A DIFFERENT PATH: THE MINORITY MUSLIM EXPERIENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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A DIFFERENT PATH: THE MINORITY MUSLIM EXPERIENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

ABSTRACT.

This thesis looks at the three significant Muslim minority communities in Vietnam, Cambodia and Southern Thailand from the perspective of living in a predominantly monocultural, non-Muslim society, and how they function economically, socially, religiously and politically in this context. It particularly focuses on the time period from 1945 to the present day, from the end of the Second World War and the post-colonial era as this is a significant break-point and begins the recent era of local societies. The end of the Second World War brought about significant change in all three countries. All three had been occupied by the Japanese. (Thailand had joined an alliance with the Japanese, but this was a face-saving accommodation, leading to de facto Japanese government and rule.) After the Japanese defeat, the French colonial power attempted to reassert itself in Indo-China, followed by a similar American exercise of influence. In Thailand, a return to independence saw Thailand become a close ally and client state of the USA, a bulwark against Communist insurgency in the rest of Southeast Asia. By 1975 all three states were free of foreign control, and pursued policies of self-determination and independent development, albeit in dramatically different ways.

I examine this situation from Muslim perspectives, from the governing policies of the states themselves and from the viewpoint of the non-Muslim majority citizens of the states. I endeavour to identify common themes and strategies and divergent reactions to their lived environment. I seek to answer the question: how have long-existing Muslim minorities come to terms with their environment in the societies of Southeast Asia that have a dominant, if not monocultural ethos, what will this mean for their future in the region, and what is its impact on the Muslim and global community?

There are two distinct and clearly identifiable ethnic groups – the lowland Cham of Vietnam and Cambodia's Mekong Delta and the Malay Muslims of the Southern border provinces of Thailand. The first group are ethnically homogenous, although split

in two by a political border that can be rigid but is also a fluid means of communication and economic activity. The second are also ethnically homogenous, but exist within the borders of modern Thailand, where they vary from the majority population in language, economic status, allegiance to and treatment by the Thai state.

By understanding the way in which these groups exist, survive, accommodate (or resist) their non-Muslim state and government structures, I draw conclusions about the success and future development of these societies – and of course, their failures. There are also interesting lessons to learn for multicultural societies coming to terms with Muslim minorities, and other Muslims working to develop in a non-Muslim environment. Although these groups are relatively small and have a low profile in the Muslim world, they are also deeply rooted, having been resident in their areas for significantly longer than the modern states that now surround them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

First I would like to thank my supervisor at the University of Exeter, Professor Sajjad Rizvi for his invaluable guidance and constructive suggestions. As a result of his comments my research and reading took many different and fascinating paths that would otherwise have been left unexamined.

I would also like to thank Dr. Philipp Bruckmayr of the University of Vienna, the leading authority on the Cham of Cambodia, for his insights and help in looking at this neglected corner of the Islamic world. Dr. Ross Porter of Exeter was also most helpful in suggesting an anthropological approach to the question.

My fieldwork would have been quite impossible without the help of my local assistants who acted as recruiters, translators and logistical managers. They were Ly Hanafy in Cambodia, Nguyen Ho Phong in Vietnam and Medina Adulyarat in Thailand. Khun Medina in particular was an endless source of help, information, suggestions and companionship during our visits to Pattani, Satun and Narathiwat provinces.

In all I interviewed around 150 local people in the three countries. Although they cannot be named, I would like to put on record my gratitude for their openness, honesty and thoughtfulness in their interviews.

I was fortunate to interview and obtain guidance from local academics and experts in both Cambodia and Thailand. In Bangkok they were Dr. Phansasiri Kularb of Chulalongkorn University, Dr. Phrae Sirisakdamkoeng of Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre, her graduate student Thitimat Kamwong, and Professor Suwilai Premsrirat of Mahidol University.

In Pattani I benefited greatly from the comments and insights of Dr. Srisompob Jitpriromsri, Dr. Samatcha Nilaphatama, Dr. Walakkamol Changkamol and Dr. Soraya Jamjuree, all of whom are associated with Prince of Songkla University and who are

also active in the understanding, recording and development of the Southern situation of Thailand..

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I would also like to thank four former colleagues from my ex-employer, Ogilvy & Mather – Shelina Janmohamed, Tahir Khan, Miles Young and Tim Isaac - for their encouragement and support when I first mooted leaving the company in order to pursue this project.

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NAMES OF PLACES AND PEOPLE – USAGE AND SPELLING.

Myanmar or Burma?

Where necessary, for the purposes of this thesis I intend to use the name of Myanmar, rather than Burma, for two reasons. First, it is the official name of the country. Second, the word Burma implies a nation of the Burmans – just one of the many ethnic groups of Myanmar.

Patani or Pattani?

Throughout this paper, I will follow the widely observed convention of using Patani with one 't' to refer to the original Sultanate and the region of Thailand that matches the borders of the Sultanate, covering the current Thai provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. When Pattani with two 't's is used, it refers to the modern Thai province, and the town with the same name.

Songkhla or Songkla?

The town and province are commonly spelled Songkhla, when transliterated into Roman characters. However the University spells itself as Prince of Songkla University. Therefore I have followed this practice.[1]

[1] Confusingly, PSU has campuses in the towns of Hat Yai and Pattani, but not in the town of Songkhla. Meanwhile the Tourism Authority of Thailand manages to use both spellings on the same page on their English-language web site.

Tourism Authority of Thailand website, https://www.tourismthailand.org/About-Thailand/Destination/Songkhla, accessed May 21, 2019.

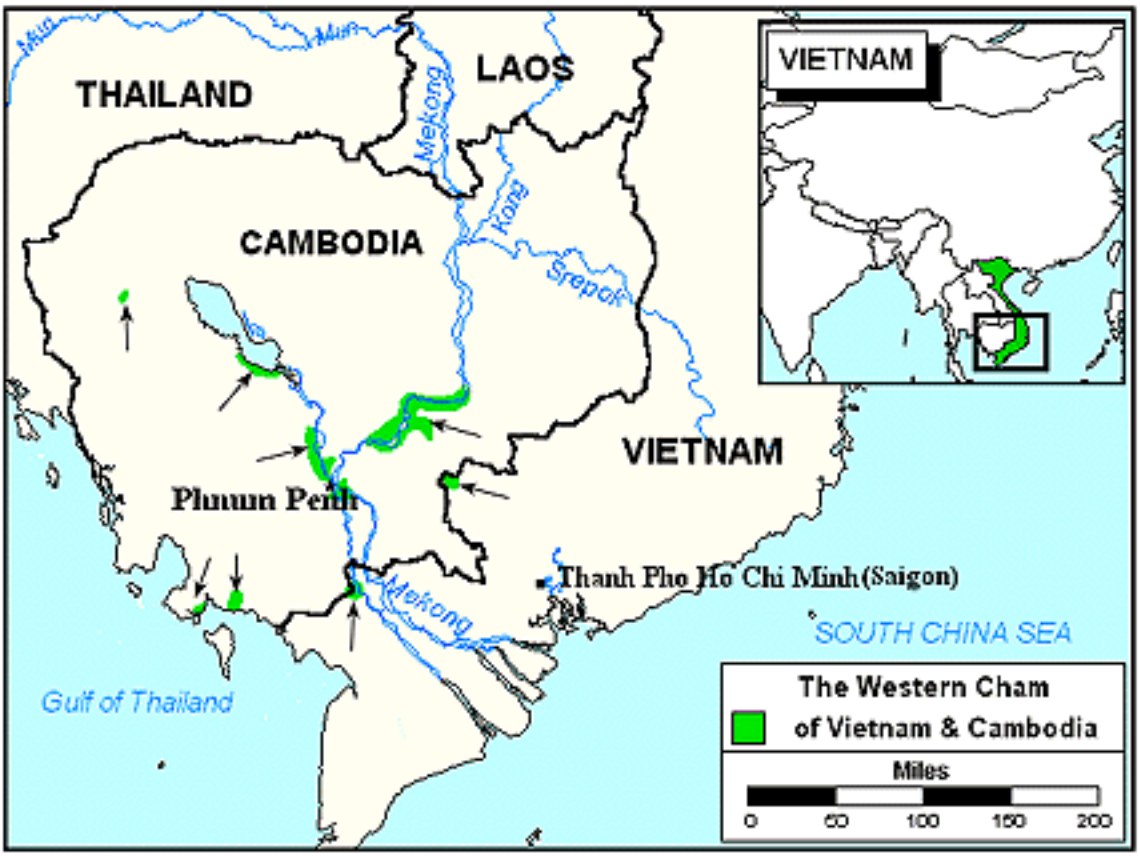
First or Last?

In Thailand and Cambodia it is customary to refer to people by their first name when shortening from the full name. Therefore I have followed that usage when using proper names in the text. However in references I have used the second name, in order to facilitate indexing and reference checking. So, for example, Thongchai Winichakul, author of *Siam Mapped*, is referred to as Thongchai when being discussed in the text, but - after the first reference - is cited as Winichakul.

Where places or people are mentioned in direct quotes I have retained the spelling originally used (or the transliteration, where the original was not in Roman script).

Border Provinces of Thailand and Malaysia.

Cham Locations in Cambodia and Mekong Vietnam.



(Open source maps, taken from relevant Wikipedia pages.)

Chapter One - Introduction.

"Vietnam is a country, not a war." This expression can be found on T-shirts printed for tourists and sold across modern Vietnam. It is a reference to the attitude held by some visitors, fixated on the wars of liberation that convulsed the country from 1945 to 1975 and held the world's attention, fought out as the first conflict broadcast on prime-time television. In a few words, it makes the important point that there is far more to Vietnam than that – a country rich in history, culture, geography and a very complex set of different population groups.

The same might be said of the experiences of the Muslim minorities in all mainland Southeast Asian countries during the twentieth century. When people think about Islam in Southeast Asia they tend to focus on the majority Muslim centres of Indonesia and Malaysia. This is understandable; Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world by population, and Malaysia, though much smaller, punches well above its weight when it comes to economic and financial influence in the Muslim economy. Of $75 billion issued globally in the form of Sukuk – Islamic bonds – during 2016, 50.6% originated in Malaysia.[2]

When attention turns to the minority Muslim populations of the region, media and academic focus tends to be heavily weighted towards the violent conflicts, either historic (the persecution of the Cham Muslims of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge regime) or present (the appalling violence visited in 2017 on the Rohingya of Myanmar, and the seemingly endless conflict between Muslim separatists and the Thai state in the southern border provinces of Thailand).[3] However, tragic though these conflicts are, there is a more complex and nuanced story to tell. The Muslim communities of this region have been in place for centuries - far longer than the

[2] Katarzyna W. Sidlo, "Islamic Finance 2017: State of the Art and Outlook for the Future". *Helpdesk Reports*. London, K4D**,** no 25, (2017), 3.

[3] This is sometimes described as a 'low-level' conflict. However, as a US-based report pointed out, "the only country with more IED attacks is Afghanistan." Zachary Abuza. "The Ongoing Insurgency in Southern Thailand: Trends in Violence, Counterinsurgency Operations, and the Impact of National Politics." *INSS - Strategic Perspectives* 6, (2011), 1-35.

modern states in which they are now situated.[4] They have rich histories, unique ways in which their religion is observed and practiced, traditions and culture that have deep roots and have been affected and shaped by the environment which surrounds them.

Moreover, the Cham of Vietnam and Cambodia, and the Muslim Malays of Thailand have been able to reach accommodations with their non-Muslim majority societies over time, which allow them not just to practice their religion and live an openly Muslim life in a non-Muslim society, but also to play an active role in the politics and greater society in which they are situated. Sadly, the same cannot now be said of the Muslims of Myanmar. There is widespread awareness of the systematic violence and persecution of the Rohingya, still ongoing as I write. However, intolerance towards Muslims has percolated much deeper into Myanmar society in the past few years, reaching not only the Rohingya but the rest of the Muslim population. In the first relatively free elections, in 2015, all Muslim candidates were systematically barred from standing as candidates, even by the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD)[5] – supposedly the voice of a new free society and led by Aung San Suu Kyi, sometimes described as Myanmar's 'Nelson Mandela' figure.[6] That said, this dissertation will not cover the situation in Myanmar, as it is too complex, too volatile and too inaccessible to be able to either research or draw conclusions that can have any guarantee of lasting validity.

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[4] At the end of this chapter I have included a few photos of the 385-year old mosque in Narathiwat, Thailand. Build out of wood, with no iron nails, it was established by an early community of local Muslims and is still in regular use.

[5] Poppy McPherson, "No Vote, No Candidates: Myanmar's Muslims Barred From Their Own Election", *The Guardian*, November 3, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/03/no-vote-no-candidates-myanmars-muslims-barred-from-their-own-election, accessed October 31, 2017.

[6] Contrast these two news stories from 2012 and 2018;

Stephen Moss, "Is Aung San Suu Kyi the New Nelson Mandela?", *The Guardian*, June 19, 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/world/shortcuts/2012/jun/19/is-aung-san-suu-kyi-the-new-nelson-mandela, accessed April 8, 2019.

Gwynne Dyer, "Suu Kyi's no Mother Theresa or Mandela", *Bangkok Post*, April 17, 2017, https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/1233314/suu-kyis-no-mother-teresa-or-mandela, accessed April 8, 2019.

The purpose of this dissertation is to focus on the recent history and current experience on the Cham and Malay Muslim people in this region, in order to understand how they have been treated as, and adapted to being minority Muslims in a Southeast Asian environment, ruled by states which are monocultural in their approach to government in that they either have a strong (non-Muslim) religious component in their view of national identity, or discourage religion as a part of national and local identity. I am defining 'monocultural' to mean that one religion or political doctrine is treated as central to the existence of the state and part of a national culture. Other options, when permitted, are seen to have a secondary status. Inevitably this also means a degree of comparison with the societies of the West and the way in which they accommodate minorities in what is held to be a multicultural approach. How genuine the professed multiculturalism of the West differs from the professed monoculturalism of these Southeast Asian societies will be addressed, particularly in Chapter Ten.

I will argue that, although these countries are not democracies and espouse belief systems that are monocultural and privilege one religion or political system as superior to all others, nevertheless the Muslims living there have been able to build and sustain a significant and unique lifestyle, which allows them to lead fulfilling and open lives. Therefore the conventional belief that multicultural practice can only happen in a Western environment where democracy and political liberalism are prevalent is not the case. This even applies in societies where the minority is perceived as being different ethnically as well as in their religious beliefs and practices. I will also try to look at these societies from a much broader aspect, covering all aspects of their societies, as opposed to conventional positions, which have focused on either conflict or religious exceptionalism.

I want to analyse whether Muslims are able to negotiate a path which allows them to live a free and expressed life as Muslims within that environment, and if so, what accommodations they have to make with the nation-state. Also, as a corollary, what actions and accommodations are made by the state, in turn. Specifically, I want to answer a key question - How do Southeast Asian Muslim minorities live with, and lead

a fulfilling life in predominantly monocultural societies, where the dominant religious and social practices and culture are not Muslim?

The main body of literature and study written about Muslims in Southeast Asia looks at small and localised communities from an ethnographic point of view, or single country issues from a political perspective. The only cross-border studies of which I am aware, focus exclusively on violent conflict, or on the one (Malay) community as it straddles the Thai/Malaysian border. This will be the first study to compare two significant ethnic minority Muslim groups (the Mekong Cham and the Thai Malays) in significantly different countries - Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam - and endeavour to answer these questions from a holistic and comparative point of view.

From this initial question, I will endeavour to answer specific subsidiary questions:

1. **Is the primary difference one of religion or of ethnicity?** In other words, when we consider the singularity of these groups, are we looking at them primarily through the prism of their religious distinction from the majority society? If that's not the case, then is it a question of ethnicity, the resentment of an autochthonous society to the imposition of a local form of what feels very much like colonialism – or are there other factors acting to create differentiation and difference?

In this context, has the Muslim religion become 'ethnicised' – seen as synonymous with a certain ethnic identity and in some ways distorted or localised to reflect that ethnicity? Of course, it might be argued that all Muslim societies are ethnicised to some degree, reflecting mores and customs which belong to that culture and which pre-date the adoption of Islam. However, in our context that becomes significant in a different way – it is not just how the society is perceived by itself or by outside observers, but also how it is seen to relate to other religious and ethnic values that are seen as synonymous with national identity. (At its simplest, the adoption of "Nation, Religion, King" as a shorthand for national identity.

"ជាតិ សាសនា ព្រះមហាក្សត" – "Nation. Religion. King" is the national motto for Cambodia, and the same phrase in Thai – "*ชาติ ศาสนา พระมหากษัตริย์*" - although not an official motto, is in common usage. In her 2018 New Year's Greetings to the Thai nation, Princess Sirindhorn, the King's sister and a highly popular figure in Thailand, reinforced a Buddhist definition of society, writing, "May the powers of the Three Gems (the Lord Buddha, dharma and the sangha), the sacred forces and the virtues bless you with inner strength, ease of mind and happiness always."[7]

2. **What can we learn from this Muslim minority experience to build a better understanding of Muslims in the Far East?** Over long periods of coexistence within a shared geographic space, what positive and negative lessons can be discovered, and can they be extrapolated to other situations? What accommodations have to be made by both 'sides', and are they willing to do so? If coexistence comes under pressure, what then happens? What can be learned from this experience, both positively and negatively? What role does language play as a religious identifier, a cultural bond and an isolating factor and how do Muslims cope with a main language of control that is not their own?

3. **How can minority rights work in a non-multicultural environment?** Are we looking at a generalised question of majority control over national minorities, or is the crucial issue the role of Muslim minorities in societies that aspire to be effectively monocultural versus societies that espouse, or at least acknowledge multiculturalism? Islam has specific cultural expectations around religious practice, education, law and social behaviour. Are these sustainable in predominantly monocultural societies, and if so, how? Do minority Muslims operate a parallel 'state' and infrastructure and if so, how does that interlock with the demands of what on the surface are relatively authoritarian non-Muslim states?

[7]"King's New Year Speech: Nation Shows 'Resilience, Calm' " *Bangkok Post*, December 31, 2017, https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/general/1388526/kings-new-year-speech-nation-shows-resilience-calm, accessed January 1, 2018.

It is important to remember throughout this discussion that in neither case should the Muslims be considered to be recent immigrants in any relevant way. The Malay population of Thailand have lived for centuries in the region they now inhabit along the Thai-Malay border. In that context, they are an indigenous Malay population, in the same way as the ethnic Malays of Malaysia, Indonesia (and Brunei). They did not cross the border that currently delineates the territories of modern Thailand and Malaysia; the border crossed them. This is why the use in the Thai language of the word '*Khaek'*, meaning guest, to describe them is seen as pejorative and insulting.[8] The Cham of the Mekong region migrated from the central region of Vietnam when the Champa kingdom was taken over by their northern rivals, the *Đại Việt*, (literally translated as Great Viet), between 1471 and 1835, and have been settled peacefully in that region during that period.[9] Records show a similar length of settlement for many of the Rohingya in Northwestern Myanmar, although it has not helped them achieve legitimate status there. Kymlicka regularly discusses the position of indigenous minorities in Canada, and therefore in Chapter Ten I look at how applicable his viewpoint is to the Muslims of Southeast Asia.

It is also useful to remember that there has never been any serious suggestion of expelling the minority Muslim populations into different countries – unlike Myanmar, for example where that is exactly what happened in 2017, and not for the first time. The Thai state has tried to alter the population ratio between Muslims and Buddhists by settling Buddhists in the border state, but only to a limited degree. The outcome of this policy is reviewed in Chapter Nine. Even when the Khmer Rouge were trying to eradicate any belief system other than their own orthodoxy from Cambodia/Kampuchea, there was never a suggestion of returning the Cham to Vietnam. The choice they were given was much starker – give up your beliefs and practices or die.

[8] *Khaek* is not only used for Thai Muslims, but also for anyone considered to come from a South Asian origin.

[9] Philipp Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia: From Forgotten Minority to Focal Point of Islamic Internationalism." *The American Journal of Islamic Social Studies,* 23 no 3 (2006), 1-23.

Methodology.

In order to enhance the scope of existing viewpoints on daily life in a non-Muslim environment with little official commitment to a multicultural approach, I have conducted specific research to deepen my understanding and provide fresh insights. My intention was to substantiate initial assumptions through a 'deep dive' into published material about issues such as economic behaviour and education, and through personal, confidential, interviews with ordinary individuals. The research process for this thesis consisted of three core elements:

1. Desk research into the existing published work on the history and societies of the region and the issues discussed as they pertain to minority Muslim life. This is fairly rich with many published sources. Some get regular attention (e.g. the armed conflict in Southern Thailand), others involve digging into the history of the region, and the societal context of modern Southeast Asian states.

   The majority of this work comes from academic sources, but there is also a sizeable input from local and international media and government and think-tank publications.

   There is also a strong body of work covering the concepts of multicultural society, ethnic conflict, and the state of minority communities within modern nations. This is directly relevant to the position of minorities in Southeast Asia today.

2. Second, I have conducted field interviews with representative individuals and communities in eight locations – Vietnam's Mekong Delta, Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang provinces and Phnom Penh in Cambodia, the Pattani, Narathiwat, Satun and Songkhla provinces in Thailand. This was undertaken working with local assistants in each area who helped greatly with organisation, recruitment, translation, advice and support.

Specifically, I found local assistants through contacts I had in local institutions in each country. Each assistant could speak both the national and local languages. In turn they recruited interviewees from the local communities, following a brief from me – to identify a cross-section of the population by age, sex, income and to recruit people who did not have official roles in society and administration in their areas. We interviewed people in their own homes, in local mosques and (in Thailand) in the lobby of a local hotel. My assistants led the interviews, following a script written by me, in order to put the interviewees at ease. The script (in Appendix B) was generally the same for each set of interviews, with local nuancing, in order to make a fair comparison of different areas and countries. This took place between February 2018 and April 2019.

We taped all the interviews and then transcribed them and translated them into English. In order to reassure participants of their confidentiality we guaranteed that all interview files would be encrypted and stored on a server held outside the country. For this reason all interviewees are only identified by a two-letter code, with their age and sex. The files containing the link between interviewee and code are held on the same secure server.

3. I also conducted one-to-one interviews with a selection of academic specialists and civil experts – people whose work I had come into contact with through my reading and research - in Phnom Penh, Cambodia and Bangkok and Pattani, Thailand.

Structure.

The structure of this dissertation is as follows: in Chapters Two, Three and Four I cover the background giving rise to present circumstances as described below, and also my approach to the question. From Chapter Five onwards I address the core learnings from research and the conclusions that result. Specifically:

Chapter Two is a review of the literature, both historic and current, showing the available sources and the way in which different studies of the region have focused on different aspects of history, politics, anthropology and social development. Through this process I will show how this work is intended to add to understanding of the Muslim experience in the region. I believe this is important to understand and describe the challenges being faced by both the states and the peoples of the region.

In Chapter Three, I set the historical context – how and why the Cham established themselves in the Mekong region during the period leading up to French colonisation of Indochina, and how the Sultanate of Patani became separated from other sultanates (Kedah, Kelantan, Perak and Perlis) in what is now the north of Malaysia and fell under the sway of the Siamese monarchy of what is now central Thailand. I will also look at how the French withdrawal and subsequent nation-building of Cambodia and (South) Vietnam affected the status of the Cham people. I will also cover the border arrangements made between British Empire and Siam, which led to the current national borders of Thailand – and why the border delineation plays a strong part in the Thai sense of nationhood.[10]

I also look at the way in which building new Communist nations in Cambodia (Democratic Kampuchea) and unified Vietnam affected the Cham – in the former case nearly wiping them out. I will also cover the rise of Thai nationalism, and how the concept of a nation unified under Language, Religion and King marginalised Malay culture. I will also look at how chronic government instability from 1932 to the present day (19 coups, 12 of which were successful) has led to inconsistency and lack of strategic planning or inclusion for the southern provinces.

Chapter Four examines the context of the last few decades. This will look at the rebuilding of Cambodia under the Vietnam-sponsored government and then the UN administration, which allowed the revival of the Cham community, brought them back into the broader society as significant actors and also brought them back into contact

[10] Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation*. (Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 1994).

with the Islamic world, particularly Malaysia and the Middle East. It will also cover the impact of the market reforms in Vietnam ('*Đổi Mới*') on the trading economy of the Cham in the Mekong Delta. We will look at how Thai Malay demands for autonomy and recognition were revived under the moral leadership of Hajji Sulong in the immediate post-war period and how, after a period of relative harmony the Thai Southern provinces burst back into violent conflict in 2004, and how the Thai state, which has had another two military coups between then and now, has struggled to manage a seemingly faceless and leaderless opposition. (Askew,[11] Helbardt, 2012 and 2015).[12]

Chapter Five moves on to look at how key elements of normal life – education, law, arbitration, ethics and morality and citizenship have evolved differently for the Muslim minorities of this part of Southeast Asia. The desire to influence or control these aspects of life is an integral tenet for Muslims all over the world. How does this manifest itself in Southeast Asia, and to what degree have people been able to develop systems, either in parallel to the state or in collaboration with it, that meet the needs of the community? Then, how does this affect their relationships with the state and with the majority community? Again, this is not always a straightforward situation – in some cases, although there is a Muslim option available, the state system might be seen to be fairer, easier to navigate and more practical for everyday life in society. (As suggested by Brown, 2014[13] and Tsuneda, 2009.[14])

In Chapter Six, I want to examine how some of the broader changes in society on a global basis are impacting the societies under consideration, and how that impact affects minority Muslims in particular, independently and in their relations with the

[11] Marc Askew; Sascha Helbardt, "Becoming Patani Warriors: Individuals and the Insurgent Collective in Southern Thailand." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 35, no 11, (2012), 779-809.

[12] Sascha Helbardt, *Deciphering Southern Thailand's Violence: Organisation and Insurgent Practices of BRN-Coordinate*, (Singapore: ISEAS Press, 2015).

[13] Rajeswary Ampalavanar Brown, *Islam in Modern Thailand: Faith, Philanthropy and Politics,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).

[14] Michiko Tsuneda, *Navigating Life on the Border: Gender, Migration and Identity in Malay Muslim Communities in Southern Thailand*, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2009.

state. In recent times we have seen significant and pervasive changes in various parts of normal life, and our subjects are in no way immune to these changes. Much of the relationship between majority and minority is defined by how it is portrayed in national media, but I will look at how the Thai and Cambodian states have tentatively opened up to locally produced media (particularly radio), and how they have then tried to use those channels as a method of influencing behaviour (Helbardt, 2015).[15] Also, how informal communication has been used as a propaganda channel for both state and insurrection (McCargo, 2009,[16] 2012[17]).

In addition, the media context has been dramatically altered by the development of interactive and social media, changing the power structure of media communications and decentralising the locus of control in ways that are both beneficial and dangerous. This is significant because of the different language requirements, the use of media as a method of controlling the dialogue between state and community, and the ability to source information and entertainment from competing channels – across the border, via the internet and through parallel distribution networks.

A changing global economy has affected the way in which people work, disrupting traditional roles and contexts and forcing people to reassess and change their ways of making a living. It is often assumed that this is a positive for Southeast Asia as a beneficiary of global change, but that benefit is distributed unequally, and the consequences are highly unpredictable. This also leads to changes in migration patterns and forces people to consider how and where they move for economic reasons. Changing expectations around gender roles are also reaching the countries of Southeast Asia and impacting both the majority and minority populations. Finally, in this chapter, I want to look at the rise of political populism in the early 21st Century,

[15] Sascha Helbardt, "The Emergence of a Local Public Sphere Under Violent Conditions: The Case of Community Radio in Thailand's South", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 46**,** no 1, (2015), 32-59.

[16] Duncan McCargo, *Tearing Apart the Land; Islam and Legitimacy in Southern Thailand.* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009).

[17] Duncan McCargo, *Mapping National Anxieties; Thailand's Southern Conflict*. (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2012).

how it is manifesting itself in the region and what impact it is having and can be expected to have in the near future.

In Chapter Seven, I examine the nature of Islam in the region and how it is practiced and expressed by the Malay and Cham communities. Given the long distance from the origins of Islam in Arabia, the relative poverty of many people in the region making it difficult for them to study or to travel, the political upheavals that have regularly affected the region and the fact that Muslims have always been a minority, subject to usually authoritarian rule from non-Muslim minority societies, it might be expected that Islam in the region has become isolated, vernacularised by influences from local animism and the strength of other religions and disconnected from the mainstream of Islam and its development over the centuries. This chapter will review whether that is the case and what developments have taken place in minority Muslim Southeast Asia to change and reform Islamic practice.

Islam in Southeast Asia has come under the same challenges and movements towards reform and return to essentials as experienced across the world in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Influences from Arabia and the Indian subcontinent reached Malaysia and Indonesia and the nature of travel across the Indian Ocean saw an exchange and dialogue in ideas and concepts of what is correct belief and practice. From Malaysia the same movements reached both Thailand and Cambodia and I will show how this transpired to change the nature of Islamic practice in these countries, with the inevitable conflict and dissent that this invited.

I also look at the nature of persecution of Muslims for their religious beliefs in these countries. The systematic attempt to eliminate religion from Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge is well-known; however Thailand has also seen attempts to bring the Malay community into a monogamous concept of a Thai state by eliminating local habits of dress, language, tradition, legal practice and religious observance. Ironically, despite the unfree nature of a Communist state, Vietnam has seen less persecution aimed at Muslims based on faith or practice but nevertheless religion has seen state interference and I will also look at how that has transpired.

Besides the conflict between traditionalism and reform, both Cambodia and Vietnam are home to groups of believers who practice a very different form of Islam, unique to their own countries and very different from practice elsewhere in the world, or even among the majority of Muslims in their own countries who adhere to forms of practice that closely resemble that of majority Muslim countries elsewhere. The followers of Imam Bani San (colloquially known as Jahed) in Cambodia and the Cham Bani in coastal Vietnam practice a form of Islam that is unique to their own communities. In the case of Vietnam they are described as Muslims by the state, but do not describe themselves the same way. Both communities have come under pressure from external influences to adapt their ways to a form of Islam that has more in common with the broader Muslim world but continue to maintain their unique ways of life to this day.

External influences will also be covered in this chapter. Despite the distances involved, there has been a regular channel of influence from the Middle East and from Northern India in particular. The near-disappearance of the Cham Muslims of Cambodia and their revival under very difficult circumstances has attracted the attention and support from both governments and NGO's from the Middle East, providing financial and educational support. This has generally been welcomed but also has consequences resulting from the financial impact that results and the expectations that come attached to aid from these sources. The other major source of influence across the region has been the influence of the Tablighi Jamaat (TJ), the evangelical and reform movement originating in Northern India. The TJ have been very active in Southern Thailand, crossing over from Northern Malaysia and have also established themselves effectively in Cambodia, headquartered in Kampong Cham province, the traditional centre of Islamic reform in that country. I will look at how the TJ have influenced Islam in the region, and how the national governments have reacted to their presence.

Finally in this chapter I cover the attempts by international Islam to influence the conflict in the border provinces of Thailand. The government of Malaysia have regularly been involved as a location for discussions, as an acceptable neutral mediator and interlocutor for both sides. To date this role has not seen any practical results, but the dialogue continues. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has also been involved from time to time. Separatist groups have tried to align themselves with the

OIC in order to align it with their aims; however the Thai government has been astute in its participation with the OIC and management of relations with OIC members, rendering it ineffective as anything other than a benign observer.

Chapter Eight evaluates the role that Muslim communities have been able to play in the political and civil societies of their states. As I will discuss, secession seems to be a lost cause, and emigration is not a practical, or considered, option. Therefore the only alternatives are a quietist attempt to stay separated from mainstream society, or in some way to participate in national politics and society. This has several different dimensions. As relatively small percentages of population in each country (usually estimated at between 1-5%), it is difficult for Muslim minorities to form any effective form of political movement capable of exerting any influence on outcomes. The Wadah[18] group in Thailand have tried but failed, defeated by aligning themselves with the wrong players and then by the termination of democracy in the country. In Cambodia the Muslims have been solidly aligned with the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) as a safeguard against turmoil and a return to past persecution – I will look at how these alignments and options have worked and what the future holds in the political arena. Across the border in Vietnam, the Cham have little political role in national society, but play an active role as traders throughout the Delta region, threaded through a greater economy. How does that mutual interdependence work, and how will it develop?

Alongside conventional political activity, the other non-violent channel available to Muslim minorities has been the involvement in NGO activity to effect change outside the political system. The developing economies of the region have attracted the attention and involvement of many external NGO's, and the fluctuating embrace of democracy in Cambodia and Thailand have also provided avenues for indigenous development of non-governmental activity. I will cover Muslim involvement in developing or participating in this sector and how it can be used effectively to achieve positive change in their circumstances.

[18] Wadah – Unity (Malay, derived from a similar Arabic word).

In Chapter Nine, I look at the relationship between the Muslims and people of other faiths – or no faith at all. In Thailand, this is obviously the Muslim/Buddhist relationship, but that relationship operates at three levels – the local, state and *Sangha* (Buddhist leadership) perspectives. In order to do this, I will cover the origins and nature of Thai Buddhism, and how it has influenced the development of religiously-influenced government, a politically active Buddhist leadership and general attitudes held by the majority Buddhist population.[19]

Buddhism in Cambodia also plays a key role in the development of the modern state. The form of Theravada Buddhism in Cambodia has been highly influenced by practice in Thailand, but was heavily involved in, and factionalised by, the conflicts that took place between the departure of the French and the rule of the KR. The KR, although in some ways influenced by Buddhist origins and supported by some Buddhist factions, almost destroyed the structure of Buddhism in Cambodia during their three years of power. Since then a rebuilding process has also seen factionalism between tendencies to support the government or to align with environmental and social international NGO's in actions that the government sees as hostile. Although not particularly focused on the minority Muslims, who are widely dispersed and maintain a low profile, this context also impacts how society will develop and how it is run for the benefit – or otherwise – of all Cambodians.

In Vietnam, there is a different challenge – how to practice religion in a country with a diversity of different faiths – folk religion, Christianity, Buddhism and Caodaism to name but four. However probably the larger challenge is that Vietnam is officially an atheist state, and therefore believing and practicing any religion becomes a challenge to the state authority – a challenge that is not treated lightly or tolerantly.[20] There are

[19] This will also reference the work of Jerryson and others, studying the stressful and tense dynamic in the south of Thailand, and the militarisation of the Buddhist community and religion, in reaction to what is perceived as an existential threat to their continued existence.

[20] "Vietnam: Torture Arrests of Montagnard Christians", *Human Rights Watch*, January 7, 2005, https://www.hrw.org/report/2005/01/07/vietnam-torture-arrests-montagnard-christians/cambodia-slams-door-new-asylum, accessed May 12, 2019.

no conventional political avenues open to any dissenting voice, Muslim or otherwise, and although there is some non-governmental activity it is also highly restricted.

Chapter Ten examines the nature of national minority existence in a monocultural society. Most studies of multiculturalism assume a stable, democratic (Western) society (Benhabib, 2004;[21] Kymlicka, 2001,[22] 2005;[23] Modood[24]). However, in all three countries, we have what Kymlicka defines as a 'national minority' which, to one degree or another, is living, growing and cohabitating under the umbrella of a monocultural, non-democratic, ostensibly rejectionist establishment. How does that fit with a Western model of preconditions for successful multicultural development, and how can the contradictions in ethnicity and religious allegiance develop, positively or otherwise?

In order to do this I look at some of the characteristics that have led to the development of nation states in mainland Southeast Asia – how history and circumstances have led to a different origin story and continue to colour the way in which they develop. This means looking at the influence of colonialism, the influence of the military state (what was recently described as 'Khaki Capital'[25]) and how the transnational forum of ASEAN might play a role.

Finally, in the conclusion, I try to evaluate what the future holds for the Muslims in this far corner of 'Mecca's Verandah'. Is there any way out of what seems a deeply intractable situation in Thailand's south, where every possible step forward seems to

[21] Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[22] Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[23] Will Kymlicka, Will. (2005). "Liberal Multiculturalism: Western Models, Global Trends and Asian Debates", *Multiculturalism in Asia*, eds, Will Kymlicka, Baogang He, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

[24] Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, 2013).

[25] Paul Chambers, Napisa Waitoolkiat, (eds.), *Khaki Capital: The Political Economy of the Military in Southeast Asia*, Copenhagen, NIAS Press, 2017.

contain its own downfall? (Poonyarat;[26] Abuza[27].) How does Malay Muslim society in Thailand develop in this context? How are issues like education, economic development, religious freedom and social change to be addressed in a society that is heavily militarised and bitterly polarised at a national level? As Askew,[28] reminds us, there is no monolithic Muslim point of view in Thailand, as elsewhere, and it is doubtful whether the opinions and positions held by the elite in the region generally reflect the feelings of ordinary people under great pressure. I will also touch on the south-west border province of Satun – also religiously Muslim, but with virtually no conflict whatsoever. How has that happened, and is there anything that can be learned and extrapolated for wider use?[29]

As I mentioned before, Cambodia is moving towards single-party rule with the ban on the opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP).[30] The Cham community has historically been involved with both government and opposition parties, but in recent years has seemed to be more closely aligned with the CPP, which has held power since 1979. This may be a protective choice, but also contains the risk of being aligned with a dictatorial and intolerant regime. And although the Vietnamese government maintains a tight grip on Vietnam's society, can that be a permanent situation, and where does it leave the Mekong Delta Cham?

Finally I want to return to the key question I started with - How do Southeast Asian Muslim minorities live with, and manage in, predominantly monocultural societies,

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[26] Chayanit Poonyarat, "Seasons of Insurgency: The Promises and Curses of Violent Actions" *The Promise of Reconciliation?: Examining Violent and Non-violent Effects on Asian Conflicts.* Oliver Urbain, Chaiwat Satha-Anand, (eds), (Oxford: Routledge, 2017**),** 73-85.

[27] Abuza, "The Ongoing Insurgency in Southern Thailand".

[28] Marc Askew, "Fighting With Ghosts: Querying Thailand's "Southern Fire"." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 32 no 2, (2010), 117-155.

[29] Thomas I Parks, "Maintaining peace in a neighbourhood torn by separatism: the case of Satun province in southern Thailand." *Small Wars and Insurgencies,* 20 no 1, (2009), 185-202.

[30] Prak Chan Thul, Amy Sawitta Lefevre, , "Cambodia's Main Opposition Party Dissolved By Supreme Court", Reuters.com, November 16, 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-politics/cambodias-main-opposition-party-dissolved-by-supreme-court-idUSKBN1DG1BO, accessed April 8, 2019.

where the dominant religious and social practices and culture are not Muslim? A believe in the benefits of multiculturalism seems to be closely linked to the practice of some form of democratic society. (I will expand on this in Chapter Ten.) Given the relative absence of democratic society in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam, and the global challenges to multiculturalism around the world, how can Muslim minorities in Southeast Asia develop and thrive in their own environments? From this conclusion, what can be learned that will be useful for other Muslim minorities in the rest of the world?

The 385-year old mosque in Bacho, Narathiwat, Thailand.

(Photos: Author)

Chapter Two – Perspectives From The Literature.

Introduction.

In order to progress this argument, I have approached this question through reviewing two sources of information and opinion. First, by conducting an exhaustive review of existing literature on the subject – from academic, political and contemporary news reporting perspectives. Second by conducting an extensive set of interviews with people from the different Muslim communities. In this way I have attempted to take from what has already been studied, documented and analysed, and add contemporary perspectives from both a media and personal point of view. I will return to the purpose and methodology of the interview process in later chapters but in this chapter I want to analyse the main themes and context of the existing literature – how it analyses and documents the context of Muslim minorities in the region, how the main themes of literature break down, and within that how this work finds a relevant and new context to add to and lead to future learning. This literature review shows the depth and range of written material that currently exists as a result of extensive study of the region and the issues that have been generated. However it also reveals the gaps in comparative analysis of the Muslim minorities of the region and shows how Muslim life in this environment has not really been examined against the backdrop of an established majority alternative, except at the most micro – village – level.

Approaches to Muslims in Thailand and the Mekong Delta.

The existing body of literature relating to these communities and their role within Southeast Asian societies can be segmented in many different ways and addresses many key issues, often in great depth. Most approaches look at a single country, either holistically or focusing on specific issues. In Chapter Three, I will look at the specific impact of the Khmer Rouge regime on the Cham of Cambodia. Because of the significance and dramatic circumstances of this regime, it has been the subject of a great deal of reportage, analysis and commentary, both scholarly and popular. Much of this literature only acknowledges the fate of the Cham in passing, as one of the ethnic minorities singled out for explicitly worse treatment, e.g. Elizabeth Becker's

classic, *When the War Was Over,*[31] written in 1986 when the Vietnamese-sponsored government was still in conflict with the remnants of the Khmer Rouge in the West of the country – and the Khmer Rouge was still part of the coalition recognised as the legitimate government of Cambodia by the United Nations. An excellent new piece of work published in 2018 examines the historical links between Cambodia and the West.[32] However, as usual, the Cham play a peripheral role in the unfolding story of Cambodia's struggle for autonomy in the face of strong neighbours and aggressive forces from the West, whether French or American.

However, some of the literature on the Khmer Rouge era has specifically examined the way in which the Cham were singled out by the regime for specific ill-treatment because of their religious beliefs, lifestyle practices deriving from those beliefs and unwillingness to provide undivided loyalty to Angkar – the Khmer Rouge government. Ben Kiernan completes a very specific analysis on the situation of the Cham, based on both statistical analyses and verbatim interviews with survivors (Kiernan, 1988,[33] and then updated in a book published in 1996[34]). Kiernan makes an explicit argument for the use of the term 'genocide' for the treatment of the Cham. He argues that they were specifically singled out for treatment based on the refusal of the Khmer Rouge to accept any form of religion or secondary allegiance and that a deliberate attempt was made to eradicate them altogether, either through complete assimilation into the general Khmer population, or by death. As Kiernan states, the Khmer Rouge specifically stated that there was no such thing as an independent Cham people – "The Cham race was exterminated by the Vietnamese!" This appears to be Democratic Kampuchea's *only* official statement about them.'[35]

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[31] Elizabeth Becker, *When The War Was Over: Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Revolution*. (New York: Public Affairs, 1986).

[32] T. O. Smith, ed, *Cambodia and the West, 1500-2000*. (London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2018).

[33] Ben Kiernan, "Orphans of Genocide - The Cham Muslims Under Pol Pot." *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholar*s, 20, no 4, (1988), 2-33.

[34] Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power and Genocide under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

[35] Ibid., 257.

This argument has been recently reinforced in an article by Maureen Hiebert as part of a focus on genocide internationally.[36] Hiebert argues that starvation was both a core tool of control in the Khmer Rouge regime, and also became a source of negative self-reinforcement – failure to meet (impossible) food production targets was indicative of incorrect attitudes or deliberate sabotage, and therefore a cause for further action. Importantly, for this discussion, she claims, "By 1976, however, it became clear in most regions that the 'new people' *and the ethnic minorities* were deliberately given substandard food rations as part of a larger project of genocidal destruction. "(Italics mine.)

The argument that the Khmer Rouge attempted systematic genocide of the Cham as a specific target because of who they were and what they believed is generally, but not universally accepted. Heder, for example, in a hostile critique of Kiernan's work,[37] argues that Khmer identity naturally included the Cham as a component and that the overt racism of the Khmer Rouge policy was a natural outcome of their Marxist belief system, not a perversion or contradiction of it. Similarly, Thion argues that the targeting of the Cham was as a result of their inability to adapt to the Angkar style of total collective submission, rather than as a result of specific religious beliefs, and therefore genocide is used inaccurately in this context, in that the Cham were not a specifically-targeted group.[38]

Additional reportage of the specific persecution of the Cham can be found in the work of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, specifically in the collection by Osman Ysa of verbatim interviews with survivors, both victims and Khmer Rouge cadres.[39] This

[36] Maureen S Hiebert, "Genocide, Revolution, and Starvation under the Khmer Rouge." *Genocide Studies International*, 11 no 1, (2017), 68-86.

[37] Steve Heder, (1997). "Racism, Marxism, labelling and genocide in Ben Kiernan's The Pol Pot Regime." *South East Asia Research* 5, no 2, (1997), 101-153.

[38] Serge Thion, *Watching Cambodia*. (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1993).

It should be noted that subsequently Thion achieved infamy for his position as a holocaust denier, and in 2000 was dismissed from the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) for this reason.

[39] Osman Ysa, *The Cham Rebellion: Survivors Stories from the Villages*. (Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2006).

collection is also a rare examination of the attempts by the Cham to rebel and fight back against the strictures regarding religious practice and observance imposed on them from 1975 onwards.

The survival and rebirth of the Cham population of Cambodia has been quite remarkable. Data on the Cham of Cambodia is very suspect. Between 1936 and the revolution of 1975 no population census was undertaken. Bruckmayr quotes estimates from different sources of between 250,000 and 700,000 at the beginning of the Khmer Rouge era. The figures for survivors are more substantial, at between 170-200,000, and current population estimates are around 250-300,000. The post-Khmer Rouge regimes have generally been keen to demonstrate tolerance and acceptance of the Cham, and although they remain economically and socially disadvantaged, they have attracted a lot of scholarly attention. Bruckmayr and others have looked at the development of the population and the success of its rebirth through local efforts supported by both the Cambodian government and international agencies (Bruckmayr, 2006,[40] 2015,[41] Farouk, 2015[42]). There have also been specific analyses of challenges in education (Bredenberg, 2008,[43] Blengsli, 2009[44]); the ritual practices of the different strands of Islam practiced in Cambodia (Trankell, 2003,[45] Uy & Yusos, 2009,[46]

[40] Bruckmayr, "*The Cham Muslims of Cambodia*.

[41] Philipp Bruckmayr, "Cambodian Muslims, Transnational NGO's, and International Justice." *Peace Review* 27, (2015), 337-345.

[42] Omar Farouk, "Globalization and Its Impact on the Muslim Community in Cambodia", *Southeast Asian Muslims in the Era of Globalization*, Ken Miichi, Omar Farouk, eds. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 145-171.

[43] Kurt Bredenberg, "Educational Marginalization of Cham Muslim Populations: A Report from Cambodia." *Journal of Education for International Development* 3, no 3, (2008), 26.

[44] Bjørn Atle Blengsli, "Muslim Metamorphosis: Islamic Education and Politics in Contemporary Cambodia", *Making Modern Muslims. The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia*. R W Hefner, ed, (Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008)**.**

[45] Ing-Britt Trankell, "Songs of Our Spirits: Possession and Historical Imagination among the Cham in Cambodia." *Asian Ethnicity* 4**,** no 1**, (**2003), 31-46.

[46] Sareth Uy, Sary Yusos, "The Muslims of Cambodia: Cultural Practice and Conflict Resolution", *Ethnic Groups in Cambodia*. Hean Sokhom, ed, (Bangkok: White Lotus, 2009)**,** 113-159.

Bruckmayr, 2017[47]); the historic and current links between Cambodian Cham and Malaysian Malays (Hamid & Effendy, 2006[48]); economic culture (Sok & Boulidam, 2016[49]); expatriate population (So, 2013[50]).

All of this literature helps to build a picture of both the historic catastrophe that befell the Cambodian Cham between 1975 and 1979 and the subsequent rebirth, cultural development and social and economic participation which continues today. However, it does not look at the Cham in the context of their permanent role as part of the indigenous population of Cambodia, and how they interact and participate in the overall Cambodian society, where the majority and power resides with the Buddhist community. It either considers the Cham as victims of a vicious totalitarian regime, bent on the elimination of their culture, beliefs and existence, or as a separate community, inwardly focused and under the influence of external forces, often with an agenda for change. When it considers the relationship with the state it tends to be expressed in token benefits - the presence of a Cham government minister (Osthman Hassan of the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training) – the launch (and subsequent closure) of a Cham-language radio station – rather than in an analysis of the overall dynamic of the relationship with the majority state. There is also little comparison of the situation of the Cambodian Muslim Cham compared with their neighbours in Vietnam and Thailand – any focus on overseas linkages tends to be on those with Malaysia, because of Malaysia's impact on the development of language and religion, and current economic links.

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[47] Philipp Bruckmayr, "The Birth of the Kan Imam San: On the Recent Establishment of a New Islamic Congregation in Cambodia." *Journal of Global South Studies* 34**,** no 2, (2017), 197-224.

[48] Mohamed Hamid, Abdul Bin Effendy, "Understanding The Cham Identity in Mainland SE Asia: Contending Views." *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 21 **,** no 2, (2006), 25.

[49] Serey Sok,; Somkhit Boulidam, "Livelihood Development and Local Participation in Fisheries Management in the Lower Mekong Basin", *International Conference on the Mekong, Salween and Red Rivers*. (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 2016).

[50] Farina So, "Cham Muslims in Malaysia and Thailand: Then and Now", National Research Council of Thailand, 2013.

When we come to Vietnam, the availability of literature on Muslims there drops significantly. Why is this? First, there are significantly fewer Muslims in Vietnam than in Cambodia or Thailand. As always numbers vary considerably. According to the Pew Research Center, there were 160,000 Muslims in Vietnam in 2010.[51] However, the same source recorded 662,000 in 1990 – attributed to serious over-counting in that year. Meanwhile, Taylor notes a Cham population of only 13,000 in the Lower Mekong Delta, adjacent to Cambodia. He specifies other Cham communities in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), and Tây Ninh province –though both smaller in size.[52]

Second, the Muslims of Vietnam have maintained a much lower profile, both in the country and globally. Although badly hit by the French and American wars, they were not singled out for overt discrimination by the South Vietnamese government and were not perceived as particularly aligned to the North by the French, Americans and their allies. Nevertheless, the Muslims of Vietnam joined the predominantly ethnic Chinese boat people exodus in large numbers, and by the time Taouti visited in 1982, it was estimated that the Muslim population of HCMC had declined from 60,000 to 10,000.[53] Since that time the Cham Muslim population have maintained a low profile in a society where any form of organised religion is seen as a challenge to the Communist state.

As a result, there is relatively little literature available that looks at the Cham of Vietnam, compared to their cousins across the border in Cambodia. Like most borders in this region, it is the border that has moved, more than the people living on either side of it. Indeed, there is still a sizeable Khmer minority living in the Delta region of

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[51] Pew Forum, http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/table-muslim-population-by-country/, Accessed 28/12/17.

The 2010 data is extrapolated from the official census of 2009, which can be accessed at http://portal.thongke.gov.vn/khodulieudanso2009/Tailieu/AnPham/KetQuaToanBo/3_Ketqua-toanbo.pdf. (Accessed 28/12/17).

[52] Philip Taylor, *Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta; Place and Mobility in the Cosmopolitan Periphery*. (London: Profile Books, 2007).

[53] Seddik Taouti, "The forgotten Muslims of Kampuchea and Vietnam." *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs. Journal* 4, no 1-2, (1982), 3-13.

Vietnam, as documented and examined in depth by Taylor.[54] The most in-depth study is the anthropological work of Philip Taylor, who has spent significant time living with the minorities of southern Vietnam. His study published in 2007[55] remains the definitive examination of this community – their linguistic, religious and working lives. In this study, he also looks at how the Cham interact with the majority non-Muslim population that they live alongside. The Vietnamese Cham operate a highly mobile, predominantly water-borne trading economy operating over long distances, which is dependent on a symbiotic relationship with the majority (Kinh) and other minority groups. Other than this, and reference to the historic migration of the Cham people from central Vietnam and their conversion to Islam (e.g. Aymonier, in an archaeological study published in 1891[56]) there is little published literature. One recent addition is an article on the economic interaction of Cham Muslim weavers with Malaysia, documented by Ngoc Tran in 2016.[57] This looks at how the traditional weaving skills of the region are now being exported through migrant labour to Malaysia, through both formal labour-broking agencies and informal links. It shows the economic opportunity, but also the severe problems caused by debt incurred as brokerage fees – and also how the Cham Muslims of Vietnam are able to interact with the Malays because of linguistic and religious connections.

Literature covering the situation of the Malay Muslim population of Thailand is far more extensive and thorough. It can be broken down into different streams, as follows:

1. Historic perspective – looking at the way in which the Patani region developed as an independent entity and was then absorbed into the current Thai nation

[54] Philip Taylor, *The Khmer Lands of Vietnam: Environment, Cosmology and Sovereignty*, (Singapore: NUS Press, 2014).

[55] Taylor, *Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta*.

[56] Étienne Aymonier, "The Chams and their Religions", *Cham Sculpture of the Tourane Religion.* H Parmentier, P Mus, É Aymonier, eds, (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1891), 21-65.

[57] Angie Ngoc Tran, "Weaving Life Across Borders: The Cham Muslim Migrants Traversing Vietnam and Malaysia", *International Migration in Southeast Asia: Continuities and Discontinuities*. Lian Kwen Fee, Rahman Yabit bin Alas, Md Mizanur, eds, (Singapore: Springer, 2016), 13-37.

through a mixture of Thai expansionism, centralisation of control and negotiations with the British colonial administrations in Malaya and Burma, as they were called at the time.

2. Conflict analysis – a large body of work looking at the source of conflict between Patani separatists and the Thai state, and expanding on why it continues, its unique characteristics, potential solutions and implications for global conflicts.
3. Buddhist reaction – how the Southern Buddhist community has evolved and managed as a result, with implications for how Southern society will evolve.
4. Anthropological analysis – observation of lived experience in small, predominantly Muslim communities situated in the Patani region, and adjacent provinces with sizeable Muslim populations.
5. Economic, media, legal and educational factors – how the Muslim community in the South manages itself, creates or adapts alternative methods for functioning alongside state provisions.

One of the most useful starting points for anyone seeking to understand Thailand's historic evolution, how the current borders have become defined and the way in which Thai government and dominant culture view the minorities absorbed in those borders, is 'Siam Mapped' by the Thai author, Thongchai Winichakul.[58] The fact that the author is Thai is important here, as Thongchai explores the concept of 'Thainess' – what it means to be ethnically Thai, how Thais themselves perceive their national character and sense of belonging to a homogenous whole with a shared set of beliefs and how that philosophy is expected to act in an all-embracing way across the entire nation. This often manifests itself in a declaration of loyalty to Nation, Religion and King, an issue for minorities who cannot identify with that triumvirate in the same way. He then looks at how Thailand evolved from a network of micro-states, operating in a tributary arrangement, sometimes with competing loyalties, that mutates as different power bases wax and wane, aided (sometimes inadvertently) by British colonial powers in Burma and Malaya. As the Siam state based first in Ayutthaya, then Thonburi and Bangkok exerted greater centralised control, the British were able to

[58] Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*.

negotiate borders that benefit both sides and enabled clearly demarcated zones of influence – but the last move of this game, placing Patani permanently under Thai control, is only made in 1909. Indeed, historic accounts of the Kingdom of Patani (Syukri, 1940's in Jawi, in English in 1985[59]; Teeuw & Wyatt, 1970[60]) confirm the strength of Patani as an independent political entity as well as a centre for Islamic learning. Syukri's work has to be viewed as not only a historical account, but also as propaganda, aimed at preserving and reviving a local identity in a time of repression.

For the purposes of this work, the other important body of literature that addresses the problems and challenges of Thailand and its Muslims concerns the ongoing conflict in the Southern provinces of Yala, Narathiwat, Pattani and parts of Songkhla. I will address the roots and dynamics of that conflict in Chapters Three and Four, helped by an extensive body of work studying the conflict, particularly since it burst back into life in 2004 after a period of relative tranquility and dormancy. The work of Duncan McCargo is renowned for its analytical and detailed approach to the causes of renewed conflict, the effect on the people of the South, both Muslim and otherwise, and the attempts to find political answers that can satisfy both separatists and the Thai state. (McCargo, 2009, 2012 and others.) McCargo is particularly effective at helping to understand the attempts to find political solutions to a military problem, both from the creation of political identities that attempt to represent and integrate Southern issues into mainstream politics – for example, the 'Wadah' faction – a political association of local politicians with an electoral mandate who tried to align with mainstream politics in order to create a dialogue and policies that might answer the challenges felt by the Southern population.

Other writers have examined the conflict through different lenses in order to try and understand why it is happening, what can be done to resolve or mitigate it, and what potential impact it has in terms of connections to a greater pan-regional or global climate of unrest and potential violence. Given the extremely shadowy nature of the

[59] Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*, (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1985).

[60] Andries Teeuw, David K Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani: The Story of Patani*. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970).

armed resistance movements – usually refusing to acknowledge their actions, lay claim to incidents, issue demands or communiques or provide mandated representatives or channels of communication – it is extremely difficult to get 'under the skin' of the insurgency. Little is known about its structure, recruitment process, methods of operation, identified goals and relationships with the civilian population. One exception to this is the work of Askew and Helbardt [61] and Helbardt,[62] who have been able to complete an in-depth picture of the structure, methods and personnel of the BRN-Coordinate, believed to be the largest, most organised and active of the militant groups.[63]

Other dimensions of the armed conflict that have been addressed, both by academic scholars and by political researchers, are the impact of Thai conflict for a wider dimension of Muslim violence, and the impact on the relationships between Muslims and Buddhists in a shared space. From the former, there are analyses by Askew (2007[64]), Chalk (2008[65]), Marks (2017[66]), Abuza (2011[67]), Means (2009[68]), the International Crisis Group (2017[69]), and others. All these analyses tend to arrive at the same set of conclusions:

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[61] Askew and Helbardt, "Becoming Patani Warriors".

[62] Helbardt, *Deciphering Southern Thailand's Violence*.

[63] One interesting factor emerging from this work is the integration of ethnic Malay nationalism with adherence to Islam as a unifying quality of allegiance, and the way nationalism and religion are balanced and stressed for different purposes. We will come back to this later.

[64] Marc Askew, *Conspiracy, Politics and a Disorderly Border*, (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2007).

[65] Peter Chalk, "The Malay-Muslim Insurgency in Southern Thailand--Understanding the Conflict's Evolving Dynamic", *Rand Counterinsurgency Study*, (RAND Corporation, 2008).

[66] Thomas A. Marks "The Thai Southern Insurgency: External Views of The Way Forward". (Goa: Mantraya, 2017).

[67] Abuza, "The Ongoing Insurgency in Southern Thailand".

[68] Gordon. P. Means, "Pattani Malay Separatism in Thailand", *Political Islam in Southeast Asia*. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2009), 227-258.

[69] International Crisis Group, "Jihadism in Southern Thailand: A Phantom Menace", (Brussels: ICG, 2017).

- The conflict is localised and not spreading to the rest of Thailand, let alone internationally.
- There is little influence from external 'jihadism', whose form of Islam is alien to predominant local practice, and which is seen as a threat because it risks attracting international (American) involvement.
- There are factors at play that make this conflict more complex – specifically corruption and criminality in the security, state and resistance structures. These make conflict resolution less likely. Put simply, conflict keeps the money flowing.

Of course, the space inhabited by the Malay Muslims is shared with a civilian Buddhist population, both indigenous and settled, who continue to try and maintain a normal existence, and who manifest themselves through their Buddhist faith and through supporting the temples and monks which are a key part of expressing that faith. Buddhists have come under intense pressure, often to relocate out of Patani altogether, and have also received overt support from both the Thai state and the armed forces. The armed forces have often become almost synonymous with the Buddhist territory, occupying temples in order to protect them and have a safe base for operations, and in some cases, the line between monks and soldiers has become blurred. Jerryson describes the tensions and compromises in the Buddhist community (Jerryson, 2009,[70] 2011[71]) and this conflict and uncertainty has also been researched

[70] Michael Jerryson, "Appropriating A Space for Violence: State Buddhism in Southern Thailand", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 50, 1 (2019), 33-57.

[71] Michael Jerryson, Buddhist Fury, Religion and Violence in Southern Thailand, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

by Horstmann (2004[72], 2011[73]), Askew (2009[74]) and Dorairajoo (2009[75]). (An interesting counter-perspective – looking at the lives of Thai Buddhists living across the border, in Kelantan state, Malaysia, can be found in Johnson, 2012[76]).

This literature is essential in understanding the roots of conflict, why it has continued at a constant level for more than 17 years and its effect on the Buddhist community and Muslim-Buddhist relationships in the South. What it does not do is help us to understand the 'normal' life of Malay Muslims in Thailand, and how they manage life as a clear and defined minority in a largely monocultural Thai Buddhist state. For help with this question, there is literature that addresses the overall nature of Muslims in Thailand as a whole, specific issues pertaining to education, media, law and work, and a couple of useful studies from an anthropological perspective.

