

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. Historical Background

1.1 Muslim Communities in Thailand

“Thailand was never under the authority of just one ethnic group. She began with people from various races and religions. Those people shared the same fate and had to face all kinds of circumstances.” (Krukrit Pramroj: quoted in Prayul Chalainadecha: 1996:p.1)

From this passage, we could conclude that Thailand composed of many different racial and religious groups: some Buddhist, some Brahman, some Hindu, and some Muslim. All these various groups have different cultures and lifestyles. But most of those groups, especially Buddhists, Brahmans, and Hindus have some similarities in their cultures and customs, and sometimes they seem to belong to the same patterns. The most different group was Muslim group. This group has different beliefs and way of life, especially in so far as the religion, customs, and traditions are concerned.

Hence this thesis aimed to focus on the Muslim people, the centre of their religious belief, Islam, is “Allah” and the prophet “Mohammad”. They adhere to the Islamic culture. The Muslim people hold the concept of “*Ummah*” or the “Community of Believers” (en.wikipedia.org). They usually settle in the community called “Kampong” which represents their Muslim identity. This is considered the real Muslim community.

In Thailand there are many “Kampongs” or “Muslim Villages”. It is because there are various groups of Muslim people in Thailand. They settle in the Kampong community in various parts of Thailand; from the south to the north. They have

the different origins but they respect the Islamic doctrine. This study follows Saowanee Jitmaud (1988: 105-126) who classifies the Muslims in Thailand into six groups:

1). Muslim of Malayu-Malay Muslim descent This is the largest group of Muslim people in Thailand. This group is assumed to have traced its descent to the Malay-Proto and Malayu-Malay Deutro; the group of people who evacuated from Yunnan in the northern part of Thailand. (Worawit Baru: 2007: interview) This group usually refers to itself as Malay-Muslim. The Malay-Muslims normally settle as communities in the Southern Part of Thailand, especially in Yala, Patani, and Narathiwat. Fundamentally, the Malay-Muslims adhere to Malay culture, the culture of the Malayu-Peninsular. For the Malay-Muslims, the key factor which establishes their identity is **the language** they use. Their language is the Malay language. Malay is their main language for general communication and also the language their religious scripture are written in. Incidentally, this group is not only located in the Southern part of Thailand. During the Ayuthaya and Rattanakosin eras, these people were evacuated to the central part of Thailand. Evidence for this can be found in Tha-id. This community still speaks the Malayu language.

2). Muslims of Arabic-Persian descent: This Muslim group has been in Thailand since the Sukhothai period. For the first period of their settlement, they established their communities in the Southern part of Thailand because they came to trade there. This remained the case until Ayuthaya and Rattanakosin courts evacuated them to the central part of Thailand like the Malay-Muslims. The Muslims of this group usually settled in communities along the river and the sea because they were merchants and such locations

According to Saowanee, the Arabic Persian Muslim sailed and settled their communities along the Bang Luang Canal, Bangkok Yai, Nontaburi, and Bang-Or because these areas were suitable for establishing a trading community. (Saowanee Jitmaud: 1988: 118) This Muslim group had another name. They were also known as Kheak Mour, Kheak Thes, and Kheak Pae.

3). Muslims of Java or Yawa Muslim descent: Javanese-Muslims who came from Indonesia. They call their community *Kampong Java*. Nithi Aewsriwong

(1984: 64, 78) mentioned that this Muslim group came to Thailand as slaves. Though they were finally assimilated into Thai society, they did not have much political participation and so little historical mention of them was made.

The status of the Javanese Muslims was mentioned again in the reign of King Rama VI in the memorandum of a royal visit to Java. (Saowanee Jitmaud: 1988: p.127). The memorandum indicated that the Javanese Muslims came to this area because they wanted to find better job opportunities. Wages in Thailand during that time were higher than wages in Java. They were also faced with the invasion of the Dutch and the problem of over-population. Hence the Javanese Muslims came to settle as communities in Thailand.

Kannika Chutamas Sumalee (1985: p.45) indicates that the main factor which contributed the Javanese Muslims' move to Thailand was the Immigration Act of 1927. This Act gave aliens the opportunity to immigrate into the country without having a passport or any national identification documents. It was therefore easy for the Javanese Muslim to migrate to Thailand.

