

## **Self-Affirmation, Globalization and Cultural Distinction in Songkla and Patani**

Locally based social movements are central in producing cultural images of the extended public spheres. Looking specifically at the local reconstruction of culture, the Chapters 3, 4 and 5 describe new arenas in Songkla and Patani. The Chapters examine in particular social formations, organization, ideologies and the activities of local movements. In summary, the research interest concerns the agency of the movement. Chapter 3 is divided into two parts: the Chapter sketches first a portrait of Thai non-governmental organisations and networks in Songkla and provides second an insight into the dynamics of re-constructing local Islam in the Southeast Asia/Middle East connection. Identity performances in locally-based social movements in Southern Thailand are interpreted in a comparative schema.

### **Klum ‘Rao Rak Songkla’**

Locally based groups in Songkla have developed into a lively social movement. Professionals are organized into networks and organizations to have a say in public life. Lawyers, doctors, journalists, academics, teachers, entrepreneurs and civil servants have been organized into business associations, philanthropic foundations, alumni and charities. The campaign for klum rao rak Songkla constitutes a new quality of the public sphere, integrating the Thai Buddhist middle classes. This integration brings together people of various strands and backgrounds from business circles, NGOs, academic circles who have sometimes never cooperated. No wonder then the people’s organisation of Songkla Prachakom has to overcome divisions within the movement itself. The ‘people’s organizations’ of Songkla Prachakom has grown dynamically in the late 1990s. Indeed, the core group has had problems adjusting to the fast growth and institutionalization of the networks. As

a result of this growth, the Chamber of Commerce and local government have shown interest in and recognized Songkla Prachakom as a major platform of public life. Local academic circles have been encouraged by the opportunities of political reform to open Songkla Prachakom for political debates and to prepare their own political careers. In doing so, they have been helped in no small part, by the accompanying community media which has been critical of the performance of the Songkla *baan koet* campaign and is a springboard for popularity, charisma and a career in the political arena (e.g. Chapter 4). The sociocultural movement, its activities, social organization and its cultural codes are shown in Table 2.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 2.** Local Civic Groups: Songkla Prachakom

Communities of practice	Performance	Language	Religion	Media	Organization
Songkla Prachakom	<i>baan koet</i> campaign	Thai	Bhuddhadhasa	Core radio	Songkla forum, NGOs, wat, political reform

### Practices and Activities

During the Learning Festival (*tesagarnarnienru*) from 9 to 11 March 1996, 24 children completed a large wall painting of Songkla under the tutelage of four adults. For that purpose, local teachers and artists guided the children to important sites of Songkla, covering the public buildings, the school, the hospital, the Buddhist wat and the mosque, taking paper and pencils with them. The mural featured a lot of green, modern housing, the main street, Songkla Lake, the fishing, and in the centre of the mural, a bright wat. The artwork was presented to the festival audience of the festival at Songkla City Hall. The artwork summarizes well the purpose of the festival: the main purpose of the festival was to learn about the participants' place of birth (*baan koet*). The people were urged to rediscover the beauty of their hometown.<sup>2</sup>

The people of Songkla were encouraged to take a break from daily life, to begin to think about a 'vision' for Songkla, and to exchange new ideas in this direction. The label 'Learning' Festival has been chosen to emphasise the role of teaching. As the invitation form to the festival

explains, the access to knowledge is a condition for the ability to participate in, and develop creative thinking for, the making of the modern world. The subtitle of the festival 'Learning Thai ways of life, feeling Thai hearts' (*rienrwititbai, duainuajaitbai*) expresses the quest for authenticity.

The festival aimed to raise awareness of Songkla culture in the minds of Songkla's people. Reflection on the landscapes of Songkla and a sensibilization for the consequences of social change were set in motion. This process of reflection was achieved through 'educational games' in which awareness of the place of birth in the face of threats to its integrity was raised. The aim of the festival was to inform the 'people' about Songkla's history; It was also intended to win friends who share an interest in a better society and most significantly, the festival—in a dramatic way—puts local groups on centre stage. Buddhist sermons of the great monk Phra Bhuddhadhasa Bhikku were presented in a radio programme. Buddhism is considered a natural and authoritative protector of the community as well as a social order. The promotion of kao yam Songkla is a nice illustration of the use of symbolism: one pamphlet reads: 'Songkla people like to eat *kao yam* Songkla'.

Local foods are chosen to represent Thai culture, traditions, a nostalgia for the past; kao yam Songkla symbolises—a somewhat essentialist—version of Thainess. Local foods represent authentic Thai culture in the face of social change and the influx of Western lifestyles, e.g. McDonaldization. The new relationship between humans and nature is one of the priorities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Songkla. The commercial exploitation of nature is criticized. Songkla Lake is seen as the lounge of Songkla, as nature is considered the lounge of the *muang*.

Songkla Prachakom and Songkla Forum were initially no more than a loose friendship groups, but developed in the face of potential sponsors into a core group of local intellectuals and a number of quasi-members who can be called upon when the occasion arose.

Youth was thought to have a critical role in the future of the locality. According to Pannipa Sotthibandhu, one of the organizers and managers of Songkla Forum, a profit-minded capitalist culture is at the root of the social ills of modern Thai society. 'As long as people are interested in money making, community-building will not progress.'

Key terms of the public discourse were 'new ideas', 'creative thinking' and 'thoughtful action'. 'Peace' and 'peaceful action' were empha-

sized. Theravada Buddhism is the only guide and ethic that members should apply to their actions.

The peoples' organization aims for no less than the construction of a new subjectivity, a subjectivity that makes the individuals conscious about themselves, the collective and the environment. Moreover, the individual is asked to begin a process of learning about the community concerns. As a result of togetherness, a world of harmony is to be established.

I have accompanied an organized walk to a temple in Songkla Lake. Guided walks leading to a forest temple in Songkla Lake is associated with reformist Buddhist connotation. The walk is associated with Dhamma Yatra, meaning that spiritual energy is set in motion.

The process of religious awakening is spelled out in rich detail: understanding the walk as a form of Buddhist meditation, the participants learn to concentrate, to breathe, to get to know themselves and to reflect on their action. The participants learn to understand their practice as a religious mission. Thus, the Dhamma Yatra walk becomes a religious experience and the participants are enlightened by Buddhist wisdom. Buddhist sermons of the great monk Phra Bhudhadhasa Bhikku are intelligently integrated in the radio programme. Buddhism is considered an authoritative protector of the community as well as social order.

