

COMPARING PATHWAYS AND OUTCOME FOR PATANI MUSLIM WOMEN OF DIFFERENT EDUCATION SYSTEMS SINCE 1959

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Abstract

A new era of resolving the conflicts in the three southern border provinces of Thailand began in the time of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat (1959-1963), with an assimilationist policy toward the Malay Muslims of the three southern provinces. This involved not only assimilation through educational, economic, and social development policies but also assimilation of the Malay Muslims in the southern border provinces with the Muslims of the central areas of Thailand through various government projects, such as the *dhammacharika* project. These projects initially began with an emphasis on the religious leaders of the communities, on bringing Muslim students on field trips to Bangkok, and on providing instruction and training for Muslim women. All of these projects received support from various Muslim associations and organizations in central Thailand. Eventhough this assimilationist policy might be viewed as destroying the religious and cultural identity of Malay-Muslims in Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat provinces. The field research data show that not only their education routes correlate with differences of status, family background, class, and degree of austerity in religious practice, but the differences among the Muslim countries where they studied also have important effects on their identity formation and consequent Malay-Muslim consciousness. All of these differences also had significant effects on their social roles and statuses after returning to work in their hometown areas, and have also had important effects on the ways in which Muslim women of this area display their piety.

Keywords: Pathways and Outcome of Different Education Systems, Patani Muslim Women

Abstrak

Era baru menyelesaikan konflik etnik Thailand di tiga provinsi perbatasan selatan telah dimulai pada saat Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat (1959-1963), dengan kebijakan asimilasi terhadap Muslim Melayu. Hal ini tidak hanya melibatkan asimilasi melalui kebijakan pendidikan, ekonomi, dan sosial tetapi juga asimilasi Muslim Melayu dengan Muslim dari daerah Thai pusat melalui berbagai proyek pemerintah, seperti proyek *dhammacharika*. Proyek-proyek ini awalnya dimulai dengan penekanan pada para pemimpin agama dari masyarakat, untuk membawa siswa Muslim dengan kunjungan lapangan ke Bangkok, dan pelatihan bagi perempuan Muslim. Semua proyek ini mendapat dukungan dari berbagai asosiasi dan organisasi Muslim di Thailand pusat. Meskipun kebijakan asimilasi ini mungkin dipandang merusak identitas agama dan budaya Melayu-Muslim di Yala, Pattani, dan Provinsi Narathiwat. Data penelitian lapangan menunjukkan bahwa mereka mampu berkorelasi dengan perbedaan status, latar belakang keluarga, kelas, tetapi juga memiliki efek penting pada pembentukan identitas dan kesadaran Melayu-Muslim. Semua perbedaan memiliki efek yang signifikan terhadap peran setelah kembali bekerja di kampung halaman, dan juga memiliki efek penting wanita Muslim untuk menampilkan kesalehan mereka.

Kata Kunci: Jalur dan Hasil Perbedaan Sistem Pendidikan, Wanita Muslim Patani

Introduction

The expansion of education of Patani Muslim Women occurred when the educational policy was implemented toward the region in the development era that began in Field Marshal Sarit Thanaruk period, who is the 11th Thailand president (1959-1963). In three Southern Border Provinces, this educational policy was the important tool for creating the assimilation of the different groups of people which had occurred in this area instead of the aggressive and convention state policy in Piboon Songkram government (1938-1944 and 1948-1957) to resolve the unrest in the

three Southern Border Provinces. However, to conduct on educational policy which strengthen implement from the government had caused the resistance of the local people because the government controlled the *pondoks*, the tradition of Islamic educational institution, registered to a private Islamic school to allow the government to introduce secular curriculums in to these institution. The government determined the completely this process between 1961-1971; the unregistered *pondoks* were gradually disappear. During this period was significant to the adjustment of the Islam education system especially the transformation of



the traditional *pondoks* to Islamic educational modern system, Madrasah which currently received full financial supporting from the government, and under control of the Educational Service Area 2 to center of education administration control in the Four Border Southern Provinces, Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun that was established in 1959. The educational system in South had more concrete policy, particularly giving specific grants to Muslim student in South who attended study in secular curriculum under the implement of the educational policy under Regional Educational Development Project including Higher Education (R.E.D.P.H.E.) in 1958 and arranged to Southern Development Plan for 3 years (1964-1966).

The adjustment enforcing in traditional *pondoks* has been seen as threaten the religious and cultural identity of Malay-muslim in three Southern Border Provinces but in the other side, the new educational system in private Islamic school set up the opportunity for the group of Patani Muslim women to reach the higher education in aboard and after finishing their education, they came back with their knowledge and potential to develop the Islamic educational institution conform to modern society that was growing in this area. Besides, there was the other group of Patani Muslim women who chose study the general education (*saman*) or in secular curriculums in order to reach the careers in the future on the path of development era in Thai society under the changing of economic system in the world including the neighbor country. Education in this era was used to support the development of the country meanwhile it conformed with the needs of Malay- Muslim to survive in the modern world that to study only religious discipline in traditional *pondoks* inadequate to encounter the rapidly social change in today.

This study will demonstrate and analyze the path of entry to the modern world for Patani-Muslim women which was built on educational opportunities and led them went outside their hometown to study in religious and secular curriculums. This academic opportunity advantaged them of new experiences in the unfamiliar milieu which empowered them to realize their fullest potential. They could expose their identity as Modern Islam and constructed women's space by their careers as preacher and teacher. Moreover, the private Islamic school is an important place for supporting them

to play their role and opened up space for them in using their potential and knowledge. Even once the private Islamic schools were viewed as the replacement of the traditional *pondoks* Islamic schools, and this kind of schools was claimed destroying the identities of the Malay Muslims of Thailand's three southern border provinces; on the contrary, the prominent region of Islamic knowledge in this area exists in private Islamic school and these women had important role to support this process.

Methods and Data

This research field of work is in the three provinces at the southern border of Thailand in order to compare the identity formation in two groups of Patani women who study outside their hometown in the modern education system. One groups attended to study in secular and other attended to study in religion curriculum in the country and abroad such as Penang, Singapore and the Muslim countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Libya, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The field work was conducted three times in three provinces, Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat between October 2012- March 2013 each visited was for two weeks. I began my fieldwork in Pattani province which is the oldest province between Yala and Patani, at this place the first Muslim women group had a chance to study both secular and religion curriculum.