Most of the Javanese Muslims worked in commerce, landscape gardening and craftsmanship. They specialized in landscape gardening because of the Dutch influence. This can be verified by the fact that most of the government offices' gardens were landscaped by Javanese Muslim.

4) Muslims of Cham and Khmer descent: The Cham were a people group composed of various races such as Khom, Indian, Malayu, and Chinese. They formed their first community during the Champa Empire in the central part of Vietnam. When there was the invasion of the "Li Dynasty", the Chams had to evacuate to another area. (Coedès: 1969: 16, 41-43; quoted by Rachanee Sadprem: 1978: 18) It was for this reason that they evacuated to Thailand and established communities in the Ban Krua area, Trad provinces and Pumraing Surathani. (Saowanee Jitmaud: 1988: 143)

This group has always maintained the use of their own language for communication. Elderly people can communicate by using the Cham and Khmer languages in their daily life, but the younger generations can understand the meaning of

Cham and Khmer better than they are able to speak these languages. The names and types of food eaten by this community are the same as those used by the Khmer.

5). Muslim of Pakistani-Bangladeshi or Afghanistani Muslim descent:

This group is the descendants of Indians who came to this area for commercial purposes. They first established a community in Thailand during the Sukhothai period and remained during the Ayuthaya and Rattanakosin eras. They generally earned their living through trade rather than other forms of employment. In the early years of the Rattanakosin era, they decided to come under the control of powerful, colonial nations, especially England. This was because they recognize the special privileges which they would get if they were subjects of these countries.

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Rachanee Sadprem (1978: p.75) notes that this group normally established their communities in Bangkok since it was a main center for trade. Their communities can usually be found in the Bang Rak, Mahanak, Ratchawong, Samsen, Hua Lam Pong, Worajuk, and Silom areas.

6) Muslims of Chinese Muslim descent: This group used the northern part of Thailand, on the Thai-Burmese border, to enter Thailand. They settled as a community in the northern part of Thailand; Chaing Rai, Lam Pang, Lam Phun, Mae Hong Son, and Chaing Mai.

Hor (ฮ่อ) or Hui (ฮุย) are the other names by which this Muslim group is referred to. They also emigrated from Yunnan in the northern part of China as did the Muslims who came to settle in the southernmost of Thailand. This group first came to Thailand during the reign of King Rama VI. (Suthep Sunthornpasat: quoted in Saowanee Jitmaud: 1988: p.155). As Sung (1982: 104) states, this was due to the fact that there was persecution against Muslim in China at that time.

Although there are various Muslim groups in Thailand, all of them have the same way of living which adheres to the religious doctrine. There are some

differences among the Muslim people. They have their own traditions and cultures which are related to their origins. **But this thesis aims to focus on the Muslims living in the southernmost of Thailand, who are the of the Malayu-Malay Muslim descent.** As mentioned above, this group traces their descent to the Malayu-Malay who lived on the Malay Peninsular. This group is also the largest Muslim community in Thailand. The Malayu-Malay Muslims living in the southernmost of Thailand differ from Muslims of other descents or who live in other parts of Thailand. Furthermore, they form the majority of people who live in the southernmost of Thailand.

1.2 Malayu-Muslim Identity in the Southernmost Part of Thailand

The identity of Muslims in the southernmost of Thailand is definitely related to Muslim culture. They see themselves as being of the same race as the Malay people because they have the same origin. Their ancestors came from Java and the Malay Peninsular which later expanded as a community into mainland.

The people in the southernmost part of Thailand are distinct from the Thai people who trace their origins to the Tai ethnic group. Hence the people in that area usually see themselves as being Malay and they also have a sense of brotherhood amongst themselves, demographically 80 percents of populations are of Malayu descent.

The fact must be accepted that this people group differs from the countries ethnic, as Krukrit Pramroj stated:

“Thai people have to recognize and accept the truth that the People in the Southernmost of Thailand are not Thai. There is no need to force them to follow the same Thai customs and lifestyle.. But we have to assist them to keep their identity and integrate it with our society.”

