan para pegawai awam Thai menjadi cukup responsif kepada ketidakpuasan sama ada Muslim yang fakir atau Muslim yang terpelajar dalam pendidikan Islam yang diketepikan atau dipinggirkan. Pada tahun 2004 keganasan dan pemberontakan antara komuniti meletus di kawasan-kawasan Muslim di selatan Thailand.*

### ABSTRACT

*This study reviews cultural factors in the development of secessionist Muslim nationalism in the area of Southern Thailand historically termed Patani, consisting of the current provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala and the linguistically more Thaiized Satun (Setul). The culture and language of most of the South has continued to have more affinities to Muslim areas of northern Malaysia than with Buddhist-majority Thailand, in the face of repeated drives*

*by Thai administrations to Thaiize these Muslim populations since 1902. The study reviews the development of the State's monolingual Thai-medium schools as the main tool with which successive Thai governments tried to integrate the South's Muslims into a united Thai state. Such deculturization stimulated armed insurgency by some Muslim Malays in Thailand from the later 1960s. The essay traces how various more liberal Thai administrations since 1990 at least made efforts to educate its Muslims and bring development and jobs with a view to drain away the economic grievances that could feed further insurgency. However, the creation of an unprecedented class of Thai-literate Muslim politicians within parliamentarism could not make the Thai civil servants responsive enough to the grievances of either the Muslim poor or of the marginalized Islamic educationalist counter-elite. In 2004 inter-communal violence and insurgency duly exploded across the Muslim South.*

#### THREAT BY THE THAI STATE TO MUSLIM MALAY IDENTITY IN EDUCATION

The Muslims of the territory currently governed by the Thai State as the provinces of Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani and Satun (Setul) converted to Islam in the 12th century AD. Subsequently, the kingdom of Thailand made many attempts to impose vassal relationships by force on the Malay Muslim sultanates to its south. Early manifestations of a clash between Thai-Buddhist and Islamic culture occurred after the Muslim Malays of the Patani kingdom and its neighboring areas in 1902 were first — after heavy fighting — placed under the direct administration of the expanding Thai empire, with which they had long had tense interactions. From 1902, Thai options to culturally assimilate the Muslims to their South were decisively broadened as the Thai state began to modernize and strengthen. This study will concentrate on the struggle between these two cultures and the effects for the construction of political identities, as it unfolded between 1947 and 2005. (Ibrahim Syukri 1958; Guilquin 2002; and Forbes 1988).

For in 1948, under the leadership of Haji Sulong Abdul Qadir, the Muslim Malays formulated demands for detailed administrative and culture autonomy that first reveal the impact of the recognizably modern type of anti-colonial nationalism then sweeping the neighboring, ethnically related, Muslim lands of Malaya and Indonesia. They were also reacting to the first effective impact of a modernist-nationalist Thai state now attempting through a network of “secular” governmental school to construct (“integrate”) a “nation” through imposed monolingualism in the public sphere, the procedure under which radical laicist nationalists in France and Italy (and perhaps to some extent the U.S.) in the 20th century eliminated the languages that did not fit in. Although modern in its meticulous apprehension of the instruments and institutions of political power,

the demands listed by Sulong in 1947 to a Committee of Inquiry sent from Bangkok after riots could in their outcome stop short of full political nationalism. He asked for one native governor to be elected to all the Southern provinces — which would establish the single Malay-Muslim political unit —; for Malay to be made the medium of primary schools in place of Thai; for 80% of officials to be from the local Muslims in their demographic ratio; and for revenue to remain and be spent in the South. Such demands might only pan out into provincial autonomy with continuing membership in a flexible Thai state. On the modern side, and strikingly like the international lobbying of the secular Indonesian independence movement, Sulong and his colleagues in 1947 appealed to the U.N. to grant separation to Greater Patani. More than half the adult population of the Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani provinces of Thailand were claimed to have signed this petition demanding inclusion into the Federation of Malaya. Sulong's collaborator, the aristocrat Tungku Maihiddin (Muhyiddin) in November 1947 met Indonesian nationalist leaders Sukarno and Dr Abdul Ghani in Java, offering to place an independent Patani within a Greater Indonesian Republic. While using some modern West-originated political language and procedures, Haji Sulong was also steeped in the formal Arabic, learning and ideologies of integral Arab Islam: born in 1893, he had gone to Mecca at the age of 12 where he studied until his return in 1924. He derived his authority to speak for the Muslim Malay populations in general from his standing as the representative of their Arabic-reading Islamic educational-judicial elite; he spoke as chairman of the Pattani district's Council of the Islamic Religion, which was an apex body of the South's Muslim ulema (Nik Anuar; Yegar 2002: 103). Sulong was arrested amid mass protests and bloody repression: after he was released in 1952, he became among the Muslims who were disappeared.

With Haji Sulong's demands, the Muslim Malays were strengthened in their determination to preserve their separate identity: they began to travel a path of resistance and protest that was to lead to an uprising for independence from Thailand that unfolded from 1969 onwards. The two decades since 1948 were thus a decisive turning point for the concepts and outlook of Thailand's Muslim Malays.

In more specific political terms, Haji Sulong's protest and the harshness with which the Thai government is reported to have silenced it, heralded the birth of a new Malay nationalist leadership in the post-World War II South. The royal Patani aristocracy whose role had by now petered out into émigré agitation from Malaya was to be replaced as the focus for Muslim discontent by new leaders. The new type of leadership raises again the deeper socio-cultural question of the part the Arabic-oriented traditional Islamic religious schools or pondoks played in the development of Muslim resistance to the Thais. Haji Sulong, his immediate followers, and the 'ulama group he spoke for as head of the Majlis 'Ulama were first and foremost products of these indigenous — highly conservative — Southern pondoks (madrasahs) which in his case had

entailed full bilingualization into Arabic through prolonged formative study in the Hijaz from his early adolescence. Significantly, the “Liberation Movement” that surfaced nearly two decades later in 1967, which from September-December 1969 onwards was attacking Thai garrisons stationed in the South, and which took the title “National Liberation Front for the Patani Republic” (“Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Republik Patani”), was at first headed by “a teacher of religion,” Haji Yusof at-Tamani (Suhrke 1970-71: 537). These Muslim insurgents who took organizational form from the late 1960s claimed to be the direct political heirs of Haji Sulong and the ulema he headed. Although his precise relation to the pondoks and ulema was not fully clear, Idris bin Mat Diah (known as Pak Yeh), the Commander-in-Chief of the Patani Liberation Army, was presented by the Front in 1970 as “a man who believes in God and is very religious with many followers” (*Suara Siswa*, Dec. 1970: 58). Certainly, he was one of the followers of Haji Sulong with whose arrest and alleged murder Idris took to the jungle from where he was for years a violent — and hunted — enemy of the Thai administration (*Suara Siswa*, Dec. 1970: 54).

The unfolding of radical jihadist Muslim nationalism in Thailand’s southern provinces in the 1970s was automatically also a problem in the international political relations of that State with Malaysia. The political and cultural borders between (a) the Malay-speaking areas of which most came to be gathered into Malaysia and (b) the India-influenced Buddhists of Siam/Thailand have shifted a fair bit over decades and indeed centuries. Siam had a very loose suzerainty over Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Terengganu between the early 1800s and 1909 when they were handed to the British, setting in motion their progression to eventual membership in Malaysia. Thus, there has historically been a fair amount of cultural and personal interaction between the two peoples. The might with which the Kingdom of Thailand strove to reduce Malay kingdoms to vassalage seems to have built some cultural respect in the latter: Malay princes sometimes sought to enhance their prestige by seeking Thai titles. People-to-people bonds developed in the era in which Thailand’s titular influence extended as far south as the present-day Kedah-Penang border in Malaysia. When Tunku Abdul Rahman, in 1957 to lead Malaya to independence from the British, was born in 1903 Thai influence in the Kedah of the time caused the Tunku to be sent to Bangkok to study with members of Siamese royalty. Clearly, Tunku Abdul Rahman’s personal formation as a Malay aristocrat might not make him direct the administrations over which he presided from Kuala Lumpur to 1969 to help Malay Muslim secessionists in Southern Thailand. In Kelantan, the stronghold of the All-Malaysia Islamic Party (PAS) in today’s Malaysia, the people’s distinctive Malay dialect shows them to be of one stock with the Malay Muslims in Thailand’s southern provinces. Thus, the “Islamists” of Kelantan, in parliamentary opposition to the Malaysian central government, and given their own historical memories of the non-Muslim Thais, might well adopt stances of solidarity with malcontents to the north above the international border liable

to make them clash with the regime in Kuala Lumpur. Still, the affinities of Patani's Malay Muslims to Northern Malaysia are thinning out with time. It is less common now for Patani men to marry northern Malaysian women, and take them back home to live, or for Muslim Malaysian men to marry Patani Muslim women and take them to Malaysia to raise the family. That old pattern had entailed periodical visits by the children across the border to see their mothers' extended kin. Patani males come to Malaysia to work, but their cultural affinities with Malaysians during limited stays do not deepen because they have only been taught the Arabic-based Jawi script of Malay in their pondok schools in Thailand; since the major Malay newspapers of Kuala Lumpur are now in Latin script, and many such ordinary Patanis do not read Malaysia's press while working there. Thus, temporary residence in Malaysia can fail to reverse the Thai state's narrowing and impoverishment of their Malay identity.

By and large, the boundary between Malaysia and Southern Thailand, and between Malay-speaking and Thai-speaking areas, has long been a porous border with business and emotional links and overlap extending on both sides. The gap of concepts and languages between the Islamic and Buddhist worlds, though, has always remained a deep ravine. Thailand's Ambassador to Kuala Lumpur Chaisiri Anamarn in early 2004 warned that Malaysians for the most part still "do not know much about contemporary Thailand despite the substantial historical ties between the two states," and vice-versa. He was concerned that the next generation of Malaysians growing up was still thinking of Thailand and its southern towns as the sex destination for tourists that it had been for decades (Moses 2004: F4).