Furthermore, Songkla Prachakom organises seminars. Local intellectuals are encouraged to think about how to contribute to the general interest of the community. For example, professors have been invited to discuss the contribution of religion. Presentations to this seminar covered Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.

The discursive practices of self-organized groups in Songkla borrow from the public discourses of Thai intellectuals and reformist Buddhism. The inspiration for campaigns, festivals and seminars is borrowed from the community culture school (*watthanatham chumchon*), from the teaching of Dr. Prawes Wasi, and from the sermons of Phra Bhudhadhasa Bhikku.

The 'people's organizations' focus a legitimising public discourse on meaningful locality, family and social change.

The people of Songkla are urged to wake up from lethargy and to participate in the activities for the 'common good' of Songkla. The core group mobilises the people of Songkla to join the 'family' of the core group for the sake of *baan muang*. This discourse endorses the ideas of prominent Thai intellectuals. Among the most prominent is Dr. (*mor*) Prawes Wasi. According to Prawes, Thai people are in a state of 'greed', because the roots and the traditions of Thai people have

been left behind. Social problems such as pollution, rural poverty and AIDS plague Thai society. Endorsing the ideas of Mor Prawes, Songkla Forum brings in national discourses in and adopts them to a local level. This popular Thai discourse on Thai values is not limited to Songkla, but influential among intellectuals and NGOs throughout Thailand.<sup>3</sup>

This communitarian discourse on 'Siam in Crisis', the construction of local tradition and 'local wisdom' is popular among Thai academics in contemporary Thailand.<sup>4</sup>

The authors of Songkla Prachakom maintain that the survival of Thai society in an age of globalization depends on reviving local communities. The movement in Songkla is gaining in self-confidence and is also linking up with other cities of Thailand in a network named city-net. Why do people participate in the activities of Songkla Prachakom or Songkla Forum? My informants told me that they are undertaking activities for society, activities that they like to separate from the sphere of home and work. Thus, a motivation for joining includes a desire to do something together with one's peer group, to work on the social reputation and to contribute to the family's name and to receive social recognition from the others. People cannot live without meaning. By joining the activities of the club, members feel that they give their life a meaning to their life. Public space allows for meaningful action.

Spiritual power spreads by word of mouth and quickly attracts new members. Significantly, the new middle classes perform their discourse on the stage of public life, and, by doing so, reformulate ideas of morality, community and justice. By engaging in this reformulation, the use of reformist Buddhism and officialising discourse, local intellectuals proliferate in the Songkla public sphere.

In 1999, the movement grew rapidly and was at the height of its power and level of activity. The movement was planning the 'greening' of private banking. Commercial banks and corporations are encouraged to assist the ecological recovery and to use funds for that purpose. The private radio station would be transformed into a centre for local media.<sup>5</sup> The core associations of Songkla Prachakom are networking with local leaders in order to assist people in need.

Significantly, the movement has been inspired to enter the political arena as a consequence of political change in Thailand. Ajaarn Vi-chai Kanchanasuwon, Aree Rangsiyogit and Supak Inthongkong have used the parent organization of Songkla Prachakom to establish a new organisation on decentralization and political reform. The political efforts of the Thai-Buddhist middle class in Songkla received fresh mo-

mentum with the new constitution in 1999. Core leaders aspire to enter the formal political process and to benefit from the opportunities offered by the elections for the new senate. The organization is also using the platform of Songkla Prachakom to attack power abuse, corruption and patronage, and to put transparency, human rights and personal rights high on the agenda. Therefore, the 'council for political reform' is carrying out a popular campaign that promotes the application of political reform on a local niveau. The leadership seeks intimate relationships with democratic institutions in Bangkok and has invited national leaders such as Anand Panyarachun to Songkla.<sup>6</sup> In personal discussion, the representatives (Ajaarn Vichai, Aree and Supak) of the new organisation and network admit that progress to apply the new laws in Songkla has been slow and has been resisted by the traditional elites. The council for political reform promotes a new vision and is using the media (print media as well as television) to disseminate ideas on clean politics (instead of money politics). While Ajaarn Dr. Vichai, Supak and Aree prepare for political careers,<sup>7</sup> the inability of the organization to change local politics causes increasing frustration and illustrates the impotence of the movement in relationship to traditional elites.<sup>8</sup> The powerlessness sometimes limits the movement to the level of ideas and visions. However, the discourses, cultural images and symbols of Songkla Prachakom are gaining quickly in importance and visibility.

### Intellectual Figures and Locations

Pannipa Sotthibandhu is recognised as the most proliferated person in Songkla. Being the daughter of the President of the Prince of Songkla University's Hatyai campus, Pannipa Sotthibandhu has all the credentials to lead civic groups in the Songkla public sphere. Khun Pannipa Sotthibandhu has been a member of Songkla Prachakom's board, the director of Songkla Forum and the chair of the group's community media, including Hatyai Talk (Hatyai Sontana) and private radio stations. She is currently heading an institute for vocational education in Songkla.

Pannipa's evaluation of local Thai society is indicative of the legitimising discourses of Songkla Prachakom's people's organization. Pannipa points out that 30 years of development have violated (*komkūn*) Thai society and led to a fast deterioration of Thai culture and Thai ways of life. Pannipa analyses the changes in Thai culture from the angle of the family. She is concerned about changing ways of life in urban

areas. Pannipa regrets that young people do not look up to old people. Parents do not have time for the family. People do not know each other, are egoistic and are caught up in consumerism. Transport and communication cause anonymity and pollution. This situation is compared with the good old times. The traditional Thai community is a lively space of communication and tradition (*püntibengchivit*). The spirit of solidarity and local knowledge was transmitted from one generation to the next. There was rice in the fields, and fish in the canal, an old Thai saying. The nostalgia for the community characterises the approach to the development of the *muang*. The goal is to re-establish some of the community-spirit.

The *muang* is compared to a house. Spaces for the family, children and communication must be established. Pannipa hopes to raise support and awareness by 'enlightenment'. She hopes that the old creativity of local communities can be revived, the spirit of Thai traditional values revived and that the violation of creativity and ideas can be stopped. She hopes to revive communication between father and mother, generations and neighbours. The family is considered to be the cell of a healthy community.

