Negotiating Thainess : Religious and National Identities in Thailand's Southern Conflict

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NEGOTIATING THAINESS

Religious and National Identities in

Thailand's Southern Conflict

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Map of the Patani Region

Source: International Crisis Group

Preface

Only weeks after I returned from a three-month research trip to Thailand's northeastern city Khorat in 2003, where I had studied magical elements in contemporary Theravāda Buddhism, Thailand suddenly made headlines in the international media. Following the raid of a Narathiwat army camp on January 4th, 2004, and the subsequent wave of arson attacks, sabotage, bombs and shootings, the long-forgotten Patani conflict had once again come to public attention, as newspaper articles and TV-reports from around the world tried, with varying degrees of success, to make sense of this resurgence of violence. Despite my many visits to Thailand and studies of Thai language, history and culture, it struck me how little I knew about this long-term and quite severe conflict. Since then, I have closely followed the developments in the Patani region, the southern frontier bordering Malaysia.

Two and a half years later, after a long night out in Oslo, I switched on the television and tuned into BBC World News, only to find video images of tanks and armoured vehicles rolling into the dim streets of a city I recognized as Bangkok. At dawn on September 19th, 2006, the Royal Thai Army was staging a *coup d'état* to oust the controversial, yet highly popular, Thaksin Shinawatra from office. Junta leader, General Sonthi Boonyaratkalin, the first Muslim Commander-in-chief of the Thai army, was quick to point out the devastating deadlock in the Patani region as one motivating factor for the coup.

Despite the fact that, for weeks, rumours of a coup had flourished in Bangkok due to the severe political crisis following the conflict between the Thaksin administration and the traditional Bangkok elite, including the upper echelon of the army, it still came as a shock. After all, fifteen years had gone by without such unconstitutional interference on the part of the army, a rather long period of time in the Thai context. Nonetheless, while going to bed that night I had more or less resigned myself to the situation, thinking: "Well, this is how it's done in Thailand." That thought, however, did not last very long, and the 2006 coup became the event that triggered a prolonged interest in Thai politics in general and the Patani conflict in particular. Two weeks after the coup, I submitted my Ph.D. proposal to Lund University, of which this dissertation is the result.

Introduction

The three southernmost provinces of Thailand—Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat—with an approximately 80 per cent Malay Muslim majority population,[1] have for more than 8 years been the venue of a violent conflict in which separatist groups have played a central role. This area, which in the past was known as the Sultanate of Patani, or Patani Darussalam, had a long and turbulent relation with the King of Siam before it became subject to Siamese control during the reign of Rama I (1782-1809) and was formally annexed in 1902, a takeover consolidated by the Anglo-Siamese treaty of 1909, drawing up the border between Siam and Malaya.[2] Since then, the Siamese and then the Thai governments have kept a close watch on the area and introduced numerous programs and policies to play down Malay Muslim ethnic identity in an attempt to assimilate the local population into the Thai nation.

Through these programs and policies, and the overall ideology of Thainess, local people have frequently felt alienated and repressed. The sense of being treated as second-class citizens, and that their interests have been neglected, is well-known to the Malay Muslim population, as documented in a number of studies.[3] Moreover, the struggle over the control of the region's natural resources and problems with smuggling and

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1 According to official statistics from 2007 given by the Provincial Operation Centre there were: 540,522 Muslims, 95,375 Buddhists, and 329 others in Pattani province; 354,317 Muslims, 113,946 Buddhists, and 1,531 others, in Yala province; and 562,798 Muslims, 93,296 Buddhists, and 1,214 others in Narathiwat Province. The exact figures from 2007 are thus 82.7 per cent Muslims and 17.2 per cent Buddhists. Compared to the statistics of the years before and after 2007 however, it appears that the statistical material is somewhat weak as it tends to differ notably from year to year, with some years altering significantly from the main tendency. Government officials at Pattani Provincial Hall informed me that there were some uncertainties related to the numbers as the statistics do not include people studying or working temporarily outside the provinces. Considering the high number of migrant workers to Malaysia, particularly among Malay Muslims, this is relevant information to consider in this regard.

2 Davisakd 2008: 78; Syukri 2005: 54 ff., 78.

3 For some examples, refer to Che Man 1990: 62 ff.; Liow 2006: 25 f.; Surin 1985; Thanet 2007: 33 ff.

corruption, sometimes involving government officials, are other constant sources of conflict that have added to a challenging political situation in which separatist groups throughout the years have led a number of violent insurgencies against the Thai state.

Between January 2004 and January 2010, out of a population of less than 2,000,000 persons, over 4,000 were killed and over 6,500 were injured in close to 9,500 incidents of regional violence, most of which have been connected to the latest separatist resurgence.[4] This makes the Patani confrontation the deadliest conflict in Southeast Asia with an average of approximately 56 people killed and 90 wounded every month.

The nature of the conflict is shadowy and far from clear-cut, leaving local communities in fear and uncertainty. It is difficult to know who is behind the different violent incidents, as no responsibility is taken and very few political demands are put forward. Both Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists have been victims of violence, but more Malay Muslims than Thai Buddhists have been killed. However, since Thai Buddhists constitute only 20 per cent of the population, the number of Thai Buddhist victims is disproportionately large. Moreover, in terms of total numbers, more Thai Buddhists than Malay Muslims have been injured,[5] and since some leaflets and other propaganda have expressed anti-Buddhist sentiments,[6] many Thai Buddhists feel they are subject to ethnic cleansing and a reinforced religious dimension to the conflict has emerged. An additional concern has been the extensive use of violence by Thai military forces, which many Malay Muslims have endured in what has thus far been an unsuccessful attempt to curb the insurgency.

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4 Srisompob and McCargo 2010: 157. The statistics used here are collected from the data base of the non-governmental organisation Deep South Watch (DSW) connected to Prince of Songkla University in Pattani. DSW have a broad network of local informants reporting all violent incidents in the region and data are later systematised by the organisation. Note that it is a challenge to distinguish between insurgency related violence and political or crime related violence.
5 McCargo 2012: 7.
6 McCargo 2009a:18 f.

Three Approaches to Understanding the Conflict

Explanations of this violent conflict can be broadly divided into three categories. One approach finds answers in a Malay Muslim identity that has been repressed by Thai domination over territory and in regards to ethnic and cultural expressions—an identity that is fuelled by history and the mythology of the former Malay kingdom of Patani. Separatist and anti-Thai sentiments have developed in response to a dominating Thai nationalism that has alienated Malay Muslims and led to a serious legitimacy crisis of the Thai state.[7] This approach is proffered by McCargo, who has performed extensive fieldwork on a number of occasions in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, and produced numerous publications, including one benchmark book on the subject.[8]

A second approach appears as a corrective to the first by pointing out the multiple driving forces behind the violence. In addition to separatist activities, the region is afflicted by political violence and organised crime along a disorderly borderland.[9] The argument is that Malay Muslim ethnic grievances are not sufficient to explain the violence in southern Thailand,[10] and it is claimed that Malay Muslim identities are today declining at the expense of an emerging Thai identity that Malay Muslims increasingly relate to.[11] Religion as a motivating factor in the recruitment of militants to the separatist movement is also highlighted.[12] This approach is advocated by Askew, who for many years has been based in Pattani conducting fieldwork in villages all over the three southernmost provinces.[13]

A third approach endeavours to link the violence to networks of international terrorism and explains the Patani insurgency in a larger context as part of the post-Cold War global *jihadist* movement. This approach is represented by Abuza and Gunaratna.[14] However, most researchers familiar with the southern Thai conflict dismiss international terrorism and *jihadist* movements as core explanations for mainly two reasons: firstly, because the recent insurgency shares more similarities with earlier insurgencies in the region than with international terrorist

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7 McCargo 2012: 3.
8 McCargo 2008. Refer also to McCargo 2012: Appendix II for a complete overview of relevant publications.
9 Askew 2010: 121.
10 Askew 2010: 118.
11 Askew 2010: 128.
12 Askew 2010: 126.
13 See also Askew 2009a; 2007; Bangkok Post, 9th August 2009, Mark Askew, "The Killing Fields of the Deep South: A Deadly Mix".
14 Abuza 2009; Gunaratna et al. 2005.

organisations, and because Islamist perspectives in southern Thailand have always developed from within the local Malay Muslim community, and have never been directly imposed by outsiders; and secondly, because the main characteristics of international *jihadist* terrorism, like suicide bombs and attacks on tourist destinations, are not part of the insurgents' strategy, nor are there any signs of a global Islamist agenda, like the establishment of a pan-Islamic caliphate.15 As Abuza and Gunaratna have failed to convincingly meet this critique, most researchers have dismissed this approach when trying to explain or understand the dynamics of the southern Thai conflict, and fall within one or the other of the first two approaches or somewhere in between. This also applies to me.

There are some facts about the Patani region16 that are important to understand. The majority population is Muslim with Malay as the native language, and since the annexation of territory, Malay ethnic grievances under Siamese and Thai rule have been well documented. For this reason the region has seen a number of separatist insurgencies and the most recent one must be viewed within the same context. These facts must be the starting point for any meaningful discussion of the Patani conflict, and, in this respect, it is the approach forwarded by McCargo that is the most reasonable. However, what Askew has pointed out is that although these might be underlying facts, over the course of time, there are some elements that have complicated the analysis. One element is the organised crime and smuggling, and the subsequent political violence that has developed along the border in the shadow of separatist insurgencies. Another element is the strain that years of Thai nationalist propaganda, primary education and mass media have placed upon Malay Muslim identity.

While I remain basically unconvinced by the claim that organised crime and/or political violence are significant factors in terms of understanding the conflict (after all, a range of criminal activity is typical of

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15 Joll 2010: 268 ff. Refer also to Connor 2007 "War on Error and the Southern Fire: How Terrorism Analysts Get it Wrong" for a thorough critique of this approach.

16 I use the term 'Patani region' primarily when referring to the provinces Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, the main area of modern day Thailand which historically constituted the Kingdom of Patani. The four southern districts of Songkla—Chana, Na Thawi, Thepa, and Saba Yoi—are also implied in this term. The term 'Pattani' is used when referring to the modern Thai province or its provincial city. The terms 'Patani' and 'Pattani' refer to Malay and Thai spelling/pronunciation respectively, and can in certain contexts be perceived politically. However, throughout this thesis the use of 'Patani' versus 'Pattani' will purely serve the purpose of distinguishing geographical areas and different historical epochs discussed. 'The deep south' and 'southern Thailand' are if not specified differently, used as reference to the same area—the Patani region.

all such conflict areas), I find the argument that Malay Muslim identity is challenged by Thai nationalism (the ideology of Thainess), and the stress on religious identity, far more compelling. Muslims in the Patani region are still dominated by a distinct Malay identity in opposition to the Thai nationalist narrative; by no means have Malay Muslims turned Thai. However, the impact of Thai influence is that many Malay Muslims are negotiating a form of Thainess. They experience multiple identities, to borrow a term from Lewis,[17] and may juggle ethnic, national and religious identities depending on the situation. Why these multiple identities have developed, how they are expressed in daily life and what impact they have had on interethnic relations and interpretations of violence and conflict will be the main focus of this dissertation.

My approach, in other words, is comprised of an intermediate position. Based on McCargo's analysis, I accommodate some of Askew's critique, but without abandoning the main perspective of Malay Muslim identity and its response to Thai dominance—an approach I believe I share with Joll, among others.[18]

Research Questions, Aims and Objectives

While this dissertation does not aspire to get to the bottom of the Patani insurgency or understand the objectives of its actors (in fact, it is not concerned with the violence, the militant movement or the Thai state's response to it as such), it seeks to give an impression of how local people experience the communities in which they live and the violence around them. This is of interest as I consider local perceptions of the southern unrest to be key factors in any conflict resolution and because engaged and confident local communities are essential in order to face the many challenges the region will have to confront in the coming years.

As explained above, the conflict is rooted in identity, the majority population's ethno-religious otherness[19] and a historical framework in which multiple identities have developed in response to an emerging Thai nation. As such, it is important to understand the local dynamics and development of this identity, and an objective of this dissertation is to seek

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17 Lewis 1998.
18 Joll 2012.
19 While Malay Muslims constitute the majority population in the Patani region, in a Thai context they are a clear minority with a distinctly different culture.

to disclose how local people perceive themselves and their communities in relation to core identity factors.

After studying the Patani region and its history of conflict and unrest, two such identity factors came to light, and thus, throughout this dissertation, religion and nation—including ethnicity and language—will be the main theoretical concepts under which identity will be discussed. These concepts are salient definers of identity and based on an assertion of multiple identities in the region, this dissertation asks:

1. What have been the main contributors to the development of multiple identities?
2. How do local Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists negotiate multiple identities in a daily life beset by violence and fear?
3. What is the impact of these identities on interethnic relations and local interpretations of violence and conflict?

In other words, it aims to detect how the concepts of religion and nation define and shape identity in the Patani region among both Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists and to identify what resonance there is for national and local discourses on religion and nation in the local population. It also aims to discover how people are influenced by such discourses, and how they redefine them. Furthermore, it examines how these discourses are reflected in local communities and how they influence both interethnic relations in the region and local understandings of the conflict.

Theory and Method

To approach the objectives of the dissertation and the research questions listed here, I have conducted intensive fieldwork in the region on three separate occasions over a period of two and a half years, totalling approximately three months in the field. During these fieldtrips, I interviewed and interacted with both Malay Muslim and Thai Buddhist people of different social statuses in Pattani province, and to some extent Yala and Narathiwat as well. A primary interest throughout the study has been to obtain a direct perception of the local population's everyday life experiences. However, the opinions and insights of religious leaders as well as schoolteachers were also sought. Over the course of the study I made use of qualitative research methods, and methodological reflections about fieldwork and the process of data collection will be presented in Chapter 7, the last chapter of Part I, in conjunction with the analyses of my empirical data, which will follow in Parts II and III.

The dissertation belongs to the research field of History of Religions, a secular study of religious beliefs, behaviours and institutions with a view of religion as a social phenomenon and part of society and culture. It derives its theoretical basis from the disciplines of History, Sociology and Political anthropology as well. As explained above, the dissertation's primary theoretical concepts or research topics are religion and nation, and the two are treated throughout as comparable variables. 'Religion' is understood to be a belief system constituted as part of human culture and 'the nation' is similarly conceived. In the Patani region, both language and ethnicity are integrated aspects of religious as well as national identity and will thus also be included in the discussions of religion and nation. Further reflections on theories of the nation as well as nationalism and ethnicity will be discussed in Chapter 6 (Part I) as an opening to the following analyses of religious and national identity of the Patani region in Part II.

Furthermore, the concepts of religion and nation will be dealt with in relation to the discourse on Thainess (*khwam pen thai*) and the ideology of 'nation, religion and monarchy,' which have dominated modern Thai history and national identity throughout the 20th and into the 21st century. Thainess is here understood as loyalty to the three national pillars, 'nation, religion and monarchy,' manifested as a moral virtue that I have labelled 'Dhammarāja Buddhism'—i.e., Theravāda doctrines structured on the dogma of Buddhist kingship (the *dhammarāja*). As Connors notes, Thainess gestures both upwards to the nation and downwards to the Thai self, although he also underlines that Thainess has been rather consciously mobilised for hegemonic and governmental aims.[20] The dynamic between these two levels, and how Thainess is negotiated in the Patani region, are of interest to this study. The development of Thainess and further definitions and explanations of the concepts Thainess and Dhammarāja Buddhism will be found in Chapter 3 (Part I).

Thainess will be an important theoretical concept throughout this dissertation and implicit in much of the analyses, as I see this ideology as being one of three main sources of the multiple identities in the region. Thainess and the making of a Thai national identity has been an overarching phenomenon in Thai society, and even if the majority of the people of the Patani region are Malay, they nonetheless will have to relate to this tangible ideology and negotiate their self-perception within the framework of Thainess.

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20 Connors 2007a: 129.

Thai identity or the concept of Thainess has been discussed in a broad spectrum of academic works on Thai history and contemporary politics.[21] It has not, however, been particularly present in discussions of the southern conflict. Analysis of how Thai nationalism and the ideology of Thainess have triggered a reaction in the Malay Muslim community and led to alienation from Thai society and an increase in Malay nationalism in the Patani region is well documented. However, a focus on why and how Thainess has also made its way into Malay Muslim identity and become part of the multiple identities that many people experience is largely missing. My argument is that Thai influence has not supressed Malay identity. Rather, it has paved the way for multiple identities in which different aspects materialise depending on context and situation, and this dissertation will thus attempt to expand the outlook by adding this dimension to the analyses.

However, while the concept of Thainess will be thoroughly discussed in this dissertation, the concept of Malayness will not be dealt with. Questions about Malay Muslim identity are of great relevance to this study and will be a recurring theme throughout. However, Malay Muslim identity will always be viewed within a Thai context, and thus the larger discourse on the Patani region and Malayness, and Malay identity within the context of the Malay world, will be left for others to explore.

How people shape their identity based on interpretations of nationality, ethnicity, religion and language depends on a number of factors and, as explained above, this dissertation will look at how Thai nationalism and Thainess influence identities in the Patani region in the meeting with local realities. Thai identities and Malay identities may collide and cause friction between people, as well as within the self-perception of individuals. As already mentioned, however, they may also result in the shaping of multiple identities where different aspects of national or religious identity are triggered according to the context and the situation.

Lewis explains multiple identities as a combination of the involuntary identity of birth, the compulsory identity of the state, and the more freely chosen cohesion and loyalty of voluntary association.[22] In this dissertation I aim to show how such multiple identities develop as a result of both conscious and unconscious attitudes and actions, as well as compulsory and implicit expectations from the local community and society at large.

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21 For further discussions on Thainess and Thai national identity refer to Connors 2007a; Reynolds 2002; Saichol 2002; Thongchai 1994: 3 ff.
22 Lewis 1998: 7.

Another concept that will be of importance to this dissertation is a concept I have labelled 'the securing of Buddhism in the deep south'. In order to understand the dynamics of religious and national identity in the region, the Thai Buddhist minority population and interethnic relations must also be taken into account, and securing Buddhism by supporting Buddhist temples and shrines is of great importance to local Thai Buddhists in order to consolidate their sense of belonging to the region. In this respect, it can be seen as a more or less subconscious reaction to Malay Muslim dominance. Securing of Buddhism in the south, however, can also be seen as a national strategy promoted by the Thai state and a part of the ideology of Thainess, and the combination of national strategy and local maintenance of Buddhist culture adds an interesting dimension to local dynamics of religion and nation.

Also central to the theoretical perspectives of this dissertation is historiography and how different actors perceive history in Thailand and the Patani region. History is one of the most contested issues, and central to understanding the southern unrest. As such, history and different interpretations of history will be given extensive consideration, particularly in Part I.

Throughout the dissertation, all Thai, Arabic and Sanskrit/Pāli terms are transliterated into the Latin alphabet and, with the exception of proper names, put in italics. Malay terms are also italicised. While Sanskrit/Pāli terms are transliterated with diacritical marks, Thai and Arabic terms are reproduced without tonal indications or diacritical marks.[23]

About the Dissertation

As outlined above, during the course of this dissertation I intend to answer three questions: 1) what have been the main contributors to the development of multiple identities in the Patani region; 2) how do local Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists negotiate multiple identities in a daily life beset by violence and fear; and, 3) what is the impact of these identities on interethnic relations and local interpretations of violence and conflict? Within every society there are multiple identities, each with variations and with sometimes conflicting subdivisions.[24] Due to the conflict in the Patani

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23 There is no uniform and consistent system for transliteration of the Thai and the Arabic language. However, for people with a basic knowledge of these languages, it will be an easy task to identify which term it is referred to.
24 Lewis 1998: 5.

region, however, much of which is rooted in conflicting identities and ethnic and religious repression, it is of particular interest to understand how and why these multiple identities have developed.

In an effort to answer the first research question I will primarily focus on three elements. The first and most important is related to Thai nation-building and the ideology of Thainess, a strong ideology developed over a time span of almost a century and consecutively imposed on the Patani region. While this nation-building has failed to include Malay Muslims, and in many cases has alienated them from Thai society and increased Malay and Muslim aspects of their identity, many people nonetheless also experience a belonging to the Thai nation in which they are born, go to school, work and live. The degree of belonging differs considerably depending on a number of variables. However, it is likely that most people experience some kind of multiple identities, and it is this dynamic between different identities that I seek to explore. Opposition to the ideology of Thainess in the Patani region remains strong. However, over the years people have also negotiated it, adapted to it, and quite often tactically related to it. In Part I of this dissertation I will therefore place a great deal of emphasis on the history of the Patani region, the development of the Thai nation, and Thai nation building. It will also be strongly focused on the particular cultural history of the Patani region, including its history of violence and unrest.

The second element is related to the Muslim revival, which has significantly escalated over the last several decades, as it has in other Muslim countries and communities around the world. The recent years' increase in the influence of modernist Islam has led to an amplified focus on religious identity in the Malay Muslim population. The fact that Thailand's ideology of Thainess has made it increasingly difficult to express ethnic aspects of identity may have contributed to this trend, as the modernists have more or less unconsciously helped to create a space for Malay ethnicity, language and culture within the domain of religion. Although the most puritan of the Salafist and *dakwah* adherents play down ethnic and cultural aspects, Malay Muslims in general certainly fill their religion with a lot of Malay culture—another sign of the multiple identities of this group.

The third element relates to the Thai Buddhist population, as they also experience multiple identities and overlapping boundaries between national and religious identities. A contributor to this development is found in the concept of securing Buddhism in the south, a concept that can be viewed as an extension of the ideology of Thainess. The securing of Buddhism is twofold. In one sense it is a national strategy of developing and supporting Buddhism in the Patani region, but it is also a way of expressing national and religious identities among local Thai Buddhists in

a Muslim-dominated environment. The merging of national and religious identities through the securing of Buddhism is thus a contributor to multiple identities among Thai Buddhists. Both the Muslim revival and the securing of Buddhism in the south will be introduced in Part I of this dissertation.

To answer the second research question I will concentrate on how people negotiate national identity or ethnicity, particularly in relation to Thainess, language and religion. How Malay culture is expressed through religious terms is one important element. When Malay culture is interpreted within the domain of Muslim culture, it appears as if ethnic identity has become subordinate to religious identity. However, it may be that Malay Muslims in the Patani region interpret being Malay and being Muslim as two sides of the same coin. Moreover, in everyday life, ethnic and national (i.e., Malay and Thai) as well as religious identities are juggled, depending on the situation.

Although these multiple identities are particularly present in the Malay Muslim population, this concept also relates to Thai Buddhists, as they become increasingly aware of their own identity in response to developments among their Malay Muslim neighbours. The violence and insecurity wherein they live are other contributors to multiple identities among Thai Buddhist. Thus the focus of this dissertation will be on both Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists, and in Part II the matter of how they negotiate multiple identities in their everyday lives will be discussed.

The Thai Buddhist population is also relevant in terms of answering the third research question concerning the impact of these multiple identities on interethnic relations and local interpretations of the violence. Years of conflict have taken their toll on interethnic and interreligious relations, particularly with the intensified religious dimension in rhetoric from the latest militant movement. In Part III of the dissertation I will therefore look at how different concepts of national and religious identity can provide some answers to how interethnic conflict has developed and, in turn, can be mended. I will also explore how people in the region interpret the conflict and how their multiple identities are challenged by key conflict issues like the questions of independence, history, religion, cultural heritage, and the role of the state and the military. Local views on political reforms and socioeconomic challenges will be discussed as well.

In summary, after the final takeover of the Patani kingdom by the Siamese, the failure of Thai nation-building and assimilation policies has led to a series of violent separatist insurgencies. Combined with the subsequent brutality of Thai military forces, the Thai state has been left with a serious lack of legitimacy in its three southernmost provinces Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. As a result, Malay Muslim identity remains strong, and the ideal of a Patani kingdom and independence from Thai rule

lives on. The Malay Muslim population, however, has not remained unaffected by this Thai nation-building and nationalist ideology. Thai language and Thai national values have made their way into the deep south through the school system and mass media. However, this is not a sign of Thai identity suppressing Malay identity. Rather, it is a sign of multiple identities developing in the region.

A similar phenomenon is found in the last decades' Muslim revival. With the increase in Muslim piety and the popularity of missionary movements and modernist Islam it may appear as if Muslim identity has displaced Malay identity, whereas, in fact, much that is Malay identity has found fertile ground within the domain of religion, and Malay language and culture are redefined and flourish within the local Muslim culture. For the Thai Buddhist population it is the blurred distinction between national and religious identity following the national strategy of securing Buddhism in the deep south which, more than anything else, has led to a development of multiple identities.

Both Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists experience multiple identities and, combined with the violence and insecurity, interethnic relations have suffered considerably. To establish mutual trust and find solutions that take the interests of all parties into account is challenging. Depending on how people juggle their multiple identities, their perspectives on the problems differ. Some Malay Muslims are clearly separatists, while others want to see a political reform that affords greater influence to local Malays. Yet others are content with being part of the Thai state, but want to secure equal treatment from the larger Thai society, respect for their ethnic, cultural and religious distinctiveness and a life of dignity. While Thai Buddhists are generally reluctant to accept profound political changes, some appear to have a good understanding for Malay Muslim grievances. Others do not. Moreover, rural Thai Buddhists tend to share many of the same socioeconomic grievances as Malay Muslim villagers and may come together on the basis of common interests. These are the perspectives this dissertation seeks to further explore.

Since the resurgence of violence after the turn of the millennium, numerous studies have been conducted with regard to the Patani conflict. The majority of these studies are dedicated to understanding and disclosing the driving forces behind the violence and the militant movements. This dissertation, however, aims first and foremost to see the local population on its own terms, and not only as being part of a war zone. It also seeks to understand why and how local identities are influenced by Thai nation-building, not only in opposition to it, but also in response to it—something that I hope will help broaden the analysis of Patani identities.

A number of researchers have conducted lengthier and more extensive fieldwork than me. However, since the majority of these individuals have been men, it is fair to assume that the perspectives of the female segment of the population are to some degree underrepresented. Although this dissertation was never intend to have a particular gender focus, the voices of its many female informants have obviously contributed to its originality and increased its value. Other valuable features of this study concern the fact that a large percentage of its informants are younger (i.e., between 20 and 40 years of age) and that a considerable number are Thai Buddhists. It is thus my hope is that the perspectives contained herein will enable a better understanding of the troubled Patani region and serve to supplement the works of other researchers.

Part I
Historical and Ideological Transitions

In the introduction I pointed to Thai nation-building and the ideology of Thainess as one main contributor to the development of multiple identities in the Patani region. This needs to be further explained. On the one hand, Thainess and the repressive policies following Thai nation-building have led to an alienation from Thai society among Malay Muslims. On the other hand, people are also affected by this ideology as it has been spread through the public education system and mass media, and in one way or another, they have to relate to it and negotiate between Malay and Thai identities.

The development of Thainess is closely linked to the development of the Thai nation and the change from a Buddhist cosmological polity to a modern nation state. The impact it has had on the Patani region has to do with the relationship between the Patani kingdom and the Siamese state, or the transition from independent kingdom to marginalised peripheral provinces, and later on, the policies implemented in these provinces supressing local culture and identities in an attempt to include them into the Thai nation. The dynamic between Thainess and Malay Muslim identities in relation to the Patani conflict has, in my opinion, not been adequately discussed, and in this part of the dissertation I will therefore provide a thorough account of how this ideology has develop and how it has affected the Patani region and its people. I will start with the early history of the kingdoms of Patani (Chapter 1) and Siam (Chapter 2), and go on to discuss the development of a Thai nation-state and the ideology of Thainess (Chapter 3), as well as the history of political resistance and violent struggle in the Patani region (Chapter 4).

Religion and religious diversity have always been characteristics of the Patani region. Religion still plays a particularly important role in daily life, and both Muslims and Buddhists emphasise the historical roots of their religion in the region. Moreover, the emergence of modernist Islam and the Muslim revival of recent years, together with the rise of strategies to secure Buddhism in the Patani region, are trends that have also contributed to the

development of multiple identities in the deep south, and in this part of the dissertation I will therefore provide some background regarding the cultural history of Islam, Buddhism and Chinese religion in the region (Chapter 5). I will also discuss some theoretical aspects of nationalism and ethnicity (Chapter 6) and more deeply reflect upon the methodological aspects of the research (Chapter 7) as a transition to the empirical material on national and religious identity, which will be presented in Part II and III.

1 Early History

Any discussion on the Patani region will soon direct attention to the subject of history. Patani history is contested, and the different narratives—whether originating from orally transmitted stories in the Malay Muslim communities, from written accounts by local historians or from official Thai histories—are all strongly argued, each with claims of authenticity. Although history in itself is of less concern in the everyday life of people today, symbolically it provides a frame for many of the present grievances and problems in the local communities. History is thus widely used to legitimate struggles and the use or misuse of power, as well as to explain conflict lines and opposing interests. History, how it is constructed and contested, represents an important foundation for identity in the southernmost Thai border provinces, and in this respect, the history and historiography of both Patani and Thailand may give key insights into the present situation.

The region, which is today divided into Thailand's three southernmost provinces (Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat), once formed the base of the Malay Muslim Sultanate of Patani or Patani Darussalam (15th - 18th century), an area that in earlier times constituted the centre of the Brahman-Buddhist kingdom of Langkasuka (6th-13th century).[25] During the time of Langkasuka, the area from the Isthmus of Kra to modern day Pattani and Kedah was an important region of settlements where trans-peninsular routs linked trade from India and China. After the 13th century, commercial centres emerged around important harbours, of which Ligor (Nakhon Sri Thammarat), Patani and Kedah would grow to become some of the most influential.[26] First subjugated to the Srivijaya Empire and later under the patronage of the Siamese in Ayutthaya, Patani developed to be one of the major cities on the Malay Peninsula. As a bustling port and centre of trade, the city of Patani attracted Chinese, Indians, Arabs and

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25 Wyatt 2005: ix; Chuleeporn 2008: 39. Refer to Coedès 1968 and to Munoz 2006 for earlier accounts of the Patani kingdom, Langkasuka, the kingdom of P'an P'an (possibly the Chinese name for Patani), and for accounts on the Srivijaya empire.
26 Chuleeporn 2008: 39.

Europeans, as well as people from all over the Malay world.[27] Thus, ethnic and religious diversity has for centuries been a trademark of this region. It was from the 16th to the 17th century that the Patani Sultanate or Kingdom was in its heyday. Trade was booming and Patani became one of the leading centres for Islam and Islamic education on the Peninsula. Following Patani's official conversion to Islam, most likely in the early 16th century,[28] Patani grew to be recognized not only as a Malay kingdom, but also an Islamic polity, a *Dar Al-Islam*, with reputable learning centres based on the *pondok* schools.[29]

Historical Sources

Patani history can also be traced in a number of historical sources around the world—from a variety of Chinese texts (including the annals of the Ming dynasty) to European accounts like the reports from officials of the Dutch East India Company.[30] These are all important supplements to the main accounts we have from Siamese and local Malay sources, most of which need to be read in their political and historical contexts.

Patani appears only sporadically, maybe even selectively, in the Ayutthaya chronicles;[31] and the later chronicles of Patani, Songkla and Patthalung, compiled by Siamese officials at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, were all written to provide evidence supporting Siam's authority over these peripheral areas.[32] The Siamese sources tell the story of Patani as a Siamese vassal state that, while sometimes rebellious, was always subordinate to the Siamese King. This is also reflected in the writing of Prince Damrong Rachanuphap, the influential administrator, army commander, minister and brother of King Chulalongkorn, also known as the 'Father of Thai history'. In his famous

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27 Refer to *Hikayat Patani* and *Serjarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani* and the discussion on these works by Teeuw and Wyatt for more on the history of the Patani kingdom.

28 Some sources consider the conversion of Patani to Islam to have occurred in 1457 (Gilquin 2005: 11). This, however, is something that remains to be adequately proven (Davisakd 2008: 80 f.).

29 Liow 2009: 18 f. A *pondok* is a traditional Malay Islamic school centred on a religious teacher, a *tok guru*. It is a boarding school with ten levels, where students graduate from each level according to personal progress.

30 Wade 2009: 499 ff.; Davisakd 2008: 74. Refer also to Coedès 1968 for an analysis of early traces in various texts.

31 Davisakd 2008: 74.

32 Davisakd 2008: 79.

"Lecture on the History of Siam" at Chulalongkorn University in 1924, his statement that "Patani has belonged to the Thai [kingdom] since time immemorial"[33] reveals Thai sentiments at that time, although it also reflects Thai history writing and Thai policies up to the present.

While admitting that the sending of the *bunga mas* flowers subordinated Patani to the superiority of Siam,[34] local Malay histories conversely emphasise Patani's independence and sovereignty. In addition to what appears to be a rich local tradition for the transmission of oral history there are a handful of important written works by local historians, of which the main two are the *Hikayat Patani* (*The Story of Patani*) and the *Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani* (*History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*). The *Hikayat Patani* is believed to have been written sometime between 1690 and 1710, after the fall of the Prasat Thong dynasty in Ayutthaya, which had repeatedly attacked Patani. Thus, according to Davisakd, its primary political message might have been to declare Patani's own political domain and underline Ayutthaya's failure to integrate Patani into the Siamese Kingdom. One way that it accomplishes this is by claiming Patani to have been a Muslim state from the very start—i.e., from the time of the first raja—thus separating the political and historical domain from Buddhist Ayutthaya.[35] The *Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani*, which largely builds upon the *Hikayat Patani*,[36] was pseudonymously written in the mid-20th century and directly responds to the repressive Thai policies of that time,[37] providing a Patani Malay ethnic consciousness by comparing the golden age of Patani history with colonial conditions under Thai rule. Both these works are thus just as interesting as a source to the specific political situation of the time they were written, as they are as accounts on the early Patani history. The same could be said about Siamese accounts of the late 19th, early 20th century, which also should be read as part of the Thai nation-building project at the time when they were written.

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33 Davisakd 2008: 72.
34 *Bunga mas*, or *bunga mas dan perak*, were golden flowers sent every third year to the King of Siam as a symbol of tributary submission.
35 Davisakd 2008: 79 f.
36 It is assumed that the author must have had access to different versions of the *Hikayat Patani* as well as other historical sources (Syukri 2005: xvi).
37 Wyatt 2005: ix f.

Patani—Siam Relations

Although the available sources on Patani history are diverse and sometimes contradictory, together they provide a fairly reliable picture of old Patani and its relation to Siam and neighbouring kingdoms through the centuries. The rajas of Patani remained independent and strong throughout the 14th and 15th century while paying tribute to other kingdoms, most notably the kingdom of Siam—progressing, expanding and sometimes rebelling during periods in which Siam was weak and threatened by rivalling kingdoms, and subordinating itself whenever Siam grew strong.[38] As a port, the Patani bay, sheltered from the Monsoon storms, was attractive because of its proximity to the Isthmus of Kra, particularly during times at which the Strait of Malacca was haunted by piracy,[39] and it grew to become a trading city of great importance, housing people of many countries. This city was also rich enough to finance a reasonably competitive military force, of which the three large brass canons of Patani were the most renowned. Although the relation between Patani and Siam shifted in accordance with the play of political power, during the Ayutthaya era, it always returned to a relatively friendly situation in which Patani paid tribute to the Siamese king. After the final siege of Patani by Rama I (1782-1809) of the Chakri dynasty, however, and the subsequent splitting up of the kingdom into seven smaller states or administrative districts (*ganpokkhrong jet hua mueang*), this relation qualitatively changed.[40] It was thus during the Chakri dynasty and the Bangkok era that resentment towards the Siamese grew increasingly tense.

By making a critical reading of the existing historical sources we can understand a great deal about Patani's past. Something these sources do not give us, however, is a clear answer to the degree of dependence or subordination of Patani to Siam.[41] The reason for this is that the logic of dependency and diplomatic relations at that time were completely different from what we find within the rationale of the modern nation-state. It is a problem that most debates which relate to Patani history today, are analysed within an understanding of states as we know modern nation-states today, as this concept, at the time of old Patani, was non-existent. Thus the struggle over Patani and its discourses on religion and nation is

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38 Davisakd 2008: 74.
39 Syukri 2005: xiv.
40 Syukri 2005: 54 ff.
41 It should be mentioned, however, that even the *Sejarah Kerajaan Patani* recognises that Patani, from the end of the 18th century, had fallen under permanent Siamese rule (Syukri 2005: 59).

tightly connected to the modernisation and nation-building processes that transformed Siam into Thailand. Siam becoming Thai serves in many respects as a precondition for Patani becoming Thai, the change in attitude towards Patani and the more or less successful process of integrating its people into the Thai nation.

2 Becoming Thai

To understand the shift in attitude towards Patani and people living on the periphery of the centre of the Siamese Kingdom as well as shifts in these people's perception of their own identity, it can be useful to start by asking how Thai nationalism and the idea of a Thai nation came about. In classical modernist theories of nations and nationalism it is commonly argued that it is nationalism that produces the nation, and not the other way around.[42] While largely sharing this view, I would nonetheless like to point out that in the case of Thailand, as well as in many other Asian and African cases, this statement lacks a certain degree of accuracy since the creation of the nation was not initially instigated from within what was to become the nation-state Thailand. Rather, the concept of a Thai or a Siamese nation was an idea imposed by French and British colonial powers in their struggle to define the boundaries of their empires in the 19th century.

The Mueang—a Micro Cosmos

Like other Asian civilisations, Siam was not defined by borders or boundaries, but instead by a hierarchy of towns and cities, *mueang* in Thai,[43] with Sukhothai, followed by Ayutthaya, and later Bangkok, elevated as the centre of the kingdom.[44] Siam was a conglomerate of sovereign units, each *mueang* with a supreme overlord (*jao mueang*) subordinated to

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42 Gellner 1983: 55; Hobsbawm 1992: 10. Theories and definitions of Nation and Nationalism will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

43 The term *mueang* is not easily defined as it implies as much social as it does spatial relationships. It can mean the town located at the hub of a network of interrelated villages, but also the totality of towns and villages ruled by one lord (*jao*). The *mueang* arose out of a set of political, economic, and social interrelationships (Wyatt 2003: 6). Related phenomena to the Thai *mueang* are also found in the Lao, Vietnamese, and Shan cultures.

44 In a short period after the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767, before the establishment of the Chakri dynasty in Bangkok in 1782, Thonburi was the capital city of Siam (Wyatt 2003: 122 ff.).

the King of Siam,[45] but perhaps also to other kingdoms depending on their territorial and relative distance from the capital compared to other powerful kings and rulers. The territory of each *mueang* was rarely fixed. Rather, it usually loosely referred to the area within the city walls, as well as some major roads, paths and travelling passes, with the remaining outlying areas regarded as wilderness or no-man's land.[46] As the central authority of a *mueang* and its lord (*jao mueang*) was directly connected to the guardian spirit (*phii mueang*) that was thought to inhabit the city pillar (*lak mueang*),[47] the power of the *mueang* was also at the strongest in the vicinity of this spiritual centre.

Similarly, the Siamese Kingdom as a whole was not defined by borders, but rather marked by its frontier towns. Patani was one such frontier town subordinated to the Siamese king, and thus marking the margins of the Siamese Kingdom,[48] although Patani, when it was considered opportune, also paid tribute to other powerful rulers. This *mueang* system was a system where the spiritual and political power was centred on the ruler, implying that the further away a given town was from this power, the more peripheral it was to the kingdom. Frontier towns like Patani thus exercised great amounts of independence.

However, this worldview was quite the opposite to the ideas developed in modern European nation-states, where fixed boundaries drawn up in official maps constituted the total power of a state, and thus also represented an obstruction to colonial aspirations in the region. For the Europeans, it was the entire geo-body of a state that was the essential entity, and thus they stressed the importance of boundaries. While the Siamese Kingdom's geography was cosmologically rooted in the Brahman-Buddhist mythology, where the kingdom and its capital centre represented a micro-cosmos with the palace and its temples signifying the sacred Mount Meru as an *axis mundi* in the heart of this micro-cosmos[49] (what Tambiah explained as a galactic polity),[50] the rulers of modern European

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45 The centre of the kingdom, the capital and residence of the king, was known as the great city (*mueang luang*), while surrounding cities, often ruled by the sons of the king, were known as children of the great city (*mueang luuk luang*). Refer to Tambiah for more on the structure of the *mueang* (Tambiah 1976: 113 f.).
46 Baker and Pasuk 2005: 5 ff.; Tambiah 1976: 113 ff.; Tongchai 1996: 73.
47 Terwiel 1994: 17. Refer to Terwiel's "The origin and Meaning of the Thai 'City pillar'" for more on *lak mueang* (Terwiel 1978).
48 Although Patani, as a Muslim sultanate, was not organized according to the Siamese *mueang* structure, similar systems of semi-independent though hierarchically structured city states was also widespread throughout the Inidianized states of Southeast Asia, as well as in the Chinese empire at large.
49 Tambiah 1976: 109.
50 Tambiah 1976: Ch. 7.

nation-states were by contrast instituted by God to reign over the totality of a given territory. Traditionally, the Siamese king, viewed as a divine righteous ruler, moulded on both the Theravāda Buddhist ideals of kingship, the *Dhammarāja*[51] and the *cakkavatti*,[52] and the Brahmin *devarāja* ideal,[53] was the overlord over a number of vassals paying tribute to the righteous and divine king, in many ways with a legitimacy similar to that of earlier European feudal kings. And this was still the case in the 19th century. A tributary state existed by submitting itself to one, or usually several, overlords to avoid punishment from either of them, and this multiple submission would balance the power of the interested overlords, a multiple submission recognised even by the overlords themselves, but found confusing and unacceptable by the Europeans.[54]

The Geo-Body of Siam—A Response to Colonial Pressure

The inevitable confusion and conflict resulting from the interaction between the Siamese, with their system of multiple sovereignties by tributary states and overlapping margins on the one side, and the Europeans, with their model nation-states and modern maps on the other, has been closely examined by Thongchai Winichakul. The repeated requests by the British in the early 19th century for the Siamese to draw up their claimed boundaries were met with little interest. In fact, when the British conquered the southeastern parts of Burma in 1826 and asked the Siamese for a clarification of the boundaries, the Siamese court replied that they should ask the local villagers. Similarly, further north in 1934, the king of *mueang* Chiang Mai left it entirely up to the British to demarcate the border. The Siamese were quite annoyed by these constant, and to them irrelevant, inquiries about borders. Annoyed was also the king of Nakhon Sri Thammarat in the south, yet another Siamese tributary which on behalf of the king in Bangkok were in control over the northern Malay states, among them Patani. The frustration, however, seemed to be mutual, and

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51 A Buddhist king who is righteous and rules according to the *Dhamma*, with Emperor Ashoka as a historical ideal type.
52 The "wheel-turner", the universal, righteous, moral and socially just ruler. A future Buddha who has postponed the attainment of *nibbana* in order to become a world ruler (Harvey 1990: 75; Jackson 1989: 45;Tambiah 1976: 38).
53 A god-king, a Brahman god incarnated as king (Jackson 1989: 122).
54 Thongchai 1996: 75 f.

the legal status of the northern Malay states, whether they were Siamese or independent, was never really determined.[55] In the eyes of the Siamese, Patani was an obvious part of Siam. Patani, on the other hand, would still argue that it had some degree of sovereignty and independence.

By the mid-19th century, however, with the rule of King Rama V, King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910), the Siamese took an interest in the kingdom's margins as well. King Chulalongkorn was among the first generation of Western-educated Siamese nobles, and in their quest to emulate the standards of Western civilization both he and his brothers had become interested in the demarcation of territory—something that the French soon came to learn. Neither the Siamese nor the French had thus far mapped the area around the Mekong River according to modern standards, and this led to a mutual race by military troops. Siam began a campaign directed towards tributary states, trying to win their loyalty by arguing for their mutual friendship, brotherhood and interest in defeating the French foreigners. This was a new tune from Bangkok, as the Siamese kings previously had remained rather indifferent to neighbouring peoples that were not Siamese, considering them to be barbarians or savages (*ba* or *tuan*). With the rise of the French threat, however, the emphasis on friendship and kinship came to be a useful tool, although the intentions were entirely imperialistic.[56] In the 1880s, both Siamese and French troops were mobilised under the pretence of suppressing Chinese bandits operating in Luang Prabang and surrounding areas. At that time, ambitious maps were drawn on both sides, and eventually the troops met at Thaeng (Dien Bien Phu) in 1888, where, after making opposing territorial claims, they decided to settle for observing the status quo.[57] As Thongchai notes: "Perhaps they were aware that their claims were equally legitimate and their maps similarly poor"[58]

With the examples of the British and the French experiences we can observe how Siamese sentiments changed during the 19th century, and can argue that the idea of a Siamese nation was first imposed on the Siamese from the outside, by European concepts of nation and nationalism, although the budding Siamese state eventually took inspiration from those very same ideas. The mapping of the geo-body of Siam marks the transition from the one to the other:

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55 Thongchai 1996: 77 ff.
56 We can here see the embryo of what would come to be the idea of a greater Thai kingdom (*maha anajak thai*), an idea of a territory controlled by Siam/Thailand, which should include all *tai* speaking peoples of Southeast Asia.
57 Thongchai 1996: 80 ff.
58 Thongchai 1996: 83.

> Mapping which had annoyed and frightened the Siamese court about half a century earlier, and by that time still frightened many local people, became an indispensable technology to decide and establish the geo-body of Siam.[59]

For Patani, annexation was the inevitable fate. With the late 19th century *tesaphibaan* administrative reform of King Chulalongkorn's trusted minister Prince Damrong Rajanuphab, which transformed the *mueang* system into a more modernized system (the *monthon* system),[60] and thus also started the merging process of incorporating Patani into Siam, Siam's grip over Patani was increasingly tightened.[61] In 1902 the Raja of Patani, Tengku Abdul Kadir Kamaruddin, was deposed and later imprisoned and sent to Phitsanulok, in 1906 *monthon* Pattani was established, and with the Anglo-Siamese treaty signed in 1909, ratifying the boundaries between Siam and Malaya, Patani was finally fully consolidated as part of Siam,[62] an annexation met by great frustration and heavy resistance from the local Malay Muslim elites.[63]

Modernization and the fall of Absolute Monarchy

This shaping of a geo-body, first imposed and later inspired by European thoughts, marked a starting point for nationalism in Siam and the further development of the nation-state Thailand. During the time of King Chulalongkorn new ground was broken for the first developments of nationalism and nation-building to take place. A certain modernization of Siam had already been introduced with Rama IV, King Mongkut (1851-

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59 Thongchai 1996: 82. For an in-depth analysis of the geo-body of Siam refer to Thongchai's authoritative main work Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation (Thongchai 1994).
60 Monthon means mandala or circle.
61 The fact that Patani after the introduction of the thesaphiban system no longer had to pay the tributary bunga mas flowers, as it from that point on was considered as an integral part of Siam (Che Man 1990: 63; Surin 1985: 33), underscores the qualitative change in the relationship between Patani and Siam from the beginning of the 20th century.
62 In fact, there was signed a secret convention between the British and the Siamese as early as in 1897, on 6th of April, ensuring: "Siam's sovereignty over the southern provinces while at the same time allowing Britain to enjoy certain privileges over the Peninsula, thus removing any opportunity for other great powers to operate in the area without its agreement" (Daviskad 2008: 77).
63 Daviskad 2008: 77 ff.; Jory 2008: 301; Che Man 1990: 62 f.; Surin 1985: 28 ff.

1868), but it was under King Chulalongkorn that the modernization processes and reforms really picked up. It was also Chulalongkorn who was the architect behind a strong state in the modern sense, which, according to Baker and Pasuk, marked the start of two key recurring processes or visions in Thai politics and its modern history, one being the construction of national unity (*samakkhi*), supported by an increased emphasis on military power, and the other being a development of civic consciousness in the new urban societies created by colonial commerce and by the nation-state itself, where the purpose of the nation-state was redefined as the well-being of the nation's members:[64]

> Old relationships of patronage were replaced by contracts in the marketplace. People evolved new ideas on man and society by reflecting on their own status as independent merchants and professionals, and by grabbing the increasing opportunities to compare Siam to the outside world undergoing tumultuous change. The new men and woman of early twentieth-century Siam took up the ideas of nation, state, and progress, and recast them. They challenged the definition of the nation as those loyal to the king. They demanded that 'progress' be more widely shared.[65]

In other words, at the turn of the century, two different visions or two different processes of nationalism were underway. I will here refer to them as a royal and a non-royal vision of nationalism. The first was the vision of King Vajiravudh, Chulalongkorn's successor and founder of modern nationalism in Siam, who, during his short reign, established a strong ideology based on the three pillars 'nation, religion and king' (*chat*, *sasana*, *phra mahakaset*), clearly inspired by the British slogan 'God, King, and Country'. With his Western education, the king, like his predecessors King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn, was eager to modernize Siam through Western means. However, unlike his father and grandfather, who more uncritically imported anything European, Vajiravudh sought to combine the modern influence, first of all from Britain, but also from other European cultures as well as Japan, with Thai traditions.[66] Consequently, Thai art, literature, music and theatre blossomed during his reign. The king continued to build up the military and also established a national

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64 Baker and Pasuk 2005: 105.
65 Baker and Pasuk 2005: 105.
66 Vella 1978: xiv ff.

paramilitary corps, the Wild Tigers (*suea ba*), to strengthen loyalty to the nation (which, for Vajiravudh, was non-different from the king).

According to Vella, Vajiravudh was a "paradoxical combination of traditional autocrat and modern nationalist".[67] On the one hand, he was highly Western oriented, opening up for new technology, modern standards for the economy and military, as well as continuing to build and strengthen public education. The king also introduced the national flag and surnames after Western standards.[68] On the other hand, the history of what was seen as a magnificent and splendid past, most notably the Sukhothai era, was glorified, and it was used (if not constructed) to represent the nature of Siamese or Thai greatness. Additionally, the monarch supported a rich expansion of cultural expressions, very much rooted in traditional art forms, Buddhism and traditional Thai values.[69] When looking into developments of nationalism throughout history and around the world, one might ask how paradoxical this combination of traditionalism and modernism really was. Nonetheless, it describes the early decades of 20th century Siam fairly accurately, and also gives us some insight into the other process of nationalism evolving in tandem with Vajiravudh's royal vision.

The king had arranged for the creation of a public sphere, encouraging the creation of new literature and drama, even supporting a free press. However, in the long run, this development of a public sphere, the freedom of speech and independent media sources among an increasingly educated and economically independent urban elite became a highly disturbing challenge. Consequently, the king met this problem by buying up some of the main newspapers, and in 1923 he also endorsed a tough press law.[70] Nonetheless, within this new public space and within the growing part of the population employed in the military and state bureaucracy, the second vision of nationalism, the non-royal vision, was already emerging in distinct competition with the royal. The non-royal vision developed from an educated civil elite or a bourgeoisie critical of the absolutism of the monarch and the advantages of the royal elite. These people rejected a tradition in which opportunities and promotions depended on birth, connections and loyalty to the king, and rather wanted a system of advancement based on merit. While the king insisted on a society based on

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67 Vella 1978: xiii.
68 Vella 1978: Ch. 6.
69 Vella 1978: Ch. 8.
70 Baker and Pasuk 2005: 107 ff. Note that Vella insists on King Vajiravudh's reluctance to control or censor the press, and thus also plays down the effect of the 1923 legislation (Vella 1978: 253).

principles of service to the king (*lak rathakan*), this growing number of politically engaged civilians, asked for the principles of law and rationality (*lak wicha*).[71] And while Chulalongkorn had envisioned the Chakri Kingdom to lead a nation with a parliament and a constitution, King Vajiravudh was no believer in democracy,[72] and maintained his power base of royals and cronies, something that fed the fire of dissatisfaction among this new stratum of an educated civilian elite.

By the time of his death, Vajiravudh's successor, Rama VII, King Prajadhipok (1925-1935), had little chance of regaining royal confidence among his subjects. Although new tax reforms and the cutting down on royal overspending was announced, the new king's efforts did not live up to expectations. Besides, the non-royal nationalist vision already had a life of its own. Ironically, it was Vajiravudh's royal nationalist vision that had opened up the space for this development, as it was his autocratic leadership that had caused the royal vision to draw the shortest straw and the competing non-royal vision to take over. Although the royal vision was never really wiped out, but rather would later gain momentum and by the middle of the 20th century re-establish itself within Thai politics, the royal nationalism of King Vajiravudh marked the beginning of the end of absolute monarchy, opened up for a parliamentarian solution and a nationalism, not with the king, but with the Thai nation and Thainess at the core:

> On 5 February 1927, seven men met in Paris and over the next five days plotted a revolution in Siam [...] They called themselves the *khana ratsadon* or People's Party, using the word for 'people' which the Bangkok press favored as the opposite of 'rulers'. The intellectual leader of the group was the brilliant law student, Pridi Banomyong.[73]

Two aims were outlined at this meeting in Paris. Firstly, to convert the absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarchy, and secondly, to use the state to achieve economic and social progress through a six-point program summarized as: true independence, public safety, economic planning, equal rights (with no exceptions for royalty), liberty for all, and universal education. As the economic depression of 1929 also hit Siam, the People's Party, which initially recruited members among student's in Europe, and later, among commoners in Siam, including some key groups

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71 Baker and Pasuk 2005: 110 f.
72 Baker and Pasuk 2005: 106.
73 Baker and Pasuk 2005: 116.

within the military, gained more and more support. By February 1932, even King Prajadhipok realized he was leading a losing battle, and on June 24th of that same year, Pridi and the People's Party took power in a bloodless coup d'état, achieving the primary aim of their Paris meeting.[74]

The transition of Siam into a Thai nation-state outlined in this chapter is of key relevance to this dissertation as it affects the perception of the Patani region, and, in the long run, the self-perception of its people as well. With the royal vision of nationalism, the Kingdom of Patani was fully incorporated into the Siamese or Thai Kingdom, its geo-body. Following the development of the non-royal vision, however, becoming Thai, or the process of assimilating Malay Muslim people of the Patani region into a Thai identity, started to transpire. In 1939, with World War II heating up, the name Siam was changed to Thailand, reflecting that the country was the land of the entire Thai race (including those living beyond its borders)—a name change that also mirrored the imperialistic aspirations of a greater Thai empire (*maha anajak thai*).[75] We see the development of a 'nation-of-intent'.[76] In order to include all people of the new Thai geo-body into this non-royal nationalist vision, however, whether it was Malay Muslims in the South or hill tribes in the North, the notion of ethnicity and nationality also had to be redefined, and a key solution to this challenge of ethnicity was to uphold and cultivate, although significantly amend, the notion of Thainess embedded in the slogan 'nation, religion and king'. The 1932 revolution marked a fundamental shift in Thai history and also a remarkable displacement of political power. Thus a main task after 1932 was to find common ground for a nation-state ideology within the highly diverse movement that constituted the People's Party. A second challenge was to redefine the nation and build legitimacy for the new era of the nation-state, and here as well, Thainess and the construction of a Thai identity became useful tools.