Muslim Malays under Thai rule in the late 1960s and the 1970s identified some highly specific grievances as pushing them since the death of Haji Sulong nearer and nearer to secessionist revolt. One ever-deepening grievance was the Thai Government's long-standing encouragement — stepped up since 1968 — of Thai settler migration to ready-built "self-supporting villages" in the South. A British journalist who visited South Thailand in late 1970 found that Muslim militants there regarded this as "an effort to submerge the Malay population and make South Thailand a predominantly Thai area" (*Suara Siswa*, Dec. 1970: 19-20; and Guilquin 2002: 115). The Thai Government had been unable, or had lacked the determination, to raise the quality of the officials it was sending to the South, regarded as an administrative dead-end to which more corrupt or incompetent administrators were sometimes transferred as a kind of punishment that could nonetheless be made very lucrative by the men of imagination. From such officials, the Malay population continued to suffer exactions little changed since their land was first put under direct Thai administration when the self-governing Malay Rajas were abolished in 1902 [*Bangkok World*, 21 August 1971: 2]. Some Thai administrators stressed that some Muslim discontent had stemmed from a factor over which Bangkok had little control — the falling prices for rubber which over the 1960s lowered the income of Muslims involved

in its production. (Suhrike 1970-71: 533). But Thai governments and Buddhist businessmen had done well out of the extraction of raw materials, both crops and minerals, from the South, even if the Muslim populations there were not. In late 1971, out of 12 provincial mineral resources offices, 10 were in the “open zone” in the South (*Bangkok World*, 23 August 1971: 2), although this did not exactly correspond to Muslim majority areas. The Muslim separatist viewpoint has over decades consistently been that “Thai imperialists” were plundering the Muslim South’s natural wealth of rubber, tin, timber, coconuts, gold, and fish, that Thailand was deriving one third of its total income from the Muslim areas. (*Young Pakistan*, 22 Oct. 1970). In 2004, emigres in Malaysia of the PULO separatist organization stressed that Thai universities were conducting geological research to assess possible deposits of oil in the Muslim South (Tanakwang 2004). Projects from Bangkok to bring economic development to the South were often meant to dilute its Muslims rather than give them more chances in life. Michel Guilquin (2002) found that the Thai government had had land cleared for the development of rubber and oil palm plantations in the South specifically to bring in colonies of Buddhist Thai families, notably from Thailand’s North East (Guilquin 2002: 115). Muslim malcontents stressed political terror that Thai officials, police, and troops had continued to use against Muslim leaders, as they charged.

All the political and economic grievances set out above nourished discontent in Southern Thailand. Research nonetheless needs to trace further to what degree and in what modalities tensions between cultures in the 1960s and 1970s pushed Patani Muslims to insurrection. It is very hard to see how (a) the ethos and culture the pondoks promoted could have been fitted into (b) the determination of the Thai authorities to linguistically — and, ultimately, perhaps religiously — “integrate” the Muslim Malays through the Thai-medium government schools they established in the South.

As early as March 14th, 1923, the *Penang Gazette* ascribed disturbances against the Thais in Patani not only to economic grievances, eg. heavy taxation, but also to “differences with regard to education. The last straw to break the back of the long-suffering Patani Malay is enforcing of the new Siamese Education Act, which simply amounts to this, that no Malay schools, not even learning in the mosques, are now allowed, but that all Mohammedan Malay children are forced to attend Siamese Buddhist schools. The object is the gradual ‘Siamifying’ of Patani, and the stamping out of the Mohammedan faith” (*Suara Siswa*, Dec. 1970: 11-12). The threat to the indigenous education system, and the Islamic ulema active at the grass-roots in the South itself, were much more the movers of the ensuing widespread quasi-uprising than aristocratic forces around Abdul Qadir intriguing from exile in Kelantan. The crisis showed the authoritarian resolve of governing Thais to excise Islam as a culture, but it is true that rigid Thai elite also now showed that it might back-track somewhat when its drive drew answering violent protest from the Malay subjects. Faced

with the pandemonium, the Thai government finally allowed the pondoks to reopen and tried to avoid Buddhist sanctuaries being built near sensitive Islamic sites. (Guilquin 2002: 100-101).

It was significant in the cultural origins of Muslim separatism in the South that this assimilation policy began to be especially applied after the modernizing military officer Phibul Songgram seized power over the Thai State in 1932. In a synthesis that varied from the resolve of Kemal Ataturk to eliminate Islam from the nationalist public sphere, Phibul proclaimed Buddhism the religion of state while using the armed forces and government to impose a single modernist-nationalist identity throughout Thailand. The bureaucratic-military system over which he presided was influenced by French Utopianist ideas but also, predictably, by Fascism, which was to lead Thailand to ally with Japan and Nazi Germany during the Second World War. The new statal identity would have a comprehensively deculturizing impact upon the Malay Muslims, religious as well as national. Adoption of Thai surnames was made a condition for public employment in towns (the Thai state had only an occasional presence in the remote Muslim villages). Phibul renamed “Siam” “Thailand” to underline the ethnic nature of membership. Given that he and his colleagues stressed Thai “race” alongside Thai language this was not an open invitation nationalism like the USA’s with its post-ww1 (the First World War) deculturizing brutal bargains for non-Anglos, or like France’s bargains for Breton- or Provençal-speakers: thus, even energetic self-Thaiization by the South’s Muslims might not have won many opportunities or resources from the State. As things turned out, the South’s Malays fought the imposition of Thai names on them because their native Arabic names related them to Muhammad, other prophets, and to the 99 attributes of Allah. In nationality rituals, Thai police forced Muslims to prostrate themselves before Buddhist sacred objects — a practise that continues in the civil service and schools even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Guilquin 2002: 101-105).

The new militarist Thai state’s policy of prohibiting the teaching of Malay in the government schools, of exclusively using Thai in administrative offices, and of forcing Thai dress, language, culture, and personal names upon Muslims loomed large in Haji Sulong’s 1948 catalogue of grievances. In 1942, strongman Phibul had declared war on Britain and the USA in order to use Japan’s power, but been forced to retire to make way for a new civilian regime which he overthrew in another coup in 1948. Barbara Whittingham-Jones, the first foreigner to travel overland from Siam to Malaya after the Second World War, reported in 1947, around the time of Haji Sulong’s movement, that “everywhere I went it was the same tale of systemic oppression and a deliberate attempt to denationalize the population. Deepest resentment is aroused by the ban on Malay education.” Prohibitions against private Malay schools, relaxed in the immediate post-liberation period when Siam was still under scrutiny as an ex-enemy of Britain and America, were now being reinforced. Although one or two Malay schools still survived, notably in Yala in Bangnara (Naradhivas), several had

been obliged to close down a day or so immediately preceding her visit. “As the Malays refuse to send their children to Siamese schools and have so stubbornly refused to acquire even a rudimentary knowledge of the Siamese language (during the whole of my visit I found only one hajji, a former district officer, able to read and write Siamese), this educational starvation is retarding their entire social and economic development. As a result, the gulf between the native Malays and their Siamese conquerors steadily widens and the Siamese colonists openly scorn their subjects as illiterate and degenerate peasants” (*Suara Siswa*, Dec. 1970: 13-16).

By 1948 many Muslim Malays had come to identify Government-imposed Thai language and culture with the issue of their economic and political subordination, although Jawi-script original sources for the period need to be scanned to focus the points at which the roles of languages and cultures conjoined with statal power and politics in the crystallization of nationalism in Patani. On both sides attitudes were hardening: Muslim rejection of Thai identity increasingly was finding its standard expressions that plague the South to this day — sporadic banditry waged against society by men who had been pushed to its margin, and political Muslim nationalist insurgency aimed at overthrowing that society from its foundation and replacing it with an independent Muslim State.

Some partial confirmation of Malay-Muslim fears in the 1960s and 1970s that the Thai Government’s “integrating” education was a programmed assault on their language and faith, their whole native identity, came from the revealing Thai sources paraphrased by Astri Suhrke. Thai Government officials openly were hoping to impose Thai language and culture on the Muslims without allowing any compensating scope for the transmission and thus survival of Malay language and the Islamic faith. They expressed confidence that this was practicable policy so long as there was no immediate frontal attack to eliminate Islam as an individual faith of private worship because — they reasoned — “only clearly restrictive policies against Islamic religion will activate the Muslim identification factor.” Suhrke, who liked the Thai language, did worry that the Bangkok government’s drive to impose Thai through schools itself “potentially conflicts with the principle of religious freedom” since “more extensive education patterned on the standard Thai curriculum will tend to squeeze out the study of Malay, Jawi [=its Arabic script, a term sometimes also applied to the local Malay dialect], and the Koran” (Suhrke 1970-71: 542). Because there was no attempt by Thai educationalists to weave Thai and Malay together, the result of the imposition of Thai in schools was incomprehension and the infliction of inability to read any language. The American anthropologist Thomas Fraser who, more than any other Westerner had a perfect acquaintance with the culture of Patani’s Malay Muslims, in 1966 observed of the Thai government schools in the South that: “the language of instruction in Thai government schools is, of course, Thai. The language spoken by the Malay village children is Malay. It is

both amusing and disheartening to walk into the school at Rumsebilan and observe the teacher standing in front of the class with charts and chalkboard, teaching from the government syllabus in Thai, while the children squirm on the benches and chatter among themselves in Malay” (Fraser 1966: 82).

Throughout the decades of the second half of the 20th century, most Muslim parents rejected the government educational system that worked to obliterate all that is most distinctive of Malay identity. There has over decades been a high drop-out rate of Muslim children: in the last year of primary school and the first year of secondary school in the 1970s only 30 per cent of the students were Thai Muslim, the remainder being Thai-Buddhists. “The major reason for the drop-out rate among the Thai Muslims is parental reluctance to maintain their children in Government schools because it conflicts with religious studies. For this reason, many prefer the pondok schools which emphasize the study of the Koran and the Malay and Jawi languages” and once Muslim children return to the village pondok they naturally lost whatever command they had gained of the Thai language (Suhrke 1970-71: 542-543). The Thai Government did not try to dispel the feeling Muslims had that modernizing education was offered to them by the state only at the price of the obliteration of their native tongue and religious civilization. Instead of including the Malay and Arabic tongues in the government curriculum and thereby providing some incentive for Muslims to accept modern Thai education as compatible with Muslim identity, the Thai authorities were pressing ahead with ever more linguistic Thaiization. Muslim pupils from the early 1970s were to learn a tongue at odds with their religion now even from their infancy. “A new plan was drafted in 1969 which aims to establish kindergartens connected with all primary schools in the Muslim provinces within a six-year period. The program is designed to lay a solid foundation in Thai language, which is not obtained through three or four years of primary schooling”. Finally, the Thai authorities hoped to eliminate the role of the pondoks as an Islamic sanctuary from Thai culture by converting them into “private Islamic schools which include several hours of Thai language instruction and standard curriculum” per day, and closing down those pondoks which refuse to convert. With non-Muslim Thai teachers assigned to such pondoks to teach secular subjects, with teaching of the Malay language banned, and with even “Islamic religion” taught from Thai-language textbooks composed in Bangkok, it would be hard to argue that any distinct tradition of education was being allowed to survive. It is clear from coverage of this educational policy in the Bangkok media of the 1960s and 1970s that even the few hours of the “Islamic religious instruction” that was all the changes would leave to the Muslim religious schools would only be those stripped-down “principles common between all religions.” Those “lessons in religion” would be a theosophical or freemasonic-like construct that would spatter some flecks ripped from Islam over the synthesized Buddhist-Western ideology of the modernist Thai state.