I am only aware of two works that attempt to look at the overall Muslim population of Thailand, including the 'peaceful' Sam-sam's of Satun province, the Thai Muslims of Bangkok and the central provinces, the Muslims descended from the Chinese Hui population in the North, and others. Gilquin provides a very useful introduction to the subject in a small book published in 2002, The Muslims of Thailand.[77] It is a very helpful overview but is necessarily broad in coverage, and a lot has happened since then, globally, both in the Thai political situation and with the Thai Muslims themselves. More recently, Rajeswary Ampalavanar Brown has published an overview of how Thai

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[72] Alexander Horstmann, "Ethnohistorical Perspectives on Buddhist-Muslim Relations and Coexistence in Southern Thailand: From Shared Cosmos to the Emergence of Hatred?" *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 19, no 1, (2004), 76-99.

[73] Alexander Horstmann, "Living Together: The Transformation of Multi-religious Coexistence in Southern Thailand", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 42, no 3, (2011), 487-510.

[74] Marc Askew, "Landscapes of Fear, Horizons of Trust: Villagers Dealing with Danger in Thailand's Insurgent South." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40, no 1, (2009), 59-86.

[75] Saroja Dorairajoo, "Peaceful Thai, Violent Malay (Muslim): A Case Study of the 'Problematic' Muslim Citizens of Southern Thailand." *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 27, no 2, (2009), 61-83.

[76] Irving Chan Johnson, *The Buddha on Mecca's Verandah: Encounters, Mobilities and Histories along the Malaysian-Thai Border*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012).

[77] Michel Gilquin, *The Muslims of Thailand*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2002).

Muslim society functions, and how it relates to the state.[78] This would be very useful, were it not for two factors. First, it is heavily focused on the financial structure of the Thai economy, particularly on the use of Waqf endowments to fund and maintain Muslim land holdings. Although no doubt interesting, this perspective does not leave much room for discussion of the life and challenges of the general Thai population. Second, there are one or two obvious errors – for example describing the victims of state violence in 2010 as being from the Yellow-shirt faction – whereas in fact, they were the diametrically opposite Red-shirts.[79] This may be a simple error but does undermine confidence in many other strongly made assertions.

From an anthropological perspective, there are three useful accounts of time spent living in Muslim villages in the South. Tsuneda (2009) spent considerable time in the border town of Sungai Kolok, and in her doctoral thesis was able to observe the dynamics of cross-border economics, family lifestyle and changing patterns of behaviour at a time when the conflict was just beginning to catch fire once more. In a more colloquial style, Manickam[80] provides a brave account of time spent living in a fishing village just outside of Pattani city. Similarly, Anderson[81] describes her experience of a Muslim community living on islands adjacent to Phuket. In each case, these accounts bring an otherwise theoretical situation to life and provide an understanding of the challenges faced by people as individuals situated in a complex and volatile environment, but inevitably provide anecdotal experiences of minority-state relations.

Other sources provide insights into particular facets of the Malay Muslim experience in Thailand. Attempts to build a more stable and balanced society through civil activity or

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[78] Brown, *Islam in Modern Thailand*.

[79] Ibid., 58.

[80] Mia Lee Manickam, *Just Enough: A Journey into Thailand's Troubled South*, (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2013).

[81] Wanni W Anderson, *Mapping Thai Muslims: Community Dynamics and Change on the Andaman Coast*. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2010).

by developing alternative income sources are cited by Kokpol[82], Tsuneda, Madsa and Pisit.[83] Developing forms of education that meet both the religious and cultural requirements to support the identity of the Muslim community, but at the same time equip students to progress to useful employment or tertiary education is a crucial question for social development – and has often been seen and attacked as a method of Thai cultural control in the South. The different structures of educational provision, with varying strengths and weaknesses, are examined by Liow (2008,[84] 2009[85]), and various authors in a review of Muslim education for minorities in Southeast Asia (Bustamam-Ahmad & Jory, eds. 2011.)[86] This also contains one of the few examinations of how education in the Deep South of Thailand has been influenced by the relationship with Egyptian institutions, which have an established process of providing scholarships and sponsorship for future local educators in the Muslim South. (Mardman, 2011.)[87]

Themes of Nation Building and Multiculturalism.

Other issues which are key to understanding how minority Muslims negotiate their existence in Southeast Asia's monocultural societies are also important of course – for

[82] Orathai Kokpol, "People-Centric Leadership at the Local Level: Yala Municipality, Thailand", *Knowledge Creation in Community Development; Institutional Change in Southeast Asia and Japan*, Ayano Hirose Nishihara, Masaei Matsunaga, Ikujiro Nonaka, eds, (Palgrave MacMillan, 2018**),** 35-57.

[83] Taksuriya Madsa; Pisit Boonchai, "The Development of Governor's Palaces of the Seven Towns in the Southern Border Region into Areas of Cultural Tourism", *Journal of Yala Rajabhat University* 12, no 2, (2017), 195-206.

[84] Liow, Joseph Chinyong Liow, "Islamic Education in Southern Thailand: Negotiating Islam, Identity and Modernity", *Making Modern Muslims. The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia*. R. W. Hefner, ed, (Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

[85] Joseph Chinyong Liow, *Islam, Education and Reform in Southern Thailand: Tradition and Transformation*, (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2009).

[86]Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad, Patrick Jory, "Introduction", *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia,* (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Ilmuwan, 2011).

[87] Hasan Mardman, "Egypt's Influence On The Education Of Thai Muslims From The Nasser Era To The Present", *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia* Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad, Patrick Jory, eds, (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Ilmuwan, 2011), 29-42.

example, the provision of parallel legal structures and how Muslims use (or don't use) them and the way in which the community is portrayed in the media and the availability of media that is owned, operated and reflects the reality of the community. Brown looks at the legal situation in depth and makes a firm argument that the general population prefer to use the Thai civil law structures as they do not trust the competency and authority of local Muslim officials. (Brown, 2014.) A detailed examination of 'talaq' based divorce process is made by Hamat *et. al* ,[88] and this gives greater credibility to the competency of the Muslim-run process. However, this area needs greater examination and verification, and neither source looks at the issue from the perspective of ordinary Muslims in the region.

Tsuneda uses her local experience to review the way in which Malay-language media crosses the border and the formal and informal channels of communication. Since the promulgation of a new constitution in 1997, there has been an explosion of community-based radio across Thailand, and the Deep South is no exception to this. Helbardt[89] examines this phenomenon, concluding that the local channels are inhibited by self-censorship, intimidation by the main actors in the conflict and are generally owned and controlled by elite groups in society. A recently published work by Phansasiri Kularb looks at how the Bangkok-based mainstream media report on the Southern conflict, (or Southern Fire, as it is inevitably called). This explores the balance between honest and accurate reporting, national loyalties, a need for sensationalism and the opportunity to provide a forum for multi-party dialogue. It also highlights the risks involved and the level of intimidation and coercion from both sides. However, the four media sources chosen by Phansasiri for analysis leave it open to a charge of being selective and subjective in nature.[90] There is little examination of the impact of social media on the situation for Muslims in Thailand, although it has clearly

[88], Mahyidin Hamat, Zuliza Mohd Kusrin, Ezad Azraai Jamsari, Md Yazid Ahmad, Noorsafuan Che Noh (2017). "Talaq (Divorce) Procedure in the Provisions of Muslim Family and Inheritance Law of Patani Province, Southern Thailand." *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 22, no 2, (2017), 98-103.

[89] Helbardt, *Deciphering Southern Thailand's Violence*.

[90] Phansasiri Kularb, *Reporting Thailand's Southern Conflict: Mediating political dissent*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

become a major arena for argument, confrontation and propaganda on a national basis. (McCargo, 2017.[91])

In order to be able to address the key question successfully, it is important to look at the nature of Muslim life in this region in the light of two perspectives. First, to what degree is the issue defined in religious or ethnic terms both by the state and by the community? Second, how does the state see the place of cultures which are not conforming to the vision of the nation as a cohesive and united whole? How does that compare with the attempts in the West to react and encompass a more recent development of multicultural societies? In order to start to address this issue, it is useful to look at how it has been studied in a broader sense.

The countries under discussion are widely described as 'monocultural' - by which we mean that there is a single ethnicity, aligned to a specific religion (or ideology in the case of Vietnam), which dictates the identifying characteristics of the nation, and is accepted by the population as the hegemonic culture within the national borders. These monocultures are very performative, being expressed and reinforced in frequent expressions of cultural norms that are evolving and added to by practice and reinforcement. By definition therefore, minorities who do not subscribe to one or more of those characteristics are seen as outsiders, strange – not "one of us". (As mentioned before, the word 'Khaek' for 'guest' in Thai is often applied, even by high officials.[92]) Although there has been a backlash in recent years about the effectiveness of multiculturalism as a policy, and the desirability of it as a goal, it has nevertheless become a semi-orthodoxy when it comes to the relationships between different cultures in Western democracies. Benhahib (2004) evaluates it as a crucial way in offering what she defines as 'membership', in order to ensure societies which recognise individual and collective rights to all participants. Kymlicka (2005) defines the various characteristics that have led to the rapid development of multicultural

[91] Duncan McCargo, "New Media, New Partisanship: Divided Virtual Politics In and Beyond Thailand." *International Journal of Communication* 11, (2017), 4138-4157.

[92] Achara Ashayagachat, "[Gen. Akanit Muansawat] has an arrogant attitude and referred to Patani Freedom Fighters as Jone Khaek (Muslim bandits) at a recent closed-door forum in Bangkok". Bangkok Post, September 8, 2014, https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/431016/separatists-pan-head-of-south-talks, accessed November 4, 2018

societies in Europe since the 1940's and concludes that none of them applies to emerging Asian countries. While this is strictly true, it is nevertheless the case that in all three countries there are clear national minorities who have negotiated or been granted rights and identities within the core structure of the nation. In this respect, they affirm the same desire for participation and recognition as Muslims in the West, outlined by Kymlicka (2001). Kymlicka's exploration of the concept of group rights is also helpful, although very American-focused and with assumptions of universal liberal values that seem unlikely in modern Southeast Asia (1995). The debate between civic nationalism versus ethnic nationalism, examined by Clark,[93] for example, is made more ambiguous than ever in our context. Other authors writing alongside Clark in the *Handbook of Ethnic Conflict* also stress the option of various forms of autonomy or territorial pluralism as a means of meeting minority desires and alleviating conflict within an existing nation-state. (Chouinard[94], McGarry & O'Leary[95].) However, they seem unwilling to confront the raw emotionalism of majoritarian nationalism in post-colonial nations. As I progress through the examination of Muslim life in this context, I will attempt to form a new definition of multiculturalism within a religiously-based society that is appropriate to Southeast Asia and also provides lessons for other environments.

Two other authors who have proved invaluable in understanding how nations have developed and come into their modern form are Smith, in *The Cultural Foundation of Nations*[96] and Anderson, in *Imagined Communities* .[97] Both authors provide a discussion of how modern nations have come into being, their common characteristics

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[93] Colin Clark, "The Nation State: Civic and Ethnic Dimensions", *The Routledge Handbook of Civil Conflict*. Karl Cordell, Stefan Wolff, eds, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016**).** 44-53.

[94] Stéphanie Chouinard, "Stateless Nations", *The Routledge Handbook of Ethnic Conflict***,** 54-66.

[95] John McGarry, Brendan O'Leary, "Territorial Approaches to Conflict Settlement", *The Routledge Handbook of Ethnic Conflict***,** 240-255.

[96] Anthony D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundation of Nations: Hierarchy, Covenant and Republic*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008).

[97] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* (London: Verso, 1983).

and building blocks that, although Euro-centric in nature, gives a useful framework to understanding the role of religion in the development of institutions and ostensibly secular societal models. This is also usefully analysed by Asad.[98] Swaine[99] offers a bold, if over-optimistic approach to the question of reconciling liberal secularism with religious fundamentalism. This approach is challenged in Southeast Asia where a concept of secularism contrasting with fundamentalism is much less accepted.

One final dimension to consider is the role of global Islam as a connector linking the life of Cham and Malay with the history of Islam and the global Ummah. Three works that have proven useful in this regard are *The Idea of the Muslim World* (Aydin, 2017[100]), *Semites* (Anidjar, 2008[101]) and *The Invention of World Religions* (Masuzawa, 2005[102]). This helps set the orthodox Islam that acts as a social glue in Southeast Asia in a context of the development of Islam as a world religion, its position vis-à-vis other world religions, and the role of Islam as a political force in the context of colonialism and global political alignments. Generally, these studies tend to look at Islam in the context of a struggle with the West, and implicitly Christianity, without looking at the dynamic of Buddhist/Muslim relations, but nevertheless help to understand the position of Muslims as a minority, but part of a global context. Aydin's examination of the position of Islam in the Soviet Union during the Cold War also helps as a precursor to understanding the relationship between Islam and the Communist states of modern Vietnam and Khmer Rouge-era Cambodia.

<u>Conclusion.</u>

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[98] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Isla*m, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

[99] Lucas Swaine, *The Liberal Conscience: Politics and Principle in a World of Religious Pluralism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

[100] Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017).

[101] Gil Anidjar, *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008).

[102] Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Although there is an extensive body of available published material, it tends to fall into specific areas – country-specific reportage; themes around war and conflict; analysis of specific subject areas (e.g. media coverage). There is also work covering the origin and development of nations and the concept and practice of multiculturalism. However, these tend to be Western-centric and do not address the challenges faced by post-colonial nations in East Asia, or how minority cultures flourish in a monocultural society. Therefore, this thesis will try to close that gap by addressing the life for Thai Malay Muslims and the Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta, and to set those lives within the context of states that are not particularly liberal, and not structured as self-perceived democracies which aspire to develop a multicultural and inclusive approach to society. In this respect it will unite the different strands of previous examination and study in order to provide a holistic picture that addresses minority life in the modern Southeast Asian environment. In Chapter Three I will look at the historical background that led to the current environment – and also clarify why I feel that these two groups need to be studied and considered together, to make sense of the task.

Chapter Three – The Historical Background and The Logic of Comparing Cham and Malay Muslims.

"We didn't land on Plymouth Rock. The rock was landed on us." (Malcolm X, March 29, 1964)

Introduction.

In order to understand how the Muslim experience in minority Southeast Asia has developed, and how Muslim minorities have maintained a separate and vital identity against a backdrop of monoculturalism and suspicion, it is necessary to place them in the correct historical context. In other words to understand how the current situation has evolved from roots that pre-date the colonial era and the states as they exist today. In this chapter, I will cover some necessary historical background on the Southeast Asia region that contains the groups of people under discussion, in order to clarify how they arrived at their current situation, geographically and politically. Before that, I will try to answer an obvious question from anyone reading this - why I feel it necessary or useful to group together the two groups – the Malays of Southern Thailand and the Cham of Cambodia and Vietnam's Mekong Delta region - for the purposes of examining Muslim experience in Southeast Asia. I recognise that there is always a danger, especially as an outside observer, in grouping together different groups with different circumstances and trying to draw common conclusions from their situation and experiences.

I will also look at the evolution of minority Muslim ethnic groups as their circumstances evolved from their role in pre-colonial princedoms, through their experience under colonial rule to the post-colonial situation.[103] In Thailand, of course, there was no colonial era; however there is still a three-stage evolution from a network of local power bases into a unitary state under a single absolute monarch, and then into a form of democracy that alternates with official rule by non-royal autocrats.

[103] I have used the word 'princedoms' to try and define a suitable label to apply to the complex and volatile network of territorial rulers across the region before colonial rule eradicated the real, if not the cosmetic power of those rulers.

In terms of sources, there is a cross-section of available material. There is extensive work from historians, anthropologists and reporters, both local and Western. Both have strengths and weaknesses. Local historians, of course, understand their local circumstances much better and can evaluate the role of innate national and local characteristics. However they are also constrained by local politics – which can be much more inhibiting of outspoken thought than elsewhere – and the inevitable fact that they are seen as representing a particular community or point of view. Thailand has the most work available, as years of repression in Cambodia and Vietnam has seriously inhibited freedom of expression and therefore published sources. There continues to be a brave and thoughtful body of work from Thailand on many aspects of the Southern situation – for example from Chaiwat Satha-Anand,[104] Chayanit Poonyarat,[105] Don Pathan, Phansasiri Kularb[106] and Surin Pitsuwan.[107] From the extensive foreign sources, McCargo is invaluable – and prolific – in analysing Thailand, as is Taylor for minorities in Vietnam, Bruckmayr in Cambodia and Kiernan for his analysis of the Cham under the Khmer Rouge.

Archive material is more challenging due partly to the large number of languages involved, the lack of documented history in the minority languages, and also to the damage and destruction caused by wars and repressive regimes in both Cambodia and Vietnam. However, there is also extensive coverage in both local-language and English-language online and offline media, particularly for Thailand and Cambodia. McCargo[108] and Phansasiri[109] both analyse the weaknesses of the Thai local media, but nevertheless, those media can be surprisingly free and frank in the face of often hostile

[104] Chaiwat Satha-Anand, *The Life of this World: Negotiated Muslim Lives in Thai Society*. (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2005).

[105] Poonyarat, *Seasons Of Insurgency*.

[106] Kularb, *Reporting Thailand's Southern Conflict.*

[107] Here I have used both names – the first name as is customary in Thai and the second name in order to be able to cross-reference to the bibliography.

[108] McCargo, "New Media, New Partisanship."

[109] Kularb, *Reporting Thailand's Southern Conflict.*

governments. The region has also attracted attention from travellers, art historians, general writers and social anthropologists – from Aymonier[110] in 19th Century Indochina to Trankell[111] and Bruckmayr's investigations[112] into modern Cham religious ritual to Becker's overview of the Cambodian war and its consequences.[113] Therefore the use of these sources is somewhat detective-like in nature, looking for clues and direction in works that are sometimes tangential, but nevertheless informative to this work.

My reasoning is driven by a theme that will recur in this dissertation and has a major significance when discussing the emergence of nation-states and the role of multiculturalism within those states – not just in Southeast Asia, but elsewhere in the world. The fact is that the notion of a nation-state with defined borders and a unifying major culture is a relatively new one. Anthony Smith, in The Cultural Foundation of Nations,[114] explores the way in which most European nations evolved in the post-Reformation period, but comes to a similar conclusion as Anderson[115] – that the key factors of vernacular language being used for official and governmental communications, shared 'republican' nationalism replacing the hitherto dominance of religion and the growth of common secular institutions – is a relatively recent phenomenon, coalescing in the 19th Century. What is true for Europe is much more so for Southeast Asia. For example, Anderson's views on language are highly relevant to the societies under examination, where the official state language (Thai/Khmer/Vietnamese) is given a privileged status in political infrastructure, at the expense of minority languages such as local Malay and Cham. Indeed, the suggestion in June 2006 by Thailand's National Reconciliation Commission that Malay be accepted

[110] Aymonier, "The Chams and Their Religions."

[111] Trankell, "Songs of Our Spirits".

[112] Bruckmayr, "Cambodian Muslims, Transnational NGO's, and International Justice.": 337-345.

[113] Becker, *When The War Was Over*.

[114] Smith, *The Cultural Foundation of Nations*.

[115] Anderson places less emphasis on the ethnic roots of nationalism.

Anderson, *Imagined Communities*: 18, 41, etc.

as an alternative working language in the Southern Border provinces met with clear hostility, not least from the Privy Council President, Prem Tinsulanonda – and therefore presumably from the Royal Family.[116]

However, the concept of the evolution of a form of 'republican' nationalism that supersedes the previous authority of the church, bolstered by predominantly secular institutions, common to Anderson and other Western writers is much less applicable to the countries of Southeast Asia under consideration. The country structures evolved in a similar way after colonialism ended, and institutions were built up based on a template derived from how they perceived the Western model to operate; very deliberately so by King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) of Thailand, often venerated as the father of the modern Thai nation, who saw them as the best defence against Western interference.[117] However the absolute nature of the Thai monarchy, and the clear identification of Monarch, Religion and State as one unified allegiance, meant that a secular, independent bureaucracy was just a veneer – the monarch continued to be where real power resided. Indeed, as Surin Pitsuwan points out, the identification of the bureaucracy with the monarchy meant that rebellion was the only viable expression of complaint. Here it's worth noting Asad's view that, "scholars are now more aware that religious toleration was a political means to the formation of strong state power that emerged from the sectarian wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries rather than the gift of a benign intention to defend pluralism."[118]

The distortions and artificial entities imposed over most of the region by French and British colonial rule exacerbated what were already highly amorphous statelets, marked by borders that changed regularly and depended for extended lines of control on tributary relationships that could be easily transferred and were by no means exclusive to one receiving state. Indeed, the (mostly) independent state of Thailand did

[116] It is always worth remembering that the form of Malay/Melayu spoken in the Deep South is quite distinct from the standard Bahasa Malay used officially across Malaysia, and the two groups often find it difficult to understand each other.

[117] Surin Pitsuwan, *Islam and Malay Nationalism: A Case Study of the Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand*. (Bangkok: Thai Khadi Research Institute, 1985).

[118] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 206

not fix its borders at their current parameters until 1909, following a treaty with the British to determine in finality the Southern border between independent Thailand and the Malay states, which up until this point had been subject to change, dispute and confusion.[119]

In consequence, the borders that separate Thailand and Cambodia from their neighbours in Southeast Asia (and from each other) are new, relatively recent and factors of colonialism and nation-making distort what is seen currently as their final demarcation. However, what is undeniable is that both Malay and Cham *people* had been residing in their current locations, established in their own communities, for considerably longer than the nations that now include them have existed in their current form. The Cham, originally an independent kingdom in the centre of what is now Vietnam, began to migrate to the Mekong Delta during the period of 1471 to 1835, culminating in the complete annexation of their lands by of the invading *Đại Việt*, their neighbours to the North by 1832. During this period, they became an established part of the population of what is now Cambodia and the border region of Vietnam – long before the establishment of a French colonial territory that included them, in 1887. They had lived alongside the non-Muslim Khmer in the same geographic space and continued to do so in relative harmony, up until the traumatic events precipitated by the takeover of the Khmer Rouge in 1975. As we will see, they survived the attempted genocide of the Khmer Rouge, and have reestablished themselves as an integral and accepted part of modern Cambodia. [120]

In a similar manner, the Malay population inhabiting what are now the southern border provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, along with five districts of Songkhla, have been the majority indigenous population of that territory since long before the conquest, concession and assimilation into modern Thailand caused by local Siamese expansionism, British-Siamese border negotiations and subsequent acceptance of Siamese/Thai territorial claims. Indeed, the growth of Buddhist Thai residents in that

[119] Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*.

[120] The question of whether the near-annihilation of the Cham under the Khmer Rouge qualifies as genocide is disputed, as I will discuss further on. However, either way, the outcome in terms of population reduction is in no doubt.

region has been as a consequence of attempts by the Thai state to settle and build up a more loyal and malleable population in the region. (This is not to say that the Malays are historically the sole residents of that region. Pattani in particular, as a centre of learning and trade, long attracted a population of international settlers, most noticeably of Chinese descent, but also Arab, Dutch and Portuguese origin.)

Therefore, both populations have a shared experience historically, and a shared current dynamic of integration and coexistence. Furthermore, the states where they reside have a great deal in common in culture and philosophy. Although the origins of the modern states are quite different, the historic nature of their relationship is blurred and linked, joined by both constant border conflicts and linkages and by cultural commonalities. The language border is not and has never been the same as the political one; Khmer, the official language of Cambodia, is spoken in parts of Eastern Thailand and the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, and borrowed Thai words are common in Cambodian conversation and vocabulary. Cham is spoken on both sides of the Cambodia – Vietnam border. Both are monarchies that play a significant role in political culture, and in both states, the role of Theravada Buddhism is dominant and privileged as a leading religion for the state. The attitude to minority religions, although it may be officially different is much the same in practice, as we will see in the fieldwork described in this thesis.

Conversely, we could ask why we are only looking at these two groups, in these two countries? After all, there are numerous other Muslim minorities in Thailand, not to mention the minority Muslims in other Southeast Asian countries – most significantly in Myanmar and The Philippines, but also in Laos and Singapore, each with their own set of circumstances. When people discuss the Muslims of Myanmar these days, they focus on the persecution of the Rohingya, but the fact is that Myanmar has many other Muslim groups of multiple and mixed ethnicities. The Muslims of Laos tend to be either Cham who escaped from Cambodia in the Khmer Rouge era or settled traders from South Asia. In Singapore, Muslims are also mostly Malay, the outcome of the ouster of Singapore from Malaysia in 1965. In the south of the Philippines, the Muslim population reflects the fluid and competing claims to islands between The Philippines,

Malaysia, Indonesia and their colonial predecessors from Spain, The Netherlands and the USA.

However, to try and include these countries would add huge levels of complexity to the question in discussion.[121] It would also have to take into account and navigate the ongoing violent conflicts of The Philippines and Myanmar, the different religious and political systems of The Philippines and Singapore – and the fact that the Muslim population of Laos, numbering a mere 500 people is therefore not very relevant.[122] In order to be able to focus on minority Muslim experience, and the nature of minority life in societies that claim to be both democratic and multicultural but show little sign of being either, I have chosen to concentrate on the Cham and Malay communities.

Indeed, they are not as separate as might be assumed. Although there is little formal contact between the two, the Cham people of Cambodia have been significantly influenced by their historic links with the Malay society across the Gulf of Thailand. A long history of trading between the two is thought to have led to the influence of the Malay language on modern spoken Cham, and on similarities in religious practice. Very recently, it has been observed that Cham migrants from Vietnam have found Malaysia to be a source of both legal and illegal employment with the aid of religious and linguistic commonalities.[123]

Where does the role of religion come into this? In the case of the Malays, whether in Thailand or elsewhere, Islam and Malay-ness are often taken to be inextricably linked. To be Malay is to be Muslim. Reid takes this further – "the further away from the heartland of Sumatra and the Peninsula one travelled, the more likely it was that the trading community of Muslims would be known collectively as Melayu, whatever their

[121] For that matter we could also look at the comparative position of non-Muslim minorities in these countries. However that would greatly complicate the discussion and make it impossible to focus clearly on the issues facing Muslims in the region.

[122] US State Department Report, 2008, https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2008/108412.htm, accessed 11/2/18.

[123] Tran, "Weaving Life Across Borders": 13-37.

ethnic or geographic origin."[124] Nowadays the defence of Islam is portrayed as a core mission in the recruitment and propaganda material of Patani separatism. For the Cham, however, religious identity is more complex. The Cham of the Vietnamese central coast region espouse esoteric interpretations of both Hinduism and Islam, which have little in common with the conventional understanding of either religion's core tenets.[125] However, the Cham we discuss here, those who settled in the Mekong Delta region, are much more clearly mainstream and monotheistic in their faith and practice and also see adherence to Islam as both a mark of identity and a link to a wider global community.

What both groups also have in common is the experience alluded to in the quotation from Malcolm X at the beginning of this chapter. Unlike Muslim minorities in Europe (and for that matter unlike the African-Americans of Malcolm's reference!) the borders and nations of Southeast Asia came into place long after the populations had settled in their current places. The nation 'landed on' them, not the reverse.

A Malay State in Thailand.

The roots and origins of the 'Melayu' or Malays spreads across the Malaysian peninsula and the islands of Sumatra, Java and Borneo in what is now Indonesia – although the word Malay has also been used to refer to the people of Champa – as Malay and Islam have often been seen as synonymous in Southeast Asia. Although the Malays of Malaysia and its neighbours to north and south consider themselves to be the indigenous people of the region, this is also not strictly true, as their growth involved effectively displacing a sparse population of what is now known as 'Orang Asli' – meaning Original, Natural or Aboriginal People in the Malay language. At the present time, Malays are estimated to be 55% of the population of modern Malaysia. Their native status is reflected in the favoured economic and political New Economic

[124] Anthony Reid, "Understanding *Melayu* (Malay) as a Source of Diverse Modern Identities" Timothy P Barnard, ed, *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Boundaries*, (Singapore: NUS Press, 2004): 7.

[125] Yasuko Yoshimoto, "A Study of the Hồi giáo Religion in Vietnam: With a Reference to Islamic Religious Practices of Cham Bani." *Southeast Asian Studies* 1**,** no 3, (2012), 487-505.

Policy, introduced as a temporary measure for the 'Bumiputra' (sons of the soil) in 1971, and still in place. Dr. Mahathir, prime minister of Malaysia from 1981 to 2003 (and now again in 2018) has argued in his 1970 book, *The Malay Dilemma*, that the Malays are the 'definitive people' – the first to establish states in the territory.[126] However, Malaysia never existed as a unitary state before 1957 (with enlargement to include Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo in 1963). Before then it was the British colony of Malaya, and before that time it existed as a collection of princely states, each ruled over by a local Sultan. These sultanates still exist, though largely with ceremonial powers, and in fact, the Monarchy ('*Yang di-Pertuan Agong*') of Malaysia rotates through an election held by the nine eligible peers, once every five years. An intriguing article on Malay rural voters, published in May, 2018 at the time of a national election, suggests that loyalty to the King is still a major factor in the Malay view of society.[127]

The kingdom of Patani was one of these mini-states, a significant one, seen as a centre of Islamic learning for the region and a commercial trading hub in what is now called the Gulf of Thailand, mirroring the trading *entrepôt* of Malacca on the Western coast of the peninsula. This history is well documented in the manuscripts of the Hikayat Patani, translated into English by Teeuw and Wyatt in 1970,[128] and again by Syukuri, writing in Malay in the late 1940's and translated into English in 1985.[129] Well documented, but not necessarily historically accurate; Syukuri, (thought to be a pseudonym for a group of writers), in particular, was writing in order to renew and reinvigorate a Patani resistance to Thai Siamese rule, not as an academic historian. As the northernmost of the Malay states, Patani was always seen as disputed territory and its commercial significance only served to exacerbate that. For the Thai Siamese rulers in Ayutthaya and then Bangkok, it was seen as politically and militarily weak, and therefore an opportunity for expansion of power and wealth in a southerly direction. For Malay rulers in the neighbouring states of Kelantan, Perak, Kedah and Perlis,

[126] Mohamad bin Mahathir, *The Malay Dilemma*, (Kuala Lumpur: Marshall Cavendish, 1970): 145.

[127] Serina Rahman, 'A look at the Malay rural voter' *New Mandala*, May 2, 2018, http://www.newmandala.org/rural-malay-voter/, accessed May 2, 2018

[128] Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani*.

[129] Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*.

themselves under British dominance, it was seen as a weak neighbour, hard to dominate, hard to defend as a subject state. For the British it became a bargaining chip, to be used in negotiations with the Siamese monarchy (and up until 1932 this was an absolute monarchy) over the relative borders between British territories in Malay and Burma and the Thai Kingdom, along the long, extended frontiers of the peninsula.

As Thongchai documents, the border relationships between the colonial powers and the Siamese state were characterized by a different metaphysical concept of statehood, territorial ownership, demarcation and permanence. From the French and British perspective, borders over their new territories needed to be agreed, demarcated on the ground and fixed using maps and physical markers. There was a need to aggrandise as much valuable land and assets as possible to win the race for Empire and keep other contenders at bay. From a Thai Siamese perspective, however, these issues were far more fluid. The Thai monarchy had always operated from a basis of shifting tributary relationships with the weaker states that surrounded it, in what are now Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Malaysia. These smaller states had tended to survive by taking on the protection of a stronger ally and paying tribute as a result in exchange for autonomy and self-rule. However, these alliances were not permanent – they would wax and wane depending on power relationships within the region, and smaller statelets were quite capable of paying tribute to more than one 'parent' at the same time in order to maintain a balance of power. Thongchai documents how the monarchs of central Cambodia turned this into a formal situation, documenting a tribute relationship with two 'parent' states; the stronger powers of Vietnam to the East and Siam to the West.[130] The concept of a map acting as physical proof of ownership was also quite alien to the Siamese, for whom a map was more of a three-dimensional picture of spatial and spiritual relationships. Physically marking borders was also a flexible concept – border regions were often difficult terrain and sparsely inhabited and therefore surveying and marking border lines was laborious, uncomfortable – and to the Siamese court, a pointless exercise.

[130] Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*: 80.

What *was* vitally important to the Siamese was to maintain their position of independence and avoid being reduced to a colonial territory, as had happened to their historical enemies in Burma/Myanmar, the Malayan peninsula and Cambodia/Laos. Fortunately for them, they acted as a buffer zone between two conflicting European Empires, who did not want to have to fight again, and certainly not over territory so far away from home. It therefore became convenient for both the British and the Siamese to agree on territorial limits – but these were only finalised by the Anglo-Siamese treaty signed in 1909. By this time the kingdom that had been Patani had come clearly under Siamese rule, and this rule had been strengthened by dividing historical Patani into four new, much smaller and therefore weaker provinces – Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun. Therefore, the agreement made the status quo formal, and as there would be no independent Malay state until 1957, there was no counter-claim to be made. Centuries of extension and retraction of power from the central Siam state through the South (and also to the Northeast) over semi-autonomous fiefdoms had formalized the borders of Thailand where they remain today. Attempts by the heirs of the traditional rulers of the Patani provinces to utilise the departure of the Japanese at the end of World War Two as a reason to change their position came to nothing, despite strenuous lobbying attempts. The British had reason to be grateful for the Thai change of sides halfway through the war and were struggling enough in reestablishing themselves as a colonial power after their ignominious departure five years earlier, not to take on this new and fruitless challenge. There was also a very practical matter of food. The Thais were the only reliable source of exports of rice at the time, desperately needed by the British to ensure food supplies in their reacquired territories.[131]

Islam in Indochina – the migration and assimilation of the Cham.

The settlement of the Cham into the territories along the Mekong river and elsewhere in Vietnam and Cambodia had taken place over a long time – in the period from 1471 to 1835. For centuries the historic kingdom of Champa had been situated in the central plains of what is now Vietnam. However, as in Thailand, these territories had always

[131] Pitsuwan, *Islam and Malay Nationalism*, 113.

been fluid in demarcation, changing through natural migrations of people, and because of territorial ambitions from neighbouring races. Nowadays acquiring land by military means is a relatively rare phenomenon, but respecting local borders is very much a late twentieth-century development, even in Europe. In the case of the people of Champa, they had the misfortune to be the southern neighbours of a much more warlike, aggressive and successful people, the Vietnamese. Outnumbered and firmly defeated in 1471, for the first of what would become a series of losing encounters, the Cham fled south and west. A small enclave of Hindu Cham settled and remained in the coastal provinces to the south, whereas the majority of the Cham moved West, settling alongside their Khmer neighbours in what is now Cambodia. A small number also remained in the Vietnamese provinces bordering modern Cambodia – a border that remains quite porous even today, bisected as it is by numerous waterways, offshoots and branches of the Mekong. Cham also migrated into Thailand, where they were used extensively as mercenary soldiers, including taking part in conflicts with Patani. About 4,000 are estimated to have settled in Bangkok, but their descendants have been entirely assimilated into Thai life, though a Muslim community in Bangkok's Baan Khrua district continues their legacy. Some Cham also travelled as far as Malaysia, but again are now entirely assimilated into the main Malay population.

Over the following years, the Cham became an established component of their new region, living peacefully alongside the majority Khmer population, and other racial minorities, such as the hill tribes and Montagnards. Although the Cham had been converting to Islam as early as the 11th Century CE, heightened conversion to Islam is thought to have come about because of contact with Malay traders from 1642 onwards.[132] Unlike Thailand, the Muslim community was and is dispersed across the country, although inevitably there are provinces and districts where there are concentrations of Muslims. Kampong Cham, where field research has been undertaken as part of this thesis, is one of these, as the name would suggest, but there are also distinct Muslim communities in the provinces of Kampong Chhnang, Battambang, Kampot and in the capital, Phnom Penh. Although civil society was dominated by the

[132] Alvin Cheng-Hin Lim. Ethnic Identities in Cambodia. *The Handbook of Contemporary Cambodia*, Katherine Brickell, Simon Springer (eds). (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 359-367.

Khmer rulers, who were Buddhists, there is little sign of any conflict between the two groups. The Cham have tended to take on an economic role of fishing and small trading along the waterways that connected this part of Asia, long before a road infrastructure came into existence. This economic role has continued to this day – a recent conference on the fishing economy of the Mekong River highlighted the role of the Cham,[133] and Philip Taylor's ethnographic study of the Vietnamese Cham living in the contiguous border provinces to Cambodia highlights the unique connecting role played by Cham traders moving along the waters of the Mekong Delta.[134] Coastal fishing communities were also in regular contact with Malays who lie directly across the Gulf of Thailand, and this led to the strengthening of the Muslim dynamic between the two groups, and the similarities between spoken Malay and Cham languages. This link still exists, facilitating economic contact and migration between Cambodia and the much wealthier modern state of Malaysia. It also explains the widespread use of Jawi, the form of Malay written using Arabic characters, in religious texts in use among the Cham people, although this has largely died out in recent times.

The colonisation and appropriation of Vietnam and Cambodia by the French during the period from 1863 to 1953 does not seem to have had much effect on the Khmer/Cham dynamic, or on the role of the Cham themselves. From a French perspective, Vietnam was seen as the priority economically and politically, with Cambodia and Laos being primarily a buffer zone separating the French colonies from the zone of British influence in Thailand, Myanmar and the Malay states. Unlike Cochinchina, which was a French colony, Cambodia was officially a French protectorate. This provided greater access to France itself. It also saw a higher rate of taxation for the local peasantry and a more significant role played in administration by Vietnamese and Khmer Krom (ethnic Khmer living in Cochinchina). This would add to a historic resentment of the Vietnamese that was to explode into genocidal violence during the Khmer Rouge era and persists today.

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[133] *International Conference on the Mekong, Salween and Red Rivers: Sharing Knowledge and Perspectives Across Borders*, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, 12th November 2016

[134] Taylor, *Cham Muslims of The Mekong Delta*.

However, it was also believed that these colonies would open up a river route for trade with China, now more open to international trade than had previously been the case. Unfortunately, an attempt to use the Mekong as a North-South transport route between 1866 and 1868 failed because of the difficulty in navigating rapids in the river, putting an end to that ambition. The fragmented nature of the royal family and the various orders of Buddhist monks that were intertwined with it made the Cambodians a more difficult trading partner than their more organised and centralised opposites in the regions of Vietnam.[135] From a Cambodian royalist perspective, it is worth remembering that for many centuries the royal rulers had been in a relatively weakened state, subject to domination and control from either Vietnam, Thailand or both. Therefore, the exertion of colonial rule by the French can be seen as the latest in a succession of dominant foreign powers. Indeed, the Cambodian Cham were sometimes regarded by the French as being in many ways superior to their Buddhist compatriots. A 19th-century ethnologist studying the culture and legacy of the Cham across French Indochina noted that, "The Cham from the delta of Cambodia…constitute the true elite among all French Indochinese subjects."[136] However, as the Cham refused to take up education in French-run schools, it was impossible for them to get the French qualification '*certificats d'études Franco-indigènes*' and therefore entry into the French colonial civil service was barred to them.

Traditionally the Cham had also been seen as being close to the Royal Families of Cambodia, with a position of power and influence. Indeed, at one point the Cambodian King converted to Islam, in 1642, changing his name to Ibrahim and marrying a Malay woman. This was seen as a step too far and he was overthrown shortly afterwards. As a modernist and reformist tendency in Islam began to affect the practice and behaviour of local Muslims, this development was largely tolerated and accepted by both the Cambodian royals and the French colonial rulers. This also led to a split in

[135] K R Hall, "The Coming of the West: European Cambodian Marketplace Connectivity, 1500–1800", in *Cambodia and the West, 1500-2000*, T O Smith (ed), (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

[136] Aymonier, "The Chams and Their Religions.", 65.

Cambodian Muslim communities between the reformers and the traditionalists, a split that was common across Southeast Asia at the time, and which will be discussed in later chapters, for its effects across both countries. In Cambodia though, this had the effect of weakening the link between Cham Islam and the Royal family, lessening the influential role of Islam in the country.[137]

It should also be noted that the relative isolation of Cambodia from the mainstream Muslim world, in terms of distance, economic relations and influence, allowed for the continued existence and development of an unusually syncretic and diverse form of Islam, practiced by the Jahed community, followers of Imam San. The Jahed are a minority within a minority, numbering perhaps 20 to 30,000, and found mostly in the regions around Kampot and Kampong Chhnang. Although considered to be Muslim by themselves, the Cambodian state and its various precursors, their belief system and practices are quite different from that practiced by fellow Muslims in Cambodia and the larger part of the Muslim world. Specifically, their main destination for pilgrimage is Oudong, a town in the central Cambodian province of Kampong Chhnang, rather than Mecca. There are also differences in time and practice of prayer, role of animist practices for specific needs, (e.g. rain making), expected dress code, etc. The position of the Kan Imam San is discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

The Japanese formally took over rule from the Vichy French in early 1945, but by the end of the year had been defeated and French rule was to be re-imposed. However, as in the rest of post-war Southeast Asia, the defeat of the colonial powers by the Japanese had undermined the credibility of the occupiers and an independence movement quickly began to emerge. The first political party to be established in Cambodia, the Liberal Party, was seen as an alliance of the old aristocracy, conservative elements in society – and the Cham – all of whom could be relied upon to take an anti-communist position as events developed. However early elections, under French supervision, saw clear victories for the left-wing Democratic party despite (or

[137] William Noseworthy, "Articulations of Southeast Asian Religious Modernisms: Islam in early 20th Century Cambodia and Cochinchina." *Suvannabhumi* 9, no 1, (2017), 109-132.

because of) several more nationalist and conservative alternatives.[138] The following years saw intense political conflict and widespread lawlessness and banditry and the emergence of a Cambodian Communist movement, initially under the patronage of the Vietnamese movement, but led by leaders who would emerge as the leaders of the Khmer Rouge government in 1975. By 1953 the French had realised that maintaining control of all five provinces of Indochina (Annam, Tonkin, Cochinchina, Laos and Cambodia) was impossible and it was decided to grant independence to both Laos and to the Kingdom of Cambodia under the rule of the pro-French King Sihanouk in November of that year.

Sihanouk quickly abdicated in favour of his father, but this was a political manoeuvre intended to allow Sihanouk to take a leading role as Prime Minister of the new state – a position he maintained effectively right up until 1970, a period during which Cambodia came into conflict with both parts of divided Vietnam and also with the United States, as a result of Eastern Cambodia's strategic position as a way station of the Ho Chi Minh trail, conveying soldiers, munitions and supplies from North to South Vietnam. By 1970 he had been forced to leave, to be replaced by Lon Nol, a perennial political figure since the beginning of independence. However, this saw the outbreak of civil war in Cambodia with Lon Nol aligned with the USA against the continued intrusions by the hated Vietnamese in conflict with an informal alliance of Sihanouk's supporters, the Communist Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese communists from both North Vietnam and the southern anti-government movement. By 1975 Lon Nol had alienated the majority of the Cambodian population and in particular, the peasants who had borne the brunt of the destruction caused by the civil war. The Khmer Rouge had taken clear control of the opposition movement, and in a final offensive on Phnom Penh in April 1975, took control of the country.

In this conflict, and in the initial period of Khmer Rouge, the Cham had mostly been aligned with the opposition to the Lon Nol regime. After all, the Cham were predominantly poor peasants themselves, with a common cause in their economic situation. Although the Khmer Rouge were tightly aligned with the Khmer ethnic

[138] Justin Corfield, *The History of Cambodia*. (Santa Barbara, USA: Greenwood Press, 2009), 43.

majority, the Khmer Republic ruled by Lon Nol had been equally ethnocentric, following a policy that aligned Khmer people with the nation, in the same way as had happened with the renaming of Siam to Thailand – the land of the Thai's – in 1944. In both cases, the Chinese minority was seen as dominating the economy and their financial influence also gave them significant political power. The Khmer xenophobia towards the Vietnamese residents in Cambodia was deep, strong and present for many centuries, but this did not extend to the Cham. Historically the Cham had been seen by the Khmer as strange, mysterious, possessing certain magical abilities that can be accessed when needed to influence matters of love and property, but who were also seen as insignificant, weak and long-term neighbours, and indeed had their own reasons to resent the ethnic Vietnamese.[139]

However, there was also a faction of the Cham population aligned to the existing government. Les Kasem had been a leader of the original Cham independence movement in the 1960's, representing a desire for Cham autonomy in both Cambodia and Vietnam. The *Front pour la Libération de Cham* became part of a broader alliance of minorities, known as FULRO - *Front unifié pour la Libération des Races opprimées.* Despite being present at the Bandung Conference of Third World nations in 1970, where they hoped to press their case for independence, this movement never met with any success, as the Cham had little political capital or unity and were widely dispersed across both countries. In Vietnam Ho Chi Minh had expressed a sympathy with national minority rights in Vietnam, as opposed to the American-supported Diem government in the South, which was highly centralised and assimilatory, but as the Cham were all located in the state of South Vietnam this was only of notional benefit – and reunification of Vietnam did not see this promise honoured. Les Kasem reappeared in Cambodia in the early 70's as a leader of a Cham faction supporting Lon Nol. From the opposition, Sos Man had emerged as a Cham leader, trying to fuse a blend of Islam and Communism in early 70's Cambodia. (I will revisit the role of ethnic opposition in Cambodia in Chapter Eight, when I look at the political options open to Muslims in the region.)

[139] See also the view of the US State Department, mentioned on page 81.

By the early 70's it became apparent that the Khmer Rouge were not only planning to rule from an extreme Left perspective but also had a highly racialised view of the ideal Khmer society, which had no place for ethnic minorities, whether Chinese, Vietnamese or Cham. In Khmer Rouge propaganda the Cham were identified as being mostly independent fishermen or traders, and therefore better off and representative of a petit-bourgeois frame of mind. This made them legitimate targets, and early acts of resistance against Khmer Rouge repression of their language, traditional dress, religious practices and dietary codes invited immediate and harsh reprisals. In the Eastern zone of Democratic Kampuchea – which included Kampong Cham, the province with the greatest number of Cham – it became mandatory for the Cham to wear blue and white scarfs, as opposed to the red or black checked scarfs worn by the Khmer Rouge and the 'base' population of original Khmer Rouge-supporting country people – a dress code that identified them as outsiders and inviting discrimination.[140]

As I mentioned above, there has been some debate as to whether the ongoing massacre of the Cambodian Cham was a deliberate attempt at genocide of a specific ethnic group, or a symptom of the Khmer Rouge hostility to any form of dissenting behaviour or belief of whom the Cham were a highly visible manifestation, but not the only one. Ben Kiernan, in two detailed studies published in 1988 and 1996 takes the former view and provides an invaluable record of what happened to the Cham across the country, with detailed testimony from survivors. Osman Ysa, of the Cambodian Documentation Centre in Phnom Penh has also been meticulous in recording the testimony of both the attempted acts of Cham resistance and the massacres that instigated and followed them. An opposing view to Kiernan's work was published in 1997 by Heder, who asserted that the Khmer Rouge's race-based philosophy was a logical outcome of their Marxist beliefs, not a contradiction to them, and the Cham were targeted on grounds of class and economic status, along with all other Cambodians who could be identified as class enemies.[141]

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[140] Raymond Scupin, "Historical, Ethnographic, and Contemporary Political Analyses of the Muslims of Kampuchea and Vietnam", *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 10, no 2,(1995), 301-328.

[141] Heder argues that Marxism, when in power, has an inherent tendency to develop in a racist way as minority rights are seen to be a challenge to an overall Communist project.

Heder, "Racism, Marxism, labelling and genocide in Ben Kiernan's The Pol Pot Regime", 101-153.

Regardless of which argument is correct – and in my view, the specific targeting of the Cham as enemies of the Khmer Rouge *weltanschauung* supports the logic of the Kiernan view – the effect on the Cham population was devastating.[142] Estimates of the number killed by the time the effective Khmer Rouge rule was ended by the Vietnamese invasion of 1979 vary dramatically, from a low point of 300,000 to a higher number of 700,000. As no census had taken place in Cambodia since 1936 it is impossible to get accurate data. On April 6, 2016, Sos Kamry – the Chairman of the Highest Council for Islamic Religious Affairs in Cambodia – testified at the War Crimes Tribunal in Phnom Penh.[143] In his testimony, he suggested that the Cham population of Cambodia numbered 700,000 in 1975, but only 300,000 in 1979. However, Kamry himself admits how difficult it is to provide accurate figures, given the chaos and turmoil of the Khmer Rouge years.

It is, therefore, more than ironic that for the years following the overthrow the majority of Muslim countries represented at the United Nations continued to recognise the Khmer Rouge government now mostly in hiding on the Western borders, rather than the Vietnamese-sponsored government that had saved the Cham from probable extinction. Of course, they weren't the only ones – during this period recognition closely followed Cold War alignments. Because the Soviet Union supported the Vietnamese government and their Cambodian puppets, the Western powers and their Middle Eastern allies followed the American lead and continued to recognise the Democratic Republic of Kampuchea in internal exile – and as a result they were able to retain the official seat at the United Nations for another eleven years, up until 1990. Where aid was forthcoming, it was delivered to Cham refugees overseas, rather than in Cambodia. In 1990 aid began to come from the Middle East, initially Kuwait and the UAE states – and the nature of Islam in Cambodia began to come under international

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[142] On November 16, 2018, the Extraordinary Chambers in the courts of Cambodia (ECCC) ruled that two prominent KR leaders, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan, were guilty of leading a campaign of genocide against the Cham people. A full copy of the ruling can be found at https://www.eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/documents/courtdoc/%5Bdate-in-tz%5D/20181119%20Summary%20of%20Judgement%20Case%20002-02%20ENG_checked%20against%20delivery_amended%20a.pdf, accessed February 13, 2019.

[143] CambodiaTribunal.org, http://www.cambodiatribunal.org/2016/04/06/chairman-of-highest-council-for-islamic-religious-affairs-sos-kamry-testifies/, accessed April 9, 2018.

scrutiny and pressure, as we will see in future chapters. Meanwhile, the new government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea stressed the unity in suffering of all races in the country, but also emphasised the return of freedom of religious practice for the Cham.

Conclusion.

As I believe I have demonstrated, there are clear similarities in the historical experience and circumstances that unite the Cham and Malay peoples, besides their ethnic connection. However, there are also clear differences, which we must also take into account when making this comparison and analysis.

Both groups are Muslim minorities in states that are predominantly Buddhist (Thailand and Cambodia) or where an official doctrine in power is not accommodating to religion, and in any case, the majority of the population who express a religious affiliation is either Buddhist, Christian or animist (Vietnam). In each case they are almost entirely Sunni in practice, adhering to the Shafi'i school of Islamic law. Although not covered in this chapter, both communities have experienced internal conflict in recent years between traditionalist practice and modernising influences coming from external sources. Both share linguistic similarities, with Cham being much closer to Malay than Khmer or Vietnamese. This has facilitated trade, intermarriage and religious dialogue. The use of Jawi as a written script, although no longer prevalent in ordinary use has been common for both groups and continues to influence the teaching and practice of Islam in the region.

In both cases, the economic activity of both Malay and Cham people has been driven by agriculture and by fishing, whether at sea or in the Mekong and connecting rivers. This economy has meant that both populations have been predominantly rural in nature, with economic activity in the towns and cities often dominated by ethnically Chinese businesses. This rural nature of life, combined with the minority role in national life and the distance involved in communicating with the 'heartlands' of Islam has led to a degree of isolation and the preservation of locally specific practices as part of the practice of Islam. I have touched on the role of animism in Cambodia above,

particularly among the Imam San community and this is examined closely in work by Bruckmayr (2017), Trankell (2003) and Collins (2009[144]). However, it is also worth noting the observation of animist practices by Muslims in Southern Thailand – even those fighting for a separate Muslim state - as described by McCargo (2009) and Horstmann (2011).

In both Thailand and Cambodia, the people have experienced rule by states that are overtly Buddhist in nature. In the case of Cambodia, this is expressed as part of the constitution. In Thailand that is not currently the case despite regular pressure from the Buddhist clerical hierarchy and at grass-roots level to include it in the constitution.[145] However, there is no question that Buddhism enjoys a privileged status in Thailand, dominating public life in ceremony, holidays and official events of all kinds. This is widely understood by both Buddhists and Muslims, as will be shown when I look at the quantitative research I undertook. In Vietnam, religious practice is heavily regulated by the state in order to prevent external interference or internal unrest – however within that framework, Muslims are a tiny minority - about 75,000 in 2009 according to official statistics quoted in Yoshimoto, 2012. They are often not mentioned at all in official statements.

In both cases, the minorities have been subject to persecution in some form and continue to experience economic hardship. The reluctance of the Southern Malays to accept the rule of the Thai state, and acknowledge that they are also Thai subjects controlled by the bureaucratic and security establishment has meant systematic repression in various degrees, ever since their formal incorporation into the modern Thai state. There seems to be a clear link between the level of repression and the unwillingness of the Malays to accept Thai rule, as catalogued by Surin Pitsuwan[146]

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[144] William A Collins. (2009) "The Muslims of Cambodia", *Ethnic Groups in Cambodia*. Hean Sokhom, ed, Bangkok, White Lotus, 2009, 2-101.

[145] The regular cycle of military coups in Thailand makes the need to write a new constitution a more frequent practice than in most countries.

[146] Surin Pitsuwan published his analysis of the Thai Malay Muslim predicament as his doctoral thesis in 1985, and it was subsequently published commercially. He went on to be appointed Thai Foreign Minister and Secretary-General of ASEAN. He died in November 2017. New York Times, December 4, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/04/obituaries/surin-pitsuwan-envoy-and-voice-of-southeast-asia-dies-at-68.html, accessed April 11, 2018.

(1985), but the desire to exert complete centralised control has ensured an ongoing cycle of intolerance and cultural imposition. The implications of this will be discussed in future chapters. In Cambodia, the persecution of the Cham took the form of an attempt at systematic genocide, as I have discussed above. Although the post-Khmer Rouge governments have made strenuous efforts to accommodate the Cham, they remain economically marginalised and vulnerable to persecution as representatives of Islam in Southeast Asia.

Indeed, the issue of land and resource ownership has been a consistent problem for both Cham and Malay. For Malay fishermen, the growth of a large offshore trawling industry, owned by Thai's and with a labour force of immigrants, often treated as slave labour, has meant the radical curtailment of their traditional fishing industry, leading many to move to Malaysia in search of work. In Cambodia the Cham have also seen their traditional fishing grounds become depleted, forcing them to move into fruit farming as an alternative source of livelihood. Additionally, the officials of the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) have been accused of systematic land grabs since 1989.[147]

So, it is clear that there is a substantial area of overlap in history and experience between the Cham and the Malay populations of Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand. However, there are of course also clear differences, and these should not be neglected and ignored. The whole history of Thai rule over Patani has been one of struggle – either to be united with their cousins in Malaysia, to regain the status of an independent state, or at the very least to gain recognition of their unique situation through forms of autonomy. The Cham – apart from a brief period of agitation in the 1960's, described above – have never aspired to significant forms of autonomy, let alone independence. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the Cham have no contiguous territory to lay claim to. Second, as a people in exile from their original homeland, asserting independence in their current territory is not very credible. Third, the Cham of Cambodia have learned a very painful lesson on the dangers of being seen

[147] Collins, "The Muslims of Cambodia".

to be different from the general population. Fourth, the government in Vietnam has exerted very tight and repressive control on any signs of challenges to their authority, whether political, religious, expressed publicly or through social media. Finally, the population of Vietnamese Cham is itself scattered and far too small to constitute a credible autonomous zone.

The attitude of rulers to ruled has also been quite different. In Thailand, the rulers, whether monarchical, democratic or military, have always treated the Malays as 'Thai Muslims' expected to accept the role of Thai language, Thai law, Thai monarchy and Thai bureaucracy as loyal and unquestioning citizens. The Thais sometimes seem genuinely surprised that the Malays do not accept this as an unalloyed blessing. Even issues of dress have become a cause of tension and attempts to exert centralised control. In Cambodia, the absence of such strong state structures and the heritage of being the subjects of colonial rule has meant far less emphasis on coercion and assimilation.

Finally, the nature of Islam across the two communities has also evolved differently. Patani was a historic centre of Islamic learning and scholarship, with long connections to Mecca and the Islamic centre. Even now hundreds of Thai Malay students travel to study in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, to further their education. As a result, and also as an expression of collective consciousness, Islam in modern Patani is aligned with views derived from a Middle Eastern context and is more connected to a perceived centre of Islam. Cambodia and Vietnam have always been more distant, more separated by financial considerations and much more open to the syncretic influences of local tradition. This manifests itself in the radically different practices of the Jahed (Cambodia) and Cham Bani (Vietnam) communities. The latter do not describe themselves as Muslim, although that is how they are labelled by the Vietnamese state. Even in the orthodox Sunni communities, there is a greater connection to non-Islamic local traditions, although this is coming under pressure from external normalising influences.

In the next chapter, I go on to look how this background proceeded to give rise to the contemporary situation, how issues of ethnic separation and tension began to

manifest themselves into the form that they currently have, and how the two communities continue to evolve and define themselves against a Buddhist state and a minority status.

Chapter Four – How state and minority relations evolve up to the present day.

"When *I* use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." "The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so many different things." "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all."

(Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass*, 1872)

Introduction.

In Chapter Three, I examined the historical roots of the Cham people in Cambodia/Vietnam, and the Malay Muslims of the Patani region of Thailand. I looked at how both groups came to reside in the territories of the modern nation-states, and the efforts made in the 20th Century to destroy their national and cultural identities – by assimilation in Thailand and by elimination in Cambodia. In this chapter I intend to look at the resurgence of national identity started to emerge in the post-war period and blossomed from the 80's to the present day in both places, despite the dominance of a Buddhist cultural hegemony and a nexus between the military and the ruling class of monarchs and aristocrats. In a region that has seen dramatic economic growth over this period, I will also look at the roots of how the Cham and Malays have developed in economic terms alongside the majority populations. I will also touch on the issue of language as a mode of nation-making and state control, although this will reoccur in later chapters, as it pervades many aspects of society.

By doing this I intend to develop the argument of a vivid and thriving Muslim culture against a backdrop of the development of new nation states, given their own sense of national unity by the espousal of a monocultural ethos intended to bind the majority of the new nation together, even when that came at the expense of different cultures, different religions or different races. Muslims were (and are) by no means the only minorities to be affected by this form of state singularity, but the congruence between ethnicity and religion and the visibility of their religion caused them to stand out even more. To be able to understand how these Muslim communities develop, we need to

understand how recent historical developments have affected them in a quite different way.

I aim to show that:

1. Despite efforts to eliminate both groups as independent communities in their nations, they have proven remarkably resilient and able to develop autonomously, despite tough opposition.
2. The link between Buddhism, both from an organisational and cultural point of view, and the state apparatus is deep, pervasive and exclusive. It provides a philosophical and structural underpinning to society which is very effective for its beneficiaries – and therefore not so for those who are outside.
3. The alienation of the Muslim community, although a permanent feature of Thai rule over the Patani region, became concrete and specific during the 1940's under the leadership of Hajji Sulong, who articulated a vision and a set of clear demands – demands which were ignored and laid the foundation for an ongoing violent response.
4. Although ostensibly free-market capitalist countries, both Cambodia and Thailand have seen the state play a major directive and stimulative role in economic development during this period. Ironically Vietnam – officially a Communist/Socialist state – has seen the same development of state-directed private enterprise. Given the monocultural nature of the state, this has inevitably failed to benefit the Muslim population. This is the case even though the successive Thai governments have recognised that better economic growth in the South might help eliminate one source of discontent – discontent that has been ably leveraged by the voices of autonomy and separatism.