Pannipa directed the 'Learning Festival', initiated Songkla *baan koet* and is heading the private radio programme. Pannipa travels regularly to Bangkok in order to keep in touch and to link up with national democratic institutions and international foundations.

Ajaarn Aree Rangsiyogit is Dean for public relations at the Rajabhat Institute in Songkla. He is a foundation member and the President of Songkla Prachakom. Ajaarn Aree Rangsiyogit worked his way up from a humble background of informal and formal education in Bangkok and Songkla. He holds positions in several institutions of higher education in Songkla.

Ajaarn Aree is a charismatic leader whose help is widely thought. Ajaarn Aree is an intimate consultant to the governor of Songkla who would not ignore him for important decisions. Ajaarn Aree is preparing for a political career and will be a candidate in the forthcoming senator elections. He told me that the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have to adjust to the modes of Songkla Prachakom, because the NGOs in his opinion are too much biased against the government. He hopes to beat corruption and vote-buying and prepares for a political career. Ajaarn Aree hopes that Songkla Prachakom will organize the political arena in Songkla in such a way that the core group of the local groups has a hand in important political decisions. Ajaarn Aree thinks that the people's organizations have been empowered by the

membership of politicians and entrepreneurs and are on their way to challenging traditional society. Thus, Ajaarn Aree is standing for power within the movement. He expects the new members from politics, business and the NGOs to adjust to the new rules. Ajaarn Aree is thinking of becoming an independent politician.

Chamnung Raekpinit has organised the farmers in Songkla for many years. He is a graduate from Thammasat University (political sciences) and is based at the Institute for Southern Thai Studies in Songkla.

Chamnung is recognized as a leading figure in the NGO-milieu. He is co-operating with many international donor agencies, among them Misericord, Terre des Hommes and Oxfarm. One of his programmes has been the organization of small-scale credit and saving cooperative in Songkla. Chamnung has been highly successful in raising financial support and in organizing farmers' associations. In addition, Chamnung Raekpinit has good connections with NGOs in Bangkok. He is the person who is mediating between Songkla Prachakom and rural institutions. He is also the person who is mediating between international donor agencies and rural institutions. Thus, Chamnung is coordinating the NGO and peasants networks in upper Southern Thailand.

Chamnung, integrating urban and rural associations, has been approached by many local groups to represent Songkla's interests. Chamnung will comply with this desire and will be a candidate for the coming senator's elections.

## **Concluding Remarks**

Acknowledging the idea of a strategic group, the local group is using cultural tools, the invention of tradition and the transmission of knowledge for public life. The community is edging out and, with performances of public discourses through their own media, provides a forum for communication. Members constitute and reconstitute their identity within the community. They draw on their educational capital to justify their leading role in the affairs of the city and to defend their mission. Thus, they claim access to specialized knowledge and, indeed, refer to a Thai discourse on *siwilai*. Avoiding a political discourse, action is legitimated through anchoring the community into Thai culture, in tradition and Theravada Buddhism. Buddhism has woken up from its apathy and a more activist Buddhism (of Bhudhadhasa Bhikku) is used. The movement is creating attention in dramaturgical fashion in terms of Goffmanesque theatre society.

Does the Songkla-based movement take the place of a third sector between market and state? The ‘club’ provides a forum for the organisation and networking of the Thai-Buddhist middle class. The cultural movement presents itself as firmly anchored in Thai culture. Interestingly, it is not the central Thai culture that has been performed in the urban events, but rather, local community culture. Local people are urged to participate in the building of *baan muang* in Songkla. Although the association does not challenge the legal or political system, the middle class is increasingly able to impose its moral standards on the rest of urban society. From this angle, the club succeeds in an upgrading of the cultural field. The enhancement of the cultural field is strengthening the position of the new middle class. The strategies of the people’s organizations in Songkla are processes of local reconstruction, self-awareness and emancipation.



Islamic Chant, Patani, South Thailand.

### **Local Muslim Society in Patani** <sup>9</sup>

With the transformation of the Patani region from being a tributary Malay principality to an ordinary Thai province, local Malays,<sup>10</sup> as a Muslim minority in a Buddhist nation-state, remember the ‘good old times’, when the Patani sultanate was well known as a ‘cradle of Islam’, attracting Muslims from the Malay peninsula and far away places. This nostalgia for a lost state seems to characterize in a nutshell the psycho-

logical situation of the local Malays, cut off from the Islamic heartland and bound up with the religious cosmology of the Thai nation-state. Remembering the past not only recalls Islamic heritage, but, by implication, involves the ambition to reorganize local Muslim society in Thailand. Related to this claim to cultural autonomy is the claim to possess a history. Thus, the resurgence of Islam in contemporary Southern Thailand is a response to the denial of Malay history in Thailand. The integration of local Muslim society into a global Islamic sphere also results in the active recall of the Patani Islamic locality.<sup>11</sup>

On my visits to Southern Thailand in 1996, 1998 and 1999, I felt a growing Islamic self-awareness in local Malay society. This growing self-awareness had to do with the specific development of the region. A dramatic transformation has been going on in traditional Muslim society for some time, which has certainly led to a breakdown of traditional Islamic institutions. This transformation touches on all domains of Muslim social life. The breakdown of traditional institutions has caused rivalries in local Malay society over the authority to interpret Islam and to shape Muslim cultural spaces. This process was further fuelled by the channelling of the central educational system into the periphery. A new Malay middle-class segment is responding by making use of the Thai as well as the Malay educational system in Malaysia. The educated Malays have been instrumental in establishing an Islamic public sphere that a religious community, social organization and communication network makes possible the negotiation of social space for Muslims in Patani.<sup>12</sup>

The Islamic public sphere, its dynamics and structural change and the application of central concepts and visions in local society have been the subject of anthropological investigation. Students who return from schools in Thailand, Malaysia, South Asia and the Middle East are crucial communicators of Islamic self-awareness. The special relationship between the Islamic public sphere and Islamic movements in Northeast Malaysia must be underlined, because Malays from Southern Thailand have chosen the Malay states of Kelantan and Trengganu as places of political exile. Muslims have to respond to the Thai public sphere as a stage, where Muslim identity and culture have to be performed. They can also be contested and negotiated in the process of realizing performance. So we can only speak here of an Islamic public culture as an appendix to the Thai public culture. This becomes even more obvious if one relates Islamic public culture to the sphere of public education and the different ways in which Islamic education is related to it. Here, we have to ask: 'how does the global form of scriptural

