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### **Origins of Malay Muslim “Separatism” in Southern Thailand**

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## **Origins of Malay Muslim “Separatism” in Southern Thailand**

Thanet Aphornsuvan

The long held political belief that equates Malay Muslim political activism to separatism is one of the many recent invented ‘facts’ of modern Thai political history. According to this fact, the Malay Muslims were not trustworthy because they always rebelled and resisted the rule of Siam all the time starting from the Ayutthaya down to Rattanakosin or Bangkok kingdoms. In recent history they have been trying to ‘separate’ and take away the three southernmost provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat from Thailand.<sup>1</sup> The national history of Thailand, which has been the only predominant historiography in the country ever since the creation of modern historical writing in Siam starting around the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, maintains that the Thai kingdom possessed and owned the Malay states in the South, including Greater Patani<sup>2</sup>, Kelantan, Trengganu, Kedah and Perlis. The intensified force of western colonialism, however, forced Siam to cede parts of its traditional territories in order to preserve its independence. The discourse on Thai independence thus was structured on the loss and preservation of its territory. Following the ‘Paknam Crisis’(1893), Siam ceded its

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<sup>1</sup> For a long time the troubled area in the deep south has been known as the “Four Southern Provinces”[si changwad pak tai], including Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satul[Setul]. Historically they were most of the time autonomous, if not independent, states of the Malay world. Recent hostile history originated to the Siamese annexation in 1906. Another distinction of the region is that the majority population of these provinces are Muslims. But Satul is exceptional in its relations to the other Malay states and later provinces and to the Thai state. Its Muslims are assimilated to the Thai culture more than other Muslim provinces in the south. . The province of Satul(or Setul) originally was part of Kedah, which was under Thai suzerainty. The Thai-Anglo Treaty of 1909 ceded Kedah to British Malaya and made Satul a Thai province. Thus gave rise to the formation of the four southernmost Muslim provinces in Siam. Thus Satul has been spared from all kinds of conflicts with the Bangkok government throughout the history of Malay separatism. After the 1970s, attempts were made to correct the area under the conflicts, which led to the designation of the ‘three southern provinces’ of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat.

<sup>2</sup> The English rendering of the name “Patani” is based on Malay spelling, while the Thai government usage of “Pattani” is based on Thai spelling. Hereafter “Patani” will be used when refers to the local perspective and practice while “Pattani” when it is used by the Thai government and state. Greater Patani, before the annexation by Siam, included the present provinces of Patani, Yala, and Narathiwat

territories--"sia din dan"—to imperial France. Similarly in the Anglo-Thai Treaty of 1909, Siam also ceded—sia dindan—15,000 square miles of its four southern Malay states to imperial Great Britain. The emergence of the latest concept of 'separatism' or 'bang yak dindan'[separating the land] in the 1940s therefore was a logical outcome of the Royal Nationalist historiography, to use Thongchai's critical description. The concept of 'bang yak dindan' thus clearly presupposes the notion of a unified territorial kingdom and state and its dominating Thai culture and institutions.. Needless to say, such concept is a new invention and far from the reality of modern nation-states, including Thailand, which grew out of the multi-ethnic communities and cultural practices.

Studies on the conflicts and violence between Malay Muslims and the Thai authorities have glossed over the origins and development of this concept and conveniently focused more on the later developments of the much publicized multifaceted conflicts in the region. But the cost of historical ignorance and amnesia on the origins of separatism in the south is to prolong and tacitly approve of a poor and subjective study of modern Thai political history. Conventional writings on the subject are polarized into two opposite camps. One mostly foreign scholars and journalists of the 1940s generation was critical of the Thai government's policies and handle of the Malay Muslim south. They tended to support the self-determination of the Malay Muslims in order to be free and accorded rights of their own culture and religion.<sup>3</sup> The other group of writers and scholars are normally Thai academics and officials, whose views and temperaments are conditioned by their loyalty to the state

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<sup>3</sup> See for example, Virginai Thompson and R. Adloff, *Minority Problem in Southeast Asia*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955); Clive J. Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996.)

and often Thai nationalism.<sup>4</sup> Foreign observers at that time were more sympathetic to the self-determination of the ethnic minorities and therefore tended to point the finger at the Thai state's prejudice against the Malay Muslims, which have been categorized as 'khaek' or 'guests', implying that they were 'outsiders' and 'minorities' and finally as 'separatist bandits'[jon bang yak dindan]. The disdainful feelings towards the war-time Thai government was a culmination of the Phibul I government (1938-1944) in cooperation with Japanese imperial power and the return of Phibul II government (1948-1957) by means of a coup overthrowing the liberal regime under Pridi Phanomyong faction. It has been a common belief that under both Phibul governments that the Malay Muslims in the south suffered the worst political oppression. But in fact the beginning of the worst suppression and clashes between the Malay Muslims and the government forces took place before Phibul stepped in as Prime Minister for the second time. Given such complex and critical historical experiences of the period, it is understandable that a kind of objective studies of the subject is rare. This paper attempts to show the conjuncture around which the crucial historical and political events of the 1940s unraveled. Emphasis is on the changing image of both the Malay Muslim south and the Thai state and government. Cultural assimilation had been exploited by the Thai government in order to stabilize its power and rule over the politically active and culturally conscious of the northeast and south regions of the country. Politically speaking, what the Thai state did at that time was amounted to the consolidation and the unification of the Thai nation-state based upon the central Thai imagination. It is argued that 'separatism' thus was in fact invented and reinforced by the Thai authorities to suppress and intimidate regional political assertions of their own aspirations and identities.

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<sup>4</sup> See for example Kachatpai Burutpat, *Thai-Muslims*, (Bangkok: Phrae Pitaya, 1976); Phraya Ratanapakdi, *Prawat muang pattani[History of Pattani]*, (Bangkok: n.d.).

Generally speaking, political separatism has been treated as one branch of rebellions against the state by groups of dissatisfied members or would-be members of a nation.<sup>5</sup> Most of these movements are based on ethnic identities, which have become the minority in their states after the struggle for independence. In Southeast Asia, famous and well-known cases of ethnic separatism are the separatist movement of the Moro in the Philippines, of the Patani Malays in southern Thailand, and of the Shan and Karen and Rohingya in Burma, and of the Acehnese in Indonesia. Clive J. Christie, in his extensive study of separatist movements in Southeast Asia, gives a succinct account of the interplay of history and politics in the origins and development of separatist movements in Southeast Asia. The main channel that facilitated and, to a certain extent, also shaped the form and content of each separatist movement in the region was the process of decolonization starting after the World War I. A common historical experience that informed separatist movements was interwoven among the emergence of the nationalist movement resisting colonial powers, the search for respective national identities, the upheaval of Japanese intervention, and the establishment of independent states.<sup>6</sup>

Attempts to place separatist movements into a structural explanation can be seen from David Brown's article, "From Peripheral Communities to Ethnic Nations: Separatism in Southeast Asia" (1987).<sup>7</sup> Brown contends that the issue of ethnic separatism is best understood through the study of the character and the impact of the state as keys to explaining the emergence of these separatist movements. His argument is based on the interaction between the state and the peripheral communities

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<sup>5</sup> See Ruth McVey, "Identity and rebellion among the Southern Thai muslims," in Andrew D.W. Forbes ed., *The Muslims of Thailand* Vol. II (Gaya, Bihar: India, 1989; idem, "Separatism and the paradoxes of the nation-state in perspective," in Lim Joo-Jock and S. Vani eds., *Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> Clive J. Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization...*, vii.

<sup>7</sup> David Brown, "From Peripheral Communities to Ethnic Nations: Separatism In Southeast Asia", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Spring, 1988), 51-77.

in three stages. Firstly, the mono-ethnic characters of the states ensure that state penetration was disruptive to minority communal authority structures. This took place in two levels. At the mass level there was a crisis of communal instability and identity, and a crisis of legitimacy at the elite level. Secondly, elite groups in these peripheral communities managed to resolve both crises by articulating an ethnic nationalist ideology and mobilizing confrontation against the state. This provides a new basis for communal unity and identity and also a new basis for their own legitimacy. Thirdly, there was an inherent weakness in the ethnic nationalist movement, arising from the existence of several aspiring elite groups such as traditional leaders and younger educated generations. Each group sought to legitimize their elite status in the communities, thus constitutes a major factor contributing to factional disunity and weakness in the ethnic nationalist movements which developed.

Crucial to this socio-political structural theory is the concept of the mono-ethnic character of the state. The societies are all multi-ethnic in character and history, yet the circumstances in which the modern states were formed have been such as to promote the identification of the states with the majority ethnic community in each case. Ethnic minorities have been excluded from full membership of the states and in influential government positions and in the ideological character of the state. Therefore the national identity became associated with the language, culture and values of the ethnic majorities. The problem with this thesis is that the "mono-ethnic" state, besides Thailand, does not fit well with the other countries in this study, such as the Philippines and even Burma.

According to Brown, from the outset the combination of "mono-ethnic" state and multi-ethnic society in Thailand, as well as in Burma, Vietnam and the

Philippines, did not imply any escalation in political tensions and violent conflicts so long as the central government lacked the will or capacity to effectively penetrate the peripheral ethnic community. It was only when political and economic considerations prompted the government to expand beyond its core areas into the minority communities, that ethnic identities and communal structures began to fundamentally affected so as to produce ethnic nationalist confrontation.<sup>8</sup> The political conflict and violence between the minority communities and the state that ensued therefore came as a result of the assimilationist centralization character of state penetration. The state's expansion took the form of attempts to introduce the values and institutions of the dominant ethnic groups into the peripheral communities. This implied that the values of the latter was in some way inferior and that only by adopting the more advanced culture of the dominant could members of the communities gain full entry into the nation.

The majority of studies of the subject carry a more or less same thesis that the Thai "mono-ethnic" state launched policies of administrative centralization in many periods. In each period of administrative centralization, when indigenous Pattani elites have been displaced from positions of authority by Thai officials, the result had been protests and rebellion as: "the dispossessed members of the traditional ruling elite [sought]to reestablish their positions of power in the area."<sup>9</sup> Spasmodic unrest in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries gave way to more sustained protest when local rulers were again replaced by Thai officials after the 1932 reorganization of provincial administration, and its full implementation under the first regime of Phibul Songkram. The important history of the conflict was the revolt in 1948 by the Malay Muslim of the south.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 58.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 52.



