

## In the Name of Identity : Islam Melayu Patani

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### Abstract

This article places an emphasis on the “realities” of Muslims and Muslim society more than the debate about being Islamic or not. It focuses on ethnic diversity of the Malay Muslim which has been touched on lately given the complexity of the Muslim society. This article is an attempt to discuss diversity in Muslim society in SBPs in terms of its way of thinking, subculture in daily life, social status, anticipation of the future, and adaptation to cope with modernity as well as global transformation as a result of Western globalization and globalization in the Arab world of people of different ages and its dynamism. It is an effort to shed light on and respond to the questions already raised as to how the differences play any role in the relations that affect the incumbent violent situation. It is an attempt to argue that the phenomenal

differences can be attributed to both the past and present globalizations. Also, the differences are useful for discovering traces of social conflicts among the Malay Muslim. The article argued that such conflicts are so natural and intrinsic to the existing interconnectedness within the Muslim society, they have worryingly multiplied themselves and are compounded by the modern nation state mechanisms. As people are prompted to take side, it has led to mutual suspicion in the SBP Malay society. In particular, the credibility and legitimacy of local institutions has been eroded and it has contributed to the intensification the causes of violent conflicts in the area.

**Keywords:** Identity, Islam, Melayu, Patani

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## ในนามแห่งอัตลักษณ์ : อิสลาม มลายู ปาตานี

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### บทคัดย่อ

บทความชิ้นนี้ให้ความสำคัญกับ “ความเป็นจริง” ของมุสลิมและสังคมมุสลิม ยิ่งกว่าการอภิปรายถึงความเชื่อหรือมีใจ โดยมุ่งมองความหลากหลายทางชาติพันธุ์ของชาวมาเลย์มุสลิมใน “โลกมลายู” ที่มีผู้กล่าวถึงอยู่บ้างในช่วงหลังโดยพิจารณาความซับซ้อนของสังคมมุสลิม บทความนำเสนอการอภิปรายความหลากหลายในสังคมมุสลิมในจังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้ที่ปรากฏอยู่ทั้งในมิติด้านความคิด วัฒนธรรมปลุกย่อยในวิถีชีวิตประจำวัน สถานะทางสังคม ความคาดหวังถึงอนาคต และการปรับตัวเพื่อรับมือกับความทันสมัยรวมทั้งการเปลี่ยนแปลงระดับโลกที่มาจากโลกาภิวัตน์ที่เกิดขึ้นในโลกตะวันตกและโลกาภิวัตน์ที่เกิดจากโลกอาหรับ การรับมือของคนต่างวัยรวมทั้งพลวัตของปรากฏการณ์การรับมือกับความเปลี่ยนแปลงเองด้วย บทความ

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ริเริ่มจากการตอบคำถามที่มีผู้ถามอยู่บ้างแล้วว่า ความแตกต่างหลากหลายมีความหมายเช่นไรต่อสัมพันธภาพในสังคมท่ามกลางเหตุการณ์ความรุนแรงที่เกิดขึ้นในปัจจุบันโดยเสนอข้อถกเถียงว่าปรากฏการณ์ความแตกต่างหลากหลายที่เกิดขึ้นนั้นเป็นทั้งพลพวงจากกระแสโลกาภิวัตน์ทั้งในอดีตและปัจจุบัน ประการต่อมาคือความแตกต่างเหล่านี้เกิดขึ้นจากความขัดแย้งภายในสังคมมลายูมุสลิมเองด้วย บทความเสนอข้อถกเถียงว่า ความขัดแย้งนั้นเป็นธรรมชาติของสังคม หากแต่ความขัดแย้งได้ทวีความรุนแรงมากขึ้นเมื่อกลไกรัฐประชาชาติสมัยใหม่เข้าไปเกี่ยวข้อง เลือกข้างและก่อให้เกิดภาวะหวาดระแวงภายในสังคมมลายูในจังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้ โดยเฉพาะการทำให้สถาบันทางอำนาจในพื้นที่ถูกลดความน่าเชื่อถือและกร่อนเซาะความชอบธรรมลงยังผลให้กลายเป็นเงื่อนไขให้ความขัดแย้งรุนแรงในพื้นที่ทวีความตึงเครียดขึ้นอีก

**คำสำคัญ :** ปาตานี, มลายู, อัตลักษณ์, อิสลาม

## Introduction

In this article, an emphasis is placed on “realities” of Muslims and Muslim society more than a discussion on the Islamic identity. It focuses on ethnic diversity of the Malay Muslim in the “Malay world” which has been mentioned by people lately. Nevertheless, it is an intention of this article to discuss diversity in Muslim society in SBPs covering conceptual dimensions, subculture in daily life, social status, anticipation of the future, and adaptation to cope with modernity as well as global transformation as a result of Western globalization and globalization in the Arab world of people of different ages and its dynamism. It is an effort to shed light on and respond to the questions already raised as to how the differences play any role in the relations that affect the incumbent violent situation. It is an attempt to argue that the phenomenal differences can be attributed to both the past and present globalizations. Also, the differences are useful for discovering traces of social conflicts among the Malay Muslim, even though such conflicts are so natural and intrinsic to the existing interconnectedness within the Muslim society. Nevertheless, such conflicts have worryingly multiplied themselves as they are compounded by the modern nation state mechanisms. As people are prompted to take side, it has led to mutual suspicion in the SBP Malay society. In particular, the credibility and legitimacy of local institutions has been eroded and it has contributed to the intensification of the causes of violent conflicts in the area.