As Anglo-Saxon statesmen and officials did in the USA, successive Thai governments have applied formal monolingual state education as the chief instrument for an imaged integration process. A Stanford University PhD dissertation by Dr Uthai Dulyakasem, a Thai Muslim intellectual and academic, noted that this bringing of “secular” education into Malay-Muslim areas had failed to achieve peaceful assimilation and “intensified, if not created, ethnic conflict between Muslim Malays and the central government.” The Thai government edict of 1960 requiring pondok schools to register promoted widespread resistance, with 150 of the 550 pondoks in the South closing down. In his 2001 retrospect, Dulyakasem saw the deculturizing Thai schools as having very much sparked the organization of such secessionist movements as the BNPP (National Front for the Liberation of Pattani: proclaimed 1969) and then PULO (Pattani United Liberation Organization: Pertubuhan Pembebasan Patani Bersatu) and the BRN (National Revolutionary Front). Dr Uthai, in 2001 Dean of the liberal arts faculty at Walailak University in Nakhon Si Thammarat, argued that Thai-medium modern education had not succeeded in diffusing a single national identification around the Thai state, particularly when imposed at the expense of ethnic, religious, and linguistic characteristics and accompanied by racial killings (Bangkok Post, 19 Aug. 2001). Rage in the 1970s at deculturization from Thai education, though, was fusing with trauma from Thai terror and killings against Muslim populations they ruled. One 1975 murder by the military of five in Narathiwat, openly connived at by the authorities, sparked prolonged demonstrations by 70,000 Muslims at the central mosque in Patani — perhaps organized by the emergent PULO (Patani Liberation Organization) — forcing the central government to replace the governor of Patani with a Muslim appointee (Yegar 2002: 150-151).

Suhrke justified that Muslims were educationally backward and almost unrepresented in the bureaucracy — the source of power in Thailand — because of their own decision to shun the modernizing education the government had long offered, that “the minority tends to discriminate against itself in this respect” (Suhrke 1970-71: 545). Still, a question of Thai intent and responsibility is raised here, quite apart from the posed retrogressiveness of Islam. It is almost as if the Thai administrative elite of the 1960s and 1970s intentionally offered the Malays a form of educational (thereby presumably political and economic) advance that was conditional upon the Muslim Malays ceasing to be themselves and becoming more or less Thai — a brutal bargain they knew very well most Malays would reject in advance. Malay Muslims ruled by the Thai state are not scattered immigrants in and around the Thai metropolis with no choice but to take that Center’s language and discourse *in toto*: they are a majority in a homeland subordinated on a periphery with an unconnected language that remains viable although starved by another group in day-to-day life. One wonders if the governing Thais have ever been much upset that the Malays

very humanly rejected an education that would modernize at such a fearful cultural price.

Clearly, western scholars who wrote about the Patani Malays were a mixed bag. Some anthropologists who lived with those Muslims and learned their language recorded the incapacity of Thai-medium education to convey data to the non-Thai kids whom it was supposed to educate. To the other side, the “objective” study in the West after the Second World War mostly credited the “modernization” and “national integration” spiels that the Third World’s new central governments regimes took up for their own purposes from Westerners. This methodological bias tended to view Third World culture minorities — in particular those that defined themselves in terms of religion — as constituting “problems” for the kind of “national integration” and “modernization,” which Bangkok administrations, too, claimed to be bringing to the South. It is the statal entities aligned with the West that had importance, not the concerns and cultural characteristics of the peoples who could be steamrollered. Statal-language discourses may not be the best sector from which to analyze disparate nationalities that such states occupy on their margins. Such discourses have to be analyzed critically as constructs designed to maximize the range of roles that the ethnic class-elite around the capital city can play throughout that state’s far-flung territories: they are a procedure of outdoor relief on the peripheries of states and patronage that binds somewhat wider sections of the group that speaks the language at the core to the system that truly does offer them chances. There need not be much intent in education offered to the out-groups to really grant them avenues to access the already crowded table of the faraway small pie in the capitals.

In the later 1970s, some Thai administrators became worried that it was hard to convey instructions or extract the masses of Malay Muslims in the South who could not read Thai. They considered printing the local Malay in Thai characters on forms, and perhaps for a few texts for the first years of primary school. This was a pragmatic adjustment to the non-Thai specificity of the Muslims that would still keep them moving on the highway to radical Thaiization. However, the experiment proved abortive.

From the 1970s, the rapid pace of construction of government schools in the South has produced a teacher-pupil ratio above national Thai average. However, it was disproportionately the Thai settler minority that gained education from these schools. Czarist Russian educational programs in Muslim Central Asia produced a literacy rate among Russian children that equaled or surpassed those in almost every other part of that empire at that time. The aim, though, was not to educate the general Muslim populations there but the children of Russian settlers “to strengthen the Russian population so that it can successfully bear the cultural and economic struggle with the mass of the native population without losing its religious, national and cultural characteristics” (Pierce 1960: 218). Parliamentarism had not meant much for Malay Muslims

as a channel for complaints to the Thai power-center or for delivering resources from that center or as a career path during the administrations of Phibun Songgram and his military between 1932 and 1963. However, in the late 1960s and earlier 1970s more benefits and avenues and chances, and more pages of print-Thai, were delivered by the corruption-bound Thai political system. Thus, a developing accommodationist group of Malay Muslims did not go with nationalists who were working to resolve the long anti-relationship between Thais and Malay Muslims with armed insurrection (Suhrke 1975, 1977 and 1981).

#### PROTEST AND RESISTANCE BY AN ARABIC-LITERATE MUSLIM COUNTER-ELITE

What was the precise nature of Muslim responses in the 1960s and 1970s to the cultural challenge of “assimilation” through the Thai schools? One view was that the Thai Government in the later 1960s was avoiding a direct clash with Muslims because it had been easy-going and benevolent in the actual implementation of its harsh-sounding policies. “Contrary to official policy, pondok schools of the common type continue to spring up in the countryside. Government supervision and control over education in the common ones is lax and lenient, and no measures have been taken to close down common pondok schools. While this may slow down the educational program as a whole, it prevents a head-on conflict between the religious and the educational issues in the short run” (Suhrke 1970-71: 544). However, the impressions of other neutral outside observers who had visited the South in the past two decades and even earlier suggested that this idyllic model of a gradual and relatively painless transition of the South to “assimilation” had not characterized all areas of Muslim-Thai cultural encounter there. Such non-Muslim testimonies bear out the account given by Muslim nationalists that they were pushed towards uprising for the South’s secession and incorporation into Muslim Malaysia by a consistent Thai governmental drive to suppress both the Qur’anic school network and the culture it radiates. Thai drives to deculturize through education sparked a matching response from a local population determined to maintain its identity to eliminate Thai rule from their history.

Due to various forms of unrest in the South, by 1969, in the words of one Western observer “the focus of the Thai Government’s counter-insurgency efforts shifted from the Northeast, where guerilla activities were largely contained, to the South where there existed something of a reign of terror...On November 24, Prime Minister Thanom indicated that the Government would send 1,000 soldiers to Southern Thailand in order to bring the insurgency to a halt” (Neher 1970: 163-164).

Such unrest the Thai Government blamed before the outside world on either pure “banditry” or Chinese communist activity. According to Muslim nationalist

sources, however, Thai administrators in the South branded the outbreaks on the inoffensive-looking pondoks, as culminating years of anti-Thai indoctrination they were alleged to give their Malay students (*Suara Siswa*, Dec. 1970: 22). One Muslim leader, a graduate from Egypt's Islamic University of Al-Azhar, boldly retorted to one such official that what had really provoked the violence in Southern Thailand were the exactions of Thai administrators and the persecution of innocent people (*Suara Siswa*, Dec. 1970: 25). The general Muslim nationalist position was that while the pondoks were strongholds for Muslim cultural resistance, they did not initiate the conflict with the government, but gave a focus and some leadership to Muslims who were responding to a whole range of injustices and pressures, cultural, political and economic. According to the secessionist argument, Muslim Malays had inadequate representation in educational institutions and the bureaucracy not only because their own cultural attitudes "penalize" them but because of Thai discrimination and determination to prevent Muslims progressing and thereby sharing power and resources. It was claimed that in the government schools of the 1960s and 1970s Muslim students who retained non-Thai Arabo-Malay names were often penalized with worse examination results than those who under the pressure adopted Thai names. The malcontents contended that universities and colleges opened in the South did not have the education of indigenous Muslims among their primary aims: the Patani University, when opened in early 1968, was said at that point to have had only one Muslim Malay student, a female, although later the proportion to the student body rose to 7% (*Suara Siswa*, Dec. 1970: 33). And even if, despite all obstacles, a Muslim did acquire standard Thai education, anti-Muslim discrimination might still prevent him from advancing in Government service. Indeed, Muslim nationalists alleged the physical elimination of young Muslims who might show promise as administrators. An instance cited was Zainal Abidin, a first-class graduate in law who somehow became a minor employee in the Prime Minister's office in Bangkok, and whom Thais were said to have beaten to death on 10 February 1970 (*Suara Siswa*, Dec. 1970: 24).

Although Patani's Muslim Malay nationalists in the 1970s were declaring with pride that "the pondoks have yet to be obliterated," they did not see this as due to any lack of Thai governmental programs geared to that purpose. Thai officials are said to have announced to Muslim religious teachers whom they had summoned to a meeting in Bangnara on 17 and 18 January 1968 that in four years the network of traditional pondoks would have been wholly eliminated. Officials in charge of education in the South are said to have also announced that from 1971 no new pondoks could open without a government license dependent on their teaching Thai curriculum, and that those teachers who after that time illegally gave instruction to groups of more than 17 people would be charged before law (*Suara Siswa*, Dec. 1970: 30). The political murders of Malays alleged by the nationalists to have preceded and partly provoked the

upsurge of secessionist insurgency in 1967-69 seem mostly to have taken as victims Muslim ‘ulama, and pondok teachers and students. This, with the restrictions on the issue of passports to Malays with Arabic names for travel and thus education abroad, was charged to have dealt a hard blow to the traditional Islamic schools. Wrote a Muslim nationalist: “One measure in Thailand’s program to obliterate the pondoks has succeeded. Now the religious teachers staffing the pondoks have been intimidated. The ‘ulama among them who want, or potentially might want, to return home” [from Malaysia and study in the Arab world] “again find no opportunity to do so and thereby serve their people. In recent times, charges have often been laid against teachers and their students at the pondoks to the effect that they are ‘the source of strength’ of the liberation fighters” [ie the secessionists] (*Suara Siswa*, Dec. 1970: 24). Given this climate of intimidation and wide arrests, in part borne out by Suhrke (Suhrke 1970-71: 539), it was difficult for the traditional Islamic schools to carry on at all, and certainly impossible for those that “converted” to Thai curricula to propagate the culture and values of Islam. For not only did most of the day pass in the teaching of Thai and Thai-medium subjects, but the Thai teachers whom such schools necessarily employed “are eyes and ears of the Government” (*Suara Siswa*, Dec. 1970: 23-24), leaving what ostensibly religious functions and personnel still survived merely a kind of “facade” for the Thai governments’ highly authoritarian “integration”.