Because of a specific target group of Patani Muslim women who had a chance to study in modern education, I could not ask the information from general people even the educational field people. To discover my informants, I used the Purposive Sampling method for in-depth interview and use Snow Ball Technique to ask them in order to find other Muslim women among their generation. This study has attempted to cover the three generations of Patani Muslim women and conducted with various methods which are participant observation, non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews as well as informal conversations for figuring their education's routes and their identity formation. Moreover, for pre-arranging the research context, I have surveyed primary sources from the National Archive and secondary data from the researches that are related to my topic. However, primary and secondary data sources of the education routes of Muslim women in the three southern border provinces of Thailand are still limited. Hence,



collecting data in field survey is necessary.

The analysis herein is based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 38 Patani Muslim women who live in Pattani, Yala and Narathivat provinces and received a modern education. Their ages range from 45 to 72, with over half in their 60s. One-third of them are unmarried Muslim women. Most of them work in the education field. Some retired government official and others are working as religious teachers in private Islamic schools. Nineteen interviewees studied in the secular curriculum and other studies in abroad, most of them studies in religious curriculum but a few studied in secular curriculum.

Due to the shortage of Patani Muslim women's story recording, especially in their education routes and experience. This fact challenges me to trace their figure. In the beginning of my fieldwork, I visited Prince of Songkla University (PSU) to find out the information from a lecturer who was my first informant. She is the first Muslim lecturer in Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus and when she was a secondary school student in Pattani, she also obtained a special quota for Muslim student from government to study in Chulalongkorn University. I interviewed her and then she introduced me to interview others in her networks. Moreover, Muslim male lecturer in the same university suggested that I also interviewed Muslim women who had studied in religious curriculum. She is a senior lecturer and the first Muslim women in College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus.

In my second time of fieldwork, I need to specify the target group from general educational Muslim women to the first till third generations and I can resolve this problem by Miss Zainub's help whom I accidentally met in Bangkok. She is a middle-aged local woman and her mother tongue is Yawi language and fluent in Thai language. Her personal background is very helpful to bridge among Muslim women from first to third generations. Moreover, her career background as a private therapist for women's health. When she was a student leader in her high school in Pattani and during university in Bangkok. This background advantages her of wide connection with different generations of Muslim women.

Due to the tough finding of the target groups but the interviewing with the informant went smoothly, Miss Zainub and me became

companion, her background and personality persuaded the informant to believe in me. With lively Miss Zainub made the informant rapidly familiar with us even it's the first time we've met. Furthermore, by making an appointment with the informant in their own house had created a comfortable situation for interviewing. They were pleased to show their photo collections related to their family background and education experience. However some of them had threw away their photos because of their religion believe reason. I began interviewing them with questions about their family background, education routes and why did they have a chance to study? Who did support them? Where was the country they go to? What did they do when they finish their education? This interviewing went naturally; Miss Zainub and me felt that we were talking with our sisters or relatives. However, as the researcher I realize the duty of analyzing their narratives related to my research.

This research, conducting the fieldwork and collecting the data are under the present situation of conflicts in the Southern part of Thailand which are not related to only physical violence but also the circumstance suspicious among people. Increasing the separation between people from different religious beliefs. This condition relates to the increasing of Military force in this area and people's lack of the confidence in the government security. In order to avoid being a target of violence situation as a non-Muslim, Buddhist, as an unmarried female researcher without speaking skill of Yawi who always drives a car to conduct the fieldwork, I worn a suitable loose fitting clothing, long shirt and skirt, including cover my head with long scarf. It was also important to protect Miss Zainub from potential misunderstanding of the nature of our relationship. I also wanted to keep a low profile so that we can even drive though the military's security station and got easily help from many people. Nevertheless, with my informants I for being honest to my informants I had exposed myself in front of them. Our drawback is that trust of my informant thought is their duty to convert me to Islam and find me a husband.



Entering to The Modern World: The Education Routes of Patani Muslim Women in Modern Education System

The education routes for Patani-Muslim women were pioneered during an era of development in 1960s, when an increasing number of Muslim women studies abroad. Some scholar have indicated that the decline in the *pondoks* system had been cited as a reason that many young Malay Muslims had gone to study in Malaysia, Pakistan and the Arab countries in higher numbers than the previous time¹. However, based on my fieldwork, I would like to debate this based on fresh information from Patani Muslim women who had other experience in their education routes. Reexamining their experience during the period when Thai political social and economic changes occurred, we will see the dynamism of people in the Three Southern Border Provinces. Rather than being 'frozen' along with the history of Southern conflict, their experience is part of a grand narrative. I would like to demonstrate that these Patani Muslim women who are the active agent in the new circumstance of southern area were not the instrument of the Thai government in assimilating the muslim people through the education system. On the opposite they stood on the different side with the government and, in other way, they utilized this to survive and empower themselves in the modern world. Encouragement and support gave the Patani Muslim women a chance to study outside their hometowns with family background, religion knowledge, grants and financial support making their innovative education routes possible.

The Converting of Pondoks to Private Islamic School: Creating the New Choice for Patani-Muslim Women in Their Education Routes

In the past, Thai governments have seen the *pondoks*, the traditional education system in the Three Southern Border Provinces of Thailand, as a threat to national security. When the development era came, 'pondoks' were viewed as not conforming with progressive development.

¹ Pitsuwan, Surin, *Islam and Malay Nationalism : A Case Study of the Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand*, (Bangkok: Thai Khadi Institute, Thammasat University, 1985), p. 196. Aphornsuvan, Thanet, "Nation-State and the Muslim Identity in the Southern Unrest and Violence," in *Understanding conflict and approaching peace in Southern Thailand*, eds. Imtiyaz Yusof and Lars Peter Schmidt, (second revised edition), (Bangkok : Konard-Adenauer-Stifung, 2006), p. 123