Structurally, the article starts from laying out the frameworks to analyze situations in SBPs hinging on the so called “Muslim Study” which focused mainly on religion individual follower and his/her society

(Chaiwat 1998, b). It attempts to explain the connection of three major issues concerning modernity including modernity and religion, modernity and identity and modern institution and diversity. An emphasis is exclusively placed on the context of Malay Muslim community in the three SBPs. Next is an attempt to shed light on diversity in the Malay world in both Malaysia and Indonesia. The third section deals with diversity in SBPs and how adaptation has been made to preserve local identity. And the last section deals with interesting examples of how Muslim intellectuals cope with modernity.

### **Muslims challenging modern world?**

A Muslim social science expert, Chaiwat Satha-anand, deems that the study of “religious truth” is different from the study of “social realities”, the latter of which is more diverse and subject to constant and marked changes. Essentially, the “object of study”, particularly in Muslim world, is carried out through the Islamic study which encompasses “theology”. Since the core of the study is Islam which hinges on faith of more than one billion people who take a vow to observe the religion. Under such a faith based framework, Islam is treated as sacred and inviolable, for example, the principle of unity with God as the ultimate being, etc. Therefore, certain issues cannot be violated or compromised. The approach to study social realities or “Muslim studies” is geared toward understanding Muslims in their social context. It emphasizes the pattern of behavior, belief, religious and social practice. The approach treats people and society as common man and not sacred. Therefore, it is possible to apply the theoretical concept and approach to attain full-fledged critique as it focuses on

studying the persons, i.e., Muslims and the society in which the people live as long as such a study is not contrary to the dominating doctrine of Islam (Chaiwat, 1998)

Therefore, Chaiwat deems that a methodology that can be applied to Muslim studies based on this radical social must treat "Muslims" as the center of the study and must pay attention to various dimensions of human beings at three levels including (1) attention given to Muslims at their personal level, (2) attention given to social context the factor of which can help to explain or help enhance understanding of behaviors or acts of a person and (3) attention given the most in-depth factor including cultural factor (Chaiwat, 1998, b)

The focus of this article is given to "groups of people in society" or the Malay Muslim in SBPs and the approach "Muslim studies" is applied since it encompasses all the differences without having to discuss what Islam is and who/which group can claim to be more Islamic than others, since such discussion has no whatsoever use for Muslim community. The article attempts to explore diversity in behavior, through and adaptation of both the new and old schools as far as they can be identified physically. It sheds light on factors that have given rise to the emerging diversity and dynamism of various groups of people in the area including the socio-economic structure and demographic change of local population as well as the structure of modern nation state including Thai state which has bearing on conflicts or cooperation between the affiliates of either the new or old school from the past until present. It delves deeper to explore at the cultural level and how it has enhanced or compromised legitimacy of the behaviors and acts of Malay Muslim in SBPs including the long lasting

cultural identity in the area and the influence of anti-Western concept and the restoration of Islam in SBPs as a result of Counter-Modernization<sup>1</sup> which has taken place worldwide. (Majid Tehranian, quoted in Chaiwat, 2006, c). This article starts from exploring various concerned factors and the structural phenomena and culture related to modernity. Three major issues are touched on including modernity and religion, modernity and identity and modern institution and diversity. Nevertheless, the section shall begin with exploring the nature of the social great transformation or modernity.

In conclusion, Chaiwat Satha-anand states that there are three factors that may enhance an effort to explain the characteristics or content of the emerging changes in modern world including the swiftness of change which refers to the fastness made possible by advancement of communication technology making the modern era markedly different from the past. Secondly, the scope of change that affects people has become much more vast than in the past. Third is the specific characteristics of modern institutions including the emergence of nation-state which has contributed to modernity in society (Chaiwat, 2006, c). In addition, modernity has led to internal change of people by uprooting them from their traditional bonds making them become individual, rational men and the belief in science (Giddens, 1991, 6). According to the author, there are at least three pertinent issues in the debate on modernity and its impact and bearing on Muslim world;

### **1. Modernity and Religion (Islam)**

One of the most outstanding and controversial emerging concepts



is the clash of civilizations by Samuel Huntington who states that the world is entering a stage at which the clash of civilization between the Western civilization, on one hand, and the rest of the world including the two ancient civilizations, i.e., Chinese civilization and Islam, on the other, is taking place (Huntington, 1993, 22-49). The problem of this approach lies with its dichotomy and dualism in which the world is exclusively split into two ways of thinking and political beliefs (i.e. liberalism vs communism). It was similar to the aftermath of the Cold War which saw one of the most profound cultural polarizations of the 20th century. It mainly shifted from asking which side you are taking (commonly asked during the Cold War) to the question “who you are?” and it makes it difficult to turn from foes to friends (Chaiwat, 2006, c). Worse, the clash of civilization prophecy has led to a symbolic interpretation which pitches Western civilization as the agent of modernity against the Chinese and Islamic civilizations which are virtually marginalized during the process. In addition, another similar attitude has been made, such as those by Ernest Gellner who deems that the existing Islam and the majority of its believers are no different to the way of Islam several hundred years ago; the resurgence of Islam or the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism was the way Islam had been since the beginning. But in fact, it was the culmination of various changes in the world of Islam whilst it was confronting changes and transformation in a modern era, particularly after the invasions of Western countries in the 18th-20th Centuries (Sirote, 2009). The two perspectives commonly view Muslim world and Islam/Muslims as idle and lacking dynamism or having no ability to adapt itself to the changing time.