Astri Suhrke fixed the number of pondok schools at one fourth of the total number of government schools established in the South; and estimated that one half of the pondoks were in process of “conversion.” One deduces that most pondoks that had survived that far had been mainly located in isolated villages over which the Thai administration and armed forces had and have but intermittent control. Lack of Thai government control in the countryside was evidenced by the military guards that were accompanying units offering medical services to Muslim villagers: a mobile medical team that also offered haircuts to Muslim children had to be accompanied, 60 kilometers from the provincial seat of Phatthalung [province 840 kilometers south of Bangkok: made up mostly of forested mountains], by “a twenty-four man military detail” and local provincial police to protect them against possible attacks from “terrorists” (*Bangkok World*, 21 July 1971: 4). Although it is outside the four provinces defined by Muslim separatists as the “Great Patani” homeland, Phatthalung was to be included among areas with Muslims neighboring that “Patani Raya” from which the Patani United Liberation Organization’s website in April 2004 warned international tourists, who had long stimulated prostitution, to stay away (Baker 2004).

From 1958 to 1972 was a period of authoritarian development over which the military presided, but which also saw the growth of a non-Chinese Thai bourgeoisie. Under governing soldiers such as General Thanom Kittikachorn, Thailand deepened its role as a close ally of the USA, offering its territories as a

base for the USA from which it bombarded North Vietnam. The U.S. lent its assistance to the construction of a network of roads that knitted all of Thailand much closer together and made possible a more intrusive presence of Thai military and petty officials now down to village level. The extraction of resources from the South was speeded up.

We have a 1970 Arabic-language account from the stratum of the nationalist Islamic intellectuals formed in the pondoks, from internal evidence written by a member of the Patani ulema who received higher education in some Arab country. It vividly catches the trauma that Thai programs to end the function of the mosques and pondoks as centers radiating Islam as an all-embracing civilization caused in the Patani ulema. From inside the pondok system and ethos, he reveals how the government's attempt to create an alternative Muslim religious hierarchy and "convert" the pondoks into an instrument to propagate, rather than be an alternative or supplement to, Thai culture, revolutionized and drove into the jungles a whole Muslim generation in the 1960s and 1970s. "The Thai government", he wrote, "has begun to bring the austere creed of Islam nearer to idolatrous Buddhism. Thus the government alternately will consider Islam a faith to be restricted to private individual worship, on one hand, but then will accuse it of being an obstruction to economic development at other times. On the strength of this, we find the Government, correspondingly, can build its Buddhist temples. What is really heart-breaking is that the mosques seem to be turning into mere sheep-pens which no one visits except for once a week, that is Friday" [the day of collective prayer]. "The reason is that the Thai Government bans any gathering of more than five people there on any day but Friday, and even then the Friday sermon to be delivered is subjected to censorship before it is delivered. [The official "Council of Islam" of the Shaykh al-Islam or Chularajmontri] has been on the point of death in recent years for it has been stacked with ignorant men who act as instruments for the Government to defend its injustices. Some even are hired as informers to spy on the Muslim teachers and the Imams of the mosques who are struggling to reform the outlook of the Muslims there and battling to wrest back the rights robbed from them in the same way that their Arab brothers in beloved Palestine are struggling to get their rights back from the hands of the Jews. As a result of this, the ulema have been arrested, they have been imprisoned without trial in jails where they meet types of torture my pen is unable to describe." [While this particular Patani writer did not ethnicize his data in that way, many Malay Muslims in Thailand regarded the often decrepit Thai-speaking non-Malay Islamic clerics drawn from the State's central lands and fostered by the Thai state under the Shaykh al-Islam or Chularajmontri, as motivated by their native speech to keep the South's Muslims under the control of the Buddhist Thais].

"I note that the Thai government does not give opportunities to the sons of Patani and does not build schools offering scientific and modern education for their use. But I must needs add here that some sincere Muslims have attempted

to set up religious schools with their own individual curricula. Yet, regrettably, the efforts meet a number of formidable obstacles imposed by the Buddhist government with the aim of destroying Islamic consciousness. For example, the Government stipulates and fixes the school subjects Muslims can study within narrow limits. Islamic law, for example, is not allowed to be taught except insofar as it touches matters of religious worship alone. Many teachers have been jailed on the charge of teaching lessons outside of what the Government has fixed. A hideous thing has happened from the Muslim point of view there when the Thai Government introduced its Buddhist tongue into the pondoks as a compulsory subject which must be taught for a minimum of three hours daily. So, only two hours of school-time remain for teaching Islam, the Qur'an and Arabic grammar ('Umar al-Tayyib 1970: 196). This is a frightening outrage which may in the coming days worsen: I mean that these originally religious schools may turn into purely Siamese Buddhist institutions that work on a regular footing in the morning and only become religious in the evening as a part-time side-line. The Tarqiyah Islam Madrasah is itself of this character." When first established it used to teach Islam and the Arabic language at the side of other religious sciences, also taught in Arabic medium. "But afterwards it was changed into a Thai-Buddhist school where Islamic subjects were taught for only a few hours in the week. This saddening situation" had similarly developed in the other religious schools in Yala, Patani and Setul provinces. The Muslims can no longer bear the hardships and persecutions that increase day after day. This is what impels many sincere youth among the Muslim community to enter the forests where they have begun to train themselves in the use of weapons in implementation of Allah's revealed verse 'What could afflict ye that ye fight not in the path of God and those men, women and children who are downtrodden?' [Qur'an 4:85]. These heroic deeds have succeeded in arousing Islamic and national consciousness in the souls of the Patani Muslims; they have begun to join in the use of armed violence against the Buddhist Government, and to inflict heavy losses upon it" (*al-Mujtama'*, 22 Dec. 1970: 12-13).

The sources, make-up and world-view of the Muslim secessionist movement that unfolded in Southern Thailand to the mid-1980s are now clear. To a large extent its leadership came from the traditional Islamic pondoks (often with higher Islamic education in the Middle East added on) and it was a sometimes rather literate, analytical, Muslim response to, and rejection of, Thai government attempts to alter the indigenous culture of the South through education. Sulong, who started the process of the formation and evolution of the leadership of the National Liberation Front for the Patani Republic (NLFPR) or in Malay, Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Republik Patani (BNPRP), had been an Arabic-literate elite Islamic intellectual. It is true that Islam, under influences from diverse independent Muslim states and politicized movements around the world, was becoming more and more diverse following the Second World War among

Muslim Malays ruled by Thailand. The successive leaderships of the NLFPR consistently presented themselves as standing for a long-established local Islam that nonetheless had its connections to up-to-date milieus and movements in the Arab World. In 1977 the Barisan's Central Committee was headed by Badri Hamdan, a graduate of al-Azhar Islamic University in Egypt, where its secretary had also studied. In the 1970s and earlier 1980s, members or followers of the NLFPR had dealings and transactions with the governments of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Pakistan that were not very radical (Yegar 2002: 144). Other factors and grievances, political and economic, were, however, important, although languages and cultures focused them. And there was some influence from Western-type political criteria of a linguistic or territorial nation, able in theory to span disparate religious groups, which would be more secular in application than corresponding concepts derived from classical Islam. These could draw the resistance leaderships to try to include the South's Chinese minority within the Nation that Islam also defined. The Chinese mostly spoke Malay: as money-lenders, marketers of produce and goods and as doctors they met grass-roots needs of Malay villagers. Chinese populations had been in the South long before Thai armies or administrators came. Given the influx of Thai settlers, the NLFPR and later other secessionist groups had to win them over. However, joint Buddhism has sometimes connected some Chinese to the Buddhist Thais and their government in the eyes of the restive Malay masses (*Suara Siswa*, Dec. 1970: 57; and Guilquin 2002: 87-90).

#### INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE PATANI ISSUE: 1974

By 1974, Thailand's campaign to erase the particularities of the Patani Muslims was arousing some sharp concern not just among nearby ethnically-linked Muslims in Malaysia and Thailand, but also among faraway ones in the Middle East. Thai administrations had to hold off and neutralize both areas of outside Muslims. At the same time, increased interest by outside Muslims was arousing, beyond the bureaucrats, a student stratum closer to the Thai popular base. The situations and the issue could get out of control of both Malaysia's and Thailand's governing elites.

On June 13, 1974 Dato' Haji Mohamed Asri, leader of the Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS) normally in opposition but for the time Malaysia's Land Development and Special Functions Minister, at his party's 20th Congress said that he thought the Thai secessionist groups' struggle for autonomy, with specific conditions, "is reasonable." The Thai Foreign Ministry called in the Malaysian Ambassador, Tan Sri Abdul Hamid, to explain Asri's statement. Tan Sri Hamid said Asri had made the statement as chairman of PAS and not in his capacity as a governmental Minister; the Malaysian government had no wish to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, particularly Thailand which was a close

neighbour. Thailand's Foreign Minister, Charuphand Isarangkun na Ayutthaya told the ambassador that "I am still worried and unhappy over this explanation." He said that he would inform his Government.

Aware that Thailand could allow the remnants of the Malayan Communist Party to recuperate within its territories, the Malaysian Foreign Ministry expressed regret on June 20, 1974 over the "misunderstanding", with a coerced Asri echoing. The Ministry statement reaffirmed Malaysia's belief that the Muslim insurgency in Southern Thailand "remains entirely within the province of the Thai Government." The Malaysian Government meant its statement to clear up "any misunderstanding which has arisen in this matter... which, if allowed to go on, can only benefit the common enemies of Malaysia and Thailand" [underground and exiled Malaya Communists to whom Thailand always maintained ambiguous or mixed stances as an instrument to contain the Malaysian government].

In a letter to Professor Sanya on June 21, 1974, Malaysia's Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, said that the utterances by Asri did not represent Malaysia's policy, which was non-interference in Thai internal affairs: Malaysia cherished its good relations with Thailand and he hoped that the incident would not damage them. Thai FM Charunphand said the Thai government appreciated the interest Tun Razak had taken in clearing up the point, but added: "We must wait and see what they practise."

The Bangkok government was under pressure to somehow act against Malaysia from Thai elements at the margin of its system, or outside it, that had special interests in the South. On June 27, 1974, the governors of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat charged that Asri was involved in training Muslim separatists in Malaysian territory. They claimed that Asri's Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS) had established a guerilla training center at Pasir Puteh in Kelantan across the Thai-Malaysian border.

Thai students, in particular those resident in the South who had disproportionate access to tertiary institutions there, were trying to muster pressure on their own account. Hundreds of Thai-Buddhist students in the South staged a demonstration on June 27, 1974, and burnt an effigy of Malaysian minister Asri, despite pleas from Narathiwat officials to avoid "fanning up" the controversy over the Muslim secessionist movements in the area. Representatives of the students laid a black wreath on the bridge linking Thailand's Golok river district to the Malaysian state of Kelantan that the PAS governed, and urged the Malaysian government and people to consider Asri's position.

