Indeterminate Geographies of Political Violence in Southern Thailand

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Intro

I begin today's talk with two indeterminate geographies from the covers of what might be called "pulp" geopolitical non-fiction. The first comes from the book *The Timebomb of Thailand-Malaysia*, published in 1975 (figure 1). With its prominent rectangle covering the majority of the space along Thai-Malaysia border, and its bomb looming over the region, this geography projects a generic threat of violence in southern Thailand. In a very simple way, the geography is indeterminate because this threat is not grounded in a specific site, and its arbitrary rectangle is placed flush with the map's borders (figure 2). The second geography from *Southern Thailand: Thai or Malaysian*, published in 1984, includes the same generic geographical structure as the first. Perhaps the single characteristic of this map that would call a contemporary reader's attention to its indeterminate nature is the omission of Pattani from its map. It would be almost unthinkable for a similar kind of book today to publish a cover with all of the provinces in the south except for Pattani. The map is a map of the border in this instance, but a contemporary reader may assume at first that it is a map of the region as a whole.

These two book covers may be considered as recent historical records of how depictions of the region and its intermitted political violence are formed. For both books the threat of southern Thailand is both communist and separatist as well as foreign in terms of the external threat posed by Malaysia.

I will argue today that indeterminate geographies such as these structure our understandings of contemporary political violence in southern Thailand. Geographical representations of the current conflict can come from many disparate sources, such as media and academic accounts, official comments, maps retrieved from documents of separatist organizations, military strategies, and discourses related to the "war on terror." Examples of these spaces include colored zones, the boundaries of a state of Patani, nationalist mappings of the "Greater Patani area," the "southern fire," and the emergence of localities as sites of violence or public protest. Today I will be discussing two examples: "red zones," and the maps of separatism.

These geographies work to provide a spatial representation of the very location of violence. It is only through this reference to location that many of the discourses surrounding political violence in southern Thailand can cohere. Location, in this regard, acts as a means to bound the conflict, whether in terms of the focus on territory within security discourses, or as a means to formulate the reference to separatism (as a figure of autonomy), the regional threat of terrorist networks, or more broadly as a method of linking cultural and religious communities to the condition of political violence. Without this representation of geography discourses surrounding political violence, literally, could not visualize such violence. With this understanding, this paper follows the suggestion by Chaiwat Satha-Anan that Pattani not be understood geographically as the province of Pattani, but rather as "political geography," which is popularly treated as a "space in which violence can arise easily."[1] I hope to show that indeterminate geographies of violence and community in fact provide the content for and in some critical ways structure such a political geography.

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[1] Chaiwat Satha-Anan, "Violence and the Management of 'Reality:' Pattani in the Last Half Century" *Fadiewkan* 3, no. 2 (2005): 139.

The arguments I will present today follow two theses. First, geographical representations proliferate in the context of sustained political violence. Such geographies vary broadly in both their spatial references and their detail, resulting in a wide range of mappings that are at times contradictory or non-identical in the spaces they represent. Second, these geographies are necessarily indeterminate with regard to the spaces they represent. Indeterminacy here does not simply mean that these maps are "factually" inaccurate. Rather as Matthew Sparke argues these maps are "fundamentally heterogeneous:"

> every geography, whether assumed or explicitly elaborated as such, every mapping, … becomes rereadable not just for what it includes, but also for what it overwrites and covers up in the moment of representing spatially the … unfinished historical-geographical processes and power relations of its spatial production.[2]

In other words, geographies always express more than they claim to represent and there is always a politics involved in this excessive expression or representation. Indeterminacy, therefore is not a deficiency of such geographical representation, it is, rather, its very political condition. This paper will not argue that there is an objective way to map the "threats" or historical "origins" of the current conflict. Geographies of political violence cannot escape this process of proliferation and indeterminacy as their claims are always politically linked to other narratives of the conflict.

These theses support a broader argument that informs this essay, namely that the indeterminacy of geographies actually reveals an indeterminacy at the very foundation of political community itself. Political community, as seen in the work of Jacques Ranciere, is always indeterminate in that it exposes a "gap" that prevents it from totally representing the sum of its parts. In fact, the core function of political community, according to Ranciere, is to

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[2] Mathew Sparke, *In the Space of Theory: Postfoundational Geographies of the Nation-State* (Minneapolis, M. N.: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), pp. xvi.

classify, categorize and manage these "parts" of society. Geographies of violent conflict continuously reference and ascribe boundaries and agency to various communities (national, ethnic, religious, or minority). I hope to show today, particularly in my example of red zones, that the indeterminacy of these geographies is paradoxically a critical mechanism in the partition of society upon which political community is founded.