Nevertheless, there is not just this monotonous view of Islam in modern world. A French historian and expert in European Muslim society, Olivier Roy, explains that "The more the terrorists appear fanatic, the less they have inherited from the traditional culture or any culture. An act to link Islam with insurgency is simply de-culturalization and is not the expression of the authentic culture" (Roy, 2005, 6-7). Though Roy's statement fails to categorically attest to during the course of entering modern world of Islam, the majority of the Muslims have to return to their roots hundreds of years ago or such changes do not reflect the authentic and ancient culture of Islam. But the remarks by Gellner and Roy on challenges and modernity show that there are different ways of approaching the world. It attests to the dynamism of Muslim world which is neither idle nor frozen. A few of Muslim academics tend to blame modernity for chiefly contributing to a decline of the Muslim world and how Muslim community has to struggle with modernity. For example, an attempt has been made to describe the resurgence of Islam worldwide as attributable to the awareness of the regression of the Muslim world and intimidation of Western imperialism (Esposito, quoted in Hafiz, 2007) and the nostalgia of the rise of the ancient Islamic kingdom during the 13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Such a perspective gives a look of Muslims as not being different from believers of other religions. It is projected as just a religion which has to struggle to cope with modern world's challenges. It invites questions that unless there were invasions from the West, the Muslims would have kept to stagnate and not adapt to the changes in Muslim society. But such notions have shortcomings, as in fact, the Islamic academia has always adapted itself and developed its curriculum constantly in order to cope

with challenges in the Muslim society.

An interesting social phenomenon which may answer the question regarding an attempt to modernize from within (the world of Muslim community) and may raise questions to the projections of social scientists in the past who used to foresee that given the modernization of society is human beings will become “rational beings” and belief in “science” would replace religions. But it turns out the world is spinning into an opposite direction given the “resurgence of religion” which has at least occurred in the Islam/Muslim community in the Middle East and Asia (Chaiwat, 2006, c).

Hafiz Salae (2007) systematically documents the resurgence of Islam and points out that a perceived decline in various aspects of the Muslim society, particularly the demise of the Ottoman Kingdom in 1924 and the perception that we have always been invaded by the cultural onslaught from the West, has triggered the aspiration to revive Islam with an aim to reform Muslim society and restore the way of Islam. In parallel to this was the Islamic Reformism, the members of which are Islamists who have had outstanding roles and influence as far as the most extensive changes of the Muslim society in the 20th century was concerned. Among them are the Muslim Brotherhood founded in Egypt in 1928 (Hafiz, 2007). During the 18th century, there were a number of Muslim scholars who have immensely contributed to the resurgence of Islam, particularly Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-87) who has revived the Islamic education with an emphasis on returning to the pure root of Islam including the Koran and the examples set out by Nabi Muhammad. He was instrumental in combating the twisting of religion tenet and has gained much

acceptance from the religious revivers. It has given rise to the so called term “the way of Wahabi” (Hafiz, 2007).

In general, the Islamists call for Muslim society to practice strictly according to the religious tenet and to use Islam as a standard for way of life at the individual level, in family and in society covering all aspects, economically and socially. The movement has thus been described as the manifestation of fundamentalism, which John L. Esposito describes that this Islamic fundamentalism has often been treated by the West as a discourse which is related to violence and terrorism (Esposito, quoted in Hafiz, 2007). Terms used by the West to describe such Muslim groups and movements including Islamic extremism, Islamic radicalism and fanaticism, Islamic terrorism, Political Islam, Islam fundamentalism, Islamic revivalism, Islamic reformism, Salafism, Islamic militant and even Wahabism (Hafiz, 2007). In addition, during the 1970’s Islamic Revolution of Iran, there was a debate among the Islamic political theorists after the spread of Western nation state concept. It has prompted worldwide extensive revival of the fundamental tenet of the religion, in particular the idea of establishing an Islamic state to ensure complete enforcement of Islamic law.

There are traces of different approaches to modernity in Malay Patani society, mostly presented by Malay Muslim Intellectuals who have been educated in the Arab world, particularly after the recognition of Daud al-Patani as Ulama (religious scholar) as a prominent person in Southeast Asia during the 17<sup>th</sup> century (K.S.Nathan, & Kamali, Eds., 2005, 10). In addition, the revival of Islam in Patani has gained momentum including the dress code of Muslim women, an intense ethnic awareness among the Malay including among youth groups as

well as the widespread challenge they have made toward the power of the state and bureaucracy.

It could be said that major events in the Muslim world, particularly the revival of connection with religious persons in other regions and Patani have prompted people to question and challenge the incoming modernity which accompanies globalization. But such a surge of Islam was not radical and powerful enough to contain the constant changes. In addition, the Malay Muslims in Patani have benefited positively from technological development and borderless communication, despite their being affected by stereotyping process as well. Nevertheless, the impact is well felt in the development of knowledge, practice and the shared feeling among Muslims in the world.

## 2. Modernity and Identity: Malay Muslim identity

It appears that the forecast of a special characteristic of the world at the overlap of the 20th and 21st centuries by Huntington is still very pertinent. While the economy and ideology have lost its importance, the culture and cultural identity has become more powerful in setting the trend and propensity of the world including conflicts or cooperation during the Cold War (Huntington, 1993). It only differs for social realities and conflicts as well as cooperation are still immensely affected by economic inequality and ideological difference. But such factors have been clouded by the invoking of reasons to embrace differences in cultural identity. As analyzed by Appadurai, even though conflicts are a result of the clash of world systems and the pressure of nation state, but globalization has ensured uncertainty and flexibility and as a result the ethnic identity is still flexible. It has given rise to concern about

the lack of identity security and discernment of hostile enemies, the condition of which has resulted in ethnic warfare for survival and the purification of identity (Appadurai, 2002, 288).