From the government's perspective, the *pondoks* learning system did not conform to standard curriculums and also did not specify the ages of students, or the specific period of learning. *pondoks* did not offer secular courses so its students had no opportunity to be exposed to modern knowledge and disciplines. Moreover, most of the *pondoks* students could not speak the Thai language very well. Therefore, *pondoks* were viewed as not being helpful in raising awareness of Thai nationality². So it was that the priority of the education policy in this area to convert the *pondoks* to private Islamic schools to a government-sponsored secular education by subsidizing *pondoks* infrastructure and employing secular teachers to improve the process of teaching, learning and curriculum improvement. Lessons were targetted at improving the Thai language and career skills of Muslim students. Sending secular teacher to *pondoks* processing by the Office of the Private Education Commission, a lot of Muslim student who studied in secular world had applied to work when they finish their education. As well as conversions from the *pondoks* process approval was given for *Tok guru* (school master) as both a teacher and owner, who finish religion study from abroad. Most of them had a chance to see close up the Islamic modern school model which have parallel curriculum in secular and religion to prepare Muslim children to enter the modern world. The educational reform policy offered by the government has since come under the supervision of Educational Region Two (General Education Development Center) which was established under the Ministry of Education, proposed as an educational development project (1958). Teaching and learning in the new educational system in *pondoks* is divided into two parts. Normally Islamic or Arabic subjects will be taught in the morning while secular subjects will be provided in the afternoon. Those who finish their study from these schools can further their studies either in universities in Thailand or abroad. They can choose to study either in religious or secular fields. For those Patani-Muslim women, These developments provided opportunities for them to use the new schools system as

² Ibrahim Narongraksakhet, "Educational Change for Building Peace in Southern Border Provinces of Thailand, in *Understanding conflict and approaching peace in Southern Thailand*, eds. Imtiyaz Yusof and Lars Peter Schmidt, (second revised edition), (Bangkok : Konard-Adenauer-Stifung, 2006), p. 143



a springboard toward religious education at the tertiary level both in Thailand and abroad. Other groups of Patani Muslim women were enabled to pursue higher education in secular curricula. Patani Muslim in this period have had opportunities and education choices much greater than in the previous generation.

Before the conversion of *pondoks* to Private Islamic schools, there was only one choice for Patani-Muslim women who wanted to reach higher education. After the compulsory education they went to study in government secondary schools in secular curriculum. Therefore, any higher education that Muslim women reached was confined to the secular curriculum and only Muslim women who came from high status and rich family backgrounds—such as an elite family, a civil servant family, or a merchant's family could achieve their aims. All of them reside in urban areas and their parents were able to afford their studies in both secular and religious areas. For studying the secular curriculum they sent their daughter to government school and when had finished their lessons, their children started to learn the Quran and Hadith in their house or Mosque with imams who were their cousin and studied religion from abroad. Sometime education continued at the weekends.

“I learned religion on Saturday and Sunday since I was young, I learned with my Uncle. He is an imam in Jabungtigor Musque. Women and men were divided to learn at difference times”

Through graduating from the secondary government schools, Patani-Muslim women were able to join the special quota for Muslim student from the government. From interviewing Patani Muslim women, most of them were able to go on to study in government universities by being part of this quota. It was more difficult for Muslim women in rural areas to be able to move to higher education in the secular curriculum because of their negative views of Thai government schools. Historically, the government school did not offer two systems that included both teaching between secular curriculum and religious studies. Hence, after children completed the government compulsory schools, Muslim parents prefer sending their children to *pondoks* rather than to public schools which are more standardize. It was suspected that students in public school might be influenced by Buddhism which

might shake their Islamic faith. Before 1932, education offered in government schools took place in temple areas. The preference of sending their children to *pondoks* made the government view *pondoks* negatively. However, base on my information from respondents the families which usually sent their daughters to government schools came from *Tok guru* family because they know that the Islamic religion is not permitted in secular schools. To skirt resistance from their community they have choose to send their daughters to learn outside their community. Those Patani-Muslim women who preferred to study religion had only one choice and went to learn in *pondoks*. They stayed with a *Tok guru* family under the take care of the *Tok guru's* wife. In this case, only though a decision by a *Tok guru could* Muslim women be granted approval to learn. However, base on my fieldwork, Muslim women who have a chance to learn in *pondoks* usually come from the family who was a relative with *Tok guru* families and networks. Other Muslim families had expected their daughters to marry an early age rather than attend to their daughter's education.

After converting *pondoks* to Private Islamic school, the new system set up a standard related to the education system in Islamic countries. Muslim students can choose to study either in religious or secular fields. Moreover, when finished their education they can further studies either in universities in Thailand or abroad. There are increasing numbers of Muslim women who join to learn in private Islamic schools. Following the government policy to expand the education in this region, the Teacher College was established around 1960 in Yala province and Prince of Songkla University (PSU), Pattani in 1967. Most Muslim students have attended to study. Through the special quota for Muslim students to study in secular field in government universities, some groups choose studies in other regions outside their home towns and other groups choose to learn religion abroad through scholarships which was afforded by private Islamic school. Muslim students who finished in private Islamic schools had studied not only in the religious field but also in the secular field.

“I studied in private Islamic school in Yala, both religious and secular curriculum. A few Muslim women finished in grade 10 in secular field but I did. Most students choose learn only in religious



field. I choose learn parallel because of only religious field was not enough to prepare the future. I think our social need to develop and education will lead to social development. Then I apply to study in Teacher College in Diploma in Teacher Profession. I would to be a teacher. Teacher is a person who able to develop social through teaching their students.”

In this period, there are an increasing number of Muslim students who have reached a higher education in both religious and secular fields. At the same time, the opportunities to receive the scholarships have various channel rather than the previous generations. Their education routes widely extend to the various universities in the country and abroad. Facilities include Thai government universities such as *Silapakorn University, Nakhon Phathom province, Chaing Mai University*, Chiang Mai province, and abroad in countries such as Kuwait, Libya, Iraq and Pakistan. Most of Muslim women when they finished their education go on to work in the education field. A great many work in both government education and as religion teachers in private Islamic schools

Family Background and Religious Beliefs .

Families who have sent their daughters to study in both ways know that Islam supports Muslims to study secular knowledge, not only religious knowledge. Secular knowledge provides their children with the ability to survive in the temporal world and religious knowledge prepares them for the afterlife. Both were God’s knowledge. This view is usually the perception among urban Muslim families and *Tok guru* families while most Muslim in rural areas attends to learn religion doctrine in *pondoks*. They have a negative view of studying secular courses in Thai government schools which has been received from older generations without being verified by Islamic doctrine. Moreover, for normal Muslim people, it was difficult to reach out for religious knowledge in the past because it was confined in a few ulama and taught only in *pondoks* in remote areas.