This relates to the opinion expressed by Le Roux (unidentified year of publication) which mentions that *“The inhabitants of Patani, formerly Malay (in the political sense) are now inhabitants of Thailand by territorial absorption; they are not*

yet Thai because of their remaining Malay identity (in the cultural sense). They are Muslim”

We can therefore conclude that Muslims in the southernmost part of Thailand are not people of Thai descent who became Muslims. They are of Malayu-Muslim descents that have been established at communities in this area for many decades. What are some of the key factors which distinguish Muslims in the southernmost part of Thailand from Muslims in other parts of Thailand? This research has found that there are many factors determining identity which are unique to the Malayu-Muslim culture.

Language: The language which the people in the southernmost of Thailand used for daily life communication is the Malayu-Patani and the Malayu-Malay language.

Malayu-Patani language is the language Muslims in the southernmost part of Thailand identify themselves with. It originated from the Malayu- Polynesian ethno-linguistic. This is not the language which is used for everyday communication, but it is the language which used for learning the Qu-Ran, and religious scripture.

The development of the Malayu-Patani language stemmed from a small independent state known as *Malayu*. This state established itself as a community on the Malay Peninsular. In the early years of the Rattanakosin period there was some correlation between words in the Malayu-Patani language and words in Thai or Malayu. There was translation from Thai into Malayu. This concurred with information gathered by Dr. Donmanus Baka, indicating that the Malayu-Patani language is composed of various linguistic influences such as Hindu, Brahman, Thai, and also English. For example, the word for *hospital* in the Malayu-Patani language was *Romohsaket* (Rumoh=room/ Saket= pain or injured)

For Muslims in the southernmost part of Thailand, the Malay language is representative of Malay-Muslim identity. (Rattiya Salae: 2001) It is not only used for understanding religious scriptures, but is intrinsic to the feeling of being Malay. To describe the influence the Malayu language has upon Muslims in the southernmost part of Thailand, this thesis would like to highlight the opinion of Arong Suthisan as follows:

““The Malay language is an integral part of Muslim social structures such as folk law, literature, signs, and philosophy. All these things are related to the Malay language. The eradication of the Malay language would be the same as cutting off everything which gives the Muslim in Southern Thailand their sense of identity. The relationship between Malay-Muslims and the Malay language expresses the unification of the Malay people....For the Muslims in Southern Thailand who have little education; this is the appropriate way to recognize who they are.” (Arong Suthisan: unknown years: p.20)

Religion and custom: Arong Suthisan notes that religion and culture are the lifeblood of society and need to be upheld by the people. Religion and custom can determine and change a group's identity. It is obvious that the Muslims in the southernmost part of Thailand adhere to this concept. Almost 80 percent of the population is Muslims who adhere to Islamic doctrine. Their religious identity affects their everyday life from the day they were born to the day they die. Islam is the key factor in determining Muslim life and customs. For the Muslim, Islam is their code of life, and they must adhere to and practice in the Islamic doctrine.

For Muslims in the southernmost parts of Thailand, Islam is not just a religion, but it is also a means of social control in the community. The doctrine of Islam relates to their customs and lifestyle. Islam covers all aspects of the Muslims' everyday life. It teaches them the meaning of life and also protects Muslims as disciples of Islam. For the Muslims, Islam is the origin of disciples from all cultures. (Piyantart Bunnak: 2003)

In agreement with the concept mentioned by Hamka, Islam had expanded towards the Patani people since the Langkasuka Empire period, which finally gave the Malayu language its importance. (Hamka: 1971: p.425) Patani actually played an important role as the centre of Islamic doctrine in the Northern Malayu cape. Since it was a sea-trading centre, it became a powerful empire, passing on Muslim culture to a new generation which had never known Islamic doctrine.