The consequent revolt came in 1948, after Phibul Songkram's return to power, when the government had rejected demands put forward by Haji Sulong, the President of the Islamic Religious Council, calling for Pattani Malays to be appointed to Governorships of the four provinces, to 80 percent of government administrative posts in the area, and to a Muslim Board to control all Muslim affairs. The arrest of Haji Sulong provoked the renewal of insurrection, which escalated further after his disappearance, and presumed murder by Thai police, in 1954.<sup>10</sup>

In the first place, there was in reality no "revolt" by the Malay Muslims in 1948. The seven-point demand was also not really the cause for the arrest and prosecution of Haji Sulong as later believed by scholars and the public. However, there were "unrest" and "protests" by the Muslims in the "three" southernmost provinces, not "four" as reported by government officials and newspapers even before the arrest of Haji Sulong and, of course, more so after his swift arrest by the local police. The big and alarming insurrection occurred on April 26-28, 1948 originating from the clashes in the village of Dusun Nyor, Narathiwat province. That incident was later known as the "Dusun Ynor Rebellion" [kabot Dusun Ynor] and commonly understood as an attempt revolt in response to the arrest of Haji Sulong. Subsequently, the "Dusun Ynor Rebellion" has been obliterated under the story-line of the Haji Sulong's Rebellion. Finally the wheel of history completed itself in the latest clashes between the militant Muslims in the three southernmost provinces and government forces on April 28, 2004. This time the old story and memories of the "Dusun Ynor Rebellion" in 1948 have, for the first time in 56 years, been revived and retold to the public in full.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 74.

### **History in the History: From the “Haji Sulong Rebellion” to “Dusun Ynor Rebellion”**

The latest series of violence in the three southernmost provinces starting in the late 2003 culminated in the raid and attack of army camp in Narathiwat on January 4, 2004 by a group of unidentified assailants marked a new development of the aged-old ethno-political conflict in the region. The long uneasy and at times turned hostile and violent relations between the Malay Muslim of the deep south and the Thai state entered a new stage with the gun-robbing of the Fourth Development Battalion, in Narathiwat's Joh Airong district on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004. The so-called January 4<sup>th</sup> incident was unique and unheard of before in the long history of these ethno-political conflicts.

According to the government report, about 60 armed men raided on Narathiwat Rajanakarin camp and shot four soldiers dead before escaping with more than 400 rifles, 20 pistols and two machine guns. The attack was admitted by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to be “a well-coordinated operation” started with simultaneously torched 20 schools in 10 out of 13 districts in Narathiwat province at about 1.30 AM and set fire to the buildings. The arsonists also torched two unmanned police posts. Five of the schools were razed. At about the same time, a group of gunmen stormed the armoury at the non-combat Narathiwat Rajanakarin Army camp. In a related development, unidentified men burnt rubber tyres on many roads in Yala province and fake explosives were found planted in at least seven areas in the province early morning hours. Police believed this was an attempt to divert their attention away from the raid in Narathiwat.

Without doubt these attacks on “January Fourth” humiliated the Thai government and made Thaksin furious. He even went all out to blame the Army for

incompetence and lose his temper at the soldiers by saying that the murdered soldiers deserved to die. “If you have a whole battalion there and you’re still negligent, then you deserve to die,” said Thaksin.<sup>11</sup>

Following the raid, the government stepped up its control and determination to liquidate the turmoil and mysterious attacks by assailants in the three southernmost provinces. Martial law was imposed and more troops were dispatched into the area. In addition, the police tightened its grips on suspected Malay Muslims by using heavy-handed tactics against them. One of these tactics was to “carry away”[oum] those suspects and made them disappear. The police came to the house and told the suspect to follow them to the police station for investigations. Usually they came without warrant but the villagers had no way to resist the police. Many days gone by before the victims’ wives and relatives began to sense that something was not right. This was what people in that area talked about. “If the suspect were carried away by the army, chances were that he might be able to come home. But if he was carried away by the police, chance was that he would be gone for good.”

In the months leading to April, many complaints from the local people and reports by the newspapers were heard of many close to 200 local Malay Muslims had been “carried away” by local police and military. But these complaints and disappearance of the local Muslims were buried under the more popular and official concern news of “daily killings” by what the government believed to be the work of the Thai-Muslim separatist movement. The daily killings especially after the January Fourth and the violent offensive by armed forces in the deep South had expanded its targets to include innocent local inhabitants not only government forces. The most shocking to the Thai public was the spate of killing and attacking of Buddhist monks

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<sup>11</sup> *The Nation*, January 5, 2004, p. 1

and the temples. Consequently the latest outburst of the violence was the April 28 clashes in Songkhla, Yala and Narathiwat between government forces and the Muslim militants, resulting in the death of 107 Muslims and 5 government personnel.

On the early morning of April 28, 2004, around 100 Muslim militants launched simultaneous pre-dawn raids on police and military outposts in 11 separate attacks on government targets in the three provinces of Yala, Songkkla and Narathiwat.<sup>12</sup> A total 107 rebels, mostly young people, were killed in the clashes and 17 were arrested. Five police and military officials died and a number injured during the attacks. The militants mostly armed with machetes and only a few carrying assault rifles, battled policemen and soldiers in one of the bloodiest days in modern Thai history. Despite the accusations and claims by the government as to the non-political cause of the attacks and even said to be the work of ‘drug addicts’, the historical meaning of the “April 28 Killing” has not been lost to the public. Immediately after the carnage, Chaiwat Satha-anan, the noted peace scholar and political scientist at Thammasat University, came out to stress the significant history of the "April 28 Revolt" in 1948 from which the Malay Muslims in the south referred to as “perang or kebangkitan Dusun Ynor” [the War of Dusun Ynor] and the Thai official discourse narrated it as the “kabot Dusun Nyor” [Dusun Ynor Rebellion].

For now I will give the Thai (official) narrative of the "Dusun Ynor Rebellion", which later we will discuss the latest version of "what really happened" in April 1948. Following the arrest of Haji Sulong in January 1948, the Malay Muslim people banded together in meetings and planning for something which likely to be a terrorist act. The officials had closely followed and kept tracks of their movements. Those who were afraid of being arrested by the government decided to flee the

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<sup>12</sup> Note that the eruption of violence in the “three” southernmost provinces in 2004 did not involve Satul at all. Instead Songkhla became a new member of the “three” provinces now.

country. The Provincial Islamic Committee of Pattani was also dissolved. Meanwhile some political parties and newspapers in Malaya reported the events in the south with supporting manners so that the people would rise up against the [Thai] government thereby achieving their goal of separating the Muslim provinces to join with Malaya.

Soon the "situation in the border provinces of the south was not reliable" [sathanakan mai pen thi na waiwangjai] the government therefore sent more police forces down to Narathiwat in order to secure peace. On 28 April 1948, a rebellion broke out in a village of Dusun Ynor, Rangae District, Narathiwat Province. The leader was Haji Tingamae or Ma Tinga, who made himself to be the leader of the group. He then led the group into the fight and clashes with the police forces for 36 hours. After that the situation returned to peace and normalcy again. The police arrested two persons, one was a kamnan[village chief] of Tanjongmas, and charged them with treason. Ma Tinga managed to escape but later was apprehended in 1954, jailed for one year in Narathiwat then managed to escape from prison and joined the Chinese Communist bandits [jon jin kommunis].<sup>13</sup>

The intertwined and convoluted histories of the “Haji Sulong Rebellion” and the “Dusun Ynor Rebellion” in 1948 actually are important to our understanding of the Malay Muslim political movement. For one and the most critical one is that there were differences, nuances, and complexities among the Malay Muslim communities and movements. For outsiders, particularly the state and government, the Muslim communities in Thailand are always perceived to be homogeneous and static. This pitfall of one-sided perception of the objective reality has been reinforced and pronounced by the practice of history, which is subject to the available evidence and

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<sup>13</sup> Kajadpai Burutpat, *Thai-Muslim* [in Thai](Bangkok: Praepitthaya press, 1976), p.263-64.

the ability and objectivity of the historian to finally tell the reader a full story. The last observation of the complexity of the Haji Sulong and Dusun Ynor Rebellions is that the year 1948 was a critical time for Thailand and even more so for British Malaya. In Thailand the key factors of the event were the mysterious death of King Ananda Mahidol in June 1946 and the Coup d'eta in November 1947. In a newly set up of the Federation of Malaya still under the British rule it was the Emergency of 1948.

During the 1940s' Malay Muslim struggle, Haji Sulong was and became the symbol of the Malay Muslim struggle against the racist policies of the Thai state and unjust practices of government officials, particularly after his arrest in January 1948, court trial and eventually tragic death in 1954. The political narrative of this period focused on Haji Sulong as the sole leader and cause of the "rebellion" in the south together with the famous and tragic clashes and uprising at Dusun Nyor. Until the 1970s literatures about the Malay separatism were more obscure of the Dusun Nyor Rebellion simply because the real story had never been reconstructed into the discourse of the Malay Muslim national struggle. On the other hand, the Thai government quickly reconstructed a story of uprising and eventually separatist movement against the Thai state. To this end the government needed a target and evidence to justify its suppression of the local rebellion, unrest and reaffirmed its rule over the Muslim south. Haji Sulong thus was arrested and narrated as the important leader of the "1948 Rebellion", after which he became the reconstructed symbol of the opposition to the Thai government and separatism from the Thai state. Meanwhile the "Dusun Nyor Rebellion of 1948" was understood as a sub-plot of the Haji Sulong's Rebellion. Until the latest clashes on April 28, 2004 that people began to hear and learn more about what really happened in April 1948.

**The “Haji Sulong’s Rebellion”**

The “Haji Sulong’s Rebellion” was the master narrative written by the Thai state in order to be able to understand the nature and causes of the Malay Muslim political activities of the time. In a sense, Haji Sulong as the leader of the Malay Muslim movement was what the Thai government needed in order to be able to move accordingly. The ultimate goal of such narrative was the realization of “separatism” in the Malay south. Without doubt this narrative drastically effected the political relations between the Malay Muslims and the Thai government. Looking back at the 1948 Revolt in the Malay Muslim south, the question is whether it was really an attempted rebellion that failed or what its true nature was. Was it from this Rebellion that the ideology of separatism planted among the Malay Muslims in the lower South of Thailand? The answers to this question, I believe, would not only shed light on the history of the origins of separatism in the area, but also help us to see more clearly the present eruption of violence in the Muslim South and to find appropriate ways to deal and remedy the worsening situation.