Regarding Muslim identity, Edward Said explains that “Muslim identity” has stemmed from the time of the Nabi Muhammad during the rule of the Madinah city state. Said states that “Muslim identity” is composed of two components including the teaching of Islam which provides the unchangeable foundation of the identity including the code of dress or the consumption of Halal food, etc. Hafiz Salae call this part “Islamic identity” (Hafiz, 2007). The other component is the social and cultural characteristics which underpinned various sets of relations among peoples regarding traditions, history, faith and religious practice as well as the geographical dwelling which depends on each and individual. Islam embraces and accepts diversity as long as it does not contravene the religious teaching (Said, 1984, quoted in Hafiz, 2007). The foundation of such identity reflects the notion of “unity in diversity” (Lings, 1983, quoted in Hafiz, 2007). The transformation of pure Islamic identity and Arab cultural identity during the Madinah whence the original Muslim identity started to form, the travel beyond the Arabian seas to various territories through the times, the expansion of trade, the dissemination of religious teaching, education and the acquisition of knowledge, the expansion of military power, the migrations to new lands and the resettlements in other societies with different culture, language, tradition, way of life and religious belief, have prompted Muslims to get adapted and compromise in order to survive in such society. Reactions to the assimilation of identity in various societies of Muslims can be explained in three broad categories

including (1) being assimilated by absorbing new culture, (2) being closed and rejecting culture from outside, and (3) rejecting while maintaining one's own stance though adaptations being made to some extent to strike the balance between the old and new identities. In other word, such a reaction has made Muslim identities “not become one” (Hafiz, 2007).

Nevertheless, the author is of the opinion that the identity struggle and adaptation of Muslims should have manifested in more than three categories. In certain areas, the local Muslims may accept new culture, but will shut down themselves when the culture infringes on the things which are inviolable to them. There are spaces whereby Muslims choose to compromise their faith with the new identity. In addition, the size of Muslim community in each region affects their ability to maintain their identity. The characteristics in society where Muslims are the majority definitely differ from the region where the Muslims are minority as they are likely subjected to assimilation. Therefore, the local Muslims in such area would be inclined to reject new culture more than their fellow Muslims who live as the majority in other regions. In addition, even Muslims who dwell in the same area, their acceptance/rejection of new culture might still differ. Such factors have affected the direction of cooperation/conflicts between the state and Muslims and between the Muslims and other believers or even among fellow Muslims.

Though there has been much debate as to whether Islam is one or diverse, K.S. Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali opine that once there is any debate about such question in a Muslim community, the answer tends to affirm that Islam is one and diversity is completely ruled out. Nevertheless, K.S. Nathan and Kamali also state that such

oneness and diversity has to be approached at different levels depending on social realities. In other word, they think that at the level of the Koran, the Word of God and at the level of the Nabi Muhammad (as God emissary), it could be said that “Islam is one” and there seems to be no challenges among the Muslims on this notion. But in the aftermath of the Nabi Muhammad, the opinions and interpretation of the Word and the practice of the Prophet have diversified and it has given rise to the split into at least two denominations including Sunni and Shia.

In fact, Islam rests on the notion of “complexity” rather than “diversity” in terms of its religious teaching, philosophy, theory, and perspective. Such complexity has even multiplied given the different contexts in which it exists, for example during the time there was an attack in USA on 11 September 2001. Nevertheless, both authors opine that when approaching the contextualized Islam, “Islam in South East Asia” tends to be much more complex than Islam in the Middle East. Such complexities have stemmed from the contexts of history, society, culture and political realities which are different. In conclusion, when approaching Islam from sociology, it could be found that Islam is complex and more than one (“Islams”), but such diversity could be said to have resulted from the interactions in the Islam history and during the different spaces and times (K.S.Nathan, & Kamali, Eds., 2005, 4). As the complexity varies to contexts and spaces and times, the great transformation of communication technology through fiber optics has affected relations between the localities, near and far, in such a way that the farther localities become the center of changes that happen in the rest of the localities. And sometimes, the centers



also interact and affect each other in such an unprecedented way. The information that flows massively from one place to another instantaneously has something to do with the “complexity” of Islam and Muslim society. On the one hand, the massive influx of information and finance has definitely given rise to conflicts among those who want to pursue a natural way of living as they are being affected by the power of mammoth capitalism/materialism from the West, so much so that they feel they can not withstand and negotiate. On the other, knowledge gained from a search for truth and the trend of Islamism and Islamic revolution in all over the world has helped to restore indigenous and local relationships making them become evermore intense. Such pressure and complexity of Islamic schools of thoughts in different contexts around the world have expanded conflicts in terms of imaginative spaces and generational relations and social strata in localities as the old generation want to pursue their simple way of life based on the religious and cultural tenets without any desire to cope with pressure from outside, but the new generation who have to choose between preserving their way of life and in search of the truth for their security and future or have to resist such pressure through different methods. In addition, local communities have to cope with the “inconsistencies” between traditional beliefs held by the villagers and community leaders who have more access to information and resources and are able to develop their capacity better.