It was in the 18th-19th centuries that Islam prospered most in this area and became significant as a religious identity. Patani, which included the provinces in the

southernmost part of Thailand, was the centre of Islamic culture. It was this centre which produced the *Ulama*, or religious philosophers. The ability of Ulamas who came from this area was acceptable and they taught in various parts of the world, such as the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Some Ulama were allowed to teach religious doctrine in the *Al-Harom* mosque in Mecca because it accepted Muslim students from Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines, and the Malayu world, especially Sumatra. (Peerayot Raimmula: 2000: p.63)

Muslim life is centred on Islamic practice, starting with the Mosque – the place all Muslims use for making merit to their god, and the place where they interact together as a group. This contributes to the strong social structure of Muslim society. Other than the mosque, Muslims are also linked closely to religious schools, known as *Pondok*. These religious schools teach Muslims by using the precepts of the Qu-Ran. At the Pondok schools, the teacher, or Toh-guru, is very influential and shapes Muslims' ideas and ways of thinking. Most Muslim families in the southernmost part of Thailand normally send their children to study in these schools because the children can absorb Islamic teaching and learn to be devout Muslims. For Muslims, the role of the Pondok schools can be described as laying the foundation of Muslim philosophy, since it is in these schools that the children learn Muslim doctrine, and that Muslim philosophy, ideals and lifestyle are passed on to them.

The *Pondok* or *Funduk* schools are religious institutions which the Muslims must be involved with because, for the Muslim people, it is necessary to know their religious doctrine since this determines their whole way of life. These institutions are expected to train Muslims to understand Muslim society and to be devout Muslims according to Islamic doctrine.

Liow notes that “*In the Pondok tradition, teaching is done in Malay and Arabic, and emphasis is on religious learning. There is no system of assessment in place, and hence these schools are not accredited by the government. Lessons revolve around prayer and memorizing the scripture, commentaries and exegesis provided by the Toh Guru*”. (Liow, J: 2004: p.1-3)

In the southernmost part of Thailand, there are many Pondok schools which provide religious education for local Muslims and sometimes for Muslims in other areas. Muslims in the southernmost adhere to these schools much more than to the government schools.

One paper indicates that Muslims in the southernmost part of Thailand usually place their children in the Pondok schools because, for the Muslim community, studying and becoming proficient in Islamic doctrine is much more important than being the same as other people.

Pondok schools were founded during the time when there was an expansion of Islamic culture in the Malayu area. It is believed that they were first founded in Patani before expanding into Malacca. (Peerayot Raimmula: 2000: p.62) From this evidence, we can conclude that the Patani's Pondok is the oldest religious school in the Southeast Asian region. Most of the religious philosophers of Islamic doctrine, or *Ulama*, were educated at the Patani Pondok School.

The Pondok schools are located a long distance away from urban areas, on land owned by the Toh-Guru. The Pondok schools provide religious education free of charge. Expansion is made possible by donations from villagers and the Toh-Guru. The Toh-Guru is responsible for all activities which concern education in religious doctrine. They use the Mosque as the centre of religious education.

Students who study in the Pondok schools are called *Toh-Pakae*, meaning a person who has enthusiasm for religious learning, while the term *Toh-Guru* refers to a person who knows Islamic doctrine well.

Naturally, Muslims in the southern Thailand respect their religious leaders. They will give honour to those who are religious leaders, seeing them as teachers who teach and instruct them in how to be devout Muslims. As Surin Pitsuwan notes.

“The most preferred character trait among the Malay-Muslims is religious piety. For this reason, religious leaders enjoy honour and respect from the people. The Imam and the Hajjis are held in high regard and act as spiritual advisors to the villagers, while the kamnan and the naiban, the village headmen, are respected for their positions and relations with state authorities. They are not regarded as equal in esteem to the Imam

and his devout colleagues. Religion, i.e. Islam, plays a highly important function in the social life of villagers. The ultimate goal in life is to attain all religious virtues symbolized in the term of *orang baik* (morally good man) or *al-insan al salin* in the Arabic formulation". (Surin Pitsuwan: 1982: p.30)

Muslims in the south of Thailand have very close contact with the Toh Guru, religious teachers, Imams or leaders of the Muslim community. Those who are religious leaders have the power to control the people in the community. They can persuade people by using Islamic doctrine which emphasizes sacrifice. It is obvious that Muslims in the southernmost part of Thailand respect their religious leaders.

Clothing

Apart from the points mentioned above, Muslim culture in the southernmost of Thailand is also reflected in the people's clothing. The clothing worn by Muslim in the southernmost part of Thailand includes the following:

1. The **Sarong**: The Sarong is the informal dress of Muslims in the southernmost part of Thailand. Both women and men usually wear it in their home or while they are praying to their God.