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74 Baker and Pasuk 2005: 116 ff.
75 Baker and Pasuk 2005: 132, Terwiel 2005: 171
76 Shamsul 1996.

3 Thainess—Nation, Religion and Monarchy

The re-definer of political legitimacy and the main architect behind the construction of the modern Thai identity was Luang Wichit Wathakan, one of the most striking characters of the post-1932 Thai socio-political landscape and part of the Paris-club from 1927. In the period between 1932 and 1962, Luang Wichit played a crucial role in consolidating the concept of the Thai nation as well as the concept of Thainess (*khwam pen thai*), meaning a moral virtue and loyalty to nation, religion and king (*chat, sasana, phra mahakaset*). Influenced by both Western historiography and ideas developed by King Vajiravudh, Luang Wichit, a close aide to Field Marshal Plaek Phibulsongkram (who was Prime Minister during the years 1938-1944 and 1948-1957), managed to conceptually link the dynastic era to the post-1932 nation-state and thus construct an official conception of Thailand's past that continues to this day.[77] However, in contrast to Vajiravudh, who portrayed the King as the sole guarantee for the existence of a Thai nation, Luang Wichit caste the military in that role. As in former times the King had been considered the equivalent of the nation, now the military-dominated state and the nation were conceived as being one and the same.[78] Successfully linking the Thai past to the changing social and political environment following the overthrow of the monarchy, he managed to replace the King with the military in the political conceptualisation of legitimate power; and by keeping the slogan 'nation, religion and king,' and developing it further, the state, whenever in need of it, could lean on the moral legitimacy of religion and king. I find it useful to look at this transformed trinity of Thainess in the context of the Thai religio-political system, which I will call Dhammarāja Buddhism.

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77 Baremé 1993: 4, 181; Saichol 2002.
78 Barmé 1993: 181.

Dhammarāja Buddhism

The *dhammarāja* is a well-known concept in Theravāda Buddhism. However, when coined as an *-ism* (as is done here with the term Dhammarāja Buddhism), it raises some problems. Dhammarāja Buddhism may suggest something like a school or a sect within the Theravāda tradition. This, however, is not my intention. I use it because I believe it says something about the political reality in Theravāda societies, particularly in Thailand, which Theravāda philosophy as such does not cover—i.e., something about the living religion and how the teaching of the Buddha, through the Theravāda doctrines, has become a mass religion.

The Theravāda Buddhist religion as living tradition and belief system has been historically structured on the dogma of Buddhist Kingship modelled after an archetypal image of Emperor Ashoka the Great as the *Dhammarāja*, the righteous ruler and protector of the teaching of the Buddha.[79] The ruler is born a king due to his merits and moral virtue, and is thus born with religious legitimacy. The king's power is therefore dependent on his adherence to the *Dhamma,* and consequently the support of the congregation of Buddhist monks (the *sangha*) becomes one of the main royal undertakings. The *sangha* provides the king with moral legitimacy and the king secures the support and protection of Buddhism and the *sangha* in a closely tied interdependent and reciprocal relationship.

Shifts of Legitimacy

Although the religious and political spheres in Buddhist philosophy are ideally intended to operate separately from one another, in Thailand, this has never been the case.[80] The relationship between king and *sangha* has been inseparable within this system of Dhammarāja Buddhism.[81] Religion

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79 Of contemporary Theravāda Buddhist countries, however, it is only Thailand that can be said to have upheld this tradition of Dhammarāja Buddhism.
80 Somboon 1982: 159.
81 The Brahman concept of the devarāja, the divine king, has also been prominent under both the Ayutthaya and the currant Chakri dynasty. However, this concept has acted as supplement to Dhammarāja Buddhism. The king as a bodhisatta to come (also prominent in Thai history) is yet another concept that unites the qualities of both the *devarāja* and the *dhammarāja*. Refer to Connors 2007a: 79 for more on the relations between the Brahman and Theravāda concepts of kingship in Thai history.

was thus used by the king to achieve political ends while, at the same time, the *sangha* acted as a mediator between the people and its ruler—all the while maintaining a ritual and religious monopoly.[82] In the meeting with modernity and Western imperial powers from the 1850s to the early 1900s, however, and with the emergence of nationalism and the development of the nation-state, this Southeast Asian sacral nature of government was challenged on an ideological basis, and the need to define Thai society and political life within a modern context, while at the same time maintaining not only political, but also moral legitimacy, became evident. It was within this context that the idea of *'Thainess'* (*khwam pen thai*) took form. The shaping of a national identity rooted in the three pillars of nation, religion and king was, as noted above, initiated by King Vajiravudh, who managed to consolidate the monarchy as a fundamental pillar of the modern nation; but it was Luang Wichit Wathakan who (although continuing this trend) emphasized the military and state bureaucracy as being the centre of the nation. Moreover, by keeping religion and king as fundamental symbolic concepts of the nation, whenever in need of it, the military and the political elite could to a certain degree borrow moral legitimacy from the *sangha* and the *dhammarāja*.

As I see it, this fundamental shift, and its importance to the moral legitimacy of politics and state power in 20th century Thailand, has not been adequately communicated in Thai political history. For centuries the symbiosis of King and *sangha* had generated a solid moral legitimacy and by keeping Vajiravudh's holy trinity, securing that the King, although stripped of power, remained the centre of unity, Wichit had managed to provide full moral legitimacy, through king and religion, to the nation.[83] And thus, as the *sangha* had earlier embraced the righteous ruler, the *dhammarāja*, it now embraced the nation. To some degree, we now see a blend of the royal and the non-royal nationalist vision.

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82 Refer to Tambiah 1976 and Somboon 1993 for a thorough discussion on kingship, power and Buddhism in Thai history.
83 Although the monarchy has lost power, its symbolic significance has remained within the concept of Thainess. Moreover, through the first decades of King Bhumibol's reign, the king with the help of his advisors (a network of princes and royalties) also managed to claim large proportions of informal political power. Refer to Handley 2006 for a thorough account of the political significance of King Bhumibol's reign.

Impacts for the Patani Region

When it comes to the southern border provinces, this development of Thainess with the strengthening and redefining of the nation, religion, king trinity was essential, as the policies following this ideology particularly affected life in the Patani region and thus influenced the development of Malay Muslim identity and the local communities, adding to anti-Thai sentiments among Malay Muslim people. Liow puts it this way:

> In order to grasp [...] the historical consciousness of the Malay Muslim community, one has to appreciate not only the resilience of Malay identity, but also the forceful nature of Bangkok's drive to craft a distinct Thai nationality and impose it on ethnic minorities.[84]

After being annexed into the emerging Thai nation, despite fierce opposition from the old Patani elite, this national ideology of Thainess was repeatedly imposed on the people of the South in numerous attempts to consolidate the nation and create a feeling of Thai unity within its borders. Thus, the development of the political situation and Malay Muslim sentiments in the Patani region were intimately linked with the evolution of the Thai state.[85] Although the local Patani elites were initially enthusiastic about the parliamentarian turn of 1932, hoping that this might represent an opening for Malay Muslim influence, their eagerness soon faded in light of the realization that the real power remained in the hands of a small group of military officers and senior civil servants.[86] Consequently, the resentment towards what was seen as intrusive Thai policies, which in reality meant restrictions on religious practices and institutions, on language, as well as on other cultural expressions, returned and again became the main concern. These policies challenged local religious and national identities, and in effect, the Thai state failed to establish legitimacy in the deep south.[87]

In post-1932 Thailand, a power struggle developed between two factions within the People's Party (*khana ratsadon*), led by Pridi and

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84 Liow 2009: 20.
85 Surin 1985: 72.
86 Surin 1985: 73 ff.
87 It should be noted, however, that the general population that had resisted the government's integration efforts for so long, and were thus more reluctant to embrace democracy and general elections in the first place, never really experienced a change in attitude towards the Thai state during this period (Surin 1985: 75).

Phibul, who held quite opposing political views. Pridi's group promoted democracy and more inclusive policies, while Phibul's group was more military oriented and promoted more national-chauvinistic policies. The strife between the two factions had great impact on political developments in Thailand at the time, but after an unjust attempt to frame Pridi for the regicide of King Ananda, Rama VIII in 1946,[88] he was forced into exile and Phibul's faction (and policies) became dominant—something that greatly affected the Malay Muslim communities in the south.

During the years of Field Marshal Phibul (1938-1944; 1948-1957) and Field Marshal Sarit (1958-1963), Malay Muslims were forced to give up their Malay-Arabic names and take Thai surnames. Traditional dress was forbidden, as was the local Malay language, and laws on marriage, inheritance and personal affairs, which had been previously enforced by Islamic judges (*dato yutthitham* (*qadi*)), were abolished. During this time, nation meant Thai (more specifically the Thai language) and religion meant Buddhism; and through the public education system, the Thai language and Buddhist values were imposed on Malay Muslim children, leading to grave dissatisfaction among people in the region. Consequently, public education, which was seen as a necessary and liberating feature of the modern nation-state, was perceived by local Malay Muslims as an attempt to eradicate their religion and culture. Buddhist monks played an important role in the development of Thai primary education, and conscious efforts were made to convert people to Buddhism.[89] Public education, which also represented a major challenge to the traditional and proud institution of Islamic *pondok* schools in the region, has since then been interpreted as the main tool of Thai repression.

There was a short period of reconciliation between Thai authorities and Malay Muslim communities when Pridi's faction was in power (1944-1948). It was during this period that the 1945 Patronage of Islam Act was passed, one among a number of important initiatives.[90] However, the more repressive policies of the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s set the standard for Thai policies on how to deal with the Malay Muslim dominated south.

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88 Handley 2006: 80.
89 Liow 2009: 21; Surin 1985: 89.
90 Liow 2009: 21.

The Many Features of Thainess

Thai policies have varied a lot up through the 20th century and beyond, shifting between attempts at assimilation and integration. Similarly, Thainess cannot be pinned down as one ideology, as it too has changed and is interpreted differently by different people in different situations. With its trinity, 'nation, religion, king', Thainess nonetheless permeates Thai society and political and cultural thinking on a number of levels, and, as Connors has noted, it has mainly and quite consciously been mobilised for hegemonic and governmental aims. After 1976, the task of defining Thai national identity was even entrusted to a National Identity Board[91] that described it as consisting of "land, people, independence and sovereignty, government and administration, religion, monarchy, culture and dignity (pride)."[92] Because Thainess has been a compulsory feature of the Thai educational system and disseminated through mass media and cultural institutions, it is also something that most people in Thailand (including Malay Muslims in the lower South) relate to in one way or another. Thainess is thus a central concept throughout this dissertation. Thainess is a multifaceted concept, especially when interpreted by people in different positions and with different experiences. Still, as part of the grand discourse of the Thai nation, Thainess can be said to contain some characteristic features, and for the purpose of this study I will define it this way:

> Thainess, or *khwam pen thai*, implies loyalty to the three pillars of nation, religion and monarchy, manifested as a moral virtue rooted in Theravāda Buddhist ethics as well as Thai traditions that have evolved under the patronage of *dhammarāja* rulers promoting discipline, harmony and unity. The Thai language and Theravāda Buddhist values form the base of this tradition, which has been continuously promoted via the public educational system, mass media and community projects organised in an alliance between the state, the *sangha* and the king.

Within this framework, cultural and ethnic characteristics (and in particular the local Malay language) can be easily perceived as un-Thai, and thus as a threat to a unified national identity. Moreover, the Muslim

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91 Connors 2007a: 129.
92 Connors 2007a: 142.

religion, although more widely accepted and allowed, is nonetheless potentially damaging to this national unity, and a certain feeling of alienation from the nation among Muslims is not uncommon.

With the Cold War coming to a head in Asia, Thainess was increasingly strengthened as Thailand, seen as one of the United States' closest allies and a buffer against the domino effect and spread of communism in East and Southeast Asia, benefitted from American funding and training. Part of the anti-communist strategy was to build a Thai nation on an authoritarian state led by strongmen from the military like General Sarit, and with a morally just semi-divine king (a *dhammarāja*) as figurehead.[93] The icon of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Rama IX (1946-) was created in accordance with this strategy, and the combination of a sanctified king with the redefinition of political legitimacy constructed by people like Luang Wichit Wathakan, as mentioned above, helped pave the way for some significant developments and changes in the role of Buddhism in Thai society from the 1950s onwards. Somboon has described it as leading up to a:

> [...] formation and assumption of new roles and quite unique redefinition of roles for the monkhood and the reinterpretation of the teaching of the Buddha (Dhamma) for the achievement of political goals [...] a mobilization of Buddhism for political ends.[94]

According to Somboon, despite its esteem and prestige, the *sangha* has, since the 1932 revolution, not been able to exercise its influence over political authority. Rather, the Thai *sangha* has been loyal and subservient to political authority in return for protection and patronage.[95] In the 1960s and 1970s there evolved a certain political awakening within parts of the *sangha* itself with some leftist-monk's movements. However, the *sangha* was also clearly used by political authorities for their nationalist and nation-building agendas, and monk's movements on the extreme right demonstrate how far this could go. Khittivuddho Bhikkhu's argument that killing communists is not a sin and will not generate demerit (*kha kommunit mai baap*) is perhaps the most famous example.[96]

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93 Baker and Pasuk 2005: 168 ff.; Handely 2006: Ch. 7, Ch. 8; Terwiel 2005: 282 f.

94 Somboon 1993: 7 f.

95 Somboon 1993: 63.

96 Refer to Keyes 1978 for a discussion on Khittivuddho Bhikkhu and militant Buddhism in Thailand in the 1970s.

A number of government-initiated projects involving the *sangha* were instigated during the 1960s and 1970s, with the *thammathud* initiative being perhaps the most illustrative example.[97] The *thammathud* program was inaugurated to encourage national integration. With the assistance of travelling monks, it intended to promote the Thai language (specifically the central dialect), religion, morals and customs as well as loyalty to the nation and increased understanding between the government and the rural population. The aim of the program was to prevent the spread of communism, but also to suppress regionalism and feelings of local rather than national identity. At the sermons held in villages, for the most part in the North, Northeast and the South, the monks lectured on *Dhamma*, but also included specific government policies on the duties of good citizenship and loyalty to the government, nation and king. The monks distributed Buddhist textbooks and medicine to the villagers on behalf of the government, and showed films about government development programs and royal projects.[98] And, as Tambiah notes, the involved monks were fully aware of their role in the *thammathud* program and its aim of utilizing religion to reduce regional grievances, stem the tide of communism and mobilize loyalty to the king, the nation and, by extension, the government. As one of the monks he interviewed states: "*Phra thammathud* work is encouraged because monks can approach the people better than government officials can."[99] Moreover, in a survey on the role of monks in society that Tambiah administered to 324 monk students at Mahachulalongkorn University, 45.6 per cent answered that they were in favour of participating in government programs of national and community development like the *thammathud*.[100] In 1977 a special program was also promoted among Malay Muslims in the South in which Muslim scholars from central Thailand and the Central Islamic Council would teach the fundamental principles of Islam based on the *thammathud* model. According to Surin, this was viewed by local Muslims in the South as "bringing the coconuts to the coconut farmers", since they saw themselves as being more knowledgeable about Islam than the visiting preachers.[101]

Considering developments regarding Thainess during the 20th century, it is not surprising that this national dogma has been problematic in the

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97 *Thammathud* is derived from the Pāli term *dhammaduta* meaning ambassador of the *Dhamma*.
98 Baker and Pasuk 2005: 172 f.; Somboon 1993: 62 ff.; Tambiah 1976: 434 ff.
99 Tambiah 1976: 439.
100 Tambiah 1978: 131.
101 Surin 1985: 213.

Malay Muslim South. Nation, religion and king are symbols infused with Buddhist values, and no matter how much the agents of Thai society emphasise that *religion* also implies *Islam*, that the king is the protector of all religions and that all the people of Thailand belong to the Thai nation (contributing to its diversity regardless of ethnicity and language), they nonetheless fails to convince. Malay Muslims in the Patani region have time and again experienced being treated as second-class citizens—i.e., Thais, but not entirely Thai. Their local Malay language instantly differentiates from Thai identity and the effort to forge Malay Muslim culture into something that fits within the Thai framework is not an easy task. Nonetheless, to secure the discipline, harmony and unity implied by Thainess and to keep the nation together as one, it has been crucial to endeavour the inclusion of all peoples in Thailand. As a consequence, Malay Muslims are branded as Thai Islam or Thai Muslims, despite the fact that many people in the Patani region see it as essential to distinguish themselves from other Muslims in Thailand. There is definitely a strong feeling of kinship with others of the same faith. However, with their own distinct language and culture, Malay Muslims of the Patani region also want to hold on to their Malay identity.[102] Although many people would accept both tags—Thai since they are born and live in Thailand and Muslim since religion mark a strong part of their identity—by repressing their Malayness, a large part of their identity is also repressed. A lot of Malay Muslims would refuse the label Thai all together. However, many people today, particularly people of the more urban, younger generation, embrace both Thai and Malay identities as parts of their multiple identities.[103]

How these multiple identities are negotiated in daily life will be discussed in Part II of this dissertation. In this first part I have thus far tried to show the dynamics between Patani and Thai national history and how the development of a Thai nation and Thainess has affected people in the Patani region, and has thus become one of the core contributors to these multiple identities. A main argument in this part of the dissertation is that although great efforts have been made to include Malay Muslims into the idea of Thainess, the basis of this very same ideology has prevented this inclusion from being realized, still leaving many people in the Patani region largely alienated from Thai society. This is particularly true in rural, predominantly Malay Muslim, areas in which Thai society has little influence on everyday life—something that separatist groups have certainly cashed in on since the time that Patani was incorporated into the Thai geo-

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102 As Joll 2012: 73 have noted, however, most Muslim communities in the upper south, as well as many in Bangkok, are of Malay origin.
103 Joll 2012: 75.

body. Despite a much higher degree of integration in present as opposed to earlier times, this feeling of alienation towards Thai society and the experience of being treated as second-class citizens is still very much present—a feeling separatists in the deep south has utilized in order to gain support for violent upheavals and armed resistance against Thai authorities. It has also been an inspiration for political groups to work for autonomy, independence or increased local influence over politics, the economy and natural resources. Thus, the southernmost provinces are first and foremost known for political struggle, violent unrest and armed resistance against a state with a serious lack of legitimacy. To understand how local people experience the communities in which they live, and the violence that surrounds them, it is therefore also necessary to understand this history of Malay Muslim resistance.

4 The Southern Unrest

While the affiliation with Siam had been long strained, the annexation of the Patani Kingdom in the period between 1902 and 1909 sparked an enraged antagonism among the Patani elite allied with the last sultan of Patani, Abdul Kadir, who fled for Kelantan with his family. It was this elite that came to form the basis of the early separatist movement struggling for an independent Patani state.[104] The annexation of Patani threatened the privileges of the ruling elite, who attempted to pursue a dual strategy of violent resistance on the one hand, and lobbying for foreign intervention (particularly from the British colonizers of Malaya) on the other.[105] The first major violent uprising came in 1922 with the Namsai Rebellion, in which the royal elite joined hands with religious leaders.[106] At an early stage, religious leaders became strategic allies since their interests were similarly threatened as national legal reforms challenged local religious jurisprudence (both *sharia* laws and local customs (*adat*)), but also because the implementation of public education directly undermined the position of the traditional *pondok* schools.[107] At this stage, however, it seemed as if the seeking of a diplomatic solution would be the most effective strategy, and numerous appeals were made to the British in order to become part of Malaya.

Diplomacy and Resistance

The British, however, although largely open to the Malay Muslims' appeal, had their own tactical concerns to consider. First of all, there was the obvious interest in keeping friendly relations with Siam, which represented an essential buffer to French colonial interests in Indochina. Secondly,

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104 A detailed account of this period and the following sixty years of Malay Muslim struggle is provided by Surin in his classical work from 1985, *Islam and Malay Nationalism: A Case-Study of Malay Muslims of Southern Thailand*.
105 Surin 1985: 51.
106 Surin 1985: 57 f.
107 Liow 2009: 20; Surin 1985: 41 f.

there were other long-running geopolitical questions to take into account, like the potential building of a canal over the Isthmus of Kra—a canal lobbied for by various countries that were seeking to challenge British interests in Singapore and the Straits of Malacca.[108] As long as there were good relations with the Thais, however, the building of a canal that was outside the reach of British control could be prevented. It was also of importance to the British that they secure a steady flow of Thai Rice to their colonies.[109] For these reasons, the lobbying efforts of Malay Muslim elites in the Patani region and Kelantan to free Patani from Thai rule never materialised. Not even in the aftermath of the Second World War, in which Malay Muslims had fought with the British against the Japanese and their ally Thailand, was the plea for secession heard by the British or the international community at large. This was partly due to a clever move by Pridi Phanomyong, who claimed that it was, in fact, Prime Minister Phibul himself that had allied with the Japanese, and not the Thai parliament. This way, he succeeded in acquitting Thailand from having sided with the Japanese.[110] However, this success was also partly determined by the fact that Thailand already had been singled out by the West, particularly by the United States, as a potentially important ally in Southeast Asia.[111] Only a few years later, when it was developed as an anti-communist bastion in the region, Thailand also proved to be that loyal ally that the United States and the West had hoped for. And thus, although Britain had clear strategic interests in southern Thailand in the post war years, to the disappointment of the Malay Muslim elite in the Patani region, these were never pushed, and Britain settled for the return of the Malay states of Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis and Kedah as well as an agreement regarding future rice supplies from Thailand.[112]

However, there was also a third strategy adopted by the Malay Muslim elites of the Patani region: involvement in the Thai political system. As mentioned above, the change in 1932 to parliamentarianism and constitutional monarchy gave some hope for influence among the Malay Muslim elites. Democratic participation could provide, if not independence, then at least some kind of autonomy in regards to religion, culture and language, and with the passing of the former raja Abdul Kadir in 1933, this alternative approach was attempted.[113] Although

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108 Surin 1985: 31.
109 Wyatt 2003: 251.
110 Wyatt 2003: 251.
111 Baker and Pasuk 2005: 137.
112 Baker and Pasuk 2005: 137; Yegar 2002: 94 f.
113 Surin 1985: 73 f.

independence remained the political goal and was still pursued by the closest descendants of former rajas, parliamentarian participation was seen as a solution to immediate grievances and was pursued by the more distant descendants, who could claim legitimacy among the local population without running the risk of compromising the prestige of the rajas and also had the modern education required to become actively involved in political affairs. Mediating between these two levels of leadership, and also communicating their efforts to the local population, was the *ulama*, the religious leaders, who granted religious and political legitimacy to the cause:

> As guardians of the Islamic faith and the source of political legitimacy, the ulama served to remind the deposed political leadership of their ultimate mission to deliver their people from alien rule, and at the same time, helped the politically active elites to mobilize the people around their immediate goals of winning elections.[114]

This alliance between different levels of elites and religious leaders helped overcome the difficult dilemma of confrontation and collaboration. Nonetheless, although the elites and religious leaders managed to overcome it, the general Malay Muslim population was not quite ready to make this leap from resistance against Thai rule to participation in general elections. From a local perspective, elections were therefore not an immediate success. Moreover, with the repressive policies of the first Phibul period, belief in the parliamentarian system withered among the elites and religious leaders as well.[115]

While some efforts were made by the Thai government to meet the grievances of the Malay Muslim population during the first years after the Second World War, under the leadership of Pridi and the Free Thai Movement, this was not enough to mend the distrust and dissatisfaction among people in the Patani region. The Patronage of Islam Act of 1945 was an attempt to establish better understanding between Muslims and the government in Bangkok by guaranteeing royal protection to Islam and providing a spiritual leader for all Muslims in Thailand as well as an Islamic advisor to the king—the Chularajamontri. One important aspect of this act was recognition of Islamic educational institutions by the government, which established schools with special curriculums for the study of Islam. However, although the effort to meet the needs of Muslims

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114 Surin 1985: 80 f.
115 Surin 1985: 75 ff.

probably was well intended, the Patronage of Islam Act also placed the religious affairs of Islam under stricter government control, leaving the bureaucracy in command of issues related to Islam. Thus the Patronage of Islam Act was just as much an attempt by the central government in Bangkok to more closely integrate the Malay Muslims of the south.[116]

The result of years of failed diplomacy and failed politics from Malay Muslims, and repressive assimilation policies from a Thai state tightening its grip on the Patani region, was a renewed resistance, this time with the *ulama* at the front lines i.e.,—religious leaders (*imam*) and religious teachers (*tok guru*).[117] Also their strategy was somewhat twofold. Legal autonomy, where *sharia* legislations on family law and inheritance matters would be independent from the Thai juridical system, with the long-term goal of implementing the sacred law on all aspects of legal matters in the Patani region, became a pragmatic objective important to the local *ulama*, since religious law was a field of special interest to the *ulama*. At the same time, their view that religious matters could not be divorced from the political context implied increased engagement in political matters as well, and a struggle against Thai repression in order to eventually gain independence was soon taken up, leaving the *ulama* assuming the dual role of both: "spiritual custodians of the Islamic faith and keepers of the community's trust in the fulfilment of its political aspirations."[118]

Haji Sulong and the Resistance of the Ulama

The most important person in this new stratum of religious leaders was indisputably Haji Sulong. Like other leading Muslim intellectuals of his generation in the Malay world, Haji Sulong bin Abdul Kadir bin Muhammad al-Fatani was educated in Islamic sciences as well as in Malay and Arabic from local *pondok* schools. In his twenties he left for *hajj* and once he arrived to Mecca, Haji Sulong decided to stay on and continue his studies. In Mecca he met other Malay students and intellectuals, whose faith in political involvement, social activism and Islam as a political force he came to share. Upon returning to Pattani he became the chair of the Pattani Provincial Islamic Council, a result of the 1945 Patronage of Islam Act, and as with many other Muslim intellectuals of his kind, the endeavour to purify Islam from pre-Islamic elements in the Malay tradition

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116 Surin 1985: 104 ff.
117 Surin 1985: 114.
118 Surin 1985: 115 f.

(*adat*) as well as to purge government involvement in the affairs of Islam in Thailand became his main tasks. In alliance with Pridi, Haji Sulong had worked for a political solution to the problem of the Patani region by arguing for some kind of cultural autonomy for ethnic groups within Thailand. With the overthrow of Pridi, however, Haji Sulong and the religious leaders of the Patani region had to promote this on their own, and on 3rd April 1947, the famous seven demands for an autonomous state were proposed to the Thai government:[119]

1. The appointment of a single individual with full powers to govern the four provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun, and in particular having authority to dismiss, suspend, or replace all government servants – this official should be from one of the four provinces and elected by the people.
2. 80 per cent of government servants in the four provinces should be Muslims.
3. Both Malay and Thai should be official languages.
4. Malay should be the medium of instruction in primary schools.
5. Islamic law should be recognised and enforced in a separate court other than a civil court where the *kafir* (non-believer) sit as assessors.
6. All revenue and income derived from the four provinces should be utilised within them.
7. The formation of a Muslim Board having full powers to direct all Muslim officers under the supreme head of state mentioned in (1).[120]

Thai authorities, however, were not ready to negotiate on any kind of autonomy in the southernmost provinces, as they feared this would trigger similar disruptions among ethnic minorities elsewhere in the fragile nation-state.[121] Nonetheless, Haji Sulong's political quest with a religious dimension was far better received among the population than the former royal elite's struggle for power and prestige, and Haji Sulong soon became an inspirational figure for both violent and non-violent political and Islamic groups in the region. What he represented was a revival of Malay nationalism in southern Thailand. A new formula had been created from which political autonomy based on Islamic principles would be

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119 Surin 1985: 147 ff.
120 International Crisis Group, *Southern Thailand: Insurgency, not Jihad*, Asia report No 98 18th May 2005, p 10.
121 Surin 1985: 155.

championed at the moment of the new development of political democracy in Thailand.[122]

The result of this was what we can call a mass movement, and Sulong continued to pressure the government, something which led to his arrest on 16th January 1948, along with a number of other local religious leaders. Many others fled to Kelantan.[123] The arrests triggered rebellions and violent clashes with the police and security forces, the largest being the Dusong Nyor incident[124] in Narathiwat at the end of April that same year—an event that became a milestone in the history of the independence movements in the region. As has been noted by Chaiwat, much of the historical data concerning this incident contains inconsistencies. In any case, the outcome was tragic, ending with the deaths of more than four hundred locals, with many more fleeing to Kelantan. Approximately thirty police officers also lost their lives.[125]

The arrest of Haji Sulong was most likely the spark that lighted the different 1948 rebellions, and a more persistent resistance developed. Some of this resistance was rooted in the Greater Patani Melayu Association, Gabongan Melayu Patani Raya (GAMPAR), a coordinating organisation based in Kelantan that was already carrying out guerrilla operations across the border calling for a *jihad* on Thai authorities. Haji Sulong's own Patani People's Movement (PPM) was another group of organised resistance. These groups were the first to provide organised structures for a growing dissatisfaction among Malay Muslim citizens in southern Thailand. When Haji Sulong, who was released from prison in 1952, mysteriously disappeared in 1954, together with his eldest son Ahmad Thomina, distrust in the Thai government was complete among Malay Muslims. It is widely held that the police had orchestrated the disappearance. Nonetheless, nobody was convicted for the kidnapping, and Haji Sulong and his son were never seen again. From this point and onwards a broad-based coalition of Malay Muslim opposition to Thai rule would continue the struggle in various forms,[126] and more tightly organised armed resistance became more of a norm.

The nationalist policies of Phibul and Sarit were additionally provocative, like the education reform of 1961, the Pondok Educational

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122 Thanet 2007: 47.
123 Surin 1985: 160.
124 The incident is referred to as either the Dusong Nyor uprising or the Dusong Nyor rebellion, depending on whether it is interpreted as a spontaneous uprising against repressive rule or a planned rebellion against the authorities (Chaiwat 2007: 19).
125 Chaiwat 2007: 18.
126 Surin 1985: 161 ff.

Improvement Programme, which aimed to transform the *pondok* schools into private Islamic schools (*rongrian ekachon sorn sasana islam*). The aim of this reform was to include more Malay Muslim children in secular education and improve Thai language skills in the region, but just like any governmental involvement in the religious sphere, the reform was highly controversial and opposed by the Malay Muslim population.[127] Governmental involvement and development programs were characteristic for this period of persistent nation building, and even if policies were introduced with the best of intentions, the damaged trust in the government was, by this time, not easily mended. As such, most projects were met with scepticism and resistance. Some policies were also seen as directly provocative, like the Self-help Land Settlement Project (*nikhom sang ton eng*) initiated by Sarit in 1961. The program, which aimed to resettle poor landless farmers, mainly from the Northeast, supposedly led to an increase of approximately 160,000 Thai Buddhists in the Patani region in only eight years. [128] Although some of these settlers were in fact Muslims from the upper south,[129] this policy was nonetheless perceived by locals as a deliberate attempt to decrease local Malay Muslim domination.

The Separatist Movements of the 1960s and 1970s

During the 1960s and 1970s the Patani region was imprinted by the violent resistance of a number of separatist organisations in direct conflict with Thai police and security forces. The first group of this kind, which to a certain extent took over for GAMPAR, was the Patani National Liberation Front (Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani (BNPP)), established in 1959. After failing to join the Federation of Malaya, which achieved independence in 1957, the aim now was full independence for Patani. Like GAMPAR, BNPP was also based in Kelantan and recruited students from the Patani region studying in Malaysia, although it also recruited from students in Cairo and Mecca. The National Revolutionary Front (Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN)) was established by an *ustadh* from Narathiwat's Rusoe district, largely as a response to the 1961 Pondok Educational Improvement Program, and aimed to create an independent Islamic republic. While BNPP still aspired to reinstate the Patani Sultanate, BRN

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127 Liow 2009: 27; Surin 1985: 189.
128 Suhrke 1977: 241; International Crisis Group, Southern Thailand: Insurgency, not Jihad, Asia report No 98 18th May 2005, p 10.
129 McCargo 2012: 20.

promoted the ideology of Islamic socialism, and was the organisation most closely involved with the Communist Party of Malaysia (CPM) and the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). In the 1960s and 1970s, both CPM and CPT were involved in guerrilla combat against the Thai state, particularly in the Northeast (CPT) and along the Thai-Malaysian border (CPM), and a tactical alliance was also made with other separatist Malay Muslim groups in order to destabilise Thailand. However, it was mainly BRN that to some extent also shared their political objectives.

While both BNPP and BRN were relatively small groups, the Patani United Liberation Organisation (PULO), which emerged in 1968, operated in the political landscape between the two, and soon became both the largest and most efficient separatist organisation. PULO was neither religiously conservative like BNPP nor radical like BNR, but was rather appealing to ethno-nationalist sentiments, with a touch of Islam justifying its operations. PULO held headquarters in both Kota Baru and Mecca, and fighters received training in Malaysia and the Middle East. Funding from Arab leaders was also substantial, particularly from the leaders of Lybia and Syria.[130]

The main strategy of the separatist groups throughout the 1960s and 1970s was to target Thai and Chinese-Thai business interests in the Patani region and launch strikes against the Thai security forces as well as government buildings—particularly public schools. Most rubber plantations, tin mines and other profitable businesses were owned by Thais or Chinese-Thais, and the idea was to discourage non-Malay Muslim businesses and to give the impression of a region out of control by targeting security forces, schools and other government buildings. From the second half of the 1970s, insurgent attacks in the Patani region became a serious security problem for Thai authorities, particularly seen in connection with the communist guerrilla groups operating both at the Thai-Malaysian border and in the Isaan jungle. This two-front war represented a great challenge that eventually led to a change in policy in the 1980s. Under the premiership of General Prem Tinsulanonda, a new strategy was launched involving public participation, economic development and, perhaps most importantly, extensive use of amnesty for former insurgents. New administrative systems promoting negotiation, like the Civil-Police-Military joint headquarters (CPM 43) and the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC), were also established.

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130 Che Man 1990: 98 ff.; Surin 1985: 228 ff.; Yegar 2002: 143; International Crisis Group, *Southern Thailand: Insurgency, not Jihad*, Asia report No 98 18th May 2005, p 6 ff. Other more short lived organisations were Saibillillah (Path of God), Gerakan Islam Patani (GIP), and Black December 1902.

These provided a meeting point for local leaders and security forces and an arena where local frustrations could be aired.[131]

The new strategy seemed efficient as many fighters turned themselves in under the amnesty, something which again weakened the separatist groups. CPM 43 and SBPAC also seemed to establish certain loyalties among the involved parties. Insurgent attacks clearly decreased in the 1980s and 1990s. However, it is not a given that these policies changed Malay Muslim sentiments towards the Thai state. In fact, the weakening of existing separatist groups most likely gave room for new insurgent groups to emerge,[132] first and foremost by recruiting militants from religious schools. Liow even argues that the lack of conflict in the 1980s and 1990s was a deliberate move by separatists to consolidate for renewed struggle.[133]

Throughout Thai history, the southern separatist movements have not been particularly homogenous, and thus the base for recruiting militants has also varied depending on the political and ideological dynamics in the movements. Early separatist movements were initiated by the old aristocratic elites, with their vested interests at the forefront. Inspired by and cooperating with the Chinese Communist guerrillas from Malaysia, some insurgents of the 1960s and 1970s were influenced by leftist ideologies, while others were driven by the hope that a separate state would restore the glory of Islam in the region. By the first half of the new millennium, a renewed, reinforced militant movement launched a new wave of insurgencies that have continued to this day, employing strong Islamic rhetoric alongside its ethno-nationalist message.

Resurgence of Violence at the Turn of the Millennium

Compared to earlier ones, the current wave of insurgencies is by far the most deadly. Although there had been an increase in assassinations of security personnel and arson attacks on state schools and government buildings since 2001, it was the raid at the fourth Engineering Battalion of the Royal Thai Army in Jo Airong district of Narathiwat that publically marked the beginning of the resurgence of the southern unrest. Before

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131 International Crisis Group, *Southern Thailand: Insurgency, not Jihad*, Asia report No 98 18th May 2005, p 9 ff.
132 International Crisis Group, *Southern Thailand: Insurgency, not Jihad*, Asia report No 98 18th May 2005, p 12.
133 Liow 2006: 27.

dawn, on 4th January 2004, some 100 armed men attacked the army ammunition depot, stealing ammunition and more than 400 weapons (including assault rifles, machine guns, pistols and rocket launchers) and leaving four high-ranking soldiers dead, all of whom were Buddhists. That same night insurgents initiated arson attacks against more than 20 schools and 3 police stations in eleven of Narathiwat's thirteen districts. Road traps and decoys were set up around Yala province, and the day after, several bombs were found around Pattani province.[134]

After the January attack, violence in the three southern border provinces dramatically escalated. Bombs and shootings directed towards security forces were still the main strategy. However, assassinations of teachers, government officials and other people seen as collaborating with Thai authorities also increased, as did the seemingly unprovoked killings of Thai Buddhist civilians (which sometimes included the beheading and torching of bodies). These features of the insurgency are significant in the sense that they added to the Thai Buddhist population's feeling that they were being subjected to ethnic cleansing. Another significant incident concerned the killing of an elderly Buddhist monk in the Bajoh district of Narathiwat whose throat was slit while returning home after his almsround. Two days later, in Yala's Mueang district another three monks were attacked, leaving two dead—including a thirteen-year old novice. Formerly, regardless of the level of conflict in the region, Buddhist monks had never been targeted. [135] Accordingly, these were incidents that shook the entire nation, including many local Malay Muslims.

The brutality of the acts and the element of ethno-religious tension are the most noteworthy features of this new wave of insurgency. The increased use of Islamist or *jihadist* rhetoric in leaflets distributed across the region is also of importance, and although much of the strategy is similar to the insurgency of the 1960s and 1970s, there are certainly some changes that have particularly intimidated the local Thai Buddhist communities. In total, more Malay Muslims than Thai Buddhists have been victims of the violence. However, given that the number of Thai Buddhists is considerably smaller than the number of Malay Muslims, Thai Buddhists feel as if they are being specifically persecuted because of their ethno-religious background. As a consequence, many have departed from their villages, or from the region altogether. Both Malay Muslims and Thai

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134 International Crisis Group, *Southern Thailand: Insurgency, not Jihad*, Asia report No 98 18th May 2005, p 17.

135 Report of the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC), *Overcoming Violence through the Power of Reconciliation*, 16th May 2006.

Buddhists, however, share the anxiety and intimidation resulting from the high numbers of civilians that have been injured by the violence.[136]

Prior to 4th January 2004, the government's response to the new violence was that of denial. Like the Chuan Leekpai government before him, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra dismissed all violent acts as banditry.[137] Admitting to separatist violence would be the same as admitting to failure, whereas blaming the disturbances and violence on drug traffickers and common criminals drew public attention away from the difficult question of separatism. With the dramatic escalation of violence after the 4th January attacks, however, Thaksin had to admit that there was more to this than petty crime. Smuggling, drug trafficking and criminal activities had been a longstanding problem in the region, and had also been used to finance militant groups. However, the blaming of all regional unrest on criminal activities was no longer a believable ploy. It became clear, in other words, that a new form of militant Islamic network-based insurgency had surfaced—a movement presumably rooted in BRN-Coordinate and, to some extent, in PULO and Gerankan Mujahidin Islam Patani (GMIP).[138] Often operating under the name Bersatu,[139] this new militant movement appears to be a loosely structured umbrella organisation that includes these and other smaller groups.[140] BRN-Coordinate, which is a faction of BRN and widely recognized as the new movement's backbone, is extensively involved in sabotage and focused on political activities, particularly in religious schools. BRN-Coordinate also maintains a number of underground cells known as Runda Kumpulan Kecil (small patrol groups), and the youth movement known as Permuda is affiliated with this faction as well. Locally, the front fighters of this cell-based movement are known as *juwae*, meaning 'fighters' in the local Malay dialect.[141]

Thaksin's response to the southern violence was rough. Like the 2003 war on drugs, which particularly affected the southernmost provinces, Thaksin's approach relied upon quick, decisive action, employing state

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136 Data and statistics of casualties are provided by Deep South Watch.
137 Askew 2007: 14; Ukrist 2007: 71.
138 GIMP, the Islamic Mujahidin Movement of Patani, emerged in 1995 as a group more influenced by international Islamism than BRN-Coordinate and PULO.
139 Bersatu, which means 'unity' in Malay, was first established in 1989, but was reinvigorated in 1997.
140 Chalk 2008: 8 ff.; McCargo 2008: 168 ff.; International Crisis Group, *Southern Thailand: Insurgency, not Jihad*, Asia report No 98 18th May 2005, p 12 ff.
141 For more on the organization and methods of BRN-Coordinate, refer to Helbardt 2011.

violence to repress militant activities.[142] And from 19th July 2005, a strict emergency decree took effect to limit the regional population's rights, leading to increased allegations of human rights violations by the military.[143] Additionally, there were also a number of incidents that were met with particularly brutal responses from the government, thus amplifying the overall level of conflict. Of these, the Krue Se mosque and Tak Bai incidents were the most grave.

On 27th April 2004,[144] a group of men gathered for evening prayers in the historic Krue Se Mosque in Pattani's Yaring district—a mosque dating back to the late 16th century and the old Patani Kingdom. From what we know about the incident, the group (some of them as young as twelve or thirteen years of age) stayed in the mosque overnight, made further prayers and executed some magical Sufi rituals.[145] In the early hours of 28th April, some of the men carried out attacks on security checkpoints. Similar pre-dawn attacks were carried out by other lightly armed groups around Yala, Pattani and Songkla, and many of them were killed in their confrontations with security forces. The mosque was soon surrounded by the military, with General Phanlop Phinmani arriving to take command. The standoff lasted for hours and, despite the orders of Deputy Prime Minister Chavalit Yonchaiyudh not to attack, the troops entered the mosque while more than 1,000 bystanders watched. The total number of dead that day was 105, including one civilian and five members of the security force.[146]

The Tak Bai incident occurred during Ramadan on the morning of 25th October 2004, in front of the Tak Bai police station. A group of people were protesting against the arrest of six village-defence volunteers, accused of having handed over their weapons to militants. Rapidly, the crowd of

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142 Ukrist 2007: 69 f.
143 Refer to International Crisis Group, Thailand's Emergency Decree: No Solution, Asia report No 105 18th November 2005 for a discussion of the impacts of the Decree in the region.
144 Chaiwat 2007: 30 has argued for the possibility that this specific date was picked as an anniversary of the Dusong Nyor uprising in 1948, as there are some similarities between the two incidents going further than the coinciding of the actual dates.
145 The participants who were followers of Ustadh Soh, a religious teacher from Yala renowned for his supernatural powers, were given a pamphlet called Berjihad di Patani (The Holy Struggle over Patani), a text on separatism in Islamic terms, using the Quran as justification, and with apparent Sufi undertones. Berjihad di Patani is translated from Malay (jawi script) into English in Gunaratna et al. (2005: 118 ff.).
146 McCargo 2006a: 4; International Crisis Group, *Southern Thailand: Insurgency, not Jihad*, Asia report No 98 18th May 2005, p 22 ff.

protesters grew to approximately 1,500 in number.[147] Police and soldiers then attempted to disperse the crowd, fearing that the situation might get out of hand. In this regard, the protesters have claimed that the area had been blocked by military trucks and armoured vehicles, and thus they had no real possibility to exit. By the late afternoon, water cannons and teargas were being used to dissolve the protest, and soon thereafter the shooting began, resulting in the deaths of seven protesters. At this point, the soldiers allowed the women and children to leave and ordered the remaining men to lie face down on the ground. People were then stacked five to seven layers thick in trucks before being driven off to the Inkayuth army base in Pattani. Twenty-eight six-wheeled trucks were used to transport 1,300 protesters, and by the time the trucks arrived at Inkayuth (more than three hours later than expected for that distance), seventy-eight young men had died, most of them from suffocation.[148] Prime Minister Thaksin was quick to blame the death on the protesters, who he claimed had been weakened by fasting. Later, however, he had to admit that some lower ranking officers had made mistakes. A military chief claimed this never would have happened had the protesters not been fasting or on drugs. In the aftermath of the Tak Bai incident, the victims' families have been given 10,000 *baht*, no military or police officers have been prosecuted, and the case has been officially closed.[149]

In the Patani region, these two incidents are the most extreme examples of why many locals have developed a severe mistrust of the security forces and the Thaksin administration. The Tak Bai episode, in particular, resulted in many more people becoming aware of and open to the cause of the militants[150]—something that may have also led to the increased radicalisation of a number of young Malay Muslim men and an escalation of support for the movement.[151] Other incidents, such as the disappearance of local defence lawyer Somchai Neelaphaijit on 12th March 2004, have added to feelings of injustice. The same can be said about the emergency decree, which essentially has given security forces free rein. The many alleged civil rights abuses and extrajudicial killings are rarely prosecuted. In other words, in their effort to fight the insurgency, Thai

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147 It appears that people had been mobilised to come without much knowledge of why the protest was instigated.

148 Forensic pathologist Dr. Pornthip Rojanasunnan stated that about 80 per cent had suffocated, three people had broken necks, while the rest had died from dehydration.

149 McCargo 2006a: 4; International Crisis Group, *Southern Thailand: Insurgency, not Jihad*, Asia report No 98 18th May 2005, p 27 ff.

150 McCargo 2008: 110, 165.

151 Bangkok Post 19th July 2009, Mark Askew, "A Tale of Two Insurgents".

security forces and authorities have failed to provide security and justice to the population.

The bitterness increased with incidents like the June 2009 shooting at the Al-Furqan mosque in Narathiwat, in which eleven people were killed and many more wounded—a massacre most likely executed by paramilitary rangers. This massacre and other similar incidents indicate that there may be organised clandestine groups of Thai Buddhist militias operating in the region, some of which are suspected of carrying out vigilante-style attacks on Muslims. These groups are not part of the growing number of paramilitaries organized by the Thai State, but operate as armed underground entities that are not accountable to anyone. One such group is known as Ruam Thai (Thai United), initiated by senior Yala police officer Phitak Iadkaew. The idea behind Ruam Thai is to establish self-defence militias throughout the region to help maintain security, and by 2007 as many as 6,000 people had participated in its two-day training program. However, the suspicion that a number of the members of such groups have been involved in deadly attacks on mosques, teashops and *pondok* schools, and the expressed view by some involved parties that the purpose of training clandestine Thai Buddhist militias is to prepare for a possible civil war, raise grave concerns regarding the prospects for peace in the deep south.[152] The result of the years of violence is a local population that lives not only in fear of insurgents and security forces, but of armed clandestine groups as well—a situation that has affected interethnic relations and created an extremely difficult setting for peace-building and reconciliation.

Explanations of the Resurgence of Violence

The question of why the violence in the deep south has revived is difficult to answer. In the beginning, many pointed to Thaksin's hawkish policies[153] and the fact that in his quest to challenge the established elite (what McCargo has called the "network monarchy"),[154] he managed to displace

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152 McCargo 2008: 125 f.; Sarosi and Jinjira 2011; International Crisis Group, *Southern Thailand: The Problem with Paramilitaries*, Asia report No. 140 23rd October 2007, p 23 f.
153 Ukrist 2007.
154 McCargo defines network monarchy as the leading political network in Thailand for the period 1973–2001. The network is fronted by Privy Council president and former Prime Minister General Prem Tinsulanonda, centred on the palace, and actively involved in interventions in political processes, working with and through other political institutions, primarily the elected parliament

stabilizing structures such as the SBPAC and CPM 43, which had helped to secure peace in the region.[155] While Thaksin's harsh reactions and counterproductive problem-solving undoubtedly increased the tension in the southernmost border provinces during 2004 and 2005, it may be wise to look beyond Thaksin as well. To frame Thaksin's dissolution of SBPAC and CPM 43 as the cause of the renewed insurgency in the south, as many observers of Thai politics have done, is highly simplistic. As Askew has correctly pointed out, the Thaksin blame-game also needs to be viewed as part of the political strategy of the rivalling Democrat Party.[156] After all, Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai Party is only one of the players in the fierce power struggle that constitutes Thai politics in the new millennium, something that should be kept in mind when analysing statements on the southern unrest by Thai political actors.[157]

Additionally, we should not overlook the fact that despite the significant reduction in violence during the 1980s and 1990s, separatist movements in the region never really ceased to exist. Liow, for example, argues that this period of relative calm, although significant, was a calculated move by the separatists to consolidate and build a stronger movement.[158] The SBPAC and CPM 43 were useful agencies in quelling separatist activities in the 1980s and continued to serve a purpose as an arena for dialogue between local elites, different interest groups and the military. As such, Thaksin may have made a mistake by dissolving them. On the other hand, since the SBPAC was unable to identify the evolving militant youth networks developing around religious schools in the late 1990s, and instead blamed most violent acts in the south on criminal gangs and bandits, the centre had already proved itself inefficient in tackling the new generation of militants.[159] This lends validity to Askew who claims that the emphasis on the dissolution of the SBPAC and CPM 43 as the direct cause of the resurgence of violence, may have served as a red herring in the

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(McCargo 2005: 499). Since 2001, 'network monarchy' has been challenged by the network of Thaksin Shinawatra.

155 McCargo 2006b.

156 Askew 2007: 53 f.

157 For more about the Patani conflict in relation to Thailand's political crisis, refer to McCargo 2012: Ch. 1.

158 Liow 2006: 27.

159 Askew 2007: 53. According to Askew (Askew 2007: 52), both General Kitti Rattanachaya and journalist Chaiyong Maneerungsakul already warned about the training of militant Malay Muslim youth in the region in the late 1990s.

debate about the southern unrest.[160] Srisompob and McCargo seem to share this view, arguing that:

> [W]hile the Thaksin administration certainly helped create the political conditions in which a revived militant movement could thrive, the violence was not simply a specific reaction against Thaksinization. [161]

Nonetheless, politics (both national and local) does play a part in the big picture that constitutes the southern conflict. So do socioeconomic differences, social problems, poverty, poor educational and employment opportunities and the struggle over scarce resources—as discussed by Srisompob and Panyasak and by Supara, among others.[162] However, they are not sufficient to explain the gravity of the problem.[163] The same must be said of the widespread illegal activities related to smuggling and crime by powerful mafia-like groups (*klum itthiphon*) along a disorderly border. As Askew has noted, shadowy activities and illegal trade have long been a common aspect of the borderland, and involve officials and politicians as well as security personnel. Militant groups are also part of this shadowy business, and although the scale of involvement by different groups is hard to measure, a great proportion of the local population believes that much of the problems in the region are related to economic interests, power and influence. Many of the people that I talked to and interviewed stressed that this is just as big a problem as separatist activities. Interesting in this regard is Askew's conclusion in his critical analysis of research done on the resurgence of violence in the deep south, where he claims that some Muslim commentators have been reluctant to admit to the presence of separatist groups and the fact that such groups, as well as some Malay Muslim leaders, draw advantages from instability and conflict in the region. The reason is that this collides with their perception of the southern crisis as a binary portrait of "Hegemonic Buddhist State vs. Oppressed Muslim Borderland".[164] He also suggests that this may explain the reason that the report of the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) recommends addressing generalized violence and structural factors rather

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160 Askew 2007: 38 ff.
161 Srisompob and McCargo 2010: 169.
162 Srisompob and Panyasak 2007; Supara 2005.
163 Srisompob and Panyasak 2007: 110.
164 Askew 2007: 68.

than restricting the problem to separatist groups.[165] While this reluctance by some Malay Muslims to admit the existence of separatist activities in the region is of interests, it might not be a satisfactory conclusion when it comes to the errors and omissions of the NRC report. There are also a number of other reasons that this report tends to avoid controversial questions. Sidelined or overrun local representatives and the lack of space and opportunity to raise sensitive issues are some important factors.[166]

Srisompob and McCargo go even further in calling advocates of different explanation models to account when they criticize the emphasis on crime instead of separatist insurgency as an explanation model.[167] As far as they are concerned, socioeconomic issues, crime and the question of injustice are all of relevance to the southern conflict, but by no means do they offer a master key to an understanding of the current violence. Srisompob and McCargo see these issues as necessary but insufficient conditions for violence. Socioeconomic grievance is everywhere in the world, criminality is a universal phenomenon, while violent conflict is not.[168] The main concern in the case of the southern violence is thus to identify the core issues, and according to Srisompob and McCargo, these core issues are political. While some analysts have viewed the resurgence of violence in the Patani region as a sign of growing Islamist militancy,[169] perhaps as a result of the excessive focus on international Islamist terrorism and Jihadism in security research from the early years of the 21st century onwards, Srisompob and McCargo are of the opinion that the insurgents in southern Thailand, although a number of them may have adopted a more Islamist form of rhetoric, essentially represent a renewed or reconfigured version of earlier separatist struggles in the region. They argue that the conflict in southern Thailand is fundamentally an ethnic uprising driven by two underlying trends: the local belief that their unique Patani identity is threatened by interference from Bangkok; and the series of central governmental policies, which have been paternalistic at best, and

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165 Askew: 2007: 32. Report of the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC), *Overcoming Violence through the Power of Reconciliation*, 16th May 2006, p 37.
166 McCargo 2012: 69 ff.
167 The title of their article, "The Southern Thai Conflict Six Years On: Insurgency, Not Just Crime", while spinning on the title of the well-known report by International Crisis Group "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," seems to be a dig at Askew's August 9th 2009 Bangkok Post article, "The Killing Fields of the Deep South: A Deadly Mix", which discusses the degree of insurgency violence compared to political and crime-related violence. Implicit is also a critique of the anti-insurgency policies of Thai authorities.
168 Srisompob and McCargo 2010: 167.
169 Gunaratna et al. 2005: 59 ff.; Kavi 2004: 267; Wattana 2007: 133.

assimilationist, authoritarian and brutal at worst.[170] McCargo has also suggested that the separatist ideas in the present militant movement may vary according to degree, and that the movement may have already reached a "post-separatist" stage.[171] While parts of the movement, like the BRN-C, clearly have a separatist agenda,[172] others are primarily driven by resistance to Thai oppression,[173] and may settle for some kind of autonomy.[174] The key to the southern unrest is thus probably found in political solutions that secure local representation in local affairs.