<u>The peace dividend for the region.</u>

After the end of the war in Vietnam and the UN-controlled stabilisation of post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia, the two countries have experienced a sustained period of political peace, albeit maintained in an authoritarian manner, and economic development. Following in the footsteps of China's economic reforms, Vietnam introduced the 'Đổi

Mới' (renovation) economic policies from 1986, intended to achieve the same ends – to stimulate the planned economy and bring in foreign investment, without making any concessions to a more open and democratic form of politics. In Cambodia, the complex process of UN-sponsored elections in 1993 saw Hun Sen established as Prime Minister, initially sharing power with Norodom Ranariddh, but in sole control since 1997. Hun Sen and his Cambodian People's Party have been in continuous control since that date, and in September 2017 Hun Sen made it clear that he had no intention of relinquishing power in the foreseeable future.[148] Although still unstable and with weak systems of government and administration, Cambodia has also seen sustained economic growth during this period, supported by foreign investment in low-cost manufacturing, particularly in the area of textiles, where Cambodia enjoys favoured access to European and American markets. Steps to curtail this access, due to the undemocratic nature of recent developments in Cambodia are under discussion, as reviewed in Chapter Nine, but they may well not happen, as they would hurt the workers far more than the ruling elite. As a result, the World Bank estimates that poverty rates have dropped from 47.8% in 2007 to 13.5% in 2014 – although they do caveat this by pointing out that a great many Cambodians live marginally above the official poverty rate.[149]

Thailand has also experienced sustained economic growth throughout this period, though stumbling badly during the Asian economic crisis of 1997-98. Overall, patterns of economic GDP growth during this period have mostly been maintained at annual rates of over 5%, except during the global economic crisis of 2008. Poverty has decreased from 67% in 1986 to 7.1% in 2015. (Data from World Bank official statistics.)[150] Of course, GDP growth is only one measure of economic progress, and even as a measurement of economic activity it has been increasingly questioned.[151]

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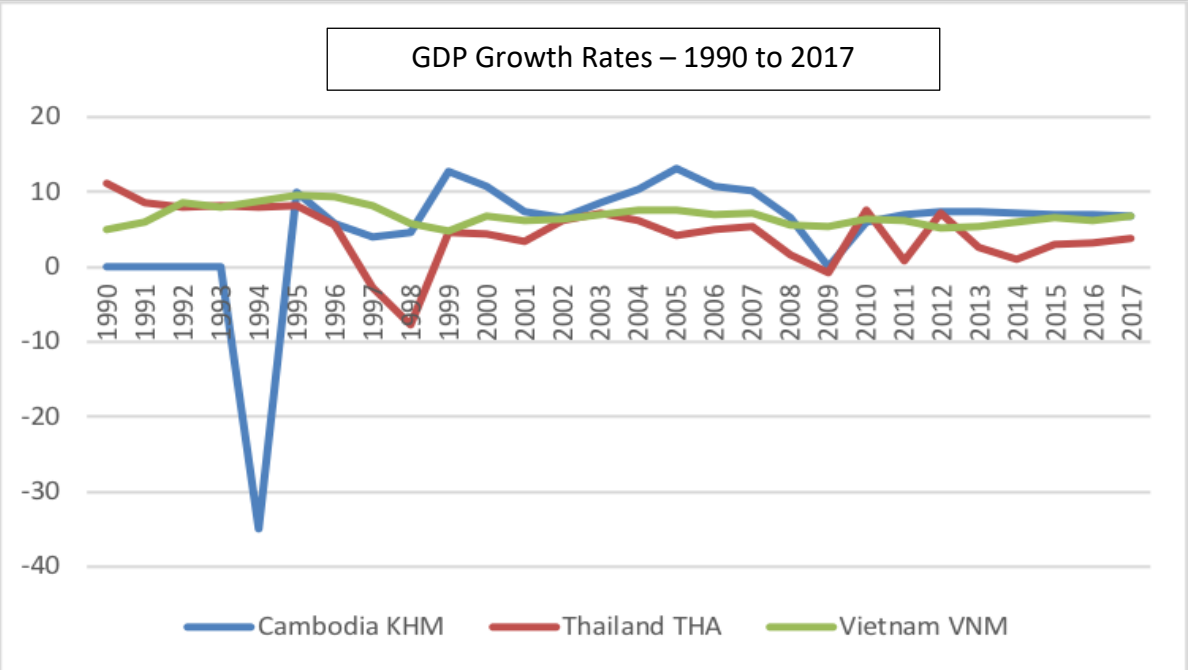
[148] *Financial Times*, 'Cambodia's Hun Sen vows to spend another decade in office', September 6, 2017) https://www.ft.com/content/5a90e200-92f7-11e7-a9e6-11d2f0ebb7f0, accessed October 20, 2018

[149] The World Bank, http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/overview, accessed February 7, 2019

[150] The World Bank, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD, accessed January 25, 2019

[151] *The Economist*, 'The Trouble with GDP', April 30, 2016, https://www.economist.com/briefing/2016/04/30/the-trouble-with-gdp accessed October 20, 2018

Most importantly from our perspective, it does not measure the levels of inequality in society. A 2018 publication by Credit Suisse claimed that Thailand had the worst *global* level of inequality, with a Gini coefficient of 90.2% and the top 1% of the population owning 66.9% of the national wealth.[152] An analysis of this by Draper and Selway, working at Khon Kaen University in the northeast of Thailand, claims that this is exacerbated by Thailand's unwillingness to acknowledge that different minorities exist, do not perform as well economically and need additional support and investment. (They highlight the ethnic Lao and Khmer of the northeast as faring worse than the southern Malays, as the south has seen efforts made to stimulate the economy as a way of controlling unrest.)[153]



The Cham Recovery.

[152] Credit Suisse Global Wealth Databook 2018, downloaded from https://www.credit-suisse.com/corporate/en/research/research-institute/global-wealth-report.html, accessed February 7, 2019.

[153] John Draper, Joel Sawat Selway, " A New Dataset on Horizontal Structural Ethnic Inequalities in Thailand in Order to Address Sustainable Development Goal 10", *Social Indicators Research 2018*, online publication.

For the Cham of Vietnam and Cambodia, this era has been one of recovery and rebuilding after the destruction brought about by the Vietnam War and the rule of the Khmer Rouge (KR) in Cambodia. The Vietnamese Cham continue to be a small and marginalised group in society and live in a society where freedom of speech, religious behaviour and any aspect of non-conformist behaviour is tightly controlled. When I conducted field research there in early 2018, all interviews had to be approved by the local police, who also sat in on almost every interview. With that important caveat in mind, it appears that the Vietnamese Cham enjoy a reasonable level of autonomy in freedom of worship, dress and economic activity, albeit under tight supervision from the state. The Vietnamese Cham operate a niche economy as water-born traders across Vietnam. The near-eradication of their traditional weaving business by cheap mass-produced imports has made the trading economy more important as a means of economic survival. This is also facilitated by a traditionally matrilineal society, which allows a stable family environment at home while male members of the family are away from home for sustained periods of time. Their location, surrounded by Kinh Vietnamese and adjacent to the Cambodian border has also meant that they are fluent in Vietnamese and Khmer, as well as Cham – a useful facility for traders across the Mekong Delta.[154]

For the Cham of Cambodia, the process of recovery from near annihilation has been quite remarkable. Besides the account of systematic persecution by Kiernan,[155] there are also useful verbatim accounts by Ysa[156] and the testimony by Imam Sos Kamry at the Cambodia Tribunal trials in 2016.[157] Ysa's work has been published by the Documentation Center of Cambodia (http://www.dccam.org/), an organisation dedicated to collecting documentation on the KR era. Farina So, one of the researchers at the Center, published interviews with Cham women as part of her doctoral

[154] Taylor, *Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta,* 81.

[155] Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime.*

[156] Ysa, *The Cham Rebellion*.

[157] 'Chairman of Highest Council for Islamic Religious Affairs testifies.' (Cambodia Tribunal Monitor, April 6, 2016) http://www.cambodiatribunal.org/2016/04/06/chairman-of-highest-council-for-islamic-religious-affairs-sos-kamry-testifies/ accessed October 20, 2018.

dissertation, reinforcing from a female perspective the documentation of the persecution of the Cham people.[158] Although it is now 39 years since the KR lost power, the memory of what happened is still very clear among the older generation of contemporary Cham, confirmed in interviews conducted in my research:

"In fact, in those days, The Cham people had the most difficult and very hard time. They gave Muslim people to eat some pork, working too hard on us, not enough foods to eat and if we were talking too much or complained, they took us off, beat us, and killed us also." (DP, 68, Retired Male)[159]

This mistreatment is confirmed by many sources, noticeably in the verbatim accounts collected and published by Osman Ysa of the Documentation Center of Cambodia,[160] and is also described in the November 2018 ruling on genocide issued by the court of enquiry in Cambodia.[161]

As a result, although these interviews were not state-supervised in the manner of Vietnam, the Cambodian Cham also speak very positively about the current regime, under whom they have seen a revival of population, religious freedom, language, dress and economic activity. The different regimes tend to be identified according to leader rather than party – Pol Pot versus Hun Sen. This reflects the leading role that Pol Pot played as head of the KR. Even his closest ally, Ieng Sary was trusted with providing an international face for the regime, but not with commanding troops or having domestic duties that might allow him to establish a rival power base.[162] Therefore, the

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[158] Farina So, *An Oral History of Cham Muslim Women in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge (KR) Regime*, (Columbus, Ohio: Center for International Studies, 2010).

[159] The recruitment and confidentiality process for interviewees is described in chapter One, page 19-20. In order to maintain confidentiality, all interviewees have been assigned a code name. In this case I was asking the interviewee what he remembered about the KR era, given that he was old enough to have been an adult at that time.

[160] Ysa, *The Cham Rebellion.*

[161] ECCC ruling referenced in Chapter Three. https://www.eccc.gov.kh/en/document/court/summary-judgement-case-00202-against-nuon-chea-and-khieu-samphan, accessed February 13, 2019.

[162] Becker, *When The War Was Over*, 199

Cambodian Cham have also been loyal supporters of the CPP during this time. The Islamic structure in Cambodia is also seen as being close to the government:

"The hakem…often acts as a politico-religious intermediary for the mufti and hence for the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) at the village level."[163]

Although Kampong Cham province - the province with the largest population of Cham, as the name might suggest - actually supported the opposition in the last free elections of 2016,[164] the Cham people are believed to have generally supported the CPP.[165] Another factor motivating the Cham to support the CPP government is the threat of civil disturbance resulting from political conflict, a threat highlighted by CPP campaigning, and something obviously of great concern in a group who have suffered so much in the past. Although the monolithic support of the CPP from the Cham has been questioned, it still seems very consistent.[166] The dissolution of the only credible opposition party in late 2017, will no doubt have made this discussion rather academic.[167]

Of course, the improvement in economic and social status and religious freedom for the Cham people in both countries has to be seen relative to their position as small minorities in each country. 95% of Cambodians are Buddhists and 90% are ethnically Khmer and therefore the Cham continue to have a marginal role in society. In a very

[163] Blengsli, *Muslim Metamorphosis*, 177

[164] The Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL), 2013 National Assembly Elections Final Assessment and Report, p. 116, Downloaded from http://www.ccc-cambodia.org/kh/download?file_id=890&action=view&view_file_id=148801741558b15807682692.88505083, accessed February 7, 2019

[165] Mech Dara and Denise Hruby, *Cambodia Daily*, "Ruling CPP Safely Retains Vote Among Cambodia's Muslims.", July 12, 2013, https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/ruling-cpp-safely-retains-vote-among-cambodias-muslims-34620/, accessed February 7, 2019. (Note: this was published two weeks *before* the elections.)

[166] Martin de Bourmont and Kong Meta, *Phnom Penh Post*, 'CPP maintains Cham support, for now', June 2, 2017, https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cpp-maintains-cham-support-now, accessed October 20, 2018

[167] *BBC News*, 'Cambodia top court dissolves main opposition CNRP party', , November 16, 2017, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-42006828, accessed October 20, 2018

poor country, the Cham are generally worse off than their Khmer neighbours. Although all the Cambodian Cham I have interviewed claim to be bilingual in Khmer and Cham, the Cham language is still only used for interactions within the community. For dealings with the state, for secular education, and for commercial or social interactions with the majority population it is still imperative to use Khmer. Media is exclusively in Khmer. For a period of time a Cham-language radio programme was broadcast from Phnom Penh but this was closed down in 2016, allegedly after having questioned land deals in the capital that benefited influential stake-holders with close links to the government but infringed on mosque land and property.[168] If this is true, it is a reflection on the priorities of the government. However, it should be noted that the government official making the complaint was *also* a Cham Muslim. A US government report on religious freedom in Cambodia in 2015 alleged that the Cham were still subject to discrimination in education, work, and general society, and were still viewed with superstition as practitioners of 'black magic'.[169] This report was clearly rejected by the government and by Muslims who might be seen to be connected to the government.[170]

Thailand – Instability and Fragility.

Given the regularity of military coups and new constitutions, it is always difficult to identify consistent policies and directions in Thai government and administration. As I write, Thailand is in its fourth year of military rule, following the coup of 2014. However, even as promises about a new democratic election are consistently broken, the new army chief makes it clear that if he feels it necessary, he will institute a coup

[168] 'Kingdom's only Cham radio show goes dark', *Phnom Penh Post*, June 27, 2016, https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/kingdoms-only-cham-radio-show-goes-dark, accessed October 20, 2018.

[169] US State Department (2015), "Cambodia 2015 International Religious Freedom Report" https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/256307.pdf, accessed February 7, 2019.

[170] *Khmer Times*, 'Chams Not Integrated into Society: US Report', August 18, 2016, https://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/28645/chams-not-integrated-into-society--us-report/, accessed October 20, 2018.

of his own.[171] There have been 12 *successful* military coups[172] and 20 new constitutions[173] since the constitutional revolution of 1932 ended the absolute rule of the monarchy. It is worth noting that even this revolution was instigated by rebellious army officers, not by a civilian-led opposition. Moreover, the motivation behind this development was resentment against the Royal decision to reduce the size of the army - and therefore the opportunity for internal promotions – and also to freeze military salaries. Indeed, the military budget proceeded to double between 1933 and 1938.[174] Since then, power in Thailand has always been wielded by a nexus of the monarchy, the aristocracy closely linked to the monarchy and highly dependent on it for position and power and the army who are clearly more loyal to these institutions than to the rest of the Thai people, or to any constitution that is in force at the time.

However, one policy that has been adhered to consistently throughout this period is a belief in the unity and common identity of the Thai nation. This is manifested in two ways – the sacrosanct nature of the Thai border, and the belief in 'Thai-ness' – the concept that everyone living within the Thai borders is Thai and should behave in a way that recognises and is loyal to that fact. This policy ignores the fact that the Thai borders have been flexible and, in many ways, notional, up until 1909. In *Siam Mapped*, Thongchai documents the evolution of the Siam/Thai territory as the country solidified over time.[175] Anderson's classic, *Imagined Communities*, documents how European nations only came into being as discrete countries with fixed borders and

[171] Wassana Nanuam, *Bangkok Post*, 'Apirat puts country on alert from the get-go', October 22, 2018, https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/1562102/apirat-puts-country-on-alert-from-the-get-go, accessed October 22, 2018.

[172] *Washington Post*, 'Thailand's army just announced a coup. Here are 11 other Thai coups since 1932', May 22, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/05/20/thailands-army-says-this-definitely-isnt-a-coup-heres-11-times-it-definitely-was/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.d6aa1328ca03, accessed November 4, 2018.

[173] Pravit Rovanaphruk, *The Nation*, Activist warns citizens against becoming 'pets of rulers' with new charter', September 5, 2015, http://www.nationmultimedia.com/politics/Activist-warns-citizens-against-becoming-pets-of-r-30268189.html, accessed November 4, 2018.

[174] Paul Chambers, Napisa Waitoolkiat, "Arch-Royalist Rent: The Political Economy of the Military in Thailand", *Khaki Capital*, 40-92.

[175] Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*.

identified citizens in the 19th Century,[176] and the same process took place in Thailand, the only non-colonial nation-state in Southeast Asia at the time.

Equally 'Thai-ness' as a concept is a relatively recent development and conveniently ignores the fact that a great many minority groups who are not ethnically Thai inhabit these borders. The Malay people of the South are the obvious example, and the subject of our discussion, but there are also ethnically Lao people in the Northeast, Khmer along the border with Cambodia, Mon in the central provinces, and a multiplicity of ethnic groups in the North, and the border with Myanmar. Then of course there are the ethnic Chinese, who have dominated the Thai economy for many years, sublimating ethnic identity but playing a pivotal role in the economic and political life of the country. There has also been a clear link between the Chinese-controlled giants of industry and the army, with many senior soldiers taking well-remunerated sinecures in Chinese-owned companies. The role of the Thai army in the economy is expanded on in Chapter Ten.[177]

"By the 1990's the economic nationalism of the 1940s was forgotten and it was not a racial issue that part-Chinese businessmen constituted the majority of the members of parliament."[178]

Nevertheless, a policy that all people are Thai, sharing common characteristics and with a shared and unquestioned loyalty to the Thai nation, has been rigorously adhered to for many years, and as a result there is a definite reluctance to make any concession to local differences. Political rule is highly centralised, with provincial governors being appointed by the central government. Administrators are also appointed centrally and regularly rotated by government decree. Thai is the only recognised language for all state and government functions, no matter how local the purpose. The Museum of Siam, located adjacent to the old Royal Palace, is described

[176] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

[177] Chambers and Waitoolkiat, "Arch-Royalist Rent".

[178] Joe Studwell, *Asian Godfathers: Money and Power in Hong Kong and South-East Asia*, (London: Profile Books, 2007), 152.

on the official tourism website as, "… a learning center on ethnology, anthropology, and other fields related to Thai society and Southeast Asia, in order to instill consciousness and understanding of the Thai people in their history, nation, culture, and localities…"[179] Its promotion of Thai-ness seems to be mostly aimed at the many school groups who visit, and is quite suffocating – if you're not Thai.

The role of Buddhism in Thai society, government and military.

The interaction between Buddhism and Islam, both from a state and social perspective will be discussed in Chapter Nine. However, at this point I want to discuss how the important role of Buddhism as part of the notion of Thai-ness and its pervasive nature in state control has been part of Thai society until the present day. Besides issues of territory and government, Thai-ness also extends to religion, and Buddhism enjoys a privileged position in this regard. Although, unlike in Cambodia, Buddhism is not the official state religion, it permeates society and culture. In Chapter One I gave an example of how the Royal Family use Buddhist concepts in official statements. The official calendar of Thailand is based on the physical death of The Buddha in 543 (BCE), so 2019 (CE) is 2562 in Thailand. Just to confuse matters, Thailand uses a Gregorian version of the Buddhist year, so the years and months correspond with the Gregorian format. The Department of Religious Affairs, part of the Ministry of Culture, includes religious symbols from Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam on its homepage, but then clearly states that its role is to, "Promote and support the protection of *Buddhist affairs and other religions* certified by the government."[180] (Italics mine.)

The role of Buddhism in government in Thailand has also been significant in two ways it manifests itself – in the position of the King in relation to the government and constitution, and in the view of Buddhism regarding the exercise of 'legitimate' violence, particularly by the army. Remember that the role of the King as the leading figure in the Thai state, with an almost religious significance as the embodiment of the

[179] https://www.tourismthailand.org/Attraction/Museum-Siam--2023, accessed October 22, 2018.
[180] "ส่งเสริมและให้ความอุปถัมภ์คุ้มครองกิจการด้านพระพุทธศาสนาและศาสนาอื่น ๆ ที่ทางราชการรับรอง", http://www.dra.go.th/th/faq-often.php, accessed October 22, 2018

nation, is a very current concept – indeed probably more so than today than at any time since the constitutional revolution of 1932.

The King in Thailand pledges allegiance to the Buddhist *Dhamma,*[181] not to the constitution. A movement called '*Nitirat'* or 'Law State' led by academics from the relatively liberal Thammasat University tried to change this in 2010 but failed. Good government is seen as being synonymous with the *Dhamma*, and the King is seen as being bound by the Ten Royal Virtues, as described in the *Dhamma*. The recently deceased King Bhumibol - Rama IX - actively promoted his self-image as the *Dhammaraja*, or Good King. The edition of the Royal Institute Dictionary of the Thai language published in 2011 defined no less than 12 words in terms of their proof of the good works of the King.[182] The highly restrictive lèse-majesté laws in Thailand equate disrespect to the King and his family with disrespect to the Buddha, both of which are described as unacceptable to 'ordinary' Thais. The newest constitution, promulgated by the military government in 2017, still does not make Buddhism the official religion of the state, but it is explicit in describing the need to protect and promote Buddhism. Discussion of the proposed constitution, prior to voting on whether to accept it, was outlawed by the government. Nevertheless, the three majority Muslim provinces in the South all voted against it, the only provinces so to do.[183]

Buddhism is also influential in the Thai Military, providing structure, moral support and a justification for the use of violence where necessary. Thailand operates a lottery system for military conscription, and Thai Muslims are not exempt from this lottery. However, when conscripted they are assigned to duties outside the South to remove

[181] There is no unique way to translate Dhamma/Dharma into English. It roughly translates at the correct, good, Godly way of living.

[182] Manita Luangkrajang, New Mandala, 'Nation-religion-king: keywords in Thailand's Royal Institute Dictionaries', August 6, 2018, http://www.newmandala.org/changing-definitions-nation-religion-king-thailands-royal-institute-dictionaries/, accessed November 5, 2018

[183] I am indebted to a recent article by Eugenié Mérieau, discussing the role of Buddhism in Thailand's monarchy and constitution.

Eugénie Mérieau, "Buddhist Constitutionalism in Thailand: When Rājadhammā Supersedes the Constitution". *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, 13, 2018, 1-23.

them from the issues there and avoid a conflict of interest. (A film showing this process in action for the Muslims of the South was shown on Al-Jazeera's English-language station in 2011.)[184]

In the common viewpoint of the West, a perceived stereotype of Buddhism has always been as a particularly non-violent religion, but this is based on a selective reading of the texts and a perspective that focusses on doctrine, rather than practitioners. A recent analysis[185] of the role of violence within Buddhism looks at the different ways in which violence can be condoned and justified where necessary, based on a need to protect the religion or even a view of some people as lesser humans to whom the protection does not apply.[186] A notorious example of this took place in Thailand with "one famous monk stating in June 1976 that killing communists was just 'a minor sin', comparable to the killing of an animal to make an offering to a monk."[187] The Thai military has Buddhist Chaplains – no other religion is officially represented. In the South, the role of the military in protecting Buddhist monks and temples from terrorist attack has led to many temples bring used as military bases, and even the (illicit) phenomenon of 'military monks' as described by Jerryson.[188] (The relationship between the military situation in the South and the role of Buddhism will be expanded on in Chapter Eight.)

Assimilation and Alienation – the Thai Malay Muslim 'Trap'.

From the perspective of the Malay Muslim community, this has always been a cause of alienation and resentment and has exacerbated the feeling of separation and second-class status that has been a prevailing cause of isolation and demands for autonomy or

[184] It can be seen online at https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/witness/2010/04/2010419411607605.html, accessed November 2, 2018

[185] Michael Jerryson, *If You Meet the Buddha on the Road: Buddhism, Politics, and Violence*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[186] Of course this reading of Buddhist attitudes towards violence is also situated in a specific reading of doctrine and practice.

[187] Mérieau "Buddhist Constitutionalism in Thailand", 13

[188] Jerryson, *Buddhist Fury*, 118-20.

secession. In 1947 Barbara Whittingham-Jones, a British journalist for the Straits Times of Singapore, then still part of Malaya under British colonial rule, travelled through Patani and published a disturbing account of the repression and corruption endured by the Malay population at the time.[189] She stresses the problems caused by a Thai administration imposed from the centre, governing in Thai and with obvious contempt for the local population. She also makes the interesting – now hypothetical – point, that if Patani were to be incorporated into Malaysia, post-independence, it would act as an ethnic counterbalance to Chinese-dominated Singapore.[190]

Between 1939 and 1942 the Prime Minister of Thailand, General Phibun Songgkram, instigated a series of restrictive decrees intended to enforce a monolithic and homogeneous Thai identity across the land. The first of these decrees changed the name of the country from Siam to Thailand – land of the Thais. These decrees had a wide-ranging and negative impact on the Malay Muslims of Patani (and all other Muslims and other minorities in Thailand) enforcing the use of Thai language, even in basic education, a Thai dress code that banned the use of traditional dress (among all ethnicities) and the end of Fridays as a public holiday. The role of the 'Dato Yutthitam' (*qadi*, or Islamic Judge), who had been responsible for implementing Islamic Law, albeit under the supervision of a superior Thai judge, was eliminated, along with the use of Islamic Law in any circumstance. For Thai, read Buddhist – Buddhist ethics were introduced into school education and attempts were made to convert Muslims to Buddhism.[191] These restrictions eliminated all hyphenated notions of citizenship – henceforth people were to be known as just 'Thai', not Muslim-Thai or any other variant of cultural identity.

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[189] Barbara Whittingham-Jones, 'Patani-Malay State Outside Malaya', *Straits Times*, October 30, 1947, http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19471030-1.2.82.1?ST=1&AT=advanced&K=patani&KA=patani&DF=22%2F10%2F1947&DT=12%2F11%2F1947&Display=0&NPT=&L=English&CTA=Article&QT=patani&oref=article, accessed October 22, 2018

[190] According to Ockey, she was invited and hosted by Hajji Sulong and therefore was not a neutral observer.

James Ockey, "Individual imaginings: The religio-nationalist pilgrimages of Haji Sulong Abdulkadir al-Fatani". *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 42, no 1, (2011), 114.

[191] Liow, *Islam, Education and Reform in Southern Thailand*, 21.

This effectively brought an end to a period of relative quiet in the Patani region, quiet which had lasted from the banishment to Kelantan, Malaya of traditional sultans in 1909 until the end of the Second World War, at which point Thailand could resume effective rule over the region. At this point the emergence of Hajji Sulong Abdul Kadir al-Fatani (Hajji Sulong) as a new leader of Malay Muslim aspirations became significant. After studying in Mecca as part of a long-established group of Malay scholars resident there, Hajji Sulong had returned for the second time, after a brief visit from 1927. The influence of living in Mecca had given him a reformist perspective, counter to the traditionalist and heterodox Islam that prevailed among the Muslims of Southeast Asia. This was also true of Cambodia – Hajji Sulong had also visited co-religionists in Cambodia at that time. As a result, he was also concerned with the reform and improvement of education in the region, something that I will cover in Chapter Five. However, his major influence, and the activity for which he is most well remembered, was as the spokesman for the articulation of a set of demands to address the problems of the Malay Muslims in Thailand. These demands, already salient enough to be mentioned by Whittingham-Jones in her newspaper report, were as follows:

1. That the four southern provinces be governed as a unit, with a Muslim governor.
2. That for the first seven years of the school curriculum, Malay be allowed as the language of instruction.
3. That all taxes collected in the four southern provinces be expended there.
4. That 85 percent of the government officials be local Malays.
5. That Malay and Thai be used together as the languages of government.
6. That the provincial Islamic committees have authority over the practice of Islam.
7. That the Islamic judicial system be separated from the provincial court system.[192]

It should be noted that these demands do not address secession, or even self-rule for the region. Hajji Sulong had been heavily influenced by the teachings of the Egyptian scholar Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) – and Abduh was a believer in the duty of Muslim reformers to cooperate with and obey the state and the rulers, while

[192] Quoted in Ockey, "Individual Imaginings", 113.

protecting the interests of the believer subjects.[193] With the exception of the first point, they were not rejected outright, but a process of obfuscation and delay meant that no action was taken to accept or even discuss them. Hajji Sulong was imprisoned in 1949, released in 1952 and then 'disappeared' in 1954 – no body was ever found. Forced disappearance of troublesome people has been a continued state practice up to the present day – mainly, though not exclusively, for leaders of the Muslim community.[194] By becoming a focal point of demands for autonomous options in justice, education and government, options that would recognise the difference between the Malay-speaking Muslim South and the rest of Thailand, Sulong was perceived as advocating and fomenting separatism – the greatest fear of the centralised Thai polity.

This problem – the belief in the one-ness of the Thai nation, and therefore that any requests for autonomy or special treatment were synonymous with separatism and were bound to lead to secession and the loss of Thai territory – has been at the core of the inability to find a solution for the Southern Provinces ever since. Even the gesture of recognising Malay as a language in use for local communication has been regularly denied. One of the recommendations of the National Reconciliation Commission in 2005, following the violent outbreak of renewed conflict in 2004, was to recognise Malay as a privileged – but not official – language for the South. This was effectively blocked by Privy Councillor Prem Tinsulanonda on the grounds that Thai was the only permitted language for official use in Thailand. At the time Prem was heavily engaged in a conflict with the Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was seen to be using the conflict in the South as one strand of his attempts to undermine the traditional network monarchy, and Prem was seen to speak for the Royal Family - "Because Prem is the king's chief adviser, his several highly-publicized speeches criticizing Thaksin

[193] Ibid., 104-105.

[194] Thailand's Failed Pledges to End 'Disappearances', *Human Rights Watch*, August 29, 2018, https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/08/29/thailands-failed-pledges-end-disappearances, accessed November 4, 2018.

made it clear that the palace wanted Thaksin out."[195] (Thaksin's role in exacerbating the Southern conflict will be discussed later.)

As stated earlier, the Thai economy has grown significantly over the past fifty years. In Thailand's case, being allies of the USA during the Vietnamese War and also the next potential 'domino' in a Communist takeover of Southeast Asia, meant that the Thais benefited greatly from Western support and investment during this time. It also developed as a hub for Japanese and Korean automotive development, being a low-cost manufacturing base, open to inward investment. This differed from the strategy pursued in Malaysia, where the government focused on an attempt to develop an indigenous automotive manufacturing economy, via the state-owned Proton company. However, this growth has not been reflected in the South, which has remained one of the poorest regions of the country – although the heavily populated Northeast region is actually poorer.

Region	Gross Provincial Product per Capita in 2013 (USD)[196]
Thailand	6,923
Narathiwat	2,118
Pattani	2,400
Satun	3,480
Yala	3,122
Northeast Region	2,425

There have been attempts to develop the economy of the South, in order to try and create an economic reason for peace and development. The highest profile of these was the sub-regional Indonesia/Malaysia/Thailand Growth Triangle, as described by

[195] Kevin Hewison, Kengkij Kitirianglarp, (2010). "Thai-Style Democracy: The Royalist Struggle for Thailand's Politics", *Saying the Unsayable: Monarchy and Democracy in Thailand*, Søren Ivarsson, Lotte Isager, eds, (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2010), 179-202.

[196] *"Gross Regional and Provincial Product, 2013 Edition"*. Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB). April 2015. *ISSN 1686-0799*. *Retrieved 16 July 2016*.

King.[197] This attempt to stimulate growth in the Aceh region of Indonesia, the North of Malaysia and the South of Thailand was highly ambitious but foundered because of over-optimism of what was possible, and the general reluctance of Thai business to get involved with what seemed to be an unstable, alien and dangerous region. It ended up only benefiting the mostly non-Muslim corridor in Songkhla province, from the Malaysian border to the regional city of Hat Yai. Indeed, one of the core industries of the South – fishing – has been badly hit in recent years by competition from large scale fishing fleets, based further up the coast and staffed by extremely poorly paid immigrants from neighbouring countries. The conditions of virtual slavery on these fleets is an ongoing scandal – see the recent Human Rights Watch report.[198] The failure to develop the economy of the South has been identified as an ongoing source of grievance among the Muslim population and came up regularly in my field interviews. In fact, one of the first attempts to analyse the outburst of violence in 2004, by a leading Thai historian, identified economics as the key factor, although put into a Millenarian context that suggested it would be short-lived.[199] Conversely, the army have accused local politicians of deliberately fomenting unrest to discourage external investment, in order to protect their own business interests.[200]

The Vietnamese Government adopted the policy of *'Đổi Mới'* at the 6th National Congress of the Communist Party in December 1986. '*Đổi* Mới' translates as Renovation and was intended to effect a shift from a state-controlled socialist economy to an open-market capitalist form, without changing the role of the Communist Party as the sole holder of political power. In this, the model very closely

[197] Phil King, "The Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth-Triangle: How The South Was Won…And Then Lost Again", *Dynamic Diversity in Southern Thailand*. Wattana Sugunnasil, ed, (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005), 93-108.

[198] *Human Rights Watch*, "Hidden Chains: Rights Abuses and Force Labor in Thailand's Fishing Industry", https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/01/23/hidden-chains/rights-abuses-and-forced-labor-thailands-fishing-industry, accessed November 5, 2018.

[199] Nidhi Aeusrivongse, "Understanding the Situation in the South as a 'Millenarian Revolt'", *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asi*a 6, (2005), Online.

[200] Wassana Nanuam, 'Military implicates local politicians in south unrest', *Bangkok Post*, December 31, 2017, https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/1388190/military-implicates-local-politicians-in-south-unrest, accessed November 5, 2018.

followed that followed by China. In an analysis of the first 20 years of the new policy, Beresford argues that this model follows a path of state guidance, where the state picks areas of focus and directs financial support, rather than a pure Capitalist model where the state role is only of a facilitator and rule-setter.[201] She argues that this has been a common – and successful – characteristic of much Asian growth in the late 20th Century, true of China but also of such democratic countries as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

In macro terms it has certainly been successful, with Vietnam having the second fastest GDP growth rate in the region (after China) and with an overall reduction of official poverty from 58% in 1993 to 23% in 2004 and 4.5% by 2015.[202] However this success has been uneven, heavily focused around the two major urban areas of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. By 2005, 83% of foreign direct investment had gone into these two cities. Rural incomes were roughly half those of urban workers and 25% of the residents of the Mekong Delta were landless by 2005. The Cham were certainly not the winners in this process – much of the land they had previously held was sold to the more prosperous and mobile Kinh immigrants to the region, and access to work in government and state industries was dependent on personal connections and recommendations – connections the Cham were unlikely to have. The new market policy had increased the ability of private individuals to work as traders, a strength of the Cham but remoter settlements remained inaccessible and therefore cut off from trading links.[203]

Language takes on a highly significant role in many aspects of the Thai situation for Muslims. In 2018 the Army changed the word used to describe peace talks from *Santiparb* to *Santisuk* – incorporating a concept that the talks were in some way 'happy' – and more concretely, excluding the idea that the other party was in some

[201] Melanie Beresford, "Doi Moi in review: The challenges of building market socialism in Vietnam"; *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 38, no 2; (2006), 221-243.

[202] Javier Revilla Diez, "Vietnam 30 years after Doi Moi: Achievements and Challenges", Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsgeographie/The German Journal of Economic Geography 60, no 3, (2015), 1-13.

[203] Taylor, *Cham Muslims of The Mekong Delta*, 147-159.

way dissatisfied with the method of rule by the Thai State, as this might justify external involvement.[204] While undertaking interviews in Pattani in 2018, I brought up the bilingual policy for official language use in Wales and showed respondents photographs of bilingual street signage and documents. They were surprised that any central government might make such a concession to localisation. At the time that Whittingham-Jones was writing in 1947, the Muslim population were almost exclusively monolingual in Malay, making it impossible for them to talk effectively to the Thai-language administrators of the region or the nation. Language rights are a highly contentious issue and the rejection of any official role for Malay continues to exacerbate the situation. However, two important caveats should be noted. First, the Malay dialect spoken in the Southern provinces in Thailand is quite different from the standard Bahasa Malay in official use in Malaysia and Malay-speaking Thais find it difficult to communicate in it. Second, the younger and urban populations in the South are usually very capable of communicating in Thai. There is a recognition that it is a necessary skill in order to deal with official society, but more importantly to progress in further education or skilled employment in the rest of Thailand.

Conclusion.

The post KR era in Cambodia and the post-WWII era in Thailand have seen different outcomes for Muslims in the predominantly Buddhist states that have evolved during this time. For Cambodian Muslims, the period has seen a remarkable rebirth of the community after near extinction. The relative peace and stability of the Cambodian state during this period has allowed Cambodian Muslims to reemerge and manifest their own culture and religion in peace alongside the majority Khmer community. Official Cambodian policy has stressed their freedom of religion and practice and sees them as loyal Cambodian citizens with ostensibly equal rights – as much as those rights exist for any Cambodians. As a result, the Cham of Cambodia have demonstrated loyalty and acquiescence to the state, and a gratitude for a time of stability and peace.

[204] These linguistic gymnastics are discussed by Dr. Chaiwat Satha-Anand in his opening keynote address at the Southeast Asian Studies Conference in Bangkok in late 2017.

Chaiwat Satha-Anand, "Celestial Axe: On the Politics of Naming". *Newsletter: Center for Southeast Asian Studies*, Kyoto University 76, (2018), 15-25.

However, this does not stop the Cham community from being relatively marginalised economically and in education. Nor does it eradicate a commonly held belief that they are in some way strange, inferior and somewhat mysterious.

In the same way, since the institution of the reformist 'Đổi Mới' policies of 1986, the Mekong Delta Cham of Vietnam have been able to enjoy a period of relative stability and harmony alongside the majority population. They are also economically marginalised but enjoy a freedom of religious and cultural behaviour in daily life. Neither group shows any aspiration to return to a notional Champa homeland, even though a mix of quasi-Hindu, quasi-Muslim Cham still live there. (I will discuss the heterodox Islamic practice of the Cham Bani of Vietnam and the Cham Kan Imam San of Cambodia in Chapter Eight.) In both countries, the state has taken steps to try and prevent what they see as external radicalisation from the Middle East – the closure of a Saudi-sponsored school in Cambodia in 2003 because of suspicion of involvement in terrorist activities,[205] and the tight control of government policy in Vietnam preventing the establishment of a strong Salafi-led movement in Châu Đốc.[206] However at the same time the more quietist reform movement of the *Tablighi Jamaat* has been tolerated and allowed to develop in both countries - very much so in Thailand.

However, the post-war era has not seen the same stability and peace for the ethnically Malay Muslim population of Thailand. A combination of political instability, ethnic Monoculturalism and poor government has meant that life in the Thai border provinces has remained unstable and dangerous. Despite good intentions, the minority status of the Malay Muslims has not been addressed. The economic situation remains marginalised and this is exacerbated for ordinary Muslims by a status quo that seems to provide economic benefits for the military, the corrupt and the criminals at the expense of the general population. The rapid turnover of governments and constitutions, and the regular frequency of military coups in Bangkok, has meant an

[205] Blengsli, "Muslim Metamorphosis", 187.

[206] Agnès De Féo, "Les musulmans de Châu Đốc (Vietnam) à l'épreuve du salafisme." *Moussons* 13-14, (2009), 359-372.

environment where any steps towards lasting improvement of conditions can only be tenuous and liable to be over-turned at any time.

In the next chapter, I propose to look at how the separation of the Muslim minorities from the ostensibly mono-cultural states has manifested itself in four key areas of society and cross-cultural understanding. I will look at how societies and communities have developed structures and policies to cover separate approaches to education, the administration of law and arbitration and viewpoints towards attitudes of morality and social consensus. I will aim to show how these different aspects of society are both divisive and yet function in a way that goes some way to meet the expectations of all concerned groups.

Chapter Five – Implications of the congruence between Islam and Malay/Cham minority status.

"The Thais are only nice and respectful to us if we shoot at them."[207]

Introduction.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the previous chapter, the development of nations in the post-World War Two era was enhanced and made stronger by the development of a national ethos which unified the majority of the nation at the expense of those groups who did not fit that mould. In this chapter I will explore the link between Islam and the Malay and Cham minorities and look at the implications of being both a racial minority and an adherent of a minority faith in countries that are ostensibly monocultural and dominated by a Buddhist culture. The nature of minority status in a monocultural society is intended to be a consistent focus of the entire thesis, but at this point I want to look at certain aspects of the 'separation' from the mainstream and how they affect the relationship between Cham or Malay Muslims and the state and general population, and the way in which they perceive each other.

Despite the occasional declaration of multiculturalism,[208] both Thailand and Cambodia privilege Buddhism as a state religion – de facto in Thailand, de jure in Cambodia.[209] Although Vietnam is an ostensibly secular state, with a communist orthodoxy, in fact the Muslims of Vietnam are clearly a tiny minority in a society dominated by the Kinh

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[207] Bersatu member, quoted in Helbardt, *Deciphering Southern Thailand's Violence*, 198.

Bersatu (Malay, tr. Unite/United) has been used as a name by many Malay-speaking organisations, but in this case it refers to an umbrella organisation for separatist groups, founded in 1989. It faded away in the 2000's as it was sidelined by more militant groups.

[208] See for example the government press release quoted at the beginning of Chapter Ten.

[209] Bangkok's Mahidol University offers a Ph. D programme in Multicultural Studies. (http://www.grad.mahidol.ac.th/en/prospective-students/view.php?id=7304D01G). However at a forum held to launch this programme in 2012, speakers were at pains to stress how Thailand fails to provide rights and support for ethnic minorities or refugees.

Alexander Horstmann, "Multiculturalism in Thailand: Concept, Policy and Practice", *Conference Report*, October 2012, https://www.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/JLC/article/view/21621/18684, accessed May 20, 2019.

people. The Kinh can be adherents to local folk religions, orthodox Buddhist, Christian or followers of local variants such as Cao Đài, Hòa Hảo and other Vietnamese religious groups – but the one thing they are not is Muslim. The only non-Cham Muslims in Vietnam are small clusters of descendants of Indonesian and South Asian settlers, predominantly located in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon). There is a clear correlation between being Muslim and being Cham, when it comes to the Cham living in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. However the Cham of the coastal region follow diverse versions of both Islam and Hinduism. The former are described as Muslim (*Hồi gi*áo) by the government, but not by themselves.[210]

A different correlation occurs in both Cambodia and Thailand. There are a small number of ethnically Khmer Muslims in Cambodia, usually as a result of conversion or intermarriage, and then there are the Chvea (a Khmer language version of Jawa, synonymous with Malay) who are closer to Austronesian Malays in ethnicity and language. This is often explained as being a result of intermarriage between male Malay traders and local Khmer women, a result of the close coastal trading links between the two territories. In Thailand there are many different Muslim minorities, of whom the Malay are the largest group. There are Hui Muslims in the north, originally migrants from Southwest China, Cham and Mon in the capital and central region and the descendants of Shi'i migrants from Iran who were attached to the royal court in Ayutthaya and Thonburi and played a significant role in government and international trade in the 17th century but have now become completely assimilated.[211] [212] Bangkok also has a sizeable South Asian population, some of whom

[210] The correlation is one way however – some of the central Cham practice a form of Hinduism, described as *đạo Bà La Môn* in Vietnamese. I will cover this relationship later in this chapter as the 'Jahed' of Cambodia also practice a similar variation on Islam – but not the Hindu variant.

[211] O'Kane has translated a fascinating account of the Iranian influence on the Siamese court in the 17th Century, written by one of the delegates from a mission to Ayutthaya between 1687 and 1671. The author, ibn Muhammad Ibrāhīm, suggests that the considerable influence held by the Iranians was dissipating as a result of internal quarrels among themselves and competing Western influence. The presence of this community explains why the role of Chularajmontri (Shaikh al-Islam) was held by a Shi'i Muslim from its inception around 1620-28 up until 1934.

John O'Kane (trans.), *The Ship of Suleimān*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972.)

[212] Imtiaz Yusuf, "Chularajmontri (Shaikh al-Islam) and Islamic Administrative Committees in Thailand", *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t343/e0020?_hi=3&_pos=9#match, accessed April 12, 2019.

are Muslim, having also arrived as traders and merchants during the period of British colonisation in neighbouring Burma (Myanmar). A few South Asians had also established themselves as merchants across the South, networking with their countrymen in Northern Malaysia. This community founded the embryonic Tablighi Jamaat movement, described in Chapter Seven. There is even a small Javanese community, the descendants of people who moved to Bangkok at the request of King Rama V in 1896 to build Lumpini Park, Bangkok's first public park. (See photographs at the end of this chapter.) They were allotted land in what became known as Kampong Jawa and although they now use the Thai language, they still have a mosque and cemetery which reflect their ethnic origin and identity, as can be seen clearly in the photographs.[213] One work on Muslims in Thailand divides them into 'unassimilated' – the ethnic Malay – and 'assimilated' – everyone else.[214] This is actually quite a practical way of understanding the difference between the ethnic Malay minority and other Muslims in Thailand.

However, in both cases, the correlation between ethnicity and religion is clear – I am not aware of any references in scholarship regarding ethnic Malays in Thailand or ethnic Cham in Cambodia who are adherents to non-Muslim religions, and Islam is a crucial part of the identity of both groups. This correlation is recognised by both the state and government and by the groups themselves. Attempts to assimilate them into the monocultural mainstream by conversion or suppression have failed and been the cause of a militant resistance in Thailand and near-genocide in Cambodia. In Chapter Four I described the attempt by the Phibun government to enforce a Buddhist version of Thai-ness on the Southern Malays, and in Chapter One I discussed the attempt by the Khmer Rouge to eradicate the Muslim identity and practices of the Cham. In the case of Thailand, protecting a Muslim identity has been at the heart of Malay resistance to the centralised Thai state, impacting not just on the application of law

[213] Nugroho Trisnu Brata, "Social Mobility and Cultural Reproduction of Javanese Descendant Community in Bangkok, Thailand", *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 2018, 602-605.

[214] Omar Farouk, "The Muslims of Thailand – A Survey", in *The Muslims of Thailand, Vol 1: Historical and Cultural Studies*, ed. Andrew Forbes, (Gaya, India: South East Asian Review Office, 1988).

and custom but also in fierce resistance to the use of state-provided education, seen as an attempt to impose an alien culture from on top.

In fact, I believe there are four key factors that affect the status of the Malay and the Cham people in Southeast Asia as a result of their perceived joint identity as both racial minorities and Muslim people, and how this congruence determines key factors of their relationship with the state. The factors are (i) the role of education as a determinant of identity development; (ii) the role of the clergy and the mosque in providing legal and family advice and mediation; (iii) mutual perspectives of morality and social interaction and (iv) perceptions of Islam as being synonymous with separatism, lack of allegiance to the state and violent behaviour. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how these factors affect the relationship between the two communities and how closely they are linked to a local perception of who Muslims *are* - from both sides.

Education.

Because the state requires that education is conducted in the Thai language, many of the teachers in state-run schools in Southern Thailand are ethnically Thai – 55.8% in 2012.[215] Since the renewed outbreak of violent resistance in 2004 numerous state schools have been subject to arson attacks in the Southern Provinces and teachers in the state schools, whether Buddhist or Muslim, have been targets of insurgent violence, needing armed protection. Between 2004 and 2014, over 170 teachers have been assassinated either in transit to/from school or actually on the school premises.[216] Unfortunately, and inevitably, this need for armed state protection of teachers reinforces the perception of them as part of a repressive state apparatus,

[215] "Explore the Southern border teacher numbers…", *Isranews Agency*, December 16, 2012, https://www.isranews.org/content-page/67-south-slide/18266-%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%B3%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%A7%E0%B8%88%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%A7%E0%B9%80%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%82%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B9%E0%B8%8A%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A2%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%94%E0%B8%99%E0%B9%83%E0%B8%95%E0%B9%89-23,376-%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%99.html, accessed May 20, 2019.

[216] Suwilai Premsirat and Kirk R Person, "Education in Thailand's Ethnic Languages: Reflections on a Decade of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Policy and Practice," in *Education in Thailand : An Old Elephant in Search of a New Mahout*, Gerald W Fry, ed, (Singapore, Springer, 2018), 399.

however unfair that perception may be. An extreme example of this perception is the Kuching Rupa incident of 2006 when a Thai Buddhist teacher, Juling Panganmoon, was held hostage in the village where she taught as a reprisal to the hostage-taking of two Muslim men by the Thai armed forces, and then beaten until she lapsed into a coma from which she then died[217] – an incident that was brought up 12 years later, when I interviewed a respondent who knew that village well.[218]

Educational policy has always been at the centre of Muslim identity where Muslims live as a minority in modern states. It is seen as a key factor in determining the existence of freedom of behaviour for religious minorities, whether Muslim or otherwise, and a test of how multiculturalism is put into practice. This is reflected in the way that educational policy is addressed in most discussions of multiculturalism. The ability and willingness of the state to allow or provide different forms of education based on minority identity is seen as a key indicator of multicultural policy. For example, in the set of decision rules formulated by Banting and Kymlicka at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, to evaluate multicultural policies towards national minorities, the provision and funding of minority-language education forms part of rule 4.[219]

In newer nations and developing markets it is also a critical issue, but there are additional factors to consider. First, education is seen as being a crucial tool for the newer states to define and communicate a vision of national identity. Of course, many (most?) states address issues of nationality, citizenship and the rights and obligations of individuals within a state through the educational process, instilling an agreed value system through schooling. However, for states that have come into existence in the post-colonial period, it is particularly important as a new ideology has to be positioned as a superior replacement for anything taught under a colonial structure. Bano also points out that in post-colonial Islamic society, governments have tended not to revert

[217] McCargo, *Tearing Apart The Land*, 130.

[218] Interview with respondent AI, February 21, 2018.

[219] Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka, Multiculturalism Policies in Contemporary Policies; National Minorities; Decision Rules, https://www.queensu.ca/mcp/national-minorities/decision-rules, accessed January 24, 2019.

to Islamic forms of education, but rather have copied colonial systems and curricula.[220] Although as stated before, Thailand was never officially colonised, the state in its current borders has only existed since 1909 and the absolute monarchy was only abolished in 1932. The rulers of Siam (Thailand) at that time deliberately followed Western models of administration and bureaucracy, seeing them as a robust defence against possible colonial incursion. As stated in the previous chapter, this has also led to a virulent expression of a 'Thai-ness' ideology that shows no sign of abating or acquiring a more flexible nature. For Cambodia and Vietnam this is even more relevant as both states have had to establish a new national identity and ideology since the end of the Khmer Rouge regime and the post-war unification of Vietnam respectively.

Second, the provision of universal primary and secondary education as a function of the state is often seen as a measure of the success of the state and a legitimising factor in justifying the current ruling entity. This is reinforced by the perceived failure of either colonial rulers or absolute monarchs to provide adequate education for the mass of society. As Bhabha stresses, the decolonisation process has sometimes led to the adaption of a form of cosmopolitanism at the expense of minority cultural development.[221] At the same time the countries under examination have far less resource to devote to the provision of universal education and many other competing demands from an infrastructural and societal perspective – health, transport and communications being obvious examples. Thailand in particular has also seen large increases in official budgets devoted to the military – from $3.2 billion in 1988 to $6.1 billion in 2017[222] – as might be expected in a country where the military plays such a significant role in politics. (The military role in government and business is also discussed in Chapter Ten.)

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[220] Masooda Bano, *Female Islamic Education Movements: The Re-democratization of Islamic Knowledge*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 134.

[221] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994): xiv.

[222] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) database, https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex, accessed February 5, 2019. This data is derived from officially published sources and therefore probably understates the real amounts being spent.

In all cases, where the provision of state education is seen as inadequate for the religious and social requirements of minority groups, the community has felt the need to step up and provide its own solutions – whether replacing the provision of the state altogether, or by supplementing it in some way. This is the case where the issue of adequacy is religious or linguistic. The two are not synonymous of course – various religious minorities in Europe and North America are providing education in local majority languages, but education that addresses issues of religious education, dress codes, mixed-sex tuition or other activities, etc. However, for Muslim minorities of Southeast Asia, the two issues are usually linked – in Thailand the Thai language is seen as a core element of national identity and at the same time Thai Malays have often struggled to study in Thai, regardless of ideological issues, as it is not their first language. Historically the Thai government has insisted on all education being in Thai:

'Inscribed in stone outside the Yala Provincial District Twelve Education Office are the words in Thai, "Education is crucial. Strive to manage it well. *Enable the people to speak the Thai language*." This pronouncement from His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great on his visit to that region on March 23, 1959, has served as inspiration for Southern educators for decades.'[223] (Emphasis mine.)

In recent years the Thai government has permitted some small experiments in bilingual education, the most well-known following a programme devised by Mahidol University and sponsored by UNICEF. (See the last page of this chapter for a photograph of the report cover.) This seems to have been successful, but has been applied in a very limited way, despite local requests for expansion.[224] I discussed this experiment in an extensive interview with Professor Suwilai in her office at Mahidol in February 2019.[225] Her key observations were:

[223] Premsirat, and Person, *Education in Thailand's Ethnic Languages*, 393-4

[224] Suwailai Premsirat, "Patani Malay – Thai Bilingual / Multilingual Education, Thailand", *UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning*, in U Hanemann, (ed), https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/patani-malay-thai-bilingual-multilingual-education, 2014, accessed February 6, 2019.

[225] Interview on February 28, 2019.

- There was still considerable enthusiasm for the programme, which had now been handed over to Yala Rajabhat University, founded as the local teacher training and development college for the region.

- The children and parents were highly enthusiastic and felt they made much more progress. The parents could also become involved in helping, something they are not capable of when all lessons are only in Thai.

- However the issue of using local Malay language in education was still contentious, not only for the government but also for some local observers who felt the programme should be run using Jawi script, rather than Patani Malay written using a Thai alphabet.

- There is still a tendency to generate many different new projects and innovations, without a sustained commitment to identifying what works and then supporting it. Each new administration feels the need to 'reinvent the wheel'.

When the issue of language use in education is discussed in interviews with the general Muslim public, there is a recognition that Thai is vital for success in broader society, but also that young children who come from Malay-speaking households still struggle and need the extra support of being able to use their own language if they are to make comparable progress to native-Thai speakers.[226]

One important point when discussing education provision for Muslim children is the belief among parents that education cannot only be in secular subjects but also needs to provide solid religious foundations for morality and ethical behaviour among students. This ethical dimension of education is stressed by Bano in her research into female Islamic education in northern Nigeria, Pakistan and Syria in 2010,[227] and by Mahmood in her examination of the role of women in the mosque movement of

[226] Interviews in Narathiwat, January 2019.

[227] Bano, *Female Islamic Education Movements.*

Egypt.[228] In my interview with Dr. Srisompob Jirpiromsri of Prince of Songkla University, he stressed that this is a major consideration for Muslim parents in the deep south of Thailand:

"Local people still believe in education. But they have different standards about the quality of education here. The general standard of education here … you've got to have a good score in maths and science or whatever. But the standard criteria for local people is the level of moral or religious faith. They accept that, okay you need to have those kinds of international standards, or secular standard, but it must go together for local people. You must be a good Muslim as well as excellent in education."[229]

In Cambodia and Vietnam, the Cham are highly fluent in the main language of the majority culture – according to the language database, Ethnologue.com there are no monolingual Cham in Cambodia[230] - but nevertheless they use Cham at home and in the close community and expect the language of religious education to be Cham.

There is another issue regarding the language of education which is recognised as being problematic by both the state and the minority culture. A lack of fluency in the mainstream language makes access to tertiary education and state services much more limited, as these are run by the Thai-speaking state offices. It also makes access to better-paid employment much harder, and hampers labour-force mobility. Better paid employment is likely to either be outside the southern provinces where Thai is the primary language, or to require communication in Thai with the central state bureaucracy. For this reason, as Chanintira and Chontida discuss in a recent paper on the subject,[231] there has been relatively little outward migration from the majority-

[228] Saba Mahmood, Politics Of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[229] Interview with author, April 29, 2019.

[230] Ethnologue Languages of the World, https://www.ethnologue.com/language/cja, accessed February 7, 2019.

[231] Chanintira Na Talang and Chontida Auikool, "The immobility paradox in Thailand's southern border provinces", *Southeast Asia Research* 26, no. 4, (2018), 315-329.

Malay provinces of Thailand's south, despite the instability, danger and lack of economic opportunity in the region. They frame this as 'location-specific insider advantage', but that seems to be putting a positive spin on the fact that Malays find it difficult to cope out of their own environment – and are often faced with discrimination when they try because of their limited and accented command of the Thai language and their physically different appearance.[232]

The Thai government has struggled to implement an educational policy in the Deep South that is acceptable to the majority of the local population and at the same time meets their requirement for integration and a shared ideological identity. Furthermore, the standards of education in the Muslim-majority provinces in the south have clearly fallen short of those in Bangkok, the central region and the upper southern provinces – although provinces in the north and northeast have also shown poor performance. In recently published data, Yala and Narathiwat provinces ranked 74th and 75th respectively in an indexed ranking of educational quality, out of the 77 provinces in Thailand. (The two provinces below them are remote regions in the far north.) Ironically, the only Deep South border province with a Buddhist majority – Songkhla – ranks very highly - 8th. *All* provinces lag far behind Bangkok and its contiguous neighbour, Nonthaburi – a reflection of the complete centrality of Bangkok to governance and investment in Thailand.[233]

Local people also highlight poor resourcing as one of the problems facing basic education in the south of Thailand. However, they also comment on two other concerns that affect schools in the region - poor quality teachers who do not want to be there, and the prevalence and easy availability of drugs in schools.[234]

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[232] This economic imbalance was reflected in the occupations of my interviewees who were generally either employed by the state as teachers or worked in informal retail.

[233] Gerald W Fry, Bi Hui and Rosarin Apahung, "Regional Educational Disparities in Thailand", *Education in Thailand : An Old Elephant in Search of a New Mahout*, 373-392.

[234] Survey results from the Center for the Prevention and Solution of Drugs Used, Internal Security Division 4, Front Division, found that there are 80,000-100,000 drug addicts from over 2 million people or about 5 percent of the total population in the three southernmost provinces. This is considered to be the highest proportion in Thailand. One in five of the youths from more than 2,000 villages in the three southern border provinces and the four majority Muslim districts in Songkhla are drug users. Most drug users are in the age range of 14-30 years old. (Nanchanok Wongsamut,

"Half the kids are on drugs." (AL, Pattani)
"Teachers only care about their money and more than half the kids are on drugs." (AN, Pattani)
"Selling illegal drugs is so obvious, like they are selling candies." (BJ, Satun)
"Far too many kids are addicted to drugs." (BL, Satun) [235]

There is also the issue of security – the Islamic Pondok schools have long been perceived by the state as a fertile recruiting ground for militant separatism and the indoctrination of a culture of resistance and independence – with some justification:

"As young men are a key resource for any armed campaign, recruitment often takes place within schools. It seems that most young recruits, particularly members of the military wing, are recruited through the pondok and Private Islamic Schools in Southern Thailand."[236]

Nevertheless, the issue of in-school recruitment did not go away with the move to registering and supervising Pondok schools, as Liow points out:

"Few analysts…have considered the fact that, while attention has often been focused on unregistered boarding *(Pondok)* schools, the schools allegedly involved in violence are all registered education institutions."[237]

The Pondok Educational Improvement Programme (PEIP), instigated in 1961, was an initial attempt to bring Pondok schools into a state educational hierarchy, with

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2017). https://library2.parliament.go.th/ebook/content-issue/2561/hi2561-002.pdf, accessed May 20, 2019.

[235] Verbatims from interviews undertaken by the author in Pattani (February 19-22, 2018) and Satun (March 26-29, 2018). I was asking for their opinions on education in their provinces – however the opinions on the prevalence of drug use were unprompted. For parents in Thailand – not just Muslims – the issue of drug use in schools is a major concern.

[236] Helbardt, *Deciphering Southern Thailand's Violence*, 63.

[237] Liow, *Islamic Education in Southern Thailand*, 142.

academic and vocational subjects being taught in Thai. The financial incentives offered meant that 400 of the existing Pondoks registered, with another 100 either closing or effectively going underground. Registration of Pondoks became compulsory in 1971. A gradual increase of funding from the state in exchange for this assimilation – reaching 5 million baht (US$157,000 at current exchange rates) per every 500 students enrolled – has meant that up to 80% of students now attend Sekolah Agama Rakyat[238] (SAR) schools, offering a hybrid curriculum. From the mid-1980's the Malaysian government made it illegal for non-Malay citizens to attend schools across the border in Malaysia, thus taking away this option as a legal alternative, putting more emphasis on schooling on the Thai side of the border for ethnically Malay students.[239]

Further (tertiary) education has also proved to be a challenge both for students looking to develop their education and for the state trying to provide resources. According to Liow, only 25-30% of Malay Muslims complete secondary education and only 10% then are able to proceed to a tertiary level.[240] The primary centre has been the Prince of Songkla University (PSU) – however it is noteworthy that although PSU has an extensive campus in Pattani, the main campus is in Hat Yai, a majority Buddhist city in Songkhla province.[241] The other locally based resource has been Yala Islamic College, founded and directed by Dr. Ismail Lutfi.[242]

Education for Thai Muslims has been supplemented by the opportunity to study in the Middle East, particularly Egypt. In fact, Al-Azhar University in Cairo was influential in the establishment of the Centre for Islamic Studies at PSU's Pattani campus. By 2005

[238] Malay. Tr: People's Religious Schools.

