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Community Media and the Politics of Nostalgia

What little attention has been paid to the media in Thailand has been concentrated on the institutionalized Thai mass media, such as television and broadcasting. Little attention has been paid to the media in Thailand at a local level, whereas the massive presence and fast spread of the media in Thai late modernity calls for ethnographic data on the media in Thai public culture and everyday life.

As Hamilton notes, it is impossible to understand the media and cultural expression in capitalist Southeast Asia without recognizing the central role of the state (Hamilton 1992). Thailand too, has seen the mass media as a primary mechanism for national development and ideological conformity. Through a variety of formal and semiformal mechanisms, and through the structures of ownership and control, most institutionalized media is under direct government control. Stations and air-time are subsequently leased to private enterprise, but the overall control lies squarely within the state.

The efficacy of state control over the media may provide its own negations. The readings of the audience may not conform to the intention of the broadcasters. As Hamilton says,

> "in Thailand what is not said, the resounding silences, can open up fissures, through which an unofficial discourse is constructed and rapidly circulated" (Hamilton 1991).

In addition, modern mass media has the potential to escape from the clutches of the state. The fast spread of new media technologies into the periphery transgresses national boundaries and slips beyond the reach of the clumsy bureaucracies charged with the task of surveillance and intervention. As Hamilton has observed, the appetite has been whetted, but hardly satisfied by the available viewing diet.

In Thailand, the proliferation of media reform is at the heart of the development of a public sphere. The media anthropologist Ubonrat ar-

gues that the media reform parallels the democratic and cultural transformation of contemporary Thai society (Ubonrat 1999). In this transformation, different social forces struggle for media space in order to set their agenda for public attention. Ubonrat argues that the media expansion does not signify a greater degree of freedom for peasants or workers. Rather, it demonstrates the growing strength of the middle class, which is in a better position to capture the media space. The appropriation of the community media in the boundaries of the club in Southern Thailand illustrates this process empirically, as outlined by Ubonrat (1999). It is argued that both media reform in the political domain and media expansion within the framework of globalization and mass consumption enable movements such as Songkla Prachakom or scriptural Islam to capture media spaces.

With the presence of the media, the way of life is not the same. The spread of media technologies to nearly every corner of Thailand has enabled small producers to use small-scale media for their own purposes. Community media is small-scale, private media, such as radio, video, film, print media, brochures, pamphlets and slide-shows. Community media is emerging in the space between the state and globalization. The state was an enthusiastic promoter, using the media for its propaganda interests. However, national efforts to use the mass media for hegemonic ideologies and images, however, are increasingly being subverted by global, as well as local, images.

Making media is crucial for the construction and shaping of the public sphere. Community media is media technology that is appropriated in the local context. As shown in previous chapters, the educational core groups of the respective social movements supply themselves with their own culture/knowledge material. Community media fits in the construction and shaping of the public sphere. The task is to put the community media in existent forms of popular communication. Thus, analysis of the community media should not be separated from everyday life and from public life. Community media plays a very important role in the articulation of interests in the public sphere, for strategic action, for the discursive construction of the group's programmes, and for the construction of cultural identity. Thus, community media can be defined as small-scale, private media technologies that allow small producers to address a very specific and limited local audience. Community media can be used to transport very efficiently and very rapidly political, cultural and religious contents and to contribute to the spread of cultural identity. Thus, the Media are important in the formation of cultural identities. The argument is that far from replacing face-to-face relationships and personal networks, media gives a new dimension to these networks and allows for a more efficient and

more performative articulation and expression of collective identities. The increasing importance of the public sphere in Southern Thailand gives new space for small producers whose production and distribution of small-scale media lies at the heart of the mobilization of the movement. Competing community media are summarised and compared in Table 4 within the framework of social movement:

Table 4. Community Media Compared

Community media	Content	Religion	Language	Location
Core radio, pamphlets, brochures, journals, slides	*baan koet* campaign, education on political reform	Than Bhuddhadhasa (homepage www.suanmokkh.org)	Southern Thai dialect	Bangkok, Songkla
Islamic Media, tapes, books, video-tape	Social virtue, Islamic lifestyle	Scriptualist Islam	Patani Melayu dialect, Jawi	Malaysia, Kelantan
Chinese, video, television	Chinese ritual, Chinese identity	Kwan Im cult	Thai	Bangkok, Taiwan, Singapore

At stake is the post-modern debate on public culture: who has the authority to speak in an increasingly diversified media landscape? From a comparative perspective, this Thai example illustrates the centrality of community media in the struggle for public opinion, and the efforts in developing public space in a period of cultural and political transformation. Furthermore, it provides a case study on the uses of community media as a means of articulation in the public space. As argued in previous chapters, the public space does not develop from scratch, but has to be carefully constituted by local groups. The systematic use of media technologies is part of strategic action for the improvement of the chances of intervention in the public space.

Hamilton, by taking from the beginning the point of view of the active audience, showed how people choose, combine, and circulate media representations and other cultural forms in their everyday communicative interactions and in doing so produce meaning in everyday life worlds. She has also pointed to the creative use and subversive readings of the Thai mass media. Hamilton has started a media project that is conceived around the question of cults and ritual move-

ments, where she looks to the role of different media in the construction of cultural identity. In her study on Thai media[1], Hamilton discusses the striking impact of video in Thailand. In Thailand, the videocassette recorder (VCR) has penetrated the country with amazing rapidity: in cities and provincial towns, the VCR is, one way or another, available to everyone. Hamilton describes how people arrange to duplicate pirated masters by the tens of thousand. More significantly for the purpose of my paper is the appropriation of video for local and private cultural activities, such as the taping of a Chinese spirit ceremony (Hamilton 1989). The edited version of the tape was duplicated and copies were sent to the medium's relatives all over the country, whereby her fame as a medium was spread, encouraging people from distant parts to attend her possession ceremonies or come for healing. Here, the media spread knowledge about Chinese cults and rituals throughout the country. As Hamilton notes, the creative use of small-scale, private media allows for the rapid circulation of cultural meaning throughout the country.