Politically, the appearance of Haji Sulong in the Muslim movement was very significant, making it a new departure from the old history of the Malay Muslims’ political activism. Earlier the long history of their struggle against Thai domination and subjugation was centered upon the leadership and traditional power of the raja or king of old Patani kingdom. In a sense that old struggle was structured within the hierarchical social relations between Siamese kings and rajas of Patani. The cause and outcome were always the same; the clashes over power, status and concomitant interests of both royal elites and the defeat of the lesser material force sometimes by means of trickery and cheating in addition to military forces. Notwithstanding the limited and narrowness of political ideology in the old raja struggle, Islam as a driving

political and cultural force was also minimal or even absent. The emergence of Haji Sulong as a potential leader of the Muslim community in the South at the time when the palace of Patani was empty, on the contrary, began to offer new vision and consciousness of the people's identity. In this revival of the Malay nationalism, a new formula had been created from which political autonomy based on the Islamic principles would be championed at the moment of the new development of political democracy in Thailand. The Patani Muslim Movement spearheaded by Haji Sulong thus became a mass movement and importantly was the first time that the leadership of the movement turned to the religious leader.

Haji Sulong bin Abdul Kadir was born in 1895 to a wealthy and learned family in Kampong Anak Rhu, (later renamed in Thai by the government as "Lukson") Monthon Pattani. At the age of 7, he witnessed the arrest of Tunku Abdul Kadir Kamaruddin, the last raja of Patani, by Siamese government for resisting Chulalongkorn's centralization policy, which drastically reduced the state of Patani to simply be another governing unit under Siam's direct rule. After finishing basic learning at a Muslim pondok school at Krasae, Banna, Pattani, run by Tokhru Waemuso at the age of 12, his father, a Haji, sent him for further study of Islam in Mecca.<sup>14</sup>

Sulong studied with famous Islamic scholars in Mecca, where he had spent twenty years as a student. Apparently, he was a brilliant student, well versed in Arab and all the texts, so that he was well known at the time and in later generations. Because of this, he then was asked to open up a school to teach Islamic studies in Mecca, which earned him a strong reputation and privileged position there. He had

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<sup>14</sup> For an excellent biography of Haji Sulong, see James Ockey, "Botrian chak prawatsat Haji Sulong kab changwat muslim phaktai"[A Lesson from history: Hajji Sulong and the Southern Muslim Provinces], *Silpawattananatham* [Art and Culture], Vol. 25 No 6 (April 2004), pp. 100-109.



many students and followers from all over the world. With increased wealth and reputation, Haji Sulong now married and settled securely in Mecca.

It is important to note that the intellectual and political climates of the first quarter of the twentieth century had exerted similar influence upon the young students of that generation, i.e., Pridi Phanomyong, Plaek Kittasangka from central, and Thong-in Phuripat and Tiang Sirikhan from northeastern Thai. These young intelligentsia represented the new men/women of southern, central and northeastern parts of the changing country. All of them were attracted to the ideas of nationalism and modernity of the community together with the awareness and cultivation of the self-consciousness. The Muslim intellectual was different from others due to the emergence of Islamic revivalism in the Middle-East and the Malay peninsula. While Haji Sulong was influenced by the Arab nationalism, the other Thai intelligentsia were imbued with the secular constitutional revolution exemplified by the Young Turk revolution of 1908 and the Republican Revolution of 1911 in China.

Haji Sulong's life and work might not matter to Patani and Thailand if not because of the death of his first son at one year old. Haji Sulong decided to go back to Patani for a brief visit and to alleviate the family's sadness over the son. Leaving behind his books and a house in Mecca, he arrived at Patani in 1927, which was also the year that a group of progressive Thai students gathered in Paris to plan for the revolution in Siam. To his eyes, Patani and the Muslim communities there were poor and backward like Arab communities at the beginning of the rise of Islam. The glory and reputation of old Patani as the "cradle of Islam" in Southeast Asia now was plagued with declining communities where people were animistic in their religious practices and ceremonies. Such scenes and deprivation of the local Muslims

prompted a change of heart inside Haji Sulong. As a good Muslim, he had a duty to teach and disseminate an Islam that was as close to the words of Allah as possible.

Haji Sulong started teaching as a Toh Kuru(Toh kru), traveling to various communities in Patani. His teaching elicited opposition from traditional Muslim teachers who later reported his activities to the Circle or monthon governor<sup>15</sup> as “a potential threat to the peace and security of the area.” The governor of the area summoned Haji Sulong for investigation, but with lack of evidence he was released. On the other hand, villagers flocked to Haji Sulong’s teaching. They eventually encouraged him to open up an Islamic school in Patani in place of local pondoks. He agreed to the idea and campaigned for school donations and support among the Muslim population and even from the Thai-Buddhist supporters. The school project got much wider support from people but it also generated a more divisive conflict with local Muslim and Thai elite, particularly with the governor of Patani under the absolute monarchy. The subtle friction between Malay nationalism and Thai royal-nationalism probably started to form up at this time. One character who was opposite to Haji Sulong’s political orientation was Phraya Ratnapakdi (Chaeng Suwanchinda), the last royal governor of Patani. He was to be removed from office by the People’s Party government in 1933 because of his royalist stance. Surprisingly, he would be reappointed as governor of Pattani again after the 1947 Military Coup and immediately played a fatal role in the arrest of Haji Sulong, whom he had close contacts and known for quite some time, on treason charge.

In the meantime, Haji Sulong and his followers finally completed the construction of the school in 1933. One of the last donations to help the completion of the school came from Phraya Phahol, Prime Minister of the newly "democratic"

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<sup>15</sup> As a result of Chulalongkorn Reform of administration, Greater Patani was regrouped under the system called, monthon or circle, starting in 1906. The monthon governor at that time was Phraya Udomphongpenswasdi (M.R. Prayoon Issaraphakdi).

government led by the People's Party. He even went down to Patani in an opening ceremony of the school. Even Pridi Phanomyong, the influential leader of the People's Party, also visited Haji Sulong and his pupils in 1945. From then on Haji Sulong and his school went on from one success to another, becoming the most popular religious leader in the Muslim south.

By placing Haji Sulong and the Malay Muslim Movement in the context of the rise of Malay nationalism in the age of independence and anti-colonialism, we can better understand the urge and aspirations of the Malay Muslims of southern Thailand. The origins and growth of Patani intellectuals could be traced back to the first two decades of the twentieth century when a wave of reform and modernization blew through the Malay world. The first generation of Patani intellectuals went from local pondok education to further studies in Mecca and came back to open the modern religious schools in the south. They began to break with the old school of Muslim leaders. Next the Patani awakening was influenced partly by religious students, most of them inclined toward modernism, who had come over from or gained experience in the north Malaya states when these came under Thai administration during World War II. It also drew intellectually on Malay nationalist and populist sentiments expressed by political groups in Kelantan and Kedah.

This period, called the reawakening, characteristically was the emergence of the Malay Muslims' self-awareness and identity under Islamic principles. Here the leadership of Haji Sulong was crucial because he belonged to the modern generation of Muslim intellectuals. He was the first Patani ulama who had studied extensively in Mecca. That's why when he returned to Patani in 1927 he found that the local practices were incorrect and Islamic faith still mixed with local Thai animism. He was among the ulama who distrusted the government's involvement in the religious affairs

of the community. He believed that the political intrusion into the legal and religious matters of the Muslims since the reign of King Chulalongkorn was corrupting the purity of Islam. He made clear that his life mission was to follow the footsteps of the Prophet to “elevate and purify Islam”. His idea of a true Muslim community must link humanity, religiosity, justice and divinity together with their manifestation in the Muslim community. Haji Sulong thus was convinced that such a community could not be established as long as it remained under Thai rule. In the course of his popular religious leadership in the province, he had realized the potency and possibility of Islam as a political force. The Muslim movement thus carried in it deep Islamic faith and outward political involvement and social activism.<sup>16</sup>

### **The changing Image and perception of the Thai state towards the Malay Muslims, 1932-1948**

It should be noted that the 15 years period from 1923-1938— the eve of the absolute monarchy and the rise of Phibul's militarism-- during which the Thai state was in a process of transforming its political structures, there were little or no rigorous cultural and political suppressions of the Malay Muslims in the south. The last and violent clashes between the Malay Muslims in Greater Patani and Siamese forces took place in 1922. The so-called rebellions originated from the Muslim villagers of Ban Namsai, in Mayo District, Pattani Province, who refused to pay taxes and rent on land to the Thai government. The cause of this resistance stem from the implementation of the Compulsory Primary Education Act in 1921, from which all Malay Muslim children were required to attend Thai primary schools. As a result of the clashes, King Vajiravudh (Rama VI, r. 1910-1925) was forced to revise policies concerning

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<sup>16</sup> Surin Pitsuwan, *Islam and Malay Nationalism: A Case Study of the Malay Muslims of Southern Thailand*. ( Bangkok: Thai Khadi Research Institute, Thammasat University, 1985).

Islamic learning and taxation in the Muslim south. Apparently Bangkok government became “aware of the emerging sense of Malay nationalism among the people in the northern states of Malaya and of their willingness to extend support to their brethren across the border.”<sup>17</sup>

Let us look at the political change and the personalities that affected Siam’s political future. The 24 June 1932 Revolution was the key change that saw the transformation of the old Absolutism into a new yet unclear national state based upon the constitutional form of government. The core members of the People’s Party were new men (no women) who came from the middling commoners of central Thai and went to schools in Bangkok. Included in the original Party members was a group of four Muslims from around Bangkok.<sup>18</sup> The main task of the People’s Party and government was to stabilize and move the country in a progressive direction according to the Six Principles of the People’s Party.<sup>19</sup>

The first general election in 1933 saw the hopeful participation of Malay Muslim voters quickly snatched. All elected MPs in the four Malay Muslim provinces, except Satul, were Thai Buddhists. The next election in 1937 was the only

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<sup>17</sup> Wan Kadir Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 64.

<sup>18</sup> The four members of the People’s Party were: Nai Banchong Sricharoon or Haji Abdulwahab, later appointed as Senator, Nai Cham Phomyong or Haji Shamsalladin Mustapi, later became the Chularajmontri, Nai Prasert Sricharoon, and Nai Karim Sricharoon. See Sukprida Phanomyong, “chao thai muslim nai kan plienplang kan pokkrong 24 mithunayon 2475,” [Thai-Muslims in the Revolution of 24 June 1932] *Silapawattathanatham* [Art and Culture], Vol. 25 No., 8 (June 2004); and Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*, tr. Conner Bailey and John N. Miksic (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, Southeast Asia Series Number 68, 1985), p. 81.

<sup>19</sup> The Six Principles of the People’s Party are:

- 1) To maintain absolute national independence in all respects including the political, the judicial and the economic;
- 2) To maintain national security both externally and internally;
- 3) To promote economic well-being by creating full employment and by launching a national economic plan;
- 4) To guarantee equality for all;
- 5) To grant complete liberty and freedom to the people provided that this did not contradict the above-mentioned principles; and
- 6) To provide education for the people.

successful attempt when Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat managed to elect their Muslim representatives to the Parliament. Interestingly Satul lost its place to a Buddhist candidate. That was the brief electoral success for the Malay Muslims. After Phibul came to power in 1938, he began to implement the Thai nationalism policy as part of the campaign of nation-building. Subsequent elections from 1938 down to 1948, all seats from the Malay Muslim provinces mainly belonged to the Thai Buddhist politicians, except Satul which managed to keep its Muslim representative throughout the Phibul government.