[239] Dual nationality is not permitted. Nevertheless some Thai Malays still also hold Malay identity documents and therefore presumably have access to the Malaysian education system.

[240] Liow, *Islamic Education in Southern Thailand*, 155.

[241] This was described to me by a local academic who wished to remain anonymous as being a political decision, as the Thai state wanted to ensure the centre of control for PSU would not be in a city with a Muslim majority.

[242] Dr. Lutfi is a prominent Salafi leader in the region, with a doctorate in Islamic Jurisprudence from the Islamic University of Al-Imam Mohammad ibn Saud in Riyadh. He has publicly shunned the insurgency and the college is known for renouncing violence and accepting state rule.

there were an estimated 1700 Thai nationals registered to study in Egypt, despite having to take a 2-3 year preparatory Arabic language course before starting the full degree programme. Liow estimates a total of 2-4,000 more Thai students overseas in total, dispersed across Saudi Arabia,[243] Sudan, Pakistan, India, Malaysia and Indonesia.[244] Many of these students come back to Thailand and then either teach Islam in existing schools or form their own religious school – it is seen as a mark of excellence to have studied overseas, and also a new school can be a source of economic growth:

"Many Cairo alumni who have returned to Thailand with qualifications in Arabic and Islamic subjects have been instrumental in the establishment of new madrasah schools providing a systematic curriculum based on that of Al-Azhar."[245]

People who have received this overseas education and then returned to teach in the Deep South or become religious leaders in Thailand are often seen as a more legitimate source of religious authority than the official leader of Islam in Thailand, the Chularajmontri, who is seen as an arm of the state – no Chularajmontri has ever come from the south, with the exception of the current incumbent, Aziz Phithakkumpol, who comes from Songkhla province, but who is not ethnically Malay.

Cambodia has also seen Islamic education as a challenge, although the situation has been less contentious because of two factors – the dispersal of the Cham among the general Cambodian population and the financial poverty of the Cham community. The Cambodian government has also been more tolerant of attempts to either build local Islamic schools or to have independent schools sponsored by predominantly Middle Eastern outside groups. This tolerance may be a factor of a greater acceptance of

[243] Also see:

Michael Farquhar, *Circuits of Faith: Migration, Education and the Wahhabi Mission,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

[244] International Crisis Group, "Jihadism in Southern Thailand: A Phantom Menace", 15.

[245] Mardman, "Egypt's Influence On The Education Of Thai Muslims From The Nasser Era To The Present", 40.

Cham as loyal Cambodian citizens, or it may be a factor of lack of resource and control from the Cambodian central government – or both. Certainly, support from Malaysia and Kuwait has been welcomed, although in 2004 a Saudi-sponsored school (Umm al-Qura) was closed down by the Cambodian authorities on the grounds that it was suspected of fostering militant extremism. (Ahmed argues that this was at the request of the USA at the height of US paranoia over the spread of al-Qaeda led terrorism around the world.)[246] Nevertheless, in an article published in the Journal of Education for International Development in 2008, Bredenberg observed that there was a movement to establishing specific Cham schools as a response to a perceived weakness in Khmer educational provision for Cham students:

"… Cham communities do not appear to be sitting idly by in the face of non-responsiveness to their expectations either. Rather, they are voting with their feet. That is, they are increasingly sending their children to Islamic Schools, the number of which is multiplying."[247]

In all three communities the role of the *Tadika* is seen as being extremely important for developing and preserving Islamic culture from an early age. *Tadika*[248] are primary-level schools, providing religious education as a supplement to anything provided in the regular schools system. Normally attached to the local mosque, they provide religious education in the minority language, sometimes in the evening but usually at weekends. When I conducted interviews in Pattani and Narathiwat provinces of Southern Thailand, the provision of *Tadika* education was often seen as the highest priority – when questions about education in general were posed, the provision and standards of local *Tadika* was often the first item to come up.

The doctrinal role of education, the need for the state to provide comprehensive education for all citizens, the symbolic role of education as a key indicator of

[246] Akbar Ahmed, *The Thistle and the Drone: How America's War on Terror Became a Global War on Tribal Islam*, (Washington, DC, Brookings Institute Press; 2013).

[247] Bredenberg, *Educational Marginalisation of Cham Muslim Populations*, 17.

[248] Malay – tr: nursery school/kindergarten.

autonomy and independent culture – all these factors combine to make education an emotive and controversial issue even in the most harmonious of multicultural societies. When I looked at how education should be provided in Thailand, by means of a quantitative online survey undertaken in 2018, there was a fairly even division between favouring a pure form of Thai state education, versus the state support for Muslim schools. (42% and 38% respectively.) Among Muslim respondents 51% favoured the state support of Muslim schools. However almost twice as many Muslims preferred Thai state education over privately-funded Muslim schools.[249]

In a situation that is in some ways analogous, in Northern Ireland, the separation of education by religion has long been blamed for the continuing failure of integration and poor cross-community relations.[250] According to a statement in the UK Parliament in 2008, 90% of Northern Irish children are still educated in schools segregated by religion.[251] In Southeast Asia this separation is not seen as a significant issue however; in Thailand the communities are poorly integrated in any case and education is never discussed as a possible solution for this. Attempts to educate Muslims in Thai schools has caused many of the problems, and no Thai Buddhist would consider a Muslim-led education for their children – not only for religious reasons but also because of the societal and economic disadvantages they would then experience, as discussed earlier in this chapter. In a recent report on anti-Muslim discrimination in Thailand, a school run by Muslims is cited as being welcomed by Buddhist parents because of its high standards – however that school is in Khon Kaen, about as far from the Deep South as it is possible to travel within Thailand.[252] In Vietnam and Cambodia, joint education is

[249] Results of this survey, with a discussion of the flaws of online research, can be found in Appendix 1.

[250] The analogy between the situations in Northern Ireland and Southern Thailand was drawn in paper presented in a recent conference on the potential for peace and reconciliation in conflict situations.

Houston, Kenneth. "Northern 'Troubles' and Southern 'Fire': An Examination of Peace Processes in Northern Ireland and Southern Thailand." In *The International Conference on Political Transition, Non-violence and Communication in Conflict Transformation*. Prince of Songkla University, Pattani: Center for Conflict Studies and Cultural Diversity, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, 2018, 56-85.

[251] Lords Hansard, July 8, 2006, https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld199697/ldhansrd/pdvn/lds06/text/60718-1006.htm, accessed February 4, 2019.

[252] Don Pathan, Ekkarin Tuansiri and Anwar Koma, *Understanding Anti-Islam Sentiment in Thailand*; (Pattani, Thailand, Patani Forum, 2018), 149-154.

inevitable, given the high level of geographic integration and despite Bredenberg's observations, the Cham communities are generally neither powerful nor wealthy enough to establish viable alternatives.

Religion in law and mediation.

The role of law as a component of Islamic culture is a significant part of Islamic scholarship. The role of the different schools of law has acted both as a cohesive factor for the spread of a clear Islamic identity across the world and also as a space for different opinions and precedents to be set and followed by different communities. This is not the space for a discussion of law in Islam but it is important to highlight that this difference is not only a question where Muslims are a minority in the West, but also in the countries under discussion, where the majority orthodoxy is Buddhist (Thailand and Cambodia) or a form of secular Communism (Vietnam).

In the large Muslim-majority countries of Southeast Asia – Malaysia and Indonesia - the legal system has evolved as a hybrid of colonial-legacy policy and the needs of the modern independent society. Because they experienced different colonial systems – British and Dutch – the colonial legal system was also different and therefore left a legacy of different practice. In the post-colonial era the two countries have developed their legal systems in different ways, Malaysia follows a legal system based on relative adherence to different systems for different ethnic groups, whereas Indonesia adheres to a nominally secular system intended to function for all citizens under the state doctrine of '*Pancasila'.*[253] Although Malaysia is a Muslim-majority state, it is officially secular, though giving Islam a privileged role as the 'religion of the federation.' Malaysian Muslims are expected to follow Sharia law in matters pertaining to Islam,

[253] Old Javanese – Five Principles. Pancasila was adopted as a doctrine at the time of independence in order to reconcile the religious nature of most Indonesians with a recognition of religious minorities and a more secular aspiration at the time. It recognises the idea of one God, without interpreting this in a specifically Muslim way. Although under pressure from factions who aspire to see Indonesia become an Islamic state it is still official policy and is still taught in all Indonesian schools. See:

Mohammad Iqbal Ahnaf, "Socio-ethnic Origin of Multiculturalism in Indonesia", *Multiculturalism in Asia: Peace and Harmony*, Imtiyaz Yusuf (ed.), (Bangkok, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2018), 135-143.

including family law, and there are effectively parallel legal systems for secular and religious matters. However, Sharia law courts have no jurisdiction over non-Muslims, who form 32% of the population. In Indonesia, Sharia is prevalent in the autonomous province of Aceh, but otherwise the legal system is a hybrid of Dutch colonial law and legislation implemented by the Indonesian government since independence in 1945. There is also an element of 'adat' – customary law – in different outlying regions. Muslims are expected to use Sharia law for family issues, but also have the right of appeal to the secular legal system.

In Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, the minority status of Muslims has inevitably led to questions over the role of Islam as a legislative and administrative force in the lives of Muslim citizens. In all three countries there seems to be a clear difference between what is legal and recognised by the state and what is actually practiced in day-to-day life. However, in both cases the role of religion as a mediating force in intra-community disputes acts as a differentiating factor between the Muslims and the majority community. It is also worth noting that this is a Muslim issue – other religious minorities do not resort to their religious leadership as an alternative source of authority in the same way.

Inevitably in Thailand the legitimacy and authority of a parallel Muslim legal authority has reflected the overall perspective of the state as regards the legitimacy of minority identities at all. As a result, the ultra-nationalist Phibun government tried at first to reduce and then delegitimatise the role of 'Dato Yuttitham' – Islamic judges. However, since 1945 the role of a Muslim legal authority has been accepted, although Brown argues that not only has this caused confusion between two available competing systems, but also that Thai Muslims often prefer the Thai system as less capricious and more efficient, due to greater resource and state support.[254] Dorloh and Yaacob also highlight the challenge of lack of funding for Religious Councils in the south.[255] Nevertheless, data from my online survey showed clear Muslim support for a

[254] Brown *Islam in Modern Thailand*, 113.

[255] Sulaiman Dorloh and Abdol Rauh Yaacob, "Roles and Functions of the Patani Muslim Religious Committee Council in Propagating and Preserving Islam as a Religion under Thai Constitution"; *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies,* 4, no. 2, (2017), 65-74.

specifically Muslim approach to legal solutions – 37% advocating Sharia law, 44% supporting a provision for Muslim family law, with only 12% preferring one universal Thailand-wide system.[256] (As this was an online survey, respondents defined the vocabulary for themselves, and therefore it cannot define the depth of understanding of Sharia among respondents.)

In the interviews we conducted in the Southern provinces, people expressed a clear preference for relying on local authority figures for conflict resolution, rather than resorting to official state channels. This is a result of a general distrust of state authority figures. The police are seen as an arm of the Thai state and have a significantly worse reputation than the army for corruption and misuse of power. Indeed, the decision of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra - an ex-police officer himself - to shift core responsibility for policing the south from the army to the police is widely seen as a core factor for the explosion in violence from 2004 onwards.[257] The rule of law is more easily compromised by state pressure and corruption; therefore lawyers are also often perceived as being in league with the state. Conversely, lawyers who are seen to provide support for the members of the minority population have suffered as a result. As Chaiwat Satha-Anand, one of the most respected figures in Thailand commenting on religious and political rights, states:

"Despite changes in government in the last five years, the Thai state fails to protect the rights and lives of those who have tried to defend human rights in Thai society and that once disappearance happens there have been scant attempts to get behind the truth about these cases."[258]

The usual first place for advice or resolution on family matters is the head of the local mosque. However, the source of local authority for other dispute resolution is not necessarily a religious figure. In Vietnam the Communist Party penetrates deeply into

[256] Online quantitative survey, Appendix 1.

[257] McCargo, *Tearing Apart The Land*, and others.

[258] Chaiwat Satha-Anand, "Missing lawyer of Thailand: the fate of engaged Muslims in authoritarian democracy", *Islam and Politics in Southeast Asia*, Johan Saravanamuttu, ed, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 111.

every settlement and therefore the officials of the local district office are often involved in solving small-scale disputes. The role of the 'headman' (ผู้ใหญ่บ้าน – Phu Yai Baan) in Thai village society is significant across the country and in all segments of society, including the Muslim regions. Democratically chosen by the local community, the headman is seen as a popularly-mandated leader, in a country where real power is highly centralised.[259] Many of our respondents saw the 'headman' as the first source of arbitration. However, in the Southern provinces, the role of 'headman' has become difficult and often dangerous, caught as they are between pressures exerted by both the state, who expect them to be loyal, act as a mouthpiece for state viewpoints and actions, and inform on possible 'troublemakers' and the 'juwae' rebels, who expect them to facilitate and support insurrectionary presence and actions. Askew provides a thorough analysis of the conflicted and ambiguous role of headmen in the south,[260] as does Chantra.[261]

So, the source of law and mediation for Muslim communities is another function of communal separation. The official legal systems are distrusted, and the informal systems of conflict resolution are either religiously-based or provided by locally-mandated community leaders who reflect the community composition. It should also be noted that in all countries covered, official channels are seen as slow, inefficient and highly vulnerable to influence and corruption. This applies to all communities, not just Muslims.

Mutual perspectives of morality and social interaction.

Perspectives of morality and social interaction affect all communities around the world and have done throughout history. There is a tendency to 'other' minority

[259] This also applies to the Cham communities in Cambodia and has done for centuries. See the reference to state law in 1692, in Philipp Bruckmayr, *Cambodia's Muslims and the Malay World: Malay Language, Jawi Script, and Islamic Factionalism from the 19th Century to the Present*, (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 56.

[260] Askew, *Landscapes of Fear, Horizons of Trust*, 59-86.

[261] Thanikun Chantra, "From Conflict to Peaceful Participation: A Case Study of the Ongoing Conflict in Southern Thailand", in *Peacebuilding in the Asia-Pacific*, Carmela Lutmar and James Ockey (eds.), (Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 19.

communities, whether divided by religion, race, ethnicity or any other factor, and as a result attribute different and often undesirable moral characteristics to the group. These characteristics can be defined economically, in terms of sexual behaviour, in terms of religious practice, or absence thereof, in terms of hygiene and living standards, etc. The process of 'othering' is mutual, but violent expressions generally affect the minority group. The switch from passive stereotyping to violent, murderous action can be very rapid and highly unpredictable – as we have seen manifested in Bosnia, in Rwanda, and towards the Rohingya in Rakhine state of Myanmar to mention just three instances in recent times.

It should therefore be of no surprise, that where Muslims live in states as a minority, these perspectives manifest themselves among the non-Muslim majority – and, it is important to remember, also among the Muslims towards their non-Muslim fellow citizens. Of course, this also applies to the three countries under consideration. The Muslim communities are perceived as being economically different, governed by different religious practices and allegiances and therefore operating under different societal codes.

For the Cham of Cambodia, this perception of difference is not manifested in the same way. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, although generally looked down on by the majority population, the Cham are seen as being in some way magical and able to provide magical solutions and remedies to financial and personal problems of the Khmer.[262] They are also seen as being economically active in trades that they specialise in – trading, fishing, butchering – as a result of social norms that anchor them in these activities. However, the parallel geographical integration of the Cham alongside the Khmer majority across the country has meant a degree of acceptance and familiarity – despite the different social life of the Cham community. As described in the modern era, but before the ascent to power of the Khmer Rouge:

[262] As far as I can tell from interviews this is an external perception, never mentioned by the Cham themselves.

"The Cham had always lived apart in Cambodia…They built their own villages, centered around a mosque, and observed their own dietary laws, dressed and groomed according to their faith, and established professional specialties as fishermen and merchants of cloth."[263]

As I discussed earlier, the savagery of the Khmer Rouge regime specifically targeted the Cham Muslims ostensibly because of their perceived status as petit-bourgeois or 'kulak' traders, but mainly because the strength of religious belief held by the Muslims made it difficult for them to accept the norms of the totalitarian KR society, and hard for them to conceal their religiously-based practices of dress and diet. There is no evidence to suggest that this attempted genocide was a reflection of the attitude of the majority population however, and it was implemented under extreme duress. The speed with which the Cham communities re-established themselves in the post-KR era seems to indicate that there was no underlying hostility or resentment.[264]

Attitudes towards Muslims in Thailand are more heterodox, depending on which Muslims are referred to. Attitudes towards the assimilated Muslims outside the Deep South are quite different towards those held towards the ethnically Malay Muslims. In general Muslims have been part of the fabric of urban life in Bangkok for a long time – and like most major cities the population of Bangkok is heavily influenced by an influx of economic migrants from other parts of the country in recent years. The population of urban Bangkok has grown from 4.7 million in 1980 to 8.3 million in 2010.[265] This acceptance is coming under some strain though, as I will shortly explain.

In the Deep South, the violence of recent years has exacerbated the preconceptions and prejudices of the two communities. Anti-Buddhist propaganda distributed by the insurgent groups and violent actions towards both the Buddhist community and their

[263] Becker, *When The War Was Over*, 251.

[264] Compare this with the fate of Polish Jews who attempted to return to their homes in Poland in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Jan T Gross*, Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation*, (New York, Random House, 2007).

[265] Thai Census Data, National Statistics Office, http://www.nso.go.th/sites/2014en, accessed February 17, 2019.

religious orders has also driven a deeper wedge between the two groups. Sorairajoo discusses the general perception from Southern Thai Buddhists of Muslims being both 'lazy' and 'violent'.[266] She contrasts this viewpoint with that held towards another minority – the ethnic Chinese. Despite also being forced to speak Thai and take Thai names, the Chinese assimilated without resistance – helped no doubt by their crucial role in the economic life of the community. Indeed, relationships between Chinese and Malays in the Deep South are often seen as better than those between ethnic Thais and Malays. Meanwhile, the Malay Muslims perceive the Thai population as being less moral, and with lower standards of social behaviour.[267] This is exacerbated by the location of significant centres of prostitution in the south, in border towns like Sungai Kolok and Betong – where the sex workers are predominantly ethnically Chinese or Northeastern Thai, even though the customers are crossing the border from Malaysia.[268] Although both communities have been seriously damaged by the effects of widespread drug use, there is a perception among Muslims that the controllers of the drug trade are closely integrated with the Thai state apparatus and there is a symbiotic relationship between them. Most 'Yaa Baa' is manufactured in the northern highlands of Thailand, or across the border in Myanmar, and crossing the border and then importing it into the south would be difficult without collaboration at the border and then a functioning corridor to the south.[269] One interviewee specifically alleged that the army uses roadblocks to sell drugs to local youth.[270] However it is also alleged that the insurgents join in the drug commerce as well.

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[266] Dorairajoo, *Peaceful Thai, Violent Malay (Muslim)*, 61-83.

[267] See for example a recent study on adolescent social problems in the region, where Buddhists are perceived as less moral and more likely to 'sin'.

Suhaimee Sateemae, Tarik Abdel-Monem, Mahsoom Sateemae, "Religiosity and Social Problems among Muslim Adolescents in Southern Thailand*", Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 9, no. 2, (2015), 3-24.

[268] Marc Askew, "Sex and the Sacred: Sojourners and Visitors in the Making of the Southern Thai Borderland", *Centering the Margin: Agency and Narrative in Southeast Asian Borderlands*. Alexander Horstmann and Reed L Wadley, eds, (New York: Bergahn Books, 2006)**,** 177-206.

[269] Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy and Joël Meissonnier, *Yaa Baa: Production, Traffic and Consumption of Methamphetamine in Mainland Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), 66-68.

[270] Interview with respondent AI, 21/2/18.

Both communities claim that the social links between them have deteriorated or disappeared as a result of the separatist violence over the last 15 years. This is reflected both in published sources, e.g. Jerryson,[271] and in interviews conducted by me with local Muslims in 2018 and 2019. In the cities of the south, the two communities are forced to interact (and the majority of Buddhists live in the main towns, rather than rurally) but it tends to be a transactional relationship brought about by work circumstances rather than choice. This has also been exacerbated by the relationship between the army and the Buddhist temples. The initial role of the army was intended to protect the temples and their resident monks from insurgent attack, but it became more practical to defend them by basing themselves there and increasingly many temples have seen military staff stationed there permanently. In some cases, the line between pacifist monks and armed soldiers has become blurred, despite official denials to the contrary.[272] The use of Buddhist temples as a base for military presence in the south has meant that it is far less likely that Muslims would consider attending them for shared social occasions. The role of the Wat as not only a base for religious activity and Buddhist education, but also as a social centre, resource for basic support and even a sporting venue, which is still prevalent in the rest of rural Thailand has of necessity disappeared in the Deep South. (The relationship between Buddhism in theory and practice and the Islam of Southeast Asia is explored in depth in Chapter Nine.)

Islam as synonymous with separatism, lack of allegiance to the state and violent behaviour.

In Western countries where Muslims are a minority, negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims as being disloyal, failing to integrate or accept behavioural norms of the broader society, and being prone to either committing or condoning violence have grown more common over the past two decades.[273] There are several causes for this

[271] 'Islam was just Islam and Buddhism was just Buddhism. They did not intermingle. But, whenever we had Thai cultural events like Mother's Day or Father's day, Muslims would come to our wat.' Jerryson, *Appropriating a Space for Violence*, 34.

[272] Ibid., 36.

[273] For a broad review of the shift in public perceptions in the USA and Europe, see the Pew Center report published in 2017. *Pew Research Center*, August 9, 2017. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-

shift in perception – the growth of xenophobic populist political movements, the failure of Western societies to provide economic growth and social support for the mass population in recent years, and of course militant terrorist activities targeting 'soft' targets in the West by groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda. The argument that this perception has changed because of the greater visibility of the Muslim community is undermined by the data, which suggests that the less contact there is with actual Muslims, the more likely respondents are to be hostile to the concept of Islam and a Muslim community. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that in Southeast Asia there is also a climate where suspicion of Muslims as not being loyal members of the state is – if not prevalent, at least acceptable. Two Asian countries in particular, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, have seen outbreaks of virulent hostility towards their Muslim minorities, hostility that has manifested itself in violence, death and destruction.

This perception of Islam as a disloyal and alien religion has manifested itself quite differently in the three countries under review though – not just different to Sri Lanka and Myanmar, but also to each other. In Vietnam the Muslim population is very small and marginalised, while the state is large, disciplined and exercises a form of totalitarian rule that permits very little space for dissent or ethnic tension in any direction. As discussed in Chapter Eight, one small attempt to introduce a more reformist approach to Vietnamese Cham Muslims was quickly cracked down on and eradicated.[274] In fact, Catholic activism is seen as a bigger threat to Vietnamese orthodoxy, with several dissidents receiving long sentences in recent years.

Despite the larger population of Muslims, and the less effective (or more pluralist) form of government in Cambodia, there is also little evidence of a perception of disloyalty from the state or the majority population. This is probably a reflection of the long duration of Cham residence – much longer than the existence of the modern state of Cambodia, coupled with the close geographical integration of the two communities. Following the Vietnamese invasion of 1978 and the establishment of the puppet

tank/2017/08/09/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/, accessed February 4, 2019.

[274] De Féo, *Les musulmans de Châu Đốc (Vietnam) à l'épreuve du salafisme.* This case is discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight.

government of Hun Sen, the Cambodian government made better treatment of Muslims a key differentiator from their predecessors, assisting in the rehabilitation of the community and involving key Muslim leaders in some government positions. This has been reflected in a clear loyalty towards the current regime and the almost complete absence of dissent from among the Muslim community. Allegations of Cambodian Cham travelling to Southern Thailand or Syria for training or involvement in militant activities has occurred from time to time,[275] but these allegations have tended to come from outside and have been viewed as unnecessarily alarmist by the Cambodian authorities.[276] (Of course, the Cham also have no optional homeland to aspire to – nobody espouses returning to the long-lost kingdom of Champa, which in any case is now firmly under the control of the Vietnamese state.)

However, in Thailand, the view of Muslims as being disloyal and separatist is much more prevalent – hardly surprisingly. We will come on to look at the link between religion and ethnicity, the state of the separatist aspiration and the realities of the situation in Chapter Eight, but at this stage there are two important points to be made. First, based on the way in which the conflict is reported in Thai media, the insurrection is seen by most Thais as being driven by a criminal minority who leverage Islam to lend credibility to their cause. This is an contributing factor to the difficulty that Muslims can face in being true members of the Thai polity.

This perception fails to recognise the ethnic nature of the separatist cause, because that would undermine the concept of Thais being one, unified people. Although the separatists align their cause with the issue of Islamic freedom and integrity, this is only one dimension of the rationale for resistance, and it is strongly aligned with the idea of a territorial integrity of believers – ' *Patani Darussalam'* – as opposed to organisations

[275] Most recently in this story of Cambodian Cham travelling illegally to Pattani for 'education' at a Pondok school. "10 Immigration Officers Moved Over Pattani Raid" *Bangkok Post*, February 2, 2019, https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/general/1622446/immigration-officers-moved-after-pattani-raid, accessed February 4, 2019.

[276] E.G. This article in The Economist in September 2010, full of conjecture and speculative links to international networks. https://www.economist.com/asia/2010/09/30/courting-the-cham#print, accessed February 4, 2019.

like al-Qaeda and who have taken a global approach to their objectives. [277] The term 'jihad' is used in reference to the liberation of Patani, rather than in a more global context.[278] In interviews with 'juwae' fighters, supporting Islam was seen as important, but as one item on a menu of reasons for new recruits to join, along with ethnic nationalism, appeals to revenge for mistreatment from the state – and the thrill of being a clandestine warrior, a strong appeal to young, undereducated and underemployed young men.[279] It is noticeable that there is little affiliation or sympathy between Thai Malay Muslims and other Thai Muslims, even those living adjacent to the conflict. As Horstmann states:

"Thai Muslims in the south who identify with being Malay resent Thai Muslims who do not, for not supporting their separatist struggle for a Malay state independent of Thailand. In sum, the Thai-speaking Muslims in Satun, Songkhla, Trang, and Patthalung are estranged from the Malay-speaking Muslims in Patani, YaIa, and Narathiwat. "[280]

However, this leads me to the second point I want to make at this stage. Although the conflict is more clearly understood through an ethnic lens than a religious one, this has not stopped a rising association of being Muslim with being disloyal to the Thai state. A recent report on Islamophobia in Thailand is indicative of this attitude. The report was written by an NGO based in Pattani (financially supported by the Canadian government). However, its main focus is on the growth of hostility to Muslims across the rest of the country, citing incidents in the northern provinces of Nan, Chiang Mai and Khon Kaen – a region where Muslims form a very small minority. The type of Islamophobia promoted by extremist Buddhist monks in Myanmar and Cambodia has

[277] Helbardt, *Deciphering Southern Thailand's Violence*, 118.

[278] Askew, Helbardt, "Becoming Patani Warriors", 789.

[279] Ibid.

[280] Horstmann, "Ethnohistorical Perspectives on Buddhist-Muslim Relations and Coexistence in Southern Thailand", 78. The provinces mentioned are those directly contiguous to the Thai Malay provinces of the Deep South.

thankfully not taken root in Thailand as yet, but there are signs that the seeds are there.[281]

Conclusion.

In this chapter I have tried to show how the perceived congruence between the ethnic minority Cham and Malay and the religion of Islam has led to a perception of separation from the mainstream of Thai, Cambodian and Vietnamese society, greater than that experienced by other minorities who share either religion or ethnicity with the majority population.

This separation has manifested itself in four significant areas: the role of education, the access to legal and arbitrational resource, the perception of differences in morality and behaviour and the view that the minority community is in some way disloyal to the otherwise accepted state. This separation is not unique to the Muslims of the countries under review; however, it does influence the way that ostensibly monocultural states treat their minorities, and how ordinary majority citizens are expected to coexist with them. The challenge of managing and accepting societal differences within an existing state lies at the core of multiculturalist thinking. In these Southeast Asian countries the challenge is exacerbated by the monocultural philosophies at the core of the state self-image and the greater degree of separation experienced by long-established minorities – separation being manifested along different dimensions, as described in this chapter.

In Chapter Six I will look at some other key issues that are affecting most, if not all modern societies, and examine how Southeast Asian Muslim minorities are being affected and reacting accordingly. Specifically, I will examine the way in which media is changing portrays Muslim life – and how Muslims use that media themselves. I will look at the change in work and employment patterns is affecting the groups under discussion. I will look at patterns of migration, often but not always closely linked to economic factors. Finally, I will look at the changing attitudes to gender roles in these societies and how this is impacting our Muslim minorities. These four factors are

[281] "Anti-Islam extremist monk forced to disrobe", *The Nation*, September 21, 2017, http://www.nationmultimedia.com/detail/national/30327286 , accessed February 5, 2019.

driving change around the world and Southeast Asia is no exception. Therefore, they also impact Muslim minorities – but not necessarily in the same way that they do the majority population.

Jawa mosque, Bangkok, December 2018.
(Photos: Author)

Cover of the UNICEF Report, 2016.
(Photo: Author)

Chapter Six. Changing issues in society – and the effect on minority Muslims.

Introduction.

For my argument to be valid – that Muslim minorities in the region have constructed a strong independent way of life, which is generally accepted in societies that ostensibly are monocultural and non-democratic – it is necessary to look at the dynamic of modern change; how are the changes that have affected society in recent times played out in this Muslim experience? In my field work, the question of changes in modern Southeast Asian society and how those changes are affecting Muslims in the region often arose as a focus for discussion and expressions of discontent. With little prompting, interviewees would highlight the way in which changes were impacting them, and how their experience was often different to that of the rest of society. Whether it was how they were portrayed in the media:

"When my friend knew where I was from, I'd try to tell him what they don't see in the media. I tried to explain that it's not like in the media, and when they came over, they were like no it's not like in the media at all." (AD)[282]

Environmental factors affecting sustainable employment:

"We fish at night because this season is when the government ban fishing. The government banned fishing in the spawning season, but we still secretly fish to support our families and [local] authorities help us because we have no other careers to do and Cham people here have no farmland."(DO)[283]

Or economic migration:

[282] Interview in Pattani, February 20, 2018.

[283] Interview, Swaihaten village, Cambodia, June 14, 2018.

"I went to Malaysia for a year to work in construction. Glad to come back to be near family." (DD)[284]

In each case there was a clear perception of change not being beneficial and any benefits being reserved for the majority population and the elite. Of course, change is constant and affects everyone; however there was an impression that societal changes impact minority Muslims differently, and I want to explore whether that is true and if it is, how it manifests itself.

In Chapter Five, I looked at four major issues in society that effectively separate ethnic Muslim minorities in Southeast Asia from the majority community – education, law and arbitration, perceptions of morality and acceptable behaviour and loyalty to the state. I showed how each of these issues acts as a touchstone, a place where Muslims choose or are perceived to separate themselves from the behaviour and structures of majority society and are therefore seen as different and a clearly identifiable minority within the nation. In some cases, this separation is very real and seen by Muslims as an important choice in order to maintain their adherence to the precepts of Islam and their identity as a different ethnic community within the state. In others the separation is not necessarily voluntary and is either a reaction to perceived shortcomings in state recognition and provision, or merely 'guilt by association' – a line of reasoning that goes - Muslims are violent and disloyal; you are Muslims; therefore, you are all violent and disloyal. At this point I want to stress again that the Muslim groups who are the subject of this discussion have all been resident in their current geographic locations long before the current states came into being[285] – this is not a question of extending specific rights or conditions to people who have recently immigrated, which is a different challenge being met by all ostensibly multicultural societies.

[284] Interview, Kampong Cham, Cambodia, June 12, 2018

In all my interviews I asked questions about media and employment opportunities. I wanted to know both what type of media they consumed and how they felt about how that media portrayed the Muslim communities. I also was curious to learn how people made a living and whether the issue of working in other countries was as prevalent as described in written material.

[285] Kymlicka (and many others) define these group as National Minorities. Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 11.

However, there are many other major changes taking place in global society – a wind of change that does not just blow through Europe and America, but also reaches deeply into every state and community, no matter how remote or isolated. These changes have had a major economic and societal impact on Southeast Asia. In some ways the region has been a significant beneficiary of this dynamic – the growth of a globally-linked economy, for example, which has been a major contributing factor towards the rapid economic growth of the region over the past 60 years and the significant reduction in poverty as a result, highlighted in the introduction to Chapter Four. Other changes have not been so beneficial or are continuing to evolve in such a dynamic way that it is too soon to tell. In this chapter I want to highlight five of those factors – factors that affect all of society but have a specific impact on the Muslim minorities of Southeast Asia. Specifically, I want to look at:

The media landscape: how mainstream media discusses and contributes to the image of Muslims in local society. How Muslims have been able to access and utilise alternative voices of media. How the explosion of easily accessed social media has impacted the way in which society addresses Muslim issues, and how Muslims themselves interact with it.

Employment: how the globalisation and interconnectivity of the global economy has affected traditional employment for Muslims and what is changing as a result. Economic factors driving changes in Muslim society. How these changes affect the interaction between Muslims and the majority.

Migration: how greater mobility and connectivity has affected options and patterns of both temporary and permanent migration for Muslims in the region. This also needs to consider migration for educational reasons and also internal (within the state boundaries) versus external migration. In recent years, the countries I cover have not seen forced outward migration of the kind currently being experienced by the Rohingya, but it has been part of history for the Cham in particular and still needs to be considered as a potential threat.

Gender: how the role of women in work and general society is changing for Muslim women. How regional politics and government involve and reflect women and address their aspirations. How the politico-religious issue of female dress codes is being addressed – and, given the high levels of sex work and trafficking prevalent in the region, how this affects women and their families.

Political populism: whether the rise of political populism currently ascendant in the West is also a factor in Southeast Asia, and if so, what its impact will be on the Muslim minorities we examine. A key characteristic of political populism is the need to identify and target scapegoats, responsible for the undermining of traditional culture and broad-based economic prosperity, and Muslims often seem to be a prime option for populist scapegoating. Is this the case now in Southeast Asia, and is it something to be anticipated?[286]

These are the themes that were often expressed in interviews and discussions. They are themes that affect most people in Southeast Asia, and the rest of the world. However I will look at the way in which they affect Muslims differently to the majority populations where they live

Media and Muslims in Southeast Asia – a two-way street?[287]

When looking at media, there are different aspects to consider. First, there is the coverage of minority issues by the domestic national media. Then there is the availability of media to the national minorities, either provided by the state or owned and operated by the minorities themselves. In the case of Thailand's Malays there is also the opportunity to access Malay-language media coming from Malaysia. Besides

[286] Of course Islam is not immune to its own forms of populism. Hoesterey documents the rise and fall of the 'tele-*dai',* (TV evangelist) Aa Gym in neighbouring Indonesia as one example.

James B. Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity and A Self-Help Guru,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

[287] In this section, I am particularly indebted to the work of Phansasiri Kularb of Chulalongkorn University for her work on Thai reporting of the southern conflict. Her work has been published; see citation 57, in Chapter Two.

'traditional' media, for want of a better label, there is also the question of access to, and use of, online - specifically, social media - by the state, the general population and the Muslims themselves. Thailand also has a well-respected English-language print media in Bangkok Post and The Nation.[288] Cambodia has also had an active English-language sector, but in recent years they have come under great political pressure.[289] Finally, there is the coverage of Southeast Asian Muslim minority issues by the international media. I want to look at each of these in turn, to analyse how each media is impacting on the coverage of Muslim minorities and therefore on how they are perceived and their ongoing interaction with society – both at an official and a popular level.

Thailand has long had an active media sector – at the time of writing there are 6 broadcast TV stations,[290] numerous satellite and cable-based stations and 7-8 Thai-language national newspapers. The TV stations are owned by either the army or the government, but the majority of newspapers are privately owned and, despite Thailand being rated 'not free' by Freedom House, [291] the media are quite skilled in skirting the boundaries of control in order to articulate criticisms – with the clear exception of anything to do with the Royal Family, where section 112 of the Thai penal code applies draconian penalties to anyone convicted of *lèse-majesté*.[292] The media sector in Cambodia is more prolific – 11-14 TV stations are active, depending on source

[288] The Nation recently announced the closure of its print edition from June, 2019. "Thai English-language Daily, The Nation to end Print Edition", *Associated Press*, May 16, 2019.

[289] The Cambodia Daily was forced to close in 2017 after receiving a $6.3 million tax bill with one month to pay. "Cambodia Daily To Close After 24 Years", *NPR*, September 3, 2017. The Phnom Penh Post was recently sold to a Malaysian businessman with close ties to Hun Sen.

Julia Wallace and Mike Ives, "A Newspaper Is Sold, and Cambodians Fear The End of Press Freedom", *New York Times*, May 7, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/07/world/asia/cambodia-phnom-penh-post-sale.html, accessed May 20, 2019.

[290] Asiawaves.net, https://www.asiawaves.net/thailand/thai-tv.htm, accessed February 8, 2019.

[291] Freedomhouse.org, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/thailand, accessed February 8, 2019.

[292] Anyone can accuse anyone of this crime and the police are formally bound to investigate. Sentences are cumulative and therefore can be very long – in 2017 one man was sentenced to 70 years imprisonment. Only 4% of accused individuals are found not guilty. "Lèse-majesté Explained: How Thailand Forbids Insult of Its Royalty", *BBC News*, October 6, 2017, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-29628191, accessed May 20, 2019.

and date – while media in Vietnam is completely controlled by the state and the Vietnamese Communist Party. (There are three national TV channels, all owned by the state via VTV, although nowadays much of the content production is outsourced to commercial production companies in order to reduce costs and generate revenue.)[293] Therefore, there is ample opportunity, in theory, for coverage of internal conflict and of minority issues. Of course, selection for media coverage is generally determined by two key questions – is this interesting to the audience for the media, and if it is, what aspects of it are worthy of coverage? I will look at Thailand and then at Cambodia and Vietnam, as in this context there is a clear difference between them.

One important factor to bear in mind is the remoteness of the southern Thai provinces to the rest of Thailand. The cultural difference between Thai and Malay people, the aspects of language and religion – and most importantly the perceived instability and danger of the south – means that most Thai people have never visited the region, nor have any interest in doing so, and therefore rely on news media for their information, and to form their opinions.[294] Unlike many other countries, where minority groups are visible in general society, and where separatist conflicts have impacted security issues nationally, in Thailand the Malay Muslims have tended to remain in their own region[295] and the conflict has rarely touched areas of Thailand outside the affected provinces.[296] (This is unusual – most separatists elsewhere have seen the impact of hitting 'soft' targets outside the zone of conflict in terms of building awareness and popular reaction.)[297] All Thai national media is based in Bangkok, and like many other aspects

[293]Nguyen-Thu Giang, "Vietnamese Media Going Social: Connectivism, Collectivism and Conservatism", *Journal of Asian Studies* 77, no 4, (2018), 895-908.

[294] Kularb, Reporting Thailand's Southern Conflict.

[295] See Chanintira and Chontida in Chapter Five, Page 106 for a discussion of why there is little outward movement from the Malay provinces.

[296] Hat Yai is the exception to this, being bombed in 2005, 2006 and 2007. Hat Yai is the economic capital of the south, has a large Muslim minority, and is in Songkhla, adjacent to the Muslim-dominated provinces. There were also bombs in Hua Hin, Koh Samui, Phuket and Trang in August 2016, killing four people. These are all popular tourist destinations and the attacks were attributed to the separatist movement. This was the first (and, so far, last) time that tourist destinations have been targeted – which must be a relief to the government as tourism accounts for 20% of Thai GDP.

[297] As the insurgents do not discuss their strategies, it is difficult to know why this is. It seems to be a combination of logistical inability to mobilise outside home turf and being unable to blend in with a local population who look and speak differently. See also the comments from Dr. Kularb in Chapter Seven.

of Thai society tends to be very Bangkok-centric. As all government, business and entertainment is centred in Bangkok, it dominates the news media. There are prominent Muslim figures in Bangkok-located news and entertainment, but they are ethnically Thai, not Malay.[298] The announcement of the beginning of Ramadan by the Chularajmontri is also covered – but at the same time Thais are alerted to be wary of increased separatist violence during this period.[299]

Where the south is covered in media, it is very much focused on issues of violence and insurrection and with little attempt to examine causes or reasons.[300] According to Phansasiri, 51% of stories relating to the south are labelled as 'Southern Fire', or the actions of 'Southern Bandits' – catch-all terms used to describe the ongoing conflict. According to her analysis 64% of incidents are attributed to attacks on authority or internal struggles among local interest groups. (An additional 13% are attributed to 'radical Islam'.) The issue is generally described as a Muslim (not Malay) conflict and 39% of stories are sourced directly from the Thai government, the military or the police. The media generally do not base permanent staff in the region, relying on 'stringers' – freelancers - for most stories. Stringers are usually only paid by the published story from stories they submit and therefore have a direct financial incentive to focus on newsworthy – violent – events. Knowing where the sympathies of their audience lie, there is a tendency to portray state representatives as the heroes of a difficult situation and local people as long-suffering and under pressure, with no link to causes or issues.[301]

Not surprisingly, interviews conducted in the Deep South suggest a real level of resentment of the way in which the south is reported in national Thai media among

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[298] "Islamic Celebrities", *Muslim Thai Post website*, http://islamhouse.muslimthaipost.com/article/19127, accessed May 20, 2019 (in Thai).

[299] E-mail conversation with Phansasiri Kularb, May 9, 2019.

[300] According to Dr. Walakkamol Changkamol, Assistant Professor of Communication, PSU, the English-language media, e.g. Bangkok Post, are generally more analytical in their reportage. (Interview with the author, April 30, 2019.)

[301] Kularb, *Reporting Thailand's Southern Conflict*, 38.

local Muslims. When I asked interviewees in Pattani how they felt about mainstream media reportage of the Deep South, people voiced opinions of resentment and frustration:[302]

"It's sad. It hurts too" (AA)
"I think it's distorted the real situation. I was like, is it really true? I don't believe it. Shame on the reporter."[303] (AC)
"I just want them to stop reporting the bad side of the situation. Show other people the good side of us." (AF)
"They think we're all terrorists but 70% of us aren't even related to the unrest at all." (AL)
"It's like I'm not Thai." (AN)

There is a general sense that national media sensationalises violence and makes no attempt to be even-handed or to look at the bigger issues involved.[304] Where there are positive stories or developments that show the Deep South in a better light, they are not reflected in the mainstream media. This is exacerbated by the fact that media ownership is so Bangkok-centric. There is a shortage of local media voices able to look at the region as a whole, and very little indeed in the local Patani Malay language. In 2013 the Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre announced the launch of a Malay-language TV station, initially broadcasting for 30 minutes a day but with the intention of stepping up to 24-hour coverage within a year.[305] However, there is no trace of this having any impact. The Yala office of national Channel 11 also broadcasts

[302] All verbatims taken from interviews conducted by me in Pattani in January 19-23, 2018. See the introduction on page 19 and footnote 284 for more information on these interviews.

[303] This concurs with the observations of Edward Said of Western coverage of Islam.

Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of The World*, (New York; Pantheon; 1981.)

[304] In interviews with lecturers in media studies at both Chulalongkorn and PSU, both supported the belief that mainstream Thai media are generally sensationalist and only provide superficial analysis of causes and motivations.

[305] Pakorn Puengnetr, "Govt agency launches Malay-language TV in deep South," *The Nation*, January 3, 2013, http://www.nationmultimedia.com/national/Govt-agency-launches-Malay-language-TV-in-deep-Sou-30197162.html, accessed February 8, 2019.

in local Malay for one hour per day.[306] There are also a number of community-based radio stations in the south, launched as part of a national initiative to provide local radio access, written into the new constitution of 1997.[307] According to an analysis by Helbardt,[308] these stations were generally run by middle-class and business interests and achieved little salience with the general population. They also came under pressure from both sides of the conflict to report in a way that reflected their agenda at the expense of editorial independence:

"There have been no — or at least no known — cases where security officials closed a station for criticising the state or otherwise used physical violence against community radio broadcasters in order to intimidate them. Usually officials use softer tactics in dealing with 'too critical' journalists. In one reported case in 2006, soldiers visited a community radio station owner in Narathiwat and asked him to 'choose a softer tone' (phut bao bao) or refrain from 'escalating the situation' for the sake of a 'peaceful and harmonious society' (sangkhom santisuk)."[309]

Responses to my interviews suggest that there is a very low level of radio listenership these days, in any case, as online media has completely replaced it as a source of news and entertainment – except when driving. I will come back to the issue of online media shortly.

In theory the Malay population of the border provinces would also have access to Malay-language media crossing over from the northern states of Malaysia. However, in fact this is relatively marginal for the simple reason that, as mentioned previously, the Patani Malay dialect is very different from standard Malay used in broadcasting and they are not easily mutually intelligible. (Standard Malay is also written using a Romanised character-set, which is not read by most Thai Malays.) Tsuneda, in her

[306] Interview with Dr. Walakkamol of PSU, April 30, 2019.

[307] Helbardt, "The Emergence of a Local Public Sphere Under Violent Conditions", 36.

[308] Ibid.

[309] Ibid., 45.

account of living in Sungai Kolok in 2003, adjacent to the Thai/Malay border, describes the circulation of CD/DVD/Tapes of Malay entertainment coming from across the border.[310] She also suggests that Thai television was a livelier entertainment medium and preferred for that reason.[311]

Thailand has been no exception in the explosion of social media use in recent years. According to a global report produced by the digital marketing agency, 'We Are Social' in 2018,[312] Thailand has the highest per person usage of the internet globally. 82% of the population are online and 74% are using social media. In Thailand Facebook is synonymous with social media – the usage statistic is exactly the same, for statistical purposes. In Cambodia 43% of the population are using social media; in Vietnam it is 67%. In both cases there is a similar 100% overlap between Facebook and social media. Thailand is the country with the 8th largest actual number of Facebook users – Vietnam is 7th. (Note, this is not as a percentage of population but a raw number, regardless of population.)

Therefore, given the growth of social media, and Facebook in particular, as a global media channel for both campaigning and political and social opinion, it is hardly surprising that it is also the case in Thailand. Inevitably a lot of that content is highly polarised, often vitriolic and in some cases a clear incitement to violence. A recent analysis in New Mandala, the academic blog hosted by the Australian National University (ANU), of the use of social media in The Philippines for political campaigning and targeted political attacks shows how social media has become central to all forms of campaigning and opinion sharing and how local politicians are accessing training and consultancy to make their communications more effective.[313] I am not aware of a

[310] In a recent visit to Sungai Kolok by my research assistant, she observed that this business has now virtually disappeared, displaced by online and social media.

[311] Tsuneda, *Navigating Life On The Border*, 169.

[312]"Digital in 2018: Essential Insights into Internet, Social Media, Mobile and Ecommerce Use Around the world", *We Are Social/Hootsuite*, https://digitalreport.wearesocial.com/, downloaded February 8, 2019.

[313]Pamela Combinido, "When illiberal social media takes over democratic Philippines", *New Mandala*, February 6, 2019, https://www.newmandala.org/when-illiberal-social-media-takes-over-democratic-philippines/, accessed February 9, 2019.

similar study on social media in the rest of Southeast Asia; however, an earlier analysis of the use of discussion groups and message boards – serving a similar purpose, but without the reach and potential for redistribution – by Phrae Sirisakdamkoeng showed the tendency towards online extremes of intolerance, religious bigotry, raw hostility and incentivising violence – in this case towards southern Muslims in Thailand from other Thais.[314]

What also became evident during my field interviews across the region in 2018 and 2019 was the way in which Facebook has become the first resource for news and information for younger people in the region.[315] Two factors became very clear during the interviews; First, Facebook is seen as synonymous with the Internet for young people. Other applications – usually popular messaging applications like What's App generally, Line in Thailand or Zalo[316] in Vietnam – are also mentioned, but as an afterthought and without the centrality of experience and information attributed to Facebook. Second, the use of Facebook as a source for news, information and entertainment, supplanting all other media, is very much a generational choice. Respondents under the age of 35-40 almost always mention Facebook; respondents over 40 almost never do, because of their lack of familiarity with social media.[317] Given the reputation of social media for the fast dissemination of provocative, inaccurate and unmediated information, this is a worrying development, particularly in regions prone to social unrest and tension. Third, almost all respondents accessing social media do so through their mobile phones, which are becoming ubiquitous as a tool

[314] Phrae Sirisakdamkoen, "Perspectives of Thai Citizens in Virtual Communities on the Violence in the Southernmost Provinces", in McCargo, *Mapping National Anxieties*, 160-183.

[315] One interviewee was sure that broadcast news took their information from Facebook anyway. AB, Pattani, February 19, 2018.

[316] By the end of 2018 Zalo had more than 100 million users and 80% of Vietnamese smart phone users had installed it.

[317] Dr. Walakkamol believes that although people over 50 do not use Facebook, they are keen users of the Line chat app and 'they tend to believe in everything that is disseminated online.

(Conversation with the author, March 30, 2019.)

and a source of information.[318] Access to the internet via PC is confined to people who have PC usage in their workplace, or the relatively well-off. I first started working on commercial and communications applications for the internet in 1998, and at the time there was a concern about the 'digital divide' – the concept that progress in society would be divided between those who could access the internet and those who could not afford to. The explosion of easy access through low-cost smart phones has made that concern a fallacy – the question now is how it will continue to influence society, and in this case, community relations.

The issue of ethnic tension and outbreaks of violence do not affect media coverage in Cambodia and Vietnam. However, otherwise the situation of media development is fairly similar. In both countries free media are highly restricted, being under control of the state in Vietnam and effectively controlled by the ruling party in Cambodia:

"Khmer-language newspapers tend to be either associated with or sympathetic to the ruling party, and nearly all television and radio stations are owned by the CPP or the family and associates of Prime Minister Hun Sen."[319]

The Cham community in Vietnam is too numerically small and poor to be able to sustain independent local-language media, even if it were permitted, and in Cambodia the token gesture of a Cham radio show was soon terminated when it questioned government development decisions.[320] As a result, all media is in the majority language and coverage of minority groups tends to only occur in the small English-language press in Cambodia. In Vietnam all villages and towns have local loudspeaker systems, used to broadcast propaganda and news, and many Vietnamese identify this source as the 'radio'. The spread of the internet and social media is similar in Vietnam,

[318] 43.7% of the Thai population were using smartphones by Spring 2018, according to a survey published by ratings agency, Newzoo. (https://newzoo.com/insights/rankings/top-countries-by-smartphone-penetration-and-users/, accessed October 22, 2019.)

[319] Freedomhouse.org, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/cambodia, accessed February 10, 2019.As I mentioned on page 132 of this chapter the English-language media have been more critical – but have come under severe pressure as a result.

[320] See Chapter Four, page 83.

where Facebook is permitted; however, people are very aware that it is monitored for dissent, and political issues tend to be focused around single-issue campaigns (e.g. sovereignty over Special Economic Zones, heath care and food safety, etc.)[321]

Use of social media is rarer among the Cham of Cambodia – roughly half of my interviewees did not access the internet because they could not afford a smart phone. Therefore, TV tends to be the dominant medium for news, sport and entertainment. No doubt this will change as people become wealthier and smartphone and data access costs continue to fall.

One other lens of focus to consider is that of media coverage of minority situations by the international media. Generally speaking, the Thai Malays and Cambodian/Vietnamese Cham have been the subject of neglect – it is rare to find any examination of them by external non-academic media sources. This is understandable – we are looking at small minorities in countries that do not attract a lot of coverage in general. Their situation is complex, their conflicts rarely impact on the outside world, there are no obvious victims or aggressors and their issues are generally subsumed into a broader question of Western/Islam relations, or of the strengths and weaknesses of multiculturalism as a philosophy and approach to society. When they do attract attention, it is inevitably from the perspective of whether they are another potential front in the 'War against Terror'.[322] From time to time, articles from pro-American think tanks review the possibility of Thai Malay separatists affiliating with and supporting Al-Qaeda or ISIS – before coming the usual conclusion that this will not happen because neither side can really benefit, and they have little in common.[323]

<u>Employment.</u>

[321] Giang, "Vietnamese Media Going Social", 900-901.

[322] See The Economist article cited in Chapter Five, page 122.

[323] Dr. Zachary Abuza of the National War College in Washington DC is a good example of a prolific author mining this vein.

Abuza, "The Ongoing Insurgency in Southern Thailand" and elsewhere.

Southeast Asia has been a net beneficiary of the economic changes of the last 50 years. Cambodia and Vietnam are both seen as significant hubs for low-cost production (along with Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh) as an alternative to China, particularly as wages and costs in the Guangdong Delta region of China have grown significantly over the past ten years.[324] Thailand is not a particularly low-cost economy, but nevertheless has also benefited significantly from inward investment, particularly from the USA, Japan and South Korea, becoming a regional manufacturing hub for the automotive industry.[325] However, as I described earlier, the economic development of Thailand has been very uneven, focused on Bangkok and the surrounding provinces. Attempts to boost inward or local investment in the Deep South have not succeeded – the continuing level of disturbance obviously discourages new economic involvement from both up-country Thais and overseas investors. Cambodia has evolved in a similar way geographically; most foreign and local investment takes place in Phnom Penh and surrounding provinces.

For the Malays of Thailand and the Cham of Cambodia and Vietnam, economic development has been a mixed blessing. Although new, better-paying, forms of employment have evolved, they tend to occur in specific places, meaning internal migration is necessary to take advantage of them. In Thailand, the natural reluctance of the Malays to move away from their home area and the inhospitality or hostility they meet with has meant that many of the manufacturing jobs in central Thailand have gone to migrants from the northern provinces of Thailand, or to immigrants from Cambodia or Myanmar.[326] These immigrants also dominate the building industry of

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[324] "Labour costs alone in southern China have gone up by 20 per cent a year over the last four years, rising by 12 per cent in Guangdong province and 14 per cent in Shanghai a year from 2002 to 2009, relative to increases of 8 per cent in the Philippines and only 1 per cent in Mexico (*The Economist* 2012b)." Quoted in:

Xiangming Chen, "Steering, Speeding, Scaling: China's model of urban growth and its implications for cities of the Global South", *The Routledge Handbook on Cities of the Global South*, Susan Parnell, Sophie Oldfield (eds), (London, Routledge, 2014), 167.

[325] In 2017 Cambodia received $2.8 billion, Thailand $8.1 billion and Vietnam $14.1 billion in net inflow of foreign direct investment. (*World Bank* statistics, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/bx.klt.dinv.cd.wd?name_desc=false, accessed May 20, 2019.

[326] Anecdotally - the road south from Bangkok is lined with large factories. One time the driver of the car I was travelling in pointed at them, saying, "you know everyone who works there is Cambodian?"

Bangkok as they are low cost workers, willing to work outside in high temperatures and are easily manipulated by unscrupulous employers who can control them with provided accommodation and threats of deportation.

Recent changes in economic development have also depleted the traditional industries that provided employment for Muslims within their own communities. For Thai Malays that meant off-shore fishing and rubber farming. For the Cham of the Delta that meant river fishing and weaving. In Thailand the off-shore fishing industry that provided staple employment for coastal communities has been replaced by large commercial fishing fleets, harvesting the bulk of the catch. These fleets are notorious for their use of slave labour – some 17,000 crew members were considered to be slaves according to a report in the trade journal, Maritime Executive – hardly a liberal publication.[327] This exploitative industry has attracted widespread international approbation, but food exports account for 10% of Thai GDP and it is therefore a highly influential lobby group. The strength and comprehensive nature of this industry in the Gulf of Thailand has left little room for the traditional small fishermen, many of who were Malay Muslims.[328] On land the south of Thailand has traditionally depended on rubber farming as a core industry. This applies not just to the border provinces, but throughout the southern region of Thailand and of course in Malaysia too. However, commodity rubber prices have been low for a long time due to oversupply and restricted demand. The benchmark price for Thai rubber sheet has dropped from THB 198.55 in 2011 to THB 58.60 in early 2019.[329] In Thailand the south is seen as the traditional area of support for the Democratic Party, out of power since 2003 (except for a brief period in 2008-2011, when the leading party was arbitrarily excluded through political manipulation). Therefore, agricultural subsidies have been heavily focused on the rice growers of the north and northeast, the power base of the Thaksin

[327]"Slavery Still Persists in Thai Fisheries," *The Maritime Executive*, November 2, 2018, https://www.maritime-executive.com/editorials/slavery-still-persists-in-thai-fisheries, accessed February 11, 2019.

[328] An account of this displacement can be found in Manickam, *Just Enough*, 71-74.

[329] Market data, *Reuters.com*, - https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-thailand-election-farmers/in-post-coup-election-thai-rice-rubber-farmers-rethink-old-divide-idUKKCN1R20RG accessed, March 22, 2019.

parties, at the expense of the south.[330] This grievance is thought to account for the ability of opposition politicians to mobilise southern supporters to blockade Bangkok in the demonstrations in early 2014, demonstrations that led to the military coup later that year. As interviewees from Narathiwat and (peaceful) Satun complained, when asked about how they made a living:

" The rubber price – it's really low. And the government can't solve it at all."[331]

"The rubber price is too cheap. I can't afford to feed my kids."[332]

The same economic changes have affected the Cham of Cambodia and Vietnam. Both communities are rice farmers, an economic activity they share with the majority Khmer/Kinh. However, both have also traditionally specialised in river fishing in the Mekong and the manufacture and sale of woven fabric. In both cases, the change in the economic climate have depressed these traditional activities. River fishing has suffered from the same low prices and volume catches as ocean fishing from Thailand, described previously. It is also constrained by restrictions on the seasonality of river fishing imposed by the governments of Laos and Cambodia. These are described in the proceedings of a recent academic conference on the economy held in Bangkok.[333] Although necessary to conserve stock and prevent over-fishing they have also made earning a living from fishing considerably more difficult.

[330] According to the junta, subsidies paid to rice farmers by the Yingluck government cost Thailand over $8 billion. (*Straits Times*, August 1, 2016. https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/yingluck-rice-scheme-cost-thailand-us8-billion-junta, accessed May 20, 2019.)

However one year later the junta had pledged $2.2 billion in subsidies to rice growers. (*Reuters.com*, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-thailand-rice/thailand-approves-2-2-billion-in-help-for-rice-farmers-idUSKCN1BC4M5, accessed May 20, 2019.

[331] Interview with EA in Narathiwat, January 24, 2019.

[332] Interview with BH in Satun, March 27, 2018. Both interviewees were female, a reflection that rubber farming is very much a family endeavour.

[333] Sok, Boulidam, "Livelihood Development and Local Participation in Fisheries Management in the Lower Mekong Basin".

In an interview I undertook with a leading Cham writer and observer, he suggested that depletion of fishing stocks in the Cambodian river system was a problem for both communities, leading to increased outward migration looking for work in Malaysia, Thailand and even South Korea in search of employment.[334]

Weaving and clothes-making was also a main source of income particularly for home-bound women in the Cham villages of Vietnam. However, this has largely disappeared because of competition from mass-produced fabrics from outside, which are far cheaper than local production. Taylor's extensive examination of Vietnamese Cham documents the ongoing demise of this trade.[335] Visiting the same region, 10 years later, there were only two home weaving shops remaining. The one I visited had moved firmly into the 21st Century, selling mainly to hotels and tour operators, using all internet services to send out sample designs and take orders.[336] This seemed to be a profitable business – the owners' children were studying in Malaysia, he and his wife travelled there regularly and a trip to Mecca was scheduled for later in the year.[337] However, this was clearly an exceptional case.

The business that the Vietnamese Cham do still dominate, and one which connects them to the rest of Vietnam, is water-borne trading. The Mekong Delta is a complex network of rivers and canals – an estimated 3,600 km of connecting waterways in addition to a similar length of rivers[338] – and the Cham have specialised in trading across this network and even further north in Vietnam. This economy, described at length by Taylor,[339] involves spending large amounts of time away from the home base in An Giang province and the Cham have benefited from a generally matrilocal home society and their fluency in Cham, Kinh and Khmer. Although this area passed from

[334] Interview with Osman Ysa, February 20, 2019.