Islam influence the field of local Islam, how do shifts in local Islamic knowledge which have become part of 'global knowledge' influence Islamic practices of the local Malays and how are new Muslim spaces designed in local society?' To answer this body of questions, the claims, visions and utopias of local Malay intellectuals are studied in the light of channelling the global Islamic sphere into the local. For whom and for what purpose is the new religious style and discourse on morality being developed? What does the politicisation of lifestyles and gender relationships mean for the modernisation of local Islam in Southern Thailand? Moreover, the situation in Southern Thailand should, moreover, always be compared with local Islam in neighbouring Kelantan because of the cultural and linguistic affiliation.<sup>13</sup>

### **Che Man's Vision of the Local Islamic Community in Patani**

The most fundamental aspect is thus the increasing power of the Thai nation-state and the expansion of Thai modern education. The period during the 1990s was marked by a paradigmatic change towards Islamic institutions. The Muslim minority participated in the national political process.<sup>14</sup> The Muslim political faction Wahdah (Unity) aligned itself with any national political parties who pay attention to Muslim interests. Mr Wan Muhammad Nor Matta, member of the Wahdah and deputy leader of the New Aspiration party (NAP) is serving as elected speaker of the Thai parliament and is President of the National Assembly. Muslim support for the Wahdah faction is increasing in the south and is gaining popularity among Muslims residing in other parts of Thailand.

Over and above the cultural bonds of Southern Thai Muslim society to Saudi-Arabia, and the intruding Thai modernity, a new religious style has taken on form, power and visibility in Patani. Muslim intellectuals take a lead in restructuring Islamic education, ordering everyday life and reworking ideologies about family, gender and race. The Saturday sermons of Dr. Isma-ae Lutfi in his pondok some kilometers out on the road to Yala has become a public event that appeals tremendously to Muslim academics and students, and attracts large crowds every week. The scholar and preacher epitomizes a new breed of Muslim intellectuals in Southern Thailand. Lutfi has become something of a media 'star' for his bourgeois clientele: Using the microphone and loudspeakers to reach the crowd, his sermons are recorded on audiotape and can be bought either on the spot or in Muslim shops that specialize in Islamic media and clothes. Lutfi is widely known and respect-

ed for his Islamic knowledge, for reciting long passages from the Qur'an and the Hadith in Arabic, and for his networks with Saudi-Arabia where he completed a Ph.D. degree in Shari'a law. By participating in the public sermons, study groups, discussion groups, networks, associations, clubs, and youth groups, I was undertaking research in what I would like to call performance, space, and the making of an Islamic public sphere. This religious style, literate, rule oriented and purist, appears to have a great impact on the university campus, because Malay academics and students seem to be prepared to submit themselves under the pedagogical authority of scholars such as Lutfi. Kraus (1984) has foreseen the development of a strong orthodox Islamic movement in Southern Thailand, which may attract Malays both from rural and urban areas. The process of local Islamic self-awareness has been dubbed 'Islamic resurgence'; yet, what is meant by 'resurgence' is not always clear (cf. Chaiwat 1993). This chapter has the modest aim of exploring some aspects of local Islamic organization at the local level and to put the changing ways of how local Islam is reproduced in relation to globalization.

The most important group among the religious leaders is religious teachers. The practices of religious teachers and their role in the process of the Islamic community in Patani has been discussed by Che Man (1983, 1990a, 1990b). Religious leaders are given positions of status and power in the society. Religious teachers gain status and power through their religious knowledge and teaching. Che Man (*ibid.*) maintains that religious leaders are treated with respect because they play a leading role in community activities, 'ranging from prayers to festivals'. In most villages,

"the Imam, Khatib, and Bilal lead the Muslim villagers in their daily prayers in the mosques. Important religious occasions such as Hari Raya, Maulud and other ceremonies to mark special events such as Kenduri on the occasions of marriage, birth and death always involve religious leaders" (Che Man 1990a: 130).

Religious teachers are divided into tok guru and ustaz. Che Man (*ibid.*) has found that religious teachers were active in the Malay separatist conflicts in the 1970s. As Che Man (*ibid.*) explains, the religious teachers in Patani society rose to fill the roles left vacant by the raja and their ruling aristocrats who were deposed and dispossessed by Thai author-

ities. The activities of the religious teachers are not strictly limited to the religion, but operate along socioeconomic and political parameters.

In the following, the writer is concerned with a new generation of urban scholars and with their religious style. The rise of local intellectuals is intertwined with the increasing contacts of local Islam with the Middle East. It appears to me that the new Islamic public sphere is firmly embedded in global modernity.

Che Man notes that Imams are given status and power in the traditional Muslim community. Describing Islamic traditions in Patani, Che Man compares the Islamic community to a big family, using the intimate words 'family' and 'communal life' to describe the key institutions of Muslim social life, the mosque and the pondok. He writes that the relationship between students and teachers and that among the students themselves are as that in a family:

"Life in a pondok is similar to that in a family. Students live in small individual huts, also called pondok, which are built around a central building where teaching and prayers are conducted. The pondok's objective, apart from teaching religious subjects, is to inculcate a sense of morality based on Islamic principles. Teachers are unconditionally obeyed by students because they are regarded as the students guardians or as members of their family" (Che Man: 1990a: 264).

In the 1990s, the situation of the pondok seem to deteriorate quickly and many pondoks were stricken by poverty. Che Man only mentions in passing the requirements that have been imposed by the Thai bureaucratic system. The material situation of the traditional ulema seems to be more serious than Che Man appears to admit: the moral economy seems to be collapsing as the erosion of the subsistence sector and the need for cash forces Malay peasants into the towns or to Malaysia to seek work. As the region is integrated in much wider national and transnational economic circuits, new consumption patterns develop and change the way of life. For example, Malay pupils may develop more interest in Thai pop concerts and the Manchester United football team than in Qur'an reading groups.

