What is it like to be Muslim in Thailand?

A case study of Thailand through

Muslim professionals' perspectives

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Abstract

This dissertation expands the body of research available on the Muslim minority in Thailand, particularly in regard to conflicts in the Lower South. Working within the framework of moderate multiculturalism and secularism, the dissertation seeks to understand how Muslim professionals see the relationship between Islamic representative bodies and the Thai state, the roles of Islamic institutions and their religious conduct in relation to wider Thai society. The fieldwork conducted in 2008 and 2009 shows similarities and differences between Muslim professionals inside and outside of the Lower South in relation to these issues. In general, Muslim professionals support national integration and multiculturalism. In the Lower South in particular, they support national integration on the condition that it supports Muslim identity. Most interviewees believe that Islamic representative bodies play integrative roles. However, this is not seen as beneficial to the Muslim community and improvements are widely desired. Where the government and the representative bodies have not been able to resolve the unrest in the Lower South, local civil society organizations have taken an active peace-making role, with the aim of promoting Muslim identity under the Thai Constitution. This dissertation also examines attitudes to mosques and Islamic education through interviewees' perspectives. The research shows that Muslim professionals expect mosques to perform a community-based role. More specifically, interviewees in the Lower South suggested cooperation between local administrative organizations and mosque committees, whereas those based elsewhere in Thailand recommended that mosques should provide social services inclusive to non-Muslim society. On Islamic education, most wished to see improvements. Some interviewees, mainly outside the Lower South, shared the government's view regarding connections between the unrest in the southernmost provinces and traditional and private Islamic schools, in consideration of which they believed that the government itself should take the leading role in providing Islamic education. On the other hand, interviewees in the Lower South mainly took the view that Islamic school development is obstructed by the unrest which the government has not been able to resolve.. Therefore, their suggestions involved improving secular curricula and introducing more meaningful and integrative religious teachings, aimed at academic excellence.

The research further shows that the religious conduct of Muslim professionals and their perspectives on it are significantly connected to their social environment. While Muslim interviewees both inside and outside the Lower South do not limit themselves to consuming halal-signed food only, those living outside the Lower South, where Muslims are a minority,

showed a greater willingness to compromise in relation to eating and drinking. Most women professionals outside the Lower South do not wear hijabs for justifiable reasons, while virtually all women in the Lower South do. Although most interviewees marry within the Muslim community, in principle they also accept inter-religious marriage. Marriage between Muslims from different sects is viewed as more controversial, although this conviction is held less strongly outside the Lower South. Overall, the interviewees are committed to preserving their Muslim identity, but with less strict trends outside the Lower South. This might well reflect moderate multiculturalism and secularism in Thailand where the identity of religious minorities and the majority Buddhist population are subject to negotiation.

List of Contents

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 <u>The significance of this study</u>

This study seeks to expand on existing knowledge of Thai Muslims by focusing on a specific cross-section of that group, namely professionals, in different regions of the country. This approach is partly intended as a response to existing literature which tends to focus on Muslims living in Thailand's "Lower South" at the expense of those living elsewhere. In contrast, this study tries to cover a much broader swathe of the Thai Muslim population than has often been attempted. Additionally, this study seeks to give a strong sociological perspective which is frequently lacking in the existing literature by examining Thai Muslim professionals as a discrete socio-economic group. By following this course, it is hoped that this study can add not only to current understanding of Thai Muslims, but also of minority Muslim populations living in other countries.

Although most Anglophone books concerning Muslims in Thailand are biased towards those in the Lower South,[1] there are two notable exceptions: *The Muslims of Thailand* by Michel Gilquin (2005) and *Mapping Thai Muslims: community dynamics and change on the Andaman Coast* by Wanni Wibulswasdi Anderson (2010)**.** However, as will be discussed below, these two books offer very different perspectives. The former includes studying Muslims throughout Thailand while the latter engages in Muslims in a coastal village.

First, Gilquin's *The Muslims of Thailand* offers a potentially misleading portrait of Thai Muslims by suggesting that those in the south are less well integrated with the Thai state than those in other regions. However, the reality might be far more complicated, and this dissertation is aimed to indicate diversity of Muslims even within a particular region. In contrast, *Mapping Thai Muslims* offers a more unorthodox approach to Thai Muslims by focusing on a coastal village of Andaman Sea. Anderson's anthropological fieldwork shows changing trends in socio-economic and ethnic identities in the area which have not been exclusively linked to Malay or Thai nationalism. Accordingly, on the one hand we can see that Gilquin's study reproduces established stereotypes of Thai Muslims in the south and other regions, while on the other hand Anderson's study, even though it contributes a wealth

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[1] For example, see Duncan McCargo, *Tearing Apart the Land* (2008) and Thanet Aphornsuvan, *History and Politics of the Muslims in Thailand* (2003); there is also a range of literature reflecting this trend in terrorism studies such as Zachary Abuza's *A Conspiracy of Silence* (2009).

of sociological information, is constructed on too limited a scale to provide an overall picture of the experience of Muslims in Thailand. In response, this dissertation attempts to bridge this gap in two ways: first, by investigating a diverse cross-section of Thailand's Muslim population; and second, by providing an in depth study of the relationship between Thai Muslims and the Thai state and society.

Alongside Anderson's study, there is a considerable amount of anthropological literature on Muslims in Thailand (Forbes 1988). However, this literature tends to shed light on cultural and historical aspects of specific Muslim groups in different parts of Thailand without properly addressing the relationship between Thai Muslims and the Thai state and society. Nevertheless, there are some important exceptions to this tendency: in particular, Suthep Soonthornpasuch's book, *Muslims in Chiang Mai* (1977). This work pioneered the sociological study of Muslims in Thailand by offering an ethnographic survey of how Muslims in the province of Chiang Mai interact with the state and society while maintaining a Muslim identity.

A more recent publication, *Thai South and Malay North* (Montesano and Jory 2008), includes essays concerning the relationships the Thai state and the population of Southern Thailand, as well as among different ethnic nationals: Chinese, Thai and Sam-Sam. Each essay provides significant insights on a particular topic such as the effects of local elections on integration with the Thai state (Ockey 2008), the experiences of certain groups such as the Sam-Sams in Satun (Suwannathat-Pian 2008), or the influence of Chinese-sponsored education in Trang province (Montesano 2008). However, taken as a whole they still only provide a disjointed understanding of Muslims in Thailand and also focus exclusively on those living in the Deep and, to a lesser extent, Middle South. Thus, taken as a whole they provide only a limited understanding of the relationship between Thai Muslims and the Thai state and wider society. Moreover, most of the analysis in this book is based on the authors' judgements rather than empirical research: some judgements are clearly derived from an "outsider's" view while others are obscure. In contrast, this study makes extensive use of ethnographic research to fill such gaps.

It is an important contention of this study that public policy decisions in Thailand should be informed by sociological studies of Muslim minorities in the country as is often the case in Western Europe. Britain and France, in particular, have sought to find appropriate models for

accommodating Muslim minorities alongside their "white" majority populations.[2] Debates on multiculturalism and secularism are raised even in countries viewed as multicultural like Britain. In theory, multicultural states aim to operate on a value-free basis that allows cultural minorities to thrive without sacrificing their identities. Yet in practice this is difficult to achieve because every state has its own dominant identity. Thus, the relationship between Muslim and national identity remains problematic in some countries, such as France or Britain (Bowen 2010, Modood 2007). Thailand is one of the countries where the dominant culture is not Islamic. Studying the Muslim minority in Thailand can contribute to the development of policies which seek to integrate Muslim citizens effectively.

From a Muslim perspective, if Muslims in non-Muslim countries are hindered from worshiping their God, they might respond either by *hijrah* [migration or withdrawal] or *jihad* ["to strive", "exert" or "fight"] (Kettani 1979, 242 in Voll 1985, 334). The use of *jihad* above, in the current cultural climate, inexorably evokes questions of violence or extremism since this is how it is usually represented in the Western media. Satha-Anand, a Thai academic who is Muslim, has stressed that although some instances of violence can be linked to *jihad*, they tend to reflect particular contexts. Moreover, he states that if the violence is the result of injustice, it is the 'perceived' injustice, rather than the 'real' one, that causes it (Satha-Anand 2005). Since the perceived injustice, which is individually varying, affects national integration rather than the actual injustice, the relationship between Muslim minorities and non-Muslim states in which they live can be perceived differently. Therefore, they are complex and should not be presented as intrinsically insular or monolithic. Furthermore, non-Muslim states do not constitute monolithic entities, whether or not Muslims are present.

Bearing all this in mind, this dissertation focuses on how Muslim professionals relate themselves to the Thai state and society. It is important to emphasize that the religious aspect of the minority status of Thai Muslims is the chief concern here. This makes Muslim professionals particularly relevant to this study for the reason that they do not generally suffer from the kind of socio-economic inferiority often associated with minority groups. Accordingly, this study is conducted around three themes which are also standard for studies on similar topics in Western Europe: national identity, multiculturalism, and secularism.

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2 Tariq Modood, in *Multiculturalism* (2007), argues that Muslims are categorised as non-whites (ethnic minorities), p.4. Tariq Modood (2007) forefronts such topics in the UK, John Bowen (2010) in case of France.

Within these themes, attitudes towards the multiple roles of Muslims are examined further, covering in particular: a) the leadership of the Muslim community in Thailand at a national level; b) the establishment and running of Islamic institutions; and c) Life and individual Islamic conduct. Key operational questions around these themes are:

1) How do Muslim professionals see the relationships between the heads/representatives of the Muslim community in Thailand and the Thai state? Do they see the roles played by these heads/representatives as liberating or integrating?

2) How do Muslim professionals see the roles of Islamic institutions, namely mosques and Islamic education, within the Thai environment? Are the roles played by these institutions inclusive with or exclusive from the Thai state and society?

3) How does the religious conduct of Muslim professionals relate to wider society and what is its significance for them: *e.g.* eating *halal* food, wearing *hijabs* and selecting spouses?

1.2 Key themes underlying this study: identity, multiculturalism and secularism

The following sections introduce and discuss current trends and debates within the literature on identity, multiculturalism and secularism in Thailand, and also provide a guide to where particular issues arise in subsequent chapters. Possible answers to the operational questions mentioned above will be proposed over the course of these discussions.

1.2.1 Thai identity and minorities

This section serves to introduce the variety of ways in which the term, 'national identity', is perceived and thus how it is used it in this dissertation. It includes different approaches to national identity. Specifically as regards the Thai case, this section highlights the various elements that are frequently put forward as constituents of Thai identity. Particular kinds of Thai identity, emerging in different periods, are addressed in order to draw attention to its changing nature. Lastly, academic debates concerning the construction of elements of Thai identity are introduced in preparation for moving on to more focused debates about identity among Muslim minorities in Thailand.

National identity is frequently conceptualized in one of three ways, namely the primordial, instrumental or constructive, each of which has distinct implications. The first two involve

positing and building up an essential concept of unity: that is, primordial nationalists believe that a nation is unified by people who belong to the same ethnic group whereas instrumental nationalists create a distinct identity in order to form a sense of belonging that can unify people within given territories. In contrast, constructivists take the view that a nation and its national identity evolve from processes which shape memories in relation to the nation. This suggests that identity is not fixed, but constantly evolving, and therefore never complete. Moreover, since the constructivist approach views identity as having evolved from memories (Anderson 1991, 205), it can explain why people in the same society or nation have different kinds of identity (Thananithichot 2011, 251-254). Anthony Smith has recently attempted to tone down the relativism of the constructivist approach. Even though he agrees that national identity evolves from the imaginations of the people who fall within any given nation, he stresses that imagined identity itself becomes essentialised as it develops into a sense of national identity (Smith 2011, 248-9).[3] He also suggests that the sense of national identity should be studied in terms of the members of national communities (Smith 2011, 231). Using the constructivist approach, I view Thai identity as a flexible entity which includes certain elements which can be or have been essentialised.

The elements of Thai identity have been subject to change, according to the nationalist leaders in various eras. Suwannathat-Pian has noted that during the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910), the Minister of the Interior at that time, Prince Damrong Rachanuphab, identified a Thai national as someone with "a love for the nation's sovereignty, fairness and ability to compromise different interests for the good of the nation" (Suwannathat-Pian 2008, 162). Yet by the reign of King Rama VI (1910-1925), Thai identity was being promoted with the motto, "nation, Buddhism and kingship". Winichakul has pointed out that the king emphasized kingship as the most important of these three pillars (Winichakul 1988, 4). Meanwhile, 'the nation' meant Siam with ethnic Thais as its dominant subjects, and Buddhism, lastly, as their religion (Suwannathat-Pian 2008, 164; Aphornsuwan 2003; Winichakul 1988). During this period, Chinese identity was not accepted among the political elites or bureaucrats even though the king himself was partly of Chinese descent (Winichakul 1988, Sivaraksa 2002).

Following the end of the period of absolutist monarchy in 1932, some aspects of western culture, such as music drama and literature, were promoted while certain traditional Thai

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[3] Benedict Anderson leads the studies of nationalism in the constructivist camp. His book, *Imagined Communities* (1991), is widely cited.

cultures were forbidden. Field Marshal Phibunsongkram (1938-1944 and 1948-1957) appointed an Italian sculptor known as Silpa Bhirasri and Corrado Feroci as the head of the Fine Arts Department (Reynolds 2002, 10). In 1941, the eleventh Cultural Mandate encouraged Thai citizens to attend art exhibitions, while, at the same time, chewing betel nuts was prohibited. From a critical viewpoint therefore, the state identity did not much represent that of Thai nationals, regardless of whether they came from the Thai Buddhist majority or any one of the various minorities (Suwannathat-Pian 2008, 165).

Craig Reynolds has noted that during the 1960s, ideas of Thai identity became more inwardly focused. Cultural magazines published under the auspices of the state promoted and celebrated local aspects of Thai national culture such as local food, folk traditions, Thai martial arts, national holidays and regional languages. However, it was very rare for articles on Muslim culture in the south to appear in these magazines (Reynolds 2002, 13). In 1981, an official cultural magazine identified six components to Thai identity: territory, people, independence, administration, culture and pride. Soon afterwards, it added two further aspects to its list, namely religion and monarchy and later still in 1983, condensed the list into four components: nation, religion, monarchy and culture (Reynolds 2002, 17). In the late-1980s, the Thai state announced that Thailand was to be granted NIC (New Industrialised Countries) status, and thus promoted a work culture (Reynolds 2002, 16).

Overall, the literature reviewed above demonstrates the flexibility and changing nature of Thai identity. However, there are some elements on which the concept of Thai identity has consistently been developed: for example, nation, religion and monarchy. A recent article on Thai nationalism has laid notable stress on these three concepts (Thananithichot 2011). Nonetheless, Thai nationalism and identity have been constructed and changed over time depending on the society shaping them. Even the dominant elements of Thai identity have been affected, as will be discussed below. However, with the suggestion of Anthony Smith in mind, I examine the sense of belonging (to the 'nation') of Muslim professionals.

Nation

The nation is clearly the primary 'social fact' which has been constantly adapted and positioned as an element of Thai identity over the past seven centuries. However, at what level we should start to examine the Thai nation is debatable. Although Thailand has held the current territories demarcated on the world map since just after WWII, in order to properly

understand the Thai nation it is necessary to study it in the contexts prior to and after that period since they reveal both continuity and change.

Thailand is usually viewed as a one-nation state, but it currently is and was also previously a plural society. Academic studies even now cannot agree upon a single root of the current Thai people.[4] However, there is a widespread consensus that Siam (that is Thailand pre-1939) was a plural society (Wallipodom 2011). People from different ethnic groups have been able to join the ruling class. There were several influential foreign officials in the court of Ayutthaya (the capital city of Thailand or Siam), especially from 1600 onwards. Westerners, such as Constantine Phaulkon, were prominent around the period 1656-88. Later, the so-called Moors (a Dutch term for South Asian or Persian foreigners, arguably Muslims) briefly became influential in royal trade in the years 1688-90, and from 1700 onwards the Chinese gained significant powers in the finance ministry and foreign commerce (Na-pombejra 1993, 257-260). In their book, *The Roles of Muslims from the End of the Ayutthaya Period to the Thonburi Period 1757-1782,* Kanjanomai and Kapilkarn (1978) points out that Muslims (Persians in particular) held high ranking positions in the military, civil service and diplomatic circles. Many current Thai cultures originated from integration with Muslim culture during that period (Kanjanomai and Kapilkarn 1978). Academics interested in Thai studies generally agree on the plurality of Siam throughout the Sukhothai (1300s-1438), Ayutthaya (1438-1767)[5] and Thonburi (1767-1782) kingdoms. Expansions and contractions in the borders of Siam and later Thailand have meant that the Thai nation has hosted different cultures at different times in its history (Winichakul 1988). Furthermore, immigration into cities within the borders of these kingdoms has led to their becoming socially diverse. Ethnic minorities, including both immigrants and people whose ancestral homes fell within the territories of Siam or Thailand, adopted aspects of the dominant local culture as well as each others' minority cultures (Keyes 1989, 18-20). Therefore, Thai culture has inevitably developed from the interplay between the cultures of the different groups of people who have at different times lived within the borders of Siam and Thailand.

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4 A major Thai school book written by Thongbai Tangnoi which is used widely states that Thai or Tai people migrated from Altai mountains (in present-day China). However, more recently historians and archaeologists have come to believe that Thais did not come from any one geographical origin. Their cultural roots are diverse, and vary between localities, according to archaeological evidence. (See Surapol Natapin. 2007. Roots of Thai Ancestry: pre-historical cultural development. Matichon: Bangkok)

5 In John O'Kane's book , "The Ship of Sulaiman", the secretary of Persian embassy during 1666-1694 mentioned communities belonging to different ethnic groups maintained their culture and identity and that Siamese King allowed religious diversity.

Modern politics, however, has distorted, and sometimes manipulated, the plurality of the Thai nation, the collective identity of which is sometimes translated into, and often construed as, the one (and only) identity (Winichakul 1998). Of course, this problem is not specific just to Thailand: the making (and reinforcing) of national identity can be seen as a normal phenomenon in any state. Nation states frequently foster a sense of nationalism, the legitimacy of which is often based on a singular essential ethnicity. However, there tends to be an intrinsic diversity within any 'majority', and even within particular ethnic groups. For example, in India, Chetan Bhatt demonstrates the diversity of an otherwise seemingly homogenous Hindu nationalism (Bhatt 2004, 201-205). Likewise, Kumar's book, *The Making of English National Identity* (2003), also reveals the confusion at the heart of being English and/or British.

The climax of the nationalist process in Thailand came during the World War II under the leadership of Marshal Phibunsongkram (1938-1944 and 1948-1957). This process has been defined by Aphornsuvan (2003) as one of assimilation rather than integration. Quoting Ibrahim Syukri's work, Chaiwat Satha-Anand has discussed how Thai nationalism was actually imposed in the southern border provinces: in particular, he describes how the police tore up Malay attire and beat people, men and women, who wore it (Satha-Anand 2008, 161). Moreover, the Announcement, issue 10, made by the office of the Prime Minister in 1941 imposed a dress code on Thai citizens which included authorized uniforms consisting of either western clothing or traditional clothing worn "properly". The latter order could be interpreted in many ways since what counts as "traditional" or "properly" in any context is highly subjective. However, western-style attire was generally worn, and some western manners were also promoted: for instance, the wearing of hats and gloves was common and the kissing of one's wife in the morning was recommended. On the other hand, some Thai traditional practices, such as chewing betel nuts, were prohibited or looked down upon. Names denoting Chinese origins had to be changed (Sivaraksa 2002, 49-51). Efforts were made to eradicate Chinese education including, between 1939 and 1940, the closure of Chinese-sponsored schools in Trang even though they offered the standard school curriculum (Montesano 2008, 234). Sivaraksa has suggested that at that time, Phibunsongkram's enemies were the Chinese and the old nobility (Sivaraksa 2002, 50). Interestingly, his advisor on culture and Cultural Mandates, Luang Wichit, was Chinese-born (Barme' 1993, 40). Nevertheless, anti-Chinese policies were more central at this time than ever before (Keyes 1989, 204). Altogether, the government under the leadership of Field Marshal

Phibunsongkram launched 12 announcements on Thai-ism (later called Cultural Mandates) within four years, 1939-1942 (Satha-Anand 160, 202).

Specifically in regard to the Lower South, academics studying the effects of the Mandates believe that the third, ninth and tenth issues were the most disturbing for Malay-speaking citizens (Satha-Anand 160, 202). The third issue demanded that all Thai citizens be called Thai, regardless of any differences of race. The ninth, concerning language, compelled all Thai citizens to learn and adopt the Thai language as the national tongue, and also insisted that they be proud in using it. The tenth covered dress code, as mentioned earlier. Ibrahim Syukri, who has authored books on the ancient Patani, believes that Buddhism was declared the national religion as part of the policy of Thai-ism (Satha-Anand 2008, 161).[6] Indeed, even though Buddhism was not officially declared the national religion during this period, the 1943 National Culture Act did state that Thai citizens have a duty to uphold the honour of the nation and Buddhism (National Culture Act, 1943). Taking these issues into account, it would seem that the language, attire and faith of the Thai state as defined in the 1940s were not compatible with the culture and habits of Malay-speaking citizens.

According to some western academics such as Michael Connors, Thailand partly succeeds in making people into national citizens. However, the Thai state in this view tends towards hegemonically oppressing its citizens to see and act in particular ways (Connors 2007, 22). Employing the concept of "democrasubjection", Connors tends to see that Thai democratic hegemony's projects of subjecting people to institutional and ideological power is never-ending so that the subjected beings are never free (from the constituting of a national political imaginary and civic virtue). Connors states that while this concept no less revolves around practicing citizens, his study focuses on government and hegemony.

Therefore, this dissertation, Chapter 4, examines whether the "national" political imaginary and civic virtue conflict with those of Muslims, exploring from Muslim professionals' perspectives throughout the country.

Religion

Another thing that is consistently identified as a pillar of Thai identity is the Buddhist religion. The previous section briefly mentioned that the imposition of Buddhism as the

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6 His books such as *Hikayat De Pattani and Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani* are banned in Thailand and Malaysia as parts of them do not concord with official versions of history.

national religion in the Lower South during the 1940s caused regional dissent. Buddhism was also used later on, during the leadership of Field Marshal Sarit (1958-1963), as an instrument of Thai nationalism. In 1962, Sarit issued a law placing the Buddhist Sangha under closer governmental control, thereby co-opting it as a means of promoting nationalist goals (Keyes 1998, 77). However, no thorough study has yet been done of the extent or timescale over which policies such as this one have affected Thai nationals. Horstmann's book, *Multi-Religious Coexistence in Southern Thailand* (2011), shows that Muslim and Buddhist communities in the south have been living together co-operatively: for example, Buddhist monks have led environmental activities that have been joined by both Muslim and Buddhist villagers. Muslim and Buddhist villagers even share the idea of ancestral ceremonies. Despite the revitalization of Buddhism and Islam that has been taking place in Thailand since the 1970s, both Buddhist and Muslim villagers continue to creatively manage their religious differences. Horstmann has argued that this trend towards religious revival tends to bring unease about the coexistence of old and new practices *within* religious groups rather than *across* religions. This tendency, in turn, could be taken to indicate that the use made of Buddhism by Thai nationalists has not necessarily had a significant effect on Thai nationals.

Also significant in this regard is J. L. Taylor's book, *Forest Monks and the Nation State* (1993). In this work, Taylor shows how even though the Thai state intervened in religious matters among Buddhists during the 1960s, Buddhist monks and laypersons remained diverse and maintained their independence from the state. More recently, Jerryson has discussed the politicization of Buddhism in Thailand in his book, *Buddhist Fury* (2011). He argues that recently Buddhism has been politicized in a specific region, namely the Lower South, and also that Buddhist clerics in the area tend to support plurality (meaning living together with Muslims with mutual understanding) and to reject the polarization carelessly created by the state and media which often serves to aggravate the relationship between Buddhists and Muslims. The relationship between the Thai state and religion in Thai society will be discussed further in Chapter 2 and with specific reference to the Lower South in Chapter 4.

Monarchy

As noted above, according to nationalists the king is also an important part of Thai identity. The Kings of Thailand have been at the heart of the country's administrative infrastructure since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For this reason, the power of Thai kings could be viewed as having a direct impact on religious and ethnic minorities. However, the extent

to which the absolutism of the Thai monarchy affected minorities, for better or for worse, remains debatable. Although it is true that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Thai kings monopolized foreign trade and centralized military power, local elites still retained a significant degree of power. Indeed, Chai-Anand Samudavanija has stated that the kings tolerated regional identities during this period. Siam had tributary territories where were self-governing (Samudavanija 2002, 69). Therefore, responsibility for the suffering of ethnic minorities in remote territories between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries should not necessarily be ascribed to the Kings of Thailand or Siam. Moreover, the existence at this time of solid relationships between Thai kings and foreign ruling classes tends to imply that belonging to a different religion or culture was not in itself a reason for being treated as inferior. Chinese and Muslims acted as ministers of commerce throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Na Pombejra 1993, 257-260), and, moreover, Muslims in particular held leading military positions until the reign of the King Rama III (Chularatana 2008), as is discussed in Chapter 4. However, the tributary relationships could be complicated at times. If tributary states did not pay tribute, kings would use their authoritarian power to instil obedience into them. Aphornsuvan states that the tributary relationship between Patani (a Malay territory in Thailand's Far South) and the Ayutthaya Kingdom was fractious (Aphornsuvan 2003, 12-13).

In spite of Aphornsuwan's claim that the Thai-Patani relationship has been "rough" since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is still necessary to re-examine this view by looking at the treatment of different groups of indigenous people in the Patani region. King Rama V (1868-1910) seems to have been the first king able to generate a sense of national unity strong enough to have a significant impact on the bulk of Thailand's ethnically diverse population. For example, in 1902 he demanded the imposition of a single legal system which effectively prevented or limited local leaders from governing by way of traditional laws. However, the extent to which this ruling affected Thai citizens varied from region to region and between different groups. In the Lower South, in particular, a compromise was reached whereby Muslims in the area could continue to use Shariah law in cases of family and inheritance disputes. Even so, this compromise can be interpreted in different ways.

Aphornsuvan states that the Malay Muslims were suppressed because they were prevented from fully observing their religious laws (Aphornsuvan 2003, 15). However, when compared to other regions, only the Malay territories were given official permission to continue

observing some traditional laws, albeit in limited forms. In fact, it seems that the indigenous elite rather than the ordinary people were most affected by King Rama V's changes. For example, the governor appointed from Bangkok did not allow the Malay elites to punish people for not going to Friday prayers (Satha-Anand 2008, 90). Another important effect of these changes on indigenous elites was the potential for conflicts of interest to arise with Bangkok. For instance, referring to NikAnuarNik Mahmud, Satha-Anand has noted that the governor from Bangkok rearranged the taxation of opium and alcohol so that half of the revenues would go to Bangkok as opposed to the Malay elites as previously. It is noteworthy that in spite of these changes, some scholars claim that the relationship between Siam and certain Malay territories, such as Satun, actually improved during the reign of Rama V (Suwannathat-Pian 2008, 161).

In a similar vein, King Rama VI demanded that a national education curriculum be implemented on the principle that a single line of education should be provided to unify Thai nationals. This policy has been criticised for being assimilationist, which is to say its aim was to dissolve other cultures such as Chinese or Malay into the dominant culture of Thainess (Winichakul 1988, Aphornsuvan 2003). However, there is evidence that this policy of integration was somewhat flexible. For example, in Trang Province in the Mid-South, a Chinese-sponsored school was established between 1919-1920 which taught the standard Thai elementary curriculum with Chinese as an elective subject (Montesano 2008, 233). In Malay-speaking communities, there were strong protests against this policy during 1910-1911 and in 1922 (Aphornsuwan 2003, 17; Suwannathat-Pian 2008, 162). Afterwards, however, the king relaxed policies concerning compulsory education, bureaucratic change and taxation in favour of Malay-speaking citizens, although this may have been in response to British intervention (Aphornsuwan 2003, 17).[7] In any case, these changes suggest that policies imposed on the king's command were to some extent negotiable.

Despite Rama IV's involvement in the development of a national education curriculum for Thailand, the extent to which he defended Thai identity is debatable. Since he was English-educated, Rama VI translated a number of Shakespeare's plays and Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories into Thai (Sivaraksa 2002). Moreover, even though he was opposed to Chinese identity in Thailand's bureaucracy, he allowed Chinese commoners to translate

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7 At that time Britain colonized the other Malayan states neighbouring those of the Lower South of Siam.

Chinese literature into Thai (Keyes 1989, 186). In fact, foreign culture, and especially foreign literature, flourished during Rama IV's reign. Therefore, stereotyping Thai kings and their policies should be avoided for the purposes of understanding their effects on Thai identity.

As regards the current king, Rama IX, who is currently the longest reigning monarch in the world, one potentially helpful way of understanding his influence on Thai identity is through the evolutionary perspective adopted by Handley (2006) and Chitbandit (2007).[8] At the beginning of his reign, Rama IX (and the monarchy in general) was used, particularly by Field Marshal Sarit, to legitimize dictatorships.[9] Both Sivaraksa and Keyes agree that the king and the queen were used for such ends while they were young and inexperienced (Keyes 1998, Sivaraksa 2002). Sivaraksa, in particular, has stated that Field Marshal Sarit played politics with the monarchy and permitted the palace to enjoy numerous economic advantages during his dictatorship (Sivaraksa 2002, 55).

In the late 1940s, Seni Pramoj, a liberal Prime Minister showed his royalist standpoint, saying the constitutional monarchy offers citizens an effective tool against dictatorship (Connors 2007, 185). However, in Connors' view, liberals should be a counter-hegemonic force to balance conservative royalist power. Indeed, the joint power between the liberals and hegemony can be seriously oppressive if it is utilized in the wrong way.

Following the end of the period of dictatorships Thailand in 1973, the role of the king became more prominent due to his pioneering of developmental projects in rural areas. However, academics were critical of his promoting of these projects and "sufficiency economy."[10] Furthermore, the king was also criticised for obstructing democracy through his involvement in the dictatorships and military governments. It would seem that post-1973, Rama IX has governed the country through a network of "good men" (McCargo 2005, 501). The term "network monarchy", coined by McCargo in his article of the same name, suggests that the monarchy played a central role in the political life of the country both after and before 1973.

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[8] ChanidaChitbandit (2007) and Paul Handley (2006) have analysed the roles of the current king in this fashion.
[9] Field Marshal Sarit governed the country through the military, and without a parliament and political parties. His government has been associated with extensive economic and moral corruption, for which the institution of the monarchy gave a degree of cover (Sivaraksa 2002, 55).
[10] There are a wide range of critical studies of the "sufficiency economy" led by the current king, notably Walker (2010). In Thai, Chanida Chitbandit's book on the king development projects was originally her 2004 M.A. dissertation.

However, McCargo argues that the network monarchy, or the network of "good men", is centred on the president of the Privy Council, Prem Tinsulanond, albeit with the king taking ultimate responsibility. Regardless of the extent to which this argument is true, it is worth reconsidering the impression that the king has intervened in the most important issues affecting Thailand, including the economy, politics and democracy. Recent stereotyping of the king's role in intervening in the country's affairs, especially from outsiders' perspectives, is exemplified by Paul Handley's book, *The King Never Smiles* (Handley 2006). Even though Handley approaches the king's life from an evolutionary perspective, the contents of his work still engage with the past. In the last chapter of his book, in particular, Handley tries to shed light on the current efforts of the king to relinquish his state duties, although, as Handley correctly points out, he is not fully able to do so. In summary, Handley's book provides a helpful account of the development of the monarchy by focusing on "royal duties" and the king's intervening in Thai politics. On other hand, however, it ignores important political events in which the king has not become actively involved. Accordingly, Handley's work provides an unbalanced view of the degree to which the king intervenes in the affairs of the Thai state.

More recently, Connors (2008) has highlighted a case in 2006 where opponents of Prime Minister Thaksin asked the king to appoint an interim government rather than using parliamentary or electoral means.[11] However, the king refused to intervene in the matter and instead suggested that the petitioners follow juridical channels. Connors has suggested that the king's decision not to intervene in this case, as he had done before in others, could reflect the development of a "more widespread egalitarian sentiment" in the country (Connors 2008, 161).[12]

Montesano has correctly noted that over time the king has shown himself to have a dynamic quality, and to be adaptable to contemporary political and social requirements. Along with Chanida Chitbandit (2007), Montesano agrees that "the current sovereign has for some years not conducted himself with the energy that defined the prime years of his reign" (Montesano 2010, 228). This conclusion, in turn, may reflect the king's response to recent and highly visible criticism of Thailand's *lèse-majesté* law, published both in Thai, such as in the Same

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11 In his article, *Article of Faith,* Connors refers to elites; he terms them royal liberals, the Democrat Party and the People's Alliance for Democracy.

12 Frequently mentioned royal interventions are ones in October 1973 and May 1992 when the police and military used violence against mass demonstrations in Bangkok (Ivarsson and Isager 2010, 17).

Sky journal [*Fah Deaw Kan*], and English, such as in Streckfuss's writings, *Truth on trial in Thailand: defamation, treason, and lèse-majesté* (2011) .

Understanding the evolutionary identity of the king, as suggested by Montesano (2010), helps to explain some of the complications that arise from the relationship between the Thai king and people. The manner in which the king is presented to the Thai public, either by himself or state officials, affects how he and his role within Thai society are perceived (Ivarsson and Isager 2010). Ivarsson and Isager have discussed this matter with reference to the origins of the 'god-king' image, as attached to the current king, in the restrictive rule on *lèse-majesté* (Ivarsson and Isager 2010, 3). Furthermore, Sarun Krittikarn (2010) has illustrated how the royal family is the object of the public gaze in the modern world. However, regardless of whether the image of the monarchy is constructed by state officials or not, the response of the Thai public to it is unpredictable. For example, political intervention on the part of the monarchy can be perceived differently, as either protecting democracy or being anti-democratic (Ivarsson and Isager 2010, 2 and 17). Whichever it is, the monarchy must adapt in response to it (Krittikarn 2010, 76-81).

Therefore, it should be stressed here that the monarch's identity is flexible and that its relationship with Thai society is reciprocal, such that it both influences and is shaped by the latter. Moreover, while much has been said on whether the king's influence over the Thai State has contributed to or obstructed the development of the country, there has been relatively little discussion of how the king relates himself to minority groups. Therefore, this is included in Chapter Two.

Language

In addition to the nation, religion and king, all of which, as noted above, are said to be the three pillars of Thai identity, the Thai language has also played an important role in the development of a modern Thai identity. The significance of the Thai language in this respect has been discussed by Reynolds in his book, *Thai Identity and Its Defenders* (2002). Reynolds draws especial attention to the policies of Field Marshal Phibun Songkram and Sarit, through which Thai nationals were pressed to study the Thai language regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Actually, according to Montesano, as early as 1919 the Bangkok government had promulgated regulations to ensure minimal levels of Thai-language

education been taught in schools belonging to aliens, such as Christian missionaries or groups of Chinese, but had loosely enforced them (Montesano 2008, 251).

In spite of this policy, however, Keyes has pointed out that radio broadcasting in Thailand has been done in local languages since the 1950s, and that Thai people have enjoyed consuming information and entertainment in this way since that time (Keyes 1989, 195). Meanwhile, in his article, 'What Makes Central Thai a National Language?' (2002, 115), Diller has demonstrated the importance of localism in driving pride in local languages in Thailand. Crucially, his study situates the development of the Thai national language within Thailand's wider linguistic community, and thereby illustrates how the process of building a national Thai language has been contended. Diller also notes that local dialects in Thailand have been studied since the 1970s (Diller 2002, 115), and draws attention to the views of some academics that local dialects such as Suphanburi and Ratchaburi should be considered the central Thai language rather than Bangkok Thai (Diller 2002, 118).

As to southern Thailand, King Rama VII (1925-1935) started to tighten control over Chinese schools (Montesano 2008, 251). During Marshal Phibunsongkram's regime (1938-1944 and 1948-1957), not only the schools using Malay, but also ones using the Chinese language, were forced to minimize the number of hours teaching these languages. Having said that, some schools coped better than others; some were forced to close down (ibid, 252).[13] Montesano gives us examples of Chinese-sponsored schools thriving at that time because the schools' administrators had good relationships with Bangkok government. Frequently, the relationships were built from business connections (ibid, 256-262). It seems that the regulations of the national tongue were not enforced consistently.

Taking stock of the aforesaid elements of Thai identity, it can be seen that the concept of what it means to be Thai has changed over time and through interaction with "minority" cultures within Thailand. In turn, these changes have affected the various ethnic groups in Thailand in different ways and at different times. Thongchai Winichakul, a former student leader in Thailand in the 1970s and now a historian and professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, has stated that the different groups of people who live within modern Thailand's borders have come to be lumped together as "Thai nationals" regardless of whatever their ethnic backgrounds may be, including Mon, Karen, Lao, Khmer or Malay

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[13] Suwannathat-Pian (1995) contends that Marshal PhibunSongkram in his second period as premier was more liberal in this issue to the extent that the Chinese cooperated with the authorities.

(Winichakul 1994, 164). In many cases, these people have adopted the Thai identity or integrated their minority identities with it. Indeed, Winichakul maintains that today it is evident that many people from minority ethnic groups find it useful to integrate with the Thai State by adopting the dominant identity within it (Winichakul 1994, 164). This observation might lead one to study the development of Thai identity and nationalism as an evolutionary process driven by the changing ways in which people within Thailand perceive themselves.

As discussed above, the development of the Thai national identity as an evolutionary process can be observed through changes to each of its supposed elements. Additionally, there is a wealth of literature available which makes it evident that Thai nationalists have diverse points of view about what it means to be Thai.

The political landscape in Thailand was extremely unstable during the years between the two periods of Marshal Phibun Songkram's rule (1944-48). However, even though there were seven different governments in these four years, significant steps forward were taken in the representation of minorities in the Thai state.

The political atmosphere during this time was increasingly liberal. It witnessed the participation of the Free Thai Party in government as well as the growth of a more relaxed form nationalism. The Islamic Central Committee was created to act as a national organization for Thai Muslims. Furthermore, Provincial Islamic Committees were created in some provinces to foster links between Muslim communities and the Buddhist-dominant bureaucracy (Aphornsuwan 2003, 19 and Suwannathat-Pian 2008, 170).[14] Even though Pridi Banomyong, the leading figure of this period, and Field Marshal Phibun Songkram had together led the 1932 revolution which ended the absolute monarchy, they held different views about nationalism in the country. Satha-Anand notes that Pridi Banomyong's government restored many privileges to Malay Muslims which had been suppressed under the previous regime, including the right to teach and learn the Quran and the Malay and Arabic languages (Satha-Anand 2008, 163). Sivaraksa emphasizes that while Field Marshal Phibul Songkram changed the name of the country from Siam to Thailand in 1938, Pridi changed it back to Siam, which lasted for four years. These names changes indicate different degrees of sensitivity to the various ethnic groups in Thailand in Phibul Songkram's and Pridi's governments (Sivaraksa 2002, 48). Thai nationalism in Phibul Songkram's regime,

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14   Instead, Suwannathat-Pian (2008) uses the term the National Councils for Muslims and Provincial councils for Muslim Affairs.

despite its longstanding existence, could not be the sole determinant of how the public would feel towards minorities, nor how the state in later periods would treat them, because the liberal movement at the time was influential among the public regardless of the ruling power.

Thai nationalism has not always threatened other ethnic identities in Thailand. Although Thai national identity was invented and, at times, forced on the population, it has also changed in positive ways to accommodate various ethnic minorities and cultures. In order to gain a balanced understanding of the relationship between minorities and the Thai state and society, it is important not to overstate the roles of particular factors at certain periods in driving its trajectory because various, even opposing, factors have frequently coincided. Thai identity has tended to change due to the interaction between a variety of factors. As Michael Connors reminds us, it is important now to rethink the supposed essentialism of Thai national identity (Connors 2007). It is important that Thai identity is examined through the eyes of Thai nationals because it is mediated by numerous factors. The lack of empirical studies of how Thai Muslims, in particular, perceive Thai identity has led to many scholars overstating the clashes between Muslim and Thai identity. This point can be illustrated by the following example.

During the regime of Field Marshal Sarit (1958-1963), military means were used to extend the goal of national integration to rural areas (Connors 2007, 61). The developmental aspect of this policy proved beneficial to some interest groups, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. For example, increased rubber production in the Lower South during this period led to growth in the region, and thus arguably brought economic benefits to the large Malay population there. As Keyes states, this era witnessed the growth of a Thai middle class (Keyes 1998, 77), including one in the Lower South. Critics of Field Marshal Sarit often argue that his developmental model had negative effects on local identity, culture and religious life in rural villages (Sivaraksa 2002, 56). However, little thought has been given to how Thai nationals perceived or understood the nature of Thai identity at that time. Gilquin states that the development programme, like the rubber plantation enterprise, was not persuasive to the Malay-speaking population (Gilquin 2005, 80). However, since he does not provide empirical evidence for this claim, it remains questionable how rubber production was increased without the willing involvement of the local population in government projects (Gilquin 2005, 80). This example indicates a lack of knowledge of what people want; and hence a lack of knowledge of whether the Thai national interest conflicts with local Malay interests.

Another issue which has received only limited attention in academic studies of Thailand is the sponsorship of Islamic education. During Sarit's regime, the government subsidized Islamic schools [pondoks] in the Lower South, despite the spread of separatist movements (ibid.). This policy could be viewed as an attempt to integrate Thai Muslims (Pitsuwan 1985), or at least to buy their approval. However, as Joll has remarked, it instead ended up turning traditional pondok schools into 'regular' private schools teaching Islam, which in turn had the effect of encouraging Malay-speakers to study abroad. For this reason, Joll makes the further connection that the Thai state therefore had less control over Islamic matters within its borders (Joll 2010, 267). However, he does not base these claims on empirical evidence regarding the motives underpinning the decisions made by Malay-speaking Muslims to study abroad. Joll contends that the foreign Islamic education received by many Thai Muslims has led to there being fragmented and insecure Islamic institutions in Thailand, which has thus resulted in the violence in the South. Against Joll's argument, however, it may be noted that well-to-do Muslims in Bangkok and elsewhere also send their children to study Islam in India or Cairo without any ensuing violence. It therefore seems legitimate to ask why Joll and some other academics see the studying of Islam abroad as leading to "fragmented" and "weak" institutions in Thailand rather than being a liberal and progressive social trend. Furthermore, it may also be asked whether Muslims in the Lower South and elsewhere have been pushed to take this measure by policies encouraging assimilation or by progressive ideas as well as the pursuit of material gains. Accordingly, these matters are addressed in Chapter 5 by exploring the extent to which Islamic education relates to Thai identity from the perspectives of Muslim professionals.

Recently, Anthony Smith has suggested that the concept of national identity should only be used as a dependent or an intervening variable when we study a phenomenon, meaning that it should not be taken as a determinant of the studied phenomena. Moreover, he points out that we should speak of a sense of national identity on the part of members of a national community (Smith 2011, 231). Thus, to reiterate a point made above, this study uses the concept of Thai identity as a flexible term, which may or may not be shaped by Thai society. When investigating the effects of national identity, questions asked by this thesis tend to be "how" or "to what extent" Thai identity affects Muslim identity. By employing national identity as a descriptive variable, it should become evident that the relationship between Thai identity and Muslim identity is neither one of polar opposites nor of direct relatives, and thus neither wholly negative nor positive. Therefore, the approach taken here of studying the

voices of religious and ethnic minorities can provide understanding of the indirect and multifaceted relationships existing between these two concepts of identity.

1.2.2 Pluralism and multiculturalism

This section has two purposes. First, it introduces the concept of multiculturalism, specifically with regard to how it can be defined and implemented, and its purposes. Second, it provides an outline of debates on the implementation of multiculturalism in Thai contexts. Although, as will be discussed below, Thailand does not necessarily fit with certain definitions of multiculturalism, considered in a certain light it may nevertheless be viewed as a multicultural society. This is so in the respect that Thailand accommodates people from a wide range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. Among these groups can be included Mons, Laotians, Malays, Chinese, and Indians, whose religious affiliations may include Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and traditional Chinese religions. Given the complex mixture of groups inhabiting Thailand, and in spite of the dominant Thai-Buddhist culture promoted by the government, it seems reasonable to consider in this chapter how far Thailand may be seen as a multicultural society, particularly in regard to how it accommodates its Muslim minorities.

In recent years, a number of books have been published concerning the integration of Muslims in non-Muslim countries and with especial concern for whether certain countries or societies are multicultural enough to accommodate their Muslim minorities effectively. John Bowen's book, *Can Islam be French*? (2010), is one example of this trend. Through a comparison of France and Britain, Bowen takes the view that British multiculturalism provides smoother pathways to creating Islamic institutions than French Muslims have encountered. He puts this down to French Muslims having met legal and cultural resistance to their pursuit of an Islamic way of life within France (Bowen 2010, 9). Even though current political figures, such as former French president, Nicholas Sarkozy, have campaigned to make Muslims more visible in French society, much of the French public remains hostile to multiculturalism. Bowen gives examples of popular opinions among the French public which run contrary to judicial verdicts in favour of Islamic legal claims. This might reflect that multiculturalism has been state policy in places like Britain but not in France where civic unity has been stressed (although at the municipal level there is a great level of tolerance in France for diversity of practice).

Bowen draws the general conclusion that France is not a multicultural society, even in spite of French courts having passed verdicts in favour of allowing "Islamic law" to be used in certain cases, such as the annulment of marriages. He explains that these judgements have been reached pragmatically on a case-by-case basis where Muslim claims have converged with French laws (Bowen 2010, 191-198). Bowen does not provide his own definition of multiculturalism, but instead refers in his notes to one given by Kymlicka (1995). Kymlicka defines multiculturalism in a twofold manner: first, it involves members of certain groups being granted a degree of legal autonomy or special rights; and second, it requires a degree of public recognition of the efforts of those groups to build their own institutions and identities. Thus, even though Bowen insists that France is not a multicultural society, the evidence presented in his book indicates that French Muslims have been granted some special rights and received a degree of public recognition as a group.

A very different view of multiculturalism is provided by Tariq Modood in his book, *Multiculturalism: a Civic Idea* (2007). Modood argues that "multiculturalism" specifically refers to the phenomenon of the immigration of non-white people to western countries. In this respect, he claims, a multicultural country provides for the political accommodation of its minorities by allowing them to use their minority identities in positive ways (Modood 2007, 5). In Modood's view, multiculturalism accommodates difference rather than cultures *per se*. Hence, for him, the term "identity" is useful because it suggests that to accommodate or recognise minority identities is not necessarily to advocate the reproduction of traditional practices or customs from far-off places: Accordingly, the extent to which members of minority communities choose to practice their traditional cultures becomes a matter of choice not necessarily linked to their identities as members of those communities. Modood cites as an example the possibility that somebody could be publically recognized as having a Pakistani identity regardless of whether they speak the Urdu language, embrace Islam or want an arranged marriage (Modood 2007, 42-43).

Exactly what counts as multiculturalism varies from place to place. Canada's 1988 Multiculturalism Act guarantees that the state will recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects cultural and racial diversity. Thus, the key point about this act is that it acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage (Modood 2007, 16). While multiculturalism in Canada can be seen as far-reaching and extensive, it is by no means the only form that multiculturalism may take hence defining this term remains problematic. In regard to French Muslims,

Laurence and Vaisse have proposed that being multicultural involves reaching out by helping them to observe their religious requirements and institutionalizing Islam within French society. Furthermore, they state that multiculturalism can be used to promote integration and reduce the level of intolerance within society. Thus, they take the view that social contention in France, whether conceived as being between Islam and French secularity, or between minorities and the dominant culture, is now a process of negotiation (Laurence and Vaisse 2006).

As just stated, it seems France can be defined as multicultural because efforts have been made to help religious minorities institutionalizing their religions in the context of French society and culture. Even though Bowen, as cited above, has contended that France is not multicultural, he nevertheless reveals that for many years, including those where debates raged about the wearing of headscarves (1989-2004), French civil servants have seen the necessity of ensuring that Muslims have legal and moral equality with people of other faiths in France, as well as access to places of worship, food meeting their religious requirements, and generally being able to organize their daily lives in ways that satisfy their concepts of piety. In this way, it would seem that multiculturalism has become embedded in French culture and society. Indeed, the alternatives to a conservative or mainstream secularity are plain to see. For example, some mayors help Islamic associations to build mosques: some prefects help Muslims to find enough properly *halal* meat on the Day of Sacrifice; some jurists take the view that marriages and divorces conducted in Islamic courts in foreign countries meet the criteria of French public order and ought to be recognized; and most jurists accept that private arrangements between Muslims in Islamic marriages are legal (Bowen 2010, 196-197). These examples clearly show that some degree of special legal rights have been granted to Muslims by the French establishment.

While Modood (2009) and Laurence and Vaisse (2006) all stress that the purpose of multiculturalism is to promote better integration in society, many academics regard it as leading to social fragmentation (Modood 2007, 11). In fact, more liberal versions of multiculturalism could be viewed as leading to the latter outcome. For instance, consider Kymlicka's definition of multiculturalism and the Canadian Multicultural Act as discussed above: the former emphasizes special rights granted to minorities while the latter actually guarantees minorities the freedom to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage. Both of these versions of multiculturalism focus on liberating minorities from the dominant culture and society rather than integrating them. Inevitably, the implementation of multiculturalism,

in whatever forms it may take, will face obstructions. For example, in its attempts to integrate citizens from different cultural backgrounds, France also places restrictions on the roles that culture and religion may play in public life. This means that while Muslims may find it easy in some respects to integrate with French society, in others they may find that restrictions are placed on how they can express their faith and culture. In contrast, British citizens are relatively free to express, and are even encouraged, to value their own cultures. However, since everyone's identity is therefore closely tied up with their cultural backgrounds, it makes it more difficult for different groups to integrate, which in turn has led to concerns about society being fragmented.

Regardless of whether the goal of multiculturalism is to integrate or to liberate minorities, it can only be imposed effectively on societies with well-developed legal and political systems. Since multiculturalism requires public recognition, the right kind of moral and social behaviour is needed among the dominant population. Efforts to institutionalize Islamic ways of life in non-Muslim countries, in particular, have been challenged by some groups. For example, Bowen draws attention to an attempt by far right groups in France to sue a local municipality for leasing land for the building of mosques (Bowen 2010, 31). The far right contended that the municipality in question had violated a 1905 law separating religion from the state (Bowen 2010, 32-33).

Laurence and Vaisse believe that the problems exposed for French secularity by the implementation of multiculturalism will lead to debates and reviews of French Law on the separation of the state and religion. In particular, they see the government softening the rigid legal restrictions placed against religious expression in the public arena, such as the wearing of *hijabs* (Laurence and Vaisse 2006, 174). As noted above, these authors maintain, that multiculturalism in France is an ongoing process of negotiation, whereof the debate about the separation of religion and state is one aspect. In a similar vein, Modood's definition of multiculturalism, as seen in page 19, implies that it is a flexible process of negotiation towards the goal of integration. With this in mind, he introduces the concept of multicultural citizenship, which combines minority and national identity as well as public recognition that different groups do not jeopardise a sense of belonging in society as a whole (Modood 2009, 153). Therefore, calls for the appropriate accommodation of minority groups, by way of special rights, public recognition, political representation and institutionalization, should not be rejected as antithetical to so-call progressive politics (ibid., 154). Furthermore, as every public culture must operate through shared values, the requirements of minorities may be

achieved through dialogue and negotiation (ibid.152 and 154). Being open for dialogue and negotiation is to turn negative differences into positive ones which is a political goal of multiculturalism (ibid, 153).

In order to apply the above literature to the case of Muslim minorities in Thailand, three issues need to be analysed: first, what is the extent to which Thailand accommodates Muslim minorities; second, what are goals of multiculturalism in Thailand (such as, liberation or integration?); and third, how should it be implemented. The first issue requires us first to consider what the components of multiculturalism are with regard to Thai Muslims: for exampkle political representation, legal autonomy and special rights, recognition of minority institutions, and accommodation of minority requirements. Meanwhile, the second and third issues are respectively concerned with why and how multiculturalism has been implemented in Thailand.

The concept of multiculturalism provides a way of judging how far the Thai state and society have accommodated Muslims by allowing for their representation in the country's political system. In regard to the Lower South, James Ockey (2008) has remarked that although the elections in the region have served a positive integrating function, authoritarianism and the repression overwhelming in national politics have had the opposite effect (Ockey 2008, 125). However, Ockey's views need to be contextualised since there was at least a period that national and local politics together help institutionalizing Islam Ockey records that in the first election in the area in 1933, three of the four elected MPs were Buddhists, while in the following two elections in 1937 and 1938 this pattern was reversed so that there were one Buddhist and three Muslims MPs.

These results tend to suggest that the outcomes of the 1937 and 1938 elections were more representative of the voting public than that of the 1933 election. However, since most of these elected politicians had worked with Bangkok officials (Ockey 2008, 127-128), it is worth considering how far they represented ordinary people. During the election campaign, the eventual victor in Pattani, Kamukda, who was already a provincial governor in the area, urged Muslims to vote for him because he was the only Malay candidate (the others being Thais). This matter is further complicated by Ockey's claim that Kamukda supported the integration of the region with the central Thai government (Ockey 2008, 130). It is noteworthy that Ockey does not mention the issues of authoritarianism and repression in this period (1933-1938). Later, between the years 1946-1957, the Thai Buddhist politician,

Charoen Suepsaeng, whose political campaign promoted equality between Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists, won three consecutive elections. The first two election victories may reflect Suepsaeng's support for the incumbent side of Pridi Banomyong, or that he was a genuinely popular representative among the majority of Malays who wanted equality rather than preferential treatment. Ockey is inclined towards the view that Suepsaeng provided proper representation for the Malay population: hence during this period the government recognized Muslim religious leaders and the Islamic courts were restored (Ockey 2008, 129-134). Moreover, Ockey states that even though the attempts of Pridi and the Pridi-backed governments to regain support in the Lower South were interrupted by events in Bangkok (the coup in particular) (Ockey 2008, 134), this interference was not directed towards attacking Muslims. Accordingly, it seems that at this time Islamic ways of life became institutionalized within the Thai state, and that Muslims gained genuine political representatives who were not always themselves Muslims (in other words, like Suepseang).