Red zones and their "parts"

In February, 2005 the Thaksin administration became embroiled in a controversy over the introduction of a new zoning scheme to combat violence in southern Thailand. The red, yellow, and green zones would gauge the security situation and local complicity in each village in the provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, and those village's designated as "red" would lose government funding related to the SML (or "community development") and CEO Governor programes.[3] Duncan McCargo has situated the introduction of this classification system in the context of Thaksin's substantial victory in the February 2005 national elections after which he "seemed re-emboldened to tackle the woes of the deep South — where TRT was decisively rejected by the voters, and the Wadah faction was humiliated."[4] In the days that followed the announcement of the plan on February 17, 2005, Thaksin was continuously asked about those people in the red zones who are not involved in the violence or whether such a plan would in fact force those uninvolved to side with militants. His responses assumed a Manichean logic in which those not cooperating with security authorities were in fact perpetuating the violence,

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[3] *Manager Online*, "Thaksin ignores sounds of protest, moves ahead to divide zones, pressure 'red bandits,' " February 17, 2005, accessed June 28, 2007, http://www.manager.co.th/Politics/ViewNews.aspx?NewsID=9480000023983.

[4] Ducan McCargo, "Thaksin and the Resurgence of Violence in the Thai South: Network Monarchy Strikes Back?" *Critical Asian Studies* 38, no. 1 (2006): 62.

culminating in the now often cited rhetorical question: "Should I just give them the land or hand them cash so they can buy bombs?"[5]

Obviously, the establishment of discrete zones is not new as a technique in managing crises. The Thai government established color-coded zones in its effort to contain the Communist threat in the 1970s and a similar color-based system of zones was deployed by the Thai Department of Livestock Development during Thailand's recent outbreaks of avian flu. It is important to note, however, that the logic of zones (*soon si daeng*—the term specifically introduced in Thaksin's proposal) and areas (*phuunthii si daeng*) was already in place prior to the controversy in February, 2005. The commander of the 9th Police Region acknowledged in March, 2004 that eight districts were "officially designated" red areas in Narathiwat.[6] The term "red district" (*khaet phuunthii si daeng*) had also been in use by police in Narathiwat as early as November, 2003 two months before the armory raid in January the following year.[7] In September 2004, Atthaniti Distha-Amnarj the former head of Thailand's Supreme Court discussed the prospect of establishing colored zones across Thailand as a means of increasing the security of the country's courts and judges. A similar proposal in June 2003 was voiced by the Director of the Center for Non-Formal Education in Yala to create a red, pink, green classification system in order to ensure the safety of school teachers.[8] Reflecting this proliferation in security zones from official sources, the term "red area" in the Thai-language

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[5] Tulsathit Taptim, "'Mandate' from other voters used to impose zones," *The Nation*, February 22, 2005.
[6] *Bangkok Post*, "Turnover of police forces in Narathiwat," March 10, 2004, Webbased News System: Southern Border Area News, accessed June 28, 2007, http://oas.psu.ac.th/wbns/shownews.php?news_id=8493.
[7] *Khaosod*, "More turmoil—explosions hit three police posts," November 29, 2004.
[8] *Matichon*, "Chawalit calls for friendlier relations in 3 southern provinces, police to meet with non-formal education teachers everyday," June 6, 2003.

media was already in wide-spread use by October, 2004 to describe the locations and threats of on-going violence.

The examples above demonstrate that there was already a practice in place prior to February, 2005 that territorialized security strategies through the creation of zones. It is possible to read the controversy surrounding Thaksin's proposal as anger over the politicization of security zoning either as a response by Thaksin to a region that just overwhelming rejected the Thai Rak Thai party in national elections or in the manner in which Thaksin attempted to tie public development funds to the security status of villages. Yet, in the responses from various sides there also emerged critiques of the effect the plan would have on those who reside within newly declared red zones. The concern was that the classification of villages would lead to the marginalization of entire communities. In this regard, red zones marked an open rupture in the continuous constitution of political community within Thailand.