“There was no Hadith, no religion instruction. *Tok gurus* only teach religion knowledge in *Banlai* (the religion teaching stage in *pondoks*). Islam knowledge taught in only *pondoks* that also far away from communities and only few people attend to learn.

For those who know Islam doctrine won’t expose it in order to confute the belief of the people who still have believed in traditional Islam faiths inherit from the previous generations. They fear people will turn against them. Moreover, Muslim parent didn’t support their daughters to learn and stay outside home. They feared their daughters would marry with Thai men and convert to Buddhism. It was a strong belief in Muslim communities. My father, he is a *Babor* (a head master of a private Islamic school). He supported me to study for showing as a model to his students and Muslim communities.”

The information from my interviews indicated that most of them come from the group of education families such as civil servants and *Tok guru* families or those families which having religious backgrounds.

“My father wants me to learn religion, even though I am a woman. Because of my grandfather used to be an Islamic expert in the community, he wants me to inherit this.”

The data in my fieldwork demonstrated that usually the father had an important role in supporting a daughter to study because they have to learn Islamic doctrine and they have to know that both Muslim men and women have their duties to learn and didn’t forbid secular learning. Moreover, they didn’t refuse their children to learn in Thai language.

“My father supported me to study. He could speak and read Thai well. He told me that knowing in Thai language would be help us communicate with the court and district office. It could be an advantage in the future. Usually Muslim parent sent their children to learn in *pondoks* rather than school in outside their community. This protected their children from misbehaving and encouraged religious learning.”

For this reason it open the opportunities for Muslim women to study even in secular school. They realized the importance of learning in secular lesson. One of my informants came from *Tok guru* family. Her brother studied secondary level in the government school in Narathiwat and then



he obtained a special quota to continue study secondary in Islamic college school in Bangkok and when he finish he became a soilder. For her education, her father sent she to learn in government school and want her to teach Thai and English lesson to his student who learn Qur'an with him. Even his father is *Tok guru* but he have positive with learning Thai opposite with government or some scholar that usually view *Tok guru* resist secular school and the converting *pondoks* to private Islamic school.

“My father taught Qur'an to Muslim people in my village. I didn't know that he wanted me to gain higher education or not but he was encouraged by a *Tok guru*, his friend, to support me to study in secular school. He said that we could teach religion but the one who knows secular knowledge we did not have. In their view secular lessons were God's knowledge also”

Base on my fieldwork, Islam does not restrict Muslim women's education. and this doctrine is obviously written in Qur'an. However, in the past, in traditional belief among Malay-Muslim who confines to reach in religion doctrine produced a negative view that discouraged women from learning. Hence in the beginning of the womens' education period, only women in some groups were allowed learning, which is confirmed in my study

Financial and Cummunities Support

Financial and communities support is necessary for Patani-Muslim women who intend to study religion abroad especially Muslim women, who came from poor families in rural areas. In the past, the lack of Islamic knower (*Tok guru*) in Southern Muslim communities led to Muslim children studying religion outside their communities, in well-regard private Islamic school, especially in the Three border provinces. Children chosen were supported by funding in communities and they would be committed within the community to be a *Tok guru* when they finished their religious learning. Hence, donations for religious learning were necessary for Muslim communities. Moreover, it was a duty of all Muslim to support education, even among Muslim women. Another form of donation was organised by communities to raise money through communities' custom - the food and

tea gathering for raising funding the long traditional practice in southern local. This activity calls *ma gae tae* in yawi words and *laing num sha* in Thai word. Including asking donate from Muslim people who intend support.

The information that I obtained from my fieldwork shows that most Muslim women who study religion abroad were supported in their communities and in their work places in Islamic private schools. This was the case with the first Muslim woman who studied B.A. in religion in Malaysia and M.A. in Egypt. She studied secondary level in Islamic Private School in Panare District in Pattani provinces. She was also the first women in this school. *Tok guru* assigned her to teach female students in lower class from her in the daytime. For the evening she studied religious subjects with male students who are of the same status as her. The classroom was divided in two for male and female and she sat alone.

“Before I went to study in Malaysia and Egypt, I completed a Saudi Arabia scholarship. There were twenty examiners. Most of them were men. Only me and my friend were women. Finally I won but Madinah University have not accepted women to study, it had only male students. So I could not to go. I have been proud and recognized my potential but I could not go. I regret that everyone wanted to help me to learn abroad. Someone gave me information about an Islamic college in Kalatan, Malaysia. Its name Nilam Puri Islamic Higher Education Foundation, a famous institution. So, I went to study in there. I was support by people donation from my student, my colleagues and villager in the communities including my friends who got the scholarship; they sent their money from Saudi Arabia. Such their support I could learn because my family is very poor. It's too difficult for them to support me.”

In that period, only scholarships of Saudi Arabia were available in the far south of Thailand through the examination management of scholarships through the Islamic Council of Pattani Province. These scholarships were designed for Muslim male students. It was very difficult for



Muslim women who were unmarried. The universities in this country have divided space for men and women. Women will have their guardian, who is not able to marry her, protecting her when staying outside the women's place. Moreover, Muslim men who attend to study in Saudi Arabia will be guaranteed by a senior Muslim who has studied in University of Saudi Arabia. Personal networks are very important and through this process open the opportunities for a group of Muslim women to receive scholarships and be approved to study in Girl's College in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

"We had friend who studied in Madinah University. We asked him to give me the information about scholarship for women. This year is the first time open to Muslim women in abroad to study in Girl's College in Riyadh. I have a guardian. He is my cousin. In weekend, if we wanted to go outside, we would to go with our guardian."

This is the information from the first two Muslim women who had a chance to study in Riyadh asking their cousins to be guardians. Other three Muslim women who went to studies in Riyadh in later year, they are relatives and one of them has a brother who has studied in Madinah so he can became a guardian for them all. According to this reason, hence, most of Muslim women choose to study religion in Egypt and for those who attend to secular curriculum would study in Pakistan because it is comfortable for women who travel alone and another reason is the financial support from private donations from Muslim believers through a process of aims-giving known in Arabic as *zakat*. The practice of *zakat* is one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith, prescribes that a fixed proportion of one's income be given to specified charitable causes, and traditionally a portion of *zakat* has endowed religious education.