However, in the 1990s, the traditional Imams seemed to lose their grip on the ownership of the Islamic public sphere. The Imams are being replaced by scholars who are inventing different ways of communicating Islamic representations. The restructuring of the pondok has profound implications for the way local Islam is reproduced in Patani.

The new religious specialists are given substantial status and power. The role of the Muslim preachers is greatly enhanced through the Islamic landscapes that are emerging between local societies and that of Petro-Islam. International migrations for higher education sustain the personal networks that feed the Islamic landscapes. The religious style differs from that of the Imam who is respected for mystical qualities. The new religious style is rule-oriented and anti-esoteric. The Imam marks special events such as marriage. The new style is sober and puritanical. The Imam is looking for a mystical relationship. The new style is literalist and Shari'a-oriented.<sup>15</sup>

The urban scholars can capitalize on their Islamic knowledge and transform it into economic capital in turn; weaving patron-client relationships with a bourgeois clientele, the urban scholars are engaged in forms of accumulation. The private character of the Islamic schools makes student fees and donations obligatory and Islamic private schools an attractive enterprises.

Among the traditional Islamic institutions, the mosque is the centre of religious and communal life. In the nineteenth century, these masjids also functioned as schools or universities, within which scholars taught the fundamentals of religion such as Sufi mysticism and languages.

When the institution of the mosque was placed under the authority of the Provincial Council for Islamic Affairs (PCIA) as part of the Thai governmental administrative structure in 1947, it was no longer considered as a private institution. Some 25% of mosques in the region remain unregistered. The formation of a mosque council was an attempt to regulate the activities of the mosque, which became not only the centre for religious activities, but also a meeting place where political issues were articulated. The Kru Se mosque is a case in point. The Kru Se mosque has become a centre of political activities and an important symbol of Muslim identity and social memory in Patani. The activation of the mosque can be interpreted as an effort to re-appropriate the mosque as a private institution and to defuse government interference. The mosque, mosque associations and mosque activities are all experiencing change.

## **New Styles and International Exchanges**

As Antoun (1994) points out, very little attention has been given to migration for higher education, to the interpersonal aspects of migration or to the reactions of migrants to prolonged exposure to alien cultures

and to radically different living circumstances (Antoun 1994). The work of Mona Abaza on Indonesian students in Cairo is the exception in that she focuses just on these issues (Abaza 1991b).

The studying experience involves much more than Islamic studies. There is a constant negotiation between local traditions and modern Islam in Cairo. As a result of exposure to Al-Azhar, Abaza has observed an Egyptianization of Malay students in habitus and lifestyle, language, dress and food habits. The students (including Malays from Thailand) build strong transnational networks that seem to be establishing travel routes, networks and milieus between insular Southeast Asia, Cairo and Mecca. Many Patani students have gone abroad to study Islam, particularly in the Middle East.

The diversity of and fierce antagonism between Muslim groups in Patani creates a highly competitive atmosphere. It is the more education-oriented Malay youth who are attracted to the modern preachers whereas the poorly educated respond to the traditional ulema. Prominent members of the leadership and Muslim academics are split between one local group that promotes the internationalisation of Islamic education, the introduction of English, and scholarships to obtain degrees in the Middle East and in the West and other local group that is pulling away from Western education and is pushing for the Islamization of knowledge; this group leans towards the Islamic centre. The ambitious programme of charismatic scriptural leaders to reorganize Islamic education in Patani Muslim society is on the defensive. In such a situation, the institutionalization of a Whahabi, scriptural religious style in an Islamic public sphere, is enhanced through the embeddedness of these leaders in an internationally organized network, providing Lutfi and others with powerful allies and a material base that enhances considerably its stand in this competitive situation. Being equipped with social and material capital, Islamic knowledge and funding, the new Muslim intellectuals stretch out to reorganize Islamic institutions, such as the mosque, the pondok (Islamic school), the Muslim economy and the Islamic media, which they make ample use of. The Islamic institutions are now considered in Table 3 on Muslim social spaces in Patani:

**Table 3.** Social Spaces for Muslims in Patani

Community of practice	Performance	Language	Religion	Media	Organization
Islamic intellectual culture	Islamic sermon	Melayu, Arabic, Jawi	Islamic reassertion	Islamic media	Mosque, pondok, Madrasah

### Personalities, Networks and Locations

The visions, claims and utopias of (selected) Muslim personalities will be examined in the context of specific life biographies, Islamic networks and locations of Muslim intellectuals in the Islamic public sphere. Their social standing in local Muslim society is based on charisma, involvement and responsibility in shaping cultural space for Muslims in Patani. The visions, claims and utopias have to do with the global sphere and inform us, I believe, about the emergence of religious landscapes that channel the global into the local. The subtle differences in Muslim discourses represent competing positions for envisaging the public sphere. This cultural complexity of local Islam gives a picture in which local Islam in Patani is developing at different tangents.

Dr. Hasan Madmarn is a fine academic who, coming from a humble family background, has become a true cosmopolitan and great scholar. Dr. Hasan Madmarn spent many hours with me discussing his role in local Muslim society, his personal history, his involvement and his role as an educator. He characterises himself as an open minded conservative who appreciates values, family ties and local traditions. I chose to include him in the study, because he represents a certain kind of scholar who is dedicated to modernization of Islam, but who considers himself a conservative and a local.

Dr. Hasan Madmarn has become the Director of the College for Islamic Studies which is attached to the Faculty of Humanities at the Prince of Songkla University. From a humble family background in Phatthalung province, Hasan Madmarn describes his parents as pious and committed Muslims who provided their children with a solid Islamic education in the Chana district. His rich description of Islamic education in the Chana district gives a good insight into the Muslim milieu in Thailand.

Hasan Madmarn began his first year at pondok Padang Langa in the years before 1955. He recounts that his tok guru has been very popular among southern Muslim communities: tok guru Abdul Ghani was a young scholar from Kelantan, with excellent training who well versed Arabic. Hasan Madmarn's pondok was geared towards the Madrasah system. Later, he has envisaged a political career, and has been a candidate for local election, although he has not been elected. Dr. Hasan Madmarn holds a doctorate from Temple University in Philadelphia and has learned with Professor Fazlur Rahman in Chicago. Hasan Madmarn's dissertation on the pondoks and Madrasah in Patani not only deals with the process of change, but can also be read as a plea for the modernisation of Islamic education in Patani. Dr. Hasan Madmarn summarises his programme as follows:

“Muslim religious teachers are aware of the need to carefully adjust from the old system (pondok) into the modern system (Madrasah). That is to say, they require that the Madrasah system be introduced into the Pondok in order to serve the needs of the modern times. At the same time, they demand that the old system of traditional Islamic heritage be retained and taught” (Madmarn 1999: 81ff).