It was harder to muster pressure in the faraway capital. A not very large group of Thai students marched on the Malaysian Embassy in Bangkok, protesting against the Malaysian Government for its alleged "support of the Muslim separatist movement" in Southern Thailand. Some 20 students representing universities in Thailand's four southern provinces of Yala, Narathiwat, Pattani and Satun, laid a wreath at the embassy building and

demanded a meeting with the Malaysian ambassador, who proved “out at the time.”

On June 19, 1974, the National Student Center of Thailand sent a letter to the Thai Prime Minister, Professor Sanya Dharmasakti, that was acutely cast: in it, the NSCT not only urged PM Sanya to recall Thailand’s ambassador in Malaysia in protest against Asri’s statement, but to expel all Malaysian working units from Thailand, in particular the Malaysian troops stationed in the province of Yala. That threatened Malaysia at its vulnerable point. The Malayan Communist Party might still become a serious threat again if Thailand denied the Malaysian armed forces the cooperation of its own army and access to areas in the South where Communist fighters from Malaysia had taken refuge.

The Thai government itself was blackmailing the Malaysia state’s fears of the “Malayan” Communist guerrillas it was still in the tough process of defeating. The Thai Foreign Ministry was preparing a note to the Malaysian government seeking further clarification of Asri’s statement. The note would suggest bilateral talks on the issue of the Thai-Malaysian border where the Malay Muslim separatist movement was most active. The Foreign Ministry sources said: “we will have a review of border co-operation” against Malayan communist exiles in Southern Thailand.

Here the Thai system was playing with its usual skill its Communist card to coerce Malaysia’s — on the whole secular — Malay governing class out of political application of ethnic links to those Malay-speakers under Thai rule.

The Thai elite had come to understand well its equivalent ensconced in Kuala Lumpur to its South. Now, though, towards the mid-1970s, it had to deal with a new set of actors: the Arab governments. The educational and cultural links of a category of Patani Malays to Arab world institutions and Arabic had been strengthening for a decade. Now, Arab governments were getting drawn into the political issues being raised by insurgent Muslim minorities in the Philippines and Thailand by virtue of an era in which an internationalist pan-Islamic identification extending beyond the pan-Arab community was becoming more important for Arabs.

At the invitation of the Thai government, Shaykh Hasan al-Tuhami, foreign affairs adviser to the Egyptian President and Secretary-General of the Islamic Conference, in mid-1974 visited Thailand’s southern provinces. At a Press conference on July 2, Shaykh al-Tuhami said that the situation in Thailand was not serious and could be easily solved by peaceful means. He stated that the Thai Government should raise the level of education of Thai Muslims, permit them to study religion in schools, and let them participate in the government administration. This would create better understanding and “prevent any separatism or secessionist movement which I am also against.” Al-Tuhami here was politely criticizing Thai policies of deculturation and inadequate delivery of schools and employment in the mainstream to the South’s Muslims.

Thailand's Deputy Foreign Minister Maj-General Chatichai Choonhawan, who accompanied Shaykh al-Tuhami on his tour, declared on 3 July that the Muslim minority in the country did not suffer at the hands of the Buddhist majority. He said Thailand wants the Muslims of the world to understand that it "treats the Thai Muslims not as a Muslim minority but as Thais. And we will show that we do more than simply talk." The Thai government would encourage its Muslims to enter into the mainstream of Thai education. Some Muslim parents were reported to be afraid of Buddhist influence in schools using the government-approved syllabus: most Muslim students were still attending local Muslim schools. When allowance is made for the softness in which Thai discourses are couched, the Deputy Foreign Minister's statement was an obdurate refusal to countenance any specificity of Muslims in Thailand's education or public life.

The Thai Deputy Foreign Minister's statement made clear that the Thai system intended to step up its campaign to educationally eliminate the Malay language and Islamic faith from Southern Thailand's schools. The government would not even go through the motions of cultural pluralism in Patani (*Asia Research Bulletin*, 31 July 1974).

The deep cultural sources and wounds that fed Patani separatism in the 1970s made it inevitable that the movement would last and grow, so long as Thai educational and economic policy made little or no provision for Muslim Malays to prosper while still preserving their distinctive identity in a united Thailand. The surrender in 1977 of Bapak Idris, commander of the National Liberation Front for the Patani Republic, changed little. True, a speaking knowledge of the Thai language gradually spread among Patani Muslims, so that it strengthened as the link-language to the area's Chinese and settler Thai minorities. Muslim kids by the 1990s could understand Thai better in schools. Yet as the two peoples engaged in unprecedented depth, the Malays of Southern Thailand were adopting and parading more and more Middle Eastern features: limited traditional shawls for women were replaced by the *hijab* (hair-scarf) and sometimes by the full *niqab* veil (Guilquin 2002: 131). The drive of Thai officials to phase out most traits of the people of Patani continued. In response, Muslim secessionist groups proliferated and became more diverse: Saudi Arabia and its Wahhabism tinged some of them, while another category of youth who went off to the Arab world was shaped by the quasi-secular Arabism of the regime of the Ba'th and Saddam Husayn in Iraq, where some of them studied. The successor Patani United Liberation Organization in the 1980s recruited 20,000 guerrillas. Its attacks dwindled away in the early 1990s when a Thai government established a local administrative authority, and economic programs, to mollify the Muslims.

The involvement of the Arabs got real resources through to Greater Patani Muslims. Bangkok had fewer means to checkmate and exclude the Arab nationalist and Arab Islamic states, located far away, than it did nearby Muslim-

led Malaysia and Indonesia who had to observe its interests within the net of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations all of whose members had to adjust to each other. Arab funds enabled pondoks that kept outside the Thai system to keep going or even expand, and to teach Arabic much better. The PULO (Patani United Liberation Organization), founded in 1967, now in the 1970s from its Mecca base creatively seized and adapted all opportunities and resources they could get from the Arab states and peoples. It built good relations with the World Muslim Congress (*Mu'tamar al-'Alam al-Islami*) in Saudi Arabia, and — so an Israeli diplomat sophisticatedly active in Asia narrated — received funding and perhaps some military training from Syria and Libya. PULO globalization was highly distinguished. From funds it cadged out of Syria and Libya, the PULO purchased a hotel in Hamburg so that it would have its own independent source of long-term finance for the independence struggle (Yegar 2002: 146-147). As Thai officials had feared, facilities, financial aid and perhaps training from Asri's Islamist PAS administration in Kelantan indeed nourished émigré Muslim separatists in Malaysian territory. However, Asri's administration was ended by the Malaysian central government in late 1977, and fatal elections followed, so that his Islamic party went back to being poor as church mice. Libyan aid also cut out in late 1978. Consequently, PULO went into a period of decline although some of its leaders were allowed to still reside in Kelantan in Malaysia.

#### THE 21ST CENTURY SHOWDOWN

By the 21st century, the Muslim populations of southern Thailand had become more widely able to follow Thai and some had become more utilitarian and pragmatic in what they wanted from education. Since pondok schools were still not accredited by the Thai government, they awarded no degrees or diplomas so that their graduates were hard-pressed to use what they had been taught to win jobs and earn a living. A 1999 research paper at the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Center of the Prince of Songkla University in Pattani, entitled "A Study of Social Psychology, Economics and Security in Five Southern Border Provinces," found that 40% of parents in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat wanted their children to study at general state schools: however, 39% of respondents in the three states said that that system did not meet their needs. By the 20th century, then, Thai Muslims had become split down the middle about the two options for education. A growing ratio of Muslim parents by the end of the 20th century were "sending their children to general schools because they want them to continue on to higher education and get proper jobs" which graduation from pondok schools might not offer. However, the *Bangkok Post* found that a ratio of Muslim Malay parents still strongly wanted to send their children to the now much fewer pondoks in the face of many economic and location difficulties.

Several Thai governments had done all they could to deny connections into the country's modern jobs and system of higher education to pondoks that wanted to change for a new era in history. Schools outside the general state education system in 2001 only received nine items from the Ministry of Education: a football, two sets of badminton racquets, a dozen shuttlecocks, a rubber hoop, a picture of the King, a world map, a map of Thailand and 25 religious books. So where were such Islamic schools to turn for basic resources? Official rigging of the outcomes of the competition between governmental and Islamic schools — including the jobs at the end — speeded up the conjunction of strata of the South's Muslims with Arabic, the Middle East and the unfolding radical Islamic movements of those now more and more vivid heartlands of the faith, not so faraway now as they once had been. Mahama Dsadee Nuereng of Yala District of Yala complained that graduates from pondoks were only able to go on to tertiary studies in such countries as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries, Indonesia and Malaysia. He wondered why the Thai system would not, by recognizing some qualifications from pondok schools, rather help a lot of those young Muslims stay home to do their tertiary study. That pondok graduates could not obtain a certificate equivalent to those accepted by the Thai general education system also forced many of them to look for work in other countries, said Abdul Roseed Niringjelae of Wangpaya, Yala.

Clearly, some Muslim parents by 2000 had accepted the state schools after a fashion under considerable duress and comprehensive rigging of the context and outcomes of the "choices" by successive Thai governments. Malay Muslims who wanted to try out the idea of a humane Thai state knew that a key condition to make the enterprise real was that the Thai government and its Muslim enemies each give up modernist binary oppositions, their dichotomous assumption that it was either-or, one of two mutually-exclusive systems/languages winning to the death of the other. For Muslim educationalist Dr Uthai Dulyakasem, dean of the liberal arts faculty at Walailak University in Nakhon Si Thammarat, in 2001, the Thai system had to install some reasonable Malay and Muslim elements within itself if it were to win consent and polity-membership from Southerners. [Although it had obliterated non-system cultures in many nationalist states even in Europe], modern statal education in Thailand had the reverse of integrated heterogeneous groups into a nation. In a new century, "both the government and Muslim locals need to reassess past policies in light of present conditions." "At a time of national development we need education to perform new functions other than assimilation," Dulyakasem pressed home to Buddhist Thais (*Bangkok Post*, 19 Aug. 2001).

There now were more liberal Thais in Bangkok than back in the 1960s and 1970s, but Dulyakasem was demanding of them insight and flexibility and a willingness to supplement the definition of Thai selfhood more than they had in them to give. The National Statistical Office in 1999 recorded 3,220,233 Muslims in Thailand, making up only 5.2 per cent of the Thai population. Their religion

Islam is alien to Buddhist mid-sets, and in the South Muslims have an unconnected language. The Muslim minority was not large or strong enough to force educated Thais in the country's core to decisively get their minds fully around a much smaller group so different from them — much heavier casualties in Patani Raya would be needed to concentrate thought. In particular the idea of multi-culturalism — that Malay could be made a concurrent language of state education, civil servants and government offices in the South, equally with Thai — was more than even the most flexible elite Thais could take on board, although a daily demand of Muslim publics in the South. Efforts from the Thai core's elite from 1990 to make their system better meet the culture, needs and material interests of the South's Muslims raised some hopes there but turned out in the end deformed and not motivated enough to really affiliate them into Thailand.