The rise of a new constitutional government in Siam, however, brought some hopes to many including the Malay Muslims in the south. For the first time there was “a sense of national belonging among the Malay Muslims.”<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Tengku Mahmud Mahyuddin, the youngest son of the former raja of Patani, also returned from Kelantan to Thailand. Although elections<sup>21</sup> did not give full satisfactory to the Malay population, they at least provided them with another public space to speak up their minds and feelings. In return, there also was less forceful resistance from the Malay Muslims. Thus this was the only period that there was considerable peace and order in the area, although the usual mistreatment of the local population by the government officials, especially the police, still persisted. The Bangkok government still relied more from the local officials and provincial bureaucracy to deliver the policies and administration. Members of Parliament could alleviate the people’s grievances by bringing the matters directly to the government and the ministries concerned. The real correction and redress of the wrongdoing, however, still rested on ministerial and provincial officials to take actions. Not until the pre- and post-

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<sup>20</sup> W.K. Che Man, *Muslim separatism*, p. 64.

<sup>21</sup> The first general election in 1934, only Satul elected its Muslim candidate, the other three Muslim provinces elected Buddhist candidates. In 1937 all three except Satul succeeded in electing Muslim representatives. After Phibul came to power in 1938, subsequent elections in 1943 and 1948 only two Muslim candidates were elected in Satul and Narathiwat.

Second World War period when economic hardship and insecurity in people's lives were intensified by government officials corrupt practices, a majority of the Malay Muslim leaders and the people began to lose their confidence in the government and came to the belief that their elected MPs had not been able to function as their real representatives.

An interesting development that took place following the emergence of the constitutional regime was the sudden outburst of voices criticizing of the government policies and behaviors. These voices were transmitted by means of speech and print. But the most disturbing voices were public speeches made by any persons at any place and any time. Such an encounter was something new and unacceptable by government officials, many of them were old guards from the overthrown absolutist regime, particularly the judges. For Muslims public speeches were normal practice of their religious gathering as well as pondok learning. No wonder Haji Sulong was eloquent orator and that image and perception began to worry the Thai authorities. By the late 1930s, reports and rumours regarding Haji Sulong's popular activism began to stir discomfort among certain factions of the government and officials. They were not sure of Haji Sulong's status and the political implications of his followers. One security measure that the People's Party led-government did to ensure its stability and stave off opposition was the deployment of secret polices following certain political figures. So local officials were instructed to secretly follow and keep track of Haji Sulong's activities and movements.

As mentioned earlier, contests and conflict among Muslims themselves also pervaded relations between the modern and traditional Muslim elite. Haji Sulong's first rival was the Abdunlabut family, of Yaring district in Pattani province. Phraphiphitpakdi (Tunku Mudka Abdunlabut) who served as district officer and under

the new political system rose to become governor of Satul. When he ran for parliament in 1937, Haji Sulong supported Jaroen Suebsang, a Thai-Buddhist whose political was more progressive. That accounted for the subsequent successful elections for Jaroen Suebsang, a senior public health official in Pattani, from 1938 to 1948. Another source of political problem for Haji Sulong's role was his contacts with Tengku Mahyiddin, whom the Thai government believed was the leader of a separatist movement in southern Thailand. Given the war-time situations when Malay nationalists were active in the northern states of Malaya, it was natural that Haji Sulong's politico-religious activities covered both sides of the Thai-Malay borders. It is amusing reading reports from Thai secret police and detectives whose information was relied mainly from the Malay informants. Since the word "Malay" was used to denote both the Malay in Malaya and in southern Thailand, the Thai officials were alarmed to hear the shout of "Merdeka" and "freedom" for the Malay in the meetings. Official reports to Bangkok thus concluded that separatist sentiments were rising among the Malay Muslims and eventually would lead to a rebellion. Judging from the secret official reports to the Bangkok government at that time, it was clear that their attitudes toward Haji Sulong and the Muslims were misleading by either the prejudice of Islamic culture or ignorance of political development in Malaya at the time. One report from 1943-47 tried to impress the government of Haji Sulong's popularity among the Muslims by describing that "the followers even knelt down to take off Haji Sulong's shoes and clean his feet for him before entering a masjid. Others were ready to carry the umbrellas to protect the sun when he visited the Muslim communities in the four southern provinces including some districts of Songkhla"<sup>22</sup> Of course, to the

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<sup>22</sup> National Archive, Bangkok, The Prime Minister Secretariat Office, "The Case of Haji Sulong and followers, 1943", cited in Chalermkiat Khunthongpet, "kan to tan nayobai ratthaban nai 4 changwad pak tai khong pratet thai dou kan nam khong Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir BE.2482-2497,"[The opposition



Thai mind this was amounted to imitation of the king, the practice that was unacceptable to the Thai royal-nationalists. In the long-term, such negative perceptions were helpful to the Thai state when it needed to show Haji Sulong as an enemy of the state and its institutions.

### **Nation Building and Cultural Assimilation, 1939-1944**

With the coming of the war, it was inevitable that the fate and future of the Malay Muslim south were bound with that of the Bangkok government. The goal of creating a unified nation-state was closer to realization when Col. Luang Phibul Songkhram was Prime Minister in 1938 with full control of the army. From the north, northeast to the south, local political consciousness was raising. That was the time that the country saw many of its able and sincere provincial democratic political leaders in the making. The rise of militarism in Japan and the threat of war in Europe brought Phibul into close and cordial contacts with the Japanese government. To Phibul and his advisors, Thailand could become a strong nation as well as modern—civilized—country by following the Japanese whose successes had become ‘the light of Asia.’

Having set an eye on a policy of nation-building, the government under Phibul(whose rank would be promoted to be the first Field Marshal of the Thai Army) began to mobilize the population under the banner of Thai nationalism from which a policy of forced assimilation was promulgated with little or no toleration for the unique cultures of other minorities and local cultures.

Phibul’s nation-building policy was aimed at the reform and reconstruction of the social and cultural aspects of the country as well as its physical representation.

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of government policies in the four southern provinces of Thailand under the leadership of Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir], *MA Thesis*, Silpakorn University, B.E. 2529.

Since the coup in 1932 had ended the absolute monarchy, this was the first time that the government attempted to really replace old ideas and feudalistic practices among the population with what they thought a modern and civilized practice. In his address to the Cabinet and senior officials in 1941, Phibul said,

In an effort to build a nation with a firm and everlasting foundation, the government is forced to reform and reconstruct the various aspects of society, especially its culture, which here signifies growth and beauty, orderliness, progress and uniformity, and the morality of the nation.

His stress on culture was mainly influenced by Japanese government policy and practice in post-World War I. The other factor was the opportunity to break away from the traditional fetters of the Thai monarchy. The imminent threat of war among the major powers persuaded Thai leaders to choose which side the country would be. One was the civilized and strong the other was the slave and weak. In order to be recognized as civilized and modern by powerful nations, the country must do away with “the people [who are] remain poor in culture and exhibit ignorance about hygiene, health, clothing, and rational ways of thinking.” With these firm beliefs on the goal and status of a nation, Phibul’s government enforced the National Culture Act. The most sensitive one was known as ‘ratthaniyom’ or the State Decrees, the first decree, of course, was the change of Siam to Thailand (1939). Under this policy came the idea of Thai-ness and ethnic Thai nationalism.

The perception of a civilized Thai nation-state devoid from remnants of feudalism was actually very Eurocentric in its presumption and ideas. Various minority groups were affected by this cultural policy but the Malay Muslims of the

South, however, were especially hit by these new culture laws and regulations. The terms “Southern Thais” and “Islamic Thais” were to be referred simply as “Thais”.<sup>23</sup> The term “Thai Islam” was an invention of the Thai government to indicate that while it did tolerate religious differences now, it did not consider that there should be any other significant differences among citizens of Thailand.

Under these laws penalties were prescribed for those who failed to observe the regulations concerning “proper dress, behavior and etiquette” when appearing in public places. Other regulations required women to wear hats and Western dress, forbade the chewing of betel and areca nuts, and instructed the use of forks and spoons as the “national cutlery”. The most sensitive one was the abolition of the Islamic laws of family (marriage and divorce) and inheritance in 1944 which had been allowed to function since the annexation of the Patani region in 1902.<sup>24</sup> By imposing the Thai Civil Law in the four Muslim provinces,<sup>25</sup> the government also revoked the Islamic judge, Dato Yutitam, which had decided the family and property cases among the Muslims. To make matter worse, the government intentionally omitted the promulgation of the newly completed codification of the Islamic marriage and inheritance law which had been undertaken in 1929 with the aim to bring unity and

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<sup>23</sup> In order to smooth off regional differences based on race and ethnicity, the government’s Public Relations department began to promote new desired-nature of the regions, such that the North was labeled as ‘thin thai ngam’[a region of beautiful people] and the Northeast(Isan) was “Thin Thai Dee”[a region of good people]. Surprisingly I could not find the label for the South.

<sup>24</sup> In the Royal Decree Concerning the Governance of the Seven Principalities [of the south] of 1902, Siam recognized specific Islamic traditions such as the area of family relations and inheritance. Article XXXII stipulated that, “The Criminal Code and the Civil Code shall be applied except in civil cases concerning husbands and wives, and inheritance in which Muslim are both the plaintiff and the defendant, or only a defendant, in such cases the Islamic law shall be applied.” For more insight into the issue of Islam and personal law in Greater Patani, please see Surin Pitsuwan, *Islam and Malay Nationalism*, pp.119-141.