There are a multitude of factors generating the restive Thai south, and although separatist insurgents cause severe violence in the region, it would be a fallacy to blame all violent incidents on insurgent groups.[175] It would also be misleading to claim that Malay Muslim grievances are solely related to ethnic and religious identity and historical factors.[176] However, jumping to the opposite conclusion by trying to explain away separatist support and Malay Muslim nationalism with arguments about socioeconomic problems, as many locals tend to do, would be a more severe form of oversimplification. Indeed, there are a number of causes producing the southern fire (*fai tai*). Srisompob and McCargo's concern, however, is that if we seek to find an answer to the violence, political solutions addressing core issues linked to the militant struggle need to be discussed, rather than what they see as more spurious issues related to socioeconomic grievances.[177]

One such core issue centres on questions about Malay Muslim national and religious identity and whether Malay Muslims are allowed to be Malay Muslims or rather are expected to adopt Thainess and become part of the Thai nation. In this part of the dissertation I have explained how this attempt to get Malay Muslims to adopt Thainess has failed. This is partly because it has repressed the local culture and language and tried to

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170 Srisompob and McCargo 2010: 169 ff.
171 McCargo 2008: 180 f.
172 Helbardt 2011: 26.
173 McCargo 2008: 180.
174 McCargo 2008: 153.
175 Refer to Askew's August 9th 2009 Bangkok Post article, "The Killing Fields of the Deep South: A Deadly Mix," for one such discussion on insurgency violence versus political and crime-related violence.
176 Askew, for example, claims that what he calls Muslim advocates in the Patani region tend to speak on behalf of the Malay Muslim population, stressing the importance of language, culture, religion and history, although he finds that Malay Muslim villagers rarely share this interest to the same degree, and generally show little concern for history (Askew 2007: 38).
177However, socioeconomic grievances and other issues, like ethnic or cultural grievances, may, of course, also be linked to each other.

influence and control religious institutions and schools, but also because Thai society ultimately does not accept Malay Muslims as being properly Thai. Opposition to this repression has resulted in ongoing resistance to the Thai state, with the separatist struggle and its violence as the most extreme outcome. This does not mean, however, that locals are unaffected by Thai nation-building. The Thai language, as I will show in Part II of the dissertation, is more widespread, and ideas about being Thai are also to some extent materializing, something that has led to the development of multiple identities among Malay Muslims. Different national identities are juggled depending on the situation, and the strong ideology of Thainess can be said to have contributed to this development, as has been shown here. Additionally, there is a Muslim revival in the Patani region, which for the past decades has intensified, something that has been another contributor to these multiple identities. Ethnic culture is largely expressed as part of religious identity and this revival has opened up space for ethnic or national identity and religious identity to merge. Yet another contributor to multiple identities, however, this concerns the Thai Buddhist population, is the strategy for securing Buddhism in the Patani region, which has led to a blurred distinction between national and religious identity.

The development of the Muslim revival and the strategy of securing Buddhism will be presented in the following chapter, which also looks into the cultural history of Islam, Buddhism and Chinese religion in the deep south. Religious identity is, as I will show in Part II, an important aspect of the multiple identities of the Thai Buddhists and Chinese population as well, and the different religions' cultural histories in the region are important to people as a confirmation of their historical belonging to the region.

5 The Religions of the Patani Region

The most striking characteristic of Patani culture is its Muslim element. Mosques are scattered throughout the region, and whereas some of the ancient ones are inspired by Indian temple architecture, others are more typical of the Malay world, and new and modern mosques are also popping up both in the villages and around town centres. As a result of the recent Muslim revival, men in long loose shirts and white prayer caps are becoming an increasingly common sight and the *baju melayu* has become quite popular for more formal occasions.[178] Women in long sleeves and *hijab*[179] are also helping to make the everyday scene in the region typically Muslim, as are the many teashops and *halal* restaurants.

However, in between the predominantly Muslim environment, the Buddhist culture becomes apparent, first of all through the Buddhist temple known as the *wat*. Buddhism is an integrated part of the picture. We can also add some other features specific to Thai Buddhism, non-Buddhist religious expressions (indigenous or Brahman) that are nonetheless rooted in the Buddhist worldview and Theravāda Buddhist tradition. The municipal cities house a *lak mueang*, a pillar that is said to house the city spirit (the *phii mueang*)[180] and national monuments

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178 Baju melayu is a traditional male dress that is widespread throughout the Malay world and consists of a stiff collared, long sleeved shirt, trousers, and a sarong, usually made out of silk or fine cotton. In the Patani region, however, this mode of dress is rather new, an inspiration from Malaysia. Baju melayu literally means Malay shirt and is also the outfit worn for silat performances, the traditional Malay martial arts. Baju kurung, the female equivalent to the baju melayu, is also more widely seen in the deep south these days.

179 The Malay word for hijab is tudung. The niqab, although much less common, is also occasionally seen, particularly among the small Shi'a population.

180 Lak mueang, or the city pillar, is a pole recognized as the central spiritual authority of a town or a city and is also common among Tai peoples living outside of Thailand (Terwiel 1994: 17). Although the lak mueang is an ancient Thai concept, the lak mueang in Pattani town was constructed in 1953 and rebuilt twice in 1962 and in 2008. It is situated on the bank of the Pattani River.

(typically statues of kings or royalties) [181] are revered objects of devotion, mainly for the Thai Buddhist and Chinese population, although Malay Muslims are also known to frequent both Buddhist temples and *lak mueang* shrines. Chinese religious culture is especially evident in the city centres, which tend to be dominated by Chinese religious shrines together with Chinese shop signs and, in some neighbourhoods, Chinese architecture.

Religious identity is important to all ethnic groups in the deep south and the cultural histories of the region's diverse religions are important aspects of historical belonging. This chapter will therefore introduce the three main religions in the region, provide a brief historical account of each and discuss some of the principal developments within the different religious groups. Particularly the development of the Muslim revival, or modernist Islam, and the policies of securing Buddhism in the south are of relevance since they have contributed to the development of multiple identities and the dynamic between national and religious identities among Muslims and Buddhists.

Islam

Islam came to the east coast of the Malay Peninsula with Arab and Indian merchants sometime between the end of the 12th and the early 14th century.[182] However, in the Patani region, it was probably not until the early 16th century that Islam became the dominant religion. Both the *Hikayat Patani* and the *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani* connect the Islamisation of Patani to the conversion of Raja Intera or Phaya Tu Nakpa (later Sultan Ismail Syah), who was cured of leprosy by a sheik from Kampung Pasai,[183] with 1457 often referred to as the actual year of conversion.[184] This dating, however, remains to be adequately proved.[185] While the aristocracy was the first to adopt the new faith of their ruler—something that in the beginning was likely limited to the rejection of pork and the worship of idols—the balance of the local population was soon to follow, and the Kingdom of Patani remained predominantly Muslim ever

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181 In Pattani town for instance we find the centrally placed monument over King Chulalongkorn, Rama V, worshiped by Thai Buddhists.
182 Che Man 1990: 31; Coedès 1968: 231; Liow 2009: 13.
183 Syukri 2005: 20 ff.; Teeuw and Wyatt 1970: 221 ff.
184 Gilquin 2005: 11; Davisakd 2008: 80.
185 Davisakd 2008: 80.

since, developing a reputation for excellence in Quranic studies and Islamic law through its renowned scholars (*ustadh*) and many thriving *pondok* schools. Patani, which between the 15th and 18th centuries was also known as Patani Darussalam,[186] has been held as one of the cradles of Islam in Southeast Asia and was famously known throughout the Malay world as a centre of Islamic studies,[187] recognised as the front porch to Mecca, meaning that Islamic studies in Patani could be a stepping stone to further studies in Mecca or elsewhere in the Arab world. The Patani Sultanate consolidated Islam in the region, arranging for this growth of religious institutions, with the legendary Krue Se mosque as one of its most famous landmarks.

As elsewhere in the Malay world, Islam in Patani was based on the *shafi'i* school of Sunni Islam, and flourishing Sufi traditions were also present, to a certain degree overlapping with the orthodox tradition.[188] Different aspects of Islam evolved in a number of stages, and using Chaiwat's terminology we can point out three periods or phases of Islam in the Patani region. The first, which he calls the 'magical period', started with the conversion of the *raja* to Islam, and was succeeded by the 'theological period' from the late 18th to the early 20th centuries, the period that many people consider to be the golden era for religious growth and progress. Finally, from the early 20th century onwards, there has been the 'modern period', which was introduced by the reformist Islamic movement *kaum muda*, or *khana mai* in Thai.[189]

Khana mai, meaning the 'new school', initially referred to the circle of urban-educated middle-class Muslims in Bangkok known as *ansorisunnah* and headed by the Indonesian political refugee Ahmad Wahab. This circle, inspired by Muhammad Abduh's Salafiyya movement, attracted the urban-based intelligentsia rather than the rural communities, and had its stronghold in Bangkok, although it soon spread to the Muslim south. Al-Manar journal as well as regional journals like Al-Imam, publishing out of Singapore, served as important sources of modernist ideas for the group. In the deep south, *khana mai* was initially associated with the group linked to Haji Sulong, while today it is more associated with the teaching of Dr. Ismail Lutfi Chapakia, widely known for his popular speeches and mass meetings.[190] The term *khana mai* expresses reform and distance from the

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186 Liow 2009: 18.
187 Che Man 1990: 31; Liow 2009: 18 f.
188 Liow 2009: 13.
189 Chaiwat 2005: 51.
190 Chaiwat 2005: 51; Liow 2009: 79 f.; McCargo 2008: 21; Scupin 1980: 1224 ff.;
    Yusuf 2007: 10 ff.

traditionalists, the 'old school'—the *kaum tua*, or *khana kao* in Thai. A divide between a modernist, reformist and puritan trend on the one hand, and a traditionalist trend inspired by folk belief, spirit reverence and local customs on the other,[191] is found in most Muslim societies, and in the southern border provinces of Thailand this divide has had great impact on religious and political developments, and is of particular interest when attempting to understand different levels of Muslim identity in the region today.

Modernist or reformist trends of Islam were always quick to reach the Patani region as they were picked up and transmitted by students returning home from Islamic studies at universities in the Middle East (particularly Saudi Arabia) as well as those in Egypt, Pakistan and Indonesia. From the 1970s, the influence of modernist or reformist trends increased as more students followed and travelled abroad.[192] As students returned home, they commonly questioned local religious traditions, and the ways of the elders in Muslim communities were challenged. These returning students had adopted understandings that were unknown to the majority of the Patani people, and occasionally disputed many of the local traditions as well as the local *tok guru*s and *ustadh*s. These new approaches commonly emphasised the Quran and the *Sunnah* and were generally more doctrinaire and prescriptive than was locally customary, projecting a more puritan teaching of Islam. They had been inspired by the general Muslim resurgence or revival that was occurring throughout the Muslim world at that time—a result of the growing dissatisfaction of a marginalized middle class with modernity, secularism and political ideologies. These people were disillusioned by the failure of the six-day war against Israel in 1967, and encouraged by the Arab economic success following the oil embargo and the Jom Kippur war in 1973 and the Iranian revolution in 1979, as well the *mujahedeen*'s struggle against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.[193] The resurgence affected the returning students and, as a consequence, the region as a whole. The result was a revival of Islam, which was becoming more diverse and which was challenging the old ways of the *ustadh*s. Specific to Southeast Asian reformism was the strong attack on folk traditions, popular beliefs and practices, which were accused of stemming from the *jahiliyya*, the age of pre-Islamic ignorance.[194]

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191 Fraser 1962: 168.
192 Liow 2009: 81; McCargo 2008: 21 f.
193 Chaiwat 2005: 80 f.; Esposito 1998: 160; Liow 2009: 139.
194 Liow 2009: 80.

Yet another Muslim awakening that affected Malay Muslim communities in Thailand followed from the post-9/11 US-led "war on terror" and the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003—a war that many Muslims, including those living in Thailand, viewed as a war on Islam, again leading to a strengthened Muslim consciousness in which solidarity within the global *ummah* became increasingly important.[195]

In recent times, developments within *khana mai* (the 'new school') have been largely driven by Salafist scholars and intellectuals, with a stronghold in institutions like the Yala Islamic College, founded by the Saudi-educated Lutfi, as well as in some segments of the College of Islamic Studies at Prince of Songkla University.[196] *Khana kao* (the 'old school'), on the other hand, has its stronghold in the traditional *pondok* schools, but also in movements like the student organisation *Saudra*,[197] and Sufi groups can be counted among the *khana kao* as well. In fact, the vast majority of the Malay Muslim population lean more towards the traditionalists than the modernists. *Khana mai* is clearly more of an urban middle-class phenomenon. The modernists, however, are nonetheless relatively influential as they represent a vocal educated urban elite and dominate many of the religious educational institutions, including the increasing number of private Islamic schools. For these reasons, they also influence much of the public debate on Islam. Additionally, with their emphasis on scriptural Islam, modernists can easily document and support their arguments with authoritative textual evidence from the Quran and the *Sunnah*—something that people who rely on traditions often cannot do.

In an examination of Islam in southern Thailand, a third trend should also be taken into account: the *dakwah* movements,[198] and in particular Tablighi Jemaat.[199] *Dakwah* movements are grassroots missionary movements (more specifically *home* missionary movements) that highlight personal devotion and promote a lifestyle that is in keeping with the *Sunnah* of the Prophet as described in the *hadith*s. Tablighi Jemaat developed from the Deobandi movement, which originated from the area

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195 Funston 2008: 34.
196 The term Salafi or Salafist here refers to the contemporary puritan trend within Sunni Islam with a focus on tawhid (the oneness and uniqueness of God), the Quran, and the Sunnah, developing from the Salafiyya movement. Some people in the Patani region also refer to Salafi as Wahhabi, including people who consider themselves part of this trend (Field notes, 18th February 2010).
197 McCargo 2008: 27.
198 Dakwah movements are Islamic missionary movements, and dakwah is the Malay spelling of the Arabic term da'wah, referring to 'to summon' or 'to invite' someone to the faith.
199 Very few people I talked to were familiar with the name of this movement and only referred to it as dakwah, an observation also made by Joll 2012: 65.

of northern India in the middle of the 19th century and can be considered as a part of the broader reformist tradition. The movement came to Yala from Kelantan, Malaysia in the 1960s, considerably expanded during the 1980s and 1990s, and continues to thrive today. Indeed, the Markaz Dakwah Yala is one of the largest Tablighi centres in the Asia Pacific region.[200]

Although *dakwah* movements are often classified among the reformist movements that focus on the purification of the Muslim community, and are thus accused by many traditionalists of promoting a modernist form of Islam, it is nonetheless problematic to uncritically place them in the *khana mai* category. Many Salafists are highly critical of *dakwah* movements, doubting everything from their doctrinal authenticity (i.e., leaning on weak *hadith*s) to the use of so-called Sufi techniques such as meditation and the like.[201] Yet others are critical of the *dakwah* practice itself, which involves absences from families for as long as four months at the time, something that many find irresponsible.[202] Additionally, I found *dakwah* movements to be stronger in the rural areas, perhaps among what we can call the lower middle class, although Liow does stress the varied background of Tablighi members.[203] This is in contrast to the *khana mai* in the deep south, which I found to be more of an urban, middle class phenomenon, popular among people with relatively high education. However, the idea behind the *dakwah* is that there is a need to purify the *ummah* before Islam can prosper; and thus, like the *khana mai*, they aim to get rid of what they consider to be non-Islamic elements in Muslim communities. In this respect, *dakwah* movements, and Tablighi Jemaat in particular, like the reformists of *khana mai*, represent a challenge to the authority and legitimacy of traditional Islam (or *khana kao*).[204] In fact, I regularly came across people referring to *dakwah* followers as *khana mai*. Similarly, as Salafist are in many respects also missionaries, it could be argued that they have more in common with *dakwah* followers than they might like to admit. Moreover, both trends can be seen as expressions of a Muslim puritanism, something that also links rather than distinguishes them from each other.[205]

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200 Liow 2009:140 ff.
201 Liow 2009: 144. For a more detailed discussion of the difference between Wahabi, Salafi, and Tablighi trends, refer to Roy 2004: 234 ff.
202 Field notes, 18th February 2010.
203 Liow 2009: 140.
204 Liow 2009: 145.
205 Joll 2012: 64 ff. differentiates between traditionalists (i.e., *khana gao*), reformist (i.e., *khana mai*) and revivalist (i.e., *dakwah*). For the purpose of this study however, I find it more appropriate to view Salafi and *dakwah* adherents in conjunction to each other. It should be noted, however, as Joll also does, that

One result of this puritanism is that, in effect, traditional practices tend to go underground—e.g., Sufism. Sufi brotherhoods in the region go back to the early Patani Kingdom and have greatly contributed to the reputation of Patani as a centre of Islamic knowledge and scholarship. Today, however, it is hard to find signs of Sufism in the region. Almost none of the Muslims that I asked about this had heard about any current Sufi brotherhoods or practices, although Sufi orders, such as the Naqshabandi order, do still exist in some of the traditional *pondok* schools. The only traces of Sufism and mysticism they could cite were the Sufi elements found in the *silat* performances[206] and some of the writings in *Berjihad di Patani* (the pamphlet found on the victims of the 2004 Krue Se incident). Only one of the Malay Muslims I asked said he knew about Sufi adherents in Patani because he had once seen a picture of a *sheik* in his friend's house. This, however, was all he knew.

As *khana mai* and *khana kao* do not represent organized or proclaimed religious disciplines, we should be careful not to put too much emphasis on them as religious sects or factions, and should rather see them as broad trends involving different and diverse religious elements that have transformed along with changing times. However, the idea of a new and an old religious tendency or movement is a fairly mainstream perception among local people, although most would not consider themselves to be followers of the one or the other tendency. The labels can be experienced as stigmatizing and they imply a whole set of associations to ideas and practices that regular people do not necessarily relate to. In fact, many people seem to find themselves somewhere in between: being interested in a Muslim revival and learning more about the Quran and the *Sunnah* on the one hand, while wishing to preserve and carry out local culture and customs on the other.[207] The friction between *khana mai* and *khana kao* is a highly sensitive issue in the deep south and it is difficult to induce people to openly discuss it. Nonetheless, it is of central importance in terms of gaining an overall impression of the latest social history of Islam in the region and understanding the changes that have occurred in the local Muslim communities.

Islam in Patani is firmly rooted in its mosques and *pondok* schools, with a strong foundation in tradition, providing confidence in the religious

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the dakwah movement consists of members with both traditionalist and modernist/reformist backgrounds.

206 Silat is a form of traditional martial arts of the Malay Archipelago.

207 Field notes, 12th February 2010.

sphere. At the same time, however, the challenge coming from the *dakwah* movements and *khana mai* has led to religious plurality and, in some cases, to a clear polarization of the Muslim community; and this, of course, has contributed to certain insecurities regarding religion and religious practice. Accordingly, many people, particularly in urban areas, are careful to distinguish between those practices that they consider to be linked to Islam and those that are not. Many times, when asking about different religious practices and traditions—and especially when asking concrete questions about magical elements like charms, spells and their relation to different spirits—I rarely received a direct answer. I was told that because these matters had nothing to do with Islam, they would not know anything about them.

One sign of this pluralistic turn in Islam is the escalating growth of new mosques all over the region, often leaving villages or neighbourhoods with two or more mosques. As such, this to some degree contributes to the splintering of the communities, leaving local people without a clearly defined religious authority, which leads to uncertainty about what the "right" religious practice might be. On the other hand, however, plurality can lead to a renewed discussion about Islam in society, and thus enrich the communities. The degree to which this might be happening today in the Patani region will be discussed in Part II of the dissertation.

From a historical perspective, it was the transformation of the Muslim Sultanate of Patani into a Thai periphery that represented the most profound change for Islam and the Malay Muslim population as such. The shift from being a religious and economic centre with relative autonomy to being a marginalized ethno-religious minority turned the power structure of the region on its head, converting the local Malay Muslim majority into a localized minority within the broader framework of the Thai Buddhist nation-state. Nonetheless, I will argue that the plurality of Islam has been another major challenge to local Muslim communities over the years, as the average villager can feel intimidated by religious scholars that question their traditional ways—something that could lead to a certain insecurity about 'right' and 'wrong' in religious matters. Joll refers to this as diversity and division.[208] It should also be noted, however, that although the plurality added by the influence of *khana mai* and the *dakwah* movements has been largely inspired by international trends, it seems clear that it has also provided local people with answers in terms of what might be described as an identity crisis. In the struggle to be able to use the Malay language, and to uphold other cultural aspects connected to Malay identity,

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208 Joll 2012: 66.

religion has been one of the strongest factors. Moreover, since freedom of religion is widely appreciated in Thailand, both Malay Muslims in the south as well as Thai Muslims elsewhere in Thailand are increasingly expressing their Muslim identity as a way of distinguishing themselves and defining their communities. In this regard, reformist movements have greatly contributed to the building of a robust religious identity for many Muslims in Thailand. And what is more, among Malay Muslims this identity is, for the most part, intimately connected to ethnicity or nationality. The plurality of Islam in the Patani region—with its traditional base and its reformist opponents—thus represents both a challenge to and a bolster for Malay Muslim identity.

Buddhism

The first signs of a Buddhist presence on the Malay Peninsula come from the 4th century. While early Buddhism was primarily dominated by Mahāyāna schools, both Sarvāstivāda and Tantric Buddhism gradually became influential as well.[209] The forerunner to Patani, the Brahman-Buddhist Kingdom of Langkasuka (6th-13th century), is thought to have stretched from modern day Kedah on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula to Pattani Bay.[210] Its centre, in what is today Pattani's Yarang district, was later moved to modern day Krue Se, in the Mueang district. Langkasuka was a kingdom containing Śaivite Brahmins and Buddhist monasteries, both of which were connected to the royal court; and P'an P'an (3rd-5th century), a smaller kingdom also located on the Bay of Bandǫn (Pattani Bay), is said to have had ten such monasteries.[211] Langkasuka was noticeably influenced, first by the Funan and later by the Srivijaya empires, and the religious currents within these empires were most likely of significance to the Kingdom of Lankasuka as well.

With the rise of Patani and the fall of Lankasuka, Buddhism decreased dramatically, and there are few accounts of Buddhism during the Patani era. Although we know that various types of religious practitioners resided in Patani, people connected to the royal court were predominantly Muslims and most local citizens were likely to have been either Muslims or animists. Merchants in the urban areas, however, mostly originating from distant countries and kingdoms, adhered to other religions—i.e., various forms of

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209 Harvey 1990: 144
210 Coedès 1968: 39 ; Syukri 2005: ix.
211 Coedès 1968: 52. P'an P'an might be the Chinese name for Patani.

Brahmanism and Chinese religion as well as Buddhism and Christianity. Most of these were Indian, Chinese, Portuguese and Dutch traders.

By the mid-13th century Theravāda Buddhism had achieved an important position within the Siamese Kingdom of Sukhothai. The Theravāda tradition, introduced to the royal court by missionaries from Burma in the 11th century, was later institutionalised with the help of Sinhalese monks,[212] and eventually migrated to those living in the peripheries of the kingdom, including the southern vassal states. In fact, the southern city Nakhon Sri Thammarat (Ligor) was itself an early Theravāda Buddhist stronghold based on Sinhalese Mahāvihāra teaching, and thus significantly influenced the political centre in Sukhothai.[213] Nakhon's religious influence is likely to have had some impact on neighbouring Patani as well, at least in terms of introducing Theravāda doctrine to the Muslim-dominated areas.

Some signs of early Theravāda Buddhism in the deep south can also be traced. Thai Buddhist settlements and Theravāda temples dating back several hundred years have been identified in a number of places around the region. Baan Dii, for example, near Krue Se in Mueang Pattani, is a Theravāda settlement from the time of Raja Mustafa (16th century) that was inhabited by slaves sent from the king of Ayutthaya, possibly of Burmese or Lao descent. Another example is Baan Kuam in Pattani's Panarae district, a Siamese settlement that also dates back to the 16th century, and Kampung Siye in Yaring, a village that is today one hundred per cent Malay Muslim, whose name indicates earlier Siamese (*oghe siye*) dominance. There are still traces of the old *wat* in Kampung Siye, which is of importance to the Thai Buddhist population in Pattani. Other examples of old Theravāda temples are the approximately two hundred year old Wat Burapharam, also in Yaring, and Wat Chontara Singhe on the bank of the Kolok River in Tak Bai district of Narathiwat, dating back to the mid-19th century—a temple that was of great importance in the negotiations between the British and the Siamese when the border was drawn for the 1909 treaty.[214] Furthermore, it is presumed that 28 of the 175 Buddhist temples in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat date back to the Patani Darussalam period before the turn of the 19th century,[215] and that as many as 56 were built during the 19th

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212 Harvey 1990: 144.
213 Wyatt 2003: 40.
214 A museum dedicated to this historic event is found on the temple compound near the gate.
215 All of these temples, however, are not of Theravāda origin.

century.[216] There are also old Thai Buddhist settlements and temples in the Kelantan state of Malaysia, indicating that Theravāda Buddhism existed south of the old Patani Kingdom as well. Additionally, the sparse historical record of the travels of the renowned monk Luang Pu Thuat indicates the possible existence of Buddhist communities in both the Patani region and Kedah as far back as the 17th century.[217]

Although strong bonds had long existed between Patani and Siam with little interference in Patani's internal affairs, the situation gradually changed with the integration of Patani into the Siamese Kingdom. At first this interference was primarily political. However, after formal annexation, the Siamese state increasingly saw the need to improve its legitimacy in the region. The Buddhist population and the Buddhist heritage in the region was a strong argument for Siamese, and later Thai, lordship, and the securing of Buddhism in the deep south became a priority, particularly from the 1940s onwards.

The policy of securing Buddhism was twofold. On the one hand, it meant to physically protect Buddhist communities, temples and sites in times of violence and turmoil, something that has been particularly pressing since the insurgency of 2004.[218] On the other hand, however, the securing of Buddhism has been a longstanding strategy for stimulating an increase of the Buddhist population and for building and rebuilding Buddhist temples and monuments throughout the region—a strategy that has been spearheaded by governmental and royal institutions, often in concert with local Thai and Chinese Buddhist populations. The controversial 1961 Self-help Land Settlement Project (*nikhom sang ton eng*), already mentioned in Chapter 4, which aimed to resettle poor landless farmers from other parts of Thailand, can be viewed as one aspect of this strategy. This policy significantly increased the Thai Buddhist population in the region.[219]

The other side of this strategy, the building of new temples and Buddhist monuments, is also interesting. These projects were often initiated and partly financed by local donations from communities and

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216 Personal conversation with Assoc. Prof. at the Department of Geography, Prince of Songkla University, Dr Krongchai Hattha, 10th February 2010, and visit to Wat Chontara Singhe 6th February 2010.

217 Personal conversation with Assoc. Prof. at the Department of Geography, Prince of Songkla University, Dr Krongchai Hattha, 22nd April 2008. We must assume, however, that early Thai-speaking communities in Patani, like elsewhere in rural Siam, were just as much animists as they were Buddhists.

218 Refer to Jerryson 2009; McCargo 2009a for details on the military securing of Buddhism since 2004.

219 Suhrke 1977: 241; International Crisis Group, *Southern Thailand: Insurgency, not Jihad*, Asia report No 98 18th May 2005, p 10.

wealthy individuals. However, both the state and the royal family have frequently been closely involved in the construction and the financing of temples and monuments of religious importance. The majestic *stupa*, the Phra Mahathat Chedi Phra Buddha Dhamma Prakat in the Betong district of Yala, was built in honour of Queen Sirikit's 69th birthday and is the biggest *stupa* in Southern Thailand. The giant Buddha image Phra Phuttha Thaksin Ming Mongkhon in Narathiwat, the largest outdoor Buddha image in all of southern Thailand, should also be mentioned. This towering golden Buddha of steel-reinforced concrete (completed in 1969) is 24 meters high and 17 meter wide, and resides in a 56.8 acre park in the midst of the Malay Muslim heartland.[220] Moreover, a large golden Buddha image has been recently constructed on a hilltop in Pattani's Sai Kao district overlooking Wat Sai Kao and the surrounding areas. The city pillars (*lak mueang*), although perhaps not directly Buddhist, nonetheless represent Thai religious monuments that are revered by the Buddhist population. These provide examples of monuments that contribute to building the legitimacy of Thai Buddhism in the Patani region. The *lak mueang* is generally considered to have been an ancient place of worship and the centre of spiritual authority in the old Tai cities (*mueang*). In the Patani region, however, the *lak mueang* monuments are modern constructions. In Yala, for instance, the *lak mueang* was built in 1962 on the instructions of King Bhumibol, and the *lak mueang* in Pattani was built in 1953, and just recently rebuilt and enlarged in 2008. The renewal was initiated by local authorities and financed through the sale of *jatukam* talismans all over the country.[221]

Theravāda Buddhist temples have been present in the region long before Patani was formally annexed into Siam, and thus must have to some degree enjoyed the support of the local Buddhist population. Also after the annexation, the construction of new Buddhist temples and monuments in the region continued,[222] and these constructions should be viewed in relation to policies of securing Buddhism in the region, policies implemented as part of Thai nation-building. The famous temple Wat Chang Hai is an illustrative example.

The most important of the temples in the southern border provinces is Wat Chang Hai, the temple of the crying elephant, situated in the Khok Pho

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220 Tourism Authority of Thailand.
221 A *jatukam* is an amulet of a somewhat newly constructed deity called Jatukam Ramathep. These amulets were immensely popular around 2006 – 2008.
222 According to Dr Krongchai Hattha, at least 52 new temples have been constructed in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat since 1932 (Personal conversation 10th February 2010).

district of Pattani. With its link to the 17th century monk Luang Pu Thuat (Venerable Great Grandfather) this temple represents the heritage of Buddhist legitimacy in the region for the local Buddhist population. Wat Chang Hai, however, was built in 1936 and is thus a modern phenomenon. Although Wat Chang Hai is alleged to have been built on the remains of an older temple, believed to have been the original residence of Luang Pu Thuat, its construction (or possibly restoration) is nonetheless more important in terms of its contribution to modern Thai nation-building. The building of the temple was sponsored by the wealthy Pattani Sino-Thai Khananurak family, which has sponsored several other Thai Buddhist and Chinese temples and shrines.[223] The focus on Luang Pu Thuat intensified when in 1954 his amulets were produced and popularized by Ajarn Tim, the Abbot of Wat Chang Hai at that time. It is these amulets more than anything that has boosted the importance of Luang Pu Thuat and perpetuated his image as one of the most sacred (*saksit*) monks in Thai Buddhism. However, Jory has questioned the link between Luang Pu Thuat and Wat Chang Hai, and instead suggested some interplay between the interests of the local Buddhist community and Thai authorities on this matter. In his view, political support for the erection of the temple at that exact site was linked to the urgent need to legitimise Buddhism and the Thai state in Pattani.[224]

There is evidence of Luang Pu Thuat as an historical figure. The authenticity of the legend connected to the *wat* in Khok Pho, however, is more doubtful, and the importance of the Luang Pu Thuat of Wat Chang Hai is first and foremost linked to its contemporary significance. Historically, Luang Pu Thuat is above all connected to Songkla, not Pattani. However, with the production of one of the most valuable amulets in the country, particularly treasured by southern Thais, the renowned monk has been relocated and is now closely linked to Pattani, turning Wat Chang Hai (and, by association, the Patani region) into an important centre of Thai Buddhism. Moreover, for Buddhists in the deep south, Luang Pu Thuat symbolizes Pattani (*sanyalak pattani*).[225] When discussing religious amulets with one of my interviewees (a female accountant from Pattani), she explained the phenomenon of Luang Pu Thuat as follows:

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223 Jory 2008: 295 ff.
224 Jory 2008: 303.
225 Luang Pho Dam from Wat Mujalinthavapi Viharn in the Nong Chik district of Pattani is also seen by many as a symbol of Pattani, but must be said to come in a respectable number two in comparison to Luang Pu Thuat.

> I respect (*naptheu*) Luang Pu Thuat the most, because he is a symbol of Pattani (*sanyalak kong Pattani*). But I don't care if it is an old and valuable one,[226] or just a regular one. Any amulet (*phra krueang*) of him will do.[227]

Another interviewee from Pattani (a Buddhist primary school teacher) put it like this:

> People from Pattani have Luang Pu Thuat. For us Luang Pu Thuat is number one. We have others also, like Luang Pho Dam, Jao Mae Lim Ko Niaw, but Luang Pu Thuat is special, because of the miracles, the sacredness (*khwam saksit*), and the help we get[228]

Although immensely popular all over southern Thailand, in the southern border provinces Luang Pu Thuat is viewed as a guardian spirit for the local Buddhist population and has become increasingly popular as a means of protection after the escalation of violence in the region the recent years. In fact, I was told that all soldiers serving in the deep south have been given a Luang Pu Thuat amulet for protection.[229]

With this example of Wat Chang Hai we see how local initiatives sometimes are supported, encouraged, and upheld by national agendas that serve political interests. Hence, when bomb exploded outside the entrance of Wat Chang Hai in early 2002, two years before the new wave of insurgency had properly surfaced, although causing little harm, the incident was nonetheless taken to be a major event, both at the regional and at the national level.[230] Such an attack was not only considered to be an attack on Buddhism and one of its most cherished landmarks, but was also interpreted as an attack on the Thai nation, since religion (i.e. Buddhism) constitutes one of the three pillars of what is regarded as Thai.

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226 Older amulets are believed to be more effective than the newer mass-produced ones. The first Luang Pu Thuat amulets from 1954, produced by the famous monk Ajarn Tim, are believed to be particularly powerful.
227 Interview, 30th April, 2008 b.
228 Interview, 1st May, 2008 b.
229 Field notes, 27th March 2008. Jory 2008: 293 supports this statement and claims that Luang Pu Thuat amulets are distributed among soldiers as well as police and government officials.
230 As a result of this attack, Wat Chang Hai was—like many other temples in the three southern border provinces—securely guarded by soldiers, something I witnessed when visiting the temple in 2008. On my second visit in 2010, however, the security of the temple was lifted. The same was evident at a couple of other temples I revisited in Pattani province. Temples in Yala and Narathiwat, on the other hand, still had soldiers guarding the premises.

The far more pressing concerns of local Buddhists today, however, are linked to the increased religious dimension of the current southern conflict. Separatist movements and waves of violent insurgencies are nothing new in the Patani region. There have been many revolts and upheavals on the part of Malay Muslim groups. These, however, were directed more towards the Thai state than they were towards local Buddhists, who were thus less directly affected. It had always been the imperialist Thai state that was the target of violence—e.g., soldiers, police and state officials. However, since the resurgence of violence in 2004, the importance of religion has increased in what had been previously viewed as a largely ethno-nationalist conflict. With incidents like the murder of Buddhist monks and what appear to be random Buddhist villagers, the Buddhist population now feels itself to be directly threated on the basis of its religion, often resulting in increased religious rhetoric at the centre of the political discourse.

With the amplified intensity of the conflict, religion becomes a more important indicator of identity and community, and people are in many respects experiencing their own ethnic group and other ethnic groups in terms of religion. Moreover, in some areas where violence has been directly aimed at the Buddhist population there has been an exodus of Buddhist families, who are moving into more urban areas or leaving the region entirely—a phenomenon that has intensified feelings of marginalisation among Buddhist villagers. While the sentiments within some Buddhist communities appear to be rather pessimistic, within others, religion and religious activities have been used in attempts to reconcile and heal, thus strengthening the role of religion in the improvement of daily life.[231]

Chinese Religion

The presence of the Chinese has had an influence on the Patani region since early times. Whereas relations between China and Langkasuka were formally established in 515, P'an P'an's first Chinese embassy dates back to the period of 424-453. Early accounts also make reference to a Taoist monastery in P'an P'an.[232] Chinese merchants, particularly from the Fujian-Hokkien area, were heavily involved in trade with both Lankasuka and Patani, and many Chinese chronicles, such as those of the Liang and

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231 Field notes, 29th April 2008.
232 Coedès 1968: 51 f.

those of the Ming Dynasty, contribute significantly to the local historical accounts of the region.

Loyal to the local rulers, the Chinese were a stable factor and an important part of society, developing solid relations with the elites and a strong foundation in the region's urban areas. The Chinese were traders, and thus settled in large numbers in the bustling cities connected to the major ports. Skinner's material suggests that in Patani during the early 17th century the Chinese even outnumbered the natives. One Chinese source from 1617 notes that the Chinese population was so plentiful that "their toes followed one another's heels".[233] From China they brought their Taoist and Confucian belief system, ancestor worship and Mahāyāna Bodhisattvas. Eventually local Chinese deities emerged as well, the most celebrated of which is Jao Mae Lim Ko Niaw, the spirit of the sister of local hero Lim To Kiam. Her shrine is one of the most visited holy places in the Patani region, receiving Chinese pilgrims from all over the Malay Peninsula.

Lim Ko Niaw, also known as Chin Lian,[234] is believed to have come from the Teochew speaking (or possibly the Hokkien speaking) area of China to the Kingdom of Patani in the mid-17th century in order to convince her brother to return home with her to their aging mother. Chronicles from the Ming dynasty report that her brother, Lim To Kiam, had fled his home after falling into trouble with some "corrupt and envious officials".[235] After a long journey, he ended up in Patani, where he converted to Islam and married a relative of the *raja* of Patani. Lim To Kiam became a trusted and loyal official of the *raja*, and is said to have been in charge of the building of the Krue Se Mosque when his sister arrived. It is also said that it was Lim To Kiam who built the famous Patani Cannons.[236]

Lim Ko Niaw's plea to her brother was of little avail, and she failed to convince him to return to China. Having sworn not to return without him, she decided to remain in Patani.[237] From this point on, however, the various legends and chronicles on Lim Ko Niaw contain two versions of her story. The version found in the chronicles of the Ming dynasty tells the story of the loyal and devoted sister. Shortly after her arrival in Patani, the *raja* dies and there is a revolt by a rivalling faction. Lim Ko Niaw fights

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[233] Skinner 1962: 7.
[234] In both *Hikayat Patani* and *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*, Lim Ko Niaw is found under the name Lim Kun Yew.
[235] *Chao Mae Lim Ko Niau Pattani*, Pamphlet produced by the Leng Ju Kiang shrine in Pattani 1992.
[236] Syukri 2005: 31; Teeuw and Wyatt 1970: 224.
[237] *Chao Mae Lim Ko Niau Pattani*, Pamphlet produced by the Leng Ju Kiang shrine in Pattani 1992.

bravely at her brother's side, but as she finds herself surrounded by enemies, she ends her life with her own sword. This is the version that one finds in publication at Pattani's Jao Mae Lim Ko Niaw shrine. The alternate version tells the tale not of a loyal and devoted sister, but of one who becomes so upset at her brothers refusal to return to China that she decides to hang herself from a cashew nut tree that stands next to the Krue Se Mosque. Before hanging herself, however, Lim Ko Niaw goes so far as to place a curse on the mosque, prophesying that it will never be finished. This is the version that appears in both the *Hikayat Patani* and Ibrahim Syukri's *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*—although in these, the curse is not mentioned.[238]

Following the death of Lim Ko Niaw, her brother gave her a traditional Chinese funeral and a shrine containing her image was built in her honour—apparently out of the cashew nut tree from which she is alleged to have hung. This shrine was initially built outside the town in which her tomb is located, but was eventually moved to the Leng Ju Kiang shrine (popularly known as the Jao Mae Lim Ko Niaw shrine) in the Chinese neighbourhood of central Pattani, turning it into one of the most famous spiritual landmarks in the region. For the Chinese traders who had left their homes and families and settled down far away from their ancestors, and thus their religious centre, Lim Ko Niaw's virtuous refusal to turn her back on her religion was viewed as a holy sacrifice and a reminder of their shared identity.

The legends of the revered spirit or goddess Jao Mae Lim Kho Niaw are of great interest to the history of religions in the Patani region, particularly when it comes to negotiating interreligious and interethnic relations. An interesting analysis of the impact of the different legends on the relations between the Chinese and Malay Muslim communities in the Patani region—their dynamics and how they have been perceived at different times—is presented by Chaiwat, who argues that the Krue Se Mosque, with its legends of Jao Mae Lim Ko Niaw, has been "used as a theatre where the identities of the Malay and the Chinese were negotiated".[239] The people of the Patani region have had the chance to believe either the myth of the suicide and the cursing of the mosque or the one in which Lim Ko Niaw sacrifices her life to protect Patani.

In the dynamics of the different legends of Lim Ko Niaw we find various interpretations of the relations between different religions and ethnic groups. With Lim To Kiam as a convert to Islam, the relations,

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238 Syukri 2005: 31; Teeuw and Wyatt 1970: 224
239 Chaiwat 2005: 68.

bonds and brotherhood between the Chinese and the Muslims are manifested in the images of Lim Ko Niaw and Lim To Kiam. Similarly, with Lim Ko Niaw fighting on her brother's side against the enemy, emphasis can be placed on the alliance between the two groups. With the second version of the legend, on the other hand, there is a certain underlying level of conflict. Lim To Kiam's break with Chinese culture and his refusal to return home, and Lim Ko Niaw's grief and suicide, not to speak of her cursing of the great Krue Se Mosque, are all clear symbols of the underlying conflicts and differences that characterize relations between the Chinese and the Malay Muslims. Today, both versions of the legend are recounted in the deep south, and although people do not interpret these tales strictly in terms of Chinese-Malay Muslim relations, they are nonetheless part of a local mythology that people relate to and uphold. Chaiwat's concluding words on the matter provide us with an observant interpretation:

> [...] the sacrifice made by Lim Kun Yew can be read as an admonition to the Chinese, especially Chinese males who had travelled to foreign lands in search of wealth, not to forget who they were. Their decision to make an image of Lim Kun Yew which has been prayed to as a revered holy idol and the creation of the *Tho Pe Kong*[240] can be read as the Chinese community's attempt to renegotiate Chinese identity with the native Malay Muslims. Lim Kun Yew failed in her mission to bring her brother back to the Chinese way and committed suicide as a way to communicate to others the significance of retaining Chinese identity. For the local Chinese who chose not to go back to China, they had found a way to remain their Chinese identity through the construction of *Tho Pe Kong* in her honour as well as carrying on the myths and performing the rituals at her shrine.[241]

As for the Malay Muslims, Chaiwat explores the possibility that given their repeated attempts to regain their identity by way of rebellions and uprising throughout history, they would sympathize with this symbol of tradition and patriotism.[242] The cursing of the Krue Se Mosque, however, is a more delicate matter, although neither the Chinese nor the Malay Muslims have emphasized this portion of the legend. Indeed, it was not until the cursing of the mosque was vigorously promoted in the 1987 'Visit Thailand Year'

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240 Hokkien for temple.
241 Chaiwat 2005: 69.
242 Chaiwat 2005: 69.

tourist campaign that this aspect of the legend was so openly, and perhaps crassly, exposed—with the Krue Se ruins themselves representing visible confirmation of the Pattani tourist commodity, reproducing the legend of the curse.[243] The legend of the curse, however, has been challenged by Dr. *Krongchai* Hattha, Associate Professor at the Department of Geology, Prince of Songkla University (Pattani Campus). His basic argument concerns the likelihood that at some point the construction of the mosque was completed, but that the structure was so weak that the roof caved in, and will likely continue to cave each time an attempt is made to repair it.

Under Siamese and Thai rule after the end of the Patani Kingdom, Malay Muslims strongly resisted Thai assimilation policies whereas the Chinese rather quickly assimilated into Thai society, adapted to the Thai language and change their names into Thai names. In fact, the earliest assimilation policies initiated by King Vajiravudh, Rama VI (1910-1925) had been first and foremost directed towards the kingdom's vast and growing Chinese population, and had proved to be quite successful.[244] The Chinese even adopted Theravāda doctrines as their main religion while still keeping alive traditional Chinese religious practices, and the many Sino-Thai marriages contributed to further integration. In keeping with the Chinese population's consistent support for local rulers, the Sino-Thais also tended to remain loyal to the Thai state. Wealthy Chinese families also made financial contributions to Buddhist *wat*s in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, and in this manner strengthened the Buddhist presence in the region. The famous Wat Chang Hai was initially financed by the wealthy Khananurak family, the same family that established the present shrine for Jao Mae Lim Ko Niaw in Pattani town.[245]

Chinese religious culture is very much alive in the Patani region today. Each year, shortly after the Chinese New Year, a weeklong festival is held in honour of Jao Mae Lim Ko Niaw. The celebration culminates with a procession in which the image of Lim Ko Niaw is paraded around central Pattani. The procession includes the ritual bathing of the image in the Pattani River; and the men that carry the platform on which the image is installed perform fire walks at the arena opposite the Leng Ju Kiang shrine (Jao Mae Lim Ko Niaw shrine). As elsewhere in Thailand, aspects of Chinese religion are clearly evident in the Theravāda temples. Shrines for Chinese deities and Mahāyāna Bodhisattvas can be found on the premises

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[243] Chaiwat 2005: 71 ff.
[244] Wyatt 2003: 216.
[245] Jory 2008: 295 f.

of the *wat*s, and deities like Jao Mae Kwan Im[246] are increasingly popular, not only among Sino-Thais, but among the Thai population as well. Wat Chang Hai is one example of a *wat* that also houses a shrine for Kwan Im.

Religious diversity is undoubtedly the trademark of the southern border provinces. This is something that both locals and people in the rest of the country associate with the deep south and that central authorities emphasise in tourist brochures and through the media. The cultural history of the religions in the region also shows how both the Muslim revival (or modernist Islam), and the many strategies for securing Buddhism in the south have contributed to the development of multiple identities in the region.[247] As I will further explain in Part II of the dissertation, a space for religious identity has opened up in both cases, and in both cases ethnic or national identities have developed within this religious domain. However, before beginning to examine the dynamics between religion and nation in the deep south—how they are perceived and how they contribute to defining multiple identities among people—I will discuss some relevant theoretical notions and definitions concerning nationalism and ethnicity and reflect upon certain methodological considerations as well.

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246 Jao Mae Kwan Im is the Thai name for the Chinese goddess of mercy Guan Yin, the female incarnation of the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.
247 Similarly, Joll 2012: 78 points out that religious, ethnic and linguistic diversity in Pattani have been impacted by Thai and Islamic influences.

6 Nations, Nationalism and Ethnicity

Defining terms such as nation, nationalism and ethnicity continues to be challenging, despite the vast amount of literature on these subjects. The idea of nation and the feeling of belongingness that the members of a nation experience are socially, politically and culturally internalized, representing a reality with deep references to history and tradition. At the same time, however, nationalism as an ideology is clearly a modern construction. While I will not attempt to give a complete answer to the question of nations and nationalism, the inevitable matter of definition must be raised, if for no other reason then to clarify the different approaches to the nation, nationalism and ethnicity that are relevant to this dissertation. In doing so, various problems concerning nationality and nationalism will be illuminated as they are viewed from both a Thai nationalist perspective and different comprehensions of local sub-nationalisms in the Patani region. Anderson uses the term 'sub'-nationalisms to refer to nationalisms within what he calls 'old nations', which once thought fully consolidated, find themselves challenged by such 'sub'-nationalisms within its borders. These are 'sub'-nationalisms who strive to discard their sub-ness.[248] In other words, sub-nationalisms are local or regional nationalisms within nation-states, or at the frontiers between nation-states, that confront or challenge their sovereignty or nationalist narratives. Notably, the nation is never a static entity. It is in constant motion, and will always be perceived as multidimensional.

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248 Anderson 2006/1983: 3.

Nations

So, what is a nation? Following Benedict Anderson, I shall here relate to a nation as an imagined political community. It is imagined in the sense that even though the members of even the smallest nation will never know, meet or even hear about most of their fellow members, in their minds, the image of their communion lives on; and it is imagined as a community regardless of the level of internal inequality and exploitation because it is conceived as a deep and horizontal comradeship.[249] A nation is where there is a mutual recognition between its members and a sense of loyalty based on some shared values, rights and duties. In the words of Ernest Gellner, two people are of the same nation:

> [...] if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating, [and] if and only if they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation. [...] A mere category of persons (say, occupants of a given territory, or speakers of a given language, for example) becomes a nation if and when the members of the category firmly recognize certain mutual rights and duties to each other in virtue of their shared membership of it. It is their recognition of each other as fellows of this kind which turns them into a nation, and not the other shared attributes, whatever they might be, which separate that category from non-members.[250]

Furthermore, going back to Anderson, it may be useful to take into account that his definition also implies that this imagined community is imagined as both limited and sovereign: limited because even the largest of them will have finite, if elastic, boundaries beyond which there will be other nations; and sovereign, because it evolved in its historical context, strongly influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment which undermined the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm, advocating the sovereignty of the state instead.[251] Leaning on these definitions by Anderson and Gellner, it will become clear in the discussions below that the Malay Muslim majority population of the Patani region shift between belonging to the imagined community of a Thai nation on the one hand and a Patani nation on the other. In certain respects, they are included in

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249 Anderson 2006/1983: 6 f.
250 Gellner 1983: 7.
251 Anderson 2006/1983: 7.

the idea of the Thai nation-state, in other respects they experience exclusion from that very same community, and in yet other circumstances they form their own Malay Muslim sub-nation or imagined community, in which the Thai Buddhist population is excluded.

Nationalism

Then, what about nationalism? The definition of nationalism introduces more problems than that of the nation. Anderson suggests that we not only view nationalism as an ideology, but that we also attempt to analyse it as we would such social categories as 'kinship' and, coincidently, 'religion'.[252] In this dissertation, however, nationalism is understood in terms of ideology, although the idea of a nation will be treated more like a social category along the lines of religion. Next, in the discussion of nationalism, there is also a need to clarify a number of different perspectives and angles that should be held apart. I will discuss four such perspectives relevant to this dissertation concerning different periods, foundations, levels and scales of nationalism.

I will start with the first perspective, concerning different periods of nationalism. This is especially important in the discussion of Asian nationalism, as many theories of nations and nationalism refer to the developments in Europe and North America related to a limited historical frame. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between the discussions of nationalism that define its origins and the historical underlying causes that made its development possible, and the more particular accounts of contemporary nationalisms around the world. This is not to say, however, that these two matters are completely separate. Nor do I believe it is meaningful, for example, to talk of European nationalisms as something significantly different from Asian nationalisms. On the contrary, the writings of scholars of nationalism like Gellner and Hobsbawm are applicable to contemporary as well as non-western cases. But as Tønnesson and Antlöv have noted: "Asia [...] has its own national forms, which are no mere reflections of European or American models."[253] What I mean to say is that these macro-historical or macro-sociological theories of the origins of nationalism and its different early forms are not suitable to be copy-pasted onto any discourse on nationalism. These theories indicate some

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252 Anderson 2006/1983: 5.
253 Tønnesson and Antlöv 1996: 2.

necessary trends and patterns, and thus a base and a framework for further analyses, which again can be used in the examination of specific cases. But nationalism is not an historical phase, in an evolutionary sense, that all societies sooner or later have to go through. Rather, it is a set of political and social characteristics, dependent on some fundamental modern elements, sometimes clearly inspired by European nationalist developments, but always specific to its own historical, political and cultural context. In Thailand, as discussed in Chapter 2, the concept of the nation-state was first imposed upon the kingdom by the geo-political interests of British and French colonial powers. However, as a result of this foreign pressure, political reforms and processes of modernisation were set off, and soon, the nationalism that had before seemed alien and strange, came to be of great inspiration to the Siamese rulers, and Thai nationalism developed into a strong ideology that has come to be an important part of the political development in the country up to today. And it is this ideology, and its significance to modern and contemporary history, that is of main interest in this dissertation.

Gellner's allegory of the tidal wave can serve as a useful illustration of how nationalism manifests itself differently at different times and at different places. Gellner argues that industrialisation and modernisation notoriously proceed in an uneven manner just as a tidal wave does not hit all parts of the world at the same time—nor with the same force, might one add. Thus:

> [N]ationalism is a phenomenon connected not so much with industrialisation or modernisation as such, but with its uneven diffusion. The uneven impact of this wave generates a sharp social stratification.[254]

In other words, it is this uneven impact and the following stratification that creates nationalism, since nationalism offers a solution for the people of underdeveloped regions and, moreover, becomes a tool for the excluded intelligentsia within these regions, as in the case of Siam with the emerging urban, educate elite behind the non-royal vision of nationalism (referred to in Chapter 2). However, this does not imply that we should understand nationalism as a fixed ideology predetermined to sooner or later strike all societies, if not simultaneously. In fact, Gellner's allegory of the tidal wave rather provides us with an image that underlines how modernisation and industrialisation form only some, albeit necessary, elements of nationalism

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254 Gellner 1965: 166.

as well as how the dynamics between this modernisation and the historical, political, and cultural specifics of the old world come into play:

> Consider the tidal wave of modernisation, sweeping over the world, in a devastating but untidy flood, aided or obstructed by pre-existing currents, deflected or canalised by rocks and sandbanks of the older social world.[255]

Nationalism combines an imagined community's blend of pre-existing common thoughts and traditions, whether real or imagined, and the challenges of modernity brought about by modern phenomena like printed press, primary mass education and an industrial-capitalist economy. In Thailand, as mentioned earlier, nationalism already began to gain momentum in the late 19th century, and intensified with the radical changes of the 1932 democratic revolution abolishing the absolute monarchy. However, it was not until after the Second World War, with the effort to consolidate an ethnically and culturally diverse nation-state, that nationalism became a significant part of Thai society and political life—a significance that has persisted and still holds great importance.

In the Patani region, nationalism developed as a result of increased Thai dominance in the region, culminating with the annexation of the Patani Kingdom into Siam in 1902, and its consolidation in 1909. Yet, it took a modern-educated elite and people like Haji Sulong to articulate a nationalist political agenda, and it was not until the post Second World War Thai assimilation policies that the force of this nationalism was unleashed—a nationalism that also clearly built upon history and the construction of a glorious past, as Ibrahim Syukri's *The History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani* shows.[256] This is also the same period leading up to the independence of the Federation of Malaya in 1957, and thus nationalism in the Patani region can be viewed as a response to Thai repression on the one hand, and a response to inspiring events taking place among Malay neighbours to the south on the other. As with Thai nationalism, Patani nationalism has continued up to today, and it is striking how developments in the histories of Thai nationalism and Patani nationalism seem to overlap or coincide.

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255 Gellner 1965: 166.

256 Although the exact date of the book is not known, Wyatt 2005: ix assumes that it was written sometime after the start of the Thai policies of cultural, linguistic, educational, and legal assimilation introduced in the post-war era. At least this appears plausible for the most well-known version of the book. The possibility that older versions also might exist, cannot be ruled out.

The second perspective I would like to highlight is the essentialist and constructivist dichotomy in the study of nationalism. In other words, there are different foundations of nationalisms. Fundamentally, this is a matter of distinguishing between the emic and the etic perspective (or the academic perspective). For the insider, the nationalist, the nation is a natural, often God-given phenomenon with roots in the early myths and history of a people, something prior to modern nationalism. For the scholar, however, the nation is a modern construction, sociologically rooted in modernity. However, as Gellner notes, nationalism may sometimes take pre-existing cultures and turn them into nations; or may sometimes simply invent them; but the pre-existing culture is also often obliterated in the process.[257] According to Gellner, nationalism does make use of pre-existing cultures, though it uses them very selectively, and most often transforms them radically. Thus, it is nationalism that engenders nations, and not the other way around.[258] Hobsbawm puts it similarly: "In short, for the purposes of analysis nationalism comes before nations. Nations do not make states and nationalisms, but the other way round."[259] Smith, on the other hand, has criticised the tendency of constructionist or modernist approaches to see the past as being largely irrelevant. He notes that the challenge for scholars as well as nations is to represent the relationship of ethnic past to modern nation more accurately and convincingly.[260] Or as he states elsewhere:

> The 'modern nation' in practice incorporates several features of pre-modern ethnie[261] and owes much to a general model of ethnicity which has survived in many areas until the dawn of the 'modern era'.[262]

In other words, the nation was not the first imagined community. Prior to nationalism, there were other imagined communities that are of significant relevance to the development of modernity and its nations.