Using a flexible framework of borderlands, I saw the whole zone of the Southern peninsula as a borderland and I was interested in exploring the many borderlines and practices of distinction of the Thai Buddhists in the upper South and the Malay Muslims in the lower South, including lines that are based on identity and popular culture. The complexity of the media in Southern Thailand reflects the significance and variety of media in a growing cultural market. We can distinguish three, overlapping media-spheres: A national media sphere (early evening TV), a global media sphere (global telenovelas, videos, video-discs and music CD's, cinema) and a local-born narrative media landscape, drama and *Manora* dance and *Nang Talung* Shadow Puppet theatre. Each media sphere has its own dynamics that cannot be discussed in full detail.

Ordinary people have been extremely keen and creative consumers of media. The presence of the media in everyday life, especially videotaping, recording was overwhelming. As for community media, the important step is not to concentrate either on the reader or on the producer, but to realize the interaction between the two. The researcher observes the levels of production and consumption at the same time. This is especially so for community media. While media anthropology has focused on the practices of media consumption, the community media helps to overcome the producer/reception paradigm. The members of Songkla Prachakom and the members of scriptural Islam are not only subversive consumers of hegemonic media texts, but are also involved in the production and reading of the community media's images. In making media, the people are themselves involved in the struc-

ture of the public world. The character of the community media is such that communication can develop outside of the national media sphere of the state.

Making Waves: Core Radio and other Media in the People Love Songkla Campaign

Songkla Talk is the centre-piece of Core radio. The directors of Songkla Forum have employed skilled journalists to design a sophisticated entertainment programme. The radio programme is roughly organized in information, education and entertainment sessions. Songkla Talk informs about its agenda, its campaign and invites people to its public events. The largest share of its programme is reserved for educational purposes. Taking up the ideology of Songkla Prachakom, Songkla Talk surveys the state of society and politics, discusses social problems that plague Songkla's people, and invites potential local intellectuals to become active:

> "Most *Ajaarns* are content in doing teaching and administration work. That's all. Some of them are are teaching and are doing research. That's the minority. Only a few think about their responsibility about society for society" (an academic from Taksin University speaking for a seminar organized by Songkla Forum).

The radio programme of 'Core radio' takes the listener as an implicit member into the atmosphere of the club. The audience is invited to participate in the making of public opinion and public life through the media. The programme managers' language is one of cultural intimacy, taking the audiences into the 'family' as an intimate relative. Articulation through its own media enables the club culture to create cultural spaces and to create a communication of the core group, the producers, and the people of Songkla. The calls that urge people to wake up and to join the activities of the core group for a better society are a pattern of a discourse aiming to mobilize segments of the educated urban middle classes. Core radio as a private local radio station creates new media spaces, presenting itself as an alternative to the conventional mass media, which, in the opinion of the cultural managers are driven by commercial interests.

The striking feature of Songkla Talk is its growing popularity and influence. Core radio provides the audiences with a new type of media experience. The proximity of producers and audiences allows the audi-

ences to be part of the radio session and to make its voice heard. The relationship between the radio and the audience is much more intimate than for other programmes.

Core radio is a community-supported non-commercial public radio station. The non-commercial nature is stressed by the cultural managers of Core radio and has contributed in no small part to its success. In addition, the marketing of local tradition and local identity as well as the regular and frequent audience makes Core radio an extremely attractive radio programme on which to advertise. Local enterprises play on the spirit of locality to promote their products and services and cleverly fit into the intimate atmosphere of the listener club. The enormous success and high legitimization have enabled the organizer to expand the radio programme to other stations, such as the station at the local university campus, and it now comprises five local stations, including public and educational stations. The managers of the many organizations of Songkla Forum have become respectable and even charismatic people who are invited to join talk shows by the primary television channel 11 which is managed by the Ministry of Education and is a non-commercial channel without advertising. Core radio moved to the FM band, and now broadcasts everyday in the morning for 30 minutes and on week-ends for 2 hours. The long Sunday seesions are able to catch the local audiences and to try experiments, such as including children's voices into the family programme.

Songkla Prachakom has discovered the local media. The core group is constructing a centre for local media in Songkla that is supposed to play a more active role in public life. Private radio is the very core of this media sphere. The centre is supposed to hold a library, slide and videoshows, public displays and public performances. The centre of local media is integrated in the idea of a community centre (*Bürgerhaus*), which is supposed to become a material space for the people.

The radio creates a clientele that is bound together through the experience of participating in Songkla Talk–either as a speaker or as a listener. Local media is embedded in the framework of the dynamics of the Thai public sphere in Songkla. Songkla Talk helps local organizations to stage the public events, to prepare, mobilize and document the Songkla Learning Festival, guided walks, seminars and campaigns. Local media is put in a relationship with other existent forms of communication, such as folk songs, drama, theatre, and Buddhist sermons and Buddhist meditation. Buddhism has a tremendous influence on the discourse of public speeches: 'new ideas' are emphasised, creative thinking and thoughtful action. So are peace and mindful action. Buddhist ethics are communicated as authoritative guides that members are encouraged to apply to their everyday life. The association is legit-

imizing activities by borrowing from the words of Bhudhadhasa, and from his charisma. Core radio is targeting a mid-to upper-income group and the programming of local cultural arts and music is an integral part of the radio station's image.

The community radio of Songkla Prachakom has seen great expansion in recent years. With the growing legitimacy and power of the movement at hand, the group is now broadcasting in some five radio stations, including the university-based radio stations. The radio has contributed to the increasing visibility of the Thai's campaign in the public sphere and to the recruitment of new members.

Islamic Media in the Patani Islamic Resurgence

The performance of Islamist religious intellectuals is itself a media event. The people and followers of these Muslim personalities wait for the media stars in the packed mosque, in front of the mosque or in *pondoks*. Ismail Lutfi tours the towns of Naratiwat, Yala and Pattani for his public presentations. His recitation and interpretation of Islamic texts is recorded on audio-tapes and filmed. The tapes of Lutfi are available for sale in the *pondoks* together with videocassettes, pamphlets and books. The crowds acquire collections of Lutfi's sermons on tape which are then routinized in everyday life. Islamic media is crucial to the nourishment of a Muslim milieu that supplies itself with religious material. Listening to Islamic audiotapes of famous Muslim preachers together with family members or friends, the followers continue the relationship of the teacher with the media.

