
Preface and Acknowledgement

Many people and institutions have helped to realize this study, which is based on my Ph.D thesis at the University of Bielefeld (Horstmann 2000). The thesis was originally written in the context of the graduate school 'Market, State, Ethnicity' at the University of Bielefeld, the findings of which have been published in the volume *Integration through Diversity* (Horstmann/Schlee 2001). Both Prof. Hans-Dieter Evers and Dr. Georg Stauth provided more than the usual advice and moral support. I like to thank Hans-Dieter Evers for guiding me through his vast experience in Southeast Asian Studies and Prof. Solvay Gerke for her initial inspiration on the sociology of a middle class in Southeast Asia, which co-exists with an impoverished peasantry. Among the many people who helped me in Bielefeld, I like to single out Georg Stauth as a teacher of the sociology of culture and religion. I like to thank Dr. Surchart Sriyaranya for his gentle companionship during writing in Bielefeld. My gratitude goes to the German Research Foundation (DFG) for a generous fellowship, to the Friedrich-Naumann Foundation for sponsoring my participation in the Fourth Inter-ASEAN Seminar on Social Development in 1999 and to the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for a post-doctoral fellowship in 2001. Further, I acknowledge the Asian Studies in Asia Participation Scheme grant from the Australian National University, which enabled me to organize a panel on border identity for the First Inter-Dialogue Conference on Southern Thailand in 2002. The Research Institute for the Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo (ILCAA) provided me with just the best possible working conditions. I gave the thesis to competent readers in Thailand, Malaysia, Japan and Australia for feedback. Prof. Annette Hamilton (University of New South Wales), Prof. Sharifah Zaleha (University Kebangsaan Malaysia), Prof. Chaiwat Satha-Anand (Thammasat University) and Prof. Omar Farouk Bajunid (Hiroshima City University) provided stimulating comments. Their encouraging words urged me to go ahead with the publication. Obviously, I tackled questions that have not been dealt with before in the

literature on Southern Thailand (but see Stivens 1998 and Kahn 1991, 1992, 1995).

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Giving Alms in Kelantan, Malaysia.

This study on the cultural competition of ethnic groups, their symbolism and negotiations of power in Southern Thailand is based on ethnographic fieldwork with a spectrum of people who have hitherto hardly been seen worthy of ethnographic attention. Academics, teachers and intellectuals are themselves very much involved in the refashioning and production of cultural identities on the golden Malay Peninsula. Sometimes, I thought that this spectrum of people was too involved in the social poetics and politics of cultural distinction. Thus, I make no excuse of centering on the narratives, educated people deploy in their everyday negotiations of power. This approach takes Bourdieu's concept of 'Distinction' (1979) as a starting point and looks carefully at the production of the many little essentialisms that result in the construction of the self and the other. In particular, I was puzzled

by the essentialist categories of Thai Buddhists and Malay Muslims and by the stereotypes and descriptions of their cultures, which, ironically resemble the essentialism of the nation-state and which seem to ignore the diversity and cultural complexity of the peninsula at the Isthmus of Kra. This region has changed from a center of maritime trade, intercultural exchange and religious mission to a borderland, in which the people have become firmly incorporated into the space of the nation-state.

The focus on the educated middle class is violating a taboo. Social anthropologists and sociologists are expected to choose their village and to reproduce some of the myths and representations of Southern Thailand. But, following Herzfeld (1997), this cultural intimacy, which people like bureaucrats, artisans and teachers try to hide from the foreigner, is often the most interesting and revealing practice to be explored. Staying with my wife and our baby in Songkla and Patani, I found that some of the key codes which were structuring my fieldwork were the debates on morality, on family and the home, on sexuality and on gender relations. People were constantly talking about family and home. Debates on morality and the moral state of society obviously had an impact on notions of being a worthy person, of dignity and self-esteem. I noted the high emotions that have been linked to the organization of everyday life. This deployment of binaries of good and bad creates friends and enemies, people to be trusted and people of whom to be suspicious. The loss of comfort, moral security and the endless disruption together with the increasing presence of mass culture and cultural images of the West produce a melancholy, a discourse on authenticity, and nostalgia for the grandeur of the past, which seems so characteristic of the atmosphere reigning in Songkla and Patani as cradles of Buddhist and Islamic civilization.

During my 14 months fieldwork in 1995/1996, I became attached to the cultural complexity and beauty of the region and to the strong will (*hoa kaeng*) of its people. In following the cultural re-discovery of the people, I hope that I have not adopted the same longing for authenticity and nostalgia as my informants. I have to excuse myself for disturbing the private sphere and peace. I think that people are not used to speaking about themselves and their communication is often a discovery of the self. On subsequent visits, I became interested in religious networks, peasants and fishing households across the Thailand/Malaysian border. However, I kept being impressed by the escalation of identity politics and the emotions that were involved. I thought that I had to show the technologies of the self and the processes in which identities are negotiated. I found assistance in Herzfeld (1997) who argued that symbolism (social drama) should not be dismissed as mere

anecdote and from two friends, who helped me during the critical stages of the fieldwork, namely Khamnuan Nuansanong and Wae-Maji Paramal. Both are willy-nilly participants in the identity politics of Southern Thailand, embracing reformist ideas in Theravada and Islam, respectively. It is to them that I owe all.

I am very lucky to have Naomi and I have seen my two children being born and growing up during the writing process. Naomi and Sascha have been in the field and have contributed considerably to the final product.

It is a great loss for me that my mother could not witness the publication of this book. It is to her, Karin Anna, nee Rattay, that I dedicate this study.

Alexander Horstmann, Tokyo, August 15, 2002.