While it is the constructivist perspective that must be the basis of any scholarly discussion of nationalism, it seems meaningless to talk of nations

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257 Gellner 1983: 49.
258 Gellner 1983: 55.
259 Hobsbawm 1992: 10.
260 Smith 1999: 180 p.
261 An ethnie is: "a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members" (Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 6).
262 Smith 1986: 18.

without considering the subjective understandings of their peoples. The fact that the nation is a modern construction does not diminish the fact that it is also a reality in the lives of people all over the world, which leads to the third point I would like to clarify—namely, what I will call different levels of nationalism.

According to Hobsbawm, neither objective nor subjective definitions are satisfactory, and, in fact, both are misleading. Nations and their associated phenomena (i.e., nationalism) are in Hobsbawm's view:

> [...] dual phenomena, constructed essentially from above, but which cannot be understood unless also analysed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist.[263]

Although Hobsbawm defines the term nationalism in accordance with Gellner, he finds himself critical of what he calls Gellner's preferred perspective on modernization *from above*', which he finds makes it difficult to pay adequate attention to the view *from below*'.[264]

The distinction between nationalist projects on the one hand and the perception of nation and nationality *from below* on the other is one that is of great importance to this dissertation as well. While there are few disagreements when it comes to the rise of nationalism, its dependence on modernity and modern phenomena like printed press, primary mass education and an industrial-capitalist economy and its specific historical context, it is the dynamics between the ongoing development and expansion of nationalist projects on the one hand, and the reception, interpretation and internalisation by its subjects on the other, that makes the study of nations and nationalism interesting not merely from a historical, but also (and perhaps especially) from a sociological point of view.

Although nationalism in its many forms has played and will continue to play a significant role in the shaping of Thai society, it is its interplay with the nationalism from below (be it Thai Buddhist or Malay Muslim, in the case of the deep south) that fuels its continuation as a dominating political force. Just as there have been many shifting nationalist narratives throughout the course of modern Thai history, there have been many local and regional variations as well as diverse ways of interpreting and internalising them, some of which may even contrast with or challenge the

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263 Hobsbawm 1992: 10.
264 Hobsbawm 1992: 10 f.

ideology of the nation-state. In other words, there is nation-state nationalism and there are sub-nationalisms, which I have defined as local or regional nationalisms either within or on the frontiers of nation-states that confront or challenge their sovereignty or nationalist narratives. And it is at the point of intersection between these two types of nationalism that national identity evolves locally. The Malay Muslim separatist movement in the Patani region represents one obvious example of sub-nationalism in Thailand. However, we can also find other sub-nationalist tendencies (i.e., local or regional imagined communities) at different times in modern history and in different parts of the country, including the south, which, if not always directly opposed to Thai nationalism, has at least challenged some of its basic fundaments. And it is precisely different opinions on such sub-nationalisms as well as local interpretations of Thai nationalism among different groups in the Patani region that are of concern in the following discussions of Part II of the dissertation.

Following this argument, there is a fourth and final point that also should be clarified. It is related to the different scales of nationalism. This dissertation will not only deal with classic nation-state nationalism, but also acknowledge that national sentiments are frequently used to reflect a sense of belonging within a group, without necessarily implying any aspirations of achieving an independent state. These are sentiments based on factors like common customs, religion, language, territory and, perhaps most importantly, assumed blood-ties or quasi kinship, to use Geertz's terminology[265]—in short, sentiments fundamental to form a people and a mutual recognition of loyalty by its members.

What I imply here is that although most definitions of nations and nationalism relate to nation-states, in this dissertation it is not only the macro-political dimension of an imagined community that is of interest, but also how nationalism affects local notions of a nation. The idea of belonging to a nation different from that of the nation-state does not necessarily create a clash of interests. In diverse communities like the ones we find in the Patani region, we can possibly even speak of multiple nationalities, the feeling of belonging to more than one 'nation'. Through interviews and my involvement in the community's daily life it became clear that many people experienced competing loyalties, also when it comes to national identity. Even though discussions about the southern unrest frequently revolve around a divergence of ideas regarding the potential of a Patani state and Thai nationalism, for people living in the area, the political dimensions of this divergence do not necessarily concern them in their

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265 Geertz 1963: 111.

everyday life. For many Malay Muslims, both Thai and Patani Malay identities seem to be fairly compatible, and both the Thai nation and their Patani identity are part of their national consciousness. In other words, what is referred to here is the relation between nationalism and ethnicity.

Ethnicity

While state-oriented nationalism is a modern phenomenon,[266] ethnicity, which refers to a sense of kinship, group solidarity and common culture, is as old as history itself.[267] Ethnicity concerns the classification of people and the relations between groups that consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive.[268] As such, it is an analytical concept that is of significant value to further discussions about religious and national identity.

As Enloe, among others, has noted, however, ethnicity is a concept that is difficult to define because it is comprised of an intertwining cluster of attributes rather than a singular cultural characteristic:

> Language, religion, territory and custom – by themselves – are insufficient to identify, or sustain, an ethnic group. Moreover, the cluster of attributes assigned a collective value by a group will vary. A common language is a typical component of the ethnic cluster, but it is neither necessary nor sufficient to distinguish ethnicity.269

In other words, the term ethnicity tends to be both ambiguous and vague, and thus a myriad of definitions exist in the academic literature. For purposes of this study, however, I will confine myself to leaning on Hutchinson and Smith, and define ethnicity or an *ethnie* as:

> A named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland, and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members.[270]

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266 Eriksen 2002: 7.
267 Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 3.
268 Eriksen 2002: 4.
269 Enloe 1980: 350.
270 Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 6.

Which 'elements of common culture' must be in place in order to qualify as an ethnic group will vary greatly from case to case, and it is the members of each group that determine which ones are of relevance. In the end, ethnicity remains an emic category of ascription.[271] In other words, belonging to an ethnic group and how that group is defined is a matter of subjective perception.

In Thai, there is a distinction between ethnicity (*chuea chat*) and nationality or citizenship (*san chat*), concepts that will be further discussed in Chapter 8. Malay Muslims in the Patani region may use this distinction and identify themselves as *san chat* Thai, but *chuea chat* Malay or *nayu*. While Thai Buddhists also have a *chuea chat*, this is rarely accentuated since both their *chua chat* and *san chat* are the same, namely Thai. It is also the existence of a Malay Muslim ethnic group within a Thai Buddhist nation-state that constitutes the core challenge of the Patani conflict, and ethnicity is therefore a tag that first and foremost is put on the Malay Muslim minority rather than the Thai Buddhist majority. In the following discussions, however, Thai Buddhists will be treated as an ethnic group on par with Malay Muslims.

In the case of Malay Muslims, their ethnic group is partly coinciding or overlapping with Anderson's idea of a sub-nation,[272] and now that at least parts of this sub-nation, through the separatist movement, strive to discard their sub-ness, it also correlates with Eriksen's definition of a proto-nation, groups with advocates who claim entitlement to their own nation-state and freedom from being ruled by others.[273] The line between an *ethnie* and a nation is thus in many cases not easily determined and may appear as indistinct.

The same can perhaps be said about ethnic ideologies and nationalisms that both stress the cultural similarity of their adherents and draw boundaries vis-à-vis others, who thereby becomes outsiders. According to Eriksen, the distinction is to be found in the relationship to the state. An ethnic group does not necessarily claim command over a state, but if it does, if an ethnic movement demands a state, this ethnic movement by definition has become a nationalist movement.[274] The Malay Muslims in the Patani region are an ethnic group, but this ethnic group also has a nationalist movement, and thus in the case of the Patani conflict both these concepts are relevant. In the discussions of this dissertation, however, it is primarily the ethnic group rather than the nationalist

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271 Eriksen 2002: 12.
272 Anderson 2006/1983: 3.
273 Eriksen 2002: 14.
274 Eriksen 2002: 7.

movement that is placed at the forefront. Nonetheless, a question of relevance concerns why the ethnic struggle in the Patani region has led to violence. Eriksen notes in this regard that the ethnic struggle for recognition, power and autonomy need not necessarily lead to violence or conflict, further noting that nation-building in many parts of the world has actually been used as a tool to *curbed* ethnic conflict.[275] It may thus be appropriate to question whether ethnic conflict in general is a symptom of failed nation-building, and whether the Patani conflict in particular can be profitably viewed in this light—i.e., as a symptom of failed Thai nation-building or failed Thainess.

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275 Eriksen 2002: 2.

7 Methodological Reflections

With the ongoing violent conflict as a backdrop, this dissertation seeks to examine how local people experience the communities in which they live and how religion and nation define and shape multiple identities in the Patani region. It asks what the main contributors to this development of multiple identities are, how locals negotiate them in a context of violence and conflict, and what impact these identities have on interethnic relations and interpretations of the conflict.

In order to approach these research questions I have carried out concentrated fieldwork in the region on three occasions over a period of two and a half years. While based in Pattani city, I interviewed and interacted with both Malay Muslim and Thai Buddhist people of different social statuses in the Pattani province, predominantly in Mueang and Yaring districts, and to some degree the provinces of Yala and Narathiwat as well. Altogether the total time spent in the field just exceeded three months. The perception the local people's everyday life experiences have all along been my main interest. However, the opinions and insights of religious leaders, monks and imams, as well as school teachers, both from state schools and the rapidly growing number of private Islamic schools, were also sought out. Discussions with researchers and lecturers at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus, as well as with foreign researchers based in Pattani or doing extensive fieldwork in the region, were also highly valuable in order to test my observations, hypotheses, and the analyses of my material. These have supplemented the theories and studies published on Thailand's southern problems and related topics, which I have made use of in my work. Also helpful in the research process, as it provided an outlook for comparative but also contrasting approaches to the field of study, was the time I spent in other areas of Thailand and in the Kelantan province of Malaysia. These travels gave me a chance to view the Patani region and its challenging situation from the outside, but still within a Thai or Malay context.

Qualitative Research Methods

To obtain culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours and social contexts of a particular population, and provide complex descriptions of people's experiences, this kind of applied research requires use of qualitative research methods. Through its dependence on fieldwork and its bottom-up perspective on social life, anthropology and qualitative research methods have the advantage of generating first-hand knowledge of social life at the level of everyday interaction. And as Eriksen has noted: "To a great extent, this is the locus where ethnicity is created and re-created.[276]

In 2008, during the time spent in the field, I carried out more than 30 semistructured in-depth interviews that were recorded and transcribed. I also carried out a large number of informal interviews that were documented in field notes every evening. Informal interviews are useful tools to build greater rapport and uncover new topics of interest,[277] and during participant observation, they proved to be an efficient means of obtaining nuanced and detailed information. Sometimes these informal interviews took a form that resembles focus groups. However, they were not organized as focus groups and overall had fewer participants than the average focus group.[278] Such informal interviews with a group of people during dinner or at a teashop provided an interesting dynamic from which a different kind of information emerged. Observations and reflections about interviews, conversations and interactions during the day were also recorded in field notes.

Formal Interviews and Participant Observation

Semistructured in-depth interviews are open-ended formal interviews that follow a general script and cover a list of topics,[279] and are particularly useful in order to obtain profound knowledge on specific topics and compare the perspectives of people from different local communities with different ethno-religious background and social statuses. These interviews were invaluable in the initial stages of the research. The validity of my

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276 Eriksen 2002: 1.
277 Bernard 2011: 156.
278 Bernard 2011: 175 f.
279 Bernard 2011: 156.

research questions and preliminary hypotheses were also put to the test in these interviews. In conflict zones like the Patani region, however, formal interviews also have their disadvantages and drawbacks. Trust is a major issue in an interview situation, and in a conflict area, this trust can prove difficult to obtain. A precondition for building trust is to be properly introduced to interviewees, preferably by someone they know and have confidence in. Good field assistants are therefore a must. However, even with well-established relations with contacts I soon experienced the challenges of formal interviews. Even before the interview had started, informants usually had clear preconceptions of what they thought were my interests and objectives for the interview and often answered according to these biases. There was also a clear tendency to provide somewhat politically correct answers and present the situation in the deep south according to how they thought it should be, rather than how they actually experienced it. Such prescriptive answers were particularly revealing as interviewees frequently expressed diametrically opposing opinions to various topics in the informal conversations that often took place immediately after the interview. I also understood that these seemingly conflicting opinions did not appear conflicting to the interviewees. In conflict zones like the one in the Patani region, issues concerning religion, ethnicity and national identity are highly sensitive, and people often weigh their words carefully before they express themselves in formal settings. In more informal conversations, on the other hand, they might speak more freely and other perspectives are highlighted. It did not seem, however, that the interviewees experienced themselves as contradictory. On the contrary, to them it was just different ways of expressing their opinion and during formal interviews only parts of their full opinion would come through.

While this observation in itself was of great interest, I also felt that the focus on semistructured and formalized interviews limited my outlook. As such, during my last fieldtrip in 2010, rather than conducting further formal interviews, I decided to fully concentrate on participant observations and the informal interviewing of key informants with whom I had spent longer and more frequent periods of time—an approach that turned out to be a valuable supplement to previous interviews and fieldworks. My material thus primarily relies upon these, and only secondarily on formal interviews. Formal interviews and participant observations are research methods that provide different objectives and perspectives, and together they reinforce and support each other. What people say and what they actually do (or mean) do not always correlate, and an approach that attempts to account for both has added to the hermeneutic interpretations and processes of which this dissertation is

comprised. The following section provides a further explanation of these two methods.

Sampling

Informant accuracy, data validity and ethical questions are measurement problems in qualitative research. The other major class of problems involves sampling and the reliability of data. Given that measurements are credible, how much of the field of research do they represent? How far can the results of your research be generalised?[280] These concerns, and especially sampling, are of particular relevance in the selection of interviewees or informants when carrying out formal interviews. According to Bernard, a population of 10-20 knowledgeable people are enough to uncover and understand the core categories in any well-defined cultural domain or study of lived experience,[281] and he highlights the same three methods of selecting a population sample in a nonprobability study that I go into here: purposive sampling; quota sampling; and, snowball sampling.[282]

While purposive sampling and quota sampling are stratified means of finding people that fit specific criteria relevant to the purpose of the research—and, in the case of quota sampling, until a prescribed quota of each criteria is reached—snowball sampling is a network sampling method by which people are selected as they come up, with one informant leading to an acquaintance with a number of other potential informants and so forth, an approach that is particularly useful in hard-to-study populations such as those found in conflict areas like the Patani region.[283]

In the selection of interviewees for this dissertation, all three sampling methods were used to select a satisfactory population. Between my first visit to the region in October 2007 and the 2008 fieldwork, a number of criteria were sketched out. Although the proportion of the Malay Muslim and the Thai Buddhist population is skewed, with an 80 per cent Malay Muslim and a 20 per cent Thai Buddhist population (which includes Sino-Thais), I decided to interview approximately ten Malay Muslims and ten Thai Buddhist. The aim here was to gain a proper impression of the local

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280 Bernard 2011:113.
281 Bernard 2011: 154.
282 Bernard 2011:147 also mentions a fourth main sampling method, convenience sampling, which I will not consider here.
283 Bernard 2011: 144 ff.

Thai Buddhist population (a group rarely visible in studies on the Patani region) as well as the ability to make effective comparisons between the two groups. I also wanted to obtain a sample with a balance of genders as well as a diversity of age groups and social backgrounds.

Three age groupings were developed: younger (20-40), middle-aged (40-60), and older (60+). Most interviewees, however, were spread out between the ages of 20 and 50, something that I considered satisfactory for purposes of the study. As for social background, I operated on both a class and an urban-rural level. I loosely divided social class into upper class, upper-middle class, lower-middle class and working class, while at the same time weighting for urban or rural background. Overall I was content with the variation of social class or socioeconomic background, but less content with the number of interviewees from rural areas, and an improved foundation in rural communities would have undoubtedly strengthened the sample. I did, however, make an effort to compensate for this shortcoming in the sampling of informal interviews and during participant observations.

Additionally, I decided to interview Muslim and Buddhist religious leaders as well as schoolteachers from both public schools and private Islamic schools. The aim here was to interview people with profound insight into the communities and the everyday lives of individuals and their families. Teachers were interviewed both as individuals and as teachers; many of these, however, were female Malay Muslims and thus this category of interviewees became overrepresented in the population as compared to the list of criteria and quotas mentioned above. Nonetheless, since the majority of research conducted in Patani region has been performed by men, and since male researchers tend to contact more male than female informants, I considered the overrepresentation of Malay Muslim women to be a strength rather than a weakness of the sample.

Ready to begin interviewing, I relied upon local field assistants to help me contact potential participants that fit these descriptions. A starting point was to meet with their friends, families, neighbours and acquaintances as well as with shopkeepers and different working people in their local communities. It was therefore essential to select field assistants whose backgrounds were as diverse as the criteria that had been established for the sample. I also made a consistent effort to use a Malay Muslim assistant when interviewing Malay Muslims and a Thai Buddhist assistant when interviewing Thai Buddhists. This, I believe, prevented my interviewees from feeling constrained by the presence of my assistant when discussing sensitive subjects like religion, nationality and interethnic

relations. The question of language was also involved in this decision. Even though most of the formal interviews were conducted in Thai,[284] the presence of a Malay Muslim assistant provided Malay Muslim interviewees with the opportunity to use the local Malay dialect during parts of or the entirety of the interview. Field assistants were mainly recruited among students at Prince of Songkla University in Pattani.

Data Collecting, Analysis, and the Reliability and Validity of Data

All formal interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcripts of the interviews were then coded into different categories of subjects discussed so as to structure the answers and ease the work with the analysis. Answers were coded into a total of fourteen nodes, which included such categories as national identity, religion, language, Thainess, interethnic relations, Patani conflict, economy and socioeconomic problems and so forth. For similar reasons, each interviewee was coded into categories of ethno-religious background, age group and gender.

The fact that the interviews were recorded created a dilemma since it was bound to add an element of insecurity among the interviewees concerning whether or not their anonymity would be firmly protected. All interviewees were thus assured that the recording was only to be used by me, and that its purpose was to ensure a correct understanding of what was said during the interview and to avoid lingual misinterpretations. The majority of the interviews were conducted with the field assistants as mediators and translators. My Thai at the time was not fully fluent,[285] and although I could understand much of the conversations, I had difficulty formulating the questions correctly. Similarly, only a small minority of the interviewees could understand or speak English. Even many of the field assistants had limited English skills, and thus the interviews were rather colloquial affairs in which questions as well as answers were discussed back

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284 A couple of them were also done in English.
285 After numerous visits to Thailand over the past fifteen years and independent language studies in oral and written Thai, my Thai is fairly good, although it lacks the fluency that many people who have lived in the country for longer periods of time have achieved. In 2010, however, I took Thai language classes every day for three weeks in northern Thailand before beginning my third period of fieldwork in the Patani region, something that enabled me to carry out better participant observations and informal interviews.

and forth as the interview went on. In this respect, going back and listening to the recordings after the interview was crucial in order to get a full picture of how questions were raised and how informants actually answered them. While none of the interviewees had any objections to being recorded, it is nonetheless likely that the recorder as well as the formal setting affected the answers and had an impact on what was said, what was not said, and how it was said.

To compensate for the methodological challenges of the semistructured in-depth interviews, as well as to complement the findings with data concerning the same subjects although collected differently, I concentrated more on participant observation and informal interviews during my fieldwork in February 2010. The sampling for informal interviews was made in a manner that was similar to the formal ones, with an increased focus on finding informants who, according to the abovementioned criteria, were underrepresented in the samples from previous fieldworks. However, the snowball effect also accelerated as my social and professional networks expanded—something that can be illustrated by a Malay Muslim family I stayed with in Pattani's Yaring district. One of the daughters in the family is a school teacher and she introduced me to a lot of her friends, many of whom also were female Malay Muslim school teachers, predominantly from Yaring and in Mueang Yala. In other words, the sample, which was already overpopulated with Malay Muslim female teachers, became even further skewed. The social backgrounds of most of these women, however, strengthened the sample, as many of them, despite their higher education, come from the rural working class and are married to men in the primary sector or low income vocations. Thus the overall result of the time spent with this Yaring family was positive for the sampling. Moreover, with respect to general data collection, it was invaluable since I acquired further direct and comprehensive knowledge of life in a Malay Muslim village, something that is normally difficult to obtain in the violence-ridden south. In sum, the combining of formal semistructured in-depth interviews with participant observations and informal interviews increased the reliability of the data.

Qualitative research methods produce information on particular cases and any further general conclusions are therefore mainly propositions or informed assertions. Case study research may, however, also be used to test hypotheses and generalize beyond the particular cases studied[286]—e.g., by seeking to increase data validity in the analyses. In the case of this dissertation, improved data validity, credibility and dependability were

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286 Flyvbjerg 2006.

sought in a number of ways. While analysing interviews, field notes and other data, my hypotheses and theories were consecutively tested against statistics obtained from local government offices, historical accounts and secondary sources (i.e., the accounts of other scholars on similar or related subjects). The primary means by which my hypotheses and theories were check and the validity of my data was tested, however, involved continuous peer debriefings by academics, researchers and journalists who were consulted in the field and at conferences throughout the course of the study and whose input was carefully documented in the daily production of field notes.

Research Ethics

Another main methodological concern has been the question of research ethics. Securing anonymity for interviewees and informants and protecting confidentiality is of particular importance in a conflict situation where the security of informants can be easily jeopardised. Consequently, while details about variables like ethno-religious and socioeconomic background, occupation and what kind of community people live in are of great interest in relation to the answers, opinions and perspectives informants provide, I have had to restrict the use of such details in the presentation and the analyses of this dissertation. According to the Provincial Operation Centre's 2007 statistics, the total population of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat is about 1,763,000 people, spread out over 33 districts and 261 sub-district; and on the basis of variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, occupation and sub-district or village of residence, individuals can be easily identified. Since the security threat in the Patani region is difficult to measure, it has therefore been a priority to take extra precautions in ensuring the full anonymity of informants. For similar reasons, the identities of public figures with official positions in the communities have also been anonymised.

Due to the sensitivity of this dissertation's subject matter as well as the prolonged violent conflict that contributes to an increased sensitivity, it has also been particularly important to obtain informed consent from informants, ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in the research study so that they can decide in a conscious and deliberate way whether or not they want to participate. Informed consent is a way to respect individuals and communities, and has been a continuous concern throughout the course of this study. Obtaining informed consent from informants prior to formal interviews was an easy task. Oral consent was obtained from all informants after a short introduction to what kind of

interview they were participating in, how the recording would be treated, and how anonymity and confidentiality would be secured. I also made an effort to inform informants about my main research questions in simple, straightforward language. Some details about the researcher were also given and participants were able to withdraw from the interview at any time—something, in fact, that one participant chose to do.

During participant observations and informal interviews, the securing of informed consent is by contrast more difficult. Repeated references to the researcher's motives and intentions in the course of informal conversations and interactions (in order to assure informed consent according to research ethical standards) can easily come across as being affected or put on, and may even disturb casually established relations between researcher and informants. However, the question of informed consent is particularly pressing in informal settings, as researcher and informants frequently establish close personal relations and sometimes even friendships. In such circumstances, the researcher, whose primary aim is the collection of data, may read a given situation quite differently from the informant, who, in a seemingly private moment, may forget the objectives of the researcher and perceive a given conversation as a confidential exchange between friends. To avoid such confusion, I made it a point to bring my notebook with me at all times, and made frequent use of it even during more private gatherings like dinners or teas. The aim, of course, was to remind those around me of the purpose of my presence. The extent to which this strategy was successful is difficult to gauge, although there were some occasions when it appeared to be quite effective. At one point, after many conversations over lunch with a Malay Muslim woman in Pattani, I was specifically asked not to quote her in my dissertation. This means that while her perspectives will be represented in the following analyses, her identity will, of course, be fully protected.

While formal interviews are listed in a chart in the back, where informants are presented according to variables such as gender, age, occupation and ethno-religious background, informants of informal interviews are further anonymised in the sense that references to their quotes will often be limited to a date in the field notes. References to formal interviews are documented in the footnotes as 'interview' and specified with the date and the letter a, b, or c, referring to the chart in the back. Informal interviews and observations are referred to in the footnotes as 'field notes' specified with the date.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Research

For any researcher using qualitative methods there will be a number of strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages, affecting the process of data collection, depending on the qualities and skills of the researcher, which may have a positive or negative impact on the results. It is the task of the researcher to make use of these qualities and skills in the most useful and appropriate manner. Moreover, any study based on fieldwork will be constrained by variables such as timeframe, budget, and the aim and purpose of the study, which call upon the researcher to make the proper assessments and define the scope and extent of the research. For this specific study it is the factors of language, choice of location, researcher skills, attributes and limitations, and the topic of sensitivity that represent the question of strengths and weaknesses of the research and the researcher.

Language, which is also one of the main investigative categories of this dissertation, is an essential tool for any anthropological fieldwork. Without knowledge of local languages it is impossible to ensure the reliability of your findings.[287] In the case of this study, the researcher has a relatively firm grasp of the Thai language. Being self-taught, my Thai is not fluent and the vocabulary is somewhat limited to everyday speech, special fields of interest and topics about which I have conducted previous research. At times I also have a bit of trouble following conversations involving more than two people. However, after regularly visiting Thailand for the past 15 years, the understanding of the Thai language, not to mention its many cultural codes, has substantially improved, and by the time of my final fieldtrip in 2010, the language skills required for conducting participant observations and informal interviews had definitely been enhanced. Language skills are certainly an invaluable instrument, but the silver lining in lacking some fluency is that the very act of asking for clarifications and explanations becomes a way of inducing people to elaborate further on specific topics. The use of interpreters and recordings are other ways of handling research situation in which the language becomes a delimiting factor. Since all the formal interviews I conducted were recorded, I could go back and listen to the answers to uncover details that may have easily gotten lost in the course of the interview.

To rely entirely on interpreters, however, is not recommendable unless they are professional interpreters, experienced at working with academic research. For me, the field assistants were first and foremost local people

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287 Bernard 2011: 270 f.

who could help to navigate in the field, provide interviewees and informants and steer away from potential pitfalls. Many of them were also highly useful interlocutors providing relevant information, and thus frequently serving in the role of informant themselves. During interviews, they also frequently served as translators and mediators, helping out with language difficulties. However, getting hold of local people who also speak fluent English can be a difficult task. Moreover, since the field assistants were predominantly young students and not professional interpreters, very few of them were equipped to accurately translate the specific terms and formulations used by the interviewees. For purposes of this study, the field assistants were ideal companions and helpers as well as valuable language aides. During interviews, however, it would have been inadequate to solely rely upon their interpretations.

When it comes to Malay language skills, the situation is fundamentally different, as my Malay is limited to only a handful of greetings and courtesy phrases in the local dialect. While these few language snippets are generally met by great enthusiasm by local Malay Muslims, and can also serve as icebreakers and openings for further conversation in Thai, the lack of Malay language skills is one of the major weaknesses of this study. Although, these days, Malay Muslims generally speak good Thai, the ability to speak in one's own language can lead to a more unrestrained and genuine elaboration of the issues discussed, at least for older people with rural or working-class background. One of the general challenges of the Patani region, however, has been that few researchers—be they Thais or outsiders—speak both Thai and Malay. Thus the perspectives as well as the findings of the research tend to somewhat differ depending on whether the researcher comes from a Thai-studies background (with expertise in the Thai language, culture and politics) or from a Malay-studies background (with the Malay language, the Malay world and Islam as a primary focus). An additional challenge is that the Patani Malay dialect differs significantly from standard Malay, which very few locals master. The few people who do have the bilingual skills required to navigate in all Patani communities therefore have great advantages in the field, and may be able to bridge the two approaches. Further challenges concerning the use of Thai and Malay languages in interview situations will be discussed in Part II of this dissertation.

One of the main obstacles of not speaking Malay is that the access to the inhabitants of rural Malay Muslim villages is limited. Even if people speak Thai, the operative language in the *kampong* is local Malay, and without this knowledge, following conversations and everyday life is a challenge. During my stay in Malay Muslim villages I was only able to follow the general topic of the conversations because Thai terms and phrases have gradually made their way into the vocabulary in places where

the local Malay dialect falls short. In such situations, it is often intriguing to observe the non-verbal forms of communication that occur during discussions on various topics. However, it is impossible to follow the actual conversations themselves.

For researchers with a Malay-studies background, access to village life is obviously significantly better. However, it seems that some of these researchers tend to ignore the fact that the Patani region also contains a substantial Thai Buddhists population whose interests and perspectives are rarely explored. One of the strengths of this dissertation is its attempt to take the concerns of this minority population into account—something that broadens the horizons of its analyses.

This dissertation is marked by its affiliation with the discipline of Thai studies, and involves all the strengths and weaknesses that may imply. Consequently, the focus of the research is limited to the study of the Patani region and its people within a Thai context, and other topics, such as relations with neighbouring Malaysia and Malay communities on the other side of the border, will be left for others to explore. And moreover, although Thainess is a central theme throughout this dissertation, a broader discussion about Malayness or a comparison between ideas of Thainess and Malayness will not take place.

The research for this dissertation was primarily conducted in Pattani province. Yala and Narathiwat were also visited, but mainly on daytrips. Indeed there were only a couple of occasions on which I spent the night outside Pattani. Conducting research in the Patani region is associated with a certain amount of risk, something that can limit travelling; but even without this risk, a choice must ultimately be made regarding the location of the research. There is, however, a tendency among researchers (including myself) to work out of Pattani town. Mueang Pattani is the main city in the region. It has its own university, and thus an existing academic environment, providing a collegium and certain facilities convenient for researchers, such as a library and access to computers or features as simple as an office desk.

A major methodological problem related to the excessively large amount of research that has been performed in and around Pattani town, is that whereas towns and villages in Pattani and Yala provide similar case studies, the situation in Narathiwat differs in many ways from the two other provinces. Narathiwat is to a much larger extent marked by being a borderland. Pattani does not border Malaysia, and although the crossing in Betong is as busy and well trafficked as the crossings in Sungai Kolok and Tak Bai, the border areas between Yala and Malaysia is more mountainous

and less populated. In this respect, Narathiwat has far more challenges with the disorderly border described in detail by Askew,[288] and people in Narathiwat also have a lot more interaction with their Malay neighbours in Kelantan, where cross-border marriages, migrant work, dual citizenships and trade are considerably more widespread than in Pattani and Yala. People in Narathiwat even speak a slightly different Malay dialect, resembling the Kelantan dialect, and are considerably more exposed to Malay TV, newspapers and other means of mass communication.

These differences, no doubt, have a substantial impact on issues relevant to this dissertation. It should thus be underlined that although I speak throughout about the Patani region as a whole, there are likely considerable differences between Narathiwat and the other two provinces in the region. As such, any attempt to make generalisations based on the findings of this study must take this delimiting factor into account.

For anthropological fieldwork involving formal interviews and participant observations, the role of the researcher becomes a methodological issue. Preconceptions and expectations about the researcher will affect the perception of interviewees and informants, and the innate properties and qualities of the researcher will also influence the nature of interactions and interplay between researcher and informant—something that will inevitably affect the answers and information given and, in the end, the research findings themselves. In the case of this study, it was being both a foreigner and a woman that most strongly affected the research and the process of data collection.

Being a relatively young Western woman has its limitations and its advantages. A limitation is that some men will want to keep a distance, particularly some of the more puritan Malay Muslim men who rarely interact with women they are not related to. On a couple of occasions I conducted interviews where the informant would neither look at nor talk directly to me, but exclusively related to the male field assistant. The results of these interviews were rather poor, although they did give a first-hand impression of local power structures in some communities. Most of the time, however, I managed to establish good relations with male informants, some of whom also became key informants. Another effect of being a woman, which sometimes is a disadvantage and at other times an advantage, is that some older men tend to take you less seriously. A young female researcher does not appear to be as important, but on a number of occasions I felt that my seemingly insignificant presence enabled people to let their guard down and relax more than they would have had they

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288 Askew 2007.

considered the interview to be more important. Thus, in this case, an apparent disadvantage might have turned into an advantage.

The major advantage about being a woman, however, particularly in predominantly Muslim communities, is that access to female informants is substantial. This dissertation is not aimed at having a specific focus on gender perspectives. However, since many of my close relationships in the region are with women and since many of my key female informants generated new female acquaintances, female perceptions and perspectives are strongly present in my material as well as in my analyses. And since the majority of researchers conducting fieldwork in the Patani region are men, and in all probability have a predominantly male network, the slightly high number of female informants first and foremost represents a strength of this dissertation and for research on the Patani region in general.

Being a foreigner is another attribute of methodological relevance. In the Patani region, where there are very few Westerners, a blond Norwegian woman is bound to be noticed. Most people in town will know about you, who your friends are, where you are from and what you are doing there. Thus, any attempt to create an anonymous and withdrawn researcher role is bound to fail, and your mere presence can easily generate a lot of disturbance in the course of data collection. In this respect, a Thai or a Malay researcher has more stable and predictable working conditions. On the other hand, due to the sensitivity of the research issues concerning the Patani conflict, foreign researchers as outsiders may at times stand a better chance of building trust with informants than local researchers. Thai researchers sometimes experience difficulties in establishing trust in Malay Muslim communities, as informants may be insecure about their standing in different sensitive issues, and view them as potential informers to the government or ISOC.[289] Others may doubt their ability as Thais to comprehend local grievances in the region. Foreigners, on the other hand, are less likely to be personally involved in the conflict and in sensitive issues like ethnicity and nationality, and may therefore be easier to open up to. Then again, most foreigners in the region, particularly those who are fluent in Thai, local Malay, or both, have at some point been accused of being a CIA-agent—a consequence of a conflict situation that any researcher must take into account and that obviously interferes with the information accumulated.

I like to believe that I sent out fewer "CIA-agent vibes" than others, but getting reliable and truthful information was a continuous concern during

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289 The Internal Security Operations Command is a unit of the Thai military that is devoted to national security issues.

my research. During a conversation about my research methods with a local Malay Muslim woman I explained how I found it surprising that none of the informants had had any problems or asked any questions concerning my recordings during interviews. The woman then laughed and said, "Well, they probably didn't plan to tell you the truth anyway." While the overall research situation is not as dark as this statement indicates, it does point to some methodological problems with formal interviews that must be considered, and also helps to explain why informal interviews and participant observations became increasingly more important during the course of the data collection.

Turning now to the analyses of the dissertation's empirical material, these methodological reflections may help highlight the manner in which the information accumulated during fieldwork has been collected, and will also hopefully clarify how the many and diverse findings have been handled and reflected upon in order to reach the results and conclusions of the coming chapters.

Part II
Religious and National Identity in the Patani Region

In Part I of this dissertation, emphasis has been placed on history and nation-building in Thailand and the Patani region in order to understand both the development of multiple identities in the region and its violence and political turmoil throughout the 20th and into the 21st century. I have argued that the development of a Thai nation and the ideology of Thainess, from which has followed repressive, discriminatory and alienating policies toward Malay Muslims, has led many in this community to resist both the Thai state and the Thai national ideology. I have also argued that the violent history of the Patani region must be interpreted within this context. However, this is not sufficient to explain the complexity of the Patani conflict and how local people experience the communities in which they live. As I have argued, Malay Muslims are also influenced by the Thai national identity, which dominates public schools, mass media and cultural institutions, and as a result, many Malay Muslims experience multiple identities wherein the Malay aspect and the Thai aspect are juggled depending on the context. Thai nation-building and Thainess—why and how they have developed—are therefore important backdrops to this dissertation and are seen as major contributors to the development of multiple identities.

Also contributing to these multiple identities is the modernist development of Islam (or the Muslim revival), which has opened up space for increased focus on religious identity. And since ethnic or national identities among Malay Muslims are hard to express because of the strong standing of the ideology of Thainess in Thailand, ethnic or national identity has developed as a part of religious identity, erasing the line between the two. The strategy of securing Buddhism in the south has similarly contributed to multiple identities among Thai Buddhists. Political strategies have added a nationalist dimension to local Buddhist temples and shrines, and consequently, for local Buddhists, religious practice has become part of national identity and multiple identities have developed with the overlapping of the boundaries between the two.

While Part I of this dissertation has primarily focused on contributors to the multiple identities in the region, Part II will concentrate on how local Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists negotiate these multiple identities in a daily life beset by violence and fear. I have argued that the Patani conflict is rooted in the majority population's ethno-religious otherness and a historical framework in which multiple identities have developed in response to an emerging Thai nation. In order to comprehend how local people experience the communities in which they live, it is therefore relevant to try and understand the local dynamics and developments of these multiple identities and how they are reflected in everyday life. In an effort to enhance our comprehension of these matters, the subsequent three chapters will explore the manner in which local Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists have attempted to negotiate the following: ethnicity and Thainess (Chapter 8); language and identity (Chapter 9); and, religion and identity (Chapter 10).

8 Ethnicity and Thainess

As discussed in Part I of this dissertation, ethnicity and the question of national identity have been a challenge in the Patani region. To be at once Malay and Thai is something of a contradiction, but for the Malay Muslim population, negotiating these multiple identities appears to be the only alternative to isolation from Thai society. One way that this is accomplished is by redefining Thainess so as to reflect the local realities of the Patani region. This, however, is no easy task. Despite the efforts of both Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists to negotiate Thainess in a way that makes it more inclusive, implicit aspects of the nation-religion-monarchy triad, as well as some currents of prejudice within Thai society, have hampered their attempts.

Malay Muslims in the Patani region are not a homogenous group and the degree to which they accept Thainess may vary significantly depending on variables like social background, age and gender. Some embrace large parts of the Thai national identity, while others reject it all together. Some exhibit Thainess in certain situations and settings, while at other times they express a clear Malay Muslim identity. Yet others manoeuvre within the ideology of Thainess for the more tactical reason of avoiding questions about loyalty and belonging.

To be Malay in Thailand

An important fact about the three southern border provinces of Thailand is that their Muslim populations are of Malay rather than Thai descent, with a religion and language that differs from the country's Thai majority—a fact that is also reflected in Part I of this dissertation. This important notion is central in terms of understanding the roots of the present conflict. To be Malay in Thailand is, however, a challenge. Throughout the school system and public sphere the expectation is that all Thai citizens should speak the Thai language and accept Thainess, meaning those values that are recognized by Thai society. Meeting these expectations, however, tends to compromise many aspects of Malay Muslim culture, such as their language and their religion. Moreover, even when Malay Muslims make an effort to

become part of Thai society, they are often not accepted by the majority as 'proper' Thais, and the assertion lives on that Malay Muslims in the south neither *feel* nor want to be Thai. They are also accused of not loving the nation and the king.[290] Despite their deep roots in the Patani region, many Thais nonetheless view Malay Muslims as newcomers or guests (*khaek*). The fact that Thailand annexed the Patani Kingdom is not widely known. A solution for Malay Muslims in the deep south is therefore to juggle ethnicity and national identity so as to accommodate different expectations and demands. For some people the Thai identity is more of a tactical manoeuvre, while for others Thainess and a Thai identity may be embraced as part of their multiple identities.

One of the most interesting and challenging questions raised in my interviews was that of national identity (*ekalak haeng chat*). Interviewees were asked how they would describe their national identity—i.e., whether they see themselves as being Thai, Thai Muslim, Malay Muslim, Thai Buddhist, just Buddhist, and so forth. The question is interesting because it reveals personal sentiments and gives people a chance to explain how they understand the concept of national identity. It is challenging, however, because it is also a question that is almost impossible to answer. How would *I* answer if, for instance, someone asked whether I considered myself to be a Norwegian or a Scandinavian, or whether I identified with people from the west of Norway (where I was born) or from the east of Norway (where I spent most of my life)—or perhaps more with a Christian or a European culture? And further, how would I answer if I were then asked what all these considerations meant to me and how they played out in my daily life? Obviously, providing answers to such subtle and nuanced questions would not be an easy task for anyone. And what is more, in the Patani region, in addition to being viewed as highly sensitive issues, such questions also raise a number of new questions relative to language and situational circumstances—and in relation to methodology as well. Nonetheless, those that I interviewed sincerely endeavoured to provide comprehensive answers to my questions, and the answers I received yielded some interesting findings.

The category Malay Muslim, which I use throughout this dissertation, is first and foremost an etic classification. It describes an ethnicity and a religion that is of importance to the researcher in order to distinguish it from other ethnic and religious groups in Thailand. It is also probably the most useful term by which to navigate within the conflict of the Patani region. However, it is not necessarily a term that is in common use among

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290 Horstmann 2002: 56 f.

the people of the region. In everyday affairs, the description of one's own identity differs according to the given situation. On any given day, a typical Malay Muslim may identity her/himself as Thai, Malay or Muslim, depending on the circumstances. Interestingly, when asked this question directly, eight out of a selection of thirteen Malay Muslims in Pattani province described themselves as Thai or Thai Muslim, while three insisted on a purely religious Muslim identity and only two described themselves as Malay or Malay Muslim.

What do these answers say about national identity among the people interviewed? The first observation to be made is that the answers were given in a formal interview situation. In contrast to the more informal conversations, answers provided in interviews frequently gave the impression of being intentionally 'politically correct'. To some degree they reflected anticipated or predictable attitudes and were prescriptive in the sense that they reproduced an idea of how people believe things should be, rather than how they actually are. This became apparent when it was seen that the answers given in formal interviews often differed significantly from the opinions expressed in the casual conversations that came after. It also became clear that this seeming contradiction was not perceived as a contradiction by the interviewees themselves. Moreover, after spending some time in the deep south I came to realise that this phenomenon quite typically manifests in many everyday situations. People provide only partial pictures and carefully consider which aspect of an opinion to select for expression in a given situation.

This does not mean, however, that expressing two seemingly opposing statements on two separate occasions is viewed as being dishonest. Rather, the one statement is seen as being suitable for one setting and the other is seen as being suitable for another setting. The fact that the majority of the thirteen respondents identified themselves as being Thai rather Malay does not necessarily mean that they *feel* Thai and not Malay. It is just as likely that this particular answer felt the most appropriate in the given situation. Here is one example: "I like Thai Muslim better than Malay Muslim, because I live in Thailand".[291] This answer, given in an interview by a middle-aged woman from Pattani town, emphasises citizenship: I am Thai, because I live in Thailand. It does not elaborate further on ethnic aspect of her cultural identity. In a more informal conversation, a young man from Khok Pho district does, explaining his view in this way:

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291 Interview, 19th March 2008 a.

> I am a Thai. I was born in Thailand, live in Thailand, use the Thai language and work for the Thai government. But I am also Malay, because Malay is my mother tongue, I am a Muslim, and have grown up with Malay culture and customs. Why can't they accept that I am both Thai and Malay?[292]

The frustration in the young man's explanation reflects a core problem in the deep south: the lack of opportunities to express Malay identity. This man is a good example of how multiple identities have developed. He has no problem being Thai, but clearly wishes to express his Malay identity as well, although he is hesitant to do so because it generates scepticism and suspicion from Thai society.[293] Being Malay is incompatible with being Thai and with Thainess, and thus is viewed as provocative in a Thai context. For Malay Muslims in the south, however, this creates a serious dilemma, and may lead to a feeling of being excluded from the Thai nation. This is one reason that many people in formal interviews are reluctant to elaborate too much on this sensitive subject, and rather find it convenient to provide limited answers that fit the expectations of Thai society.

A second observation to be made here is that the interviews were conducted in the Thai language. This is of relevance because the vocabulary used differs greatly depending on what language is spoken. Put bluntly and for reasons stated above, the term Malay Muslim does not exist in the Thai language as a category of people. Everybody is supposed to be Thai, and thus being Malay is not compatible with this image. The term Thai has two spellings, both of which are identically pronounced. 'Thai' (ไทย) refers to Thai (as in Thailand) and the people in (or the citizens of) Thailand and also bears the meaning of being free. This word, however, is derived from the term 'Tai' (ไท), which refers to the ethnic or lingual group of Tai speaking peoples in Southeast Asia.[294] When Siam was renamed Thailand in 1939, the inspiration for the name-change was for Thailand to become

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292 Field notes, 4th February 2010.

293 Dorarirajoo 2002: 370 f. describes similarly how Malay Muslim fishermen actively assert their Thai identity in confrontation with the government, and how they at the same time insist on holding on to their Malayness.

294 The Tais are the main ethnic group in Thailand, but are also significant in Laos and in some areas of Southwest China, Northern Vietnam, the Shan state of Myanmar and the Assam state of India. Common for the Tais, in addition to some shared cultural characteristics, is that they all belong to the Tai-Kadai lingual family. Not all Tais, however, have managed to preserve their language. The Tais of Assam, for example, no longer speak their Tai dialect, although some effort to teach Thai in Assam has been made from enthusiasts in Thailand and local Tais. In these cases however, it is standard Thai and not the original local dialect which is taught.

the country of all Thai or Tai people, including those Tai people living outside the country's borders. The idea behind the change was that of a great Thai kingdom *(maha anajak thai)*, which, it has been pointed out, was inspired by political currents in Germany at that time. Indeed, the very name 'Thailand', or 'the land of the Thais', is said to have been conceptually linked to and derived from 'Deutschland'.[295] The term Thai can thus be interpreted to imply the exclusion of other ethnic groups. However, with its specific spelling Thailand (ประเทศไทย) also holds the meaning of 'the land of the free', and it has been an important strategy in Thailand to promote the diversity within the kingdom. To achieve this, non-Thai peoples have been included into the Thai nation, not primarily as ethnic groups, but rather as minorities *(glum noy)*.

This is not to say that there is no concept of ethnicity in Thailand. There is a difference between ethnicity *(chuea chat)* and nationality or citizenship *(san chat)*, and many people I spoke to would refer to themselves as *san chat thai* and *chuea chat melayu/nayu* when asked specifically about this. Others again would be more insecure about the two terms, obviously unused to relating to them, and end up settling on just being Thai or Thai Muslim. Yet others would ask me about the difference between the two, thus giving the impression that *chuea chat* and *san chat* may be more academic terms than terms of everyday speech.

The formula that everybody in Thailand is supposed to be Thai, however, seems to have had an effect on the people I interviewed, of which the majority appeared to accept the term Thai Muslim as suitable for them. Thai Muslim is one of the official minorities *(glum noy)* of Thailand and includes all Muslims regardless of ethnic background. The *glum noy* Thai Muslim includes groups of Indian, Chinese, Persian and Arab Muslims that at some point migrated to Thailand, as well as Malay Muslims that have lived in the southern portion of what is today Thailand for hundreds of years.[296] And although among most of the people I interviewed there is a clear understanding of the ethnic differences between Malay Muslims and other Muslims in Thailand, the term Thai Muslim, when stripped of political content and controversy, seems a suitable term for a formal interview situation like the one they engaged in with me.

Consequently, the term Thai Muslim has become the most natural one to use when speaking Thai. In colloquial Thai, the term *kheak* (which means guest and originally referred to Indian, Persian and Arab migrants)

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295 Baker and Pasuk 2005: 132; Terwiel 2005: 271.
296 Most of the Muslims in the south, however, are native, but no longer Malay speaking. Only people in the Patani region, including Satun and parts of Songkla, are today regarded as Malay.

has also become a common synonym for Thai Muslim. This word, however, is disliked by most Malay Muslims because they do not see themselves as guests, but rather as natives of their region. Thai Muslim, on the other hand, is a more neutral and harmless word for all segments of the population.

In the local Malay dialect, wherein Thai Muslim is not even a category, the situation is quite different. In the local Malay dialect, contrary to what the practice is in Thai, it is the ethnic categories that are in use, and people of the Patani region are divided into roughly two groups: Siamese people (*oghe siye*, or *orang siye* in standard Malay) and Malay people (*oghe nayu*, or *orang melayu* in standard Malay). Which of these categories people use to define themselves is thus also dependent on which language is spoken.[297]

Ethnicity and Religion

Regardless of which language is used, it appears that ethnicity and religion in the Patani region are intimately interlinked—something, I argue, is of great importance to how identity as a whole is perceived. An older Malay Muslim man living in Pattani's Yaring district explains:

> I feel like I am Thai, but raised Malay. And Muslim, the religion is Muslim. To be Thai in Pattani, means to be a Buddhist. Siam is a Buddhist, or oghe siye, orang siye. Orang siye is a Buddhist, oghe nayu, orang melayu is Muslim.[298]

The term Thai, although clearly acceptable to many Malay Muslims, is insufficient because it is so closely identified with being a Buddhist. Ethnicity is, in any case, strongly associated with religion, and most people see the need to point out that if they are Thai, they are also Muslim, like this young man from Pattani's Nong Chick district: "I am Thai, a Thai who respects the Muslim religion, but Thai."[299] The Thai Buddhists I interviewed, on the other hand, rarely felt the need to specify their religious identity, since Buddhism, through Thainess, is implied in the term Thai. Whereas today it is more common among Malay Muslims to identify themselves as Muslims rather than Malays, partly because of the clash that

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297 For more about these lingual differences refer to Joll 2012: 74.
298 Interview, 19th March 2008 b.
299 Interview 19th April 2008 a.

occurs between a different ethnic identity and the ideology of Thainess, the same cannot be said of Thai Buddhists. In their case, since ethnicity and religion has never really been distinguished, they are still first and foremost Thais.

As mentioned above, ethnicity has been a controversial subject in Thai political history and Thai nation-building, and the question of minorities and ethnic groups has been dealt with rather pragmatically, depending on which group has been under discussion and within what political circumstances. The ethnic group Tai, however, has always been taken for granted, as is often the case with majority groups, and although the idea that all people in Thailand belong to the Thai nation is found in the Patani region as well, there is still the rather confusing habit of labelling Buddhists only as Thais. And moreover, in the local Malay language, all Buddhists, regardless if they are Thai or not, may be referred to as *oghe siye* (Siamese). In everyday speech, Thai simply means Buddhist, commonly resulting in statements like: "in my village there are both Muslims and Thais" (a confounding of religion and ethnicity that takes place among most people, Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists alike).

In other words, when talking about different groups of peoples in the Patani region, a Thai is also a Buddhist. However, since the Malay Muslims are increasingly defining themselves as Muslims, a Muslim is also a Malay. Whereas a Thai is a Buddhist (thus linking religion with ethnicity), the Malay Muslims I interviewed in Pattani defined most aspects of their Malay culture and ethnicity within the framework of their Muslim identity, as I intend to show below. The local Malay dialect and the *jawi* script, for example, are closely associated with Islam. Referring to the local Malay dialect, I was thus often asked whether or not I could speak *phasa islam*, literally meaning 'Islam language', a question that would have sounded completely absurd just across the border in Malaysia, where the Malay language has nothing to do with Islam.[300] Similarly, restaurant signs in the deep south often read, 'Muslim food' (*ahan islam* or *ahan musalim*), indicating that *halal* food is being served. The dishes on the menu, however, are first and foremost unmistakably Malay. What we have in the Patani region is the peculiar, yet fascinating, situation where Thai has come to mean Buddhist, while Muslim has come to mean Malay.[301]

It can also be argued, however, that there has been a shift attitude towards Malay Muslim ethnicity in the years after the resurgence of

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300 It should be noted, however, that this is another example of an anomaly that only occurs when speaking in Thai. In local Malay, the language would never have been directly linked to Islam in this manner.

301 Muslims from other parts of Thailand, however, are regarded as Thai Muslims.

violence in 2004. Commentators have claimed that despite Thailand's long-running efforts to undermine and marginalise Malay identity while building the Thai nation-state, an increase in the recognition of Malay ethnicity and language can be observed. In contrast to the policies of 2004 and 2005, when references to Malay ethnicity were rarely, if ever, heard in the Thai discourse, there is now a slight tendency to more frequently acknowledge the existence of a Malay ethnicity, a change in rhetoric that has been driven by local Malay nationalist activists and local and national academics, researchers and journalists,[302] and which is being slowly picked up by politicians and national policy makers. In time this shift may have an important impact on how the Patani region is perceived in Thailand, and perhaps also on how Thainess is understood and defined; but for now, the impact remains limited, as it appears to be primarily a sporadic and inconsistent rhetorical shift.

Redefining Thainess

The question of being or not being Thai is complicated. In my interviews with Malay Muslims I found that a surprising number defined themselves as Thai. As mentioned, this can be partly explained in terms of the interview situation and the use of the Thai language during such formal encounters. However, in the more informal conversations and ordinary daily encounters with people, both Malay and Thai identities were expressed. This could indicate that people in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat relate to and thus appear to be influenced by the Thai environment in which they live. Although the majority are Muslims with Malay as their mother tongue, school, work, entertainment, TV and radio are all dominated by Thai language and culture, whereas Malay is the language and culture of the home and the village. My experience is that the Thai language and culture has become more acceptable—especially among the young and in urban areas—so long as it does not contradict or conflict with Islam. In fact, Joll argues that an increasing number of the younger inhabitants of the Malay Muslim neighbourhood Cabetigo in Pattani city have become functionally monolingual Thai-speakers.[303] The Thai reality dominates much of the public sphere, and increasingly influences more of the private sphere, something that has led to a development of multiple

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302 Asia Times Online, 23rd November 2010, Jason Johnson, "Faint Reform Glimmer in South Thailand".
303 Joll 2012: 75.

identities. People's frame of reference is shaped by the local context and their Malay Muslim environment, but within the framework of the Thai nation-state.

As a foreigner, for example, I encountered cultural references that were similar to those I had experienced elsewhere in Thailand, and was repeatedly asked for my opinions on Thai food, Thai people, Thai scenery and so forth. Another Westerner had similar experiences. During a bus ride he took from Narathiwat to Pattani, the bus was stopped at a military check point and one of the passengers, a young Malay Muslim man, was questioned and checked more thoroughly than the other passengers, and it was obvious that this was not the first time he had been subjected to such scrutiny. Young Muslim men are often under suspicion of being potential insurgents. However, instead of showing any resentment at having been treated in this way by the security forces, he returned to the bus and began amiably chatting with my acquaintance ('the Westerner'), rattling off a barrage of questions like "how do you like Thailand", "how do you like Thai food" and so on and so forth.[304] Despite the potentially stigmatising treatment of the security forces, which could have trigger his Malay rather than his Thai identity, leaving him with feelings of alienation, this young man continued to act out a type of Thainess in his interactions with the foreigner.