In 1977 the government, recognising that only a very small number of Muslims in the Lower South worked as civil servants, began to encourage them to work as state bureaucrats. This policy has been criticized by, among others, McCargo (2008, 59) and Pitsuwan (1985, 23-4) for being assimilationist in the respect that when local Muslims become bureaucrats within the Thai state, they become assimilated into the Thai bureaucratic culture. More recently, Ora-orn Poocharoen, in her research into Thai bureaucracy, has shown that after Thaksin's regime, especially from 2009 onwards, more flexible strategies have been used to recruit local Muslims in the Lower South. For example, teachers have been hired first as state employees and later upgraded to tenured teachers as their competence has improved. The recruitment exams contain questions regarding Malay Muslim culture, language and religion which clearly promote the participation of Muslims in state bureaucracy. Since her expertise is in public administration, Ora-orn Poocharoen suggests that by making bureaucracy at a local level more representative of the populations being served, the government can improve the quality of localised services and empower local people to drive organizational changes in local government.

She stresses that organizational culture is determined not only by structures, rules and regulations, but also by the members of organizations themselves. By drawing 75 to 80 per cent of state officials from among the people they will serve, it is possible to make permanent changes to the relationship between the central government and local populations (Poocharoen 2010, 197-199). This perspective is important because it alerts us to the notion

that local minority people can shape a new bureaucratic culture to suit them, while at the same time toning down concern about how Muslim minorities are treated. In this way, focus can be shifted towards Muslim minorities in themselves.

During the period 1976-1990, Ockey states that Muslim MPs from the Lower South did not use their power effectively because they were not cabinet ministers even though they were members of the party sponsored by the military government (Ockey 2008, 145-146). This leads to the question of what the characteristics of political representation for minorities are and should be. In 1986, Muslim politicians from the Lower South formed the group, Wadah, which was not part of the military-sponsored party. From 1992, members of this group served in the Thai cabinet from where they were able to introduce institutions such as the Islamic bank into Thai society (Ockey 2008, 146). However, in the 2005 election, nearly all MPs from the Wadah group were rejected in the Lower South due to discontent with Thaksin's regime (Ockey 2008, 153). Thus, it might be concluded that the system of minority representation is not necessary because it did not work in the former case, and was rejected in the latter. Bearing this in mind, Chapter 4 focuses on representatives of Thai Muslims who are not in formal politics, such as Islamic representatives, by considering how such people are perceived by Muslim professional elites, and what their qualifications for representing Muslim communities might be.

Michael Connors (2007) has commented that in the 1980s, a space opened for Muslim elites to enter the national political sphere in Thailand and that more culturally sensitive policies emerged at this time (Connors 2007, 146). With this mind, Chapters 4 and 5 discuss how, the extent to which, and with what goals channels of representation for Muslims have been established in Thailand between 2008 and 2010). Meanwhile, Chapters 6 and 7 explore the perspectives of Muslim elite son how they relate themselves to mosques and Islamic practices within the context of Thai "multiculturalism".

Another indicator of multiculturalism is that legal autonomy or special rights for minorities are recognized, as noted above in this section. Beyond the context of the Lower South, the case of Ban Khrua community (Ockey 2004, 135-144) provides an example of a Muslim community being granted a special right: namely, not being evicted like others, on account of their Muslim identity. In 1994, this community protested against the construction of an expressway on its land by using Islam and its heritage, including cemeteries and mosques, as the basis of their campaign. In this case, the ethnic background of the minority worked to its

benefit. Moreover, the long negotiations between the community and government officials became an inspiration for other communities, including non-Muslim ones (Satha-Anand 2005). For Muslims in particular, this case shows that peaceful demonstrations and negotiations can help Muslim communities to achieve their goals. Malay Muslims in the Lower South could apply this to their own situation, as southern autonomy continues to be debated alongside the on-going local insurgency. Chapter 5 considers the perspectives of Muslim professionals on how they want the Lower South to be governed.

In regard to the definitions of multiculturalism noted above, it seems each one makes reference to the fact that multicultural societies involve public recognition of minority institutions. Since Thailand does recognize Islamic institutions, mosques along with Buddhist temples are obliged to register with the state in order to receive official recognition and sponsorship, as decreed by (religious) Patronage Acts. In a comparative study of the royal patronage given to Islam and Buddhism in Thailand, Ishii (1994) has stated that the Islamic Patronage Act does not work as effectively for Islamic organizations as it does for their Buddhist equivalents because Muslims do not have a hierarchical clerical system. According to Ishii, the Act was meant to keep religious organizations in order and to monitor them. This implies that the Act's goal is to integrate religion rather than to liberate it. However, knowledge of how Thai Muslims perceive such legislation is still limited.

At present, there have only been two significant studies of the roles played by mosques in Thai society. The first was authored by Jitmaud (1984) and covers mosques in Central Thailand. The second and more recent offering has come from Hajirahem (2002) and looks at mosques in the Satun Provinces in southernmost Thailand. However, Muslims live in every region of Thailand, so in spite of the efforts of these two scholars, there are still significant gaps in our understanding of this issue. Both pieces of work focus on the contributions made by mosques to Muslim communities, but do not explore the expectations those communities place on the mosques. There have, however, been some limited studies of what Muslim communities expect from *imams*. One such study was conducted in 1997 in Muslim communities around mosques in a district of Bangkok (Khuyai). This survey found that Muslims place high levels of expectation on *imams*, and are also widely satisfied and accepting of them. This dissertation is intended to build upon the latter type of study by interviewing Muslim elites in every part of Thailand. Thus, Chapter 6 focuses directly on how Muslim professionals relate themselves to mosques, and what kinds of roles they think mosques should play in their communities. In this way, it is hoped that some light can be

shed on whether public recognition of Muslim institutions serves to liberate or integrate Muslims in Thai society and how it is implemented.

In addition to mosques, Thailand recognizes and sponsors Islamic education. A wide range of policy research has already been conducted on Islamic education in Thailand. However, most of these studies, which offer survey research, cover only limited areas. Regions which have small Muslim populations, such as those in the North and Northeast have rarely been subject to academic surveys. A survey in 2009 found that demand for Islamic studies in secondary schools in Bangkok is greater than the supply (Puiraksa 2009). This finding is similar to those of other surveys, such as one from 1987 which shows that Muslim leaders at that time were demanding that primary schools situated in Muslim communities in Bangkok should promote Islamic culture and traditions (Lungprasert 1987). These studies highlight a desire that Islamic culture should be more prominent in public schools serving Muslim communities. However, there is a concern that respondents to the 1987 study might not be representative of the Muslim population in Bangkok due to their lower level of education: specifically, 67 per cent of the respondents attended primary school for no more than four years as they are *imams* of communities. This dissertation fills this gap by only interviewing middle-class Thai Muslims who generally have higher levels of education.

Historical research on education in Thailand's southernmost region has often been motivated by the assumption that education policy in certain periods in the past has had an impact relevant to unrest in the Lower South. This trend can be seen in two recent studies of Thai educational policies enacted between 1905 and 1925 (Ruttanaamatakun 2007) and from 1932 to 1992 (Panklao 1998). In a similar vein, Aphornsuwanhas described Thai state education policies as means of assimilating the country's Muslim minority (Aphornsuwan 2003, 16-33). On the other hand, *pondoks*, which is to say traditional Islamic schools, have been studied as influential repositories of custom that guarantee the continuation of the cultural and moral values of Malay-speaking Muslims in the Lower South (Gilquin 2005, 57). Therefore, Chapter 5 examines the functions of Islamic education in the Lower South in terms of whether it is used to promote a state-approved mono-culture or as a means of sustaining Muslim identity.

Finally, Chapter 7 examines how the Thai public accommodates the requirements placed upon Muslims to pursue Islamic ways of life, discussing in particular the wearing of *hijabs* and the eating of *halal* food. Additionally, the extent to which the Thai public understands

and accommodates Islamic culture is examined through the views of Muslim professionals, and consideration is also given to how this group itself interprets and adjusts to Thai society.

1.2.3 Secularism and Muslim minorities

This section introduces the concept of secularity. There is currently a mainstream trend towards studying how secular states treat their citizens who have minority religious identities. However, since religious identity is partly dependent on the subjective attitudes that people hold about themselves and others, it is impossible to properly understand the positions taken by states towards citizens who hold religious identities without also understanding those citizens themselves. Therefore, this section also introduces the concept of secularity in individuals.

Irrespective of whether Islam is categorised as a "religion" (Ramadan 2004) or a "way of life" (Jitmuad 1992), it obviously makes Muslims different from others. One source points out that to be Muslim is to become a member of the worldwide *Ummah*[faith community](Esposito 2003). Therefore, being Muslim in non-Muslim countries like Thailand can be problematic because Thailand is recognized as both "Buddhist" and "secular". According to the current constitution of Thailand, Thailand is also *de facto* Buddhist by the constitutional regulation that the king is to be Buddhist. On the other hand, it is *de jure* secular.

The 1997 Constitution states that the State patronizes and protects Buddhism and other religions, promotes good understanding and harmony among followers of all religions, and encourages the use of religious principles to create virtue and develop the quality of life. Furthermore, the separation between Buddhism and formal politics is very clear in that Buddhist clerics of any kind are prohibited from voting or standing as candidates for (or from continuing to sit as members of) the House of Representatives or Senate. By contrast, clerics from other religions, including Islamic *Imams* and *Ulama*, and Catholic monks, nuns and other Christian clergy, are not subject to the same restrictions (The Constitution of Thailand, 1997). In pre-modern Thailand, there was no separation between Buddhism and the administration of the state. As mentioned above, Buddhism was used to define the roles that Thai kings should play in ruling the state (Harding 2007, 2). Furthermore, some academics have claimed that Buddhism provided rules for the everyday lives of laymen. For example, Reynolds has described these rules as "secular laws", or laws applying to non-monastic people. Some evidence for this view can be found in the Thai word for a custom, *dhamniam*,

which has direct associations with the word *dhamma*, meaning the teachings of the Buddha (Reynolds 1994, 435-6).

The Thai model of secularism is similar to that of the United States, although there are some doubts about the extent of religious freedom in Thailand, especially with regard to the Buddhist Dhammakaya movement (Streckfuss and Templeton 2002, 74-78). Nevertheless, the activities of this group continue without restrictions both in and outside of the *Dhammakaya* temple, and it also has its own satellite TV channel.

Particularly in relation to the Muslim minority, what constitutes an appropriate way for the state to approach them becomes debatable. This depends not least on how one interprets what it means to be secular. First of all, according to Tariq Modood, a secular state which subscribes to multiculturalism should provide its minorities with the right to integrate with the dominant culture alongside the right to have their "differences" recognized and supported in both the public and private spheres (Modood 2009, 169). Furthermore, he emphasizes that these rights should result in the integration of national identity as well as ethnic identity. In response to secularists who do not accept the idea that a secular state should support religious institutions, Modood calls for a "moderate secularism" promoting integration and equality between all groups in society, both religious and secular (2009, 180). Thus, he concludes that religion should have a legitimate institutional presence in public life (Modood 2009, 170). It should be noted, however, that Modood's views of this matter are controversial, not least since any secularists see the purpose of secularization as being to marginalize religion in the public sphere.

On the other hand, Muslim secularists living in Islamic societies may have different views on secularism due to the very different contexts from which they speak. For example, the Sudanese secularist, An-Na'im, has stressed that Muslims need secular states for the reason that, in his words, "so-called Islamic states", tend to interfere in genuine religious observances (An-Na'im 2008, 1-9). Moreover, referring to the case of India, he recommends that the Indian state should "regulate its own definition of secularism, to acknowledge the role of religion more clearly rather than continue to promote the fallacy that religion plays no role in public life or politics." In this way, communities of both belief and non-belief should be protected. He also suggests that, to fit in with the religious diversity of India, Indian secularism should consist of Hindu secularism, Islamic secularism, Sikh secularism, Christian secularism and so on, all of which he calls "contextual secularisms". According to this model,

the state can regulate the role of religion in public life, thereby maintaining the separation of religion and the state, and in this way enrich the religious lives of its citizens (An-Na'im 2008, 180-181).

On the one hand, secular states may attempt to achieve equality among believers of all religions, at least in the private sphere strictly pursuing the French model of secularity [*laicite*]. On the other hand, if secular states take the course suggested by Modood, as outlined above, they can give equal rights by: 1) preventing religious believers from engaging in religious discrimination; 2) giving some of the state support enjoyed by longer-established religions to those of minorities; and 3) helping religious groups to play positive roles in public life.

However, even within the framework of moderate secularism, it is by no means easy to achieve these goals. In Britain, for example, until 2003 there was no law preventing religious discrimination in employment, and such laws were only expanded to the provision of goods and services in 2003. Even now, there is still no law placing the onus on employers to promote equality of opportunity within the workplace (Modood 2009, 170-172). The concept of "overlapping consensus", as devised by John Rawls, should be applicable in most secular countries since it refers to generally accepted principles of fairness and equality, such that can be agreed upon by diverse groups in those countries (Bowen 2001, 3).[15]

According to Modood and An-Na'im, moderate secularism involves negotiations between national identity and minority religious identities. Modood states that the actual practices of secularism in secular countries consist of institutional compromises whereby, for example, Muslims can be accommodated in contexts where they are minorities. These negotiations include: 1) reconceptualising equality as respect for difference rather than uniform sameness (Modood 2009, 180); 2) reconceptualising secularism as a moderate and evolutionary process based on institutional adjustments rather than a stance of neutrality towards religions and a strict separation of the public and private spheres(Modood 2009, 180; Asad 2001); and 3) adopting a pragmatic case-by-case approach to dealing with controversies and conflicts (Modood 2009, 180; Habermas 2005, 344).

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[15] In his article, "The Domain of the Political Overlapping Consensus" (1989), Rawls refers to an overlapping consensus that it exists in a society when the political conception of justice that regulates its basic institutions is endorsed by each of the main religious, philosophical and moral doctrines likely to endure from one generation to the next.

The concept of moderate secularism avoids treating secularity and religion as polar opposites while stressing the importance of reaching compromises between minority and majority groups. Furthermore, it allows us to see how minorities and majorities adjust to each other. Thus, for the purposes of this study Chapter 2 outlines the background to the development of secularism in the Thai state and society.

Importantly, since secularity is not always internalized by individual citizens, secular countries variably include some people who are not secular as well as others who may be anti-religious. In the context of secular countries where such people are present, Muslims may need to think creatively about how they can adjust their religious practices to avoid conflicts, either with hyper-religious or anti-religious factions. Keeping this point in mind, Chapter 7 explores common Muslim practices, such as marriage, eating and the wearing of the *hijab*, through the interview data collected for this study. By following this course, some light will be shed on how Thai Muslims adapt their religious practices to fit in with the religious and secular elements of Thai society.

Some work has been published in Thai on the religious practices of Muslims in some parts of Thailand. For example, a comparative behavioral study of Muslim students in higher education in Bangkok and in the South, published in 1986, showed that 50-60per cent of their everyday behaviour was influenced by Islamic culture (this percentage being higher for students in the South than for those in Bangkok) (Sapsaman 1986). However, even though past research indicates that Muslim students in the South tend to pursue Islamic courses more than theircoreligionists in Bangkok, a recent local study in the Lower South has shown that Muslim youthsin the area do not live their lives solely in compliance with social expectations and Islamic principles. For example, female youths may wear the *hijab* but not follow other Islamic practices which might be expected of them (Laeheem and Baka 2010). Laeheem and Baka's work, which can be considered insider research, tends to show that Muslim practices are not confined to religious traditions and that there are a variety of practices even within the Lower South: that is, differences in the behaviour of urban and rural Muslim youths (ibid.). These findings tend to suggest that it is likely that Muslims in different regions of Thailand pursue their religious commitments in different ways.

There have not yet been any general comparative studiesof Islamic religious habits across Thailand's manyregions.Some limited research has been done by Thai academics on variations between particular religious practices, such as marriages and the consumption of

halal food. For example, two decades ago Chandee attempted to explain how and why Muslims in an isolated suburban community adjacent to Bangkok married within an immediate circle of their relatives and the local community (Chandee 1992). At present, such in-depth analysis of Muslim practices is rare, although in 2001 a survey was conducted among 100 male respondents from a Muslim community in central Bangkok (Changsorn 2001). Changsorn found that the respondents tended to select spouses by themselves rather thanthrough family arrangements. In general, the pattern which emerged was one of male respondents choosing privileged females with whom they shared certain things in common including religion. However, the younger respondents showed a stronger tendency to base their decisions on the preferences and looks of their partners, as well as their closeness to each other (Changsorn 2001). Thus, Changsorn's research contributes sociological data about how a particular group of Muslim males select their sexual partners, but it does not shed much light on the reasons behind the choices they make.

In a similar vein, nearly a decade ago a study was conducted among 400 respondents concerningthe consumption of *halal* food (Hasan 2003). This survey, which was limited to the Bangkok area, shows a high level of acceptance of the need for *halal* food. The researcher highlights a connection between the lifestyles of Muslims and the extent to which they accept the need for *halal* food (Hasan 2003). However, this study does not address the matter of how its Muslim respondents understand the meaning of *halal* food, and nor is any attention given to how the surrounding context affects the attitudes of those Muslims towards *halal* food.

Therefore, while it is important to explore secularity within the Thai state and society, it is equally important to explore Muslims in broader contexts in Thailand and to discuss whether traditional or other kinds of rationale affect how they observe their religious commitments.

1.3 Reflections on data collection

This dissertation seeks to understand how Muslims, as cultural, religious and ethnic minorities, view themselves in relation to the Thai state and society. This issue is explored through the perspectives and experiences of Thai Muslim professionals, from diverse ethnic backgrounds, who tend not to suffer from the socio-economic inferiority often associated with minority groups. In other words, this study focuses on a distinct cross-section of Thai Muslims who are privileged in socio-economic terms. To ensure that this study reflects the experiences of a broad spectrum of Thai Muslims, I interviewed relevant people from a wide-

range of professions: religious leaders, educators, mass communicators, activists, governing officials, businessmen and scientists. It is noteworthy that many of my interviewees are committed to more than one profession, although they tend to identify themselves with one salient role. For example, one interviewee from the Upper South is both a religious leader and governing official, but defines himself as an *imam*. One of the benefits of studying Muslim professionals is that they frequently have connections with both Thailand's Muslim elite and grassroots movements, and thus provide a particular perspective on both. Indeed, studying people who are professionals actually eased the research in many ways. For example, I found that I shared some sets of values with my interviewees connected to our educated and middle-class backgrounds. Moreover, they were usually able to speak to me in the "middle" language (central or normative Thai) even though they normally speak in local dialects or languages which I cannot understand. They answered questions patiently and were able to articulate themselves effectively. I understood the gestures they made to indicate when they did not want to respond to my questions and I mostly felt safe when they did so. Even though each interview continued for at least one hour, none of my interviewees asked me to stop. In most cases, I could sense that they appreciated the opportunity they were being given to make Islam and Muslim life better known and that I shared this intention with them.

In order to gain a balanced sample of interview data, I travelled to four different regions within Thailand. The people I met tried to share local food which conformed to Islamic standards, not least by taking me to Muslim restaurants. On one occasion, after fasting during Ramadan, I had a meal with the family of one of my key informants at their home. I certainly appreciated and felt grateful for their hospitality. It is possible that most interviewees were compassionate towards me because I had travelled a considerable distance to meet them and showed interest in issues which were of concern to them. The age gap (at least 10 years) between me and my interviewees may also have helped, particularly because in Thai culture people are expected to act with generosity towards those younger than themselves while the young are supposed to be respectful towards their elders.

However, even though my interviewees and I shared some values characteristic of Thailand's middle-class in common, as well as the idea that my study could help Thai society in general to "correctly" understand Islam and Muslims, we still had a range of differences. At times the differences between me and my interviewees affected our relationship: particularly those pertaining to gender, ethnicity and variations in regional culture and identity within Thailand.

As a woman interviewing "Muslim" men, I was especially aware of both gender and cultural differences. Even so, I generally felt safe and also recognized a set of norms guiding how Muslim people from difference sexes pay respect to and interact with each other. For example, men and women should not normally be together in a small space. At times, I did find myself in this situation with interviewees, such as when I was conducting interviews in offices or travelling with informants by car. I did not feel unsafe in these circumstances, but I was aware that my interviewees or informants might have thought it was improper. However, only one interviewee noted that he should have left the door open while I was interviewing him. Situations like this in cars made me more self-aware and I had to keep on reminding myself to remain so since I was a stranger to the informants with whom I travelled. Moreover, even though I appreciated their kindness, I was aware that they had reputations to maintain. I was also aware that I had to adjust myself to fit in with different contexts. My dress varied depending on where I was. In Bangkok, when I went to interviewees' offices I wore tailor-made working clothes: *i.e.* knee-length skirts with long-sleeved jackets. If I was interviewing at the interviewees' home, I always wore trousers and long-sleeved blouses. I actually adopted the same dress as a close Muslim friend of mine. In other provinces, since I had to travel a long way, I always wore trousers which were particularly well-suited to situations in which I had to use motorcycle taxi services. I assured myself that I would appear at the interviewees' places wearing modest loose-fitting and long-sleeved clothes. More generally, I adopted the "never-show-my-flesh-and-curves" principle which I anticipated would be considered appropriate by my Muslim interviewees, as indeed I had already learnt from Muslim friends in Bangkok. Importantly, this attitude reflects not so much gender difference as the social roles played by Muslim women: that is, to appear sensible, modest and humble in public.

While most of the differences mentioned above did not adversely affect my research, there were a few that did. For example, on one occasion an Islamic teacher in the Upper South refused to answer the question: "What recommendations would you make for the resolution of the problems in the Lower South?" His response may have been influenced by the fact that I was introduced to him as a lecturer from Bangkok and also that upon his asking I informed him that I am a Buddhist. However, regardless of any regional, religious, cultural, ethnic and political differences that may have separated us, the one thing of which I was certain was that he viewed me as an outsider. To be sure, he did not actually say anything to that effect, but it was hard to see why else he did not want to answer my questions relating to

Malay separatism in the South. Even though this interviewee was not Malay and did not live in the Lower South, it is likely that he felt a religious bond with Malay-speaking Muslims in the Lower South and thus a sense of solidarity with them. The fact that my great grandmother was a Muslim from Pakistan and that any ethnic differences between us were minimal seemed to be of little significance to this interviewee. As a Buddhist from Bangkok, he evidently viewed me as an outsider whom he could not entirely trust. Even though I was introduced to him by a respectable lecturer from the same area, this was no guarantee that the two of them shared similar views about separatism in the Lower South. In any case, it was clear that my interviewee was not comfortable talking to me about this issue so I respected his preference not to answer and did not press him on the matter. Nevertheless, my interviewee's silence might be taken to indicate that he felt sympathy for the opponents of the government and did not want to say anything adverse concerning his fellow Muslims in the Lower South.

Even though I am a Buddhist, by the time I was conducting my research I already had direct connections with a number of Muslims, the most important among them being a close friend who is a lecturer at Thammasat University in a different department to me. She helped to introduce me to and arrange appointments with some interviewees during both periods of my fieldwork in 2008 and 2009. In 2008, I interviewed 15 Muslim professionals with diverse origins: Malay, Persian, Indian, Indonesian, and Chinese Ho. Furthermore, seven professions were represented by this group: namely religious leaders, educators, mass communicators, activists, governing officials, businessmen and scientists. The aforementioned friend introduced me to three scientists, three religious leaders, one web administrator, one governing official and one businessman in Bangkok and Nonthaburi areas, and one lecturer and one businesswoman in Chiang Mai. I interviewed the ones in Chiang Mai over the phone a few times. The rest I either knew directly, such as two Shiite Muslims from Bangkok, or were introduced to me by non-Muslim contacts. I acquired a key informant in the Lower South while attending a conference hosted by the Prince Songkhla University in Phuket. These interviews were conducted face-to-face, and connections with the aforesaid informant's colleagues were made over two days at the conference. The other new connections were introduced to me by a friend who was also a non-Muslim. One of these connections was a businesswoman from Bangkok and one of only two female Muslims whom I interviewed in 2008 (the other being the businesswoman from Chiang Mai mentioned earlier). In total, I interviewed 12 Muslims from Bangkok and Nonthaburi, two

from Chiang Mai and one from Pattani. Thanks to the diversity of this group of interviewees, I was able to develop a wide and varied understanding of Muslim professionals as a section of Thai society. Furthermore, I followed up these contacts in 2009, sometimes in person and sometimes over the phone.

In 2009, I conducted five months fieldwork from August to December. Living in Bangkok, I travelled to the main cities of several regions of Thailand: the North, North East, Upper South and Lower South. In the north, I went to Chiang Mai to interview a member of the provincial Islamic committee. I was accompanied by the Muslim friend mentioned above since she was interested in social work projects organised by the interviewee. He also allowed me to use his home to interview a radio programmer to whom he had introduced to me, as well as a doctor who gave health talks on a radio programme run by the aforesaid radio programmer. Even though these individuals shared the same network, they expressed independent views on matters such as Islamic committees and Islamic education. I also travelled, this time by myself, to interview a businesswoman who had been introduced to me by a lecturer at Chiang Mai University and whom I had already spoken to over the phone before leaving Bangkok. At the time, I did not meet the university lecturer, who was introduced to me by my Muslim friend, but I did interview him over the phone several times.

In the North East, my key informant was an academic whose writings on Muslims in Thailand I had been reading. One of my friends who knew him said he was kind and would be willing to help. I got his telephone number from the university where he worked and made an appointment to visit him at his workplace, the Foundation for Education and Development of Muslims in the North East Thailand (FEDMIN), in Udorn Thani during the month of Ramadan. After interviewing and then having a conversation with him for four hours, he introduced me to three other people from his community who I went on to interview. One of them, whom I interviewed on the same day, was a widowed Muslim woman. She had been married to an *imam* and was a Muslim by marriage [*muallaf*]. After her husband's death, she continued to observe Muslim practices strongly including wearing her *hijab*. As a small business owner, she engaged in women's development projects in the area different to those organised by FEDMIN. After interviewing her for an hour, she gave me her telephone number in case I wanted to speak with her again. She allowed me to shower and offered me food as she knew that I would catch a late-night bus back to Bangkok. The other two interviewees I was introduced to in Chiang Mai were FEDMIN staff; one of them a female teacher and the other a male administrator. I interviewed each of them for one hour. The

teacher, who was wearing a *hijab*, looked tired, but she was willing to answer my questions. The administrator was also informative. My conversations with the administrator ended around dinner time after fasting for the day. Afterwards, my key informant led me to the community's mosque. I observed outside the prayer hall as people, less than twenty, joined in the pray. The widowed lady I interviewed did not go to the mosque, but she met me afterwards to say goodbye. I managed to get the telephone numbers of everyone I interviewed. Moreover, my key informant lent me some books and magazines pertaining to Muslims in the North East and gave me his research assistant's telephone number to help with my networking. This proved very useful since the research assistant gave me telephone numbers for a number of prominent Muslim professionals and allowed me to mention him when calling them.

A few weeks later, I went to Kon Khaen, the province which has the largest Muslim population in the North East, to interview a journalist at the hotel I was staying in. A few hours later, after my interview had finished, I went to visit the aforementioned research assistant at a hospital where he was being treated for an acute illness to thank him and return some books. He was grateful and also asked an activist undergraduate student from Konkaen University to take me to interview an *imam*. Although this was unexpected, I went with the student to a mosque on a motorcycle, arriving just after prayers. Once there, I found a small Burmese Muslim community which included the *imam* whom I was expecting to interview. We managed to speak in Thai with a little help from the *imam's* assistant. Altogether, I conducted six interviews in the North East; two with women and four with men.

In the Upper South, I went to Nakorn Sri Thammarat, which is the largest province in the south and has a Muslim population of 250,000, roughly equivalent to that of Satun province in the far south (Young Muslim Association of Thailand, 2009). My hosts in the area were a local Muslim couple: the husband was a lecturer at Walailak University and a colleague of non-Muslim Thai friends of mine who live in Exeter; his wife was a housewife and a Muslim by marriage [*muallaf*]. They had been married for nearly 10 years and had two children. Furthermore, the aforesaid Thai friends in Exeter also referred me to another lecturer whom I contacted by email to ask if he would be happy to be interviewed. Upon my arrival in Thailand, I sent my host and the latter lecturer a file containing a brief summary of my research project as well as the questions I wanted to ask interviewees. My host informed me that he was willing to help me find interviewees from among his colleagues as well as people he knew from other professions that might be interested in my

project. After arranging where and when to meet by phone and email, I travelled to Nakorn Sri Thammarat even though my contact had not told me exactly whom I was going to interview. My host picked me up from a bus stop close to where he lived early in the morning and brought me to his house where I had breakfast with his family. The first interview started at nearly 8 am. No advance appointment was made with the first interviewee, who was the *imam* of a mosque in the district. Although my host did not pray at that mosque, he knew well enough that he needed to be there by that time. The *imam* was a little cautious at first and clearly stated that he would only answer questions that felt were appropriate. My host asked me to allow him to observe the interview so that he could see how I conducted it and thus know whether he could be confident in introducing me to further potential interviewees. Before starting the interview, which was conducted in an open hallway in the mosque, I briefly explained the purpose of my study and outlined the main questions I would be asking. The interview went well with the *imam* answering every question and talking more than I had expected. He allowed me to record the interview and did not hesitate to give me his telephone number in case I wanted to arrange a further interview with him. Following this first interview, I felt my host's trust in me growing. For subsequent interviews, he just dropped me off at the interviewees' places and even though I did not interview him at any point, while he was driving me from place to place he told me about his religious practices and Islamic education in general as well as the provisions he had made thereof for his son and daughter.

Before I was taken to meet each interviewee, my host briefly called them by phone to let them know that a lecturer from Thammasat University, namely me, would like to interview them about their attitudes towards Muslim institutions and roles in Thai society. Upon arriving, I would tell each interviewee more about the questions I wanted to ask them and explained my status as a PhD student. I advised them not to answer any questions with which they did not feel comfortable. I noticed this made them feel relaxed and more willing to engage in the interview process. Since my questions were open-ended, the interviewees could give responses which avoided their divulging any information that they did not wish to give me. For my part, I was able to choose during interviews whether to probe interviewees' responses further or not by asking follow-up questions. With the exception of the Islamic teacher mentioned earlier, who declined to answer my question about solving the problems in the Lower South, none of the other interviewees refused any of my questions. The set of people whom I interviewed in Nakorn Si Thammarat was not fixed in advance. In fact, of those whom I did eventually interview, I only knew of two of them beforehand; one being the

lecturer in engineering whom I had directly contacted myself, and the other a lecturer running a regional research project. I was able to meet the rest as a matter of chance, depending on their availability at the time when I was in the area conducting interviews. Since the population of the district in which I was staying is 80 per cent Muslim, I found that my host had few difficulties in finding me professional people suitable to interview for my project. Moreover, most of them were flexible about arranging appointments for interviews. Generally, my host only acted as a go-between; he did not put pressure on prospective interviewees to commit to meeting me. Most interviewees were curious about my study and also wished to know about the line of questioning before interviews took place. My status as a lecturer at Thammasat University may have caught their attention and, moreover, my status as a student might have made them generous towards me. As these interviewees had quite flexible working hours, they gave enough time to allow me to finish asking them questions. If interviewees had limited or no expertise in the issues highlighted by my questions, the interview process usually took around an hour or a little longer. Upon finishing each interview, I phoned my host to ask him to pick me up. At times when my host was working, his wife took me to and fro on her motorcycle. In summary, in Nakorn Sri Thammarat I interviewed two university lecturers, one NGO worker, three governing officials, one scientist, one businesswoman and three religious leaders. I conducted a total of eleven interviews, three of which were with women (a businesswoman, NGO worker and scientist).

While I was staying in Nakorn Sri Thammarat, I also travelled to the neighbouring province of Surat Thani to observe a mosque and its *tadika*, the foundational Islamic school where children are taught every Saturday. I was taken there and back by my uncle who lives in Surat Thani. Once there, I had an informal talk with a group of religious leaders. However, since the timing was not appropriate to conduct proper interviews, I only observed and asked for information on the mosque and its *tadika*.

In the Lower South, my host was a lecturer at the Prince Songkhla University whom I had interviewed in 2008. He recommended that I attend a conference about local government in the southern border provinces jointly organized at a local and national level by networks of civil society organizations and academic institutions. My host was a member of the conference's organizing team. I was able to interview a journalist and a radio programmer who were going to attend this event. I also observed the responses of attendees and had informal conversations with members of the local Muslim elite, including a doctor, businessman and several lecturers. I gathered other interviewees using the snowball

technique. I also phoned the PSU lecturers whom I had met on my previous research trip in 2008 to arrange follow up interviews. One of these lecturers then referred me to a scientist in Pattani and a governing official in Yala. After interviewing this scientist, he introduced me to another scientist and three of us went to see some community work they were involved in. Then, I managed to interview the second scientist in a car on the way to the project site. Moreover, a day later when I had another interview session with the first scientist, he introduced me to a journalist whom I approached to request an interview by phone. One of my interviewees from the Lower South, whom I never met face-to-face, was an NGO worker referred to me by the research assistant I met in the hospital in Khon Kaen. I interviewed her over the phone and by email. In total, I conducted nine interviews in the Lower South; three with women and six with men.

In central Thailand, I interviewed Muslim professionals living in Bangkok, Nonthaburi and Chachoengsao. I interviewed two Shiite Muslims I already knew, who were independent historians and ran a historical information centre on Muslim communities. I also interviewed an academic at Thammasat University whom I did not know personally, but whose writings I had read. A close friend of mine, who is a lecturer at Thammasat University, introduced me to three religious leaders, three scientists, one Muslim website administrator and one businessman. Subsequently, one of the religious leaders introduced me to another businessman. Thanks to the contact lists and recommendations given to me by the research assistant I had met in Khon Kaen in the North East, I made further connections to interview a journalist, a public relations worker and an economist. My interview with the aforesaid journalist led to a further interview with a female judge. Additionally, a non-Muslim peer of mine introduced me to a friend of hers who is part of a large Muslim family in Bangkok. I interviewed a businessman from this family and later attended a gathering for a Mother Day's celebration and preparations for fasting during Ramadan. The wife of this businessman introduced me to her friend who is a young businesswoman from another wealthy Muslim family. In total, I conducted 18 interviews between Bangkok, Nonthaburi and Chachoengsao; two with women and the rest with men.

In summary, for the purposes of this study I conducted interviews with 50 Muslim professionals across Thailand, as set out below in Table 1. I managed to interview seven people representing each professional category with the exception of mass communicator for which I managed to interview eight people.

<u>Table 1</u>: numbers of interviewees by region and sex

Region	Male	Female	Total
North	4	2	6
North East	4	2	6
Upper South	8	3	11
Lower South	6	3	9
Centre	**16**	**2**	**18**
Total	**38**	**12**	**50**

Chapter 2

Relationship between the Thai State and Religion

The present chapter has two purposes. First, it provides some background information on the relationship between Buddhism and the Thai state. Second, it outlines some core aspects of Muslim life in Thailand and how they are linked to the Thai state. Although this dissertation is principally concerned with Muslims in different contexts in Thailand, the present chapter provides some background information about of official status of Buddhism, the main religion of the country. Equally, it illustrates key elements of Muslim existence to the extent that they connect with the state.

It is important to understand how Thailand's religious background affects Muslims living there, especially in light of the Thai state's patronage of the assembly of Buddhist monks known as the Sangha,[16] which has been ongoing since the 13th century, either through successive kings or the government. Thailand's Muslims, who officially constitute 4.6 per cent of the country's population (Central Intelligence Agency 2011), could view this relationship as controversial.[17] Considered in a certain light (such as a radical secularist view), secular states should avoid providing some religious groups with more support or patronage than others: indeed, they should stay as religiously neutral as possible in order to promote equality among followers of different religions. However, an alternative way of thinking is that secular states cannot be entirely separated from religion (Habermas 2005), and that in practice most secular states will embody some of the ethoi and practices of their majority religions (House 1996, 230).

The "secular" standpoint of Thailand has been questioned from opposite directions: devout Buddhists and liberal western academics (McCargo 2008; Streckfuss and Templeton 2007). Firstly, in 2007 the former group demanded that Buddhism be officially declared the national religion in the Thai constitution: over a million people signed a petition to that effect. Although they could not press the government to accept their demand, the level of support they achieved indicated the significance of Buddhism in Thailand. However, even without any official declaration, the Buddhist identity of the Thai state is quite clear.

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[16] Meaning Buddhist monastic assembly.
[17] ChaiwatSatha-Anand notes that the figures used vary within the range of 4-10 per cent due to the purposes of the statistical sources. Governmental sources usually gives lower figures than the ones provided by Islamic organizations (Chaiwat 2005, 111).

Meanwhile, among liberal western academics, McCargo (2008) and Streckfuss and Templeton (2007) have all expressed concern about the religious freedom of people living in Thailand. McCargo has also argued that Thai Buddhism is closely linked to nationalism. He has applied the term ethnonationalism to Thailand in this respect, claiming that Thai nationalism is based on ethnicity and religion: hence it is neither a civic nor a liberal form of nationalism (McCargo 2008, 67). However, the present "Thai race" and Thai Buddhism are not the same as they originally were. Instead, as Reynolds has pointed out, both have become civil through continuing processes of Thai identity-making and modernization (Reynolds 1994). It seems that for Reynolds, national religion and civil religion are not necessarily mutually exclusive things. Moreover, even granting that Thailand contains ethnonationalism, it does not necessarily mean it is not liberal. As Anthony Smith has shown, European societies which enjoy significant levels of liberty still maintain forms of national identity through ethnic ties and reinterpretations of ancient festivals, historical events and ancestral heroes (Smith 2011, 224).

McCargo maintains that religious freedom does not exist among Thailand's Buddhist subjects by referring to restrictions placed by the authorities on a few minority religious sects during the 1990s: namely Santi Asoke and Dhammakaya (McCargo 2008, 68). However, his view in this regard contrasts with the fact that the Santi Asoke are currently very active in public in Thailand, both in religious and political matters, albeit as outcasts from mainstream Thai Buddhism.[18] The Dhammakaya sect is also currently thriving without restrictions: the number of religious participants is spectacular and the rank of the abbot monk moves upwards within the Thai Sangha order (Dhamma Media Channel 2011).[19] Nevertheless, for McCargo the continuing ability of sects such as Santi Asoke and Dhammakaya to operate does not demonstrate the existence of religious freedom; he argues that the Thai state continues to ascribe to itself the right to decide what constitutes a proper religion – as seen in official attitudes to Islam and Christianity, and persistent attempts to 'manage' these religions.

Moreover, the argument that the Thai state cannot legitimately determine what counts as 'true Buddhism' is highly contentious (McCargo 2008; Streckfuss and Templeton 2007). It can be argued that it is normal for limits to be placed on freedom in liberal states as follows. Talal Asad maintains that the state has rights to constitute [what is right] and to protect and punish

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[18] Their most salient political activity is being part of the PAD (yellow shirt) protest movement opposing the ex-PM Thaksin Shinawatra.

[19] This is the name of the TV channel owned by the *Dhammakaya* group.

citizens, and that human rights depend on the state having these rights (Asad 2003, 135). Similarly, Habermas states that a normative liberal state still depends on the solidarity of its citizens while 'negative' religious freedom or other liberal regulations, such as allowing abortion, can divide society (Habermas 2005, 347). As for the Santi Asoke case, Reynolds has pointed out that what the state tried to do was to separate 'religion' from politics whereas the Santi Asoke made their attendees and lay members abide by religiously-grounded rules (which were not normative) (Reynolds 1994, 447; 450).

Taking stock of Modood's framework of moderate secularism, as discussed above in Chapter 1, this chapter discusses the development of Buddhism as the de facto national religion of Thailand: in particular, it focuses on the longstanding relationship between Buddhism and the kings of Thailand; how Buddhism is used for official purposes by the Thai state; and how minority religious communities coexist with the dominant Buddhist subjects.

2.1 The development of Buddhism as the de facto national religion of Thailand: the historical period

Since the Sukhothai Era (1200s-1351), Thai kings have had a patronage relationship with Buddhist Sangha. As Ishii has stressed, although Hinduism provided the concept of divine kingship from which Thai kings have derived their absolute power, Buddhism has been most influential in legitimizing the Thai monarchy. The Buddhist principle, *Dhammasattham* [the ten kingly virtues], has been especially important in this respect since Thai kings have used it proclaim themselves *dhammaraja* [kings of righteousness], and in doing so demanding the obedience of their subjects. The distinction between the Sangha and the secular world has generally been respected in Thailand. However, at times, through its patronizing of Buddhism, the monarchy has attempted to intervene in this balance (Ishii 1993, 187-189). The fact that intervention in state affairs has come not directly through the Thai Sangha, but rather by way of the state itself may not be surprising given the historical relationship between the Thai monarchy and Buddhism. During the fifteenth century, certain kings gave ecclesiastical ranks, titles and land to monks in order to place them within a clear hierarchy (Ishii 1993, 189-190). In this way, the monarchy took control of the clerical administration of Buddhism in Thailand. The tradition that the king appoints the Supreme Patriarch or PhraSangharaja and the three other most senior members of the Sangha order continues to

this day. This section gives a chronological account of the relationship between the Thai monarchy and Buddhism prior to the latter having its own administrative body.

The introduction of the Buddhist Sangha into Thailand (the assembly of Thai Buddhist monks charged with maintaining disciplinary standards) was recorded on a main stele:[20] specifically, King Ramkhamhaeng (1279-1298) invited a monk learned in Tripikata (Pali canon inscriptions) from Sri Lanka to help establish Theravada Buddhism in Thailand (Thai Heritage Treasury n.d.).[21] During the Ayutthaya Era (1351-1767), some significant kings contributed greatly to establishing Buddhism in the land. However, in some periods control over Sangha administration was tightened and became highly confrontational. King Songdham (1620-1628) sponsored the completion of the first Pali canon of Siam. The monarchy's control over the Sangha administration was periodically tightened during this period. For example, king Narai (1656-88) tried to enforce the study and examination of the Pali language. He reportedly expelled several thousand monks who could not read Pali texts (Ishii 1993, 192). In response, a group of rural monks protested against this measure on the grounds that it violated the autonomy of the Sangha which the monarchy had customarily respected. Moreover, they complained that the Pali examination was not overseen by a monk, and thus demanded that they be examined only by one of their superiors (Ishii 1993, 193).

The relationship between the Thai monarchy and Buddhist monks between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries developed in such a way that the monarchy took the lead in religious affairs. Since the monarchy patronized Buddhism and Buddhist monks were cooperative, Buddhist institutions often became sanctuaries for kings and nobles seeking refuge during political crises. For example, king Narai (1656-88) was initiated as a monk in order to avoid being assassinated, while king Utoomporn (1758) became a monk in order to pave the way for his elder brother to become king (Payuto 2008). Ironically, these cases signify the existence of the boundary between religion and secular politics in so far as religious bodies did not interfere in the latter. Monks were expected to refrain from wielding political power because monastic society was supposed to be free from secular politics.

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[20] A stone pillar with engraved scripts used as a historical source.
[21] The emergence of the order of Sangha (literally means group or assembly) can be traced back to twenty years after Buddha's enlightenment. Ordained disciples joined the order of Sangha to enact Vinaya (discipline) law and to keep disciplinary standard. The Vinaya law is bounded around words and deeds of the ordained disciples <www.prajan.com>

After the end of Ayutthaya era, king Thaksin moved the capital city from Ayutthaya to where Bangkok is. His successor, king Rama I (1782-1809) showed much interference in Buddhist organization: a series of royal proclamations was issued during 1782-1801 to tighten control over clerical affairs (Ishii 1993, 191). These proclamations included an order that novices should be initiated into the monkhood at the proper age and not be allowed to remain novices once they had fully matured. In order to maintain discipline among monks, the king also commanded that monks who had committed serious misdeeds should declare their having done so to the assembly of monks and thus be excluded from religious rites. He emphasized that abbots were responsible for implementing these laws and monitoring monks in their orders. In his role as the Sustainer of Buddhism, king Rama I encouraged his nobles to listen to sermons and to obey Buddhist precepts (Thai Heritage Treasury a). However, the most contentious issue in Buddhist Sangha administration was when king Rama I defrocked some monks and replaced the monk in the position of Supreme Patriarch (Office of Tamai-Wangluang Sub-district Abbot 2009). In a similar fashion, King Rama II (1809-1824) deposed high-ranking monks on account of their misconduct (Thai Heritage Treasury a). From this juncture until the second decade of the twentieth century, kings still held administrative power over Thai Sangha*;* they had control over the appointment of the Supreme Patriarch.

In addition to building and restoring Buddhist temples as other kings had done, King Rama IV (a.k.a. King Mongkut) (1851-1868) established a new order within Theravada Buddhism (Sunthorn Na-rangsi 2002). The new order, *Dhammayutikka Nikaya*, was established by King Mongkut because he wanted his subjects to understand the "essence" of Buddhism and to deter them from superstitions which he considered impure and not Buddhist (Moffat 1961). He modified certain royal ceremonies to conform more closely to Buddhism rather than Brahmanism or animism (Kirsch 1977, 265). In order to make Buddhist sermons understandable to the public, monks of the *Dhammayutikka Nikaya* order delivered them in the Siamese (Thai) language instead of reciting them verbatim from Pali texts(Moffat 1961). Additionally, he tried to keep the Sangha sphere free from profane or secular entertainments, such as fun fairs, and to reduce mingling between lay patrons and clerics (O'Connor 1994). Some literature claims that this revolution involved both a strengthening of Buddhist institutions in Thailand and an increasing separation between Buddhism and secular society (Kirsch 1977; O'Connor 1994). From a critical viewpoint, the *Dhammayutikka Nikaya* divided Buddhist society because its tendency towards rationalism undermined the credibility

of the traditional cosmology which had been integrated into Buddhist secular law (Reynolds 1994, 438).

In 1902, during the reign of King Rama V, the first Sangha Administrative Act was introduced with the intentions of reaffirming the legitimate power of the Sangha Supreme Council and the Supreme Patriarch and officialising the Sangha administration (Satha-Anand 1990, 396). However, the position of Supreme Patriarch was vacant at the time of this Act's introduction. Therefore, senior members of the Thai monastic community formed the Elders Council in order to advise the king on religious issues. Even so, the king continued to be involved in religious affairs, such as approving the establishment of a new monastery and the appointment of abbots (Administration of the Sangha Act 1902). During his reign, Rama V recognized Chinese and Annam (Vietnamese) Buddhist sects and issued royal edicts commanding the Sangha to help provide education in peripheral provinces. For its part, the Sangha showed itself willing to cooperate with the king (Thai Heritage Treasury a).

In 1911, King Rama VI (1910-1925) appointed a Supreme Patriarch who proceeded to ask the king for total authority over clerical administration (Thai Heritage Treasury c). Following Rama VI's agreement to this request, the Supreme Patriarch had for the first time total authority over the clerical community. Nevertheless, the Sangha and Buddhism were still not independent from public affairs, partly because the Sangha has normality to cooperate with the state (Phra Dharmakosajarn n.d.). The following section gives examples of when and how the state has used Buddhism for the ongoing purposes of "nation-building".

2.2 Examples of official uses of Buddhism: ongoing nation-building

The previous section focused on the extent to which the Thai monarchy has patronised and intervened in matters pertaining to Buddhism in Thailand. This section, by contrast, moves on to consider how the Thai state has made use of Buddhism for political purposes. The ways in which Buddhism has been used by the Thai state have changed over time in relation to the development of the Thai nation. However, the underlying theme of this tendency has been the Sangha which has consistently been used as an instrument of state intervention in religious and political matters, even in spite of the Buddhist clergy having their own administrative bodies.

Some scholars, such as Reynolds (1977), have claimed that the nation-building state of Thailand during the reign of king Rama VI, also called king Vachirawut (1910-1925).[22] During this time, with the effects of the First World War being felt around the world, the king took on an active role in protecting the Thai kingdom from being colonized. He was able to mobilise popular support for a modern idea of Thai nationalism, not least through the threefold concept of the Thai nation, as was discussed in Chapter 1: *viz.* the nation, religion and king (Reynolds 1977). Furthermore, he stressed the importance of Buddhist teachings as the basic principles underpinning moral order in Thai society. As education in Thailand began to be modernised, the significance of Buddhism as the "national religion" became salient in school text books. For example, one book states: "As over 95 per cent of Thai people hold Buddhism as their faith, all citizens of every denomination should co-operate with each other on the principle of inter-religious relationship. This is to foster the security of Buddhism as the national religion because the security of Buddhism will have a direct effect on the security of the Nation and Kingship" (in Satha-Anand and Satha-Anand 1987, 31). King Vachirawut also introduced Buddhist prayers in schools, police stations and army barracks, and organized a paramilitary organization called the Wild Tiger Corps, whose members had to commit to "Buddhism" by oath (Reynolds 1977). The Supreme Patriarch supported the king to such an extent during this period that when the king decided to enter World War I, he gave a sermon arguing that "it is an erroneous idea to suppose that the Buddha condemned all wars and people whose business was to wage war" (Satha-Anand and Satha-Anand 1987, 30).[23]

After the period of absolute monarchy had ended in 1932, a constitution was created with the intention of bringing together the traditional idea of royal promotion of Buddhism and the modern concept of religious liberty. While keeping the king Buddhist, the constitution expanded national support to other religions, and thereby made the king the protector of all religions in the country (Ishii 1994, 456). As regards the administration of Buddhism, the commoner government attempted to design it to be "democratic" as the country had changed (from absolute monarchist to democratic). Therefore, in 1941 the government issued the Administration of the Sangha Act. This act differed from the earlier one issued in 1902 in the respect that it did not give absolute authority to the Supreme Patriarch: more specifically, the

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[22] Reynolds himself, in *Dhamma in Dispute: The Interactions of Religion and Law in Thailand,* refers to the nation building period as during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries including since the reign of the king Rama IV (King Mongkut) (1851-1868) (Reynolds 1994).

[23] Principally, according to the *sila* 5 (5 restrictions), killing is the one that Buddhists should refrain from.

Supreme Patriarch was only given authority to govern the Sangha through the Sangha Cabinet and to judge legal cases through the *Vinaya* (disciplinary) Council (Na-rangsi 2002, 63). By this legislation, the government was able to influence the balance of power in the Buddhist administrative bodies. For their part, the monastic authorities recognized that this Act was intended to organize as far as possible the administration of the Sangha around the nation's system of government, but without infringing on matters relating to monastic discipline.[24] However, in spite of this model of administration signifying democracy, it nevertheless led to stagnation and conflicts (Na-rangsi 2002, 66).

By issuing the 1941 Act, the Phibun government also attempted to reorganize the Sangha order as introduced by King Mongkut. In particular, it tried to combine two orders: the traditional and popular *Mahanikaya*, and the royal-founded *Dhammayuttikanikaya* (Na-rangsi 2002, 64). However, the new Sangha administration which resulted from this act led to more arguments between the two orders and did not work. However much the government at that time attempted to minimize the royalist atmosphere, these two orders could not be merged because the *Dhammayuttikanikaya* had been created by King Mongkut without the prior consent of the whole of Thailand's monastic community (Na-rangsi 2002, 66). Thus, in light of all these problems, the 1941 Act was annulled in 1962.

Governments consistently won popular support during the period when the 1941 Sangha Administrative Act was in effect (1941-1962), when the Supreme Patriarch did not have absolute power and the institution of the monarchy was in transition.[25] This was particularly the case for the governments led by Field Marshal Phibul Songkram (1938-1944) and Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat (1959-1963), both of which gained popularity in Thai Buddhist society by showing clear support for Buddhism (Reynolds 2002). The Phibun government in 1941 built a magnificent new temple (namely Wat Phrasrimahatat) in Bang Khen, Bangkok, where a highly revered image of Buddha was later housed. This temple was the first to be built in the "democratic" era and for the use of the *Dhammayuttikanikaya* (Buddhist Monastery Division 1982, 81-84).

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[24] However, it is believed that the administrative form according to the Buddha is that the Supreme Patriarch conferred power on the Sangha council (a meeting of four or more monks) as the authority in religious activities, and decreed that monks were to respect each other on the basis of seniority (not by age, but by duration of the ordination as monks.

[25] King Rama VIII reigned in 1938 at eight and spent most of time studying in Switzerland and died 12 years later. The current king (Rama IX) did not permanently live in Thailand until 1951.

In the South, military governments during 1938-1973 consistently used Buddhism as part of nationalist policy to integrate citizens from different ethnic backgrounds. As separatism and Chinese-Malayan communism began to take root during World War II, governments in Bangkok desperately tried to integrate the region with the rest of Thailand. The government under Field Marshal Phibunsongkram (1938-1944), Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat (1959-1963) and Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachon (1963-1973) chose the assimilationist policy promoting Buddhism as the national religion.[26] Symbols of the triad, Nation, Religion and Monarchy, were placed in state schools and supposed to be respected throughout Thailand (Aphornsuvarn 2003, 24; Jory 2008, 301-2). Doing so caused discontent among Muslim Malay citizens in the south. The Malay community mobilized the biggest demonstrations in 1948 (Satha-Anand 2008; Jory 2008).