<sup>25</sup> Interestingly there has been no study of the implementation of the Penal and Commercial Laws under Phibul’s government in 1938. The complete modern codification of Thai law would be done under Phibul II’s government in the 1950s. The codification of Thai laws, actually, was a long process that originated under King Chulalongkorn whose penal code of R.S. 127 would be replaced by modern civil and criminal laws under Phibul. Thus the revoke of Islamic laws concerning marriage, divorce and inheritance in 1944 was a result of the general implementation of the new Civil Law effective throughout the country. Within the context of nation-building, the imposition of a universal Civil Law was, to Phibul, a sign of civilized Thailand.

understanding between Thai and Islamic religious law.<sup>26</sup> Because of the proximity and adjoining borders, Muslims in Satul went to the Islamic courts in Kedah or Perlis, those from Yala went to Perak, those from Narathiwat to Kelantan for justice. Patani had not shared borders with the Malayan states, so the people elected their own ‘kodi’ or religious judge to mediate the cases. The popular elected ‘kodi’ was no other than Haji Sulong, who led the struggle to retain legal autonomy of Islamic law in the Muslim south. He was elected on 28 October 1943. From 1943 to 1947, there were no cases filed by the Malay Muslims in the Thai court at all<sup>27</sup>. Obviously these people had been separated from their land. But it was the Thai government that forced them to go and seek justice outside of their homeland. Furthermore Malay Muslims were no longer permitted to observe Fridays as public or school holidays. Most disturbing were Thai attempts to convert Muslims to Buddhism.

The year 1944 thus saw the increased radicalization of the Malay Muslim movement and the unrelenting enforcement of the nationalist policies from which the seeds of resistance and irredentism had sewn. Because Phibul's government sided with the Japanese government and declared war against the Allied, Japan, in return, assisted Thailand to take back the former dependencies, Kelantan, Trengganu, Kedah and Perlis, which had been ceded to Britain in 1909. The transfer in 1943 not only benefited the Thai state but also strengthened ties among the Malay Muslims in Patani. From now on they could renew their ties and share their problems with their brethren in Malaya. Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddin, the youngest son of the former raja of Patani, found it difficult to live in Thailand, went back to Kelantan and, during the Japanese occupation of Malaya, joined the resistance movement. After the war, he

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<sup>26</sup> Surin Pitsuwan, *Islam and Malay Nationalism*, pp. 136-145.

<sup>27</sup> Che Abdullah bin Muhammadsaad Lung Puteh, *Krajok mai me ngao: Panha si changwad paktai* [A mirror with no shadow: The problem of four southern provinces], (Bangkok: Prajak kanpim, 1975), p. 18-19 cited in Chalermkiat Khunthongpeth, “Kan totan...” p. 34.

ran a seaside resort at his Pantai Chinta Berahi estate, which attracted many Thai detectives to the place. In 1944, Tengku Abdul Jalal bin Tengku Abdul Mutalib, son of the late raja of Saiburi, whose Thai name was Adul na Saiburi, and a Member of Parliament from Narathiwat, submitted letters of protest to the Phibul I and Khuang governments regarding the mistreatment of Thai officials, which caused economic difficulties and religious discontents. The reply of the governments after a series of investigation was also the same that the local authorities in their policies of religious and cultural assimilation were right and proper.<sup>28</sup> As a result, Tengku Jalal left Narathiwat for Kelantan and joined Tengku Mahyuddin in providing leadership to the Malay Muslim struggle for their rights and justice. In the same year, Haji Sulong also set up an Islamic organization in Patani, "He'et alNapadh alLahkan alShariat" or the Patani Malay Movement (PMM) with the object of encouraging cooperation among Muslim leaders to fight against government's tampering of Islamic way of life.<sup>29</sup> The policy of forced integration and assimilation of Malay Muslims into the Thai national state, however, was halted in 1944 when Phibul fell from power. Subsequent governments<sup>30</sup> were more sympathetic to the Muslim sentiments and plight, and quickly addressed the new radical protest arising from the Muslim constituency in the South.

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<sup>28</sup> The government letter read: "I wish to make known to you that your letter dated 14/2/1944 concerning the actions of the governor of Patani has been examined, and the Office of the Ministry of the Interior has given notice that the actions of the Governor of Patani are considered to be proper and should give no cause for anger from the majority of the people. Be so informed." In Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani...*, p. 85-6.

<sup>29</sup> Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani...*, p. 85.

<sup>30</sup> The chronology of Thai governments from 1938-1948 is as follows: Phibul I (1938-1944); Khuang Aphaiwong I (1944-45); MR. Seni Pramoj (1945-45); Khuang II (1946-46); Pridi (May 1946-June 1946); Thamrong (1946-1947); Khuang III (1947-1948); Khuang IV (Feb. 1948-April 1948); Phibul II (April 1948-1957).

### **Islamic Patronage and Reform, 1945-47**

In 1945, in order to appease and normalize the radicalized political situation in the Muslim South, the Thai government under Prime Minister Khuang Aphaiwong, advised by Pridi Phanomyong, the Regent, promulgated the Islamic Patronage Act aiming at restoring “pre-Phibul conditions” in the four southernmost provinces. The observation of Friday as a holiday and the restoration of Islamic family and inheritance laws were also returned to the Muslim community. The reform of Islamic affairs also reappointed the Chularajmontri (head of all Muslims in Thailand) to act on behalf of the king regarding the Muslim concerns.<sup>31</sup>

Following the 1932 Revolution, the Chularajmontri, which had been established under the Thai monarchy since the Ayutthaya kingdom, was terminated. There was no appointment of the new Chularajmontri after the death of the last Muslim nobility in 1936. It was not until the turmoil and disaffection from the Muslims in the South following Phibul’s forced integration policies, against which the rise of the Malay irredentism threatened the stability of the central Thai government, that the new Chularajmontri was hurriedly appointed. The law of 1945 made Chularajmontri the king’s advisor in matters relating to Islam. The first Chularajmontri in the democratic period was a Muslim commoner, Cham Promyong (Haji Shamsalladin Mustapi), a Sunni Muslim who was also a member of the People’s Party and senior government official in the Public Relations department at that time. He was born in Samudprakan, a province immediately east of Bangkok, and had

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<sup>31</sup> The Chularajmontri (Sheikhul Islam) was an old appointment dating back to the seventeenth century of the Ayutthaya kingdom. In practice, the king appointed a trusted Muslim leader to be his advisor on matters relating to Islam. It was first set up in the reign of King Songtham (r 1620-29) and lasted till the end of the absolutism. All previous Chularajmontri, however, were Shiite whose ancestors came from Persia. The majority of Malay Muslims in the South is Sunni. Interestingly, the first three Chularajmontri in the Bangkok kingdom thus were involved in military campaigns including the suppression of rebellions in the Southern states, including Kedah, and Patani. The third Chularajmontri who was responsible for laying down regulations in governing of Southern states, became governor for many months after the quelling of the Muslim rebellion.

studied Islam at a university in Egypt. His immediate duty was to mediate with the local Muslim intellectuals and movements.

Unfortunately the coup of 1947 forced him out of the office and he went into exile in Kelantan. The military-led government then appointed Tuan Suwansat, who was a religious teacher in Bangkok, to be a new Chularajmontri. The government also changed the role of the Chularajmontri, from the king's advisor in Islamic affairs, to be the advisor to the government on that matter. Tuan Suwansat remained Chularajmontri until 1981, when Prasert Mahamad, also a Sunni teacher from Bangkok, became the next Chularajmontri. At present (2004) Sawat Sumalyasak is the Chularajmontri. Obviously, all Chularajmontri were from Bangkok, none ever came from the south. Except Cham Phomyong, none was whole-heartedly accepted by the southern Malay Muslims.

The Islamic Patronage Act of 1945 (revised in 1948 by Phibul government) authorized the government to form a National Council for Islamic Affairs (NCIA) of Thailand headed by a Chularajmontri ex-officio. The NCIA functions as an Islamic advisory committee to the Interior and Education Ministries. The law also creates the Provincial Council for Islamic Affairs (PCIA) in provinces where there are sufficient numbers of Muslims population. The PCIA in turn is delegated to aid and advise Thai authorities at the provincial level in matters concerning Islam and to supervise the Mosque Council formed under the Royal Act of 1947.

The sensitive issue of Islamic judges or Dato Yuttitam was also resolved by reinstating the "kathi" or Dato Yuttitam within the Thai Civil Court. This time the Bangkok political leaders moved to patronize the Malay Muslim south by making

Dato Yuttitam an official of the Justice Ministry [kha rajakarn].<sup>32</sup> On 19 November 1946, the government issued the Law on implementing Islamic Laws in the four Muslim Provinces. On 13 December the Ministry of Justice announced the regulations concerning an appointment and qualifications of Dato Yuttitam in which one of them was the ability to read and write Thai. The government's procedure and appointment of Dato Yuttitam after an election by the Muslim population was met with opposition from many Muslim leaders, in particular Haji Sulong. He disagreed with the idea and resisted it throughout. His objection was that a government, a non-believer or *kafir*, could not appoint a Muslim judge. It amounted to a breach of Islamic faith and practice. Another criticism of the new role of Dato Yuttitam was that his decision on Islamic legal matters was final and no appeal was allowed.<sup>33</sup> The criticisms and disagreement from Muslim leaders were that the Thai government was not qualify to appoint an Islamic judge and Islamic Court should function separately from the Thai Civil Court as in the past. To the idea of having a separate court, Thai Civil and Islamic Courts, the government replied that it would be costly to have two separate courts especially when religious cases did not occurred that many each year. The issue of Islamic Court and Dato Yuttitam thus created commotion and cleavage among Muslim leaders of the south as well as between the Muslim leaders and the government. But for Haji Sulong this issue put him in the blacklist of an obstinate political opposition to Thai government.

For a brief period of post-war from 1945-1947, the Pridi Islamic Patronage policies, which aimed at reforms and reconciliation succeeded in establishing the national Islamic institutions acceptable to both the government and the Muslims, generally outside the southern region. Previous Islamic tradition and practices were

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<sup>32</sup> Narong Siripachana, *kwam pen ma khong kotmai islam lae dato yuttitam* [History of Islamic Law and Dato Yuttitam], (Bangkok: Bophit kanpim, B.E. 2518(1975), p. 74-5.

<sup>33</sup> Narong Siripachana, *kwam pen ma*...., p. 84.



reinstated or allowed. The positive development was the opening of a dialogue in a free and open channel between the Malay Muslim leaders and the government. But with postwar economic hardship and scarcity, especially the shortage of rice in the south and the smuggling of rice along the border areas, the patronage policies could not deflect the course of southern Malay Muslim disaffection against Thai rule and the growing nationalist sentiment.