Contrary to Thaksin's aim of producing inhabitants in villages capable of providing workable intelligence to state authorities, an initial common response to the plan was expressed in Suwaphongs Chanfangphech's editorial in *Matichon* where he discussed the possibility that the budget scheme would in fact turn local inhabitants "further away from the state."[9] In Suwaphongs' view the new classifications would imply that the people living in the 104 villages already determined to be "red zones" were "outsiders for whom the state had no use." Thaksin sent a signal of divisiveness ("*baengkhaw—baengraw*") resulting in "a doctrine and classification creating 'red citizens.'"[10] The politicization of security zones, therefore, is not only about questions of party or national politics, but also relates to a much more fundamental question of citizenship. Along these lines, former prime minister Chuan Leekpai voiced a

[9] Suwaphongs Chanfangphech, "Red Citizens," *Matichon*, February 17 (2005).
[10] ibid.

similarly trenchant criticism of the policy stating that "the government's [plan to] divide zones will make it become as if the government itself is a separatist …the duty of the government is to take care of the people because each person is a part of Thailand."[11]

Security zones are necessarily indeterminate because the attempt to totalize the threat of violence across a particular demarcated space. As Paisarn Phromyong, the Deputy secretary-general of the Central Islamic Committee of Thailand argued "southern bandits can operate in any area, not just in a red zone. And a green zone can be turned into a red one at any time if residents change their minds."[12] Yet, they also demonstrate the trace of a larger dynamic in political community that exceeds their immediate function in the context of political violence. The argument above from Suwaphongs and Chuan, in fact, point to a more profound process at the foundation of political community.

In his book *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, Jacques Ranciere argues that the primary structure of political community is a "gap" (or "miscount") between those who count and those who do not count, between the ruling parties and those "parts of the community that are not real parts of the social body."[13] As such, government functions to police this "gap." For Ranciere, the notion of police, or policing, is not a reference to the institution within society that enforces laws, but rather it comes to mean what is typically understood by politics in general to include "the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distributions of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing

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[11] *Naewnaa*, "Criticism of Thaksin's policy to create red zones," February 18 (2005), Webbased News System: Southern Border Area News, accessed June 28, 2007, http://oas.psu.ac.th/wbns/shownews.php?news_id=17877.
[12] ibid.
[13] Jacques Ranciere, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 19.

this distribution."[14] The work of the state is, in fact, to separate, exclude, zone in the process of creating a "partition of the perceptible." This notion of the "perceptible" refers to a means of political and social recognition of those who "count" that is understood by all members of a political community, including those who are (nominally) members (who have a part) but have no part (because they are not recognized as full members).

The red zones, following Ranciere, therefore, enact this partition of the perceptible. They bound and exclude certain spaces on the basis that there is a perceived security threat to the community. The question of their exclusion, however, can never fully be about security. Because the zones are indeterminate geographies they will necessarily include members of a local community "who have no part" in the violence, but are nevertheless expendable to this logic based on a calculation of threat perception that concludes that in fact they "outsiders for whom the state had no use." Therefore, contrary to Chuan's liberal conclusion that "the duty of government is to take care of the people because each person is a part of Thailand," it is, according to Ranciere, the very logic of government to engage in "separatism" and ensure that only certain parts of society count. This includes the effect, in Suwaphongs' analysis, of producing "red citizens." Ranciere's critique of political community actually points to one possible way of understanding why the establishment of red areas was not controversial (a moment of "disagreement") prior to Thaksin's announcement. Political community is always founded on a miscount or a partition and indeterminate security zones enforces this miscount. The "red zone" in this view is an elemental geography of political community.

[14] ibid., p. 28.

Indeterminate geographies of separatism

On March 22, 2007 General Watanachai Chaimuanwong, the top security advisor to Prime Minister Surayud, in an interview with Agence France-Presse commented on the changing tactics of a new generation of militants in southern Thailand whose aim is to "create a state called Pattani Darusalam" which according to AFP "would include Thailand's Muslim-majority south and two northern states in Malaysia."[15] This claim of the boundaries of "Pattani Darusalam" is remarkable in that it includes Malaysian states, typically excluded in the numerous visions of "Pattani" statehood advanced since the end of World War Two (as seen in the demographic description of "Patani Raya's" "geography" , figure 3).[16] It is, however, necessarily an indeterminate geography. Watanachai's statement not only projects a fixed territory to the ambitions of separatist organizations, but it assumes an agency, of the RKK, with a sole "cause" motivating the violence , something which is up until now still widely debated. Most significantly, however, the description of this territory works to visualize the threat faced by the Thai nation.