The audiotapes are cultural tools in the improvement of the self. Islamic media, audiotapes of religious leaders, books and magazines help Malay youth with questions of life-planning and orientation in Thailand. The audiotapes are imported from Malaysia and are sold in a new type of shop in Patani that specializes in Islamic commodities, media and clothes. The shop caters to Malay popular demand: both video images of Mecca and the veil are available in the shops which are managed by nephews of the old nobility in Patani. The Muslim commodities represent Arabic imagined traditions that are recreated by the educated Malays to cope with the pressures of Thai modernity they are undergoing.[2]

Islamic Guidance Post is a national Islamic monthly newspaper published in Bangkok in the Thai language. *Islamic Guidance Post* has developed into a leading forum of public opinion for the Muslim minority in Thailand. The *Post* is opening a media space for intellectual debate and cultural identity. In the Letters to the Editor section, the readership

is debating with the managers of the *Post*. This section provides a vital platform for debates on Islam in Thailand.

The *Islamic Guidance Post* changed its format in the early 1980s to a monthly newsmagazine and evolved into its current format which includes newsprint quality photographs, colours and glossy inserts. The *Post's* format was also standardized at this time. It was divided into sections, with a primary section on national news, especially as it relates to the Muslim community, another on news from around the Muslim world, a multipage feature report on some important aspect of Thai politics in Southern Thailand, a few columns and regular features. The international news takes readers to the Muslim world, especially to the Middle East. Images of the Middle East are channelled into local Muslim society, so marginal to the heartland of Islam. Like Muslim media in many parts of the world, the *Post* blends moral and religious language directly into its reporting. What distinguishes the *Post* is that it presents its appeals in a language that is accessible, clear and focused on essentials. The *Post* also features critical essays, opinion columns and political interventions. The multi-page report on Southern Thailand discusses Muslim minority interests in Thailand and reviews Thai policies in a critical light. The *Post* thus wants to become a people's tribune, where Thai development programmes are discussed critically in supplements, for example the Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand growth triangle. The editors want to make the government accountable for its policies and to involve the Thai bureaucracy into a dialogue. The *Post's* editors have a clear strategy of marketing the *Post* to middle-class, educated Muslims in Bangkok and Southern Thailand. The limited circulation makes the *Post* a community medium for the Muslim minority in Thailand.

I had the good fortune to accompany some dedicated journalists writing for the *Post* and other Thai print media. The journalists are integrated into closely-knit networks that allow for communication between producer and audiences.[3] The face-to-face relationships and many personal connections make the *Post* a community medium in which Muslim identity is represented. It is interesting to note that the *Post* addresses the Muslims as Muslims and not as Malays.

Islamic media is part of a much larger transformation of local Muslim society in Patani. New members of the Islamic public sphere aim to demonstrate to become good Muslim. The application of habitual codes confines the realization of the Muslim self to public Islam. Global codes of lifestyles are channelled into the local by means of Islamic networks and media. Clothing becomes a contested space where Muslim identity in Thailand is negotiated and serves as a social language in within which an individual can redefine his or her social position in lo-

cal Muslim society; Islamic media such as audiotapes from charismatic Muslim preachers helps in this transformation of the self. Yet, the Islamic public sphere can only be conceptualized as an appendix to the Thai public sphere. Thus, Malay students, for example, may turn not only to Islamic media, but combine Islamic media with a large variety of Thai media. This tactical combination of media allows the Malay students to have multiple identities. Thus, the combination of local media characterizes hybrid identity among the Malay youth who are constantly switching codes between the Islamic and Thai public sphere. Doing so, Malay students may adopt to the codes of life that are promoted by Muslim intellectuals, but also counter hegemonic images either by Thai or Islamic media.

Community Media and Media Spaces Compared

The very creative use of local, small-scale media in the emergent public spheres has been emphasized. People at the local level have discovered the crucial role of the media in the public sphere. The growing cultural market and the fast spread of media and media technologies allow small producers to use local media for the club, which initiates feedback processes between producers and audiences. Local media is embedded and should be conceptualized in larger spaces and plays a key role in the mobilization of new members in the club.

The city becomes a stage on which actors perform public culture. As in Goffman's tales, urban life is like a play in which roles are distributed and in which people engage in symbolic interaction. Morals matter in the discourses of the educators. The media plays a large part in the spread of knowledge about them. The focus on codes of life is conspicuous in the Islamic as well as the Thai public sphere. Through the media, the so-called private spheres are debated in the public sphere and lifestyles are made visible and public. Through the media, legitimizing discourses of religious ethics are publicised. Media discourses are working with dichotomies, distinguishing 'ignorant' and 'responsible' citizen, 'good' and 'bad' Muslims, 'heaven' and 'hell' social worlds, and so on.

The social organization is a striking feature of the community media spaces. Moral leadership is provided by religious teachers, academics and scholars, forming the core group. The media managers are making use of very high officializing resources to mobilise, to discipline and 'educate' the audiences.

The relationship between the educators and their bourgeois clientele is ambivalent: media technologies are used to pinpoint loyalties.

The reader, however, may combine very different sorts of media and choose more than one loyalty, in part reaffirm and resist the pedagogical authority of the community media.

The media becomes the spring-board for political careers in the public sphere. Thus, leadership personalities of Songkla Prachakom also become media stars, moderators in podium discussions, whose name and voice becomes popular through specific radio programmes. Thus, key personalities in the movement develop ambitions to pursue political careers. Community media helps sustain and popularise political programmes. The style is such that the movement presents as a viable alternative to the government and an indispensable partner for planning Songkla's future.

On the other hand, a new breed of Middle East-educated scholars have become the media-stars and role-models of the Islamic public sphere. Especially audio-tapes help to popularize preachers whose names are recognized and regarded with awe in Muslim everyday life. Consumers in shops selling Islamic media ask for and request the audio-tapes of certain leaders from Malaysia, such as Nik Aziz Nik Mat. Media stars develop specific styles of recitation for which they are well known.[4]

The community media is firmly embedded in the local and the global. Far to little attention has been paid to the appropriation of local media which has developed in parallel to global mediascapes and has expanded and diversified in the past decade. The marketing of the community media depends on closely-knit local networks. Constituting an important interface between the local and the global, community media makes use of global flows, yet, plays an extremely important role in the construction of locality and local identity. The middle class nostalgia for 'home' and the 'place of birth' is apparent in many activities of Songkla Prachakom, such as in guided walks or in the exhibition of old photographs. Locality, however is put in a broader perspective of global recognition of local cultural inclinations. The researcher cannot escape the local when framing the media in national and global contexts.

