

Ghosts of the Past in Southern Thailand: Essays on the History and Historiography of Patani

PATRICK JORY, ed.

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“While the southern insurgency continues, the history of Patani will continue to be a battleground” (intro. xix).

Since the outbreak of the insurgency in southern Thailand in 2004, numerous studies about Patani have been published by Thai and international scholars. However, those dealing with the history of Patani from a Malay and Islamic viewpoint are rare. This volume, a product of the international seminar organized by Walailak University, Chulalongkorn University, and other institutes in 2009, is one of them. It can be said that this volume is a sequel to the previous book co-edited by Michael Montesano and Patrick Jory, *Thai South and Malay North* (2008), but it is unique in the way that it highlights the history and historiography of Patani from different perspectives, especially from Malay and Islamic studies. In effect, it offers a new framework that challenges conventional ways of studying Patani within the context of Thai studies.

The book consists of four parts. The first explores Patani as a plural community and its identity in the early-modern era. Anthony Reid begins chapter one by pointing out the fact that Patani in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a multi-racial community and not just a Malay society, as stressed by Patani nationalists. Reid’s argument on Patani’s pluralism has been stressed previously in *Thai South and Malay North*. In this essay, however, Reid draws on contemporary Dutch sources to illuminate the people and society of Patani. Another highlight of this essay is a full English translation of an account of Patani by Jacob van Neck, a Dutch merchant who visited Patani in 1602, an account that sheds a light on the social history of the polity. Barbara Watson Andaya’s chapter discusses Patani identity through the symbology of *Hikayat Patani*, the most well-known indigenous source originally written in Jawi. The most potent symbols include the elephant gate, elephants, Patani canons, and the *nobat* orchestra. Geoff Wade provides a summary of various Chinese accounts referring to Patani, dating from the sixth to the nineteenth centuries. His translation and summary of these accounts emphasizes how Chinese sources are important in unraveling the early-modern history of Patani.

Three articles in the second part draw attention to Patani’s Islamic scholars, or *ulama*, and their connections with the Middle East. Azyumardi Azra examines the life and work of Shaykh Dawud b. Abd Allah al-Fatani, one of the most famous Patani scholars who produced numerous scholarly works on Islam in the nineteenth century. Numan Hayimasae also describes the role of Patani *ulama* from the eighteenth to mid-twentieth centuries in shaping the networks that linked Muslims in Patani to Mecca. Christopher M. Joll, on the other hand, argues that some of the

prominent *ulama*, especially in the early period, were not pure “Malay,” but “creole ambassadors,” using terminology drawn from the work of Michael Laffan. He points out that they came from well-to-do elite families and had pluralistic ethnic backgrounds that enabled them to play significant roles as religious ambassadors between Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

The third part explores Patani in the periods of political transition in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Francis R. Bradley focuses on the wars between Siam and Patani during 1786–1838 that not only devastated Patani and its people, but also ended the traditional *Mandala* relation between Thai and Patani. Bradley points out a number of tactics Siam employed to subdue Patani and argues that these wars were no small-scale raids but were systematically carried out, a fact that counters the prevailing paradigms concerning early-modern Southeast Asian warfare. Philip King uses Raman, a tin-rich interior region of Patani sharing a border with Perak, as a vantage point for the analysis of Anglo-Siamese activity/rivalry in the interior zone of the Malay Peninsula in the late nineteenth century. King describes the British struggle to claim the land in Raman as a part of Perak, at the time a British protectorate, and Siam’s counterclaim. Interestingly, he shows that both the British and Siam tried to write new histories of this area based on their own assumptions about natural boundaries and ethnic identity to back their claims.

The last part deals with the contested historiographies of Patani, the most debated theme on the subject. Dennis Walker analyzes some of the works of Patanian nationalist historiography from the classic period to post-1945 (including recent cyber writers on the internet), their attitude toward the Buddhist Thais and the West, and the consolidation of Islam in shaping Patani identity. Walker points out that the secular nationalism of Patani’s nationalists in the post-1945 has been transformed today into “Islamist-nationalist” visions that engage closely with the Middle East and Islam. The article of Iik Arifin Mansurnoor provides a similar overview of the influential works composed in Jawi-Malay and describes the decline and defeat of Patani from the perspective of Malay scholars such as Ahmad Fathi and A. Bangnara. Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian provides a narrative description of Patani history in relation to Thailand and its socio-political change from 1782 to 1980s. By exploring historical works written between 1940s and 1980s by Thai, Malay, and international scholars, Kobkua notes that these works, despite their contradicting versions, have managed to coexist with, while challenging, the history written by the victors. Duncan McCargo’s chapter focuses on the anonymous leaflets widely distributed after the outbreak of violence in 2004 in southern Thailand. By analyzing the content in the leaflets, he points out that they were issued by various groups including militants, Thai security forces, and Muslim and Buddhist groups. At the same time, they all seek to use alternative readings of history for propaganda purposes, and the multiple narratives of Patani’s history reflect the ambiguities underpinning the violence in the south and the lack of clear leadership among the militants.

As stated above, the highlight of this book is that it brings together scholars from various disciplines to shed light on Patani’s history and its historiography. There is, however, considerable

overlap in the content in many chapters. For example, in Part Two, the life and work of Patani's *ulama*, Shaykh Dawd Al-Fatani, is discussed in both Azra and Numan's chapters. Even though both chapters have a slightly different framework, they reach similar conclusions about the role of *ulama* and their network. In Part Four, Walker and Mansurnoor both focus on the historiographies of Patani by Patani nationalists and offer similar remarks on Patani's changing national identity from secular to Islamic and Middle East-oriented. Yet, only their terminology differs: Walker uses the term "Islam-Malay Patanian nation" (p. 185), while Mansurnoor uses "Patani *Jawi* nation" (p. 276). The unevenness of topics is also noticeable. Stories about the rise and fall of Patani and its female rulers written in *Hikayat Patani* are repeatedly discussed in many chapters, while the history of Patani in the crucial period of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are discussed in only two chapters in Part Two.

Overall, this book is a valuable collection that deepens and broadens the existing knowledge and public consciousness of the history of southern Thailand. Ethno-religious conflict between Thai Buddhists and Malay Muslims still continues, as does historical writing. However, as Jory notes, history does not necessarily have to determine Patani's destiny. At the same time, history should not be hijacked by any one group to serve its political or religious objectives.

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The Lahu Minority in Southwest China: A Response to Ethnic Marginalization on the Frontier

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Ever since economic liberalization in the 1980s, modernization and policies that deal with ethnic minorities have become important issues in the study of present day China. Since the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party, ethnic diversity in Southwest China has been a major component in ethnic policy, and therefore ethnic issues in this area have drawn much academic interest. Most of the existing studies about minority groups in Southwest China focus on state