Interestingly, this claim is only one in a proliferating series of geographies that attempt to map the contemporary threat of separatism in southern Thailand. Such geographies have appeared in seized documents, official comments (as above), media reports, and on websites. In each instant, claims are made as to the territory or structure of a future state in southern Thailand. The fact that no separatist groups have claimed responsibility for the current violence, or that popular doubt exists as to their influence in the region, or even that these various mapping rarely coincide in the territory they represent does not diminish the role such geographies play in

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[15] *Agence France Presse*, "Thai Militants adopting Al-Qaeda tactics: general," March 21, 2007, LexisNexis, accessed June 28, 2007.
[16] Patani Malay Human Rights Organisation, "geography," (accessed June 11, 2007, http://www.pmhro.net/?S=Geography).

shaping narratives related to the violence . Such facts also do not discourage their circulation, as Watanachai's assessment of this new threat demonstrates. Rather than depicting Watanachai's comments as "off-the-wall," in the words of the Nation newpaper reporter Don Phatan, it is important to recognize that it is the very indeterminacy of these geographies that makes them durable in their circulation and powerful in their capacity to generate flexible and generic threats of political violence.[17]

Four examples of the proliferation of separatist geographies will, I hope, illustrate this point. BRN-Coordinate documents seized in May, 2007, according to the newspaper Komchadluek, demonstrate the group's links with Jemaah Islamiyah as well as provide information as to the structure of the organization itself and the structure of a shadow government that the group will use as its foundation for a future state.[18] The description in this news account shows the renaming of Thai political jurisdictions with substitutions, such as in the use of the Arabic derived Malay terms "*daerah*" and "*wilayah*" for "*amphue*" and "*changwat*" (district and province) respectively. In perhaps one of the most spectacular examples, the Manager newpaper online in February, 2005 published a report on an 80-day plan to establish a Patani state with its capital in Betong, Yala and its boundaries to include Patani, Yala, Narathiwat , three districts in Songkla, and the districts of Khuan Don and Langu in Satun.[19] It should be noted that setting its eastern boundaries in Satun at these two districts would in fact exclude the Malay-Muslim communities along Satun's Andaman coast. A Cari-Malaysia webforum thread entitled "The Loss of the Malay States in Southern Thailand" ("*Hilangnya*

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[17] Don Pathan, "Off-the-wall comments, suggestions have not helped," *The Nation*, March 29, 2007.
[18] *Komchadluek*, "Disecting BRN's plan to create the 'southern fire,' increase its power … fighting for a Pattani state," May 21, 2007.
[19] Manager Online, "New piece of the 'plan to establish a Pattani state' found, 80 days of battle before Betong become its capital," February 20, 2005.

Negri Negri Melayu di Selatan Thailand") carries a posting by a member named "Chumpon" claiming to represent PULO who lists all 14 southern provinces in southern Thailand, including and south of Chumpon, as being "owned" by the "Malay Islamic Kingdom of Patani Darussalam."[20] Finally, an oknation.net blog posting covering an undercover meeting between Thai and Malaysia authorities and separatist leaders provides an account of the by now seemingly limited demands of the rebel leaders, who support the inclusion into Malaysia, autonomy or statehood of merely the "three border provinces."[21]

Each of these geographies involves the alignment of a claim to territory with some form of sovereignty. In doing so, each project the possibility of a single collective movement behind the current violence with its ends bound up in the territorial disintegration of the Thai nation and state. It is through geography that these threats achieve a kind of materiality, as the boundaries of the indeterminate future appear in full detail. The boundaries of each geography need not coincide for public narratives on violence in southern Thailand to incorporate and respond to the potential of separatism. Nor do these mappings need to actually reflect the political ambitions of any existing separatist group, whatever their status in the conflict. It is clear that their very indeterminacy enables these mappings to acquire meaning within wider narratives.

The indeterminacy of these geographies from within the context of political violence is also mirrored by academic (and at times nationalist) accounts of political violence in southern Thailand over the course of the twentieth century. Most of these treatments of political violence focus on the concept of a "*Patani Raya*" or "*Patani Besar*:" the figure of a "Greater Patani."

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[20] Chumpon, comment on "*Hilangnya Negri Negri Melayu di Selatan Thailand*," Cari Forum, comment posted on March 2, 2006, http://forum.cari.com.my/archiver/?tid-193466-page-3.html, accessed July 4, 2007.