[335] Taylor, *Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta*, 163.

[336] See photograph at the end of this chapter.

[337] Interview with CP, May 9, 2018.

[338] *Facts and Details.com*, http://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Vietnam/sub5_9j/entry-3558.html, accessed February 11, 2019.

[339] Taylor, *Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta*, 165-201.

Cambodia to Vietnam between 1698 – 1802, there is still a Khmer minority living along the coast, also documented by Taylor.[340] In Cambodia it is still known as 'Kampuchea Krom' – lower Cambodia. Being adjacent to the Cambodian border also helps in sourcing low-cost products (e.g. cooking stoves) for onward sale. The complexity of the Delta waterway network, the predominantly rural nature of Vietnamese society and the relatively poor road infrastructure protects this ongoing trading economy from the encroachment of globalised retail trade – for the time being.

Migration.

This form of waterborne trading is not really a form of migration, as the traders return to their hometowns and villages on a regular basis and mostly the nucleus of the family remains at home, although Taylor does cite instances of the whole family travelling together for trade.[341] Transnational migration has been one of the great defining issues of the current era however, and therefore we need to look at how this is affecting the societies of Southeast Asia, both from a majority perspective and from the perspective of the Muslim minorities.

Historically economic and political migration from Southeast Asia focused on the USA, particularly the West Coast of the US. This migration was economic for poor Thais and political for Vietnamese and Cambodians fleeing the aftermath of the wars in both countries in the 70's. A few fortunate Cham were able to move to neighbouring Laos, forming the nucleus of a Muslim community in Vientiane, but mostly the firm control of the Khmer Rouge prevented any outward escape. In recent years though, as its economy has developed and prospered, Thailand has generally been the recipient of inbound migration, primarily from Cambodia and Myanmar, as described in the previous section. The rapid economic growth of Vietnam, and the fact that all its neighbouring countries are poorer, hostile or both, has meant relatively little permanent outward migration in recent years – and the same could be said of

[340] Taylor, *The Khmer Lands of Vietnam*.

[341] Taylor, *Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta*, 172.

Thailand.[342] Malaysia is more prosperous, but religion and ethnicity make it an unwelcoming destination for Thais, with the exception that I will now describe.

For both the Malays of Thailand and the Cham of Cambodia and Vietnam, Malaysia has proved to be a target for economic migration, however. The majority population of Malaysia is ethnically Malay and religiously Muslim and therefore it is an easier environment for these migrants to move into. One major sector of employment for Thai Malay migrants has been the network of some 5,000 Thai Halal "Tom Yam" restaurants across Malaysia. This style of Thai food is very popular in Malaysia and therefore has provided a steady source of informal employment for Thai Malays from the border provinces. Ironically the style of Thai food served is not that served in Malay Muslim restaurants in Patani, but Malay customers apparently believe that only people from Thailand can prepare it properly.[343] Tsuneda, in her account of life in the border town of Sungai Kolok in 2003-2004,[344] recounts how many local Malays would take up this employment. It is usually illegal, and therefore Thai Malays face the risk of fines, imprisonment and deportation, putting their increased earnings at risk but it still proves a useful source of income at better wages than can be found north of the border. Some entrepreneurial Thai Malays have moved from workers to restaurant owners, where they also provide a source of employment for other migrants.[345]

Both Thais and Cham have also found employment in Malaysia in the textile industry and other forms of manufacturing in Malaysia. For Vietnamese migrants this work is found either legally – through officially sanctioned government agencies – or illegally through informal labour brokers. The formal channel, sanctioned through an agreement between the Vietnamese and Malaysian governments has provided work

[342] However Thailand continues to encourage an overseas workforce, some 427,000 in 2017 according to the Ministry of Labour. Relatively few – around 1-2,000 were in the Muslim Middle East. 5,000 were in Israel. (*Ministry of Labour* website, http://www.mol.go.th/en/content/69654/1525496899, accessed May 20, 2019.)

[343] Both Tsuneda and Bunmak make this point.

[344] Tsuneda, *Navigating Life on the Border*, 231-255.

[345] Suttiporn Bunmak, "The Position and Meaning of Tom Yam Restaurants in Malaysia", *Research Institute for Language and Cultures of Asia* 2011, Mahidol University, Thailand.

for women in textiles, food production and electronics, and for men in plastics, mechanical production and furniture manufacturing.) Although a profitable source of additional income, the workers are expected to pay significant broking and transport costs up front and can often run into serious debt issues as a result.[346] (Individuals take out loans to finance the process, but up to 75% of the loan can go to paying middlemen costs.)[347] Interviewees in Vietnam were reluctant to talk about this as it was mandatory for a state representative, usually a police officer, to be present at all interviews I conducted in Vietnam. Cambodian interviewees were more forthcoming, however:

"I worked in Malaysia for a year, but worried as it was illegal." (DI)

"I worked in a clothes factory in Malaysia." (DK)

"I went to work in Malaysia for work as a gardener. I was jailed and had to use my savings to get out!"[348] (DO)

Generally speaking, this migration is temporary in nature, with migrants moving for employment over a fixed period of time while family members remain at home. It is very difficult for migrants to obtain any form of permanent residency (or long-term legal work permit) in Malaysia. As mentioned before there are also a number of students moving to overseas countries for tertiary education in Islam, but again they usually return to their home country on completion of study.

If we include the issue of involuntary migration (refugee status) in this section, the question arises as to how this has affected the minority Muslims of Southeast Asia. As I mentioned before, at the time of the Khmer Rouge rule over Cambodia some Cambodian Cham attempted to escape by leaving the country, either to Thailand or to

[346] According to Osman Ysa, the high cost of labour brokers was the main reason why Cham workers preferred illegal channels. (E-mail conversation with author, May 8, 2019.)

[347] Tran, "Weaving Life Across Borders", 30.

[348] Interviews in Kampong Cham, Cambodia, June 11-14, 2018. See footnote 284 and Appendix B for more information on the questions asked.

Laos. The number of refugees was fairly small, however, given the extreme poverty of the community and the draconian controls on movement imposed by the KR. Many refugees from both Vietnam and Cambodia reached Malaysia, but in general the Malaysian government were reluctant to allow them to stay as refugees, concerned about their numbers and the possibility of destabilisation, given that the internal conflict against ethnically-Chinese communist rebels was still ongoing. An exception was made for ethnic Cham, about 9,700 of whom were given refugee status and permission to stay. This decision was based on the fact that the Cham were seen as being both fellow Muslims and with long ethnic and trading links to the Malays. These refugees arrived by land having passed through Thailand, so obviously assumed that they would find a more welcoming environment in Malaysia.[349] These Cham became permanently settled and assimilated and in fact were the subject of a photography exhibition at the Malaysian Museum of Asian Art in June, 2018.[350]

In more recent times there has been no instance of forced migration of either Cham or Malay Muslims from Vietnam, Cambodia or Thailand. Even in the areas affected by civil strife in Thailand, there has been no attempt to displace the general Muslim population and little inclination to move. The Malaysian government have not offered migration as an option, although some leaders and fighters from the '*juwae'* base themselves in Malaysia for security reasons, and any talks between the sides tend to take place in Malaysia and are mediated by the Malaysian government. The Thai military government led by Sarit Thannarat between 1958 and 1963 was the first to encourage government settlement in the South by Thai Buddhists, and also encouraged Buddhists residing on the Malaysian side of the border to relocate north. Sarit saw this move in almost evangelical terms:

[349] Danny Wong Tze-Ken, "The Cham Arrivals in Malaysia: Distant Memories and Rekindled Links."; *Archipel*, 85, (2013), 151-165.

[350] https://museum.um.edu.my/news/homelands-centuries-of-cham-migration, accessed February 13, 2019.

"I want my Thai brothers from Isan, the North, and South to pour to the South to settle and work there … Bring down Thai blood and the love of the nation to spread there."[351]

Some settlements (*nikhom*) of Buddhists from Malaysia still exist and act as a Buddhist link across the border.[352] However, the internecine nature of the armed conflict in recent years has meant that Buddhists have been very reluctant to move and in many cases have themselves taken refuge in the safer parts of Thailand. Many (Muslim) participants in interviews held in Pattani and Narathiwat in 2018 and 2019 observed that their erstwhile Buddhist neighbours had progressively been moving away and nowadays most contact only took place at work.[353]

Gender.

Southeast Asia has not been at the forefront of women's rights on the global scene. The only woman to have reached national leadership status in the countries covered was Yingluck Shinawatra of Thailand from 2011-2014, and she was widely regarded as a proxy for her exiled brother Thaksin.[354] Women in Southeast Asia are generally more likely to be in the workforce than elsewhere – International Labor Organization statistics for 2018 show 81.2% of Cambodian women, 60.3% of Thai women and 73.2% of Vietnamese women in employment, compared to a global figure of 48.5%.[355] However, they are often either part of a family farming unit or in low-income roles, indicated by data from the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report:[356]

[351] Quoted in Johnson, *The Buddha on Mecca's Verandah*, 155.

[352] Ibid., 154 – 163.

[353] Interviews in Pattani, February 2018 and Narathiwat, January 2019.

[354] Yingluck was overthrown in the coup of 2014. After a period of semi-house arrest in Bangkok she fled to Cambodia in 2016, and thence to Dubai where she was reunited with her brother in exile.

[355] World Bank data. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS, accessed February 12, 2019.

[356] World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report*, http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2018/data-explorer/#economy=ISL, accessed February 12, 2019.

	Global Ranking from 149 countries measured		Wage as % of average male wage
Year	2006	2018	2018
Cambodia	89	93	69%
Thailand	40	73	75%
Vietnam	N/A	77	65%
Indonesia	68	85	72%
Malaysia	72	101	77%
UK	9	15	65%
Iceland	4	1	82%

In this respect there is little observable difference between the Muslim minority communities and the general population. Whatever gender-related traits are generally associated with Islam are outweighed by the fact that these communities are generally reliant on all family members for economic input and support. Certainly, almost all the women interviewed for my research were working, either as part of a family business or in retail, running informal restaurants or as teachers, nurses, etc. Most respondents describe a complex family unit with the involvement of grandparents and other relations in child-rearing and home management. Tsuneda describes a specific conflict for women in Patani between the expected role of women as part of the economic unit, as opposed to expectations of women's role within Islam as propagated by stricter interpretations like that espoused by activists from the organisation, Tablighi Jamaat.[357] In Patani (at the time Tsuneda was observing, in 2004) 85% of Buddhist women were involved in land ownership, compared to only 33% of Muslim women, for whom this was not seen as appropriate. However, state projects supported by the Thai government have tended to attract female involvement and therefore undermined traditional roles. The same can be said of the growth of the industrial textile businesses centred around Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam) and Phnom Penh (Cambodia), which mainly employ women workers. However, their location means that they have

[357] Tsuneda, *Navigating Life on the Border*, 61-76.

not tended to benefit local Cham people, for whom they are inaccessible. *Đổi Mới* in Vietnam also had the unfortunate effect of taking employment in state-owned enterprises away from women, and undermined the state social safety-net, making women far more responsible for domestic responsibilities – with a consequential loss of autonomy and control.[358]

In many parts of the world the issue of dress codes for Muslim women has become a sensitive issue, espoused as a declaration of religious belief or ethnic solidarity and as a way of criticising and isolating the Muslim community and women in particular. This issue has also been important to women in the regions we cover. Under the Khmer Rouge there were very strict rules covering dress and appearance in order to enforce a state of complete conformity. Muslims were not permitted to dress according to tradition and women were forced to cut their hair in order to conform to enforced norms.[359] Freedom to return to religiously-sanctioned dress codes was often cited in my interviews as one of the freedoms welcomed by Cham Muslims and associated with the current Cambodian government (which of course has effectively been in power since the Vietnamese invasion).

In Thailand the issue of dress – in particular the wearing of head coverings – has also been controversial. Satha-Anand cites the leading Thai politician and Prime Minister from 1975-76, MR Kukrit Pramoj, describing the dress code issue as one that is acting to divide different types of Thai in the 1970's:

"It is a pity that this dress issue will cause disunity among the Thais who love one another."[360]

However, as in the rest of Southeast Asia, wearing Hijab has become commonplace in recent years, as a mark of piety and community allegiance. The desire to dress in a

[358] Beresford, *Doi Moi in review*, 240.

[359] So, *An Oral History of Cham Muslim Women in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge (KR) Regime*, 105.

[360] Satha-Anand, *The Life of this World*, 90.

more religiously appropriate way was expressed by many of my female interviewees. One Vietnamese interviewee was visibly embarrassed by being seen in what she felt might be an inappropriate head covering. Even today the issue of Muslim girls wearing head covering has proved controversial, with state schools located in Buddhist temples refusing to admit them. As of writing, having flip-flopped on this issue several times, the local provincial court has decided to permit Muslim girls to wear religious-based headgear.[361]

Populism.

Lastly I want to touch on the issue of political populism as a major development in recent years, one that has used the presence of Muslim minorities as a rallying call for hostility, xenophobia and legislation intended to demonstrate this hostility in action, to prevent future migration and to discomfort Muslims living as minorities in society. This has manifested itself in laws regarding clothing (eight European countries) , places of worship (Switzerland, USA) and attempts to introduce legislation on immigration specifically targeting Muslims. Populism needs targets of approbation in order to rally support and generate emotional issues. Targets such as liberalism and globalism are hard to make tangible and identify, whereas religious and ethnic minorities can be delineated, described and used as symbols of discontent.

It might seem that ostensibly monocultural societies dominated by one religion or ethnicity would be likely crucibles for such visible forms of populism. Asia is certainly not immune to this development, as the rise of Ricardo Duterte in The Philippines and the steps taken towards a cult of personality and indefinite rule by China's Xi Jinping indicate. However, when we look at the countries under discussion, this does not seem to be occurring, as yet. The Thaksin government of Thailand, in power from 2001 to 2006 and again through his sister in 2011-2014 was distinctly populist in nature, relying on support from the mass population of Thailand, won over by short-term financial incentives and support. Also, by being perceived to be on the side of the ordinary people, compared to the traditionally upper-class dominated parties who had

[361] "Court says Pattani girls can wear hijab", *The Nation*, November 4, 2018, http://www.nationmultimedia.com/detail/breakingnews/30357836, accessed February 13, 2019.

assumed a right to rule in the past. The policies and behaviour of Hun Sen in Cambodia also appears populist in nature – aggressively appealing to nationalist sentiments among the mass population and taking aggressive steps to delegitimise all opposition.

However, in neither of these countries have Muslims been used as a scapegoat or target for popular enmity by the government. Despite regular pressure from Buddhist factions in Thailand there is still no official state religion in any of the various promulgated constitutions and although Pathan and colleagues describe a growth in hostility towards Muslims in Thailand, they also indicate that this is a grass-roots trend, unexpected and not generally welcomed by ruling politicians.[362] In Vietnam a traditional Communist government does not pursue populist policies and acts to control and suppress any situation that might breed internal discord. In Cambodia, tolerance and co-option of Cham Muslims has been used by Hun Sen as proof of the moral and political superiority of this regime. Indeed, he has been helped in this by a tendency of the opposition CNRP to target the Vietnamese minority in Cambodia as scapegoats for poor economic conditions in general.

These are not grounds for complacency. The violent persecution of Muslims by Buddhist majorities in Myanmar and in Sri Lanka make it quite obvious that Muslims can be used as a target for unscrupulous political and religious leaders, in order to motivate and manipulate the majority population for their own ends. Persecution of the Muslim Rohingya has occurred regularly throughout the history of post-independence Myanmar, but in recent years this intolerance has been extended to other Muslim groups across the country, as highlighted in Chapter One, page 14.[363] Sri Lanka has recently seen a number of violent attacks on Muslim communities, incited by intemperate and vitriolic communications coming from a group of Buddhist monks and their adherents. This phenomenon, covered widely in mainstream global media, is relatively recent and seems linked to the polarised political environment and the

[362] Pathan, Tuansiri, Koma, *Understanding Anti-Islam Sentiment in Thailand*.

[363] As might be expected, Thailand has not been a welcome destination for Rohingya refugees. Thailand is not a signatory to the UN Convention on Refugees and in 2015-16 the Thai navy was pushing boatloads of Rohingya refugees back out to sea.

"Between A Rock and A Hard Place", *Amnesty International*, September 29, 2017, https://www.amnestyusa.org/reports/between-a-rock-and-a-hard-place/, accessed May 20, 2019.

defeat of the traditional Tamil internal enemy in the north. However, there have been clear communications and links between Theravada Buddhists across the region, sharing propaganda and positions – the question is whether coreligionists in Thailand and Cambodia will be influenced in the same way, and with the same violent outcomes. Results from my online survey in Thailand seemed positive- 59% of respondents described Muslims as equal citizens, only 4% as a disliked minority. 51% of Muslim Thais considered themselves to be equal citizens. However, this is only a snapshot, with clear caveats, as mentioned before, and times and emotional temperatures can change very rapidly.

Conclusion.

In this chapter I have looked at major global trends of the early 21st Century and attempted to identify how they are impacting on the countries of Southeast Asia, and on the minority Muslim ethnic groups in particular. I believe it is important to examine these issues in order to keep the analysis current and to recognise how society continues to change. This study attempts to situate the experience of these Muslim minorities through looking at their historical origins and how that history was created through interactions with their surrounding populations and the colonial powers, as well as understanding how the current environment affects them and how they react. In order to reach robust conclusions it is therefore important to recognise the dynamism of the situation and how it is evolving in real time. This can best be done by trying to identify the significant trends in society and how they are impacting the peoples and states of the region. I highlight five issues – the changing media landscape, the changing employment environment, patterns and trends in migration, gender-driven issues and the rise of populist politics. These global tides of change reach Southeast Asia and manifest themselves in many different ways. They touch on the lives of Muslims in the region and impact the way in which Muslims cope with the societies they live within and are affecting the relationship they have with the larger community – for better and worse.

It can be argued that this selection of trend dynamics is arbitrary, or that it applies equally to the greater societies of the region – or for that matter to society in general,

anywhere in the world. While that is true, I still think it is a useful way to help understand the particular situation of the groups of Muslims under consideration. As I hope I have shown, the changes in society often have an affect on Muslim minorities that is quite different from that experienced by the country as a whole. (For example; trends of mass employment have an impact on young women in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam – they have had to become more mobile, accept labour conditions that separate them from the extended family networks of the past and as a result have perhaps become more autonomous and independent. However that does not apply in the same way to Muslim women, who are less able to take up these opportunities due to constraints of language, ethnicity and custom.) As for the selections being arbitrary – any attempt to identify factors of change runs this risk; I revised the selection after reviewing them with readers of my initial drafts and feel that they stand up as a reasonable way of making an argument.

The analysis undertaken in this chapter therefore helps to extrapolate how modern global change is affecting the Muslims of the region, and how that change has different effects from those experienced by other population groups. It substantiates the argument that Muslim minorities have continued to maintain a separate and meaningful identity within society, even as that society continues to change. This is not inevitable – global change often leads to forced changes in local economic situations and that in turn leads to major shifts in many societies.

So far I have discussed the history of these Muslim minorities, the circumstances that brought them to their current situations, the factors that differentiate them and keep them apart from their fellow citizens and the global currents that are directly affecting them. In Chapter Seven I want to examine just what Islam means to the Malays and Cham, the forms of practice and tradition and how this connects them – or differentiates them – from the rest of the Muslim world - the internal dynamic, as opposed to the reaction to external pressures.

One of the two remaining home weaving businesses in Phum Soai, a Vietnamese Cham village. (Photo: Author.)

Chapter Seven. Islam – the forms, practices and connections of Islam for Cham and Malay minorities.

Introduction.

Although there are many minorities in the countries under discussion – and also Muslims who share the ethnicity of the majority population – I have focused on the Cham and Malay Muslims – as groups who are clearly defined and quite separate from the rest of the nation in their society and demands for a separate identity. This 'separate' nature is core to the argument of minority existence in ostensibly difficult environments. Islam is core to the sense of group identity for both Cham and Malay populations – and also a significant factor in their separation from the majority population of their country of domicile. Although there are Muslim populations in all three countries who are not ethnically Cham or Malay, there are virtually no non-Muslim Malays in Thailand, nor non-Muslim Cham in Cambodia. Indeed, in a discussion on the nature of 'Malay-ness' Reid argues that from an early stage, Islam and the Malay race were seen in the region and by travellers as being synonymous.[364]

This is also reflected in an observation by Bruckmayr, in a recently published study on the 'Jawization' of Muslims in Cambodia, where he notes that becoming Malay was a synonym for becoming Muslim, and then adds:

"[T]he Cham equivalent to *masuk melayu/jawi* (i.e. becoming Muslim) is *tuei jawa* ("following the Malays")"[365]

This interchangeability of 'Jvâ' and 'Melayu' among both Cambodians and Thais from an early stage is also confirmed in a discussion on Muslim nomenclature in the region.[366]

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[364] See the quotation on page 55, footnote 121.

[365] Bruckmayr, *Cambodia's Muslims and the Malay World*, 13.

[366] Michael Laffan, "Finding Java: Muslim Nomenclature of Insular Southeast Asia from Śrîvijaya to Snouck Hurgronje", *Southeast Asia and the Middle East: Islam, Movement and the* Longue Durée, Eric Tagliacozzo, ed, (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009), 37.

Vietnam does have non-Muslim Cham – the people of the central coastal region who practice a form of Hinduism, mentioned in Chapter Five, and again below. However, the Vietnamese Cham living in the Mekong Delta region adjacent to the Vietnam-Cambodia border are Muslim and practice a form of Sunni Islam that makes them religiously much closer to their fellow Cham Muslims in Cambodia (and indeed to the majority of the global Muslim population) than to their ethnic cousins in central coastal Vietnam. There has been relatively little conversion into or out of Islam in the region, usually only occasioned by non-Muslims marrying into a Muslim family. (One of my interviewees in Phnom Penh, subject FI, had originally been a Buddhist Khmer, but had married a Muslim Cham. She had converted to Islam and moved away from her family across the river to be with him in a Cham Muslim community. However, she maintained friendly links with her Buddhist relatives, whom she visited regularly.)[367]

For both Cham and Malay people, Islam is a significant cultural identifier and something that they have adhered to strongly and tenaciously, despite intense pressure and incentives to change, or to hide their religious adherence. As we have seen, there has been systematic persecution of Malay Muslims in Thailand, with at one point efforts being made to eradicate many visible signs of cultural belonging; dress, language, law, times and places of observation were all subject to restriction or prohibition in the era of the Phibul government, and although the situation is much more tolerant nowadays, there are still instances where manifestations of adherence to Islam are restricted – for example the issue of dress code in schools, cited in Chapter Five, page 151 and again further on. Even now the expression '*Khaek*', literally translated as 'guest' is commonly used to describe Muslims in Thailand, in a pejorative way, despite being officially proscribed.[368] Although also used about any dark-skinned resident of Thailand, including Sikhs and Hindus,[369] it is particularly discriminatory

[367] Interviewee FI interviewed on February 17, 2019.

[368] Virginie Andre, "The Janus Face of New Media Propaganda: The Case of Patani Neojihadist YouTube Warfare and Its Islamophobic Effect on Cyber-Actors", *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 25, no 3, (2014), 341

[369] Mariamman Temple, the leading Tamil Hindu temple in Bangkok, officially called Wat Si Matha Umathewi (วัดศรีมหาอุมาเทวี) is known locally, and by bus conductors, as Wat Khaek.

when used about Malay Muslims, who are in no way migrants to the part of Thailand they inhabit.

For the Cham Muslims of Cambodia, adherence to and practice of, Islam has been even more difficult. As described in earlier chapters, the Khmer Rouge (KR) saw any form of religion or non-conformist behaviour as a direct challenge to their orthodoxy and something to be ruthlessly eliminated. Refusal to do so – attempting to maintain some form of religious observation – was cause for extreme retribution – by which of course, I mean death. This is well documented in the collections of oral testimony of Cham men by Osman Ysa[370] and Cham women by Farina So,[371] both of the Documentation Centre of Cambodia. There is also a description of the systematic execution of 32,690 people at Wat O Trakuon, the majority of whom were Cham, in Strangio's review of Cambodia under Hun Sen.[372] The stability and religious freedom experienced by the Muslims of Cambodia under Hun Sen, who has effectively been in power since the Vietnamese invasion of 1979, first as a puppet of the Vietnamese, and then in his own right as a (contentiously) elected Prime Minister since 1993, is a major reason why he continues to receive support from the Cham community.

In an interview with Osman Ysa in Phnom Penh in February 2019, he suggested two other reasons for the close support of Hun Sen's CPP by the Cham. First, he suggested that the leading Cham figures in the CNRP, the leading opposition party - until it was banned in 2018 - were not seen as being as credible, authoritative and connected as those aligned to the CPP. Second he pointed out that all religious teachers at every level in society, down to every village, received a salary from the government and any sign that they endorsed the opposition was cause for them to lose their employment and therefore their only source of income.[373]

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[370] Ysa, 2006. (Mr. Ysa is no longer connected with DC-Cam.)

[371] So, *An Oral History of Cham Muslim Women in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge (KR) Regime*.

[372] Sebastian Strangio, 2014, *Hun Sen's Cambodia*, (Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2014), 2. Strangio also repeats an accusation made by Thach Saren, a former Lon Nol army commander, in the Washington Post in late 1989 that Hun Sen himself was personally instrumental in the massacre of Cham civilians in 1975. 46.

[373] Interview with the author, February 20, 2019.

The fact remains that both communities are clearly committed to the practice and observation of Islam, and any pressure or attempts to separate them from their religion have failed – indeed, have been entirely counter-productive. Although separated by immense distance and significant poverty from the traditional global centres of Islam, both Cham and Malay Muslims are clearly part of the global Ummah and take pride in their practice and their commitment. Indeed the separation from mainstream Islam has been as a result of the political environment, the distances involved and the poverty of the Muslims in the region, not something desired or wanted by the Muslims themselves. As Bruckmayr says, discussing foreign involvement in Cambodia:

"A majority of Cambodia's Cham population has, even though living in a Buddhist country, felt the urge to belong to the wider Islamic world ... Finally, the wider Islamic world has come to them."[374]

Therefore, in the rest of this chapter, I want to look at the nature of Islam in the region;

- How the Islam of the region aligns itself to the legal schools of Islam, and the influence of Sufi'ism, Shi'ism and Salafi thought on the beliefs and behaviour of the region.

- The development of old and reformist schools of thought and practice, commonly known in the region as *Kaum Muda* and *Kaum Tua* – and how this has affected the unity and behaviour of the communities.

- The more esoteric form of Islam as practiced by some of the Cham Muslims in Cambodia and Vietnam, known colloquially as Jahed (in Cambodia), but to themselves as adherents to the practices of the Imam Bani San.

[374] Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia", 19.

- The nature of external influences – whether that be foreign governments or foreign-led 'missionary' organisations (particularly the influence of the Tablighi Jamaat movement in Southern Thailand and Cambodia).

- The influence of international Islamic affairs on the nature of the resistance movement in southern Thailand.

From this examination, I intend to show how the Islam of the region is connected to and influenced by the events of the Islamic world in general, and how this affects the relationship between Muslim minorities and majority communities in Southeast Asia.

Origins and alignment of Islam in the region.

This dissertation is not the place to examine and recount the detailed history of the arrival of Islam in Southeast Asia – it is well documented elsewhere and would be a major digression from the brief. Suffice to say that Islam reached the coastal regions of what is now Thailand during the 12th and 13th centuries (CE), arriving through the connections made by traders from the Middle East and South Asia arriving in the ports of the region. Initially adopted by the rulers of the local principalities it rapidly became the main religion of the region.[375] This seaborne interaction had seen the spread of Islam across large parts of South and Southeast Asia, as documented in the writings of the famed traveller of the 14th Century, Ibn Battutah.[376] A similar connection had seen the arrival of Islam to the central coastal region of Vietnam, then the kingdom of Champa, homeland of the Cham. Both Islam and a version of Hinduism established themselves in Champa, and when the Cham were forced to migrate south and westward (as covered in Chapter One), their religion travelled with them to their new lands. The closeness of Cambodia to the East coast of the Malayan peninsula, and the

[375] There is an interesting legend of the process by which the then ruler of Patani became a Muslim in the late 1400's, recounted in Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*, 20-22.

[376] Battutah himself did not visit the region we are examining – in his voyage from 1341 to 1354 he visited the coast of Myanmar before looping down through the straits of Singapore and up to China.

Ibn Battutah, *The Travels of Ibn Battutah*, Tim Mackintosh-Smith, ed, (London: Picador, 2003).

ethnic and linguistic commonalities of the Cham and the Malay, continued to reinforce a Muslim identity after the move from Champa.

In particular, Patani became a centre of Islamic learning and culture, reflecting its growth as a commercial trading entrepôt to rival the city of Melaka on the Western coast of the Malayan peninsula.[377] This religious centricity coexisted with the economic growth of the area, as it became a commercial centre and base for merchants from China, from Portugal and the Netherlands, all of whom established commercial enterprises there. (Only the Chinese remain.) This connection to the outside world and function as a centre of learning also ensured that the Islam of the area remained aligned to the development of schools of law elsewhere – the Muslims of Patani and Cambodia were, and are, Sunni, and aligned to the Shafi'i school of law. Although there are Shi'i Muslims in Thailand, they have tended to be aligned with the historic community originating in Persia, described in Chapter Three, and to be located in and around Bangkok, not in the deep South.[378] Bruckmayr describes a recent Shi'i revival in Cambodia, but as he says, it is quite obscure and difficult to assign any significance to this group within an already minority community.[379] As Siam exerted greater and greater authority over the region, absorbing it into the overall kingdom of Siam, the role of Patani as an Islamic centre inevitably waned.

However, as Bradley points out in a recent work on the influence of Patani scholars on Islam in Southeast Asia[380] (and elsewhere) the effective destruction of the autonomous Patani state after five successive defeats by Siam between 1785 and 1842

[377] Syukri describes the growth in prosperity and trade in clearly economic terms, highlighting the trading relationship between Patani, Japan and the Dutch as one of its core strengths in this period.

History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani, 29-33.

[378] Christoph Marcinowski, "Shi'ism in Thailand From the Ayutthaya Period to the Present.", *Shi'ism In South East Asia: Alid Piety and Sectarian Constructions*, Formichi, Chiara; Feener, Michael (eds.), Oxford, Oxford Scholarship Online, 2015, 1-22.

[379] Philipp Bruckmayr, "Divergent processes of localization in twenty-first- century Shi'ism: the cases of Hezbollah Venezuela and Cambodia's Cham Shi'is.", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no 1; 2018, 18-38.

[380] Francis R Bradley, *Forging Islamic Power and Place: The Legacy of Shaykh Dā'ūd Bin 'Abd Allāh al-Fatānī in Mecca and Southeast Asia*,(Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016).

did not end the influence of Patani Islamic learning – indeed, quite the opposite. Although thousands of inhabitants of Patani were transported as slaves to Bangkok under atrocious conditions, there to work on building the infrastructure of the new capital,[381] others fled either south to the Malay states of Kelantan, Kedah. Perlis and Terengganu, or for those wealthy enough to afford the journey, to Mecca, joining and expanding an already existing Malay (Jāwah) community there.[382] This local school began to work on developing and translating a huge work of Islamic literature, re-exported to Southeast Asia by returnees and Hajjis making pilgrimage. Tagliacozzo describes a continuous movement of scholars and pilgrims between Southeast Asia and the Hejaz during the 18th Century, a movement that very much included Patani:

"Pattani [sic] …was a vigorous Muslim polity in the eighteenth century, exerting influence far beyond its size and frontier geographic position."[383]

According to Bradley, the Jāwah were seen as a little unorthodox or unsophisticated by their Arab hosts, and as a result they did not become fully integrated into Meccan society and the combination of written material and returning students ensured the foundation of the network of Pondok schools across Southern Thailand and the Northern states of Malaya, much of which endures today.[384] (Much of the huge body of written material has been disappeared - destroyed by the Thai authorities, owners scared of being caught it possession of it or just by the tropical weather conditions of the region. However Bradley has identified 1300 documents preserved around the

[381] Perhaps inevitably, the forced transportation of slaves to Bangkok remains as a powerful folk memory, generating resentment among Southern Malays today. Their slave status is also referenced by Buddhist extremists, as cited in Andre's work on 'cyber-Jihadism'. (Andre, "The Janus Face of New Media Propaganda", 348.)

[382] Tagliacozzo describes references to a Jāwah community in Mecca as early as 1277 CE.

Eric Tagliacozzo, *The Longest Journey: Southeast Asians and the Pilgrimage to Mecca*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 21.

[383] Ibid., 97.

[384] For a description of the experience of Jāwah travellers to Mecca in the 19th Century, see Timothy P Barnard, "The Hajj, Islam and Power Among the Bugis in Early Colonial Riau", *Southeast Asia and the Middle East; Islam, Movement and the* Longue Durée, Eric Tagliacozzo, ed, (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009), 65-82.

world, much of which was authored by Shaykh Dā'ūd Bin 'Abd Allāh al-Fatānī, the leading Patani scholar of the time. Some of his work is still used as educational material in Pondok schools today.)

Bradley identifies three factors that did bring the role of Patani to an effective end.[385] When the last Sultan of Patani fled south to Kelantan in 1902 rather than continuing to act as a puppet ruler for the Thai, many of the 'Ulamā (scholars) followed him. The establishment of a firm border between independent Thailand and British-controlled Malaya in 1909 meant that "the locus of the knowledge network moved rapidly to Kelantan." Finally, the establishment of control over Mecca by the Saud rulers in 1924 saw many of the remaining Patani scholars migrate from there to Cairo, where their influence was less effective.

Nowadays the rule of the Thai state and the ongoing insurgency make it a backwater from the perspective of Islamic scholarship. For the Cham, the geographically nearest external centre for religious learning nowadays is Kota Bahru in the Malaysian state of Kelantan.[386] The isolation of the general Muslim populations of Patani and Cambodia from the Muslim world also meant that the practice of Islam became increasingly subject to the influence of local non-Muslim residents, by the rule and cultural hegemony of the Buddhist rulers from the North and from lack of connection to developments in the rest of the Muslim world. Although pilgrims continued to travel to Mecca for Hajj and to maintain that intellectual connection, this was restricted to those individuals who had the learning, the support and the financial resources necessary for an arduous and expensive journey lasting several months, not to the general population.

Reforming the 'old' – the split between *Kaum Muda* and *Kaum Tua* thought

Although isolated, the Muslim minority communities of Southeast Asia continued to be affected by developments in the wider world, and therefore inevitably were touched

[385] Bradley, *Forging Islamic Power and Place*, 139.

[386] Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia", 2.

by the reformist movements and currents of the 19th Century. The influence of Muhammad 'Abduh on Hajji Sulong was discussed in Chapter Four, but this was not the only factor affecting reformist thought in the region. In 1906, the publication in Malaysia of a monthly newspaper, al-Imam, acted as a "bombshell on the quiet scene of Islam",[387] effectively launching a discussion over the need for reform and a return to the original guidance of Qur'an and Sunnah, and an accusation that the existing religious leadership had become contaminated by years of reliance on traditional practices ('adat, or law of custom). This division, between what in Malay are called *Kaum Muda* (Young Group, or Younger Generation) and *Kaum Tua* (Older Group/Traditionalist) reflected trends of thought elsewhere in the Muslim World, becoming very contentious and divisive:

"The *Kaum Muda* accused the *Kaum Tua* of being the real obstacle to Malay progress and even the destroyers of Islam. In response to these charges, the *Kaum Tua* labeled the *Kaum Muda* as deviants and communists."[388]

The same movement for reform and return to core practices inevitably reached over the borders into Thailand and Cambodia, given the close links between the Muslim communities in ethnicity, heritage and traditions. (In the Thai language, the relevant trends are known as *Khana* or *Phuak Mai* for the reform group and *Khana* or *Phuak Kau* for the traditionalists.) Given the close coexistence between Thai Islam and Buddhism, it was perhaps inevitable that certain animist practices had entered into local Islamic practice. Ironically the relative harmony that existed between the two communities before the outbreak of renewed violence in 2004 had also led to a greater degree of what would be perceived by observers as syncretism, as both groups joined in common observance of holidays and feast days. Horstmann, conducting field work in Southern communities in 2004 as the conflict dramatically worsened, and then again in 2011, identifies a change from a shared, community with close ties and shared festive occasions, to a community divided by fear and hatred – not helped by the

[387] Aziz Asmi, A B Shamsul, "Colonial Knowledge And The Reshaping Of Islam, The Muslim And Islamic Education In Malaysia.", *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 125.

[388] Ibid.

widening influence of the Tablighi Jamaat movement with their emphasis on a return to 'pure' Islamic practices. This division even reached into the more peaceful areas of the adjacent Songkhla province, areas not affected by the insurgency.[389]

In Thailand it is important to note the way in which this divergence has been perceived to align to form an active or philosophical association with either the state or the insurgency. Initially, the new, reform movement was seen as being in alignment with the more purist ethos of the Wahhabi movement elsewhere. Wahhabism was not unknown to the scholars and teachers of the region – indeed the influence of the Wahhabi on the culture of Mecca had been experienced by Shaykh Dā'ūd on his arrival in Mecca after fleeing Patani, as described above. Bradley suggests that the content of his work, initially focusing on translating Shafi'i legal codes into Malay before working on more Sufi manuscripts was as a result of the Wahhabi cultural context, then being supplanted by the return of Ottoman rule in 1812.[390]

As such, it was seen as a challenge not only to the existing *Kaum Tua* nature of local Islamic authority, but also to the position of the Chularajmontri as leader of Thailand's Muslims. Outside of the Southern Provinces, the *Khana Mai (Kaum Muda)* movement was seen to be more egalitarian, and therefore naturally aligned to the political reformists leading the Thai overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932. It was also hoped that the political and religious reformists might align to change the role of the Chularajmontri – from an appointed adviser to the King and therefore wielding top-down authority, to a bottom-up, pseudo-democratic representative of the general Muslim population. (As the Malay Muslims of the South have never seen this position as very relevant or connected to their problems and situation, it is questionable how much this was a concern to them, as opposed to another reason to discount the influence of new thought leadership. In any case, it did not happen – the replacement of the reformists by the rightist dictatorship of Phibun made it a moot issue.)[391] The

[389] Horstmann, "Living Together", 485-510.

[390] Bradley, *Forging Islamic Power and Place*, 67.

[391] Raymond Scupin, "The Politics of Islamic Reformism in Thailand", *Asian Survey* 20, no 12, (1980), 1226-1235.

division has also been seen as reflected in the more traditional ethos of rural areas, compared to the cosmopolitanism and acceptance of new thoughts in the major urban centres of the region, and also reflecting a dress code that more overtly presented a separate Muslim identity.

Despite a perception, promoted and reinforced by mass media and Western leaders, that Salafism, Wahhabism, Islamism and other strains advocating a return to core, original Islamic values have a direct link to advocates of Muslim extremism and terrorism, it seems clear that this is not the case when it comes to the links between religious alignment and separatist activity in Thailand's South. As McCargo says;

"Whereas in the wider Islamic world 'Wahhabi' ideology was often constructed as the handmaiden of political violence, in Patani the opposite arguably held true."[392]

The reformists, whether from Kaum Muda, Salafism or the influence of the Tablighi Jamaat, have tended towards quietism and a separation from political objectives. The alignment seems to be more closely made between the traditional schools of local Islam and the desire for a return to a Muslim-led state free of Thai rule – Patani Darussalam. One of the leading and most respected reform-oriented Muslim scholars of the region, Dr. Ismail Lutfi, director of Yala Islamic University, has been very explicit in interpreting Shari 'a as banning armed rebellion.[393] Conversely, the separatist fighters have been documented as taking part in magic rituals in order to protect themselves against enemy bullets before undertaking a major operation – decidedly not reformist thinking and clearly eschewed by all Kaum Muda and subsequent reform leaders.[394]

[392] McCargo, *Tearing Apart the Land*, 28.

[393] Brown, *Islam in Modern Thailand*, 208.

[394] McCargo, *Tearing Apart the Land*, 138-39. However see the discussion of the role of spells in some Islamic practice in John Bowen, *A New Anthropology of Islam*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 102-118.

There are also philosophical and politically strategic reasons for the separatist movement in the South to avoid any perception of alignment with violent international Islamic movements. The Thai movement is ethnically nationalist and territorial in focus, concerned only with the conditions of Malay Muslims in the Southern provinces – it lacks any international dimension. Strategically, a perceived alignment with al-Qaeda or ISIS would bring the attention of the American 'war on terror', likely to attract additional funding and military support for the Thai army – something not at all in the interest of the separatists. Indeed, in 2005, the Thaksin government emphasised this perceived link in order to argue for greater US funding for counter-insurgency efforts.[395]

Of course the influence of reform thought and the division between *Kaum Muda* and *Kaum Tua* can also be seen in Cambodia, and even among the small group of Sunni Cham in Vietnam. In Cambodia it became most visible in the 1950's, culminating in the expulsion to Thailand in 1960 of the leadership of the *Kaum Muda* faction (Imam Ali Musa, returned to Cambodia after studying in Kelantan, with his colleague, Muhammad India) in order to try and reduce the level of contention.[396] However this level of 'foreign' influence and contention between traditional and reform practices seems to have returned in the modern era, with the influence of Middle Eastern missionaries advocating a purer form of Islam linked to the provision of material aid, and the presence of Tablighi Jamaat in a major base at Phum Trea, in Kampong Cham.[397] The same discord even occurred in the small communities of Cham on the Vietnamese side of the Mekong Delta, following the influence of Cambodian Cham Imam Musa on Muhammad Badri from the Vietnamese village of Châu Phong in the 1950's. (Badri had studied with Musa in the aforementioned village of Phum Trea – at the time a centre for religious reform, even before the arrival of the Tablighi Jamaat.)

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[395] "SSF Regilme Jr, "Does US Foreign Aid Undermine Human Rights? The 'Thaksinification' of the War on Terror Discourses and the Human Rights Crisis in Thailand, 2001 to 2006", *Human Rights Rev*iew, (2017), 1-23.

[396] Alberto Pérez Pereiro, *Historical Imagination, Diasporic Identity And Islamicity Among The Cham Muslims of Cambodia*, Thesis, Arizona State University, (2012), 141.

[397] See the discussion of the significance of Phum Trea on page 175 in this chapter.

Given the small size of the community the split appeared to descend into somewhat of a family feud between family members from two adjoining villages, and the Communist Party of Vietnam acted decisively to put an end to it in the early 80's. However the ability of the Salafi movement, in some ways ideological successors of *Kaum Muda* in the region, to access funding and support from the Middle East, has continued to cause tension and a spurt of competitive mosque-building.[398]

In summary, the division between old and new schools of thought has been present among Muslims of the region since the early 20th Century. It is a reflection of the trends in Islamic thought taking place across the world from the late 19th Century onwards, and also shows the continued connectivity of this Muslim world to the rest of the community, whether across the border in northern Malaysia or to the Middle East through pilgrimage and travel. However we can also see the strength of old traditions and practices, and the resistance of local communities to change in long-established customs. It is important to note that these divisions continue to exist and develop among the Malays and the Cham – it is not an purely historical phenomenon. Tsuneda documents the effect of the contrasting allegiances in her field work on Sungai Kolok in 2004,[399] and it also came up during my field work in the Southern provinces in 2018 and 2019.[400]

The 'Jahed' – followers of Kan Imam San – a Southeast Asian exception?

What is Islam? Who is a Muslim? Questions which have tested the faith and the faithful since its inception – and also the followers of all other religions, of course.[401] In Cambodia and Vietnam this question is tested to a further degree by the practice of

[398] De Féo, "Les musulmans de Châu Đốc (Vietnam) à l'épreuve du salafisme". Online.

[399] Tsuneda, *Navigating Life on the Border*, 61-77.

[400] Interviewees in the Thai provinces were often keen to discuss whether the community was following the 'right' path of Islam and what should be deemed as correct behaviour.

[401] See Marranci's discussion of what makes a Muslim, in:

Gabriele Marranci, *The Anthropology of Islam*, (Oxford; Berg, 2008), 15.

the believers known to outsiders as the Jahed in Cambodia and the *Hồi giáo* (Muslim) of central coastal Vietnam – historic Champa. (The Jahed prefer to be known as Kan Imam San (KIS). In an interview with the English-language Khmer Times in 2015, Yousos Tum, a sect spokesman was quoted as saying:

"We regret that the media always mentions our community as 'Jaheds'. This is a confusing term. Even though it originated from the Arab world, its meaning in the Cham language is derogatory, and is closely related with the Cham word which implies "bad or people of loose character.")[402]

This is reinforced by Pérez Pereiro, who quotes a source as saying that the word Jahed suggests doing things wrongly in the Cham language.[403]

The KIS community consider themselves to be the logical heirs of Islam as it was practiced in Champa before the migration of the Cham people westwards into what is now Cambodia. They are unique in continuing to use a written form of the Cham language for religious purposes – a mosque I visited in a village in the province of Kampong Chhnang used this writing for an inscription on the front door.[404] However this is not the only way in which their practice of Islam differs from the Sunni norms prevalent elsewhere among the Cambodian Cham. Communal prayer takes place only once a week, in the middle of Fridays, and the centre of the religion is in Oudong, Cambodia. (Oudong is located in Kampong Speu province, about 40 km north of Phnom Penh. It was the capital of Cambodia for 250 years, up until 1866.) There are also certain spiritualist rituals associated with the KIS – noticeably the cult of Sash Cay, documented by Trankell in 2003.[405] This cult is relatively recent in origin and is thought to be a result of the survival and subsequent spiritual guidance of a group of Kam

[402] Va Sonyka and T Mohan, "Do Not Call us Jaheds, Say Followers of Cham Bani", *Khmer Times*, January 10, 2015, https://www.khmertimeskh.com/53962/do-not-call-us-jaheds-say-followers-of-cham-bani/, accessed March 9, 2019.

[403] Pérez Pereiro, *Historical Imagination, Diasporic Identity And Islamicity Among The Cham Muslims of Cambodia*, 50.

[404] See photograph at the end of this chapter.

[405] Trankell, "Songs of Our Spirits", 31-46.

Imam San in the village of Au Russey in Eastern Cambodia during the predations of the KR government. The followers of Imam San do not recognise the authority of the Muslim Mufti for Cambodia, currently Sos Khamry. As the newspaper article cited above states, they have their own leader, the 'Okhna Khnour' (Venerable Master) – who was recognised by the state as having an official status in 1998.[406]

This community has come under pressure in recent years as the Muslim community of Cambodia has become reconnected to the rest of the Muslim world, and missionaries from the Middle East have reached out to aid redevelopment. Aid from the Middle East comes with a *quid pro quo* however – the expectation (or direction) that recipients of aid will abandon practices seen as heretical.[407] For the majority of Cambodian Cham Muslims (who account for around 90% of the Muslim population), this has not been a difficult bargain to accept as they have been following a generally Sunni mode of religious practice anyway. However for decidedly different KIS this is a much harder choice – between remaining true to their long-held beliefs or accepting desperately needed financial support - causing division even within a single village.[408] Interviews with Cham following Imam San reflect this pressure, from both outsiders and other Cham.[409] As the KIS account for only 36,000 remaining followers according to Bruckmayr, their long-term survival must be questionable.

The Cham of Vietnam also have a similar group of differentiated believers among the Cham Bani of the central coast, called *Hồi giáo* (Muslim) by the state, though they do not self-identify as Muslims, considering themselves to be followers of an intrinsic Cham religious tradition. According to a study on this group by Yoshimoto,[410] they number about 41,000 – more than the 27-30,000 Sunni Muslims of Vietnam's Mekong

[406] Bruckmayr, "The Birth of the Kan Imam San", 197.

[407] There is also pressure from the orthodoxy of the Tablighi Jamaat. However this pressure is easier to resist as it relies on teaching and evangelism, rather than financial support.

[408] Harriet Fitch Little and Phak Seangly, "The Politics of Prayer", *Phnom Penh Post,* July 4, 2015, https://www.phnompenhpost.com/post-weekend/politics-prayer, accessed March 10, 2019.

[409] Jocelyn E Campbell; "Daily Life Of Cham Village Girls: Learning to 'Think' with Stories", Thesis, University of Dalhousie, Halifax, Canada, 2018: 54-55.

[410] Yoshimoto, "A Study of the Hồi Giáo Religion in Vietnam", 488.

region. They enjoy close links with a similar (larger – about 60,000) group of Cham known as the *Bà la môn giáo* (Cham Balamon) who practice a form of Hinduism, although they maintain distinct settlements and do not intermarry. The smaller group follow some practices associated with traditional Islam – Friday prayer in a building oriented Westwards towards Mecca, reciting passages of the Qur'an and observing a fasting period called *Ramuwan*. However there is also a clear divergence – prayer only takes place once a week, only the elders and priests fast, and there are sect-like internal groups, separated between men and women.

Two points can be observed about this group. First although they exhibit certain characteristics in common with the KIS of Cambodia, there is no logical connection between them. (Imam San, eponymous founder of the Cambodian group, lived in the 19th Century, long after the diaspora from Champa.) Second, the assignation of the label of Muslim has been made by the state, rather than the community themselves. Yoshimoto argues that this reflects a tendency in modern Vietnam to recognise religion as having some social benefits – as long as it does not challenge the state – but then to assign identifiers that allow it both to be categorised in a logical manner and at the same time display unique Vietnamese characteristics that separate it from any form of global alignment.

<u>The Tablighi Jamaat – and other external Islamic influences.</u>

Throughout this chapter I have referred to the influence of the organisation known as the Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) on the Muslims of Cambodia and Thailand. Although there have been several sources of foreign support, involvement or intervention in the region, I believe it is fair to say that the TJ have had the most far-reaching and consistent role to play as a group concerned with reaching out to the Muslims of the region and influencing the link between them and the rest of the Muslim world. There has been a consistent TJ presence in the region for decades, although the quietist and non-political role they have played has meant that they have been less visible and attracted less attention from the state governments than other more assertive and contentious groups. Nevertheless, their role has not been without contention as it has

impacted on the discussion of tradition versus reform, albeit from a different perspective.

As a 'Dawah' evangelical movement, the TJ originated in Northern India in the 1920's; an offshoot of the Deobandi school of conservative thought, advocating an assertive return to more traditional practice. However while the focus of the Deobandis has been on the role of education in guiding the community, the TJ has always had a clear outward 'Dawah' orientation, reaching out to Muslims around the world to bring them back to a purer and clearer view of the essentials of the faith. Nevertheless, the active function of mosque-building by the Deobandi have provided the TJ with a physical base for networking and development, particularly in the UK where Siddiqui quotes an estimate of 37% of all mosques as being Deobandi.[411] It is perhaps worth emphasising that the TJ has mainly been interested in reaching 'lapsed' Muslims, not the conversion of believers from other religions or belief systems. Although a highly successful global phenomenon, TJ is still very much rooted in the homelands of Northern India and Pakistan, as signified by the fact that Urdu is still a core *lingua franca*.[412] It is driven by the role of regular travelling bands of adherents (*Jamaat*), which has enabled its deep and wide reach internationally, but it is also criticised for 'escapism' - groups of men travelling sometimes for long periods, to the neglect of their family and other responsibilities - and for a focus on ritual and practice over knowledge and learning, rendering it somewhat superficial in Islamic rigour.[413]

TJ arrived in Southeast Asia in the 1970's and 80's, initially into Malaysia and Indonesia. However the contact tended to be through affinities with the communities of North Indians settled in these regions, rather than directly to local Malay Muslims. (The majority of Indians in Malaya/Malaysia originate from South India – the state of Tamil Nadu, from whence they were brought as plantation workers by the British

[411] Bulbul Siddiqui, *Becoming 'Good Muslim': The Tablighi Jamaat in the UK and Bangladesh*, (Singapore: Springer, 2017), 140.

[412] Alexander Horstmann, "The Inculturation of a Transnational Islamic Missionary Movement: Tablighi Jamaat al-Dawa and Muslim Society in Southern Thailand.", *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 22, no 1, (2007), 109.

[413] Farish A Noor, *Islam on the Move: The Tablighi Jama'at in Southeast Asia*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 172-177.

Colonial rulers. However a community of North Indians also arrived, mostly as traders and merchants in Northern states of Malaya.)[414] From Kelantan it was a logical step to expand into the Southern provinces of Thailand via the same network of Indian traders, and by the late 70's a TJ presence had been established in Sungai Kolok (the border town) and Yala. According to Noor – who spent time there in 2008 - by the early years of this century the TJ centre (*Markaaz*) in Yala was the 4th largest in the world with a 4 km^2 area and a capacity of 8-10,000 for Friday gatherings (*Ijtima*).[415]

The energy and commitment of the TJ has seen it make deep inroads into Muslim communities in Thailand, both in the Malay South and Thai Muslim communities further North. TJ demands a deep commitment in terms of time and money from its adherents, and this has facilitated growth and the financial resource necessary to sustain it. However the rigid definitions held by the TJ of what is and is not Islamic has caused real conflict with local traditions. This spans issues as emotional as the correct way to honour the dead (for an extended mourning and support period in traditional Southeast Asian culture, whether Muslim or Buddhist; for burial within 24 hours and without further ceremonies, according to TJ belief) or as seemingly superficial as adolescent boys participating in Thai boxing tournaments (an honour for rural Thai families; anathema for the TJ). The insistence that TJ practice is the only correct one also causes conflict as it either replaces or fights with traditional behaviour. As noted previously, TJ is traditionally a quietist organisation, steering clear of political issues.[416] This has also been the case in Southern Thailand, where the TJ has been careful not to be involved in the separatist activities of the militant '*juwae'*. In his account of a visit to

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[414] Farish A Noor, "The *Tablighi Jama'at* in the Southern Provinces of Thailand today: Networks and Modalities.", *Working paper: S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore* 174, (2009), 1-48.

This can be seen in multilingual signage in use in modern Malaysia. The languages used are always Malay, Chinese, English – and Tamil.

[415] Ibid.

[416] A discussion on the Deobandi position on non-participation in politics, both in colonial India and apartheid South Africa can be found in the recent work on the Deoband Movement by Ingram. It should be noted that this position is not held by all Deobandis, many of whom were active in the struggle against apartheid, and indeed that the Afghani Taliban movement originated in Deobandi-run madrasas.

Brannon D Ingram, *Revival From Below: The Deoband Movement and Global Islam*, (Oakland, University of California Press, 2018), 190-205.

the Yala *markaaz*, Noor observes an atmosphere of suspicion bordering on paranoia towards both the 'juwae' *and* the Thai authorities.[417] He indicates a general reduction in the number of travelling TJ from other countries and those who do complain of surveillance from the Thai authorities, despite the perception of the TJ as a non-political, non-violent force, separating its adherents from issues of political and social change.[418]

Islam in Cambodia has always been multi-centric, whether that is Oudong for the KIS, Chruy Changvar (the peninsula on the opposite bank of the river Tonle Sap from Phnom Penh) for 'official' Muslim leadership – or Phum Trea, the village first mentioned on page 163 in this chapter. Phum Trea, located in Kampong Cham province across the Mekong river from the eponymous provincial capital, has consistently acted as a centre for Islam in the country, as a focal point for many rural Cham and as a locus for dissenting points of view from what is seen as orthodox in the country. Bruckmayr describes the activity in the 1930's as the discussion between old and new practices gained momentum.[419] In Cambodia this was not only the divergence between *Kaum Muda* and *Kaum Tua* thought discussed earlier, but also a deeper division between the traditional Cham-language led practices of what were to become the KIS and a Malay-influenced move towards Arabic script and more orthodox customs. As we have seen the latter mostly prevailed, but at the same time the dispute became heated enough for key figures to be deported in 1960 – as also mentioned on page 163 in this chapter.

From then until the 1990's the civil war, rule of the KR and subsequent chaos and collapse of society meant that Phum Trea lost its significance – until 1992 when it regained its status as the centre of the Tablighi Jamaat in Cambodia, which it remains as today, under the leadership of Imam Suleiman Ismail, who returned to Cambodia in 1989 after two decades studying in Saudi Arabia, India and Malaysia.[420] The mosque in

[417] Noor, "The *Tablighi Jama'at* in the Southern Provinces of Thailand today: Networks and Modalities.".

[418] Noor, I*slam on the Move*, 183.

[419] Philipp Bruckmayr, "Cambodia's Phum Trea as Mirror Image of Religious Change.", *ISIM Review* 20, (2007), 48-49.

[420] Bruckmayr implies a connection to the presence of Indian armed forces in the area as part of the UN control in 1992 and 1993, but doesn't elaborate on this, at least in the article referenced.

Phum Trea is described as the largest in Cambodia, larger than the Dubai-built mosque in the centre of Phnom Penh, and it has become a major transnational centre for the TJ. In Cambodia, as in Thailand, the strict doctrines and requirements of the TJ have brought it into conflict with traditional local beliefs. However an emphasis on Islamic education at the expense of secular or vocational education after primary level has also brought it into conflict with NGO and other Muslim-led actors. As far as I can ascertain, the government stays uninvolved in this discussion – as long as foreigners pay to educate local children and do not attract dissent or outside criticism, it is seen as a benefit and there is no government regulation of the TJ's activities The commonalities between Cambodia's Cham and the ethnic Malays coming as *Jamaat* from Malaysia and Southern Thailand mean that the role and presence of the TJ in Cambodia seems destined to continue.[421]

As we have seen, the presence of the TJ has had a significant impact on the nature of Islamic practice and organisation for the Muslims of Cambodia and Southern Thailand. However it is by no means the only external influence in recent years. The government of Malaysia and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) have both become involved in trying to resolve the conflict in the South of Thailand, and I will come back to their involvement at a later point. There is also documentation of an attempt at mediation by the International Conference of Islamic Scholars, founded by the Nahdlatul Ulama, one of Indonesia's two huge independent Islamic organisations – though I have never come across it from any other source and it had little or no impact.[422] In this chapter though I want to focus on interventions relating to Islam and its nature, and therefore highlight the involvement of the Middle East governments, NGO's and citizens as they have engaged with the region, specifically Cambodia. Thailand, it seems, is less 'deserving' and certainly more dangerous – however there have also been a few examples of Middle Eastern states providing financial support for

[421] Ysa estimates 25-35% of Cham Muslims are now adherents of the TJ movement. (E-mail exchange with author, May 8, 2019.)

[422] Beta Arif Muhammad, Najamuddin Khairur Rijal, Gonda Yumitro , "The Roles of International Conference of Islamic Scholar (ICIS) in Conflict Resolution of South Thailand", *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization* 76, (2018), 78-83.

educational and medical needs, outside government to government relationships, or as members of the OIC.[423]

It has to be said that the first response of Middle East governments to the overthrow of the government in Cambodia was not a rush to support their benighted Muslim brethren. As the table below, taken from Kiernan's indictment of the 'genocide' of the Cham in 1988 shows,[424] the majority of the Muslim country governments voted in 1980-81 at the UN to continue recognising the KR as the legitimate government, regardless of their actions towards the Muslim population:

[423] Poyee Waesahmae, "The Organization of the Islamic Cooperation and the Conflict in Southern Thailand", Thesis, University of Wellington, (2012), 57.

[424] Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime*, 32.

Table 4
United Nations Voting on the Kampuchea Question 1980–81 (Muslim Countries)

Against the Seating of Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea	Abstentions (or "No Vote")	For the Seating of Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea
1. Afghanistan	1. Lebanon	1. Bahrain
2. Algeria	2. Mali	2. Bangladesh
3. Democratic Yemen	3. Tunisia	3. Djibouti
4. Libya	4. Tanzania	4. Egypt
5. Syria	5. N. Yemen	5. Indonesia
6. Chad	6. Iran	6. Kuwait
	7. Iraq	7. Malaysia
	8. Jordan	8. Maldives
		9. Mauritania
		10. Morocco
		11. Niger
		12. Nigeria
		13. Oman
		14. Pakistan
		15. Qatar
		16. Saudi Arabia
		17. Senegal
		18. Sudan
		19. Somalia
		20. Turkey
		21. United Arab Emirates

Of course this vote was taken at the height of the Cold War and is a clear reflection of the opinions of the USA and the Soviet Union at the time – the Soviets supported the invasion from Vietnam. Therefore the USA opposed it and their allies and satellites followed their lead. It is also possible that the Muslim nations were not aware of the state of Muslims in Cambodia, although in April 1981 Seddik Taouti undertook a fact-finding mission at the request of UNESCO and the Islamic Development Bank, to ascertain the state of the Muslim populations of Cambodia and Vietnam.[425]

[425] Taouti, "The Forgotten Muslims of Kampuchea and Viet Nam".