The modernisation and streamlining of local Islam according to global standards is Madmarn's vision. Madmarn aims to harmonize Islamic tradition and Islamic modernity, and urges the new generation to keep and respect the local cultural heritage. Madmarn aims to save the kitab Jawi (traditional Islamic literature) and hopes that the Madrasah system of Patani will be taught along the same lines of those of the Middle Eastern countries.

Dr. Hasan Madmarn believes that the Malay students will have to master the Thai, Malay and Arabic languages to comply with the demands of the Thai government. He would also like to see Muslims from Thailand going to the Middle East in large numbers in order to further their education. In his vision, the pondok is a preparation for higher education in Cairo or Mecca.

While Dr. Hasan Madmarn underlines the historical continuity of Islamic networks connecting Patani with Mecca, Dr. Lutfi would like to establish the Arabic system of Islamic education in Patani. The reformist approach of Dr. Lutfi is clearly influenced by Islamic middle class study groups throughout the southern peninsula (*dakwa*) and clashes, in part, with the traditional ulema whose mystical approach to

God and whose traditional authority has been undermined by scripturalist scholars such as Lutfi. The textual approach to the holy Qur'an as the only base of authoritative knowledge reflects the transformation of public Islam from the traditional type of Islam confined to the rural kampung to one which is led by a new breed of Malays with tertiary education whose direct engagement with the holy texts is based on an Islamic education in Saudi-Arabia, bypassing the received wisdom of the traditional ulema.

The nomination of Dr. Isma-ae Lutfi as the president of the first private college of Islamic Studies in Thailand is major step forward in his grip on power over the public sphere. Orthodox Islam shapes the curriculum as well as campus life. A Diploma of Theology is offered in accordance with the guidelines of the Thai Ministry of Education. The Arabic language is considered the language of the holy texts, and Arabic has become the language of instruction. The emulation of Saudi standards depended on implementing a rigid separation of gender and the regimentation and enclosure of the female body.

Hj Wan Muhammad Shaghir Abdullah is the head of the Shaykh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani Foundation in Kuala Lumpur where I visited him. He has chosen political exile in order to re-vitalize the cultural heritage of classical Islamic works of Patani scholars in the nineteenth century. Muhammad Shaghir is a grandson of the well-known scholar Shaykh Daud al-Fatani and showed me the original works of Shaykh Daud. Muhammad Shaghir runs the foundation to keep the classical works alive. He is a visiting professor of the Faculty of Islamic Studies at University Kebangsaan Malaysia and has written commentaries on the Patani ulema's classical works and of Patani's Islamization in particular. Shaghir has taken his pupils with him to Malaysia. In addition, he has attracted members of the Malay middle class who aim to study the classical works of the traditional ulema and who respect Muhammad Shaghir for his knowledge of Islamization in Patani, his acquaintance with the Patani scholars and his knowledge of the history of Islam in Patani. Muhammad Shaghir has been to Mecca to study the kitab Jawi. He represents the local conservative tradition, and the Kelantan connection. As a disciple of the Sufi brotherhood, Shaghir is deeply emotionally deeply involved with the cultural autonomy of Patani, whose representatives have found their political exile in the federal states of Kelantan and Trengganu. Muhammad Shaghir is a representative of the classical ulema and asserts that religious leaders also have a political role in resisting the Siamization of Patani Muslim society. Whereas Dr. Hasan Madmarn has a decidedly pragmatic attitude to-

wards the Thai state, and Dr. Lutfi asserts himself to be 'a man of peace', Muhammad Shaghir deeply desires the return to or establishment of an Islamic state according to the Kelantan model of the Islamic party.

The Islamic schools are the most important institutions of power; the restructuring of Islamic education is fundamental to the realization of central concepts and visions. Here, the utopias and visions for local Islam are powerful discourses that are applied to the socialization and schooling of Malay youth. The imposed vision not only concerns school and campus life, but also regulates the private sphere and covers all domains of everyday life. Muslim intellectuals in Southern Thailand are looking to the Middle East for the restructuring of Muslim society. The increasing exposure to the Muslim world is reflected not only in images or pictures, travel and fluidity, as post-modernists seem to argue, but also in the making of tight social organization at the local level. Muslim identities are embedded in the construction of Muslim spaces. Muslim intellectuals use religious beliefs and Islamic networks to shape and organize Muslim life in the overlapping domains of family, home, school and mosque. The construction and shaping of Muslim spaces has depended in a large part on the input from a new breed of tertiary-educated Malay Muslim intellectuals. Unlike the traditional *tok guru*, the Muslim teachers not only provide a religious education, but also operate on different levels of Muslim social and political life. The emergence of charismatic leadership in Southern Thailand has depended in large part on the prestige of educational degrees and international experiences in local Muslim society. Education and international experience are 'written' in the habitus of Islamic intellectuals. Hasan Madmarn speaks fluent English and has international contacts in the West. He dresses in Western-style dark suits. He is known as a diplomatic and able intermediary who receives visitors from Malaysia or Indonesia in his house, including visitors from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is also a very able administrator who represents Muslim interests in Thai government agencies. Hasan Madmarn is a local from a Thai-speaking Muslim community in Songkla. Madmarn is converses in Bahasa, but does not speak the local dialect. He has good standing with the traditional *ulema*.

Dr. Ismail Lutfi has excellent contacts with Saudi-Arabian Islamic organizations. Lutfi speaks fluent Arabic, including Arabic dialects, and is able to declaim long passages from the holy texts and the *Shari'a* in the Arabic language. Lutfi has a modest lifestyle, wears Arabic white-coloured robes and rejects material comfort or luxury. Lutfi supports

the claim of the PAS in neighbouring Malaysia for an Islamic state. Lutfi is a native of Patani. He converses in Patani Malay with his audiences, reciting in Arabic from the Qur'an.