Meanwhile, apparently independent of the Bangkok government, local authorities orchestrated a policy promoting "Buddhism" in a form of superstition. Anan Khananurak, a city councillor (1939-1946) and later mayor of Pattani (1946-1948), popularised the story of a legendary seventeenth-century monk, Luang Pho Thuat, whom, he claimed, was the founder of a temple in Pattani, Wat Chang Hai. This claim could be seen as restating the historical roots of Buddhism in the Lower South (Jory 2008, 297). Amulets with the image of this monk were very popular and highly valuable throughout Thailand. Indeed, they were believed to have supernatural powers which, among other things, helped the police to defeat bandits and separatists as well as to escape from danger (Jory 2008, 299-301). This supernaturalism does not seem to have caused major problems between Buddhists and Muslims since adherents of both religions in the area wore the amulet (Mekjit 2011). Indeed, it was reported that the father of the monk in question was a Muslim (Kuen Im-Kaeng Krachan n.d.). However, this did not solve the problems posed by communism and the separatist movement in the region, so the government was forced to declare a state of emergency in the South in 1953 (Jory 2008, 303).

While the aforementioned dictatorships failed to win the support of minorities and groups of citizens with different political standpoints, they were successful in consolidating the ideology of Thai nationalism in mainstream Thai society. To this end, Buddhism was nurtured by the dictatorships. The core of the Sangha administrative problem was solved by

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[26] The government under Field Marshal Sarit applied the assimilationist policy more forcefully than the previous regime, and was quick to use modern weaponry provided by the US military against subversives of all sorts (Sivaraksa 2002; Gilquin 2005).

a new act, issued in 1962, which created a Council consisting of the Supreme Patriarch in the capacity of Chairman and a number of other elders. The purpose of this organisation was to issue directives, laws, procedures and motions linked to the administration of the Sangha. The act itself gave the Supreme Patriarch significantly more power than its predecessor, enacted in 1941. As a consequence, the Supreme Patriarch and the Supreme Council were more able to push forward change in the administration of the Sangha from 1962 onwards (Na-rangsri 2002, 71). Moreover, the 1962 Sangha Administrative Act immediately gave temples non-transferable rights over their land. This had the effect that if the government wanted to make use of temples' land, parliament was required by the 1962 act to pass further acts or decrees granting the government rights to do so. Additionally, the government was obliged to provide temples with financial compensation for using their land (Sangha Administrative Act 1962). The popularity of the Thai dictatorships of the mid-twentieth century among the majority of Thai society can be attributed not least to their promoting of Buddhism in this way.

In addition to mobilizing popular support through the promotion of Buddhism, during the political crises of the 1970s and 80s successive governments attempted to use Buddhist organizations for the "national" interest. For example, in order to eliminate the influence of communism in Thai society, the government allied itself with right-wing groups. A supporter of one of these groups based in Bangkok, a powerful monk named Kittiwuttho, preached that it was not sinful to kill communists (Reynolds 1977, 280). At times, these attempts to use Buddhist institutions for political purposes led to fractures in monastic society. In spite of the links between the Buddhist Sangha and the Thai government, many monks continued to observe the traditional separation between their religion and the state. Taylor has noted that forest monks in the Northeast, who lived in the midst of communist insurgents and security forces, tended to show political neutrality towards this issue. A few monks left the monkhood because of the pressure from their seniors and the government to adopt an anti-communist stance (Taylor 1993, 37; 268-269).

More recently, in 2004 the government under Thaksin Shinawatra's leadership showed its intention to make use of Buddhist properties by issuing the Land Reform for Land Development Act. During the legislative process, the drafters attempted to establish governmental rights to make use of land owned by temples. However, this move conflicted with the 1962 Sangha Administrative Act which, as noted above, conferred to temples non-transferable rights to their land throughout Thailand. This move raised a storm of protest from

Buddhist networks (The Sangha Supreme Council 2004) which eventually led to the drafters changing the content of the law to follow the 1962 Act (Land Reform for Land Development Act 2004).

At present, the governmental uses of Buddhism and Buddhist institutions can be seen in more moderate forms. Since Buddhism is part of the nation, the government delegates a range of duties to Buddhist organizations such as contributing to the national education system. For example, the 1999 National Education Act and the 2008 Vocational Education Act state that Buddhist organizations form an element of the Educational Council (in addition to organizations linked to other religions). These acts defend the space of religion in Thailand's education system and thus show that religion still has a place in state affairs.

In regard to the current insurgency in the Lower South, there is evidence that the government uses some local temples both as places to protect Buddhist citizens and bases for attacking insurgents. According to an interview conducted by Jerryson with a monk in the Lower South, the queen had ordered soldiers to become monks so that they could stay at and thus protect abandoned temples and their sacred objects (Jerryson 2011, 121). Other interviews conducted by Jerryson show a mixed response to this report from monks: some rejected it while others agreed with it, at least in the respect that soldier monks were protecting abandoned temples. However, since the operations of the soldier monks are secret, wider Thai society does not know the exact goals of this project (Jerryson 2011, 116-7). Since nobody is ensuring that the military runs this operation strictly for the purposes of protecting sacred Buddhist sites, using temples as military bases and disguising soldiers under monks' robes has had the effect of damaging mutual trust and understanding between local Muslims and Buddhists.

2.3 Coexistence of different religions

Due to the prominence of Buddhism in Thai culture, a majority of the Thai Buddhist public could easily assume that Buddhism is the national religion. Buddhism features prominently in the public calendar wherein only Buddhist holy days are marked as official holidays. Royal news always stresses the links between Buddhism and the monarchy by reporting royal involvement in Buddhist prayers and offerings. The form of Buddhist nationalism developed during the period of nation-building continues to have an impact in this respect. Certain segments of the public feel offended if they perceive that other religions are gaining preference or popularity over Buddhism in Thailand. Anti-Muslim sentiment was particularly

noticeable after the 2006 coup, not least due to the head of the coup being a Muslim. In response, Buddhist extremists commented that he might make the country become Muslim (even though his loyalty to the monarchy was widely recognised). Later, in 2007, when the country's constitution was due to be revised, the Buddhism Protection Centre of Thailand (established in 2001) proposed that Buddhism be made the official national religion. When the government showed no signs of pursuing their proposal, the organization mobilized more than one million Thais to sign a petition. Other Buddhist organizations, such as the Youth Monks Organization, a non-official clerical organization, cooperated with the Buddhism Protection Centre as well as the rector of Chulalongkorn University (Mukdawichit 2007). There was also a demonstration of 20,000 Buddhists in front of the parliament to put pressure on the government to accept the proposal (Manager Online 2007). Lastly, an active member of the Buddhism Protection Centre of Thailand published a book warning that "Islam will take over the country." The author raises this issue by stressing the rising Muslim population and the fact that the head of the 2006 coup was a Muslim (Chandee 2008).

Despite pressure from a huge segment of the Thai public, the parliament at that time did not accept the idea that Buddhism should be made the national religion. This situation reflects the various viewpoints of members of the political elite (in the name of the state), as well as the Buddhist public and the rest of Thai society. This matter is complicated still further by Forbes' claim that while the Thai state continues to face problems with Muslim separatists along the southern border, Buddhist-Muslim relations throughout the remainder of the country are good and increasingly cordial (Forbes 1982, 1067). Accordingly, the next section discusses examples of how different segments in Thai society relate to Muslim minorities: specifically, the relationship between the Thai monarchy and Muslims, issues regarding hijabs and the place of Islamic institutions in Thai society.

2.3.1 The Thai monarchy and Muslim people

Essays regarding the relationship between the current king and Thailand's Muslim population are never as comprehensive as those which focus on him as a Buddhist king ruling a Buddhist country. What is more, the king's connections to Thailand's Muslims have been treated in different ways depending on the sources concerned. Some sources view his relationship with Muslims in light of his role as the upholder of religions, in which respect he has been a benefactor of Islamic affairs across Thailand (Poomnarong n.d.). Meanwhile, other more critical sources suggest that the king should intervene in the measures taken by the

government towards the southern insurgency which are seen as discriminating and violating human rights (Ahmed and Akins 2012).

The current king of Thailand is most commonly seen as having a positive relationship with Thailand's Muslims and has been praised for his support for Islam. An Iranian Shiite website notes that in the 2011 annual meeting of senior Thai politicians, ambassadors from Islamic countries religious leaders, the king praised Islam as a religion of logic, affection and peace (AhlulBayt News Agency 2011). Even among his critics, the Thai king is widely accepted as an upholder of Islam: Ahmed and Akins have stated that the king has helped Muslims to undertake the Hajj pilgrimage and funded the construction of new mosques (Ahmed and Akins 2012).

The king's contributions to Islam in Thai society have been clearly outlined by a Muslim woman known as loyal to the king. A well-known Muslim website, MuslimThai.com, has posted an essay written by a prominent member of Thailand's Muslim community, Samorn Poomnarong, discussing the king's contributions to Islam and Muslims. Indeed, the image she presents is one of a good relationship between the current Thai monarchy and Thailand's Muslim community. In 1950, the head of the Thai Muslim community, the Chularajmontri (also known as Sheik-al-Islam in some Muslim countries), attended the coronation and royal marriage of the current king, who was then 23 years old. Shortly afterwards, in 1955, the king began to regularly visit people across the country, including in the southern border provinces where 80 per cent of the population is Muslim. Since his coronation, the king has regularly helped with healthcare provision and agriculture in the Lower South. In 1962 the king commanded the Chularajmontri to translate the Quran into the Thai language and for the resulting translation, the first of its kind, to be published. Between 1964 and 1966, the current king opened a ceremony celebrating the birth of the Prophet Muhammad and has since been replaced in this role by other members of the royal family. Poomnarong describes a number of other ways in which the king has contributed to Thailand's Muslim community, such as by donating land for the building of a mosque in Petchaburi Province in 1990 and later giving more money for the mosque to be rebuilt when it became dilapidated. She also notes that each year the king presents prizes for the best Muslim religious leaders, and that he has opened central mosques in every province (Poomnarong n.d.). For their part, when the king has been unwell, Muslims in the Lower South have gathered together to pray for him (Poomnarong n.d.).

On the other hand, the existence of militant separatists in the Lower South has at times been seen as a threat to the monarchy. For example, Satha-Anand has highlighted an incident, which occurred in 1977, where an explosion went off in the presence of the king and queen in Narathiwat. While Thai newspapers reported that the explosion was an accident, foreign media drew a connection between it and political matters in the area (Satha-Anand 2008). McCargo has argued that this bombing was an attempt to assassinate the king (McCargo 2006, 58).

In recent years, some authors have claimed that the monarchy has not responded well to the southern conflict and even that it has become involved in religious controversies in the region (McCargo 2008; Joll 2010). For example, a speech made by the queen in 2004 after two palace officials were killed, in which she called on local people to stay on their land and fight the militants, was interpreted as being addressed only to Buddhists and therefore potentially fuelled the conflict (Joll 2010, 263). On the next day, the king made a speech to 510 newly promoted police and army officers concerning cooperation between them (McCargo 2006, 60). McCargo and Joll consider the king's speech as an intervention designed to calm the situation and reassert liberal principles of tolerance (Joll 2010, 262). Similarly, the village defence volunteer system built under the auspices of the queen was seen as serving only Buddhist villagers (ibid, 261). Furthermore, the king has been seen by some as responsible for the decision made by the Privy Tinsulanond in 2006 to reject a proposal for Malay to be recognised as an official language in Thailand (Reuters 2006). Although this refusal to use Malay as an official language is not in itself a religious issue, it has nevertheless been linked to the political conflict between Malay-speaking Muslim "separatists" and the Thai state.

The relationship between the monarchy and Muslims, especially in the South, is complicated from both sides. Firstly, the queen's intentions to protect her Buddhist subjects in the southern border provinces, where violent attacks have taken place, are clear through her words and deeds. Some academics, including Jerryson (2010), McCargo (2008) and Joll (2010), believe that the queen has backed the operations of soldier monks as discussed above. On the other hand, royally supported projects, such as training local people to use arms and self-sufficient villages, have also served Muslim people (Boontab 2005). Moreover, in 2006 the king established five schools for needy children in the Lower South area offering the national curriculum, Islamic education and halal meals free of charge (Kom Chad Luek 2009). In 2007 the Crown Prince established a new housing project to replace the ruined one occupied by Muslim and Buddhist families in Yala Province (Office of Yala Province 2010).

It could be argued that royal patronage of different causes in the South has had a negative impact on inter-communal relationships between Buddhists and Muslims and different groups of Muslims in the area. However, it can also be argued that royal aid and support has actually been helpful for ordinary people in the South who get on with their everyday lives in spite of the violent attacks occurring around them.

Muslims in the Lower South are by no means a monolithic group. The so-called "separatists" who have emerged since 2004 include a diverse group of people: propagandists, operational commanders, armed fighters, supporters and other leaders (Askew 2010, 131). Furthermore, the goals of these people vary widely. For example, the demands expressed by armed fighters range from the establishment of an Islamic kingdom to there being more Muslims in local government and reductions in the presence of security forces (McCargo 2008, 152). There is a general lack of knowledge in Thailand about what kind of political settlement people in the South want with regard to their relationship with the rest of Thailand. The Muslim politician, Najmuddin Umar, has claimed that if a referendum on independence were to be held, those advocating independence might win by a margin of around two to one (ibid.). However, Askew has drawn attention to Andrew Cornish's research which suggests that the attitudes of rural Malays tend not to fit either with separatist or royalist modes of thought (Askew 2010, 146).

Askew has also argued that the pronouncements made by Malay academics about the identity of Malay Muslims living in southern Thailand may not be representative of ordinary people fitting that description. Keeping the latter point in mind, Askew has thus questioned whether Malay Muslim elites speak for ordinary Muslims given the limited contact between these two groups, as well as the fact that ordinary Muslims frequently do not follow their leaders. In support of these claims, Askew points to villagers he has spoken to who showed no interest in the issue of Malay Muslim identity (ibid. 147). He also draws support for his views from Jitpiromsri's survey research on regional governance which shows that Malay Muslim elites are neither united in their attitudes towards Islam nor the insurgency and possible solutions thereof (ibid.). Therefore, Askew draws the important conclusions that, first, Malay Muslim elites compete among themselves and, second, that the issues of Malay Muslim identity and separatism in the South offer fertile ground for establishing political power. Even more important, however, is his view that the significance of the aforesaid conclusions for ordinary local citizens is yet to be properly examined (ibid. 148).

Therefore, given that the normative attitude of Muslims in southern Thailand towards the Thai monarchy falls somewhere between royalist and secessionist, it seems reasonable to question how far anyone's view can be seen as collectively and mutually certain among them. Indeed, it seems reasonable to assume that any such attitudes vary from one person to the next, and that they are likely to have changed over time since the outbreak of violence in 2004.

2.3.3 Issues relating to hijabs

Discussing issues relating to the wearing of hijabs with reference to the relationship between the state and religion is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, it is debatable how far hijabs are worn for religious reasons. Secondly, the wearing of hijabs in Thailand has never been a direct problem for the Thai State because it has never issued any laws against doing so.

However, at least two Thai-Muslim academics maintain that the wearing of hijabs in Thailand is a religious statement. Firstly, Satha-Anand has argued that the wearing of hijabs in a country such as Thailand, where the majority of women do not wear them, better reflects the religious sentiments of those wearing them than in countries where Muslims are in the majority (Satha-Anand 1994, 284). Secondly, Marddent, who herself wears a hijab, has demonstrated that the wearing of hijabs in Central Thailand reflects a current trend towards the public expression of piety (Marddent 2009). However, the wearing of hijabs can be related to other factors neither related to piety nor the state. For example, in the context of Indonesia it has been argued that hijabs are worn as a way of negotiating between personal career opportunities and Islamic movements (Smith-Hefner 2007). Therefore, the significance of the wearing of hijabs in Thai contexts is explored in Chapter 7 of this study from perspectives of Muslim interviewees.

Both Satha-Anand and Marddent refer to the case of a group of Muslim students who, while studying at the Yala Teacher Training College between 1987 and 1988, insisted on wearing hijabs in spite of it being against the college's uniform regulations. This dispute resulted in a series of protests, at its height involving more than ten thousand people demonstrating on either side, albeit with a much greater number in support of the Muslim students. Security forces were called in to monitor the situation which eventually led in 1988 to the Minister of Education issuing a new College Act making it permissible for Muslim students to wear hijabs (Satha-Anand 1994, 287-9).

Comparing the case of Thailand with that of Singapore, Law (2003, 68) has stated that Thailand has taken a more tolerant approach to issues relating to the wearing of hijabs. Nevertheless, Satha-Anand has pointed out that during the protests mentioned above, public opinion towards the issue was diverse, incorporating supportive, tolerant and intolerant strands. In particular, those in opposition to the protesters stressed the cause of national unity which they claimed was undermined by the wearing of hijabs. Hence for this reason, Satha-Anand has estimated hijabs could potentially re-emerge as a critical issue in Thai politics (Satha-Anand 1994, 289).

The years 2010-2011 saw the wearing of hijabs become a burning issue again, this time in Bangkok. Thai Muslim women have the right to wear hijabs without restrictions, including in the workplace and on ID cards. However, some government officials and private citizens still try to prevent them from doing so. Thus, in 2011 a protest, similar to the one of 1987 described above, took place against a temple school which would not allow its students to wear hijabs. This time, the number of demonstrators involved was considerably smaller than in 1987 (around 300 people). While the 1987 protest tended to reflect a lack of tolerance for women wearing hijabs in government workplaces, the 2011 protest instead signifies the practical problems of legal pluralism facing Thailand.

This most recent issue was initially sparked in 2010 by a conflict between 17 Muslim students and a government school using land belonging to a Buddhist temple. The students and a group supporting them, the Muslim Group for Peace, insisted they had the right to wear hijabs according to the Thai Constitution. Additionally, the students and their supporters claimed that according to the 2008 Ministry of Education Regulations on School Uniform, hijabs are part of the uniform for Muslim students who are free to choose between wearing the standard school uniform or the uniform for Muslim students (Muslim Group for Peace 2011). On the other hand, the school temple, albeit state-run, also drew on the Thai Constitution in order to protect what it saw as its rights in the matter. Specifically, the temple claimed that according to the terms of the land lease, the wearing of hijabs, as well as the display of other non-Buddhist religious symbols, on the temple's land is not permissible and that the temple, as a juridical person, can set rules to regulate its own affairs (Parliament Report 2011). If the school violated the contract, the temple threatened to cancel the lease with the result that the school would have to move.

In November 2010, the school director asked the Educational Office of Area 2 for guidance on best practice. The Educational Office supposedly replied that the school could choose either to accept or decline the Muslim students' calls. It highlighted Article 19 of the 2008 Ministry of Education Regulations on School Uniform which states that school uniforms established before 2008 remain valid and that students must seeks their schools' permission if they want to wear something else as set out in the 2003 Children Protection Act which supersedes ministerial regulations. Therefore, the Educational Office essentially advised that the school could refuse the students' demands, but that it must also inform them of their right to petition against any such refusal (letter MOE 04232/2839, the Educational Office of Area 2).

After the school informed the students that they could not wear hijabs as part of their uniform, none of them exercised their right to petition, although two students did continue to wear hijabs to school. It seems that at this point, the main stakeholder in the case became the aforesaid activist group, the Muslim Group for Peace, since it did petition the PM and the Minister of Education in November 2010. Therefore, the issue remained in dispute until January 2011 when MPs asked the Sangha Supreme Council for a resolution. The resolution which followed was in favour of the temple, stating that any school or governmental units using land belonging to Buddhist temples must follow the temples' customs and regulations (Sangha Supreme Council Resolution 2/2011). However, the Muslim Group for Peace continued to protest against the decision through the media, thus prompting the Ministers of Education and Culture to give interviews: they stated that neither the Ministries of Education nor Culture, nor the Sangha Supreme Council have prohibited the wearing of hijabs. Nevertheless, they reiterated that since the temple in question is a juristic person, their ministries could not violate its rights (Manager Online 2011).

Since May 2011, demonstrations linked to the issue have become more heated. Approximately a hundred supporters of the students demonstrated in front of the temple school in May 2011when the new academic year began. Later, in October 2011 the Foundational Education Committee launched a resolution on the wearing of hijabs at the Nongjok Temple School. At a conference, which included the educational authorities, its lawyers, a parent representative and the school director, it was agreed that in the next academic year (2012), if the terms of land lease between the temple and the school prohibited the wearing of hijabs at the school, the school should declare this in its terms of admission. In fact, during the 2011 academic year there was only one student who insisted on wearing a

hijab. The school had to provide education for this student outside of the school grounds, and to arrange occasional meetings for her with teachers inside the school with the mutual agreement of the head of the Educational Office of Area 2 and the temple's abbot (Conference memoir MOE 04009/).

Since the national authorities, namely the Education Ministry and the Department of Religion, could not force the Nongjok Temple to change its rules, the aforesaid Muslim student attempted to sue the school director in December 2011. In response, the courts appointed an investigation in March 2012 (Buddhist News 2012). However, so far this investigation appears to have made little progress in resolving the matter.

Later in January 2012, several hundred supporters of the student demonstrated in front of parliament, insisting that she had the right to wear a hijab to school. In response, the Minister of Education held a meeting which included representatives of the Muslim Group for Peace. A resolution was agreed in this meeting to the effect that the school should allow the wearing of hijabs as part of its uniform despite the school being established on temple land. However, this resolution did not seem to apply to the disputed case because another resolution stated that the school director must makes provisions for extra time and resources in cases where teaching occurs outside of the school grounds (Letter MOE 04009/79, Office of Foundational Education Committee).

The resolution discussed above shows confusion on the part of the school and Minister of Education because no one could be certain of whether the school had the right to overrule the temple's regulations or not. Even though the school was ordered to adjust its uniform regulations, the committee admitted that the fact that the school was using the temple's land remained a problem yet to be resolved, and that a dialogue with the senior monk was needed (ibid.). The Director General of Department of Religion indicated that there was no rule prohibiting any person from wearing religious clothes in territories belonging to other religions. However, he also expounded that there must be communal rules. Specifically in regard to the dispute at the Nongjok Temple School, he suggested that the school administrators, teachers, parents, temple and relevant stakeholders should work together to establish a common rule. The Chularajmontri said that local MPs were trying to help develop mutual understanding (Kao Sod 2012). After all, the state had failed to enforce the rights of a Muslim student who wanted to wear a hijab and failed to confirm whether the temple had rights to maintain its own rules.

The responses of the national authorities involved in this case suggest that the dispute falls beyond the power of the state. It could be argued that the state did not wield ultimate power because it took the side of the Buddhist temple. At least two Thai academics, Unno (2011) and Eiwsriwong (2011), have argued that this dispute happened due to there being an overly rigid relationship between the Thai State and the Sangha Supreme Council such that the State could not ignore the Sangha's resolution on the matter. However, their arguments in this respect show different levels of complexity. Unno's analysis proceeds as if the Thai state, the Sangha Supreme Council and the temple school were the same entity, all holding Buddhist identity. By contrast, Eiwsriwong comments that the state should not have asked the Sangha Supreme Council for advice on the matter. However, both ignore the fact that most temple schools allow Muslim women, including teachers and students, to wear hijabs. In this temple school itself, there is a prayer room for the use of Muslim students and the school provides an Islamic education curriculum (MuslimThai 2011). It is also noteworthy that in his article, Eiwsriwong argues that the temple should be a resource for the whole community since the land on which it was founded might have been donated by or exchanged between Buddhist and Muslim ancestors.

The dispute in this case can be classified as a community problem which has been politicized nationally. If the focus is shifted from the national to the community level, it can be seen that Buddhists are in a minority in the community in question. Even in the school, ninety percent of the students are Muslim. It is therefore of interest in itself that most parents and students did not join the protests against the school's policy on hijabs. It is also noteworthy that there were initially only 17 students asking to wear hijabs, only one of whom challenged the legality of the school's decision to refuse their request.

It is significant that an online Buddhist commentator, Santiyangyoo (2011), who has been critical of cases where Muslims have not accommodated the needs of Buddhists at a local level in Nongjok, has argued that in the case of the Nongjok Temple School, the use of legal means to force the temple to accept the wearing hjiabs could threaten peace in the area. Elsewhere, Santiyangyoo has brought attention to a case where a monk could not enter an informal education exam being held in a mosque in Nongjok because local Muslims would not allow him to enter their land. He has also highlighted another occasion in Nongjok where local Muslims did not allow a Buddhist lent procession to approach the land of their mosque. There are surely many more situations in which Buddhists and Muslims may be seen as having violated each other's "religious" rights in this community. However, regardless of

Santiyangyoo's suggestions, a legal solution provided by the state has yet to be found to the issue of Muslim students wearing hijabs in temple schools. Indeed, it may be that the best solutions to such problems should come not through laws imposed by the state, but rather from within local communities themselves.

Fortunately, most of the Thai public have not reacted negatively to the polemic stirred up by the Nongjok Temple School case, even though some people have expressed defensive views towards one religion or the other. One Buddhist website has tried to show that Muslims are invading Buddhist society and that the Nongjok Temple School dispute is part of this invasion (Buddhist News 2012). On the other hand, a Buddhist visitor to the website of a Muslim blogger has stated that 12,000 Facebook members do not accept the resolution of the Sangha Supreme Council (Musachiza 2011). However, since these 12,000 members do not clearly represents any distinct group, and are likely religiously-mixed, it can thus be assumed that Thai society is not deeply divided over this issue.

By observing Buddhist and Muslim blogs, it is possible to find adherents of one religion sympathising with those of the other. Most Buddhists question whether there are any religious grounds for the prohibition of hijabs in temple schools. For example, an online commentator, Bhuddadika (2011), whose form of address suggests that he is also a monk, has referred on a Buddhist website to a teaching that Buddhists should attempt to understand all religions. On the other hand, a Muslim blogger, Sigree bin Mamak (2011), has gained a lot of sympathy from Buddhist visitors when he posted the reasons why wearing hijabs is important for Muslim women. Another Muslim blogger, Matt, has expressed some sympathy towards the Nongjok temple. Meanwhile, Matt (2011) has suggested that Muslims should not take advantage of Thai society and that the wearing of hijabs is wajib—that is to say, it is close to mandatory but subject to concessions based on local conditions and circumstances.

So far, the latest round of disputes over the wearing of hijabs has concluded with the failure of the state to resolve the issues at hand. It has also shown how far "religious" assertiveness can go. A lack of news from both sides can be taken to imply that the negotiation process is still going on. Even so, Thai society should be receptive to guidance about how problems of this kind can be best resolved by the state and relevant authorities. It is quite clear that the school discussed above has to provide education for Muslim students who wear hijabs. However, the questions hanging over whether the temple has rights, as a juristic person, to

restrict the access to its land of people who do not follow its dress code also need to be answered, not least because similar cases might arise in the future.

2.3.4 Islamic institutions in Thai society

Since the first Royal Patronage of Islam Decree in 1945, The Thai state has accommodated a wide-range of Islamic institutions. Che Man (1990) categorizes these institutions into two types: non-governmental and governmental. The former includes mosques and Islamic schools while the latter includes the institutions of the *Chularajmontri* and the *Dato Yutitham* (Muslim judges applying Islamic laws concerning the family and inheritance in compliance with the 1946 Islamic Laws Application in Pattani, Narathiwat, Yala and Satun Provinces Act). This section does not discuss the latter type of institutions since there are not many Muslim people involved in them. Firstly, the *Dato Yutitham* operates only in the four southern border provinces and, moreover, where disputes arise between Muslims the contending parties approach imams or members of Provincial Islamic Committees first. Bringing cases to the Dato Yutitham involves paying court fees and following the procedures of the Thai court system (Che Man 1990, 276-277).

The first Royal Patronage of Islam Decree in 1945 endorsed the establishment of the *Chularajmontri* (the king's official adviser on issues regarding Islamic affairs), the Central Islamic Committee of Thailand, the Provincial Islamic Committees, the mosque committees and the Islamic College of Thailand (Royal Patronage of Islam Decree 1945). Che Man classes the Provincial and Central Islamic committees and the mosque committees as subordinate to the *Chularajmontri* (Che Man 1990, 271).

In 1990 Che Man estimated that fewer than 30 percent of the members of the Provincial Islamic Committees were capable of giving religious advice at a provincial level which is why advisory committees were formed in the 1980s (Che Man 1990, 273). He also made the intriguing observation that while many Malay Muslims in the Lower South regarded members of the Provincial Islamic Committees as "second rate" religious scholars, Muslims living in other regions of Thailand valued them as learned men (ibid., 274). Lastly, Che Man contended that Muslims in the Lower South believed that Provincial Islamic Committees were established by the government to integrate and control local Muslim citizens and that they had little power and financial support (ibid.). Current situations regarding these issues are explored in Chapter 4 through the perspectives of Muslim interviewees.

More recently, Yusuf (2010, 45) has claimed that the *Chularajmontri* himself, as the head of the bodies representing Muslims in Thailand, has been a target of criticism. Specifically, Yusuf (ibid.) contends that Muslims in wider Thai society viewed the *Chularajmontri*'s response towards the Kruse mosque incident in 2004 as biased in favour of the government and thus against the Muslim population. Not surprisingly, therefore, Muslim groups attempted to alter the 1997 Islamic Organization Administrative Act, which remains in force, in order to bring about structural changes to the official bodies representing Thai Muslims (Yusuf 2010, 48-49). Accordingly, details of these events are discussed further in Chapter 4 which focuses on the *Chularajmontri* and Islamic committees.

The 1945 Royal Patronage of Islam Decree authorised for the establishment of the Islamic College of Thailand which was later founded by the Education Ministry in Bangkok in 1950 (Islamic College of Thailand 2010). In provinces with Muslim majorities, such as those in the Lower South, traditional Islamic education was affected by compulsory education policies in 1921 and 1939. Similarly, in 1961 the government initiated a policy to transform *pondoks* [traditional Islamic schools] into registered private Islamic schools which were then subsidized by the government (Che Man 1990, 265). Che Man has commented that these changes led to the diffusion of Thai values and culture within government-sponsored *pondoks*, adding that the government considered the transformation process complete by around 1990 (ibid., 269-270). On the other hand, Liow has noted that some *pondoks* avoided the transformation policy in the 1960s by moving underground and thus towards fostering separatism. More generally, Liow states that *pondoks* reinforce Malay-Muslim identity through religious and language training (Liow 2004, 1-2). Recently, a research survey has shown that in the Lower South, most Muslim respondents would like *tadikas* [foundational Islamic schools for younger children] to teach secular subjects and to have curricula which can be integrated with the 2003 Islamic Studies Curriculum. However, most respondents did not want *pondoks*, which teach Islamic education at a higher level to older students, to teach secular subjects, preferring instead an informal curriculum as has traditionally been the case (Narongraksakhet *et al*, 2011). Accordingly, Chapter 5 of this study discusses how far Islamic education in Thailand has eased or inhibited integration and explores interviewees' expectations of Islamic education.

The 1947 Mosque Act required that mosques be registered throughout Thailand. After being registered, mosques became juristic persons and were run by government-sponsored mosque committees financed with aid for Islamic affairs (Che Man 1990, 260). The fact that mosques

were therefore defined as non-governmental entities while at the same time being run under government-backed committees could potentially have led to problems in the running of their affairs. However, the results of one research survey run counter to this assumption. Specifically, Khuyai (1997) found that Muslims in a district of Bangkok expressed high levels of expectation, satisfaction and acceptance of their local *imams*. Thus, Chapter 6 of this study explores more deeply the expectations, and levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of Muslim professionals towards the services provided by mosques throughout Thailand.

It should be noted that specifically in the Lower South, the national integration policy has affected the functioning of mosques. In the 1980s the government built central mosques in the provinces of Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala. However, many local Muslims at that time were not happy that the mosques were built by non-Muslims whom they saw as being motivated by politics rather than faith (ibid., 262). Moreover, between 1960 and 1985 the Thai authorities selected mosque functionaries from the Lower South to visit Bangkok and other major cities as part of a group study tour programme. At this period of time, the principal personnel of mosques in the Lower South were frequently invited by the Thai authorities to other kinds of meetings to foster understanding and togetherness. Yet these efforts resulted in the influence of those mosque functionaries being diminished as they developed closer ties with the Thai authorities (ibid., 263).

Chapter 6 of this dissertation discusses whether the roles played by mosques have been inclusive or exclusive from the Thai state and society. Intriguingly, a survey in 1996 found that Muslim populations in the Lower South had only moderate expectations of mosques, but it did not explore in any depth what those expectations were (Madaeho *et al*, 1996, 96). Thus, Chapter 6 also explores what expectations Muslim professionals have of mosques.

Finally, there are a number of other organizations which have recently been established for the purposes of Islam in Thailand. For example, the Islamic Bank was established in 2003 under the 2002 Islamic Bank of Thailand Act (Haron and Yamirudeng 2003; Islamic Bank of Thailand 2010). Additionally, in 2003 the *Halal* Standard Institution of Thailand was developed in line with regulations set out by the Central Islamic Committee of Thailand in order to ensure that the development and certification of Halal food standards comply with the provisions of the Islamic Religion and international standards (The Halal Standard Institution of Thailand 2007). However, these institutions are not included in this study because they are relatively new as compared with those mentioned above.

Chapter 3

Muslim Groups of Thailand

In ideal, theological terms, Muslims around the world often argue that they cannot be divided into separate groups because they are intertwined in the same community. Accordingly, if asked about the make-up of the Muslim community in Thailand, some Thai scholars might be expected to give a somewhat bureaucratic response as can be seen from the following assertions made by Kashmir.

> According to the Islamic Administrative Act we don't have groups/divisions. We have a structured administration of which the Chularajmontri is the head. Thus, we can socially move in the same direction. Every group is slightly different, but not in its essence. There are differences in details of practices and in numbers of population. (Kashmir 2009)

As a member of a Provincial Islamic Committee, Kashmir tried to downplay the differences between Sunni and Shiite, the two main sects within Islam, and between the Old and New Lines of Practice. As he says above, the differences between these groups are in the details of their practices rather than their essence. These differences will be further discussed in Chapter 7. For present purposes, this chapter focuses on the geographical categorization of the Muslim population in Thailand since it is less subjective and has more relevance to the research questions posed by this study about how Muslim interviewees see themselves in relation to wider Thai society, and how far they are integrated therein.

As a major minority in Thailand, Muslims constitute 4-10 per cent of the population. The figures vary according to sources. The National Statistics Office of Thailand (2005) reported the number at 4 per cent, the US Central Intelligence Agency (2011) 4.6 per cent, the United Nations (2008) 5 per cent, while the figures reported by Muslim organizations can be as high as 10 per cent (Satha-Anand 2005, 111). It is noteworthy that the lowest figures are given by the Thai authorities and the highest by Muslim organizations. A member of the Chiang Mai Provincial Islamic committee has claimed that that the correct figure could be 7-8 per cent. Figures of up to 10 per cent have been given by Muslim organizations seeking sponsorship from the Thai government and foreign countries for projects such as the construction of mosques or to subsidize the hajj pilgrimage (Srichandorn 2009). Because ideally Muslim

should not be religiously separated, this chapter focuses on differences of Muslim population in terms of ethnic, social, cultural and political differences as well as the sizes of the Muslim populations in various regions: the North, Northeast, Centre, Upper South and Lower South.

Table 1 shows the National Statistics office's estimation of the numbers of Muslims in Thailand's different regions. The source divides the country into four regions following structure operated by the Department of Provincial Administration (Public Administration Development and Management Information Center n.d.). It can be seen that the Northeast has the smallest Muslim population (c.20,000) while the South has the largest numbering over two million.

Table 1 Numbers of Muslim populations by regions

Region	Population
North	34,299
Centre	488,007
Northeast	20,825
South	2,256,412
Total	2,799,543

Source: Population and Housing Census, the National Statistics Office, 2005

However, the figure given for the South in this source is problematic because the number of Muslims in that area was calculated on the very crude basis that 27.9 per cent of the southern population consists of Muslims without separating the Upper South and the Lower South (Population and Housing Census 2000). In reality, the distribution of Muslim settlements in the southern border provinces is densest in the Lower South. Therefore, a distinction is made in this dissertation between the Upper and Lower South.

Determining the sizes of the Muslim populations in the Lower and Upper South is complicated. The density of Muslims in the Upper South cannot be compared to the Lower South even though the overall totals might be comparable. The population density of Muslims in the Upper South provinces varies: for example, these figures range from approximately 10 per cent in Nakhon Si Thammarat to 50 per cent in Krabi. The total figure

for the Muslim population in the Upper South is estimated by a research working group at Walailuk University at nearly 1,000,000 (Islamic Studies and Muslim Community Development for Peaceful Social Integration, Walailak University n.d.). This estimate is quite different from the figure of 1,293,000 given by the office of the Central Islamic Committee of Thailand (Gilquin 2005, 40).

In regard to the Lower South, the office of the Central Islamic Committee of Thailand reported the total Muslim population at 5,004,800 in 2000 (Gilquin 2005, 10). However, this figure is greater than the total population of the five southernmost provinces (3,177,500) as determined from a census conducted in the same year (Population and Housing Census 2000). If we accept that Muslims constitute about 75-80 per cent of the population in the Lower South as mentioned in Gilquin (2005, 34), then the total Muslim population in that region can be reckoned at approximately 2,383,125-2,542,000. It should be stressed that this figure for the Lower South is greater than the figure given for the total Muslim population in the South in Table 1.

The following sections focus on the ethnic, social and cultural characteristics of Muslim populations in various regions of Thailand. The fact that Muslims in Thailand have different origins is crucial. Amporn Marddent points out that Islam in Thailand is relatively more pluralistic in character than in neighbouring Malaysia because it has evolved under the secular Thai state and its legal system (Amporn Marddent 2007).

3.1. Muslims in the North

As shown in Table 1, the Muslim population in the north is recorded as 34,299 (0.3 per cent of the 11,433,100 population). Northern Thailand is home to Muslims of various origins, including China, India and Malaya. The largest ethnic group, which accounts for 60 per cent of the Muslim population in the North, is comprised of people of Yunnanese origin: they are called Chin [Chinese]-Ho in the Thai context (Srichandhon 2009). Muslims from India are the second largest group to have settled before the twentieth century. After WWII, a small number of Muslims came from South Asia and Burma. The conversion to Islam of northern hill tribesmen, such as Mongs, and others who have married Muslims, make ethnicity among contemporary Muslims in the north very complex (Kudchumsaeng 2000, 117).

One source from 1988 reported that 20,000 Chin Ho Muslims are found in Chiang Mai (the biggest city in the North), Chiang Rai, Lampang and Lampoon Provinces (Soonthornphesuj 1977, 48-56). Another source reports that about 100,000 live near to the borders between Thailand, Burma, Laos and China (Farouk 1988). Many are relatively wealthy, make contributions to public life and have integrated themselves with other groups. The older generation donated land for the building of Chiang Mai airport and contributed to the construction of the railway. They gave significant support to local nobles, and their ethnic identity has rarely stood out (Soothornphesuj 1977, 54). The younger generation are well-educated. They belong to the *Hanafi mahrab*. Intermarriage with Thai-Buddhists is possible but not common (Farouk 1988; Forbes 1988). There are two Yunnanese Muslim quarters in Chiang Mai city. The first at Wieng-Ping Business area was established by Yunnanese Muslim traders in the mid-nineteenth century. Much later, a second quarter was established in the 1960s at San Pah-koy district, a mile northeast from the first quarter. However, a significant number of Chin Ho Muslims do not live in these quarters since they have established their shops or houses in various areas and have thus mixed in with the rest of the population.

The origin of the term Chin Ho is a mystery. Soonthornphesuj in his study in 1977 suggests that the majority of the Muslim population in Yunnan was "Arab by origin, probably intermixed with Turkish immigrants and some Chinese who joined the Muslim community by marriage and adoption" (Soonthornphesuj 1977, 52). However, other literature refers to Chin Ho as a specific ethnic group, understood to have been caravan traders who used horses and mules to cross into Thailand from Yunnan (Liulan 2004). In support of the latter claim, Liulan has referred to the histories of the Lua people, a hill tribe who already occupied parts of territorial northern Thailand. These histories report that "ho" caravans came to their village in the early seventeenth century. None of these literatures refer to the Chin Ho or Yunnanese Muslims in the region as being of Hui origin: however, there is a high possibility that they are.

The Hui are a Chinese ethnic group who follow Islam. Since Soothornphesuj states that most Muslims in Yunnan were Arab by origin, it may be assumed that Hui people also have Arab origins. In the published memoirs of a wealthy Chin Ho from Chiang-Mai, the author (Prateeprasen 2005), reports that her ancestors were Muslim caravan traders from Kunming, Yunnan, who entered Thailand in 1905. Prateeprasen traces back her ancestors even further to Cheng Ho, one of the greatest navigators of the fifteenth century. Cheng Ho was reported to

be of Hui origin, from Bukhara (present-day Uzbekistan) (Fu, Foo and Siew 2005, 7). Notably, however, while Prateeprasen (2005) recognizes Cheng Ho as her ancestor, she does not mention whether he was Hui or not.

While Prateeprasen (ibid.) focuses on her ancestors who were traders, other authors have shown that the Chin Ho came from a variety of different backgrounds. In this regard, Soonthornphesuj's extensive work (1977, 48-56) draws attention to four types of Chin Ho migrant: traders, refugees, nationalist armies and bandits. The traders were first recorded in the 1850s as being a few dozen peddlers who drove pack mules during the winter and dry seasons between Yunnan and Burma, Loas and northern Thailand. These people sold goods along the mountain trails from Yunnan down to the area near to Chao Phraya River. Some of these peddlers became permanent migrants. The first recorded Yunnanese trader married a Thai local woman in Tak Province. Later he was honoured by the king because of his long service to the government. He helped the ruling prince to supply materials for the construction of the Lampang-Chiang Mai railway and also donated about 40 acres of his land for the railway to be built on. Many Yunnanese traders became leading citizens without Thais recognising that they were immigrants.

The second group are refugees who arrived in Thailand in two major waves. The first influx came during the nineteenth century when the Manchu dynasty launched a repressive campaign to unify China's ethnic groups. This led to some Muslims in Yunnan rebelling by forming a Yunnanese sultanate in 1857, and ultimately ended up with thousands being killed between 1857 and 1873. These events have become known as the 'Panthay insurrection.' The second influx was the result of the Communist takeover in the 1950s, during which most Yunnanese people fled to Burma only to be forced out by the Burmese government in 1954 and later to settle in northern Thailand.

The third group were members of Kuomintang or Chinese nationalist armies. Between nine and ten thousand Kuomintang soldiers were protected as political refugees by the Burmese government during 1950s. However, after they fought back against Communist troops in Yunnan, the Burmese government, the United States, Laos and Thailand evacuated half of them to Taiwan between 1953 and 1954, while the remainder migrated to the border areas of Laos and northern Thailand.

The fourth group were bandits. Travelling among the Kuomintang armies were some bandits fleeing with their possessions into Burma. These bandits identified themselves as Chinese

soldiers when confronted by the Burmese military, and thereby benefited from receiving protection from the Burmese government. Finding this tactic useful, these people continued to identify themselves as soldiers while at the same time pillaging villages in the hill areas around northern Thailand. Soonthornphesuj (ibid.) notes that the Yunnanese Muslims integrated themselves almost completely into northern Thai society and that their ethnic identity rarely stood out until the second wave of refugees arrived from Burma in the 1950s.

In addition to Yunanese refugees from Burma and Muslims from other ethnic origins, there are also Muslims from southern parts of Thailand such as Bangkok, Chachoengchao, Ayuddhaya, Tak, Pitsanulok, Lampang, Chiengrai, Maehongson and Lamphun Provinces. There are also *muallaf* (Muslims who converted to Islam by marriage).

Out of the six informants from the North whom I interviewed, three of them identify themselves as Chin Ho. One of them reported that his father was a soldier under the command of General Chiang Kaishek, the leader of the *Kuomintang* during 1940s. His father fled from China after the *Kuomintang* were defeated by the Communist forces in 1949. The other two, despite identifying themselves as Chin Ho, said their ancestors were a mixture of Muslim and non-Muslim Yunnanese and local northern Thais. One of these two was Buddhist before marriage to a Muslim Yunnanese man. The Yunnanese group prefer to marry Yunnanese regardless religion. The other two are descendants of southern Asian Muslims (Bengalis/Pathans) and the other one migrated from Bangkok.

Muslims of South Asian origin, such as Pushtun (Pathans) and Bengalis, constitute the second largest Muslim population in the North. Research conducted in 1977 in Chiang Mai showed that there were approximately 450 Muslim households, about 2,500 people from South Asia. The first group, Bangladeshi-Indian Muslims, arrived in Thailand as early as the 1870s. They settled in the Changklan and Chang-phueak districts. The second wave of migration was around the period of Indian partition in 1947. They were from East Bengal (now East Pakistan). They frequently settled in Burma first, and entered Thailand via the Thai-Burma border. The third wave came after WWII due to hardship in their home countries (Soonthornphesuj 1977, 18).

Malay Muslims from Patani are one of the oldest groups in this area, but the size of their population is small so they do not have their own distinct quarter. In about 1895, a group of eighty Malays, who had rebelled against British control in Malaysia, were settled in Chiang Mai close to other Muslims from South Asia. This decision was taken by King

Chulalongkorn and the government subsidized their cost of living. Ordinary people called them *chao nai* [master] as they came with servants and had a superior knowledge of Arabic and Islamic principles. They integrated with other Muslims of South Asian origin by using the same mosques and through marriage. Some of them returned home after the war in Pahang had finished (Soonthornphesuj 1977, 45-8). More recently, Malay Muslims from the South have been migrating to the north to work as Islamic teachers (Kadchumsaeng 2000).

Despite these reminders of the diverse ethnic origins of Chiang Mai's Muslims, most Muslims in that area hold Thai nationality and consider themselves first and foremost to be Thai in their everyday temporal concerns. On the other hand, however, in spiritual matters they primarily consider themselves to be Muslims (Forbes 2004). Having said that, a local Muslim academic, Settamalinee, has noted that the younger generation of Muslins tend to be less religious than their forebears (Settamalinee 2012). From his own experience, he observed that currently there are only 60-70 Muslims in a local foundational Islamic class as compared to 180 when he was young (ibid.). Moreover, the young Muslims he surveyed for his research reported that it was their parents, as opposed to them, who wanted them to go to foundational Islamic classes. The youths found the classes largely involved memorizing Islamic history and the Qur'an, and hence not interesting for them (Setamalinee 2011).

Muslims in Chiang Mai maintain their identity in a manner which emphasises connections with Muslims elsewhere and the central Thai government. Since Chiang Mai does not have a traditional Islamic school [*pondok*] to promote life-long informal Islamic education as is frequently the case in the South, foundational Islamic classes [*Faraduin*] play an essential role in helping Muslims there to maintain and transfer their identity to future generations. Currently, the Muslim community in Chiang Mai is concerned about the quantity and quality of Islamic education available locally. In a bid to improve the provision of Islamic education, they held a joint conference between Islamic education providers in the northern and southernmost provinces (Muslim Chiangmai News 2011). Connections between Chiang Mai's Muslim community and elsewhere have existed for a long time. At-taqwa, the only Islamic school in Chiang Mai, follows the curricula of Al-Azhar University and Medina Islamic University, and has been given financial support by Muslims from Saudi Arabia and Libya. Its graduates can obtain scholarships to study in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. There has also been knowledge exchange within Thai Muslim society. Before the establishment of this school in 1972, a Muslim community leader sent Muslim students to study Islam in Ayutthaya and Chacheongsao Provinces (At-taqwa School 2011).

The Muslim community in Chiang Mai also cooperates with the government. The Northern Muslim Organization for Development has joined the National Muslim Health Programme to campaign against the consumption of alcohol and drugs, and uses Islamic principles to educate Muslims about HIV/AIDS (Hasan 2011, 78). Moreover, in response to community demands, between 2004 and 2005 the Ministry of Education was obliged to supply Islamic education in state schools where there were at least forty Muslim students (Nisa Variety 2006).

At present, the migration of Burmese Muslims into Chiang Mai is a concern for local Muslims. Chiang Mai's Islamic civil society organizations give support to these people (Settamalinee 2012). However, research conducted by a local Muslim, entitled 'Marginalization of Burmese Muslim at Chang Klan Community', shows that the Burmese Muslim newcomers cannot blend in with the Chang Klan Muslim community (Kosem 2009). They feel unwelcome even though they have settled in a Muslim community and their economic circumstances have improved. Kosem argues that the Burmese Muslims are considered to be cheap labour within the local Muslim community and some of their jobs are thought to clash with Islamic teachings. Accordingly, the Chang Klan Muslims tend to stereotype their Burmese peers as having "lower" ethical standards. Some Burmese cultural practices, such as chewing betel nuts, are viewed in a poor light because they are considered unhygienic. Furthermore, the ethnic differences between these two groups have led to security concerns forming among local Muslims who tightly identify themselves with the Thai nation. For these reasons, the Burmese Muslims in Chiang Mai have established the Burmese Muslims of Chiang Mai Funding Club to assist the needy among them (ibid.).

North-West Thailand, and particularly Tak Province, is home to a significant number of Muslims who are of South Asian or Burmese descent. Kadchoomsaeng (2000) has found differences in the settlement patterns and socio-economic circumstances of these two groups. His ethnographic research, conducted in Tak's Mae-Sod district, shows that South Asian Muslims were the first to establish settlements in the area in 1850. They mainly came from Chittagong, Calcutta and Afghanistan and have been considered relatively wealthy since then. They established settlements in the inner area of the district, in good locations for their small businesses. More recently, approximately 9,000 Burmese Muslims have settled in the outer area and work as migrant labours. Of this group, nearly half [approximately 4,500] do not have Thai nationality because it has been illegal under Thai law for Burmese immigrants to settle in Thailand since March 1976.

Since people from a variety of different backgrounds live in Mae-Sod district, Muslims in the area have social relations with other ethnic groups through marriage and economic activities while maintaining their own identities. When inter-ethnic/religious marriage occurs, the non-Muslim side becomes Muslim, and they maintain a relationship with the primary family. Families on both sides generally maintain good relationships (Kadchumsaeng 200, 82, 160). As regards economic activities, Muslims maintain their identity by selling food linked to their ethnic and religious backgrounds. This way, they can survive economically by maintaining their food culture and sharing it with other local people. Moreover, Muslims in this district have tried to campaign for female Muslim students to wear *hijabs* (ibid. 167)

Kadchumsaeng reports that inter-ethnic relations can also be seen in social activities. For example, residents of different ethnic groups join social events held by the local Islamic school (ibid. 152). A social hierarchy exists which can be seen in the ways people address each other. Mae-Sod residents frequently call Muslims '*kala*', but most Muslims prefer not to be described in this way due to its negative connotations (ibid. 126). However, Arakan or Burmese Muslims allow themselves to be called *kala* due to their marginal status (ibid. 176).

However, most Muslims in this area are not marginalised since, as Kadchumsaeng notes, Muslims from various ethnic backgrounds, including Thai migrants and Malay Muslims, work in a variety of local organisations: *e.g.* public and private schools, banks, hospitals, and municipal office (ibid. 117).

In summary, most Muslims in the North, whatever their ethnic backgrounds, consider themselves to be Thai nationals. They have shown themselves to be able to cooperate both for the benefit of their community and wider society while retaining a Muslim identity. Their identities, however, have been somewhat negotiable hence there have also been community efforts to strengthen Muslim identity through religious observances. Moreover, prejudice among Muslims in different ethnic background and social class can be seen as most Muslims in the North identify themselves as mainstream Thai.

3.2 Muslims in central Thailand

According to the National Statistics Office, Muslims constitute 4.1per cent (260,559) of the population of Bangkok and 1.6per cent (227,448) of the population of the rest of the central region (Population and Housing Census 2000). Altogether, there are nearly half a million Muslims (488,007) in the central region, as shown in Table 1 above. Muslims in Central Thailand have made significant contributions to how the country is ruled and its diversity.

Alee, an informant who moved from Bangkok to Chiang Mai, stated that Muslims in Central Thailand are better integrated with the central power of the country than their southern counterparts. A range of research regarding Muslims in central Thailand also points out that Muslims in that region are more socially mixed with other groups. Chandee (1992) and Changsorn (2001) have shown that Muslims in Nonthaburi and inner Bangkok tend to marry persons from other religious backgrounds more frequently than in the past even though intra-religious marriage is still preferred. Moreover, Kuprasertwong (2001) has found that Malay llMuslim women in Nonthaburi Province who marry men from other religious backgrounds are now more likely to accept their husband's family names than before.

Roots of the mix can be traced far back in history where Muslims in Central Siam have long been a significant part of ruling and defending the country. King Song Dham (1610–1628) appointed the first *Chularajmontri*, Sheikh Ahmad of Qomi, to be both the leader of Muslim community and a minister of foreign trade (Chularatana 2008). Later, between the reigns of Rama I and Rama V (1782- 1910) during the Ratanakosin Era, the most powerful nobles in the Siamese court were Buddhist-branch descendants of the first *Chularajmontri* of Thailand, Sheikh Ahmad Qomi, who was a Shiite Muslim trader from Qom, Persia (Chularatana 2008; The Bunnag Lineage Club 2005). Somdej Chao Praya Arkara Maha Sena (Bunnag) (1738-1805), the right-hand man of King Taksin and a friend of the Rama I, who was a descendant of Sheikh Ahmad Qomi, married a sister of Rama I's wife. Therefore, the lineage of the first *Chularajmontri* became members of the royal family. In the next generation Somdej Chao Phraya Borom Maha Prayurawongse (1788-1855), who was one of the most influential nobles during the reign of the Rama II, chose Prince Tub, whose mother was a Muslim, to succeed to the throne as Rama III instead of the queen's son, Prince Mongkut. Remarkably, when Prince Mongkut became Rama IV, he appointed Somdej Chao Phraya Borom Maha Prayurawongse as his regent (The Bunnag Lineage Club 2005). Then, in the reign of Rama V,

Somdej Chao Phraya Borom Maha Sri Suriyawongse (1808-82) was installed as Regent of Siam having acted as the right-hand man of the monarchy since the reign of Rama III.