Whether because of the end of the Cold War or the expression of a more assertive and internationalist Islam following successes in Iran and Afghanistan during the 80's, this had changed by the turn of the decade, and NGO's and governmental support began to be delivered, initially by their Malaysian neighbours, but then more expansively by the UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Bruckmayr documents the arrival and intervention of the governments of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia,[426] and some of the largest recently-built mosques in Cambodia are called 'Dubai' in recognition of their funding by a wealthy family from that state. Saudi Arabia established the Umm al-Qura school in Kandal province (adjacent to Phnom Penh) in the late 1990's. However, in a rare reaction to American pressure from the Cambodian government, it was closed in 2003 under suspicion of advocating terrorist activities, and its teachers were either imprisoned or expelled. Kuwait's Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS) has also been instrumental in developing a school network, generally seen as more aligned to a Salafi-style of Islam than JT equivalents.[427] The RIHS has been accused of supporting terrorism by the USA, although cleared by the government of Kuwait.[428] Of course support is not only religious or educational – The Economist documents a $546 million investment in energy and agriculture from Kuwait – although this also has a religious component. However between 1994-2015 the vast majority of inward investment came from China and Korea. Malaysia ranked a distant third and Saudi Arabia ranked 16th, two places behind Israel.[429]

According to Ysa, there is also a systematic programme of scholarships for students from Cham villages to go to the Middle East (and also Pakistan and Malaysia) for further education. He believes that each village has three or four students taking advantage of this opportunity every year. The programmes are welcomed by the local Muslim leadership as they provide a resource for free and are a source of future teachers. As mentioned before the government also accepts the programme as it does not cost them anything, does not create any visible dissent, and can be seen as a

[426] Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia", 17

[427] Blengsli, "Muslim Metamorphosis", 188.

[428] "Courting The Cham", *The Economist*, 2

[429] OECD Investment Policy Review: Cambodia 2018, 50.

benefit of the links between the CPP government and the outside world – therefore a benefit of the link between the CPP and the Cham leadership. Ysa's concern is that the students come back with a much stricter interpretation of Islam and then proselytise that within the community, changing traditional customs and enforcing a much stricter dress code, particularly for women, who are now expected to wear a full niqab veil.[430]

Solving the conflict – a religious dimension?

Lastly, I want to look at the attempts to solve (or at least improve) the conflict in Southern Thailand by using a lens of Islamic internationalism, and by the involvement of external Islamic observers and mediators. Despite the Indonesian reference cited above,[431] there are only really two external parties who have been allowed to become involved in the conflict – the Malaysian government and the OIC.

The involvement of the Malaysian government does not really belong in this section, as it is caused by the fact that Malaysia is adjacent to the conflict region, has ethnic and historical links to the region, has been a place of refuge for people from Patani ever since the border was imposed (and before – see this chapter, page 163) and many Malaysian citizens feel an emotional affinity to the Muslim Malays in Thailand. It is not particularly an expression of religious empathy and in fact the Malaysian government has consistently taken the side of Thailand at the OIC, when necessary. There is not really a language bond, as the Patani Melayu dialect and Standard Malay are not easily mutually intelligible and Standard Malay has been written in Roman script (officially since the language acts of 1963 and 1967), a script not used in Thailand, except where English is needed. Moreover, the problem of the Southern Thai provinces is not one that Malaysia would like to inherit – a territory beset by poverty, violence and crime is not terribly attractive; relationships with Thailand would collapse and Malaysia would acquire a troublesome Buddhist minority, with large ethnic support from the North.[432]

[430] Interview, cited in Chapter Six, 144.

[431] Page 173, footnote 412.

[432] It is worth considering the Irish parallel – should Ireland ever be reunited, how would the Dublin government manage the Protestant Unionist minority they would then acquire?

Therefore Malaysia continues to pay a role as a place for negotiations to take place and as an interlocutor between the two sides but receives few thanks for this. As the Prime Minister and 2014 coup leader, General Prayuth Chan-Ocha graciously put it:

"We don't want to have peace talks … Since they were initiated by the previous government, we are bound to continue, knowing that they could not solve any problems … The previous government insisted on doing it, so now we are forced to follow up. I say no, I will not call them MARA Patani and will not recognize anyone. It is against the law" (IsraNews 2016).[433]

(One might point out to General Prayuth that overthrowing an elected government by means of a military coup, as he did in 2014, is also against the law.)

This reflects a general position by successive Thai governments that discussions can take place, with Malaysian moderation, but with no other foreign involvement. However nothing concrete can be proposed that might involve recognition of the other sides point of view. To quote my interview with Dr. Soraya of the Peace Agenda of Women:

"Well it's been seven years but there is no progress, of not talking about the heart of the problem. They would talk about anything but not the heart of the problem."[434]

The OIC, on the other hand, might be expected to take a more proactive and Islamic stance towards the conflict, given its mandate, its involvement in mediating the nearby conflicts of Aceh in Indonesia and Bangsamoro in The Philippines and the fact that it has a specific section of the Political Department tasked with looking after the interests of Muslim minorities.[435] However the OIC is hamstrung by the fact that the direct interests of its members always trump the intentions of the body as a whole,

[433] Abu Hafez Al-Hakim, "The Patani Peace Dialogue Process: From the Terms of Reference to the Safety Zones", *The International Conference on Political Transition, Non-violence and Communication in Conflict Transformation*, (2018), 352.

[434] Interview with author, April 29, 2019.

[435] I am indebted to a previously cited recent Master's thesis by Paoyee Waehsamae of the University of Wellington, as I am not aware of any other work that looks holistically at the role of the OIC in Thailand.

and many of the members of the OIC enjoy close political and economic relationships with Thailand – particularly Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei in the ASEAN region and Bahrain and Pakistan elsewhere. Various separatist groups have tried to join the OIC as the official representatives from Thailand, but that was effectively stopped by Thailand's accession to the OIC as an observer state in 1998. This was an adroit strategic move – it reflected Thailand's historic and existing relationships with many Muslim countries,[436] it provided a forum for Thailand to articulate its point of view, and it preempted any further attempts by separatists to gain official recognition. Since then, the OIC has expressed concerns from time to time, and made regular visits of inspection, but otherwise seems powerless to exert any leverage.[437]

Conclusion.

What can we learn from the experience of Islam undergone by Malay and Cham minorities, how they have contributed to the global sense of community and what they have taken on board – or rejected – from external influences and currents? In my view, there are four conclusions to be observed, that impact on the overall questions raised at the very beginning of this thesis. First:

The experience of Islam in Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam is dynamic and flexible. It encompasses many different shades of opinion and experience from the most unorthodox practice of the Cham Bani in central Vietnam and the KIS in Cambodia to the acceptance and enthusiastic support for external influences - the Tablighi Jamaat being the most obvious, but by no means the only one. However there remains a clear alignment between the religion of Islam and the ethnicity of both Malays and Cham, no matter how that practice is expressed. Indeed in Thailand there is also a clear

[436] "Thailand recognises Palestinian State" *Bangkok Post*, January 20, 2012, https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/276039/thailand-recognises-palestinian-state, accessed March 11, 2019..

[437] The most recent visit of inspection and statement of goodwill took place in early 2018. The official statement can be found on the OIC website - https://www.oic-oci.org/topic/?t_id=17428&ref=9244&lan=en, accessed March 11, 2019. The army seemed satisfied with this outcome, "Islamic Team Praises Thai Approach to Unrest", *Bangkok Post*, March 2, 2018 https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/1420611/islamic-team-praises-thai-approach-to-unrest, accessed March 11, 2019.

separation between the Malay Muslims and other Muslims in the rest of the country – the Malays find the others weak and uncommitted, whereas conversely they are perceived as bringing an unwanted blot on the perception of being loyal Muslim citizens, desired by Thai Muslims further North.

Second, although there is a clear demarcation and separation between Buddhists and Muslims, even where they live closely together, there is also a shared heritage and a commonality in the way in which religion plays a unifying and cohesive role for the community. I will explore this thought further in Chapter Nine, where I look at specific traits of Buddhist life in the region, and how that impacts on Muslim fellow-citizens.

Third, an Islamic identity provides a strong sense of self and of community allegiance for both Malay and Cham. Attempts to sublimate it into a stronger national identity founder when they are seen as in any way undermining strongly-held beliefs. No matter how strong the force and how repressive the attempts are, Islam remains at the very heart of both communities. Even the attempts of the KR to eradicate Islam and the Cham altogether failed, and the rapid rebirth of Muslim society in Cambodia, despite ongoing civil war, dire poverty and an absence of infrastructure is quite astounding.

However this does not mean that local Islam and the Muslim communities are incapable of change. Where the change is seen to emanate from a Muslim-led source, and is coming from fellow Muslims, the region is much more receptive. One clear example; under the Thai-ness ordinances implemented by the Phibul government, clear strictures were imposed on Muslim modes of dress, with Muslims directed to adopt the same dress as their Buddhist fellow citizens (who also weren't given much say in the matter). The KR were far more draconian, as has already been described; traditional Muslim forms of dress were forbidden, and the Cham were marked out as different through the use of colour-coded scarfs. Neither coercion nor direction were successful and in both countries traditional Muslim dress reemerged as soon as permissible. However, when changes in dress code are recommended or implemented by the TJ or Salafi influence, clear changes have been adapted, as Ysa points out in his interview. A Muslim-led change is seen as acceptable, even if not necessarily adopted

everywhere. The success of *Kaum Muda*, the Tablighi Jamaat and Middle Eastern reform influences show a clear openness to debate and change – where it is owned by Islam.

In Chapter Eight I will go on to look at the links between the Muslim communities and the societies they live in, and how they are able to function as political actors in society, either independently or as part of other political organisations, in societies where they do not subscribe to an ostensibly monocultural orthodoxy.

Cham script on a mosque door in Kampong Tralach, Kampong Chhnang, February 18, 2019 (Photo by author.)

Chapter Eight – Muslim minority involvement in politics and civil society, inside and outside the home country.

"The ethnic/civic question is for most people a mute one - given that the majority of the population in so-called civic nations have no choice in their national identity as they acquire citizenship by birth."[438] (Colin Clark.)

"If we admit that today's pluralistic world requires that each nation state have some kind of multicultural citizenship, we can move beyond this, to talk about who gets to formulate the public political culture of that multicultural society."[439] (H A Hellyer)

Introduction.

In all but the most extreme situations minorities engage with the majority society – obviously economically, but also through some form of engagement with the political and social culture that determines so much of the surrounding environment. Therefore a core question to be examined is how that engagement manifests itself where the societies in question are not very democratic and do not espouse an ethos of inclusion of opposing viewpoints. In Chapters Five to Seven, I looked at different aspects of life in society that separate the ethnic Muslim minorities from their majority fellow citizens, whether that be religion, economic circumstances, language, education or other strands of existence that end up reinforcing a separate identity, differentiated from the mainstream in their own view, the view of their fellow citizens, the view of the state – and perceptions from outsiders. I looked at this both from the aspect of factors that have been a permanent marker of difference and from an aspect of modern geopolitical change that is affecting these countries and acting differently for different members of society. Of course these changes do not only differentiate Muslims from the majority. For example, the rapid growth of economic development, coupled with populist and antidemocratic political trends, can be held accountable for

[438] Clark, "The Nation State", 50.

[439] H A Hellyer, *Muslims of Europe: The 'Other' Europeans*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 41.

the dramatic polarisation of inequality in Southeast Asia – a factor that affects Muslim minorities who tend to be at the bottom of the financial pyramid, but also affects many other groups in society. Draper and Selway accuse Thailand of being particularly exposed to a widening of inequality[440] because of the state's failure to recognise and act on regional ethnic marginalisation. If this is true it affects Muslim Malays, but also affects the ethnic Khmer and Lao in the populous Northeast and the multiple minorities living in the Northern provinces.[441] I also looked at the role of Islam, and how religion plays a vital role in community identity, clearly separating Muslims from the mainstream. The history, vitality and strength in resistance to persecution has acted to bond the communities together, giving them a strength of identity that makes them immune to attempts to absorb or homogenise them into a 'created' national identity which has been used to legitimise and mould modern nation states in the region.

In this chapter I will examine the way in which Muslim minorities in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam have been affected by the politics of their country of residence, and how they have sought to become engaged with national political and social life– how they have endeavoured to find a representative political place at the decision-making table - or, where pursuing a separate and secessionist agenda has been perceived to be the best option, how that has expressed itself, and with what degrees of success. This choice, either to achieve better rights and representation, or to force acceptance by the state of some form of autonomous disengagement, has been pursued through different channels, depending on what seemed to be the most effective course of action and I will try to balance the outcomes of those strategies as they have been enacted. Besides direct political options, there have also been options to take up an armed struggle, to achieve rights and status through nonpolitical channels, and to engage with external actors in order to leverage their influence. I will

[440] Draper and Selway, "A New Dataset on Horizontal Structural Ethnic Inequalities in Thailand in Order to Address Sustainable Development Goal 10". Online.

[441] Thailand's shape means that for administrative and descriptive purposes the terms North and Northeast are used to identify these regions, rather than Northwest – which symmetrically would be part of Myanmar.

also try to evaluate how those options have been used and to what degree they have been successful.

As I write, in mid-2019, elections in Thailand have recently taken place and have been strongly criticised as having been rigged in order to ensure continued rule by the leadership installed by the junta.[442] This has seen a 250 person senatorial body appointed by the outgoing government, which will play a key role in decision-making, and also arbitrary changes in the rules governing the representation of smaller parties in order to prevent either of the two main opposition parties (Pheu Thai and Future Forward) being able to assemble a majority coalition. Even before the elections, the electoral process was strongly criticised, as was the attempt to impose a new constitution and a 20-year 'roadmap' intended to straitjacket future policy making – both of which rig the system strongly in favour of the junta-led government of 2014-19. Nevertheless, these have been the first elections since the disrupted and disregarded polls of 2014, and there was a noticeable state of excitement in the country about the possible outcomes, both short and longer-term. However, a continuation of rule dominated by the army, the monarchy and the social and financial aristocracy is a fairly predictable given, as I will explain shortly. Next door in Cambodia, the ruling CPP swept elections in 2018, having effectively eliminated all meaningful opposition through legal bans. As a result there is little prospect of any change for the foreseeable future – but in the last 'free' elections of 2017, the opposition CNRP came very close to causing a real upset, so obviously all is not as stable as PM Hun Sen might like his people and the international community to believe. Across the border in Vietnam, the firm hand of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) enters its 45th year of continuous national rule (and 65th for the Northern part of the country). The economic reforms of *Đổi Mới* described in Chapter Four have stimulated economic growth along a neo-Capitalist model in exchange for continued one-party domination and opposition continues to be firmly extinguished – but can that system prevail

[442] Criticism has come both from the international and domestic media. See for example, "Thailand's Junta has another go at rigging elections", *The Economist*, April 11, 2019, https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/04/13/thailands-junta-has-another-go-at-rigging-elections, accessed May 14, 2019, and "Senators Seen as PM Puppets", *Bangkok Post*, May 15, 2019, https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/politics/1677808/senators-seen-as-pm-puppets, accessed May 15, 2019.

permanently? All of which is to say that what stability exists is recent and can be fragile. Predicting where this will leave the Muslims of the region is difficult, but based on history and experience, some predictions can be attempted.

Politics as part of the mainstream process – parties; factions; armies and real power

One simple but significant observation is that the Muslim minorities lack the clout, politically, economically and numerically to become important participants when acting autonomously. As 6% of the population in Thailand, 1.6% in Cambodia and less than 1% in Vietnam, a distinct and separate voice for the Muslims cannot exert the kind of leverage necessary to make a difference, even assuming for a moment that all Muslims had a common political interest that would make them vote unanimously for one leader, party or point of view.[443] (They are insignificant not only numerically, but also economically – Muslims tend to be poorer than the average population, unlike, say, the ethnic Chinese in Thailand who are numerically small but economically powerful.) Therefore the only practical route forward for those people who feel that political engagement is important and attainable is to become an useful faction aligned to greater political forces in the country – and if necessary to use the weight of that faction as a bargaining chip to align with whichever political force offers the most reward – either to the Muslim community or to the people who say they speak for it.

McCargo covers in detail the attempt to build an effective faction, Wadah, in the southern provinces, headed by Den Tohmeena – a local political baron and also the son of the iconic Hajji Sulong, whose role I discussed in Chapter Four.[444] Den was very effective in crossing the complex and factional lines of local politics and religion in order to weld together a power base that could deliver enough votes and parliamentary seats to be useful to the national parties. Initially Wadah was aligned with the Democratic Party, who took power after the Asian financial crisis of 1997

[443] Data on actual Muslim populations varies according to source. These numbers are taken from "Mapping The Global Muslim Population", *Pew Research Centre*, https://www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population23/, accessed May 15, 2019.

[444] McCargo, *Tearing apart The Land*, 63.

devastated the Thai economy. This made sense in many ways as the Democrats had always had a power base in the adjacent upper Southern provinces and were seen as the natural leaders of that region. This does not imply an affinity between the Deep Southern Muslim provinces and their majority Buddhist neighbours – on more than one occasion it has been suggested to me that the Upper South has a poor understanding of and attitude towards their Southern neighbours, born perhaps out of familiarity or even because of a historical memory of subjugation to Southern Muslim rule. McCargo also argues that Muslims in the Deep South perceive officials from the Upper South as being second-rate, only stationed there because they are not good enough to succeed in their home region or the rest of Thailand.[445]

In 1988 Den decided to change sides and align Wadah with the New Aspiration Party, soon to be absorbed into the newly-dominant Thai Rak Thai (TRT) Party (see below) – but as I will explain, TRT's behaviour towards the South was deeply insensitive and counter-productive, leading to a rapid rise in civil disorder and violence. As a result Wadah was punished at the polls, losing all their seats in the elections of 2005. The latest round of elections have seen the emergence of new party, Pracha Chat,[446] claiming to represent the region – headed by Wan Muhammad Nor Matha, one of the original leaders of the Wadah faction.[447] Election results in 2019 showed them winning 6 seats out of 11 in the three Southern provinces – though these results may change as political maneuvering continues.[448]

The complex nature of post-war Thai politics has often enabled that kind of political activity, bartering support in exchange for promises of power and recognition. To a

[445] Duncan McCargo, "Thai Buddhism, Thai Buddhists and the Southern Conflict", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40, no 1, 2009, 3.

[446] Pracha Chat - Nation of the People (Thai.)

[447] Pitcha Dangprasith, "Prachachat Party Chief Optimistic", *Bangkok Post*, January 23, 2019, https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/1615866/prachachat-party-chief-optimistic, accessed March 22, 2019.

[448] "Prachachat Party Sticks To Coalition Plan", *Bangkok Post*, May 1, 2019, https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/politics/1669856/prachachat-party-sticks-to-coalition-plan, accessed May 15, 2019.

certain degree it has paid off for the individuals concerned, who have reaped the rewards of political power at certain times. In Thailand those rewards may manifest themselves in terms of significant national political positions; they may also manifest themselves through material rewards delivered by budgetary control or bribery and corruption.[449] However a number of issues have made it difficult for this type of political success to be maintained for any length of time. Most obviously, Thai democracy is fragile and has been crushed by a military coup on regular occasions – since the end of the Second World War there have been *successful* military coups in 1947, 1951, 1957, 1958, 1971, 1976, 1977, 1991, 2006 and 2014.[450] Given the revolving door of the army barracks, sustained democracy is a dream for the Thais, and therefore the rewards of democracy for honest, or less-than-honest, leaders are fleeting.

Even when the army is not running the country, it does not mean that the elected politicians are necessarily in real power. McCargo has written extensively about Thailand's networked monarchy, a perceptive understanding of where power resides in Thai society.[451] Although theoretically a constitutional monarchy, the King (they have always been male) holds immense power in Thailand. Allegedly the world's richest monarchy, a combination of deeply traditional expressed respect and highly restrictive lèse-majesté laws mean that any attempt to curb royal power is deeply

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[449] For example, a leaked US Embassy cable identified Suthep Thaugsuban, Deputy Prime Minister between 2008-11 as being renowned for corruption among his own Democratic Party colleagues. *Wikileaks*, 2008, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BANGKOK3712_a.html, accessed May 15, 2019.

[450] The current head of the Thai army, General Apirat, has already made it clear that he will stage another coup if he is unsatisfied with the outcomes of the 2019 election – the first since the 2014 coup. This could put him in the interesting position of leading a coup against a government headed by a Prime Minister who himself took power that way – as speculated upon in a recent article on the Australian National University's Southeast Asian website.

Wassana Nanuam, "Army Chief Refuses to Rule Out Fresh Coup", Bangkok Post, October 18, 2018, https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/politics/1559750/army-chief-refuses-to-rule-out-fresh-coup, accessed May 15, 2019.

Paul Chambers, "What if Thailand's Junta Can't control The Military?", *New Mandala*, March 14, 2019, https://www.newmandala.org/what-if-thailands-junta-cant-control-the-military/, accessed March 22, 2019.

[451] Duncan McCargo, 2010, "Thaksin and the Resurgence of Violence in the Thai South: Network Monarchy Strikes Back?", *Islam in Southeast Asia: Critical concepts in Islamic Studies*, Joseph Chinyong Liow, Nadirsyah Hosen, eds, Oxford: Routledge, 2010), 252-281.

hidden – if it exists at all.[452] This power links to a senior layer of aristocracy, economic barons, the highest level of state bureaucracy and the army leadership to ensure that whoever is elected, real power resides elsewhere.

Possibly the one exception to power being retained by the army or what can only be described as a 'deep state' is the period where power was held by Thaksin Shinawatra or his proxies, in the party originally known as Thai Rak Thai.[453] Thaksin was first elected in 2001 and was the first Thai politician to be able to win an outright majority in the Thai Parliament, thus exempting him from the usual constraints of coalition-building. This was achieved by what his detractors saw as blatantly populist promises made to poor electors in the populous North and Northeastern provinces – or what his admirers saw as the first Thai politician to actively listen to the poorer voter, make promises that would provide them with real and tangible benefits and then deliver on those promises, rather than assuming that the *Khwai* (buffaloes – a highly derogatory term of abuse often, though not exclusively used by Thai upper and middle class urbanites to label the rural poor) would behave themselves and vote for the usual self-designated leaders.[454] He was reelected in 2005 and parties led by his designates also won elections in 2007 and 2011. As McCargo observes:

"Thaksin's aim has been to displace network monarchy, and to replace it with a much more centralized form of political control."[455]

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[452] As an example, the King has recently taken back the land used by the Bangkok Zoo, one of the two racecourses in Bangkok and the current home of the Thai Parliament – leaving the latter homeless, as the designated new home is unfinished. It is not permitted to ask why.

https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/01/05/as-the-army-and-politicians-bicker-thailands-king-amasses-more-power, and https://www.economist.com/leaders/2019/03/16/thailands-bogus-election, *The Economist*, both accessed March 22, 2019.

[453] "Thais love Thais" – but the name has since changed twice as the party was deemed illegal and had to be reconstituted with a new identity each time.

[454] A discussion of the opposing views of Thaksin's populism can be found in Janjira Sombatpoonsiri, "Conservative Civil Society in Thailand", *The Mobilization of Conservative Civil Society*, Richard Youngs, ed, (Washington DC, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018), 28

[455] McCargo, "Thaksin and the Resurgence of Violence in the Thai South", 254-5.

As a result, he was strongly opposed by the 'network monarchy' and they were instrumental in the coup of 2006, in which he was overthrown. Exactly what the process was by which this took place remains murky, but a leading member of the network, Prem Tinsulanonda,[456] made it clear where he felt the monarchy stood:

"Because Prem is the king's chief adviser, his several highly-publicized speeches criticizing Thaksin made it clear that the palace wanted Thaksin out."[457]

Whatever the merits of Thaksin's role in modern Thai politics – a role that continues to bitterly polarise Thai society to this day – one fact is indisputable; Thaksin in power was a very damaging outcome for the Deep South of Thailand. A combination of his power base in the North, his background as a police officer before entering into business and his unshakeable belief in his own judgement meant that he owed nothing to either the Muslims of the South (who had traditionally voted for his opponents in the Democrat Party), or to the army or the bureaucrats who had managed to achieve a degree of stability and relative calm in the region. As a successful CEO of a large Thai conglomerate, Thaksin firmly believed that he should run Thailand in the fashion of a business CEO, failing to perceive the very different set of complexities that faced him. In two early actions, he dissolved the Southern Border Province Administrative Centre (SBPAC) on May 1st, 2002 and made the army in the region subservient to police authority in the same year. The SPBAC was widely regarded as responsible for creating a stable environment in the South acting as a bridge between the local community and the government, initiating dialogue and policies seen to be humane and accommodating to local concerns.[458] The police on the other hand may have been Thaksin's alma mater, but were widely perceived as being far more corrupt, inefficient

[456] Prem held many roles in Thai government, including being Prime Minister from 1980 to 1988. In 2006 he was President of the King's Privy Council. A military man by training and inclination he retained an influential place until May 2019, when he died at the age of 98 – two weeks after presiding over the marriage of King Rama X. Ironically his birthplace and original power base was the town of Songkhla, in the deep South of Thailand.

[457] Hewison and Kitirianglarp, "Thai-Style Democracy", 193.

[458] McCargo describes the SBPAC as "a liberal enclave…symbolizing the Thai state's sincerity and goodwill." McCargo, "Thaksin and the Resurgence of Violence in the Thai South", 256.

and hostile than the army. They were also understaffed and external in origin and language:

"[T]he state agency responsible for upholding the law, the Royal Thai Police, is considered one of the most inefficient and corrupt state agencies in Thailand. In Southern Thailand, inefficiency is perpetuated by a shortage of police officers, especially those who have Malay-language skills and informal ties to Malay communities."[459]

The heavy-handed policies of Thaksin and his government provoked a reaction in the outburst of violence in 2004, an outburst that represented the beginning of the modern insurgency and has continued ever since. 2004 is always used as the landmark date for the commencement of the modern insurgency, but in fact there had been several incidents during 2002 and 2003. McCargo suggests that the majority of these were created or triggered by the army, looking for increased budgets and greater control of the Thai-Malay border. Nevertheless, the death toll jumped to 624 in 2004[460] and saw the beginning of a new style of insurgency, more urban and more unpredictable in nature.[461] For Thaksin, this was both an embarrassment and a direct confrontation to his policies and actions. Like most Thai politicians before and since, he refused to acknowledge that there was a legitimate grievance being expressed and sought to conflate the rise in violence in the South with his active 'war' on drug dealers in the rest of the country.[462] Conflating the two issues not only allowed Thaksin to maintain a purely 'law and order' approach to the problems of the South, but also to leverage a relationship with the USA, to whom he presented the issue as one of a new

[459] Helbardt, "The Emergence of a Local Public Sphere Under Violent Conditions", 63.

[460] Deep South Watch, https://deepsouthwatch.org

[461] I will cover the forces driving insurrection and the way in which it has manifested itself later in this chapter.

[462] One of Thaksin's key policies was to eliminate the Thai drug problem by literally eliminating drug dealers – some 2800 people suspected of being involved in the drugs trade were killed by the state between in the first three months of 2003.

"Thailand's War on Drugs", Human Rights Watch, March 12, 2008, https://www.hrw.org/news/2008/03/12/thailands-war-drugs, accessed March 22, 2019.

battlefield in the continuing global war on Islamic terror – and one that would need (and receive) substantial funding as a result.[463] One side-effect of the war on drugs was the escalation of a turf battle for control between the Thai Army and Police – the latter killing many retired militants who had become useful informers for the army.[464]

So, for the Malay Muslims of Thailand, engagement in conventional political activity has been ineffectual, hampered by the complex and dysfunctional nature of modern Thai politics. The sad fact is that, not only are their numbers too small to provide useful leverage on a national stage, but also any actions seen to cater to their concerns are also seized on by the opposition as giving way to terrorists – and worse, from a Thai nationalist perspective, separatists. Any suggestion of responding to requests for local sensitivity or some form of autonomy is seen as traitorous and disloyal to the national monarchy – and as I already stated, that is an extremely dangerous proposition in Thailand. As a result the political avenues open to Southern Muslims have been limited to locally-based activity, NGO-led attempts to change specific circumstances or armed insurrection with the goal of forced autonomy or secession. I will come to all three of these shortly.

Before I do, I also want to look at the options for political leverage for the Cham people of Cambodia. At one point, before the takeover by the Khmer Rouge, Cham leaders had been involved in a putative separatist movement, *Front Uni de Lutte des Races Opprimées* – United Front for the Struggle of the Oppressed Races (FULRO). This organisation was an umbrella organisation representing the oppressed races of Indochina – besides the Cham it also represented the Montagnards, Khmer Krom (the Khmer people still living in the Mekong region now held by Vietnam), Lao minorities inside Vietnam – many of the minorities who could claim to be oppressed by the governments of Vietnam and Cambodia at the time.[465] A distinct Cham organisation, the *Front de la Libération du Champa*, led by Les Kosem, had been folded into

[463] Regilme, "Does US Foreign Aid Undermine Human Rights Does US Foreign Aid Undermine Human Rights", 1-23.

[464] McCargo, "Thaksin and the Resurgence of Violence in the Thai South", 53.

[465] Collins, "The Muslims of Cambodia", 42.

FULRO.[466] FULRO was represented at an international conference on Indochina's people, sponsored by Cambodian King Sihanouk in 1965, and had pressed a case for international recognition (unsuccessfully) at a meeting of Bandung Conference representatives in 1970.[467] At its height it had sponsored a renewed interest in the revival of the Cham language and even broadcast in Cham from both North and South Vietnam.[468] However a movement that functioned across national borders and was opposed to both the ruling governments in North and South Vietnam never stood much chance of success. As a Cham military unit led by Les Kosem had fought with Lon Nol's government against the KR, the KR saw it as an enemy, representing the socially conservative Muslim community, and its leaders disappeared into KR prisons, once they came to power:

"[T]he Muslims had an organization called "FULRO Champa," to defend the interests of the Muslims, led by Les Kasem [sic], a colonel in Phnom Penh during the Lon Nol period. So Pol Pot did not trust the Muslims. After 1975, in the eyes of the state organization there were no Muslims at all."[469]

Since the UN-sponsored elections of 1993, the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) led by Hun Sen have maintained an effective monopoly on political control, as discussed elsewhere. During this time the Cham Muslims have clearly been aligned to the CPP, both in recognition of the freedom and tolerance offered by the CPP compared to the persecution of the KR, but also because the leadership of the Cham have effectively been coopted by the CPP power structure. The CPP have also taken material steps to help the Muslim community, offering free passports to Hajj-bound pilgrims, providing prayer rooms at the main airports and either supporting or not interfering with

[466] Muhammad Zain bin Musa, 2001, "Malay And Cham Relations With The Kingdom Of Cambodia During And After The French Protectorate Period (1863-2000)", *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 74, no 2, 2001, 1-21.

[467] Collins, "The Muslims of Cambodia", 44.

[468] Scupin, "Historical, Ethnographic, and Contemporary Political Analyses of the Muslims of Kampuchea and Vietnam", 316.

[469] Ouch Bun Chhoen, a KR leader of the time, in conversation with Ben Kiernan. Kiernan, "Orphans of Genocide", 13.

programmes for education and mosque-building undertaken by foreign governments and NGO's, as described in Chapter Seven.[470] The Cambodian Cham are also very much aware of the peace dividend – concerned that an opposition victory would bring back a period of civil unrest in which they would suffer once more. The issue of relative freedom and tolerance under CPP rule is highly salient for the Cham, for whom the ability to dress, follow codes of behaviour and worship is an essential expression of their self-identity. It was mentioned frequently by Cham interviewees:

"The government have done a lot for Cham people in Cambodia." (DA, Male, 58)

"Things are much better now – Cham have rights to live as Muslims in dress and practice." (DE, Male, 58)

"We are never going to forget the government's kindness, helping us the most. [Hun Sen's government has] given us fairly … everything that we got from the government such as schools, educational centres and he supported Islam when compared to previous societies." (DH, Male, 69)

"Now we have comprehensive rights." (DJ, Female, 58)[471]

A real estate development in central Phnom Penh that saw the Muslim community lose property and land rights in 2016 forced the closure of the only Cham-language radio programme, after it was discussed on air; this certainly created friction between the government and the community, but nevertheless it seems like the Cham remain

[470] *Phnom Penh Post*, June 2, 2017, "CPP Maintains Cham Support, For Now" https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cpp-maintains-cham-support-now, accessed March 22, 2019.

[471] Interviews in Kampong Cham, June 11-14, 2018. I asked people about their view of the government and their position in society in all interviews. As local officials were present in Vietnam, it is difficult to give much credence to those responses. However in Cambodia and Thailand people were quite confident and willing to voice opinions.

closely aligned to the CPP, despite efforts of the opposition to woo them[472] – and the banning of the CNRP in 2018 makes the discussion moot for now.

Politics in Vietnam remain a monopoly of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) and the Cham are far too small a minority to have any influence or power for change. In both Cambodia and Thailand, Muslim politicians have achieved positions of power (Ahmad Yahya as personal advisor to Hun Sen in Cambodia, Wan Nor as Interior Minister in Thailand in 2002) but I am not aware of any Cham leaders in Vietnam's CPV. Official government policy remains tolerant of all religions – an official submission to an Australian inquiry into freedom of religion in 2016 is interesting because it singles out protection of Cham religious freedom as an example of Vietnamese tolerance.[473] When I conducted field interviews in Vietnam in May 2018, the interviewees were very positive about government support for their religion and their community – however as in each case it was mandatory to have a local police or government official present, it is impossible to assess the impartiality of those statements.

Militant liberation and separatist movements. Evolution, trends and status.

There have always been three functional political options for the Malay and Cham Muslims – to actively participate in the political system of their country, to passively accept 'colonial' rule as subjects of the ruling system, or to rebel against it and try to achieve a degree of self-government, either through autonomy within the state or through secession to independence or by joining a neighbouring state that would be more acceptable. I have discussed the first option. The second - acquiescence to dominance by the majority culture - has been the fate of both groups for a long time; how acceptable it is depends on the benevolence of the government of the time and the degree of resentment at a local level. I now want to turn to examining the third

[472] Ben Sokhean, "Kem Sokha Promises Political Tolerance to Cham Muslims", , *Cambodia Daily*, June 22, 2017https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/kem-sokha-promises-political-tolerance-to-cham-muslims-131604/, accessed March 22, 2019.

[473] https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Freedomofreligion/Submissions - submission 185, accessed March 20, 2019.

option; autonomy, secession or accession to a neighbouring state. Brown, in her recently published overview of the state of Islam in Thailand, claims that:

"The impoverished south, vulnerable to radicalization through some teachers, still desires neither secession nor autonomy."[474]

I am puzzled as to how she came to this conclusion; 15 years of continuous conflict must have been about *something*, that *someone* wants.

First, I need to stress that this is only an option that has been actively pursued in Thailand. After the failure of the FULRO movement in the 1950's and 60's it has been very clear that this is not a feasible path for the Cham of either Cambodia or Vietnam in recent years or the feasible future. Both groups are too small, too marginal and lack a contiguous geographic area to describe as a homeland[475] (unless we consider the historic area of the Champa Kingdom – but the vast majority of modern Cham live nowhere near it, or even in the same country). For the Cambodian Cham, a level of visibility and the perception of being different caused immense suffering in the 1970's and therefore is to be avoided at all costs. The Cham of Vietnam are very small in number, and furthermore are split into three distinct groups – Hindu and Cham Bani in the central lowlands and Sunni Islam Cham in the Mekong region. Oddly, I did discover a small California-based group arguing for Cham rights against the Vietnamese government – but I suspect that this is the outer limit of fringe politics.[476]

Second, for the Thai Malays, resistance to the state has never had a peaceful option. Any expression of a desire for an independent Patani state, accession to neighbouring Malaysia, or even a form of autonomy within Thailand has been met with complete hostility from the Thai State who see it as a grave danger to the structural integrity of

[474] Brown, *Islam in Modern Thailand*, 10.

[475] The situation of the Karen in Myanmar is an interesting parallel. "[I]n the delta the Karens were simply too scattered to form a political unit, even if overall they comprised 20 percent of the local population." Christopher Bayly, Tim Harper, 2008; *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire*, (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 392.

[476] http://champaka.info/, in Vietnamese only, accessed March 21, 2019.

the modern state, even an expression of disloyalty to the Monarchy – and therefore completely illegal. I described the reaction to Hajji Sulong's demands for concessions that would have created a degree of autonomy in 1949 – the demands were ignored and the spokesperson for them was imprisoned and then 'disappeared'.[477] Following the outbreak of violent rebellion in 2004, an attempt was made to find political solutions to solve the problem. The National Reconciliation Commission of 2005-06, headed by the respected Thai ex-Prime Minister, Anand Panyarachun, issued a report authored by the equally respected Chaiwat-Anand (whose work is cited elsewhere in this thesis). This report offered some steps towards a level of administrative, linguistic and political autonomy.[478] It was summarily shelved by the Thaksin government of the time – but in any case, as Askew points out, based on his conversations with people involved;

"A proposed council for Development had no administrative authority and was evidently a watered down version of stronger recommendations that were discouraged by a "big person" – most likely the President of the Privy Council, retired General Prem Tinsulanond – who had warned Anand not to propose anything smacking of regional autonomy."[479]

As mentioned earlier, Prem has played a crucial role in the network governance of Thailand for many years, and it is safe to assume has represented other "big people" in implacable hostility to any recommendations that make concessions towards autonomy for the South. Certainly Prem was identified with the rejection of the recommendation that Malay be adopted as a working (though not official) language for administration in the South.

Therefore, given that non-violent channels for promoting autonomy or secession were clearly closed, violent means were the remaining option. As Patani had been

[477] Chapter Four, 90.

[478] An English translation of the full report can be downloaded from http://thailand.ahrchk.net/docs/nrc_report_en.pdf, accessed May 15, 2019.

[479] Askew, 2010, 135-36.

incorporated into Thailand through sustained warfare in previous centuries, there had never been a perception of legitimate Thai rule in the first place and there had always been an undercurrent of violence in the relationship. Thai rule over the region had always been enforced by force and the region – like many contested border regions – had always had a reputation for lawlessness, smuggling and disorder. The region had been a safe haven for Communist guerillas conducting the insurgency against the British and then the Malaysian governments in the period between 1948 and 1960 and the defeated guerillas had settled in the region as they could not return to Malaysia.[480] As a result there was an exchange of assistance between the two groups at the time.[481] There had been several different factions and forces claiming to act for the oppressed people of the region, differentiated by their attitudes towards separation, the use of violence, the role of Islam as a legitimising factor. The most significant had been the Patani United Liberation Organisation (PULO) in the earlier stages of conflict, but after the revival of armed rebellion in 2004 the prominent factor seems to have been Barisan Revolusi Nasional – Coordinasi (National Revolutionary Front – Coordinate or BRN–C). Whereas the power base and territory of PULO had tended to be the more remote and rural parts of the region, the modern conflict was more urban in targeting, more youthful in enrolment and more overtly aligned towards the defence of Islam as part of their raison d'être, as opposed to the historically ethnic and nationalist core of PULO.[482] This is not to say that PULO was averse to using Islam as a legitimising tool when necessary, citing the Qur'an and Sunna to reinforce their message of insurrection.[483]

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[480] Ironically, this resistance was predominantly ethnically Chinese rather than Malay.

Peng, Chin, , *My Side Of History*, (Singapore: Media Masters, 2003). Peng was the leader of the Malay Communist Party during the insurrection. He died in exile in Thailand in 2013.

[481] Farish A Noor, "The Tablighi Jama'at as a Vehicle of (Re)Discovery: Conversion Narratives and the Appropriation of India in the Southeast Asian Tablighi Movement", *Islamic Connections: Muslim Societies in South and Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: ISEAS, 2009), 200-1.

[482] "The PULO has kept their demands for an independent Islamic state but the major characteristic of this movement is that it is more ethno-nationalist than Islamist." Christopher Paik, Jessica Vechbanyongratana, *Mandala Matters: Former Tributary States and Modern Civil Conflict in Thailand*, p. 101. (Working paper, http://www. eh. net/eha/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Vechbanyongratana. pdf, accessed May 12, 2019)

[483] Joseph Chinyong Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 126.

BRN-C is still seen as the leading force in armed resistance to the Thai State. BRN-C is not officially part of the MARA Pattani umbrella group that has been trying to participate in negotiations with the Thai state since March 2015, despite two negotiators being 'freelance' from BRN, making the value of those discussions very questionable.

"As an army officer in the Deep South observed about the dialogue process: 'We are fighting BRN but talking to Mara.'"[484]

The structure, aims and effectiveness of BRN-C are very difficult to ascertain as it is a highly secretive and cellular structure. It differs from many other similar movements in that it rarely claims responsibility for actions, identifies leaders, makes statements of aspirations or aims. However a 2015 study by Helbardt[485] lifted a metaphorical lid on what previously had been a highly opaque organisation,[486] examining structure, ambitions, recruitment policies and methodology, ways of taking action, etc. One aspect of this analysis that is specifically germane to this thesis is the relationship between BRN-C and the advocacy of Islam as a core part of their ideology. Although BRN-C has been more overt than PULO about an alignment between Islam and the independence of the Southern region, drawing a clear link between the oppressive force of the Thai state and the role of Buddhism as an alien and aggressive religion, in practice it seems that it uses the appeals of nationalism, ethnicity and religion interchangeably, used as recruitment and motivation factors to be stressed according to their appeal and relevance to the individual or the situation in hand. In the previous chapter I mentioned the reluctance of Thai separatists to be aligned with internationalist Islamic forces in opposition to the West, both from a pragmatic desire

[484] Matt Wheeler, "Thailand's Southern Insurgency in 2017: Running in Place", *Southeast Asian Affairs 2018*, Malcolm Cook, Daljit Singh, eds, (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2018), 378.

[485] Helbardt, *Deciphering Southern Thailand's Violence*.

[486] "Notably, most insurgents interrogated by officials (or interviewed by these authors) profess to have no knowledge of the name of the organization to which they belong, despite the uniformity of their training and indoctrination. " Askew and Helbardt, "Becoming Patani Warriors", 784.

to avoid American interest and also because the core of their cause is specific to one geographic issue.

The issue of what the separatists actually want to achieve is still confusing, even for people who have studied the issue for a long time. In April, 2019 I interviewed Dr. Srisompob Jitpiromsri, head of Deep South Watch and a lecturer at Prince of Songkla University in Pattani and asked him about the lack of clear demands for either autonomy or separation. He answered:

"I think that it's a special characteristic of the country here. The insurgent movements and separatist movements are underground movements. They never show themselves in public. We know about PULO, we know about BRN but not official documents. They never show up to make statements. They never have statements confirming that they caused dissident violence. No political statement at all. Because they know that the Thai state, is strong at control and manipulation. It's very good at controlling and manipulating things. They are very disadvantaged for over 100 years, the Thai state has Bangkok leaders [who] are very good at manipulation. Sometimes, you look like you are open, you are good, you talk, but sometimes you can be suppressed. It can go both ways with the Thai state. When they are strong, they are very brutal as well. So, this is very disadvantageous. I think that the area of movement here is not quite large-scale, we have only 3 provinces, limited area of movement, so it's very disadvantaged. So actually, separatist movements use a very underground way of movement. They never make any official statement, but local people know that they are the actors of violence."[487]

That being said, BRN-C – and other violent separatist movements – have acted with ruthless, cold-blooded hostility towards the minority Buddhists of the region - and towards fellow Muslims where they have been seen to be allied with, or even appeasing, the Thai state. Specific attacks have taken place against Buddhist civilians, and Buddhist clergy, with the intent of terrorising the community, driving them out of the region, breaking down any cordial relationship between Buddhist and Muslim

[487] Interview with Dr. Srisompob, April 29, 2019.

neighbours – and simply outraging the Thai state and majority population. This has not only caused significant polarisation in the South, but also in the rest of the country. Buddhist resistance has been encouraged at the highest level, with the Royal Family actively supporting armed Buddhist resistance from an early stage:

"This self-image was reinforced by a controversial speech by the Queen in November 2004, in which she called upon 'all three hundred thousand Thais' in the region to learn how to shoot."[488]

Given the very strict laws governing comment on the Royal Family in Thailand, it is difficult to know how this partisanship was perceived by Malay Muslims. My perception is that they are viewed more favourably than other Thai institutions, as suggested by one interviewee, quoted in Chapter Nine, page 221. However it would be very risky to say otherwise.[489]

Support from the Royal Family has also been helpful in the funding and development of armed groups acting as self-defence paramilitaries, sourced from both Buddhist and Muslim Communities. Indeed McDermott alleges that many more Muslims (the "vast majority" of the claimed 50,000 members) have joined the largest self-defence force (Chor Ror Bor) than the insurgency.[490] The Buddhist-only self defence force, Or Ror Bor, received royal patronage. However McCargo is fairly scathing about the effectiveness and competing loyalties of these groups.[491]

(I will address the role of Buddhism as it impacts on Muslim minorities in the next chapter, including the Buddhist reaction to Muslim violence at both an official and social level.)

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[488] McCargo, Thai Buddhism, 4.

[489] Thailand's lèse-majesté laws are described in Jerryson, *If You Meet The Buddha On The Road*, 21. These laws are not just enforced by the state, but also by online and social vigilantes, as discussed in Sombatpoonsiri, "Conservative Civil Society in Thailand ", 29-30.

[490] Gerard McDermott, "At the Kingdom's Edge – Exploring Thailand's Forgotten Conflict", *Magill*, 2012 https://magill.ie/archive/kingdoms-edge-exploring-thailands-forgotten-conflict, accessed March 22, 2019.

[491] McCargo, Tearing apart The Land, 123.

The conflict continues without any end in sight after 15 years since the revival of systematic armed conflict in 2004. It damages the economy of the region, imperils the safety of everyone in the region, no matter which 'side' they come from and continues to alienate the Deep South provinces from the rest of the country. A relatively few people are active, but they have an impact way beyond their numbers. Figures are obviously impossible to measure accurately; Askew and Helbardt quote an army estimate in 2008 of estimated 300 active insurgents, 3000 who were trained but not currently active and around 30,000 non-combatant insurgents– or about 2% of the regional population.[492] The problem – or one of them – is that it is good business for many of the people involved and has little or no effect on the Thai people or Thai economy outside the region. Accusations are regularly levelled against the insurgents, the army, the police, the politicians and the business people – that all of them are in some way benefiting financially from the conflict. Whether this is through collusion in criminal activity or increased budgets devoted to peace-keeping and economic incentives – concrete facts are impossible to pin down, but the general belief of people in the region is that many parties benefit from ongoing disturbance and collaborate in order to make sure the money continues to flow:[493]

"This is a golden area for corruption." AA (Male, 25, Pattani)
"Those who command the 'Juwae'[494] might be the same as those who control the military." AB (Male, 24, Pattani)
"The military get risk payments so want [the violence] to carry on." AH (Female, 21, Pattani)
"40% Juwae – otherwise politics and crime. Drugs." AL (Male, 21, Pattani)
"It's a business – smuggling goods, gasoline, drugs, that's how they get the money to keep [the conflict] running." BC (Male, 31, Hat Yai)
"Many groups – drug dealers, those funded by the government, the separatists." BJ (Female, 28, Satun)

[492] Askew and Helbardt, Becoming Patani Warriors, 780.

[493] Interviews undertaken by the author in 2018 and 2019. See footnote 471 for the question and also a view on how reliable these interviews are.

[494] Juwae – local Malay, warrior or fighter.

"The government use [the conflict] to make money. They even shoot their own people." EG (Male, 31, Narathiwat)[495]

"If there's peace, there's no money. Everyone benefits." EK. (Male, 46, Narathiwat.)

Within Thailand, the violence stays within the provinces and therefore does not affect ordinary Thai people, or the immensely important tourist industry (20% of Thailand's GDP).[496] I asked Dr. Phansasiri Kularb of the School of Communication Arts at Chulalongkorn University why she thought this was:

"Because if you want to organise attacks elsewhere, it requires a lot of moving and relocation and coordination. I'm not sure if the insurgents want to spend their energy on that. I think that in the earlier days of the conflict, there were some suspicions over students at Ramkamhaeng University because there were clubs that belong to Malay students or people from the Southern border. But it hasn't been discussed in the media that much, so I don't know if that's still the case, or if there's some big community of Malay Muslims in Bangkok. I would guess it's more fear of the plan backfiring and intensifying security measures."[497]

A combination of logistical challenges, fear of retribution and (perhaps) inability to escalate the conflict to a higher level keep the conflict zone in the Deep South, where it can be contained, managed – and profited from. As Dubus and Pokla observe:

The huge budget for the South - 199 billion Baht[498] overall from 2004 to 2010 - had somehow created what the International Crisis Group calls an "industry of insecurity."[499]

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[495] A similar observation is made by Dr. Phansasiri in her recent book on media coverage of the 'Southern Fire': "There were several episodes in which the officials were killed in a personal dispute. However the incidents were filed as a result of the unrest, so that police investigators would approach the cases differently from typical criminal acts, and the victims could then earn compensation payment." Kularb, *Reporting Thailand's Southern Conflict*, 38.

[496] See the discussion in Chapter Six, 133.

[497] Interview, March 4, 2019

[498] US$ 6.6 billion at 2019 exchange rates.

[499] Arnaud Dubus, Sor Rattanamanee Polkla, "Policies of the Thai State towards the Malay Muslim South (1978-2010)", (Bangkok: IRASEC, 2011), 94.

NGO activity – indigenous and external; politics and other causes.

When peaceful political channels - either as part of a larger political movement or as indigenous expressions of aspiration – are either closed or unnavigable, and violent channels are discounted, what else remains as a means of expression for the Muslims of this region? The answer, as in so many places around the world, is to utilise alternative political methods to try and affect change based around specific issues. These focal points may be around the desire for peace but are also focused on the Human Rights failings of the government, the poor quality of education and the environmental and economic issues caused by blatant exploitation of local resources or misguided government initiatives.

In Vietnam non-government organisation meets with immediate hostility from the CPV. The spread of online social media, with a relatively small force of control compared to the Great Firewall of China,[500] has acted as a platform for collective expression of concern or hostility, usually around very specific expressions of concern over environmental or business issues, but this is unstructured and comes from the majority population, not the Cham. In Cambodia, NGO's have been extremely active in many areas of society, ever since the UN took over responsibility for the country in 1992. This level of involvement has met a mixed reaction from the government of Cambodia, welcoming the aid and investment but resenting and rebuffing attempts to redraw society as a result. Most NGO activity has been driven by external forces – countries and organisations becoming involved in order to try and affect positive change for a suffering people. This has also been true from a Muslim perspective, with involvement from Malaysia, and the Middle East in education, religious revival and infrastructure – as mentioned in Chapter Seven. This specificity of focus has enabled the Cambodian-based Muslim NGO's to function without government hostility; at the same time it also limits the effectiveness of local actors trying to achieve substantial change in their situation.

[500] Giang, "Vietnamese Media Going Social", 905.

In Thailand, locally-based and developed NGO activity has been a much more visible part of society. As Thailand has veered between quasi-democratic and military rule, it has created space for local organisations to take up issues and act effectively to achieve change. One of the most cited – and one undertaken by Muslims, the historic Cham community of Bangkok's Ban Khrua district – was particularly effective in preventing the destruction of their community by the building of a new highway. Chaiwat cites this, not only as an example of Muslim self-empowerment, but also as a demonstration of the effectiveness of the student Muslim organisations founded at the time.[501] There have also been several organisations founded with the specific intention of alleviating the conditions of Muslims in the South, focusing on Women's Issues, Political Monitoring, Human Rights Abuses, Environmental Concerns and others. Deep South Watch, hosted by Prince of Songkla University in Pattani, (https://deepsouthwatch.org/en), for example ,has been providing a monitoring service, platform for discussion, source of information and independent source for news and development consistently since 2006. There have also been a number of women's groups trying to focus on peaceful solutions to alleviate the situation. Noteworthy among these is the Network of Civic Women for Peace, led by Soraya Jamjuree, who is also a professor at Prince of Songkla University. In September 2016, they were part of an alliance of 23 women's groups of both religions who marched in Pattani to support the dialogue between the Thai state and MARA Patani. When I interviewed Dr. Soraya in April, 2019, she stressed their focus on victim support and creating 'safe spaces' which will become conflict-free. However women's groups have inevitably been criticised for factionalism and perceived alignments to one or other side.[502] Environmental groups focused on specific sites have been focused on preventing developments that were seen to be disruptive to local life and damaging to the environment – in the South noticeable successes in delaying development have taken place at the proposed deep water port at Pak Bara in majority-Muslim Satun

[501] Chaiwat Satha-Anand, , 2001, "Defending Community, Strengthening Civil Society; A Muslim minority's Contribution to Thai Civil Society", *Islam and Civil Society in Southeast Asia* N Mitsuo, S Siddique, OF Bajunid, eds, (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2001), 91-103.

[502] "Unifying Women's Groups in a Divided society in Thailand's Deep South" *Prachatai*, February 19, 2018, https://prachatai.com/english/node/7633, accessed March 22, 2019.

province[503] and the coal-fired power station at Thepha, in Songkhla province, but adjacent to Pattani.[504] Historically local protests in the Deep South have also targeted the exploitation of fishing grounds by large commercial fisheries, but with less success, as the fishing fleet owners have considerable political leverage.

I believe there are three issues that NGO's have to face when trying to create a better environment for Muslims in societies where they are a minority and facing governments who do not see minority rights as a particularly high priority. First, it is very difficult for NGO's or other forms of Civil Society to function in non-democratic environments, where their voices are seen as hostile to a single-voice dictatorship. In a review of the links between Islam and Civil society in Southeast Asia, Bajunied argues that Islam and Civil Society are not only compatible but interlinked, but without a democratic framework it is hard for any NGO-like activity to be effective.[505] Although writing in 2001, when the prospects for peace and democracy in the region seemed much brighter, more recent experience seems to prove this to be true.

Second, there are major social issues that affect people who are experiencing ongoing periods of conflict and social disruption. The inability to improve social and economic circumstances through internal migration, being confined to a minority and repressed environment is one, as mentioned previously in Chapter Six. However there are also clear repercussions for people growing up in this environment.[506] The ongoing instability has been documented to cause severe problems with drug addiction - mentioned previously in Chouvy and Messonnier's work on Methamphetamine in the

[503] Thodsapol Hongtong, "Pak Bara Port Plans Shelved, Source Says", *Bangkok Post*, July 19, 2018, https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1505862/pak-bara-port-plans-shelved-source-says, accessed May 15, 2019.

[504] "PM Suspends Thepha Coal-Fired Power Plant Project", *Thai PBS*, January 30, 2018, http://englishnews.thaipbs.or.th/pm-suspends-thepha-coal-fired-power-plant-project/, accessed May 15, 2019.

[505] Omar Farouk Bajunid, "Islam and Civil Society in Southeast Asia: A Review", *Islam and Civil Society in Southeast Asia,* 177-202.

[506] Kathleen Ford, Aree Jampaklay, Aphichat Chamratrithirong, "Coming of age in a conflict area: Mental health, education, employment, migration and family formation in the southernmost provinces of Thailand", *International Journal of Social Psychiatry 2018*, 1-10.

region[507] (and also in many of my interviews). There are also social problems with teenagers rebelling against such a difficult environment[508] and specifically high levels of mental trauma being experienced as a result of long exposure to the conflict.[509] A recent study showed a clear correlation between exposure to conflict and mental health problems among primary school children – more than twice as likely to have problems among those who had been exposed to conflict situations.[510]

Finally, attempting to take action to improve the situation, or even expressing or documenting areas of concern, can be very dangerous for the people concerned. This is the case in Cambodia:

"Cambodians today continue to suffer from poverty (especially in rural areas), widespread corruption, and human rights abuses (politically ordered arrests and sometimes killings, land grabs, clampdowns on freedom of expression and association, etc.) and thus are in a state of negative peace."[511]

As for Thailand, two examples can indicate the challenge. When a group of Thai Human Rights organisations published a report on torture by the army in the Deep South in 2016, they were prosecuted by the state on behalf of the army, for refusing to disclose their sources.[512] The charges were dropped in November 2017 but as Amnesty International's regional director, James Gomez, said:

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[507] Chouvy and Messonnier, *Yaa Baa*. See Chapter Five, page 119 of this thesis.

[508] Sateemae, Abdel-Monem, Sateemae, "Religiosity and Social Problems among Muslim Adolescents in Southern Thailand, 3-24.

[509] Wit Wichaidit, "Trauma from Armed Conflict and the Effect on Mental Health in Thailand's Deep South: A Systematic Review", *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research*, 12:7, (2018), VE 1-6.

[510] Jirawan Jayuphan, Rassamee Sangthong, Narisa Hayeevani, Sawitri Assanangkornchai, Edward McNeil, "Mental Health Problems from Direct vs Indirect Exposure to Violent Events Among Children Born and Growing Up in a Conflict Zone of Southern Thailand", *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, (2019), 1-6.

[511] Laura S McGrew, "Victims and Perpetrators in Cambodia: Communities Moving Towards Reconciliation on a Rocky Road", *Reconciliation in Conflict-Affected Communities: Practices and Insights from the Asia-Pacific,* Kathy Jenkins, D B Subedi, Bert Jenkins, eds, (Singapore: Springer, 2018), 23.

[512] The actual report can be downloaded at https://voicefromthais.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/torture-report-english-as-of-10-feb-2016-

"While it is heartening that the charges against three brave human rights defenders have finally been dropped, the fact is they should never have been brought in the first place."[513]

Most infamously, there is the case of the lawyer, Somchai Neelapaijit, who 'disappeared' in March 2004 after achieving a high profile as a defender of people accused of separatist involvement at the time. His case has been thoroughly investigated but no individual has ever been charged, despite copious evidence. As the afore-mentioned historian Chaiwat says in an article about this case:

"Despite changes in government in the last five years, the Thai state fails to protect the rights and lives of those who have tried to defend human rights in Thai society and that once disappearance happens there have been scant attempts to get behind the truth about these cases."[514]

Conclusion.

The expression of political belief and the ability to act on it meaningfully is vital for minorities if they are to feel part of a greater society and to feel that they enjoy rights within that society. This is clearly articulated in the interview responses from Thai participants – less so from those in Cambodia and Vietnam, given the risk of expressing dissent in those societies. The ability to participate in the political life of the state to whatever degree is important as an expression of citizenship, as active role players within the construction of society and as actors trying to change and improve the

released-version.pdf) It goes into very specific detail about the use of torture by the Thai authorities in the period 2014-15 and makes clear recommendations for improvement in the handling and reduction of these incidents.

[513] "Thailand: Defamation Charges Dropped against Amnesty International Chairperson", https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/11/thailand-defamation-charges-dropped-against-amnesty-international-chairperson/, accessed March 22, 2019.

[514] Satha-Anand, "Missing Lawyer of Thailand", 111.

quality of life and the circumstances within which they find themselves. As the opening quotation in this chapter highlights, most people acquire citizenship at birth and have no opportunity to change it – therefore the ability to try and make the most of it is vital for meaningful citizenship. Certainly the states of Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam would claim that they provide opportunities for minorities, whether ethnic or religious, to express themselves and to enjoy freedom of expression within the constraints that they feel are necessary or correct.

Within that context, the Muslim ethnic minorities of this part of Southeast Asia strive to become engaged, or at least to have their voices heard. This can take the form of becoming independent political actors, becoming involved in the broader political activity of the nation, trying to change the circumstances of their existence through autonomy or secession, or by focusing on specific issues that can create positive change around the issue itself. Unfortunately, none of these avenues have proven to be effective for the communities in question. There are some basic reasons for this:

- The minority position of the Muslim groups and their clear separation from the majority, both ethnically and religiously, leaves them ineffectual. Alone they do not command the leverage to make a significant difference. As participants in broader political activity they are also marginalised, often used by leaders or representatives for personal gain, and any concessions they attempt to achieve are used as signs of weakness that can be exploited by hostile oppositions. This is exacerbated by a lack of cohesiveness in the community – Muslims do not act as a bloc with a single voice in this region, or anywhere else.