Muhammad Shaghir is a conservative scholar. He is a local whose knowledge is firmly based in Patani's history. Muhammad Shaghir keeps tight contacts with the Patani ulema, to the Patani Muslim printing houses and to Islamic organisations in Malaysia. He considers Siam a colonizer of Patani.

The three schools of thought illustrate different discourses and different contexts in which discourses are produced. In addition, they show different visions and utopias for contemporary local modern Muslim society. They are competing political economies of meaning, envisioning in practices and discourses different ways in which Islamic traditions are reproduced. As ideal types, they represent conservative, modern and orthodox approaches to constructing, using and shaping Muslim spaces in a minority situation. The habitus relate to their relationships with the social memory of the past, the embeddedness in Muslim networks and relationships with the Thai bureaucratic polity.

Hasan Madmarn represents a school of thought that strives for the harmonization of the old and the new. Hasan Madmarn looks back to a glorious past. He believes that the authority of the traditional ulema has to be respected and wants to modernize the institutions of Islamic education along the standards of the Middle East. In addition, Hasan Madmarn is putting effort into the idea that Muslims in Thailand benefit from cultural citizenship. Hasan Madmarn wants to go through the system to help represent Muslim interests. Ismail Lutfi is the media star of the Islamic public sphere that depends on the charismatic leadership of highly-educated young scholars. Lutfi's scholarship challenges the authority of the traditional ulema. The introduction of a new stock of Islamic knowledge constitutes a rupture with the past. Malay visitors from the Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur told Lutfi that he cannot emulate Medina in Thailand. Lutfi stands for the increasing encapsulation of the Malay Muslim community in Thailand; the emerging Malay middle class in Southern Thailand is looking for spiritual support from him. Academics visit him in order to learn. Lutfi stands above ordinary people. Muhammad Shaghir represents the traditional ulema. He has left Southern Thailand; cooperation with the Thai state is not desirable. Muhammad Shaghir aims to revitalise the cultural heritage of his forefathers. He does not embrace the new ways of Islamic education which are compromised to the Thai educational system and cannot accept the foreign ideas of scholars like Lutfi. In summary, the orthodox scholars

and the modernists vie for ownership of the Islamic public sphere in Patani.

### **Communicating Islam in the Public Sphere**

Senior religious teachers disapprove of frivolous amusements, including music and carnivals. The disapproval of fun-spaces not only marks an internal conflict in the Muslim field, between old and young, but also concerns the socialization of Malay youth into Thai popular culture. The discourse of fun-spaces, entertainment, dance and music works with metaphors of good and bad Muslims and evoked Muslim discourses about the evil worlds in Thai cities, the seduction of sensual pleasures, the world of brothels, discotheques, cafes and karaoke bars. The stigma of Muslim backwardness is, in a psychological and philosophical sense, turned into its opposite: that of the ultimate superiority of the Muslim system of belief.

The label fundamentalism has contributed little to the analysis of social change in Muslim society. The development of an alternative perspective focuses on the re-negotiation of Muslim identity, life planning and life aspirations. This negotiation of identity involves the emergence of a poly-tactic identity and stresses the ways in which Muslims participate and build their life projects in Thai modernity. My argument is that this kind of negotiation is increasingly realized in the space of the Islamic public sphere.

Advances in transport and communication have facilitated the emergence of transnational Muslim spaces and Islamic networks, and intensified religious exchange which has put the Muslim minority in Thailand in much closer contact with the Muslim world. The experience of the Muslim pilgrimage and the sheer presence of Islamic images in Southern Thailand creates imagined communities well beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. The imagined communities beyond the boundaries of the Thai nation-state are also supported by the proliferation of Islamic community media. Islamic media are those media that are produced by Muslims for Muslims. The post-modern condition in Patani is supplemented by media such as books, audiotapes and videotapes. Through the media, local Muslims can access Islamic images from Mecca and Bosnia. Satellite television allows for the reception of Malaysian television. Accordingly, radio stations in Malaysia broadcast to Southern Thailand's border provinces. The media cross international boundaries and spread the message of pan-Islamic unity.<sup>16</sup>

Globalization seems to have added a new dimension to Muslim travellers (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990). The willingness of the local Muslims to move has increased greatly. Among the lower classes, Muslims from Patani earn their livelihood in the rice-fields of neighbouring Malaysia. Among the middle classes, more parents send their children to study at Islamic Universities in Cairo. In short, more Patani Muslims are on the move. This increasing mobility has led to the creation of transnational networks of Muslims from Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. Transnational organization at the Thailand-Malaysian border has intensified. Malay Muslims from Malaysia and Thailand meet regularly in study groups. There are du-ah missionaries who receive monthly salaries and allowances from different Islamic call centres in the Middle East (Che Man 1990a).

The Muslim teachers disposing of authorized Islamic knowledge become brokers who mediate between local and global cultural forms. The Muslim teachers become gatekeepers for Saudi Arabian culture and it is through them that local Muslims hope to get access to Islamic knowledge and to participate in Islamic modernity.

Urban scholars are given confidence and responsibility in managing Islamic economics. Urban scholars manage saving and credit funds and use the skills of Muslim graduates.

Thus, religious leaders use knowledge/power systems to engage in Muslim forms of accumulation, and to occupy positions in the local arena. The social organization is akin to the theory of strategic groups: the religious teachers weave strong power structures through nets of kinship and inter-marriage, personal networks and pondoks.

The Ustaz imposes educational techniques and new religious styles on a local society that has its own indigenous tradition of Islamic knowledge. In fact, the emergence of a new public sphere has fundamental implications for the Muslim field. The new Muslim discourse clashes with the traditional ulema whose source of identity and authority is undermined. The scriptural movement has attempted to purify local Islam of pre-Islamic, Hindu or animistic beliefs and contents in Muslim rituals and festivities. Furthermore, the zeal of purifying Islam involves the eradication of fun-spaces, such as music, dance and carnival. The Muslim field is not static or monolithic. Here, the Muslim public sphere is conceptualised as a contested space in which young and old people and traditional and modern ulema vie for cultural supremacy.