"In Egypt, all mosques have taught Islamic doctrine and Qur'an recitation by Ulamas. I went to learn and sometime I obtained zakats from Muslim believer to Muslim students for supporting their education. And another way to obtain zakats from Qur'an recitation. It is similar to work for education funding but we got from *zakats*."

For those Muslim who studied in Pakistan, they obtained the privilege in lower credit fees for student from the countries is ruled by non-Muslim.

"In Pakistan, Most of Thai Muslim student group came from the three southern borders. Usually We have processed in traveling and applying Pakistan by ourself including buying the plane ticket. We did not have any grant but when we were accepted to be student in university, we could apply a grants and special credit fees rate".

Due to the specific of the scholarship and the limitation in family financial, Muslim women in southern Thailand in the previous generation choose to study in Nilam Puri Islamic Higher Education Foundation, which was established in 1965³. This institution consisted of two faculties-namely the Faculty of Syariah and the Faculty of Usuluddin. It proposed the Bachelors in Islamic Education Degree. In 1981, this institution was taken over from University of Malaya and changed its name to the Academy of Islam, University of Malaya. All lecturers graduate from Middle East countries, especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The spreading of Modern Islamic Idea has begun including the idea of practice Islam among students. There are high number of Malay-Muslim attend to study, the major reason came from financial factor and its location nearly southern border.

However, many years after converting *pondok* to private Islamic school completed, scholarships in abroad was processed by the school director. Hence, this scholarship had been given through private Islamic school and student will have commitment to work for school when they finish their education. Time period for working depend on a school contracts. The information I obtain from my fieldwork was between two and five years and work without paying salary. However, school provided food lunch and most incomes come from students paying school fees.

In the past, private Islamic school didn't have the financial supporting from the government. I worked without pay money from school. My

³ Guan, Hock Lee, "Globalisation and Ethnic Integration in Malaysian Education," in *Malaysia : Recent Trends and Challenges*, Saw Swee Hock and K. Kesavapany, eds, (Singapore : Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), p. 252.



salary based on giving student fees from my pupils. It isn't too much but enough for me. Usually school was support by students and communities even funding for school building. Sometime I earn money from teaching religion to Muslim housewife in communities.

Impact of Modernized Education System on Patani Muslim Women's Identity and Their Social Role

Both groups of Patani muslim women who studies in various pathways in Modernized education system in religious and curriculum field, when they finished their education most of them worked in the educational field. Muslim women who graduated in religious field came back to teach in private Islamic schools and set up group to dawah women in their communities and spread the idea of good Muslim mother and wife such as orphan house and children nursery, to prepare Islamic lesson to children from the beginning of their life. The women who studies in secular curriculum enter to the bureaucracy system to implement the education policy such as teaching Muslim children to speak Thai and change their parent attitude to send their children learnt in government school and some other work in health system to develop the far south areas. Throughout the fieldwork respondents demonstrate that the education routes have an important impact on the identity formation of Patani Muslim women and expose their roles in public space. In particular, self-confidence to express themselves in their own religion. And throughout the influence of the Islamic revivalist movements in this region, these educated Muslim women have identified with Modern Islamic linking to the solidarity of Muslim in worldwide which emphasize religious identity in the public appearance instead to the religious practice in private sphere and abandon tradition Islam which inherit from their ancestor. Following this way, they play an important role in establishing the new roles and identities of Muslim women through their roles as teachers in the private Islamic schools that were once viewed as replacements for the traditional *pondoks* Islamic schools, and that were therefore seen as destroying the identities of the Malay Muslims of Thailand's three southern border provinces.

Practice Public Piety, Exposed to Islamic Modern Selves

With experience in modernized education system to access both Islamic doctrine and secular knowledge, Patani Muslim women have constructed their Identity with Islamic modern selves on an impact of the threshold period in the Islamic resurgence in 1970. They had experience in Islamic revivalism during studied in the university. For the respondents who studies in abroad, having studied religion in higher level had deep insight into Islamic doctrine relate to women duties and responsibility in Islam. They had a pious practice in their religious doctrine and studying Islam texts that more than conducting prayers and worshipping, demonstrated their modern selves and divide them as traditional or modern Muslim. In their opinion, in the past people had only known Islam as their religion but they were not realize it. One of my respondents said: "before, we did everything by traditional custom. I known religion more and had realized it from my education. It made me feel pride in myself."

The information from my respondents indicated that Muslim women were be ambitious to study religious field in the higher education because of in their opinion Islamic knowledge which taught in traditional *pondoks* was not enough to eliminate ignorance in Islamic doctrine.

"My school only taught religious curriculum to ninth grade but I want to continue my study in high level. Because of I still want to pursue the deeper religious knowledge and *Tok guru had not anything to* taught me. So I went to Malaysia where everyone can further their study. *Pondoks* and private Islamic school are not the same system. In *pondoks*, *Tok guru* taught without class difference. The aim to learning in *pondoks* is religious knowledge. No student classification and no certification to use enroll in schooling system".

To pursue in their higher education in abroad Patani Muslim women had experienced and interacted with Muslim in other counties. It enabled them to realize the Islamic knowledge which they were taught by *Tok guru* in their hometown deeper than other Muslim countries, including that of the Sacred Lands (for example



Saudi Arabia) that source of the religion. These factors lead to their pride of their identity as Malay Muslim which have their own history of the prominent center for Islamic scholars and of Islamic learning in the surrounding region. Most of the respondents who had experience in abroad said that in her study period, Islamic doctrine still did not lead to practice among Muslim people even the Muslim countries in Middle East.

“In Egypt, people prayer five times similar us but different clothing style and usually we worn the prious dress rather them. In that time, Most of teenagers still did not practice in religion, they will do it in the old age. For reading on The Quran, we read better them, Arab student read Qu’ran as reading the newspaper. Because it was their language so they read quickly, not to stress in correct rhythm. As the way we read Quran we read in the correct rhythm and correct way follow its principle. We will stress it in difference way, sometime long sometime short reciting. In classroom, when we learnt to read Qu’ran, a teacher appreciated us, Patani Muslim student, to read it more than Arab students. Even we came far away but we had high background in religion more than them. For these Patani Muslim women who studies abroad, they were under the impression that religion and modern life are incompatible. However, Muslim person who are able to practice in Islam doctrine would be praise from another Muslim. They expressed in Islam belief in their practice in public space and cultivated their pious self through pious practices such as veiling and were gradually change their clothing to Islamic style. In the past, no one who initiated covered their head and there are no specific patterns. So, covering the head depends on a personal style. Sometime, she make it by herself. For one who decides himself to cover her head, finds it is not easy to do. It will be tolerate misunderstand from people, even among Muslim people who known Islam doctrine. We will dare to do, even it made us hurt, shy. But will do. It’s God doctrine. It could not

change. When we do, people would respect us. Be polite manner and speaking with us”.