- A blatant deficit in democracy across the region, coupled with strong forces that act to exert control on any social dialogue – military, hierarchically, or through the power of the Communist Party structure – make attempts to make change extremely difficult for opposing views in the majority population, let alone for minorities.

- Attempts at an armed struggle are unsuccessful in the one country where they are attempted. After 15 years of revived violent separatism there is no sign of

> any meaningful change as a result. Thousands of people have died to no effect – but also with no success in solving the problem from the state. The goals of the armed struggle are unclear and rarely expressed. The idea that the region might secede and join Malaysia is absurd; the Thai state would never permit it and the Malay state does not want it. Indeed, apart from a rare expression in a demonstration in 2006, it is never mentioned. An independent state – Patani Darussalam – is also unfeasible; the territory is too small, too unstable, too poor and has no serious structure or concept behind it. Therefore autonomy seems to be the only option – but that is not claimed or set out in any way and the Thai state remains implacably hostile to it. Dr. Soraya was of the impression that some informal discussions had tried to ascertain what goals might be acceptable to the insurgents, but at a very superficial level.[515] Furthermore, there is no support externally from the neighbouring country, from the region as represented in ASEAN, from the Islamic world or even from Islamic militants active in other parts of the world. Every so often the Thai government likes to express a worry about this, but more for effect than from a genuine concern.[516] As long as the conflict remains localised in the border provinces, there is no likelihood of it concerning – or even being noticed by – a wider audience.

The one avenue that does seem to offer productive involvement is that of participation in a broader Civil Society through NGO and related activity. This is not without risk (as discussed) and can seem like a difficult struggle. However it has been successful in effecting change, adding benefits to a marginalised society and acting as a channel for expression that can attract notice and motivate an otherwise pacified audience. It requires an openness of society that is not present in contemporary governments, but still offers a route to self-expression and meaningful change.

[515] Interview, April 29, 2019.

[516] For example, back in 2004: "A government report stated that 18 Muslim youths trained in terrorist activities by Libya were returning to carry out terrorist acts in the southern provinces." Satha-Anand, *The Life Of This World*, 82.

In the next chapter, I will look at the context within which our minorities live – specifically the way in which the alignment of Buddhism with society and the state impacts on the lives of minority Muslims in Cambodia and Thailand. This involves an understanding of the broader local context – the philosophical underpinnings of Buddhism as it has evolved to impact on society and social structure; the way in which that philosophy is expressed and acted on by state and by religious leadership in the region; and the way in which that philosophy is expressed at a popular level for Buddhists coexisting with Muslim fellow citizens.

Chapter Nine. The Muslim interface with the Buddhist world (and the complex of religions in Vietnam).

"A sweet religion whose doctrines of resignation are marvelously suited to a tired people." (Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia, quoting – approvingly - Louis Finot)[517]

Introduction.

So far I have looked at the situation of the Muslim minorities themselves – their historic origins and experience, and how they live, work, pray and express themselves within the context of the states of Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. My field interviews confirm the clearly separate identity of these people, even as they live closely with a different society. In each case the Muslims are a small minority – ranging from 1 – 5% of population according to best census estimates over time. In the case of Cambodia and Thailand the majority population is overwhelmingly Buddhist – 97% in Cambodia and 95% in Thailand. The remainder are minority religions, of which Christianity forms about 0.4% in Cambodia and 1% in Thailand.[518] In both countries the form of Buddhism is very similar – Theravada Buddhism, prominent in Southeast Asia as opposed to the Mahayana Buddhism more often practiced in China, Japan and Korea. In Cambodia, Buddhism is the official state religion; Thailand has no state religion, despite Buddhist pressure to give Buddhism that status each time a new constitution is adopted. Nevertheless Buddhism holds a privileged position in Thailand, as described in my introduction and also in the analysis of the link between Buddhism and the Royal Family, described in Chapter Four – hardly surprisingly, given its dominant position in population terms.

Therefore the purpose of this chapter is to examine the role of Buddhism as it pertains to the situation of Muslims in the region. At the beginning of Chapter Two I suggested

[517] J P Armstrong, *Sihanouk Speaks*, (New York: Walker, 1964), 30.

[518] CIA World Factbook 2015, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/, accessed March 23, 2019.

that a weakness of the existing scholarship in this area was that it tended to focus on minority experience and practice without contextualising that against the broader backdrop of society. This is important for two reasons – to understand the philosophical and practical relationship between majority Buddhism and minority Islam, and to understand the practical implications for the lives of the two communities as they coexist and how this impacts the ability of Muslims to enjoy freedoms of belief, behaviour and expression in the context of their minority position. In order to do that, I need to look at the way in which Buddhism has been adopted in the region, the way in which it is practiced as a dominant belief system and philosophy and the way in which that expresses itself through the operations of the state. In a famous statement by Weber, the state tries to own a monopoly on the use of legitimate violence within its territory,[519] and therefore I will look at the attitude of Buddhism towards the use of violence – not only as a philosophical context but also because this has very real implications for life in modern Southeast Asia. I also need to look at the Muslim view of and reaction to Buddhist control – after all the position of Muslim minorities under non-Muslim rule is not only a global issue, but also a key question examined by the various Islamic schools of law over the centuries. The position of Muslims as religious minorities in Europe has been a key driver in changing the discussion of multiculturalism from one based on ethnicity to one that views religion as a key identifier of a minority in Western society.[520] Finally I will look at how Buddhism is manifested in real terms, not just by the state or the priesthood, but by the ordinary civilians of the state. This means looking at how the two religions engage and coexist and how their different theologies impact on the life of their followers in this context.

Not quite finally – this work also covers the situation of the Vietnamese Muslims of the Mekong Delta region. In Vietnam the role of religion is quite different. Of course the rule of the Communist Party of Vietnam, (CPV) suggests a Communist atheistic attitude to religion, defined as the 'opiate of the masses' by Karl Marx, but there is also a long

[519] Dagmar and Tony Walters, *Weber's Rationalism and Modern Society, New Translations on Politics, Bureaucracy and Social Stratification*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 136.

[520] See Modood, *Multiculturalism,* and Hellyer, *Muslims of Europe*, as two examples of this shift.

and complex set of religious beliefs in Vietnam, predating Communist rule and still honoured in belief and practice.[521] I will look at how the complex history and interaction of Vietnamese religious beliefs relate to the position of Muslims in Vietnam, in theory and practice.

The position of Buddhism in Southeast Asia.

This is not the place to discuss the rich detail of Buddhist philosophy and practice. My intention here is to provide some historical and cultural context, and then to look at how the form of Buddhism, manifested in Cambodia and Thailand as a majority religion, impacts on the minority Muslims.

Despite the fact that Buddhism is the third largest global religion, defined by number of adherents, there are relatively few states where Buddhism forms a majority religion and fewer where Buddhism is officially or practically the leading religious force within the country. However it remains the dominant religion across much of East Asia, either prevalent or highly visible everywhere except The Philippines and Timor-Leste (where Christianity is the majority religion) and the Islamic-majority states of Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia. Buddhism is believed to have become established in Southeast Asia during the first millennium (CE), transmitted by travellers from Sri Lanka and South India and championed by King Aniruddha of Pagan (in modern Myanmar) and King Ramkhamhaeng in Sukhothai.[522] Southeast Asian Buddhists are usually adherents to the Theravada School, as opposed to Mahayana Buddhism, which is more prevalent in Northern and Far Eastern Asia. However there are deep overlaps between Theravada and Mahayana practice – certainly from an outsider's perspective, the differences are more esoteric and less divisive than those in other major religions. One important difference though, that does have an effect on the way in which the management of

[521] Freedom of religion has always been an expressed objective of Vietnam's leadership, dating back to the original declaration of independence by Ho Chi Minh in 1945.

Peter Hansen, "The Vietnamese State, the Catholic Church and the Law", *Asian Socialism and Legal Change: The Dynamics of Chinese and Vietnamese Reform*, John Gillespie, Pip Nicholson, eds, (Canberra: ANU Press, 2005), 311

[522] Prapod Assavavirulhakarn, *The Ascendancy of Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia*, (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2010), 1.

Buddhism in Thailand affects the relationship with the Muslim population, is the centrality of the Pāli language and the Pāli Canon, the set of scriptures central to Theravada learning, used in practice by the Buddhist monkhood. As it spread across Asia, Buddhism tended to become adopted through the attachment of Buddhist teachers to the courts of local monarchs, and therefore be closely linked with the rule of royalty throughout the principalities of the region.[523] This affinity to the ruling dynasties of the region was reflected in the concept of the *Cakravartin Dharmarāja*, the 'wheel-turning righteous king', as an option for the enlightened figure who chooses to remain active in the world, rather than turn away from it.

"The *Cakravartin Dharmarāja* is therefore a secular equivalent of the Buddha and is thus responsible for instilling Buddhist ideals throughout his realm."[524]

As Thongchai states, in his introduction to an analysis of the evolution of modern Thailand:

"In the Theravada Buddhist polity of the region, the righteous kingship, the universal monarch or *cakravatin,* was obliged to protect the religion from declining. Protecting the religion and the quest for supremacy were one and the same mission."[525]

In other words, the king legitimised the religion and undertook to protect and support it; conversely, the religion legitimised and supported the rule of the king. This clear affinity between monarch and religion is very clear in the practice of Buddhism as a state religion in both countries.[526] The link between state and Buddhism became especially clear in Thailand from the beginning of the 20th Century – as Jerryson suggests, a reaction to the pressure on Thai independence from the Colonial powers, and therefore the defensive efforts made by King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) to build a

[523] Alexander Wynne, Buddhism: An Introduction, (London: IB Tauris, 2015), 209.

[524] Ibid., 210.

[525] Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 83.

[526] I discussed the source and enabling of spiritual authority for the Thai King in Chapter Four.

cohesive notion of Thai nationhood and unity.[527] However it therefore legitimises the implication that anyone who is not a Buddhist is not authentically Cambodian or Thai and is therefore in some way disloyal. Dubus quotes King Vajiravuth (Rama VI) as saying, in a 1914 speech to his personal military unit:

"Every religion is suitable to particular nations and races. Buddhism is suitable to the Siamese race and 'inseparable from our nation'. In other words, Buddhism is for Thai people. Besides, no other countries in the world knows Buddhism better than Siam, and Buddhism is only secure in Siam."[528]

More recently, a recent analysis of the growth in hostility to Islam in Thailand pointed out:

"[I]n the view of Thai Buddhists, a Muslim can never become fully Thai and therefore, can never grasp and appreciate Thainess."[529]

This idea of religion being an expression of loyalty to the state was prevalent in early European nation states, as Anthony Smith states:

"Since religion was the main source of unity and cleavage in early modern society, the kings sought to exclude all those who did not adhere to the dominant and majority religion of the state in the hope of making their societies more cohesive through the principle of an exclusionary "nationalism"."[530]

The problem for Muslims in modern Southeast Asia is that this is still the case; as Buddhism is aligned as a central tenet of the modern nation state, there is still support for an argument that they are therefore logically excluded from the full realisation of

[527] Jerryson, *Buddhist Fu*ry, 46.

[528] Dubus, "Policies of the Thai State towards the Malay Muslim South (1978-2010)", 74.

[529] Pathan, Tuansiri, Koma, *Understanding Anti-Islam Sentiment in Thailand*, 29.

[530] Smith, *The Cultural Foundation of Nations*, 117.

citizenship. The congruence between full citizenship and a particular religion has become part of the expression of many of the modern states of Southeast Asia.

Buddhism and the state.

The modern states of Cambodia and Thailand profess positions of religious tolerance and support for the freedom of belief in their citizens, and the organisation of minority religions, so long as they do not interfere with other beliefs or subvert the peace of the kingdom. I have already described the clear articulation of support for the minority Cham Muslims of Cambodia by Hun Sen and his government. Freedom of religion is also guaranteed in the Thai constitution (the version adopted in 2017, which is the most recent – but also in the numerous previous constitutions). [531] However it also states that the King must be a Buddhist,[532] and Section 67 describes the role of the state in protecting and supporting Theravada Buddhism, "which is the religion observed by the majority of the Thai people for a long period of time."[533] Article 47 of the most recent Cambodian constitution, revised in 1999 also guarantees the same freedom of religion, but the same clause also specifies that the official religion of Cambodia is Buddhism.[534] A note of caution should be sounded about any automatic assumption that because these rights are enshrined in the official constitutions they are available in reality – as they were also present in the constitution promulgated by the Khmer Rouge government when they took power in Cambodia in 1975, albeit with a significant caveat:

"Every Cambodian has the right to worship according to any religion and the right not to worship according to any religion. *Reactionary religion which is detrimental to*

[531] Constitution 2017, Downloaded from http://www.constitutionalcourt.or.th/occ_en/download/article_20170410173022.pdf on March 24, 2019., 31.

[532] Ibid., 4 – "The King is a Buddhist and upholder of religions."

[533] Ibid., 21.

[534] Website of the Office of the Council of Ministers, Cambodia, http://pressocm.gov.kh/en/archives/9539, accessed March 24, 2019.

Democratic Cambodia and the Cambodian People is absolutely forbidden."[535] (Italics, mine.)

A recent review of constitutional arrangements in Southeast Asia defined the relationship between state and religion as a formal prioritisation of religion in Cambodia and Thailand, and statist or communitarian states that tend to regard religion as an aspect of state control (Vietnam).[536] In Cambodia, Buddhism is not only given a special place in the constitution, but also Buddhist philosophy is seen to have informed the character of the constitution itself.[537]

Despite the official link between the Thai monarchy and Buddhism, the late King Rama IX, who ruled from 1946 to 2016, was seen by many southern Muslims to be somehow above the circumstances of their oppression – McDermott describes how his portrait was regularly on display in Muslim shops and homes[538] and I have also observed this – indeed it was expressed to me explicitly in one interview:

"We have the same father, which is our King, the King Rama IX." AF. (Female, 37, Pattani.)[539]

Perhaps expressed loyalty to the King is a way of showing 'Thainess' for people who are otherwise in conflict with, or distrusted by, the state? Prior to the imposition of the State of Emergency in 2004, the local Buddhist *wat* (temple) in the South would also act as a focal point for both communities to celebrate the King's birthday. Now,

[535] Quoted in Ian Harris, 2005, *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice*, (Hawai'i, University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 174.

[536] Jaclyn L Neo, Bui Ngoc Son, "Pluralist Constitutions and the Southeast Asian Context", *Pluralist Constitutions in Southeast Asia*, Jaclyn L Neo, Bui Ngoc Son, eds, (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2019), 5.

[537] Taing Ratana, "Pluralist Constitution in Cambodia", *Pluralist Constitutions in Southeast Asia*, 183.

[538] McDermott, "At the Kingdom's Edge ", 25.

[539] Interview. February 21st, 2018. Note that this was said 16 months *after* Rama IX had died. The respondent was answering a question about how Muslims are seen by society in general.

however, they are seen as a profane space to be avoided by Muslims, for reasons that I will mention shortly.[540]

As Buddhism is the official state religion in Cambodia, one might expect the relationship between state Buddhism and the Muslim minority population to be similarly alienating, and indeed it has been said that "to be Khmer is to be Buddhist."[541] However in fact the use of Buddhism as a tool for state authority in Cambodia has been much less overt. There are a number of reasons for this: the state authority is inconsistent in its application and reach, and therefore less able to monitor local behaviour – for this reason the state is more concerned with issues of political dissent, at the expense of social engineering. There has been no attempt to exert an independent course of action by any section of the Cham community since the downfall of the FULRO movement described in previous chapters, and therefore they have not come into conflict with the Buddhist state in the same way. The trauma of the KR era and subsequent years of conflict have led to a situation where the majority of people in both communities value tranquility and avoid contention – and the state of orthodox Buddhism in Cambodia is far weaker, with the Buddhist clergy being politicised, reduced in numbers after their ranks were dramatically depleted by the KR and lacking basic education and Buddhist textual resources.[542] I will expand on this point shortly.

It is worth coming back to the point that there have been regular attempts to have Buddhism enshrined as the state religion in Thailand, lobbied for by factions within the Buddhist establishment and by popular movements such as the very controversial, but also very popular, Dhammakaya temple.[543] Given the frequency with which Thailand

[540] Jerryson, "Appropriating a Space for Violence", 34.

[541] Smith-Hefner, quoted in McGrew, "Victims and Perpetrators in Cambodia", 107. Note *Khmer*, not Cambodian – but there are Khmer who are Muslims too.

[542] Ibid., 108.

[543] Since its foundation in 1970, the Dhammakaya movement, led by the monk Phra Dhammajayo, has attracted huge support, but also been the subject of much criticism and regular legal attempts to constrain it. Its detractors see it as highly political, involved in corruption and overly populist in its approach to Buddhism. Its main temple, just outside Bangkok is reputed to be the largest religious complex in the world and can accommodate over 200,000 worshippers. A fairly skeptical report can be

enacts new constitutions, there is always the opportunity to revive this discussion and it was pushed, without success, during the discussion of content for the 2017 constitution enacted by the military government, who refused to accede – leading to the peculiar accusation that the army was in league with Islam to dethrone Buddhism from its prominent role in the land. The argument for inclusion in the constitution is based on the fact that Buddhists comprise 95% of the population and the rather contradictory argument that Buddhism is under threat from Islam and needs protection. This is discussed at length by Dubus[544] and during the recent Thai elections a political party was formed to specifically defend and champion the idea of Thailand as a Buddhist nation.[545] However it is worth noting that the party did not receive enough votes to win any seats. (A photograph of an election poster is included at the end of this chapter – this is the only one I saw in the run-up to the election and it is stuck tentatively to a bus stop, as opposed to the large, professionally constructed and ubiquitous posters of all the main parties contesting the election.)

Although the advocates of Buddhism as an official state religion have failed – so far – the government bureaucracy is still very much committed to supporting Buddhism as a unique part of society and this manifests itself in the financial support committed to the religion through the governmental National Office of Buddhism (NOB). (This funding is entirely separate to the donations made to Buddhism by supporters through the temple network, estimated at around $3.5 billion per annum – the NOB provides about $137 million.)[546] An interesting recent paper by Larsson,[547] analyses the way in which this funding is allocated and budgeted, coming to the conclusion that – unlike in other countries where the primacy of non-democratic autocracy and state religion tend to be closely linked – the budget for Buddhism actually rises more significantly

found at https://www.voanews.com/a/wat-dhammakaya-conflict-thailand-buddhism/3778313.html (Accessed, March 27, 2019.)

[544] Dubus, "Policies of the Thai State towards the Malay Muslim South (1978-2010)", 79-84.

[545] Panu Waongcha-um, "Buddhism under threat': Thai election gives platform to radicals" *Reuters.com*, March 7, 2019, https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-thailand-election-buddhism/buddhism-under-threat-thai-election-gives-platform-to-radicals-idUKKCN1QO0E2, accessed May 13, 2019

[547] Tomas Larsson, "The Political Economy of State Patronage of Religion: Evidence from Thailand", *International Political Science Revie*w, June 2018, 576-90.

during periods of democratic rule. Larsson argues that this is because the democratic leaders need the support of the Buddhist hierarchy as a legitimising factor, whereas military rulers assume that their close links to the network monarchy provide them with a built-in legitimacy from the monarchy and the state.

Buddhism and violence – implications for state rule in Southeast Asia.

There is a natural tendency to assume that Buddhism is more naturally peaceful and opposed to violence than other religions or philosophies – the concept of Buddhism as a synonym for non-violence is a commonplace in popular culture:

"Think of the many books on Buddhist meditation, the 14th Dalai Lama and his advocacy of non-violence, and the peace work of Buddhist activists such as the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh (whom Martin Luther King Jr nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967). It's no surprise that many Westerners think of Buddhism as a non-violent religion, dedicated to inner peace and harmony, not violent politics."[548]

It is also a perception reinforced by images of Buddhist protest – when Buddhists are moved to protest it is symbolic of a situation where things must have deteriorated badly for Buddhists to take such a worldly step and if violence occurs, it is either with the Buddhists as victims or it is self-inflicted to expose the moral failure of their opposition. The empty bowl protest of monks in Myanmar in 2007, where monks turned their alms bowls upside down rather than accept alms from army personnel as a protest against military rule, reflects this demonstration of non-violent protest. However, anywhere between 10 and 200 people died during and immediately after these protests. The self-immolation of Thích Quảng Đức in 1963 in Vietnam, protesting the repression of Buddhists by the South Vietnamese state, is a famous and particularly dramatic example of the second case.

[548] Michael Jerryson, "Monks With Guns", *Aeon* website, March 2017, https://aeon.co/essays/buddhism-can-be-as-violent-as-any-other-religion, accessed May 15, 2019.

However the idea that Buddhism inherently opposes the use of violence is not quite correct, and in fact there are clear examples of both the ideological underpinning of justified violence and its implementation in practice. Recent works by Jerryson ("Buddhist Fury"[549] in 2011 and "If You Meet The Buddha On The Road…"[550] in 2018) and Lehr ("Militant Buddhism"[551] in 2019) examine how violence is rationalised and used – with specific references to the situation in Southern Thailand. Jerryson discusses the Buddhist concept of *Ahimsā*, which he translates as a command to non-harm or non-injury; not quite the same thing as non-violence. He explores the role of intention as a factor in the consequences of action, and the mitigating factors of indirect consequences (or insanity). Most importantly he explores the idea that a distinction of severity is related to the virtue or otherwise of the victim. This can be used as a justification where the victim of violence can be perceived to be hostile to Buddhism – which in Thai terms has been applied to both Communists and Muslims. This can be explicit, in the sanctioning of the use of violence where deemed necessary, or tacit – the continued allowance of merit-making by the aggressors through the receipt of alms-giving by the monks, in contradiction to the Myanmar example cited above.

If violence can be justified in theory when deemed necessary to defend the religion, how is that acceptance put into practice? The use of violence in Thailand has manifested itself in two ways – through the legitimacy of the role of the army in attempting to exert control over the restive South, and in the vocal suggestion by members of the clergy that violence should be used in retribution against violent acts towards Buddhists. Jerryson observes that the Thai army enrolls Buddhist monks (and only Buddhists) in an official role as Chaplains to the soldiers. In order to reconcile their role with the precepts against violence in the Buddhist canon, the selected monks have to defrock before taking up their role. Nevertheless the monks who take this path have to have reached a high level of Buddhist understanding before being accepted

[549] Jerryson, *Buddhist Fury*.

[550] Jerryson, *If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, ...*

[551] Peter Lehr, *Militant Buddhism: The Rise of Religious Violence in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand*, (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

into this role, having passed the 9th level of Pāli language examinations. (Only 3-5% of students ever reach this level.) More visibly, the army in the South have made extensive use of Buddhist *wats* as bases for stationing troops across the region, building defensive positions and permanently locating troops within temples. (This of course is one reason why Muslims now perceive *wats* as profane spaces, no longer the centre of community that they fulfilled in previous times.) Most seriously of all, Jerryson shows that in some cases soldiers have ordained as monks without giving up their military role, becoming armed soldier-monks. This is completely against all strictures of Buddhist practice and is denied by official sources in Thailand – but Jerryson presents compelling evidence to back up his claim.[552]

This alignment between official Buddhism and military objectives is a major reason why the Muslims of the region see Buddhism no longer as a purely religious phenomenon but as aligned with the state and as part of the apparatus for centralised control. However my interviews with Muslims in the region suggest a difference of perception between Buddhism as part of a state doctrine, reflected in the state school system and ordinary Buddhist individuals who Muslims come into contact with, either as administrative staff or merely as neighbours. The proposal and building of large-scale Buddhist monuments in the deep south has exacerbated the perception of the state as a Buddhist-led entity, even when one project was put on hold because of concerns from local Muslims.[553] Of course there are very clear arguments to support this militarisation of Buddhism in the region – thousands of Buddhists have been killed in the region since 2004[554] and the separatists have made targeting of Buddhist monks a clear part of their strategy to intimidate Buddhists in the region and to alienate the mass Thai population. The targeting of monks is particularly significant in its implications; in Buddhism, the monkhood is seen as deeply symbolic of everything that

[552] Jerryson, "Appropriating a Space for Violence", 48-52.

[553] "Pattani Buddhist Park Project Put On Hold", The Nation, January 21, 2016, http://www.nationmultimedia.com/national/Pattani-Buddhist-park-project-put-on-hold-30277346.html, accessed May 16, 2019.

[554] According to Deep South Watch, 2,359 Buddhists were killed in the first 10 years of the conflict, 39% of all deaths. "An Inconvenient Truth about the Deep South Violent Conflict: A Decade of Chaotic, Constrained Realities and Uncertain Resolution", Deep South Watch, July 2, 2014, https://deepsouthwatch.org/en/node/5904, accessed May 16, 2019.

is sacred and good about the religion and therefore to attack them is deeply shocking and profane:

"When militants targeted and killed monks, they defaced walking emblems of Thai nationalism and Thai Buddhism. An attack on a Buddhist monk was tantamount to burning the US flag or the Qur'an."[555]

The attack on Buddhists – particularly Buddhist monks – by violent separatists in the South – has therefore inevitably caused a strong reaction in return. I will come on to how it has affected the perceptions and attitudes of ordinary Thai Buddhists in a moment; however it is also important to mention the reaction of the Thai Buddhist clergy themselves.

Ordained Buddhist Attitudes towards Muslims.

One disturbing development in recent years has been the advocacy by Buddhist monks of violent acts towards local Muslims, or Muslims living within the same national borders. Myanmar and Sri Lanka have both seen this kind of 'hate speech' aimed at Muslims, with terrible consequences in loss of life, property, dislocation and in the case of Myanmar the forced emigration of hundreds of thousands of Muslim refugees to neighbouring Bangladesh, or by boat to whichever country will accept them – or to drown at sea. This is not the place to delve into this phenomenon, but I want to highlight a few cogent points made by Lehr, because they also have a potential correlation to the situations in Cambodia and Thailand. Lehr points out that Theravada Buddhism is loosely organised and more autonomous at a local level – he makes an analogy with Sunni Islam or Protestant Christianity, as opposed to a more hierarchical and directed Shi'i Islam or Catholic Christianity.[556] This makes it hard for any central edict to be made or enforced. Second, in both countries, Buddhists have been able to construct a narrative showing them as under siege by large and aggressive neighbours – the Tamil region of India for Sri Lanka and Muslim Bangladesh for Myanmar. The

[555] Jerryson, *If You Meet the Buddha on the Road*, 192.

[556] Lehr, *Militant Buddhism,* 108.

conclusive defeat in 2009 of the Sri Lankan Tamil separatist movement, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka has left a gap for a new 'other' for the Sinhalese Buddhists.[557] Lastly, the spread of the use of social media and encrypted messaging groups has enabled the rapid spread of rumour and fake news aimed at the minority population. Of course, this problem reaches far beyond Southeast Asia.

Although both Cambodia and Thailand are also Theravada Buddhist, with deep links to both Myanmar and Sri Lanka, there are clear differences that separate their situation and may support evidence of a different outcome. Thailand does not have a large threatening neighbour of a different faith; Malaysia may be majority Muslim but it also has one third of the population and shows little interest in its Northern neighbour – in fact there is a history of collaboration and mutual support.[558] Indeed Malaysia has been a host and mediator for discussions between the Thai government and the insurgents and has generally cooperated with Thai security measures.[559] Cambodia has a very large neighbour in Vietnam, with whom it has a very painful relationship and deeply held bitterness. However that manifests itself in persecution of the indigenous Vietnamese living in Cambodia, rather than the Cham. It is also complicated by the fact that Hun Sen was effectively implanted by the Vietnamese government as their puppet in 1979. The resistance to possible colonialism in Thailand acted to create and depend on strong links between the Monarchy and the Buddhist leadership (Sangha), whereas British colonialism broke down the link between traditional rulers and religion in Myanmar and Sri Lanka.[560] Finally the examples of Communist rule in neighbouring Cambodia and Laos acted as a painful example to the Thai Sangha of what can happen to Buddhist authority when the traditional rulers lose power.[561]

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[557] Ibid., 118-18.

[558] See also Chapter Seven, page 180.

[559] Laura Villadiego, "Malaysia could play a 'vital role' in mediating the conflict between Thailand's army and Muslim separatists – but will the junta allow it?", South China Morning Post, February 10, 2109, https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/2185535/malaysia-could-play-vital-role-mediating-conflict-between, accessed May 16, 2109.

[560] Ibid., 202.

[561] Ibid., 206.

For all these reasons, leading Thai Buddhist figures have generally avoided stimulating or endorsing anti-Islam feeling in the country. This is not to say that they are insensitive to the plight of Buddhists in the deep South, actively providing aid and solace on a regular basis. However this does not usually stretch to moving there to reinforce the beleaguered temples of the region – perhaps a call too far. Pathan, Tuansiri and Koma document the recent growth of hostility towards Muslims in Thailand,[562] but this is noticeable for being driven by lay Buddhists rather than monks and also for being most obvious in provinces where there are very few Muslims in the first place. The government has also made it clear that it does not intend to condone the import of this kind of extremism. When the radical Thai Buddhist monk, Phra Apichart posted on Facebook in 2015:

"It is time to arm Thai Buddhists …time for compassion has run out. If a monk is killed in the deep South, a mosque must be burned down in exchange. Starting from the north, we must chase away this cult from every area until there is no one from that cult left."[563]

he was harshly reprimanded, and after continuing to post anti-Muslim material was arrested by the army, who described him as a 'threat to national security' and then handed over to his home *wat*, where he was defrocked in 2017.[564]

There has also been no visible sign of hostility towards Muslims from the Buddhist leadership in Cambodia as it has been too concerned with its own revival and also distracted by internal division. During the colonial era, Buddhism in Cambodia had been instrumental in catalysing a sense of revived Cambodian nationhood and

[562] Pathan, Tuansiri, Koma, *Understanding Anti-Islam Sentiment in Thailand*.

[563] Quoted in Lehr, *Militant Buddhism,* 217.

[564] The military involvement in what was a religious sanction was seen as rather controversial in Thailand but reflects the all-pervasive nature of junta rule. One of my interviewees was harshly critical of the army's role in controlling the budgets and administration of Prince of Songkla University.

Pravit Rojanaphruk, "Defrocked Anti-Muslim Buddhist Monk Was 'National Security Threat'", Khaosod English, September 21, 2017, http://www.khaosodenglish.com/news/2017/09/21/defrocked-anti-muslim-buddhist-monk-national-security-threat-prawit/, accessed May 16, 2019.

underpinning the independence movement against France, and therefore it is slightly ironic that Cambodian nationalism was such a core part of the KR ideology. The structure of Buddhism in Cambodia was badly damaged by the Khmer Rouge – numbers from this period are notoriously unreliable, but Harris quotes an estimate in 1980 that 63% of Buddhist monks died or were executed during the 3 years of the regime[565] and the remainder were forced to disrobe and enter lay life, working, suffering and dying alongside their fellow countrymen. However even before the KR takeover, Cambodian Buddhism had been riven by competing allegiances to the Monarchy, and then republic, of Sihanouk, the republic of Lon Nol and the revolutionary movement of the KR. Alignments existed to all three – although traditional Buddhism had always been aligned to the monarchy, the Sangha came under the effective control of the Lon Nol government and were pressured to endorse that government in the fight against the Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese. At the same time many Buddhist monks in the liberated areas of the KR were willing to endorse the struggle against oppression – and, once they came under complete KR control in the liberated zones, they had little choice.[566] In fact, before his overthrow, Sihanouk had founded a movement of Buddhist Socialism (the People's Socialist Community) as a way of fusing traditional beliefs and practices with his inclination towards socialist theory (but not of course when it applied to his own position).[567] In the recent post-communist Cambodian era Buddhists have also returned to an involvement in politics, especially after the UN-sponsored elections in 1993 gave monks the vote for the first time, against the will of the Buddhist leadership.[568] Support for opposition to the CPP, initially quite vocal, has waned as the CPP established complete control over the country – and while modernist groups, seen to be allied with NGO interests fighting environmental despoliation and corruption have experienced suspicion and persecution, some traditionalist monasteries have seen a clear financial benefit to aligning with the new wealthy political and economic class.[569]

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[565] Harris, *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice*, 179.

[566] Ibid., 171-172.

[567] Ibid., 146-147.

[568] Ibid., 204.

[569] Ibid., 224.

Popular expressions of Buddhism and religious coexistence.

So far I have looked at the way in which Buddhism conditions and affects the way in which the state relates to ethnic Muslim citizens. I have also examined how that attitude percolates into the behaviour and attitudes of the priesthood and the monks. I also want to consider how Buddhism influences relationships at a civil level, between ordinary citizens of both faiths. There are two important aspects of Thai society to keep in mind when considering general attitudes. First, despite a perception and self-belief of Buddhism as an inherently peaceful and tolerant religion, Thailand in particular has always been quite a violent society. McCargo states this unequivocally, when he implies that some of the violence in Southern Thailand is just an overspill of a normal level of crime in society:

"Thailand is a violent society, with the highest homicide rate in Southeast Asia and the second highest in Asia (8.47 per 100,000 in 2000), well above the United States (5.5), and far higher than most developed countries (typically between 2 and 3)."[570]

This is reinforced by another study on violence in the region, which points out that, "of all married women in Thailand, 38% have been physically abused by their husband."[571]

However it is worth noting that there has been a decline in homicide in Thailand in the fifteen years since McCargo wrote this. According to recent data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, relevant statistics are as follows:[572]

Intentional Homicide Rates (per 100,000)

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[570] McCargo, 2009, *Tearing Apart The Land*, 193.

[571] Patrick Barron, Anders Engvall, Adrian Morel, "Understanding Violence in Southeast Asia: The Contribution of Violent Incidents Monitoring Systems", *The Asia Foundation 2016,* 16.

[572] Accessed via Wikipedia – https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_intentional_homicide_rate, accessed March 28, 2019.

Cambodia	3.2	2001	1.8	2011		
Indonesia	1.0	1999	8.1	2008	0.5	2014
Malaysia	2.4	2000	1.9	2010		
Myanmar	2.0	2001	1.6	2007	2.4	2015
Thailand	7.9	2001	4.8	2011	3.5	2015
Vietnam	3.8	2004	1.5	2011		

Belgium (as an example of a developed country.)				2.0	2015
Global				6.2	2012
Asia				2.9	2012

I am not sure why this is – perhaps a link to a return to economic growth and relative stability after the Asian financial crisis of 1997, which badly affected Thailand?[573]

Second, the concept of individual leadership being comprised of either 'good' or 'bad' people is pervasive in Thailand. The idea that some people are inherently either good or bad, and problems of leadership can be resolved by selecting and trusting the 'good' ones is regularly used in political discussion – often to encourage the lower rungs of society not to be led astray by 'bad' people but instead to trust those designated by traditional leaders as 'good'. This concept of 'goodness' has been associated very closely with the role of the monarchy; the late King Rama IX was always perceived as being supremely 'good' (and sanctified as such by Buddhism – see Chapter Four, pages 86 and 87) and therefore able to guide his people accordingly. In the 2019 elections in Thailand, the current King, Rama X, intervened the day before the country voted to express a similar perspective, borrowed from his father:

'The palace said the king recalled comments made in 1969 by his father about the need "to promote good people to govern the country and to prevent bad people from power and creating chaos".'[574]

[573] In 1998 the Thai economy contracted by 10.5%, unemployment rose from 1.7% to 3.6% and food prices rose by 10%.

M Ramesh, "Economic Crisis and its Social Impacts: Lessons from the 1997 Asian Economic Crisis", *Global Social Policy* 2009: 80-82.

[574] Patpicha Tanakasempipat, Panu Wongcha-umchai, " King Makes Surprise Pre-vote Plea for 'Security and

From the perspective of Thai Muslims, these two factors have implicit concerns. The first is that, in a society where violence has long been a method of resolving disputes, there is a higher level of tolerance for the concept of violence as an acceptable solution. Therefore although the level of violence in the South has been horrendous, it has also seen a blurring of criminal and political violence which is often difficult to parse. When violence has been directed at Buddhists in the South there has been a lower level of inhibition against retaliation or alienation from among the Buddhist community. The widespread availability of the internet with rapid dissemination of commentary and viewpoints has certainly exacerbated this. In 2012, Dr. Phrae Sirisakdamkoeng of Silpakorn University contributed a chapter to McCargo's 'Mapping National Anxieties', in which she analysed the use of online message boards to spread hatred and threats between the two communities.[575] Recently I interviewed Dr. Phrae and one of her graduate students, Thitimat Kamwong, to understand what had changed in the interim. Their general conclusions were that the same level of vitriol and religious hatred still prevailed in posts made by Buddhists commenting on the South, but with some important developments:

- The growth in the use of Facebook and particularly the encrypted messaging app, Line (Thailand's ubiquitous messaging service – similar to What's App), has also seen a growth in the use of this kind of 'trolling' and hate speech. However it is less anonymous – as people know they are communicating with like-minded individuals, they are less inhibited.

- They also perceive a contribution from either the state, supporting Buddhist discussion groups, or from individual Thai soldiers, writing from a personal and non-official perspective.

Happiness" Reuters.com, March 23, 2019 https://www.reuters.com/article/us-thailand-election/thai-king-makes-surprise-pre-vote-plea-for-security-and-happiness-idUSKCN1R40D8, accessed May 13, 2019

It is too early to say whether this reflects an intent to take a more activist or guiding role from the new King, as opposed to his predecessor who generally avoided expressing any public view on Thai politics.

[575] McCargo, *Mapping National Anxieties*, 160 – 183.

- The language is used is often very vulgar and deliberately chosen to demonise and provoke Muslims through taboo references. This is probably a reflection of the removal of societal bonds of politeness on the internet. It is also a useful way of virtue signaling to sympathetic readers and disconnecting from those who are neutral or opposed.

It should be noted that both Dr. Phrae and Khun Thitimat were mostly observing channels written in Thai and therefore more likely to come from Buddhists more than Muslims. Also they still observe some commentators who stress the humanity and similarity of individual Muslims with whom they are acquainted.[576]

Second, the concept of 'good' and 'bad' people, although a natural reflection of Buddhist beliefs about character and behaviour, has cause to alienate Muslims, when applied in their context. McCargo suggests that the Thai concept of rule by 'good' people is closely linked to the general Thai precept of national unity based around "Nation. Religion. King", as described in Chapter One, Page 16,[577] where good people will naturally align to these values. This does not align well with a Muslim perception that does not have the same conception of 'nation', follows a different religion, and has an ambivalent relationship with the King, and certainly with the state that claims to act on his behalf.

How is the Buddhist citizen's perception and attitude of the Thai Muslim community changing over time? There seem to be three general characteristics – a stability of the Buddhist community in the South, a general refusal to want to engage or contemplate the problem in the rest of the Buddhist population, and a growth in hostility towards Muslims on a national level – although thankfully not manifested in the same violent way as that experienced in Myanmar and Sri Lanka. The initial violence experienced by Muslims in the Southern provinces caused many to leave, either to the safety of the

[576] Interview with Dr. Phrae, February 28, 2019. E-mail discussion with Thitimat Kamwong, March 2-7, 2019.

[577] McCargo, *Tearing Apart The Land*, 7.

rest of the country, or to temporary sanctuary in the Buddhist *wats* of the region, which had come under military protection. However recent years have seen a relative decline in the level of violence and the situation may have stabilised to an 'abnormal normal'. The two communities are deeply polarised but coexist under the shadow of the army and the police presence. In Thailand generally, opinions on the 'Southern Fire' are mediated by the national media, as described in Chapter Six and as there are no new developments, the story becomes stale and drops down the news agenda. As Dr. Phansasiri states, all media persist in blaming what they label as the actions of 'Southern Bandits' (*Jone Tai*) for the problem, and therefore that becomes the normalised viewpoint.[578]

I have already mentioned the report on persecution of Thai Muslims published in late 2018.[579] This reflects a concerning trend to conflate issues with Muslims in the South with the general Muslim population, and a growth in resentment of Muslims in the country as a whole. It is not particularly logical, manifesting itself most obviously in parts of Northern Thailand where there are very few Muslims living. Hostility towards a Halal food production centre in Chiang Mai (Northern Thailand) also ignores the economic and employment benefit brought by this inward investment – after all the Halal food industry is a major export contributor to Thailand's economy.[580] As a result, the Halal Science Centre at Chulalongkorn University is a world-class facility with 200 permanent staff, and branch offices in Pattani – and Chiang Mai. However economic logic does not always align with political emotions – the UK's Brexit crisis is ample proof of this. In my discussions with Dr. Phrae, she identified an overseas influence that was manifested in online discussion groups – not only the obvious example of militant Buddhist voices from Myanmar and Sri Lanka, but also the aggressive and violent stance towards dissenting or unlawful forces taken by President Duterte in the Philippines and President Putin in Russia. Both were praised online by Thai Buddhists

[578] Interview with author, March 4, 2019.

[579] Pathan, Tuansiri, Koma, *Understanding Anti-Islam Sentiment in Thailand*.

[580] According to the National Food Institute, part of the Thai Ministry of Industry, Thailand is the world's tenth-largest exporter of halal foods, with exports valued at $6 Billion in 2017 https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/news/1394058/nfi-aims-to-boost-thai-halal-food-industry, accessed May 16, 2019.

as popular leaders who knew how to deal with disruptive forces in their own countries.[581]

Cambodia is different once more, in that there is much less overt conflict at a social level. For ordinary Cambodians, the biggest challenges are economic and these challenges are shared equally by the Khmer and Cham people. The Cham are generally poorer than the Khmer and therefore do not provoke resentment, unlike the Cambodian Chinese members of the dominant class who are seen to be the main beneficiaries of economic growth – and also to be permitting inward investment from China that is corrupt and brings with it huge problems of debt and loss of independence. Currently Cambodia is faced with an economic challenge with the possibility of the cancellation of the 'Everything But Arms' agreement (EBA, as it is commonly known). This agreement, which permits duty free imports and exports to the European Union, is under threat as it is conditional on democratic freedoms being permitted. It is currently under review, with an eighteen month timeframe before possible cancellation.[582] The Cambodian government is very vociferous in its opposition to what it sees as foreign blackmail; however as Ysa said in my interview with him;

"When the EBA [Agreement] is completely taken away then there is no job for the workers – I believe that. I don't think that people can do anything, without EBA, to have another thing instead. Hun Sen said that no one will die because of EBA. That's true – no one dies, but they suffer, suffer a lot. The people will become poorer."[583]

Vietnam – the case of religion.

[581] Conversation with author, February 28, 2019.

[582] "Cambodia Faces Major Economic Blow as E.U. Weighs Ending Trade Deal" *New York Times,* March 24, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/24/world/asia/eu-cambodia-trade.html, accessed March 29, 2019.

[583] Conversation with author, February 20th, 2019.

As I said in the introduction to this chapter, the role of religion in Vietnam is quite different to that in Cambodia and Thailand, and therefore the relationship between the minority Muslims and other religions needs to be addressed separately here – whether in the way that religion is treated by the state, or in the way that practitioners interact with the Muslims. It is different in two main ways – First the history of religion in Vietnam is completely different to that in the other two countries, and second the role of the modern state in sanctioning and managing religion is also very different. That said, I do not believe that the situation implies a lack of commonality across the countries under discussion; in Vietnam, the Muslims are also a clear minority, ruled over by a society that is highly monocultural both ethnically and politically. In the case of Vietnam however, the alignment of the dominant ethnicity and the dominant culture does not overlay with one religion in the same way. (I mentioned the atheist underpinning of official Communism on page 2 of this chapter.)

The history of religion in Vietnam is made complex by the long-standing position of local, village-based worship, focusing on the role of ancestors and significant local factors – people and objects or geographic features. Vietnam has been an historic melting pot of different religions, from the influx of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism in the late 900's after independence from China was gained in 939 CE, to the subsequent arrival of Islam and Christianity brought by traders, missionaries and colonial rule, to the origin and growth of significant local variants - *Hòa Hảo* and *Cao Đài* being the two most successful in the 20th Century.[584] However underlying all these elements has been the continuing presence of localised belief systems. Data on religious persuasion varies significantly according to source – the figures provided officially by the Vietnamese government to the UN Special Rapporteur on Religion during an official visit in 2014[585] were:

[584] An interesting history of religious development in Vietnam can be found on the website of the Asia Society - https://asiasociety.org/education/religion-vietnam.

[585] UN Commission on Human Rights, July 31, 2014, "Press Statement on the visit to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief", https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14914&LangID=E , accessed March 29, 2019.

Religion	Adherents
Buddhism	11 million
Catholicism	6.2 million
Cao Đài	4.4 million
Protestantism	1.4 million
Hòa Hảo	1.3 million
Muslim	75,000

However as the Rapporteur points out, many millions of Vietnamese do not fit these designations, following an informal folk religion instead. (The Pew Forum estimated this to be 45.3% of the population in 2010.) Although the Vietnamese constitution also claims to support freedom of religion, there are also restrictions on registration and actions laid out in the law on religion, updated in 2016. This also has to be viewed in the context of the role of the Vietnamese Fatherland Front. The Front is an umbrella organisation, led by the Communist Party, coordinating all social organisations active in Vietnam. The three religious groups sanctioned by the front are the Vietnamese Association for Buddhism, the Committee of Catholic Solidarity and the Congregation of the Protestant Church of Vietnam.[586] Without this official sanction and support, religious groups who might share a belief system but do not want to be aligned to the government, operate on the fringe of official society and are liable to stricter control.

From a Muslim perspective, it can be seen that Vietnamese Muslims form a tiny percentage of the population. 86% of the Vietnamese population are ethnically Kinh and they dominate all aspects of society and the economy. There are tiny minorities of non-Cham Muslims in Ho Chi Minh City – descendants of settlers from the Indian sub-continent or Indonesia – but otherwise Muslims are assumed to be ethnically Cham. Taylor discusses the challenge for the Cham to survive economically, given the dominance of the Kinh population and their marginal existence on the edge of the

[586] List of Vietnam Fatherland Front member organisations, https://vietnam.resiliencesystem.org/vietnam-fatherland-front-and-member-organizations, accessed March 29, 2019.

Cambodian border.[587] However within these constraints the Cham enjoy a relative degree of autonomy and are even seen as somewhat of a tourist attraction.[588]

Conclusion.

In Cambodia and Thailand, Muslim ethnic minorities live in regimes that are dominated by a Buddhist ethos and culture shared by the vast majority of the population, who are also ethnically different. In Vietnam, religion does not pay the same dominant role in the culture, but nevertheless Muslims are separate and different from the dominant ethnic group and there is an official philosophy that is not particularly positive towards religion. Buddhism has also been and remains a highly influential cultural characteristic of Vietnam – and there are roughly 100 Vietnamese Buddhists to every Vietnamese Muslim. The Buddhism of Cambodia and Thailand is deeply rooted, having been the primary religion of the region for centuries. The Theravada Buddhism practiced in these two countries is very similar and is characterised by a recognition of the role played by a righteous ruling class and also by a degree of local autonomy that does not necessarily follow policies or edicts coming from a religious centre. (In the same way, the righteousness of the ruling class in Vietnam is not open to dispute – although there is little or no local autonomy.)

The Buddhism of the region is characterised by a separation between the overall philosophy of the religion – orthodoxy – and how it is lived in practice – orthopraxy. Although sometimes difficult for non-Buddhists to understand, it is deeply pervasive in the lives of people in these countries. In particular the role of the monkhood in exemplifying social behaviour and acting as moral and spiritual guides is highly important and characterises much of social behaviour. However this does not always live up to the ideals at the base of the religion, leading to an acceptability of resentment, anger and violence towards communities who seem to be threatening stability or 'normality'.

[587] Taylor, *Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta,* 144-178.

[588] Ibid., 29—30.

Although the current states may be new in their current borders and structures, the culture is not. It is typified by a clear understanding of the correct roles of monarchy and the ruling class, the monkhood and the clergy and the ordinary people. Challenges to that set of roles by dissidents – whether political or religious – are not welcomed and tend to lead to a situation where the majority is always in the right and minorities are expected to acquiesce quietly and unobtrusively. As recent history has cycled through absolutist monarchic rule, through colonialism, aspirations to democracy and unstable semi-dictatorships, the role of religion has been an important unifying and continuous dimension of consistency. The arrival of communism as a fact in Vietnam and Cambodia and as a perceived existential threat in neighbouring Thailand only served to reinforce a perception that cleaving to a true faith would offer stability and that antithetical human propositions brought (potential or actual) suffering and chaos.

For Muslims living as minorities this dominant culture continues to prove a challenge. The correct behaviour of Muslims living as a minority under non-Muslim rule has been a subject for discussion by the various schools of law for centuries. There is an extensive overview of the precedents and opinions of the scholars in an article by Abou El Fadl,[589] looking at the options of emigration, acceptance and resistance dating back to the very first move from Mecca to Medina. (However of necessity this does not really address the relatively recent issue of voluntary migration out of Islamic lands.) For Muslims of this region, the choices are not really available – migration is impossible for people with neither the resources nor the available destinations. Therefore they have to continue to make the situation work in place, through political engagement, either directly or through non-governmental activity. Armed resistance is either impossible – or seemingly unproductive.

In my next, and final, chapter I want to summarise my understanding of the reality of Muslim life in ostensibly monocultural societies, to see how the reality differs from the perception and to see how the reality of Southeast Asia reflects the theory of effective

[589] Khaled Abou El Fadl, "Islamic Law and Muslim Minorities: The Juristic Discourse on Muslim Minorities from the Second/Eighth to the Eleventh/Seventeenth Centuries", "*Islamic Law and Society* 1", no 2, (1994), 141-187

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modern multiculturalism. There is significant overlap between ethnicity and religion in this region, and we need to understand how that dynamic affects the culture and structure of these societies. As Bowen suggests, aspects of Islam can be interpreted in order to mobilise for action in differing local circumstances, and therefore the connection between ethnicity, culture and religion needs to be understood in the particular context of the Southeast Asian experience.[590]

[590] Bowen, *A New Anthropology of Islam*, 197.

Poster for Pandin Dharma Party, taken on March 18, 2019. Photo: Author.

Chapter Ten. Minorities in monocultural societies – the Southeast Asian example.

"Through this visit it is hoped that the Sheikhul Islam of Thailand will be able to draw attention…of [sic] how Thailand is a multicultural society, where people from different religious faiths live together in peaceful harmony and are given freedom of practicing their religious beliefs."

(Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Release, May 3, 2017.)[591]

"The very idea of freedom of religion is paradoxical; it is the freedom to be unfree in a particular way."

(Michael Lambek)[592]

Introduction.

One of the questions posed at the beginning of this dissertation is whether and how a minority group can lead a fulfilling existence within a society which is ostensibly monocultural in nature. This question is relevant to both the Thai Malays and the Mekong Cham. Since it began to describe itself in terms of an assumption of statehood, Thailand has seen itself as a Buddhist state and has put that into practice through the endorsement of Buddhism as the main religion of the country and through a concept of Thai nationality known as 'Thai-ness' ('Khwam pen Thai' in Thai) that also defines itself by adherence to the unitary nation, loyalty to the monarchy and use of Thai (central Thai, to be specific) as the only national language. The constitution and several laws commit Thailand to upholding the Buddhist religion.[593] Strictly speaking,

[591] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, May 3, 2017, http://www.mfa.go.th/main/en/news3/6886/77297-The-Sheikhul-Islam-of-Thailand-and-delegation-visi.html, Accessed April 7, 2019.

[592] Michael Lambek, "Is Religion Free?", *Politics of Religious Freedom*, Sullivan, Winifred Fallers Sullivan, Elizabeth Shackman Hurd, Saba Mahmood, Peter Danchin, eds, (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2015), 298.

[593] A recent controversy was triggered by an officially produced music video of the National Anthem that showed leaders of other faiths – but not enough Buddhists. See:

the plural version of the word is commonly used – 'religions' rather than 'religion' but the constitution makes it clear that Buddhism is the primary religion of the country and this is commonly understood – for example, in my quantitative survey, 78% of respondents said they understood that Thailand was a Buddhist country - 17% said it was secular. 71% of *Muslim* respondents said that it was Buddhist.[594] Similarly, since independence from France in 1953, Cambodia has defined itself constitutionally as a Buddhist country, excluding the Khmer Rouge period of rule between 1975-78. In both cases estimates quoted in the previous chapter indicate that about 95% of the population are Buddhists. Vietnam, as described in the previous chapter, is in no way religiously monocultural but in every aspect the culture of Vietnam is defined and controlled by one governing body, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), with little tolerance for dissenting views. Article 4 of the Vietnamese constitution makes the preeminent and exclusive role of the CPV very explicit.[595]

The use of the term multiculturalism, and the concept that it embodies, has come under considerable scrutiny and criticism in recent years, as it has been associated with the failure of Western societies to find a solution that both accommodates and provides autonomy to minority groups and at the same time integrates them into the state in such a way that ideals of equality, opportunity and participation for all members of all communities can be realised to mutual satisfaction. The question has been exacerbated by a perceived increase in immigration into Western Europe and the use of the immigration issue by hostile political movements to make it more salient as an establishment fault-line, in order to gain popular support from historic populations

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"'Not enough monks' in anthem video", *Bangkok Post*, May 22, 2019, https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1681648/not-enough-monks-in-anthem-video, accessed October 29, 2019.

Teerana Aruvashtra, "Gov't To Amend 'Anti-Buddhist' National Anthem MV", *Khaosod English*, May 21, 2019, http://www.khaosodenglish.com/politics/2019/05/21/govt-to-amend-anti-buddhist-national-anthem-mv/?fbclid=IwAR1jkPdwdwl4Us2XTKDSTcveVosEt2gLzUA2m_SyfHB5bqN1BT5iVdOLWEk, accessed May 23, 2019.

[594] See data in Appendix 1.

[595] Vietnamese Constitution 2013, Article 4, http://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/tranlation_of_vietnams_new_constitution_enuk_2.pdf, accessed April 6, 2019.

who feel under threat. In the USA the demographic trend that leads towards a non-white majority in the next few decades has also exacerbated hostility towards a multicultural society. Multiculturalism has come under attack both from the left for being either 'tokenistic' or as a distraction from a class-based agenda, and from the right for failing to encourage minorities to assimilate and share in a common culture, and as a result providing a safe environment for extremism and terrorism to fester. Modood reviews the different strands of opposition to multiculturalism in his eponymous book.[596] Nevertheless, most Western-style democracies endorse some form of multicultural policy intended to recognise the rights of minority population groups to freedoms of religion, language and to pursue a way of life that reflects their values, provided it can be balanced with the overall 'rules' of society as a whole.

Kymlicka, one of the first and foremost writers on multiculturalism, defines groups in four categories, based on whether they are indigenous to the nation state[597] (i.e. they were residing in their current location before the state came into existence) or whether they are immigrants arriving after the state formation – and then by nationals of the nation state (e.g. the French-speaking community of Canada) versus indigenous residents (e.g. the Inuit of Canada) and long-term (legal) settlers versus recent arrivals who may be refugees or intent on non-permanent status – and for whom legal status is new, tenuous or non-existent. Although it seems that Kymlicka is specifically referring to North America, if this definition is applied to the countries of Southeast Asia covered in this dissertation, then the Thai Malays and Mekong Cham fall firmly into the first camp as long-term indigenous citizens – indeed the categorisation referring to recent arrivals would only have to be considered in Thailand, where official hostility and refusal to accept more modern refugees has been a consistent policy for many years – witness the treatment by the Thai state of the Vietnamese 'boat people' in the 70's and 80's or the Rohingya refugees from Myanmar who have attempted to arrive in Thailand in recent years.[598] Citizens of both Cambodia and Myanmar work in

[596] Modood, *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea*, 9-13.

[597] Kymlicka, "Liberal Multiculturalism".

[598] Thailand's refusal to sign international treaties on the protection of refugees and subsequent ill-treatment of both refugees and asylum seekers is discussed in; Pei A Palmgren, "Irregular Networks: Bangkok Refugees in the City and Region", *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 27, no 1, (2014), 21-41.

Thailand, but as short-term guest workers. As far as I am aware, there have been no significant attempts at inward economic migration to either Cambodia or Vietnam. Therefore the development of Islam based on a defensive expression of culture among Islamic communities based around immigrants from specific geographies is not relevant in this discussion.[599]

Therefore in this chapter, I want to look at the concept of monoculturalism and multiculturalism as it might apply to the groups and countries in question. Given the ostensibly monocultural nature of these states, how are their minorities able to live in a way that allows them expression of freedoms in behaviour and belief? Is the multicultural model that has been constructed and dissected, but nevertheless generally applied in the West, applicable here? I want to suggest that the issue is not as straightforward as it might seem – despite a clearly monocultural model of society, the situation of Malay and Cham Muslim minorities in Southeast Asia is both more complex and more accommodating than might be expected, lending itself to a more open dialogue and formation of compromise. Indeed, some of the restrictions that have been imposed in recent years in the West, on Muslims in particular, do not occur in Cambodia, Thailand or Vietnam and are not discussed in any way leading to official legislation. Here I refer for example to laws that discriminate on grounds of dress, passed in France, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, The Netherlands and Austria – and debated in many other European countries.[600] Some Western countries, noticeably Switzerland, have also introduced restrictions on the freedom to build places of worship – however as mentioned in the report published by Don Pathan and colleagues,[601] this has now also become an issue in Thailand.

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[599] Bowen, *A New Anthropology of Islam*, 157-158.

[600] Nathan Lean, "The Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufactures Hatred of Muslims", (London: Pluto Books, 2017), 228-9. Updated by; DW, June 1 2018, "Full-face veil ban: How laws differ across Europe" https://www.dw.com/en/full-face-veil-ban-how-laws-differ-across-europe/a-44049185, accessed April 7, 2019.

[601] Pathan, Tuansiri, Koma, *Understanding Anti-Islam Sentiment in Thailand*.

In order to do this, I need first to look at definitions and to understand what is meant by the difference between multiculturalism and monoculturalism in theory and in practice. This also means at considering how religions and ethnicities are treated by the state. I also need to look at the common characteristics of statehood in Southeast Asia as opposed to Western Europe and North America, as there are characteristics of origin and definition that have created quite different contexts and aspects of behaviour. I then need to look at the difference between conception and reality, to understand how core needs of self-definition and expression are met for the ethnic Muslim minorities in reality, and how that is changing over time.

What is multiculturalism – and why?

To discuss the conceptualisation and rise of multiculturalism, it is necessary first of all to look at the concept of the nation state, because the idea of group rights began to achieve momentum as a result of opposition to the demands for conformity made by the governing majority of the nation state. There is a tendency to look at the formation of nation-states as a mostly 19th Century phenomenon, usually defined in terms of reference to the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which recognised and endorsed principles of statehood within Europe. However, in his seminal work, The Cultural Foundation of Nations,[602] Anthony Smith argues that in fact the concept of nationhood in Europe dates back much further, prior to the reformation, to the 14th and 15th Centuries, with the breakdown of a concept of common unitary Christendom across Europe and the development of states loyal to a particular ruler and sharing a form of religion and a common or majority vernacular language. Not only was religion a mode of achieving state-wide unity, but also it was used in an exclusionary manner.

He argues that during the 18th Century the new states began to be informed by a basic form of secularism – the concept of rule by goodwill, rather than by God's will. Although states continued to be aligned to a religious (Christian) base, the modern state began to see nationalism as a more practical unifying creed and therefore a

[602] Smith, *The Cultural Foundation of Nations*.

hedge against disloyalty motivated by religious reformism or loyalty to extra-national beliefs and leaders, whether religious or political.