To obtain a balanced impression of the Patani region, the image of Malay Muslims as being estranged from Thai culture and society, which some Malay Muslim nationalist rhetoric may imply, needs to be more nuanced. While there are many characteristics of Malay Muslim culture that contrast Thai culture, and while there are many aspects of Thai society that alienate Malay Muslims, many people still live their lives somewhere in between the two cultures, and negotiate multiple identities without difficulties. Some examples from a small shop in a predominantly Malay Muslim village at the outskirts of Pattani town give a good picture of this balance. At night a handful of men usually gather in front of the shop to drink coffee, have a smoke, chitchat and watch TV. English football is their main TV interest. However, on a couple occasions while waiting for the game to start I observed them interestingly following the *lakhon thai* (Thai soap opera) on Channel 7. The local Malay dialect is the spoken language in this village, although they do not mind speaking Thai when I am around. Their level of education range from primary school (*phratom* 6) to the first half of secondary school (*mathayom* 3), and are observant Muslims, although not particularly pious or religiously interested. One evening while

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304 Field notes, 29th January 2010.

we were discussing Patani culture, one of the men explained some differences he found between northern Malaysia and the south of Thailand:

> People in Kelantan are Muslims like us, but they live differently. They don't live together in villages (*moo baan*) like us. They live on farms, grow fruit, and do not live like us. Thai people don't like that. We like to stay together and meet, like we do here at the shop.[305]

The differences between Kelantan and the Patani region portrayed here seem to be exaggerated. He also acknowledged that the similarities between Kelantan and Narathiwat, both linguistically and culturally are quite clear. What is interesting with this statement, however, is the way he talked about these things using terminology like Thai people (*khon thai*) and Thailand (*mueang thai*) instead of restrict it to the Patani region and its Malay Muslim population which after all were the subjects of comparison. His statements also revealed the interesting fact that the distinct Malay identity in the Patani region is not connected to a Malaysian identity as such. This is also why many local Muslims react against the label Malay as they mainly associate this with Malaysia, something that they distinguish from their own identity. While they may identify with a local Malayness, they differentiate this from a Malaysian identity. At major sports events, for example, local Malay Muslims tend to side with Thailand rather than with Malaysia. If Thailand and Malaysia meet in a football match or a boxing fight, local Malays will cheer the Thai athletes.[306]

Does this mean that Malay Muslims in the Patani region have become Thai? No. What these examples indicate is that Malay Muslims are increasingly managing multiple identities and manoeuvring different national identities (Malay and Thai); and in order to find this balance they have to redefine Thainess to suit the local context. As Joll has noted, many Malays view their Thai citizenship as complementing—rather than competing—with their sense of belonging to the Malay world.[307]

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305 Field notes, 10th February 2010.
306 Field notes, 21st March 2008, 9th February 2010.
307 Joll 2012: 78.

Loving the Nation the Muslim Way

Despite the fact that many Malay Muslims also feel Thai, the assertion persists in Thailand that they do not.[308] Particularly with reference to Thainess, it is common to hear people in Thailand state that in the deep south they do not love the nation and the king. The love for the nation and the king is repeatedly expressed through daily rituals in Thailand. Twice a day at 8 am and 6 pm the national anthem is played on radio and TV. The national anthem is also sung at all schools in the morning while the national flag is raised, and the king's anthem is played in cinemas before each movie is screened. National icons like the statues or images of former kings are respected and bowed down to, and pictures of the current king and the royal family decorate practically all Thai homes as well as public buildings. In Thailand, showing respect for national symbols like these are core elements of Thainess, and while Malay Muslims also undertake the same ritual respect for the nation, there are some practices that they do not follow, which appears strange to many Thais. Rarely will there be portraits of the king and the royal family in Malay Muslim homes, something that strikes many Thais as suspiciously un-Thai. While, in many cases, this is a sign that the king is not a recognised authority, this absence of royal portraits is not always tantamount to 'not loving the king'. In fact, a number of the Malay Muslims that I interviewed and spoke with specifically declared their devotion to the king. Most of these people were women. A young woman belonging to the higher strata of society in Pattani town put it this way:

> I am Thai, and I love my king [...] The king has set up schools in remote areas, his palace has all these projects, farms, everything. He has set them up and the prince and the princesses, everybody work hard for us. I don't know why those politicians don't get that. They don't work hard like them.[309]

Her enthusiastic remarks about the king and royal family first and foremost reflect a profound distrust of politicians, and what she sees as the diligence of the king represents a sharp contrast to the political sphere. However, they also mirror how, like most people living in Thailand, this woman has incorporated the national narrative about the king as a hardworking righteous servant of his people—the narrative of the

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308 Horstmann 2002: 56 f.
309 Interview, 17th March 2008 a.

dhammaraja. In other words, respect for the king can be found among Malay Muslims as well. A significant difference, however, is that for religious purposes Muslims are reluctant to involve themselves in revering or worshiping the king, something that is considered natural behaviour towards a respected personage from the Buddhist point of view. In Thereavāda Buddhism, respect is often shown in the form of reverence or worship of images, statues and pictures,[310] and the many pictures of the king decorating Thai homes, offices and public buildings must be viewed in this context. Idol worship is far more problematic for Muslims, and thus Muslim homes are decorated with Arabic calligraphy and pictures of the *ka'ba* in Mecca instead. Also, the poster calendars found all over Thailand picturing the king and royal family are Buddhist, and Muslims prefer to utilize their own, showing Muslim, rather than Buddhist holidays. These calendars are also decorated with pictures of the *ka'ba* or local mosques. One Malay Muslim woman, a primary school teacher from Yaring district in Pattani, did in fact use the prohibition against life-like imagery and the aniconism in Islam as an explanation for the lack of royal portraits in Muslim homes. Her explanation came after a conversation about the Patani region and Muslims in Thailand wherein she suddenly brought the king into the discussion, saying: "I love the king. I love him very much. Many people say that Muslims do not love the king, but we do. He works so hard for this country."[311]

Expressing love and devotion for the nation and the king are compulsory activities in Thailand and, in many cases, this is something that is routinely done, or done just as a tact to avoid questions about loyalty. This does not mean that people are all consumed with these issues. The fact that in the Patani region they seem to be kept at a minimum also indicates that expressing devotion to nation and king are not recognised as very important. The yellow wrist bands widely worn in 2006 in connection with the king's 60th anniversary on the throne and the fashion of wearing yellow and pink royal shirts, hugely popular in many parts of the country, were never big hits in the south—and royal collared shirts are mainly seen in government offices. Nonetheless, many people are affected by the strong nationalist influence that surrounds them and respond to the expectations by incorporating Thainess. As mentioned, I found this tendency to be particularly common among women. However, in order to act out Thainess, they must redefine it in local terms—e.g., by fitting it into a Muslim context.

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310 Nilsen 2011: 1603 ff.
311 Field notes, 29th January 2010.

In the interviews, the dynamic between ethnicity (*chuea chat*), nationality (*san chat*) and national identity (*ekalak haeng chat*) was further explored through more specific questions about Thainess (*khwam pen thai*). Although such questions are as difficult to answer as those about national identity, I wanted the interviewees to explain what Thainess meant to them. While not all my informants were specifically asked about Thainess, the answers I received from those that were highlight a number of interesting issues regarding the complexity of religious and national identity.

Negotiating Thainess

Despite the intricacy of the subject, talking about Thainess came quite easily to the Thai Buddhists I interviewed. If specifically asked about Thainess, a clear majority stressed its importance to them and only a couple had difficulties expressing their thoughts on this abstract topic. Loyalty to the nation and the king and the feeling of belonging to the Thai community or Thai nation were among the most explicit common denominators and were highlighted by many of the interviewees.[312] Within this loyalty was embedded certain values and ethics associated with Thai customs and culture, such as being polite, showing respect for others, greet people with a '*wai*', and, in general, doing good deeds.[313] A couple of informants additionally linked Thainess and national belongingness to Thai history and more specifically to the era of King Chulalongkorn, Rama V. The time of Rama V is almost mythological in the context of the Thai nation, and the merits of Rama V—his abolishing of slavery and his association with modernity, prosperity and independence from neighbouring states and colonial powers—have led these people to link Thainess with freedom, peace, liberty and prosperity.[314] This is interesting since, in the context of the Patani region and the Malay Muslim population, the reign of Rama V is associated with the fall of the Patani Kingdom to foreign supremacy.

When discussing religion as one of the three pillars of Thainess, however, a number of people stressed that although religion is a valued and important aspect of Thainess, it must be more broadly understood in the

312 Interview, 20th March 2008 a, 26th March 2008 a, 26th March 2008 b, 26th March 2008 c, 25th April 2008 a, 1st May 2008 b.
313 Interview, 25th April 2008 a, 26th March 2008 a.
314 Interview, 15th March 2008 a, 20th March 2008 a.

sense that all religions are appreciated within the Thai nation, with the king as the protector of them all.[315] Living in a Muslim dominated region, the Thai Buddhists I interviewed in the Patani region demonstrated a strong awareness of the sensitivity of religion.

For Malay Muslim informants, on the other hand, discussing Thainess came across as being far more difficult. Acknowledging the three pillars nation, religion, and king was one thing, but explaining their meaning seemed complicated. Among the people who were asked specifically about this, one young man from Nong Chik described the three pillars as something that gave him peace of mind (*jit jai*).[316] A young woman from Yaring who teaches at a religious school in Pattani gave the following explanation: "It [Thainess] is important. For us, God is the most important, but since I am Thai and live in Thailand, this is also important. People have different religions, but they are still Thai".[317] These answers appear vague and inarticulate, perhaps because Malay Muslims are not as accustomed to discussing these issues on a personal level or perhaps because they find them entirely irrelevant. Thainess, as taught in schools and transmitted through the media, seemed to be more easily compatible with the Thai Buddhist self-perception, while Malay Muslim informants struggled more to fit into the concept. An explanation might be found in the implicit meanings and connotations of both the 'religion' and the 'nation' pillar, namely their close association with Buddhism, Thai ethnicity and, particularly, the Thai language (as explained in Chapter 3 of this dissertation). Such an explanation is supported by the young teacher's need to specify that despite their adherence to different religions, people can still be Thai. Three of the interviewees, all young men from fishing communities in Pattani, even explicitly stated that the concept of Thainess and the three pillars are not relevant to them.[318] Interestingly, these were the same three men who in the previous chapter identified themselves as Malay Muslims rather than Thai or Thai Muslims.

Even from this slim selection of interviews it seems reasonable to argue that for Malay Muslims, religion and ethnicity conflict with the national ideology of Thainess and its three pillars. The national narrative is not easily adaptable to their reality. Despite efforts by both Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists to negotiate a space for Malay Muslims in the ideology of Thainess, these efforts seem rarely very successful, and most Malay

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315 Interview, 25th March 2008 a, 25th April 2008 a, 30th April 2008 b 1st May 2008 b.
316 Interview, 19th April 2008 a.
317 Interview, 2nd May 2008 a.
318 Interview, 19th April 2008 b, 19th April 2008 c, 19th April 2008 d.

Muslims seem to have trouble defining Thainess. In the effort to negotiate and create a common ground for a Thainess suitable to the Patani region it was religious diversity that was particularly emphasised, but even then the content of Thainess remained vague. One of the imams I interviewed serves as an example. When asked, in relation to the three pillars, whether he felt there was an open space for different religions and cultures in today's Thailand, he replied as follows: "I understand it like, in our nation, in Thailand, we are free to have any religion we like. And the king will support any religion, not only Buddhism."[319]

My impression of many Malay Muslim interviewees and informants is that they want to be accepted as equals to their Thai Buddhist neighbours, but that this is problematic because the strong emphasis on Buddhism, Thai language and Thai culture in the ideology of Thainess prevent integration. After all, Malay Muslims may accept multiple identities, but very few are ready to compromise their own culture. However, while many people in the deep south seek to negotiate a more inclusive approach to Thainess, others still cling to the more prejudiced aspects of this ideology, and as a result, many Malay Muslims, particularly men in rural areas, remain alienated and detached from Thai society.

Exclusionary Thainess

In the national discourse the more inclusive approach to Thainess must struggle against the dominating mainstream interpretations of Thainess, and we are thus left with a contradicting perception of its content. Moreover, even in the deep south these types of contradicting attitudes exist and thus contribute to the exclusion of Malay Muslims from this national ideology—even those that consider themselves to be Thais. In an interview with a high-ranking Pattani monk, Thainess or the Thai way (*withi thai*) and the Buddhist way (*withi phut*) were more or less seen as parallels. Here he describes Thainess as a set of values that he also sees as being typically Buddhist:

> Thai people are kind and merciful. They are giving [...] this is the Thai way (*withi thai*). When you visit Thai people they will offer you something to drink and take good care of you as a guest [...] Thai people are kind and they accept Buddhism very easily, because Buddhism is the same [...] Buddhism is a

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319 Interview, 18th March 2008 c.

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symbol of Thailand, the smile of Thailand [...] a symbol of
Thainess (*khwam pen thai*).[320]

One could certainly question how typically Thai the values listed by this
monk really are. One might argue that politeness and hospitality are
universal to most cultures. In the monk's argument, however, the link
between politeness, hospitality and Buddhism was a central point,
something that is not unusual in Thai Buddhism. In everyday life Thai
Buddhism is very much connected to a set of ethical values. When
describing the core of Buddhism, many Thais, including monks, will make
reference to the Thai saying, *tham dii dai dii tham chua dai chua* (do good
and good will come, do evil and evil come),[321] and in many respects this is
reflected in the answer given by this Pattani monk. At the same time,
however, he also pointed out how different other religions in the region are
to Buddhism:

> All the religions are different, completely different. The life is
> different. The Buddhists teach people to be diligent, to work
> hard, and to save money, and to follow the sufficiency
> economy".[322]

Here, the monk even links Buddhism to King Bhumibol's infamous and
prestigious sufficiency-economy project (*sethagit phor phiang*) and, in
doing so, links it even more closely to Thainess and the three pillars. Later
in the interview, he also claimed that Muslims do not live up to this
Thainess: "When it comes to *khaek*, to Muslims, the children use rude
words to their parents. They use words like *mueng* and *khuu*.[323] It is a lack
of respect."[324] He then used a surprising example by presenting the famous
Thai tennis player Paradorn Srichaphan as a typical example of good Thai
behaviour: "You know Paradorn, when he finishes a match, he always *wai*
the audience. He is a good example of the Thai way (*withi thai*)."[325] In the
Patani region, the Thai greeting, the *wai,* is intimately associated with
Buddhist worship and thus with Buddhist behaviour. It is not, however,
used by Muslims, who rather greet each other by shaking hands and then

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320 Interview, 24th March 2008.
321 Nilsen 2011: 1610.
322 Interview, 24th March 2008.
323 *Mueng* and *khuu* are informal forms of the second singular and first singular
   personal pronouns respectively.
324 Interview, 24th March 2008
325 Interview, 24th March 2008.

placing the palm over the heart (or, as is customary for women, by holding the palms towards the face).

This particular monk, although high-ranking and influential, cannot be said to be representative for the attitudes of Thai Buddhists or the *sangha* in the deep south, as his outlook on such matters as Islam is rather hostile. His interview statements, however, help to illuminate why Malay Muslims can find it hard to navigate between different ideals of Thainess and their own religious and ethnic identity.

Competing Nationalist Narratives and Reflections on Gender

I argue here that many Malay Muslims experience multiple identities wherein both Malay and Thai aspects manifest themselves. The Thai nationalist narrative has taken root in the deep south as well, and many Malay Muslims relate to this narrative even if it sometimes involves difficulties. Nonetheless, parallel to this narrative there is also a competing Malay Muslim nationalist narrative in the region, and, in sum, these two competing narratives create a far less hegemonic position for Thai nationalism or Thainess as compared to most other regions in Thailand. While Thainess and the Thai nationalist narrative are promoted in schools, through television and mass media and in the bureaucracy, anti-Thai rhetoric is widespread in mosques and Islamic schools and institutions, points of meeting that are exclusive to the Malay Muslim population. While not always directly referring to Thailand and Thai society, references during Friday prayers in mosques throughout the region about the *kufar* threatening the Muslim way of life, and the need to fight *kafir* elements in society, are commonly linked to drug trafficking, alcohol consumption, adultery, karaoke bars and massage parlours, all of which are associated with Thai society. In other contexts and situations the anti-Thai rhetoric more openly and explicitly refers to the Thai state and government as imperialistic (*penjajah*), or even swinish (*babi babi*).[326]

Malay Muslims in the Patani region are exposed to two competing nationalist narratives (one pro-Thai and one anti-Thai), both of which influence their self-perception and identity. While people are exposed to the two narratives at different arenas of their everyday lives, it is

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326 Field notes, 24th March 2008, 19th April 2008, 2nd February 2010, 9th February 2010.

interesting to note that women seem to be more exposed to the former narrative, while men are more exposed to the latter. Among the thirteen Malay Muslim interviewees mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, all three who claimed a Malay, rather than a Thai or Thai Muslim, identity were men.[327] The anti-Thai narrative is more explicitly found in settings often related to the public religious sphere, which is also a male-dominated sphere. The religious life of Malay Muslim women, on the other hand, is predominantly situated at home with other female family members, friends and neighbours—a sphere in which political matters are rarely discussed and television often plays a prominent role. The teashop, however, can also be considered another male-dominated Malay Muslim sphere, and one in which political matters are more frequently debated.

In other words, there appears to be a clear gender difference when it comes to which nationalist narrative people are more likely to be exposed to, and thus a degree of distinction between the way men and women generally comprehend their national and religious identity. Exposure to the nationalist Malay Muslim narrative seems to be more common among men, whereas women through mass media and the public school system are predominantly exposed to the Thai narrative. Furthermore, there is also another possible explanation as to why my material shows that Malay Muslim women, despite their Muslim religion, Malay language and Malay culture, seem to be more receptive to a Thai identity than men. I discussed this with Nik Abdul Rakib Bin Nik Hassan, a researcher at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, and head of the Malay Studies Section at the same faculty. He told me that he had also found indicators of this trend in other studies and we discussed the possibility that taking on a Thai identity enabled women to better climb the social ladder. Women tend to hold a lower social status than men in Malay Muslim society, and by adopting a Thai identity they are in some ways able to break free of this constraint and claim a higher social status.[328] The tendency of women to be more open to Thai identity and Thainess seems to be particularly evident when it comes to language. Indeed my material as well as the material collected by researchers at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Prince of Songkla University

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327 Note also that of these thirteen people, eight were women and five were men.
328 Although women in Thai society are also socially subordinate to men, by adopting the Thai language and a Thai identity, Malay Muslim women break with the Malay Muslim social hierarchy, and thus manage to achieve a relatively higher social status.

indicates that women have fewer objections than men when it comes to using the Thai language.[329]

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329 Field notes, 19th April 2008. Although Nik Abdul Rakib Bin Nik Hassan had not yet published his studies on this subject, he was nonetheless able to brief me on his own, and others', findings.

9 Language and Identity

Language differences are one of the greatest challenges in the Patani region, and no doubt also a source of conflict. While the vast majority of the population speaks a local dialect of Malay as their mother tongue, the use of the Thai language has been long promoted by Thai authorities, particularly in schools and in public life at large. The use of Malay, by contrast, has been discouraged, and at times even criminalised,[330] and in the past, language barriers has been a major source of conflict since local villagers and Thai officials were largely unable to understand each other. Today, however, more Malay Muslims speak and understand Thai and sheer misunderstandings are less common.

The local Malay dialect is one of the most important aspects of Malay Muslim identity, and its maintenance and the ability to use it in the public sphere is of high priority. At the same time, however, the Thai language is on the rise, and finding a balance between mastering Thai and upholding and preserving Malay is central to negotiating multiple identities. Language is also of importance to Thai Buddhists, who experience a regional unity and solidarity in their southern Thai dialect. And while the ideology of Thainess specifically promotes the central Thai dialect, Thai Buddhists in the Patani region have redefined their Thainess to include the southern Thai dialect as well.

Language Challenges

Most Malay Muslims of today speak Thai, but this should not be taken to imply that all problems concerning language have been overcome. Many Malay Muslims struggle with fluency in Thai, a barrier to full integration into Thai society. If Malay Muslims do not fully master the Thai language, they risk falling through the cracks of Thai society and missing out on job opportunities. A primary school teacher at a district school in Yaring,

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330 Surin 1985: 89.

Pattani province, informed me that very few of her pupils master the Thai language, and that their grammar and vocabulary is generally poor. Like herself, all pupils in her school are Malay Muslims, and each day a large amount of class time is spent on teaching the children proper Thai.

With the poor teaching resources in the region, this is a demanding task. Particularly since the upsurge of violence in the last years, many teachers in public schools have been shot,[331] while others have left the region, and it is hard to recruit new teachers.[332] Thus the problem remains, and even at the university level, Thai language skills among students are far from satisfactory. Almost all the lecturers I met at Prince of Songkla University (Pattani Campus) expressed concern about the poor academic standards among students, particularly regarding language.[333] The university once attracted students from all over the country and ranked relatively high among Thai universities. Since the resurgence of violence, however, students from outside the region no longer want to study in Pattani, entrance requirements are down, and the student population is now almost exclusively from the deep south of Thailand. As a consequence, Malay Muslim students now represent over 80 per cent, as opposed to a previous figure of 2 per cent, of the total student population.[334]

This change no doubt opens up great opportunities to many local Malay Muslims, since they now have better access to a university degree that they normally would not have qualified for—or, in the case of many young women, would not have been allowed to partake of by their families. Many Malay Muslim parents are reluctant to send their daughters to universities that are far from home, whether in Thailand or Malaysia. However, the university in Pattani is closer and thus more tolerable. The share of female students at Prince of Songkla University is also considerably higher than that of male students.[335] Lecturers at Prince of Songkla University, however, seem more concerned about the general academic level of the institution. Only one of the lecturers I spoke with, a

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331 From January 2004 to January 2010, 128 teachers were shot. While this only comprises 1 per cent of the totality of 10,609 casualties, according to Deep South Watch the mortality rate for the teachers that were attacked is as high as 59.3 per cent. (Deep South Watch, 10th March 2010, Srisompob Jitpiromsri, "Sixth Year of the Southern Fire: Dynamics of Insurgency and Formation of the New Imagined Violence").
332 Field notes, 1st February 2010.
333 Field notes, 16th April 2008, 18th April 2008, 25th April 2008, 28th April 2008, 13th February 2010
334 Field notes, 27th January 2010, 13th February 2010, 17th February 2010.
335 Field notes, 16th April 2008 15th February 2010.

local Malay Muslim teacher, considered this development to have had a positive impact on the local community.[336]

Thai on the Rise

Despite these grave problems, the fact remains that today most Malay Muslims both speak and understand Thai. Although Malay is the preferred language in everyday conversations among family and friends, Thai is the dominant language in the public sphere and also increasingly among young people. Some urban middle-class people informed me that they spoke in Thai with their children because they realized that without Thai their children would have fewer opportunities in Thai society. Joll refers to examples of this as well.[337] Others informed me that they made an effort to speak in local Malay with their children so they would not forget their mother tongue. However, their children would usually respond in Thai, indicating that Thai comes more naturally to them.[338]

One reason that young people tend to speak more in Thai than in local Malay concerns vocabulary. Since local Malay is largely a domestic language, it does not supply young people with the vocabulary required for discussions on topics outside of family and village life. Modern life, including such activities as flirting, romanticising and the like, require an extended vocabulary, and this vocabulary is provided in Thai through television, radio, magazines and other mass media.[339]

Here another matter concerning vocabulary can also be mentioned. A Malay Muslim from Pattani's Sai Buri district, and the first person in his village to obtain a Bachelor's degree, informed me that prior to a presentation at a conference in Malaysia he was asked if he would be giving the talk in Malay, where upon he realised his inability to do so. There was no other choice but to give the lecture in English, noting the awkwardness he felt about this situation:

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336 Field notes, 25th April 2008.
337 Joll 2012: 63.
338 Field notes, 25th April, 2008, 28th April 2008.
339 Field notes, 18th March 2008. The challenges with limitations of the vocabulary are also highlighted by Joll 2012:77.

> Malay is my mother tongue, I can speak Malay, even standard
> Malay; but I do not have the vocabulary to give an academic
> presentation in Malay. I can only do it in English or in Thai.[340]

This man, like many others, shifts between Malay and Thai depending on
the circumstances, who he is talking to, and the nature of the subject
matter, and quite frequently, either the Malay or the Thai language will
come to short. The two languages are therefore frequently mixed together.
Joll talks about a Thai-ised Malay, with a lack of clearly defined tones, a
specific pronunciation and Malay lexical borrowings, and a Malay-ised
Thai with some tonal elements and extensive lexical borrowings from
Thai.[341]

My material shows that Thai is progressing while Malay may be on the
retreat. It seems clear, however, that local Malay still holds a stronger
position in villages and rural areas than in the provincial cities, while
among younger people the use of Thai seems to be more common, even in
rural areas. Similarly, there is also a difference depending on what people
do for a living. Thai remains only moderately spoken by people in the
primary sector, among fishermen and farmers, while it is widespread
among the educated middle class.

The Lack of a Local Malay Script

Another reason that local Malay is declining concerns the fact that it is
primarily an oral language in the region. The *jawi* script (Malay based on
the Arabic alphabet) that has been in use for centuries has become less
common today, something that can be partially explained by the scepticism
of local Thai authorities towards this language form. The Thai language is
insistently the official language of Thailand, and thus the Malay language,
with its *jawi* script, is not accepted in this capacity at all. Yet another
explanation is found in the decline of the traditional *pondok* schools.

The *pondok* schools are the last strongholds for *jawi*. However, with
the private Islamic schools increasingly taking over Islamic education, *jawi*
is also weakened. While *jawi* is still taught in *tadika* schools and in some
classes in private Islamic schools, the extent of *jawi* in the religious
curriculum is marginal and most private Islamic schools concentrate on
rumi (Romanised Malay) and Arabic instead. *Jawi* is thus reduced to a

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340 Field notes, 28th April 2008.
341 Joll 2012: 76.

language that is mainly used for religious purposes, as part of the Malay Muslim cultural heritage, and cannot be relied upon as an actively used script. An *ustadha* from Pattani's Yaring district even mentioned that *jawi* is regarded as lower class (*lo so*), explaining that a main challenge for *jawi* today is that there are too few people taking the initiative to carry the tradition on. She also explained that globalisation and the modern information society have made *rumi* and Arabic more relevant. Today those books and newspapers that are written in *jawi* generally come from Kelantan or Kedah in Malaysia,[342] where interest in traditional *jawi* script remains strong among some dedicated groups.

For these reasons, the use of the *jawi* script in the Patani region is limited. Moreover, while being an important part of the deep south's Malay Muslim religious and cultural heritage, *jawi* is not sufficient to strengthen the local Malay dialect against Thai influence since it is incapable of covering or embracing the nuances of this dialect. Like *rumi*, *jawi* is a writing system for standard Malay, and since the local dialect contains a number of vowels and vowel clusters quite different from standard Malay, it cannot be symbolised by *jawi* letters. In fact, many local Malay Muslims even report having trouble understanding standard Malay and in the Patani region it is the local Malay dialect and not standard Malay that forms the local identity.[343] Thus, when the local Malay dialect in Thailand is referred to as *jawi*, this is inaccurate, firstly, because j*awi* is a script and not a spoken language, and secondly, because this script does not work very well as a script for the particular dialect in question. The local dialect does not really have its own writing system and it is therefore more accurate to refer to the local Malay as the *phasa tong tin* (dialect) of the region rather than just Malay. Malay Muslims may refer to it as *bahasa nayu* in local Malay and as *phasa tong tin* in Thai, or as I will show below, just as *phasa islam*.

With the emergence and increasing popularity of social media over the last couple of years, especially among the region's younger population, written language has come to be an important part of everyday interaction as well. And due to the lack of a satisfactory Malay alternative, this new social space is dominated by Thai,[344] something that represents another blow to a living and vibrant local Malay language.

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342 Field notes, 31st January 2010.
343 Field notes, 19th April 2008, 24th April 2008, 29th April 2008.
344 Some of those educated in standard Malay may also use rumi (Romanized Malay).

Uneven Levels of Language Skills

Malay Muslims in the Patani region speak both local Malay and Thai, but their mastery of these two languages differs considerably depending on variables like social background, age, schooling, and whether or not they grew up and/or live in a Malay Muslim-dominated environment. At government schools, for example, Thai is the only spoken language and English is the only foreign language taught. Private Islamic schools also operate with Thai as their language of instruction, but the focus on other languages is broader, often including classes in English, Arabic and standard Malay. Local Malay may also be used in the religious curriculum at the first part of the day.

The ethnic composition of pupils is also different, with government schools sometimes containing a mixed population of both Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists (something that improves Thai language skills) and private Islamic schools containing a population almost entirely comprised of Malay Muslims.[345] However, when it comes to language skills, we can observe just as much variety among different government schools. Thai language skills seem generally poorer in village and districts schools while the level is considerably higher at some of the prestigious schools in the provincial capitals, like the Prince of Songkla Demonstration School and Benjamarachuthit School in Pattani town. These schools are dominated by pupils from wealthy and influential families and are generally difficult for children from the average Pattani family to enter.

Concerns about Decline in Local Malay

The rise of the Thai language has led to the concern that the local Malay dialect is disappearing. While talking about the importance of the Malay language with local Muslims and how a decline in language skills may influence the local communities, a well-educated middle-aged Malay Muslim woman from Pattani town put it like this: "If we no longer have Malay, our language, then who are we? How can we exist as a people?"[346] For her, local Malay is what distinguishes the Muslims of the deep south

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345 Some of the pupils at private Islamic schools, particularly those that are more renowned (larger boarding schools like the Thamma Witthaya School in Yala), may also come from other non-Malay parts of Thailand.
346 Field notes, 25th April 2008.

from other Thai Muslims, and in this respect it is language more than anything else that represents their identity. Language gives them legitimacy as a people.

The local Malay language is also crucial to the Malay nationalist narrative and the reluctance of Malay Muslims to submit to Thai dominance. For people with a Malay nationalist agenda, whether they seek independence from Thailand or more political and/or religious autonomy from the Thai state, the fact that the local population speaks a language that differs from the Thai majority serves as a strong argument for their political cause, and one that I repeatedly heard from politicians, religious leaders and academics who are advocates of Malay Muslim communities.

Thai Prejudice

Language is an important part of Malay Muslim national identity and the maintenance of local Malay is an essential task. However, as part of their multiple identities, the Thai language is on the rise. Fluency in Thai is still a challenge, but many Malay Muslims also meet judgmental preconceptions from the non-Malay population, particularly those living outside the region, where it is quite common to hear complaints about the inability of Malay Muslims to clearly speak the Thai language (*phuut thai mai chat*).

Such comments are indicative of a certain amount of prejudice against Malay Muslims, implying that they to some degree are un-Thai. This prejudice may be rooted in a Thai chauvinism that is especially manifest in relation to people from Thailand's neighbouring countries An interview I did with a couple of young Malay Muslim men in the fishing community of Paak Nam in Mueang Pattani illustrates well. The field assistant I worked with that day, a young non-Malay Muslim student from Songkla province was clearly anxious about the situation and worried that she had not succeeded in finding suitable subjects of interview. As one of the young men suggested I should interview his friend, she revealed her bias when I overheard her doubtfully asking him: "I don't know, does he speak Thai clearly (*chat*)?"[347] The man in question jokingly dismissed the comment, smiled and said he would try his very best. This awkward situation, however, is not unique in the sense that Malay Muslims from fishing communities are not necessarily expected to be fluent in Thai. At the same

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[347] Field notes, 19th April 2008.

time, the Thai language is in many respects regarded as an indicator of Thainess, and this bias towards Malay Muslims in the villages contributes to a stigmatisation of these people as being somewhat outside the Thai nation.

This is illustrated by an incident at Prince of Songkla University in which one of the department directors introduced a new colleague to the rest of the staff by saying: "He is a Muslim, but he speaks Thai clearly (*chat*)."[348] Again, the director, who comes from central Thailand, probably meant to compliment the new employee. Nevertheless, such comments can be easily taken to be demeaning and humiliating, and may even be experienced as provocative, or worse, hurtful. Indeed, quite often such comments are consciously intended to be critical, and as the use of local Malay is generally looked down upon, at the same time as Malay Muslims are constantly reminded of their inadequate Thai skills, it is challanging to meet the standards of Thai society.

Language as Marker of Identity

The level of language skills in both local Malay and Thai is irregular, with the unfortunate result that many Malay Muslims have problems with both languages.[349] The practice of local Malay is limited to everyday speech and domestic conversations, while Thai language skills are coloured by the simplified language of television and mass media. Nonetheless, language is one of the most important identity factors to people in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, to Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists alike, and thus needs closer examination.

Malay Muslims in the Patani region increasingly speak more and better Thai.[350] However, the local Malay dialect continues to be a major identity factor and a proud component of the Malay Muslim community. Of the same thirteen Malay Muslim interviewees mentioned in the previous chapter, six emphasised that the Malay language is particularly important to their sense of identity and cultural heritage. The remaining seven

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348 Field notes, 14th February 2010.
349 Field notes, 2nd February 2010.
350 It is here important to note, however, that people in Narathiwat who are more closely connected to the their Malay neighbours in Kelantan (by kin, migration, dual citizenship and media consumption) are generally less exposed to the Thai language and hold a somewhat stronger Malay Muslim identity than people in Pattani and Yala, particularly when it comes to language (field notes, 19th April 2008, 2nd February 2010).

underlined that although Malay was their mother tongue, Malay and Thai were used more or less interchangeably depending on the given situation. The stress on the Malay language in the answers of the above six informants, however, raises some interesting points. A middle-aged woman from a relatively wealthy Pattani family closely associated the local Malay dialect with Islam and the Islamic heritage:

> It [Malay] is important because in religious studies, also in former times, we use the Malay language to study Islam [...] These days in the villages there are campaigns to get people to speak more Malay, like for example in *tadika* schools [...] The parents want to speak more Malay with their children[351]

This woman also frequently referred to the local Malay dialect as *phasa islam* or Islam language, a reference I heard many people make in interviews and conversations in the Patani region. Similarly, while traveling with a non-local Muslim through one of the Malay-speaking districts of Songkla, we stopped along the road to ask a couple of men for directions. I asked in Thai, but when they saw that the car had Muslim ornaments hanging from the rear-view mirror (including a black amulet with the name of God and the Prophet written in golden Arabic calligraphy), they enthusiastically asked if I could speak *phasa islam*.[352] This example illuminates how closely religion, language and ethnicity are interlinked in the deep south, something that will be further discussed in Chapter 10. People are well aware that Arabic and not Malay is the language of Islam. Nonetheless, in local everyday speech the use of Malay is exclusively associated with Muslim people, and thus the term *phasa islam* makes sense. It only makes sense, however, in the Thai language. You will never hear people refer to Malay as *bahasa islam* while speaking the local Malay dialect.

In the Patani region, the local Malay dialect indicates a Muslim identity. One of the abovementioned young men I interviewed in the fishing community of Paak Nam in Pattani answered this way when I asked him the difficult question of identity: "I am a Muslim. I shift between being Thai and Malay. But Malay or the Malay language is our identity (*ekalak khong rao*)." He wanted to explain further, but struggled to find the right words; I then asked him if it was true that the Malay language was an indicator of being a Muslim. "Yes, yes! Good! That's it [laughter]," he replied enthusiastically. The non-Malay field assistant, also a Muslim, was

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351 Interview, 19th March 2008 a.
352 Field notes, 21st April 2008.

notably troubled by this statement and asked him whether not speaking the language disqualified one from being a Muslim, upon which he quickly reassured her that this was not the case.[353] Nonetheless, even though the words that he answered to were mine and not his, the look on his face and the enthusiasm of his response indicated that I had provided a key that helped him to articulate the complex linkage between religion, language and ethnicity.[354] A young teacher at a private Islamic school, originally from Yaring district, also emphasised this link between the Malay language and Islam:

> Language and culture is really connected. We respect (*napteu*) Islam and it is very much connected to our language here in this area. I think language and culture is very important. [...]In my family it [Malay language] is part of being Muslim, but in other families it is different. [...]In my family we speak Malay. [...] With my husband and daughter I also mainly speak Malay.[355]

The Controversy of Malay

Due to its firm standing, the acknowledgement of Malay as a language on an equal footing with Thai has, since Haji Sulong, been a strong claim of Malay Muslims in the region and something that Thai authorities have been reluctant to accommodate. Some initiatives, however, have been allowed, such as a fairly successful pilot project at some rural, exclusively Malay Muslim primary schools in which local Malay is used as a bridge to learn Thai in order to improve the pupils' general understanding.[356] Nonetheless, even this project has been met with harsh criticism within the Thai political debate and the sceptical view that Malay is a language of rebellion prevails. Even locally, people experience this scepticism among their Thai Buddhist neighbours, and a young man from Rusemilae, another fishing community in Mueang Pattani, explained it like this:

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353 Interview, 19th April 2008 c.
354 The fact that my leading question formulated the statement raises some methodological issues. I have nevertheless chosen to use the example because of his highly affirmative response.
355 Interview, 2nd May 2008 a.
356 Bangkok Post, 3rd October 2010, Supara Janchitfah, "Teaching in the Mother Tongue".

I know that some Thais, Thai Buddhists, when they hear us speak Malay, they sometimes believe that we are gossiping. But they can think what they like. We are only speaking our mother's language. If we have the choice between speaking Malay and Thai, we would speak Malay, but the Thais don't know this language and don't understand it.[357]

In more public settings, confrontations may be more eloquent. During a lunch conversation in Pattani I was told the story of a couple of teachers in Narathiwat who had been strongly reprimanded by the headmaster for chitchatting with their pupils in local Malay after school hours. The headmaster, a Thai Buddhist, had asked them why they were speaking Malay when they knew there was a violent conflict going on.

To the teachers' surprise, Malay was openly associated with militant activities.[358] Reluctance to acknowledge Malay is also apparent at the Prince of Songkla University. During a visit by a delegation from a university in the Malay-speaking world, it was suggested that the visitors receive a locally guided tour of Pattani. However, when it was discovered that the local guide could not speak English and the guests could not understand Thai, the proposal was rejected. For the university administration, Malay was not an appropriate option.[359] At certain internal university events, on the other hand, Malay may be used as the working language. It seems that for the university, it is more important to uphold the Thai image outwards, while there inwards, is opened up for at least a minimum of space for activities and conferences in Malay, not least to meet the strong popular force by pressure groups, like student organisations, to allow Malay activities. This may help explain this seemingly contradictory attitude.[360]

The Malay language continues to cause controversy in the deep south, and it continues to be a strong identity factor and of great value to the Malay Muslim majority population. Thus, although learning Thai is of increasing importance, being able to uphold and maintain their native Malay language remains a high priority for the people I met through my research. However, it is not only Malay Muslim communities that value their language as a significant part of their local identity. For the local Thai Buddhist population, language plays a key role in defining identity as well.

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357 Interview, 19th April 2008 d.
358 Field notes, 4th February 2010.
359 Field notes, 4th February 2010.
360 Field notes, 9th February 2010.

The Southern Thai Dialect

Local Thai Buddhists speak Thai, but they also have their own distinct southern dialect. Many people make a point of this, explaining that they do not speak Thai (*phuut phasa thai*) but rather southern Thai (*laeng tai*). The southern dialect is spoken all over southern Thailand, and is characterised by its tonal differences from other Thai dialects—it even has two more tones than central Thai. It also has quite a distinct vocabulary, and is known for shortening words and sentences, making it difficult for outsiders to follow conversations between two southerners. Southern Thai is easily recognised because of its specific tonal melody, but the southern dialect is also radically different from one province to another. It is thus more accurate to talk about many southern dialects rather than one.

One can clearly observe a regional fellowship among southern Thai Buddhists in which the southern dialect plays a central role. For one thing there is an imagined community among southern Thai Buddhists at large. A number of people I interviewed and spoke with talked about "us southerners" as a group, referring to Thai Buddhists from all over southern Thailand. I was also told that other Thais perceive southerners in certain ways. For example, southerners are seen as being more hot-tempered (*jai ron*) or direct (*trong*) than other Thais and are typically considered to be more tricky or cunning: "southerners have the head of a doctor" (*khon tai hua mor*), as the saying goes.[361] I also often heard this description from central, northern and northeastern Thais, who claim that they find it difficult to trust southerners.

This impression has largely come from the southern Thai dialects. When people speak southern Thai (*laeng tai*), sentences and formulations are shortened and the many terms and expressions in the Thai language that articulate hierarchical politeness or subservience are often omitted, as are the many end-particles typical for central Thai. This direct way of speaking appears aggressive, or even rude, to other Thais, and it is thus these southern dialects more than anything else that have created the impression that southerners are hot-tempered (*jai ron*)—because other Thais perceive them as speaking in too straightforward a manner (*phuut trong trong*).

For southerners, however, this way of speaking is an indication of a southern identity, and it is therefore interesting to observe the feeling of kinship Thai Buddhists in the three southernmost provinces express through their common southern dialect. While central Thai is experienced

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361 Field notes 25th April 2008, 26th April 2008.

as a formal and polite language, southern Thai engenders a feeling of communal belongingness, even among strangers. A middle-aged man and food vendor from Khok Pho district expresses it this way:

> I *laeng tai.* It gives me a better feeling than when I speak central Thai. I feel more close to people when I speak southern Thai. Central Thai is like a shadow, not real. If I speak my own language I can express my real feelings. When we speak together and we speak dialect [...] it gives more feeling.[362]

Of the eleven Thai Buddhists I interviewed, five made a point of emphasizing that their language is southern and not the standard central Thai. Particularly among people from rural areas, whether they come from exclusively Thai Buddhist or ethnically mixed communities, this stress on the southern dialect is explicit. A middle-aged man, originally from Yala and now working as a gardener at one of the Queen's agricultural projects in Pattani's Panarae district, explained:

> Well really, I think the southern Thai dialect is like the identity of southerners. Just like the Isaan dialect is the identity of Isaan people. It is a marker that shows that we belong in the same group.[363]

More revealing than this statement, however, was the interaction that developed between this man and my field assistant during the interview— an interaction that exemplifies this quote as well as the one above. My field assistant that day was a young woman from Songkla who suggested that we find an informant among the vendors at Makrood market. She approach one man and addressed him in central Thai, as is customary when talking to strangers. During the interview, however, the accent and vocabulary of both my assistant and the informant began to turn more southern, and as this occurred, the conversation started to run more freely and the two seemed more comfortable with the whole situation. The same phenomenon occurred at a number of other interviews, and the couple of interviews I conducted with field assistants who did not speak southern Thai appeared to be more formal and less open.

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362 Interview 20th March 2008 a.
363 Interview 25th April 2008 a.

The Importance of Language

The experiences derived from these interview situations and interactions with local Thai Buddhists indicate that the southern dialect is a strong factor that binds Thai Buddhists in the Patani region together in something that is experienced as a common destiny. As neither local Muslims nor Buddhists from other parts of Thailand speak southern Thai, the southern accent triggers a mutual recognition in people when they meet, and a connection in which the experience of being part of an increasingly threatened minority whose religious freedom and lifestyle is limited by violent intimidation emerges. The southern dialect represents a kinship and a shared cultural background, but also a common fate under circumstances that have become more challenging since the resurgence of violence that has more directly targeted local Thai Buddhists.

It seems clear that for local Muslims and Buddhists, language represents a strong marker of identity in the deep south. At the same time, however, there seems to be less common understanding between the two ethno-religious groups with regard to this important factor. It should be noted that as many as seven of the eleven Thai Buddhists that I interviewed claimed that they had some understanding of local Malay, and four even claimed that they could speak or at least understand it enough to communicate in Malay on work-related issues. A few even informed me that at least one of their parents had been a competent Malay speaker. Nevertheless, my impression from interacting with local Thai Buddhists is that their knowledge of Malay, if it exists at all, is rather limited, particularly in urban areas and among younger people. And among Thai Buddhists originating from outside the Patani region there is practically no knowledge of Malay at all. Interest in Malay also seems to be quite limited. An interview I conducted with a young meatball vendor in Pattani town nicely illustrates this point. This woman talked a lot about the importance of knowing other languages: "Language is very important, also foreign languages. If we can learn foreign languages it is very useful. It is good" When I asked her if she would like to learn Malay, however, she answered like this: "No, I think speaking Thai is enough here. Besides, Malay is difficult."[364] It should be noted, however, that this woman is not a native of the Patani region. A middle-aged Malay Muslim woman argued that many local Thai Buddhists are likely to be familiar with the Malay language, depending on the type of community they grew up in:

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364 Interview 26th March 2008 a.

"It is not age-dependent, but rather how they have lived, if they have lived with Muslims and have Muslim friends, or if they have lived here all their lives, or not. Children who are born here and have grown up here, they know *melayu*".[365]

Although central Thai is not the preferred language of either local Muslims or local Buddhists, it has become the commonly accepted language of both groups. Malay, as already mentioned, has been controversial and southern Thai is not favoured among Malay Muslims. In part, this has to do with the fact that it is central Thai that is taught in schools, and thus the language introduced to native Malay speakers. However, southern Thai is far from being incomprehensible to local Malay Muslims. It nonetheless seems to be rejected by this segment of the population. Only one of the Malay Muslims I interviewed, a young well to do urban woman who had studied in Bangkok as well as abroad, showed any kind of interest in the characteristic southern Thai dialect.[366] McCargo suggests that the lack of interest in the southern dialect among Malay Muslims originates from the historical antagonism of Malay Muslims towards southern Buddhists, particularly those from upper southern provinces like Songkla, Patthalung and Nakhon Sri Thammarat who were sent south to govern over the Malay Muslim-dominated provinces. Accordingly, Malay Muslims favoured the central rather than the southern dialect, and preferred dealing directly with Bangkok rather than with southern intermediary bureaucrats.[367]

As argued here, language is intimately tied to national identity and ethnicity.[368] The Thai language has a central place in the national ideology of Thainess, something that influences both Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists and their relation to the Thai language. According to my material, people nonetheless feel the strongest connection with the local dialects. For local Thai Buddhists, the southern Thai dialect represents a regional identity—a bond to an imagined community of southerners that invokes a feeling of loyalty, belonging and kinship. In the Patani region this imagined community has grown stronger with the escalation of the violent

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365 Interview 19th March 2008 a.
366 Interview, 17th March 2008 a.
367 McCargo 2008: 57.
368 In the case of the ethnic Chinese, however, this link appears to be of little relevance in the contemporary deep south. While in earlier times, Chinese (most commonly Hokkien) was widespread in the region, interviewees and other informants of Chinese or partial-Chinese descent reported that today Chinese is only limitedly passed on from parents to children. The Chinese in the Patani region are native Thai speakers and the Chinese language only appears in the written characters in front of Chinese shops, temples and shrines, as well as on signs and decorations on display for traditional Chinese holidays and festivals.

conflict, and the southern dialect seems to trigger a feeling of trust and shared destiny that ties people together and thus makes for a relaxed and safe atmosphere in a tense daily life.

As for Malay Muslims, the local Malay dialect also represents a bond to an imagined community that invokes feelings of loyalty, belonging and kinship. It is the main indicator of what is unique for them as a people and distinguishes them from other Muslims in Thailand. Language is the main factor that connects the Malay Muslim population to the historical homeland of Patani, and it is for this reason that Thai authorities associate Malay with the insurgency. For Malay Muslims, on the other hand, being able to speak their native language is about maintaining their national identity. The Malay dialect is also increasingly perceived as an expression of Muslim identity, and religious identity seems to be of increasing local significance for both Muslims and Buddhists alike.

10 Religion and Identity

Religion is the most evident identity factor in the region. As I have shown in the two previous chapters, Malay ethnicity and national identity are expressed as part of religious identity, and being Muslim implies being Malay. Because of the controversy over Malay ethnicity and language caused by historical conflicts and insurgencies as well as the national requirement that all Thai citizens must be Thai, Malay identity has to be redefined so as to accommodate the ideals of Thainess. In many cases blending national and religious identities is the solution, an example of how multiple identities are negotiated in the Malay Muslim population.

People in the deep south also perceive Thai Buddhist national and religious identity as merged into multiple identities. A Thai is implicitly also a Buddhist, and as I will show in this chapter, the securing of Buddhism, where Thai national interests penetrate the Buddhist sphere, has led to a development whereby the line between Thainess and Buddhism is blurred.

Also in this chapter I will discuss how religious identity is negotiated in a daily life marked by violence and insecurity. Religion is an important foundation for shared community and belonging and religion seems to be of increased importance in Malay Muslim and Thai Buddhist life. For Malay Muslims it is mainly the Muslim revival that has provided extended space for religion, which has led to a more diverse Muslim religion, but also a certain friction between different Muslim traditions. The Muslim revival has challenged ethnicity and national identity, but there are few signs that religion has supressed the Malay national identity. Rather, national identity is negotiated within the religious sphere and is thus incorporated in the multiple identities of Malay Muslims.

Religion as Moral Guideline and Shared Community

When discussing the role of religion in their everyday lives, almost all interviewees, Muslims and Buddhists alike, emphasised morality and ethics. Religion was described as the guideline to right living and being a good person. For Muslims, this right way to live is found in the Quran and in observing the five daily prayers. Sometimes the *Sunnah* of the Prophet was also described as an important source, but reading the Quran and praying five times a day were the most common descriptions of religious practice leading to the 'right way of life'; and although many interviewees admitted that their understanding of Arabic was limited, reading, or perhaps more precisely, reciting the Quran was nonetheless highly treasured as a moral guideline in their lives.[369]

Buddhist interviewees were less specific about how religion and the *Dhamma* affected their moral behaviour. The common Thai proverb *tham dii dai dii tham chua dai chua* (do good and good will come, do evil and evil will come) was referred to by some.[370] Many Buddhists also made the connection between being a good person and being polite—something that may be connected to an ideal of Thainess, as discussed above. A substantial number of interviewees, Muslims and Buddhists alike, also underlined that all religions teach us to be good, meaning that no matter what religion one adheres to it will be a parameter for good moral behaviour. With a clear reference to the on-going violence in the region, some of which comes along with strong religious rhetoric, a couple of these interviewees also strongly noted that people who kill or agitate out of hatred are either devoid of religion or without proper religious understanding.[371] Such views were also expressed in more informal conversations.

Another aspect of religion that was highlighted by the interviewees concerned the feeling of belonging and shared identity that religious communities provide. The Thai Buddhist gardener from Panarae expressed it like this:

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369 Secondary literature explaining and analysing the different *suras* are widely available in both Thai and Malay (in *rumi* as well as *jawi*). *Suras* are also explained and analysed in *tadika* schools, *pondok* schools, and private Islamic schools.
370 Interview 26th March 2008 a, 26th March 2008 c.
371 Interview, 15th March 2008 b, 17th March 2008 a, 30th April 2008 b, 2nd May 2008 b.

> Well, religion is a way to show your identity (ekalak) and get a
> feeling of who you are. If you stay with your own group, you
> will feel more secure. To be with people of the same religion
> makes me feel that I have friends, that I have somewhere where
> I belong.372

Muslim interviewees expressed similar thoughts, and moreover
emphasised the comfort and harmony experienced in living in a Muslim
society. A middle-aged woman from Pattani expressed it like this:

> Living in Pattani enables me to live in a Muslim society, and
> I'm very grateful for that. We help each other out and it warms
> my heart to be able to live in a society like this. It is a religious
> society where there are many mosques too.373

Considering the present violence, unrest and insecurity, this emphasis on
the link between the Patani region and a good and peaceful life seems odd.
Nonetheless, the idea that peace and tranquillity are closely associated with
the Muslim society—and particularly with the Patani region—was
expressed by others as well, like this middle-aged female teacher at a
Pattani private Islamic school:

> In Pattani, in my family and my neighbourhood, we help each
> other. We are brothers and sisters, we are Muslims. We try to
> be good to each other. When I hear the call for prayers, the
> *azan* from the *minaret*, I feel peaceful, because this is my
> home. I feel calm and I feel good. Sometimes if I go somewhere
> else, like Bangkok, this calling for prayers is hard to hear,
> because there are not so many mosques and they might be far
> away. But here there are so many mosques so you hear it
> everywhere, and it reflects the way of life here.374

This description nicely portrays the link between the good life and living in
a Muslim society. Living in a Buddhist-dominated country, this woman
evinces a keen appreciation for the advantages that a Muslim-dominated
local environment provides. Yet another middle-aged Pattani woman
agrees:

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372 Interview, 25th April 2008 a.
373 Interview, 19th March 2008 a.
374 Interview, 17th March 2008 b.

[...] I am glad that my children got to grow up in a Muslim society. My children are lucky to have done that. If they had grown up in Bangkok they would not be able to understand *jawi*. It would be harder to find Islamic schools, there are not so many of them in Bangkok.[375]

To make this distinction between the Patani region and the rest of Thailand seems important and many of the Malay Muslims interviewed stressed the fact that they wear different clothes, eat different foods and behave differently from other Thais. The Islamic school teacher quoted above explains:

I am a Thai Muslim. I am a Thai, but my religion is Islam. I wear different clothes than other Thais, I speak Islam language (*phut phasa Islam*) and eat different food. Some things I cannot eat, I have to eat *halal* food. This is different from other Thais, and it shows that I am a Muslim.[376]

By pointing at such distinctions she shows how people in the deep south stand out as Muslims.[377] Expressing a Muslim identity seems essential, and the need to mark some distance from the greater Thai society seems to be one reason that the focus on Islam in the Patani region is so strong.

Historically the Muslim identity has been the most successful contrast to Thai dominance. While ethnic Malay identity, language and culture have been discredited and gravely suspected, Islam seems to have been more readily accepted because it has been in fewer conflicts with the national ideal of Thainess. In addition, the region's longstanding Islamic tradition— and the fact that it had preceded Thai nationalism and nation-building— remains an important source of local pride that will continue to play a role in creating a sense of shared identity among local Malay Muslims. It is part of what makes the Patani region distinct within the Thai context, and is also used in Malay Muslim nationalist and separatist rhetoric and agitation. Thus, regardless of whether or not local Malay Muslims feel connected to the Thai community, the Muslim heritage is common to all, and is used by some to keep aloof from Thai society and by others to indicate an identity within the Thai context. In other words, there are a variety of reasons that Islam has a strong standing in the identity of people

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375 Interview, 18th March 2008 a.
376 Interview, 17th March 2008 b.
377 A number of interviewees also pointed out a distinction between Muslims in the deep south and other Thai Muslims, although this distinction was less articulated.

in the Patani region. Different approaches towards history and local traditions give us some answers, but Islam's solid position should also be viewed in the light of at least one other factor, namely the global resurgence or revival of Islam since the 1970s.