The ideology of the Thai state is challenged in the South in indirect and symbolic ways. The local media does not confront the Thai state in explicit words. However, the appropriation and creative use puts the community media beyond the control of the state. Local groups take the initiative from the local state. Community media is very important in the creation of spaces for cultural, religious and ethnic identity. But they are political in the sense that it contests the official ideology of the state which, in turn, so heavily depends on the national, government mass media. It is likely that efforts by the state to maintain control over

what people see are being undermined by the facilities provided by the technology itself, and by the indigenous determination of local people to get the kind of media environment they want. In addition, small-scale community media overlaps with other indigenous forms of communication, such as religious ritual or political communication, and can be successfully appropriated by local groups, spreading alternative identities. Media consumers are now able to choose between national television news, print media, radio, global images, satellite, cable, video, and the community media, which caters for a very specific and active audience.

This, community media should be seen and studied in the larger context of public culture and in terms of the relationship of these new forms of communication with local cultural resources and the dynamic spread of locality and tradition. Community media is on the borderline between the performance of local culture and the broadcasting of the same culture. As Lindsay (1997) says, private radio in particular appears to be securing for itself a strong niche for itself, with ever more segmented programming within its local community focus: the paper has focused on only a few examples of community media, yet the resource is there for the study of language usage, radio as an oral tradition, globalization, performance and sociopolitical change in the community. Much scholarly attention has been given to print media and television, but community media seems to have been largely ignored. Yet, like regional cultural identity, it is there, all around, in Southeast Asia.[5]

The Rise of Mediated Publicness in Southern Thailand

According to some sociologists of the media, the rise of mediated publicness introduces new forms of action and interaction and new forms of social relationships and displaces traditional forms of publicness that have been based on face-to-face relationships and on a shared locality. It is argued that the mass media creates a situation in which some individuals produce symbolic forms for others who are not physically present, whereas others are involved primarily in receiving symbolic forms produced by others to whom they cannot respond, but with whom they can form bonds of friendship, affection, or loyalty. The following argument aims to correct this basic assumption on the role of the media in the modernization of society.

The media and new forms of communication in Southern Thailand have not displaced traditional forms of publicness. Face-to-face relationships have not ceased to exist. Rather, the use of communication media transforms the organization of social life in a fundamental way,

creating new forms of exercising power. Since the development of print and especially the electronic media, struggles for recognition have increasingly become constituted as struggles for visibility. The Thai Buddhist movement has appropriated the radio to address very specific symbolic clues to a very specific audience. Doing so, the community media has complemented the face-to-face networks and has not displaced them. Community media such as Core radio has neatly established itself in a space in-between the oral tradition and the national and global mass media. The public sphere has not disappeared through the negative influence of the media. In Southern Thailand, we observe a process in which the middle class in Songkla as well as in Pattani makes itself heard through radio programmes, videos, tapes, cassettes, brochures and pamphlets. Using new media technologies, such as the tape or the video, the movements have based themselves on face-to-face relationships. Further, although the movements are able to use the media as very efficient vehicles of transporting symbolic contents to many other parts of Thailand and the world, the community media does not transcend the shared local sphere, but celebrates it. This, again, strengthens the power of the local groups that have used community media. For processes of the change of societies through media and globalization, it is pertinent not only to look at the reception of global media and its incorporation, but to the appropriation of media technologies in the construction of the public sphere.

Social Memory and the Politics of Authenticity

Maurice Halbwachs is one social theorist to have devoted systematic attention to the ways in which memory is constructed socially, particularly in his two important works 'Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire' (1952) and 'La mémoire collective' (1950). Therein, he argued that it is through their membership of a social group that individuals are able to acquire, localize and recall their memories. As Connerton notes (1989: 37), Halbwachs explicitly rejected the separation of the two questions: how does the individual and, how does society preserve and rediscover memory? Thus, Halbwachs (1950: 36) writes,

> "Every recollection, however personal it may be, even that of events of which we alone where the witnesses, even that of thoughts and sentiments that remain unexpressed, exists in relationship with a whole ensemble of notions which many others possess: with persons, places, dates, words, forms of language,

> that is to say with the whole material and moral life of the societies of which we are part or of which we have been part."

Halbwachs demonstrated that the idea of an individual memory is an abstraction and that social memory is always collective memory. He maintains that our memories are located within the mental and material spaces of the group. He was convinced that

> "even individual memory is structured through social frameworks, and, all the more, that collective memory is not a metaphor but a social reality transmitted and sustained by the conscious efforts and institutions of the group" (Halbwachs 1950: 36).

Halbwachs showed how different social segments, each with a different past, will have different memories attached to the different mental landmarks characteristic of the group in question. The social segments of the middle class, organized in communities of memory, will have different memories, and are involved in the active appropriation of the past.

Halbwachs, even though he makes the idea of collective memory central to his inquiry, only hints at the crucial question of how social memory emerges, and how these collective memories are passed on within the same social group. The purpose of this chapter is to do this, that is, to illustrate the formation of political pasts in the context of strategic groups.

The Politics of Remembrance

In Chang's words (1996), 'an interpretative power exists in the process of constructing collective memory into social solidarity.' Memory from her point of view plays a crucial role in creating a we-sentiment, a world of reciprocity. Thus, social solidarity is rooted in memory; memory is a meaningful resource and solidarity can be evoked by participating in ceremonial activities.[6]

Accordingly, the transformation of the memorial framework implies the constructed history of a dominant group, but allows for the freedom of the individual to choose between different communities of memory, and the convergence of the autobiographical memory and the collective memory as a result.

As Chang (1996: 60) says, this implies central question regarding constructed history and the shaping of the public arena: 'who selects

the different historical contents and interprets them? What is the relationship between the constructed history and the other repressed memories?'.