However, in this period, it was a threshold period in the resurgence of Islam; Muslim women who wore hijabs and Islam clothing were seen as unusual fashion. Most respondents reflected their experiences to embrace Islam and to transform themselves to their clothing styles and wearing hijabs as the hard experience. One of the respondent said before she went to study in Egypt, she covered her hair with the traditional style in Malay Muslim culture. In the past Malay Muslim women only used the long scarf to cover their head. When I known the covering of Muslim women is the avoidable principle in Islam, I started to adapt my clothing style. I would encourage myself in particularly when I came back Thailand, everyone looked at me and said I am a *Ninja*, moreover people in my communities, in three southern border of Thailand, resisted me and however, they gradually gaining acceptance.

Such as suffering experience in expressing their Islamic practice to those Muslim women who graduated from religious fields from abroad as a first group to spread Islamic doctrine and to practice in the three southern borders of Thailand. The confidence in their Islamic knowledge was the important thing to encourage them to adhere to their pathway in Islamic doctrine. This was similar to those Patani Muslim group who studied in secular field, learning Islam doctrine in a university that attracted them to the Islamic practice. One respondent who studies in Prince of Songkla University said she learnt an Islam text in year two with her friend who studied in private Islamic school and entranced to study in Science faculty. She and other Muslim women learnt religious lessons with him at the Muslim student association which is the center of Muslim activity in the university. After learning in Islam text, she has gradually changed her clothing style including stopping some activities that were not conform to Islamic religious. Besides, one respondent who studied at Chiang Mai University said that since everyone knew she had studied in private Islamic school from Yala province. Her Muslim friends from Chiang Mai province and Bangkok asked her to teach religious lesson to them and in the weekend she went to teach religion to Muslim people in a remote area in Chiang Mai province. However, she said she



didn't wear hijab or cover her head when she learnt in Chiang Mai University. In the opposite way, the first Muslim women who wear hijab came from Bangkok. She was her senior. And then in later year, there was Muslim woman from Narathiwat wearing hijab. She just wore hijab when she finished her education and worked in a private Islamic school in her hometown. For those respondents who studied along with a secular curriculum, they resisted to cover their head they were confident in themselves with a high education level and dared to express their Identity as Islam. Most of them intended to come back to learn religious doctrine by themselves and with imam after work during weekends. For deeper understanding in Islam, they transform themselves to pious practice in religious disciplines. One of my respondents had a struggle experience with her insistence to wearing hijab at her workplace and she overcame it. Her education background that enabled her to know the way to fight, she referred to the official rule that did not forbid her to cover the head, the only one rule that enabled to be give up someone from their position is a severe of break discipline in bureaucracy. From her education background and her Muslim friend network who worked in the bureaucracy led her to the successful religious rights resistance in her workplace.

Information from my respondents exposed the identity construction of Patani Muslim women to Islamic Modern selves in the threshold period in the Islamic resurgence. It demonstrated that they did not abandon their religion from their identity formation but embraced it to represent themselves as Modern Muslim women through expressing it in the pious??? Practice and enabled Islam to appear in the public space. Following this impact, the opportunities of their education, both in religious and secular field were most important to empower and encouraged them to express their potential in their communities. However, in case of Patani Muslim women, the private Islamic school was a place for them to enact their capability and spread the Islamic doctrine to a way of their life.

Spreading to the Modern Islam Doctrine: Patani Muslim Women's Role in Private Islamic School

The information from the respondents demonstrated the opposite views to dispelled stereotyped assumptions of Muslim women who

studied in secular curriculum and must study in a government school. And after finishing their education, they would work in the government schools or government offices. But on the other hand, there are a large number of Muslim women who finished from private Islamic schools entering to a government university and worked for government such as being teachers, naval lady officers and public health officers. However, the large number of their careers was government teachers under the Office of the Private Education Commission for teaching a secular lesson in the private Islamic system as government teachers. For those Muslim women who studied abroad came back and became religious teachers in private Islamic schools which were in their foundation period. Even though the government arranged curricula to private Islamic schools in both religion and secular, in the religious curriculum was only broadly content and practice in Islam was ignored and lack to concern even in most *Tok guru* and *Ustaz*, Muslim male teachers. Especially the practice of female students. Hence, these Muslim women teachers who educated from abroad had the important role as the prior group to spread the Islamic doctrine which related to Muslim women. They taught Islam as a complete way of life and expressed it through the practice in everyday life. They had changed a female student uniform to the suitable way especially their cover head style that did not cover up. In the past Islam clothing was rarely found in the three southern border areas because of the trend in Islam fashion that was result in the Islamic revivalism still not to happen. Hence, *Tok guru* and *Ustaz*, both of them even knew that women would cover their hair and their body but no one was strict it and they did not know how Muslim women should do for covering their head and their body based on Islamic doctrine. Most of respondents looked for the suitable way to cover their body and their way.

Tok guru had realized this issue but they did not know the suitable way of Muslim women to cover their head. They did not concern much about it. They knew only to put clothings in women's heads. During that time, there were no specific patterns and no styles in Malaysia also. I set up Muslim women's group with my friend to create the Islam dress for women. We knew Arab Muslim women cover throughout their body but it was not suitable with our region. So we



would look for our style. We design it by ourselves and change it many time until we see it is suitable. We had useful comment from some *Tok guru* and they give some aid why you did not design Muslim clothing that can be ready to pray, for that Muslim women will not take dress praying with them all time. It was comfortable way for women. Someone said we are seriously and too strictly not like other Muslim women. But we explain them we did in the correct way and why we do because it is Allah doctrine.