The Muslim Revival

As explained in Chapter 5, the global Islamic resurgence that began in the 1970s also left its mark on the Malay Peninsula and Thailand's deep south.[378] This revival gave momentum to modernist and/or reformist trends, and influenced religious teaching and consciousness as well as general conduct and dress. These new trends were mainly introduced by students returning from Islamic studies abroad, and came as a result of political and religious developments within the Middle East.

The secular nation-states of post-colonial independence had failed an expanding middle class that had become increasingly disillusioned with Western civilisation and capitalism as well as with socialism. This middle class emerged as a result of mass education and increased urbanisation, and without channels of influence and representation, the antagonism within this stratum of society increased. Through the 1970s this antagonism was channelled into a revival of Islam and an Islamic sense of identity, boosted by such political events as the 1973 Yom Kippur War against Israel (featuring Anwar Sadat's use of Islamic symbols and rhetoric), the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the 1979 struggle against Soviet Imperialism in Afghanistan.[379] Moreover, the 1973 Arab oil embargo signalled that first time in post-colonial history the West seemed dependent of the Muslim world; and, as Esposito notes: "For many, these new signs of wealth and power were a source of enormous pride and a sign of the return of God's blessings." [380]

The spread of reformist and/or modernist trends throughout the Muslim world, sometimes characterized as Islamic fundamentalism,[381] was the most significant effect of this Muslim revival. Reformist trends were by no means new. Reformist and/or modernist Islam dates back to the 18th

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378 Academics dispute whether to call this phenomenon resurgence, revival, fundamentalism or neofundamentalism, among other things. In the following I will refer to it as a revival, and revival should here be understood as awakening.
379 Chaiwat 2005: 80 f.; Esposito 1998: 160; Liow 2009: 139.
380 Esposito 1998: 163.
381 Lapidus 2002: 823.

and 19th century and figures such as Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani. Some would argue that it dates back even longer than this. However, with the Muslim revival these trends gained momentum. An increasing number of students from all over the Muslim world returned home, inspired by reformist scholars, and built numerous mosques and educational institutions promoting reformist ideas, sponsored by Arab petrodollars.

As underlined by scholars such as Esposito, Lapidus and Roy, among others, terms like reformist, modernist and fundamentalist Islam, rather than being descriptive of a particular religious school or sect, are insufficient in themselves to describe the wide range and variety of Islam-oriented movements that are extant in the world today.[382] There are nonetheless certain revivalist and/or reformist movements within the broad Muslim spectrum that share some common tendencies and traits. Central to the ideas of these more fundamentalist movements is a strong focus on religious piety and a view of Islam as being a total ideology for political, social and cultural life. Theologically, the stress is on *tawhid* (the absolute unity of God) and a literalist reading of the Quran and the *Sunnah*. The Muslim revival supports *ijtihad* (interpretation), although only as a way of bypassing different religious schools; it also highlights *sharia* laws. The emphasis on the Quran and the *Sunnah* has led to a form of practice that accentuates prayer, fasting, *halal* food, the separation of the sexes, Islamic dress (particularly for women) and a puritanism that rejects most parts of Western culture.[383] With these reformist ideas, the revival brought a renewed Islamic identity to a growing educated middle class in Muslim communities throughout the world, including that of the Patani region. Moreover, this Islamic identity poses a general challenge to ethnic or nationalist identities, and thus it is not only in Thailand's deep south that Muslim or Islamic identity has to some degree overshadowed other identities:

> Everywhere, the revivalist movements have transformed state and popular identities. In many countries national identities, built on a compound of religious and ethnic loyalties, have shifted from emphasis upon the secular ethnic to the religious aspects [...] many Indonesians, Malaysians, Iranians, Turks, Egyptians, Algerians, Tunisians, and other Muslims now lay a

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382 Esposito 1998: 165 ; Lapidus 2002: 823 ; Roy 2004: 234.
383 Esposito 1998: 165; Lapidus 2002: 823; Roy 2004: 243 f.

greater emphasis upon the Islamic rather than the political or ethnic component of their identities.[384]

Lapidus' observation corresponds with my material as well. Over the years, the Muslim revival of the 1970s has continued to grow and become stronger in the Patani region as more people studying abroad returned home, among them the influential preacher and founder of Yala Islamic Collage, Ismael Lutfi.[385] With the turn of the millennium, the increasing growth and development of this regional revival has become striking indeed. The extensive building of new mosques and the growing popularity of Islamic educational institutions, many of which are sponsored and dominated by reformist or *khana mai* adherents, are clear indicators of this expansion. The result in the last decade has been a strengthened Muslim identity, perhaps further reinforced by a sense of solidarity with the global *ummah* as a reaction to the West's so-called War on Terror, often experienced by Muslims as an attack on Islam.

During a conversation about recent religious developments with an *ustadha* from Pattani's Yaring district, who teaches at one of the largest private Islamic Schools in Yala, the *ustadha* gave an illustrative description of this tendency: "You know, for the last ten years, we have had a Cultural Revolution (*patiwat watanatham*) here."[386] She explained that the region has seen a clear increase in religious interest, something that has influenced dress codes and religious behaviour as well. I find 'Cultural Revolution' to be a descriptive term that indicates how in some circles Muslim identity is superseding ethnic and national identities. It was also clear that the *ustadha* conceived of this development not as something new, but rather as a comeback for Islam in the region. When talking about Patani history, she emphasised its Muslim heritage more than anything else and asked me if I was aware that in earlier times this area had been a Muslim country: Patani Darussalam.[387] Its Malay heritage seemed subordinated.

While ethnic identity still has a strong standing in the Malay Muslim population, the Muslim identity seems to be more explicit. My argument is that this is not a sign of religious identity supressing ethnic or national identity, but rather an indication of a development of multiple identities wherein ethnic and/or national aspects are redefined and expressed within the religious domain. Both the global Muslim revival and the problematic

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384 Lapidus 2002: 826.
385 McCargo 2008: 21 f.
386 Field notes, 31st January 2010.
387 Field notes, 31st January 2010.

standing of ethnicity in the Thai context, particularly the Malay ethnicity, should be seen as driving factors behind this development. There are, in other words, both local (or national) and global aspects to the multiple identities among Malay Muslims in the Patani region.

Separatist movements also have been influenced by the reformist trend, albeit its more violent aspects—e.g., *jihadi* ideologies of returning *mujahedeen* fighters from Afghanistan.[388] Some researchers interested in the violent conflict have thus considered whether or not the Patani insurgency should be seen as an aspect of the international *jihadist* trend.[389] While it would be naïve to think that international *jihadist* groups are not closely following the southern Thai conflict, or even communicating with and perhaps assisting Thai militant groups, there is little evidence of close ties between insurgents and global *jihadist* movements.[390] As the resurgence of violence in the Patani region more or less coincided with the emergence of the US-led War on Terror, and given the global political climate at the time, it is no wonder that parallels to international *jihadist* groups were drawn. In the first couple of years, however, the tendency to uncritically link the southern Thai conflict to global terrorism was so frequent that many Thailand specialists saw a need to balance the discrepancy by arguing against the disproportionate emphasis on global terrorism among certain academics—e.g., Connors' call for a 'War on *Error*'.[391] As mentioned in the introduction, a couple of these researchers, such as Abuza, continue to claim this link.[392] It is my understanding, however, that the Jihad of Thailand's southern insurgents is first and foremost still aimed at delegitimizing the Thai state in order to gain independence or autonomy.[393] Moreover, it is likely that global *jihadist* ideas would appear quite alien and largely irrelevant to the average villager.

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[388] Between 50 and 150 Malay Muslims from southern Thailand are believed to have been trained by the Taliban or at least been passing through Afghanistan in the 1980s (Abuza 2009: 145; Funston 2008: 34).
[389] Abuza 2009: 145 ff.; Gunaratna et at. 2005: 59 ff.
[390] Chalk 2008: 13; Funston 2008: 34 p.
[391] Connors 2007b.
[392] Abuza 2009: 145 ff.
[393] Field notes, 8th February 2010. Refer also to Mark Askew's "A Tale of Two Insurgents" in Bangkok Post 19th July 2009, for two different cases explaining their reasons for joining the insurgency.

Local Impacts of the Muslim Revival

The Muslim revival in the Patani region is the expansion and development of a stronger *khana mai* (the new school). Modern reformist Islam has taken particular root in urban areas, but has also made its mark in more rural communities, where *dakwah* movements have gained strength. This development, containing ideas that compete with *khana kao* (the old school) and traditional religious practice, has led to a number of interesting phenomena and trends, three of which will be discussed herein.

First of all, these competing ideas have brought a level of diversity or plurality to Islam in the region. While in the past, the traditional *pondok* schools and their *tok guru*s held a religious hegemony based on Malay culture and traditions, and villagers combined their Islam with a fair amount of animism and magical rituals,[394] the modernists strongly reject such practices and strive to rid Islam of all traditional or cultural aspects. Impulses from different modernist trends have spread with the help of a variety of missionary movements, new mosques and religious educational institutions, and thus a diversity of religious ideas and practices can be found throughout the region, to some degree leading to a renewed sense of confidence in both Islam and the Malay Muslim cultural heritage.

Secondly, however, this diversity has led to some insecurity among people when it comes to religious practice, and a certain conflict between traditionalist and modernist practices is noticeable. Although Malay Muslims insist that there is only one Islam and that there are no significant differences between the practices of Islam in the region, it is obvious to any observer that the traditionalist-modernist diversity also generates considerable friction in the local communities. The majority of Muslims in the region are traditionalists or *khana kao*. During the last decades, however, the modernists have significantly increased in number. More importantly, however, they generally belong to the educated middle class and hold influential, privileged and high-ranking positions in society as teachers, politicians, businesspersons or community leaders, and have become dominant as their mosques and schools receive substantial financial support from abroad. Thus, it is often the modernist perspective that is put forward in the public debate on the southern problems and the viewpoint of the average villager is rarely heard. In other words, modernists may still be a minority, but they are nonetheless the most articulate voices from the south, and their opinions and perspectives have great impact on young people and students, but also on Thai society at

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394 Fraser 1962: 168.

large, as well as on NGOs, journalists, researchers, and academics who endeavour to understand religious, cultural and political sentiments in the region.

As a consequence of its violent conflict, the Patani region has witnessed an increase of interest from various outside parties. However, it is typically modernist ideas, perspectives and analyses that are presented and discussed in seminars, articles and policy proposals. As people look for solutions to violence a modernist urban elite is ready to provide answers concerning religious reforms such as the introduction of *sharia* laws. However, the relevance of such proposals to the regional conflict remains unclear, as is the degree to which they resonate with Malay Muslim villagers.

A conversation I had with the men from the small village shop in Pattani (mentioned above) provides a telling indication of the lack of popular momentum with respect to the general implementation of *sharia*. One evening, a gentleman from this group informed me about *sharia* laws (*gort mai saksit*) in Malaysia. He explained that if you steal something your hand will be cut off and if you are caught selling drugs you will be executed. The man talked about this with awe and said that in Thailand you would only go to jail. He then jokingly added that if you have money you would not even have to go to jail. From this answer, it was clear to me that the Thai approach, despite its many flaws, was far more preferable. But when I directly asked what they thought about the idea of introducing such *sharia* laws in the Patani region, he as well as the others that were present declined to answer and abruptly changed the subject.[395]

What could explain this evasiveness? As Muslims it is impossible to dismiss *sharia*. After all, it is supposed to be God-given and sacred. However, it is not juridical law that is the burning issue for average villagers like the ones at this small shop. Judging from their conversations, they were much more concerned with issues like job opportunities, education and personal economy. Moreover, as Thai citizens, it is odd for them to relate to a law as something sacred. In a country where constitutional amendments or the constitution's total abolition seem to be seasonal events, the concept of a sacred law (*gort mai saksit*) appears alien.

Influential puritanical pressure groups, often speaking on behalf of the Malay Muslim population while at the same time working to promote their piety in the villages, have no doubt had an effect on the religious climate in the region. Because of their influence, the modernist perspective appears to

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395 Field notes, 13th February 2010.

be more mainstream than it actually is.[396] But the effort to purify Islam through prayer, fasting, 'right' behaviour and the study of the Quran and the *Sunnah,* and to rid it of superstitious or non-Muslim practices, has left people with feelings of insecurity about their own religious belief and practice—something that Horstmann has also observed.[397] Both during interviews and in more informal conversations I searched to find out more about religious practice and its diversity in the region. This, however, proved to be a challenge. None of the Muslims I talked to would go further into the matter and merely stated that being a Muslim meant reading the Quran and praying five times a day. When I tried to direct the conversation to matters of religious rituals and ceremonies or ask about differences in practice between former and current times, I almost never received an answer, and the limited answers I did receive gave the impression that their reticence was largely a cautious attempt to avoid the accusation of heresy or wrong practice. Similarly, rather than entering into deep water on issues of right and wrong by commenting on other people's practices, they found it safer to maintain—or perhaps pretend to maintain—a healthy ignorance.

Whenever I inquired about magical rituals and spirit reverence, practices that were well documented by Faser in the 1950s[398] and are still followed today (particularly in the rural areas), I was told that such practices have nothing to do with Islam and Muslims,[399] and are only indulged in by the Buddhists. Sometimes I probed further, asking, for example, if they had never before witnessed or heard of a Muslim fisherman tying some ribbons to the front of his boat before going out to sea or uttering a spell for protection. On one such occasion a young urban man belonging to a *khana mai* family responded as follows:

> Some people do that. Many, many people do that. But when they do things like that, it is almost like we can regard them as non-Muslims. This is not about what is *haram* and what is not. This is about *aqidah* (the six creeds of belief),[400] it is about faith, and it is the most important part of being a Muslim. And

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396 Field notes, 4th February 2010, 17th February 2010.
397 Horstmann 2011: 497.
398 Fraser 1962: Ch. 10.
399 Similar rejections occurred as response to questions about Sufism.
400 Here he refers to the first of the six creeds of belief: *tawhid*, belief in Allah, the one and only one worthy of all worship.

when people do these things, they question God, or his almightiness or something like that, and that is serious.[401]

Most of the time, however, I sensed a reluctance to go further into questions about religious practice, and religious diversity in the Muslim community was generally underplayed regardless of age, gender or socioeconomic background. Particularly *khana kao* practices and precepts like the ones mentioned above are easily undermined since they are not rooted in authoritative texts and laws, but are merely aspects of local traditions. Traditionalists are thus particularly vulnerable to reformist critiques that draw upon the Quran and the *Sunnah* to question their practices.[402] Although the traditionalists still outnumber the modernists, as mentioned above, it should nonetheless be noted that many people define themselves as being somewhere in between, and are more pragmatic in their approach to religion. Many people appreciate learning about the Quran and *Sunnah* and listening to the teachings of people like Lutfi or expressing sympathy for pious *dakwah* missionaries, while at the same time retaining a desire to uphold local beliefs and traditions.[403] In other words, many people do relate to a polarised divide between traditionalists and modernists, and instead select those forms of religious expression that give meaning and value to their lives—perhaps yet another indication of the multiple identity phenomenon.

An additional explanation for this reluctance to discuss the diversity of religious practices is that people do not want to give the impression that there is a divided Islam. There is only one Muslim religion, I was often told, meaning that there is only one form of Sunni Islam. The desire to avoid the impression that there are sectarian divisions within Islam seemed crucial, particularly for the modernists.[404] One could perhaps argue that while modernist-leaning individuals want to appear united as Muslims, traditionalist-leaning individuals are reluctant to talk about religious practice for fear of criticism and condemnation. Regardless of how hesitant people are to speak about religion, their particular choice of mosque often says much about the degree to which they lean towards either a traditionalist or a modernist perspective. For example, many people express a rejection of modernist puritanism by avoiding mosques that are considered to be *khana mai*. A Muslim teacher at Prince of Songkla University, amongst others, told me that the PSU mosque is not a very

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401 Field notes, 18th February 2010.
402 Field notes, 4th February 2010.
403 Field notes, 12th February 2010,
404 Roy 2004: 232.

popular place among students for Friday prayer because it is considered too *khana mai* and students prefer to go to nearby mosques like the one in Rong Lao instead.[405] Theological or conceptual differences between mosques cannot be identified by the mosque's exterior, yet similar-minded people tend to gravitate towards the same mosque while avoiding others.[406]

The lack of confidence in certain religious beliefs and practices indicated here has had an impact on other aspects of society as well. In a way the Muslim revival, or what has been called the 'Cultural Revolution', is in fact contributing to the suppression of cultural expressions in the region.[407] Villagers are left apprehensive about their own customs, and modernist pressure indirectly puts a damper on debated Muslim practices and old Malay traditions: everything from the celebration of Mawhlid to the performance of *silat* and *diki hulu* (*dikir barat* in standard Malay).[408] Any cultural activity that can be characterized as non-Muslim is discouraged, and thus there are far fewer leisure activities in the deep south than there are in the rest of Thailand—with sports remaining one of the few. Opportunities for children and teenagers to cultivate music, film and other artistic interests are limited. One observer put it like this: "Here, if you do not do sports or raise singing birds, you have a choice between television, tea and *tadika*."[409] In other words, one has the choice of devoting oneself to religious studies on the one hand, or hanging around teashops, watching TV and possibly getting involved with drugs on the other (with drugs being a severe problem among the many of the deep south's unemployed youth). Many young people have decided to select the religious option.

This leads to the third trend to be highlighted herein, namely the increased focus on Islam and Muslim identity. The combination of the reformist 'Cultural Revolution', the amplified competition between modernist and traditionalist religious expression and the tendency to define ethnic identity in religious terms has contributed to a strengthened religious consciousness. As already mentioned above (as well as in Chapter 8), most of my interviewees emphasised their religious identity as being either part of or superior to their ethnic identity. In fact, ethnicity and religion (or nation and religion) have in various ways become indistinguishable designations. Two examples of this phenomenon are the

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405 Field notes, 17th February 2010.
406 Field notes, 13th February 2010.
407 Horstmann 2011: 505.
408 Field notes, 30th January 2010. *Silat* is the martial art of the Malay Archipelago and *diki hulu* is a traditional Malay musical form.
409 Field notes, 14th February 2010.

tendency to refer to local Malay as an Islamic language (*phasa islam*) when speaking in Thai and to refer to all Buddhists as Siamese people (*oghe siye*) when speaking in local Malay. A third example consists of the tendency to call conversion to Islam, *masok nayu* (*masuk melayu* in standard Malay), which literally means 'to go into Malay'.

Muslim identity, with or without the ethnic connotations, is strong in the region, and I also sensed that among younger people, a solid religious standing was to some extent viewed as a sign of success, prosperity and achievement. Anyone that appears to be pious or of advanced religious understanding is considered more likely to succeed and less likely to fall into trouble. A solid Muslim identity indicates a decent person.

This, in turn, has triggered a growing attention to more strict notions of 'right' and 'wrong'. Despite the lack of confidence referred to above, a general focus on ethics and morality seems to have followed in the wake of the strengthened Muslim identity. While rarely being very specific about its content, most interviewees emphasised what they called 'right religious teaching' or 'right religious understanding' as a key to solving the problems of the region—i.e., the violence and the various socioeconomic and political challenges. To a substantial degree, this trend can also be linked to the last decades' Muslim revival, the 'Cultural Revolution' of the abovementioned *ustadha*.

A Muslim awakening seems to have escalated among the young urban middle-class, and I observed a striving for piety that was particularly apparent among women. The popularity of veiling and long sleeves is perhaps the most eye-catching element, but the issue of piety and morally right conduct is also strikingly present in everyday conversations. While spending time with a group of young female teachers in Yala, everything from *halal* food to male-female relationships was thoroughly discussed. I was asked about Norwegian customs and norms, and the conversation eagerly went on about Thai society and Muslim values. They were also highly critical of trends within their own communities, particularly drug abuse among youngsters and the lack of parental guidance resulting from the departure of many migrant workers to Malaysia.[410] To them these trends were indicative of a moral decline within Muslim communities. However, their perspectives were no blueprints for conventional Muslim morals. They also adopted a critical attitude towards gender roles and patriarchal structures in their local community, and even polygamy (which is permitted in Islamic societies) was problematized:

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410 Field notes, 19th February 2010, 20th February 2010.

Muslim men are cheaters (*jao shu*), maybe even more than others, because in Islam it is allowed to have four wives. But really, you cannot just take four wives just because you feel like it. You still have to take care of your family. And you cannot take a new wife without a reason. If your first wife is not well, cannot have babies or things like that, then it is ok, you can take a new wife too, but not just because you feel like it. In Islam it is allowed, but I don't think it is right.[411]

The focus on right and wrong and on what Islam says about different issues was something many people were concerned with, and I interpret this interest in Islam and religious ethics as a result of the Muslim diversity and influence of modernist thoughts.

Increased Buddhist Religious Consciousness

If modernist dominance has caused some inter-Muslim resentment, it has fuelled a certain Buddhist-Muslim antagonism as well. It is essentially the violence and killings over the last decade that has created an increasing tension in Buddhist-Muslim relations. However, many Thai Buddhist interviewees also expressed discontent and frustration with what they referred to as strict Muslims. The impression these people are left with is that where earlier Buddhists and Muslims lived together and took part in each other's festivals and celebrations, these days Muslims have so many restrictions that there are many activities they cannot take part in. Some interviewees expressed dissatisfaction and regret at this development, which will be further discussed in Part III of this dissertation.

It can be argued, however, that there has been an increased consciousness about religious adherence among Thai Buddhists as well. For security reasons Thai Buddhists have had to adapt their rituals and religious practices. Many people prefer to go directly to the temple to offer food to the monks instead of waiting for their morning round of alms[412] and rituals and festivals that were normally held in the evening have been rescheduled to daytime hours.[413] This is an indication of the ways that people have had to reconsider and adapt the observance of their religion. One development I found among Thai Buddhist interviewees and people I

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411 Field notes, 20th February 2010.
412 Interview, 26th April 2008 a, 30th April 2008 b.
413 Interview 20th March 2008 b, 26th March 2008 b, 1st May 2008 b.

met around the region was an increased interest in protective amulets, spells and blessings.[414] Shrines and amulets (particularly of local monks) have become more popular. Not only Luang Pu Thuat at Wat Chang Hai, but also deceased monks like Luang Pho Dam at Wat Mutcharinthawapiwihan in Nong Chick and Luang Pho Daeng at Wat Choeng Khao in Narathiwat's Bacho district receive great reverence. Many admitted that they have begun to use more amulets and religious protective measures since the escalation of violence, and that this had a comforting effect in their everyday life. A young food vendor in Pattani town taps on her shirt pocket and smiles when I ask her about amulets:

> Luang Pu Thuat. I have it with me in my pocket all the time. I have had it for a long time, but it is only the last couple of years that I started carrying it on me all the time.[415]

A primary school teacher, also in Pattani town, carried a whole range of protective amulets:

> I have *sing saksit* (sacred objects), many of them [laughter]. I wear an amulet (*phra kruang*), but I have a lot more of them in my bag. I have Luang Pu Thuat, Luang Pho Dam, Luang Pho In, Takroot Tan Daeng.[416] I have many. My bag is full of them. [...] really full (*tem leuy*). I always had many, but now I have even more.[417]

Her Luang Pu Thuat amulet was donated by the Queen, who had recently arranged a ceremony for schoolteachers in the south at Wat Thung Pla in Pattani's Khok Pho district, where all the teachers were given a Luang Pu Thuat amulet for protection.

Another noticeable development within the Thai Buddhist community involves the various initiatives to secure Buddhism in the region. As mentioned above, securing Buddhism is not only a state priority, but is of importance to local Thai Buddhists as well. Although the objectives of local and state actors are quite dissimilar, the combination of the two approaches have proven to be effective, and as securing Buddhism has

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414 Interview, 20th March 2008 b, 26th March 2008 a, 30th April 2008 a, 1st May 2008 a, 1st May 2008 b.
415 Interview 26th 2008 a.
416 *Takroot* is a tubular amulet of rolled metal sheeting inscribed with sacred symbols by the monk who made it. The *takroot* is believed to be particularly protective against dangers.
417 Interview 1st May 2008 b.

become a national concern—i.e., a way to protect the nation—it has also become a contributor to multiple identities among Thai Buddhists in the Patani region.

From the local Buddhist perspective, maintaining older Buddhist sites as well as supporting local temples and local monks is of great importance. The fact that the Buddha's teachings have been present in the Patani region throughout history, as has the Muslim faith, is something that many Thai Buddhist interviewees have emphasised, and the sponsoring of Buddhist temples is their way of upholding this proud history. A middle-aged, well-educated woman from Yaring, Pattani, emphasised the importance of such support, and when it came to 'making merit' (*tham bun*), the impact on the local community seemed more important to her than her own spiritual gain and development:

> Every year for *wan khao phansa*,[418] I go to a different temple to *tham bun*. One year I go to Yaring, one year I go to Phanare. [...] I think it is important to *tham bun*. In my village in Yaring the temple there needed a new gate and the cost was estimated to 20 000 *baht*. On the birthday of my children I wanted to donate the whole amount, but then the other villagers protested and said they wanted to donate as well. So I could only donate 2 000 *baht* (laughter).[419]

This woman makes it a point to visit remote temples around troubled areas of the region to secure a future of Buddhism, and is concerned about the financial situation of both the monks and the temples. This securing of Buddhism by local Buddhist has also become more organised. In February 2010, some Buddhists at Prince of Songkla University in Pattani arranged for the region's very first *wai phra gao wat* tour, a relatively modern trend adopted from the Bangkok middle-class where people join an organised tour to visit nine important temples in order to gain merit and at the same time support the temples.[420] In Bangkok, joining a tour like this is a matter of convenience for busy city people. In Pattani, however, travelling as a group seems safer than travelling on your own, although many jokes were made during the trip about the possibility of a terrorist attack. The tour also provides a unique opportunity to visit more remote temples and support the monks there as well.

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418 *Wan khao phansa* is the first day of Buddhist Lent.
419 Interview, 30th April 2008 b.
420 Field notes, 16th February 2010.

The tour organisers picked nine temples, some of which are associated with a particularly *saksit* monk or Buddha statue, and some of which are of important historical significance, like the ancient Srivijaya cave temple Wat Na Tham in the Yaha district of Yala, and the 19th century temple Wat Chonthara Singhae, in Narathiwat's Tak Bai district. Wat Chonthara Singhae is situated at the bank of the river bordering Malaysia and was one of Siam's strongest arguments when negotiating over territorial borders with their British counterparts. Today the temple is also commonly known as Wat Phitak Phaendin Thai (the temple to protect Thai territory) and houses a small museum that includes full-sized wax figures resembling the signatory parties of the Anglo-Siamese treaty of 1909.[421] The temple is thus one of many examples of how Buddhism and Thai legitimacy have been entwined in the region. The tour organisers who encouraged the participants to visit the museum also highlighted the importance of this particular temple. The blending of national and religious interests that this temple represents is thus a good example of how national and religious identity is blended in multiple identities among Thai Buddhists in the deep south.

In addition to the nine temples, the *wai phra gao wat* tour also included a visit to the giant Buddha image Phra Phuttha Thaksin Ming Mongkhon in Narathiwat, the largest outdoor Buddha image in all of southern Thailand. This golden Buddha is situated in the midst of the Malay Muslim heartland, and may be interpreted as yet another example of the parallel between securing Buddhism and state legitimacy. A shrine of King Thaksin (1768-1782) is also found in the park.

The tour departed from the university at sunrise and returned well after sunset. There were about one hundred participants, of whom only five where men, including the bus driver. The donations for each temple were collected in an envelope before arrival and handed over to the abbot by the tour organisers. On average, each participant donated between 40 and 200 *baht* at each temple, with some purchasing amulets and other *sing saksit* as well. In return, they received blessings from the monks by way of Buddhist chants, holy water (*nam mon*) and, sometimes, amulets. And despite the many hours on the bus, the participants maintained their goodwill and enthusiasm throughout the entire trip.[422]

A tour like this provides an opportunity for Thai Buddhists to visit important temples together with others, gain merit and contribute to the support of Buddhism in the region. However, it also serves another

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421 Field notes, 6th February 2011.
422 Field notes, 6th February 2011.

purpose. While travelling around the three provinces visiting old Buddhist temples, caves and relics, a religious consciousness of the region's Buddhist past develops and the confidence that Patani is also a home for Buddhists is strengthened—a confidence that has considerable impact on the Buddhist communities in the three provinces. Interestingly, the tour in question also demonstrated how the relation between Buddhism and Thainess is entwined in the south. Wat Chonthara Singhae and its little museum of Thai National History, and its popular name Wat Phitak Phaendin Thai, is the most open example. But the giant Buddha image Phra Phuttha Thaksin Ming Mongkhon can be perceived this way as well, not only because of its shrine of King Thaksin, but also because, in contrast to most of the other sights visited, it is a rather modern construction placed in an area containing a relatively small Thai Buddhist population. In this sense, it can be interpreted as an attempt to increase the legitimacy of Thai presence in the deep south.[423] The result is a blurred line between nation and religion.

Religion and National identity

In this chapter, as well as in the two previous chapters, I have argued that religion has become a key identity factor among Malay Muslims as well as Thai Buddhists. Although religion has always been an important marker of identity in the region, we can nonetheless observe some changes that have reinforced this marker. For Malay Muslims these changes have mainly come in two ways. Firstly, they are the result of the long-term effect of the problematic issue of ethnicity and national identity in Thailand, paving the way for a strong Muslim identity that contains ethnic as well as cultural components. Secondly, many Malay Muslims are also heavily influenced by the global Muslim revival that has made way for a stronger emphasis on religion in the region. Within this expanded space for religion we also find examples of ethnic or national identity developing where the Malay language (often locally referred as *phasa islam* or 'Islam language') has been incorporated into the Muslim identity. Aspects of Malay ethnicity and culture, in other words, have been redefined as attributes that concern religion.

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423 Refer to Nilsen 2012 (in print) for more on Buddhism and state power in the deep south of Thailand.

Malay identity is by no means supressed by Thai or Muslim identities. Rather, Malay Muslims are continuously negotiating multiple identities, and balance Malay and Thai identities according to the situation, using religion to provide space for aspects of Malay national identity that are incompatible with Thainess and Thai society. The tendency to refer to the local Malay dialect as *phasa islam* in Thai is descriptive of how people negotiate these multiple identities. Another good example is provided by the fact that converting to Islam is referred to as *masok nayu* (go into Malay) in the Patani Malay language. These examples also indicate that when speaking Malay, it is ethnicity that is the main marker of identity, while it is religion that dominates whenever the Thai language is used.

The Muslim revival has had an impact on Thai Buddhists as well. When Malay Muslims increasingly define themselves through religious denominators—where, for example, young people express religious adherence through the way they dress, what activities they engage in and how they act and speak—this triggers a reaction among Thai Buddhists, and their perception of themselves as being both Buddhists *and* different from the Muslim majority is amplified. Since the resurgence of violent conflict over the last decade, this strengthened religious identity is evident in an imagined community of southern Buddhists who share similar experiences and feelings of being persecuted as religious group. Interviewees and other informants explained how being around fellow Buddhists made them feel relaxed, open and more able to frankly discuss sensitive matters.[424] A strengthened religious identity is also evident in how local Thai Buddhists support temples and shrines around the region. The *wai phra gao wat* tour at PSU is one example. Thai Buddhists are not content to only support the temple in the vicinity of where they live. They also make an effort to secure Buddhism in other districts and provinces in the deep south. Considering how securing Buddhism has also become a national strategy, particularly since the resurgence of violence, this has an impact on the multiple identities of Thai Buddhists. The line between national and religious identity is blurred, and religious practice thus becomes a way for Thai Buddhists to express their Thainess.

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424 Interview, 25th April 2008 a, Field notes, 26th April 2008.

Part III
Interethnic Relations and Local Interpretations of Violence and Conflict

The argument I have presented in this dissertation is that Thai nation-building and the ideology of Thainess, together with the development of some newer religious trends, have contributed to multiple identities among Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists in the Patani region (Part I), implying, in the case of Malay Muslims, that ethnic (Malay) and national (Thai) identities are juggled in daily life depending on the situation and context. Moreover, for both Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists, ethnic and national identities have become indistinguishable from religious identity, and the line between them has become blurred (Part II).

As described in the introduction of this dissertation, there are two main approaches to the Patani conflict that can be distinguished in terms of their attitude towards identity. The first approach (McCargo) argues that the Thai state's domination over territory and its attempt to undermine Malay identity and culture have led to a legitimacy-deficit and a void wherein militant movements have emerged. The second approach (Askew) modifies this view with the claim that the average Malay Muslim is increasingly adapting to Thai society, that Malay Muslim identity is on the decline,[425] that religion is an increasingly important factor in the Patani region,[426] and thus that there are other explanations for the conflict that need to be explored as well.

My argument is that despite the apparently increasing influence of Thainess and Thai society and the greater integration of Malay Muslims,

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[425] Askew 2010: 128.
[426] Askew 2010: 126.

the Malay identity has not been displaced by the Thai identity. What we see is an expression of multiple identities wherein Malay and Thai identities are negotiated depending on the context. I also argue that religious and national identities are negotiated in a similar manner, meaning that ethnic and cultural aspects are interpreted as being part of the religious sphere, and claim that this merger of national and religious identities has developed within both Malay Muslim and Thai Buddhist communities.

In other words, the Thai nation-building that has been imposed on Malay Muslims in order to undermine Malay identity and culture in an effort to incorporate them into the Thai nation, has been a failed strategy in the Patani region, as the Malay Muslim population still feels largely alienated from many aspects of Thai society. This does not mean, however, that Thai nation-building and the ideology of Thainess have not left their mark. Malay Muslims relate to the Thai nationalist narrative, and both Thai values and the Thai language are on the rise. However, I do not see this as a decline in Malay identity, but rather as an expression of multiple identities, where a redefined Thainess adapted to a Muslim context is communicated to meet the expectations of Thai society, and where a Malay identity is communicated to meet the expectations of the Patani Malay society. Moreover, whenever challenging contradictions between the two occur, a religious identity, containing a range of ethnic and cultural aspects, is communicated instead. It is important to note, however, that the extent of conflicting or converging identities will differ greatly depending on variables like education and social background, but my experience is that people in general hold some kind of multiple identities. The fusion of religious and national identities is common for Thai Buddhists as well. Both nationally and locally there are hardly any differentiation between being Thai and being Buddhist, and since the national strategy of securing Buddhism in the deep south has increased in conjunction with the resurgence of violence, religious and national identities are more or less indistinguishable. Religious practice has thus also become a way to express Thainess and national identity.

While Part I and Part II of the dissertation have sought to explain the main contributors to the development of multiple identities in the Patani region and how local Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists negotiate these identities in an everyday life of conflict and violence, the aim of Part III is to look into some developments in interethnic relations and identify how multiple identities are negotiated with regards to these relations and to local views and interpretations of the Patani conflict.

Lewis has pointed out that there are multiple identities within every society, each with variations and with sometimes conflicting subdivisions.[427] As a result of a history of violent conflict, aggressive nation-building, ethnic and religious repression, as well as some newer religious trends, such conflicting subdivisions are particularly evident in the Patani region, and the multiple identities described in Part II of this dissertation may help to provide some answers concerning how interethnic conflicts have developed and how they can be mended. In this last part of the dissertation, I will therefore analyse the development of interethnic relations in the light of multiple identities (Chapter 11), look into how interethnic relations can be restored (Chapter 12), and discuss some local interpretations of the violent conflict, how multiple identities are challenged by key conflict issues, and how people view the prospect of reform and positive change (Chapter 13).

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[427] Lewis 1998: 5.

11 Negotiating Interethnic Relations

The Patani conflict has been a challenge for interethnic relations. Insecurity and fear have led to a deep mistrust, particularly in communities with a high level of violent incidents. The degree of interethnic tension or coexistence is, however, also determined by factors concerning identity—e.g., how people interpret local grievances and how they perceive their own religion and culture. Moreover, Thai nation-building, the securing of Buddhism, and the Muslim revival—the same factors that have been described in this dissertation as contributors to multiple identities in the Patani region—can also be said to have contributed to interethnic tensions, something that will be further discussed in this chapter. In the following I will also look at interethnic relations and interethnic tension in the light of multiple identities to see how tension has developed and how it is accommodated and negotiated in different situations.

Interethnic Tension

> Life has changed, it has changed. We don't have freedom anymore. Business is down and it is hard to get work, and there is no trust between the religions, between Islam and Buddhism.[428]

This was the response from one of the interviewees, a young Malay Muslim man from Nong Chick district in Pattani, when asked if the violence has affected the way he lives his life. Others, both Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists, expressed similar views, pointing towards what they perceive to

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428 Interview, 19th April 2008 a.

be a lack of trust between the religions.[429] One Thai Buddhist woman from Yaring district provides the following account:

> In my village, there is not much change, but there is some uncertainty between the different (religious) groups. There is still a quite good relationship, but not a hundred per cent trust (*wai jai*), because people don't know who is behind all the violence. We have no idea. For example, in the past I used to small talk late in the evening with my neighbours, friends, and the elderly in the village. But now, already around six o'clock, people will say: "Well, I guess it is time to go home now". People are more careful.[430]

The recognition of interethnic tension since the renewed outbreak of the full-scale insurgency in 2004 was acknowledged by a number of interviewees and informants, a tension that was exclusively expressed in terms of religion and the waning of trust between Muslims and Buddhists. Many of them also stressed that this is a phenomenon that has occurred in the wake of violence, and thus interreligious tension was never seen as a cause of violence. In fact, a number of people I talked to emphasised the peaceful coexistence in which they used to live prior to the violence.[431] This young Malay Muslim teacher from Yaring district serves as an example: "Between the different religions there is a lack of trust now, and people are more on guard towards each other. Before, this problem never occurred."[432]

Despite the long history of insurgencies in the region, even older people who have experienced previous revolts expressed that the level of trust never was affected the same way as today. There are, however, still people who insist on upholding an image of interreligious harmony in the region, an image of peaceful coexistence and understanding that stands in grim contrast to the harsh realities in the region. A middle-aged Buddhist teacher I interviewed who liked to identify herself as a Pattani person (*khon pattani*), would define it further this way:

> A Pattani person, I think that a Pattani person is a good person. We live together in peace, we share, we are kind, generous, and we help each other. In my childhood I lived close to the river,

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429 Interview, 14th March 2008 a, 1st May 2008 a, 2nd May 2008 a.
430 Interview, 30th April 2008 b.
431 Interview, 14th March 2008 a, 17th March 2008 b, 19th April 2008 b, 25th April 2008 a.
432 Interview, 2nd May 2008 a.

and quite often some Muslim people would come rowing in their boat selling some kind of fish, and I used to buy fish from them.[433]

Another example of this tendency to idealize interreligious relations was found in a presentation of a research project a young Malay Muslim woman at Prince of Songkla University in Pattani was working on. The project, which at this stage was incomplete and unpublished, examined the level of cultural integration among Muslims, Buddhists, and Chinese in Pattani town, and gave numerous examples of integration in work situations, in the different neighbourhoods, but also in relation to education, voting habits during elections, and interreligious marriages. While the study gave a lot of interesting examples of cultural integration, extensively illustrated with descriptive photographs, the conclusion of all aspects of the study was that the level of cultural integration is high and rising.[434] Nowhere did the study discuss or question different aspects of the findings, how representative the samples were, if the findings were unambiguous, and so on. The whole research seemed to be a collection of data sampled with the sole purpose of supporting the assertion of high cultural integration.

Considering the insecurity and distrust many experience, the above statement by the middle-aged teacher and the one-dimensional conclusions of this PSU research appear to be more prescriptive than descriptive. They seem to present an image of how people would like things to be, rather than how they really are. Even if this interreligious harmony and religious and cultural integration were the reality in the past, there is no denying that the last decade of violence has had its effect, leading to more interreligious tension—something that the responses of the interviewees and informants of this study have generally confirmed. While examples from communities more directly affected by violence report more severe distrust and tension, leading for example to the rise of *ruam thai* (Thai united) groups, where Buddhists arm themselves in order to protect their communities against Muslims,[435] it should be noted that the lack of trust and insecurity reported by interviewees and informants in this study were of a comparatively milder nature. This is not to say, however, that interreligious tension only represents a real problem in communities with a

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433 Interview, 1st May 2008 b.
434 Field notes, 21st April 2008.
435 McCargo 2008: 125 f.; International Crisis Group, *Southern Thailand: The Problem with Paramilitaries*, Asia report No 140 23rd October 2007, p. 23 f.

high level of conflict. Even in less affected areas, the distrust between Muslims and Buddhists constitutes a major obstacle on the road to peace.

The acceptance of the idea that Muslims are troublemakers is not uncommon in Thailand. An expressed dislike for Muslims is something that I have frequently witnessed, even though the people who articulate it do not really know any Muslims and have problems explaining why they feel the way they do. Occasionally statements like "they do not eat pork" can be a sufficient explanation. Moreover, since the escalation of the southern violence over the last ten years, Thai people, who in general seem to know very little about the problems in the south, are nonetheless well aware that the violence is caused by Muslims, something that again confirms their conception of Muslims as troublemakers. This is a prejudice Malay Muslims from the Patani region experience whenever they visit other provinces in Thailand and many make an effort to present their religion and their culture in a positive manner. Some young Malay Muslims from Pattani explained to me that they had started a charity project that distributed food, schoolbooks and copies of the Quran to Rohingya refugees from Myanmar at the Thai-Myanmar border.[436] Another effort to change the conception of southern Muslims has been made by the southern rock band Hammer. Hammer is a Muslim band within the 'songs for life' (*phlaeng phuea chiwit*) genre. Some of the band members have roots in the deep south, and they sing both in the southern Thai dialect and in Patani Malay. In recent years Hammer has frequently performed on TV, almost regularly at channels like ASTV,[437] with heavily patriotic lyrics, presenting Muslims within the ideology of Thainess. The chorus of one of their songs goes like this: "We are Pattani people / We speak *jawi* / We are Muslims / But we are good hearted people (*khon jai dii*)".

Contributors to Interethnic Tension

Although interethnic tension by interviewees and informants was generally described as interreligious tension, practically all the people I talked to or interviewed were quick to dismiss religion as the cause of violence and conflict in the Patani region. Most people felt they had to underline that religion has nothing to do with the southern problems, and did so even before I began asking questions or in answer to a question that was wholly

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436 Field notes, 7th February 2010.
437 ASTV is the TV channel for the People's Alliance for Democracy, the so-called Yellow shirts.

unrelated to the insurgency. Many apparently felt the need to stress that all religions fundamentally represent peace and kindness and to highlight the claim that religious diversity did not lead to interethnic conflict. In this connection, I was met with a range of examples of how people in the region live peacefully as neighbours, participate in each other's social activities and interact in their everyday dealings.

While I agree that the problems in the Patani region are not caused by religious tension and that the conflict is basically not about religion—although religion may be of importance in the recruitment of new militants and in the perception of Malay Muslim identity and the history of the region[438]—this intense emphasis on interreligious harmony nonetheless appeared put on. More than anything else it presented a prescribed picture of how people would want things to be, or at best it described how it used to be sometime in the past, typically presented as childhood memories of the people interviewed, as illustrated above. Although people for the most part still live peacefully side-by-side, the fact remains that at least the last decade's escalation of violence and the full resurgence of a separatist revolt have also damaged interreligious and interethnic relations in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat.

There are three main reasons that interaction between the two main ethno-religious groups has deteriorated. Perhaps the most obvious reason is the violent conflict. As roadside bombs and assassinations by Malay Muslim insurgents have terrorised the region for nearly a decade, Thai Buddhist villagers, who as a group have been particularly affected by this violence, have become more sceptical of their Malay Muslim neighbours. Compared to the assumed number of a few thousand militants,[439] the Thai military, with its more than 60,000 deployed forces, should be invincible by any measure,[440] and the fact that they are not leaves people speculating

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438 Both Askew and McCargo have discussed the extent to which militant movements are motivated by religion (Askew 2010: 125 ff.; McCargo 2008: 176 ff.).

439 Estimated numbers of active militants varies considerably. Some researchers operate with a number between a couple of hundred to around 1,000 militants (Abuza 2009: 79; Davis 2005; Gunaratna et al. 2005: 45, 54). Thai military sources, however, differ greatly, variously estimating between 5,000 and 20,000 militants (Funston 2008: 43 f.). A document describing a seven-step strategy to independence, confiscated from alleged militant leaders, provides two numbers – 3,000 and 30,000. Helbardt argues that the first of these may refer to the active military force, while the latter may be an indication of the number of villagers with basic training or perhaps the number of guerrillas considered necessary for the armed struggle (Helbardt 2011: 29).

440 Deep South Watch, 28th June 2009, Srisompob Jitpiromsri, "Five years, five months: analysis of the 65 months of unrest in the southern border provinces":

about how much support and protection militants receive from the average villager. Particularly beginning from 2004, with the Tak Bai incident as only one example, the militants have proved themselves able to mobilize large groups of villagers to participate in different demonstrations and manifestations, something that may indicate widespread support among the locals.[441] Many Thai Buddhist interviewees and informants admitted to a general scepticism of Malay Muslims. Similarly, as more Thai Buddhists now arm themselves and as clandestine Buddhist militias are organised to retaliate against the violence,[442] Malay Muslim villagers are equally reluctant to trust Thai Buddhist strangers.

The other, and far less serious, reason can be linked to the increased religious awareness and the Muslim revival described above. Horstmann points to the impact of new puritan religious movements as a factor that has put a strain on interreligious relations. On the basis of his research in the area around Songkla Lake, he explicitly discusses the influence of the *dakwah* movements, Tablighi Jemaat in particular.[443] Findings from my material, however, suggest that the whole *khana mai* trend could be discussed in this regard.

In previous chapters I have argued that the challenge from modernist or Muslim revivalist trends in Thailand, known as *khana mai* (the new school), have had a dual impact on Malay Muslim life in the Patani region. In one sense, the revival has strengthened Muslim identities and provided a space wherein people can express this identity and also incorporate ethnic aspects that have been previously supressed. In another sense, however, the rivalry between modernists and traditionalists has made the latter group (which constitutes a clear majority of the population) defensive as the modernists tend to use scriptural evidence from the Quran and *hadith* texts in their critique of traditionalists, something that traditionalists, who mainly lean on *adat* (local customs and beliefs), cannot provide. And as Joll has noted, although the traditionalists are the overwhelming majority in the region, the influence of the modernists is disproportionately large.[444] As a result, a certain insecurity has emerged among the average Malay Muslim villager about right and wrong religious practice, and thus the people that I interviewed tended to avoid talking about religious practice altogether. Only orthodox practices like the observance of daily prayers, the study of religious texts and practices like

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441 McCargo 2008: 164 ff.
442 McCargo 2008: 125 f.; International Crisis Group, *Southern Thailand: The Problem with Paramilitaries*, Asia report No. 140 23rd October 2007, p. 23 f.
443 Horstmann 2011: 509.
444 Joll 2012: 78.

fasting, *hajj* or *zakat*, were highlighted. Horstmann has reported similar observations.[445]

The Muslim revival and the rise of *khana mai* have also had an impact on interreligious relations. The 'Cultural Revolution' referred to above has resulted in a growing awareness, particularly among the young and urban educated middle-class, about religious practice and what kind of activities they engage in. In an attempt to lead a pious life and follow an Islamic ethical standard many people tend to avoid activities and situations that previously they would have been involved with. As a consequence, they live a life that is more secluded and removed from their Buddhist neighbours. Examples I came across during fieldwork involved the reluctance of some Muslims to be seen at places where alcohol or pork are served or to participate in fairs and activities that take place on temple grounds. I also observed scepticism towards typical Thai courtesies like the *wai* (Thai greeting)[446] or offering respect to objects and images, something that many Muslims regard as idol worship, and thus as a legacy of Buddhism Similarly, teachers at Prince of Songkla University in Pattani also reported increased complaints about campus activities from some student groups and organisations that have questioned many of the university's undertakings as well as the mixing of male and female students during various leisure activities and sporting events.[447]

Particularly many Thai Buddhists expressed frustration over what they experienced as strict Muslim rules and how they contributed to limiting everyday contact between Buddhists and Muslims. The sharing of food is an obvious challenge. Although local Buddhists claim they adapt and always go to restaurants with *halal* food when they dine with Muslims, in practice Buddhists and Muslims rarely eat together as they prefer to eat at different restaurants and markets. My material also suggests that as a result of the recent Muslim revival, many Muslims are increasingly conscious about food habits. A young Malay Muslim woman from Yaring, for example, complained about her friend, who she felt was too strict when it came to food:

> She refuses to eat at KFC because she says it is not *halal*. But my sister used to work in a chicken factory and they packed

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445 Horstmann 2011: 506 f.
446 This observation is confirmed by Joll 2012: 69.
447 Field notes, 25th April 2008, 17th February 2010.

meet in boxes stamped with: "*Halal* chicken for KFC." Well, my friend is very strict (*khreung*). She is a follower of Lutfi.[448]

This young woman, who is also serious about her food habits, thought her friend became stricter after she began listening to the speeches of Lutfi and getting more involved with the *khana mai*.

With fewer common places to share food comes fewer arenas for interaction between Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists, and a lot of this is a consequence of the increased piety among some Muslims. The trend, however, is far from ubiquitous, as there are many Malay Muslims that remain less concerned with these types of things. For example, the few beer gardens and bars that exist in Pattani town are largely frequented by Malay Muslim men.

Another aspect of this revival that can be said to have led to a decrease in interreligious integration is the growth and popularity of private Islamic schools. While traditional *pondok* schools also created a situation in which many Malay Muslim and Thai Buddhist children had fewer arenas of interaction, the current increase in modern private Islamic schools has expanded the number of Malay Muslim children that receive their education in an all-Muslim environment.[449] Moreover, contrary to the traditional *pondok* schools, private Islamic schools are in most cases also run by teachers leaning towards the *khana mai* trend,[450] and thus the above mentioned factors leading to less interaction are reinforced through educational institutions and spread to the younger population.

Buddhist teachers I interviewed reported a development in which school or university activities are abolished or adapted due to pressure from Muslim groups that are concerned with such matters as male-female interaction—issues that were rarely raised in the past.[451] As mentioned, Muslims also visit Buddhist temples less frequently and rarely participate in activities held on temple grounds. While in the past, the temple served as a local community gathering place for both Buddhists and Muslims alike, I was given the impression that today the temple, being a Buddhist place of worship, is perceived as an inappropriate place for Muslims. [452] During an interview with an older man from Pattani, for instance, I was told about the past and how he as a little boy used to go to temple school.[453] His nephew who was listening to the interview was clearly surprised by this

448 Field notes, 12th February 2010.
449 Joll 2010: 259 f.
450 Joll 2012: 49.
451 Field notes, 25th April 2008, 17th February 2010.
452 Interview, 30th April 2008 a; Jerryson 2009: 34 f., 43 f.
453 Interview 19th March 2008.

information and had difficulties accepting that the local temple school was the only alternative at that time for many Malay Muslims. Also illustrative, is Malay Muslim's interest in magical objects. According to an elderly woman working as a temple assistant in a Pattani temple, in the past it was not uncommon for Muslims to come to this particular temple to purchase the famous amulets produced there. Now, however, this was less common.

This could perhaps be a result of the modernist rejection of combining magical elements with Islam. But it may also be a consequence of the third contributor to interethnic tension: Thai nation-building and its specific local manifestation – i.e., the securing of Buddhism in the deep south, resulting in an unclear distinction between Thai national interests and Buddhism.

A number of Thai Buddhists informants expressed regret and discontent with the fact that Muslims appear to be withdrawing from social arenas that they used to share. Some also saw it as a hindrance in everyday life.[454] However, it is far from only Muslims who contribute to this tendency. Other researchers have suggested that the militarisation of temple grounds has contributed to the linking of Buddhism with the Thai state and state violence, and that this is an additional reason that Malay Muslims tend to avoid them.[455] Within the ideology of Thainess, as indicated in this dissertation, national values and Buddhist values are more or less indistinguishable. Thus, even when Thai authorities make an effort to try and welcome religious minorities into the Thai nation, there are aspects of this nation that implicitly exclude these minorities from being fully accepted. This has been particularly evident to Malay Muslims in the Patani region, and the strategy of securing Buddhism, particularly with the more recent militarisation of Buddhism, seems to underscore this notion.

Although we cannot point to a Buddhist religious movement as a compelling cause, as we to some degree can in the case of *khana mai* and *dakwah* movements, there are indications of a certain withdrawal amongst Buddhists as well. Again, most of this is likely to be a direct consequence of the violence and the fact that the militant movement consists of Muslims that propagate anti-Buddhist sentiments. However, Thai Buddhist insecurities and fears have also led to a tighter embrace of religion as well as the ideology of Thainess, something that is apparent not only in the state-initiated strategy, but also in the local securing of Buddhism in the region. With the threat against the unity of the nation as a result of separatist activities, a response from many Thai Buddhists has been to

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454 Field notes, 25th April 2008, 17th February 2010.
455 Jerryson 2009: 36 ff., 41; McCargo 2009a: 21 ff.

embrace national symbols, traditional Thai culture and what many would call Thai values, which, as argued for earlier, also imply Buddhist ideas and values. An unintended result of this response has been a further widening of the gap between Muslims and Buddhists as Muslims may feel excluded from these aspects of Thainess. Overcoming interethnic or interreligious tension is thus a task that must be confronted by both Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists.

Despite the ongoing violence, with its almost daily bombs and killings, people in the Patani region for the most part try to live their lives as normally as they can. With the death tolls and number of injuries rising, most people are affected by the violence either by losing someone close to them or someone more peripheral. However, the intensity of the violence differs severely from district to district, and most people still live relatively safe lives. In this respect, the claim that Buddhists and Muslims live peacefully side by side is valid. The increase in interethnic or interreligious distrust, as described above, is nonetheless a reality, and the strained relationship between Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists is a serious challenge for the future of the region.

Protecting Religion and Culture

The consequence of the interethnic tension or deteriorated relations is a worry in the respective communities for the prospects of Malay Muslim and Thai Buddhist religion and culture in the region. A number of Thai Buddhist interviewees and informants expressed concern for the survival of Buddhism in the region. As the killings persist, many Buddhists either move from their villages into the city centres or leave the region altogether.[456] Rural temples thus have a hard time recruiting monks and novices to uphold and maintain basic rituals, ceremonies and temple activities, and without local Buddhist communities to support the monks, temples struggle to endure, an issue also discussed by both Jerryson and McCargo.[457] In other words, the concern about the future of Buddhism is understandable, although few interviewees shared the views held by one of the above-mentioned monks, who saw the protection of Buddhism in Pattani as part of a larger strategy of protecting Thailand as such:

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456 Exact numbers of fleeing Thai Buddhists have proved difficult to obtain. McCargo 2009a: 14, suggests an estimate of between 35,000 and 100,000 people.
457 Jerryson 2009: 50; McCargo 2009a: 21 ff.