2. The **Kapiya**: This is a *hat* worn by Muslims daily when they go outside or to the mosque. The Kapiya is used only in the south of Thailand and Malaysia. It is a very particular identifying feature of Muslims in the south of Thailand – a feature that distinguishes them from Muslims in other parts of the world.

3. The **Tope**: This is used for religious occasions. It is formal attire for Muslim men. The Tope is a long white robe, fashioned after the robe worn by Mohammad, the prophet of Islam. The Tope is the official attire of the Toh-Gurus. They usually wear it when they go to the mosque.

4. The **Hijab and women's clothing**: Women in the southernmost part of Thailand wear the Hijab which covers their face so that it cannot be seen by others. Wearing the Hijab reflects the belief that all women must wear clothing

which hides them from others. Muslims must not wear clothes which show their bodies because this goes against their religious teaching.

The lifestyle of Muslims in the South of Thailand is not luxurious. Muslims in the southernmost part of Thailand usually settle their *kampong* (Muslim village communities) far away from other communities. (Phuwadol Songprasert: 2006: p.145). Muslim communities seek to live in peace and adhere to religious teaching. The Muslims themselves rely on their customs, living a simple life and devoting themselves to maintain their religion which is seen as their code of living.

The concentration of religious influences in the south of Thailand has made the Muslims there highly aware of their own ethnic identity. This is reflected in Michael Guelquin statement: *"The Muslims in southern Thailand have high self-awareness about their culture. Their lifestyle is an obvious display of Muslim customs. At times we could conclude that the Muslims in Thailand live under the absolute obligation to conform to its dogma"*. (Guelquin, Michael: 2004: p.45)

The model of the Muslim community in southernmost Thailand is the same model as that of a rural community, centering on agriculture, fishing and rice farming. The customs and lifestyle of Muslims in southern Thailand are quite closely connected with their religious teaching. For the Muslims in southern Thailand, their religion is not only a doctrine, but it is their code of living. Some scholars say that Muslims in southern Thailand are closed communities; they prefer not to have any interaction with other ethnic groups and will tend to interact with people of the same ethnic group. There is very little interaction between Muslims in southern Thailand and the other ethnic groups (Alisa Hasamoe: 2000).

1.3 Issues Affecting Identity

The southernmost part of Thailand shares its borders with Malaysia. Geographically, this boundary reflects the cultural identity of the population in this area.

Most of the population in this area (more than 70 percent) has *dual nationality*. Some of the people in the south of Thailand hold both Thai and Malay nationalities. This sometimes creates problems in bureaucratic administration. This is because the closeness of the Malay border means that people in the south of Thailand feel a much stronger affiliation with Malaysia than with the Thai central government. The people in this area feel themselves to be more Malay than Thai.

1) Historical identity

It is because of their distinct identity that Muslims in the southernmost part of Thailand have differed from Muslims in other parts of the country. The view of the central Thai government, seemingly a monopolistic bureaucracy, has been that the conflict which has arisen in the deep south of Thailand stems from the tributary state rebellion. The central Thai government insists that it holds authority over the land that the Malay-Muslims live in since, according to Thai historians, this territory has been a dependent part of Thailand for a long time. There is evidence which indicates that the Kingdom of Patani was subject to the authority of the Siamese Court from the Sukhothai period onwards. As Prince Damrongrajanuphab stated:

“The three southern provinces of Thailand were a dependency of Thai authority since the Sukhothai period and the relationships between both of them usually were in conflict hence, the central government has absolute authority over the land”.

The historical background of the Muslims in the southernmost part of Thailand has a deep emotional effect on them. The Sultanate of Patani, or Fatoni in Arabic language, was well known as an independent state. In Chinese chronicles this area was known as the Lang-Ya-Ssi-Chai, Lang-Chia-Shu, or Lany-ya-hsiu.