#### IMPACT OF GLOBAL JIHADIC "ISLAM" ON PATANI MUSLIMS AND THAIS

More than before, in the new era of globalization images from the Middle East made both Muslim-Malays and Thais warier of each other and highlighted mutual violence as a potential. Soon after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the USA, Osama bin Laden's face was being sold on T-shirts in southern Thailand, although with a touch of non-serious "fun" and fashion like the clothing with Che Guevara's face on it sold for a profit to educated classes in Western countries: "there are no connotations of hatred" (Dr Peerayot Tohimmula of Prince of Songkla University in Pattani). Yet Peerayot was troubled by the negative connotations now being given the term "fundamentalism" not just by the West's foreign media but by the Thai media that took up its Islamophobic themes. Dr Peerayot said people in the South had a view of Osama bin Laden that diverged from those in Bangkok. They were supplementing its media-hostility with information from Malaysia "where Osama bin Laden is seen as a devout Muslim." Some Muslim groups had written to the Thai government asking it not to fan hatred towards Muslims. The organizations urged more care on the government before any joining in America's "War against Terror." Some Thai Muslim leaders from the southern provinces also issued a statement opposing the U.S. plan to attack Afghanistan, and asked for America and the media to prove Osama bin Laden's guilt beforehand. "Most U.S. media paint America as fighting for freedom worldwide but fail to mention what they have done in Palestine, in Saudi Arabia and Vietnam and to many others around the world," said a Saudi Arabia-educated resident of Pattani. He said people in the Middle East, where he studied, see America as an accomplice of Israel, a partner in what they believe is the quelling of Palestine. It was a hopeful sign for the building of future good relations between Buddhist Thais and local Muslims,

though, that this item in the *Bangkok Post* carefully diversified the interpretations of the term “Jihad which has, unfortunately, been simplistically translated as a holy war.” Yet the Middle East could become secondary to the material needs of Thailand’s Muslims who, the Thai paper noted, want the government to provide more educational opportunities, fully support religious studies, and provide them with certificates to use to find a decent job. This Bangkok press item was relaxed about drives by the South’s Muslims to establish their own Islamic banking system and their own Islamic court (*Bangkok Post*, 30 Sept. 2001). But if another, more common, type of Thai media communications now made a Southern Muslim counter-elite emotionally link themselves more tightly to faraway Arabs in the Middle East, this was a new acculturated modality of pan-Islamization with a much more precise grasp of literary Thai and its print-products. This unprecedented cultural attunedness of Thai-ruled Muslims to the majority community could enable deals and constructive settlements with the system instead of secession, if that system came to foster interests.

#### REFORMS AND CHANGE AFTER 1990

As the previous secessionist movements died away, various Thai administrations made considerable efforts to develop the South and educate its Muslims, although oft stymied by the system’s inbuilt corruptness. In 1992 saw the reestablishment of Democratic Party rule, transferring more power to the middle classes in Bangkok, to parliaments and to provincial-based money politics and business executives, away from the armed forces. Chuan Leekpai of the Democratic Party became the first non-military Prime Minister in 1997. The new administrations checked the military and intelligence agencies, and established institutions in the South to bring governance closer to local populations and give them direct lines of communication to civil servants in Bangkok. An unprecedented class of Thai-literate Muslim politicians developed around these institutions and in the center’s parliament and mainstream Thai political life. Muslims were, for instance, elected to parliament in association with the Party of New Hope of General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, Prime Minister from 1996-1997, whose Indonesian wife spoke the language of the Southern Muslims. Chuan Leekpai (PM 1992-1995 and 1997-2001) originated from Trang, where there is a strong Muslim minority, above the deep South, and his Democratic Party courted votes from Muslims in the South. Yala’s deputy Wan Muhammad Nor Matha became President of the Thai parliament and Minister for Transport: he formed the Wahdah (Unity) pressure group through which the Muslim politicians in the central system lobbied it to, for instance, incorporate Islamic shari’ah law into the Thai legal code, working to soften the assumption of many Buddhist Thais that that shari’ah was an anachronism that had to be phased out of existence. The multi-lingual new Muslim intellectuals in the College of Islamic

Studies established at Prince Songkla University had the same wish to build exchanges of reciprocal benefits between the South's Muslims and Thailand/the Buddhist world, rather than armed reciprocal violence. (However, massacres of fellow-Muslims some had viewed in childhood and adolescence sometimes chilled the drive of the new Thai-literate intellectuals in the mainstream institutions to affiliate the South's Malays into a Thai state to be made able to respect them) (Guilquin 2002: 166-171, and *Straits Times*, 25 June 2004: A8).

More Thais were now prepared to give some admission in the system's public space to particularities of non-Thai Muslims: in 1997, after the issue had fostered ill-will for a long time, Thai authorities lifted the ban on female pupils wearing Islam-influenced clothing in governmental schools. The State now allowed Muslim women to wear *hijab* in passport photographs and at work: Muslim public servants were given an hour off for Friday prayers and allowed to draw from their annual paid leave for the few Muslim festival days and for pilgrimages to Mecca. This did not address the structural problem that nine tenths of officials, police and military were still Buddhist Thais from outside an area that had a 75-80% Muslim majority (*Bangkok Post*, 2 Sept. 1997, and Guilquin 2002: 86-87).

In the upshot, the new structures and the economic development fell short of their potential to constructively link the two groups, and indeed sometimes increased the ill-will. The budgets of Bangkok governments continued to favor the construction in the South of infrastructure that would aid the transfer of its raw materials to the center. The priority given that did not leave enough allocations to carry the drive to educate (and Thaiize) the Southerners through to completion. For fiscal year 2001, the five southern border provinces of Songkla, Satun, Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat were granted a total budget allocation of 18,184 million baht, of which only 1,716,000 baht was allocated to Muslim education. Most of the budget was earmarked for infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges and piers — which would aid the resources extraction by the Thai Center (*Bangkok Post*, 19 Aug. 2001). The South's Muslim peasantry, long isolated, could not get some gains in knowledge and skills from more interaction with a modern central economy: however, much of the development taking place made them still poorer. In 2001, ordinary Muslim Southerners complained that government plans to increase employment had thus far failed in the South. They said that the government did not need to create projects to generate work, but only let them manage their own resources. Development should be zoned so as not to take the forests with their jobs in orchards and rubber-tapping etc from rural Muslim people. The development of large-scale industrial fishing by Thai ships harmed the livelihoods of Muslim small-scale fishermen. Politicians got no action out of authorities who excused that they did not have enough budget and manpower to patrol coastal areas. Leaders of the Muslim small-scale fishermen had been shot dead, while some groups of fishermen cut off the ears of odd non-Muslim big trawler owners.

Although by the new century most politicians representing southernmost Thailand were Muslim, their concern for the well-being of their constituents was now getting questioned. Some thought that payments from companies had made the parliamentarians preoccupied with getting more allocations from the central government for the very infrastructure projects that sometimes harmed ordinary Muslims (*Bangkok Post*, 30 Sept. 2001). Had they been corrupted to sell out their people? Yet, clearly, Muslim parliamentarians and integrationist politicians were getting a better hearing for the South's interests in far-off Bangkok by 2000. And where they were remiss the gap was filled by vigorous investigation of the South and its grievances by liberal Buddhist journalists in the Bangkok press who openly denounced those Thai officials there who wanted to go back to the old ways of crushing its people with extra-judicial killings (Chutima 1990).

In the economic suffering of ordinary uneducated people in Southern Thailand, we see how a high culturist counter-elite such as the radical Wahhabism-tinted Islamic teachers and clerics there has to form trans-class alliances with very different discontented strata if it is to launch an insurrection and sustain it. That pool of discontented popular classes was there to provide shelter, backup and recruits by 2000AD.

There was a much better range of opportunities now for Malay Muslims in the Center itself as they mastered Thai. The Thailand of the new century even appointed a Muslim Southerner, Surin Pitsuwan, of the Democratic Party, as a memorable Foreign Minister (1997-2001) who helped the country develop its relations with the Arab world and take up observer status in international bodies of the Islamic states — some Buddhist Thais were now realizing that the very difference and specificities of the South could bring connections, chances and Arab investments for all rather than pose a problem. However, new PM Thaksin Shinawatra, when he assumed office in 2001, abolished the provincial authority that had been set up in the South. That measure eliminated a (corruption-distorted) channel for appeals from the South's Muslims to Bangkok against maladministration and abuses by its officials; this cleared the way for corrupt Thai police officers, accused by the local Muslim people to have been behind a series of still-unsolved kidnappings, murders and disappearances in the South.

#### THE 2004 EXPLOSION

Accordingly, unrest, protest violence and insurgency flared up anew, focused by the warring cultures and educational institutions, as had been the pattern for decades. In the 1990s, more Muslims were inducted into the central Thai system's parliamentarism and parties. Yet, as in previous decades, Bangkok administrations were continuing to transfer off to the South Thai officials who

had shown incompetence and corruption elsewhere. Such officials had made security crackdowns in the South pretexts with which to routinely arrest, beat and extort money from poverty-stricken Muslims (*The Australian*, 31 May 2004: 15). Malays claimed that discrimination against employing or promoting Muslims in the Thai civil service remained as bad as ever, and that government offices in the South made no serious provision to communicate to the local people in their own language. On 4 January 2004, 21 of the government's hated deculturizing schools were torched in Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala provinces: 50 people, including soldiers and Buddhist monks, were killed. As it repeatedly had throughout the whole length of the 20th Century, Thailand's central government again responded by closing the tiny Islamic schools that have always kept springing up like mushrooms after each wave of Thai repression (BBC, 20 March 2004). In early June 2004 two insurgents on a motorcycle shot dead a Buddhist school-principal in Pattani province (*The Australian*, 8 June 2004: 12). The Thai military and police was able to arrest and interrogate 12 youths with Molotov cocktails at the sites of arson attacks on schools in Narathiwat and Yala. Not depicting them as disciplined members of any organized guerrilla army, Lieutenant-General Chalermdej Jombunud, commander of Thailand's Special Branch police, speculated that the teens were paid 1,500 baht (about \$45) each to carry out the arson. They had only been casually hired and were not members in a trained group, he reassured (*Straits Times*, 24 April 2004: A12).