This relates very much to the questions which I identified as central to the shaping of public arenas and communities of practice, namely the ownership of the public sphere and the authority to speak. To explore these questions, consider the strategies that will be used by any dominant group to strengthen its cultural or political hegemony and repress the other memories within any given society at the same time, strategies of 'organized remembrance' and 'organised forgetting'. Chang (1996: 61) writes; 'obviously the bringing into play of power relations does not simply imply a construction of history, it is rather the attempt to maintain the authority by such kind of interpreted history'.

Thus, the practice of recalling the past is an attempt to shape cultural spaces. The reconstructed history provides the meaningful material for the social construction of the communal spaces, the flesh and the contents of these spaces.

The problem with his sociology of memory is that Halbwachs says little of how images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past are sustained and conveyed by social groups. In a Foucauldian manner, we are interested in the techniques by which pasts are re-enacted, appropriated and by which cultural spaces they are shaped. The emphasis is switching to the political manipulations of the past and not only the historical reconstruction. Looking to the practices of re-enacting the past by which images of the past are conveyed and sustained, in particular, opens a perspective on the relationships of power, of domination and resistance, by which interpretations of history are designed, imposed and contested, by which either complementary or oppositional versions of the past are demonstrated within the context of the communities of memory in their ritual performances.

The Politics of Remembering and Forgetting

Communities of Practice is a sub-theme of identity politics. The associations are forms of class sociability, which allow original forms of communication and, importantly, utopias and visions. The middle classes are the producers, and, with the help of their own media, the articulators of collective identity.

The aggressive promotion of tourism in Thailand has transformed the landscapes and memorial sites of Southern Thailand in tourist maps and commercialized tourist attractions. Southern Thailand, which is considered a sensitive region in terms of national security, has

been discovered and marketed in the southern-most axis of the tourist trade. In a context of rapid modernization and urban change, a nostalgia and general quest for authenticity is flourishing in Southern Thailand.

The re-imagining of Southern Thailand and the extensive changes in the subjectivities are taking place in a larger context in which the region is transformed by modernization processes and in which Thailand partakes in cultural globalizations. The positions of East and West, of Westernization, Islamicization and Reformist Buddhism are all facets of a global reality that is increasingly manifest in the region.

Southern Thailand's history is becoming part of a passionate discourse on its cultural heritage. In the politics of selective remembering and forgetting, middle-class agents become keen archaeologists, historians and architects of collective identities. I would like to argue that the appropriations of partial histories are a component of the 'high' cultural productions of knowledge. I would like to show how social memory is incorporated and used in the practices and discursive strategies of the communities of practice. Social memory is cultural capital that is returned in the social arena on various levels of social action. Social memory forms an important part in the assertion of identity in an attempt to shape cultural spaces and is itself a discursive construct of the strategies of selfhood–on the individual and communal level.

Social Memory

Connerton (1989: 2) notes that our experiences of the present depend upon our knowledge of the past, and that our images of the past commonly serve to legitimate a present social order.

A social order requires shared memories:

> "It is an implicit rule that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory. To the extent that their memories of a society's past diverge, to that extent its members can share neither experiences nor assumptions" (Connerton 1989: 3).

Images of the past legitimate the social order. The legitimization of the past is problematic in Thailand. Social memory, sustained in commemorative ceremonies, thus legitimizes or questions such a social order. Connerton (1989) argues that images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past are conveyed and sustained by performances.

Furthermore, he points to the manifold ways a society remembers, through gestures, acts and bodily performance.

Taking up the notion of the performative memory, I shall explore the remembering of the past through incorporated practices, as Connerton suggests, and look at the performance of commemorative ceremonies in the public arena. Shared memory in Southern Thailand is very problematic. At the same time, memory seems central in the making of a society and in producing or challenging the social order.

Social memory as a meaningful resource has entered everyday discourses in a moral economy of symbolic goods. Furthermore, the appropriation of history is part of a collective identity that is developed in the communities of practice, here communities of memory. Social memory plays a role in the mobilization of members and provides important material for the construction of shared identity. The presentation of Southern Thailand's history forms part of the stocked knowledge of the educated. The presenters are conscious of the sensitive nature of local history.

Traditions are reinvented as part of a spectacle in which the meaning of locality is negotiated.

The discursive formations are not to be separated from the political stake. The appropriation of regional history and its partial demonstration is confronting the Thai-ization campaign of the state and the important role that the history of mapping, including cultural mapping, plays for the self-understanding of the nation-state. In any society, there are different theatres of society.

However, social memory is a meaningful resource in the globalization processes. Local history becomes a concern of the communities at a time, when the *lieux de memoires*, the places of remembrance, are the subject of the tourist gaze (e.g. Chaiwat 1993).

Tourism is an important dimension of market expansion and of the social transformation in general. Tourism is also a golden opportunity for the representation of Southern Thailand by larger state agencies, such as the National Identity Board and the Tourist Authority of Thailand (TAT). Theatres of remembrance are rearticulated in the frame of cross-border tourism from Malaysia and Singapore. The spirals of tourism contribute in no small part to putting memory on the agenda of the public sphere.

In the following, practices of remembrance and forgetting, especially from the communities of memory, are interpreted as techniques for producing locality. From the outset, locality is reinvented and reimagined in the complex relationships of the communities with the state.

Memory work is not a passive receptacle, but instead a process of active restructuring, in which elements may be retained, reordered or

surpressed (Fentresss/Wickham 1992). As Appadurai (1995) points out, the perception of locality has undergone fundamental changes: the media, in particular, has transformed the meaning of locality by creating complex images of distance, self and other and social transformation Southern Thailand is better described as a site in which complex historical processes come into conjunction with global processes that link such sites together. Appadurai (1995) has described these sites as a global structure for the continuous flow of images and ideologies. Social memory has entered the language of cultural politics.

The efforts of the state to control the conservation of the cultural heritage, the aggressive promotion of tourism, and the competing theatres of memory, create complex conditions for the production and reproduction of locality. Constitutive narratives are persistently retold among the groups. An exploration of the theatres of memory always includes individual or collective interactions either with the state or transnational localities, translocalities. Thus, the renegotiations of memory is a battle that touches museums, travel and heritage.