[21] "More movement from Kuala Lumpur: the Southern Fire will Continue to Blaze" *Oknation.net*,May 5, 2007.

This essentially geopolitical conceptualization of "Patani" emerges in the early and mid-twentieth century with the formation of explicitly nationalist claims in resistance to Thai national political authority and represents a *recent* territorialization of Malay-Muslim political community.

It is the academic work of Surin Pitsuwan that presents perhaps one of the broadest, and in fact most widely replicated, geographical claims to a "Greater Patani." The opening page of *Islam and Malay Nationalism*[22] (figure 4) includes this hand-drawn map, without attribution or citation, that clarifies for Surin's readers the broad geographical borders of the "Greater Patani Malay State" that he refers to in his prose and the potential consequences of separatist ambitions should they be successful in their goal of statehood. It is difficult to determine, however, if the map contains a gesture to the historical boundaries of a "Greater Patani" or one toward a nationalist vision of a future pan-Islamic state. As a historical representation the map displays curious details. The modern border of Malaysia is displayed as the "State's" southern border. The effect of this border is to exclude the Malay state of Kelantan that Surin in his text includes as a part of a Greater Patani. Also, the inclusion of Satun does not reflect the lack of significant historical relations between Satun (or Langgu) and Pattani, as well as its status as a dependency of Kedah. In many ways, Surin's sketch is one of a modern nationalist vision that attempts to fix the location of Muslim political community within the confines of modern geopolitical realities (such as recognition of the Malaysian border as the limit of separatist aspirations).

On the other hand, the very title of the map referring to a "Greater Patani" functions historically as it calls upon a former kingdom now eclipsed by the Thai nation-state. The vision of a "*Patani Besar*" can also be found in other nationalist historiographies, such as in the map

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[22] Surin Pitsuwan, *Islam and Malay Nationalism: A case study of the Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand* (Bangkok: Thai Khadi Research Institute, Thammasat University, 1985).

found in Ahmad Fathy al-Fatani's *Introduction to the History of Patani*.[23] Describing the vast area of the kingdom of Raja Sakti I (who in fact was the Raja of Kelantan and took the sultanate in Patani by force). The map (figure 5) extends south to past Kuala Trengganu (presently modern-day Malaysia) and north to the Isthmus of Kra beyond Patthalung.[24] This is certainly a different historical view of a Greater Patani from the map found in *Islam and Malay Nationalism*. It connotes a historical importance to Patani, in fact, more vast than Surin's geographical suggestion. Instead, it can be argued that the map at the opening of *Islam and Malay Nationalism* is caught between these two impulses, one that seeks to retain historical claims to legitimacy while the other articulates a nationalist strategy for self-determination separate from the Thai nation-state. It is an indeterminacy, between the historical and the national, that serves as the very structure of Surin's narrative of modern Malay-Muslim politics more generally throughout his book.

To conclude, I would like to focus on a different kind of location, not a mapping but the geographical modifier found in Patrick Jory's notion of "Patani Malay." In his working-paper "From '*Melayu Patani*' to "Thai Muslim": The Spectre of Ethnic Identity in Southern Thailand," Jory is also attentive to the proliferation of geographies that have appeared since the start of the conflict four years ago. In doing so he describes "a map produced by the Bersatu separatist organization, which depicts the "state" of Patani (*Negara Patani*), coloured in green, covering the *entire* region of southern Thailand. The existing provinces, whose present-day boundaries are retained on the map, are renamed in Malay."[25] Jory also cites Bahrun's references "to similar

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[23] Al-Fatani, Ahmad Fathy, *Pengantar Sejarah Patani* [*Introduction to the History of Patani*] (Alor Setar, Malaysia: Pustaka Darussalam, 1994).
[24] ibid., p. 29.
[25] Patrick Jory, "From '*Melayu Patani*' to 'Thai Muslim': The Spectre of Ethnic Identity in Southern Thailand," ARI Working Paper no. 84 (2007): 23,

extravagant claims made by the BRN over the southern Thai peninsula to as far north as the Kho Khot Kra district in Ranong province, on the basis that these lands once belonged to 'Melayu.'"[26] The conclusion arrived at in the face of this indeterminacy is that Jory's readers can "see a confused conflation of the notions of "Malay", "Islam" and "Patani" within the framework of Patani Malay nationalist discourse."[27] In fact, I have shown that such conflations should not be viewed as "confused," but rather they provide a critical geographical structure to narratives at work in various ways in contemporary violence in southern Thailand. The mappings above no doubt involve a conflation that is actually central to their discursive function as opposed to being accidental.