From the beginning of the *Chuilarajmontri* position until the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932, this position was occupied by Qomi's descendants (Chularatana 2008, 46-53). Therefore, this Persian family served the monarchy for a long time both in political and religious affairs. In the present era, Sonthi Bunyaratkalin, the head of the 2006 coup, was a descendent of Sheikh Ahmad of Qomi (Weerawan 2007). Additionally, General Chavalit Yongchaiyut, a retired army commander and former prime minister, who is still active as a politician, is descended from another Persian family, that of Sultan Sulaiman (Jitmuad 1998).

Muslims from other ethnic backgrounds have also contributed to the rule, defence, reform and development of Thailand. Raymond Scupin (1988b) maintains that Cham Muslims lived in the capital of Ayutthaya as far back as the 7th century. Thai historical documents report that the significant influx of Cham Muslims began after the collapse of the Champa Kingdom in the 15th century. Between 1450 and 1767, significant numbers of Cham Muslims joined the Thai navy to fight against Burma and many of them died in this war (Scupin 1988b; Jitmuad 1998). The Cham Muslims were incorporated into the traditional Thai patron society through the *sakdina* system (hierarchical benefit in the form of lands given to "honoured Thai" citizens) in the absolutist monarchy era (Scupin 1988b).

At the present, it is estimated that the number of descendants of Cham Muslims in Thailand is between 1,500 and 2,000, most of whom live in Bangkok and provinces along the eastern coastline (ibid.). In Bangkok, the Ban Krau community is known as a place where Cham Muslims have become socially integrated into wider society while maintaining their religious beliefs and practices. Putthawattana's (1988) work on roles of folklore in child-rearing reveals that Muslims in this community use Thai-Buddhist proverbs and Aesop's fables which do not conflict with Islam to educate and accustom their children to the norms of Thai society. They have also preserved the Cham language through lullabies, albeit without understanding their meanings. Even though they might see themselves as a distinct group, Chams marry with Muslims and non-Muslims from other ethnic backgrounds, and most of their children study in Thai public schools and receive religious instruction after school at local mosques (Farouk 1988).

Muslims from other ethnic groups, such as Arabs and Indonesians, have contributed to the development of Thailand. Farouk (Farouk 1988, 5-12) has categorized the Indonesians into

three ethnic sub-groups: Javanese, Boweans and Minangkabaus. The Javanese came from Java Island and the Boweans from Sumatra Island, both in present day Indonesia, to the west of southern Thailand. Meanwhile, the Minangkabau moved from a small island in the Java Sea, 150 kilometres north of Surabaya Island (see Map 1). Most Indonesian Muslims settled in Thailand as traders and refugees due to the Dutch invasion or internal power conflicts (Chularatana 2008, 40). Masjid Yawa, situated in Bangkok's central business district, belongs to people of Javanese origin while Masjid Bayan and Masjid Indonesia belong to Boweans. The Minangkabaus are dispersed throughout urban areas, including Bangkok. These three sub-ethnic groups have contacts with their own people in Malaysia and Singapore. However, the younger generation tends to be more fully assimilated into the Thai homeland (Farouk 1988, 5-12). Moreover, the Makassars from Celebes Island are reported to have taken refuge in Thailand in 1666, and took part in a coup against king Narai. Ultimately, they have assimilated into mainstream society and no Muslim community now claims to be descended from them (Gilquin 2005, 22).

It is important to mention that one Minangkabau, Ahmed Wahab, has made significant contributions to Thai politics and Muslim society. He was exiled from Sumatra after the tax rebellion of 1908. Residing in Bangkok, he established a school in the Tanon Tok area in 1926 which provided religious education in the form of a modern curriculum and also became a centre of the reformist association, Ansori Sunnah [the Helper of the Sunnah]. Its political ideology was anti-feudal, republican, egalitarian, and anti-imperialistic. A reformist from this group, Cham Promyong, was the first elected Chularajmontri. He had a close relationship and shared some of his political ideology with Haji Sulong, a renowned Muslim scholar from Pattani (Kraus 1984). The activities of Ahmed Wahab's followers will be discussed in more detail in the section on the Ansorissunnah community at Bangkok Noi (see p. 87).

Another important ethnic group are the Malays. There is evidence of Malay quarters between 1656 and 1688 in the old capital of Thailand, Ayutthaya. These Muslims included merchants, sailors, craftsmen, farmers and civil servants, and some may also have been prisoners of war and slaves from when Siam invaded Malay states at various points in history (Chularatana 2008, 41-2). Since they have lived in the capital cities of Thailand from the seventeenth century, they can be counted among the ancestors of present day Thais and considered to have adopted Thai socio-cultural traits. Similarly, another source (Jitmuad 1998) maintains that Malay Muslims moved to Bangkok after the collapse of the old capital, Ayutthaya. A

Muslim ship trader who married with a local Chinese lady became a renowned noble, Luang Kosha Ishag, who is an ancestor of the bureaucratic Samantarat family. His descendents include Phraya Samantaratburin and Termsak Samantarat, both of whom acted as provincial governors of the southern provinces, Pattani, Satun and Chumporn (ibid.). Additionally, some descendants of the Malay royal family from Pattani and Satun entered Bangkok around a century ago and became significant statesmen such as Aree Wongaraya, a former interior minister is descended from Malay royalty (ibid.).

Muslims of Indian origin, such as the Nanas and the Siamwalas, have also contributed to Thailand's development. For example, Lek Nana was a founding member of the Democrat Party and appointed as a minister several times. Furthermore, he gave five rais of land to King Bhumipol to establish a memorial park in honour of his mother (Jitmuad 1998). Another distinguished Thai of Indian-Muslim descent is Ammar Siamwala, who is well-known as an economist, expert on Thai rice economics, president of the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) and senator.

From these examples it can be seen that in central Thailand, Thai Muslims from different ethnic backgrounds have taken part in the government, defence and development of the country. They were particularly influential in the early Ratanakosin era during the reigns of the kings Rama I-V, and hence took part in building the nation. Another important characteristic of Muslims in central Thailand is that since they have different ethnic backgrounds they tend to hold different "traditions" and "political" viewpoints. For example, some of central Thai Muslims since the 20th century have rejected certain Islamic traditions such as hosting feast for the death or observing the *maulid* ceremony marking the birth of the Prophet Mohammed: such people are known as the *Kana Mai* [New Line].

One example of the *Kana Mai* is the Ansorissunnah community in the Bangkoknoi area of Bangkok. Saowanee (1998) maintains that some of this community's ancestors came from Saudi Arabia. Many Muslims in the present generation in this community were educated in Saudi Arabia (Al-Islah Association Bangkoknoi 2007). One member of this community, who is very widely known in current Muslim society, is Sheikh Rido Smadi who has declared himself a Wahabist (Sunnah student). He attended kindergarten in Saudi Arabia, high school in Saudi Arabia and later Egypt, and studied to undergraduate level in Egypt and achieved a master's degree in Morocco. He has worked as an Islamic teacher in Cairo and after he returned home, became a member of the Ansorissunnah mosque committee in 1998-2002 and

taught Islam at an Islamic school in Chacheongsao Province between 2000 and 2002. He is now the president of the Muslims for Peace Group (Islam in Thailand 2009). This group has played a vital role in campaigning for Muslim rights, such as the right of female students to wear the hijab in the Nongjok community school dispute. The Ansorissunnah community now runs a primary school teaching national and Islamic curricula. The school is free and also available for non-Islamic students in the neighbourhood (Ansorissunnah Masjid Foundation 2005. The community also propagates its religious practices by running summer holiday camps for Muslim youths throughout the country (Al-Islah Association Bangkoknoi 2007). Many women in this community now wear the *niqab*.

The Ansorissunnah community have formed the Al-Islah Association in 1928 to educate fellow Muslims about their religious practices which they called *kibtabuallh* and *sunnah*. In the past, some members of this community played political roles after the 1932 revolution since they were fellows of Ahmed Wahab, an Indonesian political refugee from the Dutch colonial authorities (Kraus 1984, 416-7). According to Kraus, Wahab formed the Ansorisunnah movement in 1926 at Tanon Tok Area, north of Bangkok. He established a school which had a form of religious education based on modern school curricula as existed in Indonesia. Since his political standpoint was leftist, his reformist ideology attracted a Muslim group at Bangkok Noi. The Ansorisunnah Association was officially formed in 1959 and published monthly magazines to promote its views on Islamic reform. Its political ideology was leftist: anti-feudal, republican, egalitarian and anti-imperialistic (Kraus 1984).

Chaem Promyong, the first *Chularajmontri* appointed by Thai democratic parliament, was a follower of Wahab, the Indonesian politician, and had connections with the first leftwing and democratic Thai government. He was appointed to help solve the problem of separatism in the southern border provinces. Later, he had good connections with Haji Sulong, a prominent religious leader in the Deep South. There was the light for more decentralization to the Lower South at that moment (Satha-Anand 2008). However, two years later, following the defeat of the leftwing government by the nationalist military, Chaem went into exile and has been so ever since (Kraus 1984).

Direk Kulsiriswasd, an iconic Thai-Muslim academic, was a follower of the Ansorissunnah group both religiously and politically. During the 1940s and 1950s, he translated the group's ideology on Islamic reform into the Thai language. He also wrote treatises on Islamic marriage customs, the prohibition against eating pork, the hajj and Islam and science, all of

which he supported by arguing that Islamic practices should be pursued in accordance with a Muslim's personal reasoning rather than simply following tradition. He also completed a translation of the Quran in 1977 (Scupin 1980, 3).

Kulsiriswasd's scholastic activities provoked opposition from the relatively conservative Chularajmontri at that time, Tuan Suwannasat, who graduated from Mecca and held that office during 1947-1981. Suwannasat published a book against the use of personal reasoning [*ijtihad*] while underlining the importance of established religious scholars [*mujtahids*] in confirming interpreting religious texts correctly (Scupin 1980, 7).

In the old capital city of Thailand, Ayutthaya, Muslims there maintained the diversity existing among them in former generations. Kantawiti (1999) has shown that, among the different Muslim groups in Ayutthaya, there are followers of the Qadiri Sufi order and the Shafii *mahrab*, both within the Sunni sect. Additionally, while one group might not observe religious ceremonies, such as the *maulid*, with certain groups, they will observe the same ceremony with others (ibid.). Shiite Muslims in the Ayutthaya Province are most likely either descendants of the first Chularajmontri, Sheihk Amad Qomi, or Indo-Iranian merchants (Kasetsiri 2012).

Diversity among Muslims in central Thailand is significant in terms of how they can be identified. While some Muslims follow the religious practices recommended by the Chularajmontri, others are guided by religious leaders in other countries. For example, influenced by his training in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, Sheikh Rido Smadi, from the Ansorissunnah community, has declared the beginning and end dates of Ramadan according to moon observations in Saudi Arabia instead of Thailand (Smadi 2012). Most Thai Shiite staff in the Iranian embassy support Iran and its current political system, and as a result often find themselves having little in common with Thai Muslims in the South or other Thai Sunni Muslims (Marcinkowski 2009, 49). Moreover, because Muslims in the central region have relatively open access to various forms of Islamic media (*e.g.* newspapers, internet, radio (Srihakulang and Hwangkhem 2009), their practices can vary according to whatever sources by which they may have been influenced. For instance, the first page of the official website of the Tha-it School presents a video of a recital of the Quran by an imam in Kuwait (Tha-it Suksa School 2012).

It is true that Muslims in central Thailand have access to different sources about how they can best practice their faith. On the other hand, however, practices which are not allowed

according to mainstream Islamic teaching in Thailand, such as men and women living together outside of marriage, are common in some places (Din-A 2010). Moreover, pre-marital sex among Muslim students who have left home to study in Bangkok is a major concern within Thai Muslim society (Marddent 2006). Marddent points out patterns of behaviour such as this show a steady growth in challenges to mainstream Islamic sexual ethics among young Thai Muslims. Some have been able to justify their behaviour by making reference to the fluidity of Islamic sexual ethics (ibid.).

3.3 <u>Muslims in the Northeast</u>

As shown in Table 1, the Muslim population of the Northeast is recorded as 20,825 (0.1per cent of the total population of 20,825,300). Muslims in this region belong to several different ethnic groups including the Patans, Bengalis (from Burma), Malays and Isans (a local people) (Sohsan *et al* 2008, 58). Those among them who are embedded in Muslim communities are better able to maintain Islamic practices than those who are mixed in with the local Isan people (Chuchuai 1990).

The Patans are supposed to have been the first group to have arrived in northeast Thailand in about 1914. They moved there from the border land between Pakistan and Afghanistan during warfare, and married with local Isan women. Nowadays, Patan Muslims have a salient role in local politics. Many have the surname, Pratan, which is shared by many Muslims involved in local politics, such as those who act as *kamnan* (sub-district chiefs). Farida, the wife of a renowned Pattani politician, Muk Sulaiman, comes from this community (Sohsan *et al* 2008, 61). The Patans are considered relatively rich and influential, and they monopolize the cattle market. The older generations still speak the Patan language while younger generations can speak the local Isan or central Thai spoke languages (Chuchuai 1990).

The older generations of Malay and Bengali Muslims still speak their historic languages as well as Isan and central Thai (Sohsan el al.2008, 64-5). They maintain their dress culture which is notable among Muslims in Thailand in that most women not wearing hijabs (Chuchuai 1990). Chuchuai reports that the religious practices of Malay Muslims are stricter than those of other Muslim groups in the region. North-eastern Muslims have accepted parts of the local culture, such as the language and food (ibid.) Social interaction between Muslims and people from other religious backgrounds is generally cooperative, for example Muslim

butchers stop trading on Buddhist holy days and Muslim employers allow Buddhist employees to have holidays during religious celebrations (Sohsan et al 2008, 85).

However, Muslims also hold some negative attitudes towards local people. They tend to take the view that non-Muslim Isans spend too much time indulging in entertainment and drinking alcohol (Chuchuai 1990). Therefore, Muslims living in Muslim communities try to transfer Islamic beliefs to younger generations and limit how far they interact with Isans. Well-to-do Muslims might send their children to learn Islam in central Thailand or hire private Islamic teachers. Foundational Islamic classes are held at mosques and some state schools, but there are no private schools teaching Islam in the region (ibid.).

Because the size of the Muslim population in the Northeast is small, and no Islamic schools have been established, they are often religiously influenced by Muslim communities elsewhere. For example, Muslims in Surin Province were inspired by Muslim communities in Bangkok and Ayutthaya to build a mosque (Sohsan et al 2008, 69). A Muslim non-governmental organization, FEDMIN (Foundation for Education and Development of Muslims in the Northeast) has tried to address the lack of good quality Islamic education in the Northeast by annually organizing basic foundational Islamic classes in the summer (Prem 2009). Some Muslim communities have also tried to provide foundational Islamic classes: however, the projects they have started cannot meet the level of demand from Muslim parents in the Northeast, and most of them are not sustainable (Sohsan el al 2008, 156). Muslim communities in the Northeast have cooperated to get support for basic Islamic education from the government. However, due to the small numbers of Muslim students in state schools (as well as other types of school), state schools often do not run Islamic classes (Fatima 2009).

3.4 Muslims in the Upper South

As noted above, the figure for the Muslim population in the South given in Table 1 does not distinguish between the Upper and Lower South. The lack of such a distinction in that figure is problematic for the purposes of this study because there are significant social and cultural differences between Muslims in those two regions. It is possible to distinguish the Upper South from the five southern border provinces (Satun, Songkhla, Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat). Accordingly, the Upper South can be taken to include Chumphon, Ranong, Surat Thani, Pang-nga, Phuket, Krabi, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Trang and Pattalung (see Map 2). Siripatana, the head of a research working group at Walailak University, ISWU (the Islamic Studies and Muslim Community Development for Peaceful Social Integration

Project), has claimed that there are nearly one million Muslims in the provinces of the Upper South: more specifically, Muslims account for approximately 40 per cent of the population in Krabi, 30 per cent in Trang, 20 per cent in Pang-nga and Phuket, 10 per cent in Nakhon Si Thammarat and 5 per cent in Surat Thani and Chumphon (Siripatana 2009). This estimate contrasts with the figure of 1,293,000 given by the office of the Central Islamic Committee of Thailand (Gilquin 2005, 40). The population density of Muslims in the Upper and Lower South is very different: they account for around 80 per cent of people living in the Lower South and, depending on province, 5-40 per cent of people living in the Upper South.

Siripatana (2009) has highlighted the lack of violence between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Upper South when compared to the Lower South. This may be due to Muslims in the Upper South being identified as Thai Muslims rather than Malay Muslims (Langputeh n.d.). Interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims in this region has been generally positive because Malay nationalism is not widespread even though there are many Malay Muslims there (Siripatana 2009).

Most Muslims in the Upper South speak a southern dialect of Thai, and the younger generation tends to speak central Thai. Therefore, they can mostly communicate with Thai-speaking officers. However, sometimes they feel looked down upon when receiving certain government services. For example, according to Kerdbangbon (1999), who studied traditional midwifery practices in a village in Ranong Province, 80 per cent of Muslim villagers preferred to give birth with traditional midwifes rather than go to a hospital or health centre where they felt looked down upon by the staff. This was found to be due to there being a contrast between the villagers' beliefs and the hospital's practices. For example, whereas the villagers maintained a practice of burying placenta, hospital staff tended to dispose of placenta rather than give them back to the villagers for burial. Moreover, the staff required mothers giving birth to take off all their clothes whereas they were used to wearing sarongs with traditional midwifes. They also believed that it is religiously prohibited for them to expose their naked bodies to others.

Since Muslims in the Upper South speak Thai, they rarely have problems with Buddhists living in the same villages. For example, Sanamchai found few problems between Muslims and Buddhists living in Na Tai village in Pang-nga Province (Sanamchai 1987). He also found that both Muslims and Buddhists in the village cooperate well together and with the government, and that the numbers of Muslims and Buddhists in the village are about equal.

Both groups maintain their religious practices although Muslims tended to practice more regularly, praying every day and refraining from gambling and drinking alcohol (ibid.).

Economic development has changed the ways-of-life of Muslims in the Upper South. Mahmudi (1993), studying Klong Din Village in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, found that since 1989, when industrial factories began to encroach on the village and its neighbouring areas, Muslim villagers have paid more attention to formal education than before, and have had less time to pursue religious practices. Indeed, these changes have led to Muslim villagers more regularly eating lunch during *Ramadan*, praying less than five times a day, committing adultery and not wearing *hijabs*. Community leaders have expressed concern about these changes and campaigned for a revival of strict religious observances. As the result, Muslims in the same family can hold different sets of norms such as wearing or not wearing *hijabs* (ibid.).

Since investment in the Lower South is considered risky due to the ongoing violence in the region, more development projects in the Upper South lie ahead. For example, Muslim leaders in the Upper South support the governmental policy on the Halal Economic Zone which is intended to become a hub for the enterprise of processing sea food and tourism to serve the ASEAN Community (Kom Chad Luek 2010). Moreover, the Islamic Bank of Thailand intends to open more branches in Surat Thani, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Phatthalung and Trang provinces (Banchongduang 2011). The different level of economic development might make Muslim society in the Upper South the most diverse in Thailand.

3.5 Muslims in the Lower South

The history of the Lower South is full of acculturation and resistance. Muslims in that region were originally traders in the Indian Ocean and Pacific Oceans, and came from India, China, Turkey and the Arabian Peninsula beginning in the fourteenth century (Gilquin 2005, 10). The four oldest Muslim villages are claimed to be at Sakom beach in Jana District, Songkhla. There is a local tale that there used to be a mosque near these villages dating back to the early Ayutthaya Period (1350-1767) which was destroyed by a strong gale. The villagers are descendants of sea gypsies who still sail some seas in South East Asia (Chamoramarn 1988). Before the 1930s, people in this area identified their origins with different islands in the Malay Archipelago and with different races such as Chinese and Moros. They did not call themselves "Malay", but rather "Orkae Sia" (Siam people) (Sorayut 207). Moreover, Sorayut

points out that before the coming of the modern Malay state, the Chinese and Thais had mixed their religious customs together (ibid.).

In trying to explain the emergence of Malay nationalism in Thailand's Lower South, the Malay nationalist, Ibrahim Syukri (1989), argues that after the Patani Kingdom was annexed by the Kingdom of Siam and the ruling of Malay elites deposed in 1902, Siam exploited the local people in many ways. For example, he claims the Siamese governors, judges and police were corrupt and did not try to understand Islam. Moreover, the local people had to pay tax at the highest rate without receiving sufficient levels of education or healthcare while the tax revenue went to the benefit of Bangkok. There was a local rebellion in 1923, but the rebels were arrested, banished or killed (ibid.). During the 1940s, governments under the leadership of Field Marshal Phibun Songkram tried to force local people to adopt Thai cultural habits by prohibiting the Malay language, attire and naming customs. In 1944, the government annulled Sharia law and forced the application of secular laws instead. This led to the formation of Haji Sulaong's movement to liberate the Malays from Siamization (ibid.).

Recent research conducted by Sorayut (2007) also points out that during the period of nation-building (1940s-1960s), the state's preferential policy led to ethnic Thais being conferred privileges such as better housing and the establishment of temples in the Lower South. These actions created a boundary between ethnic Thais and Malays, and ended up strengthening and creating an identity among the latter in which Islam is recognized as a symbolic boundary (ibid.).

Due to the failure of its attempt to force local Malays to adopt a Thai national identity, the government adopted a softer approach during the 1960s and 70s. In particular, it allowed Islam to be taught and Malay spoken (Bunnag 1991). This change in tactic proved more successful for the government since it allowed for greater acculturation. The Thai language was taught in private Islamic schools which were transformed from traditional *pondoks* to state-sponsored schools (ibid.; Suthasasna 1989). It is noteworthy that Muslims in Satun could already speak the Thai language because it had been taught to them since the time they were ruled by Nakorn Si Thammarat before the 1902 annexation to the Siam kingdom. Moreover, the government at that time established quotas for higher education and military scholarships which had to be filled by Muslims from the Lower South (Pitsuwan 1985; Bunnag 1991). The government also granted prizes for distinguish Islamic teachers (Bunnag

1991), and projects promoting Thai identity in the region were often run by Bangkok Muslims (Suthasasna 1989).

The historic political conflict between the Thai state and separatists continues to fuel unrest in the Lower South in the present. At the same time, however, the gradual process of acculturation between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Lower South has continued, albeit more so among some than others. For example, in the past many Muslims in Chana District, Songkhla, married Buddhist Thais and later Chinese. In turn, this led to their sharing some aspects of the same food and entertainment cultures, supernatural beliefs, the southern Thai language and other traditions (Warikul 2004). Moreover, intermarriage among Muslims and Chinese people in urban Pattani has led to the formation of a large Chinese Muslim community in the Lower South whose roots can be traced back to both non-Muslim Chinese and Muslim Malays (Pimonsiripon 2000). Malays and Chinese both occupy the same business spaces in Pattani town's market area, although it is likely that the Chinese have mainly been shop owners and Malays employees in the shop. Gradually, however, the Malays have become business owners and also tend to send their children to the local Chinese school since it offers a good quality education at a low cost. The school also allows students to dress according to their religious beliefs (Sirisakdumkueng 2003).

At present, many scholars, including Gilquin (2005, 34) believe that 75-80 per cent of the population in the Lower South is made up of Muslims. Even so, there is still a pressing need for the total number of Muslims in this area to be assessed accurately. Due to the unrest, a national census in the Lower South has not been conducted as extensively as in other regions. Moreover, the figures provided by Muslim organizations could be exaggerated in order to raise more support for their activities. The National Statistics Bureau has estimated that the overall population of the five southernmost provinces is around 3,177,500 (Population and Housing Census 2000). If we assume this figure is correct, and that 75-80 per cent of the people in the region are Muslims, then the total number of Muslims in the Lower South can be estimated as *c.* 2,383,125-2,542,000.

Since the unrest in the Lower South is ongoing, Malay Muslims tend to be slow to accept development projects by comparison with Muslims elsewhere in Thailand. For example, Silpawisan (1995), who studied Muslim women working in factories in Pattani, found that many feared that their working role would diminish their religious piety by taking them away from the duty of looking after their families. The government has recently developed plans to

establish various economic development projects, such as the Pak Bara Industrial Estates and Port, and the Pattani Halal Food Industrial Zone. However, some Muslim groups are opposed to these projects because they are concerned that their large scale will destroy the environment and Islamic ways-of-life in the area. Furthermore, local Muslim communities might be affected by migration to the area and new businesses providing services which may be unethical (Public Post 2012). Accordingly, it would seem that resistance to these government projects is motivated at least in part by religious values and mistrust of the authorities.

Regardless of whether there are links between religion and politics in the Lower South, thousands of Malay Muslims have recently begun sending their children to study abroad after graduating from Islamic schools in the area. These children's study destinations include Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, the Universities of Medina and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, the Narawatul Ulama of Lucknow University and Aligarh Muslim University in India, Karachi, Abubake and other Islamic universities in Pakistan, and various universities in Malaysia, Indonesia and Iran. As a result of their overseas studies, returning students engage in promoting Islamic reform and the resurgence of local Thai Muslim communities (Yusuf 2006, 178-179). Yusuf concludes that language, local history and education are markers of Malay Muslim identity in the Lower South. There can be little doubt that Islamic education helps to maintain Malay Muslim identity. However, it is also evident that overseas studies promote change rather than inertia within Malay Muslim identity: albeit change which tends to preclude mergence with any other ethnic/religious identity.

Horstmann has argued that since 1970, when the *hajj* became more affordable to the masses in Thailand and the Thai government tried to impose Buddhism on its citizens, ethnic identity has been strengthened and promoted among both Thai Buddhists and Muslims. For example, Muslims have developed new techniques of breathing, prayer, and clothing which they feel express their identity (Horstmann 2008, 289). Joll (2011) has argued that practices of merit-making among Muslims and Buddhists, which were once believed to share the same meaning (because they shared the same terminology in Thai, '*tam-bun*'), are significantly different. Apart from ritual differences, Joll has stressed that the praxis of *tam-bun* among Muslims in the Lower South in the present is more strictly linked to obligations to Allah than before (from which the influence of reformist Islam may be inferred).

3.6 <u>Conclusion</u>

In conclusion, Muslims in each region have different characteristics. In the North, the Muslim population comprises of groups with a range of different ethnic identities. Since Muslim communities in this region have developed alongside the emergence of the ruling elites appointed by Bangkok, they tend to view themselves as being "Thai" while also maintaining their ethnic identities. The ethnic boundaries between Muslim groups are visible. The sizes of the Muslim populations in the North and North East are comparatively small (0.3 and 0.1per cent respectively). However, Muslim settlements in the North East are more widely dispersed due to the much greater size of the region. In the North East the lack of established Islamic education institutions lies beneath north-eastern Muslims having less visible identities and practices as compared with those in the northern, central and southern regions. Muslim groups in Central Thailand are much more diverse than those in other regions. However, these groups have contributed towards the building of current mainstream Thai civilization. The institutions of religious education available to these groups are better developed and established, and also have influence over Muslims in other regions. The diversity of Islamic education in Central Thailand has increased the diversity of Islamic education available in other regions. The challenge of maintaining an Islamic identity for Muslims in the North, North East and Central Thailand is that they must adapt to values other than those that they have traditionally held. Since Muslims in these three regions constitute only very small portions of the total populations (4.1 per cent in Bangkok and 1.6 per cent in Central Thailand), they are more likely to interact with people from other cultural and religious backgrounds.

The Upper South has a significant Muslim population, ranging from 5-40 per cent from province to province. Muslims in the region mostly speak a southern dialect of Thai although many of the younger generation speak central Thai and identify themselves as Thai. They maintain their traditional practices and Muslim identity, and they tend to accept economic development projects which bring about social change more freely than their fellow Muslims in the Lower South. There are no significant ethnic conflicts in this region, and Malay Muslims also tend to speak Thai.

In contrast, the Lower South is mainly occupied by Malay Muslims who speak Malay. The provinces which make up this region were annexed by the Kingdom of Siam in 1902, although some had Thai governors before that time so many people in the area can also speak

Thai. The Thai state has tried to integrate the Malay population by establishing state institutions in the region (including the juristic system and educational institutions). Even so, the Malay population has resisted these institutions. Some Thai governments have pursued the policy of pressing for assimilation in the Lower South more strongly than others. In response, Malay nationalist movements, including militant groups, have formed and made their mark on several occasions including in the present. However, these movements have not been active in Satun province where most Thai-speaking Malays live. Malay Muslims in the Lower South come from mixed ethnic backgrounds; they accustomed to acculturation. However, they are mainly concerned with preserving "Malay Muslim identity".

In regional comparison, we might find that Muslim populations in the Lower South appear to have different identity from others due to the great amount of Malay Muslims preserving their identity, the history of state resistance and the ongoing unrest situations. However, the common aspect among these regions is that there is diversity within each. The diversity can be seen in ethnic backgrounds, religious praxis and viewpoints and levels of acceptance of the state. For example, ethnic boundaries can be quite clearly seen between different settlements in Chiang Mai and Tak, in the North. Moreover, the case of Burmese Muslims in Chiang Mai illustrates how Muslims often identify other Muslims as the other. Depending on their ethnic backgrounds, Muslims in the Centre appear to have different religious rituals which can be linked to the traditions of their communities, for example Muslims in Ayutthaya and the Ansorisunnah community in Bangkok. Wider opportunities to observe the performance of religious rituals of Muslims worldwide can lead to more diversity in religious praxis and viewpoints in any part of Thailand. Development projects that bring about social change can also lead to greater diversity in religious praxis, for example Muslims in Na Tai village in the Upper South. Muslim communities in the Lower South show different viewpoints towards the development of industrial enterprise.

Chapter 4

The institution of the *Chularajmontri*

Following Che Man (1990), cited in Chapter 2, we can refer to the institution of the *Chularajmontri* as an Islamic and government institution consisting of the subordinate Central, Provincial Islamic committees and mosque committees. According to the 1997 act, the present status of *Chularajmontri* is head of the Muslim community in Thailand. Elected by the Provincial Islamic Committees, the *Chularajmontri* is the chair of the Central Islamic Committee. Mosque committees in each province, which has a proportionately high Muslim population, elect their Provincial Islamic Committee. In turn, the latter monitors operations run by mosque committees.

In the past, the absolutist monarchist era, the *Chularajmontri,* as the leader of Muslim Community, worked directly for the throne and the king. Relationships between the *Chularajmontris* and the kings were comparable to those between the Buddhist Supreme Patriarchs and the kings, as seen in Chapter 2, which were both under royal control. Section 4.1 gives more details.

Sections 4.2-4.3 contain empirical data from the interviews of Muslim professionals reflecting their views on the Islamic patronage of the state and the level of effectiveness of roles played by the institution of *Chularajmontri*. Issues in these sections revolve around the concepts of multiculturalism and moderate secularism. Section 4.4 gives suggestions on the changes in the institution of the *Chularajmontri* that should have been made.

4.1 Close relationship between the Chularajmontri and the monarchy before constitutional democratic Thailand

Apart from putting the Buddhist Sangha Supreme council under control, as shown in Chapter 2, the Thai state since the time of the Siam kingdom had also centralized the *Chularajmontri* position dating from the Ayutthaya period in the 17th century. King Songdham (1610-1638) appointed one of the high-ranking noble as the first *Chularajmontri* (or Shaikh al Islam). "*Chularajmontri*" literally comprises of three Thai words: "*Chula*" (the top position), "*raj*" (the king), and "*montri*" (the advisor). However, some literature suggests that the word "*Chula*" was picked from a Persian word, *Mullah*, or *Jullah* (Samaun 2004, 79). Therefore, put together, "*Chularajmontri*" might be intended to refer to "*Mullah* who is the king's highest advisor. Therefore, the *Chularajmontri*'s role centred around the king's throne.

The *Chularajmontris* in the absolute monarchy era shared two common characteristics. First, they always occupied another government post. Second, marriages between the *Chularajmontri*'s family and the royal family were common.

The fact that the *Chularajmontris* in that same era had other political posts made them more closely aligned with the state (or the king) than was the wider Muslim community. For example, the first *Chularajmontri*, Shaikh Ahmad, was appointed by king Songdham (1610-1628) at a time when he was a high-ranking noble dealing in foreign trade with West Asia. By background a Shiite scholar and trader from Qum, he was a concurrently a wealthy trader, a noble and a *Chularajmontri*. Shaikh Ahmad was a very close personal friend of *Phraya* Maha Amat, who later became king after the death of King Songdham, taking the title King Prasat Thong (1629–1656) (Chularatana 2008). His outstanding mission was to suppress a Japanese riot in the kingdom. In return, he was promoted to a position equivalent to a present day prime minister. Shaikh Ahmad's last position was as the regent of King Prasat Thong, meaning that he could work on behalf of the king (Samaoun 2004).

Even though there was evidence at that time that the Malay population in the kingdom outnumbered those of Persian origin, the *Chularajmontri* positions always went to Persians. All *Chularajmontris* before the 1932 democratic revolution were descended from Shaikh Ahmad, and control over the department dealing with trade with West Asia was also monopolized by Muslims of his family (Chularatana 2008).

As the *Chularajmontris* had a close relationship with the royal family, the religious difference between the two was never contentious. On the contrary, it seemed that the *Chularajmontri*'s family and the royal family gained mutual support from each other. An *imambara* (Shiite Muslim community centre) was established under royal patronage in the Ayutthaya kingdom. The king's close relations with the Shiite Muslim community were made clear when King Narai (1656–1688) disguised himself and his companions as participants in the *Ashura* ceremony in order to seize his opponent in the royal palace (Chularatana 2008). In the new dynasty founded by the Ban Phlu Luang in 1688, the roles of Muslims and Christians in the kingdom were more controlled. King Borommakot (1733–1758) emphasized the role of the Ayutthaya kingdom as the centre of Theravada Buddhism, and conversion from Buddhism to Christianity or Islam was outlawed. However, the position of *Chularajmontri* still remained with the family of Shaikh Ahmad and his brother. One of the high-ranking nobles of this family converted to Buddhism at that time (Chularatana 2008). Moreover, as leaders of the

Muslim community, the *Chularajmontris* mobilized their people for state purposes when needed. During wars, such as at the end of the Ayutthaya period, the *Chularajmontris* called upon Muslims, mostly Chams, to battle (Kongchana 2007).

As the *Chularajmontri* also held other government positions, they had to be involved in combat in the southern territories when Malay leaders there did not agree with the annexation by Siam. After the dissolution of the *Ayutthaya* kingdom, the *Chakkri* dynasty held the throne from 1782 until the present, called the *Ratanakosin* era. It was named after *Ratanakosin* Island which was the old city centre of Bangkok, (Kingdom-of-thailand n.d.). Kings in this dynasty tried to colonize Malay territories. Phraya *Chularajmontri* (Thuean) and Phraya *Chularajmontri* (Nam) under King Rama II (1809-1824) and King Rama III (1824-1851), helped in subjugating the Malay territories of Thalang and Kedah. *Phraya Chularajmontri* (Nam) laid down rules to administer the southern territories, and occupied a post as 'Commissioner Looking after the Southern Territories' during the reign of King Rama IV (1851-1868). In 1923, King Rama VI launched a 'peaceful treatment' policy for the southern administration, introduced on the basis of a suggestion by his adviser, *Phraya Chularajmontri* (San Ahmadchula) (Saengraya 2010).

The second characteristic of the *Chularajmontri*s of the absolute monarchy was inter-marriage between the *Chularajmontris'* family and the royal family, including those close to the royal family. During the reign of Kings Rama II and Rama III, three generations of *Chularajmontri* men, (Konkaew, Thuean and Nam), married women from Sultan Sulaiman's family, the Songkhla Muslim Sunni dynasty which was related to the royal family. Moreover, daughters of some *Chularajmontri*s were concubines of the kings. Hongse, a daughter of *Chularajnontri* Konkeaw, was a concubine of King Rama II (1809-1824). Lamai, a daughter of *Chularajmontri* Sin, was a concubine of King Rama V (1853-1910). In this phase, relationships between Sultan Sulaiman's family, the *Chularajmontri*'s family and the royal family were very close, beginning with King Rama II, who had a consort from Sultan Sulaiman's family. She gave birth to King Rama III. Furthermore, King Rama V's mother was from this family and he in turn married a concubine from the *Chularajmontri's* family (Chularatana 2008). As King Rama V had a close relationship with *Chularajmontri* Sin, he usually attended the Muharram ceremony attired in black, symbolizing sadness for the death of Imam Hussein. King Rama V also agreed to place the ceremony under his patronage (Klang Panyathai 2010).

In addition to having a close personal connection with the *Chularajmontri* and Sultan Sulaiman's family, King Rama V was present at Islamic occasions. He and his nobles attended the Shiite Ashura commemoration in black attire like other Muslim attendees (Klangpanyathai n.d.). The relationship between King Rama V and the *Chularajmontri's* family was very close. The king's patronage of the Muslim community in general is worth further study. King Rama V did not appoint anyone after the death of the previous *Chularajmontri* to occupy the post. Not having a leader for about two years, until the reign of King Rama VI, affected the Muslim community (Klangpanyathai n.d.).

The *Chularjmontri's* position in the Ayutthaya and Ratanakosin periods can be seen as a reward for Muslim nobles. Appointing *Chularajmontris* who had a sound knowledge of Islam also benefited the state as they would be respected by Muslims and could mobilize manpower when the state needed cooperation from the community. During the last reign of this dynasty, (which saw the end of the Ayutthaya-based kingdom), the *Chularajmontri* was granted 10,000 *rai* (a Thai unit of land which equals 1,600 square meters) (Kongchana 2007).

The emergence and existence of the *Chularajmontri* position in the absolute monarchy era might have reflected the state of pluralism in the Siam kingdom and the Thai kings' recognition Islam. The inclusion of Muslim Persians in the rulings might have signified that the kings provided for the political accommodation of the minority by allowing them to use their identities in positive ways.

However, the grant to the *Chularajmontris* in such a way might not have represented the accommodation of the Muslim community in general since the *Chularajmontri*s in that era were always from one specific clan while Muslims in the Siam kingdom were ethnically diverse. The overthrow of absolute monarchy in 1932 signalled the end of the traditional lineage of *Chularajmontris* from a Persian Shiite clan family. There had been 13 Persian *Chularajmontri*s in the absolute monarchy.

4.2 Discussions on the current state support to the institution of the *Chularajmontri*

After the political revolution in 1932, the state discontinued the *Chularajmontri* position until 1945 when the 1945 Royal Patronage of Islam Decree re-instated it. However, its function was only limited to being "the king's official adviser on issues regarding Islamic affairs". The

Chularajmontri position did not engage in governing the country as it had previously. Moreover, the 1945 Royal Patronage of Islam Decree established the Central Islamic Committee of Thailand, the Provincial Islamic Committees, the mosque committees and the Islamic College of Thailand (Royal Patronage of Islam Decree 1945).

The first *Chularajmontri* in the democratic era*,* Cham Bromyong, was an official in the government's Public Relations Department. He lived in Samutrprakarn, a province next to Bangkok. He was connected to the People's Party and was interested in peace-building in the Lower South, and it was on that basis that he was appointed as the first *Chularajmontr*i under the constitutional monarchy. In the democratic era the *Chularajmontri* post has always been given to Sunni Muslims, the religious identity of most Muslims in Thailand. This might imply that the state's accommodation of the minority which has represented Muslim citizens in general rather better than in the absolute monarchy era. However, although a majority of Muslims in Thailand reside in the south, there had never been a *Chularajmontri* from the south until 2010.

Since the state has committed itself to upholding other religions other than Buddhism, it had granted them financial support. According to the 1997 Islamic Religion Administrative Act, the *Chularajmontri*, regarded as the leader of Muslims in Thailand in Islamic affairs, receives financial support from the state. Since 1999 the *Chularajmontri* has received a stipend of 10,000 baht a month (Chularajmontri Subsidies Royal Decree 1999). Members of the Central Islamic Committee do not receive a salary, but the committee is authorized to arrange the block grant given by the state. Provincial Islamic Committees and Mosque Committees, albeit only *imams, kotebs* (whose duty is giving sermons) and *bilans* (with the role of calling for prayers), are entitled to a monthly stipend (Islamic Administrative Act 1997).

However, Che Man, cited in Chapter 2, points out that the institution of *Chularajmontri* has had little power and financial support. Ishii (1994) also maintains that the Thai state has always supported Buddhism above other religions. Compared to those stipends given to Muslim representatives, it appears that the Buddhist representatives are given more: the stipend for the Supreme Patriarch is 32,200 baht, with 20,400 baht attached to other members of the Sangha Supreme Council (Itti 2009).

When Muslim representatives receive less financial support, a question remains whether this is reasonable or not. Considering Modood's concept in Chapter 1, we might be able to say that Thailand applies moderate secularism. When it tries to promote integration and equality

between religious groups, the support given is on the basis of the difference between the groups i.e. the Sangha Supreme Council engages with 90 per cent of the country's population, the institution of *Chularajmontri* 5-7 per cent. According to Modood, cited in Chapter 1, moderate secularism engages firstly reconceptualising equality as respect for difference rather than uniform sameness and secondly reconceptualising secularism as a moderate and evolutionary process based on institutional adjustments rather than a stance of neutrality towards religions. In the latter issue, the institution of *Chularajmontri* in the current form was established 43 years later than the Sangha Supreme Council.[27]

Moreover, Thailand as a sovereign country which has the right to design how to support religion has stated that it will foster, promote and propagate Buddhism while upholding other religions (the Department of Religious Affairs, 1988). Therefore, intentionally, the state does not aim to propagate every religion equally. When the status of each religion is unequal, the support given to different religions cannot be equal, but proportional. In this light, we still can see the development of the accommodation of the minority. The Thai state has established the institution of *Chularajmontri* which connects with the majority of Muslim citizens more than in the era of absolute monarchy when the Chularajmontris were always appointed from the particular Persian Shiite clan. Whether the given support is reasonable or not should be explored through the perspectives of Muslims themselves.

Responding to the question of how they find the work of the institution of *Chularajmontri*, the Muslim interviewees raised some problems relating to governmental financial support. Most did not consider the amount of the granted budget as the problem, but its management. Ben, a physicist in Pattani, maintains that the state support for Islamic organizations is ineffective because the government does not know where or how to allocate the budget. He points out that the Department of Religious Affairs lacks of understanding of Islam due to the inadequate amount of staff.

> "Nowadays, the problem is that non-Buddhist religions take a small part in the Department of Religious Affairs which has only one staff administering the Islam division. There should be reorganization of this department. Otherwise, no way can one person make it sufficient."

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[27] The institution of Chularajmontri in the current form was established in 1945 and the Sangha Supreme Council 1902.

While the overall figure of the financial support from the state is proportional, certain groups of Muslim interviewees including a member of the Nonthaburi Provincial Islamic Committee and Muslim interviewees in the Upper South, Lower South and North East, still perceive insufficient support from the government.

Five interviewees agree that the areas lacking of reasonable financial support are mosques in peripheral provinces, for example, in the Upper and Lower South and those located in a small Muslim community, for example in the North East with the smallest population of Muslims.

Comparing Bangkok with the upcountry area, Kom, the President of a sub-district administrative organization in the upper South, states:

> "The government should give more support to upcountry mosques because they do not have their own income. Mosques in Bangkok earn from letting out the land, but mosques here do not."

To support mosques, the government should take into consideration their fund-raising potential. Mosques in big cities like Bangkok can rely on other resources besides governmental support whereas in a relatively peripheral area, even though a mosque is partially supported by the government and the community, the sum total of funds is still insufficient.

Imam Cha, imam of a mosque in a sub-district in Nakon Sri Thammarat, who also occupies the position of sub-district Chief, reflects the situation regarding the inadequacy of the budget. He describes how, even though the financial support comes from many sources, it is not enough. A building in his community mosque area remains unfinished and sometimes they do not have enough money to pay for Islamic teachers' salaries:

> "The government provides one 10,000 baht endowment for each masjid at the beginning of the establishment, and never follows up in case we lack of anything. If any masjid runs a religious school, the Ministry of Culture provides a grant annually. The amount of the grant varies according to the number of students. This (my) masjid gets 12,000 baht a year from this grant. The Provincial Administrative Organization via the Provincial Islamic Committee grants 2 million a year for *masjids* throughout Nakorn Srithammarat province. The Sub-district Administrative Organization grants another 10,000 baht a year for *masjids* running a religious school. However, inclusively, this *masjid* has a budget of 7,300 baht monthly to pay for teachers'

salaries. We cannot survive if we only rely on the governmental budget. We have to mobilize money by holding charitable tea parties, but we just about survive. Sometimes we do not have teachers for our Islamic school because they are paid badly. If they get better job, they will leave us."

The interview above might infer that mosques have some certain specific needs, abilities and activities which have to be considered. The allocation of the budget based on numbers of mosque members cannot be effective.

Indeed, the logic of granting support could have been reversed. Probably, mosques which have very few members could have been supported more than those with a lot of members because the bigger mosques tend to be able to fundraise themselves. Muslim communities in the North East are very small, and little support goes to mosques serving such small communities. A mosque which has more members is provided with more money than one which has fewer members.

Prem, a retired lecturer, president of a foundation for Muslim education and a settler in a new Muslim community in Udon Thani, who took part in the establishment of the community's mosque and school, complains:

"As a settler, I mobilized money from outside (the community and some outside the country) to build the *masjid* when there were only five Muslim households here. Our *masjid* gains a small budget from the government because there are only little amount of Muslims here, not even ten households yet. If we have lots of Muslims, we will be provided more budgets."

Some interviewees suggest a resolution to the situation that the government, especially the Department of Religious Affairs in charge administering Islamic organization, does not understand the specific circumstances of Muslim communities. For example, Muslim professionals in the Lower South propose that the state should distribute sufficient budgets to mosques through the sub-district administrative organization. Ben reflects that it is productive when *masjid* committees, particularly imams, work along with the local administrative organization:

"The government should have known that the *masjids* have potential for community work such as education. Transferring all community work to the sub-district

administrative organizations weakens *masjids*. Imams should have taken part in the sub-district administrative organization's budgeting."

Moreover, some much-needed developments do not require a huge amount of money. <u>Tom</u>, a retired economist who still lectures in higher education institutes, proposes a way to improve religious equality for the Muslim community:

"For example, there should be examination of Islamic knowledge in the same way as Buddhist monk examinations to promote the status of *Masjid* committees who obtain different levels of qualifications. So, this will motivate them to develop fair knowledge on both the general and religious world."

According to <u>Ben</u> and <u>Tom</u>, it seems the government does not need to mobilize another series of budgets to support Islamic affairs, but only to reallocate the funding to make it more productive. Some innovations in Muslim organizations, such as an examination for members of Islamic committees, could well be introduced. This does not require a huge budget, but would have administration costs.

Apart from the support given to mosques through the mosque committees, the government could revise the way it supports the Central Islamic Committee. According to <u>Prem</u>, who worked in the Central Islamic Committee, conferring a block grant to the Central Islamic Committee without giving a salary to each member of the committee might cause some problems, such as lack of motivation and corruption:

"The central Islamic committees do not have a salary. They can claim only expenses used for the purpose of meeting, like the cost of petrol. They will receive money for each meeting, but that does not help much. The work of the Central Islamic Committee is not effective because the members work only in the meeting room. To be effective, the members need to work harder outside the meeting room, but it seems they do not have motivation. The committee does not even have money to employ an administrative team when members of the committee cannot manage doing all the administrative work. Compare this with a Provincial Islamic committee, whose members receive stipends, the government should organize stipends to the Central Islamic Committee because it is even at a higher level. Otherwise, the members will seek money through granting *halal* permission. Having a bad reputation on this, we lost credibility..."

From <u>Prem</u>'s interview, it is questionable why the Central Islamic Committee did not set a budget for its administrative staff or even for the members' stipends. On the other hand, the fact that the state does not confer stipends to members of the Central Islamic Committee is not logical because the *Chularajmontri* and members of other kinds of committees all receive stipends.

From this research, most interviewees consider the financial support to be proportional. Many refer to the large Islamic pilgrimage fund which the government grants to the Muslim community as their affirmation of fair support. However, certain groups of Muslims find the support insufficient and ineffective, as mentioned above. The chief recommendation is that the support should have been more organized without needing to add much money. Budget reallocation should help improve the support. Above all, the number of the staff (only one) working on Islamic affairs in the Department of Religious Affairs might not represent proper accommodation of the minority.

Not many interviewees take a comparative view of the governmental support for Buddhism and Islam. The interesting issue is that, even among a few interviewees, their opinions are diverse. Kashmir and Davudi represents two poles of the exceptional cases. One complains about little financial support from the state compared with Buddhist organizations, while the other maintains the opposite view. <u>Kashmir</u>, a *koteb* and a member of the Provincial Islamic Committee in Nonthaburi, states:

> "Due to Thailand being Buddhist, when we have an issue relating to religion, such as that in the Deep South, Muslims feel unfairly treated. A Buddhist provincial abbot has a sufficient salary while a Muslim religious leader receives 10 times less, which is not enough and we feel it is like nothing. The president of a Provincial Islamic Committee and an imam receives 1,000 baht a month. A *koteb* receives 500 baht a month. On the other hand, the provincial abbot receives 10,000 a month. Even the chief of a village receives 3,000 baht a month."

With an opposite perspective, <u>Davudi</u>, a member of the Provincial Islamic Committee in Chiang Mai maintains that the government supports the Muslim sector too much, taking into consideration that Muslims are a minority. He contends that Islamic affairs should not be the state's burden, but each Muslim community should be in charge of its own mosque, supporting and monitoring it.

"Comparing the mosque committees to Buddhist monks, they both will gain support from the masses if they are virtuous. There is no point in supporting bad persons in religious organizations, and the state shouldn't."

Davudi's notion above recalls a secularist view contending that the state should not finance any religious organization. However, since the Thai state applies moderate secularism, it finances religious institutions including the institution of *Chularajmontri*. When Islamic representatives do not find the support appropriate, they could amend it by a negotiation process, for example, through the parliament.

4.3 Discussion on effectiveness of the state-supervised Islamic representative bodies

The previous sections illustrated the development of the institution of the *Chularajmontri*. In the absolute monarchy era the *Chularajmontri* position belonged to one Shiite Persian family while in the democratic era the government appointed a Sunni Muslim scholar. The *Chularajmontris* in the democratic era did not come to office by lineage. Moreover, all were Sunnis, who represent the majority of Muslims in Thailand. However, the government never appointed Muslims from the South even though there was a greater Muslim population than in other regions. When the *Chularajmontri*s (before 2010) came from central Thailand, they were always involved with the Lower South. As Che Man 1990, cited in Chapter 2, contended that Muslims in the Lower South believed that Provincial Islamic Committees were established by the government to integrate and control local Muslim citizens, the *Chularajmontri* could be considered as such.

Indeed, *Chularajmontris* were drawn to become involved in the conflict between the government and the locality in the Lower South. The first *Chularajmontri* in the democratic era, Cham Bromyong (1945-1947), was specifically appointed to help resolve the conflict (Aphornsuvan 2003, 20). The next *Chularajmontri*, Tuan Suwannasan (1947-1981), was chosen by a nationalist regime, and not supposed to be politically active. However, he allowed his daughter to marry a Muslim MP from Yala apparently to strengthen the relationship between Thai Muslims and Malay-speaking Muslims (Saengraya 2010).

How much the *Chularajmontris* could represent the majority of Muslims and defend Muslim rights was questionable since they were from the central Thailand (Aphornsuvan 2003, 20;

Saengraya 2010). Moreover, the institution of *Chularajmontri* was always structured under governmental organization (Royal Patronage of Islam Decree 1945), which could affect the institution of *Chularajmontri* negatively when the government made arbitrary changes.[28]

In 1948 the nationalist government amended the Royal Decree on the Patronage of Islam by downgrading the status of the *Chularajamontri* (Ishii 1994; Aphornsuvan 2003). This stated that the *Chularajmontri* was to be advisor to the Religious Affairs Department instead of personal assistant to the king as laid down in the 1945 Decree (Royal Decree on the Patronage of Islam No. 2, 1948). Therefore, it seems the claim made by Che Man (1990) that the institution of the *Chularajmontri* has had little power may be not far from the truth. The state at that time (1947-1981) designed the appointed *Chularajmontri* to be the personal assistant to the king (according to the 1945 Royal Decree on the Patronage of Islam) or to the Religious Affairs Department (according to the 1948 Royal Decree on the Patronage of Islam), not to be the head of the Muslim community in Thailand.

However, 1997 saw the Muslim community making changes which showed its increasing power. In the past, according to the 1945 Royal Decree on the Patronage of Islam, the members of the Central Islamic Committee and the Provincial Islamic Committees are appointed and can be removed by the government and the Ministry of Interior. In the 1997 law, the Islamic Organization Administrative Act, such power is delegated to Islamic representative bodies. The government no longer directly appoints Islamic committees. The Act states that the Ministry of Interior organizes Mosque Committees to select the Provincial Islamic Committees. Subsequently, the Ministry of Interior arranges for the latter to select the Central Islamic Committee. The Provincial Islamic Committees throughout Thailand are in charge of selecting the *Chularajmontri* (Islamic Organization Administrative Act 1997).