“We wanted to change our society. When we come back, we had activities with young Muslim women students in private Islamic schools such as training programs to educate Muslim women to dress up as Muslim way, Muslim women’ duties and their role. We also made ourselves to their role model. In that time my age was almost thirty years old. It is our duty to teach and tell them about our religious practice as a way of life especially, the necessary of the doctrine for all Muslim women. If we knew it and we did not teach them, we were wrong, and if they did not know before and they did not practice, they were not wrong. For the way to teach, I told and dialogue with them and acted as their model”.

Such active agent of Muslim women who played their role in the private Islamic school led them to set up a new network preaching Islamic doctrine widespread to Muslim communities surrounding three southern border provinces. They made Islam doctrine spread. This doctrine related to the duty of Muslim women as daughters, wives and mothers to Muslim women practice in their life, and abandon traditional practices and beliefs that were against the Islamic principle. They referred to the Qu’ran for approving the wrong practice and belief in Islam. To preaching religious lessons, the deeper in their religious knowledge enable them to be respect from the communities even they were a women. Moreover, as intensely role of Muslim women, a group of my respondents who graduated from Malaysia and Egypt set up a group to build the orphan house and kindergarten to educate Muslim children with the Islamic principle that later led to develop the ed to the Islamist.

Patani Muslim Women Creating Space and Their Negotiation

In many Islamic societies, women’s space is considered to be a private sphere, perhaps even a home, while men’s space is the public sphere. For female Muslims, the primary female responsibility usually is interpreted as fulfilling the role of wife and mother, whereas the male’s role is to work and be able to financially support wife and family. In this section, I would like to demonstrate the innovative stance of the Patani Muslim women who have, through higher education within a religious curriculum, created for themselves a role as religious teachers and leaders. I will examine how Muslim women balance their duty as wives and their social roles. Moreover, I would like to raise some points about divorce among Muslims. Unmarried women constituted one-third of all respondents. The high number seems unusual within an Islamic context which supports marriage for life. Both the Qu’ran and the Hadith specify principles guiding roles for women, especially in marriage, as a Muslim believer’s basic task.

Preaching and teaching, family life and women’s duty in Islam: Patani Muslim Women Have Created Space and Power

During the 1970s, two new developments changed the paradigms of the three southern most border provinces of Thailand. Religious awareness, religious knowledge and practice among Muslim believers intensified, and at the same time new ideas about gender emerged. These circumstances led to an awakening of Muslim women intent on absorbing Islamic knowledge, especially regarding to women’s duty and family life in Islam. Islam knowledge related to women’s issue became important because of the perceived need to improve the lives of Muslim women. In the past, it had been difficult for Muslim women to access Islamic knowledge. Muslim women who graduated from abroad had raised this issue. Islamic principles specified the duties of men and women in the Qur’an and Hadith but there was no general acceptance that women could preach or teach other women about prayer in a proper way. Moreover, it was known that the male spiritual leaders, *Tok guru* and *Ulama*, were not the people who could clarify the Muslim women’s questions. One of my respondents reflected her experience when she studied religious class in her private



Islamic school. She was the only female student among male students so she did not dare to ask some questions of the *Tok guru*, especially questions related to women's health and sanitation.

"My questioning began when I saw how men could learn. Why, I wondered, was this learning process not also applied to women? When I had the opportunity to study, I found it was not always appropriate for women. So I did my best to learn. There was a lack of women gaining religious knowledge. From my learning experience, studying with a male teacher, I sat alone and I did not dare to ask any questions. I was not encouraged and never became confident and familiar with fellow students. I only heard their discussions. If there were female teachers, bonds would be formed. I studied at the highest level, yet there was no opportunity to ask questions. I was the oldest among the female students, so when they asked me a question relating to women I wanted to be able to answer them. I wanted to learn at the higher level."

Limits on the studies by women inspired my respondent to study Islamic knowledge at a high level. She had to learn Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh) concerning the impurity of women (such as during menstruation and after childbirth) at which time they were not allowed to enter a mosque and could not participate in ritual fasting. This knowledge prevented the women from inadvertently annulling their merit. Similar with other graduated Muslim women, concerned about women's issues in Islam, who needed to teach other Muslim women distanced from Islam education to bring awareness of religious principles in their lives. When they completed their education and became religious teachers, they did not confine themselves only to their role in private Islamic schools but they set up groups to teach formal and non-formal education (preaching), counseling relate to women's duty in Islam and family programs to Muslim women in this area. With better Islamic knowledge, Patani Muslim women able to transfer their knowledge and power from a role in the public space through teaching and preaching to the tradition role of women as wives and mothers. Since the mother is a child's

first teacher of religious therefore women will have Islam knowledge to educate their children. They helped these women understand how to be a good spouse and changing the interpreter of Islam, female teachers developed ways to convince the women that giving up certain indigenous ritual made them "better Muslims" and to be good wives and mothers. Muslim women who finished studies in Malaysia and Egypt, the previous group to mobilize Muslim women in this area, played important roles in strengthening the organization with their donations and activities for women. With religious education regarded as a primary social function, they founded a kindergarten in 1984, to transmit the Islamic principles of Islam to children. Moreover, some of them also voiced Islamic doctrine through radio programs to preach to Muslim women in remote areas. Such preaching and teaching through radio that was the main tool to spread the message of reformist Islam which Muslim women was allowed to participate and create their efforts gave them their space as female preachers. There were no inhibitions on the women from raising their voices in the public sphere. They had become part of the revivalist trend, preparing other women for their role in life according to Islamic guidelines and raising awareness about social-religious issues. This increasing awareness led women realize their potential and self-confident to preach and negotiate with their families, especially with husbands, to teach Islamic knowledge and principles. In so doing they contributed their knowledge to other Muslims and resulted in creating their own access to preaching and teaching in the public space. One of my respondents reflects s on her experience in negotiating with her husband.

"At first my husband did not allow me to preach on the radio. Even though he was a government teacher, he did not support me to preach in public. But I explained him I did not teach in the bad way; I taught students how to be good people. If I studied only to level 10 in a private Islamic school, I would stop, but I graduated from university. I wanted to contribute my knowledge to other people. I am a woman I could not be a *Tok guru*, I had no channel to disperse my knowledge. So I could not make religious merit".