This independent state was situated on the Malay Peninsular and had an important role as a sea-trading route because it was located between the east and the west - China and India. Hence it was called the *east and the west centre*. The status of this area

as a sea- trading route made it influential in the expansion of Islamic and non-Islamic civilizations. From historical evidence noted by Krongchai Hatha, a Professor at the Prince of Songkla University, it is evident that the Patani Kingdom had high internal security and was connected with Western powers such as the British and the Dutch. There was also a connection with Eastern nations such as China.

In his *Patani in the Malay's Civilization*, Peerayot Rahimlula makes the following statement about the prosperity of the Patani Kingdom:

“It happened during 1584-1642. During this period, Patani was the centre of trading and the centre of Malay civilization. It had a strong leadership which gave the kingdom political stability. This area was in an area of interest to many traders whether from the west or the east”.

Thai scholars are not the only ones to note that this was a powerful trading area. Western scholars, such as Alexander Hamilton, also state that the Patani Kingdom was the greatest port for trade in that whole sea area.

As a sea- trading route, the customs and lifestyle of the Patani people reflected a multicultural society. This society was not composed purely of Muslims but included others as well. In addition to being the centre of Islam in the Far-East area, the Kingdom of Patani was also regarded as the centre of Langkasuka, one of the most important influences on the kingdom during the 16th century. It was an important sea-trading port and enjoyed political and economic security. It was also a centre of civilization, spreading civilization to other countries in the same region.

In the early years of this kingdom, mainstream social norms were influenced by animism, followed by Hinduism, during the increasing Indianization of the area. Buddhism was one of the religions which played an important role in the lives of people in this area when there was contact with the Majapahit Kingdom, which had its

centre in Java. The arrival of Islam and its expansion into this area happened after the decline of the Majapahit Kingdom (Ibrahim Syukri: 2005).

During this period the Patani Kingdom was an independent state which enjoyed prosperity and was superior in terms of civilization and government. As Paul Wheatley notes:

“Many of the perplexities which we have noted in these pages may well prove permanently insular but enough has been salvaged from obscurity to show that Langkasuka, a kingdom of considerable importance during the first fifteen hundred years of the Christian era, was situated in the vicinity of modern Patani. Emerging as an entity early in the period of Indianization, it persisted through the vicissitudes of peninsular history until early in the sixteenth century when it mysteriously disappeared, leaving only a legendary name to peasant mythology”.

The strength of the Patani Kingdom enabled it to expand its influence to neighbouring countries, and eventually it was able to annex many independent states situated on the eastern coast. The relationship between the Kingdom of Patani and the Siamese court was not harmonious. However, the Siamese court allowed this kingdom to make their own decisions about internal affairs. The Kingdom of Patani was one of the tributary states of the Siamese court until the reign of Rajas Ungu. The strength of the Patani Kingdom during her reign made the Rajas Ungu decide to cut off the diplomatic relations with the Siamese court of Ayuthaya.

Not too long after the reign of Rajas Ungu, the Kingdom of Patani again accepted the authority of the Siamese court and agreed to send the Bunga Mas (Gold and Silver Flower) to the Ayuthaya Kingdom.

2) Patani under the Siamese Court

The Siamese court and Patani were never at peace. They usually found opportunities to attack each other's weaknesses and to try to overrule the other party.

From the point of view of the Siamese, the Kingdom of Patani was in rebellion, but from the point of view of the people in that area, fighting against the authority of the Siamese court was considered righteous because the Siamese Kingdom threatened their authority.

The Patani Kingdom was officially recognized as a dependent state of Siam from the Sukhothai period onward. The Kingdom of Patani had to submit the Bunga Mas as a tribute to the Sukhothai Kingdom. However, in terms of its administration, the Kingdom of Patani still had full authority over its territories. In the early years of the Rattanakosin period, however, the Patani Kingdom was officially merged as one of the dependent states of the Siamese court, meaning that all internal affairs had to be referred to the Kingdom of Siam during the reign of King Rama I. Patani's annexation was concurrent with that of Kedah, Kelantan, and Trengganu. During that time, Patani and Trengganu were under the authority of Songkhla, while Kedah and Kelantan were under the authority of Nakhon Sri Thammarat.