It is important to encourage local people (Buddhists) so they can continue living here. If not, Thailand will become a Muslim country. I believe that in the next 50 years this area (Thailand and Thailand's neighbouring countries) is dominated by the Muslim religion, like in Pakistan. Before, Pakistan was Buddhist. In Afghanistan, Pakistan, they were all Buddhists, Buddhists everywhere. But now they are Islamic countries and there are a lot of bad things going on there. I think this will happen here as well.[458]

While I found the views of this particular monk rather extreme compared to other monks I interviewed and talked to, it appears that the fear of Muslim dominance is widespread among some monks. McCargo has detected similar positions within the Thai Sangha[459] and Horstman, who has studied interethnic and interreligious relations around Songkla Lake, also argue that the violence of the Patani conflict has affected how monks view Islam even in areas unaffected by the violence.[460]

For the Thai Buddhists I interviewed and engaged with, however, such concerns were not widely held. Instead of keeping a distance from their Muslim neighbours, they compensated for their minority status by strengthening their ties with Thai culture and the nation, or as Horstmann has noted, by reproducing Thainess.[461]

These different approaches essentially represent two different outcomes of the same phenomenon. They both see their Buddhist identity as inextricably linked to their Thai identity, and Buddhism as linked to the Thai state, but while the former takes on a more confrontational approach, the latter is more defensive and concerned with building up one's own confidence. Which approach people tend to take depends on a number of factors, but one social movement activist working with Buddhist villagers all over the three southernmost provinces suggests that whenever the level of trust is high the level of integration is also high, and that in communities where Thai Buddhists and Malay Muslims have lived side by side for generations, people tend to be less confrontational in their negotiation of Thainess and their opinions about Islam.[462] These are communities that have developed what Horstmann has called 'organic solidarity',[463] something that will be elaborated upon in the following chapter.

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458 Interview, 24th March 2008.
459 McCargo 2009a: 15 ff.
460 Horstmann 2011: 508.
461 Horstmann 2002: 56.
462 Field notes, 29th April 2008.
463 Horstmann 2011: 488.

As for the Malay Muslim community, concern for the survival of Malay Muslim culture has been a continuous challenge ever since Thai Nation-building made its way into the southern borderlands (as described in Part I). Religious freedom, cultural maintenance and the permission to speak the local Malay dialect, together with a desire to govern and rule over their own community, have been ongoing causes of local struggle. However, the relative success in recent years of Thai primary education in the south, and thus also the Thai language, has left Malay Muslims with a renewed concern about the prospects of their cultural heritage. In combination with the high level of school dropouts and unemployment, and the subsequent problems with drug abuse and crime, it is basically a formula for discontent and grievance. The feeling of being left out among many Malay Muslims is a serious problem and perhaps the greatest challenge for Thai authorities. In order to fight the insurgency, winning the trust of Malay Muslims is as crucial as the military defeat of the insurgents. All people I spoke with wanted to see an end to the violence and few expressed much sympathy for a fully independent Patani state. However, although I found that the insurgents held little credibility, the credibility and authority of the Thai government seemed to be just as low.

I have here described three contributors to interethnic tension. However, fuel for continued tension seems to be found in a number of grievances people struggle with, and such grievances may vary, not only depending on ethno-religious background, but also depending on factors like social background and whether people come from a rural or urban upbringing.

Rural Grievances and the Struggle over Natural Resources

The issue of Muslim grievances has been elaborated by a number of studies and reports,[464] which have shown how challenges for farmers and fishermen in the villages mainly relate to the access, management and maintenance of natural resources. The number of large commercial fishing trawlers owned by Bangkok Thais keeps expanding their business around Pattani Bay and along the Narathiwat coastline, and according to villagers,

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464 Refer to, for example, Supara 2005, and the report from the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC), *Overcoming Violence through the Power of Reconciliation*, 16th May 2006.

these trawlers are operating closer and closer to the shore, frequently crossing over their permitted boundary lines, something that results in a dramatic decrease in the daily catch of local fishermen.

For centuries their small boats have executed sustainable fishing in the region and provided jobs for the entire costal community. Traditionally the men have been responsible for the fishing while the women have taken care of processing and selling. With the fish now absent, whole communities must look for jobs elsewhere, leaving many Malay Muslims from the south of Thailand searching for jobs as illegal migrant workers in Malaysia, typically in construction or as cooks in Thai-food restaurants (so-called *thom yum goong* restaurants). [465] Another competitor to the traditional fishermen is the many smaller fishing trawlers found in places like Pattani Bay, anchored in the mouth of Pattani River. These boats are also largely owned by non-Malays, with a crew consisting of cheap migrant labour, predominantly from Myanmar. Other challenges for rural people are so-called development projects, typically dam and irrigation projects that have been implemented without consulting local farmers and fishermen, often leading to disturbances in the ecosystem, and thus to the destruction of livelihoods.[466]

As Srisompob and Panyasak have noted, such socioeconomic grievances fail to explain the resurgence of violence in a time of high rubber prices and relatively good living conditions for Malay Muslims.[467] They are nonetheless relevant in order to comprehend how interethnic relations and multiple identities are negotiated. Combined with widespread suspicion that Thai authorities and big business are plotting to exploit the region's rich reserve of natural resources and control potential future oil recoveries and other extractive industries, these harsh realities have led to deep-rooted antagonism against Thai dominance in rural Malay Muslims areas, something that also affects local Thai Buddhist villagers, although it is not the average Thai Buddhist villager who holds power or has economic interests at stake. When I asked a young woman from Yaring about the natural resources of the region and deposits of precious metals, she looked at me with surprise, lowered her voice, and asked me how I knew about these things. I replied that I believed the likely existence of such deposits were well-established and no big secret. She agreed, but also noted that people would probably not discuss it very openly:

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465 Dorarirajoo 2002: 365ff.
466 Field notes, 29th April 2008.
467 Srisompob and Panyasak 2007.

> Rumours say that there are large oil reserves in Pattani Bay. I think most people don't know this. I have read about it in Matichon,[468] but most people do not read Matichon. I think this is one of the main sources to the problems in this area. I don't know if it's only me, but I think so. This is one of the major issues.[469]

Oil and gas reserves are found in the large Pattani Basin in the Gulf of Thailand. However, this basin is associated with Pattani only by name, as it stretches from the north of Pattani Bay all the way past Chumpon Province in the upper south. Pattani Bay and the coastline of Pattani and Narathiwat are not part of this area.

Nonetheless, rumours about oil deposits and clandestine economic interests flourish, and in situations like the one reproduced here, where natural resources and rural livelihoods are discussed, the ethnic Malay identity takes over, even with well integrated people who normally identify themselves as Thais. There is an underlying tension in these questions from which the concept of "us" and "them" will surface. The antagonism is directed towards big business and the political power play. However, Thai Buddhist villagers who have no investments or economic interests in Malay Muslim areas are easily associated with the Thai and Sino-Thai elites, and are thus taken as stakeholders in the to some extent simplistic dichotomy of repressed Malay Muslim villagers on the one side and a ruling Thai Buddhist elite on the other.

In rural areas, the kind of injustice and exploitation described here directly affects the livelihoods of whole communities. Among the more urban middle class of Malay Muslims on the other hand, the grievances are of a different nature, and one can easily sense a feeling of relative deprivation within their ranks.

Relative Deprivation among Urban Malay Muslims

As mentioned above, a quick look at the student population of Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, reveals some interesting aspects that, in comparison to the situation ten to fifteen years ago, illustrate how the region is changing. Previously, Prince of Songkla University was a renowned university where students from all over the country sought to be.

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468 Thailand's leading political newspaper.
469 Field notes, 20th February 2010.

Today, mainly due to the violence, the students who used to dominate the student population no longer aspire to study in Pattani and, as a consequence, about 80 per cent of the student body is now local and predominantly Malay Muslim. Additionally, the majority of students are also female, not only in the Department of Education and disciplines that have been traditionally dominated by women, but also in disciplines like Political Science. The increasing numbers of local graduates expect to find employment opportunities in the region, but to date such opportunities have proven difficult to come by.

Combined with the challenge of integrating the many Malay Muslims who return from religious studies abroad, the pressure on urban areas of the Patani region is intensified. The resources of a growing middle class are not utilized as there are not enough jobs to employ all qualified persons and meet the demands and expectations of young and educated Malay Muslims. And although many more local Malay Muslims are employed as government officials these days, top positions are still mainly occupied by Thai Buddhists.[470]

Malay Muslim grievances are diverse and they differ depending on socioeconomic background. This means that the interests of Malay Muslims in the rural primary sector are different from those in urban areas who work in the state bureaucracy, governmental institutions and the like. For the former group, control over natural resources as well as protection from big business, vested state interests and the interference of non-local actors are of primary importance, while for the latter group, the possibility of promotion and access to top positions are a priority. However, the feeling that Malay Muslims do not enjoy the same opportunities as Thai Buddhists and that wealth is unequally distributed between the region's ethno-religious groups is prevalent among both groups, as is the notion that the three southernmost provinces are governed by Thai Buddhists who do not understand the needs and customs of the Malay Muslim majority population. But as their realities are so different, their answers to this problem and their main priorities are also likely to differ considerably.

Although many interviewees and informants gave the impression of being well integrated into Thai society and identified with some form of redefined Thainess, in issues about the management of natural resources and accessibility to higher positions, there would surface a clear understanding of "us" (Malay Muslims) and "them" (Thai Buddhists). Again it is the dichotomy of repressed Malay Muslims against a ruling Thai

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470 Again, one does not have to look further than Prince of Songkla University to exemplify this trend.

Buddhist elite that is expressed. This does not mean, however, that all these people bear a grudge against everything Thai. It would be simplistic to read this into a for or against Thailand. In many cases this dichotomy is an expression of general system critique, and it is the sense of injustice that triggers the Malay identity. This critique, however, nonetheless also frames many rural Thai Buddhists who also struggle with many of the same socioeconomic problems as their Malay Muslim neighbours.

Thai Buddhist Grievances

The Thai Buddhist population also has its grievances, predominantly in rural areas and among working class Buddhists; and the general view of Thai Buddhists as a ruling elite insensitive to Malay Muslim realities also affect these people, who are by no means part of this elite. Many of the same challenges that face Malay Muslim farmers and fishermen also face Thai Buddhist farmers, and the economic situation for them is equally grim.[471]

Even if they do not share the resentments of their Malay Muslim neighbours with regard to language, religion and other cultural aspects, they too struggle with issues concerning access to and management of natural resources and experience distance and alienation from policy makers and bureaucrats. However, little attention is paid to this group, perhaps because they are not viewed as directly relevant to the violent conflict. A number of Thai Buddhist informants expressed discontent with the image of Thai Buddhists as a ruling elite. As far as they are concerned, they face similar challenges as Malay Muslim villagers, but due to the violent conflict, attention is directed towards Malay Muslim grievances, and Thai Buddhist villagers feel left in the lurch.[472] This is an observation that Askew has also made.[473]

Even people who can be said to be members of the Thai Buddhist elite resent this picture of Thai Buddhist hegemony. Among the people I interviewed in this category, many of them were sympathetic to Malay Muslim challenges concerning language and religion, and identified themselves as part of the local community. The allegation of Malay Muslim nationalist propaganda that they are Thai colonisers (*penjajah siye*) thus

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471 Field notes, 29th April 2008, and interview, 26th March 2008 c.
472 Field notes 26th April 2008, 17th February 2010, and interview, 24th March 2008 a.
473 Askew 2009a: 69.

seemed unfair and contrary to their own self-perception.[474] The fact that the region actually was colonised by the Thais was overlooked, and through the veil of Thainess and its Thai nationalist narratives they neither saw themselves as part of this colonising process nor acknowledged the continuation of this process today. Chaiwat explains this well:

> [T]hough land, space and territory are geographical concepts, they are also part of a juridico-political geography, permeated with power. For those who are in control of the land, it seems normal and logical to exercise the power that has been in their possession for so long that the traces of pre-existing freedoms are hard to find[475]

Shifting Identities

It is an overt fact that the Thai state exercises strict control over the region through political institutions, the bureaucracy and security services, and that top positions are held by trusted Thai Buddhist officials. Considering the status and life situation of many local Thai Buddhists, however, the conflict line between repressed Malay Muslim locals and a ruling Thai Buddhist elite nonetheless appears too simplified, as neither Malay Muslims nor Thai Buddhists are homogenous groups. In reality there are power struggles both within and between ethno-religious groups, just as there are differing and contradictory understandings of identity both within and between groups; and if this reality is not understood, we might also fail to recognise how different social and political arguments, and different forms of religious and nationalist agitation, resonate in various strata of the population.

The insurgency of southern Thailand has no doubt affected ethno-religious relations in the region, and despite the fact that most people try to live their lives as normal, people inevitably are influenced by the violence as well as the ongoing religious and nationalist rhetoric. In such a situation, religious and ethnic, but also national, bonds provide a sense of belonging—an imagined community and a comfort in the dangerous environment in which people of the Patani region live. Nevertheless, the identification of religious and ethnic belonging and how this fits into perceptions of national identity, be it Thai or Patani Malay, varies

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474 Field notes, 17th February 2010.
475 Chaiwat: 2009: 13.

considerably within ethno-religious groups—a crucial recognition when trying to map out political solutions and strategies for the troubled region. Both socioeconomic and educational backgrounds are, according to my material, just as important as the actual ethno-religious background. This is an important nuance that Askew has also pointed out. Askew finds it hard to characterise the Malay Muslim identity of the Patani region in simple terms:

> For every Malay nationalist who regards the Thai state as the perpetrator of injustice there is another who resents insurgent groups and affirms the claim to belong to an entity called "Thailand". For every Malay Muslim who may recount part of the historical narrative of loss or suffering following from the defeat of the Patani Sultanate by Siam two hundred years ago, there are many more who profess no interest in the past.[476]

Askew goes on to criticise McCargo's citation of a claim from a former resident of the region: "Scratch a Malay Muslim and you find a separatist underneath".[477] In Askew's opinion, this is only concealing the diversity of Malay Muslim identities:

> It is just as common to scratch a Malay Muslim and hear one using the expression Rak Chart (love the country/Thailand) and happy to identify as Thai, yet conducting most of his/her daily life in the local Malay dialect.[478]

Askew's point is an important one. There are many Malay Muslim identities and not all of them fit the main conflict lines in the deep south. This does not mean, however, that Malay Muslims are necessarily either separatists or Thai patriots or loyalists, or that Thai Buddhists either live in harmony with their Muslim neighbours or express hostility towards them. A variety of identities are found among Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists alike. My argument is that most people nurture a multitude of identities that shift in accordance with the situation and context. Different settings trigger different aspects of their multiple identities. And moreover, the factors that dominate will vary from person to person. In the same way that a person can feel both Thai and Malay (as discussed in Part II of this dissertation, Chapter 8 in particular), a person can also identify with a

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476 Askew 2010: 144.
477 McCargo 2008: 4.
478 Askew 2010: 144.

variety of political projects without fully accepting the whole package. Even if someone does not support the violence and the methods of the militant movement, she can still support the general claim of independence and reject the legitimacy of the Thai state. Similarly, criticising the Thai state and opposing the policies of the military are not necessarily the same as being anti-Thai or being sympathetic to separatist ideas. Identities of the Patani region are diverse and they are shifting.

Interethnic relations are also marked by this diversity. While some communities, villages and neighbourhoods are characterised by mistrust and suspicion towards other ethno-religious groups, others try to cultivate interethnic unity and trust. There are a number of factors determining the degree of trust in a community and the level of violence is the most important one. However, how people relate to the dynamics between religious and national identity, and to newer religious trends, may also play a role. This is something that I will discuss in the following chapter.

12 Restoring Relations

In the previous chapter I indicated that the Muslim revival and Thai nation-building—more specifically, the securing of Buddhism—have not only contributed to multiple identities in the Patani region, but also have had an impact on interethnic relations. Violent insurgency is no doubt the main cause of interethnic tension. However, to regain trust and overcome tension, addressing issues concerning national and religious identity are important tasks as well. Moreover, in contrast to the violence, these are issues that can be directly addressed in the communities, and they are therefore of importance in order to reclaim a space wherein interreligious interaction, common interests and trust can be cultivated and maintained.

Preconditions for Peaceful Coexistence

Leaning on extensive ethnographic material from the area around Songkla Lake, just north of the turbulent Patani region, Horstmann has looked into Muslim and Buddhist coexistence and how people there, through what he calls 'organic solidarity', are able to maintain peaceful relations. His argument is that this solidarity consists of a complex arrangement of cultural resources, patronage networks and the ethical commitment of community leaders to positively invest in relations across religious divides. He also notes that peaceful coexistence is not a static, diachronic reality, but rather a dynamic yet fragile system that has to be constantly maintained.[479]

Although this area also consists of Muslims and Buddhists living together, the realities of the Songkla Lake and Patani regions are not that easily compared, since the Songkla Lake area does not struggle with the same issues of ethnicity and language nor share the violent history of its southern neighbouring provinces. In this sense, one should be careful not

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479 Horstmann 2011: 488.

to directly apply the experiences of the Songkla Lake area to the Patani region. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that the Thai Buddhist civil society activist of the previous chapter provided a description that resembles Horstmann's description of 'organic solidarity'. With more than 15 years experience in community work among people in the three southernmost provinces, she and her colleagues have a lot of experience in this field. First of all she differentiated between communities that have a high level of integration and trust and those that do not:

> It depends on how long people have lived together—their history. For example if the people in a community, both Muslims and Buddhists, have lived together for many generations, they know each other quite well, and they have a good relationship, they have a better understanding of each other. But if the villagers are newcomers or people come and go more frequently, like that, the relationship is not as good. [...] [Buddhists] who have had a good relationship with Muslim people since the past are really concerned with the situation. They don't want to see the situation get worse. They want people to live in harmony. [But] if one person do something wrong, and that person is a Muslim, they are able to differentiate and see that it was this person who did something wrong, that not all other Muslims are like that.[480]

Other interviewees and informants also distinguished between communities with a long history of coexistence as opposed to communities with people who have more recently moved to the region, and many of them insisted that the level of understanding and mutual trust was higher in communities that had such historical roots of coexistence. The civil society activist further described an elaborate system of communication and interaction that highlights how different ethno-religious groups acknowledge each other's cultural characteristics and distinctiveness. She used language as an example:

> Well, in these communities they have a kind of a mutual language that they can all understand. Buddhist Thais speak Thai and some of them speak Tai (southern Thai), and some of them can listen to and understand the Melayu language. They still understand each other even if they don't speak the same language. The Muslims can also speak Thai although not that

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480 Field notes, 29th April 2008.

good. I like this phenomenon very much. I think this is a very sweet thing about the identity here. I am really interested in these communities where Buddhists and Muslims live together. I think if there are only Buddhist people in a village they have a quite narrow perspective, it is not so good. And if there are only Muslims, that is not so good either. But in the communities where people live mixed together, it is a good opportunity to get to understand each other, where there is interaction between Buddhists and Muslims. I feel privileged to work with these people [...][481]

What this civil society activist describes here and above are communities that, despite being constantly tried by the violence and uncertainty that surrounds them, continue to negotiate a space wherein Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists can continue to coexist and engage in each other's lives without compromising their national and religious identities. During the interview, she also argued that in communities where integration and understanding are relatively high, trauma and crisis management is most successful. However, there is little doubt that the level of violence also affects how different communities are able to cope:

The reason for some people to have really strong feelings against Muslims is because they live in villages where Buddhist people have been attacked and killed. So they have strong feelings towards Muslims because they feel that they are victims [...] [Some of these communities] that are negative to Muslims, they want to protect their communities and they make leaflets to show their disagreement with the Muslim people, and they form groups to protect the village, and they also say no to Muslim visitors, and hang up posters saying Muslims are not welcome. They write messages like that.[482]

Among the thirteen villages she worked in at the time, however, she noted that perhaps only three openly reacted with this kind of seclusion and harsh agitation against Muslims. She also believed that these villages lacked this ethical commitment—what Horstmann has called 'organic solidarity'. From the reasoning of this informed activist we can deduce that there are at least two important preconditions for peaceful interethnic or interreligious relations. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, there is a need

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481 Field notes, 29th April 2008.
482 Field notes, 29th April 2008.

to reduce the level of violence. Even in the Songkla Lake area—which is not affected by the violence of the Patani region and where the overall conflict level is marginal—Horstmann nonetheless reports that interreligious coexistence has been tried by years of violence in the neighbouring provinces.[483] Secondly, there is a need for a common space wherein the different religious groups can meet and communicate—a space in which 'organic solidarity' can develop. Many interviewees and informants talked about how they tried to create or maintain such a space and how the violence had made this task more challenging.

The 'organic solidarity' described by Horstmann is close to what Dorarirajoo found between Malay Muslim fishermen and Thai Buddhists NGOs in their common struggle for the environment.[484] It also resembles what Askew presents in his account of village headmen in Pattani and the lower parts of Songkla. The relationship he describes between the Buddhist village headman Sunthon and Yusof, his Muslim counterpart from a nearby village, is a good example of how interethnic relations are cultivated and maintained.[485] The local reality within which people must navigate is a myriad of loyalties, networks and connections, some of which may be purely tactical, while others are a result of life-long relationships. Nonetheless, these loyalties and networks form the foundation of local communities and are thus also preconditions for peaceful coexistence and means by which to overcome interethnic tension.

Regaining Trust

While the violence, questions about autonomy, and structural problems concerning injustice and socioeconomic challenges are matters that, first and foremost, need to be handled politically, the conditions for interethnic coexistence can be largely dealt with in the communities, and a strong civil society is an advantage in this regard. Communication with and observations of different civil society initiatives and social movements operating in the region have revealed that the dynamic in the local communities is significant. Originally engaged in local development projects and environmental issues, and later, with the rise of insurgency and violence, committed to the healing process of local communities suffering from violence and unrest, the female activist quoted above has a

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483 Horstmann 2011: 508.
484 Dorarirajoo 2002: 365 f.
485 Askew 2009a: 77 f.

number of examples of the positive effects of local engagement and initiatives. She is a firm believer in social engagement as a tool for channelling frustration and grievances, and trusts that she has found a correlation between organised resistance/mobilisation and peaceful communities:

> In the 50 villages we work with in these 3 provinces, the people have […] a voice and they use it. So they won't turn to violence. They show their frustration with demonstrations, openly. For people in other villages, apart from these 50 that we work with, they are just as frustrated, but they don't have the same way of expression. They are not as organised.[486]

Her experience is that community work and local activism is empowering in the sense that people who are accustomed to expressing their frustrations and feelings of injustice through protests or campaigns will also be more capable of voicing their opinions and suggesting solutions. Thus they will be less likely to turn to violence. She does admit, however, that interreligious understanding is a continuous challenge, but suggests that the best way to overcome such challenges is to work together and interact on issues of common interest:

> Many Muslim volunteers are afraid to go into the Buddhist communities and work with them, because they don't know what the Buddhist people are thinking about them, and they don't know how to approach Buddhist people because they haven't worked with them before. Being a Buddhist myself, I know how to approach the Buddhist community and the Buddhist people, but also, I have been working with environmental issues with Muslim people, so I know both the Muslim and the Buddhist community.[487]

Many of the activities offered by this social movement employ religion and culture in an effort to heal the wounds of violence in both Malay Muslim and Thai Buddhist communities. This adds a sense of safety and encouragement (*kamlang jai*), and when they bring people from different villages together to perform music and engage in social activities, they aim to help build stronger (*tham hai khaeng raeng*) communities as well.[488] The idea is that confidence in one's own culture and identity will, in turn,

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486 Field notes, 29th April 2008.
487 Field notes, 29th April 2008.
488 Field notes, 29th April 2008.

lead to a lower conflict level and less interethnic tension—a result that Nik Abdul Rakib Bin Nik Hassan, the head of the Malay Studies section at Prince of Songkla University in Pattani, also found in his research on Malay Muslim communities in the region. According to him, the more confidence that a Malay Muslim village has in its own identity, the lower will be its level of conflict with the government.[489]

In other words, grassroots mobilisation and the building of a strengthened civil society can help to regain trust and overcome interethnic tension. However, this is not a given results. Grassroots initiatives such as those propagated by Ruam Thai and other local militant groups can only cause more resentment and tension; but even more innocent and basically peaceful movements can also contribute to keeping ethno-religious groups apart. Horstmann, for example, has depicted the growth of *dakwah* movements (which, more than anything else, are a result of bottom-up mobilisation) as a constraint upon interreligious coexistence.[490] Here I do not mean to imply that Tablighi Jemaat or other religious grassroots movements in themselves cause interreligious division; of this, there is little evidence. What I will argue, however, is that both Malay Muslim and Thai Buddhist dogmatism has proved to be a challenge, and that the promotion of locally rooted initiatives that avoid this damaging dogmatism are the key to the achievement of increased, sustainable interactions between Muslims and Buddhists. In other words, confidence in one's own culture and identity must not come at the expense of respect and tolerance for other people's culture and identity.

In his article, Horstmann argues that ethnic categories are not a priori determinants of identity and social coherence.[491] The same can be said of religious categories, and thus religious movements will always be products of their environment and people's needs and requirements. Hence, religious movements—particularly of the grassroots kind—are not predetermined to move in either this or that direction, but are rather influenced by the thoughts and actions of their adherents. The turn towards a more inclusive approach, in other words, is possible for all popular movements, be they religious or otherwise.

According to my material, community-based organisations, social movements, grassroots mobilisations and social activism seem to be potential key factors in regaining trust and mending interethnic relations. Moreover, they appear to be instrumental in creating a vital civil society—something that will be essential in the building of legitimacy and

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489 Field notes, 19th April 2008.
490 Horstmann 2011: 489.
491 Horstmann 2011: 489.

confidence in future conflict solutions. The impact of grassroots mobilisation and community-based organisations in villages and neighbourhoods in the region is not only apparent in the work of the social movement mentioned here. Other organisations, networks and initiatives that I have been introduced to can also present similar results, whether they have been involved in environmental work and nature protection, trauma management and community healing or engagement in social issues, dealing with everything from education to drug abuse.[492] Common to all these movements is the experience that whenever people are given the opportunity to learn about their rights, express their opinions and develop solutions that are relevant to their daily life experiences, the outcome is engaged citizens that have demands and expectations but that also take responsibility for their own lives and communities.[493]

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[492] Field notes, 29th April 2008, 4th February 2010.
[493] Field notes, 27th March 2008, 25th April 2008, 29th April 2008, 4th February 2010.

13 Local Views on the Patani Conflict

As indicated in the two previous chapters, it is first and foremost the insurgency and its violence that has instigated interethnic tension. Local understandings regarding the underlying causes of this violence, however, tend to reflect a fusion of rumours and conspiracy theories, and through interviews and discussions, informants revealed a reluctance to acknowledge the central role of the separatist movement. These discussions also revealed that Malay Muslims often feel torn between their ethnic and national identity on the one hand, and the expectations and suspicions of both Malay Muslim nationalists and Thai authorities on the other. Issues concerning the conflict such as the history of the Patani Sultanate, the question of independence and discussions with regard to the role of the military are thus extremely sensitive and difficult for Malay Muslims to relate to. Therefore, in addition to illuminating how the Patani conflict is viewed by local people, this chapter aims to show how people's multiple identities are challenged by such key conflict issues. Local interpretations of political reforms and socioeconomic challenges will be discussed as well.

Conspiracy Theories

Questions about the causes of violence were raised in most of the interviews I conducted with people in the Patani region. This was also an inevitable topic that would time and again surface in discussions about politics and social issues as well as in everyday conversations. If we look at the totality of violent acts, the picture is undoubtedly complex and hides a mishmash of actors, as Askew and others have noted. These range from rivalling criminal groups involved in trafficking and smuggling along an already disorderly border to opposing political interests (often involved with the same vested economic interests as the former) to mafia-style army

vs. police rivalries to insurgent groups fighting for an independent Patani state.[494] However, as Srisompob and McCargo have noted, crime and politically or economically motivated violence have always troubled this borderland. In fact, the entire country struggles with this culture of violence and crime. It is therefore the resurgence of separatist violence which is of the greatest interest to try and understand as it is this phenomenon that has represented the dramatic escalation of violence in recent years.[495] The insurgency has led to an increased disorder behind which other vested interests can be hidden and where crime can flourish further. Nonetheless, evidences show that the militant movement is behind most of the killings. These realities, however, seem difficult for many locals to grasp, and people in general, as well as the authorities, have been reluctant to point out the problem.[496]

While not denying the existence of a separatist insurgency, a majority of the people interviewed argued that there had to be more to the violence than this movement. A multitude of conspiracy theories flourish in the region and it is difficult to stay unaffected by the many rumours and stories that exist. Most people gave vague hints about people with power or influence (*phu mii ithipol*), pointing to drug trafficking or other illegal or shadowy activities, and argued that the people involved range from politicians, army commanders and police to mafia-style godfathers: "When people have power, they can use that power to benefit their own group."[497] Others came with even more vague statements, suggesting that certain people or certain interests want to sustain the level of conflict in the region, and somehow benefit from the continued security threats. Here is one example from a Thai Buddhist tinsmith in Pattani town:

> I think a lot of people, different groups, want to hold on to their benefits. I don't really know who they are, but there are some people, government officials, police and so on, who benefit from this region and who want to keep it the way it is. It is a rich area with resources, like for example oil.[498]

The point about control over natural resources mentioned in the previous chapter appears again here, suggesting that there are a number of people who believe that there are multiple hidden agendas among officials and

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494 Refer to Askew 2007 for a thorough discussion of the disorderly borderland.
495 Srisompob and McCargo 2010: 167.
496 Askew 2007: 5 ff.
497 Interview, 30th April 2008 b.
498 Interview, 25th March 2008 a.

political actors in the region. Another of the interviewees, a wealthy young Malay Muslim woman, even denied the whole issue of separatism and claimed the southern problems to be a combination of vested interests and bad governance:

> I think some people set it up. I don't think the bombing... I don't believe that, like they try to get the land back and things like that. I don't think so. I think some people benefit from this situation. [...] I think, I believe that when officials or whatever did something wrong they got punished by being sent down here (to Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat). So we get all the bad stuff.[499]

This was the only person I talked to who denied the whole issue of separatism all together, but there were many others that had difficulties accepting what this movement is all about. An interpretation might be that, for some people, to acknowledge the separatist movement would be to contradict their own self-perception as well as the religious and national identity that they have constructed. The image of a Malay Muslim population integrated into the Thai nation-state is, for example, shattered by the existence of a separatist rebellion; and so is the image of interethnic or interreligious harmony that many Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists like to project. This may help to explain why many people did not initially trust the reports about renewed separatist activities in the region. One Malay Muslim woman, a prominent community figure, well informed both politically and on the grassroots level, noted that at the beginning of 2004 she did not believe the talk about a separatist resurgence:

> At first, when there was talk about a new separatist movement here and that it was this movement who was behind all this violence, I didn't believe it. I didn't believe that this would reoccur now. But now, I believe it. Now I see that it is true. [...] But the rights of Muslims are much better now than before, although it has taken too long time to achieve.[500]

As this woman concludes, today it seems clear that the majority of violent acts are somehow related to the insurgency. People I talked to still cling to a multitude of explanations concerning what it is precisely that is going on. Even though people are aware of the insurgency and its ultimate goals, they

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499 Interview, 17th March 2008 a.
500 Field notes, 27th March 2008.

seem quite convinced that there are numerous interest groups ready to take advantage of this unclear, difficult and confusing situation in order to serve their own purposes; in this way they create an even more complex picture:

> I don't know for sure. Some people think it's about religion, some say it is because of the history of this land, and that it is about separatism. Others say it is because of drugs, and yet others blame it on politics. But many people believe it is a combination of all these reasons, and this mix becomes a big mess. [...] All of these problems are connected and linked together[501]

The challenge of this type of analysis, which invokes multiple causes and largely hidden, interlinked interests is that it may lead to resignation among locals regarding how to deal with the situation. Indeed it is quite common to hear people speak as if there is not much anyone can do to improve the safety of their communities. The problems are too complex. Others find the whole situation too complicated to even try to understand, like this Thai Buddhist vegetable seller in Pattani: "I don't know. I don't know either. Many people say it is separatism, but I don't know. I don't know what is going on here."[502] The many conspiracy theories and rumours obscure the situation and, as a consequence, it is hard to understand exactly what is going on. Then again, in a violent and dangerous atmosphere where accurate information is hard to come by and where the media and official propagandists are not always forthcoming with the facts, rumours, and even conspiracy theories, can sometimes be as noteworthy as any thing else. One woman engaged in the building of women's networks and social movements in Malay Muslim communities insisted that rumours and conspiracy theories, although exaggerated, nonetheless had to be taken into account along with other sources of information.[503]

Explanations of the causes of violence diverge in all directions and few people claimed to understand much of what is going on. A couple of the people interviewed, however, did attempt to point out more concrete causes of the violence, but in contrast to the above explanations, these came across as being too simplistic, echoing the propaganda of the Democrat Party, which aims to blame former Prime Minister Thaksin and

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501 Interview, 30th April 2008 b.
502 Interview 26th March 2008 c.
503 Field notes, 12th March 2008.

his policies for the violence.[504] Examples of such statements are as follows: "My opinion, from what I can read in the newspapers, is that since the *sor or bor tor* (the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre) was dissolved, things have not been normal";[505] and "It (the problem) is about justice and about the former government (Thaksin)."[506] While the policies of the Thaksin administration have likely contributed to an increase and amplification of the conflict level and the further alienation of many Malay Muslims, particularly after the Tak Bai tragedy,[507] there is not much evidence backing the argument that Thaksin is the main cause of conflict.[508]

Among the diversity of explanations, the general blame on criminal groups led to little further reflections about the southern violence among interviewees and other informants. There were, however, some aspects of the violent conflict that were discussed in more elaborate terms, two of which will be highlighted here: the question of independence and the question of state violence.

History and the Question of Independence

The question of independence is a highly sensitive one and a subject that neither Thai Buddhists nor Malay Muslims liked to discuss in-depth. As outlined in Part I of this dissertation, the Thai geo-body has become something of a sacred entity, and any talk about separatism (*baeng yaek din daen*) is thus indirectly a hard blow to the nation as well as the idea of Thainess. Independence is, in other words, an unthinkable thought.[509] Nevertheless, the existence of separatist groups within the militant movement is undisputable and from time to time the topic would thus surface.

Any serious account of the troubled southern provinces of Thailand will have to deal with the question of history and the former Malay Muslim Sultanate of Patani, as does this dissertation. Today's violence and conflict is not occurring in a vacuum, and the parallels to earlier insurgencies are

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504 A discussion on the role of Thaksin is found in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.
505 Interview, 26th March 2008 b.
506 Interview, 19th April 2008 a.
507 The Tak Bai incident is, for instance, referred to as the main motivation for joining the movement by one insurgent interviewed by Askew, Bangkok Post 19th July 2009, Mark Askew, "A Tale of Two Insurgents".
508 Askew 2007: 66 f.
509 Srisompob and McCargo 2010: 175.

striking, perhaps more so now than during the first couple of years after the full-scale resurgence of the conflict in January 2004. Recruitment to the movement is based upon a combination of religious motivation and historical consciousness.[510] In this sense, it is not only in the Thai context that the land and its history has become a sacred entity. Chaiwat has explained that when the ties binding people to their land are undercut by violence, the lives that derive meaning from such ties simply end:

> For such people "land is all they have," it is the very thing that connects them together. When this connection is nurtured by historical consciousness and constantly drummed up by the pain of unending violence, it means more than mere ethnic identity in a material sense because it endows the natural geography with a sense of the sacred, giving birth to sacred geography.[511]

It is in other words vital to understand the various historical currents in order to understand the insurgency and its movement. But to what extent is history part of Malay Muslim identity as such?

Judging from my own material, history is not one of the main components in the making of identity among Malay Muslims. People are certainly aware of the former Malay Kingdom of Patani as well as the preceding Brahman-Buddhist Kingdom of Lankasuka, but to say that the history of the region is important to people in their present circumstances would be an exaggeration. History was rarely stressed as being a significant factor in the interviews and conversations I had. And if I would raise the question, it was for the most part dismissed. One outspoken young Muslim woman put it like this:

> I think for me, it's just history, because there is history everywhere. I think we are proud of it, but [...] I know people try to make history into a big thing again, and separate people or whatever. But there is history everywhere. You know Thais used to fight with the Burmese. [...] Are we still going to fight with them? No, we are neighbours, we try to make it better. [...] It is the same.[512]

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510 Refer to Bangkok Post 19th July 2009, Mark Askew, "A Tale of Two Insurgents".
511 Chaiwat: 2009: 13.
512 Interview, 17th March 2008 a.

Another young Muslim woman also warned me of overemphasising the impact of history. During my time in Pattani I developed an interest in the dynamics between the three main landmarks representing the history of Islam, Buddhism and Chinese religion in the region: the Krue Se Mosque, Wat Chang Hai and San Jao Mae Lim Ko Niaw respectively. These are interesting landmarks as they are all of historical significance, and thus help consolidate the roots of different ethno-religious groups in the region. However, they are also contested sites because the myths and stories associated with them are to some degree constructed and shrouded by the past, as explained in Chapter 5.[513] Thus, over the course of time, they have been renegotiated and redefined. For anyone concerned with ethno-religious relations and the making of identity in the Patani region, history and the forming of such contested landmarks can provide valuable insights. In the daily lives of people in the region, however, there appears to be little awareness or concern with regard to such processes. As such, the abovementioned young Muslim woman who had discovered my interest in these contested landmarks was concerned that I had been misled by them or had read too much into their meaning:

> You know, we don't really think so much about Krue Se and these places. They are part of the history, but we don't think about them like that. I really don't think they are that important to us.[514]

Although history is a central part of the agitation of militant groups and is actively used in the recruitment of new militants,[515] my material suggests that the impact of history is of less relevance in the everyday life and self-perception of common city dwellers and villagers. For the most part, people are influenced by what is taught in school and presented through the media and in the public sphere, and thus issues like local history are not accentuated. Thai curriculum, for instance, only deals with the history of the Siamese or Thai Kingdoms, and never includes the local history of smaller kingdoms on the periphery of Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, Thonburi and Bangkok—e.g., Patani in the south and Lanna in the north.

However, because of the use and misuse of history in the current insurgency, this is an issue that people are becoming increasingly

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513 Some of these myths and stories are highlighted in Part 1, Chapter 5 of this dissertation.
514 Field notes, 14th March 2008.
515 McCargo 2009b; Bangkok Post 19th July 2009, Mark Askew, "A Tale of Two Insurgents".

interested in. The insurgents' choice of the Krue Se Mosque as the place from which to launch their April 2004 attack was no coincidence; and since this incident, locals have taken a greater interest not only in the mosque, but in other historical sights as well. To some degree, curiosity has induced the local population to learn a bit more about the region's local history. This notwithstanding, there is still remarkably little interest in local historical landmarks. During visits to Krue Se Mosque and the graveyards of old *raja*s from the Patani Kingdom around Mueang Pattani and Yaring district in March 2008, I was struck by how little had been done to promote and highlight these sights. While the actual Krue Se Mosque is duly marked with road signs and plaques from the Tourist Authority of Thailand, the nearby *perigi hang tuah* (a well that is associated with the legendary 15th century Malay hero Hang Tuah) was barely noticeable. In addition, the graveyards of former rajas are impossible to detect by anyone other than local villagers or those who know of their exact whereabouts.

Moreover, people who are interested in local history are dependent on orally transmitted sources, as there is little written material available.[516] These sources, however, are often of dubious quality, with their reliability greatly depending on which transmitter one happens to listen to. Indeed, there are a number of vested interests involved in the manner in which this history is presented. As for the few written sources that do exist, many people seem reluctant to openly keep them in their homes for fear that an interest in local history will itself cause the Thai government to become suspicious.

Despite recent events, most people seemed to have little interest in their local history. Nonetheless, local history is a controversial issue in the south, as it is in other parts of Thailand as well. Thai history has always been centred on the ruling dynasties in *mueang luang,* with their kings and palace, while other smaller kingdoms on the periphery have been downplayed and portrayed only as clients or vassals to the great Siamese kings. Due to the stress on Patani history from militant groups, however, the southern history has been particularly sensitive in Thailand. An illustrative example can be found in the content of a film that was set in the time of the famous Patani queens Ratu Hijau, Ratu Biru and Ratu Ungu, originally titled "Queens of Pattani". The film went into production in 2005, a year in which the violence in the Patani region was well underway. As a result, the filmmakers were pressured to change the title to the

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516 One young woman told me that her great grandmother used to tell her stories about history and her family lines while grooming her and her siblings' hair for head lice (Field notes, 12th February 2010).

historically misleading "Queens of Lankasuka", allegedly to avoid a connection to the ongoing insurgency.[517]

In other words, local history in the deep south is associated with separatism, and thus also seen as something anti-Thai. Malay Muslims therefore seem reluctant to discuss it. Teachers at the history department at Prince of Songkla University in Pattani explained that they found it hard to have a discussion about local history because their students are reluctant to join in. However, when the topic is changed to regional modern history, which concerns issues like nationalism and the decolonisation of Southeast Asia, the students are eager to talk and engage in discussions. This distinction is interpreted by the teachers as an indication that although the students actually have a profound general interest in the local history, they are nonetheless reluctant to enter into potentially sensitive issues and the taboos of Thai historiography.[518]

A profound interest in local history was also found among some Buddhist monks. With all the focus on the Malay Muslim Kingdom of Patani, perhaps one of the reasons that these monks are particularly interested in local history concerns their need to affirm that Buddhism is also a natural part of that history. During a visit to a Pattani temple I approached the abbot to inquire about the religion and culture in the region. Before I had a chance to present my prepared questions, however, the abbot immediately began to recite a detailed narrative regarding the region's local history—an account that lasted for a full two hours.[519] Although the abbot's presentation was selective, he displayed an impressive knowledge of local history, culture and languages. My field assistant on this occasion, a Thai Buddhist originally from Songkla, was noticeably impressed and fascinated by this introduction to the history of Patani, Langkasuka and beyond. Despite her high level of education, it was clear that she had never learned much about her local history. In fact, knowledge of local history is even less common among Thai Buddhists than it is among Malay Muslims, who have, after all, maintained a certain culture for the study of local history. With the honourable exception of Dr Krongchai Hattha, who has written valuable studies on local history and archaeological sites, documenting both Muslim and Buddhist culture,[520] not much serious history on Buddhist culture in the Patani region is available to the Thai Buddhist population.

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517 Askew 2009b.
518 Field notes, 17th February 2010.
519 Interview, 25th April 2008 b.
520 Refer to Krongchai 2005; 2006; 2009 for a broad introduction to historical and archaeological accounts of the region.

The general lack of accessibility to actual historical sources and the taboo on local histories in Thailand, particularly Patani history, have helped to undermine interest in local history. At the same time, to expect that the average citizen should be particularly concerned with history, either in itself or as part of one's self-perception, would be too much to ask anywhere in the world. Nonetheless, in order to understand the different separatist movements over the last hundred years, and the Thai government's response to them, history is a key factor. Moreover, due to the intensity of violence and the use of history by militants in their political agitation, there has been a certain increase of interest in local history among locals, perhaps particularly among people like the abovementioned students. We should nonetheless be careful not to overstate the connection between the level of regional political agitation and the degree to which either the Malay Muslims or the Thai Buddhist take an interest in Patani history. This type of critical approach is required when it comes to the issue of independence as well.

Despite the reluctance of some to accept it, the dramatic increase in violence over the last decade has been instigated by a determined militant movement whose primary aim (at least for elements like the BRN-C) is the achievement of an independent Malay Muslim state (Negara Melayu Islam Patani). [521] Although McCargo has argued that the BRN-C might have been given "too much credit for the violence", and that the movement has by now likely become "postseparatist" [522] (meaning that opposition to Thai rule is its main objective), this latest insurgency is best seen as a continuum of earlier separatist groups—even with its magnified focus on religion and its new style of network-based organisation.[523] Some scholars have tried to estimate the degree of support that this aim of separatism has among the local Malay Muslim population. This, however, is a challenging task, and having compiled no statistical data on this matter myself, I will here avoid making any baseless speculations. The matter of independence was not even raised in my interviews, and had I indeed asked the question, there is little likelihood that I would have received a straightforward answer. On the other hand, although I made no explicit reference to the independence issue, it did sometimes come up, albeit more often in informal conversations. As such, some remarks about this sensitive topic seem to be in order.

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521 Helbardt 2011: 26.
522 McCargo 2008: 180 f.
523 McCargo 2008: 7.

The discontent and resentment of large segments of the Malay Muslim population with the Thai government has been firmly documented.[524] It would be risky, however, to conclude that this discontent automatically indicates support for the separatist agenda, and a number of Malay Muslims that I spoke with were careful to point out that they desired to continue living within the Thai nation-state. A young female teacher from Yaring district explained it like this:

> I don't want to separate the land (*baeng yaek din daen*). No, that is too dangerous. Just look at the chaos in local politics today. People get killed and there is just as much corruption here as elsewhere in Thailand and in Bangkok.[525]

She then asks sarcastically: "What, should the provincial governor (Or Bor Jor) become king? (Laughter) That smug corrupt guy? No, thank you!"[526] And she went on:

> I don't want independence (*isara*). What is independence? No control? Just look at the children in my school. If they did not have any rules, if they were to do as they pleased. It would have been chaos. Muslims here are not able to rule. They do not read books. Have you ever seen a Muslim here who reads books? We need people with education. We are a part of Thailand, and we love the king![527]

A multitude of feelings are expressed here, and judging by these statements and other conversations with this woman, I understand her to be concerned about the ability for Malay Muslims to unite under a common strategy. What she sees is different interests and power structures fighting for influence in her name and in the name of other Malay Muslims. She sees many calls for independence, but no unified idea regarding how to bring about justice, peace and the rule of law. Like many other people, particularly teachers and people with higher education, she is also concerned about the level of education and the capacity to govern, and thus ends with a rather patriotic statement, dismissing any claim to independence or autonomy.

Something should also be said about the stress on education in her statement. The standard of education in particular is often used as an

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524 Che Man 1990; Liow 2006; Supara 2005; Surin 1985.
525 Field notes, 12th February 2010.
526 Field notes, 12th February 2010.
527 Field notes, 12th February 2010.

argument in explanations of social and political problems in the Patani region, and a general call for better education is frequently made[528]—a call that I find to be somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, the lack of good teachers (many have been killed, few want to work at the southern schools, and local students resent going into teaching) and the problem of getting children to complete their education are serious concerns. On the other hand, however, the challenges in the region too often seem to be brushed aside and explained by simple claims of lack of education. Children or young boys who take drugs or commit crimes, people with unconventional religious beliefs, troublemakers or insurgents—all are often dismissed as uneducated by the middle class. Instead of dealing with each issue, trying to get to the root of the problems, very often the call for better education, which very well might be part of the answer, is the convenient but simplistic conclusion and no further analyses are made.

Despair over corruption and the lack of trust in the ability of the Malay Muslim community to govern the region are explanations for this woman's dismissal of the idea of an independent Patani state. Others might be less pessimistic about the prospect of Malay Muslim local governance, but dismiss both the militant's agenda and Thai patronage as oppressive. Another female teacher expressed her views like this:

> I am frustrated with the Thai government because they leave people here in a squeeze between the insurgents and the authorities. People do not sympathize with the insurgents. We look at them as people who are only concerned with their own interests. They say they work in the interests of the whole population, but they really only work for themselves. They want power to control the people. They kill people, everyday! How can we believe that they work in our interests? [...] But on the other hand, from Thai authorities we only meet suspicion and distrust. If they only had made a little effort to make us feel included, it would have been so easy. Instead they stick with the same old strategies, and they don't work There are only more people who get killed. Everyday people get killed. Before

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528 A visiting American MA. Student, for instance, who was conducting an opinion survey of PSU students concerning the causes of the problems in the region, discovered that many students named the lack of education or poor education as the main source of problems—an option that was not even one of her survey's five main categories (Field notes, 8th February 2010).

> it wasn't that often, but now it is every day. That the government is succeeding in the south is only propaganda.[529]

Due to the almost daily killings by insurgents, the concept of independence is easily associated with violence, sorrow and economic recession, and thus many people reject the whole idea. Yet others seem reluctant to embrace independence as it is unclear what kind of society the separatist groups aim to create. A majority of Malay Muslims would probably welcome an independent state founded on Islam and Muslim values. However, a strictly Islamist state might not be as desirable to all. The group of men at the village shop mentioned in Chapter 10, for instance, seemed to be sceptical about the introduction of *sharia* laws. Despite being Muslims and Malays, they did not appear desirous of changing their society according to strict Islamic principles or adopting the policies of Islamic parties in Malaysia. On the contrary, they seemed relatively content with the Thai system, with all its obvious faults and defects.[530]

The squeeze between insurgents and Thai authorities expressed in the quote above is interesting and points to an important dynamic I found among several interviewees and informants. Although they do not necessarily support the call for independence, the constant suspicion of Thai security forces, the discrimination by Thai authorities, and the prejudice of Thai society at large, which many Malay Muslims experience on a regular basis, contributes to an increased sense of distance from the Thai state. One observer put it this way: "People around here hate the insurgents for the killings and the violence, but they hate the Thai state and the oppression it represents in the south even more".[531] Which one of the two parties would be the most dreaded is, of course, not easy to determine, and would in all likelihood greatly differ depending on who is asked. The value of the term 'hate' should also to be disputed. Nonetheless, the point that many people in the region feel caught between insurgents and the state in this conflict is of significance. The bind they find themselves in challenges their multiple identities and how they are navigated, and religious and national identities are shifting and adapting to different situations and contexts.

In other words, one of the conclusions that my material tends to confirm involves the seemingly small amount of trust that many average Malay Muslims have in the militant movement. A second conclusion, which I will further elaborate below, concerns the fact that they have just as little

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529 Field notes, 4th February 2010.
530 Field notes, 13th February 2010.
531 Field notes, 14th February 2010.

trust in the Thai state—particularly as represented by the security forces, the executors of state violence.

The Military and State Violence

The matters of state violence and the role of the military involve three aspects: the first concerns the military's potential involvement in criminal activities, the second involves the abuse of power, and the third relates to the state's ability to generate peace and defeat the insurgency.

Despite the evidence pointing towards the insurgency movement as the primary instigators of violence, the presumption that Thai security forces also are involved is widely held by locals. During interviews and in conversations, both Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists voiced suspicions that elements within the military were directly behind at least some portion of the violence or invested in maintaining unrest.[532] Rumours of fighting between the military and police over the control of smuggling routes and/or drug cartels tend to fortify this suspicion, and bombs and shootings are seen as part of a rivalry in which separatist violence is used as a cover up. An alternative view is that the military gains from the violence in the sense that its budget seems to grow in step with the growth of the violence.

The security industry that always seems to evolve in the wake of severe conflicts like the one in the Patani region begins to develop its own dynamic, with its rising demand for armaments, bomb detectors, additional personnel and an assortment of other facilities for the security forces. Along with this comes the offering of various grants directed at trying to better understand the conflict and numerous seminars and conferences held at fancy hotels and conference centres. The security industry develops a whole range of new needs that even academics and researchers can easily benefit from. In this case, however, the Thai military seems to be the main beneficiary.

Regarding the constant accusations concerning the abuse of power by soldiers and the military, this often becomes another main challenge to peace in the region. The criticism is levelled not only against the military institution itself (as with the apparent abduction of local defence lawyer Somchai Neelaphaijit in March 2004), but also against the violations and abuses of individual soldier, and perhaps also the military's upper echelon,

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532 Field notes, 12th March 2008.

which can be accused of covering up these abuses. An example would be the suspected cover-up of the alleged suicide of 25 year-old Sulaiman Naesa in May 2010. Many locals as well as a number of Human Rights organisations fear that Sulaiman in fact was a victim of torture while being held in military custody at Ingkhayuth military camp. Another perhaps less extreme but nonetheless serious example involves reports made to me by young law-abiding Malay Muslim men of being harassed and questioned by soldier while out driving their motorbikes after dark. These reports were further confirmed in an interview with the Imam of a mosque that is quite popular with members of the *dakwah* movement:

> I think it (the conflict) has affected us. Because people are afraid of the soldiers the government has sent. Not too much, but they are afraid of going out and things like that.[533]

The presence of the military has a clear impact on local communities; it represents a powerful stakeholder that the Malay Muslims of the region often find challenging to relate to. A Malay Muslim woman who works with trauma management in violence-affected families and villages explained how difficult it is to work with the military when it comes to the violations and abuse of its security forces:

> Many of us thought things would be better after the coup, maybe since General Sonthi is a Muslim. Maybe we thought he would understand more. But in some respects things became worse. It is harder to hold the military accountable. The apologies made by Prime Minister Surayut Chulanont were important. However, the abuse continues, but they refuse to admit it. If we file a complaint they just deny responsibility and say: "We do not do such things, so it could not have been us." This is very frustrating.[534]

This problem with the discrepancy between policy and practice in solving the Patani conflict has also been pointed out by Chaiwat.[535] Particularly for the Malay Muslims I spoke with, the strong presence of military forces serves only as a reminder of the insecurity and potential danger in the region; and to many, the military itself represents part of the problem, as stories abound regarding people that have been arrested or harassed for no

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[533] Interview, 2nd May 2008 b.
[534] Field notes, 27th March 2008.
[535] Chaiwat 2009: 2.

apparent reason. While the Thai Buddhists expressed a sense of security stemming from the presence of military forces, Malay Muslims did not share in this sentiment and statements such as these were not uncommon: "There was not really much problem in this village before the soldiers came here, but since they arrived, there is nothing but trouble"; "The road between Pattani and Yala now has more than ten check points, but nowhere are there more bombs, than along that road." Such statements point to a distrust of the military's ability to curb the violence and imply that the ever increasing military presence is itself part of the problem, as noted above. Although their stories were not as conspiratorial as those already mentioned, a number of Thai Buddhists lodged their own brand of complaints against the military, such as this woman from Yaring district in Pattani:

> The government doesn't understand the situation. They only send the army, but for what? They just come here with no power. They come here to protect the villagers, but actually, when they come here they become a target. Once there was a case in my village. There were soldiers on the temple ground, like a camp or army base, to protect the temple and the villagers. But there was a villager who was shot there, right in front of the temple. And the soldiers couldn't capture the one who did it. So it is like they come here because they are ordered to come here, but they can't do anything.[536]

Although the Thai Buddhists interviewees generally felt safer in the presence of the military than did the Malay Muslims, I found a common distrust of the military and the government's ability to solve the southern problems. The woman quoted above, continued by criticizing politicians as well:

> [...] and when the Prime Minister or the minister of internal affairs comes to this area, what happens? Like with Thaksin, they fly in here, show their faces, stay one night protected by a lot of soldiers, and the next day they fly back to Bangkok. And for what?[537]

I found that a majority of the Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists that were interviewed shared this lack of trust in the government and the armed

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536 Interview, 30th April 2008 b.
537 Interview, 30th April 2008 b.

forces' ability to end the violence. Taking up the argument of Chapter 3, an interesting observation can be made. In Chapter 3 I presented the efforts of the group around Luang Wichit Wathakan in trying to centre the nation on the military and state bureaucracy. From a deep south perspective, however, this effort seems to have failed. While many Malay Muslims might identify with the Thai nation, as well as with some kind of Thainess, they seem to be reluctant to admit that the military and the political elites are essential facets of this nation. When Malay Muslims negotiate Thainess, central parts of the nationalist idea of the nation are factored out. In other words, if there is love of nation among Malay Muslims, it embraces neither the military nor the political sphere, which are regarded as having little, if any, moral legitimacy.