Nevertheless, it should be considered that such manifestations are not the just the essence of conflicts and/or violence. But they well reflect the adaptation and negotiation of people at all levels with changes in other areas which have inevitable affected them. To ensure

the adaptation, one needs to create “political space of identity” which links up between local and national political spaces. In addition, attention should be paid to complexity within Muslim society including the “Ummah” (a nation of Islam). Such concept reflects the complexity of approaches beyond the community and it embraces Muslims all over the world as one community. The concept of the nation of Islam also aims to create an administration based on Islam in order to create unity among the believers. The quality of being a nation of Islam does not rest on ethnicity, nationality, domicile, occupation, kinship or any interests. The border of the nation of Islam hinges on the border of the Islamic state or it could be called “non territory community” (Hafiz, 2007) which can create interconnected relationships and nurture cooperation among Muslim communities in order to struggle with outside pressure. Meanwhile it can also be a factor that propels conflicts given the different concepts. However, such a change is needed in order to create a “strong public space of community culture” similar to the case of large Muslim communities in Thailand’s SBPs.

The mainstream Islam in South East Asia and Thailand’s SBPs is Sunni Islam. Since its inception in the 12th century, the school of Islam is believed to have spread to this area with Sufis and traders from the Middle East (mostly). The majority of the population here are therefore Sunni Muslims. Though there are some Shia Muslims and those inspired by the Iranian Islamic Revolution here, but there is no clear evidence that their number is small and limited in some areas (K.S.Nathan, & Kamali, Eds., 2005, 8). In this region, people in ancient time embraced different beliefs and religions including Hinduism and Buddhism as well as animism and the belief in supernatural beings.

Local Muslims have also been influenced by their local tradition and culture. In studies, for instance, by Duncan McCargo, traditional fishermen in Saiuri District, Pattani, used to perform a ritual to worship the God of sea and lit fire crackers before boarding their fishing boats (though the tradition was discarded by the religious leaders of the new denomination in early 1990's) and this group known as "Khana Kao" (McCargo, 2009, 21). According to McCargo, the attempt to identify the standardization and generalization of Islam as commonly practiced in the South could be traced back to Haji Sulong Abdul Kader who supported and called for a society on this path during 1920's. He asked people to abandon mysterious rituals and has been behind a new political movement which operated during the Dusongyo rebellion. Nevertheless, Uma Tayib, former Senator of Narathiwat, said that during the time, most local people still observed the old school thoughts, whereas the Imams and members of the Islamic Committee who had the chance to study religion abroad, particularly in Arab countries, no longer wanted to adhere to the traditional school of thought. Such a phenomenon has led to a social and educational gap between adherers to the new school and old school (McCargo, 2009, 21). The new situation in the area was the obvious emergence of the Malay Muslim elites and the traditional Malay Muslims.

After the establishment of the new school in SBPs by Haji Sulong Abdul Kader was then a well-known and highly respected leader of people in the South. He has become a symbol of political struggle of the Malay Muslims in Patani and a new generation of Muslim leaders with high education from Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Upon his return, Haji Sulong helped to restore Islamic education in Patani and nearby

provinces and it has led to the formation of movement to struggle and demand justice for Muslims, particularly his leadership of the protest against the nationalist policy of the Thai state. He was arrested in 1948 and was then convicted. He was released in 1954, after which he was made disappeared and murdered mysteriously (Thanet, 2004, quoted in Chantani, & Eds, 2005). The new school was subjected to reform again during the second wave led by Umar Tayib in 1960's and other well-known Muslim intellectuals in Patani who wanted to support the neutral stances of Ismail Lutfi Japakiya, a preacher who graduated from Saudi Arabia. (He returned to Thailand during 1980's) He founded the Yala Islamic College and during the time, he has questioned the dress code, the prayer method and the Koran study as well as other small detail of daily practice. One of the most controversial things was the abolishment of "Maolid", which had been traditionally held to celebrate the birth of Nabi Muhammad. In addition, McCargo states that the event that highlighted the marked different between the old and new schools was the use of religious institution for religious education during weekends (McCargo, 2009, 23). It reflects how each of them has responded to the onslaught of social change in SBPs and the attempt to preserve traditional relationships of local people. It also shed light the rough numbers of followers of each of the groups as well.

Regarding the changes and conflicts in Malay Muslim society during the beginning of the internal change, Thanet Aphornsuvan describes the time of Haji Sulong that upon his return to Patani in 1926, he viewed Patani and Southern Muslim society from his new looking glasses. To him, Patani was an Arab society in ancient time

when local community was highly influenced by traditional and superstitious belief and rituals. Given the assessment, he decided to settle in Patani “with his awareness of his duty as a good Muslim to disseminate the true Islam according to the Word of the Allah” (Thanet, 2004, quoted in Chantani, eds. 2005) Haji Sulong started from working as an Imam and opening a Pondok School, Mudarasa Al-marif Al-waraniyah, to teach new version of Islam. He embarked on long journeys to various parts of the province of Patani and was highly successful as local villagers have made donations to support him to open school to teach Islam, instead of the Pondok School. Given his soaring popularity, it has led to mutual suspicion among the new school and old school Muslim leaders. One of Haji Sulong’s hostile parties in the beginning came from the family of Abdulla Putra in Yaring District, Patani (Thanet, 2004, quoted in Chantani, & Eds, 2005). Nevertheless, the conflict did not stem from differences in religious thoughts. It originated from differences in political thoughts since Haji Sulong threw his support to Phra Pipithphakdi (Tonku Mudka Abdulla Putra) and Khun Charoen Woradeth (Charoen Suebsaeng), Patani Public Health Chief Officer, who was a Thai Buddhist and had progressive political thinking and won the elections successively during 1938-1948. Nevertheless, it should be noted that such social conflicts were not raised and discussed widely and the dominant conflict then was between the state and Malay Muslims who were subjected to heavy pressure. The conflicts were then primarily related to political competition.