To achieve these goals to spread Islamic doctrine for women, Muslim women gathered for the first time in Narathiwat in 1997. More than 20,000 Muslim women participated. Topics at the conference related to the manner of women's dressing, practical prayer, women's duty as mothers and wives, and Islamic principles for women. This first Muslim gathering for women was repeated seven times in later seven years. The broad range of activities resulted in a transformation from a mission through preaching and teaching to one designed to encompass every aspect of life for Muslim women. These Muslim women perform their traditional women's roles as mothers and wives to but also created social space for themselves and built upon their modern role as educated mothers in Islamic knowledge to raise and instruct their children in moral behaviour. This allows them to be recognized, and to be accepted by Muslim menfolk as part of the social education fabric of the three southern border provinces. One of my respondents spoke of the way the power of female preachers and teachers in women's space, confined only for women, where men were forbidden to interfere. Such a message of women's power depends on women's access to religious knowledge similar to men.

As the *Tok gurus* are all male, we could not ask them intimate questions. But among women, we could discuss whatever we chose. We did not want other men or *Tok guru* to join us, just their wives. Actually, the men could join us and listen to whatever we spoke of; in just the same way women could listen to men discussing religion. However, we always said to them that men should talk with men because men know men's issues better. We should talk only with women because women should control their own space.

How Single Female Teachers and Divorced Women Negotiate a Social Norm

In the past, a common perception of Islam was that religion caused Muslim women in the three southern border provinces of Thailand to marry at an early age. This was thought to be because Muslim women were confining to the private area and were under the control of Muslim men. On the contrary, my field work found that religion in itself was not the major reason for

women to marry early but there were other factors, especially in rural areas. Lack of knowledge led people to believe that to prevent their daughters from becoming impure; they should be married in early age. And another reason was that early marriage protected women from being snatched. One of my respondents had been married at 14 years old. She said her village was in Narathiwat province. When she was young, most of the families in the district wanted their daughters married at an early age because to prevent them from being snatched by a local influential person, perhaps a known gangster, or a village chief, including members of the communist party that extended its influence underground in southern villages. My respondent told of her experience. She did not want to marry but in that time she was alone with her mother because her father had passed away and could not protect her from a kidnap. So her mother arranged for her to marry with a man who was her cousin. It was seen as a better way to protect her. When she got married she would *dua* (pray to god) every day, asking for her husband to allow her to live her own way so she could study. Finally he understood and divorces her.

Similarly, another respondent underwent an arranged marriage set up by her parents. She was married for just one year before divorce. She gave me the reason that the pair was incompatible and she was not able to be a good wife because she preferred to continue her career. My respondents revealed by exposing their experience, that destiny her own life depended on a willingness to pursue education pathways and achieve future careers. In the same way, other respondents had chosen to remain single so they could concentrate on their education rather than married life. They made this decision even through marriage was expected of Muslim women. Moreover, they found inspiration and escaped to achieve their education and became models for younger Muslim women. Because of these factors it's easier to see why one group of respondents who married over thirty years of age had a higher education level than the average for Muslim women in southern Thailand. Both groups made the education pathway their priority. With a higher level of education, they cultivated self-confidence and self-control in their lives and expected to find for themselves suitable men with whom to start a family.



I was a single woman. I worked hard and enjoyed my career. In my opinion, marriage was always likely to be a lottery at a young age. Some are lucky but others had bad luck. For me, I preferred to be single. I have yet to find a good man, the best possible husband, a man who could lead me and take responsibility. I have had this hope since I was younger but I still have yet to find the right man. I would not mind if he already had a wife or more than one, if he was responsible with me. I want freedom in my life; I never did want someone who would go everywhere I wanted to go. I wanted to decide for myself.

With the high profile background of their education, these women were considered to be of the highest standing and their self-confidence and self-control led them to looking for suitable men of similar status. The information of my respondents demonstrates the way they negotiated and reinterpreted marriage within the Islamic doctrine to the guidelines of God and depending on God's desire. In their opinion, even though they had not married, they could to protect their chastity through their self-control.

That is God's desire for me be single. There were men who approached me but there were good reasons who I rejected their proposals. One good reason is that I was the last born child in my family. I would take care with my parents. They did not prevent me from marrying but it was my choice. I did not find a suitable man. Most of those who approached me wanted me to stay with them. They wanted me to help them found a religious school. I could not do that. I worried about my parents. I could not leave my parents. If I was single, it's true there was no man to protect me, but I could control myself in chastity.

Most respondents among the unmarried women have renegotiated their Islamic doctrine. Protection of their chastity did not depend on marriage, where a husband would be their guardian. In their opinion, it depended on Islamic knowledge that enabled them to perceive a proper way to practice their religion while remaining a single woman. One respondent gave the reason why she

remained single was because of her experience as a female preacher. This status enabled her to sense the painful experience of women whose husbands had had another woman. My respondent reflected on her feeling that it's difficult to be the second wife even through it is permitted in Islam.

"I remained single because the men who approached me wanted me to be a second wife with them. In Islam doctrine, this was allowed, but I have consulted Muslim women who faced the painful experience when their husbands took a second wife. I sympathized with them. I realized their feelings. Some women accepted such a situation. Some women did not want their husbands to know their weakness so they keep it in their hurtful heart. I did not close my heart but I think God did not want me to marry; he did not give me a soulmate. But God opened another way to me, and in going this way God wants me to do my best".

The experience of respondents who have chosen to remain single shows that their pathway to education and religious knowledge enabled them to become self-confident in their own way. Moreover, their religious knowledge has strengthened their ability to become a group accepted as a social norm.

Conclusion

The education of Patani Muslim women's pathways exposes to the dynamic of women's lives in the Three Southern Border Provinces of Thailand: they are active agents in the new circumstance of the development era of Thailand and create their own space to play Muslim women's role through their full potential and knowledge both in religious and secular field. These women feel pride in their religious identity and dare to expose it in public space with more self-confident and self-esteem. Moreover, their personal life is different and transgresses the social norm indicating from the respondents who had chosen to be single. The great number of Muslim women who studied in higher education demonstrates the awakening of women's education in this area. Besides, it shows that the Malay-Muslim people in far southern Thailand are not backward but in other way they look forward to improve their education in both pathways.

These are also relevant to a prominent center for Islamic scholars and Islamic learning in the surrounding region in the past and it is still alive in the form of the modern private Islamic school. Especially, women have the important role in supporting this Islamic pedagogy as the active agents in the far southern of Thailand

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