**“Patani-Malay State Outside Malaya”<sup>34</sup>**

On top of the simmering conflict were complaints and petitions from the local Muslim population regarding the cruel and unjust practices of the Thai officials particularly the police. One can sense the pained feelings of the Malay Muslims from the account by Ibrahim Syukri(pseudonym), *Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani* [History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani] published in Kelantan in the late 1940s. The author pointed out that

At this time [1945-46] there was a sort of contagious disease among the Siamese officials which led to disregard of directives and the taking of bribes. This occurred from the highest officials to the lowest peons. A matter that was very important could not succeed if bribes to the officials were not first prepared. With the police, a criminal who was caught could with ease be safe and free if he gave them a bribe. Repeatedly, when a Malay was accused of friendship with bad elements, he was immediately arrested by the Siamese police, taken to a lonely place, and beaten before he was taken to the place of detention. This also happened to Malays accused of taking part in political

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<sup>34</sup> This was the title of a report written by Barbar Whittingham-Jones after her visit to Patani in September 1947. The article published in *The Straits Times*, 30 October 1947.

movements critical of the government. They were always threatened and slandered in various ways by the Siamese police, arrested, or simply beaten without bothering to take the matter to court.<sup>35</sup>

The post-war lawlessness and corruption were increased elsewhere in Thailand too, but the most serious one was the southernmost provinces which had become the centre for smuggling, particularly rice into Malaya.<sup>36</sup> The government under Luang Thamrong and Pridi started negotiations and tried to bring the Muslim political leaders into the state's patronage and eventually cooperation. The Commission of Inquiry to investigate situations in the four southern provinces was sent down on 3 April 1947 to Patani to listen and give sympathetic support to the plight of the Muslims there. Upon hearing of the arrival of the government Commission, the Malay Muslim leaders, on 1 April<sup>37</sup>, had an emergency meeting at the Provincial Islamic Council of Patani to draft a proposal concerning political rule, rights and religious affairs of the Muslims. That meeting produced the seven point demand which were:<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibrahim Syukri(pseudonym), *Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani* [History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani] tr. Conner Bailey and John N. Mksic (Ohio University, Southeast Asia Series, No. 68, 1985), p. 86.

<sup>36</sup> Chin Peng, the leader of the Communist Party of Malaya, admitted that the Party also launched a rice smuggling along the Thai borders as a means to raise fund for the Party. See *his My Side of History* as told to Ian Ward and Norma Miraflor (Singapore: Media Masters, 2003), p. 327-8.

<sup>37</sup> Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom...*, gave a different date of this meeting. The book states that on 24 August 1947 the meeting between the investigative commission and the Malay Muslims was held. Haji Sulong, the head of the Islamic Council, and Wan Othman Ahmad, head of the *Persekutuan Semangat Patani* [Alliance of the Spirit of Patani], represented the populace of Patani, and submitted to the commission seven demands to presented to the government, p. 89.

<sup>38</sup> Another interesting version of the Seven-Point Demand was from Barbara Whittingham-Jones who visited Patani in September 1947 and was likely to obtain a copy from Haji Sulong. Her version read as follows:

- (1) The appointment of a single individual with full powers to govern the four districts of Patani, Naradhivas, Yala and Setul, and in particular having authority to dismiss, suspend or replace all government servants, this individual to be local-born in one of the four districts and to be elected by the people.
- (2) Eighty per cent of government servants in the four districts to profess the Muslim religion.
- (3) Malay and Siamese to be the official language.

1. The government of Siam should have a person of high rank possessing full power to govern the four provinces of Patani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satul, and this person should be a Muslim born within one of the provinces and elected by the populace. The person in this position should be retained without being replaced;
2. All of the taxes obtained within the four provinces should be spent only within the provinces;
3. The government should support education in the Malay medium up to the fourth grade in parish schools within the four provinces;
4. Eighty percent of the government officials within the four provinces should be Muslims born within the provinces;
5. The government should use the Malay language within government offices alongside the Siamese language;
6. The government should allow the Islamic Council to establish laws pertaining to the customs and ceremonies of Islam with the agreement of the [above noted] high official;
7. The government should separate the religious court from the civil court in the four provinces and [give the former] full authority to conduct cases.<sup>39</sup>

The seven-point demand document clearly was not overtly separatist in intent. Yet its claim for the political autonomy was also not unambiguous. It actually was the most progressive aspiration reflecting the contemporary political development of

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(4) Malay to be the medium of instruction in the primary schools.

(5) Muslim law to be recognized and enforced in a separate Muslim Court other than the civil court where the onetime *kathi* sits as an assessor.

(6) All revenue and income derived from the four districts to be utilized within them.

(7) The formation of a Muslim Board having full powers to direct all Muslim affairs under the supreme authority of the heads of state mentioned in (1). *The Straits Times*, 30 October, 1947, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> Ibrahim Syukri, *Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani*, p. 89-90.

the people's experience. At the meeting, the government Commission expressed its uneasiness to the demand. After the consideration, the Commission of Inquiry called on Haji Sulong as the leader of the demand to discuss and explain to him that which demands would be agreeable to do and which ones would not. Of course, the government was not ready to accept something that was that progressive and even too radical to the ruling group at that time. The most that the government could make concessions to were the issue of religious freedom, and to accept the idea that Muslims in Thailand could become part of the Thai national family as 'Thai-Muslims'. But the Thai government could not accept the idea that any separate ethnic group could have separate rights or any demands for regional autonomy on the basis of such separate ethnic rights. Such acceptance would have meant the undermining of the very core belief of the indivisible of the Thai nation, based on the trinity of nation, religion (Buddhism) and king.<sup>40</sup>

Prime Minister Thamrong brought the seven-point demand into the cabinet meeting for consideration in July 1947. The cabinet resolved that over all the seven-point demand could not be met because "the existing form of government at the present is appropriate, to arrange it into a kind of *monthon* is not suitable since it is going to divide [the land]."<sup>41</sup> Here probably we can see traces of initial perception of the Thai government in response to the Malay Muslim political demand of self-government or autonomy. To the Thai officials such idea was amounted to the secession of the Muslim provinces from the Thai nation-state. Four months later the government still mulled over other proposals like teaching Malay in schools, improving rubber plantation and transportation, religious holiday on Fridays and the

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<sup>40</sup> Clive J. Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia*, p. 183.

<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Justice, confidential-urgent, 16 July 1947, the secretary general of the Prime Minister Office to Minister of Justice, "Review of the report by the commission to investigation situations in the four southern provinces." Cited in Chalermkiat Khunthongpet, p. 79, footnote 12.

like. But no clear answer as to the future political objective, which for the Malay Muslims, it was the most pertinent demand.

The situations in the area were still bleak with rampant arbitrary oppression of the Malays by the Thai authorities. In August came the second Commission of Inquiry to investigate the specific charges raised against the police and other officers before the first Commission. Though during the period of the inquiry the individuals complained of were withdrawn, they had since been trickling back. While no action had been taken by the government, in Patani, “the police had taken reprisals against all who gave evidence before the Commissions by launching a fresh campaign of shooting and blackmail.”<sup>42</sup> Towards the end of 1947, disturbances and robbing occurred around 200 cases in Patani Province. Government said that most of the victims were Thai Buddhists, who told the police that after the raid, the thieves left the burning houses with the shout, “ido Melayu! [Malaya awaken!]. For the first time, one public school in Patani also was burnt down. Leaflets were dispersed around town calling for Malay political awakening.<sup>43</sup>

With little hope on the concession by the government, Haji Sulong stepped up his campaign for political changes by moving on the issue of Dato Yuttitam. Haji Sulong led the boycott of the appointment of Dato Yuttitam by the government. He called for the rights of Muslim to determine their own justice. By the middle of 1947, police kept close watch on Haji Sulong and his political mobilization in the masjids, pondok, and schools. Reports from secret agents indicated that Haji Sulong had planned to organize Muslim people to protest against the government and then to invite Tengku Mahyiddin from Kelantan to be the leader of the four southern provinces.

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<sup>42</sup> Barbara Whittingham-Jones, “Patani\_Malay State Outside Malaya,” in *The Straits Times*, 30 October 1947, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> Chalermkiat Khunthongpet, p. 95.

On 26 September 1947 Miss Barbara Whittingham-Jones, an English newspaper correspondent, visited Patani on an invitation by and arrangement of Tengku Mahyiddin. At Koke Poh station in Patani, Haji Sulong met her and put her up in his place. He took her to meet the governor of Pattani but he was out of town. Whittingham-Jones spent three days travelling all over Patani and filed a report for the *Strait Times* of Singapore on 30 October 1947. Consequently this report put the problem of the Malay Muslim in southern Thailand up on an international spot. Later reactions from the Thai government and senior officials showed their disappointment and even anger over the negative implications of the report. It would become one of the chief evidences used by the court in persecuting Haji Sulong on sedition charge.

Indeed the picture of Patani in late 1947, through the eyes of Whittingham-Jones was shocking to outsiders. Set against the background of the ruins of old prosperous Patani, which once “was the main entrepot between Malacca and Japan”, Patani today “is nailed down by a skeleton network of Siamese commissioners, police and other officials.” “Everywhere I went it was the same tale of systematic oppression and of a deliberate campaign to de-nationalize the population. Desperate resentment is aroused by the ban on Malay education. Prohibitions against Malay schools, relaxed in the immediate post-liberation period when Siam was still enemy in status, are now being reinforced.” To Whittingham-Jones, Siam was behaving like a “colonial” power and “conqueror.” That’s why, she explained, “as outcasts of society it is hardly surprising if some of the more rebellious elements have become also enemies of society and taken to smuggling, piracy and gang robbery.”

Whittingham-Jones had no mercy to the Thai officials when it came down to the issues of corruption, blackmail and persecution of the Malay Muslim victims. She wrote, “for alleged harbouring of gang robbers, though without preferring a charge in

court, the Siamese police burn kampong to the ground, blackmail the wealthier class of shopkeepers into paying thousands of ticals in 'protection money,' force their way into Malay homes, beat up their women and carry off such of the smaller and moveable goods as they fancy. Individuals are constantly shot out of hand or simply disappear and are never heard of again."

"Because of its complete isolation from the outer world Patani is helpless against this reign of terror. The mildest criticism of the existing regime is classed as 'dangerous talk' and suppressed by death or blackmail. Patani Malays had no freedom of speech, no newspapers, few radio sets, and no political machinery."

If we take Whittingham-Jones as a temperature of the feeling about irredentism-separatism at that time, it would look like there were three alternatives floating among the Malay Muslims in both sides of the border. One was the formation of an autonomous Malay state centered round Tengku Mahyiddin. Second was the incorporation of Patani into the Federation of Malaya. Third an unlikely possibility but was inspired by the Independence Revolution in Indonesia, that was the affiliation of Patani to Indonesia. The second and third alternatives soon faded away when external forces and factors did not support the movement. In this case the British decided to stick with the Thai government due to the US strong support of the postwar Thai government and status.<sup>44</sup> The Malay Muslim leaders also realized that irredentism was not possible, their hope thus pour into the struggle for autonomous self-rule as much as possible. But until November 1947, there was no definite action in asking Tengku Mahyiddin to become the leader of the Malay Muslim in southern Thai. Actually the movement under Haji Sulong was making more contacts and dialogues with the government and officials concerned in settling the many cases of

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<sup>44</sup> See Astri Suhrke, "Irredentism Contained: The Malay Muslim Case", *Comparative Politics*, 7(2): 1975, p. 196-197.

complaints and grievances lodged by the people. Within the elite circle one can see that there emerged the two orientations regarding the future development of the Malay-Muslim political existence. One group would look down to the south, another look up to the north.<sup>45</sup> But who would be able to make or even know one's own history.