The author deems that social changes in the present Malay Muslim society could be attributed to the differences of Muslims in

new and old schools. The debate permeates in all social strata and covers small detail of daily religious practice of people even at the village level (Srisompob, 2007 cited in McCargo, 2009, 22). There are two interesting observations here, however. Firstly, the split between new and old schools plays little roles among the majority of local people. As illustrated by McCargo, most people live their life in between the various waves of changes and thus the dichotomy between the two schools becomes blurred. Moreover, most people with whom he had a chance to interview and exchange tend to identify themselves as in between the two schools and they tend to say they belong to the “current school” instead of the new and old schools. As a result, he tends to call their groups according to their leaders rather than relying on the new and old schools notion which risk labeling them (McCargo, 2009, 25). In addition, the fluid identity of the new generation can not be ignored. They tend to identify themselves as both Malay Muslims and “Thais” as Taweesak Pueksom and Chirawat Saengthong remind us that;

“it is dangerous to strip down the notion of being “Malay-Thai Muslims” to just “Malay Muslim”. Even though we embrace diversity, we cannot ignore the fact that the Malay-Thai Muslims also embrace Thai spirit even if they have frequently been subjected to abuse by the authorities. For some of them, their spirit of being Thai is even stronger than Malay. It depends on different conditions. For example, how open they are to the education provided by the Thai state, how open they are to social statuses and to benefits from globalization and the development of Thai state. After all, the Malay identity could simply be a non-essential part of the Performativity more than the essence.” (Pueksom, T., & Saengthong, C., 2006).

### 3. Modern political institutions and the management of diversity in SBPs

The nation-state system is an outstanding modern social construct and has brought about many conflicts over the attempt to manage the global relationships. The issue has always been in trend in the past over two hundred years. According to Giddens, the nation-state system plays an important role in shaping the fluidity of modernity in terms of its process. The existence of sovereignty is contained and mutually reflected within the states in the nation-state system. And the sovereign power is based on borders rather than frontiers of traditional states. The modern nation-state is therefore defined (based on the geographical boundary and the power to contain violence) as format/institution which retains and maintains the political order used for ruling the territory defined by its boundary. The concept is newer than the concept of nation which refers to race and traditional kinship and the original relationships which preceded the newly imagined nation state (Giddens, 2001). A major challenge for an attempt to establish a Thai nation state is therefore how to create Thainess that can be shared by people in the county. The unity of conscience based on the “Tai” ethnic group has been used to spur nationalism which has elicited resistance and other dangers from various groups including the marginalized ethnic groups, communists, colors of shirts, or even the indigenous people who had lived here before. These marginalized people in SBPs have been branded as “Southern bandits” The driving forces of the Thainess include the nation, religion (Buddhism) and the King. The establishment of such nation state has resulted in failures of some aspects as Theerayuth Boonmi states that “the only thing that people in a nation try to grab is the original and root identity of theirs which still remain

including ethnicity or religion. It thus gives rise to the cult of returning to one's root and it has become more and more obvious." (Theerayuth, 2003).

The ethnic Malay Muslims in SBPs are one of the ethnic groups in Thailand which has been affected by the development of modern nation state. The modern Thai state has attempted to establish its unity and security and it has led to the infringement of identity in four areas including ethnicity (Malay), language (Yawi), religion (Islam) and history of the ancient state (Patani). Particularly, the governments of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram and Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat adopted the policy of ethnic diversity assimilation through various measures including politics, culture and education, the latter of which is still going on as the Thai state has attempted to control and interfere with Madrasah education of local community.<sup>2</sup> They also used certain religious leaders or certain elitist people and labeled some groups as being related to Islamist groups around the world (particularly the accusation that some of them belong to the Wahabi movement around the world) (McCargo, 2009, 23). It has caused tension between the new and old schools from the past until present. In addition, it has seriously eroded and weakened legitimacy of the religions institution and leadership and has given rise to a crisis of legitimacy at present (McCargo, 2009, 20). Therefore, apart from affecting mutual trust among Malay Muslims in SBPs, it has weakened conflict management mechanisms of the community and paved the way for the complexity of evermore protracted and violent conflicts. The main reason that has led to the interference and suspicion of the role of leaders of religious groups in SBPs is the Thai state lacks knowledge and understanding



about the important roles the religious leaders in Islam since Islam does not separate religion from politics. As a result, the Thai state tends to view religious practices of the Muslims as a political act with an important aim of secession (Thanet, 2004, quoted in Chantani, Eds, 2005).

As aforementioned, the difference between the new and old schools among local people is not well pronounced. But the Thai state tends to ignore sensitivities of Islam in the local area. The Thai security forces opt to favor certain groups, particularly those in power and those Malay Muslim politicians, and pitch them against other groups. It has brought about a lack of trust among local religious leaders and people and even with the central religious leaders who are viewed as an organ of the Thai state. Given the open and close political spaces, the conflicts have become intense. The author deems that the situation reflects that the local Malay Muslim society sits in between the transition which is not difficult anymore. At least, the terrestrial concept and cultural map in the mind of the Thai state has slightly changed from believing that the country belongs to the same culture boundary<sup>3</sup> (basically, all people are Thai.) It is essential that spaces are open up for expressions, particularly political expression, which is related to religious concept from within and outside the local Malay Muslim society.