## Leading Voices of Public Islam

Class formation in Malay society is decisive for the construction of an Islamic public culture and for its ethos. Participation in the activities of the public sphere requires forms of literacy from speakers and receptors. The Muslim orthodox teachers are successful in communicating their programme to Malay academics and students, to entrepreneurs and civil servants and soldiers. Why is it so? The staging of Islam as public virtue provides an alternative ideological consciousness to constructions of Thai national identity and appeals to the aspirations of young adults to join global networks of religious exchange. The feeling of global solidarity with the Islamic block in Saudi-Arabia liberates the Patani Malays from feelings of isolation, loneliness, and estrangement. In participating in the activities of the public sphere, the members succeed in constructing alternative sources of cultural citizenship, to build self-esteem. As Abaza argues: “The (imagined) Arab traditions have been recreated and reinvented in Southeast Asia to fit with the constraints and pressures of modernity which emerging middle classes are undergoing” (Abaza 1991a).

Likewise, the habitus of Muslim intellectuals are nourished by symbols and manners of Arabic dress, *Halal* food and Arabic dialect language. The new members of the *Dakwa* groups emulate the symbols to display and signal their membership of Islamic modernity. Islamic lifestyles are displayed and indeed celebrated in the public sphere. The orthodox public sphere provides the space where cultural identity can be realised. The scriptural movement uses religious beliefs in order to make and shape Muslim cultural spaces (e.g. Chaiwat 1993).

Public Islam provides a powerful religious tool in the hands of Muslim teachers to mobilise and to discipline members. When the language of religion gains ground in public discourse, religious specialists acquire the power of definition of public norms. The performance of public sermons is a critical practice in staging and communicating Islam to the audiences. Social life is like a play in which roles are distributed and in which people engage in symbolic interaction. The mosque, the Islamic school, the home become the stage at different levels of society.

The performance of Islam in the Islamic public sphere and the communication of Islamic representations develops in tandem with the growth of a cultural market.

Education is the key to the social reproduction of Muslim spaces. The College of Islamic Studies, which is located on the campus of

the Prince of Songkla University, has developed into a centre of intellectual exchange for the Muslim community.

The making of Muslim spaces organises at the delicate threshold between home, school and mosque, between the domain of the family and larger social organizations. The emergence of an Islamic landscape that is gaining in strength in Southern Thailand through transnational networks in the Muslim world has drastically changed gender relations. The Islamic schools are the most important agents of socialisation into gender roles. A lot of pressure is exercised here from the teacher and the older students to adjust to dress codes.

Ong's (1995) analysis on gender relations in modern Malay life reveals how the discourses of the Islamic resurgence have incited and intensified concerns about female sex, space and actions, and how concerns about women's bodies are used to redraw the boundaries between Muslims and Non-Muslims. Ong (1995) argues that educated women found the *dakwa* call so appealing because as wives and mothers, Malay women can adjust to pressures of moral uncertainty and find Islam a system which guide them through a period of rapid change. She concludes that women become implicit allies of *dakwa* organisations to create patriarchal domination in both public and private spheres. However, my empirical data support the thesis that Muslim women did organise in alternative networks and that women make themselves visible in the construction of new Muslim spaces, such as associations, study groups, mass prayers, consumer groups, Qur'an reading groups and Muslim women's networks more general.

I had the fortune to accompany committed female journalists and to participate in the making of news, columns, features and debates in local Muslim society. Superficially, the women may submit to patriarchal relationships, but the same women find the authority of Islam attractive for developing female spaces in which their activities in the public sphere are recognised for their religious purpose. Through dress codes and *dakwa* practices, Malay women communicate strong boundaries to non-Muslims, especially Buddhists. Arab symbols are recreated in order to cope with the pressures and tensions which the emerging middle classes are undergoing. The community of practice nourishes and supplies Muslim spaces with their own media/culture/knowledge material for. Local media thus play a crucial role in the negotiation of ethnic and religious identities.

## Concluding Remarks

A new breed of Middle Eastern-educated scholars has taken the initiative in weaving prestige, contesting culture and realizing Muslim identity. In order to assert and make their identity visible, the educated Muslim middle class endorses the scriptural Muslim discourse and the visions, claims and utopias that are affiliated with the rapid transformation of the Patani Muslim locality. This transformation is marked by the increasing cultural bonds between Patani and Saudi Arabia, the increasing integration into the Thai political system and increasing cross-border Muslim public life. The analysis of the particular relationship between teacher and disciple reveals the modes of social reconstruction of local educational forms and Islamic knowledge as well as the great appeal that the educational techniques and shifts in Islamic knowledge have for the Malay middle class in Thailand. Islamic education is a crucial resource for Muslim identity in Thailand. The communication of Islam as a social virtue is carried out in an Islamic public sphere which has gained quickly in strength and power in the 1990s. The establishment of a public culture is instrumental to the growth and strength of the charismatic leadership of Muslim intellectuals in Southern Thailand. The anthropology of performance, culture and space is particularly well suited to explain the formation of collective identity and the changing ways in which local Islam is reproduced in local society.<sup>17</sup>

The transformation of the person occurs at several levels. Socialisation under the new educational techniques is certainly the most influential instrument of producing docile bodies. The young students coming from the kampung adjust to the rules of the pondok. Many women have to trade their pastel-coloured or flowered clothes for long robes and headcloth. Enrolment in the educational institution also requires correct demeanour and conduct. Some students aspire to become model students, to keep the rules or to spy on the activities of their fellow students. Starrett (1998) argues that today's Islamic assertion is rooted in new ways of thinking about Islam that are based on the market, the media and the school. New styles of religious education, based on moral indoctrination, together with new forms of communication have changed the way the Islamic tradition is reproduced. Educational techniques together with the commodification and mediation of Islam result in a rapid Islamisation of public spaces.

Now, what are the new ways of thinking about Islam in Patani? The transformation of local Muslim society is occurring in a perspective of

crisis. Indicators for this crisis are the rapid diminution and irrelevance of many rural pondoks, the erosion of the subsistence sector and blunt poverty and the marginalization of Malays in Thailand. The extension of the Thai state into the periphery, the rapid expansion of capitalist markets and the expansion of the Thai educational sector all fly into the face of Malay nationalism in Patani. In this situation, the Islamic networks with Malaysia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia have produced a new breed of tertiary-educated Malays who assume a key role in negotiating social spaces in education, gender relations, Muslim social life and in re-imagining the Patani locality.<sup>18</sup> In the new Muslim spaces, Muslim identity is not coupled to Malay ethnic identity.