As to dismissal, the Ministry of Interior can no longer remove members of the Islamic committees, according to the 1997 Islamic Organization Administrative Act. There is further delegation in the Islamic representative bodies. Removal of a member of the Central and

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[28] The royal decree stated that "the government may establish the Central Islamic Committee of Thailand to advise the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Education in matters regarding Islamic Affairs... Members of the Central Islamic Committees are appointed and can be removed by His Majesty on the recommendation of the Minister of Interior". In the same way, "the Provincial Islamic Committees may be established by the Ministry of Interior to give advice to provincial authorities on matters regarding to Islamic affairs. The Provincial Islamic Committees are appointed and removed by the Ministry of Interior (Royal Decree on the Patronage of Islam Act 1945).

Provincial Islamic Committees and mosque committees needs approval from the Central and Provincial Islamic Committees, respectively. It seems the 1997 Islamic Organization Administrative Act confers more decentralization on Islamic representative bodies.

However, on the other hand, we can see that the representative bodies do not have full power. The Minister of Interior and the Minister of Culture are legally authorized to implement the Act. They can appoint staff and issue ministerial rules regarding administration of the committees (Islamic Organization Administrative Act 1997). Moreover, in reality the institution of *Chularajmontri* is still not in charge of some important Muslim activities. For example, the Minister of Culture is the Chair of the Board of Hajj Affairs, providing logistics and services for Muslim pilgrimages. The board consists of nine other high-ranking government officials, one Muslim representative from the Central Islamic Committee, and up to a maximum of four honourable persons appointed by the Minister of Culture (the Promotion of Hajj Act 1981).

Therefore, the question of whether the institution of *Chularajmontri* has enough power remains debatable. According to the Islamic Organization Administrative Act of 1997, the *Chularajmontri* is the leader of the Muslim community. His four direct duties include advising or proposing comments to the government in relation to Islamic affairs, announcing the results of lunar observations, issuing *fatwas*, and appointing his advisory committee. Moreover, as the chairman of the Central Islamic Committee, the *Chularajmontri* is responsible for its authorities including regulating the administration of provincial Islamic committees, mosque committees and registered mosques, supporting and promoting religious activities and education, and appointing working groups to accomplish their lists (Islamic Organization Administrative Act 1997).

Samaoun (2004), a renowned Muslim scholar who was a senator, concludes that the actual power of the *Chularajmontri* is limited only to the four direct duties. Most administrative work falls to the Central Islamic Committee. Working in the form of a committee, the *Chularajmontri* cannot overrule opposite opinions. Hence, Samaoun contends that the *Chularajmontri* does not have real power to administer Islamic organizations.

Moreover, Yusuf (1998, 292-293) reveals that Prasert Mahamad, the *Chularajmontri* during the drafting process of the 1997 Act, warned that the election system would cause vote-

buying. Samaoun (2004) also points out that the election accordance with the 1997 Act creates cliques among the Islamic committees, rather than promote cooperation among them.

The following interviews show Muslim professionals' perspectives on the institution of the *Chularajmontri*, focussing on the *Chularajmontri* position and the Central Islamic Committee. Interviews were conducted in 2008 and 2009 when the *Chularajmontri* in the office was Sawas Sumalayasak (1997-2010). Sumalayasak, at the age of 80, was the first *Chularajmontri* elected by members of Provincial Islamic Committees throughout Thailand, under the 1997 Islamic Organization Administrative Act.

In contrast with Samaoun's concern, with reference to when Sumalayasak was largely inactive towards the end of his leadership (2008-2009), most interviewees did not complain that the *Chularajmontri* had less power. The idea that the *Chularajmontri* did not utilize his authorized power, especially concerning help to alleviate important problems like the southern conflict. In fact, in 2004 he was widely criticised because he tried to legitimize the governmental use of armed forces against suspected insurgents at the Kru Se mosque (Yusuf 2008). This could lead to the question of how far the head of the Muslim community, structured under governmental organization, can represent the majority of Muslims including Malay-speakers in the Lower South.

Indeed, Muslim interviewees in the Lower South do not question why Muslims in that area have never been appointed and elected as the *Chularajmontri*, given that the Muslim population of the region is the largest in the country. The interviewees realize that the *Chularajmontri* is elected by the election by the provincial Islamic committees not by the masses. Therefore, they understood that unless the candidate from their region was exceptionally outstanding, there was very little chance of winning the vote. However, many interviewees in the Lower South question the representativeness of members of the Central Islamic Committee, feeling that there should be one from the Lower South.

Sawat, the head of the District Administrative Office in the Lower South, notes this unusual and unfair aspect of members of the Central Islamic Committee:

> "There should be a variety of Muslims in the representative bodies; however, we do
> not see Muslims from the Lower South in the Central Islamic Committee despite
> nearly a half of Muslim population in Thailand is here."

Uthman, a radio programmer, states:

> "The qualification is the most important, and the Central Islamic Committee should have diversity. At least, there should be a variety of occupations in it.

Muslim interviewees from other regions also note this unusual characteristic of the Central Islamic Committee. Ayub, a journalist in *Isan*, explains why Muslims from the Deep South cannot or do not take part in the Central (national) Islamic Committee. He speaks straightforwardly about lobbying as a strategy to win the elections.

> "To be chosen by the elections, candidates need to gain wide support. They seek the support by lobbying. As they come by this way, it is not right. In turn, they have to care about benefits of their supporting groups otherwise nobody helps them to win the elections."

Lobbying has reduced the representativeness of the Central Islamic Committee. Instead of diversity, the Central Islamic Committee has become one of Muslims who play politics and make connections with politicians, not their local communities. More straightforwardly, Kirsh, an imam who had struggled to attain a position on an Islamic committee, mentions vote-buying:

> "Once we have the election, if you want to occupy this position, you offer money…the voters vote for you. We bribe in the national election, in the local election, not except in the religious organization. Politicians interfere with it easily by using money."

Most interviewees see the negative effects of elections. Some of them believe that they give rise to disputes, vote-buying and malign influence among interest groups, such as business groups or politicians.[29] Few interviewees identify any advantages of them.

Kiri, a religious leader who owns a *pondok* (traditional Islamic school) in the upper South, reflects that he is less satisfied by present than past Muslim representatives since there is now the election procedure. He takes the view that elected members of Islamic representative bodies do not work hard. As they have a limited period of tenure, they concern themselves with their supporters' interests rather than the interests of ordinary Muslims in general.

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[29] The best discussion of this phenomenon is in McCargo (2010), Co-optation and Resistance in Thailand's Muslim South: The Changing Role of Islamic Council Elections.

> "All three organizations, the *Chularajmontri* team, the Central Islamic Committee and the Provincial Islamic Committees in the present come from elections. They have less devotion. They are worse than the former ones because there is contamination by politics at both the national and local levels. Members of Islamic committees have connections with members of the House of Representatives and senators. We can say there are several political parties represented in Islamic committees. We have to admit that wherever election takes place, partition comes."

From Kiri's interview, it seems that representatives chosen by electoral means do not dedicate themselves as fully to Islamic affairs. The encroachment of political and interest groups causes division among members of Islamic representative bodies.

Samart, a bio-scientist in the Lower South, also sees that competition during elections only brings rivalries, not fruitful benefits:

> "Local citizens set high expectations on the Provincial Islamic Committee. We expect them to solve all vice problems. To win elections they seek to gain a competitive advantage over rivals, just like politicians. After obtaining positions, they do not work hard, though. The same to Central Islamic Committee and *Chularajmontri* team, I did not see their accomplishments. I did not even see these two teams working together.

Theoretically, competition during elections should guarantee that the Muslim community has productive and efficient committees. However, vote-buying practices take religious leaders away from the Muslim community while aligning them with external interest groups either at local or national level.

Kashmir, a member of Nonthaburi Islamic Committee who experienced the fruitful period of the old Muslim organizations, reflects that an election eventually proves hazardous to the Muslim community: "Nowadays, the contestation to be the leaders makes Muslim community insecure."

Vote-buying not only attracts candidates who do not wish to represent their own Muslim community, but also creates cliques among members of Islamic committees. Boon, a local politician, reflects:

> "Whatever elections are as equally bad. Religious leader elections follow the same fashion of using money. Too bad, good people can't win the election. Whoever wants to sell or buy votes can do it freely. It happens at every level. When money engages elections, even friends can kill friends."

The consequence of intense competition during elections is fragmentation. Harmony hardly exists when members of a committee create their own cliques. Prem, an ex-member of the

Central Islamic Committee, describes the working circumstances within the Central Islamic Committee:

> "It was awkward working in the committee. It was difficult to find agreement on any issue. The Zakat Act could have been implemented if members of the committee agreed. Sometimes, I felt, it is like if you are not their companion, they will not agree with your proposal."

Fragmentations occur when members of a committee protect the benefits of different political and interest groups. Most interviewees do not see any advantages in the alignment with political parties and other interest groups; they think it causes ineffectiveness as the elected representatives do not work closely with the Muslim community. They are more concerned about the benefit of interest groups. However, one interviewee does see an advantage to the encroachment of business groups. Awudud reflects that conflicts of interest among members of Islamic representative bodies are created by the involvement of businessmen. However, he believes that encroachment from business groups sometimes benefits Thai society. He explains that as society cannot stop the forming of interest groups in religious organizations, use can be made of it. He gives an example of the *halal* certification:

> "Sometimes the interest groups can benefit the society. The old system certifying *halal* food was not respectable. It is good that the *Chularajmontri* team has been forced (by business groups and some members of the Central Islamic Committee) to follow international standards, which are more scientific. Otherwise, corporations selling food world-wide have to apply the certification from Malaysia."

Strikingly, when many interviewees raise the problem of fragmentation and vote-buying among members of Islamic committees, most of them do not suggest that the electoral vote should be abrogated. They believe that since the election system has been instituted, it should remain. Indeed, some interviewees mention the vote-buying with disbelief as if they would like to think that it is only a rumour, rather than the reality. When probed why they do not think the elections should be abrogated, those interviewees consider vote-buying as the malpractices of some candidates. They take the view that the problems centre around persons of financial means who have close links with national or local politicians who cooperate with business firms. That could be seen as an optimistic view: whatever problems happened could be improved in the future.

Moreover, only a few interviewees complain about the electoral procedures of the *Chularajmontri* and the Central Islamic committee which demand only Provincial Islamic Committees to vote, thus considered as less democratic. They suggest every Muslim should have the right to vote for the national-level Islamic representatives. Strikingly, none of these interviewees was from the Lower South, the habitat of nearly half the whole Muslim population of the country. This might signify that the interviewees from the Lower South do not take the view that Muslims in that area should dominate the national-level Islamic committee by the use of mass elections.

In another way, if the state's accommodation of Muslims was aimed to integrate the Muslim minority through the regulation of Islamic committee elections, it seems unsuccessful. Nearly half of the interviewees from the Lower South propose using a selective procedure in appointing Islamic representatives. With there being no Muslims from the Lower South on the Central Islamic Committee might disappoint some Muslim interviewees in the Lower South, but not less than the fact that the committee appeared inactive and fragmented.

Moreover, since vote-buying is considered an unethical practice that destroys the reputation and legitimacy of the Islamic committees in general, some Muslim groups plan to eliminate Islamic committee elections. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

4.4 The prospects for change

The issue of what should be the best way to appoint members of the institute of *Chalarajmontri* was debated in Muslim society before the legislation of the 1997 Islamic Organization Administrative Act. At that time Muslim politicians of the New Aspiration Party proposed the election as the method to appoint the *Chularajmontri* and members of the Islamic committees at every level, while the Democrat Party preferred the selection method. Prasert Mahamad, the *Chularajmontri* at that time, warned that the election would cause vote-buying (Yusuf 1998, 292-293), but since the Act was issued while the National Aspiration Party was in power, the members of the institute of *Chalarajmontri* were determined to be elected (Yusuf 1998, 296).

However, as shown above, most Muslim professional interviewees questioned the coming to power of some Islamic representatives, which could give rise to some resentment towards the institution of the *Chularajmontri* in its current form in Muslim society.

After the 2006 coup led by a Muslim General, Sonthi Boonyaratkalin, in January 2007, Nideh Waba, an advisor of the Prime Minister, proposed to reorganize the institution of the *Chularajmontri*.[30] Waba proposed to remove the election from the recruitment of the members of the institution of the *Chularajmontri*, and instead to introduce the *Shura* as a consultative body in the name of the National Islamic Council. He and his team drafted a new version of the Islamic Organisation Administrative Act for this reason; however, the National Legislative Assembly did not pass this bill.[31]

Moreover, the president of Narathiwat Islamic Committee did not agree with the creation of a *shura* council. He contended that Waba's proposition reflected the conflict between the drafter and the incumbent *Chularajmontri*, and would therefore lead to conflict within the Muslim community. However, Wahab Abdul Wahab, ex-president of the Pattani Islamic committee, and Areepen Utarasintr, a prospective MP for Narathiwat, supported the idea of a *shura* council on the condition that the *Chularajmontri* took part in the *shura* council and not in the Central Islamic Committee, as happens now. Even though they agreed to the creation of a *shura* council, they were aware that it might cause conflict among Muslims and misunderstanding in wider society (Isra News 2007).

Later in November 2007, Ismael Ali, the director of the Islamic Studies College in Pattani and a member of the National Legislative Assembly, drafted a bill on Islamic administration (Thai Senate 2007).[32] This did not call for the *shura* and seemed to favour compromise between the electoral and selective modes of appointment. The bill was different from the 1997 Islamic Administrative Act in some significant issues:

1) With regard to members of the Central Islamic Committee, a recruitment committee selects candidates totalling twice the number of members of the Central Islamic Committee. Afterwards, the *Chularajmontri* appoints members of the committee from the provided shortlist.

2) As for the Provincial Islamic Committees, the Ministry of Interior organizes *imams* to elect two-thirds of the number of the members and the other one-third comes from a selective procedure.

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[30] Nideh Waba is an Islamic scholar in the Lower South who is known as a supporter of the Democrat Party and in opposition to Den Tohmeena who pushed the 1997 Islamic Organisation Administrative Act. His attempt to remove the *Chularajmontri* in the office in 2007 is also known.

[31] See details in Yusuf 2010, "The Role of the Chularajmontri (Shaykh al-Islam) in Resolving Ethno-religious Conflict in Southern Thailand" *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* Vol. 27 (1): 31-53.

[32] The National Legislative Assembly at that time was constituted by the 2006 coup leaders, who determined its members.

3) The *Chularajmontri* can appoint other persons to enact his mission.

The third proposition could resolve problems when the *Chularajmontri* falls ill, without raising the issue of the controversial *shura* council. Even though the draft of the amended Islamic Administrative Act contained much compromise, the cabinet at that time only agreed to study this issue further (The Secretariat of the Cabinet 2007). This proposed legislation has not progressed thus far. Succeeding governments have made no headway. The current *Chularajmontri*, taking office in 2010, gained his position through the 1997 Islamic Administrative Act.

The following section shows visions of Muslim professionals on change to the institute of the *Chularajmontri* from the interviews conducted in 2008 and 2009. The interviewees tend to believe that it is hardly possible to abrogate the electoral mode of appointment since it represents democratic appointment rather than other means. Thus, the suggestions made by the interviewees focus on the adjustment of the electoral mode of appointment. Very few interviewees from the Upper South suggest using a mixture of election and selection as proposed above by Ismael Ali.

The interviewees from northern and central Thailand suggest revising the principles of who and how potential Muslims should be candidates and voters. Most interviewees from the Lower South support the idea to constitute the *shura* to advice or monitor elected representatives.

According to the 1997 Islamic Administrative Act, candidates for *Chularajmontri* and other positions in Islamic committees are supposed to nominate themselves for election. Kashmir, a member of the Provincial Islamic Committee of Nonthaburi, takes the view that the self-proposing principle is incompatible with Islam:

> "Actually, Islam does not endorse the way that the candidates propose themselves, but rather support the way we have a recruitment committee. The old law of 1947 and 1948 did not determine the procedure to elect those positions, so we can adjustably apply the way that suits Islamic principles."

Further, he stresses that in whatever form, if not a recruitment committee, there should be a measure to qualify or "screen" the candidates concerning their virtue.

On the other hand, younger-generation interviewees are concerned about who should be eligible to vote. According to the currently-used 1997 Islamic Administrative Act, voters for positions of the *Chularajmontri* and members of the Central Islamic Committee are members

of Provincial Islamic Committees throughout Thailand. Voters for positions in a Provincial Islamic Committee are members of mosque committees in each provincial area. Some interviewees in the North and Centre do not agree with this legal stipulation. Opinions are, however, diverse. Two believe that ordinary Muslim masses should be eligible to vote whereas the other two suggest that the rights should belong to Muslims with a certain level of appropriate qualifications.

Alee, a lecturer at Chiang Mai, and Bihar, a businessman in a province near Bangkok who had lived abroad for long time, comment that the election should have been more democratic, in the same way as general elections. Alee takes the view that the present election represents an elite model rather than democracy:

> "The procedure to elect the Chularajmontri and members of committees is defined and operated by the government. It is more of an elite model. Ordinary Muslims do not engage in the votes at all. The legislation defines that voters of provincial Islamic committees are mosque committees. Indeed, Muslim masses should have the right to choose the *Chularajmontri* directly from name lists of honourable Muslims which might be prepared by a recruitment committee."

Bihar also insists that the Muslim masses should elect the Islamic representatives directly:

> "Islamic Committees in Thailand were established by the Thai authority, which is democratic in form, but not in practice. The better way for Muslims is to set our own representative system from the pure election of the Muslim masses and by approval of the King. The duty of the representatives is to check for approval or veto against all laws applied to Muslim region or to Muslim individuals."

Alee, a lecturer in political science, and Bihar, a socialist businessman, give their opinions from a democratic standpoint. They believe that elections of Muslim representatives should apply the democratic tradition so the majority of Muslims can play a role in the election, at least that of the *Chularajmontri*.

However, Julong, a young imam, and Raqq, an administrator of a Muslim website who answers Islamic questions, give opinions in the light of an "Islamic principle". They contend that Muslims who are authorized to vote now, cannot judge adequately due to their poor religious qualifications. This is opposite to Alee's and Bihar's perspectives as it implies that Muslims in general are not capable of voting. Julong says:

> "In general elections everyone, good or bad, has equal rights, but Islam teaches that you have to be good before you obtain this right. Christianity developed this

technique: Pope is chosen by cardinals. Unluckily, due to Islam not having clerical orders, we don't know who is good or bad. "

Raqq straightforwardly points out that the authorized voters e.g. members of mosque committees are not qualified according to his standards:

"The problem is *imams, kotebs* and *bilans*, who are authorized (to elect) by the Interior Ministry, do not have enough Islamic knowledge. They might occupy their positions because the positions belonged to their ancestors. "

Interestingly, only one small group of Muslim interviewees are shown to have widely opposing and diverse opinions. One side maintains that the Muslim masses should have rights to vote for their Islamic representatives as in the democratic ideology, whereas the other side suggests that the votes should be cast only by "qualified" Muslims or Muslims with a good knowledge in Islam. Notably, the latter also refers to the authorized voters who are "not quite qualified".

Believing that the elections of Islamic representatives are unlikely to be withdrawn, Muslim interviewees in the Upper South propose a compromise between the election and appointment of the positions. Kiri, an Islamic teacher who owns a *pondok* in the upper south, suggests: "Elections are democratic; they should work well, but it happened that they don't. I proposed we use both election and selection."

Moreover, to minimize vote-buying in election, Kashmir, a member of the Nonthaburi Islamic Committee, proposes that the legal stipulations regarding the election process should be amended by reducing the recruitment period. The current legislation states that an election will be held within 6 months after a vacancy has arisen. Kashmir considers that this is unnecessarily long and thus maximizes vote-buying opportunities.

"If the (Buddhist) supreme patriarch passes away, the Sangha Supreme Council will select the new one shortly. In the Muslim case, we require local participation up to 6 months before the election. Then, around 10 persons, who want to be *Chularajmontri*, will lobby and buy voters. We should not leave the period that long."

The aforementioned interviews imply that these interviewees in the North and Centre do not consider there should be a change to limit or balance the power of the elected representatives. Remarkably, a few interviewees in the Lower South suggest the emergence of *shura* in the structure of the institution of the *Chularajmontri,* to advise those elected representatives.

Qaisar, a lecturer in the Prince Songkhla University, believes the *shura* can minimize the negative effects of the election. He introduces how it would work in the representative bodies:

> "The supreme Islamic leader should have a consultant council. The ruler and his counsellors will debate the issues until they have the consonance to make the decision. They do not use the vote system when they consider an issue as it exists in Thai parliament.

Pradya, a young journalist in Pattani, also recommends the *shura* for Islamic committees at every level. Moreover, for him the *shura* should play important roles other than the consultant role:

> "Personally, I think *shura* councils should not only be advisory teams. They should have more power, such as to monitor or to warn elected members of Islamic committees or even Muslim politicians."

The recommendations made by the Lower South interviewees differ distinctively from those of the interviewees elsewhere. The Lower South interviewees tend to see the necessity of balancing and monitoring (or actually limiting) power of elected Islamic representatives while the interviewees from central and northern Thailand tend to accept the authorized power according to the existing Act of the elected Islamic representatives if their coming to power is justifiable. This might relate to the fact that there are no Muslims from the Lower South on the Central Islamic committee, and the *Chularajmontri* position has never belonged to Lower Southern Muslims. This might affect them in some ways since the Muslims in the Lower South appear to be different, ethnically and culturally, from those in other parts of Thailand. Also, they probably have different political viewpoints from the rest. The calling for the *shura* to give advice to the elected Islamic representatives can be referred to this concern.

As Muslims nationwide are aware of the disadvantages of the election procedure according to the 1997 Islamic Organization Administrative Act, a legal amendment was proposed after the 2006 coup led by a Muslim General. The amendment has developed through negotiations. Initially, Waba, the Muslim advisor to the Prime Minister, intended the bill to form the *Shura* in which the *Chularajmontri* is the head and consisting of selected members who are Islamic leaders and experts from registered Islamic religious schools nationwide (Yusuf 2010). However, when the concept of the *Shura* attracted criticisms, Ali, the member of the National

Legislative Assembly, ignored the idea of establishing the *Shura*. However, as seen from the interviews, the interviewees in the Lower South still recommend the *Shura*. Moreover, while Waba intended to completely make void the electoral practices at every committee level, Ali's draft has reduced this, albeit in a relatively compromising way. The latter proposed that the *Chularajmontri* selects members of the Central Islamic Committee from a shortlist drawn up by a committee. As to the Provincial Islamic Committees, the drafted bill states that imams in a province select two thirds of the members of the Provincial Islamic Committee with the other third coming from selection by a recruitment committee. Thus, the draft has the potential to solve some problems relating to the self-proposed procedure existing in the election. However, from the interviewees' perspectives, there are concerns over the judgement of some imams. Above all, as the parliament has not yet legalized this draft, a large group of the interviewees (which should represent part of Muslim society) still consider that the electoral means tend to represent democracy better than other means.

4.5 Conclusion

The Thai state has accommodated Islam, recognizing it as a significant religion. The institution of the *Chularajmontri* as established since 1945 has been regarded as an instrument working to promote integration of the "nation" rather than that of the minority. Aphornsuwan (2003) claims that the Thai state has tried to assimilate the Muslim minority by organizing Muslim representative bodies in the form of the institution of the *Chularajmontri*. Indeed, even in a relatively well-developed multicultural country like Britain, multiculturalist academics, e.g. Modood, propose that national integration should be one of the aims of multiculturalism.

Responding to the question of how Muslim professional interviewees see the relationships between the heads/representatives of the Muslim community in Thailand and the Thai state, this research has found that the interviewees consider the Islamic representatives integrated into the national bureaucratic and political system in such a way that does not benefit the Muslim community (or local Muslim communities). However, it does not prove whether the interviewees see the state attempting to exploit or assimilate Muslim minorities, as claimed above by Aphornsuwan.

Referring to the concept of multiculturalism, Modood stresses that it can only be imposed effectively on societies with well-developed legal and political systems (see 1.2.2). The question can be asked as to how well-developed Thailand is in terms of political and legal systems, even though the answer tends to be relative and subjective. Since some interviewees see that national and local politicians interfere in the election of the Islamic representatives, we might conclude that the political and legal systems of Thailand is not well-developed democratic so that it does not make the Islamic representative system effective. However, when the majority of the interviewees see that the ineffectiveness of the institution of the *Chularajmontri* is caused by the vote-buying to be elected, they attribute this as the personal problem. Most Muslim professional interviewees do not even think there should be abrogation of the law regarding the election. They focus on the qualification, the "virtue" and the motivation of the candidates rather than interference from outside. From the interviewees' perspectives, the inner strength within the Muslim community is the foundation on which to develop an effective Islamic representative system.

The aforementioned paragraph might also signify that most interviewees (as well as the majority of Islamic representatives) are well-integrated in the existing political and legal systems of the country so that they do not see those systems directly obstructing the effectiveness of the institution of the *Chularajmontri*. As a democratic country in the third world, Thailand is regarded by some western academics, such as Connors (2007), that it has inserted the unity of Thainess during the process of democratization. The perspectives of those interviewees might reflect the characteristics of "people in democratic subjection" who are committed to national identity and do not estrange themselves from the state projects of democratization revolving the three pillars: nation, religion and king.

However, the interviewees in the Lower South appear to show some difference. They also attribute the personal problem as the cause of the ineffectiveness of the Islamic representative bodies, but nearly half of them tend to foresee the existing political and legal systems (particularly ones relating to the elections of Islamic representatives) as not enhancing the effectiveness of the Islamic representative bodies (see in 4.3). More clearly, the requests for *shura* within the structure of the institution of the *Chularajmontri,* raised by the Lower South interviewees, (see 4.4), suggest that those interviewees do not rely on the existing system of the elected Islamic representative bodies.

Whereas perfect accommodation of minorities is rare in any country (see 1.2), the concept of moderate secularism suggests that this should be organized in adjustable and negotiable processes (see 1.3). Therefore, in this case Muslim minorities in Thailand and the Thai society should take time to continue mutual negotiations. The complication in the Thai case is that the Muslim communities do not seem to be able to reach an agreement over the effective model of the Islamic representative bodies.

Unlike Muslim interviewees from the other parts of Thailand, nearly half the Lower South interviewees expect to see *shuras* as part of the institution of the *Chularajmontri*. Thus, dialogue and negotiation within Muslim society are essential to further this progress. As the concept of moderate secularism also suggests adopting a pragmatic case-by-case approach to dealing with controversies and conflict, it might be worth it for the Muslim community and the wider Thai society to consider whether Muslims in the Lower South can have those Islamic representative bodies they desire. More importantly, a study of how ordinary Muslim masses in the Lower South see their Islamic representatives should be undertaken in the near future. The reason why this is important is because the Thai state is liberal. The interviews from the Lower South evidence that many Muslim professionals there, as citizens, are not passive subjects who are oriented to follow the same political imaginary created by the state. Even though Thai liberalism can be viewed as containing negative freedom (Connors 2007, 184), there should remain negotiation opportunities for people from different strands.[33]

Viewing Thailand as having non-western liberal democracy, Connors (2007) stresses that the Thai state tries to unify different citizens within the frame of civic virtue. When there are people-problem, elites always interfere in the problem, using their own tactics disguised under civic virtue to make the disputing people unified (Connors 2007, 267). Therefore, it is interesting to see further how ordinary Muslim masses in the Lower South want their Islamic representatives, and how they can make their ways if that is not accordance to "national interests" or civic virtue.

At the present stage, with the amendment of the current Islamic Organization Administrative Act having been suspended, most Muslim professional interviewees do not feel they have representatives who can voice problems or represent them. This issue is considered more significant in the Lower South where the problem predominates. Integrating Islamic

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[33] Connors uses the term 'negative freedom' to describe Thai liberalism which "keeps the state and the masses at bay".

representative bodies to the state, without representing or benefiting local Muslim communities, might have contributed to the enduring southern conflict. Calls for southern independence might in part have resulted from the inadequacy of the Islamic representative bodies. The next chapter explores non-militant calls for southern autonomy.

Chapter 5

Calling for Lower Southern Autonomy: lessons learned from the failure of the institution of the *Chularajmontri* and the interplay of Islamic education

The previous chapter reflected on the ineffectiveness of the institution of the Chularajmontri in terms of Islamic representation. This chapter concentrates specifically on the call for Lower Southern autonomy. With an analysis at the institutional level, the chapter examines the roles of non-militant movements calling for the autonomy and Islamic education of the region as seen through the perspectives of Muslim professional interviewees.

5.1 <u>Non-militant movements seeking southern autonomy and questions on the state's legitimacy</u>

The southernmost part of Thailand, particularly Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, has long been well-known for the militant separatist movements which have existed there. However, besides militant organizations, there have also been civil movements calling for greater autonomy from the Thai state. The *Persatuan Semangat Pattani*, formed in 1939, had the best reputation in the past, since then, relatively little news about politically active civil society organizations had reached outsiders until December 2009, when the idea of autonomy gained publicity and expression through such terms as "special administrative region". The possibility of autonomy came to be presented and discussed by local civil society organizations, not only by politicians and academics, as before. The existence of either civilian or militant movements raises questions relating to the justice of governance in the Thai state.

This section gives a brief overview of the activities of those civil society organizations aiming to revise the centralized administration of the Thai state in the Lower South. The focus falls mainly on two developments: the emergence and activities of Haji Sulong's movement in 1939, and those of 23 organizations formed in 2009, with justification given for the activities of both movements. The attitudes of the Muslim elite will be examined on the basis of material from 9 interviewees from inside and 41 from outside the Lower South. The interviewees were asked to make recommendations for resolving problems of violence in the Lower South. Their attitudes towards "autonomy", a "special administrative region" and other possible solutions are also revealed and analysed.

<u>5.1.1 The development of non-militant movements seeking southern autonomy in the</u>
<u>period 1939-1957</u>

The fact that civil Muslim movements have called for autonomy in the Lower South for decades is less well-known than the existence of movements committed to militant separatism. However, such civil movements have existed and attracted much popular support since 1939, for example the Persatuan Semangat Pattani organization. The latter was established by Haji Sulong Abdulgadir to call for good governance in the Lower South (Salae 2006, 187), by peaceful means. Although he was the president of the Pattani Islamic Committee, he was seen as "a leader of separatists" or "rebels" (Satha-Anand 2008, 170). After his death in 1954 civil political movements in the Lower South did not, until recently, play a vital role in events in the region. The following section covers the development of proposals to alter, and movements intended to adjust, the administrative system in the southern border provinces.

After the 1932 political revolution, which conferred democracy with a constitutional monarchy in Thailand, it appeared that Muslims in the southern border provinces were highly active politically. In the first two elections, Muslim representatives in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat won seats in the parliament. The democratic government under the People's Party was sympathetic to southern Muslims and tried to encourage them to join the nation's political life. The Madrasa Al-Muarif Al-Wadaniya Patani, the first "modern" private Islamic school, founded by Haji Sulong, was financially aided and opened by Phraya Paholpolpayuhasena, the leader of the People's Party and of the 1932 revolutionary coup (Satha-Anand 2008, 159). However, later on Thai politics became more nationalist, which created a more difficult environment for those representing southern Muslims.

In 1938 Field Marshal Phibul Songkram, from the military wing of the People's Party, became prime minister through a resolution of the House of Representatives. His first term of rule was from 1938 to 1944 (The Secretariat of the Cabinet n.d.). He sought popularity by propagating a nationalist policy where cultural assimilation was imposed and little tolerance was shown to the culture of minorities (Apornsuwan 2003, 18). Malay Muslims on the southern border were affected. For instance, Malay-speaking Muslims in the Saiburi district of Pattani were forced to pay respect to images of the Buddha, the National Culture Council at the time having determined that Buddhism was the national religion. Moreover, according to the dress code decided by the Council, local government officials forced Malay-speaking

Muslims to change their traditional attire to a western style, with no head covering allowed for either men or women. Sometimes, police destroyed the Muslims' clothes in their presence (Satha-Anand 2008, 161).

To respond to such policies and practices, Haji Sulong established an association, the *Persatuan Semangat Pattani*, in 1939 to call for fair treatment for citizens in the southern border area (Salae 2006: 187). However, the situation did not improve. Furthermore, in 1943 the government declared it would apply Thai civil law for family and inheritance practices in the southern border provinces, replacing the existing system of Islamic law. It also voided the status of Datoh Yutidham (an Islamic law consultant in Thai courts). As a result, Muslims had two alternatives when seeking Islamic legal guidance: to consult either an Imam in their community, or a *qadi* (Sharia judge on family and inheritance matters) in Malaysia to judge their case. As it was quite far for Muslims living in Patani to travel to Malaysia, they elected Haji Sulong to be the *qadi* of the region (Satha-Anand 2008, 162).

After the resignation of Field Marshal Pibulsongkram in 1944, the new government under Major Khuang Abhaiwogse issued the Patronage of Islam Decree of 1945. This act defined the *Chularajmontr*i as the king's personal assistant with regard to the royal patronage of Islam. It created the possibility of establishing the National Islamic Committee and Provincial Islamic Committees. With regard to Islamic education, the state delegated its duty to the Education Ministry to establish Islamic colleges when appropriate, by the same act. Moreover, hoping to gain support in the Lower South, the government which followed, under Dr. Pridi Banomyong, issued the 1946 Act on Islamic Law Implementation in Pattani, Narathiwas, Yala and Satun. This law restored the position of Datoh Yutidham in Thai courts.

However, the implementation of these laws did not fulfil local needs. There were many complaints from residents in the southernmost area. Haji Sulong's association was also active in this. He disagreed with the revival of the *Datoh Yutidham* position because the position of *qadi,* which has the same function*,* had already been settled in Pattani. He preferred Islamic courts to remain separate from Thai courts, and Muslims to have their own Islamic judges, as he believed that other arrangements ran counter to Islamic law. However, the fact that he himself was the *qadi* in Pattani created suspicions that he was mainly concerned about protecting his own interests (Satha-Anand 2008, 163).

The *Persatuan Semangat Patani* which Haji Sulong headed was seen by the government as instigating a rebellion, though in practice the movement was a civil movement promoting wider political participation among Muslims. Apart from establishing the association, Haji Sulong submitted petitions to the government bearing the signatures of local Muslims. He was in fact a religious teacher without a militant background. Even though he was not fluent in the Thai language, he tried to communicate to the Thai government through official channels; he was therefore not a radical separatist, but actively engaged with the political process. He was the first person to press the government to establish a Provincial Islamic Committee in the southern border provinces, his intention being to improve the status of Muslim identity within the context of Thai politics. In April 1947 he submitted the following demands to the government in Bangkok (Kraus 1984, 413):

1) The four provinces, Patani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun to be administered by an elected Muslim leader.

2) Eighty percent of the civil servants in the South should be Malay.

3) Thai and Malay both to be recognized as official languages

4) Lessons in elementary schools to be conducted in Malay

5) Islamic law to be introduced and Islamic courts to be established

6) All taxes collected in the South to be spent in the South

7) An Islamic council under the authority of the above-mentioned leader to be formed. This council to supervise all Islamic affairs.

When the government received Haji Sulong's letter, it responded by agreeing with some of his demands. In July 1947 the government ordered the Interior Minister to change the administration of the southern border area. The government also conferred on Muslims the right to enter the army school, and it tried to recruit more local Muslims (those proficient in the Thai language) as government officials. Another new policy was to organize Malay language lessons in state schools in the Lower South for five hours a week and to have radio programmes in Malay (Satha-Anand 2008, 165). Haji Sulong's demand for a Provincial Islamic Committee was in fact consistent with the 1945 Decree on the Patronage of Islam. However, the newly-established Provincial Islamic Committee in the south was under government control, not under an elected Muslim leader as demanded. The government could

not satisfy the movement's demands to have an elected Muslim governor or to have Malay citizens making up 80per cent of the civil service, partly because of the laws governing Thai bureaucracy, which define the necessary characteristics of all officials, such as the ability to communicate in the Thai language. The same applied to the refusal to separate Islamic courts from provincial courts; the judges had to be competent in accordance with Thai laws. In addition, the government presumed that Islamic law consultants in Thai courts could be equally effective (Satha-Anand 2008, 166).

As the government had not accepted all of the demands, Haji Sulong continued to campaign. He called on the southern Malays to support him more actively to establish a Maleyu territory embracing Malay customs under the Thai state. Haji Sulong planned to put pressure on the government by boycotting the coming general election (Aphornsuvan 2003, 23). At the time, the government, which was in the midst of an economic crisis following World War II, tried to negotiate these demands via Muslim Members of Parliament. An outbreak of robberies hit the Lower South at this time, in addition to a growth in communist and separatist movements (Satha-Anand 2008, 166-169). In November 1947 another new government came to power. A new Interior Minister was appointed with a policy to prevent their ability to organise by "removing the head" of the separatist movement. At that time the government could not differentiate those aforementioned difficulties (Satha-Anand 2008, 169-170). The new Interior Minister re-appointed an ex-governor of Pattani, Chaeng Suwanachinda, who may have had an issue with Haji Sulong after the latter, who had promised to help another candidate, refused to help him to mobilize voters in an election. Haji Sulong might not have realized that he had turned an acquaintance into a hidden foe when he promised Chaeng Suwanachinda his help in the election. When Chaeng Suwanachinda ruled Pattani again, Haji Sulong considered submitting another letter, a petition signed by Malay-speaking Muslims in Pattani. He asked the governor of Pattani whether he could submit it legally, which the governor confirmed. The letter, written on 5th January 1948, stated that "Melayu Muslims lived under the rule of the Thai government with oppression. Even when we appealed, the government did not respond. Therefore, we have a consensual agreement that Tenku Mahmud Mahayiddin, the son of the former sultan of Pattani living in Kalantan, has full power to seek the way to maintain the Melayu nation, to preserve Islam and to gain human rights." Haji Sulong consulted the governor on the 15th January 1948 and, contrary to the assurances he had received from the latter, was arrested the next day on a charge of rebellion (Satha-Anand 2008, 186-188).

Haji Sulong's letter was rather radical, implying that he and his followers rejected Thai rule. From the perspective of the government it could be argued that it was difficult to distinguish Haji Sulong's ideology from separatism and guerrilla movements, since they all occurred simultaneously, albeit independently. Malay separatists and the Communist Party of Malaya had become more active in this period (Kraus 1984, 413). Their actions took place during an economic crisis, prompting social unrest. However, considering the approach he took, it becomes clear that Haji Sulong was attempting to communicate with the rulers hierarchically, and had sought advice on acceptable channels of contact. The governor's response proved at best misguided, and provided no relief for the frustrations of the Malays. In 1948 Haji Sulong was incarcerated for four years and eight months (Satha-Anand 2008, 167) by the court as a 'rebel' during the rule of Major Khuang Aphaiwong's government in 1948.

He was released from prison in 1952 during the second term in office of Field Marshal Pibulsongkram (April 1948-September 1957). However, two years afterwards (1954) he, his eldest son and his two friends disappeared on the way back from meeting Special Branch Police in Songkla. This coincided with a demonstration in Malaysia along with the campaign for separatism within Thailand. Eventually, the next generation has uncovered the truth that Haji Sulong and his companions were killed at the authorities' command (Satha-Anand 2008, 192-193: Kraus 1984, 414).

After Haji Sulong's death, one of his younger sons published a book entitled "Union of Light and Security" (Gugusan Chahaya Keselamatan) during the parliamentary elections of 1957.[34] The government considered it separatist literature as it called on Muslims to fight for their rights. Copies were confiscated and burnt, and political assassinations became daily events. It seemed that the military government at that time was suppressing southern Malay Muslims. On the other hand, armed separatist movements such as the Malay Union of Greater Pattani became considerably more active (Kraus 1985, 414). Two decades after Haji Sulong's disappearance, separatism reached its peak, when becoming an understandable demand among the Malay-speaking community on the southern border (Aphornsuvan 2003, 26).

5.1.2 Non-militant Movements in the Lower South during 1980s-1990s

In 1981 during the leadership of General Prem Tinsulanonda, the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) was established to solve the southern problem. It was a

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[34] This Haji Sulong's son was an MP at that time. His name is Wan Muhammad Amin or Amin Tohmena, Den Tohmena's brother (McCargo 2008).

governmental organization structured under the Fourth Army Region (namely southern region) and responsible for civil tasks in the five southern border provinces. A joint civil–police–military taskforce was also created to prevent violence and to suppress the separatist movements (The Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre n.d.). Broad offers of amnesty were eventually taken up by hundreds of militant communists and separatists (Melvin 2007, 16). This phenomenon resulted in the Malay separatist movements reorganizing themselves in the 1980s and 1990s, as their members decreased (Che Man 2005, 89). Governments during the 1980s and the 1990s seemed to have succeeded in subduing the separatist movement, even if they could not completely put an end to it. The Lower South area during 1980s-1990s appeared to have been more peaceful than in previous decades, with the government neither suppressing nor subjugating the Malay-speaking local civilians. However, political integration policies still contained a significant element aimed at assimilating diverse population groups, with corruption among civil servants still prevalent (Melvin 2007). The injustices which thus remained in the region go some way to explaining why the government could not uproot the separatist ideology and movements. During the 1980s and early 1990s civil movements were neither powerful nor, in general, politically active. In other terms, local moderate Muslims did not speak out on how to resolve the conflict in their motherland. In the main, the government took the leading rule, which proved unsuccessful. The indicator of this ineffectiveness is the continuation of violent attacks, witnessed by Thais even today.

In 1997, under the leadership of General Chawalit Yongchaiyut, an important movement for *sharia* law enforcement arose. The Muslim elite, mostly from the College of Islamic Studies in Prince Songkhla University, proposed that the state should expand the implementation of Islamic law on inheritance and family matters to other provinces where Muslims comprised a significant population, in the same way, as extensively as it used to be. Indeed, King Rama V had conferred on Malay Muslims the right to use Islamic law in inheritance and family matters as early as 1901, when this region was Siam's southern territory. However, this omits the fact that before law reformation in the reign of the King Rama V, Muslims in this area applied s*hariah* law in more areas of Muslim life than family and inheritance alone (Din-a 2009). This arrangement was abrogated during nationalist rule, but revived in 1946. The movement of Muslim academics in 1997 was striking, as Muslims in Pattani played a leading role on behalf of their fellow Muslims. In fact, those Muslims outside the Lower South can also apply Islamic laws regarding family and inheritance. It had not been legalized, but

neither was it prohibited. If the government accepted this proposal, those Muslims who did not want to pursue *shariah* law would be forced to admit it. This phenomenon signified that Islamic identity was very important for Muslim academics in the Lower South. Ultimately, however, the idea did not gain enough supports from the wider Muslim community, and resulted in almost no change.

5.1.3 <u>Civil movements under Prime Minister Thaksin Shinnawat</u> (2001-2006)

This period of rule was marked by attempts to control unrest in the southern provinces through police and military means, rather than through dialogue, which led to a growth in organizations opposed to the government's policies, particularly after 2004.

The first decade of the twenty-first century saw a more heavily militant approach to the situation, taken up by both the state apparatus and non-state actors. States of both martial law, and of emergency were declared in 2004 and 2005 respectively (Tuansiri 2006, 59). In January 2004, the government under Prime Minister Thaksin Shinnawat declared a state of martial law in Narathiwat, Pattani, Satun and Yala after army weapons went missing in Narathiwat as well as arson attacks in public places. During the chaos, the government instigated investigations while student movements tried to understand the critical situation in their own way. A group of students from Prince Songkhla University conducted a fieldwork study, interviewing local citizens as they were curious about cases of disappearance. They believed that some citizens were killed by the state apparatus during investigations under martial law (Tuansiri 2006, 50).

Movements of local students and civil society organizations become active in response to such occurrences as disappearances during the state of martial law. In March 2004 an activist lawyer, Somchai Neelapaichit, who for two decades provided legal help for citizens suspected of violence in the Lower South, was disappeared. Previously, Somchai had led a movement to lift the state of martial law, mobilizing 50,000 signatures to petition the government (Cheman, 2005). In August of the same year, human rights activists and local civil society organizations asked the prime minister to respond to the disappearance of Somchai Neelapaichit (Neelapaichit 2006, 93). In January 2006, the court imprisoned a police Lieutenant Colonel as one of between 3 and 5 persons accused of abusing Somchai Neelapaichit. Afterwards, the prime minister gave an interview revealing that he believed that

the lawyer was dead (Neelapaichit 2006, 98). The civil society organizations that activated the investigation, although failing to clarify who gave the command to kill, and for what exact reasons, made the public aware both of enforced disappearance and that agents of the state were capable of committing such acts. At that time, these actions of students and civil society organizations encouraged local citizens to take their cases to court.

In June 2006, following a survey by the National Reconciliation Commission, Pratabchit Neelapaichit interviewed 21 families of disappeared citizens. She found that most disappeared after they were arrested under the condition of martial law, specifically after more than 100 weapons were found to have been taken from army supplies in January 2004. Some of those surveyed asked for police investigations, but nothing was forthcoming apart from some financial aid from other civic departments (Neelapaichit 2006, 84).

28 April 2004, saw the Kruse incident in which 32 men were shot dead in the Kruse mosque. On that day security forces chased and killed the militants, who were primarily young men armed with machetes, without clear orders from the government (Human Rights Watch 2007). A group of interested students interviewing relatives of the dead men ended up working as a relief agency. The suspected militants' families were upset by government statements issued against the attackers, in particular one declaring that the latter were drug addicts. The attackers' relatives were firm in their belief that they had not deserved to be killed. By educating local citizens about the human rights enshrined in the Thai constitution, some families of the dead rioters took their cases to court, perceiving the officers' operations to have been too abusive. The activities of the student group attracted the attention of a national human rights organization. As a result, members of the Human Rights Commission and senators came down from Bangkok to research and give aid to families of the dead, with the assistance of Malay-speaking students. The working groups stressed the importance of upholding human rights; for this reason government officers questioned whether the Commission was taking the side of the attackers. However, the working groups also tried to promote forgiveness and to foster orphan children, so that they would not grow up seeking revenge (Tuansiri 2006, 55-59).

The Kruse incident was not the only such occasion to damage the relationship between the central government and the people of the Lower South. The Takbai incident in October 2004 discredited the government and the army. Apart from six protestors, who according to the

police were carrying arms and were killed during the demonstration, 78 arrested protesters died while in custody. These deaths signified maltreatment of the detainees; officers piled up about 60-80 men in each truck until they died through suffocation during transportation (McCargo 2008, 111). In the general election of January 2005 the Thai Rak Thai Party under Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawat lost almost all the parliament seats in Yala, Satun, Songkhla, Pattani and Narathiwat. It is clear that he and his followers had lost the trust of the Muslim community in the Lower South. In March 2005, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawat formed the 48-member National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) to deal with the Lower South crisis (Asian Centre for Human Rights 2005).

As the result of the enduring conflict, the Security Studies Project emerged at the end of 2004 as part of the drive to better understand, and thereby improve the internal security of Thai society. The project covered three key areas: research, dialogue and academic publications, which were carried out under the auspices of the Thai Research Fund, a national government-supported research body (Sripoonsuk 2009, 2). Evoking attention from academics and civil society organization, this project later contributed to research on legal models for local administration in southern Thailand.

Indeed, the questions of the excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests and police brutality in Thailand, and of the failure to provide justice to victims and families during the imposition of the state of emergency in the southern border provinces, were raised internationally (International Crisis group 2005); (Asian Centre for Human Rights 2005). A network of local people, students, academics, lawyers, NGOs and journalists known as the "Coordinative Committee of Civil Society Organizations for Southern Border Provinces", was formed in April 2005 to seek understanding of the conflict by the public, to relieve the negative effects of the conflict and to open a dialogue for justice (Coordinative Committee of Civil Society Organizations for Southern Border Provinces 2006, 4). The Coordinative Committee also asked the government to respond questions relating to the loss of citizens, both suspects and witnesses, during the investigation under the state of emergency and martial law (Neelapaichit 2006, 84; Adil 2006, 170; Tuansiri 2006, 55). The publication was sponsored by the Asian Regional Exchange for new Alternatives).

When the government lost its credibility among the Muslim community in the Lower South, two political parties put forward alternatives for conflict resolution. The 'Patani Declaration'

of the Democrat Party supported s*haria* courts and promoted the capacity of local administrative organizations. The 'Yala Charter' from the Muanchon Party, working with local intellectuals, supported the urgent restoration of justice in the area, a non-interest economic system in accordance with Islamic precepts, the zakat act, sharia courts and Malay-Thai language education. It also declared an intent to develop the region into the centre of Islamic education in ASEAN, to develop "vice free" areas, and to develop relationships with Muslim countries. Both parties supported *sharia* courts, but only the Democrat Party mentioned decentralization. The result was that the Democrat Party gained most seats in the southern border provinces in the February 2005 general election. The Thai Rak Tai Party, the leading party before and after the election, lost nearly all seats in the Lower South largely due to its inactivity on the question of the Lower South conflict resolution (*Fah Deaw Kan* 2005, 107-108).

Outside the Lower South, Kothom Areya, the director of Mahidol University's Research Center for Peace-Building, and a member of the National Reconciliation Commission, who is non-Muslim and Bangkok-based, advanced his ideas on substantive decentralization for the Lower South, through televised debates. He and some other members of the commission proposed this idea to strengthen civil society in the Lower South, but the president of the commission, Anand Panyarachoon, refused to have this discussed. He claimed that no one, not even the separatist movements, supported autonomy (McCargo 2008, 61-62). This claim has some merit; one ex-separatist, now a columnist for the *Nation Weekend*, a Thai weekly newspaper, has contended that neither a "special administrative zone" nor "autonomy" could resolve the continuing violent conflict (*Fah Deaw Kan* 2005, 128).

However, substantive decentralization, either in the form of a "special administrative region" or "autonomy", is seen by most leading academics as a new tool which the government should use to resolve the conflict. Kasian Techapeera, a political scientist from Thammasat University, maintains that "autonomy" is the solution, though it would have huge social consequences. To achieve conflict resolution, there has to be drastic change at the core of Thai society (*Fah Deaw Kan* 2005, 109; Satha-Anand 2006, 136).

In August 2005, with conflict still enduring, the journalist association of Thailand and newspaper presses in Bangkok, the South and the Lower South revised the role of mass media in presenting news on the Lower South crisis. They established the Isra News Press, or

"Isra Institute, Thai Press Development Foundation" in English, which aimed to reflect without bias situations happening in the Lower South. In practice, Isra News Press encouraged more journalists from the centre to appreciate the real situation in the southern border provinces, while at the same time developing home-grown journalists (Reungdit 2005). Today the editor of Isra news press is a local Muslim journalist, Ayub Pathan, who is active in educating citizens in decentralization and political participation.

One year later, in August 2006, Deep South Watch Network was established, as a cooperation of the journalist network from the Southern Journalist Association of Thailand, local (Red Zone) voluntary journalists, the Network for Violence-Related Injury Surveillance in the southern border provinces, the Rural Doctor Society and academics from Prince Songkhla University. The Deep South Watch Network worked on depth-analysis of the Lower South situation, synthesizing information from databases collected through fieldwork, the ultimate goal being peace in the Lower South through improved information collection and communication. Multi-dimensional phenomena were presented, rather than only the violent aspects of the situation, to build up public understanding of the southern border region. The Deep South Watch Network is independent, but has a structural affiliation to the Centre for the Study of Conflict and Cultural Diversity in Southern Thailand, Prince of Songkhla University (Deep South Watch Network, n.d.).

At that time, under ruling Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawat, local civil society organizations proposed that conflict resolution should adopt political and cultural rather than military strategies, but this did not find favour with the government (Salae 2006, 174-5). Salae also reports that the number of human rights NGOs active in the region had fallen to virtually none by 2006, resulting in accused citizens unable to find advice. Yet more illustrative of the problems was that governmental representatives such as village chiefs and local and national politicians dared not accept petitions from citizens under suspicion (Salae 2006, 188-9).

In brief, the proposals of academics, such as Kotom Areeya, in the National Reconciliation Commission, the voices of local civil society organizations and the development of journalism in the Lower South could not change the government policies on the southern border provinces during the Thaksin regime.

5.1.4 After the parliament was dissolved by Thaksin in Febuary 2006 (June 2006-December 2008

After Prime Minister Taksin Shinnawat declared the dissolution of parliament on 24th February 2006, a general election took place in May. However, the results were annulled by the Constitutional Court on 8 May 2006. A new round of elections was called for October of the same year, but did not occur due to the coup in September 2006. Before the coup, Taksin stayed in power as the acting prime minister; the cabinet worked with no official policies. During this period an interesting political scene emerged. Pichet Satirachawal, a mualluf Muslim (Muslim by marriage), businessman and politician, declared the founding of a new political party, the Thai Peace Party, in June 2006. He had been a member of the Thai Rak Thai Party established by Taksin Shinnawat. In addition, he was then Secretary General of the Central Islamic Committee. The official opening of his new party was held at the Islamic Center Foundation of Thailand, in Bangkok. He introduced it as the party for people in the three southern border provinces and declared that he would abrogate the Emergency Act in the southernmost area if elected. The party's policy was to develop a special economic zone containing ASEAN health care, educational institutions and *halal* industry, which would attract paying clients from ASEAN countries. The potential for these enterprises to cooperate with Malaysia was highlighted. When journalists asked about the alternative "special administrative region" concept, Pichet Satirachawal said the administration could not be changed under the constitution of Thailand (Patani News 2006). He attempted to solve the problem without accepting administrative change, as he thought economic development would solve the problem. Eventually, his party was dissolved as it had no broad popular support (Constitution Court 2008).