### **Muslim diversity in the Malay world**

A number of academic works on Islam in South East Asia helps us to come to terms with diversity of Islam. An outstanding anthropological work by Clifford Geertz,<sup>4</sup> a famous anthropologist who

has much influence in social science, for example, divides Muslims in Indonesia into two groups including the devout Muslims (Santri) and the folklore Muslims who combine the religious teaching with their belief in supernatural power and voodoo (Abangan). The latter are contemporarily called “Muslim KTP” or Muslims as indicated in their ID cards. Even that, the devout Muslims could also be divided into at least two schools including the Traditional Muslims or “Kolot (old fashion) santri who adhere stringently to their Javanese belief and Modernist Muslims or “Moderen (Modern) santri” who have been influenced by religious reform in the Middle East and want to revive the original teaching of Islam.<sup>5</sup>

In the midst of Indonesia’s current Islamization, Islam can be divided into three major categories. First is the Moderate Islam to which the majority of Indonesian Muslims belong. They are influenced by the “middle path community” (umma wasatan) and based on their Islamic political concept they believe in the condition in between a secular state and a religious state. In addition, they place an emphasis on what is provided for in the Koran and rights and liberties to ensure balances of their duties in the world. Second is the Liberal-Progressive Islam, a group of which is trying to challenge and adapt itself to the modern world. They advocate a secular state in Islam and most of their members are intellectuals who have splintered from the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) after the era of President Suharto. Third is the Radical Fundamentalist Islam which is entirely different from the first two groups. They reject modernity and call for the establishment of Darul Islam. In Indonesia, the Darul Islam movement is quite complex and is composed of various groups. They garner strong support from

grassroots Muslims (Pradana Boy ZTF, 2008).

What is intriguing about Indonesia's Muslims is the diversity of dynamism of the intellectual movement regarding the social, political and economic contexts in the midst of modern world. Given the overall picture and major issues faced by Indonesia, one of the most striking phenomena is the struggle of the Acehnese. Even among fellow Muslims, politics of identity can reign in and result in the resistance against the central power of the Jakarta.

As for Malaysia, the rivalry between the PAS and UMNO has brought Islam into politics. It depends on how Islam is "interpreted" then. The parties interpret the teaching to provide for welfare in the present world (Dunya-Arabic word) and the future world (Akiraḥ Arabic word) among the Malay Muslims in Malaysia in order to win their support and votes amid the social context during the Islamization and globalization.

A Thai scholar who is well-versed in international relations and teaches at Chulalongkorn University, Kullada Kesboonchoo-Mead, has conducted a research on "Malaysia and Islamic Capitalism and its impacts on Thailand". (Kesboonchoo-Mead, K., 2008) It sheds light on the development of capitalism driven by the economic policy implementation of leaders in Malaysia. The nationalist elements of the economic policy also play a role. It has given legitimacy to the implementation of policy by Malaysian leaders and the concept of Islam has been brought into approach the globalized economy. Kullada defines Malaysia's economic system as "Islamic Capitalism" The rather streamlined views concerning society, economy and politics in Malaysia could be attributed to a rather unified belief in religion and can be

obviously observed from the devout adherence to the religious tenet and the fact that Muslims are the majority of people in Malaysia.

Meanwhile, Liow Chinyong pointed to the connection of the impact of Islamization across the borders of nation states. He discusses the origin, network and movement of various Islamic groups in Southern Thailand including the Young Muslim Association of Thailand (YMAT) and the Salafim, both new and old schools. In terms of their connection with organizations outside the country, YMAT holds close relationship to Anwar Ibrahim since the time he was affiliated to the UMNO, until his affiliation with the People's Justice Party (PKR) at present.<sup>6</sup>

From the above information, a number of foreign academics have endeavored to study the issue of diversity and Islam in Patani. Still, most of the works fail to discuss conflicts or cooperation of various groups in Patani. This is contrasting to that there are a number of works that focus on differences in thinking in Islam in South East Asia.

### **Dynamism and adaptation to preserve local identity**

Dynamism, changes and social reform of Patani society can be traced back through the local history studies (different from the nationalistic Thai history). Among leaders who have influence in Patani society and politics is Haji Sulong Abdul Kader. Upon his return to Patani, Haji Sulong first vowed to change Patani society in terms of its religious belief which was still based largely on superstition and scared rituals. Haji Sulong traveled to various places in Patani to spread his “new concept” and to erase any heresy and belief which was contrary to the principle of Islam.<sup>7</sup> His religious mission was considered new and it had led to conflicts with a number of traditional

religious leaders at various Pondok. As the resistance simmered, he was reported to the government. Haji Sulong was highly successful in spreading his religious teaching and garnered much support from Patani people. The first religious school was founded in the province of Patani then,

The Siamese state in those days tended to back the groups opposed to Haji Sulong. Various local leaders who challenged the central power were busted. The challenge of local community to the exercise of power by the central authority could be a lesson for the current Thai government as the resistance stemmed from the advocacy of local people to demand their self-determination.

Social movement in the past of Patani was “not new”. The case of Haji Sulong reflects how the emergence of modern political (and social) concept and ideology can take place based on the foundation of Islam inspired by those receiving education from the Middle East. Basically, it primarily focuses not just on politics, but social reform. But eventually, the social reform led by Haji Sulong has got involved with politics and has resulted in the seven political proposals.

In terms of social adaptation of Patani in the past, it was undeniable that religious leaders played important roles in both society and politics in Patani. A study by Saruinee Sainui is an attempt to shed light on the roles of Muslim leaders and social movements.<sup>8</sup> In her dissertation, Saruinee chooses to focus on two religious leaders including Haji Sulong Bin Abdulkader<sup>9</sup> and Dr. Ismail Lutfi Japakiya. It is striking that Saruinee chooses to focus on both leaders from different times. In sum, both Islam leaders mobilized with the aim to revive religion and they had commanded robust response due to various factors.

Nevertheless, under modernity at present, the complexity of religious concept and social differences has become too tense and it is hard to distinguish the groups.