The modern state therefore exerted a pressure to conform to the secular standards defined by its rulers – a homogeneity of belief, language and ethnicity. Anderson[603] stresses the change to use of what he describes as print-language as a driver of nation-building and national conformity. As he states, the change from a ruling language (Latin) shared by princes, the nobility and the church to a common use of a printable standardisation of vernacular language of the ordinary people of the region was pivotal in defining how the national concept would become meaningful for the general population and help to define the limits of its boundaries. Anderson highlights the adoption of Central Thai as one of these print-based official state languages, overruling local dialects as the acceptable official form of Thai.[604] The issue of language policy is critical to the evolution and structure of Southeast Asian states, as I will show shortly. This notion of a shared cultural and historical narrative is defined by Smith as fundamental to the origin of nations, as opposed to states defined by institutions. However the pressure to conform to the norms of the nation inevitably began to exert itself on non-conforming minorities, of whatever description. As Kymlicka describes it,[605] minorities began to be faced with three options at this stage – to give in to the requirements of the national majority, to start to build parallel structures and institutions for their own self-governance or to enter a form of enforced isolation from the state.

The problem – and this seems very germane to the discussion as it pertains to the minorities of Thailand and the Mekong region – is that three factors that are most significant when it comes to pressures for conformity within a nation-state are ethnicity, religion and language. These are also the most difficult to change or modify in order to conform. People are connected to ethnicity from birth as a dominant

[603] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*: 45-46.

[604] Ibid., 45.

[605] Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular*.

identity[606] and only redefining where an ethnicity 'belongs' can change that.[607] Although people can and do change religion, it is also a deeply emotional attachment for most people and rarely freely changed for assimilative reasons. Modood makes this point in his argument for the importance of religion being treated as a group-defining factor in European societies – although theoretically people enjoy mobility of religion, in fact belonging to a religious group is often assigned at birth and difficult to change, particularly before adulthood.[608] Language is also deeply associated with ethnicity[609] and although people are capable of learning multiple languages it is very unusual for people to forget their language of birth.[610] The imposition of a national language on minorities whose first tongue is different has been a method of exerting state control for centuries and there are countless examples of sanctions against the ongoing use of a minority language – Gaelic in the UK, Basque and Catalan in Spain, Kurdish in Turkey, Aboriginal languages in Japan and Taiwan – the list is endless and the policy continues to be used in authoritarian states to this day.[611]

Modood observes that – in the UK at least – multicultural policy was originally driven by a recognition of ethnic demands, rather than those of religion. British society slowly recognised a disaggregation of minorities from Black/White to Afro-Caribbean/South Asian and only when recognising the religious differences of different South Asian groups were Muslims recognised as a specifically unique community, long after

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[606] Ravi Kanbur, Prem Kumar Rajaram, Ashutosh Varshney, "Ethnic Diversity and Ethnic Strife. An Interdisciplinary Perspective", *World Development*, 39, no 2, (2011), 147-158.

[607] Robin DiAngelo, "White Fragility… a Discussion of Assigning Ethnicity in the USA" reviewed in *New Statesman*, March 27, 2019, https://www.newstatesman.com/obin-diangelo-white-fragility-why-its-so-hard-for-white-people-to-talk-about-racism, accessed April 6, 2019.

[608] Modood, *Multiculturalism*, 65.

[609] Tariq Modood, "Ethnicity and Religion", *The Oxford Handbook of British Politics*, Matthew Flinders ,Andrew Gamble, Colin Hay, Michael Kenny, eds, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 485 - 499. Also; Kim, Rebecca Y Kim, "Religion and Ethnicity: Theoretical Connections", *Religions* 2, no 3, (2011), 312 – 329.

[610] Kanbur, Rajaram, Varshney, "Ethnic Diversity and Ethnic Strife", 148.

[611] "China's Muslim Minority Banned From Using Their Own Language in Schools", *The Independent*, August 2, 2017, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/china-muslim-minority-school-language-ban-han-xinjiang-uyghur-hotan-hetian-government-communist-a7873446.html, accessed April 6, 2019.

Sikhism and Judaism had been seen in that way, described as ethnic minorities rather than religious ones.[612]

Therefore the argument for multiculturalism in a liberal democracy can seem quite simple, expressed in one piece of Canadian legislation as 'the accommodation of differences'.[613] Of course the discussion is more complex and very much under discussion. Benhabib, for example, looks at the concept of 'group rights' positioned alongside the rights of the state and the rights of the individual, arguing that managing the correct balance between all three is complex but necessary.[614] She also highlights the importance of the concept of inalienable membership in the state, regardless of the requirements of homogeneity, citing the French concept of *laïcité* as seeking to over-rule that concept.[615]

It is also important to separate concepts of multiculturalism from that of secularism. Asad and Mahmood point out that there is a tendency among supporters of liberal democracy to align virtues of critical reason, modernity and freedom of speech and expression with societies that are not only multicultural, but also have developed as championing secularism as part of a multicultural framework for coexistence and minority rights within the nation state.[616] This is then contrasted with a form of intolerance – usually Islamic – which is the converse of these things – based on faith, tradition and an intolerance of dissenting views, even when expressed externally. The former is seen as an ideological development from the values ascribed to states that were (and are) ostensibly Christian and have led to an acceptance of separation of Church and State in a modern secular establishment.[617] However, in our case this

[612] Modood, "Ethnicity and Religion", 493.

[613] Modood, *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea,* 16.

[614] Benhabib, *The Rights of Others*: 84.

[615] Ibid., 138-141.

[616] Talad Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, Saba Mahmood, *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury and Free Speech*, Berkeley: The Townsend Center For The Humanities, 2009).

[617] As Asad puts it, "What happens to our political life when Christianity can claim "the secular" as its offspring, and secularity has the power to assign objects to the category "religion"?"

Ibid., 138.

argument cannot hold true. There is no history of Christianity other than that proselytised by colonial powers, and Cambodia and Thailand in particular are quite clearly not secular in perceived nature or expression by their citizens, despite attempts during the colonial period to secularise education and government administration.[618]

It is important to remember that multiculturalism is a real piece of public policy, applied in many countries and affecting people in everyday life - not an idealistic concept.[619] Although criticised and scapegoated as a cause of recent societal problems, it continues to be applied in many contexts and in fact Kymlicka argues that it is more prevalent in recent times than ever before.[620] Two further points need to be considered before examining how this applies to Muslim minorities in Southeast Asia. First, Modood and other writers on the subject state that multiculturalism and liberal democracy are closely linked and that it is impossible to have the former without the latter. This belief seems to be drawn from the experience of application in the West, based on the idea that multiculturalism is dependent on a level of freedom of expression and behaviour that are not available elsewhere. That might be the case, but it may also be based on a bipolar view of the world divided into 'free' versus 'not free' countries whereas in fact levels of freedom are more complex and applied in different ways. Second, the link between religion and the state is also a complicating factor. In theory, the idea of multiculturalism implies a high level of secularism with no religion privileged or supported by a benevolently neutral state. In fact, however, almost all states facilitate religion in some way – France, despite its reputation for aspiring to a pure secularism still provides state funds for various officially-recognised religious bodies. In the UK the prevalent argument seems to be for a broadening of support:

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[618] As previously stated on page 244 of this chapter, among respondents to my quantitative survey in Thailand, only 17% saw it as a secular society. See appendix 1 for data. I know that Thailand was never colonised, but as was highlighted in chapter Five, page 100, Western models of secular development were largely used as a basis for reform to avoid incursion from the colonial powers.

[619] Modood, *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea,* 15.

[620] Multiculturalism Policy Index, http://www.queensu.ca/mcp/, accessed April 7, 2019.

"The minorities seem to prefer an incremental pluralisation of the religion-state linkages, rather than their abolition."[621]

The Nature of the State in Southeast Asia.

Before looking at how the development of multiculturalism has been relevant to this part of Southeast Asia, there is one other factor to consider – the nature of statehood in Southeast Asia, particularly as it compares with those states in the West where multiculturalism is seen to have taken root to a greater or lesser degree. The concept of the nation state underlies discussion of multiculturalism in the West – it is not possible to create a multicultural environment or legislate to build it, except within the boundaries of an existing nation. Furthermore, although the concept of secession as a solution to perceived failures in minority autonomy is discussed and sometimes fought for, in fact successful secessionist movements are rare and meet hostility, not just from the country in question but also from other countries who are concerned about the precedents that might be set or the general disruption to a settled order. One example of this is the refusal of Spain to recognise the secession of Kosovo from Serbia, as official recognition might be perceived as legitimising the aspirations of their own restive national minorities.[622] Official recognition has also not been forthcoming for the territory of Somaliland, despite having carved out a functioning model of national statehood for 28 years from the otherwise failed state of Somalia.[623] However the process by which the formation of nation states in Southeast Asia has been achieved is quite different from the West and has consequences that affect policy towards neighbours and towards internal minorities.

The disruption caused by colonial rule meant that the evolution of these countries into nations was constrained and interfered with, both by colonial rulers and then by external forces, either from a perspective of decolonialisation or through manipulation

[621] Modood, "Ethnicity and Religion", 496.

[622]" Spain Exposes EU Split AS US Leads Recognition", *The Guardian*, February 29, 2008https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/feb/19/kosovo.serbia, Accessed April 6, 2019.

[623] Tom Wilson, "Somaliland Steps Up Push For International Recognition", *Financial Times*, November 1, 2018, https://www.ft.com/content/331521ba-dc24-11e8-9f04-38d397e6661c, accessed May 20, 2019.

as part of the struggle for Cold War political alignment. Cambodia only achieved independence from France in 1953; Northern Vietnam achieved independence from France in 1954 after a hard-fought war but was then ploughed into a long and debilitating conflict – both a civil war and an international battleground for Cold War goals – that only saw unification, by force, in 1975. Although Thailand was never colonised, it came under considerable pressure over both civil structure and border demarcation from the neighbouring colonial powers. As Liow points out;

"Thailand's ability to successfully elide colonialism was at least in part attributable to the Siamese state's quick adoption of Western social mores and administrative practices."[624]

All three countries were ruled by either Imperial Japan or Vichy France during World War Two, exposing the weakness of the traditional powers, but also the expansionist and racially based ideology of the Japanese Imperial state. Given the comparative recency of this phase of history, all three countries continue to demonstrate signs of continued insecurity when it comes to questions of their internal conduct or how they manage their own people.

Furthermore, the boundaries that demarcate the existing frontiers of these states are also open to question. I discussed the finalisation of Thailand's southern border with the Malay states in 1909 in an earlier chapter. However that border was still being questioned in 1945, with an appeal to the newly-formed UN to transfer territory to Malaysia. If the British had not opposed the move, then the current situation could be quite different. After all, provinces in Northwest Cambodia were transferred by France to Thailand in 1941 before being returned to the restored French colonial rulers in 1946.[625] There is a continuing border dispute between Thailand and Cambodia, based around the historic Preah Vihear temple and fighting broke out between 2008 and 2011, claiming 34 lives, after Thailand refused to accept international border

[624] Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*, 108.

[625] Pitsuwan, *Islam and Malay Nationalism*, (1985), 112.

demarcation when UNESCO ruled against the Thai claim in 2008.[626] Vietnam took an area of the Mekong Delta from Cambodia in 1858, and this ownership was confirmed by the colonial French in 1949; there are still some 7 million ethnic Khmer living in that region of Vietnam and in Cambodia it is still referred to as *Kampuchea Krom* (Lower Cambodia) and the people as Khmer Krom.[627] Of course there are also disputed borders in Europe, many arising from the end of World War Two, and ethnic minorities who feel trapped on the wrong side of them.[628] However the more recent demarcation and attempt to stabilise regional borders in Southeast Asia leaves the issue more salient and a more sensitive issue for national governments.

Other factors that make a difference in the way that Southeast Asia has developed modern nationhood and minority rights include the role of pan-regional bodies, the role of the military and the role of religion as a nation-formative factor. All three countries are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Thailand as a founder member in 1967; Vietnam and Cambodia were admitted in 1995 and 1999 respectively. ASEAN was formed by five nations in 1967,[629] with an intention to improve cooperation in the region, under pressure from much larger super-powers.[630] It is important not to assume that the role of ASEAN is similar to the role of the European Union (EU) in Europe, however. Benhabib, for example, discusses at length the issue of democratic rights within Europe for both citizens and what she describes as 'third country citizens', and whether these are added to or under attack by either multiculturalism undermining national rights, or by the cohesive and aligned policies of the participating governments.[631] These questions never come up when

[626] Martin Wagener, "Lessons from Preah Vihear", *Journal of Southeast Asian Current Affairs* 30, no 3, (2011), 27 – 59.

[627] Unrepresented Peoples and Nations Organisation, https://unpo.org/members/7887, accessed April 6, 2019.

[628] See for example the position of ethnic Hungarians living in Slovakia and Romania.

[629] ASEAN Official History, https://asean.org/asean/about-asean/history/, accessed May 20, 2019.

[630] At the time the USA, Russia and China were fighting through their proxy states in Vietnam, very much part of the region.

[631] Benhabib, *The Rights of Others*, 147-167.

looking at the ASEAN countries, where there are wildly differing definitions of individual rights and no concept of addressing them on a pan-organisation basis.

ASEAN has states with a greater variety of size, type of government and economic development than the EU, making it much less likely to act in a cohesive way or draw up the basic requirements of common behaviour that, although under pressure in recent years, have come to characterise the EU. ASEAN is still very much driven by interstate economic considerations, not political or cultural ones – although most citizens of ASEAN countries are aware of the organisation, it is generally only thought of in economic terms, with much lower awareness of its political and security dimensions.[632] One fundamental principle of ASEAN has been to respect the right of member states to manage their own internal affairs without comment or interference from other members, as laid out in Article 2 of the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. Accession to this treaty is a requirement for membership.[633] This has come under rare pressure because of the Rohingya crisis in member-state Myanmar,[634] but nevertheless is generally adhered to. When a major diplomatic row flared up between Cambodia and Thailand in 2003, provoked by (false) rumours that a popular Thai actress had claimed that the ancient temples of Angkor Wat were rightfully Thai, ASEAN made no comment, despite the cessation of diplomatic relations between two of its members as a result. By contrast, the governments of both China and the USA promptly expressed their views and concerns.[635] Again this makes local conduct regarding the treatment of minority issues much less likely to attract external comment from other ASEAN members.

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[632] Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, "Voices of ASEAN: What Does ASEAN mean to ASEAN Peoples?", *ASEAN @ 50*, Vol. 2, 2017, 3-4.

[633] Donald E Weatherbee, *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle For Autonomy*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 126-7.

[634] "ASEAN Aims to Express 'Concern' on Rohingya Crisis For First Time", *Nikkei Asian Review*, November 13, 2018, https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/ASEAN-aims-to-express-concern-on-Rohingya-crisis-for-first-time, accessed April 6, 2019.

[635] Weatherbee, *International Relations in Southeast Asia*, 123-4.

In 'Formations of the Secular' Asad discusses the relationship between an ostensibly secular Europe and attitudes towards Muslims, both within Europe and as a historical external challenge.[636] He points out that although the mental conception of the borders of Europe have shifted eastward to include many of the former Eastern Bloc countries as part of a 'new Europe' there is still a habit of considering Muslim citizens differently – in a discussion on Bosnia he perceives an attitude that states, "Bosnian Muslims may be *in* Europe but are not *of* it."[637] (Italics in the original.) To a degree a similar attitude can be perceived in the countries of Southeast Asia towards their domestic minority populations. However it is made more complex because there is not the same concept of a common Southeast Asian citizenship or ideology, as yet. Although for the purposes of this work I look at the commonalities of the three countries discussed, they do not perceive each other in the same way – there has been armed conflicts involving all three in the last 50 years over issues of territory and sovereignty. Asad points out that Europeans have a habit of conveniently ignoring the terrible way in which Europeans have treated each other in the not-so-distant past; that convenient memory lapse does not benefit Southeast Asian nations in the same way. Therefore, for example, China has found it quite easy to 'divide and rule' ASEAN when it comes to the issue of control in the South China Sea, especially as some members of ASEAN are not contiguous to the Sea and therefore have no motivation to defend ASEAN member rights there.

The political and economic role of the military in these three countries is also significantly different from that of the military in the Western democracies and this also has implications for multiculturalism in the region. The role of Thailand's military as part of the governmental structure, in taking political action to influence outcomes or just take control through direct intervention has been covered in earlier chapters. It also takes a significant role in running the national economy, owning land, a TV station, housing, a leading bank (TMB – Thai Military Bank), and a football team, to highlight a few. Many State Owned Enterprises (SOE) also have military officers on their boards,

[636] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003): 162-164.

[637] Ibid., 164.

and therefore it is a hugely important actor in the Thai state.[638] Although the military in Cambodia and Vietnam are not partial to taking over and running the state in the same way – there have been no military coups in Vietnam and only two in Cambodia, led by Lon Nol in 1970 and Hun Sen himself, in order to consolidate sole power in 1997 – they still have a deeper role in political decision making and economic management than their equivalents in the West. In Vietnam there is considerable overlap between the civilian and military leadership, with the Vietnamese People's Army (VPA) having bloc status on the CPV central committee.[639] Although the VPA was supposed to divest itself from commercial involvement when Vietnam joined the World Trade Organisation in 2007 this has not happened – Thayer lists 10 major corporations still owned by the army in 2009.[640] Most noticeably, the largest mobile phone network, Viettel, continues to be owned by the Ministry of Defence – and has 43.5% market share in Vietnam, with 90 million customers across Vietnam and 10 overseas operating subsidiaries.[641] In Cambodia the army has less of a role in operations of the economy (although it does own the broadcast stations TV5 and Radio 5) but is under the direct control of PM Hun Sen, rather than any government.[642] Because of the limited state resources of the Cambodian official economy, the army is also partly funded by direct contributions from corporations (both domestic and foreign-owned) who use it to acquire and secure land assets on a major scale:

"As of 2016, over 850,000 people or six percent of the population have been pushed off their lands in often violent circumstances - with the vast majority of evictions carried out by the security forces."[643]

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[638] Chambers & Waitoolkiat, *Khaki Capital*, 40-92.

[639] Carlyle A Thayer, "The Political Economy of Military-Run Enterprises in Vietnam", *Khaki Capital,* Chambers, Waitoolkiat, eds., 131.

[640] Ibid., 151.

[641] Viettel Corporate Website, http://viettel.com.vn/en, accessed April 6, 2019.

[642] Chambers, Paul, "Khaki Clientelism: The Political Economy of Cambodia's Security Forces", *Khaki Capital,* 192.

[643] Ibid., 187.

This huge and continued influence of the military in national politics and economics, in ways that show them to be either completely out of elected state control (Thailand) or with a much greater role in guaranteeing continuance of state power (Cambodia and Vietnam) is important when it comes to considering how minority cultures function in society for two reasons. The military role operates a parallel system, often much stronger and more powerful, out of the influence of politicians or any other agents for change or reform – and it is the intrinsic nature of military organisations to be hierarchical, intolerant of dissenting opinions and prone to solving possible conflicts by the exertion of force or repression.

Lastly, religion has played a different role in the evolution of states in Southeast Asia. I quoted Smith earlier, arguing that the original role of religion as a key unifying factor had been replaced over time by a form of semi-republican secularism, downgrading the role of religion and religious leadership in the conceptualisation of modern nations. In both Vietnam and Cambodia, religion, specifically Buddhism, played a significant role in supporting and motivating independence and nationalist movements in the colonial era – understandably, given the link between the colonial power and the disregard for traditional state/religion linkages, not to mention the perceived sponsorship of the spread of Christianity by the colonial powers. There is still an official link between religion and state legitimacy in Cambodia, as of course there is in Thailand, where Buddhism has always been a defining factor of nation creation. The development of state secularism with a republican flavour, as described by Smith, has never occurred in either Cambodia or Thailand; in Vietnam, religion lost any significant role in state creation with the advent of Communist rule, but it can be argued that the doctrine of Communism itself plays a quasi-religious role in the formation and ongoing control of the Vietnamese state.

Multiculturalism in Southeast Asia?

So, are Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam multicultural countries – at least in the way that they treat ethnic minority Muslim citizens? The quotation at the beginning of this chapter (taken from a press release marking an official visit of the Chularajmontri, the official head of Thai Islam, to Turkey) indicates that the government of Thailand, at

least, believes that to be the case – but writing something in a press release does not make it a fact. In an attempt to identify characteristics of multiculturalism, the Multiculturalism Policy Index project at Queens University, devised by Banting and Kymlicka highlighted certain policy areas whereby the effectiveness of multicultural policies could be measured, and although these can no doubt be disputed and improved on, I have found them useful as a benchmark in order to try and assess the situation in this region in a logical manner.[644]

The first of these areas; if the minority group has a distinguishing language, how is that language treated by the state in terms of usage in official channels? In all three countries ethnic Muslim minorities use primary languages which are different from the official language of the country. This is not just the case for Muslim minorities – both Thailand and Vietnam have numerous minority communities using their own languages and even in Cambodia, the hill people of the Northeast use languages other than Khmer. However there is a clear relationship mapping the minority Muslim communities and their use of a specific language – Patani Melayu (the local dialect of Malay) for the Malays of Thailand and Cham language for the Muslim Cham in both Cambodia and the Mekong region of Vietnam. Nowadays, there is no attempt to suppress use of the language in daily life, but it has no official recognition, nor is it condoned for use in schools, other than specific religious schools maintained by the community for extra-curricular study, notwithstanding the experiments described in Chapter Five.

There is also another linguistic challenge, which has not been addressed by either the state or the community – if Patani Melayu is given an official status, how should it be written? Historically it was written in Jawi script, but this is now only in use for religious and symbolic purposes and is not widely understood. It can be phonetically transliterated into Thai characters – and this is what was done in the UNICEF sponsored experiment. This attempted to give the written form a formal structure, allowing for the fact that spoken Thai is a tonal language with written tonal markers, whereas Patani Melayu is not. According to Professor Suwilai, this attracted criticism

[644] Multiculturalism Policy Index, http://www.queensu.ca/mcp/, accessed April 7, 2019.

from some Malay commentators as being seen as a way to assimilate Malay culture – but was also popular with parents for whom the characters were familiar from daily life, national media and their own experience of enforced Thai education, and who therefore could participate in their children's education in a way that had been closed to them previously.[645] The same caveat applies to Cham – written in traditional script (see the photograph in Chapter Seven, page 185), it is only a spoken language for Cham people, although the followers of Imam Bani San (Jahed) claim they can both read and write it as part of their religious practice.[646] Is the failure to agree a common form of written language a justification for not using it in an official capacity – or is it something that has been deliberately neglected by the state in order to relegate the status and standing of languages other than Thai, Khmer and Vietnamese?

Either way, in Thailand attempts to give Patani Melayu/Malay language some form of official status have been rejected, as described earlier; in Cambodia and Vietnam, formal recognition of Cham has not been considered. In a discussion on the study of ethnic conflict, Kanbur, Rajaram and Varshney highlight how the federalism of India into states separated by language in the 1960's was a major factor in eliminating ethnic tension around this issue;[647] nevertheless it remains off the agenda in Thailand for peace-building or reconciliation, seen as a challenge to national identity and Thai patriotism. In Cambodia it is believed that almost 100% of Cham can also speak Khmer[648] with a high level of comfort; certainly in my series of interviews with Cham Muslims in 2018 and 2019 I never met anyone who did not claim a high level of fluency in Khmer. Nevertheless, as Ysa stated in his interview with me, Cham children still struggle in the early years of Khmer-language school as they are not using Khmer at home.[649] This is confirmed in data from Bredenberg's research on Cambodian school education, published in 2008; 89% of Cham respondents say they normally speak

[645] Interview with Professor Suwilai Premsrirat, February 27, 2019. In Malaysia the language is written using Roman characters, but that would be still more confusing. See chapter seven, page 180.

[646] Uy, Yusos, "The Muslims of Cambodia".

[647] Kanbur, Rajaram, Varshney, "Ethnic Diversity and Ethnic Strife".

[648] Ethnologue.com, https://www.ethnologue.com/language/cja, accessed April 6, 2019.

[649] Interview with Osman Ysa, February 20, 2019.

Cham at home, and 32% of state teachers reported Cham children as "understanding Khmer language instruction a little bit but not very well."[650]

Banting and Kymlicka's next criterion for measuring multiculturalism is whether there is minority representation in government. They look at a range of options, from reservation of assembly seats for minorities, to drawing of constituency borders in order to ensure that minorities will form a local majority, to the honouring of a customary practice of including minority representatives. The problem with this criterion is that there is an assumption of democratic structures as a given in the first place. As I have said before, this reflects a belief that multiculturalism is dependent on democracy. This is not just a Western assumption. In a recently published review on multiculturalism in the ASEAN countries, Buendia states unequivocally:

"The principle of multiculturalism has to go hand in hand with democracy and a broad regional autonomy. In fact, only democracy can really accept multiculturalism as a concept of state and nation building. It is through a more democratic structure, institution, and process that empowerment of the people, including and especially minorities, be strengthened, enhanced, and promoted."[651]

This seems logical – without democratic rights of self-expression how can minorities have a voice, when nobody does? On this basis, there is no multicultural option for representation available. In fact Thailand has lurched in and out of democracy, and therefore there are delineated electoral constituencies in Thailand where Malay Muslims are a majority of the electorate; given the high percentage of Muslims in the border provinces it would be impossible for that not to be the case. When there are elections, the level of participation has been high – usually higher than in the country as a whole.[652] However the political choice has usually been between the Wadah faction in different forms (described in Chapter Eight, page 189) or the Democrats, the

[650] Bredenberg, "Educational Marginalization of Cham Muslim Populations", 1-14.

[651] Rizal Buendia, "Multiculturalism and Economic Cooperation in ASEAN", *Multiculturalism in Asia - Peace and Harmony*, Imtiaz Yusuf, ed, (Bangkok: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2018), 74.

[652] Chantra, "From Conflict to Peaceful Participation", 194.

traditional power in the other Southern provinces. The separatists do not contest elections – quite apart from other considerations, their aspirations cannot be expressed legally in an open forum in Thailand. In Cambodia and Vietnam the minority population is either too dispersed and/or too small to be able to leverage electoral strength, and in any case there is no democratic choice on offer in either country. Individual Muslims have been represented in democratically formed governments in both Cambodia and Thailand, as described in Chapter Eight, usually as a reward for being able to deliver factional votes.

One concerning issue for political representation for minorities in a multicultural context is the growth of a populist form of majoritarian politics in the region. By this I mean the growing tendency for politicians to leverage electoral gain by appealing directly to the specific interests of the majority population by ethnicity or religion – not only ignoring the issues that concern minorities, but actively targeting them as in some way a disloyal threat to the wellbeing of the nation. As a result, opposition parties feel under pressure to align to a similar position or risk being outflanked on emotive issues of nationalism and patriotism. The growth of this tendency in South Asia – noticeably in the policies of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India, but also in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka – was described recently in an article reviewing new books covering the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar.[653] In Myanmar, this has given rise to legalised discrimination against minority groups – for example the Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Law, preventing marriage to non-Buddhist men without parental permission and giving automatic child custody to the Buddhist mother in the case of a divorce. Given the commonalities between Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka and Myanmar, this is a cause for future concern in this sub-region.

Provision of education is another signifier of applied multiculturalism – the ability of minorities to access education at all levels (including tertiary). Banting and Kymlicka define this in terms of local language use in education, but I believe it also needs to apply to the general provision of education to minority areas or communities both in

[653] Mukul Kesavan, "Murderous Majorities", *New York Review of Books*, January 18, 2018, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2018/01/18/rohingya-murderous-majorities/, accessed April 6, 2019.

terms of adequate provision of resource and properly-funded opportunities for continuing education. Educational policy is heavily centralised in all three countries under discussion and therefore there is little opportunity for properly-funded local initiatives. The issue of use of minority languages in education has been covered; at least in Thailand, Muslim pupils are also expected to sing the national anthem, a pledge of loyalty to the Thai state in all schools, every day. In recent years Thailand has espoused official support for minority education but a recent review of this policy concluded that it is superficial, providing a minimal level of support to Muslim children, or to the children of economic migrants from Cambodia and Myanmar working in the country on a temporary basis.[654] Generally education resource is limited and poorly funded in areas of Cambodia and Thailand outside the capital region, and therefore standards are much lower in general. Financial considerations also make it much harder for minority children to remain in education past the age of 14-15, as many respondents to my interviews made clear.[655] That said, poor education funding and enforcement is not necessarily specific to religious minorities; according to both UNESCO and Bredenberg, more than 70% of children in Cambodia do not attend secondary school, as of 2007.[656] However it is certainly the case that there is a failure to provide bilingual education and this must exacerbate the problem.

The fifth criteria for measuring commitment to multiculturalism is the affirmation of "multinationalism". This is defined as the recognition in official documents (by which they refer to either the constitution or similar official documents) of "the plurinational character of the country (or the existence of two or more nations on the state's territory)". They suggest that if the nation is defined in terms only of the majority population, then it is clearly not multicultural. I find this criteria quite problematic for the following reasons. First there is a touching faith, perhaps derived from a Western democratic experience, that because something is in the constitution it necessarily has

[654] Thithimadee Arphattananon, "Multicultural Education in Thailand", *Intercultural Education* 29 no 2, (2018), 149-162.

[655] Interviews with Cham people in Cambodia during 2018 and 2019.

[656] "Using ICTs and blended learning in transforming technical and vocational education and training", *UNESDOC*, UNESCO Digital Library, 164, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247495, accessed April 6, 2019.

a practical meaning for the rights of citizens. Unfortunately there is a tendency to include commitments to political and religious freedom, individual and group rights and other worthy aspirations in most written constitutions, without it meaning anything actionable in reality. Dictatorial regimes are often challenged for their failure to live up to the promises made in their constitution. When those challenges are made by their own citizens, it tends to end up badly for the citizen rather than the state. In Chapter Nine I highlighted the commitment to religious freedom made in the constitutions of all three countries, and also the commitment made to religious freedom in the constitution of the Khmer Rouge. However, whatever level of commitment is demonstrated to the statements made in a written constitution, it is safe to say that all three countries fail this test anyway. Article 5 of the Vietnamese constitution specifically protects the rights of (unnamed) ethnic minorities, including their right to use their own language – although the constitution also defines Vietnamese as the only official language of the country.[657] However the constitution defines many other individual rights that are certainly not honoured in practice. Section 70 of the most recent Thai constitution also protects (unnamed) minority rights – so long as they behave themselves.[658] (My paraphrase!)

The last benchmark is the idea of international personality – the ability of minority nations to act on their own behalf, making treaties or participating in international bodies. This includes sporting events – which I interpret as being included in order to expand the category, faced with the realisation that otherwise it would be very small indeed. The reality is that international sporting recognition of – for example - Wales, the Faroe Islands and Hong Kong is hardly proof of the effective international personality of those territories. It is very difficult to argue that any of this applies to the minorities of Southeast Asia. At a stretch it could be argued that Thailand's participation as an observer nation at the OIC, as discussed in Chapter Seven, is a form of international personality for Thai Muslims, but I suspect that the more cynical view

[657] Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, https://vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/250222/the-constitution-of-the-socialist-republic-of-viet-nam.html#VBtY27PjP3LQsZhS.97, accessed April 6, 2019.

[658] Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, http://www.constitutionalcourt.or.th/occ_en/download/article_20170410173022.pdf, accessed April 6, 2019.

– that this is a way of preempting international intervention in the Southern conflict, or a recognised Patani separatist presence in that forum – is also more accurate.

Based on this measurement of the performance of Southeast Asian states against the set of decision rules posited by Banting and Kymlicka, it is tempting to fall back on the conclusion implicit in the vocabulary – that multiculturalism is not possible in a monocultural society, and that the origins and development of nation states in this part of the world preclude the form of liberal democracy that writers on multiculturalism deem necessary for it to emerge and flourish. Before stopping there though I want to consider two additional factors. First, does the concept that East Asian culture and government is influenced by Confucian principles, with an implied respect for familial and societal harmony overriding individual or group advocacy, mean that multiculturalism is likely to have a different aspect and manifestation as a result? This theory, most famously propagated by the late Singaporean statesman, Lee Kuan Yew to justify his hostility to democracy and promotion of the central role of ethnic Chinese in the development of Singapore,[659] is often discredited as just a rationalisation for the monolithic and dictatorial government of some regional states – particularly Singapore.[660] That may well be the case, but it is also true that the desire to avoid public discord and look for common ground in indirect solutions is widely believed to be a preferred way of behaviour in Asia. Alas, it would be easier to sustain this argument of conflict aversion were it not for the fact that two of the three countries in question were home to extremely violent civil wars during the 20th Century, and the third (Thailand) has seen violent repression of civilian political opposition on regular occasions - 77 civilian deaths in 1973, around 40 in 1992 and 91

[659] Lee argued that this was an Asian characteristic but was only really concerned with the outcome in Singapore. However a theory that only applied to a small island nation would seem absurd. Other countries have never espoused this concept, except for tactical short-term gain.

Haig Patapan, "Modern Philosopher Kings: Lee Kuan Yew and the Limits of Confucian 'Idealistic' Leadership", *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 12, (2013).

[660] Ibid., 217-241.

in 2011. In all three countries, citizens killed their fellow countrymen in attempts to resolve political disputes.

The second factor is that although multiculturalism may be absent in the theoretical sense, there are practical manifestations of openness to accommodating Muslim fellow citizens in a way that does not seem to attract any adverse comment, certainly not in the way that it would in the West. This can range from the mundane, but important, like the provision of prayer facilities at major nodes of transport or low cost passports and official assistance for Hajj pilgrims,[661] to the way in which Muslims are actively employed in certain sectors of the economy – noticeably tourism, healthcare and food service. The photograph at the end of this chapter shows the prayer rooms on the platform at Bangkok's Hua Lamphong railway terminus. This is significant – the airports are used by many foreign Muslim tourists, but the trains are not. Therefore this is intended for use by Muslim Thai citizens. Sector employment tends to reflect circumstances; many Buddhists do not want to be involved in meat slaughter, processing and sale; Thai hospitals attract many Muslim customers from The Gulf; the tourist centres of the South have a larger local population of Thai Muslims available for the workforce. Nevertheless there is a perceived openness to Muslim participation, perhaps reflecting the fact that Muslims have been a permanent and enduring presence for centuries.

Conclusion.

Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam are clearly monocultural – dominated by a single religion in the first two and by a monolithic political system in the third. In each case the dominant culture is given a special status constitutionally and in practice, and it is assumed that the citizens accept that monoculture and adhere to it, no matter what their ethnicity, language or religion may be. The monoculture privileges religion (or party), but also gives a central place to a national language and, in the cases of

[661] "Ministry of Foreign Affairs Contributes to the Pilgrimage Mission of the Amirul Hajj of Thailand for the Year 2018", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, August 27, 2018, http://www.mfa.go.th/main/en/news3/6886/93581-Ministry-of-Foreign-Affairs-contributes-to-the-pil.html, accessed May 20, 2019.

Cambodia and Thailand, the monarchy. Minorities in ethnicity, language or religion are expected to accept this state of affairs and to be loyal to it. Failure of loyalty brings alienation or punishment. In this respect, these countries are quite unlike those liberal Western democracies who espouse or practice multicultural policies aimed at fair treatment and group recognition and enablement for ethnic and religious minority citizens. It should be noted however, that the issue of freedom of religion or religious tolerance is not nearly as clear-cut as often perceived in the West. It tends to be something granted towards minority religions by the majority religion of the time – Catholics to Protestants or vice versa, or Christians to other religions. As Haefeli points out,[662] religious tolerance is a dynamic relationship, and an uneven one, not a static condition and Moyn also contends that it tends to be pushed for by religions only when they find themselves in a minority status.[663]

It is important to understand the evolution of the nation states in the region, in order to understand the different context and different circumstances that have brought about their current situation. A background of conflict, of colonialism, and civil war or civil unrest still in living memory for some citizens, has meant that these states are relatively new in their current forms and issues regarding geographic borders, establishment of religion, legitimacy of current governments and relations with other countries, whether neighbours or critics from afar, are still salient, sensitive and fragile. In that context, these states do not feel the same obligations or restrictions when it comes to exercising their authority over minority populations. Fragility can mean that perceived dissent is very easily equated with disloyalty or insurrection. This is particularly the case where there is a direct alignment between ethnicity, language and religion, making a specific minority separate and different along all three parameters.

Within that framework, these states fail to provide a context for their ethnic Muslim minorities that allows them to reach a state of equality and fulfilment. When judged along the criteria of the Multicultural Policy Index, they are found clearly to be less

[662] Evan Haefeli, "The Problem with The History of Toleration", *Politics of Religious Freedom*, 108.

[663] Samuel Moyn, "Religious Freedom Between Truth and Tactic", *Politics of Religious Freedom*, 137-138.

multicultural than their Western counterparts, and unlikely to change in that direction in the perceivable future. At best, the comparison can be made to other similar countries in the region – those neighbours in South Asia – and the conclusion drawn; it could be a lot worse! However in practice the region does make an effort to accommodate and provide freedoms for its ethnic Muslims. The situation is certainly better than it was 60-70 years before, at the end of colonialism and during the wars in Cambodia and Vietnam and the enforced policies of "Thai-ness" imposed in Thailand. Despite the efforts of some extremist Buddhist monks to import the hostility and violence prevalent in Sri Lanka and Myanmar, there is little sign of a growth in hostility towards ethnic Muslim citizens, nor of any official policy to discriminate or restrict behaviour and practice. Most commentators express a belief that liberal democracy and multiculturalism are inseparable and without the first, the second can never happen. This is probably true; however, given that there is no sign of liberal democracy arriving in any of these three states, the situation for minority Muslims deserves recognition as being more complex and more nuanced in modern reality.

Muslim prayer room on Hua Lamphong station platform, March 2019. Photo, author.

Chapter Eleven. Conclusions.

In 2010 the Foreign Correspondent programme of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) broadcast a documentary on Thailand's monarchy, highlighting the probable succession crisis facing the country.[664] The programme was highly controversial – it is likely that nobody involved in making it will ever be able to enter Thailand again, and the presenters made it very clear that the programme was made without the knowledge or involvement of the Thai-based bureau of the ABC. It specifically highlighted the probable problems arising from the fact that the widely revered King Bhumibol was likely to die in the near future, and the legal successor was his son Vajiralongkorn. The programme focused on the dubious moral character of Vajiralongkorn, and the fact that although no media could ever dare to publish these allegations, they were widely known to be true, even among ordinary Thai people. Bhumibol was seen as kindly, caring for ordinary people and having the countries best interests at heart. In contrast Vajiralongkorn was seen as immoral, cruel and autocratic with little interest in the people and land he would be expected to reign over.

Recent events would seem to confirm this reputation. Although King Bhumibol lingered on until 2016, Vajiralongkorn married his fourth wife three days before his coronation in May 2019, but in July of 2019 made a public announcement of his official consort in a ceremony that included the presence of his current wife. Although not unheard of, this was the first official consort proclamation since 1921 – when the monarchy still wielded absolute power.[665] However, much of the speculation regarding a forthcoming crisis in the Thai monarchy proved to be just that. There was never any sign of discussion about Vajiralongkorn's right to succeed to the throne, and publicly his portrait and influence are just as visible as that of his late father. Indeed, the number of Lèse Majesté prosecutions in the reign of the new king have actually fallen

[664] The programme can still be seen at https://vimeo.com/51669319

[665] To add to the absurdity of the situation, the consort was summarily sacked and publicly humiliated in October, 2019.

"Sineenart's titles, ranks, removed", Bangkok Post, October 21, 2019, https://www.bangkokpost.com/learning/easy/1777049/sineenarts-titles-ranks-removed, accessed October 23, 2019.

significantly – from an annual average of 25 in the last three years of the old king to a current average of 9 in the first two full years of King Vajiralongkorn's reign.[666]

The point I am trying to make is that politics and society in Southeast Asia can be unpredictable and opaque, making it difficult to forecast likely developments based on past history and precedent. Secretive networks of power and influence in all three countries make understanding what is really happening quite complex. With this caveat, I want to try and draw out what can be learned from understanding the situation of Muslims in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam, how it compares to the status of Muslim minorities in the supposedly multicultural countries of the West – and how the situation is likely to evolve in the near future.

To recap, the core question asked by this is how Southeast Asian Muslim minorities live with, and manage in, predominantly monocultural societies, where the dominant religious and social practices and culture are not Muslim? Although as mentioned previously, all three countries lay claim to a belief in multiculturalism, in fact they are referring to the fact that they are aware of the existence of minorities within their borders and that state policies generally[667] do not discriminate based on ethnicity or religion – cultural diversity, rather than multiculturalism. Within that core question, I also wanted to address the issue of the overlap between ethnicity and religion in the region, and the realities of Muslim minority existence in societies where they have been present for a long time, but always as a minority in a country with a very strong central role for a different religion – and a different race – shared by an overwhelming majority of the community.

Throughout this thesis I have examined different facets of society and how it has affected the existence of the Muslims. I have looked at the origins of the Muslim community in each country and the (often traumatic) way in which recent developments in history have affected them, through the post-colonial era up to the

[666]Kas Chanwapen, "Junta reins in Lese Majeste" (sic), *The Nation*, September 30, 2018, https://www.nationthailand.com/politics/30355507, Accessed October 21, 2019.

[667] Specifically of course they do – the constitutions of both Cambodia and Thailand recognise a privileged place for Buddhism and Thailand's language policies clearly discriminate against languages other than standard Thai.

present day. I have looked at specific ways in which societies have organised and managed themselves in education, in language, in personal and family law. I have also covered the way in which media has portrayed the minority and covered its relationship with the majority population, and the way in which economic development has impacted on the working and migratory life of the Muslim community. The way in which political and civil activism and violent resistance can be leveraged – or not – by the Muslims is also a significant factor in the role they can play as part of the greater nation. I have examined the role of religion in society – both the role of Islam in the lives of the people and the way in which Buddhism has been used as a cultural determinant and a way of seeing the minority from both the state and the individual point of view. Finally, I have tried to look at the way in which an ethos of multiculturalism can be seen to apply to the rights and lives of Muslim minorities and how this compares with perceived Western standards and expectations of what multiculturalism is – and how it is expected to work.

As outlined in the previous chapter, there seems to be a perception among writers on multiculturalism that links the concept with a liberal, quasi-secular, democratic form of government and particularly with the states of Western Europe or North America (and also I imagine with Australia and New Zealand). On the surface this is not an unreasonable assumption – illiberal states and dictatorships do not often see the need to accommodate minority points of view and are capable of quashing dissent without being too concerned about the perceptions of their actions. As the rule of law is subsumed to the needs of the power-holders, there is not much legal recourse to avail minority protections or rights and dissent can be stifled without much regard to possible consequences. In extreme cases minorities can either be violently repressed – as for example in the recent treatment of Uighur Muslims in the Xinjiang province of China – or actively scapegoated to provide an outlet for a frustrated majority and to link the ruling body with populist opinion – the case of the Rohingya in Myanmar being a glaring example.

Certainly the states covered in this are in no real way liberal, secular or democratic. In Chapter Nine, I discussed the close links between the Buddhist religion and the state concept and administration in both Cambodia and Thailand. Of course there is no

established religion in Vietnam, but the main religions – differing forms of Buddhism and Christianity – are effectively co-opted and controlled by the state, and it can be argued that the nature of Communism in Vietnam makes it an imposed set of beliefs and practices that is almost religious in nature. Minority religions – not just Islam but also Protestantism and Hinduism – are not co-opted and administered in the same way and are not permitted to exercise any form of independence or demand specific rights not authorised by the state.

Neither are any of them democratic in the way in which the term is used in the West. Of course all three hold elections, though in the case of Thailand, elections are suspended during the regular periods of military rule. However many dictatorships claim to hold elections to ratify their continued rule – China, North Korea and Kazakhstan being three obvious examples. In the last National Assembly elections in Vietnam (in 2016) the Communist Party won 473 of the 494 seats available.[668] Recent elections in Cambodia have been more hotly contested by a credible opposition, but the close race in 2013 appears to have scared Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and since then several steps have been taken to make sure this risk is not repeated – including the outlawing of the main opposition party, the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP), preventing them from participating in the election of 2018, where the CPP won 100% of the seats available.[669] After 5 years of military dictatorship, an election was finally held in Thailand in 2019. The legitimacy of this election can be hotly argued, but the fact that – once all the haggling, bargaining and buying of coalitions and positions was concluded – the new Prime Minister was Prayuth Chan-o-Cha, who had been leader of the coup in his position as head of the armed forces and head of the ruling military junta for the previous five years, is a clear indication of how the process had been manipulated.

Clearly the situation of Muslim minorities in Southeast Asia is quite different from that of Muslim minorities in the West, specifically because of the deep roots of the

[668] Inter-Parliamentary Union, Vietnam 2016, http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2349_E.htm, accessed October 21, 2019.

[669] More voting papers were spoiled than any single other party received votes, seen as a way of protesting against the sham election. Inter-Parliamentary Union, Cambodia, September 6, 2018, http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2051_A.htm, accessed October 21, 2019.

communities in the places that they live, dating back centuries, and therefore there is no history of migration and external pressure to assimilate as relative newcomers with historic roots elsewhere. It would be interesting to see how recent inward migrants have been treated by the receiving societies in Asia, but the relative poverty and xenophobic resistance to accepting any type of refugee means that there is no real case of permanent inward migration for many years.[670] There are ethnic minority refugees along the Northern border with Myanmar – people who have fled the attempts of the Myanmar army to quell ethnic rebellions in that region. However they remain stateless and exist in a highly ambiguous legal position. In Myanmar the Rohingya are treated by the state as recent immigrants, arriving illegally from Bangladesh. For this reason the state refuses even to use the word 'Rohingya', labelling them 'Bengali' and using this as an excuse to drive them across the border with Bangladesh with great violence.

Returning to the case of the Malay Muslims of Thailand and the Cham Muslims of Cambodia and Vietnam, there has never been any attempt to deny their position as legitimate citizens of the state. The form of Thai nationalism prevalent in Thailand during the last century has led to the opposite case. Ethnically Malay Muslims have been expected to behave in the same way as all other citizens of Thailand, including using the Thai language and in some cases experiencing pressure to convert to Buddhism and give up patterns of behaviour, religious practice and dress that might mark them out as being different. The highly centralised nature of power and authority in Thailand, whether under a civilian or military government, has meant that control over the areas of Thailand where Muslims of Malay ethnicity are in a majority has been exercised by the centre, and by administrators who are largely appointed centrally, often sent from other parts of the country – hence the high level of resentment, often manifesting itself in armed rebellion. This has not been the case for the Cambodian Cham, who are much more evenly distributed across the country and therefore not concentrated in any area where they would form a majority and be able to demand some form of decentralised status. Following the appalling treatment they received at

[670] Thailand has many inward economic migrants from both Cambodia and Myanmar, as discussed in Chapter Six However their status is not allowed to become permanent and they are expected to return to their country of origin as soon as their economic role is over. There is no channel for permanent settlement for these workers.

the hands of the Khmer Rouge, decent treatment from the CPP has been a lodestone of that party's legitimacy and has resulted in a perception of loyalty among the Cham community. This has been exacerbated by the opposition's tendency during the 2013 elections to scapegoat Chinese and Vietnamese minorities in order to highlight the historic link between the CPP and the Vietnamese government and the more recent economic benefits derived by leading members of the CPP from their links to Chinese investment. (An element of racist populism is also a factor, something that would inspire mistrust among the Cham.)

Nevertheless, as I discussed in Chapter Ten, there are factors regarding the treatment of Muslim minorities in these countries that imply a greater set of rights and a greater assumption of legitimacy from the state and the majority population than that experienced by Muslims in the West. The concept of liberal secularism and multiculturalism has come under considerable pressure in recent years, both from populist movements who target minorities and from more liberal politicians and opinion leaders who believe that an excessive commitment to multiculturalism has led to the formation and exercise of extremist views in Muslim communities, sometimes manifesting itself in a willingness to participate in violence either domestically or in the Middle East. It is also clear, as Asad and others point out, that a notional commitment to secularism is often just that – there is a clear level of economic and political linkage between states and favoured religions in all Western states.[671] Although it has not always been the case, and is still exercised unevenly in some cases, there is a clear freedom of religious belief *and practice* experienced by Muslims in all three countries. Muslims have been represented at high levels of government and administration for many years, and in general the attempt to roll back freedom of dress and the hostility towards building of new mosques seen in some western countries has not been experienced in the Southeast Asian countries under discussion.

Access to work, education and the media is generally harder for Muslim minorities than for the majority population in all three countries. This is often a function of language difficulties, which make Muslim minorities perform less well academically as

[671] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 5.

they are having to study in a different language to that used at home and work in an environment where the official language is also not their first choice. There is also evidence of racial discrimination, particularly in Thailand where the Malay Muslims find it difficult to get employment outside their home provinces as they are perceived as a backward and often dangerous minority. Indeed, there is a paradox in that the state makes it abundantly clear that there will be no form of decentralisation or autonomy for the Southern provinces, while at the same time the general population are hostile to the people who live there and are not amenable to the idea of integration. Media access is also limited and mainstream media either ignores the minorities or covers them in a negative and superficial, sensationalist manner. The relatively small population and high poverty levels of the Muslims also makes them an unattractive proposition for new media development. This is an economic factor, not a deliberately restrictive one.

Hostility to Islam as a religion *per se* is also not manifested through populist politics in the same way as has been seen in recent years in the West, although Sri Lanka and Myanmar, both of whom share a similar form of Buddhism as a majority religion, have seen extreme outbreaks of Islamophobic violence. In Thailand, Islam has been associated with both violence and an influx of 'outsiders' as detailed in Pathan, et al,[672] but even then it is seen as something associated with ethnically different Muslims from the far South, seen as destabilising the Kingdom and does not carry over to non-Malay Muslims in the rest of the country. This is partly because a narrative that accuses an influx of non-native Muslims of 'swamping' the locals does not make sense in an environment where the Muslims in question have always been present.[673] It may also be the case that Buddhism is a religion more geared towards acceptance of

[672] Pathan et. al, *Understanding Anti-Islam Sentiment in Thailand*.

[673] See Morey & Aquin's discussion of how stereotyping of Muslims denies the possibility of evolution of roles within society, and the fact that the volume of hostility undercuts any notion that there is really a threat.

Peter Morey, Amina Yaqin, *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11*, (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2011).

different versions of religious faith, though the work by Jerryson on Buddhist violence rather undermines that theory.[674]

In all three countries there is a clear link between ethnicity and religion, whereby being of a certain ethnic group brings with it an automatic assumption that the individual is also a Muslim. This is a one-way linkage; it is quite possible to be a Muslim in Thailand without being assumed to be Malay. As mentioned in Chapter Six, there are several Muslims in popular media, and in government and administrative roles but they are always Muslims of Thai ethnicity, not Malays from the South. Muslims in Cambodia and Vietnam are generally assumed to be Cham, but nevertheless there are Muslim minorities in Cambodia who are not Cham (the Chvea, for example) and Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City has distinct Muslim minorities who have settled from either South Asia or what is now Indonesia. As was mentioned in Chapter Three there is a linguistic linkage whereby Malay and Muslim were seen as being synonymous, and as Milner points out, Cham immigrants to Malaysia at the time of Khmer Rouge genocide were generally described as 'Melayu Muslim Kemboja' (Malay Muslim Cambodians).[675]

Summary.

In conclusion, the concept of Muslim minorities in these three countries as being a hidden and marginalised by a monocultural majority, supported by a state that privileges a specific religion or doctrine is in some ways true, but is also simplistic and fails to recognise both the willingness of the state to accept a minority that is visibly different and the ability of the Muslims themselves to carve out a position of autonomy and self-reliance. States in the West that are ostensibly multicultural in philosophy and practice often privilege a particular religion and philosophy at the expense of Muslim self-determination despite their democratic and liberal ideals. The rise of populist politics in the West has created an atmosphere that is much more conducive to the 'othering' of Muslim minorities, and they have experienced a rise in intolerance, hostility and violence as a result. This hostile climate is dialed up by

[674] Jerryson, *Buddhist Fury, If You Meet The Buddha On The Road*.

[675] Anthony Milner, *The Malays*, (Chichester, UK, Wiley Blackwell, 2011), 178.

politicians like Trump, Farage, Orbán, Le Pen and others of their ilk, and more traditional or mainstream politicians feel under threat enough to have to start conversations using the same terms of reference. The 'Overton window'[676] of what is acceptable discussion has shifted as a result.

Although there has been a very clear manifestation of xenophobic hostility driven by a similar form of populism in Sri Lanka and Myanmar, this has not generally been the case in the three countries under discussion. Paradoxically, the greater level of authoritarian control exerted by their governments has also acted to suppress and restrict alternative narratives of anti-Islamic populism, which is seen as a potential threat to state control. Although historically there have been clear and savage examples of Muslim persecution and repression in both Cambodia and Thailand, the modern states do provide an environment whereby Muslims can live an authentic and separate expression of their religion, albeit under the umbrella of a monoculture that is described as the most authentic practice for the state as it exists today. Ethnicities that are seen as synonymous with Islam are treated as citizens who are economically marginalised and under some degree of suspicion for disloyalty or disruptiveness; however this is an ethnic issue, not a religious one, and a reflection of linguistic and cultural differences more than of religion.

I believe that this thesis is a significant advancement in scholarship because it addresses an issue that has traditionally been subsumed into discussions of conflict and violence or of micro-focus on religious 'quirks' taking on an almost orientalist approach. It focuses on the nature of Muslim minorities in a part of the world where they are often ignored. It draws out the similarities and shared challenges of communities in neighbouring countries – countries that have been discovering and consolidating their own identities in the past decades since the end of colonialism in the region. It also highlights that multiculturalism is not unique to liberal democracies in the West and can exist in situations that are quite repressive and intolerant.

[676] The spectrum of policies on any issue seen as acceptable to the public. See for example, The New Statesman, "What Is the Overton Window?", April 27, 2015, https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/04/what-overton-window, accessed October 21, 2019.

Like any work with a specific focus, there are questions left unanswered. As I explained in Chapter Three, I have not made a comparison of the experiences of Muslims versus non-Muslim minorities in these countries, as this would have vastly complicated the question and also made it impossible to look at the Muslim experience in the detail required. A future area of study in this context would be fruitful. There are also Muslim minorities in other authoritarian states in Southeast Asia – Laos, Singapore and Myanmar – as well as the relatively democratic experience of The Philippines in recent years. Understanding their situation and placing it in the same context would also be interesting and worthwhile. If it were possible to identify comparative communities in a Western and Southeast Asian country and then take a deeper look at their similarities and differences, that would also be worth pursuing.

APPENDIX ONE – RESULTS FROM A QUANTITATIVE SURVEY TAKEN IN THAILAND IN MARCH – APRIL 2019.

Responses – 517.

Duration – March 27 – April 15, 2018.

A. Biases in the data.

1. All results were collected by an online link to a 12-question survey. Therefore, all respondents needed to be able to access it and complete it online. This skews the results in favour of people who are comfortable using online interaction and have access to the necessary technology.

2. The sample is biased towards women – 61% versus 39% male. (The actual population is 51% female, 49% male.)

3. The sample is biased towards people aged 21-35, who were 65% of responders. This age bracket is only 21% of the population in reality. Over 55's only accounted for 4% of responses. (Nationally they account for 23% of the population.)

4. The South of Thailand is up-weighted – 22% from the Southern border provinces and 23% from the upper South. (These two account for 14% of the population in 2017.) The West, East and North regions only accounted for 4% of responses but represent 31% of the population in reality.

5. The sample over-represents higher education – 63% of responders have a first degree and 22% have a second or higher degree. (46% of the Thai population went into tertiary education in 2015.)

6. The sample is weighted towards Muslims – 56% of responders identified themselves as Muslim, versus 38% Buddhist-identifying responders. (The national population statistics are 95% Buddhist, 4% Muslim.)

B. Results.

1. Thailand is seen as a Buddhist country (78%). 4% say it is Muslim, 17% that it is secular.

2. Religion is very important to Thai people (71%). 24% say that it is quite important, 3% a little, and 1% not at all.

3. Muslims are seen as being equal citizens by 59% of responders. 27% see them as an accepted minority, 8% as a tolerated minority and 4% as a disliked minority.

4. However, when it comes to the designated official language of Thailand, 52% say that it should only be Thai. 34% favour the option of Malay for Malay speakers.

5. In education, 42% of responders supported the use of Thai state schools. 38% want Muslim schools funded by the state, while 7% wanted Muslim schools, funded privately.

6. 33% of respondents supported the application of Thai law equally for all citizens. 41% supported making a provision for different rules for Muslims in the area of family law. 21% want Sharia law for Muslims.

7. Finally, 12% feel that the security situation in the South is improving – but 16% believe it is getting worse, 68% that it is always the same – and 5% don't care!

C. <u>Differences between religions.</u>

1. The Muslim data is more heavily skewed to a young demographic – 77% are between 21-35. (This reflects the people I was able to access when running the survey.)

2. Muslims are also much more likely to come from the South – 39% of Muslim respondents came from the border region, and 37% from the upper South. Conversely 16% of respondents came from the Northeast, but only 0.7% of the Muslim respondents came from this region.

3. Educationally, the demographic was similar – slightly more Muslims with a first degree, slightly fewer with a higher degree.

4. Muslims are slightly more likely to think of Thailand as a secular country – but 71% still think it is Buddhist.

5. 81% of Muslims think religion is very important in Thailand – compared to 71% of the overall sample.

6. Muslims are a bit less likely to consider they are seen as equal citizens – but still 51% give that answer.

7. Muslims are much more supportive of Malay being used as an optional official language – 52% chose that option.

8. Not surprisingly, Muslims are also more in favour of state-funded Muslim schools (51%), but Thai state schools are still seen as a better option than privately funded Muslim schools (22% versus 12%).

9. Almost all the supporters of Sharia law are Muslim, and it therefore accounts for 37% of Muslim answers – as opposed to 44% supporting a provision for Muslim family law and 12% preferring one Thai system for all.

10. Opinions on the security situation in the deep South are almost the same as the overall sample – except that only 2 people (out of 23 in total) said they didn't care.

APPENDIX TWO – A SAMPLE DISCUSSION GUIDE FROM THE QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS UNDERTAKEN IN 2018 AND 2019.

The following are the questions used as a discussion guide when conducting interviews in Pattani, Thailand in 2018. A similar format was used for interviews in Thailand's Satun and Narathiwat provinces, in An Giang province in Vietnam and in Kampong Cham, Phnom Penh and Kampong Chhnang provinces in Cambodia, with the questions tailored to reflect local concerns and differences. Of course the conversations often took different turns as they progressed.

Questionnaire – Pattani.

Start by explaining the exercise – purpose, confidentiality, data security, consent.

A. First, some questions about you.

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your primary language? How good do you consider yourself in the secondary language (Thai/Malay)?
4. Are you employed/self-employed?
5. What is your primary source of income?
6. Tell me a bit about your family – spouse, children, other relatives living with you?
7. How religious do you consider yourself and your family, on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is highly secular and non-practicing and 10 is highly religious in prayer, dress, observance?

B. Second, a little bit about your community – where you live.

1. How big is it – number of households?
2. If not a town, which is the nearest town, and how far is that?
3. Are people there friendly, sociable?
4. Is it an exclusively Muslim community?
5. If not is there much Buddhist presence?
6. Do you mix much with them these days?
7. Was it ever different?

C. Now a few lifestyle questions – First, education.

1. What educational facilities are available to you and families in your community?
2. How well are they used?

3. How would you like to see them improved?
4. How well do they equip people for the needs of the modern world?

D. Then local legal assistance.

1. What recourse to you have for legal help in the case of conflicts?
2. Is it something you feel comfortable using?
3. Where family issues arise – divorce, land, etc. what is the customary avenue for resolution?

E. Moving on to media and news sources.

1. What type of TV do you watch?
2. Where is it broadcast from?
3. Where do you get news information?
4. Do you use the internet much – on your phone or on a PC?
5. Do you listen to national or local radio stations?
6. How about newspapers or magazines?
7. Do you see yourself/your community covered and reflected in the media, or does it feel 'foreign'?

F. And lastly, government and security.

1. Do you have much contact with Thai state offices – bureaucracy and administration?
2. Can you describe how that works?
3. Do you feel you have equal access and treatment from the authorities, compared to other communities?
4. Do you have any contact with Malay authorities? If so, why?
5. What are your views on the security situation at the moment?
6. Is it improving, deteriorating, static?
7. How much is it a political versus a criminal issue, in your opinion?

G. And finally, looking to the future…

1. How could the Thai government improve things for the people of Pattani and the South?
2. How could anyone else? Who?

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