### **The Coup of 1947 and the End of “Islamic Patronage”**

The final stroke of event that turned the table around was the military coup on November 8, 1947. In retrospect, I think this coup was the most critical of all in terms of the changes and aftermath of the history to come. Two factors of internal and external that had much to determine the weigh and direction of politics after the coup. One was the mysterious death from gun shots of the young King Ananda Mahidol in June 1946, which, unfortunately led to the resignation of Pridi Phanomyong from premiership, and entered a period of the return of royalist-conservative-reactionary politicians and officials to the helm of the state. The other was the postwar economic difficulties and the rise of nationalist-independence movements in the region. The Coup Group, Khana Patiwat [Revolutionary Party], consisted of a retired Army commander and a group of young key commanders, seized power from Thamrong-Pridi government, which had dominated government and politics since the end of World War II. With Phibul and army fell from power and no other opposition political leaders in sight, the strike of the coup was a big surprise to all. In the wee-hour of the Coup, the Coup Group had to beg and finally blackmail him to accept the leadership of the Group. Unable to head as Prime Minister of the military-controlled government because of his war crime record and strong objection from the British and

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<sup>45</sup> This observation was from comments by Paul Hutcroft.



US, Khuang Aphaiwong was invited to head the interim government. But the sign on the sky was obvious that Phibul was returning. The question was when. The shift at the center of the Bangkok power sent dangerous warning to the Patani Muslims. This about-turn event explains why Haji Sulong and other Muslim leaders urgently requested that Tengku Mahyiddin in Kelantan to head a Patani resistance movement and sent out appeals for support to the outside world.

As they were pressing their seven-point demand, the government was still under Khuang Aphaiwong from the Democrat Party. The response from Khuang government was more abysmal than Thamrong's. At one point, Khuang replied as to the demand of the Malay Muslims that he was too busy with many other government businesses. Besides, said Khuang, the problems with the Malay Muslims had been there for so long, so give him a few more time to settle was still not too late. Likely that by late 1947, Haji Sulong and his followers might realize that the hopeful dialogues with the government had come to an end. The only available weapon was the act of non-cooperation with the government which, by then, had "transformed into a political strategy with a religious overtone."<sup>46</sup> Haji Sulong and his movement planned to boycott the coming general election in January 1948 in their provinces.

The last incident in December 1947, which set the tone for the coming intensified conflict between the Malay Muslims in Patani and the government, was the murder of a Thai police officer by bandits near a village named Kampong Belukar Samok, Pattani Province. A group of police force sent out to the village, arresting Malay youths and torturing them to find out who among them was the murderer. The police charged them with supplying provisions and assistance to bandits. Later police forces came and "burned the village because it was charged that the residents of the

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<sup>46</sup> Surin Pitsuwan, *Islam and Malay Nationalism*...,p. 159.

village were befriending the bandits. With this fire twenty-five Malay families were made homeless.”<sup>47</sup>

### **The Beginning of an End**

By late 1947, the new minister of Interior under Khuang government, also a retired army general, Luang Sinadyotharak, was very worried about disturbances and unrest in the Muslim south. In a defensive mood of the illegitimate government, he opted for a drastic measure to quell disorder and restore “peace and order” to the region. He therefore replaced the governor of Pattani and chose Phraya Ratanapakdi, whom he trusted would be able to nab at the root cause of the Muslim problem since he had governed Pattani before. Phraya Ratanapakdi, as mentioned earlier, was the last governor of Pattani under the absolute monarchy and was deposed by the People’s Party government in 1934. He then was a retired official, hoping to run for Parliament seat but could not get support from Haji Sulong in Patani. In a way they were both acquaintances and foes. Once he set foot back in Pattani, Phraya Ratanapakdi gathered all reports about Haji Sulong and his activities and submitted them to the Interior minister for decisive moves.

Believing that they were able to root out the problem once for all, the Khuang government (not Phibul’s as generally put) authorized the arrest of Haji Sulong. On 16 January 1948 Haji Sulong and his associates were arrested and charged with treason. As expected, the arrest touched off simmering discontents and protests in the region and the flames were rapidly fanned by the Malay politicians across the border. Little less than a month after the arrest of Haji Sulong, the Pattani provincial attorney requested the court to move the case to be trial at Nakhon Si Thammarat provincial

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<sup>47</sup> Ibrahim Syukri, *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*, p. 87.

court. The reason was the defendants in this serious case had a well-planned movement and a large number of followers. The provincial officials were alarmed when they brought Haji Sulong and followers to the court, requesting the extension of the accused during police investigation of the case. The huge crowd of Muslim people gathered at the court. It was clear that the arrest of Haji Sulong had hurt the Muslim feelings very much, so that the officials said they were fearful of possible unrest during the trial of Haji Sulong, which might disrupt the peace and order of the court.

Late in February, a popular rising took place in several districts of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. Violence clashes with police and security forces occurred all over the four provinces with hundreds killed and thousands migrating to Malaya. While the situation in the South deteriorated, Phibul finally replaced Khuang and became Prime Minister on April 8, 1948.

On April 26, riot and clashes between the Muslim villagers and the police and military forces took place at Duson Nyor in Ra-ngae district, Narathiwat. The government version of the story held that the still confusing “Duson Nyor Revolt” was led by a religious leader, Haji Abdul Rahman, and joined by some leaders who had fled from the village Kampong Belukar Samok. The crowd first attacked the police station. Here was the report in the *Straits times* of Singapore, on April 29, 1948

### **Revolt in South Siam—Police Attacked**

The long-threatened crisis in the four southern provinces has finally exploded, with a revolt in Narathiwat. Reports from police to Bangkok stated that 1000

Siamese-Muslims attacked a Siam police force situated near the Kelantan border and are reported to have capture a police station.

Fighting was still in progress while dispatch sent. Owing to the rebels numerical and arms superiority, the police were unable to resist and reinforcements were sent from Bangkok and other southern provinces.

### **Peace Move**

Siamese naval vessels on a training cruise in the vicinity were also ordered to stand by in response to an appeal from the provincial Commissioner.

An emergency cabinet meeting was called by the Premier (Field Marshal Phibun) upon receipt of the news and he decided to "pacify" the situation in order to avoid bloodshed.

In consequence, the Government dispatched a mission, comprising a Minister and Assembly man, Inche Abdullah Wangputeh, himself a Siamese Malay; Col. Phao Siyanon, and other high officials in a special aeroplane to negotiate.

The Defense Ministry also sent high army officers to observe the situation and if the talks fail, they may enforce martial law and employ the Siamese Army stationed in the southern provinces to quell the revolt.

### **Two Policemen Killed**

The rising is believed to have been instigated by the Plukasamoh bandit gang.

Earlier a report from Kota Bharu said that two policemen were killed during a communal clash at Dusunnyior in the Tanjongmas district of South Siam.

At Tabal 30 Malays ransacked and set fire to a Siamese home, killing the owner.

An official of the Islamic Association was later arrested.”

The clashes with the police forces, which lasted two days, involved up to thousand men in an open battle during which 400 Malay Muslim peasants and 30 police men were killed.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, the Muslim version was that the police started shooting at the villagers during the ceremony of “oil bathing”. The villagers were organized and prepared to defend themselves against the raid by the Chinese Communist bandits from the border area.<sup>49</sup> The police were suspicious of their activities and gatherings so they attacked the villagers first. The truth of the Dusun Ynor Revolt is that, as mentioned at the beginning, there were many Malay Muslim histories as well as the differences and distinct personalities and ideas of the local leaders in different environments. Another was deep prejudices and fear on the part of Thai officials and government over the real motive of the Malay Muslim people. As seen from the police report, the Dusun Ynor villagers were armed with sten guns, carbines and grenades when in fact they only had knives, spears and whatever weapons they could find in the village. Furthermore the spontaneous uprising was not planned or part of the Haji Sulong Rebellion as narrated by the official discourse.<sup>50</sup> Of course, the first concession the Phibul government made on April 30 was to announce the release on bail of Haji Sulong.

Following the clashes and suppression, some 2,000-6,000 Malay Muslims fled to Malaya. Soon an estimated 250,000 Patani Muslims signed a petition requesting the United Nations to preside over the separation of the four Muslim provinces and to join with the newly formed Federation of Malaya. The Phibul government declared a

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<sup>48</sup> W.K. Che Man, *Muslim Separatism...* p. 67.

<sup>49</sup> According to Chin Peng, there were many Chinese bandits roaming around the borders, some were the ex-KMT soldiers but they were not members of the Communist Party of Malaya. Actually the CPM had to finally force these bandits out of the area. See his *My Side of History*, p. 109-11.

<sup>50</sup> For more detail discussion of the Dusun Ynor Revolt, please see a terrific argument by Chaiwat Satha-anan, “kwam ngiab khong anusawari lukpun” [The silence of the Bullet Monument: Dusun Ynor, Narathiwat, 1948], in *Silapawattanatham* [Art and Culture], Vol 25 No. 9 (July 2004).

state of emergency in the Muslim provinces and sent three regiments of special police to Narathiwat, declaring that the task was to combat against "the Communists".<sup>51</sup>

Undoubtedly, the Patani issue attracted international attention, including from the Asia Relations Organization, the Arab League and the United Nations. Calls for support were also made to Muslim countries, such as the states of the Arab League, Indonesia, and Pakistan. It received support from Malay groups in Thailand as well as from the Malay Nationalist Party in Malaya. The situation was tense. Guerrilla operations began to move across the border from inside Malaya into southern Thailand. Religious leaders on both sides of the border were calling for a Jihad (holy war) against the Thai authorities.

Interesting to note that when the Pattani provincial attorney brought the case against Haji Sulong and three other accomplices to court, the prosecutor stated in the written official document specified that Haji Sulong and his disciples were all "Thai" race and nationality. The charges prepared by the provincial attorney were "the preparation and movement attempting by the four defendants to change the royal traditional government of the kingdom over the four provinces, i.e., Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satul; to cause the injurious to the independence of the state; and to cause violent disruptions in the country by outside forces."<sup>52</sup>

In a detailed description of the seditious acts of Haji Sulong and followers, the Thai state told us that in August 1947 Haji Sulong had gathered a meeting of about 100 Islamic people at Masjid Baan Prike. After instructing them to learn religious matters, he then "spoke in conceit to the audience insidiously arousing rebellious feelings among the people to the point of almost creating unrest in the kingdom." His

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<sup>51</sup> *Singapore Free Press*, 28 July 1948, quoted in W.K. Che Man, *Muslim Separatism...*p. 67.