The core of the rebels had skillfully concealed themselves even from fellow Muslims throughout the communal clashes. Even if Jombunud's argument was right, he had taken no proper account of the hatred among the Muslim teenagers against the schools that had been established to take away their culture and at the few doors to employment they would open even if they somehow graduated. They might torch those schools any time on their own account, but from the shadows a small rebel leadership gave them the needed coordination and timing for a general attack on that system. The underground insurgents had shown impressive capacity to secretly detach the desperate teenagers from their own parents in a society in which privacy is difficult. "The first I heard my son was involved with some bad people was when he was already dead," said Abdurrahman Deramang, 60, whose son was one of 15 young men from Kuwa village who were shot dead (*The Age*, 1 May 2004). However, the Thai government was able to keep the bulk of its network of schools in the South intact and operative to some extent despite periodic closures. Teachers received death threats, and the government closed the schools to review their security. But police and soldiers were on hand in early February for the reopening of the more than 1,000 public schools that had been closed a week before (*Straits Times*, 4 Feb. 2004: B23). When a Buddhist teacher at a private Islamic school was executed by a motorcyclist in June 2004, 4,000 principals and teachers in the Muslim South conducted a mass protest in Pattani city. Hundreds of them

met Education Minister Adisai Bodharamik who had flown in from Bangkok to hear their concerns. The morale of the Thai teachers was close to collapse. The chairman of the Southern Teachers' Federation complained that he and his colleagues had often had to give money to their pupils, given the poverty of most Muslim families, lest the local Muslim communities withdraw their protection (*Straits Times*, 11 June 2004: Q1). Led by the Arabophone stratum of Islamic school teachers, Patani nationalists in the daily hit-and-run attacks continued to systematically hack away at the educational network of the central government in the South. In August 2004, an insurgent dressed in a white Arab-like *da'wah* (Islamic missionary) robe, from a speeding motorbike shot dead a Thai army sergeant assigned to a unit protecting teachers and students in Yala province (*Straits Times*, 7 Aug. 2004: A14).

Thai academics in faraway Bangkok worried in 2004 that Thailand's commitment of a small force of 650 to the USA's "coalition of the willing" in Iraq was providing a symbolic focus for the Arabic-literate clerical classes that could finally trigger a general Muslim insurgency in the South. The Thai government itself was worrying by mid-2004 that pan-Islamic identifications were indeed inducting students into the resistance. Thaksin's Interior Minister still felt that no formal group was behind the violence: it was being sparked by the exactions of corrupt officials and by military/police torture of Muslims they abducted (he minimized the numbers). However, the anger of Muslim students was being sharpened and focussed by images that Muslims being oppressed around the globe were brothers (*Straits Times*, 10 June 2004: A16).

Thai military, officials, teachers and Buddhist monks in the new century were being picked off in diffused, asymmetrical warfare amid communal killings by both the two ethnic communities in the South against individuals in the other. Two 20-year old Muslims were found beaten to death under a bridge in Than Yong, Narathiwat province; soon after, 2 Muslim youths on a motorcycle knifed to death a Thai Irrigation Department employee jogging along a dam in Pattani province (*Straits Times*, 5 Feb. 2004: B22). Two motorcyclists shot dead a trainer for Thailand's army reserve (*Straits Times*, 8 Feb. 2004: F16). The rebels represented these killings as retaliatory executions. When other motorcycle riders killed three among some Buddhist villagers chatting at a roadside pavilion, police found a note: "do you feel pain when innocent people get killed, like you did to us?" (*Straits Times*, 22 May 2004: B19). When a 63 year-old non-Malay rubber tapper was beheaded, a note was left warning that "more innocent Buddhists" would be killed in retaliation for arrests of "innocent Muslims" (*The Australian*, 31 May 2004: 15).

Heartened by the arms their teenagers had seized from Thai armories in January, the secret uprising leaderships now tried to move from the stage of piecemeal, scattered violence to the next stage of a broader, but in places concentrated and frontal, offensive as a proto-army against the Thai armed forces. Yet the performance and results were symbolic; it is not easy to make

hit-and-run guerrillas into a regular army. Towards the end of April, Muslim militants, mounted on motorbikes and bearing machetes, launched coordinated attacks on Thai military posts and police stations across three states. However, Thai intelligence had been informed and the waiting Thai forces killed dozens of the pitifully ill-armed attackers, with only a few of their own troops falling. When 35 of the militants fled the closing dragnet into the 16th century Kersik mosque in Pattani city, the Thai military on April 28 obtusely stormed it when they could have negotiated, killing thirty of the enemy whose blood of the martyrs soaked into the mosque's carpets, and down into the collective ethos of the South's Muslim Malays thenceforth. Many of the families buried their dead from the storming without giving the bodies a ritual Muslim cleansing — a sign that the population believed they died religious martyrs. A video of the storming, and laminated photographs of the bodies of the rebels who were slain within it, were on sale in Patani towns just days after the raid. The symbolic damaged immemorial mosque and its “martyrs” look set to focus resistance and violence in Patani-Thai relations for many years to come.

Bangkok at once moved to send thousands of troops to the South: soon Thai forces there totaled 35,000. The Thai government and military kept up the old dual policy of denying any existence of the other party while mustering massive force to crush the South's Muslims. On one hand, Thai officials, worried at the damage it all might wreak upon the international tourism vital to their country's economy, denied that there was any resistance movement of a political type in the South. It was just criminal gangs trying to seize weapons from Thai military armories in the South in order to sell them at a good profit in neighboring countries — an explanation that strained the patience of one BBC correspondent. On the other side, and addressing the Malay subjects more, a spokesman for the Thai military menaced that it was now taking “decisive action,” and that its responses to date had been on its “passive” side (BBC and Melbourne Channel 10 Midday News, 29 April 2004). Spokesmen for the Thai military ruled out direct training or aid from either other Southeast Asian or Arab jihadist groups given that the adolescents and men mowed down in the April attacks were only wielding machetes and knives. Dr Andre Tan, a regional terrorism specialist at Singapore's Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, found no evidence that the rebels were building links with al-Qa'idah. Hanbali, a leader of Indonesia's Jama'ah Islamiyyah terrorists had stayed in Southern Thailand sometimes (*The Age*, 3 April 2004). To refute that it stemmed from ideology or religious fervor, Prime Minister Thaksin also argued that the chaos was a proxy war by the sets of parliamentary politicians he had driven from office in Bangkok acting through their parties' local Muslim bosses, and that it was all being fuelled by money from local drug traffickers (*The Age*, 1 May 2004). (True, criminality and the violence and financing of national insurgencies have never been far away from each other in the global history of revolutions, in the Arab and Muslim worlds as in the other sectors). Those local Muslim politicians, though,

denied involvement and claimed they feared that the Thai intelligence agencies meant to bump them off, like the disappearances of some Muslim professionals before them, such as human rights lawyer Somchai Neehlaphajit (*The Nation*, 10 May 2004, and *Straits Times*, 25 June 2004: A8).

In October 2004, 84 young Muslims who had demonstrated at the Tak Bai police station in Narathiwat province were then crushed and suffocated after being heaped and packed into trucks by the army.

The non-traditional Saudi-patterned Salafi form of Islam, and its educational institutions, was at least psychologically stiffening resistance among the Muslims of the South in 2004. Ismail Lutfi, rector of the Saudi-funded Yala Islamic College, in his own spoof on silken Thai ambiguity said the violence was being driven by young people ignorant of their religion. “Let’s see if the Government can solve the problem: if not, then it will have to be separatism” (*The Australian*, 31 May 2004: 15).

Arrested cleric Mama Matheeyoh of Yala told journalists that “we are fighting for a separate Muslim state.” The just-detained cleric denied claims by PM Thaksin Shinawatra that the violence was instigated by criminals and that the teenagers had fought drugged: instead, “everyone sacrificed their lives for Allah” he exulted (*The Age*, 1 May 2004). In later 2001, Thai Army Commander-in-Chief Gen Surayud Chulanont had warned that “countries in the Middle East provide training, education and financial support for fundamentalist groups in the South.” Muhammad Adam, owner of a pondok school in Yaring who also graduated from Saudi Arabia, insisted at that time that there was no organization or network of Saudi graduates in his town, nor connections of that sort to the Middle East. “What we do is offer education to our people to be in peace: peace is the meaning of Islam” (*Bangkok Post*, 30 Sept. 2001). Still, the booklet, *Jihad di-Patani*, found on the bodies of some youthful fighters the Thai army killed in 2004 looks Arab-influenced: it wrote the word Patani using the Arabic emphatic “t,” — and in impressing upon its Muslims that they had to fight the Thais to expel them it cited not only the Qur’an for that principle of Jihad and martyrdom but also parallel unjust rule of Muslims by non-Muslims in the Middle East who already were being resisted with Jihad there (*Straits Times*, 9 June 2004: A1).

The preparedness of the South’s insurgents in 2004 to use violence to overthrow a non-Islamic power system — the Kingdom of Thailand — that was in the same ASEAN network of states as Malaysia worried some in the still mainly secular regime in Kuala Lumpur. Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told reporters he feared that insurgents seeking refuge in Malaysia “will be a threat to us also.” The mayhem made it “even more urgent” for the two countries to co-operate to defuse and “manage” the crisis in Thailand’s predominantly Muslim south, he warned. After the slaughter of the 113 attacking Muslims, Malaysian police and troops maintained heightened security along the busy border to try to stop Muslim insurgents from mainly

Buddhist Thailand fleeing to Muslim-led Malaysia (*The Australian*, 30 April 2004).

Now Thai figures in Bangkok again tried to vary the old approaches of crushing the southern Muslims on various planes. In regard to economic causes in an insurgency he well knew was now making many Thais question if he should stay in office, PM Thaksin Shinawatra took to rubber-tapping and cash handouts to appease southerners traumatized after all the violence. "I know now the life of a [Malay Muslim] rubber-tapper is very difficult and dangerous," the billionaire said, after waking before dawn, strapping a gas light to his head and heading to a rubber-tree plantation to try his own hand at extracting the resin from the tree. Many of the 107 fighters who died in the failed attacks on Thai army and police posts had been rubber-tappers, working for around 50 baht (barely one U.S. dollar) a day. This grassroots empathy of the billionaire Prime Minister was also his nervous response to growing fears in the Bangkok elite that his administration's mishandling of the south since 2001 had triggered a final no-quarters struggle there with a new generation of youthful Islamic leaders and fighters (*The Weekend Australian*, 8-9 May 2004). How far Thaksin could grasp, or adapt to, public opinion in the South remained doubtful. On one hand he said that "in those three southern provinces, only half a per cent of residents have problems with the government, while the remaining 99.5 per cent have no problems" (— so why did he bother to go rubber-tapping?) In the other direction, the representatives of the Muslims of the South definitely had got the message through to him when he rejected southern community leaders' requests to withdraw Thai military forces from the area, saying they would remain until order was restored (*Straits Times*, 4 Feb. 2004: B23, and 24 April 2004: A12). The Thai center's militarism had no support in the South even from those Muslim elements affiliated to that system.

The insurgents, though, by targeting Thailand's vital tourist trade had inflicted much harm on the Thai economy. Since 2000, they had been threatening and bombing tourists from Malaysia, a mix of Chinese and Malays, as well as those from Western countries. The bombs continued in 2004 (*The Age*, 3 April 2004). By May, the number of Malaysians crossing into southern Thailand had fallen by 40 per cent, and Western governments were discouraging tourism by their citizens to Thailand (*The Age*, 1 May 2004).