When the Council for National Security came to power in September 2006, Thai society expected it to resolve the Lower South conflict as the head of the council and the Interior Minister were Muslim. The Prime Minister, General Surayud Chulanont, began this time in office by apologizing to victims of the Takbai military operation (Parliament of Thailand n.d.). However, daily attacks remained the same. Statistics from VIS (Violence-Related Injury Surveillance Network 2010) show that the number of attacks dropped in some months and rose in others between 2007 and 2009.

At the end of May 2007 student groups from inside and outside the Lower South occupied the Pattani Central Mosque to protest against the government. They demanded a lifting of the

state of emergency and curfew, and the removal of military forces from the area. The demonstration was prolonged to five days as the demands were not met, and it became a riot, nearly causing bloodshed.[35] The number of protesters was as large as 1,200 (Krungthep Turakij Website 2007) or 3,000 according to some sources (Prachatai Online Newspaper 2007). This student demonstration dispersed following an opposing demonstration by the urban Pattani citizens, who did not mind having soldiers around, but they cared about the mosques being surrounded by the protesters for a considerable time (Krungthep Turakij Website 2007). One year later, the head of the student demonstration, Tuwaedaniya, a student of Ramkamhaeng University, gave an interview indicating that the student networks had been monitoring the extrajudicial practices employed by the government forces (Isra News 2008).

In August 2007 General Chavalit Yongchaiyut, an ex-prime minister and a member of the dissolved Thai Rak Thai Party, proposed another approach to conflict resolution to General Surayud Chulanont, the Prime Minister of the National Council for Democratic Reform. His proposition was that the administration of the southern border provinces should be rearranged in a similar way to that of Bangkok and Pataya, and might be named 'Pattani City' (Isra News 2009). At that time his idea did not gain much support from civil society and was severely criticized by the government.

In December 2007, the Deep South Watch Network and the Thai Peace Information Centre opened dialogue for conflict resolution at Thammasat University. Lower South activists argued that the security measures bringing suspected citizens to a vocational-training camp worked only for a short period, and that the military officers received revenge attacks. Iskanda Thamrongsub, a local academic, put forward the opinion that dialogue with the attackers was essential because otherwise they would not stop easily. Ayub Patan, the vice president of the Southern Journalists Association, stressed that civil society organizations had to propose relevant resolutions to which local citizens would agree. His work was to disclose real situations in the Lower South, both peaceful and violent, from multiple perspectives. He believed that with sufficient information, civil society organizations would help local ordinary citizens to decide their preferred resolution (Deep South Watch Network 2007).

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[35] Human Rights Watch (2007) reports that the BRN-Coordinate, a militant separatist organization of Southern Thailand, has focused on expanding its strength through networks of students of foundational and traditional Islamic schools as well as private Islamic colleges.

After the Council for National Security (originally named the Council for Democratic Reform) stepped down, the pro-Thaksin People's Power Party gained major popularity in the general election. Samak Sundravej, the party's leader, became prime minister on 29 January 2008, but won only two seats in the Lower South (McCargo 2008, xxv). During his tenure, Samak did not put forward a policy to resolve the Lower South conflict; he delegated this security task to the military, as did the following government led by Somchai Wongsawad. The focus needed to be on national political conflict in addition to forthcoming general election and relied on security organizations, mainly the army, to resolve the problem in the Lower South (Maneepiluk 2009)

By 2008, the Lower South civil society organizations, which had originally engaged with the conflict by starting a relief project in 2004, were attracted by political solutions proposed by academics inside and outside the Lower South. Srisompob Jitpiromsri and Sukri Lungputeh, lecturers from Prince Songkhla University and Yala Islamic University, proposed a new model of southern border administration. In essence the existing Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre would be enhanced by becoming the "Southern Border Provinces Administration Bureau", with the legal status equivalent to a ministry. The bureau would consist of a "Chamber of Southern Border Provinces", and a *shura* council (an advisory board) in each sub-district. Ideally, the Shura council would be involved at every level to balance power in the administrative bodies. Chuntana Siribanpachote, an academic at Chulalongkorn University, also presented her research on political administration in cultural diversity (Puengnet 2009). Exchanges of knowledge between academics and civil society organizations have taken place regularly since 2004 in Pattani town, although the explosion at CS Pattani Hotel in March 2008 seemed to obstruct the latter's activities for a while. However, the civil society organizations of the Lower South still work on conflict resolution and have been able to activate some change (Jitpiromsri 2008).

5.1.5 Civil society organizations in the Lower South during the ruling of the Democrat Party (December 2008 until 2010)

When in power, the Democrat Party could be expected to satisfy local civil society, being the only party supporting legal amendments relating to the Lower South administration (Askew 2009). The party was construed to prioritize the Lower South conflict over other problems as it pledged to reclaim the policy on the Lower South insurgency from the military

(International Crisis Group 2009). However, with the continuation of violent attacks; the justice system was questioned. No further progress has been made in the case of 11 Muslims shot dead in mosques in July 2009 (Maneepiluk 2009). Even though Lower South citizens trust the Democrat Party rather than other parties to lead the country, they are not sure that it can resolve the national political conflict and the 'southern fire', as shown by the poll conducted by Prince Songkhla University staff (Jitpiromsri 2009).

Although the government was not gained much credibility from its efforts to resolve the unrest, the increasingly democratic atmosphere allowed civil society organizations to be active. 2010 was the year in which two demands by civil society organizations have been met. First, the state of emergency was declared lifted in July (International Crisis Group 2010). Second, the Assembly of the House of Representative approved the Southern Border Provinces Administration Act in August (Post Today 2010). This section focuses on the efforts of the civil society organizations, mainly in the Lower South, to put pressure on these two advances.

The first progression resulted from on-going campaigns dating from the implementation of the 2004 martial law, mentioned in 5.1.3 and 5.1.4. Between December 2008 and 2010, more movements within civil society organizations emerged and still continue. The one playing the most persistent active roles has been the Deep South Watch Network. Since it was established in 2006, this organization has networked civil society organizations, media, journalists, public health professionals, educators and academics, locally and nationally, utilizing internet interface to publish news, analyses, articles and survey results to make the wider public aware of more multi-dimensional conflicts and resolutions in the area.

Despite army insistence on stabilizing the great number of military forces in the area, the Research Centre of Conflict and Diversity of Southern Culture, affiliated with the DSWN above, conducted a survey in 2009, showing that 46 per cent of 1,878 respondents in the Lower South disagreed with maintaining this large number of soldiers. Later the same year, ad-hoc focus group analysis by the same organization, showed that groups of young people, NGOs, and those affected by the unrest and helped by NGO-led social projects preferred the state of emergency to be abrogated. However, groups had varying opinions. This focus group study suggested that businessmen, religious leaders, civil servants, police and military forces saw the necessity of the Emergency Decree (Deep South Watch 2009).

Interestingly, the group of journalists from the focus group study above have proposed lifting the state of emergency for a 3-month trial period, resulting in the Emergency Decree eventually being lifted on 6th July 2010 on a trial basis of three months (International Crisis Group 2010). Other organisations also echoed this proposal. In its report, the International Crisis Group recommended that the government should lift the Emergency Decree and apply only the Security Act (International Crisis Group 2009). In May 2010, after turmoil in Bangkok, the Justice for Peace working group demanded that the government abrogate the state of emergency throughout Thailand (Justice for Peace 2010). This temporary abrogation of the state of emergency may have been the result of the pressure from local, national and international organizations, which originated from the networking of local civil societies.

The second positive outcome, which seems to demonstrate the efforts of civil society organizations, is the 2010 Southern Border Provinces Administration Act, passed by the Thai House of Representatives on 4 August 2010. Local civil societies had pushed in this direction since 2008. For example, Lungputeh and Jitpiromsri (2008) and Patanawongse (2009) proposed to escalate the status of the existing Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) into a bureau, equivalent to a ministry. Their proposal, which appeared in an article and on their media network, similar to those connecting to the Deep South Watch Network, echoed the issue, hoping that having a status equivalent to a bureau would make southern border administration more convenient and independent. Before the change, the SBPAC was under the supervision of both the Ministry of Interior and Internal Security Operation Command (ISOC), meaning that its regulations needed to be approved by both these superior bodies.

Once local demand to enhance the status of the SBPAC became an issue, the government showed a positive interest by declaring an amendment of the law in 2009, resulting in four versions of the drafted law being submitted to the parliament (Focus Team 2010). Afterwards, the parliament conferred a new status on the SBPAC through the new 2010 law. According to this 2010 Southern Border Provinces Administration Act, the new SBPAC is under the jurisdiction of prime ministerial authority, instead of the Interior Ministry and ISOC, as before, and the SBPAC under this Act gains more independence in finance and policy design (The Nation 2010). The secretary-general of the new centre is authorized to plan budgeting and design the strategic plan, "Strategy for Southern Border Provinces Development". An advisory council entitled the "Peace Building Council" is in place to

advise SBPAC, with part of the advisory council's committees being non-governmental (Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre Act 2010). In general, this 2010 Act aims to make the administration more independent and more compatible with local identity, thus ideally reducing violence.

The new SBPAC is required to be loosely monitored, under prime-ministerial supervision, and the strategic plan of SBPAC needs approval from the Strategic Board for Southern Border Development. The Board consists of the Prime Minister, a vice-prime minister, ministers, the secretary-general of the National Economics and Social Development Board, the secretary-general of National Security Council, the director of Bureau of the Budget, the secretary-general of ISOC, the governors of southern border provinces, the president of the Advisory Council for Southern Border Provinces Administration and Development and provincial local citizen representatives selected by the aforementioned Advisory council (Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre Act 2010).

Administration of the current SBPAC is now quite independent since it is not under any other ministerial supervision as it used to be. Instead, according to the 2010 Act, it is advised, inspected and evaluated by the Advisory Council for Southern Border Provinces Administration and Development. This council consists of southern border representatives of local administrative organizations, Sub-district Headmen and Village Headmen, religious leaders, local intellectuals, secular and religious educators, women's groups, members of commercial chambers or industrial councils, non-governmental experts, and one mass media representative. Overall, members can amount to 49 persons (Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre Act 2010). The emergence of this advisory council accords with proposals of Jitpiromsri and Langputeh (2008), and Patanawongse (2009) active in the local civil society.

With the higher status of the SBPAC, it carries more real power. The 2010 Act authorises the SBPAC to structure its own organization, to increase civil servants' salaries, to appoint its staff from any other governmental offices and to remove civil servants, but not military officers, attorneys and judges, who provoke unrest or injustice in the region. However, beyond the SBPAC, the southern border administration is overseen by the National Security Council and ISOC (Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre Act 2010).

Local civil societies pressured the government to enhance the status of the SBPAC because they demanded decentralisation of the southern border administration. The empowering of SBPAC was only the first step in the call for self-governance. Since the end of 2009, local civil societies have manifestly pressed the issue. December 2009 saw a network of 23 civil society organizations hold a conference on southern autonomy. The network demonstrated cooperation of civil society organizations across regional and professional lines, including the Southern Islamic Culture Foundation, the Cross Cultural Foundation, the Civil Society Network of Pattani Muslims, the Muslim Attorney Centre of southern border provinces, the Student Federation of southern border provinces, the student organization of Prince Songkhla University, As-salam Institute of Yala Islamic University, the Yala Islamic Committee, the Pattani Islamic Committee, the Narathiwas Islamic Committee, the Islamic Association of Narathiwas, the Islamic Studies College of Prince Songkhla University, the Attorney Assistance volunteers network, the Foundation for Education of Amanasak, the Southern Border Provinces Women's Network for Peace and the Yala Community Radio Network. Organizations outside the Lower South are the Young Muslims Association of Thailand, the Halal Customer Protection Affiliation, Muslim Organizations Council of Thailand, the Student Federation of Thailand, the Network of Students Protecting Citizens, the Peace Media Project, and the Faith Community Network. Seminars and conferences were held to promote southern autonomy (Deep South Watch n.d.).

I observed their conference, entitled "Pattani City under the Thai constitution: dream or reality", on December 10, 2009, at Prince Songkhla University. It highlighted the results of brain-storming with regard to how to govern the Lower South in a substantially decentralizing way. Most presenters were confident that self-government administration was compatible with the Thai constitution. However, two questions remained as to whether it would work in the Lower South of Thailand: the possibility of stopping the violence and make the region prosper, and if so how it could be achieved. Presentations were balanced by views that the autonomy of minorities in other countries in recent decades did not straightforwardly lead to peace and progress.

The civil society organizations had already designed prospective models for Lower South administration, which were represented at the conference that same day, such as those designed by Bhromsutr and Patanawongse, and in the conference proceedings. Having said that, opinions on how self-governance should be conducted were very diverse. First of all,

contributors to the conference disagreed on where exactly the area was which should be administered as the autonomous region. Udom Patanawongse, ex-district chief and leader of the Southern Islamic Culture Foundation, defined three provinces: Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, as the special region, while Akacha Bhromsutr added four districts of Songkhla in his draft of the Pattani Metropolitan Administrative Act (Patanawongse 2009, 4; Bhromsutr 2009). This issue was resolved in the 2010 Southern Border Administrative Act by adding the Satun and Songkhla Provinces to those three provinces even though the rationale behind this was questioned.

Even after the parliament issued the law conferring more independence to the SBPAC, the civil society organizations continued brain-storming and education on the issue of an autonomous region. Seminars and public hearings have been held by local civil societies to complete the picture of the "Pattani Metropolitan Act" since 2009 until the present day (Deep South Watch 2012). Two potentially contentious issues arising from the 2009 conference, relating to governors and religious courts, have not been directly addressed in the new 2010 Southern Border Administrative Act. Firstly, using the same model of Bangkok Metropolitan, Bhromsutr, a Buddhist contributor to the conference and member of staff in the Political Development Council in the King Prajadhipok Institute, proposed that the Lower South should have an elected governor. In practice, this can be problematic, the challenge being how to deal with the existing official governors of the five provinces. If these provinces had only one governor, the existing officers would have to sacrifice their governorships (Puengnet 2009). Whether or not the elected governor would be better than the one selected was also debatable. However, most recently, the network of local civil societies relating to the one which organized the 2009 conference above still insists that the governor of prospective "Pattani Metropolitan" is to be directly elected by an absolute majority of its citizens. According to the network's proposal, at least one-third of Vice Governors will be Buddhist, and Deputy Governors will be appointed by the Governor (People Network for Political Participation Development in Southern Border Provinces et al. 2012).[36] Regarding the second issue, if we look through the models of local government presented by civil society organizations in the 2009 conference proceeding, we find that the religious aspect is important to many. For example, Patanawongse suggests that Islamic courts should be established as a complete form of *shariah* courts in which *ulama* will act as judges, unlike the

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[36] The proposal does not state whether the Vice Governors are to be elected or selected.

existing ones presided on by professional (secular) judges (Patanawongse 2009, 6). Moreover, in the 2012 proposal, the network calls for enforcement of Sharia law for Muslims in prospective "Pattani Metropolitan". However, very little of the religious aspect is stated in the 2010 southern border administrative law.

In overview, even though local civil societies succeeded in pushing the Act which enhanced the status of the SBPAC in 2010, the law does not directly confer self-governance. To attain autonomy, the locality requires citizen participation. Civil society organizations, such as those organizing the 2009 conference, have mobilized participation for citizens to acquire a communally-desired model of southern border self-governance compatible with the constitution of the country. Considerable issues arise from their proposals, namely the situation of governors, religious courts and citizens of different faiths living together. The next section explores attitudes of Muslim professionals, both activists and non-activists, from inside and outside the Lower South, with regard to their concerns over southern border administration.

5.1.6 Muslim professionals' concerns about southern border administration

This section evolves from my interview question, "What recommendations would you make for the resolution of the problems in the Lower South of Thailand?" Interviews were conducted in May 2008 and during August and September 2009. It is notable that not all interviewees agree to the idea of decentralizing the Lower South as an autonomous region; however, all can point out what should be in terms of administration to help resolve the existing conflicts. This section comprises the meaning of autonomy in both Thai and local senses, attitudes towards the autonomy of Muslims inside and outside the area, and aspects of the expected special administration.

In the interviews in 2008 the Muslim professionals were already aware of the concept of "autonomy". General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, the prime minister during 1996-1997, who had a reputation for previously resolving the conflict between the state and communist movements in 1980, had already proposed this idea in 1993 (Maluleem 2010). However, his political opponents warned the public that his idea had an ulterior political motive, being more interested in swaying public opinion for a vested interest (Bangkok Post 2009). At that moment the idea of southern autonomy raised by local civil society organizations was not broadly publicized, but limited to mostly academic circles. Whether "autonomy" runs counter

to the unity of the Thai state under the country's constitution had not been made clear to the public. The word "autonomy" in the Thai sense had the connotation of an "independent state" which is not compatible to the first article of the constitution: "Thailand is a unitary kingdom, which is not indivisible" (The Constitution of Thailand 2007). At the end of 2009, local civil society organizations tried to publicize explicit ideas of Lower South autonomy, proposing more concrete models. The idea that southern autonomy will in practice be comparable to Bangkok Metropolitan, which has its own special administration and mass-elected governor, has been known since then. However, most adherents of this issue were confused about the goal of the autonomy proposed. The most crucial question raised during presentations at the 2009 conference of civil society organizations was whether the new power structure would stop violence since it had been the most vital problem in the area. This was made clear on the day by some panelists that autonomy does not guarantee to end violence whereas the audience should be focusing on the idea of self-government making the region desirable for those living in the locality.

On the side of the Muslim professional interviewees in the Lower South, I found both support and disagreement for the idea of regional self-governance. The latter, however, recommended that applications of legal pluralism are needed in some aspects of local administration. Pradya, a young journalist and interviewee in Pattani, notes that local professionals working in/with the NGOs and the government tend to have relatively opposing opinions towards the autonomy proposal. According to him, journalists like himself, students, academics, and villagers who do not understand autonomy, tend to follow NGO workers because they give aid to those local citizens affected by events. Therefore, Pradya forecasts that if there is a referendum, the supporting side could win. However, he reveals that this does not appeal to separatists: they construe that the autonomy proposal still connects the southern border provinces with the Thai state, which is undesirable for them. Additionally, Pradya was informed by voluntary journalists in the Red Zone (a frequently attacked area) that villagers who presumably "take the separatist side" do not support autonomy either. This backs the analysis made by panelists in the 2009 conference that autonomy might not quell the violence as previously expected.

Samart, a physicist and interviewee, considers himself as a government officer. As with the other three interviewees in the Lower South, he does not support calling for autonomy. The

following interview reflects his standpoint and the reason behind it, which might also represent the views of others favouring the government.

> "Working at this university, I take myself as a government officer. Thus, it doesn't look good if I support autonomy and it might risk my status. At the same time, I couldn't say I oppose this idea because a lot of staff and people outside (university) support it. I will risk myself if I say I am against it."

When I probed, I found that not only his self-definition, but also his understanding towards autonomy itself, relate with his standpoint of not supporting the autonomy proposal. He does not anticipate that autonomy could help improve people's quality of life.

> "As you saw, I'm a scientist working for grassroots to improve their quality of life. I'm not sure whether autonomy can help make people happy and full. People at the grassroots still talk about how to have enough food. They do not even know what autonomy means."

Samart construes that the proposed autonomy as a political instrument to restructure the power of the region has less engagement with people at the grassroots level. It is quite critical that those political movements like one calling for self-governance have been viewed as asking for power-sharing. Recently, leading local civil society organizations have frequently held seminars to educate local people about the ideology behind the call for autonomy: building a desirable society.

As to any chance of reducing violence by adjusting the local power structure, the assumptions that neither the government nor the 'separatists' support autonomy can raise the question whether local civil society organizations are moving in the right direction. As mentioned before, members of civil society organizations also realize that autonomy and violent attacks in any form are not directly connected to each other. However, if we believe that the prevalence of those attacks from whichever group exists because local people ignored the problems, self-governance could force the local people to solve their own problems. Surveillance cannot be effective without the cooperation of the neighbourhood. If the activities of the civil society organizations are to promote political participation of the local community and the state is to support citizens, they should cooperate with each other to achieve this course. This looks as though the 'separatists' will be left out and might attack even more. However, if we believe, like many interviewees, that the number of member of militant organizations is not large, this is a reasonable resolution.

Five out of the nine Lower South interviewees back the call for autonomy. Supporters and non-supporters alike are dissatisfied with the existence of army forces in the area. Moreover, the latter also call for legal pluralism to be implemented in some aspects, for example, regarding special governors and religious courts. Speaking of the resolution of the southern conflict, the Lower South interviewees consider who should be governing the area and why. Pim and Samart, who do not adhere to the proposed autonomy, consider the disadvantages of having army forces in the area, both stressing that the army should not engage in governing the area. Pim contends that good governance, rather than autonomy or military forces, will help. For her, the presence of the armed forces signifies the fearfulness of the community, which tears society apart.

> "Since the attack on the army in January 2004, the community here lives in fragmentation. There are not only Muslims here, but also a lot of Buddhist citizens and officers. We don't communicate much since that happened, so why doesn't the government organize dialogue between us instead of settling soldiers around. Seeing a lot of soldier on the street arouses our fear. If the '(separatist) movements' want to kill us (citizens), let's count how many they can kill. But we mustn't live in fear."

Samart shares the above view. As a lecturer, but identifying himself also as a scientist and government officer, he considers that he does not want to see the southernmost provinces administered by military personnel even though he is an admirer of General Prem Tinnasulanont, the Privy Council Chairman playing the leading role in the internal security. Samart also disagrees with the new army project in Pattani. He says:

> "The government sent the army to do everything: road maintenance, fish farming, and vocational training. It's not true that soldiers can do everything. We need professionals to do these jobs! I don't agree on the new army project containing 60,000 soldiers.

It is quite clear that the informants do not think army personnel should be governing the region. Another issue raised in the 2009 conference was whether the governor of the region should be local and elected.

Qaisar offered reasons why the governor should be from the locality. He is a lecturer from the Prince Songkla University, who invited me to attend the conference entitled "Pattani City: dream or reality" in December 2010, maintaining that Malay Muslims in the Lower South long for ethnic-based dignity. Despite being the dominant population group, Muslims have historically been ruled by outsiders. Seemingly, it should be the turn for the local Malay-

speaking population to rise. He sees this as a long-rooted problem specific to Malay-speaking Muslims in the far south with even Muslims in the upper south not sharing this sentiment.

> "People from the centre and the upper south get used to boss and they are not sensitive. Muslims at the upper south are not conscious about the ethnicity and the land, unlike Lower South Malay Muslims. Therefore, the state should confer decentralization to this region somehow…For example, let them plan the budget and administer religion and culture and the government looks after security units; army and police, finance and education. "

Indeed, few Muslim interviewees outside the region take the view that local citizens in the southern border provinces should have more power to govern themselves. Kirsch, an Imam and the owner of an Islamic school in Nonthaburi, points out the failure of the government in ruling the Lower South. Hence, the local citizens should govern themselves. He reflects that local citizens do not respect officials sent from Bangkok when they sense that the latter do not respect them. For instance, the officers were dressed inappropriately to the place and time. As the government does not have the same understanding of local feeling, the other resolution is to have local government so that local citizens can govern themselves as in Bangkok or Pataya. However, Kirsch understands that the government does not attempt to do this because self-governance might support separatism:

> "The government did not have sincerity. If it did, it would let more Muslims be high-ranking officers. At least the majority of district chiefs and provincial governors should be Muslim. The government did not share power because of the fear of separatism. Actually, we can say everywhere has violent problem. If Pattaya or Bangkok can administer themselves, why can't people in the Lower South do the same?"

Bihar, a businessman from Chachoengsao, suggests that the government should move on to confer autonomy under supervision of the Thai government, after realizing that the situation has never been better. He criticizes the government for wasting huge budgets making no impact apart from increased corruption.

> "The Lower South should have administration of their own, but under supervision of the Thai government. Thai administrative functions have proved unacceptable to the population of the area, and have caused loss of lives, time and treasure while Thai government officers in the area received more fringe benefits than government officers elsewhere in Thailand. That is not including corrupted budgets for

propagation projects and projects for the replacement and maintenance of weaponry and surveillance instruments."

While Qaisar, Kirsch and Bihar consider that governing positions should be granted to local citizens, impliedly being elected as in Bangkok, some interviewees in the Lower South, however, cannot foresee any such benefit. Pim, a lecturer in Pattani who is also of Malay origin, is a non-supporter of southern autonomy. Identifying herself and her family as loyal officers of the government, she claims that she does not take the side of either the government or the separatist movements, while both sides might suspect her of spying. Pim tries to convey that there is little chance to have a good elected governor:

> "Why do we have to have elected governors? There's no point! We already elect MPs, chiefs of villages and presidents of local administrative organizations. Do they do a good job? Elections do not guarantee anything. On the other hand, there are a lot of good appointed governors."

Apart from the creation of the elected governor, with no interviewee mentioning how many there should be as discussed in the 2009 conference, the quality of government officers in the area is another issue of concern. There is an idea that a large proportion of local officers would help the self-governance. Interestingly, there is a discrepancy in perceptions regarding how large the proportion of local Malay-speaking officers is e.g. some interviewees outside the Lower South suggest that there should be more local officers while some in the Lower South say over 80per cent of officers in the area are already local. Sawat, a Malay-speaking District Chief Officer of Chinese-origin in the Lower South, suggests the primary need is for locally-recruited soldiers:

> "(The government) should send good officers to work here and recruit soldiers locally. Lads here would like to be soldiers, as they grew with the scenery of military camp, camouflages, tanks and guns. Imagine, now local lads want to be soldiers. If the army does not admit them, while the other side gives them guns, what will happen? Seriously!"

With self-governance seen as potentially the way to solve the problem in the long term, the interviewees in the Lower South at that time, December 2009, did not fully clarify their idea of the governing model; for example, whether the governor should be elected or appointed, and if southern border provinces should combine as one unit, how many governors should there be. Local civil society organizations propose to have one elected governor of Pattani

Metropolitan in 2012, including the provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and the four districts of Songkhla Province,[37] whose tenure is four years (People Network People Network for Political Participation Development in Southern Border Provinces et al. 2012). In January 2010 the Civil Society Council of Southernmost Thailand declared they would arrange 200 public arenas to let people share opinions concerning substantial decentralization (Declaration 3/2012).

In the discussion on autonomy, whether the local interviewees support it or not, they suggest that some aspects of local administration, including the law, have to be different from other areas. Most interviewees in the Lower South recommend a more extensive and intensive application of Islamic law. Some construe this as a requirement from the separatist side. Samart stresses that Islamic religiosity is an important condition called for by the separatists. He reflects that they do not want to see encroachment of night-time entertainment:[38]

> "There should not be any nightclubs in Muslims neighbourhoods at all. There should be zoning. Muslims do not want it, and perpetrators of violence are using it to justify their attacks".

Awudud, a lecturer in the Upper South, not belonging to the Malay ethnic group, considers that religion is crucial for Malay-speaking Muslims in the far South. Unlike those in the other areas, Muslims in the Lower South are willing to pursue Islamic law even when they have to lose their benefits. Failure to understand this characteristic causes the problem.

> "The government should cease acting disdainfully. How come a (Chinese/ Buddhist) goddess becomes a symbol of Pattani. Why can't the government admire Muslim object as a symbol of provinces. If citizens in the southernmost provinces call for sharia law to be implemented, the government must confer it. Unlike Muslims here, even if they lose benefit because they follow the sharia law, they will still follow it. They fear sin."

Pradya, a young journalist in his mid-20's, is one of the five Lower South interviewees who expects to see local government. He construes that the religious aspect is more important for Malay Muslims of the Lower South than their Muslim counterparts in other areas. In Pradya's opinion, local government should allow Muslim *ulama* to judge in *sharia* courts, and to advise politicians:

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[37] This arrangement contrasts with the 2010 Southern Border Provinces Administrative Act stating that the region includes five provinces: Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Satun and Pattani.

[38] Samart's understanding might be true because there were attacks at Karaoke places in Yala in 2007 (Manager Online 2007). Afterwards, Munso salae publicized that Muslim intellectuals did not like the encroachment of nightclubs and all vices in the area (Salae 2007).

"There should be *sharia* courts that Muslim *ulema* are judges. Today, in the southern border provinces, Islamic judges are not authorized as professional judges. Therefore, they are only advisors to the state judges… Religion should take part in politics. There should be s*hura* councils in local administration, ideally at every level. "

According to the 2010 Southern Border Provinces Administration Act, the concept of the *shura* council is already applied through the Peace Building Council, and *shura* councils at the village level already exist, as reported by Pradya. However, questions remain concerning how extensively the Islamic law should be implemented and whether compulsorily or voluntarily. Some interviewees inside and outside the Lower South consider that applying Islamic law on family and inheritance throughout Thailand might help resolve the southern conflict as it is a sign of acceptance of the minority. Additionally, some interviewees, though not the majority, inside and outside the area, support applying other aspects of Islamic law; for example, regarding donation (zakat). Pim, who does not support autonomy, and Uthman who does, would like to see s*hariah* implemented nationwide, and in more aspects than only family law. Pim says:

> "The government should implement Islamic law throughout Thailand. Not only in the family aspect; for instance I support the Zakat Act which is still in the legislative process. The government should study from Malaysia how it was done."

However, it might be difficult to implement the *sharia* law in regard to either donation or family because even among the Lower South interviewees, some do not see the enforcement of Islamic law on every Muslim in the area as a good idea. For example, Pradya reflects the current problem of Muslim citizens, namely men marrying more than one woman:

> "As to marriage, Muslims here can register only one woman. There should be an option for Muslims to lawfully marry more wives."

Pradya, tends to think that Muslims should have a personal choice whether to pursue the Islamic law or the civil law. In the case of marriage, he calls for the Muslims' right to marry more than one wife lawfully. In other aspects, for example drinking alcohol, Pradya mentions refraining from all vices should be voluntary rather than compulsory:

> "Vices are not limited to entertainment complexes. Muslims have to strengthen themselves. Neighbours and the community should also help in watching each other.

If anyone drinks alcohol, we have to warn them against it. The hearts that hate the vices should be in individuals."

Moreover, <u>Sawat</u>, who has government status, similarly states clearly that Muslims should guard themselves to avoid vices. He considers it improper to issue *sharia* laws for Muslims alone: "Muslims cannot order others to do things in our favour, but we can guard ourselves." Indeed, from the perspectives of most interviewees outside the Lower South, it seems radical to enforce *sharia* laws on Muslims throughout Thailand. For example, <u>Awudud</u>, a lecturer from the upper South, <u>Max,</u> a doctor in Nonthaburi and <u>Bora</u>, a radio programmer in Chiang Mai, take the view that *sharia* laws could be applied throughout Thailand, but should not be forced on Muslims outside the Lower South. As to the Lower South demands for *sharia* courts with *ulama* judges, Muslims elsewhere see their importance. <u>Yoth,</u> a judge in Bangkok and <u>Awudud</u>, a lecturer in the upper South, agree that the government should confer *sharia* laws to the Lower South. However, even when the government fails in this respect, there is sympathy from some Muslim interviewees. For example, <u>Manop,</u> the secretary of the district office in the upper South, states:

> "Muslims in the Lower South should have *sharia* courts, I know that. But at the same time I am quite sympathetic to the government. It is a huge budget. We have to find space, construction, manpower and so on. So, I won't blame the government."

As aforementioned by Qaisar: "Even Muslims in the Upper South do not share the same sentiment with Malay-speaking Muslims in the Lower South", as evidenced by this study. For instance, <u>Davudi</u>, a member of an Islamic committee in the North and <u>Vincent</u>, a scientist in Bangkok, point out that autonomy cannot end the violence because essentially neither ordinary people nor separatists want it; thus, impliedly there is no point in having one. <u>Davudi</u> perceives that violence goes on because rivals are fighting against each other. It would have helped if military officers stopped fighting:

> "Muslims there gained more than enough. They might say yes (even without understanding) if we ask them whether they need autonomy, but that is not the point. The reason why the violence goes on has something to do with the military. Officers in charge would like to use the fiscal budget. If military officers want to stop, violence will stop."

<u>Vincent</u>, a lecturer at a University in Bangkok, does not believe that militant attacks are seriously undertaken for separatism. Therefore, he does not see autonomy as useful. He judges the restoration of justice to be more important.

> "The violent attacks today have changed. They are not permanently organized, unlike in the past. It's not possible to remove all of the attacks even when it is an autonomous region. The resolution will come when the grass roots have a better life and when the forces of law and order stop abusing the laws."

Indeed, even though both Davudi and Vincent do not support the autonomy proposal either because of the understanding that southernmost people already have special rights or that autonomy will not stop the attacks, their recommendations could be implemented only if the region has more political power. At present local government organizations can do nothing regarding removing military officers from the area. Also, extra-judicial treatments could stop if the locality has autonomy. The most extreme case even suggests assimilation to co-opt the Lower South population. Rose, a Bangkokian businesswoman in her 30s who graduated from a university in the United States, proposes:

> "We should promote Thai culture, Thai language and Thai education, so that they (Muslims in the Lower South) feel they are Thai. As I experienced, they do not think of themselves as Thai. China used assimilation policies, setting prostitution into Muslim areas. Even if we (Thai government) do not copy China, we should assimilate a bit more."

Therefore, it sounded difficult at that time, 2009, to think that the government would grant autonomy for the southernmost region because even Muslim counterparts did not understand why autonomy was needed. At best, they would not obstruct the progress of the autonomy movements even though they do not see benefits. For example, Raqq, a businessman residing in Bangkok and working for a Muslim website, answering questions regarding Islam, does not show sympathy to the southernmost citizens or think that they should have autonomy. However, he thinks that if autonomy can stop the fight, the government should probably grant it.

> "They are already privileged compared to Muslims in other parts of Thailand. They can enter the state university by quota, not worrying about the entrance examination. Seriously, they gain literally everything. If that is not yet enough, let them govern themselves. If they want this, give it to them."

At worst, Muslim interviewees outside the Lower South can see no connections between the incidents in the south and the political power structure. Boon and Max suggest that the family can help in solving the southernmost problem, not seeing the violence as the result of conflicts between state and local elements. Boon, president of a Local Administrative Organization in Nonthaburi, says:

"The structural problem there is the local conflict between religious leaders and local administrative organizations. Family can solve the problem. In good families, children listen to adults and if the family does not support violence, the children won't turn to violent."

Max, a doctor in Nonthaburi, maintains:

"The solution should start at home. If family members never use violence, Muslim youths will not develop violent behavior."

The way Boon and Max define the Lower South problem is very different from the view of civil society organizations in the Lower South. Unfortunately, most interviewees outside the Lower South do not support the call for autonomy, not least because they think it is part of irrational separatism. They do not realize how substantive decentralization can help ordinary people in the area. To resolve the conflict in the Lower South, therefore, multi-level actions are required. Local civil society organizations will have to widely publicize meaningful autonomy whose purpose is not to stop the violence but to strengthen the society. Tan, a Bangkok-based NGO operative working with Muslim communities calls for every part of Thai society to engage more in resolving the southernmost situation.

"Nowadays the government take it that Muslims have a problem. The mass media becomes interested in the Lower South problem. Political icons like Anand Panyarachun plays leading role to solve the southern problem. Therefore, the whole of society has to take part. Muslim organizations have to be more active. They should do more than distributing dates during *ramadan*. Not only non-Muslims, but also Muslims do not understand the differences among Muslims. They do not understand that Muslims from different cultural background cannot live the same way."

5.2 Islamic education: integration or seclusion

Islamic education in the southernmost Thailand has been viewed as a factor bolstering separatism in the area. For example, connections between Islamic teachers in the Lower South and Muslim countries can be considered as a source of disloyalty to the Thai state. Donations from Arabic countries can also be negatively interpreted as linked with global Islamic movements. A lecturer at Prince Songkhla University, Abdullah Abru, in an interview to the Deep South Journalism School, states that the Thai state itself mistakenly tried to arrest some Islamic teachers who could actually help the state because they were local

leaders (Chaleompinyorat 2012). Indeed, academic sources assess that most traditional Islamic schools were integrated in the Thai state when they were transformed in order to align with the national education system (Che Man 1990; Narongraksakhet 2005). In Thailand, Islam is instructed at many levels and forms, such as in kindergartens, elementary schools and institutes of higher education. Many Muslims in other parts of Thailand look up to the Lower South when it comes to Islamic teachings. Traditional *pondoks* (Islamic boarding schools) are commonly seen in the Lower South but rare in other areas. Islamic private schools are very popular among the Muslim masses in the southernmost provinces. Moreover, there is no Islamic University outside the Lower South (Yusuf 2007, 4). This section will explore contributions of Lower South Islamic education in four forms: firstly, the *faraduin* school, which is the mosque-run Islamic school; secondly, the *pondok* educational institute or traditional *pondok* that teaches only religion, thirdly, the Islamic private school, and fourthly, Islamic education in higher education. To what extent these forms of Islamic education integrally or exclusively function in the Lower South, and recommendations of interviewees to resolve the southern conflict via Islamic education institutions, will be discussed.

5.2.1 Foundational Islamic schools

The first category is foundational Islamic schools or *Tadika* (as widely called in the Lower South) or *faraduin* schools (as they are generally called in other parts of Thailand). These have been under the administration of the Education Ministry since 2005. The Education Council recognizes them as children's centres providing foundational Islamic education (Office of National Education Council 2007). *Faraduin* classes can run either after school or during weekends. They provide Islamic teachings, from the correct gestures and verses for Islamic prayers, to Islamic principles. Pupils can be of kindergarten age, but are mostly elementary school pupils who after school studying Islam. Today the *faraduin* schools tend to set a common curriculum at each level, to align with the 2002 national Islamic Studies curriculum (Narongraksakhet 2005).

In the Lower South, nearly every mosque provides *faraduin* or *tadika* classes. Before 2005, the Department of Provincial Administration administered *tadikas*. Later, the Ministry of Education took over the administration. In the Lower South, the Office of Private Education, provincial Islamic Committees and Muslim academics set the *faraduin* curriculum for this region (Office of the Private Education Satun Province 2009). However, a number of

faraduin schools still do not follow this official curriculum. They hold the status of informal educational institutions (Narongraksakhet 2005). Statistics from the Office of the National Education Council show that there are 2,135 *tadika*s in Yala, Pattani, Naradhiwas, Satun and the four districts of Songkhla, serving 200,959 registered *tadika* students.

The majority of Muslim interviewees in the Lower South arrange the foundational level of Islamic education (*faraduin)* for their children, as a parent's duty. Sending their children to *tadikas* can ensure that the children know how to practise Islam. As most *tadika* also run during weekends, interviewees' children do not miss study hours at their schools. Another way to give children foundational Islamic education is to have lessons at home or at the Islamic teacher's house after school or during weekends. A few interviewees teach children by themselves at home, using books for each level. In the Lower South, the Muslim elite do not struggle to find classes or teachers for their children as there is ample supply, while wealthier Muslims might invite Islamic teachers to teach at their home.

All interviewees consider it necessary for their children to gain a basic knowledge of Islam and to be able to practise Islam when they are very young. They want their children to assume a Muslim identity while still being Thai citizens. Most parent interviewees send their children to Islamic Private School in primary years, while some choose non-Muslim schools, and arrange *faraduin* lessons during weekends. Pim, a lecturer at Prince Songkhla University explains: "I myself went to the provincial government school (which had no Islamic teaching). My father invited an Islamic teacher to teach me and my siblings at home." Beyond primary level, most parent interviewees in the Lower South send their children to non-Muslim schools. (This will be discussed in the next sections.) *Faraduin* lessons appear to act as an agent for preserving Muslim identity because parent interviewees are determined that their children internalize basic knowledge of Islam when they are still very young.

5.2.2 Traditional Islamic schools

The second category of Islamic education discussed here is the traditional Islamic school or traditional *pondok*. (*pondok* or "*pandokein*" literally means 'hut' or 'inn'). In the customary way, a Muslim sought out his own Islamic instructors and lived in a simply-constructed hut on the instructor's land. The traditional *pondok* did not have a specific curriculum; teachings depended on the teacher and the student. Instructors did not collect money; students had to support themselves. In this way the Muslims were Islamized not only by the taught texts but also by living together. The oldest *pondok* in Thailand can be traced back to 1624, nearly 400

years ago. It was situated separate from, but close to, the mosque in Talomanaw district, Naradhiwat (Narongraksaket 2005). In the 19th century the Lower South of Thailand was a regional centre for Islamic learning, where Muslim students from the mainland, for example from Cambodia, and the archipelago would sojourn in any of the hundreds of *pondok* schools in the provinces, before making trips to the Middle East for further religious education (Liow 2010, 32)

Today, traditional *pondoks* in the Lower South are still relatively popular, albeit much less so than in the last century.[39] There are 391 traditional *pondoks* serving 24,398 students in Yala, Pattani, Naradhiwat, Satun and the four districts of Songkhla (Wisalaporn 2007, 119). This percentage is not large, as perceived by Kashmir,[40] the interviewee who is a member of Islamic committees. From the database of the Southern Health System Research Institute, in 2010 there are 406 *pondoks* in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat (Southern Health System Research Institute 2010). A source reports that 25 percent of parents in the Lower South would like to send their children to *pondoks* due to their lack of secular education (Parameswanran 2007). Since 2005 the government has tried to register *pondoks* to administer them. They will then gain the status of "*pondok* institution". In *pondoks*, boys and girls live in segregated accommodation (Narongraksakhet 2005). Chinnaworn Boonyakiat, the Minister of Education in 2010, has put forward a proposal to establish 200 intensive-curriculum Islamic schools in the Lower South (as part of the effort to improve internal security) (Chinnaworn 2010).[41] This would initiate 'state-run *pondoks'*.

The traditional *pondoks* might have lost their popularity by their nature; teaching only religious subjects cannot support secular occupations. Moreover, they might have lost the excellence they once had due to governmental education policies. For example, education policy during 1973-1992 emphasized promoting national identity, which can be clearly implied as not promoting minority identities (Pankla 1998). Since 1958 the government has attempted to "develop" traditional *pondoks,* from non-registered to becoming registered and from non-formal education to the Private School Teaching Islam. Traditional *pondoks* have gradually pursued this policy. According to the 1958 legislation, registered *pondoks* were

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[39] Che Man states that 70 per cent of Muslim school children during 1940-1960 attended *pondoks*, and that in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century the Lower South was the cradle of Islam in the Malay Peninsula.
[40] Kashmir gives the figure of less than 2 per cent of Lower South Muslim population studying in *pondoks*. However, since the number of Muslim population in the Lower South can range from over two million to five million, we cannot significantly rely on it as the base to estimate the figure of *pondok* students.
[41] The Islamic National Curriculum was issued around 1980. However, it has never been popular in the Lower South since it contains too few hours when taught at schools.

entitled to receive government support in improving the infrastructure: buildings, roads, signs and logos, and also in teaching the Thai language and vocational subjects. At the same time, registered *pondoks* were committed to be "systematically improved" and evaluated (Narongraksakhet 2005).[42] Narongraksakhet (2005) points out that the registration of *pondoks* during 1959-65 did not affect the educational system in the Lower South very widely while Che Man (1990) maintains that this unnecessarily jeopardized the traditional system of Islamic scholarship in the area to serve the integration policy of the Thai state.

The greatest changes in traditional *pondoks* have occurred since the outbreak of violence in 2004 (Narongraksakhet 2005). At that time, the government viewed those Islamic education institutions as sympathetic to separatism and put pressure (and significant incentives) on unregistered *pondoks* to register, and hence follow the national education system (McCargo 2008). The great impact on *pondok* institutions, resulting from the 2004 regulation of Education Ministry, determines that Islamic teachers applying for the registration must have Thai nationality, a primary level of general education (not religious) or the equivalent and good knowledge of Islam. They must be certified by the Provincial Islamic Committee or the Association of Private Schools Teaching Islam in Southern Border Provinces (Education Ministry 2004). This implies that this regulation demands that the applicants have the ability to speak, read and write in Thai. Needing certifications from the Islamic Committee or the Association could also mean applicants have to adopt the values of the former or become allies of them. According to Liow (2004, 2009), despite the fact that national education has diffused mainstream values and culture into the Muslim community, some traditional Islamic schools have opted for the greatest resistance against this change, making state policy on the Lower South education appear to be an unsuccessful means to integration.

Academics both inside and outside Muslim world recognize connections between *pondoks* in the southernmost Thailand and Muslim countries providing scholarships for local Muslims to go to South Asia and the Middle East (Van der Mehden 1993, Prapertchob 1991). This might not help in building national integration. In the worst case, as stated by Van der Mehden (1993, 96) separatist groups in the Lower South have developed long-term contacts with Muslim countries, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Libya, Kuwait, Syria, Iraq, the Sudan and Iran, since they have studied abroad, receiving cultural and financial support from them. Still, these connections have not necessarily ruined national integration. For example,

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[42] The biggest lot of the *pondok* registration was after the outbreak of the 2004 violence when the government eased the registration procedure (Narongraksakhet 2005).

Prapertchob (1991, 233-258) shows that some traditional Islamic schools received financial support from Middle Eastern donors (in addition to annual financial support from the government), which help them preserve their own identities.

As to interviewees in the Lower South, they do not criticize *pondoks*. Also, most interviewees in other parts of Thailand respect the prevalence of *pondoks* in the lower South. However, there were a few criticisms connecting the administration and teachers of *pondoks*. <u>Kan</u> considers that most *pondoks* in the Lower South lack well-qualified staff, and suggests the following:

> "If I were authorized to, I would abolish the *pondoks* in the Lower South. Tok Kru (Islamic teachers) there have 4-5 wives; they are not good role models. The form of *pondoks* is not as bad. However, the schools lack good quality teachers and staff."

Kan's criticism is not directly related to separatism or integration of the region. However, this might help in understanding why *pondoks* are not as popular as before. Moreover, we can imply that improving the quality of *pondoks* might help in integrating citizens in the area both directly and indirectly. In the context of the present conflict, there are calls for religious commentary on whether the southernmost part of Thailand is *dar ul harbi* [a domain of disbelief where the battle for the domination of Islam should be waged]. However, most religious leaders cannot risk expressing such a view. Moreover, open commentaries on *dar ul harbi c*onflict vastly (Chaleomsripinyorat 2012). Improving the quality of *pondoks* might help to crystalize the idea relating to this much debated issue. More generally, governmental support for traditional Islamic schools might show a sincerity to develop the education of the region as the local desires, namely by supporting pluralism. <u>Kashmir</u>, a member of Islamic committees in Nonthaburi, points out:

> "None of the Thai government accepts traditional *pondoks*. The *pondoks* represent local Malay culture and language. The government should support this diversity. Nowadays, there are only less than 2 per cents of Muslims studying in *pondoks*. So, why does the government not support it at an optimal level? There should not be any problem if the government supports every school equally."

The interviews from <u>Kan</u> and <u>Kashmir</u> represent two poles of opinions which might also explain why *pondoks* are ignored by the government. In practice, the government has no

rationale to close down unregistered *pondoks* during time of conflict.[43] Kashmir's recommendation to support *pondoks* is worth considering. It is potentially practical, given that the government currently finances Islamic Private schools, some of which exaggerate numbers of students to gain more governmental financial support (McCargo 2008, 41). Therefore, traditional Islamic schools could well be optimally financed if the government improves budgetary management, unless the attitude of the state towards the schools remains negative.

However, if we consider that the opinions of interviewees outside the Lower South partly represent the perspective of the state, the proposal that traditional Islamic schools should be equally supported might be far-reaching. Indeed, Kashmir is the only interviewee suggesting support for *pondoks*. Most recommendations, e.g. from Tom, Udom and Yoth, are for the government to monitor *pondoks* at some level.

> "The government does not have to change the system of traditional *pondoks*, just not neglect them. Recently, new graduates from Egypt, Iraq and Iran have become Islamic teachers. The government should seek to know what they teach, and should be less laissez-faire than they have been."

Unfortunately, this perspective signifies a quite wary attitude, unlikely to lead to giving financial support as Kashmir proposed. Indeed, in 2010the government, instead of supporting the existing traditional *pondoks*, proposed to create government-run intensive Islamic schools providing more hours teaching Islam to meet local demands (Chinnaworn 2010). Not only the government, but some Lower South interviewees in 2009 thought the same. The emergence of public schools teaching Islam has the potential to replace the traditional form of Islamic education if they are of high quality even though their competitors seem to be private schools teaching Islam. Sadly, this policy might not benefit national integration unless it can produce a good number of influential religious scholars who dare to speak out against vicious attackers.

5.2.3 Islamic Private Schools

The third category is Islamic private schools. In the Lower South, there are Islamic private schools that teach only Islam, and others which teach it as well as the general curriculum. The establishment of Islamic Private schools comes from two different sources: the initiative

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[43] Despite the fact that the government is suspicious of religious teachers at those traditional schools (McCargo 2008, 43).

among reformist Muslim scholars to transform traditional Islamic education, and the government's efforts to administer Islamic education, mainly in the Lower South (Narongraksakhet 2005).

Indeed, the first Islamic private school was created in 1933 by Haji Sulong, a reformist Islamic teacher who learned Islam in Saudi Arabia (Narongraksakhet 2005; McCargo 2008; Liow 2010). He was the first person on record to consider some aspects of traditional *pondoks,* such as a non-formal curriculum and non-systematic assessments, as drawbacks. His school taught Islamic, general and vocational curriculums. General education comprised science, geography and mathematics, but its popularity generated discontent among traditionalist Islamic teachers due to their different backgrounds in religious studies. Having graduated from Saudi Arabia, Haji Sulong was viewed as not holding *Shafii Mahrab* [one of Islamic schools of thought], unlike the majority of Muslims in the region (Liow 2010, 37-39).

Between 1959 and 1965 the Education Ministry attempted to unify the educational system nationally. The government appealed for Islamic teachers who owned traditional Islamic schools to register their *pondoks* so that they could be monitored and transformed. Incentives such as financial aid and improving their infrastructure, were granted to the schools to catalyse changes such as being able to organize standard tests or teach the Thai language and secular subjects. Many traditional *pondoks* followed this scheme, thus transforming themselves into "private school teaching Islam" (Aphornsuvan 2003, 24). There are 75 Islamic private schools teaching only Islam and 202 that also teach a general curriculum (Wisalaporn 2007). The latter is very popular among ordinary Muslims as approximately 70per cent of Muslim students at secondary level register there (Narongraksakhet 2005; Parameswaran 2007; Wisalaporn 2007). Narongraksakhet (2005) reports that ordinary Muslim parents prefer those schools to the state ones because they provide a sex-segregated environment considered important by the community for students at the age of puberty) even though public schools potentially provide better academic education at a similar cost. Interestingly, while most Muslim interviewees in the Lower South support the existence of private schools teaching Islam, they tend to send children to those schools at primary rather than secondary level. One exception is Asma, an NGO agent working for a relief agency, who embraces the advantages of private schools teaching Islam:

> "In the schools, children practise praying, saying Islamic verse and wearing hijab. As a parent I do not expect much on the academic side, as we can teach them by

ourselves. I prioritize the idea that Muslim children should be in an Islamic environment."

The other parent interviewees in the Lower South opt not send their children to those schools at secondary level, only at primary level. <u>Pim</u> says: "It is ok when they are still young". Envisaging the future careers of their children, <u>Ben,</u> <u>Samart,</u> <u>Pim</u> and <u>Uthman</u> prioritize academic strength over an Islamic environment. They send their children to Islamic private schools at primary age to absorb Muslim culture and Islamic principles, whereas secondary level, they choose a demonstration school administered by a university or a provincial state school.[44] They reason that these two types of schools teach a stronger academic curriculum, and their children can mix with non-Muslim friends. The interviewees do not send their children to private school teaching Islam unless they expect their children to pursue some specific careers. For example, <u>Uthman,</u> a radio presenter and director, and a father of six children, tells:

> "I stress that my daughters should have an academic education; the demonstration school here will do. As to my son, I would like him to have a religious education. If he doesn't want to be a religious leader, he can go for a career in translation. Arabic language and Arabic studies are taught up to doctoral level worldwide."

Interviews with those Muslim professionals show a reverse pattern to that of the Muslim masses gathered by Narongraksakhet, Parameswaran and Wisalaporn above. This implies that Muslim professionals do not attempt to keep their children in an Islamic environment. However, they do not particularly intend to help the state in establishing national integration when many send their children abroad, mainly to Malaysia. In fact, Muslim professionals in the Lower South do not think of the schools as a tool of integration or seclusion. Focussing on future careers, they tend to favour international opportunities.

In terms of integration, Narongraksakhet figures that the authorities were not pleased with the ratio of nearly three quarters of Muslim students going to private schools teaching Islam. Their view was that studying in such as environment excluded Muslim students from mixing with others of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Hence, they did not support the

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[44] The demonstration schools are run under higher education institutes as training fields for academics and students in Education. If they create an educational innovation, they will pilot it with these school first. This term, "demonstration", is used in the schools' English names.

process of building peace in the region (Narongraksakhet 2007). The state has tried to eliminate such effect by creating 807 'public schools teaching Islam' at elementary level and 31 schools at secondary level; they served 179,756 and 5,841 students, respectively (Narongraksakhet 2005). This data shows the unpopularity of public secondary schools teaching Islam. Indeed, some parents send children to these schools due to constraints such as transportation and cost while worrying that their children could lose their Muslim identity (Che Man 1990). Moreover, since 2004 enrolment rates have dramatically dropped (McCargo 2008). Local interviewees in the 2009 fieldwork explain that Islamic curriculums in these schools are not intensive enough to meet local demands. The fact that they are co-ed schools with multi-faith students might as well play a part. Therefore, some interviewees in the Lower South suggest an intensive Islamic curriculum with a sex-segregated environment in order for public schools to meet local demands. In 2010 the Minister of Education announced the decision to use intensive Islamic curricula more extensively in public schools in the southernmost provinces (Chinnaworn 2010).