The true importance of Jory's article, however, lies in its outline of the three narratives that have shaped the formation of contemporary "Malay-Muslim" identity over the course of the twentieth century. These narratives include the creation of the category "Thai Muslim" in Thai state-based programs of integration and assimilation, "the politicization of Islam amongst the Malays in neighboring Malaysia" that conjoined Islam and Malay ethnic identity particularly in the latter half of the 20th century, and the influence of the global "Islamic revival." Jory's carefully crafted account demonstrates that representations of a "Patani-Malay" identity are the result of historical processes grounded in regional and global forces. This identity is neither necessarily homogeneous nor static and as such it denies the representative capacity of an "exclusionist conception of the "Malay Muslims" of southern Thailand associated with a historically powerful Patani state, which is characteristic of Patani Malay nationalism, central to

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www.nus.ari.edu.sg/pub/wps.htm.
[26] ibid., p. 23.
[27] ibid.

the ideology of separatism."[28] Moreover, this analysis of shifting representations of communal identity over the course of the last 120 years is a critical addition to Chaiwat's notion of "Patani" as a "political geography." It is not merely that the political geography of southern Thailand describes a space associated with the continuous threat of violence, but also that it must include an understanding of how politically powerful dynamics effect "regional" identities that are neither ahistorical nor primordial. The politics of this regional geography involves the conjoining of "threat" and "identity."

It is in the middle of his paper, in the section entitled "The De-culturalization of Islam in Southern Thailand," however, where it becomes possible to detect a subtle shift in the object of Jory's analysis. It occurs in the form of a question:

> "Amidst the Thai policy of assimilation and Malaysian programs of Islamization across the border one might well ask, to what extent a Patani Malay identity still exists among the locals of the "three southern provinces"? There is little empirical data on which to base an answer to this important question."[29]

This question recalls Michel de Certeau's critique of ethnology in his discussion of the Brentons of northern France:

> "What constitutes an ethnic group is not the fact that an ethnologist or a sociologist can somehow or somewhere define the Breton as the object of his or her interest or knowledge. This 'object' is, furthermore, perpetually 'vanishing;' for the a priori of the ethnological method "suppresses" the *act* by which Brentons become Brenton and speak, in their own name, as the language of their desire to live, the cultural elements analyzed by the observer. Now, an abstraction cannot be made of the act that *holds* all these objects together."[30]

To rephrase de Certeau's concerns here it is possible to inquire: if "Patani Malay" identity has

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[28] ibid.
[29] ibid., p. 17.
[30] Certeau, Michel de, *Culture in the Plural*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 76.

experienced various transformations throughout the last century, particularly if the nationalism of the mid-twentieth century was predicated on the articulation of "self-determination" that reconstructed "Patani" as a site of homogeneous ethnic community, then at what historical point can a definition of "Patani Malay" be found that is prior to these transformations that would provide the grounds for such a comparison? In other words, at what point does a "Patani-Malay" identity exist that is not affected by "outside" forces?

To be sure, the strategies of assimilation by the Thai state, in particular, have resulted in extensive effects and a durable politics of resistance among certain Malay and Muslim communities in southern Thailand. Jory hypothesizes about such effects in relation to the current violence by asking whether "one of the sources of the violence might be an identity crisis among young men of the region resulting from the obliteration of Patani Malay identity over the last hundred years."[31] There is an important slippage at this point between the early "identities" Jory describes as political, nationalist, and religious constructs and the (seemingly) empirical, lived ethnic attachment of "Patani Melayu," which is subject to "obliteration." There can be no denying that communal identity is an elemental component in the politics of southern Thailand. Not, however, as a contest among three culturally bounded identities (Thai, Malay, Chinese), but instead as a site of contestation that involves forces of (national, i.e. Thai) conformity, indeterminacy, reform(ism), modernity, and nationalism. The critical question becomes that of the location of the "Patani" that modifies "Melayu." How does the location of Patani function as a referent to such a "ghostly" (in Jory's description one capable of haunting, but without sovereign form) communalism. As I have argued throughout this paper, this modifier, "Patani" cannot escape the indeterminacy of its geography. Even in this instance, the geographical

[31] Jory, p. 19.

modifier represents a politics and history of its production that exceeds what it claims to describe.