Having been directly ruled by the Thai State for a century, a portion of Patani's Muslims had come to accept it as a part of nature and lobbied to make it help them rather than harm. They have requested to Thai officials and the central Thai media that the government send good instead of extractive officials to Patani and make some highly specific changes to policies affecting economic resources on which the Muslim poor live. Their requests show a pragmatic wish for the two sides to come to terms with each other. The PULO too during the 2004 mayhem began to talk of the problematic functions of all nation states in the post-modern era of globalization and to propose a mutual adjustment of

interests with the Thai state within an autonomy framework that would give more jobs for lumpen-professionals who had been educated in Thai. (However, the limited materials on PULO's website suggested that their links with the populations and militants that had stayed put in the South had thinned out in their Malaysia exile). Yet all the continuing complaints from the Muslim common people showed the severely dysfunctional nature of the Thai State, and Southerners by 2004 were turning to Islamic nationalism and insurgency in unprecedented numbers. Concerned that the Malay Muslim teenagers were listening mainly to jihadist interpretations of Islam influenced from the Arab World, Deputy Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh suggested that the government should establish youth centers at the district and provincial levels to teach the young the true [theosophical] teachings of Islam (*Straits Times*, 19 June 2004: A13). The Buddhist Thai governing class sees the survival of its system in the South as dependent on reducing Islam to a shell of nominal rituals that cannot sustain coherent counter-community, and helping West-patterned neo-paganism — “fun” — to then corrode away at even the remaining husk (*Straits Times*, 24 July 2004: A16). Aware current Muslim armed resistance could carry on for a decade, the government in mid-2004 was planning to put \$US 300 million into “social and economic development” in the South. It remained to be seen if, unlike similar past programs, this one would deliver real resources and chances to ordinary Muslims or turn out mainly to foster resources extraction and the implantation of Buddhist settlers.

Despite occasional attempts in the more hopeful 1990s to become more flexible and induct the Malay Muslims into a true parliamentarism at the system's center, in 2004 as in the 1970s official Thai policy mostly remained to crush its Muslim Malay minority militarily — but before everything else in cultures and identity. The Thai military's decision to make limited propaganda broadcasts in local Malay in mid-2004 was too belated, and too reactive and instrumental, to bear much credibility as a facility to maintain a discrete regional culture. Maintained so single-mindedly over decades whatever the havoc, refusal by the most significant strata among Thais to allow a group much that it could call its own — even a way of speaking —, or to ever negotiate with, or at all adjust to, its rebels or protest representatives, and inability to get along with even just ordinary individuals trying to somehow work in with the system, has to rate as a form of violence. True, the explosion occasioned some reflective liberal articles in the Bangkok press. And while denying that “undue force” had been used, the government appointed a commission of inquiry with some Muslim academics on it to study the “anatomy” of the storming of the immemorial Kersik mosque. The genuinely independent committee was soon finding that security forces had thrown grenades among rebels holed up in the mosque who had only knives apart from six guns they had snatched from its police guards as they fled inside it (*Straits Times*, 19 June 2004: A13). Yet for all the silken mild manners its spokesmen could put on, Thai policy under PM Thaksin was yet again more or

less the systematic rejection and steamrolling that by 2004 had at last triggered wide organized counter-violence (“terrorism” now rather than mere “banditry”) from the Patani Malays it had so long marginalized, impoverished and brutalized.

By late 2004, the morale of some sectors of Thai Buddhists had drawn close to collapse, as groups within the establishment and in the wider bourgeoisie argued about what course to pursue. The monarchy has long been a political power in its own right that checks or corrects malfunctions in the system. Statements by the King that Buddhism was a religion of gentleness, and that if the military and the police could not work together then the country could be doomed, tried to bring the military, but also Thaksin’s policy of armed repression itself, under control. The aged Queen stayed for two months in the South: while she counseled conciliation between ethnic groups there, her statement that “every Thai owns this country” equally urged the Thai Buddhist settler community to stay as the insurgents targeted them. Overall, the two monarchs had mounted a Janus-like critique of steps under the Thaksin regime that was provoking Muslims, but also counseled better organization of the State’s institutions of repression and the Buddhist settlers so that Bangkok could keep its grip on the South.

Letters to the Thai press and internet sites showed a hardening of the attitudes of some Thais, young professionals, who assailed Thaksin as too soft in the South because he was appeasing Malaysia, Indonesia and other Muslim states. A category of young modern Thais took up U.S. Islamophobia that the tenets of Islam were what inherently had to produce violence by Muslims. Thai leftists did argue that violence in the South was the result of uneven development in favor of the Center that likewise produced violence and protests in non-Muslim provinces in North Eastern Thailand, and that it was American exploitation and “crazy” aggression that was causing the global violence. Those alternative themes, though, were drowned out by the voices that saw Islam as the cause, and as the Thais’ (and indeed the global community’s) enemy.

Jihadic clerics and their followers could look back on 2004 as a in general good year in which they got off the ground an asymmetrical insurrection crafted to work around Thailand’s strengths in the South. Since the late 1940s, Thailand had built up a pervasive intelligence apparatus to monitor the class of Islamic students and scholars in the South: in 1973, a Patani student visiting the Arab World was afraid to talk privately to me on the conditions of Muslims in Thailand lest some report somehow might get back. Since 2000, the new Muslim resistance has responded to Thai atomization by flowing around overwhelming Thai garrisons and surveillance with small bands of three or four young people who have mostly known each other since childhood or adolescence and can trust each other. A Singapore academic with obvious access to some intelligence agency advising or helping the Thais assessed that even in later February 2005 Thai security forces still did not know “which group if any directs the action” (*The Weekend Australia*, 9-10 April 2005).

Young Islamic clerics in Thailand are at ease with the internet and TV: they have carried much farther the decentralization with which the resistance in Iraq has sidestepped all attempts by U.S. forces to crush their insurgency. A Muslim mass nationalism has existed in Patani since the mid-1975s from which large crowds in the tens of thousands have often gathered or been gathered to protest against deaths in custody or against America's war in Iraq etc. But no centralized command, no mass structured independence organization or army that could wage coordinated attacks across the breadth of the occupied homeland, has formed as yet, although the picking off of Thai teachers, officials, peasant settlers and Buddhist clerics has in it some considered psychological warfare and perhaps some systematic dismantling of the Thai state, and looks like destruction by Islamist insurgents in Algeria. Foreign training seemed absent in the super-optimistic, foredoomed April 2004 attacks on Thai military posts and police stations across the South. Yet the resultant multiple martyrdoms there, too, the blood in the immemorial Kersik mosque, were a sort of victory because they radicalized so many ordinary people. Whether the internet only, or foreign jihadists, supplied know-how for the car-bombs against an airport and other civilian targets in the province of Songkla in April 2005 is unclear. Hat Yai airport is the main gateway to Thailand's Muslim far South. Some young Songkla students at Cairo's Islamic al-Azhar university in 2005 were accepting of Thai education when it was free because of the modernization benefits: they voiced no ill-will to the Buddhist majority in their province, or to Thai which had become their print-language. The question of Patani is closer to internationalization than ever before: the governments of Malaysia and Indonesia, which previously had tried to exclude insurgent groups from pan-Islamic forums, have protested to the Organization of the Islamic Conference over Thaksin's repression in the South.

#### ASSESSMENT

The cycles of discontent from Thailand's southern Muslims which we have focused from the later 1940s had various planes. Economic causes — the chronic difficulty Malay rubber-tappers and poor fishermen have faced in making a meager living — gave the discontent its popular extension during the flare-ups. There was a wide class overlap between being poor and being Muslim in a hierarchical Thai system that too often has been interested in the South for the natural resources and jobs it could get out of it for the State's real nation — the Buddhist Thais. Detentions, torture and killings by the Thai military and police since 1948 have also repeatedly fueled Muslim protest, counter-violence and small-scale insurgency. Yet grievances in culture and education were a central aspect of the Thai State's devaluation of them that clearly triggered a lot of the protest from Malays in general. The masses of Malays, in however simplified,

primordial or deformed ways, did want forms of education that would connect them into literate Islam and out to an imaged international Muslim civilization.

It is clear that both the Thai nationalism that the State has pursued in its Southern provinces and the attempts at formulations of Islamo-Malay ethnicity in response, were all newfangled constructs. Ideological self-definition changes a lot over time as the stimulating conditions alter and as ideas and systems of practices unfold from within themselves. In the last two decades of the 20th century, though, globalization has widened the proportion of Greater Pattani Malays who have encountered the Arab Middle East and also Arab Islamic institutions that have had increased input into culture and life in Southern Thailand. The Arabs are now familiar in Thailand (a few of them with secular intents that fit into the needs of fun-loving Thais more than they highlight the imperatives of Islam). Saudi and other Salafi Arabian educationalists have through education fostered a growing stratum of youngish Muslims in Patani that knows some Arabic and for which the patterns set by anti-Israeli, anti-American forces in the Middle East guide aspects of their own adversarial interaction with the Thai state. Arab aid and influence widened the Malay counter-elite of Arabophone Muslim teachers and clerics that is leading resistance to Thai rule, with the two warring educational systems a crucial front, as Thai leaders had well grasped by mid-2004 (*Straits Times*, 24 July 2004: A16).

Since around 1990, some governing Thais and some Thai intellectuals tried to modify the system so that it might open some benefits and cooption to some Muslim Malays, not just extract. But the gulf between atheistic Buddhism and Islam as conceptual systems, and that bilingualization mainly affected Muslims, made it too unlikely that Thais could truly get their minds around the thoughts and feelings of Muslims and the things they wanted. The thought and expense the Thai state put after 1980 into a network of state schools that did deliver some mass education to Malays, some of them in very remote villages, was meant to make them a cultural extension of the Thais, but had some generosity in it. Some Muslim southerners in and around parliamentary politics, and some aging PULO exiles in Malaysia, did seek some accommodation between Muslims and the Thai system. Thai-medium mass education and induction into Bangkok's parliamentarism, though, have failed to build constructive relations between Buddhist Thais and Muslims. It was not just that a Thai political party in opposition might use violent Muslim elements in the South to discomfort the Bangkok government of the day, as PM Thaksin charged against the opposition. Rather, some Muslims in parties on both sides in parliament could turn disloyal to the Thai state (*Straits Times*, 22 July 2004: A5) — parliamentarism was not truly integrating them for the purposes of the Thai system. A multi-party electoral system had not achieved its potential as a means to hold Thai administrators and business people accountable to interests of Muslims. National integration through parliamentarism and monolingual state education had failed. In 2004

the incompatibility of the two language-cultures, and the pain and loss Thai stational education has never ceased to inflict on Muslims, detonated open warfare between the two peoples.

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