There was resistance from the Patani Kingdom again during 1808, but the situation was easily brought under control by Songkhla. Bangkok then decided to divide the kingdom into seven provinces. These were Saiburi (first Selinong Bayu, then Telube, in Jawi), Patani (Ttaning in Jawi), Nongchik (Nochi' in Jawi), Yala (Nibong in Jawi), Yaring (Jamu in Jawi), Rangae (Tanyong Mah in Jawi), and Rahman (Koto Baru Me in Jawi)

In the reign of King Rama V, when the Patani Kingdom was merged as part of Siam, there was political reform so that the central government divided its territories by using the new *Monthon* system. The result of these new political reforms was that Kelantan and Trengganu became dependent upon the province of Phuket. Patani and Kedah came under Nakhon Sri Thammarat. It was then eventually divided into three provinces - Patani, Yala, and Narathiwat.

Although the relationship between the central government of Thailand and Patani has always seemed to be one of conflict, there is some evidence that there were

periods when these two kingdoms were at peace. This was during the reign of King Rama V. During this period, the King sought to honour cultural identity. He recognized the importance of identity and tried to make laws which were not in contradiction with Muslim identity. The King also tried to assimilate policies so that they would not be in conflict with the Muslims' customs and lifestyle.

King Rama VI did the same. A government survey in the Patani area showed evidence of violence, but this was instigated by a small group. The King ordered the civil servants in the area to develop themselves and to recognize the customs, lifestyle and culture of the local people. The tensions between the Malay-Muslims in the southernmost part of Thailand and the Siamese government seemed to decrease as a result of these measures. However, when absolute monarchy ended, tensions between the central government and Patani flared up again. **This happened during the period of Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram rule.** The government under the Phibunsongkhram regime had to deal with the tensions of World War II. This was complicated by the fact that Thailand was such a diverse nation. Hence the government needed to mobilize the people by introducing a nation-building policy which led to the proclamation of a cultural policy.

Of course, the conflict between the southernmost part of Thailand and the central government has come from many reasons, such as those relating to ethnic identity, the government's misunderstanding of the Islamic regulations, and the problems arising from local administration of the people in that area. **However, the conflict which created one of the most serious gaps between the central government and the people of Patani happened in the period of Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram.** Although the nation-building policy during the period of Phibunsongkhram had widespread impacts on many ethnic communities, especially the Chinese, the Muslims in the southernmost part of Thailand which intensively adhered to their identity seemed to be most seriously effected by this program.

Many scholars, including Paitoon Jaehae and Dr. Worawit Baru

(Interview: 2007), have indicated that the nationalist program of nation-building of Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram accentuated the feeling of the Muslim in the southernmost area to resist the central government. This policy threatened the Malayu-Muslim identity of those local people. **Hence this thesis aimed to study the impact of this policy on the Malayu-Muslims in the Southernmost of Thailand: Yala, Patani, and Narathiwat.**

2. Objectives

Focusing on the nationalism policy as embodied in the Ratthaniyom Proclamation which was based on the central culture, language, and tradition, this study has two objectives, as follows:

2.1 To study the nation-building policy during the period of Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram especially the Ratthaniyom Proclamation that is the key-mechanism of the government.

2.2 To study the Ratthaniyom Proclamation and its impact on the Muslim community in southernmost part of Thailand: how this policy was perceived, in particular, as a threat to the identity of the Muslim people in this part of the country.

3. Scope of the thesis

The focus of this thesis is on the impact of the Ratthaniyom Proclamation on the Muslim identity of the people in the southernmost part of Thailand, that is, those in Yala, Patani, and Narathiwat Provinces. This is because the Muslims in these areas most strongly resisted those aspects of the government's cultural policy they perceived as a threat to their identity. The focus of this thesis will thus be on only those specific proclamations in the policy, namely, Ratthaniyom proclamations No.1, No. 3, No. 9, and No. 10, which were perceived as such by the people.

4. The Definitions Used in This Research

4.1 The Malayu-Muslims refers to the Muslim people who lived in the southernmost part of Thailand.

4.2 Nation-Building policy refers to the Nation-Building policy issued during the period of Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram.

5. Thesis Questions

5.1 What was the identity of the Muslim community in the southernmost part of Thailand?

5.2 How was this Muslim identity in conflict with the Ratthaniyom Proclamation during the period of Phibunsongkhram regime?