However, the number of Lower South interviewees preferring public schools teaching Islam is very modest. Most Muslim professionals in the Lower South recommend improvements in private schools teaching Islam for the sake of educational excellence rather than for national security. Unlike the authorities, the interviewees see how poor national security obstructs educational development in the region, rather than the other way round. Since living in the area is considered a risk to life, most schools lack teachers of quality. Ben, a physicist, has to help teaching physics at a private school teaching Islam for that reason. Pim, teaching English literature at Prince of Songkhla University, maintains:

> "Students here are not stupid. If they have good teachers coming to teach them, they will be good, certainly. But what we have is Thai language teachers teaching English and math. At this level we need specialized teachers."

Primarily, they focus on how to improve secular education in the private schools teaching Islam, and suggest real integration of Islam into other academic subjects. Though this sounds difficult in the Thai context, Muslim professional interviewees perceive that Indonesia and Malaysia already have this system.[45] Pradya says: "Indonesia and Malaysia have been

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[45] Since Thailand is a non-Muslim country, approximately half of teachers in the southernmost provinces, who came from the outside, are not Muslim. Pim, an interviewee in the Lower South, mentions that since they are not Muslim, they can hardly be able to integrate Islam with secular subjects. Actually, it is difficult enough to find

integrating Islam into academic subjects. For example, we can teach politics from an Islamic perspective. We can talk about politics and Islam in Europe, for instance." In fact, Ben helped the Asia Foundation create an integrated curriculum combining religion with each subject, but it has not yet been put into use.

Concerned about the weakness of private schools teaching Islam, interviewees in the Lower South, such as Ben, Samart, Pradya and Uthman mention that students at these schools spend longer hours learning too many subjects in order to cover the national curriculum and religion lessons, but are not satisfactory at either. Therefore, they propose those schools should adjust those curricula in some ways. For example, Uthman, the Malay-speaking presenter and manager of several radio programmes, who has six children suggests:

> "The schools should open a variety of programmes that stress different sciences. A student can then choose to attend a programme that suits him: one may choose the Islamic-specialized programme, another can choose a secular-specialized programme."

Pradya, the young journalist and Ben the physicist, take the same view that the schools should give more support to students who are particularly good at certain subjects. Instead of every student learning everything equally and similarly, the schools could decide for some to study certain subjects for longer hours. While the government tries to compete with private schools teaching Islam by enhancing the Islamic studies curriculum, some of the latter try to improve the secular subjects. For example, Thailand Centre for Muslim and Democratic Development (TCMD), a Lower South-based civil society organization, with support from the Asia Foundation, is assisting 12 Islamic private schools to improve the quality of their secular instruction. The project is divided into three major areas. The first is to introduce modern pedagogy, with a student-centred approach. The second aims to build detailed lesson plans based on the government curriculum to ensure high-quality instruction. The third area is an orientation programme designed to help students adjust to and succeed in their transition from local religious schools to secular universities in multicultural urban centres. Moreover, students in those project schools can have opportunities to join foundation-supported English camps (Asia Foundation 2008).

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teachers expert in maths and science. Graduates from these subject areas would rather work in the business sector.

Noticeably, as the lower south interviewees do not directly link the schools to the existing violence, they do not suggest monitoring the latter as the authorities and interviewees outside the area do. Udom, Prem, and Kan from Bangkok, Udornthani and Chiengmai, share the idea that the government should take control of, or at least monitor, those schools: "The government has to be in control over education. Now it lets new graduates from Egypt, Iraq and Iran teach whatever they want. The next generation will be better." [46] Having said that, most interviewees outside the Lower South do not envisage private schools teaching Islam as a security threat. They only comment on their failure to help social and economic development since a significant number of graduates have no further study and employment. Most interviewees both outside and inside the area tend to understand that effective education, can help promote peace, albeit taking time. In which case, private schools teaching Islam have a lot of such potential due to its popularity. However, how to achieve that is debatable. Some recommend the state operating the same type of school; whereas, local interviewees tend to think about improving existing private schools teaching Islam. It would be better for state and private schools to cooperate in sharing some facilities, buildings and teachers during this period of hardship. That would be a role model of integration at institutional level.

5.2.4 Islamic studies in higher education

The final category refers to Islamic colleges and universities. The first Islamic college called the Islamic College of Thailand was established in Bangkok in 1950 to grant diploma degrees. However, the diploma curriculum was withdrawn the following year due to too small proportion of enrolled students. It granted diplomas in Islamic studies, Arabic, Malay and general education and became a secondary school serving Muslim, Buddhist and Christian students (Islamwittayalai n.d.).

In the present day, institutions of higher education providing Islamic education are situated only in the Lower South. In 1989, the Islamic college in Prince Songkhla University was created. The Yala Islamic College was established in 1999 (Soheng 2003) and was promoted to be a university in 2007 (Yala Islamic University n.d.). While the former is state-led, the latter is predominantly supported by the governments of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar. Yala Islamic University was also assisted by the U.S.-linked Asia Foundation, by arranging

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[46] In 1999 a unit of educational authority in the area was removed. That made private education not supervised and monitored for several years. The locality has only recently regained this authoritative body (Boonyanuwatr 2009).

English language training and study trips to Malaysia (Liow 2010, 54-55). The other state university providing an Islamic education curriculum is Narathiwas Rajnakarin University (Narongraksakhet 2008).

Even though the ratio of students in higher education in the Lower South is low, these two Islamic colleges and university could have a high impact on the region. Both are active in peace-building in the region; they founded the Southern Thailand Peace Network (Parameswaran 2007). Yala Islamic University is looking to work with UNESCO and the United States Institute of Peace (UNIP) to promote cross-educational links in peace techniques, reconciliation and peace theory (Parameswaran 2007). Locally, more than a hundred of its graduates currently teach in Islamic private schools throughout southern Thailand (Liow 2010, 48). As a non-state university with links to Saudi Arabia, it is presumed to hold *salafism*, aiming to bring back a pure Islamic lifestyle reflecting practices of Muslims dating from the era of the Prophet. This is not compatible with either the non-Muslim or traditionalist Muslim scholars e.g. Nideh Waba, a powerful Islamic teacher with close links to royalty (ibid.). Surely, graduates from these universities have increased diversity in the ways local people believe and practice Islam.[47] As to the interviewees, only one expects his son to take Islamic studies in higher education, with the hope that he can pursue a related career in the future. Only one interviewee in the Lower South defines himself as *salafi;* the rest admire the rector of Yala Islamic University, Ismail Lutfi Japakiya. Having said that, most perceive that Japakiya avoids engaging in politics and might not directly play a leading peace-making role in the area.

5.3 Conclusion

Responding to situations after the 2004 outbreak of violence, local civil society organizations have led seminars and conferences on southern autonomy. They have mobilized local participation in considering desirable local governance since 2009. Their proposal of self-governance is very similar to the seven demands Haji Sulong called for in 1945. This can be considered as an integrating or liberating role. Notably, nearly one third of these organizations are educational, mainly in higher education. While the violence has not seemed to fade away, Islamic education institutions have been viewed as instigating or nurturing instead of defeating the unrest. The dramatic decline in popularity of state secondary schools has also led to the thinking that local people have taken a standpoint against the state.

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[47] Christopher Joll (2011) argues that pattern of beliefs and practices of Malay- and Thai-speaking Muslims in a Pattani's sub-district has gradually changed since reformist movements has been active.

Expecting Islamic education to instil calm, the government tries to improve the Islamic studies curriculum in state schools. While the state considers education as an agent of change for national integration, this research has found that professional interviewees in the Lower South do not see it that way. They recommend improvement of both Islamic and general education for educational excellence itself.

From the above outlook, the autonomy proposal of local civil society organizations and the popularity of private schools teaching Islam seemingly indicate a gap between the state and Muslim population in the Lower South. Superficially, it seems those civil society organizations do not support national integration since they have called for regional autonomy. However, they actually stress the compatibility of their proposal with the constitution of the country. It might be true that this declaration aims to legally justify their activities. Having said that, the fact that academic institutions from Bangkok support this project, while separatists reportedly do not, might signify that these local organizations aim for integration. Seeking for self-governance within the constitutional framework, they work to acquire desirable governance in which national integration remains.

Working within the constitutional framework does not mean agreement to governmental policies, (and vice versa). Also, disagreement to official policies does not show disloyalty to the state. In the context of southern border provinces, the state aims to use public education to defeat the unrest. Perceiving that learning Islam is important for Muslim children, the state established an Islamic studies curriculum in public schools in the area. Realizing that the curriculum did not meet local demand, the state has built another extensive curriculum to be competitive with private schools. Strikingly, however, most interviewees in the Lower South do not support the Islamic studies curriculum in the current form at secondary level, in neither private nor public schools. They think learning comparable Islamic to secular subjects only unnecessarily makes students study for too many hours. The suggestion was that children at secondary level should gain an expertise in either secular or Islamic subjects.

Chapter 6

Mosques: inner and outer gaps and ineffectiveness

According to the 1997 Islamic Organization Administrative Act, "a mosque is a place for religious affairs of Muslims where there has to be regular Friday Prayers and is a place to teach Islam." (Islamic Organization Administrative Act 1997). This definition of mosques refers to a limited range of functions allocated to mosques. There are now 3,610 official mosques in Thailand (the Internal Security Affairs Bureau 2008). This section focuses on the perspectives of Muslim interviewees towards the mosque as an institution. Because most interviewees are not members of mosque committees, responsible for mosque activities, their perspectives and recommendations represent the "demand side" of the relationship. The interviews show that most interviewees have expectations with regard to the role of mosques which go beyond the definition given by the state, and are more extensive than their actual functions. Most Muslim interviewees expect mosques to take on both religious and communal roles.

6.1 Expectations on mosques to provide proper Friday prayers service

The literal meaning of mosques as defined by the 1997 Islamic Organization Administrative Act covers only limited functions: religious affairs and the teachings of Islam. With regard to the former, mosques are required to provide prayer services, seemingly a very basic role of mosque as a religious institution. Most interviewees are satisfied, to some extent, with the way mosques perform this basic role. As Muslims are committed to praying five times daily (*salah* or *lamad* in Thai-Muslim terms) mosques are places to pray in. Basically, they provide congregational prayer services on Fridays, which include sermons *(khutbas)* given by *kotebs,* who are Muslims in charge of giving sermons. In practice, these might be *imams* or other Muslims who have sufficient Islamic knowledge. The following shows how the interviewees benefit from attending mosque services.

Weerawan, a judge in Bangkok who is also an *imam*'s wife, explains that sermons include the imparting of moral education. *Kotebs* in different mosques have different ways of delivering sermons.

> "*Khutba*s are delivered depending on *koteb*s. Kotebs in some mosques teach only religion, some mosques combine political issues into the *khutbas*. Sometimes kotebs

pick verses from the Quran, sometimes are general moral teaching to remind us doing right things, such as not to begrudge."

Bihar, a businessman in Chachoengsao, says *imams* of *masjid*s (mosques) remind Muslims who attend mosque services to pursue Islamic practices regularly.

> "I agree with *imams* when they emphasize consistency of Islamic practices. The requirement of Muslim life: prayers, fasting and *zakat*, needs to be fulfilled persistently."

Pong, a lecturer in Bangkok, sees the importance of going to mosques. Even though some *khutbas* may not be informative, they are nonetheless spiritual.

> "During Ramadan like this, the *khutbas* remind me of the importance and the essence of the sacred month. It is just spiritual for me. Perhaps, that is all one needs, going to pray. In another mosque that I attend, the *khutbas* are very different. That is a big mosque and quite international. They give *khutbas* in English and they talk about a lot of issues. This is another form which is also useful and informative."

Anat, an IT manager in a commercial bank living in Nonthaburi, describes the contents of the *khutba*, which include two general aspects of Islamic teaching, Ibadat and Muamalat.

> "My Imam teaches how to *lamad* (pray) and teaches about family, husband and wife relationships. He reminds us to abstain from consuming alcohol. He teaches how to share and be generous. He encourages us to enter into the bigger organization as grown-ups so that we can teach others. That is the way we make ourselves useful. He even teaches how to remind others politely, without embarrassing them. Basically, we have to behave ourselves well, first."

Khutbas indeed vary from one community to another, depending on local circumstances. Some *kotebs* stress the *ibadat* (worship) more than *muamalat* (interactions between humans), while some regularly combine political issues and community concerns in their sermons. Sermons in different mosques might have the same content during religious occasions such as *Ramadan*, *hajj*, *Eid Ul Adha* and *Eid Ul Fitr*. During popular Thai festivals, such as *Songkran* (the Thai New Year Festival which features paying respect to elders) and *Loy Kratong* (a raft floating event which pays respect to the river goddess), *khutbas* might focus on the correct attitude of Muslims towards these ceremonies. It would not be suitable for Muslims to join in the paying respect to dead ancestors and the goddess on both days, as this would contradict the principles of their faith. During the electoral season, they might discuss how to choose the right candidates (rather than being bought by the politicians). On non-festive days, *khutbas*

frequently engage with local concerns, such as drug problems or how to strengthen the community.

Nat, a public relations manager of a Muslim organization, notes the differences between *khutbas* in different regions.

> "In the central region, *khutbas* might be about developing cooperation with the state or social problems. In the Lower South, *khutbas* might lay more stress on maintaining social identity than material development."

Even though most interviewees are satisfied with the prayer services, 10 interviewees view them negatively. A few interviewees who are satisfied with the mosque services also make recommendations to improve the physical environment. As a suitable venue for prayers, mosques have to have quality sermons and a hygienic environment. Interestingly, five critical assessments are from women, from among only 12 women interviewees. Three report that the male-centred nature of the mosque obstructs them from joining Friday prayers at the mosques.

The recommendations directly related to the *khutbas* are to improve both their content and the pedagogy of those delivering them. Julong, Davudi and Ning comment on the contents of *khutbas*. Julong, a younger-generation *imam* in Nonthaburi province, adjacent to Bangkok, suggests that *khutbas* in general should contain considerable teaching on *muamalat* (interaction between humans):

> "An important problem is that the *imam*, *koteb,* or whoever gives sermons, does not understand what should be delivered. Most of them teach only rites, and do not teach *muamalat*. They let problems grow in the community and only resolve them afterwards. We can't separate social problems from religion, because Islam is in all aspects of life."

Davudi, a member of the provincial Islamic committee in Chiang Mai, suggests that *khutbas* should be both informative and spiritual:

> "Nowadays we hardly find a touching *khutba* that is informative and spiritual at the same time."

Ning, a scientist in the upper south, comments that the contents of the *khutbas* are not interesting enough to attract Muslims in the community:

> "The mosque is full only during special events, Eids and funerals. The sermons provide nothing new or interesting. They are too dull."

Kan and Penporn, living in the city of Chiang Mai in the north, comment on the pedagogy of delivering *khutbas*. According to them, giving *khutbas* by reading from al-Qur'an is not an effective method.

Kan, a doctor in Chiang Mai, suggests the *kotebs* (persons who give sermons) need to make some improvements:

> "The once- a- week *khutba* may not be enough to make people good. As the *khutba* was read, some attendees snoozed. The way of delivering the *khutba* must be improved. Otherwise people get nothing at all."

Penporn, a businesswomen in Chiang Mai, reports that

> "In mosque A, the *koteb* reads Quranic verses in Arabic. Mosque B has translation. I wonder how attendees understand without translation."

The above information shows that some mosques in Chiang Mai provide *khutbas* by reading from al-Qur'an. However, most *khutbas* elsewhere also contain other pedagogies, such as giving a talk, mostly in Thai, or in Malay in the Lower South.

Apart from criticisms of the contents and the pedagogies of sermons, the physical conditions of mosques are seen as important. Weerawan and Montri are concerned about the cleanliness of the mosques as a religious venue, noting that hygiene is one of the most important things that the Prophet stressed.

Weerawan, a woman judge living in inner Bangkok, does not criticize sermons performed on prayer days but concerned with issues of hygiene in mosques as the sacred place for praying.

> "As the place to *lamad* (pray), the mosque has to be clean while we worship God. Hygiene is a part of the faith's principle. Some mosques provide *lamad* clothes for *muslimah* (women) who come to mosques from work, but those clothes are not clean."

In the Lower South, the interviewees do not give negative feedbacks on the mosque services, but rather on mosque attendance. Pim, a lecturer in a southernmost province, reflects that she would like to see more people *lamad* (praying) at the mosque regularly.

"I want more Muslims to go to the mosque regularly. I go to the *masjid* in the university mostly. I see a good amount of people only on Friday, but these are basically seniors. Women are not obliged to go to the mosque and youngsters are not fond of it. I do not appreciate this trend. I want to beg the younger generation to go to the mosque."

Information from Pim indicates that women in the Lower South are not obliged to go to the mosque, as with Muslim women in other areas. However, while criticisms of the mosque services come from Muslim women in other regions of Thailand who do not regularly attend the mosques, Pim, a Muslim woman of the Lower South who prays there, criticizes Muslim individuals, rather than mosque committees. Pim demands the Muslim community, especially the young generation, to visit the mosque more often, because at present mosques in general have low attendance except for Friday. This information shows Pim's community Friday attendance is satisfactory, while participation on other days is much lower.

This might be interpreted as showing that mosque services in the Lower South are comparatively better than others, or simply that the Muslim population in the Lower South is much more numerous. The different loci of concerns of Pim and others lead to an understanding of how the mosque services might be improved, and why some mosques do not accomplish all that they could. Perhaps the number of mosque-goers relates significantly to the quality of the services at a given mosque. When Muslims do not participate in mosque activities or are not affiliated to the mosque community, although they may have suggestions, their points of views are not revealed. Improvement of the services would probably require significant cooperation from the community, bringing to mind that mosques are a crucial part of the community they serve and highlighting other expectations placed upon them as institutions, which will be discussed below.

6.2 Expectations of mosques as community centres

Most interviewees, although satisfied that mosques are first and foremost a place to worship, expect them to have other functions. Some interviewees refer to al-Qur'an, stating that *masjids* (mosques) should be the centres of the Muslim community. To be "community centres", mosques have to perform multiple roles. Some interviewees would like to see the mosques providing social services, including economic, health and education support. This phenomenon that the interviewees would like to draw functions of other social institutions

into the hands of the mosque is worth considering, and might lead to the question of whether the social services provided by the Thai state are properly and appropriately delivered to Muslim groups. Alternatively, it might be argued that the latter have different specific requirements.

Most of the 49 interviewees indicate that they prefer to see the mosques perform both communal and religious roles, even though the majority give no concrete suggestions of how this should be done. Muslim interviewees expect mosques to be multi-purpose, meaning that they also operate as community centres. At present, however, most mosques in Thailand do not engage in social work. This section reveals recommendations by interviewees on particular aspects that mosques can work to improve. For example, mosques can help Muslim communities to relieve hardship, through economic intervention. Moreover, according to some interviewees, a mosque as community centre should be a surveillance centre, a family centre and a health care centre. Basically, they envisage the mosque as taking on numerous roles, which would see it become the main charitable organization for the community.

Under the concept of "community centre", professional interviewees look at different tasks involved therein. Some would like the community centre to work as a family centre. Nong, Montri and Max, who live in urban areas of Chiang Mai, Bangkok and Samutraprakarn, a province next to Bangkok, have witnessed poverty and difficulties within families, and they reflect that the mosque as community centre should work like a family centre in the following ways:

Nong, a young businesswoman living in Chiang Mai city, reflects:
> "There should be a nursery in the mosque to help the community with child-rearing. This would be good as we can thereby foster a moral ethic in the kids. The mosque should help with occupational development, too."

Montri, a journalist whose workplace is near a poverty-stricken area of Bangkok, suggests:
> "The mosques should include social work for women as mothers, children, and youths. The mosques should be more physically attractive and there should be a library as well. Then, youths would have a place to go and to be, outside home, that ensures that it is safe and useful."

Max, a doctor in Nonthaburi, realizing that parents in the present have to focus on their occupations, meaning that they have less time for their children, proposes:

> "The mosque should take on the role of the family, in that they can give social orientations to Muslim kids."

Apart from the recommendation that mosques as community centres should adopt a role in child-rearing, and be a shelter for kids of all ages and mothers who need it, other interviewees suggest that "community centres" should take on a duty of surveillance, monitoring what happens in the neighbourhood. Sawat, Aisha and Julong, each living in different contexts, reflect that their community needs to be guarded, and crime prevented, and they believe that mosques as community centres can accomplish this task.

Sawat lives in the Lower South. He takes the view that the violent situation in his area partly emerged from the fact that local communities have been weak. Apart from the separatism known in the Lower South, violence also comes from other common social problems, which, he believes, mosques can prevent them if they guard their neighbourhoods. Sawat believes that preventing or detecting common social problems, such as drug abuse or minor crimes, is the first step to aviod separatist violence.

> "They have to do community work, such as to watch out for drugs or thieves, because these are all against religious principles. Once local people let these things go on, they can't fight the separatist attacks. They let everything happen because the communities are weak."

Aisha, who lives in a suburban area in the northeast, reports that the mosque in front of her house was invaded. Thus, she is aware that houses surrounding the mosque can be burgled if the community have no preventative measures.

> "There should be a *red box* (a police patrol box that the police put their memo in, after checking the area) in front of the mosque to make sure that the police officers are guarding this area, so the thieves won't come."

Julong lives on the outskirts of Nonthaburi, where drug problems are spreading. He is aware of a significant number of drug users in his neighbourhood. He suggests:

> "The mosque should be the place where members of the community communicate to each other if they see any problems or prospective problems. We should not wait until a problem gets big, as it will become more difficult to resolve. We should play a

preventive role. There are thieves and drug users here, in a Muslim neighbourhood. We have to fight against them, and not let go."

Davudi, a member of the provincial Islamic Committee in Chiang Mai, stresses the need to help eight kinds of people, who deserve to be looked after by their community. He describes his ideal community centre as also providing basic health care.

> "The mosque should have first aid and a community clinic. In case of death, the dead body should be placed at the *masjid* (mosque) before burial. Mosques should support the eight types of needy people that Allah defines: widow women and orphans should register at the mosque, so that the mosque can support them."

While the above interviewees insist that the mosques should help resolve any "social problems" that they witness in their communities, there is the possibility of a proactive approach as follows.

Bihar believes that the quality of life of Muslims will increase if communities can build up their economic strength. He considers that *imams* of mosques should initiate this cause and proposes:

> "One mosque should produce one product. If we can distribute or sell our product, we will earn more money and have better living. This activity will bring Muslims self-reliance, self-confidence and bring them close to Allah."

Bihar's idea of "one mosque, one product" resembles an existing national project, "one sub-district, one product", in which the government encourages each sub-district in Thailand to make and distribute its local products. If either Bihar's or the other interviewees' ideas to resolve the social problems mentioned are right, there will be costs associated with operating the community centres. Some interviewees put forward ways to finance the centres. Since most suggestions point out that the community centres should be run as charitable organizations, two sources of finance are mentioned: governmental and Islamic.

In the northeast there are calls for support from the government. This might be because the Muslim population in this area is so small that the interviewees cannot foresee how the community centres could be self-sufficient. Ayub, a journalist in Udon Thani, says:

> "The mosque should be the main charitable centre. The government should support it."

On the other hand, a larger group of interviewees refer to a self-sufficient model, and pick the Islamic principle of *zakat* as the way to achieve it. <u>Vincent</u>, <u>Davudi,</u> <u>Max</u> and <u>Bangsan</u> refer to this, pointing out that the mosque should be in charge of collecting and organizing *zakat* money:

> "There are eight types of persons that should be fostered, such as widows and orphans. The mosque should organize a *zakat* system to benefit them, as no one else can. The mosque should register these persons."

The fact that these interviewees prefer the mosques to be self-reliant, running community centres by using *zakat* collected from the Muslims in each community, signifies the enthusiasm of the Muslim elite to apply Islamic conventions in their community. This might imply that they perceive the conventional Thai economic traditions as not fitting, or failing to support the Muslim community. However, although they are choosing an Islamic way to deal with the social problems, this does not mean that the interviewees would like Muslim communities to be separate from the rest of Thai society.

<u>Vincent</u>, an internationally well-known scientist living in inner Bangkok, goes so far as to say that the charitable work run by mosques should support everyone in their neighbourhoods, both Muslim and non-Muslim.

> "The mosque should be the relief centre to help people after disasters, such as fire and flooding. The services should be supplied to everybody without discrimination. You know, people near the mosque may be not Muslim. The charity should spread to non-Muslims as well, because they are in the same community."

<u>Vincent</u>'s input looks beyond the question of how Muslims, as a minority, are treated. A significant number of interviewees recognise that Thai society generally faces a range of social problems. Most suggest that the mosques should contribute in resolving these problems for the Muslim community. There is also the possibility, however, as discussed by Vincent, that Muslim communities can be more active in resolving problems in the wider society. If this were to happen, it would help not only Muslims, but also non-Muslims, and could have a positive effect on the standing of the Muslim community within society.

As to the research question regarding how interviewees see the roles of Islamic institutions within the Thai context, it appears that most are not satisfied with the role of mosques. They

expect mosques to play active community roles whereas the state only recognizes them as religious institutions. Their function as community centres, raised by some interviewees, is not familiar to either the Thai state or Thai society. It may be argued that for this to change, the Muslim elite should create greater awareness of a possible communal role. Muslim interviewees who raised this point do not want governmental support, except in the northeast where the Muslim population is very small. They believe that Muslims should use their own money, raised by *zakat*, and mobilize this money more effectively. At the same time it should be directed towards making a contribution primarily to Muslim society, but without excluding the wider Thai society.

6.3 <u>Analysis of the ineffectiveness of mosques</u>

As seen in section 6.1, most interviewees are satisfied with the fact that they can go to mosques to pursue religious practices, mainly through Friday prayers. However, suggestions are made to improve the mosques as religious venues. Also, even though mosques are known and recognized by state law as places to perform Friday prayers, the information in section 5.1.2 reveals that approximately one-fifth of all interviewees are dissatisfied with mosques having only religious roles. They suggest that mosques should function like a community centre. This section explores why the mosques do not institutionalize a community role. It can be explained using two broad types of factors, internal and external. The chief internal factor concerns inadequacies within the mosques' internal organization, whereas the external factors are cooperation between state agents and members of mosque committees, and the development of differentiation among social institutions.

<u>Internal factors</u>
The internal factors include a range of contributory facets, such as the problematic means of coming-to-power, the factionalism and the tardiness of members of mosque committees. They also cover the incapability of some members of mosque committees, and the poor proportion of women supporters.

The reason why mosques do not establish communal roles while the demands for such roles appear significant, at least as seen by the interviewees, may originate from the problematic appointment of members of mosque committees. Since the 1997 Islamic Organization Administrative Act states "members of each mosque choose their own mosque committee"

(Krisdika n.d.), and in many places have opted to hold a vote to determine committee membership. The voting resulted in division, competition and conflicts of interest. Most interviewees report such conflicts of interest as allegedly caused by the voting.

Kashmir, a *koteb* and member of the provincial Islamic committee in Nonthaburi, criticizes the implications of the 1997 Islamic Organization Administrative Act, since it allows mosque members to lobby to come to power:

> "*Masjids* (mosques) now follow the new act (the 1997 Islamic Organization Administrative Act). Member of mosques committees do not righteously enter to the positions; they lobby. As the result, most *imams* don't have religious inspiration, but they care for their own pride, their followers and peers.

Yoth, a jurist in Bangkok, refers to the electoral procedure as the cause of division within the mosque in his community.

> "I myself experienced disputes among members of the mosque committee in my community. They quarrelled a lot. It happened because of the election. It also happens elsewhere. You can see after the election, Muslims, who were not satisfied with the vote result, petitioning to have it overruled. People compete to be on the mosque committees because of the honour of the position. Some come seeking profit from the appointment. It is not big money, but it might be significant to the grassroots. For example, the profit from organizing food stalls in Muslim festivals can arouse people to want a position on a mosques committee."

Kiri, an Islamic teacher in the upper south, takes the views that although the voting system is a good sign of democracy, it creates factions within a community.

> "Now that everything is democratic it's good; we can have voting at every level. We vote to appoint members of our mosque committee. In my experience, everywhere using the voting system has faction. In a small community there can be 3-4 groups. But we have to admit that, and try to join those groups together afterwards, or they might learn to co-operate each other, because this is the democratic way. "

While Kiri sees the drawbacks of the voting procedures, he nonetheless takes the view that the process is part of the development of democracy, which is worth pursuing. He suggests coping with the faction problem gradually, case by case, whereas others propose the opposite. Nat, a Bangkok-based public relations manager in a Muslim organization, explains how and why Muslim communities should avoid voting.

> "We should organise public relations broadly to inform that the Muslim community does not need to vote to choose mosque committees. We'd better use a consensus,

considering qualification, merit and maturity. Islamic committees of some provinces campaigned for this: some communities followed this suggestion, some didn't. The voting system has a huge disadvantage: if *imams* ally with politicians, they won't resolve social problems. Moreover, according to Islamic principle, to acquire an Islamic leader, Muslims need to consider their qualifications mainly; we cannot use the majority rule."

Not only <u>Nat</u>, but also other five interviewees, mention that Islamic principles do not support voting as a system to acquire an Islamic leader. They state that Islam promotes discussion to reach an agreement and that a *shura* council (advisory team) should be created to take part in deciding upon an appointment. In this case, as Nat states, some provincial Islamic committees have taken on the role of *shura* council, leading discussions for Muslim communities to reach a consensus on an appointment, even if, like any system, this is not always successful.

Even though most interviewees attribute the factional problems that prevented mosques from performing active communal roles to the problematic appointment of the members of mosque committees, some others construe that personal disposition or selfishness obstructs the committees from enacting such roles. <u>Kan</u>, a doctor in Chiang Mai, states:

> "The effectiveness of the mosques relies on the quality of the mosque committees. It would be good if they wanted to contribute something for the society. Nowadays, they take the position because they want to become somebody."

The members of a mosque committee are supposed to work together as a group. If individual members do not want to or cannot work together as a team, the roles of a mosque – whether religious or communal - cannot be accomplished. The fact that members of mosque committees work ineffectively if there are competing factions might be related either to the voting or to conflicting interests. However, what obstructs the communal roles of mosques might not be factions among committee members. Other interviewees reflect on another drawback regarding the voting, namely the slow progress of mosques caused by non-productive harmony between committee members. If everyone focuses on protecting their self-interests, positive change is unlikely to take place.

<u>Nong</u>, a scientist in the upper south, describes how members of mosque committees do not work effectively.

> "Since the *imam* is selected by voting, the person who acquires the position is the person who has more relatives than others. Worse, other members of the mosque committee are also relatives of the *imam*. After they come to the positions, nobody else apart from the *imam* works. The *imam* never has a working team."

Fatima, a female NGO worker in suburban Udon Thani, a north-eastern province, says that

> "The law saying mosque members choose *imams* leads to the phenomenon that an *imam* is the one who has more relatives than others. The *imam* of one big mosque in this province can't even speak Thai. There was a petition to disqualify him because there were concerns that he could not work as *imam*. However, other members of the mosque committees tried to protect him because they are his kin."

It seems that the voting brings at least two disadvantages, disintegration and tardiness, that obstruct mosques from enacting communal roles. Some interviewees do not directly indicate that the voting is the root of this ineffectiveness. It could simply be that the *imams* and other members of the mosque committees lack the skills to develop communal roles.

Zaqq, a businessman with a degree in Islamic studies from India, who answers Islamic questions on a renowned Muslim website, also believes that most *imams* are not capable of enacting communal roles. Zaqq says:

> "Most *imams* and other members of mosque committees are not trained to do development work or social work".

Zaqq's notion is hardly counter-intuitive; *imams* are trained to lead worship, while other members of mosque committees, unless they are social workers, do not necessarily have developmental skills, as with the average person in the population.

While it might be true that division and conflict between the members of the mosque committees have sprung from the voting, it is also true that conflict is common in most organizations. Some other interviewees do not feel the need to mention the conflicts among members of mosque committees, wherever they are from, and anticipate how to develop the quality of members of mosque committees. Regardless of how proper the coming to power of *imams* and members of mosque committees is, or what qualities they already possess at the beginning, they believe there should be a training programme to increase the capacity of members of mosque committees to perform communal roles. Like the conflicts within

mosque organizations, the inability of religious professionals to pursue communal roles should be solvable.

Tom, an economist in Bangkok, proposes a motivation scheme to develop religious professionals. As a member of the Muslim elite with experience in community development, he reflects:

> "*Imams* are not self-sufficient. I think, they have to learn more about both religion and society. I myself experienced difficulty trying to campaign for people in a Muslim village to use a healthier kind of toilet. It is an innovation that *imams* should understand. There should be an incentive system to motivate them to learn both branches of knowledge: there might be exams through which the government could provide them with grants if they obtained good mark levels.

Bora, a radio programmer in Chiang Mai, recounts that the government is establishing orientation programmes for *imams* in the Lower South. He suggests that the same scheme should be available throughout Thailand:

> "Currently the government organizes orientation programmes for *imams*, but only in the Lower South. These should be implemented elsewhere, too"

Apart from conflicts, tardiness and incapability among members of mosque committees, too few contributions from Muslim women might negatively affect the development of mosques as community centres. As the male and female Muslim population is assumed to be approximately equal, the latter should constitute half of mosque-goers, but most are not obliged to go to mosques regularly, as mentioned earlier. Of the twelve women interviewees, three stress that women should play more important roles in mosque activities. They believe that women can more easily foresee what mosques can contribute to communities:

Ning, a scientist in the upper south, suggests:

> "If more women took part, it might be better. Women foresee how to serve the community."

Penporn, a businesswoman in Chiang Mai, tells of her experience that not every mosque welcomes women's efforts to be active in organizing mosque activities:

> "My Muslim women's group is legally registered as a foundation. We helped mosque A to get funded and we also arrange activities for fundraising, too. We organized activities for youths. We are aware of drug problems, so we try to draw youths away

by getting them to spend their spare time usefully. Unfortunately, we can't do much. Mosque B does not appreciate these efforts."

Penporn's case gives an example of how a Muslim woman has contributed to her community. This also implies that Muslim women elsewhere can make contributions in their own ways, and that other mosques have the potential to perform communal roles.

External factors

Other factors impeding communal roles of mosques are external: cooperation between state agents and members of mosque committees, and the development of institutional differentiation.

1994 saw the first Sub-district Council and Sub-district Administrative Organization Act, which determines two types of members of sub-district administrative councils: *ex officio* members and elected members (The Council of State n.d.). In accordance with the intent of the 1997 Constitution of Thailand to promote decentralization to local administrative organizations, this act was amended in 1999. Instead, it determines that all members of sub-district administrative councils are directly elected (The Council of State n.d.). The Sub-district Council and Sub-district Administrative Organization Act authorizes sub-district administrative organizations to approve sub-district developmental plans and budget rules. The emergence of these organizations is reported by a significant number of interviewees as an obstruction of the communal roles of mosques.

Four out of nine interviewees in the Lower South take the view that sub-district administrative organizations have taken over the communal roles of mosques. Ben, a Malay-speaking physicist living in Pattani, whose research project requires cooperation from the locality in the Lower South, states:

> "Now the Tambon (sub-district) administrative organizations do everything. They organize education. They take over mosques' roles. Actually, the mosque should be the best organization capable of resolving violent situations, albeit not overnight. Just think – there could be people coming to mosques five times a day, and they can concentrate on what you saying more than at other places. That means mosques have good potential to run any community project. In my case, people co-operated well

when I conducted survey research, because I used mosques as the venue for the research activities."

Samart: a Malay-speaking bio-scientist in Pattani similarly reflects the idea that mosques should be centres for community development:

> "If the government wants to start any development project or even does not know what to do, it should give budgets to mosques. People will cooperate a lot more if a project is run by the mosque."

The opinions of Ben and Samart might reflect the distrust between the Muslim community and the state, and the delicate balance which must be maintained in power-sharing between them. Most interviewees in the Lower South suggest that mosques and sub-district administrative organizations should cooperate with each other, as they would like to see the development of mosques contributing more to Muslim communities. Mosques cannot be independent, as they cannot mobilize sufficient budgets; sub-district administrative organizations are a local source of the state budget.

Uthma, a radio programmer in Pattani, recommends:

> "If the mosque could work alongside with the sub-district administrative organization, things should be better."

Samart adds:

> "Members of mosque committees should be developed broadly, and they should cooperate with the chiefs of the villages and the presidents of the sub-district administrative organizations."

Prachaya, a Malay-speaking young journalist, proposes an idea:

> "Members of mosque committees should take the leading roles for community development in defining strategic plans. Chiefs of villages or officials should take supporting roles. There might be members of sub-district administrative organizations who also work as members of mosque committees.

From the interviews above, within the framework of "working together" or co-operation between state agencies and members of mosque committees, there are a few models of how this might be accomplished. There seem to be problems of power-sharing in the Lower South. However, there is an example of mosques working well with the state-sponsored agencies.

<u>Asma</u>, a woman NGO worker involved in community work who goes to mosque regularly, represents the positive side of power-sharing:

> "The mosque that I go is very good. The *imam* is a wise man. He makes use of local government organizations and local students. Now the mosque is a centre for petitioning and information. It seems that agencies outside try to help too. Now the provincial Islamic Committee tries to cooperate with the mosque: there is an orientation programme provided for the *imam*. In the midst of violence, the operation of the mosque should be very useful."

Interviews from the Lower South highlight the importance of the power-sharing issue between members of mosque committees and state agencies. Sub-district administrative organizations are considered to be at the forefront because they are the most important local source of government funding. Power-sharing between them is not limited to the southernmost region.

<u>Boon</u>, a president of a sub-district administrative organization on the outskirts of Nonthaburi, gives his opinion, which may also represent the perspectives of other members of local administrative organizations:

> "Members of mosque and temple committees are alike; they try to work by themselves. It doesn't work that way because they don't have power. In democracy we no longer follow what an *imam* orders. Mosques are supported by getting budgets from the provincial administrative organization and the Department of Religious Affairs."

The information from <u>Boon</u> shows that even though he is Muslim, he is not concerned about the Muslim community's demands. It might be usual for sub-district administrative organizations not to allocate budgets for the community work of mosques, unless a set budget plan has been agreed between them. <u>Boon</u> might have concluded that sufficient budgets are received by mosques in his area from the provincial administrative organization and the Department of Religious Affair are sufficient. Therefore, <u>Boon</u>, as the president of a sub-district administrative organization, does not allocate budgets for mosques in his community.

In a more urban area, a municipality takes the leading role towards a community, with the local Muslim elite having to deal with its administrators when they want to propose any

project. Bora, a radio programme representative in Chiang Mai, reports his experience trying to develop a mosque in his community:

> "The mosque in my community has lots of land. We would like to turn the empty land into a park where Muslim and non-Muslim youths in the neighbourhood can exercise. The prime minister of the municipality does not respond to the proposal even though he himself is Muslim. Nowadays, Muslim youths turn their backs to the mosque. They walk into other religions. Drug abuse is starting."

On the other side, we can see positive developments in the cooperation between sub-district administrative organizations and members of mosque committees. Two out of ten interviewees in the upper south reflect this positive direction. Kom and Kitti live in Nakorn Sri Thammarat. Kom is a first-term president of a sub-district administrative organization; Kitti, is a relatively young *imam* in his 40s. Kom admits that sub-district administrative organizations did not look after mosques well enough, but efforts from both sides, the sub-district administrative organizations and mosques, aim to work together. He says:

> "As mosques here do not earn money, unlike some big mosques in Bangkok, and the Department of Religious Affairs does not confer fix budgets to mosques, sub-district organizations must continually allocate budgets for them. On the other hand, mosques should be more active. In this sub-district, since there has been an association of Muslims initiated by the sub-district council, mosques have appeared to play a good range of communal roles: there are *mayat* foundations (aid funds for funerals), youth funds, and social welfare funds. There are a lot more activities for youths, such as Faraduin lessons (foundational Islam), orientations in *Ramadan* and orientations to avoid drugs."

Kitti, an active *imam* of a mosque in the sub-district where Kom administers, who initiated new mosque activities for the community, tells what he has done:

> "In this mosque we do social work: we have a *mayat* fund (a fund for funerals) and a *zakat* fund for education. Some villagers and organizations do not recognize that mosques should take care of community. Our mosque campaigns against drugs."

The information from Asma, in the Lower South, and Kom and Kitti, in the upper south, signifies examples of cooperation between mosques and state agents. Therefore it can be assumed that such cooperation could emerge in other regions of Thailand, and should lead to more active communal roles for mosques. In some regions, such as the northeast, where Muslim populations are very small, Muslim communities might be desperate for financial support even to fulfil their religious activities. With the state allocating budgets on the basis of the number of Muslims in each province, mosques in the north east always receive very

small budgets. Prem, an NGO director who is a member of a mosque committee, recounts that he asked for money from the Islamic Development Bank owned by Muslim countries, for mosque activities.

> "I try to run a summer camp every year to educate Muslims. At least they know what is forbidden: drinking alcohol is quite common here because Muslims live very close to or even in non-Muslim communities. We do not have a budget for many activities. It is difficult to get government budgets. Muslims in this province share only one provincial Islamic committee with Muslims in the other three provinces because their population is very small. I used a budget from the IDB (Islamic Development Bank), but that was tied to specific proposes. We do need regular budgets of a sufficient amount."

Ayub, a journalist and a member of a mosque committee reports similar circumstances, though he lives in a different province from Prem. He says:

> "In my community, Muslims make up less than 10 percent of the population. The mosque is to help people, but the government does not support us. We tried to activate Islamic spirituality by organizing a mosque fair for *Eid* festivals, and during *Ramadan* after fasting we had communal services every night. We are still at the developing stage. As Muslims here mingle with non-Muslims a lot, some of them are still drinking alcohol. This is a common problem among Muslims in the north east. "

It seems that mosques in different regions need different kinds of cooperation from state agents. Besides power-sharing with the local administrative organizations, one interviewee thinks that the mosque should share power with the police force. Kirsh is an *imam* in Nonthaburi. Concerned about the level of crime, he proposes how to help administer the community:

> "If *imams* can administer the community, I can bring drug abusers to stay in the mosque. Abbots of temples can do the same. Now one of my duties is to give drug abusers orientations, anyway. Police can delegate the power to confine them to *imams* because the drug users violate Islam, too."

Kirsh is a famous *imam* in his locality, and has connections with high-ranking police officers. His proposal, though, is extravagant; it shows how much a particular religious leader volunteers himself for his community, but his suggestion goes beyond what most *imams* could or would reasonably seek to accomplish. Nonetheless, it demonstrates the realistic general belief that with the consensus of the Muslim population in a community and cooperation between members of a mosque committee and state agents, a mosque can achieve communal roles.

However, the second external factor, the development of institutional differentiation, should not be overlooked. Some interviewees living in metropolitan areas of Chiang Mai and Bangkok recognize a decrease of communal roles of mosques while other institutions, such as schools, play more active roles.

Nong, a young businesswoman in Chiang Mai, suggests that:

> "The mosque used to be at the centre of the community, a centre for enjoyment, festivals and a public forum, but it has changed because we now have many other institutions working in place of the mosque, such as schools. I prefer the mosque to be the centre of the community, like in the old days."

Bangsan and Max construe that occupational institutions have accrued importance, resulting in the communal scene of religious affairs becoming less marked. Tom points out that migration to pursue occupational careers causes a reduction of the Muslim population surrounding mosques.

Bangsan, a hotel general manager in a tourist area of Bangkok, states:

> "Now mosques have reduced roles. There are fewer attendees and even *imams* sometimes can't come. *Imams* are not full-time; they also have another career to pursue."

Tom, an economist in Bangkok, comments that:

> "Now populations around certain mosques in Bangkok are significantly reduced. Others have moved in while Muslims have moved out. They pursue career mobility: work and study."

As the above trend is unlikely to be reversed in the near future, Tan, an NGO worker who is *shiite* Muslim, suggests a solution to the "weakened mosque community":

> "Mosques should take on new and proactive roles. In the modern era, we (the Muslim elite) have to think about how to transfer knowledge: both Islamic and secular with a Muslim perspective, to Muslims when Muslims do not go to mosque. We have to deliver Islam to the Muslim community in some way. Many Buddhist temples established websites to communicate with Buddhist communities. A mosque should have its own website."

Tan's suggestion is practical and proactive. However, at the same time it could be considered too progressive for Muslims who see the significance of going to mosques, as his suggestion

implies that mosque attendance is unnecessary in the present day, as it does not fit metropolitan life style.

The analysis in this section shows the interrelation between the internal and external factors: the poor quality of internal administration can result in a lack of cooperation with organizations outside or a "weakened community" can result in incompetent mosque committee members. To eliminate disadvantages caused by the internal factors, mosques need the strength of the external factors, and vice versa. For example, inadequacies of mosque internal administration, either from conflicts or weak members of mosque committees, can be resolved by support from outside organizations. To survive, mosques may well need strength either from inside or outside; to be effective as community centres, they need both.

6.4 Conclusion

As a Buddhist country, Thailand officially recognizes Islam by supporting and monitoring Islamic institutions, namely mosques. In answer to the research question how interviewees see the roles of Islamic institutions within the Thai environment, this research finds that, as the quantity of mosques grows, their roles do not meet the high expectations of the interviewees. They suggest mosques should lead active community roles instead of being only religious institutions. However, being officially recognized by the 1997 Islamic Organization Administrative Act, mosques are places for religious affairs providing prayer services. The suggestions concerning community centres imply that the interviewees would like mosques to engage more with the wider society, which is an inclusive, not exclusive role. This chapter, though, sees differences in such opinions in different parts of Thailand: interviewees in the Lower South recommend that mosques should cooperate more with local administrative organizations while those outside the Lower South feel that mosques should provide welfare or social services to the surrounding non-Muslim people.

The desire to have mosques as community centres could be interpreted as an exclusivist role as mosques clearly have a religious identity different from the majority non-Muslims. Being active in non-Muslim communities, mosques could be viewed as 'taking over' non-Muslim Thai society or converting Buddhists to Islam, which would have caused social anxiety. Having said that, we can equally analyse in the opposite direction: the interviewees would

like to see mosques adopting inclusive roles in solving problems in secular everyday life regardless of faiths.

When such expectations are rarely met, we can say that it was partly due to social change which results in delegating to other social institutions community duties that might have belonged to mosques. As mosques are truly part of Thai society, they are influenced by Thai social change which also affects non-Muslim elements alike. Practical problems of voting for mosque committees might have aggravated this. This research finds that prospective members of mosque committees might have paved the way to ally themselves with existing authorities or influential politicians. Unfortunately, these alignments do not much benefit mosques or the grassroots Muslim community. Interviews regarding the expectations of mosques becoming community centres reflect the picture of weakened communities, including surrounding non-Muslims. If members of mosque committees ally with politicians, they have no need to work for or as the community, which was already weak. If mosques fail to adopt community roles, Muslim interviewees might call for governmental support. However, it is debatable whether this sounds reasonable. Even among Muslim interviewees themselves, some construe this should be done within the Muslim communities. As the state recognises only the religious roles of mosques, the Muslim community might well have to support itself or put more pressure on the government to meet its goals. The latter is a civic process asking for governmental support to adequately institutionalize Islam.

Chapter 7

On Piety and Personal Practices

Practising "Islam" in a non-Muslim country like Thailand can face various constraints. For example, the non-Muslim majority might not recognize that eating can be a religious practice for some different others. Wearing *hijabs* may be viewed as unnecessary, negotiable or even improper in some certain situations, in non-Muslim contexts. From some perspectives, marriage is a personal, private sphere in which religion is less likely to interfere. Satha-Anand suggests that practising Islam in a non-Muslim society can reflect piety better than in Muslim society (Satha-Anand 1994). He reasons that practising Muslims in a non-Muslim environment have less social pressure to do so, unlike those living in Muslim society. Even so, practising Islam within Muslim society can have various meanings. Interpretations to practising (and not to practising) "Islam" are meaningfully different varying from one to another. For examples, what is mean by *halal* food and what are exceptions for not eating *halal* food are debatable. This chapter focusses on how the religious conduct of Muslim professionals, such as eating *halal* food, wearing *hijab*s and selecting spouses, relates to wider society and what its significance is for them.

7.1 Choosing *halal* food and drink

Living in a non-Muslim society, Muslims may struggle to find *halal* food, drink and medicine in daily life. From my perspective as an outsider, Muslims in a non-Muslim society, such as Thailand outside the Lower South in, have limited choices. It seems to me that eating out is not so easy for them. For example, my Muslim colleague has to bring her meals from home. In Bangkok, most food shops sell items in which pork is an ingredient. Beef is rarer because many Sino-Thais do not consume it, believing that eating big animals is a sin and unhealthy. It is even more difficult for Muslims to find *"halal"* meat in a food store, meaning that fish and seafood are more feasible choices. However, Hanafi Muslims such as those living in Chiang Mai and Konkaen do not eat seafood on principle, but allow themselves to eat fish. In the business districts of Bangkok, there might be a few Muslim food shops or restaurants within a two mile radius of offices, but to commute there and back to work might take 40 minutes. Consequently, eating in Muslim shops every day is not practicable. It is unfortunate

that while there are hundreds of food shops within only a five minute walk from the office, my Muslim friend cannot find one selling *halal* food. Another Muslim colleague buys her lunch from the nearest canteen in the university. Although it does not have Muslim dishes, she avoids ordering pork.

Aside from my colleagues, most Muslim interviewees also live and work in big cities, where they can find Muslim food. Although there are many such shops in Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Nakorn Sri Thammarat, the problem is the time spent reaching them. Most Bangkok interviewees work in a building with no Muslim food shop, thus having to travel for their lunch by car or sky train. A few interviewees in Bangkok work near a Muslim community with Muslim food shops. However, when they have guests, they take them by car to finer Muslim restaurants even if situated far away. Muslim interviewees in Chiang Mai and Nakorn Sri Thammarat say the same. If they work within a Muslim community, all is well; otherwise, it takes time to reach food shops. Although on an everyday basis these Muslim interviewees do not mind taking time, sometimes they are too busy. Weerawan, a female jurist from Bangkok in her 50s, compares finding *halal* restaurants in Malaysia and Thailand:

> "Living in Thailand, maybe we have a little bit of difficulty about food. We have to seek for Muslim food shops providing *halal* food. This is unlike in Malaysia, where we can eat in literally every shop. Therefore, [in Bangkok] mostly we cook food ourselves."

Waen, a woman NGO worker in her late twenties, living in Nokorn Sri Thammarat, in the Upper South, complains: "There should be *halal* food in every office, governmental and non-governmental, everywhere."

In the Northeast, most interviewees work in a Muslim community and live near their workplaces. Furthermore, wives prepare lunch for husbands. However, they can imagine how difficult it is for other Muslims wanting to settle in the Northeast, where there are few Muslim communities. Prem, head of an NGO in that area, describes the difficulties finding *halal* food where Muslims form a very small part of the population:

> "Living in or travelling to the northeastern region was what Muslims counterparts warned 'you would find nothing to eat'. Nowadays, it is better, but because of the small Muslim population, the *halal* food shops are still quite rare."

As Thailand is not a Muslim country *halal* food is not necessarily sold in office buildings, in either the government or private sector. 18 out of the 50 interviewees work in a non-Muslim

environment. They respond differently to the limited availability of halal food, by purchasing meat other than pork, or looking for vegetarian dishes. Otherwise, they might only eat dessert.

Their individual lifestyles determine how Muslim interviewees choose their food. Rose is a young businesswoman in the advertising business who graduated in the United States and now works at Silom, the heart of Bangkok business district. She has to commute from her house in a suburban area, and reports that her lifestyle is busy, like any typical Bangkokian.

> "Well, my daily life is busy and urban life does not let us have much choice. You know, my lunch can be a sandwich from the shop in the building. I choose quality ones. I do not always eat food with the *halal* sign, but I'm always aware what I can't eat and I care for the quality."

Yoht's life is very different. He is a senior judge who is fortunate that he has a Muslim male assistant, who manages to find *halal* food for Yoht so that they normally have lunch together. There are a few Muslim food shops including superstores around the governmental centre, Chaengwattana Road, where they work.

Interestingly, the interviewees, who do not feel that finding food by themselves is difficult, report discomfort when they are invited out and expected to eat the food provided. The following section focuses on the interaction between Muslims and non-Muslim colleagues or hosts in situations involving meals. The interviewees cope through different approaches. Weerawan, a female judge in Bangkok, reports that she now receives suitable hospitality because she has told non-Muslim colleagues and hosts exactly what she can and cannot eat:

> "I don't have a problem now because I have told everyone. Mostly, people think that we can't eat pork; therefore, we can eat other meat. However, it is not like that. We have to tell them the truth; otherwise, they get it wrong forever. They need to know. Once they know, they are enthusiastic to find *halal* food for me: chicken has to be slaughtered by Muslims, otherwise I have to have seafood."

It might be true that many non-Muslim Thais lack a proper knowledge of Muslim eating requirements. The hosts assume that Muslims might be able to eat any meats other than pork. In other words, those non-Muslim hosts do not take *halal* food restrictions seriously. While Weerawan chooses to tell her host that the only meat she can eat is that slaughtered by Muslims, Yoht, Kan, Tan and Sawat do not. These male interviewees hesitate to ask, perhaps thinking that the hosts already know this. However, finding *halal* meat is an extra task for the hosts, especially when they live far away from a Muslim community. The Muslim

interviewees may feel that they do not want to be a burden to the hosts, while at the same time not wanting to reconcile themselves to eating 'non-*halal*' meat. Yoht, a senior judge in Bangkok, recounts his experience of being invited to another governmental organization, when he ended up eating only dessert.