Theatres of Memory

Social memory also includes the cultural productions of Chinese and Malay communities of practice, producing complementary or oppositional discourses on the past. Social memory involves speaking for a culture and of defining the contents of Thai Culture or Islamic Culture. In these authorized interpretations of the past, *lieux de memoire* are associated with versions of history that form the basis for narratives, legends and stories. The narratives of the imagined past provide important discursive constructs in the public culture. Social memory is likely to be found in commemorative ceremonies. Connerton's (1989) argument is that performative memory is bodily. There is an aspect of social memory that has been neglected: bodily social memory. Performative memory is more widespread in bodily practices. In the theatres of memory, the re-enactment is of cardinal importance in the shaping of communal memory.

Connerton's argument can be readily applied to the case of Southern Thailand. Table 5 illustrates the politics and re-enactment of the past in spaces of identity.

Table 5. Performative Memory Compared

Communities of memory	The Imagined past	Commemorative ceremonies	Bodily practic, habitual memory	Identity markers, identity emblems	Re-enactment of the past
Thai professionals	*baan koet*, community culture	Urban event, exposition, blessing	Merit Making (*Tambun*)	Local foods, Southern Thai dress	Prince of Songkla, Luang Por Tuad Saints cult
Islamic Scholar	Lost state, cradle of Islam	Public lecture, oath	Prayer, Ascetic Lifestyle	Veil, arabic dress, Kru Se, mosque, Sultanate's palace	Haji Sulong martyr
Chinese Entrepreneur	Chinese Settlers	Festival, Documentation, Curse	Vegetarianism	Lim Gor Niew Shrine	Kwan Im cult, Lim Gor Niew Saints cult

Symbols from rural worlds (local foods, Southern Thai peasant clothes, folkloric elements) are used in the urban performative culture to support the invention of a local identity and a Southern 'Thai way of life'. In addition, symbols of Theravada Buddhism, nature and political heroes underline the efforts of the 'people's organizations' to create affection and sympathy for the Songkla locality. The history of the muang was visualized in the exposition of old photos of Songkla town, showing the old houses, dress and family images, etc. The saints cult of Luang Por Tuad is to be found in the performative memory. Luang Por Tuad is remembered for his magical powers. Stories about him are told and retold in Southern Thailand.

The re-enactment of the Islamic locality is very important for local strategies of Muslim self-awareness in Patani. The re-enactment of the great past has an important psychological dimension for the Malay Diaspora in Southern Thailand. Here, what is being remembered can counter the history that has been, consciously or unconsciously, forgotten. The common history of the Patani and Kelantan *ulema* is embedded in the South-South dimension: The *kitab Jawi* of Shaykh Daud al-Fatani have been printed in Cairo and Mecca and are used widely in the Islamic heartland (Madmarn 1999). The Patani *ulema* and their clas-

sical works on *kitab Jawi*, like those of Shaykh Daud al-Fatani forge the past reputation of Patani as a cradle of Islam. In the context of Muslim self-awareness in Patani, Islamic networks with the Middle East and the neighbouring Malay provinces of Kelantan and Trengganu are being revived. The suffering of the Malays in Thailand is epitomized by the remembering of the martyr Haji Sulong who rebelled against hyper-nationalism and was murdered by Thai police.[7] The legend of Lim Gor Niew and the temple cult is an important aspect of Sino-Muslim relations in the South. The unfinished Kru Se mosque has become a place of worship for the Malay community, symbolizing the ordeal of the Muslim minority in Thailand.

The southern coastal Chinese possessed a very distinctive local culture compared with Chinese elsewhere. Hamilton (1999: 10-11), when attending a ritual of Chinese in Yala (of transporting the gods, spirit mediumship and spirit possession), saw a performance of an elaborated series of dances:

> "Wearing costumes remniscent of Imperial China, with painted faces and using clab-sticks for rhythm, this group danced in and around the temple in the evening and again in the morning as the gods were being roused to come down to earth. At the end a long narrative was read out over the loudspeaker, remembering the history of the Southern coastal Chinese" (Hamilton 1999: 10-11).

The spread of accompanying media has helped greatly to the processes of these practices into a space of public culture. The revival of Chinese identity is greatly helped by thousands of visitors from Malaysia, Singapore and, lately, from Taiwan.

In summary, there is a deep historical layer of Thai, Chinese and Malay rituals. Practices of remembering and forgetting contribute greatly in the construction of cultural images. The politics of the past forge a particular Southern identity. Whereas the Thai practices of memory are thus associated with political forms of state power (epitomized by Prince of Songkla, Prem Tinsulanond, Chuan Leekpai), and the Chinese practices of memory arise from the particular history of Chinese settlers (and myths), the Malay memory is concerned with the repression of Malay history.

The performative memory varies rhetoric styles in bringing the past into the present and the future. Among the most influential styles are the blessing, the oath and the curse. The blessing of Phra Bhudhadhasa is not merely a good wish, but brings merit and fortune in the hands of

the people's'organizations. The oath is a powerful reminder that the Muslims are not going to tolerate the ongoing suppression of speaking about history in public. The name of Haji Sulong, in particular, is put into this context. In contrast, the Lim Gor Niew curse has grown louder in recent years as a result of the growing presence of Chinese in Southern Thailand from Bangkok, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan.[8]

The re-enactment of the past in bodily practices characterizes the everyday politics of constructing culture through lifestyles. Bodily practices and more formalized rituals are both material to the performance of social memory in the communities of practice.[9]

Thus, dress is one of the most visible practice of distinction and demonstration of a lifestyle and a highly visible expression of identity.[10] The visual modification makes dress performative. The example of Southern Thailand provides material on the process in which bodily practices, such as dress, are made public.

People in Southern Thailand are making conscious choices when selecting dress. In the life-worlds of the communities of memory, traditional dress comes back onto centre-stage. Through a self-imposed dress code, the members are anxious to conserve their traditions, which are sedimented in the body.

Therefore, both commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices therefore contain a measure of insurance against the process of cumulative questioning entailed in all discursive practices. This is the source of their importance and persistence as mnemonic systems. Every group, then, will entrust to bodily automatisms the values and categories which they are most anxious to conserve. They will know how well the past can be kept in mind by habitual memory sedimented in the body. Clothing is a strong identity marker in the micropolitics, which visibly situates the wearer in a political context. Clothing, like bodily practices in general, point explicitly to the imagined past and is an identity emblem that is performed in the context of the communities of memory.