<sup>52</sup> The Pattani Provincial Court, Criminal case no. 25/2491, the Pattani Provincial attorney v Haji Sulong and co., 6 February 1948, reprinted in Phraya Ratanaphakdi, *Prawat Muang Pattani* [History of Pattani] (Bangkok, 1966), p. 75-78.

vile speeches caused humiliation upon the Government and the royal bureaucracy among the populace. The things that Haji Sulong said to the Muslim audience that created uproar among them were his rallying statements that they should always remember and love their Malay race. He also defamed the Thai government by stating that "for the past 40 years the Thai government had governed over the four provinces but had done nothing to better the places, for example, the schools here were still like chicken pens, which were contemptuous to other people." But the most serious political accusation was that Haji Sulong had persuaded people there to lodge their complaints in Pattani province asking to have self-government. If the government complied, they would invite Tunku Mahmood Mahyiddin, the son of Tunku Abdul Kadir, the raja of Patani, who resided in Kelantan, to preside as the leader of the four provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satul. He then would implement Islamic law in order to liquidate all evil things and bring progress to the hometowns. In the end, if the government would not yield to their demands of self-government, Haji Sulong would incite the Malay population in the four provinces to make their complaints heard until they succeeded.

The other piece of illegal evidence against the national independence of the Thai state was the printed-letter in Malay language dated 5 January 1948, inviting Tengku Mahiyiddin to be the leader of the Malay Muslims in order to push toward the demand for political autonomy. The letter stated that, "We, the Islam Malays under the reign of Siam, beg to inform you that we cannot bear any more injustice, hardship, oppression and the loss of all personal liberty that has been imposed on us by the officials and Siamese government." Although they had several times begged the government to give them their "rights and privileges as human beings", but in return the government gave nothing not even a reply. Thus, "we give you herewith, full

powers and rights to do anything possible and proper to satisfy our requests, so that we may live as any other human beings in this world having personal liberty, regaining our Malay racehood and our Islam religion. With these aims and wants we, individually, or our own accord and pleasure, put hereunder our signature and/or thumb prints.....to appoint you as an above mentioned representative.”<sup>53</sup>

To the eyes of the Thai state, this letter caused abhorrence of the Thai government and officials among the public and caused defiant acts among the people which might lead to unrest in the kingdom.

Although the seven-point demands were regarded as the most vital evidence of the separatist plan of the Patani Malay Movement led by Haji Sulong, the court found no legal ground to prosecute Haji Sulong as charged by the Pattani provincial attorney. Particularly were the first demand, which stated that the highest ruler of the four Muslim provinces should be a Malay Muslim and another demand that the courts in the area should be separated between Islamic and government's civil courts. Apparently these seven-point demands were submitted to the Thamrong government before the November 1947 Coup and the government had yet to redress all of the demands, but simply reduced some of the weight from these problems. Seen from this light, it would be very awkward for the state prosecutor to sue Haji Sulong on the demands that had been legally accepted by the previous government.

Finally the provincial court found Haji Sulong guilty of making public the letter to Tunku Mahyiddin which had defamed and humiliated the Thai government and its officials. Here is the interesting point how the court translated that offense into a verdict of justice. It stated that the said wrongdoing was amounted to "an offense of sedition within the kingdom according to Criminal Law clause 104." Haji

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<sup>53</sup> From Mahyiddin to B.W. Jones, January 27, 1948 cited in Surin Pitsuwan, *Islam and Malay Nationalism*, p. 158.



Sulong and other associates therefore were sentenced to three years of imprisonment. The prosecutor appealed the case arguing for a more severe punishment of Haji Sulong, citing evidences of making a separatist movement by means of rebellion, though with no clear armed forces. The language and elaboration of the public prosecutor this time produced a strong accusation and perception of the ultimate desire of the Malay Muslims to separate the land and join with the newly formed Federation of Malaya. The Appeal Court concurred mostly with the charges especially the defame letter and seditious acts of Haji Sulong. The new sentence thus increased the jail term to seven years but the useful investigation and trial provided by the defendant, the court therefore in kindness reduced the sentence to four years and eight months. The Dika or Supreme Court also confirmed the same sentence.

The arrest and prosecution of Haji Sulong could also be seen as a result of the power struggle between the Pridi-Thamrong faction and the Phibul faction. Pridi Phanomyong group dominated national politics and government during and after the World War II. His political bases came largely from the Free Thai Movement with its members fairly widespread all over the country, in particular in the northeast. The Muslim south was also drawn to Pridi's group with the implementation of the Islamic Patronage Act in 1945 and the reappointment of the Chula rajmontri, the highest spiritual leader of all Muslims in Thailand. Phibul's power bases, however, were consisted of the military and royalist politicians and senior government officials. It is revealing to note that all prominent political leaders and politicians of the northeast and south were also massacred by Phao's police force in the 1950s. They were accused with no court trial to be plotting or working in the separatist movements against the sovereignty of the Thai State.

Haji Sulong was jailed for four years and six months before he was released in 1952. Haji Sulong returned to Pattani, which had been rife with anger and resentment against the government. Then in 1954 he mysteriously disappeared from the region after reporting to the Special Branch Police office in Songkhla province. Popular belief held that he and others, including his eldest son, Wan Muhammad, had been "killed by Thai police under General Phao Siyanond, then Director-General of the Police Department, on the night of 13 August 1954. They said to have been tied to heavy stones and drowned in the sea behind the Nu Island."<sup>54</sup>

## Conclusion

The paper attempts to clarify and declassified the myth(istory) that has been constructed around the political concept of "separatism" in the Muslim south. The official narrative is centered on the conflict and problems between the Malay Muslims in the "four southernmost provinces" and the Thai government especially in the 1940s, which culminated in the famous "Haji Sulong and Dusun Ynor Rebellions." In the first case the word "rebellion" was given by the Thai authorities, not used or chosen by the Malay Muslim themselves in their political movements. Instead they called the Dusun Ynor uprising and clashes as "Perang Tok Perak Dusun Nyor"[Tok Perak's war at Dusun Nyor] or "kebangkitan Dusun Ynor" [the uprising of Dusun

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<sup>54</sup> *Suara Siswa* No. 2 (December 1970) and *The Bangkok Tribune*, 11 January 1958, quoted in Nantawan Haemindra, "The Problem of the Thai-Muslims in the Four Southern Provinces of Thailand (Part Two), *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 8 No. 1(1977), p. 85. The presumed death of Haji Sulong by "dark forces" was circulated in many variants. One version said General Phao Sriyanond, the Police Chief secretly ordered the arrest and subsequently Haji Sulong "was chained to stones and flung into the sea." See Panomporn Anurugsa, "Political integration policy in Thailand: The case of the Malay Muslim Minority," *Ph.D Dissertation*, University of Texas at Austin, 1984, p. 141. The author bases her fact on "interview with the top official of the National Security Council, Bangkok, Thailand on June 29, 1982. The latest version from Jaran Maluleem, a Muslim lecturer in Thammasat University and advisor to Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatt, who said that Haji Sulong's body was dropped down from an airplane into the lake. He presumably was already dead before. See, *Matichon Daily*, 16 March 2004.

Ynor].<sup>55</sup> It was not a rebellion, it was a war. For the Thai state the image of Pattani that readily came to people's mind was one of the subjugated subject but a defiant one with a long history of rebels and resistance to Bangkok rule.

In retrospect the paper shows the attempts and willingness of the Muslim leaders to form some kind of dialogue and negotiation with the Thai government over issues of conflicts and disagreements. In the 1940s their movements and expressions were mostly reactions of the Malay Muslims and their leaders in response to the government handling of the oppressive conditions and on-going negotiations between both sides. Two things regarding the Muslim community which Thai authorities could not well understand and yet were cited as evidences of protest and defiant behavior. One was the nature of the Muslim community that had a well organized and structured of collective actions compared to the Thai community. Friday prayers and big gathering at the masjid together with eloquent speakers/preachers at times touched on topic of politics and the like alarmed local Thai officials who actually were a minority in the area. Another was the nature and character of Islam which does not separate religion from politics. The Appeal Court in its verdict on sedition charges of Haji Sulong, explained his role as a religious and political leaders by citing the fact that Haji Sulong was a famous Haji having many disciples and followers. Furthermore "Islam was a religion that did not specifically practice only religious affairs but also had covert political intentions with it too."<sup>56</sup>

Scholars have been explaining the causes of conflict between ethnic minority and the state based upon their opposite beliefs and practices. In reality as in the history of the Haji Sulong and Dusun Ynor Rebellions, the problems of ethno-

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<sup>55</sup> Chaiwat Satha-anan, "kwam ngiab khong anusawari lukpun: Dusun Ynor-Narathiwat, 2491"[The silence of a bullet monument: Dusun Ynor-Narathiwat, 1948], *Silpawattthanatham*, Vol. 25 No. 9 (July 2004), p. 137.

<sup>56</sup> The Appeal Court Verdic on Haji Sulong's case, 7 June 1950, in Phraya Ratanaphakdi, *Prawat Muang Pattani*, p. 124.

religious conflicts were subordinated to the influence and impact of national political development and international, in this case, colonial powers, pressures. Such was the deepening of the Thai authorities' attitudes and treatment of the Malay Muslims' demand into a challenge and threat to the Thai nation-state. Timing was with the Thai state and the military-led government. Britain denounced the Patani Muslim demands for irredentism with Malaya and, in November 1948, raided GAMPAR's office in Singapore.<sup>57</sup> For the British, Thai rice was more important than supporting the Muslim separatism. For the US, after the Truman Doctrine was out, Phibul, a former enemy, became the close ally in the fight against Communism in Asia. Thus was the end of peaceful communicating between the Malay Muslims in the south and the Thai government. Afterwards the new discourse on "separatism" as a label of opponents and enemies working to devastate the Thai sovereignty and peaceful order of the society ensued. In perspective it is pertinent to point out that the Thai state, in the 1950s, had liquidated its political opposition throughout the nation, not only in the Muslim south but also in the Lao northeast too.

For Muslim nationalist and religious leaders, their goal of a struggle had to move up to a higher sense of Islamic consciousness and also move back to a history of Patani in the pre-Siamese times.

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<sup>57</sup> Astri Suhrke, "Irredentism Contained: The Malay Muslim Case", *Comparative Politics*, 7(2): 1975, p. 197.