> "In practice, people in the bureaucratic system do not understand Muslims' way of life. Even when my position is this high, the hosts do not care to find *halal* food for me when I am invited. It was even more awkward when they try to convince that apart from pork, I should be able to eat everything. Sometimes I ate only dessert."

Frequently, in conferences, seminars or workshops, the host does not prepare *halal* food for the Muslim interviewees. Their acquaintances, colleagues or hosts try to persuade the Muslim interviewees to eat the meat provided, which is not pork but neither is it *halal,* by saying "other Muslims did". This circumstance frustrated the interviewees. They found it rather offensive that the hosts questioned why some Muslims would eat the food provided, but others would not. Yoht, as a senior judge, construes his Muslim identity is known. Moreover, it is not so difficult to find *halal* food in Bangkok, so the failure to prepare it is interpreted as carelessness.

In fact, what really upsets the Muslim interviewees is not that they connot eat, but how they are treated. More complicatedly, they do not all expect the same arrangment from their hosts. Kan, a doctor in Chiang Mai, does not expect the host to provide *halal* meat for him.

> "Because my position is high, and everyone knows I'm Muslim, if I show up they will be enthusiastic to find food for me they think I can eat. Actually, I don't mind having food or not, as we are a people that fast every year. Not eating cannot bother me at all. I do not expect them to prepare *halal* food just for me, one person. I understand that in Thai culture the host needs to see me eating to make sure I'm well cared for, but I couldn't feel easy. When we have the chance to choose (food) we'd better choose, but if we really need food and have nothing to eat, we will then have to eat whatever to safe our life."

Tan, an NGO worker, is a Shiite Muslim living in an old Muslim community in Bangkok. In his work relating to historical Muslim communities in Thailand, he tries to emphasize that in the past Muslims mixed well and were great supporters of the kings. Moreover, he tries to build mutual understanding between non-Muslim and Muslim communities, often mediating between Muslims from different strands and sometimes between Muslim and Buddhist communities. On one occasion, a Muslim official could not sign an official letter to a monk abbot because he felt that the salutation was meant to pay respect to the latter. This official

felt strongly that Muslims cannot pay respect to other religious entities. Tan convinced him that the salutation, as a formal greeting, has no religious meaning. Personally, Tan chooses to pay respect to individual monks whom he respects, which is quite different from the view of many other Muslims. However, Tan finds that while he works for Muslims to understand non-Muslim cultures, people in the mainstream culture do not try to understand Muslims. For this, it is worth stressing that Muslims like him are different from many others I have met. He reports experiences of having lunch organized by government hosts.

> "Most people do not understand Muslims; the only thing in their mind is Muslims can't eat pork. Eventually, to save our life if we were dying, we could even eat pork. Eating it would not kill us. People take it like pork is scary. When the hosts do not prepare Muslim food, they spoon food for us in a dish, or run to buy Kao Mog Kai (Chicken Briyani). We end up sitting alone while others are choosing food and chatting. Actually, we can consider what to eat, just label it so we know what's inside. I personally have a logical idea that I can eat most chicken, because 80 per cent of chicken on the market is from CP company, whose chicken products pass *halal* certification. The hosts can put Muslim dishes next to non-Muslim dishes. They don't need to go different corners. If so, we can mingle with the others."

Remarkably, no other informant argued that chicken can be eaten for this reason. Most might not eat chicken if they are unsure whether it is permissible. Moreover, many others, unlike Tan, might prefer not seeing Muslim food next to pork dishes at all.

The information from Yoht, Kan and Tan reflects that a lot of non-Muslim Thais, especially in governmental organizations, do not appropriately respond to cultural difference. This might accompany the generosity which is a prominent characteristic of Thai culture. Additionally, the hosts might expect everyone to accept the same standards, and not be fussy when invited for a meal. Moreover, in work-related conditions the host might not feel obliged to please and fully accommodate the wishes of Muslim guests. This lack of sensitivity in governmental organizations is perceived strongly among the interviewees. Even in the Lower South, with a majority Muslim population, one interviewee there reports a negative experience when he had lunch with the army. Sawat, a Malay-speaking Muslim born in Pattani, is head of a District Registration Office, having worked there for decades. He believes that most local officers recognize him as Muslim even though he has Chinese origins. When he was asked to occasionally work in an army camp in the southernmost area, the host invited him to have lunch together in the army mess.

"Nowadays Thailand has a sound policy towards understanding Muslims; however, the practitioners do not understand such policy. Once, in the military camp here I was offered a lunch. It looked like pork curry. People here know I'm Muslim. I asked whether it was pork. The soldier on duty didn't answer, but changed it for me. Another soldier whispered to warn me not to eat, because that soldier just spooned the old meat off the plate and spooned a new kind of meat in. Everything else remained the same."

Eating is important for Muslim professionals, not only to fulfill basic needs, but also pursue religious practices. Put passionately, it is to serve God, which is why eating in accordance with religious specifications is important for them.

When asked whether they find difficulties living in a non-Muslim country like Thailand, most interviewees replied in the nagative. However, from the information above we can see what confronts them. In normal situations this discontent might not be considered significant to the harmony of the nation. However, the lack of sensitivity of people in non-Muslim society might be further construed as injustice in some particular contexts, such as in the Lower South. Therefore, this lack of sensitivity should be addressed, and where possible eliminated. Mutual understanding should be continuously campaigned for to achieve significant understanding within mainstream.

From another viewpoint, an analysis can focus on the food-choice behaviour of the Muslim interviewees. It is significant that the Muslim interviewees have different perspectives towards permissible food. Within the governmental-related context, the interviewees try to choose food in accordance with Islamic principles. Outside this context, they have much greater choices. The latter indicates roots of Islamic diversity, which help ease living in non-Muslim society. At the same time, the question regarding the essence of the permission and restriction can be raised. Indeed, as mentioned in Chapter 4, the religious representative bodies, the *Chularajmontri* team and the Central Islamic committee, are in charge of certifying permissible food. However, approximately half the Muslim interviewees do not rely on the *halal* sign issued by them. In fact, choosing food with the *halal* sign is a Muslim social norms; however, such as insufficient amount of *halal*-signed food causes great inconvenience. The registration fees to apply for the certificates can deter manufacturers from entering the process. Moreover, there are arguments against accepting the official *halal* certification in regard to its guiding principles and reliability.

Davudi, a provincial Islamic committee member in Chiang Mai, disagrees with the practices of the Islamic representative bodies issuing the certificates, believing that only God has this power.

> "The word '*halal*' means permissible by God. The process of *halal* certification is more engages with business nowadays. There is an effort to indict people putting *halal* sign on their products without permission from the Islamic committee, as if the assessment of '*halal*' belongs to the committee. That is too much."

Bihar, a businessman whose sister has a small food business has a similar opinion to Davudi. He criticizes the inaccessibility of the *halal* certificate for small business owners even though they produce quality products. He maintains that high-rate registration fees and procedural costs are significant obstructions:

> "The *halal* certificate that the Islamic committee is authorized to issue, I think, benefits businessmen rather than customers. My sister is producing food products by hand. It is quality food, but we can't afford to register it with the Islamic committee."

Rose, a young business woman in Bangkok, relates that she does not choose food because of the *halal* sign. She reasons that the certification only benefits the authorized organization but cannot guarantee the quality of the food.

> "The *halal* sign does not add value to the products, but it makes money for the organization issuing it. In case of fresh meat, I can buy it from Foodland (a Muslim-owned supermarket, where she can be sure that the butchers are Muslims.) Anyway, some food which has the *halal* sign is contaminated with non-*halal* elements"

Anat, an IT manager in a commercial bank living in Nonthaburi, the North of Bangkok, puts forward:

> "Some of products with the official *halal* sign are contaminated with pork. And there is inconsistency about some certain products, such as we used to believe that we can eat KFC chicken, but it is confusing now. At times some suspicious products sent to the *halal* science centre were analysed as contaminated, but the *halal* sign is still attached to the food."

Qaisar, a lecturer in the Lower South maintains that when choosing food, considering only the *halal* sign is not enough. He states that "besides the *halal* sign, we have to consider the food's quality". This supports ideas of previous interviewees that quality food and the *halal*-signed food may be not equivalent.

The fact that nearly half the Muslim interviewees ignore the importance of the *halal* sign illustrates that the Islamic representative bodies cannot monopolize judgment on what is permissible for Muslims. It is debatable whether this is derived from secularization, Islamic diversity or simply the failure of the Islamic representative bodies. In my view, all could impact on Muslims' behaviour. The fact that the Muslim interviewees rely more on their own judgment when choosing food can be construed that Islam has been privatized, so that religious organizations cannot monopolize their religious power. This is common in any secular society. In this case, Thai society has a secular foundation as stated in Chapter Two. Also, it could be claimed that secularity is embedded in Muslim society. In some interpretations, Islam allows personal reasoning in many aspects, including choosing food. Efforts of the state and the Islamic representatives to monopolize the judgment on whether food is *halal* has proved unsuccessful because Muslim individuals make their own consideration.

Therefore, even though the Thai state and society does not provide the ideal conditions for Muslims to find *halal* food, Muslim interviewees are able to make suitable arrangements, in accordance with individual interpretations. This signifies that when trying to maintain a Muslim/Islamic identity, they adjust the Islamic framework to accommodate both Thai and Islamic cultures.

Drinking behaviour frequently relates to socialization among colleagues, most likely as night-time entertainments. Most Muslim professionals perceive that offered entertainments at night by mainstream society can be very seductive and may lead to misconduct. Nightclubs, karaoke booths, bars and even restaurants always provide opportunities to access *haram* elements such as alcoholic drinks. However, it is more likely that the younger generation finds them more difficult to avoid, whereas the older generation have developed various ways to cope with them. Most interviewees report that they can usually resist them even though at times it is complicated to refuse invitations from colleagues.

While hanging out together until late at night and drinking alcohol is common among non-Muslim colleagues, some Muslim interviewees cannot get used to this behaviour. The following shows how Udom, Max and Yoth cope with such situations. The three interviewees place different limitations on their activities.

Udom, a businessman in Bangkok, stresses the importance of mixing with colleagues to be happy and successful at work. He tries not to make his religious identity a hindrance to his

social life. Although, used to mingle with colleagues in night clubs after work, he has stopped doing so now because he has a family. He suggests how to cope with the night-time entertainments.

> "Before married I went to bars and night clubs often, as my colleagues asked me to. That was entertaining. I liked it, looking at ladies (only looking). I didn't drink alcohol though, only drank fizzy drinks and ate nuts."

Udom thinks Muslims have the right to enjoy nights out while some Muslims think forms of entertainment, such as watching television or listening to music, is *haram*. He disagrees, saying that he was aware of doing wrong in the night clubs, such as drinking alcohol and committing fornication. He believes that if Muslims have self-control, such entertainment cannot do any harm.

However, Max disagrees, taking the view that Muslims should not participate in any night-time entertainment. Max is a doctor in the Health Ministry. He married and moved from his parents' home, in southern Bangkok, to the northern outskirts of Bangkok closer to his workplace, but still goes to his parents' every weekend. His parents cultivated the norms that night-time entertaining places are should-not-go areas. He follows his parents' teaching and thinks other Muslims should share this norm.

> "My colleagues like entertaining, singing and drinking. I exclude myself. I learnt to say no. It might be not comfortable at first, but night clubs are a no-go area. We risk involving ourselves in fighting. Even though we don't harm anybody, we might get hurt by chance. It depends on parents, too, how to raise children. My parents are religious. They have always said that night clubs are not good, since I was young. So, I grew up without wanting to go."

Yoht, a judge, has similar experiences, saying that socialization is important for his career. He used to go out with colleagues and bosses, but stopped because he refrained from drinking alcohol. Eventually, he felt a distance between himself, a non-drinker, and the rest of his colleagues, and decided to stay away because it was pointless:

> "My colleagues entertain themselves from midday until midnight. Some other Muslim civic servants mingle well with their colleagues and boss. They might progress quicker than me. But for me, I think we have to have a balance between work and faith, otherwise we lost ourselves."

Nowadays, however, he has a senior position, he and his colleagues join in entertainment during working hours. Every Friday they all have lunch together in an office meeting room.

The meal includes wine. Although <u>Yoht</u> does not drink, he shares in the cost, which worries him because it is *haram*. He reflects on what he has to confront:

> "The way they (colleagues) approach me is unbelievable. We are all mature in age and our positions are high. They persuaded me to drink whisky and wine. They convinced me that it is a kind of medicine. They should not raise the example of other Muslims who do wrong. That is not right. I, working as a government officer, have to be patient."

A comparison between <u>Udom</u> and <u>Yoht</u> is interesting. <u>Udom</u> has a business career and his colleagues accept him as non-drinker, whereas <u>Yoht</u> has a government career in which colleagues try to persuade him to drink. These might result from the personal disposition of each colleague, but it is also possible that a significant proportion of government officers get used to treating everyone the same, and believe that they have enough power to convince others who think or act differently to conform. It would be unfortunate for a proficient Muslim officer to fall behind because of his personal and religious convictions of what is lawful and righteous.

The information in this section shows demands from non-Muslims encouraging Muslim professionals to join in consuming non-*halal* products, but without appearing to involve forced compliance. A negotiation process is shown between the Muslim interviewees and their non-Muslim colleagues, which is sometimes difficult due both to the strong attempts at persuasion from the non-Muslim side and very strict interpretations of correct behaviour from the Muslim side.

7.2 <u>Wearing *hijabs*: piety and loyalty</u>

12 out of the 50 interviewees are female. Three are from the Lower South, with the others from elsewhere in Thailand - two each from the North, Northeast and Bangkok, and the other three from the Upper South. Apart from the female interviewees from the Lower South, only two (both from the Northeast) wear *hijabs* on a daily basis. One converted to Islam to marry an *imam*. The other was raised in the Lower South. As Satha-Anand (1994) proposes that wearing *hijabs* in Muslim and non-Muslim societies may contain different meanings, there might be such difference between Muslim interviewees inside and outside the Lower South. In some Muslim society, such as in Indonesia, nowadays wearing *hijabs* increases opportunities for studentships (Smith-Hefner 2007). In contrast, wearing *hijabs* in non-Muslim contexts might require the women to be more courageous, being in the minority.

In Chiang Mai, northern Thailand, with a non-Muslim majority, Muslim students can be seen on the streets wearing university uniforms with *hijabs*. However, the female interviewees from there do not wear *hijabs*. Nong, used to be an NGO worker and a company employee, now in her 30s has her own business. She takes the view that wearing *hijabs* obstructs women's opportunities to get a good job. Penporn, a businesswoman in her 60s, presents the same viewpoint that wearing *hijabs* symbolizes minority status:

> "Companies do not recruit Muslims who wear *hijab*s. The government sector might do, but provides narrow opportunities. I don't wear *hijab*, I don't experience that feeling very much. Wearing *hijab*s in urban Chiang Mai is ok because there are quite a lot of Muslims, but if you go somewhere else wearing *hijab*, others will look at you strangely."

What Penporn said about Muslims wearing *hijabs* and being stared at might be true; however, there is an increase in wearing *hijabs*. Wearing *hijabs* is not uncommon now, but Muslims who wear them are mostly of the younger generation.

In the Upper South, none of the female interviewees, Tasanee, Ning and Wean, wear *hijabs*. Tasanee, a single businesswoman in her late 40s, with short hair, explains why she chooses not to wear the *hijab*:

> "I'd like to feel flexible and international. In religious rites I wear the *hijab*. I feel indifference to wearing *hijab*s, I lay more stress on being righteous and being faithful in Islam."

Ning, a forensic scientist in her late 30s, also feels that wearing *hijabs* is not required in everyday life. She says: "I don't think it's needed. It is difficult to work while wearing a *hijab*. I just wear modest clothes. But when I attend ceremonies, I wear it."

Waen, an NGO worker in her late 20s, does not wear *hijabs* every day, but sometimes for work purposes, as lately she has had to work closely with the Muslim community.

> "Wearing *hijab*s doesn't make me feel flexible (to move and to work actively). My job is quite dynamic. If I need cooperation from a Buddhist community, wearing *hijab*s can burden me. If I need to go to a Muslim community, I will wear *hijab*s as it can help me get cooperation from people in the community, and because most Muslims in the community wear *hijab*s."

Though Waen perceives that most female Muslims in the community wear *hijabs*, the majority of female Muslim interviewees do not, perhaps because of differences in social

status, professions and family expectations. In Bangkok, <u>Weerawan</u>, a judge, and <u>Rose</u>, a young businesswoman, wear *hijab*s only for religious ceremonies.

In the Northeast, two of the woman interviewees wear *hijabs*. <u>Aisha,</u> an NGO worker originally from the Lower South who graduated from a university in Bangkok, has worn *hijabs* since she was nine years old. <u>Fatima,</u> another NGO worker, is Muslim by marriage to an *imam.* She has always been wearing *hijabs* since she has converted to Islam. Every woman professional interviewee in the Lower South wears *hijabs*, like most other *muslimahs* (Muslim women) in the region.

Wearing *hijabs* may have more than one function. It can reflect inner religious piousness; at the same time it shows surrounding society their commitment to the norm. Put simply, it has two meanings, religious and social. In both, it shows good qualities of practising Muslim women: piety and loyalty to the Muslim community.

I had a conversation with the wife of my host in the Upper South. Now aged 30, she has been a *muallaf* (Muslim by marriage) for ten years. She always wears *hijab*s, while her husband's sisters, who are Muslim-born, do not. She says:

> "I wear *hijabs* when I go out, so my husband's family do not have to worry what I'm doing. They might be afraid that I would go back to eating pork or paying respect to Buddha."

<u>Ning</u> in the Upper South, a Muslim by birth who does not wear *hijabs,* reveals how *hijabs* work in inter-religious married couples. She says: "If a Muslim man wants to marry a non-Muslim woman, she has to become Muslim: wearing *hijabs* and performing *nmaz* (prayer)."

It is striking that a *muallaf* may be expected to wear *hijab*s more than born Muslims. This is justifiable in so far as the *hijabs* are worn to remind the new *muslimah* and her new Muslim community of her Muslimness. However, it is also common in other different places and times that a *mulluf* do not wear them. <u>Penporn</u>, a businesswoman in her 60s, has been married for 30 years to a Muslim Thai Chinese-Haw businessman in Chiang Mai. They are both Chinese-haw, but her husband was born to a Muslim family, while she was not. In those days, there was no pressure on her to wear *hijabs* when she converted.

Indeed, others who are significant to the female interviewees affect their practice on wearing *hijabs*. Outside the Lower South most Muslim women interviewees do not wear *hijab*s every day, justifying this by saying that it is not a tradition of Muslims in many areas, such as in the

North and Bangkok. In the Upper South, even though ordinary Muslim women wear *hijab*s as a common practice, the interviewees identify themselves as professionals, such that wearing *hijab*s does not suit them. Wean is an NGO worker whose job requires cooperation from the Buddhist community. Tasanee is a businesswoman who contacts diverse clients and would like to be regarded as "international". Waen and Tasanee are both single. Ning is a government scientist whose work makes wearing head-covering impractical and her colleagues do not expect her to do so. Her husband, also a government officer, prefers Ning to follow the policy of her office. Neither of their families put pressure on them to wear *hijab*s.

Moreover, the wives of most male interviewees outside the southern provinces do not wear *hijab*s, even though some of them might prefer their wives and daughters to do so. Male interviewees in the North and the centre adopt opinions in favours of their wives, who do not wear *hijab*s. They reason that Muslims in many countries, including Thailand, do not have the custom of wearing *hijab*s. Vincent, a scientist in Bangkok who has Jawa origins, explains:

> "Patterns of wearing *hijab*s are different in each country. Muslims in many countries do not wear *hijab*s. My wife and my daughter do not wear *hijab*s. A magazine once wanted to publish photos of our family. They asked if we wanted to put *hijab*s on. We said no because we would not seek to deceive other people. "

Davudi, a member of an Islamic committee in the North, sees that wearing *hijab*s is now a fashion trend:

> "Formerly we Muslims here didn't need to wear *hijab*s. Now a lot of women wearing *hijab*s, sometimes not correctly. It does not look good when they wear *hijab*s with short sleeve shirts or excessively tight clothes. Wearing modest clothes without *hijab*s is fine to me. I think not all of them (who wear *hijab*s) know the meaning of *hijab*s. They just put it on and it has become fashionable now"

Some others, whose wives do not wear *hijab*s, refer to them as an "external element" which is not as important as the "internal quality". Max, a doctor in Nonthaburi whose wife does not wear *hijab*s, says:

> "Wearing *hijab*s is good, but not necessary. It would be lovely if my daughters- if I had any- wore *hijab*s. However, if that obstructed her in her career, such as entering a medical school, she would not have to wear them. I don't take wearing *hijab*s serious. *Hijab*s do not guarantee your goodness. There is a woman wearing *hijab*s who never pays lent money back. I stress wearing *hijab*s at heart more."

In contrast, in the Upper South, most married male interviewees encourage their wives and daughters to wear *hijab*s. Their wives are housewives or economically dependent, while the female interviewees in the Upper South, who do not wear *hijab*s, are professionals and in some cases single. To support their daughters to wear *hijab*s, some interviewees opt not to put children the schools not accepting this practice. Some of such schools are academically well-known public schools. This phenomenon is more common among interviewees in the Upper South than in the North or Centre. Awudud, a university lecturer in the Upper South, shows sympathy to his daughter insisting on wearing the *hijab* even though her first choice of school did not allow her to do so. She sacrificed her plan to study in a very reputable school even though she passed the entrance exam. Eventually, they both agreed on applying another school instead. Imam Cha, living in the same province, names some such schools; for him, "it is pointless to be a part of a good school which does not understand Muslims."

In the Lower South, all women professional interviewees wear *hijabs*. Moreover, interviews with the male interviewees there reflect more clearly that wearing *hijabs* has social functions. Ben and Samart, Malay-speaking scientists in Pattani, claim that wearing *hijabs* is now important for Muslim women in the southernmost provinces because Muslim men tend not to propose marriage to unveiled women: "Nowadays if Muslim women want to be married, they have to wear *hijab*s."

Pradya, a young Malay-speaking journalist, has a neutral opinion towards the issue. However, he realizes that wearing *hijab*s has now become necessary:

> "It is ok that nowadays Muslim women have to wear *hijab*s. But in real life, at work, men and women work together. It is necessary that Muslims know how different sexes interact with each other."

The fact that wearing *hijabs* is "nowadays" necessary in the Lower South highlights that the significance of wearing *hijabs* has changed over time, perhaps resulting from the flow of Islamic movements promoting wearing *hijabs* throughout the country (Marddent 2009). In general contexts outside the Lower South, wearing *hijabs* might symbolize the piety of the wearers since there is less social pressure or benefit in doing so. In contrast, wearing *hijabs* in the Lower South may be reinforced by stricter social norms. Regardless of mentioning the religious significance of wearing *hijabs*, many male professionals feels that social sanctions for not practicing this are crucial. Ben and Samart reports that at present Muslim men in their area will not propose to women without *hijabs*. Moreover, Ben reveals that his wife did not

wear *hijabs* before, when she lived in Phuket, because it is common not to do so there. This signifies that his wife might have started wearing *hijabs* because most others do.

Therefore, wearing *hijabs* in this region is more important than in the other areas. It might not guarantee piety, but women need to wear them at least to show social meanings. As a Quranic verse says: "no compulsion in religion", now Muslim women in the Lower South are socially constrained to wear *hijabs*; otherwise no one asks for their hand in marriage. This might provoke reconsideration of whether wearing *hijab*s is an absolute religious duty for Muslim women.

7.3 <u>Selecting spouses: differences that matter</u>

While Thailand is a non-Muslim country where the marriage of couples from different religious backgrounds is acceptable, most interviewees married partners from a Muslim background. One converted to marry an *imam*, and another married a Buddhist man. It should be noted that most interviewees are over 40, and therefore marriage patterns among the younger generation of Muslims might vary from the norm expressed in the sample. The Muslim professional married to a Buddhist man is in her 30s. Superficially, the reasons why marriage to non-Muslims should be avoided in some Muslim professionals' perspectives might be that they perceive differences in gender-related practices and religious customs between non-Muslims and Muslims in Thai society.[48] More deeply, those interviewees who disagree with inter-religious marriage, foresee how religious differences can cause family problems. For this, inter-religious marriage and inter-sectarian marriage fall in to the same situation. Marriage to a Buddhist or a Shiite Muslim can jeopardize family health, according to those Muslim interviewees who do not support any inter-marriage. This section addresses the perceived differences of gender-related practices and religious customs between non-Muslims and Muslims and between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, the majority and minority Muslim groups in Thailand, respectively. Attitudes towards inter-religious and inter-sectarian marriage are also analyzed.

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[48] As most interviewees reflect on their own generation and mostly around themselves, they tend to assert that Muslims preserve chastity more than people of other faiths. Only few refer to the current situations where young Muslims dress fashionably, and openly hold the hands of their girlfriends and boyfriends, just like their non-Muslim peers. There are certainly concerns about Muslim sexual conduct among Muslim youth (Marddent 2009).

Most Muslim professional interviewees perceive the difference in the sex-related practices of Muslims and other Thais in wider society. The following opinions are expressed by Muslim interviewees with liberal outlooks. Rose, a businesswoman in her 30s who graduated from the U.S., is married to a student friend from a Buddhist background. She presents a clear division between Muslim and non-Muslim women from her experience:

> "On the street we can see women wearing excessively short skirts. It has now become the norm in general that people live together (before and without marrying), but I think Muslims still keep their virginity. That is also the difference between me and my friends. When I was in America, my boyfriend and I did not have premarital sexual relations, as others did."

Most interviewees, when talking about the current sexual norms and discipline of Thais in general, share the same idea that Muslim women are more reserved than their non-Muslim counterparts, though they are aware of a trend for Muslim women to also have less strict discipline than in the past. They have witnessed Muslim young couples holding hands or not dressing modestly. However, compared to non-Muslims in general, Muslim women are considered more sexually disciplined. Bangsan, a hotel owner who graduated in India and the US, gives an overview picture of Thai men from his direct experience:

> "Attitudes toward sexuality between Muslim and non-Muslim Thai people are very different. Looking at my friends, non-Muslim, they go to brothels. They have innumerable relationships. This is banned by Islam. Living together is also very restricted. If parents know, the couple have to *nigah* (marry)."

In principle, Muslim appropriate sexual conduct is different from that of other Thais in wider society, according to religious leaders, such as Kashmir, a member of a mosque committee and of a provincial Islamic committee:

> "Muslim males and females have to respect each other. The way they dress has to be proper, not only women but also men. That is different from other non-Muslims. Muslims also have to be aware of the meetings with members of the opposite sex whom they would be eligible to marry. We have to be careful about travelling alone. Sexual ethics are crucial for Muslims."

Due to the difference in sexual norms, the marriage of a couple from two different backgrounds might be jeopardized. Pim, a lecturer in the Lower South, reports family problems of inter-religious marriages:

> "I found that many couples, Muslim women married to Buddhist or Christian men… collapsed; Muslim men married to Buddhist women were not happy, always paranoid.

Because their wives did not wear *hijab*s, the husbands doubted if the wives had other men. Muslim women do not give men a wink. We preserve the honour of our husbands."

In theory, Muslim men and women can marry from different religions if their partners are willing to convert to Islam. However, as illustrated by <u>Pim</u>, mutual understanding at the beginning of marriage may change later because of different world views. Seven interviewees do not support Muslims marrying non-Muslims, even if the latter convert. These interviewees live in different parts of Thailand. <u>Max,</u> another interviewee who does not support the marriage of people from different religious backgrounds, takes the view that differences in sexual norms might evoke family problems. <u>Max</u> is a doctor in Nonthaburi. He says:

"According to Islam, Muslims cannot touch or even look at persons of the opposite sex. This is different from others in Thai society. The boundary between male and female now remains clearer among Muslims than others, I can tell. If couples are too different, they can adjust, but it may be a temporary understanding. "

The overall concern is that the Muslimness of converted Muslims tends to be reversible. A wide range of *haram* practices are embedded in non-Muslim Thai society, potentially jeopardizing inter-religious marriage. <u>Buncha,</u> an NGO worker in the Northeast, stresses: "For Muslims, it is difficult to live life with a spouse who has a different religious background. The understanding of each other cannot last long." <u>Max,</u> the doctor in Nonthaburi, mentions that apart from different sexual norms, different diets can cause significant difficulties:

"Thinking about adjustment, if someone eats pork for all his/her life, how can he/she change? They might be patient at the beginning, but not long term."

While eating pork is very typical in wider Thai society, it is *haram* for Muslims. It is questioned whether the converted Muslims could permanently stop eating pork and other non-*halal* meat, particularly when they are surrounded by people consuming them. Another *haram* practice mentioned relates to Buddhism. If individuals were brought up in the faith and taught to pay respect to monks and Buddha, how can they easily give that up? <u>Pim</u>, the lecturer in Pattani, outlines the practice considered *shirk* (putting someone or something in the place of God): "(I know) a Muslim man married to a Buddhist lady. At first she was good, but she eventually paid respect to monks."

Even though the wider Thai society accepts marriage of couples from different religious backgrounds, most Muslim interviewees do not prefer it, while still acceptable. The

supporting interviewees refer to one strict condition: the non-Muslim party must first become Muslim. To publically show their conversion, both sexes stop using the other religion's symbols, women might wear *hijabs* and men are required to be circumcised.[49] Moreover, Muslims who bring partners from other religious backgrounds have to bear the responsibility for their spouses as new Muslims. Bangsan, a hotel owner in Bangkok, is one out of many interviewees who support inter-religious marriage with a significant amount of anxiety. He also tries to convey that Muslims should give priority to persons from a Muslim background when choosing mates:

> "Islam supports Muslims to marry Muslim as the first priority. From my experiences, Muslim men who marry women from another religion often have a shorter life span. In some cases, the wives bring the dead body of the husband to burn (instead of being buried in the Islamic way). However, it is possible that Muslims marry mates from other religions. In that case, they have to learn about Islam. I actually supported a few couples of employees here to have Islamic orientation at the mosque, as they are from different religions."

Very few interviewees completely support inter-religious marriages. Udom, Alee and Julong favour inter-religious marriage for different reasons. However, they all have wives from a Muslim background. Interestingly, some interviewees take inter-religious marriage to be a personal affair, while others see it as a religious issue. Udom, a businessman in Bangkok, takes the view that religion should not be a barrier to marriage. He says: "For me, marriage is personal affair. There should not be religious rules involved." Alee, a lecturer in Chiang Mai, compares inter-religious marriage to intra-religious marriage, in that most couples have to adjust to each other; Muslims can have different orientations. He explains:

> "There is a teaching on marriage that we should consider the religious understandings and practices of our prospective spouse. Those among Muslims can vary. Whatever they are, Buddhist, Jewish or Muslim, when they live with another as a couple, they need to adjust to each other. We can marry across the religions - and not only men. Muslim and Jewish women can also do so, but mostly the teachings lay the stress on men."

Julong, an *imam* in Nonthaburi, mentions the religious reward of converting someone to the Islamic faith through inter-religious marriage.

> "Inter-religious marriage can occur. If the couples are from different religions, they will need to learn about Islam. However, the socializing process cannot happen unless

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[49] Most Thai baby boys have been circumcised at birth due to prevailing medical practices.

the family sanctions the relationship. Actually, the parents should be pleased that they get a new member and support them, to be sure they are on the right track."

Overall, few of the above interviewees willingly support inter-religious marriage, with most reflecting their anxiety rather than encouragement. However, this does not represent the current trend of Muslims in general, as Kirsch says:

"Nowadays it is difficult for Muslims to refrain from inter-religious marriage, unless they are really religious."[50]

According to most interviewees "marriage to another religion" is unacceptable at all. Therefore, if Muslims select mates from other religious backgrounds, they have to convert them to Islam. While most interviewees stress that the differences in gender-related norms and religious customs are reasons why Muslims should refrain from inter-religious marriage, only a few point to a profound reason: the fear of the loss of the Muslim family chain. Kitti, an Islamic teacher in the Upper South, proposes: "The reason why al-Qur'an tells us to marry Muslims is to preserve our race and clan."

The fact that most interviewees do not want their child to be converted to another religious custom implies agreement with Kitti. This makes inter-sectarian marriage even less practicable than inter-religious marriage because it is hardly likely that one can convert to the other. 19 interviewees strongly disagree with inter-sectarian partnerships, while only seven strongly disagree with the inter-religious marriage.

Even though none of the interviewees claim that al-Qur'an prohibits marriage between Shiites and Sunnis, whether this is acceptable is debatable. Uthman, a Malay-speaking radio programmer in the Lower South, comments that it should not be practicable. He states:

"In principle and traditionally, Muslims shouldn't marry across sects. We can see some married couples of Sunni and Shiite Muslims, but they are not accepted. Sunni and Shiite Muslims have different basic principles; principles of faith are different. So, Muslims from two sects shouldn't be husbands and wives."

Some who disagree with inter-sectarian marriage give examples of different practices between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. Nong, a young businesswoman in Chiang Mai explains:

"When they (Shiite Muslims) pray, they don't speak out the name of the Prophet as if they do not respect Him. They have their own al-Qur'an. They respect Ali and *imam* Khomeini."

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[50] This represents his context. Where he lives, he is surrounded by non-Muslim population. Wearing *hijab*s for female converts is actually not compulsory and there is even less pressure to wear them in the central part of Thailand.

Nong implies that Shiites respect the Prophet at a lower level than Sunnis do, while giving more importance to other iconic *imams* in the past. Moreover, she claims that Muslim Shiites have a separate al-Qur'an, which, although untrue, represents the negative feeling of a Sunni against Shiites so that persons from two sects should refrain from marrying. If her claim is inaccurate, it shows that knowledge of Shiite Muslims, even within the Muslim community, is poor, and perhaps due to the very small population of Shiite Muslims in Thailand.

Bangsan, a hotel owner in Bangkok, has a negative impression of the practice of "temporary marriage" by Iranian friends when he studied in the US. It bothers him when considering whether Sunni Muslims like him should marry Shiite Muslims. He expresses anxiety when asked if he would allow his daughter to marry a Shiite man: "I worry. I would have to tell my daughter that he (her husband in the future) has to convert to be like us."

Apart from the gender-related practices and customs, from the perspective of some Sunni interviewees, differences between Sunnis and Shiites are as huge as with an entirely different religion. Golan, a lecturer in the Upper South, states: "If individuals are absolute Shiites, it is like they have another faith. They must convert first if they want to marry with Sunni Muslims."

Most of the 19 interviewees disagreeing with inter-sectarian marriage do not state that it violates Islamic principles. Instead, they underline that families of the two parties would not accept it. Julong, an *imam* in Nonthaburi, clearly states that it is not subject to Islamic prohibition; however: "They can't marry because the families of the different sides will not accept each other." Kom, a government officer in the Upper South, puts it straightforwardly that their surrounding community is the reason why Shiite and Sunni Muslims should not marry: "There will be social sanctions for the couple. They can't marry. Even mosques, there are separate mosques for Sunnis and Shiites."

Suggestions that Shiite Muslims have to convert to be Sunni before marriage come from Sunni interviewees. However, in practice, the problem is that they both already identify themselves as Muslim; therefore, it is hard to imagine that a Shiite Muslim will convert. Tassanee, a businesswoman in the Upper South, raises this issue:

> "If they are something else, such as Buddhist, they can become Muslim, but since Shiites are also Muslim I don't get how they would convert. So, how can they marry?"

There are vast differences between the two sects perceived by the Sunni interviewees who do not agree with inter-sectarian marriage. In contrast, Tan, one of the two Shiite interviewees, out of the total of 50, states that Shiites and Sunnis can marry, and suggests that there are misunderstandings regarding Shia and inter-sectarian marriage. He says:

> "In the past Muslims believed that Sunnis and Shiites cannot marry due to the different principles of faith. Now it is widely known that Muslims from two sects can marry; the principle of marriage is separate from the principle of faith."

Some other interviewees, who agree with inter-sectarian marriage, do not perceive vast differences between Sunnis and Shiites. Tom, an economist in Bangkok, states:

> "There is no restriction for Shiites and Sunnis to marry. Even Christians and Jews can marry Muslims. In this case, conversion is not necessary because Christians and Jews are also People of the Book sharing the same god. As to the temporary marriage, Shiites applied it when there were wars and men had to travel for a long time."

There might be misunderstandings about temporary marriage practised by Shiites. While Tom, the economist, conveys that it was a practice in the past, others believe it is still practiced by Shiite Muslims. Tan, a Shiite himself, says that a Shiite man can propose a temporary marriage under certain conditions: to a divorced woman or one who does not believe in the same God, to convince her to believe in the same God. In the latter case, there is a teaching that People of the Book, e.g. Christians and Jews, are construed as believing in the same God.

Even though Tan, the Shiite interviewee, expressed that now Muslims know more about that inter-sectarian marriage is practicable, 19 from 50 interviewees do not think it is acceptable. This proportion is not small. It might be that myths or misunderstandings play a negative role to prevent Sunnis, the majority of Muslims, to join their family with Shiites, the minority. It seems the Muslim community has to clarify the differences between the faith principles of Sunnis and Shiites, and the rules governing temporary marriage. Wider Thai society should also contribute to this because some Sunnis might already have prejudices, and the Shiite population in Thailand is very small at about 1 to 2 per cent of the Muslim population (Gilquin 2005, 19). If the clarification suggests that Sunnis and Shiites are not essentially different, social sanctions to inter-sectarian marriage might disappear.

Muslims in a non-Muslim country like Thailand can face difficulties seeking a Muslim spouse. They do not have substantial alternatives due to the limited Muslim population.

Another option is to marry a non-Muslim as long as he or she can convert to Islam. In choosing a partner from the other Islamic sect, Muslim individuals may by comparison face greater obstruction than with other choices. With this in mind, it would appear that the issue is less to do with non-Muslim society, and more to do with internal Muslim concerns. Muslim society itself might need to encourage inter-sectarian dialogue if it seeks to widen opportunities of marriage among Muslim individuals.

7.4 <u>Conclusion</u>

Most interviewees, being Muslim in a non-Muslim country, work in non-Muslim workplaces, including governmental, where *halal* food provision is limited. They can cope because *halal* food does not only refer to food with the *halal* sign, and their religion gives opportunities for them to consider what to eat. Difficulties happen when they are persuaded to eat food they are not sure is *halal*. They respond differently. In rare cases, they tell the host straightaway what meat Muslims can eat. Some choose to eat only the parts of the meal that are "permissible." Using their own judgements, some eat the meat provided selectively. To do this, they have different ways to interpret which food is *halal*. Similarly, entertaining and socialization among colleagues which involve *haram* elements, such as alcohol, is common in non-Muslim society. Some respond to this more strictly than others. Whatever way they choose affects their relationships with colleagues, which they accept because they have different ways to justify their choice. <u>Max</u> is satisfied with never mixing with colleagues at night. <u>Udom</u> is happy to go out but not to drink alcohol. <u>Yoth</u> chooses to progress slowly at work while preserving his Muslim identity.

Choosing whether or not to wear *hijabs*, in daily life or in only Muslim ceremonies, depends on personal preference and social constraints. While most interviewees outside the Lower South do not wear *hijabs* on an everyday basis, they do so for attending social or religious ceremonies. There are certainly persons who do not wear them on any occasion. For example, <u>Vincent</u> insists that his wife and daughter do not need to wear them to appear on the media as they do not use them in real life. This means decisions to wear *hijabs* closely relate to society and the family surrounding women. Since there is no outside reinforcement, decisions to wear *hijab*s can be considered as determined by their piety. In the Lower South, the greater chance to get married might motivate women to wear *hijabs*. In this case the behaviour and meaning of wearing *hijabs* greatly relate to men in the society. Therefore,

wearing *hijabs* in non-Muslim society might be a good indicator in relation to piety whereas doing so in Muslim society can have more social significance.

As to marriage patterns, there is a principle suggesting Muslims should give priority to fellow Muslims when choosing a spouse. However, as Thailand is non-Muslim, inter-religious marriage is common on condition that non-Muslim partners convert to Islam. Even so, it can be unacceptable from some perspectives. Having said that, most interviewees accept inter-religious marriage, but they choose Muslim spouses for themselves. Marriage between Shiite and Sunni Muslims can be problematic. As most interviewees are Sunni, the majority do not agree to marry Shiite Muslims, with fewer construing Shiite Muslims in the same way as Sunnis. When speaking of conversion to Islam, there is very little chance that Shiite Muslims would agree to this. However, this issue could be resolved in the future if more Muslims in Thailand considered that there is no need for Shiite Muslims to convert in order to marry Sunni Muslims.

Overall, this chapter shows that religious conduct of Muslim professionals relates to their different environments. Muslims in Muslim and non-Muslim society might adopt different patterns of practices for justifiable reasons. Eating *halal* food, wearing *hijabs* and choosing Muslim spouses are important to practising Muslims, albeit involving different meanings and negotiations. Those who opt not to do so are in most cases still accepted as Muslims. In the Lower South, omitting to do so could well attract some questions as the majority are committed to these patterns of practices. Seemingly, societies outside the Lower South provide more flexible conditions for Muslims to show their "piety". Considering the concept of multiculturalism at the national level, we might see that practicing Islam is more visible in some places, namely the Lower South, than others. This might signify importance of Thai identity overtaking others outside the Lower South. In a positive way, this allows Thai Muslim citizens to alternate between integrating themselves to majority identity and preserving Muslim identity. At an individual level, we can also see a lack of sensitivity affecting practising Muslims. Some secularised persons in non-Muslim society tend to marginalize religion from the public sphere; for example hosts who are careless about Islamic traditions of eating and drinking. In contrast, living in a Muslim dominant society like the Lower South could lead to Muslims' disadvantage for the opposite reason, as the society there tends to interfere in genuine religious observances. Interviews regarding *hijabs* from Ben and Samart are the best evidence.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Studying the Muslim minority through Muslim professionals' perspectives throughout Thailand beyond the Lower south of Thailand, this dissertation seeks to understand a) how Muslim professionals see the relationships between Islamic representatives and the Thai state, in other words, whether they play liberating or integrating roles, b) their opinions on the roles of mosques and Islamic education and c) relationships between the wider society and religious conduct of Muslim professionals. Differences are found between Muslim professionals inside and outside the Lower South in some of the above respects.

Considering multiculturalism in Thailand, given that it accommodates different identities, we might see that the Thai state supports the existence of Muslim identity by promulgating the 1945 Royal Patronage of Islam Decree, which appointed the position of head of the Muslim community just as Ishii (1994) states that this Act resembles the Buddhist Sangha Administrative Act, and thus is not effective, Muslim professionals in this study tend to have similar opinions. According to Ishii, the Act was meant to keep religious organizations in order and to monitor them. This implies that the Act's goal is to integrate rather than to liberate religion and that the state supports Muslim identity aligning itself with the national identity. Muslim interviewees see it as part of the democratization process in which election procedures are widely applied. The only problem is that the electoral process results in ineffectiveness caused by rivalries among cliques. In such circumstances, most Muslim professionals still believe that elections will continue as the mode to appointment of members of Islamic committees at every level. However, the principle of legal pluralism might be applicable here: a democracy like Thailand could issue prospective laws relating to Muslim minorities to serve their demands and benefits. Having said that, Muslim professionals want their Islamic representatives only to perform exclusive roles to some extent. Most prefer them to represent the demands of Muslim communities, in particular ordinary Muslims. Muslim professionals in the Lower South do not demand to have the head of the Muslim communityseparate from the existing one. This indicates their wish for their representatives to work on improvements within the Thai administrative system so that they remain sharing a Thai identity with the rest of the country. Therefore, when Muslim interviewees in the Lower South make the significant suggestion, unusual however for Muslim fellow counterparts, of establishing *shuras* in the institution of *Chularajmontri*, it is important that dialogue and negotiation proceed.

Given that the Islamic representative bodies of Thailand are structured under government administration, it might be considered as preventing them from paying positive contributions. Thai centralization of Islam has a dual impact on the Muslim community: supportive and administrative. The government allocates budgets to administer the Islamic representative bodies. The Muslim community receives cooperation from the state, while to some extent sacrificing its independence. However, this is a common trend in a non-Muslim country. For example, the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore is an official representative of Islam, established by the 1968 Administration of Muslim Law Act, with similar functions to that in Thailand (MUIS 2009). The difference is that its members obtain their positions by selection processes, not elections as in the Thai case. Some other non-Muslim countries do not recognize official Islamic representatives. There was no Islamic representative system in the Philippines until 1990 when the first set of Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao officials started to function (ARMM 2012).

In the Thai case, because the Islamic representative bodies are an extension of government, it seems that they cannot represent Muslims as a whole community. However, the interviewees do not see this as the result of governmental efforts to suppress them. This might be because the election procedures required for the recruitment have developed alongside the "democratic trend" in the country. Moreover, the outlook of the present representative bodies is much better than formerly, showing progress in this respect. During the absolute monarchist era (from the 1600s until the democratic revolution in 1932), the *Chularajmontris* (Shaykhul Islam) were always Persian Shiites, who formed a minority of the Muslim population. They worked for kings as nobles and heads of the Muslim community in Thailand. After the revolution, even though the position has been occupied by Sunnis, the majority Muslim group, they have been inhabitants of the central region with links to governmental power. The present *Chularajmontri* is the first southern Muslim to be appointed to this position, which signifies that the power is not necessarily at the centre. During the 2009 fieldwork most interviewees did not imagine that a Muslim from the South would occupy this position; they thought the candidate from Bangkok would win. Indeed, it is still considered at odds that a Muslim from the Lower South, which makes up the majority of the Muslim population, should occupy this position. However, given that this position was always occupied by Muslims in the centre, this marks impressive.

From time to time, despite the existence of the Islamic representative bodies, southernmost unrest has recurred. As those Islamic representatives have not been considered capable to

instil calm, local civil society organizations have had to step forward. Since the situations after the 2004 outbreak of violence have not improved, local civil society organizations have proposed an approach to political participation to the Lower South Muslim society. They have held conferences and seminars on southern autonomy, hoping to attract ordinary Muslims in wider society to pay more attention to local governance, and since 2009 have tried to propose models of self-governance. Their principles are very similar to the famous seven demands raised in 1945 by Haji Sulong before he died. Indeed, these movements have been viewed as liberal fronts relating to independence of the region. However, in contrast to the superficial outlook, these movements have worked closely with central academic institutions to ensure the proposals have met constitutional principles, especially pledging that no separation from Thailand is envisaged. . Actually, these organizations try to accommodate multiculturalism, in which case promoting Muslim identity and mobilizing positive participation from the Muslim minority in accordance with the conditions of the constitution of the country, while Islamic representative bodies and the government fail to do so. Information from the interviews seen in Chapter 5 shows a significant number of interviewees in the Lower South who do not agree with these movements, because the proposals have connotations of irredentism. However, the fact that separatists themselves do not support these projects leads to the conclusion that these organizations support national integration in which multiculturalism is substantially promoted. In sum, from Muslim professionals' perspectives Thailand provides fair opportunities for the Muslim minority to integrate with the dominant identity. Even so, by stressing their minority identity, as in the activities of the civil society organizations in the Lower South, Muslims face a prolonged process of negotiation.

As Islamic education has been viewed as relating to the unrest in the area, government officials and some Muslim interviewees outside the southernmost region have envisaged that it should instil calm into the area. Putting the idea into practice, the government issued an Islamic studies curriculum to use in state schools, and later developed such a curriculum to be more Islamically intensive in order to compete with private schools teaching Islam. However, Muslim interviewees in the Lower South, who are not government officials, do not think that the government should interfere in the Islamic education by establishing public schools teaching Islam. Private schools teaching Islam should be improved or improve themselves in their aim for academic excellence, as should non-Islamic schools. Not seeing a direct link between Islamic education and the attacks, Muslim professionals in the Lower South foresee

opportunities for Muslims in the international labour market as they are more competent in English and Arabic. If a moderate multicultural society gives people the choice, either to integrate themselves with the dominant system or to occupy different identities, the interviewees in the Lower South might prefer a different identity, which neither runs counter to their national identity nor preserves their traditional Islamic identity. For example, most interviewees in the Lower South would like to support their children to study abroad at secondary and higher levels. This echoes the trend of Muslim professionals in other parts of Thailand, who prioritize international employment opportunity relating to education. As the interviewees outside the Lower South do not see Islamic education in their area linked to national security or integration, they construe there are such links in the Lower South.

Mosques, as institutions with the clearest Islamic identity, are expected by Muslim professionals to perform communal roles more extensively while communities throughout the country are weak. Within this hope, Muslim interviewees inside and beyond the southernmost area stress different directions. Those inside think mosques will function capably as community centres in cooperation with local administrative organizations. This also implies that the latter should delegate some power and budgets to the former. Thus, this seems to indicate that some Muslims in southern border provinces would like to free mosques from obligations with administrative organizations while others expect to see more cooperation. Outside the Lower South, they envisage mosques providing social services to surrounding communities, including non-Muslim ones. This progressive expectation eliminates the images of Muslims as an inferior or oppressed minority. Indeed, they have the potential to lead mosques as community centres inclusive to non-Muslims because of suggested roles of mosques to be secular. In the end, Muslims both inside and outside the Lower South expect to see the combination of secular and religious services at mosques. This might be due to the nature of Islam, which does not distinguish between secular and religious elements, or the reverse trend of secularization. Regardless of any reason, this model is worth to putting into efect because it symbolizes the strength of both Muslim and non-Muslim communities, for the former, to initiate it, and for the latter, to accept it. This notion indicates that Muslim interviewees expect mosques to retain Islamic roles while also preforming inclusive community roles which engage non-Muslims.

Being Muslim in Thailand can be difficult at times as some interviewees have to sacrifice either their religious identity or secular progress. Due to the lack of sensitivity of certain non-Muslims, some Muslim professionals are encouraged to join in restricted activities, such as

drinking alcohol. In order to preserve their Muslim identity, some interviewees fall behind at work while some women interviewees construe that wearing *hijabs* obstructs job opportunities. However, the wider picture reflects that they have choices. Not surprisingly, patterns of three key behaviours, choosing halal food and drink, wearing *hijabs* and selecting spouses, among interviewees in the Lower South are not wide-ranging.

Analysing *halal* food behaviour, Chapter 7 in this dissertation focuses on interactions between Muslim interviewees and non-Muslim encounters such as eating food in a non-Muslim environment including governmental offices in the Lower South. When invited to have a meal, they are expected to eat a range of the food provided. In respond, if unsure whether the food is *halal*, most tend to refer to Islamic principles and avoid it. Their behaviour when choosing food in the market rather illustrates their flexibility and personal reasoning, with most interviewees not confining themselves to *halal*-signed food, but consuming food they personally consider *halal*.

Interviews with 12 Muslim women professionals from various regions of Thailand reveal a great diversity in the wearing of *hijabs* outside the southernmost provinces. However, wearing *hijabs* in the Lower South tends to reflect conformity to the dominant social norms. Outside the Lower South, the patterns of wearing *hijabs* range from a) not wearing them at all, b) wearing them in some social occasions when considered proper c) wearing them only in order to join traditional ceremonies and d) wearing them on daily basis. Remarkably, converted Muslims are seen as more committed to this due to social concerns they have borne. In the southernmost region, traditions and Islamic revival movements play a part in motivating Muslim women to wear *hijabs* daily. Social sanctions for not doing so can be as crucial as having no one to marry. In terms of multiculturalism, this phenomenon shows that the Lower South nurtures a significant feature of a different culture, Muslim, but Muslims who are different might find it difficult to show their identity. Similarly, secularists might be critical that the region provides such limited social space for people who do not share the faith, in this case believing in wearing *hijabs*.

As a minority, most interviewees prefer their children (and themselves) to marry fellow Muslims because they anticipate family problems from inter-marriage. They are deeply concerned about preserving Muslim family bonds and culture. This research shows different levels of acceptance of inter-religious and inter-sectarian marriages among Muslims inside and outside the Lower South. Surrounded by a majority of Muslims, those in the

southernmost provinces might encounter more questions than Muslims in other regions if they do not choose Muslim spouses. Whereas inter-religious marriage is very problematic to most, Muslims outside the Lower South show more relatively positive opinions towards it. It is possible that the latter Muslim interviewees in general tend not to strictly confine themselves to any traditional practice; thus marrying someone committed to another set of practices, namely of different religious sects, would not cause much worry.

With this dissertation finding significant differences between Muslims outside and inside the Lower South, the researcher is aware of the limitations in generalizing regional results. It is important to note that 50 research informants comprise 9 from the Lower South, 18 in the centre of the country, 6 in both North and Northeast, and 11 in the Upper South.

Further survey research into certain specific topics and involving larger samples would greatly benefit body of knowledge on Muslim minority. For example, a study comparing the opinions of Muslims living inside and outside the Lower South, with regard to acceptance of the autonomy proposal, would prove very useful. Moreover, a comparative study concerned with Islamic representative bodies within non-Muslim countries should explore in depth degrees of satisfaction within Muslim societies. This would indicate to what extent Muslim citizens in different countries, ideally, comparing Singapore and Thailand, are satisfied with their representative bodies. Such research might cover interviewees in a wider range of occupations than was possible in this dissertation, thus ensuring the diversity and representativeness of the samples. Moreover, this should be used as an analytic factor. In fact, it could affect religious opinions towards Islamic elements, such as marriage and education.

Focussing on the non-Muslim majority in Thailand, another useful study would fulfil the concept of multiculturalism because accommodating the minority requires consensus with the whole society. As illustrated in this dissertation, with Shiite Muslims appearing to be "the minority within the minority", intra-religious dialogues are essential, particularly if attempts are made to include them in wider Muslim society.

With more extensive exploration within both Muslim and non-Muslim societies in Thailand, multiculturalism, both in terms of integration and accommodation of the minority, could have been more applied leading to a more harmonious, peaceful society.

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