Whereas dress is the most visible bodily practice of performing social memory, cuisine can also be used in the re-enactment of an imagined past and invented tradition. In the communities of memory, traditional dress and local foods are actively promoted. Members of the communities are encouraged to express a collective memory and shared identity through dress and taste. Cultural festivals of the Thais, Chinese and Malays highlight 'traditional' clothes and bodily practices. The bodily practices are social memories in which the knowledge of the past can be stored.

Dress practices in the public spaces do not reflect everydaylife; rather, dress enhances the performative statement of cultural identity.

The (Southern) Thai dress, combining peasant and Thai aristocratic styles, affectedly help create feelings of belonging in the performance. The traditional dress adds to (and contrasts with) Western, global clothing. In contrast, the Islamic dress sets the Malays apart from the Thai majority. Muslim women play a crucial role in maintaining ethnic symbols, such as clothing and language and minimize interaction with outsiders. In addition, women strongly oppose intermarriage (Chavivun 1980). Muslim habitual practices (veiling) play a crucial role in bringing in new gender arrangements in the frame of the South-South dimension. Chinese variations that are put on for festive occasions include white clothes to express bodily renunciation (for the vegetarian festivals in Trang and Phuket) and colourful costumes of Imperial China to enhance Chineseness.

Thus, dress as a code is woven into the identity politics in Southern Thailand. In this sense, dress-codes are a significant part of the cultural productions. The invention of a 'traditional' dress by Southern entrepreneurs illustrates that businessmen are prepared to show solidarity in order to resist competition from the national centre, Bangkok.

The dynamics of language belong to the bodily practices and habits by which performative memory is communicated. The memory is also stored in names. In Thailand, minorities have to adopt Thai names in order to fit into the model of the Thai nation-state. The adoption of Thai names is a relic from the colonial past. Thus, Malay academics use Muslim synonyms and restrict the use of Thai names to the official sphere. The new name does not necessarily correspond to the old Malay name, but may correspond to a new self-confidence of orthodox Muslims. The psychological significance of naming should not be underestimated. In contrast, the Chinese have no problem in using Thai names. However, the use of Chinese names is common.

The official version of the past is challenged within the communities of memory, which use their own symbols and languages.[11] Thus, in the Muslim public sphere and in the *pondok*, the Patani Malay dialect is spoken, and it comes as no surprise that the Islamic values that differ substantially from the official version, in that different hierarchies and rules are taught, are associated with the Malay dialect, with Arabic, and with the Jawi script.

Thus, just as the Central Thai dialect is the medium of the official past, Malay and Jawi is the medium of the Islamic past. Particular Chinese biographies, in which the Chinese dialect informs about the migrant's origin, are told and retold in oral history.

Some Chinese rediscover the biography of their parents in the Thai language. The documentation of the Khunanurak family shows that this rediscovery of the Chinese past is complimentary to that of the

Thai nation. This book situates the Chinese community in relationship to the Thai state and the Thai royalty. The documentation is about the genealogy of Chinese ancestors. This important documentation shows the assimilation into a Thai political system, their affiliation with the Queen, with Theravada Buddhism, and the Thai state. It nicely illustrates the particular development of the Chinese in Thailand and the South. In this documentation, the Chinese past is beautifully revived and presented to a Thai-Chinese speaking audience.[12]

In summary, language is a medium of communicating memory. What emerges is not one collective memory, but a plurality of social memories that is taught and re-enacted in Thai, Malay or Chinese languages and dialects. The language, together with dress and food, becomes important sites for negotiating cultural identity and contesting social order. This politics of language, which language is used on which occasion, is very closely linked with the assertion of identity and assertion of an imagined past. The Chinese or Malays may speak Thai fluently, but they will continue to practise their own languages within their own communities of memory and their lifeworlds (including their educational institutions). They may switch languages according to the situation and the context to express their place within plural cultures or to demonstrate loyalty/resistance, complementary visions of history (the Chinese)/oppositional versions (the Malays). Thus, bodily practices, clothing and languages are important forms of distinction, in which a political past can be highlighted.

The Curse, the Blessing and the Oath

As Connerton (1989) writes, the performativeness of ritual is partly a matter of utterance. Among the verbal utterances most commonly encountered in rites are curses, blessings and oaths:

> "A curse seeks to bring its object under the sway of its power; once pronounced a curse continues to consign its object to the fate it has summoned up and is thought to continue in effect until its potency is exhausted. A blessing is no mere pious wish; it is understood to allocate fortune's gifts by the employment of words. And like the curse and the blessing, the oath is an automatically effective power-word which ... dedicates the swearer to this power" (Connerton 1989: 58).

Using the example of the sudden death of a young Muslim convert, Nishii (1996) shows the conflictual appropriation of social memory as

the families attempt to impose their funeral on the dead body of the young convert. This body of the young convert emerges as a contested symbolisation of social struggle over competing cultural systems. Nishii (1996) has given a vivid picture of the social processes in which social memory emerge.

Taking up Nishii's idea that social memory is a process in which different ways of remembering contest, I shall explain the ways in which social memory is created and, indeed, demonstrated in the communities of practice and used in their partial interpretations of history.

The Past Cannot Be Forgotten

In Southern Thailand, practices of remembering are concerned with the management of emotions, because history is a highly emotional affair. Hatred is a spontaneous emotion that emerges as a reaction to concrete experience of discrimination or ignorance. Hatred can also be directed and manipulated through organized performances.

The remembering of the past has a specific aim: a subjective view of the past allows a claim on cultural space. The recalling of the cradle of Islam provides an opportunity for a growing self-confidence of the Muslims, united in the expanding public sphere of High Islam. The perception of marginality and despair can be transformed into centrality and pride. The sultanate, the palace and trade re-emerge in rich colours and the kingdom of Langkasuka is evoked in paintings of greatness. The centrality of the Muslims is supported by claims of being a cradle of Islam with a history of Islamic teaching and learning.[13] Patani is said to be a place where pious Muslims come from Champa, from Malaya and from other directions to learn in the known *pondoks* of Patani. The cradle image points to the cardinal importance of education in the Muslim communal space.