It was generally challenging to induce people to reflect upon the causes of violence. The matters of independence and state violence, however, were more elaborately discussed and many interviewees were willing to share their opinions in this regard. The Malay Muslims that I spoke with described feeling squeezed between the insurgent groups and the Thai security forces, both of which expect cooperation and loyalty. However, neither the militants nor the Thai authorities seemed to enjoy much trust among locals. While very few interviewees and informants expressed political aspirations with regard to full independence, their discontent with the current situation and the question of Thai rule was nonetheless tangible, and thus some kind of political reform seems to be an inevitable step on the road to peace, reconciliation and a solution to the crisis of state legitimacy.

Political Reform

Although there are locally elected institutions in Thailand, it is indisputable that much of the country's administrative control remains firmly in the hands of unelected career bureaucrats and that the real power still lies with the provincial governors and their subordinates.[538] The discontent with this system is widespread among Malay Muslims, and this dissertation's interviewees and informants were no exception. One young Malay Muslim Woman explained her views as follows:

538 Srisompob and McCargo 2008: 406.

> They [the government] always think they know what the people
> here need, but actually they don't know. They should give the
> power to the people here. People here need to look after
> themselves. They don't need the help from the government.
> The local government also need to understand more about the
> people's needs. They are a little better, but they are still not
> good enough.[539]

This statement can easily be read as reflecting implicit support for
independence. However, the young woman expressed no such view. On the
contrary, she gave the impression of being fully integrated into the Thai
nation state and identifying herself as Thai, although with a different
mother tongue and religion than most other Thais. In her call for more
power to the people she speaks of decentralisation and democratisation,
and not about autonomy or independence. Indeed, the impression I am left
with in the aftermath of my fieldwork in the region is that even modest
reform proposals would likely appeal to a substantial portion of the Malay
Muslim female population. Apart from the woman from Pattani's Yaring
district quoted earlier, who had little confidence in the ability of local
politicians to govern the region, most women seem to prefer modest
administrative and political changes to meet the needs of the local
population rather than grand reforms or independence.

An example of such a proposal would be a report by Srisompob and
Sukree that modestly suggests the creation of a new administrative
structure while avoiding the dangerous terrain of autonomy or special
zones.[540] The proposal is the result of an extensive study on possible forms
of decentralisation conducted by a research team largely comprised of
scholars from Prince of Songkla University in Pattani. It suggests that
relatively minor changes to the existing system of local governance might
be sufficient to ease the concerns of the Malay-Muslim population and
boost the legitimacy of the state.[541] The study's survey results indicate that
there may be considerable backing for a new mode of governance in the
area, but also imply that no one solution is preferred by a majority of the
local people. Because of this it concludes that almost any proposal for
government reform in the border region is likely to be divisive, and will
probably meet with some degree of resistance.[542] The separatists have an
agenda of independence (albeit with little concrete content) while other

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[539] Interview, 15th March 2008 b.
[540] Srisompob and McCargo 2010: 175.
[541] Srisompob and McCargo 2008: 412.
[542] Srisompob and McCargo 2008: 409.

political actors (or aspiring political actors) as well as the religious elites have many and diverse ideas about governance and how the region should be administrated. As such, any proposal that is advanced as a solution to the region's governmental and administrative problems must reflect a spirit of compromise that brings the various sides together.[543] Ideas ranging from an Islamic state based on *sharia* law to a self-governing municipality within the Thai Kingdom are under consideration, but due to the taboo of separatism in Thailand, even the mildest reform proposals are rarely publicly debated.

The reform proposal presented by Srisompob and Sukree will certainly not provide an immediate solution, and will likely be criticised for being either too extreme or too insignificant, depending on the outlook of the person asked. Nonetheless, reforms of this kind may provide a starting point for building trust and confidence in governmental institution, and are liable to be supported and viewed as a step forward by a wide spectrum of at least the Malay Muslim population. However, whether or not such reforms will be sufficient to prevent new recruitment to the separatist movement remains to be seen.

When it comes to the Thai Buddhist population, however, reform proposals are much less welcomed. According to my material there is an apparent uncertainty as to what impact such reforms would have on the Thai Buddhist minority. Some of the monks I interviewed explained that Buddhists were wary about whether their rights as a minority would be sustained if the Malay Muslim population obtains more influence, or if *sharia* legislation is implemented.[544]   It is therefore fair to assume, as Srisompob and McCargo have noted, that:

> Any proposal to reform the existing structures are therefore likely to meet with significant objections from the roughly 20 per cent non-Muslim population of the southern border provinces, who have suffered disproportionately from the violence and tend to feel alienated, marginalized and anxious about their security and general situation in the region.[545]

To show consideration for the needs of the Thai Buddhist minority is, in other words, one of the major challenges for any reform. However, it seems that a political approach to the southern problem is the only way that the resurging call for independence can be overcome.   Political or

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543 Srisompob and McCargo 2008: 414.
544 Interview, 20th March 2008 b, 24th March 2008 a.
545 Srisompob and McCargo 2008: 411.

administrative reform is a way of undercutting separatist groups rather than yielding to their demands, as many national politicians and bureaucrats appear to fear. The probability of being able to build trust in the authorities, and perhaps also the armed forces, seems slim without seriously addressing the legitimacy crisis of the Thai state. In other words, political or administrative reforms must address both the question of independence and the question of state violence, as indicated above.

Any formula for autonomy is considered to be as controversial as the question of separatism by many within the military and other governmental institutions. However, as Srisompob and McCargo have noted, there is now growing evidence that even high-ranking officials and powerful people are starting to "think the unthinkable."[546] Proposals such as that of a Nakhon Pattani (Pattani City) model or a Pattani Mahanakhon (Greater Pattani City) model have been debated among academics at a couple of conferences and seminars, and have been gradually picked up and discussed by a number of national politicians, particularly those from the Phuea Thai Party (the latest incarnation of Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai Party).

The idea of Nakhon Pattani, which has been forwarded by General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh of Phua Thai, resembles the abovementioned proposal of Srisompob and Sukree.[547] During the general elections of 2011, Phuea Thai even campaigned on its basis with posters reading, "Phak Phuea Thai supports Nakhon Pattani". However, considering the poor showing of Phuea Thai in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, this would seem to have been a failed strategy, especially given that it was roundly defeated by the Democrat Party—a party that has been extremely reluctant to enter the debate on political reform, but that nonetheless took nine out of the eleven seats held by the three provinces in parliament.[548]

The success of the Democrat Party and the failure of Phuea Thai seem to imply that political reform may yet remain an alien—or, alternatively, an unripe—idea. However, the political situation in the south is complex and this type of hasty conclusion is likely to give a false impression. The failure of Phuea Thai can also be explained in terms of the antagonism still felt towards Thaksin and his heavy-handed policies in 2003-2005.[549] A lack of

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546 Srisompob and McCargo 2010: 175.
547 Srisompob and Sukree 2008. Srisompob personally pointed out the resemblance between the two proposals, field notes 27th January 2010.
548 The two remaining seats were taken by Phak Bhumjai Thai and Phak Matubhum.
549 Resentment over the Krue Se and Tak Bai incidents is, however, equally directed towards the army, which many insist must share responsibility with Thaksin.

faith in Phuea Thai's sincerity to follow through on such reforms as well as its ability to implement them could serve as an alternate explanation, especially given the massive opposition that would likely come from the army and the non-elected political powerbase in Bangkok.[550] The split in the Wadah group, a former ally to Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai Party, and the lack of unity among the local Malay Muslim political elites adds another dimension to the political reality in the region, and thus none of the other candidates that promoted political reform were able to win seats either. With Wadah politicians and other Malay Muslim political actors struggling to regain trust due to allegations of corrupt and self-serving conduct and their inability to unite in a common political objective, opportunities for the opposing Democrat Party opened up. The democrats already had a solid base of loyal voters in the Thai Buddhist population and could concentrate on the Malay Muslim votes. Rumour also has it that the Democrat Party was not only involved in the buying of votes, but also paid the highest prices as compared to the other political parties, which were also involved in the same unsavoury business. Whether there is any truth to these rumours is, however, difficult to determine, as they are just as likely to have arisen out of an attempt to smear the Democrats.

According to the abovementioned Srisompob and Sukree study, it appears that some sort of reform of the administrative system is widely supported among both the religious and the secular Malay Muslim elites.[551] More importantly, however, the survey indicates that a considerable number of villagers back a new mode of governance as well.[552] Villagers have long felt alienated from the religious and political elites, something which has been a major component of the social problems in the region.[553] Thus, in order for systemic reform to contribute to the resolution of the Patani conflict it is imperative to obtain the support of the general Malay Muslim population.[554] However, various interviewees and informants,

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550 During his time in power, Thaksin showed little interest in decentralising power, either in the south or elsewhere in Thailand. On the contrary, he seemed more interested in concentrating state power rather than decentralizing it. Besides, even if his party has recently undergone some sort of change, the fierce opposition he would meet from the army and the political elite in Bangkok, make the chances of a new policy in the deep south rather slim.

551 Srisompob and McCargo 2008: 412. Among Thai Buddhists, on the other hand, there is very little support for political reform, and maintenance of status quo is generally preferred (Srisompob and McCargo 2008: 409).

552 Srisompob and McCargo 2008: 409.

553 Srisompob and McCargo 2008: 422.

554 Some advocates from the religious elites—e.g., members of the local Islamic Council—also strongly argued for more religious freedom and increased local decision-making in religious matters as a solution to many of the problems in

particularly those with lower middle class and working class backgrounds, noted a number of socioeconomic challenges that were also of relevance to the conflict.

Reach Out, Understand and Develop

"Reach out, understand, and develop" (*khao thueng khao jai phattana*): these were the words uttered by King Bhumibol on February 24th, 2004 in a speech during the audience of then Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. His formula for peace in the southernmost provinces is simple yet challenging to actualize. It has become somewhat of a catchphrase that people tend to use when they are dissatisfied with the efforts made to solve the violent conflict. The thought is that: "If these politicians, if the military, if they would only listen to the King and do what he has prescribed, we would not have all these problems." The first principle implies reaching out to locals and winning their hearts and minds so as to connect with how they feel and think. *Understanding* refers to being aware of local history and culture and sensitive to the causes of violence while *development* refers to the corrective measures needed so as to curb the problem. In this respect, reaching out and understanding are seen as preconditions for successful development.

While the King's three-tiered strategy is by no means a comprehensive plan for action that policymakers can simply pick up and implement, the key words that he highlighted resonate well with the views of my interviewees and informants concerning the solutions to the violent conflict. By adding *justice* to this list one obtains a fairly accurate picture of how many locals understand the needs of the situation. McCargo, however, rejects the idea that the Patani conflict is essentially about justice, and maintains that easing state repression in itself is not likely to end the conflict.[555] Nonetheless, many people underlined the urgent need for justice and respect. One middle-aged Malay Muslim woman in Mueang Pattani put it like this:

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the region. Such representatives of local religious institutions are frustrated with the military's inability to understand the impact of religion in the region and highlight how an appreciation for their work with local religious leaders can lead to better understanding between local communities and the state (Field notes, 22nd February 2010).

555 McCargo 2008: 12.

What we need is sincerity and justice [...] Thai authorities have to convince us that they are sincere about solving the problems, and they have to bring justice by giving people a fair trial and by punishing the wrongdoers, including soldiers. But don't let everybody suffer for the wrongs made by a few. That will only make things worse [...] If there are some *tok guru*, or some *tok imam* who are bad people and have bad influence on our youngsters, and who are behind the violence, then punish those people, arrest them and take them to court. But why punish people who have done nothing?[556]

This woman, who is involved in a women's network of Malay Muslims working on various social issues, calls for a change in the policies of the state and military towards the local communities, while others point towards respect for cultural and religious differences as an important step in the right direction. A younger woman from Yaring district emphasised increased acceptance and tolerance as a key to better understanding:

Most people just want to be accepted and treated equally to everybody else. I can feel that I'm not the same to them and that they are wary when I say I'm from Pattani, particularly people in Bangkok and other places in Thailand [...] Independence is not important to us, but acceptance and equality, that is important.[557]

Typical causes for feelings of exclusion or marginalisation concern negative public reactions to such external factors as the wearing of Muslim headscarves, although the use of the local Malay dialect frequently provokes public scepticism and prejudice as well (as explained in Chapters 8 and 9 of this dissertation). The previously quoted statement of the young man from Pattani's Khok Pho district serves as a reminder:

I am a Thai. I was born in Thailand, live in Thailand, use the Thai language and work for the Thai government. But I am also Malay, because Malay is my mother tongue, I am a Muslim, and have grown up with Malay culture and customs. Why can't they accept that I am both Thai and Malay?[558]

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556 Field notes, 24th April 2008.
557 Field notes, 20th February 2010.
558 Field notes, 4th February 2010.

These statements underline how the King's recipe for a solution resonates with local views. Outreach and understanding were mentioned by a number of people, as was the call for development.

The term development (*phattana*) is somewhat ambiguous. In fact, in Thailand's most impoverished areas of the northeast and south, the call for development has somewhat of a negative ring. Too often road and irrigation projects have been imposed on poor communities under the banner of development, but ended up having a negative impact on the local population, which thus regarded them as being intrusive and damaging to the environment and their livelihoods. The locals rarely ask for these projects, are rarely consulted about them, and primarily views them as having been contrived for the enrichment of entrepreneurs, construction companies, local politicians and big business—all in the name of development and the eradication of poverty. An activist working locally with environmental issues in the Patani region explains:

> I think the big problem of this area comes from the governmental development projects, because these projects come from the government and not from the locals. And they really affect the lives of the villagers and the environment. [...] These development projects cause conflict with local people, and we can clearly see who benefits from them. If the project is passed and the leader of the village gets some advantages, then we know who is responsible for bringing that project here. [...] I have more than 15 years of experience working with villagers and I can say that local people are frustrated with the government policies.[559]

This is the grassroots experience of many villagers throughout the region, for whom positive development is not about large-scale road projects or dams, but about economic and educational betterment instead—something that has been confirmed by many of the people I met in the Patani region.

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[559] Field notes, 29th April 2008.

Socioeconomic Challenges

Although rich in natural resources, the Patani region has long been one of the poorer regions of Thailand. At the time of the resurgence of violence, however, Srisompob and Panyasak found that rubber prices were high and people in the region were relatively well off. Because of this they conclude that the matter of socioeconomic grievance fails to explain the resurgence.[560] Nonetheless, because of the violence, Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat are now regressing economically as compared to the national average. Due to the conflict, the local economy is crumbling because many families have lost their breadwinners to assassinations, wounds that have left them permanently disabled or lengthy prison terms and interrogations that have caused absences for months, and sometimes even years. Even families that have not suffered such direct losses still struggle as small-scale trade and the general economy have slowed down. One of the consequences is increased worker migration, specifically to Malaysia, which adds to social dislocation and the fragmentation of the family. The violence has also led to disruptions of the delivery of governmental services, particularly education.[561]

Thus, in addition to Malay Muslim grievances of a more cultural, linguistic and religious nature, concerns about the local economy, employment and education were among the more pressing issues interviewees and informants highlighted, particularly those with lower middle class and working class backgrounds. A young man from a village in Rusemilea, a sub-district of Mueang Pattani, pointed to the high level of unemployment, particularly among the young:

> When young people do not have a job, they have nothing to do all day, and it is easy for them to get involved with bad people [...] This is only what I think, but I think the biggest problem here is economical. When there are no jobs, and this is combined with drug abuse, it becomes a big problem. That's what I think.[562]

Concern about the economy, particularly since the resurgence of violence, is also a matter that greatly troubles lower middle class and working class Thai Buddhists. For low income families, even the slightest downturn in

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560 Srisompob and Panyasak 2006.
561 UNDP Thailand Human Development Report 2007: Sufficiency Economy and Human Development, p 15.
562 Interview, 19th April 2008 d.

the economy can have devastating effects on their financial situation since most of their income goes to cover the cost of necessities like food and energy. With the parallel rise in global prices on staple food and oil,[563] the effects have been particularly tangible, and thus the economic situation was one of the most serious concerns among informants from low income families, Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists alike. Here are some of the worries of one middle-aged Thai Buddhist woman selling vegetables in Pattani town:

> The economy has suffered a lot. It is not easy to do business. Before I sold 80 per cent of all my goods, now it's more like 30 per cent that I get to sell [...] Boats and ships don't come here anymore. Pattani harbour used to be a busy place where ships from Rayong, form everywhere, would dock and do trade. Now these ships go to different harbours [...] People are scared to come here. Before we had visitors from other places, from Malaysia and Singapore, from Bangkok, but also *farang* people would come. People from many places. Now they are too scared and don't come any more. They used to come here to visit Jao Mae [Jao Mae Lim Ko Niaw shrine], we had many tour groups coming here, about ten buses a day. Now we don't have any [...] I think it will take many years for the economy to recover. Maybe 10 years.[564]

Other Thai Buddhists expressed similar concerns, like this Pattani tinsmith:

> It [the violence] has affected the economy a lot. Before, there were many people who came here to do business. Now a lot of the Thais and the Chinese has moved to other provinces, and the Muslims live in the countryside for the most part. So business is very bad.[565]

While these two statements address some of the difficulties experienced by those who are lucky enough to have work, the man from Rusemilae (quoted above) highlights the serious impact that joblessness and lack of

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563 The FAO Food Price Index shows a steady rise in food prices since 2004, with a dramatic peak during 2008. After an adjustment in 2009, the prices again reached an all-time high in January 2011. When compared with the IEA Oil Market Report 10 August 2011, which shows similar trends, it becomes clear how food and oil prices are intimately related.
564 Interview, 26th March 2008 c.
565 Interview, 25thApril 2008 a.

employment opportunities have on the region. Particularly it is the young that struggle to find work, with those that remain idle often becoming involved with drugs and criminality. The economy and particularly the issues of jobs and employment are intimately connected to education, and a majority of interviewees and informants from all social strata (both urban and rural), pointed to more and better education as a key solution to the region's many challenging social problems.

Quality and access to education, particularly in peripheral provinces, is a general problem in Thailand, and the Patani region is no exception. In the 2007 UNDP report on Thailand, for instance, Narathiwat was ranked 74th out of a total of 76 provinces on the HAI education index.[566] While a lengthy discussion on the comparative level of education in the region is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I will here highlight some of the issues that have been raised by interviewees and informants that are illustrative of their views on education and the educational challenges in the region.

A good number of interviewees and informants were either schoolteachers or university lecturers who shared a deep concern about the quality of teaching and the low completion rate among students. While the educational sector throughout Thailand faces a number of difficulties with regard to these issues, the three southernmost provinces are burdened by additional challenges, particularly when it comes to the recruitment of teachers. Statistics from the PSU-based NGO Deep South Watch show that between January 2004 (when violence resurged) and January 2010, 128 teachers were killed in attacks, often on their way to or from work; and bestial episodes of murder followed by the torching of bodies have highlighted the particularly pointed threat that teachers face. Although teachers represent only 1 per cent of the totality of 10,609 casualties, the teacher mortality rate is as high as 59.3 per cent.[567] Thus, for obvious reasons, the recruitment of good teachers to the region has proven to be difficult.[568] The recruitment of teachers from elsewhere in Thailand to state schools is challenging, and with the low standard of higher education in the region discussed above, the problem of too few, and often academically weak, teachers is reproduced. creating a vicious cycle that is hard to break.

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566 UNDP Thailand Human Development Report 2007: Sufficiency Economy and Human Development, p 7.
567 Deep South Watch, 10th March 2010, Srisompob Jitpiromsri, "Sixth Year of the Southern Fire: Dynamics of Insurgency and Formation of the New Imagined Violence".
568 Field notes, 1st February 2010.

There are scholarships at Prince of Songkla University that require graduating students to work for at least five years as regional state schoolteachers, at least two of which are supposed to be spent in one of the more troubled districts.[569] While this is a positive initiative, it remains difficult to induce qualified teachers to work in state schools even though state school salaries are much higher than the salaries offered by private Islamic schools.[570] Fear is an obvious factor here, but other factors may also play a role. One state school teacher from Yaring in Pattani who used to teach at a private Islamic school in Yala explained that she changed to the state school in her village in order to work closer to home. A better salary and less of a workload were other contributing factors. However, she also explained that she enjoyed working at the private Islamic school because she was able to teach her main subjects, whereas at the local *thesaban* school she had to teach all subjects.[571] In other words, one could argue that competition with private Islamic Schools also affects the recruitment of teachers to public schools.

Other aspects of the quality of education should be viewed in relation to language. Many Malay Muslim children, particularly in the countryside, are only properly introduced to the Thai language when they start school. Some may have a basic understanding of Thai from TV and radio, but few have ever spoken the language, not to mention having read or written it. The schoolteacher from Yaring explained that teaching the pupils Thai literacy is a major task and that she spends substantial portions of class times teaching Thai and explaining Thai terms in local Malay. In this regard, the pilot project mentioned in Chapter 9 of this dissertation—which introduces the Thai writing system as a transcript of the local Malay dialect and uses Malay as a bridge to the understanding of Thai—seems to be a fruitful experiment.[572] However, a certain amount of scepticism relative to this project is found among the most Thai-critical Malay Muslims, who regard the transcription of Malay into Thai characters as yet another attempt by Thai authorities to undermine Patani Malay culture and argue that the whole project is an attempt to colonise their language. While this view seems a bit exaggerated, other aspects of this project raise legitimate concerns. For example, the claim that the project will help strengthen the local Malay language (which was made in July 2011 during the 11th

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569 Field notes, 5th February 2010.
570 Field notes, 11th February 2010.
571 Field notes, 11th February 2010.
572 Bangkok Post, 3rd October 2010, Supara Janchitfah, "Teaching in the Mother Tongue."

International Conference on Thai Studies)[573] can be called into question since the more direct and effective approach would appear to be the introduction of first-class native language education based on *jawi* or Romanized script.[574] All in all, however, the preliminary results of this pilot project indicate that the method of using local Malay to introduce the Thai language in exclusively Malay Muslim schools is successful.

Another teacher at the same primary school in Yaring expressed concern about the intense focus on religion in the region, which she feared was taking focus away from core subjects: "The level of the students is exceptionally low here [...] I think we spend too much time on religion,"[575] said the young teacher (a Muslim originally from Satun province), when I asked her what she saw as main challenges to education in the region. Although her village school is a public school, religious subjects have been a natural part of the school curriculum for the past five years, more or less after the model of the private Islamic schools. Primary public schools have long been without competition as it is mainly at the secondary level that we find the private Islamic alternative. Now, however, an increasing number of private Islamic primary schools are being built, one of which is under construction only a few kilometres from this village school. Thus in exclusively Malay Muslim communities, state schools struggle to compete and, as a consequence, have been allowed to include religious subjects in their curricula.[576]

As has been argued in a previous section of this dissertation, the emergence of private Islamic schools has been a relatively successful tool for integrating the Malay Muslim population into the Thai education system (and to a certain extent into the Thai nation), since the Thai language is today more widely spoken in the region. However, other aspects of the transformation from the *pondok* system to private Islamic

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[573] Session 48, "Language and Culture Preservation: Lessons, Debates, and Case Studies".

[574] Neither *jawi* nor Romanized Malay/*rumi* provide a perfect writing system for the Patani Malay dialect, as they are both systems for standard Bahasa Melayu. *Rumi* has the advantage of being phonetically compatible with Patani Malay pronunciation, in addition to the obvious benefits that come with sharing a linguistic community with the rest of the Malay world—something that would revitalize and enrich Patani Malay, as it would open up new channels of lingual development through different means of communication such as literature and newspapers. The strong bond between jawi and Patani Malay identity, however, is a major obstacle to the propagation of rumi; and, unfortunately, there is to date no consensus on this matter that could help secure a future for written Patani Malay.

[575] Field notes, 1st February 2010.

[576] Field notes, 1st February 2010.

schools have had less desirable consequences. The popularity of private Islamic schools, for instance, has effectively led to increased segregation between Muslims and Buddhists, as the percentage of Malay Muslims in state schools is significantly reduced. Although more Malay Muslims receive a secular education, more of those that would have received one anyway choose the alternative of the private Islamic school instead. Interethnic and interreligious interaction is therefore down and younger people live their lives more apart from each other.[577]

The second major challenge that teachers and others pointed to concerned the high rate of school dropouts among Malay Muslim youngsters. As the only job prospect for many is to leave the area to become a migrant worker in Malaysia, numerous Malay Muslim families in the Patani region have become increasingly fragmented by the absence of responsible adults and caretakers. Interviewees and informants singled out this fragmentation as being a primary cause of the high dropout rate, which, again, often leads to unemployment, drug abuse and crime.

In this regard, it can be argued that a strengthened economy and more and better jobs in the local communities might also lead to an improved completion rate, which, in turn, is likely to upgrade the general level of education as well as reinforce the local economy. Economic development and education are intimately connected and likely to constitute a positive dynamic. Ultimately, this is also the idea behind the extensive *yalannanbaru* (new way of life) program instigated by the Royal Thai Army and the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC). The program aims to straighten out youths with drug problems by teaching them a skill and helping them to find a job or start their own business. Although its focus is on vocational skills and some computer training, it is also a way of introducing young Malay Muslims to the ideology of Thainess and sufficiency economy (*sethagit phor phiang*). By February 2010, more than 10,000 youths between the ages of 14 and 25 had made their way through the program,[578] and despite the widespread aversion to the military and its policies in the deep south, this particular program was rather well received among a number of informants.[579]

In the Malay Muslim section of a village that lays close to Pattani town, where the group of men referred to above usually gather at one of the local shops in the evenings, this program was eagerly discussed. In February 2010, a group of youngsters from the village had been sent to the *yalannanbaru* training program, and although the men joked a bit about

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577 Joll 2010: 259 p.
578 Field notes, 16th February 2010.
579 Field notes, 13th February 2010, 22nd February 2010.

the army and some of the underlying reasons for the project, they were largely sympathetic to the notion of a vocational training program, which they viewed as a practical and useful initiative:

> It is good to learn something. You learn about agriculture or fishing or something else that you can use to make your own living when you get back. And about computers, these are useful things.[580]

During a visit to the Islamic Council in Pattani, one of its representatives raised some criticism of the *yalannanbaru* program. Although he believed the basic intentions of the program to be good, he voiced some frustration over the fact that local Malay Muslims were not involved in its development. His claim was that because of this the program has been insensitive to a number of delicate local issues.[581]

The main problem with the *yalannanbaru* project, however, is not the program in itself; it is the fact that it is largely an army propaganda tool that has limited scope rather than a broad initiative to strengthen the overall level of education in the region. Nonetheless, the general perception of most local people I spoke with was positive. Moreover, the discrepancy between the views of the average person on the street and the representatives of the urban elite (i.e., the Islamic Council) illustrates how different social strata within the Malay Muslim community can hold different perceptions regarding aspects of the southern problem.

In sum, local views of the Patani conflict reveal a host of conspiracy theories and rumours, not least involving the military and other security forces. While this affects the credibility of these forces, it also indirectly affects interethnic relations in the region. Firstly, the faults and failures of Thai authorities may be automatically transferred to the local Thai Buddhist population since their national identity is so closely associated with the Thai state via the ideology of Thainess. And secondly, these various conspiracy theories and rumours have led to an increased feeling of insecurity and scepticism of others as well as a tendency to categorise the population in terms of "us" and "them". As a consequence, there are now fewer arenas in which to cultivate interethnic and interreligious understanding—a trend that is also likely to have been reinforced by the Muslim revival.

This multitude of rumours and conspiracy theories notwithstanding, the Patani conflict has been first and foremost driven by the Malay Muslim

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[580] Field notes, 13th February 2010.
[581] Field notes, 22nd February 2010.

separatist movement's fight against the Thai state and its military forces. My material indicates that while the local population expresses only a moderate interest in the partitioning of Patani into a separate state, they have at the same time become increasingly doubtful and distrustful with regard to the legitimacy of the Thai state (as also discussed in Part 1 of this dissertation). In this there appears to be a possibility that certain social, political and administrative reforms that include both educational and economic improvements will be sufficient to ease the level of conflict in the region. In the current situation, many Malay Muslims feel torn between the expectations of their Malay Muslim communities and those of Thai society, a position that challenges their many identities as well as their capacity to navigate between them. Similarly, Malay Muslims are likely to feel pressure to cooperate from conflicting sides—i.e., the separatists on the one hand and the Thai military on the other. This, of course, places them in a terrible bind that is demanding as well as dangerous. As such, the negotiation of religious and national identities may very well be the result of both authentic and more tactical considerations, and thus identities will likely shift depending on the situation and context.

Conclusion

The Patani conflict is regarded as one of the most serious in Southeast Asia. Ruthless violence has plagued the region for nearly a decade, and billions of *baht* have been poured in, in an attempt to quell the insurgency. However, despite indications of talks between the Thai state and militants, and some improvements in defining political reform proposals, it appears that the deadlock is nowhere near a solution.

Since the military coup d'état that ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra on 19th September 2006, and the following abolishment of the constitution, dissolution of political parties, not to mention the massive street protests by the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD) (popularly known as the Yellow shirts and the Red shirts), Thai authorities have paid little attention to conflict resolution and peace negotiations in the south. It seems that the political turmoil in Bangkok has overshadowed the Patani conflict. As politicians in Bangkok are preoccupied with trying to solve their own internal problems, little is done to address the many pressing issues of the south. The Patani region is neglected and the violence continues.

However, the Patani conflict should not be regarded as being separate and apart from the recent years of political turmoil in Thailand. Both are related in the sense that both are concerned with the legitimacy of the Thai state. The political battle in Bangkok is basically a struggle over power and status between the traditional royal and bureaucratic elite (or 'network monarchy') and the emerging nouveau riche elite of Sino-Thai businessmen from the north—i.e., the cronies of Thaksin. And the intensity of this conflict seems to increase proportionally with King Bhumibol's declining health. All in all, this is a battle over which power network is going to control Thailand in the new era that will follow the royal succession. However, through the popular mobilizations in the wake of this battle, we see a strong divide between centre and periphery. The Red shirts, whose primary support base is drawn from the north and the northeast, make vivid use of the underlying antagonism people in the provinces have towards Bangkok. Their rhetoric concerning the aristocracy's (*amart*) repression of the underprivileged (*prai*) has proven

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to be extremely effective in terms of mobilizing rural Thais, and the cultivation of Isaan and Lanna identities is widespread among the Red shirts.

While I did find a handful of people in the Patani region who identified with either the Red shirts or Yellow shirts, Patani people in general, unlike people from the north, the northeast and the central plains, seem largely unconcerned with the goings-on in Bangkok, with most finding the matter to be almost entirely irrelevant. The Democrat Party and PAD have nonetheless used the Patani conflict as an argument against Thaksin with the claim that the Democrats will be able to solve the problems in the south.[582] The military junta behind the 2006 coup, led by Muslim general Sonthi Boonyratkalin, similarly used the Patani conflict as an excuse to take power.

In my experience, however, such arguments were rarely employed by the Patani people themselves. On the contrary, from my first research trip in 2007 to the last one in 2010, I observed a slight increase in the support for Thaksin and the Red shirts. The Thaksin administration was widely unpopular in the deep south because of its heavy-handed policies; but after the coup, Thaksin became the main opponent of the Thai establishment, and many Malay Muslim nationalists considered that they and the Red shirts (with their center/periphery agitations) shared a common interest— at least from a tactical point of view. Some militant groups also recognized this shared agenda and one separatist webpage made a mockery of the Thai military by observing: "The Siamese have now more troops than ever in our land, but it seems that the Isaan soldiers they have deployed are not too eager to die for Siam."[583] The insinuation that the Thai state is losing the battle and that soldiers from the northeast do not really identify with the Thai nation, and thus are reluctant to perform their duty, is a slap in the face of Thai authorities, particularly since it is probable that there is some truth to these allegations. In one sense, the ideology of Thainess has made its way into the peripheries of the nation-state, but in another sense there are strong regional identities cultivated by distinct dialects and cultures. Thus just as people in the deep south hold multiple identities, so do people in other rural areas of Thailand as well. And whenever Thai nationalism threatens to undermine these local or regional identities, the legitimacy of

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582 Southern Thailand is the traditional stronghold of the Democrat Party. However, the Malay Muslim dominated provinces of the Patani region are not part of this stronghold, and the ability of this party to solve the conflict is thus exaggerated, something the Democrat led Abhisit administration also confirmed.

583 Personal communication with Dennis Walker.

the Thai state is jeopardized. The ideology of Thainess has affected but not taken over regional identities, and thus the legitimacy of the Thai state depends upon how well it is able to accommodate multiple identities around the country.

The objective of this dissertation has been to examine how multiple identities in the Patani region have developed, how they are negotiated in everyday life and what impact they have on interethnic relations and local interpretations of the ongoing Patani conflict. This is important in the sense that understanding the dynamics of these identities could be central to determining how Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists relate to the challenges of their communities, to the people around them and to Thai society, thus providing an indication of the general level of conflict in the region as well as the degree to which the Thai state is viewed as being legitimate.

To solve the conflict and put an end to the insurgency both the militant movement and Thai policies would have to be scrutinized. This, however, has not been the aim of this dissertation. Rather the aim has been to learn more about the everyday lives of ordinary people living in the midst of a difficult conflict, and how they themselves perceive the situation. After all, any sustainable resolution of the conflict needs to take into account not only the aspirations of the militants, but also the interests and expectations of the local population. This study's essential contribution has been to provide increased insight into how these two groups negotiate between their multiple identities according to the expectations of different interest groups as well as to comprehend the attitudes of local Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists towards the agenda of the militants on the one hand, and the reaction of the Thai state on the other.

In the introduction I referred to two different approaches to the Patani conflict that are of relevance to this study: the approach of McCargo and the approach of Askew. From McCargo's point of view, the problem centres on a lack of shared norms and values between the Malay Muslim population and Thai society as well as disputes over identity and territory; the result is that both Thai society and the Thai state lack legitimacy within Malay Muslim communities.[584] Askew, for his part, has attempted to modify this view by noting that Malay Muslim identities are currently declining at the expense of an emerging Thai identity that this group increasingly relates to.[585] He has also emphasised religion as a key motivating factor in Malay Muslim resistance to Thai dominance.[586] While

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584 McCargo 2008: 16; McCargo 2012: 3.
585 Askew 2010: 128.
586 Askew 2010: 126.

the perspectives of both McCargo and Askew have made a valuable contribution to this dissertation, for my purposes it seemed unnecessary to delve further into the differences between them. Rather, throughout this work I have attempted to adopt a position that is more or less intermediary in its stance. Based on McCargo's analysis I have accommodated some of Askew's critique by arguing that despite the signs of an increased influence of Thainess and Thai society on Malay Muslims in the Patani region, the Malay identity has not been wholly displaced by a Thai identity. Instead we see an expression of multiple identities wherein Malay and Thai identities are negotiated depending on the context, and wherein religious identity has become more noticeable because of the inclusion of otherwise suppressed ethnic and cultural markers, providing a space within which controversial and disputed aspects of identity can be reflected.

The first aim of this dissertation was to conduct an examination whereby I could determine the main contributors to the development of multiple identities in the region. In this regard, the history of the old Patani Kingdom and its relations to Siam, the annexation of Patani into the geo-body of Siam and the construction of a Thai nation-state and the national ideology of Thainess provided some answers. To build a Thai nation, Thai authorities implemented policies designed to undermine the local identity and culture and assimilate Malay Muslims into a Thai identity. These efforts, however, conflicted with Malay Muslim self-perceptions, and thus neither the nation-religion-monarchy trinity nor Dhammarāja Buddhism has been able to gain legitimacy for the Thai nation in the Patani region. On the contrary, they contributed to a fierce, enduring resistance to Thai domination, and the current militant insurgency should be understood as a continuation of this resistance.

However, throughout the years, the shifting strategies of Thai nationalism and the ideology of Thainess have also exerted an influence on the Patani people. The educational system, the media and the various means of mass communication have all helped to accelerate the integration of Malay Muslims into Thai society. Today's Malay Muslims negotiate Thainess and can shift between their Malay and Thai identities so as to accommodate the different expectations and demands of their local communities, and of Thai society at large. For some, this negotiation between different identities is performed largely for tactical purposes—i.e., to adapt to different contexts and situations. For others, the two identities are more compatible, reflecting how both Malay and Thai identities are expressed in the course of their daily lives.

The multiple identities of people in the Patani region, however, are not only comprised of different national identities; religious identities have become increasingly important as well. My account of the history of religious diversity indicates that religious and national identities have long

been interchangeable variables, as is confirmed by the modern example of securing Buddhism in the deep south. The securing of Buddhism is both a local initiative that strengthens the identity of the Buddhist minority in a Muslim-dominated region and a national strategy that aims to undermine this very domination. As such, it has helped to eradicate the boundaries between Buddhism and Thai nation-building. Indeed, the securing of Buddhism is in many ways the local version of Thai nation-building, and a development that has gained traction with the resurgence of violent conflict.

The Muslim revival is a third contributor to multiple identities in the region. The increased influence of modernist Islam in recent years has led to an amplified focus on religion, which, in turn, has helped to create a space wherein Malay ethnicity, language and culture can be expressed within the framework of religion. In this revival we can also observe a certain rivalry between modernists and traditionalists, leading to a specific insecurity among many Malay Muslims about religious practice. Primarily, however, modernists have paved the way for the expansion of Muslim identity in Thailand, and Malay Muslims have then used this newfound space to express their multiple identities.

The second topic I examined was how Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists negotiate multiple identities while living under circumstances of conflict, violence and strife. As indicated above, Thainess and Thai nation-building have not resulted in the replacement of a Malay by a Thai identity. Rather what we see is an expression of multiple identities wherein Malay and Thai identities are negotiated depending on the context. Many Malay Muslims will more or less successfully attempt to define themselves within the ideology of Thainess, and some local Thai Buddhists will have a similar approach. Moreover, to avoid suspicion or to gain acceptance from Thai society, many Malay Muslims will also accept a Thai identity. However, in their local context they also want to maintain their Malay identity, something that is hard to accommodate in many situations, particularly since the nationalist interpretation of Thainess continues to dominate in Thailand. People therefore also negotiate between their religious and national identities, where ethnic and cultural aspects are interpreted as part of the religious sphere; and this merging of national and religious identities has developed within both Malay Muslim and Thai Buddhist communities. Religious practice has become a way of expressing national or ethnic identity, and in the Patani region being Muslim also implies being Malay. The fact that in Thai the Malay language is described as *phasa islam* is a case in point. This, however, is an adjustment to the Thai reality, and in the local Malay language, it is rather the ethnic markers that dominate: The ethnic terms nayu and siye are used to describe a Muslim and a Buddhist respectively. Another example is the expression used about

converting to Islam, masok nayu, which literally means "to go into Malay". These are all examples of how people negotiate their multiple identities in a conflict situation where the understanding of ethnicity, language and culture are contested and highly sensitive.

Lastly, I used my findings on multiple identities in the Patani region and how they are negotiated to explore their impact on interethnic relations and local interpretations of violence and conflict. I found that the Muslim revival and Thainess (Thai nation-building, and more specifically the securing of Buddhism), are not only contributors to multiple identities in the Patani region, but have also had an impact on interethnic relations. I also found that interethnic tension on the one hand and interethnic coexistence on the other was determined by how people interpret local grievances and how they perceive their own religion and culture. Although it is first and foremost the insurgency and its violence that has instigated interethnic tension, it seems that a shared space where the different religious groups can meet and communicate—a space where 'organic solidarity' can develop—is a precondition for peaceful coexistence and thus a key to the regaining of trust and the restoration of interethnic relations.

Concerning local understandings of the Patani conflict, I found a multitude of conspiracy theories and rumours that have led to an increased feeling of insecurity and scepticism towards others as well as a tendency to define people in terms of "us" and "them". Today, therefore, there are fewer arenas for the cultivation of interethnic and interreligious understanding (or 'organic solidarity'). Moreover, I found that Malay Muslims often feel torn between their ethnic/national identity and the expectations and suspicions of both Malay Muslim nationalists and Thai authorities. Issues concerning the conflict such as the history of the Patani Sultanate, the question of independence and discussions about the role of the military are thus extremely sensitive and difficult for Malay Muslims to relate to. This situation also challenges their many identities and how they navigate between them, and thus the negotiation of religious and national identities may be the result of both authentic and more tactical considerations. Chawat might therefore be on to something when he challenges Thai society to take responsibility. He argues that a halt of future violence will depend on the capacity of the Thai people to re-imagine their community with sufficient space to allow the different peoples who were there before the modern nation-state, and who were perhaps born from a different imagination, to be able to live side by side with dignity.[587]

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587 Chaiwat 2009: 13.

In order to resolve the Patani conflict there must be genuine negotiations between the militant movement and the state in which concrete reform proposals for a political solution are considered. There is, however, also a need for the Thai state to enhance its legitimacy among the general population. And in this regard, my material indicates that Thai authorities would have much to gain by being less concerned about potential separatist tendencies in the Malay Muslim population and instead strive to accept Malay Muslim culture and ethnicity on equal terms as the constructed ideal type of what is regarded as Thai. The acceptance of all aspects of multiple identities in the Thai society could be a first step on the road to embracing a policy of 'unity in diversity'—something that may help increase the legitimacy of the Thai state in the south and perhaps also ease some of the remaining political tension within the geo-body of Thailand.

Summary in Norwegian

SAMMENDRAG PÅ NORSK

Formålet med denne avhandlingen er å undersøke hvordan religiøs og nasjonal identitet uttrykkes i den konfliktfylte Patani-regionen i det sørlige Thailand. I en historisk kontekst preget av kamp om territorium og politisk legitimitet, der identiteter har utviklet seg i møte med en fremvoksende thailandsk nasjon, er det relevant å forstå disse identitetenes dynamikk og avdekke hvordan lokalbefolkningen oppfatter seg selv, sine omgivelser og samfunnet de lever i. Til tross for at det er forhandlinger mellom opprørsgrupper og den thailandske staten som er nøkkelen til opphør av vold i Patani-regionen, vil graden av slike politiske løsningers lokale forankring ha innvirkning på utsiktene for varig fred. Som følge av en historie preget av politiske strømninger som har undergravd Malay-muslimsk kultur, og forsøkt å påtvinge regionen «thaihet» som ideologi, står den thailandske staten uten legitimitet blant den Malay-muslimske majoriteten, og etnisitet og religion er vedvarende kilder til konflikt mellom thailandske myndigheter og lokalbefolkningen. For å forstå de grunnleggende konfliktlinjene i regionen er det derfor av betydning å utforske lokale identiteter, inter-etniske forhold og holdninger til «thaihet» og thailandsk nasjonsbygging.

Ved hjelp av antropologisk feltarbeid tar denne avhandlingen sikte på å forstå hvordan religion og nasjon definerer og former identitet blant Malay-muslimer og Thai-buddhister i Patani-regionen. Den søker å identifisere gjenklangen nasjonale og lokale diskurser om religion og nasjon har i lokalbefolkningen, hvordan folk påvirkes av dem og hvordan de redefinerer dem. Resultatene viser at både Malay-muslimer og Thai-buddhister har utviklet multiple identiteter som veksler avhengig av situasjon og kontekst. En viktig målsetning er derfor å utforske hvorfor disse multiple identitetene har utviklet seg, hvordan de uttrykkes i det daglige liv, og hvilken innvirkning de har på inter-etniske relasjoner og tolkninger av konflikten i Sør-Thailand.

De to viktigste tilnærmingene til å forstå Patani-konflikten er å finne i McCargo og Askews forskning. McCargo peker på manglende felles normer og verdier mellom den Malay-muslimske befolkningen og det thailandske samfunnet og konflikter over identitet og territorium som en viktig del av

problemet. Det thailandske samfunnet og den thailandske staten mangler legitimitet blant Malay-muslimer.[588] Askew søker å justere dette synet ved å hevde at Malay-muslimske identiteter idag er på defensiven på bekostning av en fremvoksende Thai identitet som Malay-muslimer i økende grad forholder seg til.[589] Han vektlegger også religion som en avgjørende motivasjonsfaktor i motstanden mot thailandsk dominans.[590] Både McCargo og Askew har vært verdifulle kilder til denne avhandlingen og jeg har ikke sett det som relevant å gå dypere inn i forskjellene på de to eller vurdere dem opp mot hverandre. Min tilnærming er heller en mellomposisjon hvor jeg med utgangspunkt i McCargos analyser forsøker å imøtekomme noe av Askews kritikk. Til tross for en økende innflytelse av «thaihet» og thailandsk samfunn blant Malay-muslimer i Patani-regionen, argumenterer jeg ikke for at Thai-identitet fortrenger Malay-identitet, men peker istedet på tegn til en utvikling av multiple identiteter der Malay- og Thai-identitet sjongleres utifra kontekst, og der religiøs identitet har blitt mer fremtredende ved å ta opp i seg ellers undertrykte etniske og kulturelle markører og gi rom for kontroversielle og omstridte aspekter ved folks identitet.

Den første problemstillingen denne avhandlingen tar for seg er hvilke hovedårsaker vi kan finne til utviklingen av slike multiple identiteter i regionen. Historien til det gamle Patani-sultanatet og dets forhold til Siam, innlemmelsen av Patani i Siam, og konstruksjonen av en thailandsk nasjonalstat gir mye av svaret. I oppbyggingen av en thailandsk nasjon og som et ledd i forsøket på å assimilere den Malay-muslimske befolkningen inn i en felles Thai-identitet, implementerte thailandske myndigheter politikk som truet med å undergrave lokal identitet og kultur. Disse forsøkene kom i konflikt med Malay-muslimsk selvforståelse og hverken trekløveret «nasjon, religion og monarki» eller det jeg kaller «Dhammarāja Buddhisme», lyktes med å bygge legitimitet rundt den thailandske nasjonen i Patani-regionen. Tvert imot bidro disse til langvarig og kraftig motstand mot thailandsk dominans, og dagens militante opprør må ses på som en kontinuitet av denne motstanden.

Opp gjennom årene har de skiftende strategiene i thailandsk nasjonalisme likevel hatt påvirkning på folk i regionen. Utdanningssystemet, media og massekommunikasjon har bidratt til økt integrering av Malay-muslimer i det thailandske samfunnet og dagens Malay-muslimer skifter gjerne mellom Malay- og Thai-identiteter for å imøtekomme ulike forventninger og krav både fra lokalsamfunnet og fra

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588 McCargo 2008: 16; McCargo 2012: 3.
589 Askew 2010: 128.
590 Askew 2010: 126.

den thailandske nasjonen. For enkelte navigeres det mellom ulike identiteter hovedsaklig av taktiske årsaker for å tilpasse seg ulike kontekster og situasjoner, mens for andre fremstår de som kompatible og reflekterer hvordan både Malay- og Thai-identitet kommer til uttrykk i det daglige.

Men det er ikke bare ulike nasjonale identiteter som utgjør de multiple identitetene i Patani-regionen. Religiøs identitet er også av økende betydning og i avhandlingen argumenteres det for at religiøs og nasjonal identitet gjerne fremstår som sammenlignbare størrelser. Eksempler på dette finnes både i lokale og nasjonale aspekter av det jeg kaller «sikring av Buddhismen» og i den globale «muslimske oppvåkningen» som de siste ti-årene har gjort seg særlig gjeldene i regionen.

Den andre problemstillingen som diskuteres er hvordan Malay-muslimer og Thai-buddhister håndterer multiple identiteter i den konfliktsituasjonen de lever i. Jeg argumenterer for at mange Malay-muslimer mer eller mindre overbevisende vil definere seg selv innenfor rammen av begrepet «thaihet», og flere lokale Thai-Buddhister vil forfekte en tilsvarende inkluderende tilnærming. Videre vil en del Malay-muslimer, mer taktisk, akseptere en Thai-identitet for å unngå mistenkeliggjøring eller for å vinne aksept i det thailandske samfunnet. I en lokal kontekst er det likevel Malay-identiteten som vil dominere, og denne balansegangen kan være vanskelig å opprettholde, særlig med tanke på den vedvarende nasjonalistiske tolkningen av «thaihet» som preger thailandsk offentlighet. Konflikt mellom ulike identiteter kan av den grunn lett oppstå, og etniske og kulturelle identitetsaspekter tolkes derfor gjerne som en del av den religiøse sfære. Denne sammensmeltningen av religiøs og nasjonal identitet har utviklet seg i både Malay-muslimske og Thai-buddhistiske samfunn og religiøs praksis har blitt en måte å uttrykke nasjonal eller etnisk identitet på. Det å være Muslim innebærer det samme som å være Malay, mens det å være Thai innebærer det samme som å være Buddhist. Et illustrerende eksempel er hvordan den lokale Malay-dialekten i regionen på thailandsk ofte betegnes som *phasa islam* (Islam-språk). Men dette er først og fremst en tilpasning til den thailandske realiteten. Når det er Malay som er det anvendte språket er det ikke de religiøse, men de etniske markørene som dominerer, slik at termene *nayu* og *siye* brukes for å beskrive henholdsvis en Muslim og en Buddhist. Et annet eksempel er uttrykket *masok nayu* som beskriver konvertering til Islam, men som bokstavelig talt betyr «å gå inn i Malay». Dette er eksempler på hvordan folk håndterer sine multiple identiteter i en konfliktsituasjon der etnisitet, språk og kultur er omstridte og sensitive kategorier.

Den tredje og siste problemstillingen i denne avhandlingen er hvilken innvirkning disse multiple identitetene har på interetniske forhold og lokale tolkninger av vold og konflikt. Jeg argumenterer for at de samme

faktorene som har bidratt til mulitple identiteter i Patani-regionen, det vil si «thaihet»/thailandsk nasjonsbygging, mer spesifikt «sikringen av Buddhismen», og den «muslimske oppvåkningen», også har påvirket interetniske relasjoner. Jeg argumenterer også for at graden av interetnisk spenning eller sameksistens påvirkes av hvordan religion og kultur fortolkes og hvordan etnisk og religiøs misnøye håndteres. En forutsetning for fredelig sameksistens er at det finnes sosiale rom hvor ulike grupper kan møtes og kommunisere, og til tross for at det først og fremst er den voldelige konflikten som har utløst de interetniske spenningene, tyder mye på at en nøkkelfaktor for å gjenvinne tillit mellom Malay-muslimer og Thai-buddhister vil være å legge til rette for arenaer hvor en «organisk solidaritet» kan få utfolde seg.

I dag er det imidlertid færre slike arenaer hvor interetnisk og interreligiøs forståelse kan kultiveres. Ikke minst handler dette om lokale tolkninger av Patani-konflikten hvor konspirasjoner og rykter florerer og i sin tur fører til en økt følelse av usikkerhet, skepsis mot fremmede og en tendens til å definere folk og grupper i kategorier som «oss» og «dem.» Det er også slik at mange Malay-muslimer gir inntrykk av å dras mellom sin etniske og nasjonale identitet og forventninger og krav fra både Malay-muslimske nasjonalister og thailandske myndigheter. Tematikk knyttet til konflikten som for eksempel Patani-sultanatets historie, spørsmål om uavhengighet, og diskusjoner om militærets rolle i regionen, er derfor spesielt sensitive og vanskelige for Malay-muslimer å håndtere. Slik utfordres også deres mange identiteter og hvordan det navigeres mellom religiøse og nasjonale identiteter er derfor et resultat av taktiske så vel som reelle hensyn.

List of Interviews

Malay Muslims

Date	Gender	Age	Born/Live (province, district)	Occupation
14th March 2008 a	Female	28	Pattani, Mueang	Photo copy worker
17th March 2008 a	Female	31	Pattani, Mueang	Self-employed (imp./exp.)
18th March 2008 a	Female	51	Yala/Pattani, Mueang	Insurance seller
19th March 2008 a	Female	41	Pattani, Mueang	Real estate disseminator
19th March 2008 b	Male	63	Pattani, Yaring	Pensioner
19th April 2008 a	Male	32	Pattani, Nong Chick	Travel agent
19th April 2008 b	Male	40	Pattani, Mueang, Baak Nam	Office worker
19th April 2008 c	Male	25	Pattani, Mueang, Baak Nam	IT technician
19th April 2008 d	Male	32	Pattani, Mueang, Rusemilea	Watchman

Thai Buddhists

Date	Gender	Age	Born/Live (province, district)	Occupation
15th March 2008 a	Male	23	Pattani, Mueang	Student
20th March 2008 a	Male	45	Pattani, Khok Pho	Kiosk owner/rubber tapper
25th March 2008 a	Male	51	Pattani, Mueang	Tinsmith
26th March 2008 a	Female	37	North of Thailand /Pattani, Mueang	Food vendor
26th March 2008 b	Male	47	Pattani, Mueang	Office worker
26th March 2008 c	Female	52	Songkla/Pattani, Mueang	Vegetable seller
25th April 2008 a	Male	40	Yala/Pattani, Panarae	Gardener
30th April 2008 a	Female	77	Pattani, Nong Chick	Temple assistant (former rice farmer)
30th April 2008 b	Female	38	Pattani, Yaring	Accountant
1st May 2008 a	Female	37	Pattani, Yaring	Laundry worker

School teachers

Date	Gender	Age	Born/Live (province, district)	Religion	School
15th March 2008 b	Female	23	Pattani, Mueang	Muslim	SS
17th March 2008 b	Female	45	Pattani, Mueang	Muslim	PIS
18th March 2008 b	Female	47	Pattani, Mueang	Muslim	SS
25th March 2008 b	Male	55	Pattani, Mueang	Buddhist	PIS
1st May 2008 b	Female	56	Pattani, Mueang	Buddhist	SS
2nd May 2008 a	Female	29	Pattani, Yaring	Muslim	PIS

Imams

Date	Born/Live (province, district)
18th March 2008 c	Pattani, Mueang
2nd May 2008 b	Pattani, Mueang

Monks

Date	Born/Live (province, district)
20th March 2008 b	Yala/Pattani, Khok Pho
24th March 2008 a	The upper South of Thailand/Pattani, Mueang
25th April 2008 b	Pattani, Mueang
26th April 2008 a	Yala/Pattani, Mueang - Khok Pho

* Formal interviews only. Informal interviews are referred to in the footnotes as 'field notes' followed by the date of the interview.

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