### **The mystery of Muslims “new and old schools”**

It appears that the issue of new and old schools of Muslims is too complex and hard to understand for non-Muslims. But from my experience, the non-Muslims seem to pay much attention to the issue of new and old schools of Muslims. A number of studies have been carried out to explore and understand, but mostly by approaching the issue as social realities rather than religious aspects. For example, the dissertation by Sarayuth Eamuayuth,<sup>10</sup> a new generation of anthropologist who spent one full year in the community of Paenakae and attempted to explain changes in the community by reviewing the Islamization and the power of the Thai state. The work was presented in the anthropological framework in order to come to terms with and describe the community of Paenakae amidst social, political and economic changes.

But to many Muslims, such an issue is not worth the study or presentation. It is treated as something old and traditional. And if one asks Muslims about the new and old schools of Muslims, one would expect so different answers. Some may respond based on the “religious principle”, while others expressing their attitude based on their “experience”. Some attitudes are based on “stories”, while some may feel the issue is not relevant enough to be studied. Some even think the study on the issue will simply give rise to conflicts and misunderstanding in society. The author wants to beg to differ and

views Muslim studies as very important since it will help us understand social realities better amidst the changes in modernity.

### Conclusion

The swift changes in modernity render severe impacts on society. We should learn to cope with the changes and to grasp the complexity of the existing violent situation. Once we accept that we are at the intellectual crossroads, it is possible that we make steps into a mindful society.<sup>11</sup> In other word, such society can exist and cope with changes without a brink of its eyes. Such courage to confront the realities is definitely a gift of God given to human beings who are urged to use their wisdom to contemplate on things mindfully.

It is important that the study of Muslim society has to delve deeper and to describe the phenomenon creatively. When one delves deeper enough into the Malay Muslim society in Patani, one would realize social changes and confront with the problems and challenges including the violent situation, modernity, globalization, etc. It could be said that the suffering and troubles of local people are “social realities” that reflect how ineffective the nation state framework can be.

It is not enough to look for solutions from the central power since it will not help us understand the real problems. In addition, the quality of being nation state destroys local people and the implementation and operation of the central state from the past to present has intensified violence and conflicts.

For the Muslims, in order to get a good grasp of the problems of fellow citizens, it is important that we have to be ready to provide a creative critique and to engender social justice as well as to utilize the

wisdom and mindfulness given by the Allah to come to terms with fellow Muslims rather than to judge their different views or opinions. The complexity of thinking and behaviors of Muslim society should be held as a great wisdom and contribution to humanity. Only the Allah knows what is best for us.

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### Footnote

<sup>1</sup> Majid Terhranian notes that modernity has to face four major reactions including (1) Counter-Modernization as seen from the resurgence of various religions around the world, (2) Hyper-Modernization as seen from the use of nation state to propel modernization and to pool together natural resources and members in society under the monopolization of the use of violence, particularly during the intense nation state building and nationalism process, (3) De-Modernization as it is subjected to contention from various forces in society including environmentalism, feminism, or even the revival of local wisdom to challenge modernization, and lastly Post-Modernization including the development of conceptual knowledge to critique and challenge the legitimacy of the set of knowledge generated by modernization

<sup>2</sup> For more detail, please see Ibrahim Narongraksakhet. 'Pondok and the Establishment of Identity in Southern Border Provinces,' in Uthai Dulayakasem and Lertchai Sirichai. 2005. Knowledge and Conflict Resolution: The case of crisis in the Deep South, Bangkok. Liberal Arts Department, Walailak University, 65-130.

<sup>3</sup> Terrestrial change as a result of social change in modern era by Chaiwat Satha-anand, during his speech at the First Seminar on Quality of Thai Society: The state of problem and solution, Friday 19 February 2010, 13.30 - 16.30, Royal Princess Hotel, Bangkok.

<sup>4</sup> Please see 'studies of religions of the Javanese in Indonesia in Geertz, Clifford.' 1960. The Religion of Java. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

<sup>5</sup> Taweesak Pueksom. 2004. Indonesia: From Raya and traditional nation to



- imagined 'nation.' Muang Boran Printing, 125.
- <sup>6</sup> Please see works by Joseph Chinyong Liow. 2009. Local Networks and Transnational Islam in Thailand (with emphasis on the southernmost provinces) Transnational Islam in South and Southeast Asia Movements, Networks, and Conflict Dynamics. 189-208.
- <sup>7</sup> Please see Thanet Aphornsuvan. 2006. The Origin of Theory of Separatism in the Deep South, Bangkok, South East Asia Studies Project, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University in collaboration with the Health Promotion Action Plan: The case of three Southern Border Provinces, the Social Agenda Taskforce, Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University.
- <sup>8</sup> Please see Saruinee Sainui. 2004. 'Islam Religious Leaders and Social Movements' Master Degree Dissertation, Chulalongkorn University.
- <sup>9</sup> In the dissertation by Saruinee Sainui, the Thai spelling of "Haji Sulong" is different from what the author uses in this article.
- <sup>10</sup> Please see Sarayuth Eamuaryuth. 2008. 'Payoh Nao Yah Di Nanyu' (It's hard to become Nanyu): Ethnicity, meaning and compromise in daily life of the Malay Muslims, Dissertation in Sociology, Faculty of Sociology and Anthropology, Thammasat university.
- <sup>11</sup> The author often heard the term "mindful society" all the time while working with Dr. Surichai Wankaeo. He always stressed the importance of complexity of social problems that had emerged around the world and reminded us to be mindful of its complexity and pay good attention to social problems from the village to the global levels.

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