The recalling of an autonomous history involves semi-secret organizations and the secret mapping of southern landscapes by the Malays. Without a museum of their own, the Malays are able to name and label the many places, grounds and cemeteries. The construction of their own world, their own past is a technique of zoning the physical space around their emotional needs. The Islamization of the past seems a major project realized by Muslim religious leaders, transporting the past into the present.

The Islamic calendar contained only two festivals: the pilgrimage, and feasting in Ramadan.[14] Both rituals have been incorporated into the Muslim public sphere. Travel agencies in Pattani, Yala and Naratiwat increasingly organize the pilgrimage. The pilgrimage is a highlight

in the Muslim media, in the *Islamic Guidance Post* and allows for extensive media coverage on radio and television. Feasting during Ramadan is a period during which the religious is intensive and during which explicit historical reference are made. The Islamic heritage is re-enacted in commemorative speeches as well as public lectures, in documentation (in book form), in the Islamic media and in the work of voluntary foundations. The foundation called Haji Sulong Foundation explicitly remembers the resistance of Muslim leaders to the Siamization policy of the military Thai government. In this way, remembrance of charismatic religious figures is combined with current Islamic charity.

The Chinese community dominating economic life also takes care to preserve the Chinese cultural heritage. In the 1980s, and into the 1990s, the Chinese New Year has become a tourist event. The boost of the Chinese New Year in Thailand is due in no small way to the ever-growing flow of Chinese tourists. In the mingling of Chinese Thai cultural spaces, the nurturing of the Chinese heritage in Thailand, Chinese urban symbols in Southern Thailand, and the promotion of Chinese festivals in Thai tourism, Chinese social spaces, or ethnoscapes, emerge, in which the Southeast Asian Diaspora remembers the legends of Chinese settlements on the harbours of Southeast Asia. The remembrance of Captain China and the Chinese include military strife. The Chinese have lent a helping hand in a symbiosis with Thai noble families to defeat Malay revolts against Thai occupation. The photos on the walls of the Khunanurak family home show the symbiosis of the royal family with Chinese families. This symbiosis strongly symbolizes the historic alliance of the Chinese and the Thai state. In this scenario, the Muslims are perceived as a 'fanatic' mob, which has to be controlled. As Connerton (1989) notes, the performativeness of ritual is partly a matter of utterance: the recurrent utterance of curses, blessings and oaths.[15]

The Production of Locality and the Thai State

The attempt of the state to control the conservation of the cultural heritage, the promotion of tourism by quasi-governmental organizations such as the TAT, and the performances of memory by the communities create complex conditions for the production and reproduction of locality, in which ties of remembrance weave together various circulating populations that belong in one sense to the nation-state, but are what Appadurai (1995) calls translocalities. As he explains, translocalities and transnational communities whose solidarity is produced by known and shared memories are at odds with the need of the nation-

state to regulate public life and public remembrance in the sense that the transnational communities of memory produce contexts of alterations (spatial, social, and technical) that do not meet the spatial standardisation of the nation-state.

Forgetting is as socially structured as is the process of remembering. Thus, the practice of remembering the past is always an action of re-interpreting and remaking the past within the present. In the process of reworking the past, narratives emerge that nest in the discourses on place and more particularly on the present and future of the locality.

Lovell (1998) notes that belonging is a way of remembering and of constructing a collective memory of place, but that such constructions are always contestable. Her concept of locality and belonging explores how collective memory, ethnicity and a sense of longing for the past can fuse in the construction of locality. Belonging may be instrumental in the construction of collective memory surrounding place. Locality and belonging are defined and moulded by memories of belonging to particular landscapes.

Narratives of the past provide important building material for the construction and enactment of particular landscapes. Thus, the selective choice of some building materials and the rejection of others is part of the reconstruction of an imagined community. In the case of Southern Thailand, locality can be recreated through the memory of its existence in the past. Thus, the memory is conductive to the forging of social bonds and contributes in no small part to a structure of feeling, to solidarity. The memorialization of space mobilises people, and represents an attempt to assert a particular identity through interpretation of history. The communities of memory create remembered and imagined pasts and spaces, which can be used as a symbol of other, often political claims. The geographical boundaries, by which cultural territories may emerge, can be called mental maps. The appropriation of history takes place within the framework of the communities of practice that are involved in a constant effort of mapping Southern Thailand anew.

The historical heritage of Southern Thailand constitutes such a contested locality, in which mobilized feelings of belonging express more political claims and assertions in the social transformation of the region. Appadurai (1995) has argued that the multiple forms of rituals, labelling and spatial demarcations, which are easily overlooked by anthropologists, could be interpreted as techniques for the zoning, and production, of locality.

Southern Thailand as a Discursive Construct

Social memory is constitutive for the formation of discourses on Southern Thailand and the perception of Southern Thailand in Thailand and in Malaysia. Southern Thailand's mapping splits into the lower and upper body of Southern Thailand. Lower Southern Thailand is regarded as a problem region and a trouble maker. National security is put high on the agenda. Administration is carried out more tightly. The five provinces of the lower body are called the five border provinces. The border provinces are focus of a special development programme that is protected by the royal family. The institutional commemoration can silence alternative memories of the past. In the emerging public arenas, the discursive construction of the past is highly politicized, negotiated and contested. The dominant discourse of the state is a constant reminder to the different communities that they build their politics of the past always in relationship with the state. The theatres of memory, their commemorative ceremonies and their daily routines are integrated into the ongoing negotiation of Southern Thai identities. The politics of the past are in no way lasting memories stored up in history, but are always revoked and manipulated within social struggles in the present. Thus, the hatred, which the recalling and, indeed, performance, of the past in mass tourism, provokes, illustrates the management of emotions that the manipulation of the past involves in the current social transformation of the region. Social memory is one of the social fields emerging in which the ownership of the public sphere is at stake. The claim on the past is also a signal of demonstrating a presence in public spaces in the present social order. The performative social memory is surely a very important dimension of the design of the autonomous communal spaces that have been established under the lead of the educated middle classes.